Architectural Profile
Christ Church of Chicago

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On April 16, 1926, St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church submitted a building permit to the city of Chicago for the creation of a parsonage and church building at 6045-6057 North Rockwell Street (Figure 1). On the permit, Brant is listed as the architect, and J. Tovf is listed as the contractor. The congregation built a simple brick chapel and parsonage, which were dedicated on October 10 of the same year (Figure 2).

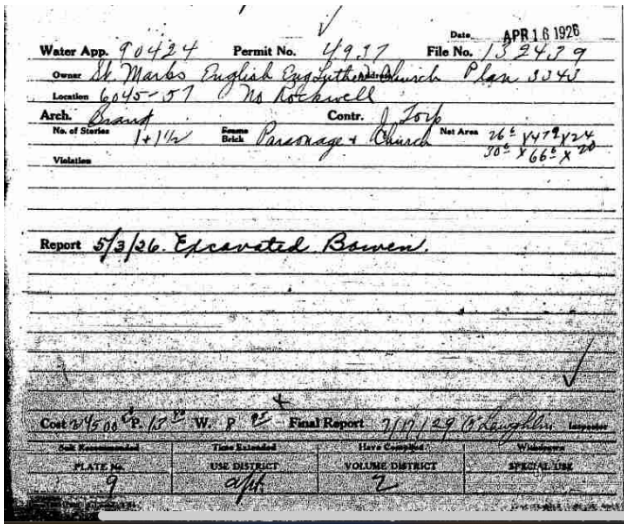

Water App. 90424 Permit No. 49.17 Date APR 16 1926 File No. 132479
Owner St Marks English Evg Lutheran Church Plan 3346
Location 6045-57 N Rockwell
Arch. Brant Contr. J Tovf
No. of Stories 1+1½ Frame Brick Parsonage + Church Net Area 26± x47½ x24 30± x66± x20
Violation
Report 5/3/26. Excavated. Bowen.
Cost 2/15 00 P. 17 W. P Final Report 7/19/29 O'Laughlin Inspector
Soil Recommended | Time Extended | Have Complied | Windows
PLATE No. 9 | USE DISTRICT a/1f | VOLUME DISTRICT 2 | SPECIAL USE

Figure 1: Chicago building permit, from University of Illinois Chicago



Figure 2: The 1926 chapel and parsonage, which still exist on the property today, from the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

In 1947, the city approved plans for the construction of a new, larger church for the St. Mark's congregation on the same plot of land. The larger space was simply added onto the existing chapel and parsonage. The building permit was submitted to the city on April 15, 1953, with Eric G. Stenbeck as the architect and Ray L. Lantz as the contractor (Figure 3). On March 28, 1954, the church dedicated the new building.

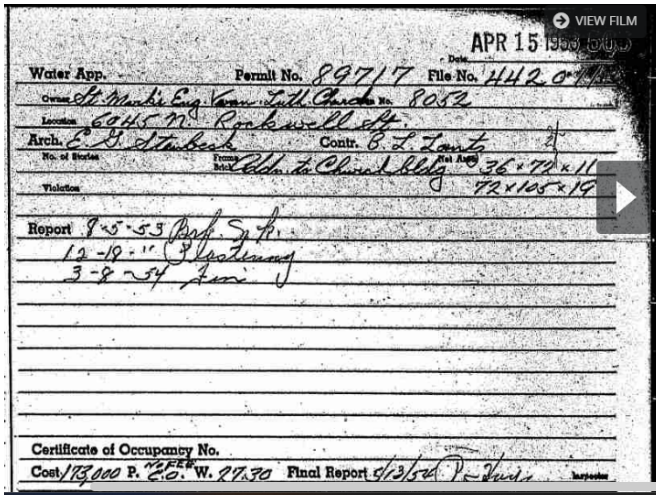


Figure 3: Chicago building permit, from the University of Illinois Chicago

In its current form, the building is a minimalistic example of the Gothic revival style. A unique combination of red brick, stonework, and pointed gothic arches, the church building truly stands tall amongst its neighboring churches.



Figure 4: The entrance of Christ Church of Chicago in 2023.

As pictured in Figures 4, 5, and 6, classic Gothic arches adorn the gathering place on all sides. While the heavy use of red brick may lead the average passerby to identify the structure as a Romanesque church, the pointed windows ornamented with ironwork and terra cotta are key factors of the Gothic revival style.





Figure 5 (left): Front center of Christ Church of Chicago in 2023.

