



### A Brief History of St. Peter's Church

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was no church in T.M.R. The possibility of having church services and a Sunday school were first discussed by mothers and daughters at teas, and later at evening gatherings which included husbands and fathers. About seven families were involved. The meetings were very ecumenical including Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and other denominations. In 1920 the closest churches were in Outremont and St. Laurent, a great distance away for Town residents. The first services were held in private homes, led by an Anglican priest, Reverend Horace Lindsey, who conducted a couple of services but then was transferred. It was evident that more space and a central location were needed.

A year later, in 1921, the congregation used a classroom at Carlyle School and Reverend F.W. Poland was given T.M.R. as one of his responsibilities. The first official service of St. Peter's was held on October 9th, 1921.

In 1923 the restless congregation bought a parcel of land on Sherwood Crescent next to the present-day library, and in February 1924 the new church held its introductory service. Due to increasing growth and interest, Bishop Farthing appointed Reverend Poland as the full-time incumbent. He remained at St Peter's until his retirement in 1933 and died four years later. This fact is commemorated in an inscription on the side of the present altar, which reads, "Beneath this Altar lies the earthly remains of Frederick William Poland, Priest, First Incumbent of this Parish, Born 1859 – 1937, R.I.P."

However, by the mid thirties, the Congregation and Sunday School were growing too large for this small church. St. Peter's made a strategic decision to sell two lots on Sherwood Crescent and bought the property on Laird Blvd (approx 40 000 square feet). Sadly, the purchase of the property coincided with the outbreak of World War II and some felt this was not the time to undertake another financial campaign. However, much planning for a new church had already taken place and so work on the building started in May 1940 and was formally dedicated on Wednesday evening October 16<sup>th</sup> 1940.

When the contract was awarded to A.F. Byers and Co. Ltd for the amount of \$50 000.00 (1940 dollars) and the work was completed, a credit of \$25.00 remained from the original \$50.000.00. Overruns were avoided through diligent planning and constant supervision of the work by the Church Corporation.

This magnificent edifice was constructed in the style of an Early English Gothic Parish Church, with a Norman-style bell tower rising 58 feet above ground level. Pointed arches over doors and windows mark this style of architecture. The windows are of the lancet type, grouped in pairs between the buttresses except the end window of the nave, which is triple light lancet window fourteen feet high. A Rose window, seven feet in diameter, was placed in the end wall of the chancel above the altar, the design consisting of three large cinquefoils, or five leaved openings and three circular openings. The roof is open to the peak, the solid British Columbian roof trusses being exposed to view from the nave and chancel. The outer walls are mostly Quebec gray stone and various other types added for pleasing aesthetic results.

The service for the "Laying of the Foundation Stone", Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> 1940, opened with the hymn "The Church's One Foundation" and closed with "We Love the Place, O God" Obviously it was a joyous occasion, marking a new stage in the history of St. Peter's Parish.

Again the founding members through prayer, perseverance and financial giving were able to raise funds for construction of Memorial Hall in 1949 totaling 5000 square feet and occupying three floors. It was immediately used for the library, Sunday School, Ladies' Guilds, Women's Auxiliary, Men's Club, Choir and other ministries necessary for the well being of the Congregation.

In the 1950s, a new Cassavant pipe organ was installed – no doubt the philosophy was tht a singing congregation and teaching pulpit would be a winning combination. It has served us well ever since.

The decade of the fifties was a great time for church attendance in North America, and T.M.R. was no exception with a major building boom taking place in our community. In 1951 Memorial Hall was added, and in 1960-61, a further expansion was completed including the South Porch to Churchill Avenue, Sacristy, Rector's Study, Athabasca Room, kitchen and basement below.

The Quiet Revolution of 1960s in Quebec saw a rejection of institutional Faith by many young people – materialism, secularism, and to a lesser extent nationalism emerged as a feeble alternative to worship. The mid sixties revealed an ominous sign that the number of people attending churches decreased and St. Peter's was among them. The late 1970s saw the purchase of the Rectory on Palmerston Avenue.

For financial reasons, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we sold Memorial Hall as the Church could not afford the extensive repairs it required (totalling over \$200 000.00).

We are a gifted congregation with a Church and Rectory free of mortgage but like most churches we have financial responsibilities which are difficult to meet, but hopefully, not impossible with the sale of Memorial Hall.

Our predecessors set the standards and today we the congregation are all caretakers of St Peter's - so that present and future generations will have a safe, secure, sanctuary where one may enter, rest, and pray.

Robert M. Gordon

Chair of the Heritage Committee