

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ

Other names/site number: Graham Temple

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 810 Elwood Avenue North

City or town: Minneapolis State: MN County: Hennepin

Not For Publication: N/A

Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

1

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Romanesque

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Stone, Asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ is located at 810 Elwood Avenue North on the Near North Side of Minneapolis, an area of North Minneapolis nearest to the downtown business district (Figure 1). The building is sited atop a hill in a residential area where Elwood Avenue intersects with Eighth Avenue North. Its location conforms to a Jewish tradition that a synagogue should rise above the surrounding buildings.

The large, rectangular building features dark brown brick and buff colored limestone trim. Constructed on a raised basement, the building rises over two stories high (Photo 1). A stone water table separates the basement from the upper portion of the building. A low-pitch gable roof with asphalt shingles covers the building. The façade is Romanesque inspired, featuring a prominent arch, although windows along the sidewalls are capped with pointed arches. The windows feature multi-colored stained glass with prominent tones of amber. The interior is notable for its original wall paintings that were installed in 1932.

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The building was designed by architect Perry Crosier and constructed in 1926 for the Tiferenth B'nai Jacob congregation, which had been founded by Orthodox Jewish immigrants. In 1957, the building was purchased by the First Church of God in Christ, a Holiness-Pentecostal African American congregation that continues to worship in the building to this day. This National Register Nomination recognizes the history and significance of both congregations.

Narrative Description

The Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ measures approximately 83 long, 53 feet wide and 31 feet high. The building's distinctive brown brick features a textured face with vertical striations. Overall, the design of the building is eclectic with a Romanesque arch on the facade, surrounded by decorative brickwork in a geometric pattern. The building also features stylized classical details such as the keystone at the peak of the arch and brick piers topped with Corinthian-inspired capitals flanking the entrance doors.

The building was repaired following a serious fire in 1932, and several changes were also made to the exterior including modifications to the main stairway and the entrance. At the same time, the interior was decorated with elaborate wall paintings and other ornate features.

West Elevation

The west-facing principal elevation fronts Elwood Avenue. (Photo 2) Two broad flights of concrete steps lead to the entrance. The lower flight angles toward the street in order to align with Elwood Avenue, which curves as it extends past the property. Twelve steps flanked by steel railings rise to a wide landing. The second flight rises fifteen steps to a second landing that fronts the main entrance. Railings also flank the second flight and an additional railing is positioned in the center of the stairway. The landing at the top of the stairs is flanked by brick sidewalls with a concrete coping. At the base of each sidewall, and at ground level, there are two windows now filled with glass block.

The west elevation features three bays: a central bay flanked by tower-like projecting bays to each side. The center bay is characterized by a large, recessed brick arch, which incorporates the main entrance and windows above. The arch includes stone springers and a keystone. The surrounding wall surface features decorative brickwork in a diamond pattern that is executed in a darker brown brick than the primary brick employed on the building. A flat parapet wall conceals the building's gable roof.

The tri-part entrance includes paired doors in the center and a single door to each side. (Photo 3) The paired doors include four, small square windows with raised frames. The single doors also feature four square windows with raised frames as well as six frames below with blind windows. Brick piers with capitals separate the three entrances. The four capitals feature scrolls set within a stylized foliated design in a variation of a Corinthian capital. (Photo 4) A rondel at the center of each capital originally contained an incised Star of David although they are now barely

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visible. Traces of blue paint remain and suggest that each Star of David had been painted blue. A broad stone lintel is positioned above the brick piers and extends across the full length of the entrance. The lintel once contained an inscription in dark lettering stating "Tifereth B'nai Jacob" in Hebrew. (See historic photo, Image 7) The lettering is no longer visible and appears to have been covered with stucco. A cast-iron lantern is placed to each side of the entrance. (Photo 5)

The windows above the entrance, all set within the arch, are separated into sections by raised brick piers. (Photo 6) The windows are casements with wood frames. The lower windows, immediately above the entry, include four, tall narrow windows above the paired entrance doors, and two, tall narrow windows above the flanking single doors. A stone tablet with the first words of the Ten Commandments inscribed in Hebrew is positioned between the lower and upper window arrangements.

The upper windows follow a similar arrangement to the lower windows, but the window frames are capped with round arches or conform to the curve of the arch. Each of the window openings features a T-shaped metal insert that is attached to the window frames on the exterior. Except for the inserts in the smaller flanking windows, a decorative heart-shaped element with a foliated design is placed at the intersection of the T. The inserts may have been installed for safety purposes as the windows are positioned quite close to the floor of the upper level.

A circular window is positioned at the peak of the arch and originally held a Star of David. This window has been infilled with a wooden panel. The central bay by is completed with a flat, parapet wall with a raised brick edge that conceals the building's gable roof.

Rectangular towers flank the center bay. The towers project slightly from the face of the wall. A single entrance door, which extends through the water table, is positioned at the base of each tower, providing access to stairways leading to the upper and lower levels. A stone surround frames the doors. Each doorway also has a wire mesh outer door. Two slender windows, one above the other, are centered in each tower. The windows are framed with stone trim. Each tower is capped with a triangular stone parapet. The towers were originally crowned with a large Star of David supported by a tall post but they have been removed.

All the windows on the west elevation have storm windows with thin white frames that were installed in recent years.

There is a cornerstone on each side of the building, placed directly below the water table. The cornerstones have been covered with stucco but the stucco on the cornerstone at the north side of the building has deteriorated and the following inscription is visible: "Donated by Mr. & Mrs. Louis J. Berman," although no information has been found to identify the specifics of the donation. Stucco completely covers the cornerstone on the south side of the building and obscures any inscription.

A two-sided sign, perpendicular to the wall, is placed above the entrance. (Photo 7) A steel bar and steel cables support the sign. The sign's wording states: "Graham Temple, Home of 1st

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Church of God in Christ, Pastor Tierre A. Webster.” Graham Temple is a reference to Bishop John W. Graham who headed the congregation beginning in about 1937 until his death in 1967.

South Elevation

The south elevation is divided into four bays by brick piers with dripstones. (Photo 8) There are two stained-glass windows with steel frames in each bay on the main and upper levels. However, there is a blind window on the main level in the bay to the west as a result of the location of the stairway to the balcony on the interior. The brick spandrels between the windows are recessed. The windows on the upper level feature pointed arches, while the windows on the main level are rectangular. All the windows feature stone sills.

The basement level includes five windows that align with the windows above. They are located in the second, third, and fourth bays when viewed from west to east. The windows are nine-light casements with steel frames and they also feature stone sills. An original window in the second bay was removed in recent years to accommodate a door for an accessible entrance. This entrance is covered with a canopy supported by two steel rods attached to the side of the building. The fourth bay includes an entrance to the basement level that is believed to have been installed in 1932. A stairway defined by a low concrete wall descends to this door. In 2023, a canopy was installed over the entrance. The canopy is supported by two steel posts. All the windows on the south elevation are protected with wire mesh screens.

North Elevation

The design of the north elevation is nearly identical to the south elevation. (Photo 9) The window arrangement and detailing are the same on the main and upper levels, including the blind window on the main level in the first bay to the west. The basement level features four nine-light casement windows with steel frames positioned in the first, second, and third bays when viewed from west to east. The windows also feature stone sills. The fourth bay includes two small, three-light, rectangular casement windows with steel frames located near the top of the basement wall surface. All windows on the north elevation are protected with wire mesh screens. The fourth bay also includes a stairway that descends to a door providing access to the basement level near the boiler room. The sidewalls of the stairway are poured concrete. A wire mesh fence is positioned alongside the stairway. In 2023, a canopy supported by two steel posts was installed over the stairway.

