

St. Matthew Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

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St. Matthew also Connects to:

- Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church
- Bethel C.M.E Church
- St. John C.M.E Church
- Trinity C.M.E. Church
- Invisible Faith C.M.E. Church
- Allen Ebenezer C.M.E Church

Historical Overview

In 2018, St. Matthew Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church of Milwaukee Wisconsin celebrated its congregation's centennial. Located today on 2944 North 9th Street Milwaukee, WI 53206, the story of this congregation moves beyond the building it is in. Rather, its story is one of community service, collaboration, inclusion, and social activism. Its story begins with the desire to organize a church by W.S. Ferguson, his wife Pearl, and presiding C.M.E. Bishop M.L. Jamison in the Milwaukee area. In 1918, St. Matthew established itself in the home of Rev. Ferguson. Unfortunately, the official whereabouts of Rev. Ferguson's home remains unknown. There were seven original members of St. Matthew's including Rev. Ferguson, his wife, Lonnie Eubanks, Monroe Thompson, C. E. Menninger, Laura Maughum. One year later in 1919, W.S. Ferguson purchased and opened their first edifice at 538 West Walnut St. Milwaukee, WI 53212. It would remain at this location until 1958. During their time at the West Walnut location, the congregation cycled through twelve reverends, ten of which occurred over a span of fifteen years. Near the end of their 38-year presence at West Walnut, their congregation numbered around 140 members. In 1958 Rev. McLin, due to increasing membership, saw the need to move the congregation to a larger location on North Ninth Street where it remains today.

Over the first half of the twentieth century, the 53206 neighborhood slowly transitioned from a predominately German community to a predominately African American community. Built in 1914, the building that is currently home to St. Matthew originally held a German Reformed Church named Grace Reformed Church. St. Matthew congregation purchased the building from Grace Reformed Church in 1958. Following this move to their current location, the congregation experienced a change in pastorate leadership with Rev. B.S. Gregg. It was under the leadership of B.S. Gregg that the congregation saw the fulfillment of their mortgage, and increased involvement with the Civil Rights Movement.

During the height of the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee, B.S. Gregg collaborated with other leaders to desegregate the Milwaukee Public School System. During this time, St. Matthew became both the central location for M.U.S.I.C. (Milwaukee United School Integration Committee), and a Freedom School. From then on, they continued to be a community-based organization with a vision

and mission to serve underprivileged communities, assuring that they are more than a place of worship. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, St. Matthew established choir groups, member clubs, community outreach and education programs, renovated the building's interior and exterior, founded the Community Brainstorming forum, began the Sunday Morning Community Breakfast for members and non-members, and provides scholarships for secondary education. From its beginning St. Matthew has continued to be a community center, outreach location, center for education, and a gathering place for all.

Timeline:

1865	This date appears in a news article about St. Matthew's building. More investigation regarding it is needed.
1914	The church building was built.
09/15/1918	St. Matthew Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and congregation established by Reverend W.S. Ferguson and six other members in his home in Milwaukee.
1919	St. Matthew moves to 538 West Walnut Street Milwaukee, WI 53212 and remained there for 39 years.
1919 – 1934	Pastoral Leadership: Reverend W.S. Ferguson, Reverend S.W. Samples, Reverend W.H. Parker, Reverend W. Crain, Reverend G.W. Goodwin, Reverend J.T. Cochran, Reverend R.H. Anderson, Reverend G.S. Smith, Reverend JK Barnett, Reverend N.H. Rhodes. Within the first fifteen years of St. Matthew's existence, the congregation cycled through ten reverends with an average stay of a year and half a piece. In 1935, Reverend H.C. Coggins became the first reverend to hold the position long-term.
1935 – 1945	Reverend H.C. Coggins
1950s	Reverend W.J.G McLin embarked on an ambitious project to help end racial segregation in churches. Organized diverse congregations to worship together. Established clubs. St. Matthew's services were broadcast live on WTMJ Television station.
1958	St. Matthew moves to current location: 2944 North 9 th Street Milwaukee, WI 53206.
02/16 – 03/09/1958	Two-week celebration for the move from 538 West Walnut St. to 2944 North 9 th St. The celebration included a motor caravan from West Walnut St. to North 9 th St., services and sermons, and activities each day of the week lasting from morning until night.
1960 – 1978	Revered B.S. Gregg

