

# **MID-CENTURY MODERN CHURCH SURVEY**

Religious Structures 1940 – 1970  
in St. Louis County

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## PURPOSE

As with most styles or fads, architectural preservation is cyclical. Typically, little attention is paid to what was constructed by the previous generation; people tend to appreciate buildings created in their grandparents' generation. It is easier to get the public behind saving buildings whose architecture represents the historic stereotype of beauty.



The Third Church of Christ Scientist in Washington, D.C. is a great example of the Brutalist style of modern architecture. The congregation wanted to tear down the structure to rebuild a more aesthetically pleasing church, but preservationists fought to save it.

Convincing them to save a simple, square structure of brick and concrete in the International style of modern architecture can be more of a challenge. However, because a new generation has emerged, those unique, innovative buildings of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s have gained in popularity. Awareness of and appreciation for such structures is increasing, as is the effort to preserve them.

The first step in saving an architecturally significant structure is simply to identify it.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive inventory of all churches built within the “modern” period. The hope is, based on this information, those modern religious structures in St. Louis County of exceptional design will be preserved.

In 1991, a survey of churches built prior to 1941 in St. Louis County was completed, with more extensive research being compiled on the thirty oldest religious structures. Building on the 1991 survey, this survey extends the dates of construction through 1970, and highlights the best architectural examples of mid-century modern worship spaces.<sup>2</sup>

## GEOGRAPHIC AREA

This survey encompasses the entire area of St. Louis County, Missouri. There were a total of 513 church structures or complexes in the Mid-Century Modern Church Survey. Of those 513 structures, 43 were structures that had been included in the 1990 survey of churches, but had had exterior alterations or additions made during the period from 1940 to 1970, making it necessary for them to be included in the Mid-Century Modern Survey. Of the total number of newly constructed church buildings and additions, 425 were located in incorporated municipalities and 88 in unincorporated areas. Of the 91 municipalities located in the County, churches of this period, including both new buildings as well as additions, were found in 61 of them.

Due to realignments of roadways, a number of streets in the survey have had name changes or have been renumbered. When this has occurred, the spreadsheet record will note both the original and current address.

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<sup>1</sup> When the term “significance” is used in this paper, it is referring to historical significance. According to the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, historic significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of a community, State, or the nation. It is achieved in several ways:

- Association with events, activities, or patterns
- Association with important persons
- Distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction, or form
- Potential to yield important information.

<sup>2</sup> This study uses the terms religious structure, church, sanctuary, and worship space interchangeably. When referring to the church and its attached or detached additions, the word ‘complex’ is used.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Working off of the previous inventory of pre-1941 churches, the initial phase of the survey included a compilation of church structures built, or having had substantial exterior alterations made, after 1941 and before 1970. Using the 1969 city directory, names of churches, the addresses, and denominations were gathered and compared against the results of the former survey. For a more complete inventory, other sources were consulted, including a number of books published on the histories of individual municipalities (see bibliography). Previous thematic and geographical surveys conducted by the County Parks Department, in addition to the 1991 church survey, also helped identify properties that had not fit into the scope of those particular surveys, but were worthy of additional research. To verify or obtain construction dates, deeds from the County Department of Revenue's office were used.

From the primary and secondary sources, a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet was created to organize the information, which included the name of the church, its street address and municipality, data on name changes, the original and current denomination, construction date, and the architect(s).

A basic windshield survey was done on over 400 church structures, with 380 churches having a basic inventory form completed for each.<sup>3</sup> Several religious structures were added to the inventory based on visual inspection while in the field, not having been listed in other sources but still falling within the period of significance (1941-1970). Because of the nature of the inventory, structures not originally constructed for the use as a church were not included: no storefronts, residential properties, lodge halls, or other buildings converted into worship space were added to the inventory. Church cemeteries were not surveyed in conjunction with the church, but were noted on survey forms when the cemetery was located on the same lot as the church. Only architecturally substantial additions made between 1941 and 1970 to churches built prior to 1941 were included in the survey; those deemed insignificant by the surveyors were not included.

Once the windshield survey was complete, structures to be further researched were selected based on architectural merit. Of the churches that required additional research, published church and municipality histories were consulted, as well as various county records, church websites, and church office staff. The only structure built during this survey's period already listed on the National Register of Historic Places was the B'Nai Amoona Congregation, currently Center of Creative Arts, in University City listed in 1984.

