

Finnish immigrants began to settle in Maynard in 1885, which was a prosperous mill town on the Assabet River about 22 miles west by north of Boston. It was here that the early settlers earned their livelihood and established their Lutheran Church.

It is known that some Finnish immigrants lived in Maynard prior to this date, but they only stayed for a short time and then moved on.

In August 1894, a Bible salesman by the name of John Laitinen arrived in their midst. He inspired them with his talks and suggested having an outdoor worship service for all the Finnish people in Maynard. The people were enthused and began making preparations for a great festival. This was held the following week by the shore of Mill Pond in the pine grove. This grove used to be across from St. Bridget's Church. It is believed the speaker of the day was Mr. Jphn Laitinen. At this festival a meeting was held and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Maynard was organized. The women had made beautiful baskets which were sold and the proceeds were turned over to the newly organized church and were the first monies deposited in its treasury. The minutes of this first meeting have been lost so important facts, such as the exact date of this meeting, how many joined the new church, or who were elected as its officers are not known.

For their first pastor a call was sent out to Rev. John Nissila of the Fitchburg congregation to hold a mid-week worship service in Maynard once a month. If there were five Sundays in the month he held services also on the fifth Sunday. These services were held in the chapel of the congregational church. Rev. John Nissila served the congregation until 1895. Pastor Viljo Heiman of Worcester served the congregation temporarily in 1933, assisted at other times of congregational need, and conducted Finnish Worship Services twice a month, dropping to once a month until the move to the new church building, when the use of the Finnish language was completely discontinued, and his services no longer needed.

The congregation was incorporated as the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Maynard, Mass., according to the laws of Massachusetts, in 1902. The names on the Charter were: William Luomala, Peter Pekkala, Matti Koski, ERick Johnson, Hugo Kajander, Heikki Aakko, Josef Kajander, Victor Anderson, Heikki Huikari, Heikki Paakki, and Antti Seppala. The lots which the church and parsonage were built on

~~were~~ purchased in February 1902 for \$750.00. The building of the church was begun in April 1907. Jacob Oberg and Matti Jokinen made a contract with Mr. Whitney, a contractor, to dig a cellar and lay the foundation for the sum of \$250.00.

The plans for the church were drawn by Mr. Johan Peltokorpi of Lanesville. After a few minor changes, they were accepted and he was selected as the construction foreman. The congregation gave the entire construction project into the hands of the Trustees. Mr. ~~Antti/Kononen~~ Victor Luosalo was selected to act as an overseer in behalf of the congregation. Pastor Antti Kononen who was the pastor at the time did the bookkeeping. The work on the church began in June 1907 and was completed in November of the same year. All the work was done by Finnish day laborers. The total cost of building was \$8,000.00. The dedication of the church took place June 6, 1908.

The congregation joined the Suomi Synod in April 1909. Pastor M. I. Kuusi of the Worcester congregation was then serving the congregation temporarily. The congregation joined the Eastern Conference of the Suomi Synod in 1910. The Maynard, Allston, Brighton and Quincy congregations joined together to form a pastorate in 1913. Their first pastor was Alpo Setala.

The Sunday School was first organized in January 1906. The first teachers were William Luomala, Elias Worlin, Maria Harjula, Liisa Tikka, and Mrs. Wuorenmaa. The Christian Young Peoples Society was first organized in 1913 and now functions as the Luther League. The Ladies Aid functioned for 60 years. In 1945 the younger women of the church organized the Bethany Sisters Guild. Following the merger of the Lutheran Church of America, the women re-organized to form the Lutheran Church Women.

The Mens Handicraft Society was active for twenty years from 1913 - 1933. The men then banded together under the banner of the Lutheran Brotherhood of Maynard, Mass. Then they were known as the Lutheran Church Men.

The choir was organized in 1913, and has been active ever since.

A parsonage was built in 1929 at a total cost of \$6,225.00, while Dr. Taito A. Kantonen was serving as pastor. However, the first pastor to occupy the parsonage was Pastor and Mrs. Arvo Niskanen, who arrived in 1943. The congregation held Open House at the parsonage on November 7, 1943. On the same day the first ministerial act was performed

in the house. Charles Williams Jr. son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Williams of South Chelmsford was baptized. The parsonage was furnished by the congregation and individual members.

The congregation has always taken an active part and supported all church-wide campaigns and endeavors. St John Evangelical Lutheran Church is now 77 years old and has passed through her share of the typical experiences of growth, from an immigrant church to a community church. During this growth she has made the transition in service from the Finnish to the English language. The church has also progressed from being served by an itinerant ministry, to the calling of her own pastor. In 1962, in the same spirit of progress, St. John eagerly waited for the consummation of the merger of the Lutheran Church in America in order that she might be more fully united with her sister churches in New England and in the work of ministering to the American community.

St. John is happy to have been selected as one of the churches involved in the pilot project for leadership training in the Long Range Program for Parish Education in the new church. St. John organized a self study committee which initiated action toward the relocation of the church to better serve the growing community constituting her parish.

The congregation is also proud of the fact that several of her pastors have gone on to distinguish themselves in the work of the church. Dr. Taito A. Kantonen now serves as Professor of Systematic Theology at Hanna Divinity School in Springfield, Ohio. Dr. Bernard Hillila recently served as dean of Hanna Divinity School, and now serves as the dean of the Pacific Lutheran College in Thousand Oaks, California. Pastor Eino Vehanen has served as a guest professor at the school of Missions at Maywood Theological Seminary, Maywood, Illinois, and has now returned to serve a parish in the foreign field. St. John has two sons serving in the ministry. They are William Sarvela, son of Mr. and Mrs. Evert Sarvela, and Walter Aalto, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eino Aalto. In 1967 St. John relocated in a new building in North Sudbury at the juncture of Route 117 and Waltham Street. She continues to hold membership in the Maynard-Town Council of Churches, and is an associate member of Sudbury Council of Churches.

St. John is exceedingly grateful to God for blessing us so richly in the past and our prayer is for His continued nearness and belssing in years ahead.

The old church building is ~~st~~ continuing to serve as ahouse of worship as the Church of the Nazarene purchased the building, and currently has an ~~active~~ active congregation working for the glory of God.-

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