

Faith Lutheran Church: A Brief History

Faith Lutheran Church has its beginnings in early 1968 when four men began visiting over morning coffee at the Waco Café. As parents of children nearing Confirmation age, they felt the need for a local Lutheran congregation that would nurture their children, be welcoming to all, and serve the entire community.

As a result of their conversations, a steering committee was formed, and, with the help of area pastors, arrangements were made for the first service of a new worshipping community. The service was held in the auditorium of Waconia High School on June 16, 1968. By September of that year, the budding congregation rented a temporary facility for their regular use—the Izaak Walton League clubhouse on Lake Waconia. Members who were around in those days chuckle now when they remember the moose head behind the altar, the large sailfish above the fireplace, and the fully stocked bar in the back of the building!

What started as just a few families continued to grow. On August 2, 1970, the group members signed a charter—80 signatures in all—and became a recognized congregation of the Lutheran Church in America. The congregation was officially named Waconia Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church. “Faith” was chosen because faith was all that early group had to go on! Their faith was well founded as God has brought forth life, growth and opportunities for ministry ever since.

That same year, the congregation purchased the Izaak Walton building. Soon an adult choir was formed, the Sunday school program was expanded, a women’s group was established, and a full program of congregational activities and outreach began to take shape.

As the congregation grew and required more space for worship and activities, plans were made for a new building. Faith’s current location was chosen, and the 2.34 acres of land was purchased for \$23,400. Ground was broken for the new building in 1976, and a house across the street was procured for the first pastor. It was a bittersweet transition as the congregation moved from the beauty of the lake and their first home to a new building where they would have the potential for continued growth and service to the whole community.

Faith Lutheran flourished in its new setting, offering a number of opportunities for worship, learning and fellowship over the years. Subsequent building projects were undertaken to meet the changing needs of the congregation. This project included the renovation of the education wing, addition of office space and a fellowship hall, all completed in December 2013.

As the congregation has grown and the vision for ministry continues to expand, the church staff has also grown. Since the early years of the congregation, two associate pastor positions have been added. The Parish Education Director position formed in 1983 has evolved into the Director for Children Youth and Family Ministry, and a Children and Family Minister position was added in 2012.

As it has been since the beginning, Children, Youth and Family ministry is an area of strength and growth for Faith Lutheran today. As our relatively young congregation begins to mature, a focus on senior ministry has also been added. Worship and music ministry continues to be important to the congregation—Faith now enjoys three vocal choirs, one handbell choir and a variety of special music throughout the year. The tradition of serving the community by sharing our space with local organizations has also continued; groups such as AA/Alanon and Boy Scouts regularly hold meetings at Faith.

Faith Lutheran Church has been in constant growth since its beginning, and we anticipate further growth as the Waconia area gains new residents. In the midst of the community, Faith Lutheran continues to be a place of welcome and nurture, and a congregation that strives to make a difference outside our walls as well as inside. Using the gifts, skills and contributions of each of our members is important as we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit into a future of gospel-based mission and ministry in Waconia and beyond.

Pastors

Terry R. Morehouse
November 1969 to November 1979

Kenneth H. Kotzer
May 1980 to December 1987

David W. Mohn
August 1988 to September 1995

Daniel L. Warnes
August 1993 to November 2003

Julie A. Ebbesen
October 1996 to February 2005

Dale R. Peterson
November 2005 to present

Jason L. Okrzynski
June 2006 to August 2009

Travis S. Gerjets
April 2010 to February 2014

Brandy J. Gerjets
October 2010 to February 2014

Christine M. Ruth
January 2016 to 2019

Katie Escalante
October 2018 to present

Membership

Charter members

1970, 80
1975, 141
1980, 340
1985, 540
1990, 635
1995, 841
2000, 1201
2005, 1871
2010, 1987
2012, 2294
2015, 2479
2016, 2589
2017, 2753

Buildings

June 16, 1968

September 1, 1968

June 12, 1977

January 20, 1991

September 5, 2004

May 5, 2013

First worship service at Waconia High School

Services moved to Izaak Walton League on Lake Waconia

First worship service in Faith's new home at 800 County Road 10 North (Waconia Parkway)

First worship service in new sanctuary (a major building expansion included worship, education, administration and kitchen space)

First worship in new sanctuary building (previous sanctuary had to be demolished due to construction issues)

Groundbreaking for addition and renovation project



1968



1977



1991



2004