St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Gathering Place Name also Connects to:

- Christ Church of Chicago
- Light of Christ Lutheran Church
- Rogers Park Lutheran Church

Historical Overview

The Illinois Synod and the Home Mission Board of the United Lutheran Church in America organized St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chicago in the spring of 1922. A portable chapel was purchased and the Home Mission board designated Dr. T.B. Hersch as the mission pastor. It was left to Hersch to locate and attract members for the congregation. It appears as though Hersch attracted a decent number of new members in a matter of months, because the first organizational meeting was held in October of 1922. It was at this meeting that the name St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church was chosen. Hersch left St. Mark's sometime in 1923.

Sometime between 1922 and 1926, the Chicago Park Board desired the property where St. Mark's portable church resided, and thus, condemned and purchased the lot. The money from the purchase was used to repay the Home Mission Board and buy land for a new church. They bought five lots on Rockwell Street in a mainly residential area.

The church's congregation continued to grow, and in the 1940s, the church started a building fund for a new building. Interestingly, St. Mark's determined more room was necessary for the growing church in the middle of World War II, implying that the congregation had outgrown its building even with young men overseas and before the post-World War baby boom. The actual building plans were not approved until 1947, though, and construction for the new building did not begin for six more years.

Around 2000, St. Mark's merged with Rogers Park Lutheran Church to form Light of Christ Lutheran. The new church relocated to 7045 N Western Ave. Rather than putting their church up for sale, as nearly a dozen other Lutheran Churches on Chicago's North and West sides had recently done, Reverend Nelson of St. Mark's personally reached out to Christ Church of Chicago, who was actively searching for a new building, with an offer to sell. Rev. Nelson had conducted a service for Christ Church of Chicago previously and had admired the love and friendship she saw exhibited by the congregation.

It is unknown what happened to the congregation of Light of Christ Lutheran after 2000. As of 2023, their previous building at 7045 N Western Ave houses the Rahmat-e-Alam Foundation.

Timeline

1922	St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church is organized as a member of the United Lutheran Church in America.

Spring 1922	The Illinois Synod and the Home Mission Board of the United Lutheran Church in America purchases a portable church from Belmont Park Lutheran Church. The portable church is moved to Talman Avenue and Peterson Road.
10/15/1922	Dr. T.B. Hersch holds the first organizational meeting. The name of St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church is chosen.
c. 1922-1926	The Chicago Park Board condemns and purchases the Peterson Road property. With the profits, the congregation buys five lots on Rockwell Street.
3/11/1923	Irwin C. Birk begins to serve as pastor.
4/16/1926	Construction began on the parsonage and church building at 6045-6057 North Rockwell Street in Chicago.
10/10/1926	Parsonage and church building at 6045-6057 N Rockwell Street were dedicated.
8/1/1929	Kenneth A. Hurst begins to serve as pastor.
12/1/1940	R.E. Lesher begins to serve as pastor.
1944	Due to an increase in congregants, St. Mark's begins a building fund campaign to build a new building.
1947	Plans approved for a new, larger church building on the N Rockwell Street plot of land.
3/2/1947	Edward E. Hummon begins to serve as pastor.
3/1/1950	Russell A. Olson begins to serve as pastor.
4/15/1953	Construction begins for the new building.
3/28/1954	The congregation dedicated the new church building.
1955	J. Stephen Bremer begins to serve as pastor.
9/23/1962	Leonard Nelson begins to serve as pastor.
10/1/1967	John L. Timmerman begins to serve as pastor.
c. 1980-2000	A woman referred to as Reverend Nelson serves as pastor of the church. Rev. Nelson is the one who personally offers the building to Christ Church of Chicago.
2000	St. Mark's merges with Rogers Park Lutheran Church to form Light of Christ Lutheran, moves to 7045 N Western Avenue, and sells the Rockwell St land to Christ Church of Chicago. St. Mark's initially reached out to Christ Church of Chicago when the Reverend heard that the latter was looking for a new building.

Annotated Bibliography

Gathering Place Records. Held in the church office of Christ Church of Chicago. Chicago, IL

Christ Church of Chicago's church office holds the full, detailed contract between St. Mark's and the contractors of the 1953 additions and a typed account by James Shikami of how Christ Church of Chicago purchased the building from St. Mark's.

A History and Directory of Saint Mark Lutheran Church, Golden Anniversary -- October 15, 1972, 1972.

This volume was used to write the history of St. Mark's found online on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine website. It is unknown for certain where the physical copy exists, but it may be at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (EVLA) Archives.

"Permit No. 4937." *Chicago Building Permits, Book 33, North*. City of Chicago. From University of Illinois Chicago.

https://dr652a.bmiimaging.com/Roll/Roll?datasetName=Chicago%20Building%20Permits%2C%201872-1954&rollID=eceab293-76ba-4c64-b144-d0e8d54627e1&frameNumber=1 (accessed March 2023).

Chicago Building Permit Book 33 North contains the building permit for the 1926 parsonage and church with details about the architecture. It can be found online or at the University of Illinois Chicago.

"Permit No. 89717." *Chicago Building Permits, Book 66, Citywide*. City of Chicago. From University of Illinois Chicago. https://dry1e.bmiimaging.com/Roll/Roll?datasetName=Chicago%20Building%20Permits%2C%201872-1954&rollID=aeea5d47-d4ab-4172-82ba-f7522343fe06&frameNumber=310 (accessed March 2023).

Chicago Building Permits Book 66 Citywide contains the building permit for the 1953 additions with details about the architecture. It can be found online or at the University of Illinois Chicago.

"St. Mark's English Ev. Lutheran Church." Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Internet Archive Wayback Machine, 2002. Accessed March 2023. https://web.archive.org/web/20110709071416/http://www.elca.org/archives/chicagochurches/stmarks_ulca1922.html.

This internet archive hosts a since-deleted post by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Archives containing a brief history of St. Mark's. The information was presumably all taken from the Golden Anniversary book.