The brick wall of the basement level has been covered with stucco beginning at the east end of the third bay and extending through the fourth bay. In recent years, six air-conditioning units were installed on the exterior of the main level.

East Elevation

The east elevation exposes the building's gable roof and poured-concrete foundation. (Photo 10) There is a single rectangular stained-glass window in each of the outer bays on the main level

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and a corresponding single stained-glass window on the upper level. The upper windows are capped with a pointed arch like those on the south elevation. A shallow rectangular projection in the center of the east elevation rises to the height of about a story and a half. This projection is covered with a shed roof and incorporates a tall chimney at the north end that rises above the roofline. A three-sided bay covered by a hip roof is attached at the center of the projection. This bay features a single stained-glass window with a round arch, which allows daylight into the Torah Ark. The windows on the east elevation also feature stone lintels.

There are two casement windows with steel frames at the left side of the exposed basement that are set within the poured-concrete foundation wall. At the right, the walls of the former boiler room and coal bunker rise to the height of the basement and extend around the northeast corner of the building. This section of the building is covered with a flat roof. There are several rectangular casement windows with steel frames set within its walls as well as the former access panel for the coal bunker.

Interior

Vestibule

The entrance doors open into a vestibule extending across the width of the building with identical staircases at each side leading to the balcony and to the basement level. A beam that extends above the stairways features a bracket with a foliated design. (Photo 11) Stained glass windows are positioned above the entrance doors and illustrate the design of the stained-glass windows throughout the building. (Photo 12) Rectangular panes of glass in variegated tones of amber, gray, brown, and blue are framed with narrow bands of green, amber, and gray. The corner of each window features a foliated design. A window in the south stairwell illustrates the design of the stained-glass windows with pointed arches that are positioned on the upper walls of the building. The triangular portion of these window features additional foliated designs. (Photo 13)

Set into the concrete floor of the vestibule is a round medallion of gold and blue terrazzo containing the inscription, "SEAL OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, INC, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE." (Photo 14) The center of the medallion contains an image of a shaft of wheat and the wording, "Founded 1907." The wheat in the center represents the many members of the Church of God in Christ. The rope binding the sheaf together represents Church of God in Christ founder Charles Mason. The rain in the background is a reference to the revivals practiced by the church.

Sanctuary

Two sets of paired doors opposite the main entry open into the rectangular sanctuary. (Photos 15-17) The wood floor slopes from back to front with the wooden pews arranged into three sections divided by two aisles, creating a section of long pews in the center, and a section of shorter pews on each side along the exterior walls.

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The ceiling is flat in the central portion of the sanctuary but then slopes toward the sidewalls, terminating just above the windows. Chandeliers of white, multi-sided opaque glass are suspended from the ceiling.

Bimah/Chancel

The bimah, or chancel, is at the east end of the sanctuary. (Photos 18 and 19) The congregation faces east, toward Jerusalem, the direction of prayer according to Jewish tradition. The bimah is defined by a raised platform with three levels while the original Torah Ark is positioned at the rear and set within a recessed opening with a double, ogee-type arch. The Torah Ark, or cabinet, is an elaborate wooden structure with stepped sides and a round arch at the top with a keystone. The classically inspired structure features engaged pilasters, moldings, and recessed panels with garlands and swags and is covered by a proscenium with five coffered panels each containing a single light. Paired cabinet doors at the center are framed by four Corinthian columns that support an architrave with modillions. The cabinet once held the sacred Torah Scrolls, handwritten copies of the five books of the Hebrew bible, which are read aloud at services. When the cabinet doors are opened, light pours into the space through the stained-glass window on the exterior of the building. At the top of the Torah Ark, a faint outline of a Star of David that had once been in place can be seen within the arch.

Balcony/Women's Gallery

Accessed from the two stairways in the vestibule, the balcony, also referred to as the women's gallery, which was a requirement in an Orthodox synagogue, because women were not allowed on the main floor during services, curves around the back half of the sanctuary in a horseshoe-shaped configuration. (Photos 20 and 21) The balcony is supported by two cast-iron columns. Individual wooden, theatre-style seats are arranged in stepped rows that descend to the front of the balcony. There is a center aisle and an aisle along each exterior wall. Along the sidewalls near front of the balcony, seats are arranged in rows parallel to the wall.

A small room at the back of the balcony may be accessed from the landing at the top of either stairway. The rectangular space is currently used for storage although its original use is not known. The stained-glass windows in the room are those set within the top of the round arch on the building's west elevation. A trap door in the ceiling provides access to the attic. Following the fire in 1932 that damaged the balcony and roof structure, as well as other areas of the building, structural repairs were completed that are visible in the attic. Steel trusses installed at the time are visible along with charred or smoke-blackened timbers that reveal the damage from the fire.

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Wall Paintings

In addition to structural repairs following the 1932 fire, new pews and fixtures were installed and the Torah Scrolls were replaced as they had also been damaged in the fire. The building was also extensively redecorated with elaborate wall paintings and decorative elements.

The wall paintings include several painting techniques: **trompe l'oeil**, meaning "deceive the eye," in which painting on a flat surface makes an image appear three dimensional; **stenciling**, or the use of cutout patterns to repeat a decoration; and **free-hand painting**. **Faux finishes** are also employed that replicate the appearance of the other materials such as marble.

The same color palette is used for repetitive features, often in tones of brown, tan, or gray, providing a consistent appearance for the wall art.

The Torah Ark

Painted free hand in dark red on the wall above the Torah Ark, tromp l'oeil draperies with swags are pulled back as if to reveal it. (Photo 18) Hand painted urns and vases are placed alongside the Ark as if they are positioned on the Ark's ledges. (Photos 22 and 23) The vases are beautifully rendered with flowers. (Photo 24) The background wall is painted to represent a blue sky with clouds. On the ceiling above The Ark and bimah, and between the draperies, can be seen the remnants of sun rays, a common motif in many nineteenth and early twentieth century synagogues. (Photo 18) At one time the entire rising sun may have been visible.

Sanctuary Walls

The walls of the sanctuary feature a wainscot about four feet high, which is painted in tones of browns and reds to resemble marble. Columns are positioned around the sanctuary. (Photo 16) They are painted to simulate the three-dimensional quality of a fluted column and also feature a gray faux finish resembling marble. The columns are completed with stenciled capitals with stylized acanthus leaves on a lattice background. (Photo 25) At the front of the sanctuary the columns rise the full height of the building where they are not interrupted by the position of the balcony. Where they are interrupted by the balcony, the columns on both the main and upper levels include capitals.

The windows are framed with surrounds in tones of gray simulating marble. Near the front of the sanctuary where the upper and lower windows are not separated by the balcony, a stenciled sunburst in tones of brown and tan is positioned between the windows. (Photo 26) A stenciled frieze, also in tones of brown, tan, and red encircles the main level, linking the tops of the faux frames of the windows on the main level. Featuring a foliated design, the frieze continues along the side walls as well as the rear wall of the sanctuary where it is positioned above the doors to the vestibule. (Photo 27)

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A final frieze is positioned at the point where the walls of the sanctuary meet the ceiling. This stenciled, tromp l'oeil frieze features a dentil course with shading that creates a three-dimensional effect. (Photo 15)

Ceiling

The painted ceiling features the stars and clouds of the night sky on a blue background. (Photo 21) Astral imagery found in the Hebrew Bible frequently refers to God residing in the Heaven, which may account for its appearance in synagogues, as well as many Christian churches.