There are a number of architectural categories within the Mid-Century Modern period. For clarification, they are listed in the section "Architecture and Design of Worship Spaces" below. However, for this survey, the general term Mid-Century Modern was used to describe all churches built between 1940 and 1970, with the exception of the Revival styles (Colonial, Federal, Gothic, etc.). This was done to simplify the categorization of the churches; a more in-depth survey would be required to further classify the churches into more specific categories. Also, a number of churches in the survey exemplify more than one style of modern architecture. This is primarily due to later additions that were made within the same architectural period, but are representative of a different style.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

When discussing the oldest churches in the St. Louis metropolitan region, the City of St. Louis, having been founded by French Catholics, has a large number of historic Catholic churches. However, St. Louis County, having been founded primarily by Anglo-Saxons, contains a large number of historic Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches. Lutheran and Evangelical denominations gained a prominent place in the County during the nineteenth century as Germans began immigrating to the region. As the population of the County expanded, so did the needs of many of the historic congregations. New churches and parochial schools began springing up, a number of which expanded multiple times over the

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<sup>3</sup> The cause for the discrepancy between number of survey forms filled out and the number of churches surveyed was that some churches had been demolished. In a couple of instances, the church had undergone such major renovation that the original Mid-Century Modern portion was not visible from the exterior. Some of the churches in the 2009-2010 survey had existing survey forms from prior surveys completed by the County, so an additional survey form was not created.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While expansion sometimes led to the inclusion of modern architecture in church designs, it also often meant the demolition of the older structures.

### *Suburbanization & Religion*

Because of the amplified need for supplies during World War II, the industrial area in the City of St. Louis drew rural workers in need of employment and cheap living accommodations. These conditions added to the influx of poorer blacks and whites to the city center, while driving the middle and upper class to the suburbs. This movement of population to the suburbs stimulated a large increase in construction, particularly after World War II.

During the 1950s, the City undertook civic improvements, in part to minimize slum areas, but also to improve the City's infrastructure. Urban renewal became a common phrase adopted by many cities used to connote a sense of progress, but it often led to a trend of minority displacement. In 1951, a local government agency, the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of St. Louis, was created to help develop 'urban renewal' areas. One of the largest examples of gentrification caused by the Redevelopment Authority occurred in 1959, with the clearing of the Mill Creek Valley area, bounded by Lindell and Olive Avenues on the north, Scott Avenue on the south, 20<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, and Grand Avenue on the west. This urban renewal project forced a number of blacks to relocate to the Cabanne District in University City, Wellston, and Pine Lawn (Primm 1990).

Suburbs in the north and west regions of St. Louis County saw the largest influx of the working class white population. With more affordable land, areas such as Bridgeton, Jennings, Ferguson, Florissant, St. Ann, and Overland expanded. While the County's population continued to grow, so did the City's. However, it was the poorer, rural residents who countered the out-migration of the middle class (Primm 1990).

Although the automobile allowed for easier movement and a decreased need for resources to be located within close proximity, suburbanites still preferred community resources to be located close-by. Areas began incorporating at a quick rate, and by 1970, the County contained 87 separate municipalities (St. Louis County Department of Planning 1998). Schools, parks, community centers, and churches began popping up in each municipality in response to the demand of the growing populations.

The 1991 Church Survey showed 234 churches were built prior to 1941, and almost 20 percent of those had additions or were expanded during the mid-century period.<sup>4</sup> A *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article from 1955 discusses the rapid growth of new congregations, as predicted by the Metropolitan Church Federation. At that time, 23 denominations were affiliated with the Metropolitan Church Federation, and 16 of those reported in a survey having had established 22 new churches between 1950 and 1955 in St. Louis City and County. The same 16 reported a total of 292 churches in the City and County in 1950, 311 in 1955, and an estimated 412 by 1966. Rev. Dr. C. Walter Wagner, director of the Federation in 1955, discussed the need for churches to relocate based on community development patterns, "We no longer can properly place new churches or relocate old ones on a purely denominational basis of opportunism" (Stewart 1955).

