The Story of Purchasing Tri-C's Church

The process started when the Moderator, Ben Yamagiwa requested James Shikami in April of 1999 to look for a permanent church for Christ Church of Chicago. At that time, Tri-C was holding it's services at Bethlehem United Church of Christ at 1713 Cullom. Although the officers and members of Bethlehem church were very accommodating, the service and activities of the two churches became burdensome. It was time to seek a church of our own.

It was soon after Ben Yamagiwa's request that I found a church at

5846 Spaulding Ave. that was up for sale. After taking a look of the church building from all sides outside the church, I went inside and looked at the chapel, kitchen, social hall which could be converted to a basketball court by having the two backboards with net to come down from ceiling height at each end of the social hall, and, upstairs above the social hall to rooms for classes. It seemed ideal for our church.

I asked the custodian if I could have our church members to come on a Saturday to see the place. It was agreed that it could be done and a date for this to happen was set. A large number of our members did show up on Saturday and saw the outside and inside the church. The members were very enthusiastic in their approval of the church and site location. In talking to the custodian and leaders of this church to find out how much they were asking for the sale of the church, they came out with a figure that appeared somewhat feasible for our church. If we could be successful in bargaining for a slight decrease in their sale price, that would be very meaningful for our church.

Church of Christ Presbyterian, another Japanese church group, soon found this same church and their members liked everything about the church. One of their leaders was Mr. Funai, President of the Funai Law

firm. Funai Law Firm was a very successful law firm with a large staff of lawyers. Mr. Funai's leadership and financial means played a large part in Church of Christ Presbyterian in purchasing the church.

Members of Christ Church of Chicago were very disappointed in losing this opportunity to have their own church, especially, a church that was well suited as far as location of the church.

Soon after this loss, I saw an ad in the Chicago Tribune newspaper, that 12 Lutheran Churches in Chicago located in areas North and West side. I decided to visit each church and it took 3 weeks. Some were small and some were quite large but two had possibilities. One was located on Lawrence Street and not far West. Street parking looked adequate and a small park on the East side of the church. It had a large Chapel, a number of classrooms and a full basketball court in the basement as well as a large kitchen. The downside for this church was that it showed many areas with cracked walls and floors. The basketball court appeared to have water seepage problems. Overall, the investment required to bring this church into a healthy condition would be quite large. The other church had similar problems with cracked walls, paint discolorations, and water problems.

After visiting all 12 Lutheran Churches, decided not to bring any of the churches to the leadership of Christ Church of Chicago.

On a Saturday night, one week after visiting the 12 Lutheran Churches, I received a call from Rev. Nelson of St. Marks Lutheran Church on Rockwell Street. She said that they have not advertised their church was up for sale because they wanted to sell their church to Christ Church of Chicago. Rev. Nelson also stated that she had been invited to handle a church service for Christ Church of Chicago while they were located at Bethany United Church of Christ facility. Rev. Nelson said that she

enjoyed the session and liked meeting with members of the church. When Rev. Nelson's church decided to sell their church, she told them of her experience in providing a church service for Christ Church of Chicago. She felt strongly that the kind of love and friendship offered at that service should be shared at St. Marks Lutheran Church.

I set up a time to visit the church and met with Rev. Nelson and her Moderator. The church was large with a nice size Chapel, a sub-Chapel, a large size social hall with stage, a number of class size rooms, office spaces, large restrooms for men and women, storage room for janitor and other rooms as well, a large kitchen, and a large room for special meetings. The church seemed to fit the needs of Christ Church of Chicago.

I asked Rev. Nelson if we could hold a short service at their church on a Saturday to see what our church members think of this church as a future home for Christ Church of Chicago. A Saturday date was set and a large number of church members came for the service and to see the outside and inside the church. It was unanimous in their opinion that this church should become the home for Christ Church of Chicago.

With this reception by our members, I had a meeting with Rev. Nelson and their Moderator to go over their selling price for their church, including the Parsonage house attached to the church. Their offer was $1,000,000 for the church and parsonage plus $100,000 for the organ.

I had a meeting with the Trustees, Building Committee and Investment Group, to get their advice on the purchase of St. Marks Lutheran Church. (See the document papers given to me by Elaine Kaneshiro which has the cover page, Christ Church of Chicago Presents…Saint Mark Lutheran Church,6045-6057 North Rockwell, Chicago, Illinois). The document shows an excellent progression of the process the church

leaders took in making their decision in purchasing St. Mark Lutheran Church.