The Zodiac Signs

The zodiac is represented in a series of paintings on the face of the balcony. (Photos 17 and 28) Zodiac signs appear historically in many synagogues as far back as ancient times. Rather than astrological meaning, the zodiac signs represent the passage of time, the change in seasons, or a connection to the heavens. The order of the signs signals its Jewish application, for unlike the traditional order of the zodiac that starts in the spring with Aries (March 21-April 19), the series begins with Libra (September 20-October 22), on the far right, corresponding to the autumn season when the Jewish New Year begins. The twelve zodiac signs are to be read from right to left, as is the Hebrew language, and include Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius (Photo 29), Capricorn (Photo 30), Aquarius (Photo 31), Pisces (Photo 32), Aires (Photo 33), Taurus, Gemini (Photo 34), Cancer, Leo, and Virgo (Photo 35).

Each zodiac image is positioned in a rondel centered within a rectangular cartouche. The cartouche features a frame with bands of green and light brown surrounding a dark brown background covered with light brown latticework. Foliated decorations and ribbons extend over the latticework and around the rondel. While the cartouche is stenciled, the zodiac signs are hand painted, each representing a highly detailed miniature landscape. Of particular note are the signs of Aquarius Gemini, and Virgo, which contain human figures, a rarity in synagogue wall art.

Basement

The lower level is accessed by the two stairways off the vestibule at the west end of the building. There is an entrance to a restroom at the base of each stairway with the men's restroom off the south stairway and the women's off the north stairway. The restrooms extend beyond the west wall of the building and under the landing that fronts the main entrance to the building.

Double doors off the stairways lead to the main space on the lower level. (Photo 36) The space occupies the majority of the lower level and is used for gatherings, events, and dinners. A raised platform is at the west end, between the doorways to the stairs. The accessible entrance to the building is located on the south wall of the space. This entrance opens onto a landing with stairs to the basement and a lift to provide transport to the basement level or to the sanctuary. A kitchen is located at the northeast corner of the basement. The former boiler room and coal

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bunker are entered from the kitchen. The exterior entrance along the north wall of the building provides access to the kitchen, immediately adjacent to the boiler room.

A door in the east wall of the large gathering space leads to a hallway, which extends from the second exterior entrance on the south wall of the building to the kitchen. Two offices are located off the hallway along the east side of the building. It is not known whether the hall and offices are original to the building or were added in the modern era.

Site

As noted, the building is perched atop a hill, observing the Jewish tradition that a synagogue should arise above the surrounding buildings. The remainder of the property is largely lawn, except for a paved parking lot at the east side of the building that is reached by a driveway entering the property from 8th Avenue North.

A sign for the property is placed at a diagonal near the southwest corner of the building. The rectangular sign is set within a concrete base and surround. A tall flagpole extends from the center. Based on historic photographs, the sign and flagpole were in place while the building served as a synagogue. Today the signage reads, "1st Church of God in Christ," with the schedule for services noted.

Assessment of Integrity

The Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue/First Church of God in Christ has retained very high integrity throughout its continuous Period of Significance representing the tenure of both congregations. The building clearly retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It remains at its original location and is surrounded by buildings from the historic period including residences as well as several institutional buildings from the period. For example, buildings that housed the former Emanuel Cohen Center and the former Sheltering Home for Children, both of which served the Jewish community, are located a short distance to the northwest of the building.

The building also retains very good integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. There have been no additions or major modifications. The few minor exterior changes include the accessible entrance on the south elevation and the rebuilding of the exterior stairs. The upper stairs were rebuilt in 1932 and circa 1980. The lower stairway was originally split, with a double approach from the sidewalk. The stairs experienced deterioration and were also rebuilt to their current appearance in about 1980. As would be expected, when the building was transformed from a synagogue to a church, exterior signage and two Stars of David were removed, modifications which simply represent the evolution of the building.

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Similarly, there have been very few changes to the interior, the addition of the lift for accessibility being the most prominent one. Again, as would be expected, some decorative features were removed when the synagogue was transformed into church, including the Star of David and Lions of Judah on the Torah Ark. But more importantly, the interior remains in remarkably original condition from its 1932 remodeling. It still reflects its design as a synagogue and retains its elaborate wall paintings. Thus, the building retains its historic character as both a synagogue and a church.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☒ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE-OTHER-ETHNIC

ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK

RELIGION

ART

Period of Significance

1926-1974

Significant Dates

1932

1957

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Perry Crosier

Liebenberg and Kaplan

Balkin Construction Co.

Dahlstrom & Weinberger

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A in multiple Areas of Significance because of the complex and intersecting histories of both congregations. Both were impacted by the same societal forces that shaped the Near North Side area of Minneapolis and resulted in the historic contexts that define the area. First, the building is significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage. The congregations that have occupied the building belonged to Jewish and American African communities that had few options but to settle on the Near North Side as the result of systemic racism, implicit segregation, and racial covenants, which limited opportunities and prevented their members from residing in many parts of Minneapolis, relegating them to this less desirable area of the city. Both groups struggled in their early years, worshipping in residences or storefront churches, but they ultimately established flourishing congregations and important religious institutions, all while encountering numerous adversities. Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ is significant for its ability to illustrate the underrepresented histories of these marginalized communities.

The construction of the Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue in 1926 is associated with the settlement of the Near North Side by Jewish immigrants, while its purchase in 1957 by the First Church of God in Christ reflects the demographic evolution of the area as the Jewish community ultimately migrated to suburban areas while African Americans expanded their presence on the Near North Side. Remarkably, the building is the second former synagogue to be occupied by the First Church of God in Christ. The 1957 purchase also reflects the displacement experienced predominantly by the African American community as a result of the construction of Interstate Highway 94, which destroyed commercial and residential areas along Lyndale Avenue, forcing businesses and residents to move, including the First Church of God in Christ and members of its congregation. Moreover, various urban renewal actions impacting the Near North Side have essentially eliminated nearly all the physical evidence of the earlier histories of both congregations.

As marginalized communities that faced particular obstacles and challenges, the building ultimately became a focal point for both congregations as they organized events and activities for their members and provided other forms of support that were denied them through mainstream channels. The Tifereth B'nai Jacob congregation was particularly notable for its social and political activism. The congregation invited politicians at the local, statewide, and national levels to speak; raised funds for various causes; worked with the Christian community to increase tolerance; and as early as 1933 tried to call attention to the perils of Nazi Germany.

The Church of God in Christ is also significant because it distinguished itself from other African American denominations by embracing African heritage and traditional African-based spiritual

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practices and by utilizing religion as a mechanism to promote social justice. In these ways, the church made substantial contributions to the African American ethnic identity of its members.

The First Church of God in Christ is also significant in the area of Religion as Minnesota's first congregation of the Church of God in Christ, which has grown to become the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States. The congregation was founded by three missionary couples who arrived in Minneapolis from Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1923, likely encouraged by the denomination's founder, Charles Mason. They arrived during an era known as the Great Migration when thousands of African Americans left southern states to escape poverty and injustice and seek employment opportunities and a less hostile environment. In addition, it is known that the congregation's founding members had connections to the notorious Tulsa Massacre of 1921, which resulted in the violent destruction of a prosperous African American neighborhood and business district known as Greenwood. In time, the church played an important leadership role in Minnesota and served as the denomination's headquarters for the state.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion C in the area of Art because of the high artistic value of its elaborate interior wall paintings. Not merely decorative in nature, the interior represents a remarkable example of the age of painted synagogues of which only a small number now survive in Europe and the United States. The wall paintings are exceptional for their quality, quantity, and state of preservation. The signs of the zodiac in particular are noteworthy for their artistic achievement. The entire interior represents an irreplaceable monument to American Jewish religious art.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ meets National Register Criteria Consideration A for Religious Properties. The property is significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Art. Its significance in the area of Religion is associated with the establishment of the first Church of God in Christ congregation in Minnesota and its important leadership role.