Figure 6 (right): Back of Christ Church of Chicago in 2023.

However, the church does fit squarely into all facets of gothic revival. It maintains minimal ornamentation, and no grand finials or hood moulds. Rather than erect a traditional Gothic church or utilize the 1930s architectural fad of Art Deco, architect Eric. G. Stenbeck elected to lean toward the rising modernist trend of the mid-1940s. In the original agreement signed by the St. Mark's congregation, Stenbeck, and contractor Ray L. Lantz, there is a focus on ensuring the building would

maintain a clean face with great precision and care given to the placement of each brick upon the concrete foundation.



Figure 7: The front of Christ Church of Chicago in 2023

In 2000, Christ Church of Chicago bought the property from St. Mark's English Evangelical Lutheran Church when the latter merged with Rogers Park Lutheran Church and moved to 7045 North Western Avenue. The only real renovation that Christ Church has done to the property since purchasing it has been the addition of wheelchair lifts to interior staircases.

While Christ Church of Chicago has not permanently altered the building much, the congregation has decorated the inside of the sanctuary with three removable adornments to better represent their community. First, the large cross above the altar was brought from Christ Church of Chicago's first permanent location on Buckingham Place (Figure 8). Hanging on either side of the altar are quilted banners made by women of the church (Figure 9). Featuring both kanji, or Japanese characters, and Christian symbols, the quilts' imagery represents the largely Japanese American congregation's journeys to the United States and to Chicago. Also hanging throughout the sanctuary is a paper chain of origami cranes. The chain was sent by a United Church of Christ congregation in Dallas, Texas, after the murder of Christ Church of Chicago's long-time organist. Once Christ Church of Chicago has healed, the chain will go to another United Church of Christ congregation in need of healing.

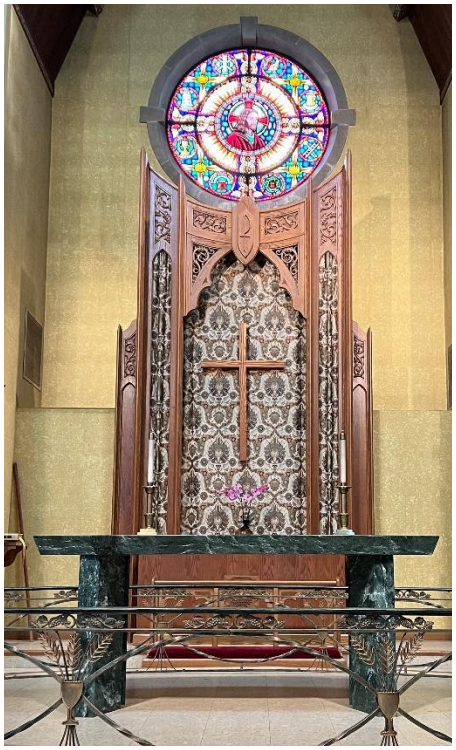




Figure 8 (left): The altar

Figure 9 (right): The banner that hangs on the right side of the altar

As seen in Figures 4 and 7, Christ Church of Chicago also added a rainbow banner that reads, "God is still speaking" above the front doors outside. Similar to a Pride Flag, the banner is meant to welcome people of the LGBT+ community.

Christ Church of Chicago has made it its mission to welcome and accept people from all backgrounds as their original congregation found community in exclusion. This mission is reflected in the place their congregation calls home as it is a unique collection of architectural styles and symbolism both inside and out. Rooted in the Catholic tradition, the gothic windows call back to the origins of the faith that was practiced in grandly ornamented churches. Its brick exterior exemplifies the steadfastness and perseverance of the resilient congregation that survived the Japanese internment camps. Though accessibility is required by law now, the lifts reflect Christ Church of Chicago's commitment to being an inclusive space. The rainbow banner above the front doors also reflects their commitment to inclusivity. Christ Church of Chicago still pays homage to its Japanese American heritage through the kanji on the quilted banners, even though they welcome and accept individuals regardless of their background.



Figure 10: A stone on one of the 1926 buildings, recognizing its founding year and original congregation

Sources

"Permit No. 4937." *Chicago Building Permits, Book 33, North*. City of Chicago. From University of Illinois Chicago. https://dr652a.bmiimaging.com/Roll/Roll?datasetName=Chicago%20Building%20Permits%2C%201872-1954&rollID=eceab293-76ba-4c64-b144-d0e8d54627e1&frameNumber=1 (accessed March 2023).

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