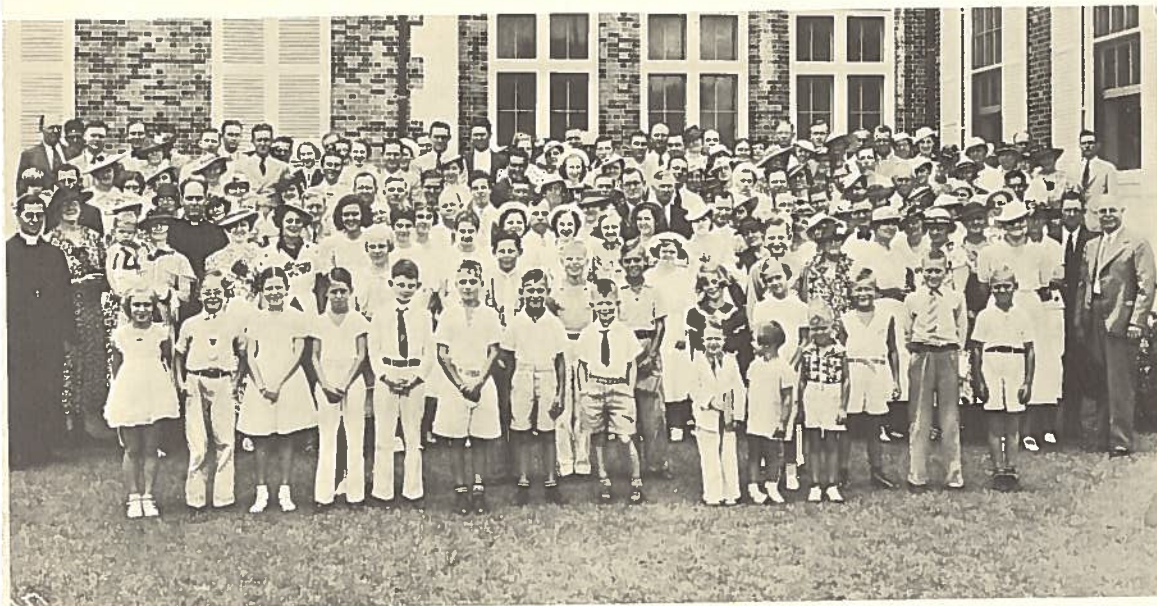


FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH

1936-1966

A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE





First Anniversary: 1937.



Pastor Fred W. Kern Breaks Ground

HOW WE STARTED

On a hot July evening in 1936, a small group of stout-hearted men and women held a public worship service, using the facilities of the First Congregational Church. A week later—July 19—the small band assembled again, and this time voted to organize itself into a Lutheran congregation. A constitution was read and adopted, and the charter membership list, to be held open for ninety days, was signed by thirty persons. Less than a week later the congregation was chartered by the State of Texas. Even before the First English Lutheran Church—so named because it was the first Lutheran congregation in Austin to use the English language exclusively—had a pastor, it had a Sunday School, organized on July 26, 1936.

On August 1, Pastor Fred W. Kern accepted the call to the infant church and, with his wife, moved to Austin on September 8. Three months later he was formally installed by Dr. John F. Seibert of the staff of the Board of American Missions. In order to have Sunday School and worship service unified, services were moved from First Congregational Church to the building owned by the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs; a year later services were moved to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Not surprisingly, the women of the congregation organized themselves before the men did—on October 26; the men became a formal organization the following February, and the youth organized some two months later.

Under the capable and energetic leadership of Pastor Kern, the congregation moved fast. The first great need—members—was being met. In spite of

what is recorded as an “overly cold night,” the six-month-old congregation held its first annual business meeting on January 21, 1937, with 115 present. The second great need began to be fulfilled when the Building Fund drive opened on January 1, 1937.

What the devotion and tireless efforts of a pastor and his people accomplished within the first four years is eloquently attested to by the following dates and figures. Read them with pride and gratitude!

Accessions (including Children and Infant Baptisms)

1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40	Total
156	124	102	87	469

Building Progress

August 30, 1937—Property at Whitis and 30th Street purchased, financed by personal loans of members. Purchase price: \$3,600.

September 25—Men of the church meet to clear the property of trees, brush, and brambles. Biggest discouragement: red bugs.

October 5—Architect Arthur Fehr submits floor plan of the proposed church to the vestry.

January 21, 1938—Congregation approves floor plan and instructs architect to proceed with working plans.

March 13—Congregation applies to Board of American Missions for Church Extension loan.

September 25—Board of American Missions agrees to lend congregation \$12,500 on a mortgage without interest provided the congregation secure

locally a loan for a matching amount. Congregation accepts Board’s offer.

November 27—Congregation votes to raise local mortgage to \$15,000.

January 8, 1939—Contract for building awarded. Total contract: \$27,849.

January 22—Ground broken for new building.