The Period of Significance begins in 1926 with the construction of the building and ends in 1974 based on the 50-year National Register guideline, although the significance of the property continues to the present day. The building is of Statewide significance because of the rarity of the interior wall paintings and because of the influential role of the First Church of God in Christ in Minnesota. Additional research might confirm whether the wall paintings possess National significance.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Narrative Statement of Significance begins with the history of Jewish settlement in Minneapolis and the North Side and continues with the history of the Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue. The narrative proceeds with a description of the architects and designers involved in

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the 1926 construction of the building, its repair in 1932, and the installation of the interior wall paintings. The narrative then continues with a history of African American settlement in Minneapolis and the North Side and proceeds to a history of the Church of God in Christ on both the national and local levels.

The History of Jewish Settlement in Minneapolis and the North Side

Early Jewish Settlement

The first Jews arrived in the state soon after the Minnesota Territory was created in 1849. The earliest arrivals settled in Minnesota from the eastern and southern United States from largely Germanic lands of central Europe, and in small numbers from western sections of Eastern Europe. They were attracted by mercantile and commercial opportunities opening up in the region, especially in Saint Paul. Some arrived with savings or had access to investment capital, which enabled them to establish commercial careers. Clothing and dry-goods merchants predominated. This first phase of Jewish life in Minnesota was characterized by the middle-class status of its members who lived within the context of the German cultural milieu.¹

By 1856, the Jewish settlers were able to establish the Mount Zion Hebrew congregation in Saint Paul. Jews in Minneapolis were slower to establish their institutions and it was not until 1878 that the Shaarai Tov congregation (now known as Temple Israel) was incorporated. Organized Jewish life was then focused in the Mount Zion and Shaarai Tov synagogues and they remained the central institutions of the German settlers until the 1880s when Eastern European Jews began to arrive.²

Eastern European Immigration

In 1882, approximately 600 Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe arrived in Minnesota, nearly equaling the older German Jewish community. These settlers came from a variety of regions but particularly the Russian Empire where they had fled religious and economic persecution. Repressive laws passed in Russia in 1881 restricted residency rights and dispossessed large numbers of Jews from rural districts. The resulting terroristic pogroms in which Jewish communities were attacked forced a mass exodus of Jews from Russia and the Eastern European countries along its boundary. Immigrating to the United States, large numbers settled in cities on the East Coast, but many moved farther west. This large influx of immigrants increased the Minneapolis Jewish community to 5,000 by 1900; 8,000 by 1910; and 15,000 by 1912.³

Unlike the earlier German arrivals, most of these new Jewish immigrants had little urban experience, spoke Yiddish, and arrived as refugees with very few resources. Their language and

¹ Hyman Berman, "The Jews," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Study of the State's Ethnic Groups*, edited by June Drenning Holmquist (Saint. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 489.

² Berman, 489-491.

³ Garneth O. Peterson, *Jewish Settlement in Minneapolis, 1860s-1972: Historic Context Study for Minneapolis Preservation Plan*, prepared by Landscape Research, August 1997, 5; Berman, 492.

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way of life were said to have been a shock and embarrassment to their Americanized fellow Jews.⁴ The *Minneapolis Tribune* announced the arrival of the first group of impoverished immigrants in an article published April 16, 1882, under the headline, "A Persecuted People." The article concluded: "Let the good people of Minneapolis, of all sects and of no sect, unite in this work of charity."

Initially, the immigrants strained Jewish resources although the Christian community contributed to the aid of the refugees. In time, the Jewish community was transformed into one of greater complexity that resulted in new institutions to support the immigrants.⁵

The new immigrants tended to develop separate neighborhood settlements rather than assimilate as the earlier German Jews had done. Like members of other ethnic groups that arrived in America during this era, the Eastern European Jews tended to live with others from their homeland with whom they shared a common language, customs, and religious attitudes. Newer arrivals from Romania and the Russian Empire concentrated in two separate neighborhoods, the Romanians on the South Side of Minneapolis near the intersection of Franklin Avenue and 15th Avenue South, and the Russians, Poles, and Lithuanians on the North Side near Washington Avenue and 5th Street North.⁶

Like most groups new to America, these immigrants sought inexpensive housing close to their primary job locations in the downtown or downtown fringe areas of Minneapolis. But unlike the earlier German Jews, who had greater experience in America, came west as pioneers with some capital and often spoke English, the later arrivals hailed from a peasant society in the Russian Empire. They had little money and came in greater numbers, making it more difficult for them to assimilate.⁷

In many cases, the length of time in America affected the strictness of religious practices. The newly arrived Eastern European immigrants usually followed Orthodox Judaism while the German Jews, with a longer tradition in a more assimilated community, tended to embrace Reform Judaism, which discarded some of the traditional practices. After the turn of the 20th century, a middle ground, or Conservative Judaism, emerged, which retained some of the traditions of the Orthodox, but with some accommodation to modern life. Thus, Conservative Judaism provided another alternative in an era of synagogue proliferation in Minneapolis. The variety of heritages of Jewish settlers led to synagogues serving each group. Between 1884 and 1905, eleven Orthodox synagogues were founded in Minneapolis, a recognition of the initial stage of the immigrant experience. Most of these were founded by people from a specific geographic region or community in their homeland and thus had homogeneous populations. Once the new residents became more established, the old geographic heritage became less important in synagogue formation.⁸

⁴ Peterson, 5.

⁵ Peterson, 5.

⁶ Peterson, 5; Berman, 493.

⁷ Peterson, 6.

⁸ Peterson, 6.

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The North Side Jewish Community

Jewish neighborhoods developed on both the North Side and South Side of Minneapolis. Each neighborhood created its own institutions, and developed according to its own pattern of growth.

The North Side of Minneapolis encompasses a large area and is home to many distinct neighborhoods ranging from Bryn Mawr on the south to Camden located north of Lowry Avenue, and from the commercial and industrial area along the banks of the Mississippi River on the east, to the lush green golf course and hills of Theodore Wirth Park on the west.

Architectural historian Larry Millett in his book *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities* comments that the "North Side has never been a glamorous part of Minneapolis . . . and it is literally on the other side of the tracks, separated from downtown Minneapolis by the city's oldest rail corridor, along Third Avenue North, built in the late 1860s."⁹

Tifereth B'nai Jacob is located in the Near North Neighborhood, roughly defined by the Mississippi River on the east, Penn Avenue on the west, Olson Memorial Highway on the south and Broadway Avenue on the north. The term Near North Side refers collectively to six neighborhoods, including the Near North Neighborhood, all located to the northwest of the city's downtown business district. The Near North Side of Minneapolis developed in the late nineteenth century when land from the Mississippi River to Girard Avenue was platted in 1885. Worker's cottages were located near the river, while the 1880s residential subdivision of Oak Lake held more substantial Victorian homes.¹⁰ Inexpensive housing north of Sixth Avenue North (now Olson Memorial Highway) and east of Lyndale Avenue was readily available and served as the first home for new immigrants. The area experienced a variety of population groups moving through during the late nineteenth century, including French, German, and Scandinavian immigrants, followed by an expanding Jewish population. The earliest Jewish settlement was near Washington Avenue and Fifth Street North, where at least two synagogues, Keneseth Israel and Anshei Tavrig, were built by 1900.

By the turn of the century, the Oak Lake area was becoming surrounded by railroads and industry, and the wealthy residents began to move to newer enclaves having occupied the area for only a single generation. The single-family homes were subdivided into flats, and the expanding Jewish population moved into them, leaving behind smaller houses that were attractive to the slowly growing African-American population. The Jewish population later moved farther north and west and Oak Lake became largely African-American by the 1920s.¹¹

By 1910, the North Side Jewish community contained approximately 4,500 residents, largely from Russia, Lithuania, and Poland in contrast to the South Side of Minneapolis, which

⁹ Larry Millett, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 188.