### *Architecture and Design of Worship Spaces*

The St. Louis County Historic Buildings Commission created a list in 2007, identifying 67 structures that represent the most impressive examples of modern architecture in St. Louis County. Of the private residences, schools, commercial buildings, and churches, 19 were spaces of worship. The fact that nearly one-third of the list is devoted to churches and synagogues illustrates the key role religious entities played in the modern architectural movement in St. Louis.

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<sup>4</sup> The data from the 1991 and the 2009-2010 surveys do not include the date of construction for every church. This is because the data was not available or not known. It is also important to note that some construction dates were gathered from existing cornerstones on the churches, while other dates were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Depending on the source, sometimes the date of construction would be the start date of construction, others the date of dedication of the completed church, and still others the date of the architectural drawings.

Modern architecture began in the 1920s in Europe and was formalized with the meeting of the Congress Interantionaux de l'Architecture Modern (CIAM), or the International Congress for Modern Architecture in 1928 in Switzerland. The CIAM's goal of promoting modern architecture was centered on key architectural characteristics, including form following function, using a minimalist approach to design, and the use of new building materials and techniques (Torgerson 63). By the 1950s, younger members of CIAM with new interpretations of modernism began criticizing the architectural principles on which the organization was founded. In 1959, CIAM disbanded, but the organization's influence on modern architecture is unquestionable.

Modern design became mainstream in the United States with the increasing popularity of designs by such architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, I.M. Pei, and Le Corbusier, a number of whom were members of the CIAM. Even though some early works show signs of modern influence, the elements of modern architecture did not fully emerge in St. Louis County until the early 1950s. It is fair to say that B'nai Amoona Synagogue, now the Center of Creative Arts in University City, was the first religious structure in St. Louis County designed in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style. Eric Mendelsohn and Bernard Bloom were commissioned by the Jewish congregation in 1946 to design a new synagogue, although it was not completed until 1950 (Soren 1984). The next church in St. Louis County to be designed in the modernist style was Harris Armstrong's Lutheran Church of the Atonement (now demolished), which was designed in 1949, but was not completed until 1953. Christ Memorial Lutheran Church (demolished in 2008) in Affton, dated as 1950, soon followed.

Another major achievement for modern architecture in St. Louis County came from architect Joseph Murphy, who designed a series of three churches for the St. Louis Catholic Archdiocese. The Church of the Resurrection (1952) is located in the City of St. Louis, but St. Peter's Church of Kirkwood (1951) and St. Ann of Normandy (1952) are the first Catholic churches in the County to be designed in the Mid-Century Modern style. Drawings for St. Ann's were published in the September 1947 issue of *Architectural Record*, making it one of the earliest modern designed churches in the County (St. Louis County Parks, History Files). Prior to its construction, St. Ann's design was again published, along with the other two Catholic church designs by Murphy, in *Liturgical Arts Quarterly* in 1950 ("Three Churches..." 1950).

Although churches were still being designed in traditional styles in the 1950s and 1960s, it became more and more common to see the linear, unadorned forms that exemplify modern architecture being built throughout the county. Frederick Dunn, of the firm Nagel & Dunn, who designed what is considered the first modern church in the City of St. Louis (St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 1939), had said of modern architecture, "We can't use the methods of the middle ages, for we don't have their craftsmen or their materials. We must take the crafts and materials of today and adapt them to new forms" (Stewart 1951).

Using "materials of today" reflects the central theme of modern architecture: form follows function. As the culture of the church expanded to include that of a social outlet, churches grew beyond serving as just a space for worship into a place for community activities. Congregations now desired fellowship halls, in addition to the standard education buildings; churches became complexes and the simple concept of a singular sanctuary became rare. However, despite a need for expansion, most congregations were limited in funding, and construction decisions were still based on the economic viability of their members.

It was frequently financial restrictions that led congregations to steer away from Gothic and Romanesque Revival designs, which were more costly due to materials and detailing. Compared to traditional styles, modern architecture often utilized cheaper, more readily available materials, making construction more affordable. Stone and brick were still used, but architects began incorporating industrial materials into their designs: concrete, laminated beams, and steel frames provided for innovative methods of design and construction.

Aside from financial reasoning, many congregations chose modern church designs based on social influences. A design that reflected society's modern culture and fashion would hopefully help perpetuate an image of accessibility and forward-thinking (Torgerson 2007). Nevertheless, good examples of revival

styles are still found, particularly Colonial Revival, heavily concentrated in the municipality of Ladue. Gothic and Romanesque Revival structures are found scattered throughout the County, as well.

