

Bridgeland Walks Self Guided #7 Churches

Bridgeland - Riverside has without a doubt, the largest number and variety of places of worship of any community in Calgary. From its earliest days, Bridgeland and Riverside were home to immigrants from many different countries who worshipped in a variety of religious settings in the language of their home countries. The church was central to the lives of the people; a place where they could continue with cultural traditions and freely speak in their mother tongue. Some of these churches have created the iconic skyline of our community, from the red neon cross atop the steep spire to the onion domed roof tops of the Orthodox faith.

To prepare the facts for this walk we researched and are indebted to Marlene Michel and her book 'Usu Leut, Our People: an historic look at the Germans from Russia Living in Bridgeland/Riverside', Crystal Mackenzie and her blog 'Churches of Bridgeland', information from Calgary's Inventory of Heritage resources and Harry Sanders book 'Historic Walks of Calgary'. Websites from several churches were accessed to provide detailed information on their history. If you have further or clarifying information about any of these 'places of worship' please contact bridgelandwalks@gmail.com with the details.

This is a big walk and the descriptions of the places of worship are extensive, so you may wish to plan a break at the halfway point.

The walking route follows smooth, mostly flat sidewalks. After stop #11, there is a choice.....

Route A up the long stairway of the North escarpment and the Renfrew Community to see two churches that were originally considered to be in Bridgeland for a total walk of 6.4 kilometers, or...

Route B a flatter route which rejoins our "pilgrimage!" at stop #14 for a total walk of 5.5 kilometers.

[Start from the Community Centre at 917 Centre Ave.](#)

There are often congregations who meet at the Community Centre – currently the Ahmadiyya prayer group, Diamond Way Buddhist Meditation and Renfrew United Church people worship here.

[Cross to the North side and proceed East on Centre Ave as far as 12 Street. Cross the street and turn right to walk past the school and as far as the pink coloured building.](#)

Stop #1. Seventh Day Adventist Church

The congregation came into being in 1907 with 23 members, mostly German speakers who organized a church, originally on 8A St. Over the years many others immigrated from all over the world, increasing the membership till a larger

building was needed. Land was acquired on 12 St at the bottom of Tom Campbell Hill and construction began in 1994. For numerous years a Day care was located in the church. The Sabbath for this denomination is Saturday when the church is busy with worshippers who come from all over the city.

Return North and cross 12 St at McDougall Rd. to the South sidewalk and proceed West along McDougall Rd as far as 11 St. Turn South and walk to the end of the street at the Rehab Society building.

Stop #2. The **Peniel Glorious Destiny Church** worships here on Sundays. Most of the members have come from Eritrea.

Go to the South side of the building and turn right, following the sidewalk next to Memorial Drive till you reach the CTrain station. Turn right and proceed North along 9 St to McDougall Road and cross to the NW corner. Take the path past the Murdoch Rain garden, through the park. It winds past the soccer field and up to the top of the lower escarpment at 7A St. Continue West along the escarpment sidewalk and you'll see the tall stately red brick church ahead. In the area of the parking lot there was another church – originally Zion United Church and then a Pentecostal church that was torn down in the 1980's.

Stop #3. St Matthew Church

This is a Lutheran church that to this day has services conducted in both the German language and English. However it was originally a Moravian church, built in 1912 in the Gothic Revival style. During world war 1 church services, originally held entirely in the German language had to be curtailed as a result of tensions in Calgary. In 1945 due to changing numbers in their congregations the Moravians exchanged buildings with the Jehovah Lutheran Church (see stop #4). With post war immigration, the Lutheran congregation swelled and the parish prospered. A carillon bell was installed in 1956 and the red neon cross was added in 1958. Members voted to change the name to St. Matthew in 1960 as the original name was deemed to be vague and confusing. This church building is on the city's Inventory of Heritage Resources and is a Calgary registered historic site (check out the plaque). In 2013 St. Matthew celebrated its Centennial and in 2017 there was recognition of 500 years since Martin Luther separated from the Catholic Church and started a new denomination – a time known as the Reformation.

Continue West along the escarpment pathway and turn North when you reach 6A St. Stop at the corner of 6A St and Centre Ave. See the building that is now a residence on the SE corner.

Stop #4. Constructed in 1920, this is the site of the original **Jehovah Lutheran Church**. When the Lutheran congregation grew and the Moravian church dwindled, they did an exchange and this smaller building became a Moravian church. In the 1970's with other Moravian churches built elsewhere in the city this small church was sold to the Korean Baptist or United church in 1977. It

became a residence in 2004. The church cross still sits atop the steeple on this building.

Walk North on 6A St till you reach 1st Ave and cross to the North side.

Stop #5. This is currently the home of the **Grace Calvary** church but for most of its life it was the site of **St John's Evangelical Lutheran** church. The first building for this denomination was constructed in 1909. Additions were made over the years to accommodate a growing population and in the late 1960's a brand new church – the one that you see today, was built. You'll see a plaque on a rock at the front, commemorating the Germans from Russia who came to Bridgeland and Riverside in large numbers starting in 1891 and who started many of the early churches here. Due to a dwindling congregation, St John's was sold in 2018 and the Grace Calvary church has carried on.