¹⁰ The Oak Lake subdivision was located to the east of present day Interstate 94 and south of 6th Avenue North (Olson Memorial Highway). The entire neighborhood has been obliterated by subsequent redevelopment.

¹¹ Peterson, 9.

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contained approximately 3,500 residents, largely from Romania. Jews on the North Side earned livings in many ways, including peddling, salvage, and other activities. Some established shops and other businesses serving the community, developing a vibrant business district along 6th Avenue North.

By the teens and 1920s, the Jewish community grew more Americanized and sought new or larger houses. Jewish families began to move into the newly platted Homewood subdivision located west of Penn Avenue. When Homewood was platted, restrictive covenants were placed on the parcels to prevent Jews and African Americans from purchasing properties. In this instance, however, the covenants were overlooked, possibly because the land had not been selling. In general, racial covenants became common in Minneapolis for newly platted areas after 1910. The wording varied, but the intent was to restrict home ownership to Caucasians. Racial covenants had a high impact on Jews and African Americans, preventing home ownership in desirable areas, and along with implicit biases that also limited opportunities for employment and education, resulted in a culture of institutional racism in Minneapolis that persists to this day.¹²

By the 1920s, as the Jewish community prospered, there were areas of middle and upper-middle class homes that developed on the North Side. The corresponding increase in population was paralleled by the development of a second generation of synagogues that also moved westward. In addition to Tifereth B'nai Jacob, the second-generation synagogues included the following:

- **Kenesseth Israel** - The earliest synagogue on the North Side, and for many years the most influential, was Kenesseth Israel (Assembly of Israel). Established in 1891 as a successor to an earlier congregation of Lithuanians, by 1895 the congregation was meeting at a synagogue on 4th Street North near Sixth Avenue North. In 1912, they built an impressive new synagogue at 518 Lyndale where they worshipped until 1948 when they purchased a former church in the Homewood neighborhood. The congregation built a new synagogue in St. Louis Park in 1969 but continued to hold services in both St. Louis Park and on the North Side until 1971. The Lyndale Avenue synagogue was razed to make way for Interstate 94.¹³
- **Mikro Kodesh** - Russian immigrant Jews founded the Anshei Russia (Men of Russia) in 1890. Five years later, the congregation changed its name to Mikro Kodesh (Holy Assembly), in an effort to end any acknowledgment of their homeland. Their first-generation building was a Greek Revival style synagogue built on Oak Park Avenue in 1901. In 1926, the congregation built an impressive Byzantine style synagogue just a few blocks away at 1000 Oliver Avenue North. By 1949, Mikro Kodesh was the largest

¹² Peterson, 10; The University of Minnesota's "Mapping Prejudice" project was created to shed light on these historic practices, including racial covenants, redlining, and predatory lending practices, which have resulted in demographic patterns that remain in place in Minneapolis to this day, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>.

¹³ Laura Weber, "Kenesseth Israel Congregation, St. Louis Park," MNOPEDIA, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.mnopedia.org/group/kenesseth-israel-congregation-st-louis-park>.

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Orthodox congregation in the Upper Midwest with some 500 families. But membership declined in the 1960s as members moved to the suburbs. In 1969, the Mikro Kodesh merged with a conservative congregation and moved to St. Louis Park. The building remained vacant for a decade and was then purchased by the nondenominational Disciples Ministry Church.¹⁴

- **Gemelus Chesed** – Residents from the town of Tavrig in Lithuania founded the Anshei Tavrig (Men of Tavrig) congregation in 1902 and met at 601 North Fourth Avenue. When they dissolved in 1913, their building was moved to 815 Girard Avenue North and became the Gemelus Chesed (Providing Kindness) synagogue. The congregation then merged with Sharei Zedeck and the building was later demolished.
- **Sharei Zedeck** - The last Orthodox synagogue founded on the North Side was Bet Ahron (House of Aaron), which was organized in 1906 by a group from Keneseth Israel. Known as Sharei Zedeck (Gates of Righteousness) by 1920, this first-generation synagogue was located at 726 Bryant Avenue North. The building was razed by the federal government along with 375 other buildings in 1936 to make way for the Sumner Field housing development, a New Deal project sponsored by the Public Works Administration (PWA). That same year the congregation constructed a new building at 1119 Morgan Avenue North.¹⁵ In 1969, the congregation moved to St. Louis Park and the building was sold to the African American St. John's Missionary Baptist Church. In 2016, the building was sold to the African American Faith Deliverance Holiness Church.
- **Beth El** – Reflecting the current changes in Jewish practices, the Beth El (House of God) synagogue was formed by a group of young people who wished to implement practices they believed would be more modern and meaningful to a new generation. It was the only congregation on the North Side to affiliate with Conservative Judaism. Their first synagogue, designed by Liebenberg and Kaplan, was built in 1926 at 1349 Penn Avenue North. The modernist lines of the building reflected the congregation's forward-thinking practices.

By the 1960s, however, many members had moved to St. Louis Park so the congregation purchased land and built its Youth and Activities Building there in 1963. By 1967, only 10% of the congregation still lived on the North Side and it became time to consolidate all their activities at the new site. The last services were held at the North Side synagogue in June 1968 and a new synagogue was completed in St. Louis Park in 1970. The City of Minneapolis purchased the North Side synagogue and used it for the Pilot City Health Services program. The building was razed in 1995.¹⁶

¹⁴ Laura Weber, "Mikro Kodesh Synagogue, Minneapolis," MNOPEdia, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.mnopedia.org/structure/mikro-kodesh-synagogue-minneapolis>.

¹⁵ Peterson, 11.

¹⁶ Laura Weber, "Beth El Synagogue, St. Louis Park," MNOPEdia, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.mnopedia.org/group/beth-el-synagogue-st-louis-park>.

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Several of the most important landmarks of the Jewish community on the North Side such as Keneseth Israel and Beth El synagogues have been demolished. The conversion of several of the surviving synagogues into churches that serve African American congregations reflects the ethnic and demographic history of the North Side.

Jewish Migration from the Central City

The Jewish community in Minneapolis had followed a traditional immigrant path, although somewhat complicated by differing ethnic heritage and religious traditions. Early immigrant neighborhoods provided the first home for synagogues and community institutions. But as the immigrants improved their situation, and as younger families were established, they moved out of the oldest neighborhoods and established a second generation of institutions. This generation remained through the Great Depression and World War II years, until the post-war economy encouraged the Jews, like other central city residents, to move to the suburbs.

The Jewish community on the South Side responded most quickly to the post-war changes. The North Side community, with generally fewer economic resources, remained for another decade until the late 1960s, when civil disturbances ended what remained of the primary Jewish business community along Plymouth Avenue. Synagogues and other community institutions largely moved to suburban locations to the west, including St. Louis Park and Minnetonka.¹⁷

According to a 1930 survey, there were 16,260 Jews living in Minneapolis, with 11,018, or 70%, living on the North Side. A map depicting the Jewish population in Minneapolis as of 1934 clearly illustrates the concentration of residents on the Near North Side. The population had already begun to shift westerly away from the earlier concentration near Lyndale Avenue and 6th Avenue North.¹⁸ (Figure 2) In 1949, 60% of the roughly 23,000 Jews in Minneapolis were living on the North Side. A decade later the number had decreased to 38%. By 1971, only 2% of the Jews in Minneapolis still lived on the North Side.¹⁹

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The Tifereth B'nai Jacob (Splendor of the Sons of Jacob) congregation was founded in 1890 by immigrants from the town of Filishter in Bessarabia, the historical name for a borderland region north of Romania. Over the centuries, Bessarabia had been under several jurisdictions, including Russia and Romania. Today most of Bessarabia is within the Republic of Moldova while northern and southern areas are within Ukraine. Originally named Tifereth B'nai Israel, the

¹⁷ Peterson, 12-13.