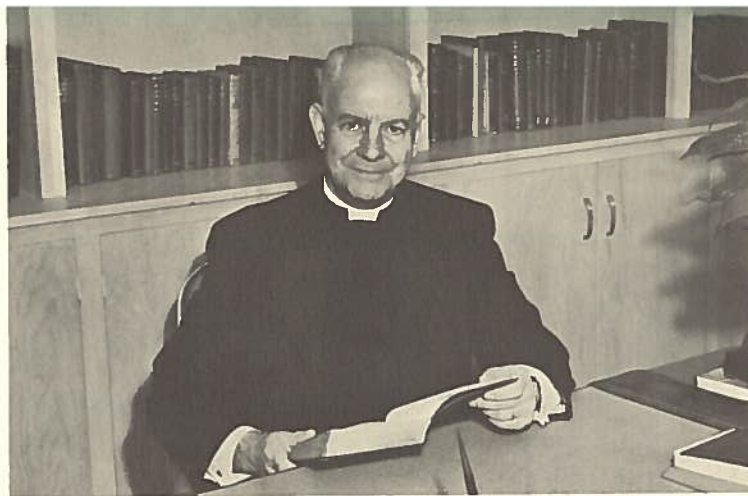
January 23—Construction begins.

April 9 (Easter)—Cornerstone, a simple stone slab, is laid.



The New Church Completed.

Dr. Lewis P. Speaker.



May 7—Congregation votes an additional \$5,000 for air-conditioning. First English will become the first air-conditioned church in Austin, if not in all Texas.

September 24—First English Lutheran Church, built of Austin cutstone in modified Spanish Mission style, is dedicated. Capacity: 340.

In October of 1942, Pastor Kern joined the chaplaincy of the armed forces, and First English experienced a pastoral vacancy for nearly a year.

GROWING PAINS

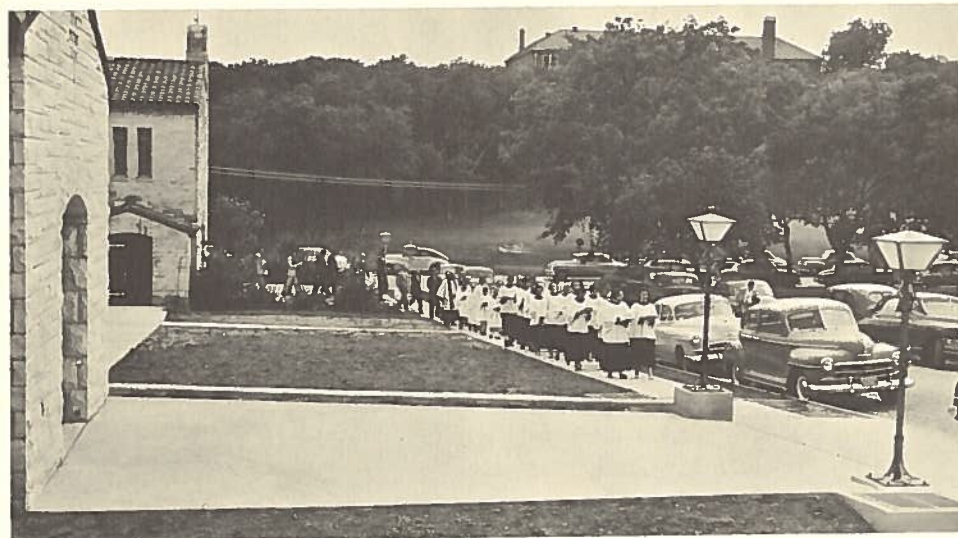
The second pastor to be called was Dr. Lewis Speaker, who came from First English Lutheran Church of Columbus, Ohio, with his wife and young daughter, Lucy Lee, in July, 1943. By 1950 the congregation had paid off all its indebtedness, had reached 536 in number, and was literally unable to contain itself. Expansion was obviously the only solution.

Thanks to the foresight and generosity of two charter members, who in 1938 had bought and personally held four lots each east of the church property, and to the later generosity of a small group of members who bought and donated three lots north of the property, First English had somewhere to go. And it was in a hurry to get there.

In the fall of 1952 work was begun on the Parish Hall. It was dedicated in May of 1953, at a total cost of \$129,000, of which \$59,000 had been raised in cash. The wisdom of the expansion was clear for all



Parish Hall under Construction



and Dedicated.

to see. That year First English employed Miss Billie Grace Ungerer (now Mrs. Jim Herring) as its first full-time assistant, a post she held for two and a half years. By 1956 the baptized membership had reached 800. In 1955 the theological internship program was begun, and three vicars—Arlyn Hausmann, Terrance O. Michael, and Kenneth Schroeder—served the congregation for a year each.

With the resignation of Dr. Speaker in 1963, First English was again without a pastor for nine months. In November Pastor Merle G. Franke, on the staff of the Board of American Missions, was called to the pastorate. He accepted the call but needed some months to bring to completion his work with the Board. In April of 1964 he arrived with his wife and their ebullient family of five—Becky, Jim, Stephen, Gwen, and Kris. Pastor Franke put his shoulder to the wheel the day he arrived and hasn't budged since.

