

## 150 Years of Mission and Ministry

The bells will chime, the choir will sing, and the congregation will fill the air with singing as Emanuel's Lutheran Church at 10:30am Sunday, October 31, 2021 celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> (+1) anniversary.

A year-long celebration, meant to host monthly celebrations and fellowship gatherings, was rocked, just as the world was, by COVID and plans were stalled. However, the celebrations will be in full force as a weekend of festivities are set to begin Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup> with Emanuel's Lutheran Day School hosting its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Trunk-or-Treat in its parking lot on Mountain Street. Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, will feature an open house from 10am to 2pm, where the community is invited to tour the sanctuary and peruse a great collection of historical photos and artifacts. Various Emanuel's musicians, choirs, and player from the Mid-Texas Symphony will provide entertainment throughout the open house.

Then Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, will cap off the incredible weekend with fellowship and coffee under the Oak at 9am, the opening of the bicentennial time capsule and unveiling of the 150<sup>th</sup> banner at 9:45am, worship with Bishop Susan Briner of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at 10:30am, and a sausage luncheon on the lawn featuring the music of the Dirty River Jazz Band.

The roots of Emanuel's go deep into the history of the Seguin community. The earliest known Lutheran work in Texas dates to the 1840's when the Lutheran Synod of South Carolina sent the Scherer brothers to Texas to survey the missionary opportunities. They established a school and congregation in the Columbus area but did not affiliate with the soon-to-be Texas Synod. Beginning In 1851, the St. Chrischona Mission Institute of Basil Switzerland sent graduates to Texas and established congregations in several parts of Texas in the 1850's. This included a church near Seguin at a place named Hortontown or Neighborsville, just outside present New Braunfels. The St. Martin's Lutheran Church building on Loop 306 in New Braunfels was moved there during the centennial of the Texas Synod in 1951, as a monument honoring the early missionaries sent to Texas from St. Chrischona. It is possible that pastors from this congregation ministered in Seguin prior to the 1870 founding of Emanuel's. However, it was not until the latter part of 1869 that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod sent Pastor Johannes Wohlschlegel as a full-time missionary to the Seguin area. Pastor Wohlschlegel preached his first sermon for the Emanuel's congregation on Sunday, September 1, 1869 and under his direction, a small group of 19 families joined together and on the fourth Sunday After Epiphany, January 30, 1870, the Evangelish Lutherische Emanuel's Gemeinde was formed.

In less than six months from that initial gathering, the first sanctuary building of Emanuel's was constructed, followed by a two-room parsonage in 1877. A second

church building, replacing the first, was completed in 1913, along with a parish hall in 1929, and finally the existing sanctuary and education facilities in 1956. Over its 150 years, Emanuel's has not only been a landmark in the downtown area, but through active concern of its pastors and membership for the wellbeing of Seguin, it has made important contributions to the development of this community. Emanuel's first church was known as the "cradle of public schools" in Seguin, a "free school" arrangement that lasted from 1870-1904. Many of Emanuel's first pastors, along with numerous other members, served as teachers. In 1949, Emanuel's began serving the community with a kindergarten program, with a nursery school being added in 1971, and then adopting a Montessori approach to learning in 1978. Today's school, extending from infants to kindergarten, beginning at 7am and ending at 6pm with the nationally acclaimed FrogStreet Curriculum at its core. The Day School main office is located on the block just north of the church campus at 304 North Travis Street.

In 1912, the membership of Emanuel's played a major role in bringing Texas Lutheran University, formerly College, to Seguin and have shared a close relationship since that time. Many Emanuel's Pastors have held teaching and campus pastor positions through TLU's long history. Prior to the construction of the Chapel of the Abiding Presence on the TLU campus in 1954, Emanuel's played host to many students attending worship over the years and the former Parish Hall, the largest assembly hall in Seguin at the time, hosted many baccalaureate services, public meeting and lectures, piano recitals, drama and musical productions, as well as synodical and national church conventions.

Emanuel's continues to be a vibrantly historical place of worship, service, and outreach. Participating in numerous charitable organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the Christian Cupboard, Meals on Wheels, Lutheran World Relief, Water to Thrive, Kosovo Hope, and the ELCA's Good Gifts Project, Emanuel's maintains active hands in local, national, and global assistance programs. As a congregation rooted in worship and dedicated to education, Emanuel's is looking forward to all that God will do in and through this place and its incredible members as it begins its next 150 years of mission and ministry.

*The Rev. Marcus Bigott is the senior pastor at Emanuel's Lutheran Church. The Rev. Luther Oelke is a retired Lutheran pastor living in Seguin.*

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