1960s – 1970s	Reverend Gregg paid the mortgage in full, renovated the church, installed air conditioning, and stained-glass windows. Organized clubs and was instrumental in organizing the Freedom School. Community meetings were held at St. Matthew during this time. Established the Chancel Choir, Senior Choir, and Children’s Choir. Reverend Gregg and St. Matthew were influential during the Civil Rights Movement in Milwaukee.
1978 – 1984	Reverend William Smith. Reverend Smith reorganized the Children’s Choir, restructured the Board of Christian Education, and departmentalized the Sunday School.
1984 – 1987	Renovated the church’s kitchen, gymnasium, garage, pews, carpet, and air conditioner. Community Brainstorming held at St. Matthew.
1987 – 2010	Reverend Dr. Daniel L. Fitten. Reverend Fitten installed a new sound system, upgraded air conditioning and heating system, and repaved the parking lot. Under his leadership St. Matthew had sixty hundred members, bible classes for adults and teens, annual church retreats, clubs and groups for the youth and adults, Sunday Moring Community Breakfast, golf group, men mentoring program, cancer support group, year-round tutoring, and monthly clothing drive.
2010 – Present	Reverend Dr. Richard D. Shaw. Reverend Shaw has developed many ministries that are aimed at serving the St. Matthew community. He has also led the church into a weekly television broadcast and live streams St. Matthew’s services each week on YouTube and Facebook. Reverend Shaw continues to make St. Matthew a place and community of social activism. Community engagement and community outreach also continue to be important to St. Matthew.
2018	St. Matthew celebrates its 100-year anniversary as a congregation.
Date	Applies to be known as a historic building on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Annotated Bibliography:

Congress of Racial Equality. Milwaukee Chapter. CORE Records, Box 1, Folder 2, Segregation of Milwaukee Public Schools, Freedom Day Materials, 1964, 1964.

This is a collection that is held the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives that depicts the running Freedom School in Milwaukee. While only several of the documents within the collection are digitized those that are showcase the daily lessons taught at these schools as well as the education and materials needed in order to be a teacher at the school. Though St. Matthew’s Church is not specifically highlighted in the collection, it was a Freedom School in the 1960’s and documents within this collection illustrate what was being taught at the

school. The collection includes documents on school programs, poems used in lesson plans at the school, information on Freedom Day Withdrawal, Recommended excuse to use for Freedom Day Withdrawal, and teach questionnaires.

Dougherty, John, and Michael Fultz. *More than One Struggle: African-American School Reform Movements in Milwaukee, 1930*1980*, 1997, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

This is a dissertation written by John Dougherty in 1997, which explores the tactics used by groups to desegregate schools. The work illustrates how groups in Milwaukee worked to not only desegregate the public-school system for students, but also how to integrate Black teachers into the school system. Though this work does not mention the involvement St. Matthew's had during the desegregation process, it does provide context to issues occurring in the public-school system and broader Civil Rights Movement.

Jones, Patrick, Boyer, Paul S., and Tyson, Timothy B. *"The Selma of the North": Race Relations and Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee, 1958-1970*, 2002, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

This is a dissertation written by Patrick Jones in 2002 discusses the fight for fair housing in Milwaukee. The work illustrates how groups in Milwaukee fought for equal housing opportunities while placing them in the context of the broader Civil Rights Movement. While this work does not discuss St. Matthew's Church, does elude to the involvement of churches as community centers and institutions that helped place families in affordable housing. St. Matthew's Church was instrumental within its own community in finding housing for its church members. This work illustrates the process by which St. Matthew's may have helped its members find housing.