Depending on the source, modern architecture is generally broken into multiple categories, although stylistic descriptions and names of specific styles have not been universally accepted. Below is a table of eight commonly agreed upon styles with brief descriptions of each.

<b>Modern Style</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Wrightian/ Organic</b>	1920 – 1975	-emphasis on horizontal -roof serves as a character feature -dominant horizontal or vertical lines with cantilevered broad eaves -strong geometric shapes arranged in distinct zones -battered walls, piers tapering down to a base, solid balcony railings -banding windows, mitered glass at corners
<b>Art Deco/ Art Moderne/ Streamline Modern</b>	1925 – 1950	-strong symmetrical lines; highly stylized natural and geometric forms -smooth wall surfaces -zigzags, chevrons, stylized geometric motifs -towers/vertical projections above the roofline for vertical emphasis
<b>International/ Bauhaus</b>	1929 – 1940; 1945 – 1970	-named from a modern architecture exhibit designed/curated by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock (Museum of Modern Art, 1932) -sometimes used interchangeably with general term of modern architecture -volume over mass -smooth walls/surfaces/portion vs symmetry; horizontal bands of windows in large expanses -cantilevered building extensions; flat roofs
<b>Exaggerated Modern</b>	1955 – 1975	-exaggerates the structural components of a building -typical of commercial architecture -exaggerated, sweeping cantilevered and oversized rooflines -V-shaped columns -curvaceous geometric shapes -common materials include steel, plywood, glass block, plastic, stone
<b>Formalism</b>	1960 – 1975	-embraces many classical characteristics, like building proportion and scale and the use of columns and colonnades -highly structures, strict symmetry; lacking ornamentation; emphasis on vertical lines creating a structural, construction grid -smooth walls of high quality materials -flat, projecting rooflines -columnar supports
<b>Brutalism</b>	1960 – 1975	-comes from the French word <i>béton brut</i> meaning “raw concrete” -popular for governmental and institutional buildings -unadorned poured concrete, rough exterior surfaces -heavy buildings with irregular massing -blunt detailing of joints/openings -window openings tend to be either recessed or protruding from wall plane
<b>Post-Modernism</b>	1964 – 1990	-view of architecture in pieces; highlights a single architectural feature and takes it out of its context -returns to sources of traditional architecture, especially Palladian, but with an iron modern twist
<b>Late Modern</b>	1970 –	-uses the forms and materials of the International style but with an emphasis on their aesthetic qualities

Within the stylistic periods, common architectural themes emerge, particularly in church designs. Floor plans ranged from circular to square to elliptical, all in an effort to create a more intimate space between the minister and congregation (Loveland 2003). Rectangular or square sanctuaries, which reflect a transition from a traditional cruciform plan to a sleek, modern interpretation, are common.

Rooflines are one of the most obvious defining characteristics, including the flat, low roofs or the more exaggerated geometric shapes like the folded plate or concrete shells. Low, projecting side aisles often incorporating clerestory windows are another typical feature. These low side aisles are even found in modified A-frame structures, one of the most widely-recognized mid-century modern architectural sub-styles.

Construction of the A-frame, also called a tent form church, became popular in the 1950s. The origins of the A-frame can be seen in medieval villages of northern Europe, in homes and other buildings with steeply pitched rooflines. Wide spread use of the A-frame added to its popularity, as well as its accessibility and affordability. The A-frame allowed for volume and height that traditional church structures were known for, while keeping pace with styles of the modern architectural field. In 1955, architect Paul Thiry expressed his appreciation for the A-frame: "Isn't all this exactly what the church builder has been looking for all the ages past – greater span, height, lightness, openness, acoustical control, ease of construction, simple methods?" (Randl 2004, p 127). The 1954 issue of *Architectural Forum* published the design of Eero Saarinen (architect of the St. Louis Gateway Arch, 1948-64) for Concordia College Chapel (Kramer Chapel) in Fort Wayne, Indiana ("The Tent Form..." 1958). Kramer Chapel is regarded as one of the first examples of the A-frame church in the United States and became a model for many congregations. Saarinen, however, was not the only architect successfully applying the A-frame style to church designs. Published in the very same issue of *Architectural Forum* was Harris Armstrong's design for the Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Florissant, which is now, unfortunately, demolished.



Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Florissant, MO by Harris Armstrong, 1949.



Frank Lloyd Wright's Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin, 1946.

Modifications to the A-frame design can vary greatly and are as commonly found in mid-century architecture as traditional A-frames themselves. Frank Lloyd Wright's Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin is perhaps the most famous. Commissioned in 1946, Wright designed a structure with a steeply gabled roof, similar to an A-frame. It differs in that the sanctuary entry has a low ceiling and gently slopes upward towards the rostrum and peaks at a glass-filled prow. These irregularly shaped rooflines, with an emphasis on irregularly shaped rooflines, can be found throughout St. Louis County.

Kirkwood's United Methodist Church and Black Jack's Christ the King United Church of Christ are both examples of A-frames with slightly modified rooflines.

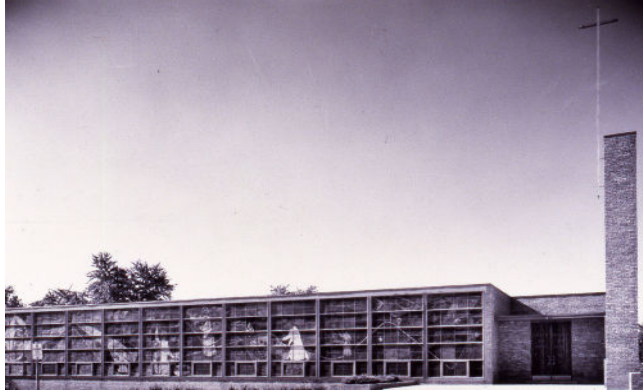


Christ the King United Church of Christ in Black Jack by Manske & Dieckmann, 1960.

Prows are another architectural element, often incorporating a repeated pattern of small stained or colored glass windows set in brick.



St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Ferguson by Manske & Dieckmann, 1958.



Faith-Salem Evangelical and Reformed Church of Jennings, now Brotherly Love West Christian Assembly, represents the simple box-shape, flat-roof design of modern architecture. Designed by Frederick Dunn & Associates, 1955.

Square and rectangular box-like shapes with flat roofs are frequently tied to the mid-century modern architectural movement, and at the time were considered nearly as extreme as the steeply pitched roofs of the A-frame. In 1951, Rev. Kurt Schmiechen, pastor of Faith-Salem Evangelical and Reformed Church in Jennings, said of the new design for their church, "Basically, the radical new design is the result of down-to-earth thinking by my people about their needs....the congregation now sees that this design will provide more church facilities per dollar spent than any old-fashioned or traditional church. The flat roof, for example, will cost several thousand dollars less than an arched roof" (Stewart 1951). Flat roofs allowed for cheaper construction, but also aesthetically

provided the low, streamlined look modern architects desired. A number of those flat-roofed churches have now been renovated with more modern conveniences, such as air-conditioning, and have air-conditioning units on top of the structure, breaking up smooth, clean lines created by the roof.

Some of the most eye-catching, unique church designs of the mid-century modern period incorporate exaggerated, repeating arches or irregular rooflines. Both St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church in Ellisville and St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Hazelwood show some inspiration from Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, France, mimicking the sweeping roofline, concrete walls, and



St. Martin de Porres in Hazelwood by John McEwen of Rodriguez Design Associates, 1963. The detail image above shows the small, inset windows along the concrete wall.

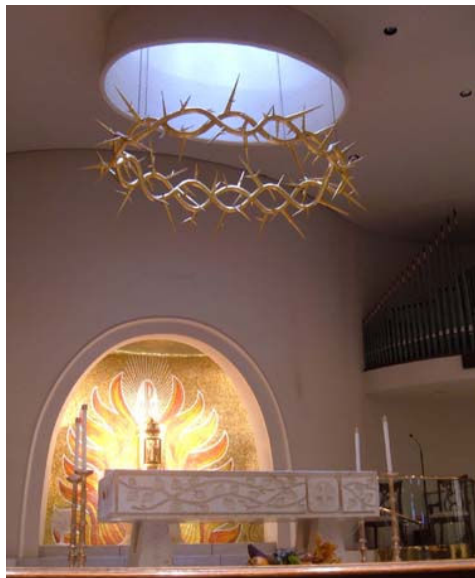


The Ethical Society of St. Louis. Designed by Harris Armstrong, 1961.

