

And today?

Today man's religious search for meaning also takes place outside the traditional structures of the church. As a result, St. Matthew's sees itself more and more as a church in the middle of a busy urban center. It has remained a congregational parish, but opens its rooms as well for the offerings of a City Church. Here one can visit traditional reformed worship service but also art exhibits, theatre, concerts and lectures. Here you are invited to sing with your children, to find peace through meditation or simply to look around and enjoy the quietness. The church is open daily Monday through Friday

Our St. Matthew's Church lives from the people, who are in it, who participate and are active in its programs. If you would like to be a part of our community, you are most welcome!



Exhibit "Plants, trees and fruits of the Bible"

Reformierte Kirche Stadt Luzern – Citykirche Matthäus

Sekretariat, Morgartenstrasse 16, 6003 Luzern

T 041 227 83 21 | sekretariat.stadt Luzern@lu.ref.ch | www.refstadt Luzern.ch

St. Matthew's Church Lucerne

English

The History of St. Matthew's Church

After repeated attempts at reformation, all of which had been suppressed, it wasn't until the 19th century that a protestant-reformed parish could be formed in Lucerne. The King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III and the cantons of Zurich and Berne each contributed a precious chalice as gifts at the founding of the parish in 1827. After that, both German and English visitors repeatedly urged the new parish to build a church building. The owner of the Hotel Schweizerhof next door finally provided appropriate land on which to build St. Matthew's church and the process was set in motion.

On 30th January 1860 the corner stone of the first protestant church in central Switzerland was laid. The well-known Zurich architect Ferdinand Stadler designed a three-naved, neo-Gothic basilica based on an English model.

On 29th September 1861 St. Matthew's Church was dedicated.

Financing was a big problem for the then small protestant community. With the help of donations from all over Switzerland however, the construction could be started. In the side windows the coats of arms of twenty-two cantons are a reminder of this collective Swiss assistance.



Steel engraving by Huber, approx. 1864

The building's foundation rests on a grid of oak beams that is placed on rows of pillars, rammed into the earth.

In the years 1951/ 52 the interior went through a substantial renovation and many of the original design elements were removed. The baptismal font and the wrought-iron chandelier have disappeared.

In 1991 a renovation of the church's exterior was carried out, followed in 2005 by an extensive renovation of the interior.

Brief Tour of the Church

At the outside entrance a sandstone **relief** commemorates Lucerne's reformer and humanist Oswald Geisshüsler (1488-1552), also known as Myconius who was rector of the Hofschule in Lucerne. Being a friend of Zwingli's, he supported progressive ideas, which led to his dismissal in Lucerne. He then went to the Fraumünsterschule in Zurich. After Zwingli's death in 1532 he assumed the office of the „Antiste“, the chairperson of the parish council, and of the „Münsterpfarrer“, the Rector of the Minster in Basle, where he died in 1552.

With the interior renovation in 2005, the main entrance to the church was redesigned as an enclosed, multifunctional narthex. The organ gallery above the narthex is directly accessible from this room. The Lucerne artist Johanna Näf developed an artistic design for the glazing of this anteroom that creates a dialogue with the opposing choir window.



The large **stained-glass window** in the choir shows the four evangelists with their symbols. From left to right: St. Luke with the bull, St. Mark with the lion, St. Matthew with the angel and St. John with the eagle.

The windows of St. Matthew's carry twenty-two cantons' **coats of arms**. This oldest reformed church in central Switzerland is a symbol of national protestant, even ecumenical solidarity. The governments of these cantons as well as churches and private persons from all over Switzerland contributed to the financing of the church building.

The pews, installed during the interior renovation of 1951, were replaced by chairs in 2005 to facilitate a more flexible use of the whole space.

Queen Victoria

From the beginning, the church had not only been religious home to the approximately one thousand protestant-reformed Christians of the Lucerne area but to numerous foreign guests and tourists as well. Services were regularly held in French and English. For the holiday stay of **Queen Victoria in the summer of 1868** some modifications of the furnishings had to be carried out. The wooden pew, specially upholstered for the queen, has not been preserved. The church's tower bells, however, that could be acquired shortly thereafter thanks to her and other donators' contributions, have. The four **bells** are tuned to e', g', h' and e and were cast in 1869 by the Jakob Keller Bell Foundry in Zurich.

The **organ** in its colourfully decorated case, stands on the gallery at the rear wall. It was built in 1971 by the organ builders J. Neidhart and G. Lhôte from St. Martin, Neuchâtel. It has 39 stops, distributed over three manuals and pedals and is conceived and voiced in neo-baroque style. In 2006 the organ underwent a thorough technical and tonal revision, carried out by the well-known Metzler Organ Builders from Dietikon.



Richard Wagner: A Wedding and a Christening

Even before 1860 Richard Wagner had lived in the Hotel Schweizerhof for a longer period of time and had worked there on his opera „Tristan and Isolde“. A move to the country estate „Am Rhyn“ at Tribschen, provided him and Cosima von Bülow a new, quiet place for their work and their family. The birth of Siegfried on 6th June 1869 caused Cosima to ask her husband Hans von Bülow for a divorce. On 25th August 1870 Cosima and Richard Wagner were married by Reverend Johann Tschudi in St. Matthew's church; Siegfried's christening took place in the church on 4th September 1870. King Ludwig II of Bavaria and Countess Caroline Waldbott-Bassenheim were recorded as witnesses to the christening. However, the king was not present in person.