Walk West on 1 Ave to 6 St. where you'll see the Buddhist Temple on the NW corner

Stop #6 Calgary Buddhist Temple

This was originally the site of **St Stephen's Ukrainian Catholic** church. Originally located in Tuxedo Park, the building was moved to the 6 St location in 1926. A fire in 1942 badly damaged the church but it was repaired. The parish grew with a post World War 2 influx of refugees. A source of pride was the youth group whose float entry in the 1952 Stampede Parade won first place in the New Canadian or ethnic class. In the late 1950's the Ukrainian congregation moved to a new church in a prominent location at the top of the escarpment on 6 St at 7Ave. Then **Our Lady Queen of Poland** Catholic congregation worshipped here until they built a new larger church and moved in 1968. The Croatian Catholic congregation of **Our Lady Queen of Mercy** occupied the church, until they too outgrew the space. The building was purchased in 1981 and became the **Calgary Buddhist Temple**. Extensive renovations were completed in 2015 and it now very much has the appearance of a temple.

Walk across 1 Ave Southward at the cross walk and walk along 6 St, down the hill and turn right on Meredith Rd and proceed West across Edmonton Trail, cross 4 St and continue West and up the hill on Meredith Rd. Currently this West side of 4 Street is part of Crescent Heights community. However for much of the last 100+ years, this area was considered Riverside and the presence of churches which originate with European immigrants attests to this connection.

Stop #7 St Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The first service of Orthodox Ukrainians in Calgary was held in a private home in 1928 and this continued until 1938 when the congregation purchased this land and built a small church in this prominent location overlooking the Bow River and Calgary's downtown. In 1976, an electrical fire started in the interior, with

significant damage to important features of the church and to their book collection. Work was completed on a new modern building next door that became the Ukrainian Cultural Centre. The subsequent replacement and updating of the Orthodox church was a challenge, especially finding skilled carpenters able to build in the Byzantine Revival style. Topped with five copper domes there are also 62 custom-made windows and a rose shaped stained glass window facing Memorial Drive. The final part of the church to be completed was in 1994, when the iconostasis was finally put into place. This is a very important part of the Orthodox Church as it separates the sanctuary from the rest of the space. The interior of the church is very beautiful. Attached to the church is the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, which features an extensive library and a museum which offers tours. There is also a Day Care called Sadochok where the Ukrainian language is spoken with the children.

Return down Meredith to 4 St and walk North as far as Marsh Rd.

Stop #8 Immanuel Lutheran Church

This was the first German language church to be built in Calgary in 1903. Located on 4th Street in Riverside, home to a large number of Germans from Russia, the area was informally known as Germantown. By 1910 there were 100 members of the church, a school, and a German teacher. The Calgary School Board forced the school to close and the children to go to the new nearby Riverside Elementary School. Subsequent to 1912 there was dissent among Immanuel Church members and in 1913 a group split off to start St. Paul's Lutheran Church which lasted less than a decade as its own church. The church which appears very much as it did in years past operates today as the Riverside congregation.

Continue North along 4 Street and cross 1st Ave...

*** You're about halfway along our self guided walk and if you want to take a break now, you have your choice of several food establishments. Stay on this side of the road to enjoy Chinese /Thai food at Spicy Hut or Mediterranean food at Shawarame Ave. Cross 1 Ave to Lukes Drug Mart for a cup of good coffee / ice cream/ other snack, or stop for a meal at the Ville Firenze Italian restaurant.*

Continue North on 4 St on the West side of the street till you reach the corner with 3 Ave. – 313 4 St where you will see the Hindu temple

Stop #9. The Hindu temple

The temple is known as Iskcon Calgary, Radha Madhava Cultural Association; and was founded in the early 80's. The temple welcomes visitors to come to the Sunday Feast and enjoy a vegetarian banquet and talks from Bhagavad Gita, plays, films and music. The site was previously home to the Giovanni Caboto Lodge and the Polish Alliance of Calgary.

Return South to the crosswalk at 2 Ave and cross both 4 St and Edmonton Trail. Turn left and you'll see a small building on the North side of 2 Ave

Stop #10. This former Knights of Columbus building was part of the nearby Catholic church but more recently has had different denominations who worship here.

Proceed North on Edmonton Trail and when you reach the access to the next church turn right and proceed into the parking area.

Stop #11. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church

Originally this was an Italian speaking church that was the centre of worship for the many Italians who lived in Bridgeland - Riverside. With migration of Italians to the suburbs in past years it has become a Chinese speaking Roman Catholic church that hosts one Sunday mass in English.

Continue ahead and to the left and you'll see a lovely grotto setting

Continue around the corner and to the North side and exit onto 4 Ave. Turn right and walk along the South side of 4 Ave as far as 6 St.