deeply inset stained glass windows. The exterior of Harris Armstrong's 1961 design of the Ethical Society of St. Louis in Ladue reflects the slightly oriental qualities made popular by Edward Durrell Stone and Minoru Yamasaki at that time. Typical of Armstrong's interest in technology, the reflecting pools near the entrance also served as the air-conditioning system. The Priory Chapel (1962) in Creve Coeur garnered designers Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK) numerous accolades and international attention. The church consists of two concentric levels of thin concrete parabolic arches. Obata's

initial design for the church was modified to a parabolic form at the suggestion of the great Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi, who had pioneered the thin-shell concrete construction used at the Priory (Wright 1980). The inspiration of Nervi's artistry is seen in the interior view into the lantern or bell tower, where the arch folds converge in a flowerlike pattern.

The structural framework of a church, whether simple or complex, serves as an initial introduction to the worship space, but the art, sculpture, and glass have always been key facets representing a church's identity. A number of the churches in this survey contained stained glass, a very traditional feature of religious centers. However, unlike the thin, delicate stained glass work that is customary, the glass was sometimes cut in thick chunks, faceted in a concrete-type mixture. Robert Frei, of Emil Frei, Inc., helped develop the use of faceted glass, which had been discovered by a French artist during World War II. Because traditional concrete could not be used to set the glass due to cracking, Frei hired a research chemist to formulate a new concrete mixture (Tighe 2001). Jacoby Art Glass Company, which closed in 1970, and Emil Frei, Inc. were the two most prominent stained glass companies involved in church glass designs in St. Louis, but a number of other local glass companies, artisans, and even church clergy designed glass artwork.



Church of the Immacolata, 1966. Altar mosaic designed by Russell Moreland Kraus for the Ravenna Mosaic Company, installed 1967. Note the baldachin, representative of the crown of thorns, under the skylight

Other church details, including pulpits, altars, and baptismal fonts within the sanctuary were also created with modern design in mind. Because modern architecture's central theme

was minimalism, artwork was often incorporated into the structural design of the building. Mosaics and sculptural pieces became important artistic focal points, such as the altar mosaic by Russell Moreland Kraus in the Church of the Immacolata and the bema sculpture by Rodney Winfield in Temple Israel.

Religion tends to invoke the idea traditionalism, a strikingly inverse concept of what modern architecture, at least on the surface, represents. Modern architecture, although stereotypically viewed as innovative, unique, and sometimes cold, carries with it a great sense of symbolism. Unlike traditional architecture (i.e. Gothic) where vast interior spaces

are meant to be enclosed and separated from the outside world, modern architecture focuses on opening the interior space up, creating harmony with the outside and reserving special emphasis for the altar area. Joseph Murphy, like Frederick Dunn, pointed out that "[t]here are practical reasons for this trend...almost no parish or congregation...can afford the labor, craftsmanship or materials required to erect the massive structures of the past. The ideas and faiths of the great religions have not changed, but present economics make it impossible to carry them out architecturally in the way of our forefathers" ("The New Look" 1958). Murphy also discusses how the needs of congregations have changed to include modern conveniences and that the traditional means of constructing those architectural styles cannot seamlessly incorporate those.

Because modern architecture was not always viewed as 'traditional,' convincing congregations of employing modern designs for their new churches was not simple. Contention arose between the congregations and building committees as to what type of structures would be most appropriate to represent their religious ideology. Opposition to modern church architecture came from laymen and clergy, as well as architects. When asked about churches of modern design in 1959, Richard Neutra, an internationally-known architect who was a lecturer at Washington University, said, "Most of them look as if they'd been designed by atheists" (Orthwein 8 Feb 1959). That year, the *Globe-Democrat* polled clergy, laymen, artists, and architects in the region to get perspective on how modern church architecture was viewed; the results indicated that the majority considered modern architecture "distinctly bad" (Orthwein 8 Feb 1959). William Crowell, a St. Louis architect, believed that modern architecture could be beautiful,

but when designed merely for the sake of proving an engineering feat and lacking an artistic, spiritually reflective sense, modern architecture was inappropriate (Crowell 1959).