¹⁸ Calvin F. Schmid, *A Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, Minneapolis: Bureau of Social Research, The Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies, 1937, 178.

¹⁹ Laura Weber, "Gentiles Preferred: Minneapolis Jews and Employment, 1920-1950," *Minnesota History* 52 no.5 (1991): 177; Weber, "Tifereth B'nai Jacob Congregation" and "Keneseth Israel Congregation," MNOPEdia.

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Orthodox congregation first met in a private home in North Minneapolis. In 1897, the congregation moved to a former Baptist mission at 910 Emerson Avenue North, which is no longer extant. In the 1920s, the name of the congregation was changed to Tifereth B'nai Jacob (TBJ).²⁰

In 1922, the congregation purchased land at 810 Elwood Avenue, a half-mile west of the Emerson Avenue location, to construct a new synagogue. (Figure 3) It was said the old building had been condemned. As of 1922, the congregation had raised three thousand dollars for the new building.²¹ Fund raising activities continued and by 1926, the congregation was ready to begin construction. Architect Perry Crosier of Minneapolis was engaged to design the new building.²² Balkin Construction was hired for its construction. The building permit was issued on April 1, 1926. (Figure 4) A newspaper account described the building as follows:

A new temple for a new congregation now is under construction by the members of Tifereth Israel (renamed Tifereth B'nai Jacob). Its members intend that their new \$60,000 temple shall be a "Temple Beautiful."

The new temple will be at Elwood Avenue and Eight Avenue North. The main floor, which will measure 60 x 75 feet, will seat 500 persons. Construction work now is under way, and it is expected that the building will be ready for dedication exercises within three months.

The exterior of the temple is to be of brick and cut stone. Beside the seating room on the main floor, there will be a balcony with 350 seats. In the basement will be room for weekday services, and also a community room for entertainments. In addition, room will be provided for dining services, and complete kitchen equipment will be installed.²³

The congregation assembled on May 16, 1926, to witness the placement of the cornerstone for the new building. Speakers included Rabbis Moses Romm, S. I. Levin, C. David Matt, Albert G. Minda and David Aronson. Cantor Max Levin and his choir provided the music.²⁴

Construction of the new synagogue was completed in less than five months and the building's dedication was held on August 22, 1926. (Figure 5) Led by a band, members of the

²⁰ Laura Weber, "Tifereth B'nai Jacob Congregation, Minneapolis," MNopedia, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.mnopedia.org/group/tifereth-bnai-jacob-congregation-minneapolis>. It is not known why the congregation changed its name, possibly to avoid confusion with Temple Israel. The word "Tifereth" is sometimes spelled "Tiferes." This is most apparent in newspaper articles about the synagogue. This occurred because the letters "s" and "th" are considered interchangeable in Hebrew.

²¹ "Tifereth Israel to Build," *The American Jewish World*, October 13, 1922, 13.

²² It is not known what inspired Perry Crosier's design for the synagogue. Historians Sam Gruber and Marilyn Chiat theorize that the building's central element flanked by towers may be a reference to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, a common historical motif found in synagogue design.

²³ "Tifereth Israel Will Construct \$60,000 Temple," *The Minneapolis Journal*, April 4, 1926, n.p.

²⁴ "Tifereth B'nai Jacob to Lay Cornerstone," *The American Jewish World*, May 14, 1926, 8.

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congregation walked from the old synagogue on Emerson Avenue to the new building carrying the Book of Moses. The building committee, which had been in charge of the construction, included Oscar Rockler, chairman, I. Z. Goldstein, Mrs. J. Groman, and Mrs. Rose Leins. In October, 350 people attended a dedication banquet at the building. Members had the opportunity to purchase fixtures or windows as memorials.²⁵

The Fire of 1932

In 1929, architect Perry Crosier prepared plans to remodel the balcony, which was completed by Ring Construction, although the specific nature of the work is not known. The cost was estimated at \$1,500.00.²⁶ Unfortunately, the building, including the balcony, was seriously damaged by a fire in the early morning hours of Monday, January 18, 1932. (Figure 6) It was reported that the fire began in the basement and spread rapidly to the balcony and roof structure. Fireman battled the blaze for more than two hours before it was brought under control. Fifteen hand-written Torah scrolls were destroyed by smoke and water damage as were additional books and vestments. Three scrolls were rescued before the fire spread. The damage to the building was estimated at \$35,000 while the value of the Torah scrolls was placed at \$6,000.²⁷

Newspaper accounts stated the cause of the fire was unknown. However, this was a period of rampant anti-Semitism in Minneapolis and fires occurred at a number of synagogues in Minneapolis and St. Paul during 1920s and 1930s. Other nearby North Side synagogues that were damaged by fires included Sharei Zedeck, Mikro Kodesh, and Independent Chesed Saglames (sic).²⁸ Thus, it is quite possible that the fire at Tifereth B'nai Jacob was deliberately set.

The congregation hired the architectural firm of Liebenberg & Kaplan to handle the repairs. The firm was well-known for its service to the Jewish community and had also previously collaborated with architect Perry Crosier. The architectural drawings prepared by Liebenberg & Kaplan confirm that the fire damage was considerable. They depict the steel trusses that were installed to reinforce the roof structure along with other repairs including some repairs to the Torah Ark. The front entrance stairway was reconfigured along with the main entrance doors, and an entrance to the lower level was added to the south elevation.²⁹

²⁵ "Combined Services to Be Held for Dedication of Jacob Synagogue Today," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 22, 1926, n.p.; "Large Attendance at Dedication Banquet," *The American Jewish World*, October 15, 1926, n.p.

²⁶ "Building Permit No. B217944," August 19, 1929, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis History Collection, Hennepin County Libraries; "Building Permits," *The Minneapolis Star*, August 20, 1929, n.p.

²⁷ "\$35,000 Blaze Damages North Side Synagogue," *The Minneapolis Star*, January 18, 1932, n.p.; "Fire Sweeps Synagogue With Loss of \$35,000," *Star Tribune*, January 19, 1932, 12.; "When Fire Swept Tiferes B'nai Jacob Synagog(ue)," *The Minneapolis Journal*, January 20, 1932, n.p.

²⁸ "Fire Hits Synagogue," *The Minneapolis Star*, March 3, 1930, 5; "Fire Burns Synagogue," *Star Tribune*, January 23, 1923, 4; "Ancient Torah is Saved in Fire," *The Minneapolis Star*, May 19, 1925, 1;

²⁹ "Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers," Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis; "Building Permit No. B232040," May 7, 1923, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis History Collection, Hennepin County Libraries.

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The building was formally reopened on Saturday, August 27, 1932, followed by a five-day celebration.

Tomorrow [Saturday] for the first time since the fire, services will be conducted in the main auditorium of the building, and tomorrow night final preparations will begin for the celebration that starts Sunday afternoon.

For the congregation it will be virtually a new synagogue. There will be new pews, new fixtures, and new decorations, as well as new scrolls to replace those damaged by fire. Under supervision of the firm of Liebenberg & Kaplan, architects and engineers, the building has been entirely remodeled.

The formal [rededication] program Sunday will open at 2 P. M., with a series of addresses by Governor Floyd B. Olson, Rabbi David Aronson, Rabbi S. I. Levin and Rabbi Hirsh Heiman. Various forms of entertainment are also scheduled . . . [which will] continue nightly until Friday.³⁰

It was reported that over 3,000 visitors toured the building on Sunday. The week's events included a bazaar and carnival on the grounds.³¹ The changes to the exterior of the building are depicted in a 1936 photograph. (Figure 7)

The 1932 Wall Paintings

Tifereth B'nai Jacob's wall paintings were completed in conjunction with the repairs to the building. Executed by the Minneapolis firm of Dahlstrom and Weinberger, the paintings represent a rare surviving example of painted synagogue decorations and are important examples of religious art significant for their high artistic quality.