This next section – Route A involves a left turn onto 6 St and then up the long stairway to 7 Ave. Once there you'll visit 2 different churches and then descend the escarpment via another staircase and a small lane.... or

Route B - If you wish to bypass this steep section continue on 4 Ave as far as 8 St, turn right and walk one block to 2 Ave. Go to Stop # 14

Stop #12. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic

As mentioned at stop #6 the Ukrainian Catholic Church's first Bridgeland location was on 6 St at 1 Ave. Plans commenced in the 1950's for a larger building on land that was obtained not far from the 1 Avenue church, on the top of the escarpment at 6 St. In the late 50's construction on the main structure of the new church began, following a Ukrainian-Byzantine style. The first mass was conducted on Christmas day 1958. It took a few more years till 1967, to install the iconostasis, an important feature that separates the sanctuary from the rest of the church. The painting of the iconography in the interior of the church commenced in 1996 and was completed in 2000. The church is not open to the general public, but there are occasions – such as the annual perogy supper – when tours are conducted and you can see the amazing beauty of the building's interior. A choir area is on the second level. Singing in this church is traditionally unaccompanied. The church is a significant landmark for North Calgary.

Head North and turn right at 7 Ave and proceed as far as 8 St. Turn left and you will see the next church nearby.

Stop #13. All Saints Russian Orthodox

The Orthodox parish of All Saints was founded in 1930 and initially, services were offered in a Protestant church. On land donated by a parish family, a temple was constructed and services began in 1934. Parish life with regular spiritual activities was established and was supplemented by cultural and

educational activities, including the opening of a library, which contained many books. After world war 2 and the arrival of a wave of refugees, the space proved to be too small. In 1953, the Temple was greatly expanded, and a bell-house was built. There followed a period of prosperity and cultural life of the Russian Church in the city of Calgary. With further growth, it was decided to build a new temple and this was completed in 1962. The parish flourished and the choir was organized and became so good that they gave several concerts on the local radio. The Circle Theatre staged many plays by famous Russian playwrights and the library functioned well. In the lower hall a Saturday school for children took place for those who wanted to learn the Russian language, history, geography, and Russian literature. To this day there is a training programme on Russian language and Russian literature. As with other Orthodox churches the parish follows the Old Julian calendar.

Return to 7 Ave and take the nearby stairway down to Bridge Crescent. Walk as far as house# 854, cross the road, walk South, down the lane beside the apartment building to Drury Rd and turn right. Drury becomes 8 St and walk South till you reach 2 Ave.

Stop #14 St Michael's Eritrean Orthodox.

The building was originally owned by the Bridgeland Baptist Church who sold it in 1970's to the Chinese Alliance Church. Then for a period of time it was a traditional Catholic Church - Immaculate Heart of Mary. More recently the people of St Michael's Eritrean Orthodox Church worship here. People arrive here from all over the city, wearing traditional white shawls and leave their shoes at the door as part of their devotions. There is a story that the building was once a theatre but definitive proof of this has not been found.

Walk one block East on 2 Ave to 8A St.- SW and SE corners

Stop #15. Centre Street Church - Bridgeland Campus

This has been the site of an evangelical church for many years. Originally Salem Evangelical Church was located here in the 1930's and apparently it was people from this church who originally spawned the Centre St Church. For a period in the 1980s-90's it was known as Gateway International Church and more recently the Bridgeland Campus of the Centre Street has worshipped here. It is not known when this current church building was constructed.

Stop #16. True Jesus Church

This location was originally the **Zion Lutheran** church which dissolved in 1918, with many members joining **St John's Lutheran** church (stop #5) . The building was the first location of the **Bridgeland Seventh Day Adventist** church and then the **Bridgeland Baptist Fellowship**. **St Gabriel's Ethiopian Orthodox** church occupied the space for many years - drums and singing often could be heard emanating from the hall. They moved on to a larger location a few years ago and now the **True Jesus Church**, a Chinese speaking Evangelical congregation worships here on their Sabbath which is on Saturdays.

Walk two blocks further East on 2 Ave....

Stop #17. Calgary Gospel of Grace Church

The first church here was **Ebenezer German Congregationalist** congregation which was established in 1911 and originally met in the home of the Hildermanns until the church was built in 1913. In 1925 as part of amalgamation, they became a part of the **United Church of Canada**. With diminishing numbers here in ensuing years, Ebenezer and the Renfrew United Church shared a pastor and talks began for the two to unite. By 1961 the church was closed and sold in 1962. The **Calgary Chinese Gospel of Grace Church** has been here for many years and have done a good job in maintaining their congregation and their modest heritage building.

Walk one block further East to 10 St....

Stop #18. Bridges Pentecostal Church

This site was originally the location of the 2 storey Bridgeland Cottage School that provided education to many children who lived in this area. It was torn down in the late 1970's. Bridges Pentecostal church was built and has conducted services here since the early 1980's.

This is end of the Churches Self Guided tour.... walk South on 10 St as far as Centre Ave and turn left and return to the BRCA Hall at 9 St.

We hope you have enjoyed your extensive walk/pilgrimage through our community!