That same poll conducted by the *Globe Democrat* showed consistent comments about the importance of vertical height in a sanctuary. The low, box-like shapes would limit not only the height, but also the amount of light admitted. Rex Becker, of the architectural firm Froese, Maack & Becker who was a well-known designer of modern churches in the area, agreed: "Ample height will lift man's spirit as it lifts his eyes upward" (Orthwein 15 Feb 1959). Many modern architects understood the need for height and light and designed sanctuaries that incorporated as much of both as possible. For example, the glass wall behind the pulpit of the Garden Chapel in Creve Coeur, although modern in design, allowed a great amount of light in, and the tall, straight support beams led the eye upwards. It can be argued that the manipulation of focused light and height as a symbol of God's presence replaced traditional artwork used to convey the same spiritual message (Anthony 2004). This use of architecture as art not only had an effect on the economic stability of the congregation, but also on the role of society's artisans. For centuries, artists were employed by religious entities and religion was a primary source for artistic inspiration. As the demand for conventional church artwork decreased, artist looked for new motivation, including popular culture (Anthony 2004).

The argument for modern church architecture continued to circle back to functionality and the affordability that the newer, modern structures provided. Charles Nagel, another St. Louis architect, made the point that traditional styles were perhaps preferred, but in a time when "air-conditioning, fluorescent lighting, and public address systems," were desired, compromises on design had to be made (Orthwein 15 Feb 1959). Architectural publications even made suggestions to clergymen and architects about how to convince congregations to use modern designs (Randl 2004). No doubt the most influential argument centered on finances, but for some forward-thinking congregations, the concept of innovative architecture was as attractive as affordability.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of architectural significance, not every mid-century modern church is worthy of being saved. The purpose of this survey was to identify those religious structures that are most representative of the types of architecture that were produced during the middle of the twentieth century. It is our hope that steps to preserve these buildings will be undertaken by the community or the congregation inhabiting them.

Compared to commercial or residential structures, places of worship have relative difficulty in obtaining National Register of Historic Places designation, due to the strict nature of listing criteria. The National Register excludes properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, unless their significance is derived from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance. Due to the separation of church and state, a church's role in the history of religion is not considered a qualifier for listing on the National Register. There are 2,620 buildings currently listed on the National Register under religious significance, with 51 in Missouri. Of those 51, eight individual worship spaces are listed in St. Louis County.<sup>5</sup>

While listing on the National Register of Historic Places gives properties access to state and/or federal tax credits for rehabilitation, it does not protect against demolition or alterations, unless federal funding is involved. Education is the key to preventing demolition or drastic alterations that greatly change the essence of a building. Educating church leaders, as well as their congregations, about Mid-Century Modern architecture will help create awareness of that era of buildings, as well as the overall significance their own church plays in that period of St. Louis' architectural history. A lack of interest and education will lead to a lack of preservation.

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<sup>5</sup> The figures for the number of structures listed on the National Register nationwide and in the state of Missouri were obtained from the National Park Service database of National Register properties. The search looked at listed buildings, as opposed to structures, districts, or sites, categorized under Religious Significance. The number of historic church structures in St. Louis County was obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office website. There were a total of 148 individual properties and historic districts, including secular and nonsecular, listed on the National Register in the County. Figures were gathered on June 4, 2010.

Church structures have an added struggle that most commercial and residential buildings do not have when considering adaptive reuse for preservation. The physical layout of a religious structure is unique in that it reflects the needs of a congregation. Vacant churches are at particular risk of losing architectural significance when not purchased by other religious entities because the intended original use of the space will be altered. There have been instances of religious spaces being successfully remodeled for commercial use. For example, three religious structures located in close geographic proximity to one another in University City were rehabilitated: the First Church of Christ Scientist (1924) was converted into offices in the 1980s, Shaare Emeth (1931) was converted into the Washington University School of Music, and B'nai Amoona (1948) was converted into the Center of Creative Arts. However, the threat remains that a poor renovation could destroy the unique characteristic qualities of Mid-Century Modern architecture. Educating the public and the church congregations is again the strongest, most accessible tool preservationists have to prevent such losses. Zoning laws and historic preservation regulations enforced by local governments are other important means to saving these structures.