Milwaukee United Schools Integration Committee. Milwaukee United School Integration Committee Records, 1964.

This is a collection that is held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives, and details some of the activities led by the Milwaukee United Schools Integration Committee (MUSIC). The committee was instrumental in fighting for the desegregation of the Milwaukee Public School System and was based out of St. Matthews Church. Under the pastorate of Rev. B.S. Gregg, St. Matthew's Church become involved with the struggle to desegregate public schools and later became a Freedom School location. Documents within this collection illustrate the specific role St. Matthew's and Rev. B.S. Gregg played in the desegregation process. Included in the collection are correspondence between Lloyd Barbee (Leader of MUSIC) and the superintendent of the Milwaukee Public School System, information on events organized by MUSIC, and various lesson plans used in the Freedom Schools.

Milwaukee United Schools Integration Committee. MUSIC Records, Box 1, Folder 1, Correspondence and Memos, 1965-1966, 1965.

This is a collection that is held the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives, and details some of the activities led by the Milwaukee United Schools Integration Committee (MUSIC). Differing from that of the Milwaukee United Schools Integration Committee

Records Collection, this collection focuses on the correspondence between committee members and the school district, and memos produced by the committee. As St. Matthew's Church housed the committee, the collection eludes to the involvement of the church in the process of desegregating the Milwaukee Public School System. The collection includes various correspondence from MUSIC members on events organized by the committee and memos from their meetings.

St. Matthew CME Church. (Accessed February 6, 2019) <http://box5769.temp.domains/~stmattj7/>

We have used the St. Matthew website as our starting point for our research. It gives a lot of great basic information about St. Matthew and the people who are involved with St. Matthew. It also leads us to other social media platforms that St. Matthew posts on regularly including Facebook and YouTube. These platforms are useful for our research in terms of understanding how St. Matthew interacts with their community today.

Documents/newsletters Dr. Williams and Mrs. Suggs gave us. How do we cite?

This is not a formal citation. We have had the pleasure of receiving many copies of documents or letters from St. Matthew that are useful to our research, however, we are finding it difficult to cite these sources. More discussion with Professor Cantwell will help us better understand how to use these documents.

Spatial History:

The story of St. Matthew's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.) is one of inclusion and community involvement. Our spatial history of the church illustrates several geographical locations that highlight the movement of the church to specific spaces in order to accommodate their community. The first location is the home of Rev. Ferguson, who was the organizer and first pastor of St. Matthew's. Unfortunately, the location of his home remains unknown, therefore we have chosen to highlight the city of Milwaukee. Under the leadership of Rev. Ferguson, the church moved from his home to its first edifice at 538 West Walnut St., which is represented by our second location on the map. The congregation remained at this location for the next 38 years during which time it cycled through 12 pastors. Our third location represents the move the church made to its current location at 2944 North 9th Street. The move took place largely due to the increasing size of the congregation. It was at this location that the church became involved with the Civil Rights Movement, through its struggles with desegregation of the Milwaukee Public School System and fair housing. The fourth location is the city of Milwaukee again. This point illustrates the impact St. Matthew and their Reverend B.S. Gregg had on Milwaukee in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement. This period is significant to St. Matthew's history because it focuses on their community involvement outside of the congregation. Our fifth location highlights the 53206 neighborhood. We highlight this zip code because Dr. Williams has specified it is important to St. Matthew and it indicates that St. Matthew is heavily involved in their community today.

5 or 6 locations:

1. Rev. Ferguson's home
2. West Walnut St.

3. N. 9th Street
4. Milwaukee (in the 60s)
 - a. Civil Rights newspapers
5. Community Brainstorming
 - a. Audio, N 9th Street
6. 53206 Neighborhood

[I think one of your points should discuss the Great Migration. Maybe the point on the 1960s covers this?]

What does St. Matthew's history say about Milwaukee? Segregation.