THIRTY YEARS OF CHANGE

The period covered by this abridged history has seemed long to some, short to others. But no people in history have ever been called upon to accept within a comparable span anything that even approaches the scope of change that has taken place in these three decades. Many of our members who were babes or school-agers in 1936 are today established business or professional men, with babes and school-agers of their own. In 1936 none of us had seen a TV program, nor a ball-point pen. Chicken was high and bacon cheap. Einstein's theory of relativity, which has made it possible to put men into orbit, was



Pastor Merle G. Franke.

known to few and accepted by fewer. Nobody—not even President Roosevelt—had heard of an atomic bomb, and few people had enough income to be troubled by the IRS. (Could you guess the first annual budget voted by our congregation? Exactly \$2,-193.70!) In that year few people bothered to differentiate between the terms *integration* and *segregation*, let alone question the practice. Practically nobody had heard a live symphony, nylons had just hit the market, and wigs were an item of strictly historical interest. Except for First English and Honeywell, air-conditioning was almost on a par with the

theory of relativity, and owning two automobiles was considered as vulgar a display of wealth as a toothy smile to show gold inlays. But times did change, and willing or reluctant, we changed, too.

WHICH WAY NOW?

It is impossible to escape the conviction that First English occupies a unique position as a church. Its very location—the closest Lutheran church to the University—which in 1936 enrolled 8,488 students and in 1966 had 26,230—imposes an obligation to minister to transients, students and faculty alike. This fact alone has helped to mold the character of our church, to change it from a neighborhood church to an urban church. Nor is that all. Bergstrom also has provided us with many earnest workers from time to time—here today, gone tomorrow, giving and receiving blessing. But perhaps the greatest factor in our changing image is the almost incredible fact of population mobility. American families move at a rate undreamed of a few years ago. From a population of 74,006 in 1936, Austin has grown to 225,000 (the Chamber of Commerce says this is underestimated), and in the *first quarter alone* of this year, building permits in Austin totaled \$23 million, mostly for apartment construction. Builders are economic watchdogs who build for people and for profit, not for fun. People are here and more are coming.

And yet it is a fact that our church membership has declined in the last few years, owing to such factors as transiency, mobility, personal friction, and attrition. Despite this gloomy statistic, however, the

prospects are wonderful. Consider these facts: our membership roll is realistic, pared to those who are really members, not faceless names of those who no longer claim us; on Holy Thursday of this year, 240 persons took Communion, the largest number on record; the face of our congregation is becoming a young face; enthusiasm and loyalty are high; we have the extreme good fortune to be led by a man of deep conviction and endless vitality. These form an unbeatable combination if we use it.

Use it how? To tow our honored past like an unwilling barge or use it as a springboard for yet bet-



Without People, just a Building

ter things? First English is no longer a fledgling. It is a strong body, come to maturity through the grace of God and the efforts of many people. It has a job to do. Recognizing that our church is strategically located in a tightly compressed population area is to recognize that we have a particular and peculiar role in spiritual and human affairs, a role considerably different from that of other Lutheran churches in Austin: to serve the permanent *and* the transient.

God does indeed move in a mysterious way. Shortly after his arrival, Pastor Franke had in his class of instruction a young couple from Houston, both of whom had belonged to different faiths. After confirmation they entered eagerly into all aspects of church life. For six months. At the end of that time they moved back to Houston. Six-month transients. A good investment of church time and money? Who can tell? A few weeks ago Pastor Franke received a letter from the young man. He wrote that he will wind up his business in Houston this summer and in the fall will enter our seminary in Chicago. And we all know that it is because of the ecumenical attitude of our congregation that Mike Megahan is entering the Lutheran ministry. And it is gratifying to mention that another new member, Vince Hedges, who just graduated from Texas Christian University, will enter seminary this fall.

Sometimes we do minister to angels unawares. Yet the chief role of the church is to minister to men, not angels, and the love of a congregation of Christian men and women, dedicated to the service of God because men are needful human beings, is exceeded only by the love of God Himself.

Our past is gone, but let us not forget it. Our fu-



Ready for the Future.

ture cannot be the same as our past—unless we were to ask that all progress cease. Our past is always the foundation—the future remains to be built. The workmanship and care and love that built our first thirty years will serve us well as we set about to construct the future, regardless of the shape and form that will evolve.

SOME THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Go placidly amid the noise * Haste, & remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly & clearly; and listen to others, even the dull & ignorant; they too have their story. * Avoid loud & aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain & bitter; for always there will be greater & lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. * Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity & disenchantment it is perennial as the grass. * Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue & loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. * You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees & the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. * Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors & aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. * With all its sham, drudgery & broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy. *

(Found in old Saint Paul's Anglican Church, Baltimore. Dated 1692)