

FIRST ENGLISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
89TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2025
HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT



First English Ev. Lutheran Church was founded on Sunday, July 19, 1936, and the nave and sanctuary were built in 1939. We have served with six pastors, 50 vicars/ interns, and numerous music directors, organists, youth ministers, education and faith formation directors, and child development center directors. We seek to be an inclusive and caring community of faith and service that invites, welcomes, connects, and transforms people from diverse areas of faith and life. We strive to share the Gospel of the risen Christ. We serve with neighbors, near and far, that all may know God's love and justice, peace and joy. ***God loves. We love. Everyone!***

1930's

1936	June 24	First meeting of founding members
	July 12	First worship service celebrated
	July 19	Congregation organized; Pastor Fred Kern called
1937	August 30	Purchase property at Whitis and 30 th
1938		Adjacent lots purchased
1939	January 22	Ground breaking ceremony
	May 7	\$7000 to install air conditioning, first in Austin
	September 24	Dedication of Nave and Sanctuary

1940's

1942	October 31	Pastor Kern resigns to serve in the US Military Chaplaincy
	July 15	Pastor Lewis Speaker begins call
1947	May	Additional lot added
1948		Brotherhood organized

1950's

1952	September 28	Parish Hall construction started
1953	May 3	Parish Hall dedicated
1956		Baptized membership reaches 800
1958		Vicar Internship Ministry started, Arlyn Hausman serves as first vicar

1960's

1961	July	25 th Anniversary celebrated
1962		Parish Hall air conditioning added
1963		Pastor Speaker retires
1964	April 15	Pastor Merle Franke begins call
1964		First Chicken BBQ
1968		Vicar Intern Ministry renewed

1970's

1972		Child Development Center opens as an outreach ministry
1974		Pipe Organ rebuilt
1977		First vicar intern couple: Kathy and Al Wicks
1978		FELC resettles Laotian and Vietnamese refugee families

1980's

1980		Budget reaches \$100,000
1982		Anna Johnson retires after 26 years as church secretary
1984	March 31	Pastor Franke resigns
	December 19	Pastor Robert Karli begins call
1985		Nave air conditioning replaced
		Vicar Intern Ministry renewed
		Members of FELC resettle Guatemalan refugee family
1986		Stephen Ministry begins
1986		50 th Anniversary celebrated

1988	January 1	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America formed
1989		Members of FELC resettle an Iranian refugee family through Global Refuge
1989		FELC becomes a Reconciling in Christ congregation

1990's

Long-range plan adopted for \$300,000 in improvements
 Covered ramp for parking lot entrances built
 Sanctuary lighting upgraded
 Sacristy remodeled to provide two accessible restrooms
 Trumpet stop added to pipe organ
 Sanctuary floor leveled
 FELC hosts music and arts events
 Baptized membership settles around 350

2000's

2007	October	Pastor Karli retires
2008	July 1	Pastor Michael Coffey begins call
2009		Nave and Sanctuary rewired; exterior stonework washed and tuckpointed
		First Oktoberfest

2010's

2011		75 th Anniversary celebrated with year-long observance
2012		Companion Café Wednesday night dinner ministry started
2015		Church basement floods; air conditioning components replaced Beginning of relationship with Dialogue Institute of the Southwest Beginning of relationship with Vision of Hope AME Church Young Adult outreach ministry begins
2016		Capital Campaign for campus improvement (inc. sound system)

	Chapel of the Saints and Columbarium dedicated
2017	FELC hosts Refugee Council USA prayer vigil
2019	New LED lighting installed in Nave/Sanctuary/Chapel

2020's & Beyond

2020	January	Strategic Outreach Plan developed
2020	March	COVID-19 pandemic leads to online worship and formation only
2020	December	Largest Christmas Eve worship attendance in FELC history, all online
2021		Upgrading and investment in digital technology
2021		FELC hosts first trans/non-binary vicar pastoral intern
2022		Nave, Sanctuary, Chapel, and Transept walls repaired and painted
2022	June	Synod bishop suspends FELC as an internship ministry site
2023	January	Pastor Coffey resigns call
2023	March	Covenant begins with Transitional Pastor, J. Mills
2023	May	Child Development Center ministry suspends operations
2023	June	Significant remodeling of Education CDC Wing and Fellowship Hall
2023	August	Child Development Center ministry resumes operations
2023	October	Transition Ministry Team formed
2023	November	Congregation engages in large and small gatherings for the transition
2024	January	Church Council does not renew covenant with transitional pastor
2024		Congregation strengthens commitment to benevolence ministry partners
2024		Enrollment in CDC rises and now includes infants
2024		FELC renews/begins engagement with Austin area music groups
2024		Front courtyard and grounds redesigned and restored
2024		Narthex doors refurbished & preparations made for refurbishing the Pipe Organ
2024		Council engages in team building trainings and organization for ministry
2024	June	Pastoral Call Committee formed and ministry documents approved
2024	July	Pastoral Call Committee begins process for candidate interviews

2024	September	Team, Committee, and Task Force groups begin renewal
2025	May 4	Congregation Meeting to call the Rev. Katie Rode as the sixth pastor
2025	June 9	Pastor Katie Rode begins her call

HISTORY OF VICARS / PASTORAL INTERNS

2022-2025		Pastoral transition ministry – no vicar
2022	50	Wes Isberner
2021		Covid19 pandemic - no vicar
2020	49	Kelsey Kresse
2016–18	48	Travis (Gould) Fitzgold (two-year, half-time vicar intern)
2014–16		Break from vicar ministry
2013	47	Kwame Pitts
2012	46	Alex LaChapelle
2011	45	Peder Hinderlie
2010	44	Carolyn Albert Donovan
2009	43	Rick Fry
2008	42	Rich Gates
2007		Pastoral transition ministry – no vicar
2006	41	Jordan Miller
2005	40	Laila Olson Barr
2004	39	Mary Seroczynski
2003	38	Amy Becker
2002	37	Trish Madden
2001	36	Kristen Koch
2000	35	Elaine Watsky
1999	34	Jason Wahlstrom
1998	33	Scott Chinberg
1997	32	Craig Sagebiel
1996	31	Elisa Brandt
1995	30	Joan Swander
1994	29	Steve Springer
1993	28	Greg Bouvier

1992	27	Chris Jones
1991	26	Michael Coffey
1990	25	Phil Witkop
1989	24	Marsha Houtman
1988	23	John Conrad
1987	22	Mike Mackey
1986	21	Jim Oschwald
1985	20	Melinda Wagner
1984		Pastoral transition ministry – no vicar
1983	19	Robert Wertz
1982	18	Beth-Marie Halverson
1981	17	Bobbie Blackburn
1980	16	Daniel Carlson
1979	15	David Olson
1978	14	Alan Wicks
1977	13	Kathy Wicks
1976	12	Robert Graff
1975	11	Wayne Harrison
1974	10	Robert Neubauer
1973	9	David Swenson
1972	8	Ralph Lien
1971	7	Craig Johnson
1970	6	Stephen Youngdahl
1969	5	Lee Dyer
1968	4	Paul Hansen
1961-67		Break from vicar ministry
1960	3	Kenneth Schroeder
1959	2	Terrance Michael
1958	1	Arlyn Hausman

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