

Celebrating 40 Years of Community and Faith at CEC



Our 40th Anniversary Celebration brought together more than 160 parishioners, clergy, and friends for a joyful day of worship, remembrance, and community. From heartfelt reflections to lively music and laughter, the day was a beautiful tribute to God's faithfulness over four decades at Christ Episcopal Church.

A Day Filled with Connection

The festivities began with an informal meet-and-greet, complete with coffee and donuts, allowing everyone to gather on our beautiful grounds and reconnect. The service started with a slideshow that marked many of the events and people who have made CEC so special over the past 40 years, and was officiated by three beloved CEC vicars/rectors: the Reverend Robert Wearing, the Reverend Trawin Malone, and the Reverend Richard Pelkey. Our own Deacon Jan beautifully read the Gospel from the Gospel of Luke, setting the tone for a day of reflection and celebration.

A Journey Through Time

The sermon was a heartfelt journey through our history at CEC, starting with amusing and touching stories from our origins in 1985, shared by Father Wearing, including stories of early services interrupted by longhorns and deer. Although unable to attend in person, Mary Green warmed our hearts with a video recounting memories from the late 90s and early 2000s, including a cherished moment when, after communion, a young parishioner joyfully broke into the Celtic Alleluia, uniting the congregation in a spirit-led, sacred experience.

Father Bruce Bonner also sent a lovely letter from him and Kathryn, lifting us and reminding us that we are the church and thanking God for the many Christ-centered relationships that make

Christ Church a beacon of God's light to all. Father Trawin reminisced about his five years as our rector with an amusing story about the cattle near the church and reminded us that our love for each other binds us together in the eternal love of Jesus Christ. Father Richard shared his gratitude for God's goodness and grace. He shared how the Holy Spirit continues to be at work at Christ Church and how we have emerged from the COVID pandemic, referencing the transformative 3-year LEADS process, sponsored by the Diocese of Texas, that clarified our mission, values, and purpose. He offered "full-throated thanks to God for the healing and ministry here at Christ Episcopal Church for the past forty years".

We were honored to hear our very own Jim Penniman-Morin, in his role as the Mayor of Cedar Park, present an official proclamation honoring CEC on this momentous occasion. The sermon concluded with warm wishes and a proclamation from our Diocesan Bishop, the Right Reverend Andy Doyle.

Generations of Service

We were blessed to have Brielle Giard and Adam Sterling serve as acolytes, just as they did together about 30 years ago as teens in the congregation. They joined current acolytes, Ella Giard and Amalia Sterling, representing the three-generation CEC family! Our music team was enriched by the presence of Sarah Simpson, former music director.

A Moving Communion Experience

The Holy Spirit was palpable during communion, where we were uplifted by beloved hymns, *Bread of Life*, and *I Looked Up*. As we took communion, we remembered over 30 members of our CEC family who now reside with God in heaven, reminding us that we are surrounded by a cloud of saints during each Eucharist. This moment left many of us in tears, creating a powerful and moving experience.

Celebrating Together

Following the service, we gathered for a lively group photo at the altar, where more than 160 of us squeezed together, thanks to Ben Sterling's booming voice guiding us to say "cheese." We then enjoyed a BBQ lunch, with seating throughout the campus. Those lucky enough to secure a table in the parish hall not only got to sit at tables adorned with beautiful flowers lovingly arranged by Jill McDonald but also were the first to sit on our lovely new white chairs, made possible by the generous gifts from our congregation.

Throughout the day, guests explored multiple display tables in the Family Life Center, the Outreach Room, the library, and the grounds. Many took a moment to visit the tiny chapel to light a candle for those we have lost, while others walked the labyrinth or the Stations of the Cross, enjoying displays of various CEC t-shirts and banners. The main hall of the Family Life Center served as a trip down memory lane with artifacts and pictures representing each of the

four decades of our life as a congregation. An interactive timeline and a memory tree allowed us to capture our memories and gratitude.

The day concluded with a delightful sing-along in the parish hall, led by Dave and Cindy Gravis, accompanied by Sarah Simpson on piano and Andrew Verdesca on clarinet. We made a joyful noise together, singing cherished CEC favorites!

In case you missed it....

If you missed any of the fun, be sure to check out the photo gallery, which will be posted soon on our [40th Anniversary webpage](#), or watch the recording of the [livestreamed service](#). We also have a booklet with the [history of CEC](#), lovingly written by Beth Sterling, and a fun kid version of the church's history in a [40th Anniversary Coloring Book](#) in the Narthex for all who would like a copy. The timeline and memory trees will remain up for a while longer for you to add your special memories, and the memorial chapel will be open for the next few Sundays.

Thank You!

A special thank you to everyone who contributed to making our day so memorable:

- To the countless volunteers who helped with planning, setup, cleanup, and breakdown.
- To those who generously donated their time, talents, and resources.
- To everyone who attended in person and those who prayed for our celebration from afar.
- To the past, present, and future clergy who have and continue to lead us in God's mercy and love.
- To Mary Gossett Elliott for creating our logo and providing graphic design for all our printed materials.
- To those who searched through thousands of photographs and supported the creation of the many slide shows for the event.
- To those who donated items for displays, including photographs, t-shirts, and artifacts from our 40 years.
- To those who shared information for the history, created displays, centerpieces, and programs.
- To all who worked in the weeks leading up to the event to clean, declutter, and prepare our beautiful buildings and grounds.
- To the diocese for granting us the money needed to paint the family life center.
- To all those who traveled to join us in celebration, especially to Father Robert Wareing and his wife Pat, for arranging their schedules and traveling from New Mexico to help us celebrate.
- And to our past, current, and future congregation members for keeping the Holy Spirit alive at CEC.

Throughout the preparations and the celebration, we were reminded again and again that we are the church. God is calling each of us to live in relationship with each other, praising His name and sharing the blessings of His love.

On behalf of the organizing team, including Father Richard, Beth Sterling, Craig Strauss, Sarah Martinez, the Vestry leadership, Linda Dozier, and Lu McCann, and the entire vestry, thank you all for your generosity, commitment, and love in making the first 40 years of our lives as a congregation so special. We eagerly look forward to what God has in store for us in the next 40 years!

We are the Church—past, present, and future—living in God's love and light.