



Historic Austin Churches

Self-Guided Bike Tour

- POINTS OF INTEREST**
1. David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
 2. Wesley United Methodist Church
 3. Ebenezer Baptist Church
 4. Our Lady of Guadalupe
 5. Mt. Olive Baptist Church
 6. Cristo Rey Catholic Church
 7. El Buen Pastor Presbyterian
 8. St. David's Episcopal Church
 9. St. Mary Catholic Cathedral
 10. Gethsemane Lutheran Church
 11. St. Martin's Lutheran Church

This tour is generously supported by Preservation Austin's public programming sponsor, **Colin Corgan**



ABOUT THE TOUR

We hope you enjoy this self-guided tour of some of Central and East Austin's amazing historic churches, spanning various denominations and architectural styles.

The ensuing content corresponds to a 12-mile bike route from our friends at Bike Austin. The loop begins at David Chapel and runs counterclockwise. Street parking is available in the neighborhood surrounding David Chapel if needed, but please do not park in the congregation's surface lot. All sites are accessible by foot or car as well.

ACCESS THE BIKE ROUTE THROUGH RIDE WITH GPS [HERE](#).

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. If you enjoy this tour and would like to support us in this work, become a member at preservationaustin.org.

Historic Designations Key: **NR** = National Register of Historic Places; **RTHL** = Recorded Texas Historic Landmark; **COA** = City of Austin Landmark



BIKE AUSTIN

Presented by Colin Corgan

1. David Chapel - 2211 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd (1958)



David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church was originally founded in 1924 in South Austin. The congregation relocated in 1958 and hired pioneering African American architect John S. Chase to create a modernist design for their new facilities. Chase was among the first students admitted into the University of Texas for graduate studies following the landmark

Sweatt v. Painter Supreme Court case of 1952 and would go on to become the first Black architect licensed in the state of Texas. Chase used his master's thesis, "Progressive Architecture for the Negro Baptist Church," to gain clients within Baptist congregations since he was unable to find work in the Jim Crow South. Chase's David Chapel is one of the most significant works in his career and one of Austin's most important architectural landmarks from any era.

2. Wesley United Methodist - 1164 San Bernard St (1929)



Wesley United's original structure at 9th and Neches Streets dated to the 1860s, during the Civil War. The church was established for a growing community of freedmen in Austin, and many of its early members attended as enslaved people. The current Gothic Revival-style church at San Bernard Street was constructed in 1929 with expanded facilities, including an on-site library and space for classes

for Samuel Huston College (later Huston-Tillotson). During the year of its construction, Austin's all-white City Council implemented the City's segregationist Master Plan, which forced Black and Latinx Austinites to relocate east of East Avenue (now I-35) or be denied city services. In 2017, the Equal Justice Initiative erected a memorial plaque in front of the church to commemorate victims of lynchings in Travis County as part of their Community Remembrance Project.

Designations: NR, RTHL, COA

3. Ebenezer Third Baptist Church - 1010 E. 10th St (1955)



The home of Eliza Hawkins originally served as the first gathering place for the Ebenezer or “Stone of Help” congregation founded in 1875 by Reverend C. Ward. The church’s first frame structure was located on the corner of Curve and Catalpa Streets, but by 1885 the congregation outgrew this location and moved to its current site. The current brick

and limestone church was constructed in 1955 by Roy L. Thomas, architect of the Stephen F. Austin Hotel. The church features a prominent stained glass window above the entry and a Gothic Revival-style spire adorning the bell tower that holds the bell from the congregation’s original church. Ebenezer is well-known for its legacy and tradition of music, including the “Bright and Early Choir,” led by renowned Director of Music Virgie Carrington DeWitty and one of the first choirs to broadcast live over the radio.

Designations: RTHL

4. Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church - 1206 E. 9th St (1954)



Established in 1907, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church (OLG) bears the name of the patron saint of Mexico, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Originally located at 5th and Guadalupe Streets, OLG relocated to its current location in 1925 to meet the demands of Austin’s growing Mexican population. The present-day church was designed by father and son architects Maurice J. Sullivan and Charles F. Sullivan of Houston and was dedicated in 1954. The bell tower and stained glass windows were restored in 2010 by Heimsath Architects of Austin. Since its inception, OLG has been a cultural

and religious cornerstone of the Mexican-American community, and the parish elementary school has taught generations of neighborhood children. Every year in December, the church hosts its annual Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe and hundreds of parishioners celebrate with a festive procession and Mass.

5. Mount Olive Baptist Church - 1800 E. 11th Street (1956)



Mt. Olive Baptist Church was established in 1889 in the former freedmen’s community of Masontown, situated in present-day East Austin between 3rd and 6th Streets, and Waller and Chicon Streets. The community received its name from Sam and Raiford Mason, two formerly enslaved brothers who bought property in the area in 1867. Masontown was a thriving Black

community for decades—at one point the town had over 200 residents and two Baptist churches, including Olivet. The congregation eventually moved out of Masontown and to its current location in 1956. With its striking modernist design, Mt. Olive stands out amongst the neighborhood’s bungalows and Victorian homes.