As stated in the document just mentioned, as chairman of The Larger Committee, I called a congregational meeting to have everyone the opportunity to share their opinion on the purchase of St. Mark Lutheran Church. In that presentation the report from Inspired Partnerships, a non-profit corporation, that is well known in work done with historical building appraisal and restoration, the appraisal of St. Mark's structure was found to be structurally sound. In addition, the sell price provided by St. Mark's church was presented to the congregation members.

Based on the approval of the members to purchase the church, the Building Committee and Investment Group leaders presented the financial situation and suggested a purchase price of $850,000 for the church, parsonage and the organ.

The congregation members approved the purchase at $850,000.

I called Rev. Nelson and spoke to her and the Moderator that our total price would be $850,00 for the church, parsonage and organ. They said they would present our offer on the following Sunday. Rev. Nelson will call me as soon as a decision had been made. That Sunday night Rev. Nelson called and said that the members of St. Mark Lutheran Church and Rogers Park Lutheran Church had just approved the sale to Christ Church of Chicago. Rogers Park Lutheran Church had previously sold their church to the Chicago Board of Education and joined St. Mark Lutheran church. The combined church had very few members. Since Rev. Nelson had decided to join the University of Chicago Religious staff, the minister from Rogers Park Lutheran Church became the minister of the combined church. In the vote to sell to Christ Church of Chicago, the lone vote against selling the church to Christ Church of

Chicago was the Rev. from Rogers Park Lutheran Church. He had received an offer from Devon Bank that it had a customer who would pay $100,000 over the price that Christ Church of Chicago offers. The members voted for Christ Church of Chicago because they wanted their church to remain a church and not to be torn down to build a structure to house either apartments or condos.

When I heard the good news, I called Steve Takaki to join with me to go to 3 banks to see where we could get the best deal. Steve showed his ability to deal with banks with a well thought out presentation. We got a good deal.

After getting our bank mortgage, we had a day to settle with the combined church of St. Mark Lutheran Church and Rogers Park Lutheran Church which now were listed as St. Mark Lutheran Church. The sale was completed and Christ Church had a new home.

I put together a list of activities which included the leader of each group and the members under each group. The activity included preparing. Marking and packaging all the items to be moved to the new church, teams for the new church to received and put the goods in their proper place, Cleaning the new church and making the Parsonage livable. All the committee leaders and their members went right to work. Not one person complained about being on a committee even though it was done by me. Everyone, it seemed, loved the opportunity to have a new home and would help to make the home their home.

Within a month after the purchase of St. Mark Lutheran Church, the church received a letter from the State of Illinois that stated since the Parsonage was vacant, it will be placed back on the tax roll. It's true that at that time we did not have a permanent Minister who most likely

would live at the Parsonage but relied on visitor Ministers. I was told of the situation so I contacted United Church of Christ office and asked for a list of lawyers that could be helpful in this situation. A list of four lawyers were provided to me. I called each one and found one lawyer who was willing to assist me pro-bono. He turned out to be excellent. We had four meetings with the State Judge in Chicago. Each time I had to show more evidence that the Parsonage was an important part of the main church. I took photos in the basement of the Parsonage where we stored things for the bazaar and other activities of the church, then took more pictures showing students in the living room of the Parsonage with their teacher, and then took more pictures of women in the kitchen of the Parsonage making food for the church bazaar. After the fourth meeting with the Judge, he agreed with us that the Parsonage should be included with the church and no tax should be charged. He sent his judgement to the State of Illinois. I received the State of Illinois agreement with the Judge's decision. I then had to take that letter to the City of Chicago taxing department where it was also listed as a non-taxable entity.

That's the end of the long journey in getting a new home for Christ Church of Chicago.

Please note: I've included this document with the award given to me for assisting Christ Church in finding their new home. After the award was given to me in assisting Christ Church of Chicago to find a new home, I stored it in the garage. Over time it cracked and I thought I got rid of it with other trash. After Lois passing, clearing out many of Lois' drawers, Kevin found this award. Apparently, Lois had gone to the garage and saw the award and put it away. I did not know she had it until Kevin showed it to me.

If you feel it brings closure to finding a new home that's fne.

James Shikami