It is not known how decisions were made to select the various design elements that were installed. The decision may have been made by the Rabbi and congregation, or Dahlstrom and Weinberger may have played a role as well. Furthermore, it is not known who completed the hand-painted work, although it was likely Dahlstrom as he was known for his artistic talents.

The wall paintings were analyzed by Samuel D. Gruber, Ph.D., an internationally recognized expert on Jewish art, architecture, and the preservation of Jewish sites and monuments, and the founder of Gruber Heritage Global, a cultural resource consulting firm.³² He is also the author of the book, *American Synagogues: A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community*.

³⁰ "Tifereth B'nai Jacob to Celebrate Rebuilding," *American Jewish World*, August 26, 1932, 10. It was later reported that Governor Olson had been unable to attend.

³¹ "3,000 See Synagogue Rooms Opened," *Star Tribune*, August 29, 1932, 7.

³² Dr. Gruber examined photographs of the interior in September 2020 and visited the building in November 2022 and May 2023.

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In May 2023, Sam Gruber spoke at a symposium held on the North Side that focused on the history and significance of the Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue and the First Church of God in Christ. The symposium was titled, "Art & Faith Bridging the Jewish and Black Communities: Stories of a Historic North Minneapolis House of Worship." Gruber's presentation was titled, "Between Two Worlds: The Synagogue Art of Eastern European Jews in Their New American Home – An Illustrated Talk." He discussed the history and meaning of synagogue art and placed the wall paintings at Tifereth B'nai Jacob within this context.

Gruber commented how wall art in the form of painted or mosaic decorations have been found in synagogues from ancient times. Their purpose was to embellish the sanctuary and enhance the experience and meaning of the space. It was a way to make the holy beautiful. Some elements have biblical references such as the sun or starry sky. The signs of the zodiac have been found in ancient synagogues, as well as ancient churches. They may represent the passage of time, cyclical movement, the seasons, or months of the year. In Judaism, time is an important concept and circular in nature. Yet, synagogue paintings, including the signs of the zodiac, generally avoided figurative art. Thus, the figural signs of the zodiac at Tifereth B'nai Jacob are highly unusual.³³

The tradition of wall paintings in synagogues continued over the centuries and paintings were often a prominent feature in Eastern European synagogues, although many were destroyed in the Holocaust. Immigrants brought the tradition of wall paintings with them to the United States, but most wall paintings in this country have been lost over time.³⁴

Gruber had previously prepared the following assessment of the interior of Tifereth B'nai Jacob:

The interior of the former congregation Tifereth B'nai Jacob, now the First Church of God in Christ, is a remarkable survivor of the age of painted synagogues of which only a small number survive in Europe and in America, though once there were many more. In Europe, these buildings with their exuberant decoration were mostly destroyed in the Holocaust. Only in recent years have a few examples and fragments been rediscovered and sometimes conserved or restored. Emigrants from Eastern Europe brought this tradition to America. There were once scores – maybe hundreds - of congregations that decorated their new houses of worship, big and small. Painted curtains on the Ark wall evoke the Biblical Tabernacle. Lions of Judah and the Tablets of the Law connect the congregation to the Biblical past while scenes of the Holy Land inspire return, either as modern pilgrims or settlers, or in the Messianic Age. Architectural decoration may also refer to the Temple of Jerusalem, or only serve to elevate this American synagogue to the status of a grand public space.

³³ Samuel Gruber, "Between Two Worlds: The Synagogue Art of Eastern European Jews in Their New American Home – An Illustrated Talk" (lecture, *Art & Faith Bridging the Jewish and Black Communities: Stories of a Historic North Minneapolis House of Worship*, Minneapolis, MN, May 10-11, 2023.

³⁴ Gruber, "Between Two Worlds."

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The signs of zodiac at Tifereth B'nai Jacob painted along the parapet wall of the women's gallery correspond to the Hebrew Calendar, and link the decoration to an ancient Jewish decorative tradition known from some of the earliest synagogues excavated in the Land of Israel. Representing the zodiac is not just decorative; though for painters it offers an opportunity to demonstrate skill in both figure and landscape painting. The zodiac suggests belief in cosmic time, and the understanding that the Hebrew festive calendar is linked to the never-ending cycle of months and seasons. Only a few American synagogues retain so much of their original decoration as does Tifereth B'nai Jacob. Even though it has long been a Christian church, it retains its complete wall paintings, and also its original Ark (Aron ha-Kodesh).

Tifereth B'nai Jacob is a survivor and a surrogate for lost buildings, and it is also an example of highly refined synagogue art. The quality of painting of the zodiac signs is especially noteworthy. The themes of the symbolic representations are comparable to other examples of painted zodiac signs, but the quality of the painting surpasses all other known American examples. Sometimes synagogue painters are clearly of the congregation, and while indicating great faith show limited artistic training. The Tifereth B'nai Jacob zodiac painter, however, was not only trained, but highly skilled. Perhaps he was a congregant, or perhaps he was hired for this task. Regardless, these wall paintings stand out as an exception for their quality and quality, and for their excellent state of preservation. Taken together the entire interior is an irreplaceable monument to American Jewish religious art.³⁵

Gruber notes that few American synagogues with surviving wall paintings of comparable quality are known to exist. One example is the Sons of Jacob synagogue in Providence, Rhode Island, which features well-preserved wall paintings. The paintings feature various murals, a ceiling painted with clouds, and panels with the signs of the zodiac. The synagogue is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.³⁶ A second example with impressive wall paintings is the very ornate Wiltshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles.

Local historian, John Salisbury, also commented about the significance of the zodiac scenes stating, "The murals are of high quality and appear to be in excellent condition."³⁷

³⁵ Samuel D. Gruber, Ph.D., email message to Marilyn Chiat, September 9, 2020. Zodiac images have appeared in synagogues from the ancient to the modern period, although generally not in the United States, and they have been the subject of much scholarly discussion and debate, yet no definitive interpretation has emerged. The meaning of the images for the Tifereth B'nai Jacob congregation itself is important, but further research would be required into the congregation's records in order to determine if their meaning to the congregation can be ascertained.

³⁶ "Wall Paintings at Sons of Jacob, Providence, Rhode Island," accessed April 25, 2021, [Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art & Monuments: USA: Wall Paintings at Sons of Jacob in Providence, Rhode Island \(samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com\)](https://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com).

³⁷ John Salisbury, email to Marilyn Chiat, February 5, 2021.

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Furthermore, there are no examples of comparable wall paintings in any surviving synagogues in Minnesota. For example, neither Mikro Kodesh nor Sharei Zedeck synagogues, built during the same timeframe as Tifereth B'nai Jacob and also located on the North Side, feature surviving wall paintings. The walls in Mikro Kodesh were plain and while there may originally have been limited wall paintings in Sharei Zedeck, they are no longer extant. Similarly, Temple Israel, located in south Minneapolis, and constructed on a much larger budget than the North Side synagogues, does not contain wall paintings.

Social and Political Activism

The Tifereth B'nai Jacob congregation established a number of organizations for its members. These included a Women's Auxiliary, a Young Women's Auxiliary, a Men's Club, and a Young Men's Club. Over the years, these groups organized various social and cultural activities to meet the needs of the congregation, including dinners, concerts, dances, and fundraising events.

