

Important Dates in the History of Grace United Church

1840: German Evangelical Association preachers on horseback reach the Tavistock area, having established churches in Kitchener the year before. About this time a church is established near Tavistock at Balaclava. Some called this the Ratz Church. Members of this congregation later established East Zorra, Lingelbach, Sebringville, South Easthope, and Tavistock.

1848: Henry Eckstein builds a hotel at the five corners.

1857: The coming of the railroad brings industry and a rise in the population.

1860: The Presbyterians erect a log structure on lot 30 10th line of East Zorra for a place to worship. In 1874 they move to the present location of the 10th line. This church is called Burns Church. The congregations become a two point charge with Brooksdale until 1920 when Burns is connected to Tavistock.

1862: A Methodist minister, Rev. Elsworth prepares a site to hold camp meetings at the top of a hill north of the Trout Creek (Harmony). In 1864 a small frame church is built on Lot 1, concession 7 of Downie Township on land donated by a Mr. Dunsmore. The red brick church in Harmony is built in 1874.

1865: A wonderful revival is held near Lingelbach. Out of it results the formation of two classes, one in North Easthope and in South Easthope.

1865: A "class" of thirty members meets in Tavistock. William Morlock was the class leader. The "class" formed was one of eleven classes in the Sebringville district. The first trustees are elected in 1869 and erection of a church is given consideration. In 1870, the first church building, a frame structure, is erected. The Stratford Weekly Beacon reports, "The new handsome church recently erected in this village by the Wesley Evangelical Denomination was opened on Sunday last. On Monday evening, the Rev. Preston delivered a lecture on 'The History of Methodism'."

1874: The South Easthope Church is built though stationing had been present since 1870. The Church is first known as Salem Methodist Church (later EUB). A Sunday School had been organized at Ratz Church in 1850. South Easthope and Tavistock formed Tavistock Mission in 1870. In 1909, SEH is taken from Tavistock and added to Lingelbach to form a circuit. South Easthope and Lingelbach were one charge until 1938 when South Easthope and Zion Tavistock were made a charge.

1878: A student missionary, Mr. Fleming is sent into the Tavistock area to minister to the Scottish settlers. Services were held in the hall over the sheds of Loth's Hotel (NW corner of Woodstock St. N. and Hope St. W.). There were about twelve adherents.

1882: Tavistock first listed with the Presbyterian Church. John Stewart was minister and attended to both North Easthope and Tavistock. The Presbyterian Congregation in Tavistock rented from the Baptist Church (the Board of Trade Building) for afternoon services until their own church was built (in 1892).

1886: Harmony becomes part of a three point Methodist circuit with Harrington and Maplewood.

1892: The Presbyterians open their new church. Rev. Pyke is the pastor.

1892: A Union Service is held in Tavistock German Methodist Church with Messrs Otto, Pyke, and Krupp.

1904: The Tavistock Evangelical Association congregation build a new brick church.

1911: Zorra added to Tavistock circuit.

1919: Burns and Tavistock Presbyterian churches are on the same charge again.

1922: The East Zorra congregation amalgamates with the Tavistock congregation.

January 1925: Knox Presbyterian holds vote regarding union. 101 members voted, 75 for and 26 against. 32 members abstained. Knox became Knox United Church. Burns votes remain with the Presbyterian Church as does North Easthope.

1925: Tavistock asks conference to place Harmony, a former Methodist church, as a two-point charge. Conference approves. The charge is then in Perth Presbytery, London Conference.

1946: The Evangelical United Brethren Church is formed by a union of the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ (an American denomination).

1953: Zion and Knox held union services for the summer.

1960: Knox appoints a committee to try to bring the two congregations of Knox and Zion closer together.

1967: The Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren passes a motion to join the United Church, effective January 1, 1968. More than 1100 people crowd into Zion United Church in Kitchener to witness the consummation of union between the Canada Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the United Church of Canada. Harry Roppel attends the dinner and service as the lay delegate for Zion United Church in Tavistock. He is accompanied by Mrs. Roppel. Rev. Siebert and Mr. and Mrs. James Sitler also attend. Bishop Paul Herrick of Dayton says, "We rejoice tonight in a partial mending of the broken body of Christ."

Zion Church in Tavistock becomes Zion United Church and Tavistock in effect has two United Churches. Presbytery suggests that Lingelbach church be aligned with the Tavistock Churches.

September 1, 1969: Zion United, Knox United, South Easthope United, and Harmony United become one-Grace United Church.

Rev. James Warden serves as minister until November 29, 1970.

Gathered by Paul Bartlett