Fostering relationships with churches is as important as continuing to foster relationships with local preservation organizations. There are multiple agencies with preservation missions and municipal preservation commissions in the region, and maintaining strong affiliations with those is important. As of August, 2010, the municipalities of St. Louis County had 10 Certified Local Governments with some type of preservation commission and four other municipal historic commissions.

*Certified Local Governments with Preservation Commissions*

CHESTERFIELD LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
690 Chesterfield Parkway West  
Chesterfield, MO 63017  
Date Certified: Feb. 21, 2002

FERGUSON LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
City of Ferguson\  
110 Church Street  
Ferguson, MO 63135  
Date Certified: Nov. 13, 2006

FLORISSANT LANDMARK AND HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
City of Florissant  
955 St. François Street  
Florissant, MO 63031  
Date Certified: Oct. 2, 2001

KIRKWOOD LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
City of Kirkwood  
139 South Kirkwood Road  
Kirkwood, MO 63122  
Date Certified: Aug. 11, 1986

MANCHESTER HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION  
City of Manchester  
14318 Manchester Road  
Manchester, MO 63011  
Date Certified: Sept. 28, 2006

OAKLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
City of Oakland  
P. O. Box 220511  
Oakland, MO 63122  
Date Certified: March 24, 2004

PASADENA HILLS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
City of Pasadena Hills  
3915 Roland Boulevard  
Pasadena Hills, MO 63121  
Date Certified: Oct. 2, 2001

UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
City of University City  
6801 Delmar Boulevard  
University City, MO 63130  
Date Certified: March 22, 1990

WEBSTER GROVES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
City of Webster Groves  
4 East Lockwood Avenue  
Webster Groves, MO 63119  
Date Certified: Oct. 25, 1991

WILDWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
City of Wildwood  
183 Plaza Drive  
Wildwood, MO 63040  
Date Certified: June 5, 2001

### *Other Municipal Historic Commissions*

BALLWIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
c/o City of Ballwin  
14811 Manchester Road  
Ballwin, MO 63011

BRIDGETON HISTORIC COMMISSION  
City of Bridgeton  
11955 Natural Bridge Road  
Bridgeton, MO 63044

ELLISVILLE HISTORIC COMMISSION  
City of Ellisville  
No. 1 Weis Avenue  
Ellisville, MO 63011

MAPLEWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION  
City of Maplewood  
7601 Manchester Avenue  
Maplewood, MO 63143

Many of the architects credited with designing church buildings listed in this survey were familiar names in the realm of St. Louis architecture. Joseph Murphy, Frederick Dunn, and Gyo Obata are well known and cited for their work in this region. However, this survey revealed a number of new architects, some internationally known, that up to this point had not been credited for their work. For example, until this survey, only a few church structures in this area had been attributed to the Daly Company, but research revealed a number of additional Catholic churches designed by the company. Because of this survey, Robert L. Fischer, while already known for his designs throughout the region, was credited with even more church designs. Rodriguez Design Associates was an example of an architectural firm where little was known of their work prior to this survey, but was found to have designed some of the most unique, important examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture (St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church in Ellisville and St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Hazelwood). These architects and firms, along with others uncovered as a result of this survey, should be further researched. A more comprehensive list of architects and their work will provide a better overarching look at themes and patterns of architectural and social movements of St. Louis County.

During the windshield survey component of this inventory, a common architectural theme of churches built after 1970 began to emerge. Structures built in the 1970s were frequently found to be built in a fan-shape or large, box-like shape. Although the fan-shape structure is found in mid-century modern architecture nation-wide, that layout tended to be less common in this region until later in the period. For example, the fan-shaped Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Florissant was not designed until 1964. The use of man-made materials was still evident, but the focus on incorporating height or natural light seemed less so. As the construction year progressed into the 1980s and early 1990s, a finish using a sand-mix material (the most commonly used product brand is Dryvit) became more regularly used. An attempt should be made in the future to document the churches built after 1970, particularly in the 1970s, in St. Louis County, following similar research methods as this survey.

It is important to note that simply because particular churches are not designated by this survey as historic or having architectural distinction does not imply that the structures are less important to the communities within which they are located. However, the 104 churches that were selected in this survey as excellent examples of church architecture do provide a vital, tangible link to mid-twentieth century culture.

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