Designations: RTHL

6. Cristo Rey Catholic Church - 2208 E. 2nd St (1959)



In 1922, a committee at St. Mary’s Catholic Church began searching for a church site to serve Austin’s Spanish-speaking Catholics and established Cristo Rey here. During the congregation’s early years, the property frequently flooded and a tent served as a temporary chapel, with mass held at a neighbor’s home on Santa Rosa Street. It wasn’t until after World War II that the

congregation raised enough money to build a masonry church here, completed in 1959. Cristo Rey became known as a center for activism in the Mexican-American community. In 1968, the Economy Furniture Strike was organized at this church and in 1973 Cesar Chavez, the renowned labor union activist, spoke to the congregation about the United Farm Workers grape boycott. Today Cristo Rey continues its role as a center for Mexican American cultural life.

7. El Buen Pastor Presbyterian - 1200 Willow St (1902)



El Buen Pastor Presbyterian Church organized as Iglesia Presbiteriana Mexicana in 1910 and became El Buen Pastor Presbyterian, meaning “the good shepherd,” in 1951. Originally located at E. 6th and Navasota streets, the congregation relocated several times before arriving at its present location in 1959, moving into the existing 1902 Mission Revival-style

church building. The building formerly housed the Ward Memorial Church, whose congregation organized in 1885. The El Buen Pastor Early Childhood Development Center next door opened in 1975 with a class of eight and now serves over 100 area children. Since 1988, the church’s Manos de Cristo service ministry has supported the community of East Austin.

8. St. David’s Episcopal - 301 E. 8th Street (1853)



St. David’s began in the mid-nineteenth century as a missionary chapel for the Episcopal Church in Texas. The original Gothic Revival-style chapel, completed in 1853, was the first stone church building in Austin. The early congregation was soon divided over the issue of slavery and in 1856 a small group of pro-Union parishioners left to establish a separate church. The two factions later reunited. Since the mid-19th century, the church has played a significant role in the cultural life of Austin. Affectionately referred to as the “Dime Opera House” in the 1890s, the church provided choir performances,

theatricals, and other entertainment. In the 1920s, the church helped to establish St. David’s Hospital under the Reverend Lenoir Valentine Lee.

Designations: NR, RTHL, COA

9. St. Mary Catholic Cathedral - 203 E. 10th St (1884)



The congregation of St. Mary Catholic Cathedral was established in the early 1850s as St. Patrick’s, a name given by its Irish-Catholic parishioners. An increase of German Catholics to the area led to its renaming as Saint Mary’s of the Immaculate Conception in 1866. The traditional Romanesque Revival-style structure was dedicated in 1884 and was the first church designed by Irish-born architect Nicholas Clayton of Galveston, who also designed the Main Building at St. Edward’s University. The native limestone church features a rose window, stained glass windows from France and Germany, and an ornate bell tower. Saint Mary’s was designated a cathedral in 1948 upon the formation of the Diocese of Austin by Pope Pius XII. In 2013, significant restorations were made to the Cathedral’s exterior and large rose window.

Designations: NR, RTHL, COA Landmark

10. Gethsemane Lutheran Church - 1510 Congress Ave (1883)



In the mid-19th century, a number of Swedish immigrants settled in parts of downtown and present-day East Austin. The most notable Swedish enclave of this era is known today as “Swedish Hill” (or Swede Hill.) Architect August Swenson and builders Frederic Reichow and S.A. Carlson helped the congregation construct the present-day Gethsemane Lutheran Church, made from handmade brick and stone salvaged from the Capitol building fire of 1881. The church, completed in 1883, is typical of Swedish rural architecture—a Gothic Revival-style building with

a central bell tower and a wood and plaster interior. The building has changed hands between religious and municipal organizations over the years, presently serving as a meeting space, library, and home to the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

Designations: NR, RTHL, COA Landmark

11. St. Martin's Lutheran Church - 606 W. 15th St (1960)



The original St. Martin's Lutheran Church was established in 1884, named by its German congregation in honor of their faith's namesake, theologian Martin Luther. Originally situated two blocks south of the Capitol building, the church relocated several times over the decades as the Capitol grounds expanded, landing at its current location in 1960. Designed

by architect Robert Mather of Jessen Jessen Millhouse and Greeven in the Modern Basilica style, the church strikes a unique balance between mid-century innovation and traditional architectural forms. The church's facade is adorned with a trio of cast stone sculptures by locally-based and internationally renowned artist Charles Umlauf. Up until 1920, St. Martin's held regular services in German, and each year at Christmas the church celebrates this tradition with a service fully conducted in German.

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