Yet, the congregation continually engaged with the broader community in social welfare and political activities. For instance, in February 1931, Governor Floyd B. Olson and Minneapolis Mayor William F. Kunze were featured speakers at a dinner held at the synagogue.³⁸ In April 1931, Mayor Kunze and candidates for alderman in the Third Ward spoke at a political rally held at the synagogue under the auspices of the Allied Citizens' Club.³⁹ In June 1931, candidates for various public offices spoke at the synagogue.⁴⁰ The political events crossed party lines with members of the major political parties invited to participate.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob also served as the venue for an annual benefit dinner sponsored by the United Bikur Cholem to raise funds for "needy persons." The event included speakers and musical entertainment.⁴¹

As early as 1933, the congregation was reacting to events in Germany. A meeting was held at Tifereth B'nai Jacob on Sunday, May 7, 1933, "to map plans for a demonstration against treatment of the Jews in Germany under the Hitler Regime." The plans included a march from the parade grounds to the Minneapolis business district followed by a mass meeting. The Minneapolis Park Board granted a permit for the use of the parade grounds based on a request from the following organizations: Gemiles Chesed Society, Medum Ladies Auxiliary, Minneapolis Icor, Capmaker's Union, Rosa Luxemburg Women's

³⁸ "Governor to Speak at Synagogue Sunday," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis and Saint Paul), February 15, 1931, 15.

³⁹ "Kunze, Aldermanic Aspirants to Speak," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis and Saint Paul), April 25, 1931, 2.

⁴⁰ "Candidates Will Speak at Rally," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis-Saint Paul), June 1, 1931, 18.

⁴¹ "Benefit Dinner Will Be Given Sunday," *Star Tribune*, December 18, 1935, n.p.

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Auxiliary, Independent Loan Association, National Workers Order, and the District
Committee of the Worker's Circle.⁴²

In 1942, Tifereth B'nai Jacob held a rally to protest the persecution of Poles, Christians, and Jews by Nazi Germany. The multi-faith event, in which local politicians also participated, attempted to rally support from Americans of Polish birth or extraction in particular. Dr. Moses Barron stated, "Three years ago Hitler declared war on Poland. It was the first time Jews had won allies. In Poland, every Jew is a hostage and for every Jewish soldier who dies on the battlefield, 100 are slaughtered as hostages." Other speakers included Rabbi Israel E. Friedman, Rabbis Hirsh Heiman of Keneseth Israel, Dr. Joseph E. Diamond, superintendent of Talmud Torah, Judge Luther W. Youngdahl, later elected Governor of Minnesota, who made an appeal for the purchase of war bonds, and Rev. Frank J. Rakowski. U.S. Senator Joseph H. Ball sent a wire stating, "I am wholeheartedly in support of your cause."⁴³

In 1944, Tifereth B'nai Jacob participated in events associated with Brotherhood Week. The event, also referred to as National Brotherhood week, had its roots in rising anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish sentiment in the 1920s. To counter this movement, a group formed in 1927 called the National Conference for Christians and Jews (NCCJ), with the aim of combating the hatred and intolerance they saw around them. The NCCJ developed an idea for a traveling roadshow called the "Tolerance Trio," including a priest, a minister and a rabbi. They would give presentations, discuss stereotypes, and preach tolerance. Some attendees may have never seen a rabbi or priest in person, let alone three clergymen on one stage joking with each other and demonstrating how people of different faiths could view each other respectfully.⁴⁴

The Minneapolis branch of the National Conference of Christians and Jews organized a series of such talks during Brotherhood Week. The talks were held at churches, synagogues, and community buildings. The speakers at each event included a minister, priest, and rabbi. One of the talks was described in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* as follows:

Another interfaith trio composed of the Rev. Arthur Snow of Plymouth Congregational church, the Rev. Theodore Krebsbach of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and Rabbi Israel Friedman of Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue, will speak to Laundry Workers Union at 8:30 p.m.⁴⁵

⁴² "To Map Jewish Protest Plans: Synagogue Meeting Slated Sunday to Arrange Demonstration," *The Minneapolis Star*, May 4, 1933, n.p.

⁴³ "Rally to Protest Treatment of Poles," *The Minneapolis Star*, August 30, 1942, n.p.; "Persecution of Jews Held Forerunner of Salvation," *Star Tribune*, September 2, 1942, n.p.

⁴⁴ "Whatever became of National Brotherhood Week?," accessed January 16, 2024, <https://theworld.org/stories/2018-02-21/whatever-became-national-brotherhood-week>.

⁴⁵ "Brotherhood Week Talks Scheduled," *Star Tribune*, February 16, 1944, n.p.

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In 1945, Tifereth B'nai Jacob hosted a benefit concert sponsored by the Minneapolis Jewish Labor Committee. The concert was held to benefit displaced European refugees.⁴⁶

Politicians continued to be invited to speak at the synagogue. In 1946, Mayor Hubert H Humphrey and County Commissioner I. G. Scott spoke at the 25th anniversary observance of the Chesed Shel Emes Society.⁴⁷ In 1946, Henry Wallace, who had served as Secretary of Agriculture and later Vice President under President Franklin Roosevelt, held a rally at the synagogue.⁴⁸ Wallace returned to Tifereth B'nai Jacob in 1948 to hold a rally as a U. S. Presidential candidate on the Progressive Party ticket. By this time, the congregation had earned a reputation for its "socialist" leanings.⁴⁹

The 1940s and 1950s

Tifereth B'nai Jacob began to change in the 1940s. The congregation hired an American-educated Orthodox rabbi, a man with a modern outlook who is said to have played and enjoyed football during his college days. By the end of the decade, the congregation adopted the practices of Conservative Judaism, which was less traditional and appealed to younger and American-born members.

A happy occasion was observed on November 25, 1945, when the synagogue paid off its mortgage. The mortgage was burned and a celebratory dinner followed. Synagogue member Martin Weinberger, of the Dahlstrom and Weinberger decorating firm, was in charge of the festivities. At the same event, Rabbi Friedman presented a Torah scroll to synagogue president Oscar Rockler that was to be brought to Europe and given to European Jews.⁵⁰

The exterior of the building is depicted in this time period in a 1948 historic photograph. (Figure 8) The interior is depicted in a wedding photograph from 1951, which depicts the Torah Ark with all its original features. (Figure 9)

The congregation was clearly thriving because in 1949 they hired Liebenberg & Kaplan to design an expansion of the building. Although the expansion was not constructed, the architectural drawings depict a large one-story rectangular, basement-level, addition along the south elevation that ran the full length of the building. The addition was to have included space for events and meetings, as well as religious services. The basement of the existing building was to have been remodeled to provide space for classrooms. Cost may have been an issue because Liebenberg & Kaplan also proposed a second, less-expensive scheme. However, documentation

⁴⁶ "Benefit Concert," *The Minneapolis Star*, November 28, 1945, n.p.

⁴⁷ "Chesed Shel Emes to Hear Humphrey," *Star Tribune*, February 24, 1946, n.p.

⁴⁸ "Peace Seen by Wallace," *Star Tribune*, October 30, 1946, 1.

⁴⁹ Laura Weber, "Tifereth B'nai Jacob Congregation, Minneapolis," MNopedia.

⁵⁰ "Synagogue Fetes Burning of Mortgage," *Star Tribune*, November 26, 1945, 7.

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has not been located to confirm why the congregation decided not to proceed with the expansion.⁵¹

By the late 1950s, the North Minneapolis Jewish community was in decline. Many of the city's Jews, like other urban Americans, began moving to the suburbs after World War II. In 1957, Tifereth B'nai Jacob sold its synagogue at 810 Elwood to the First Church of God in Christ, an African American congregation, and moved into temporary quarters in the I. L. Peretz Community Center at 2418 Plymouth Avenue North. In 1959, the congregation moved to 1500 Xerxes Avenue North in Golden Valley, just beyond the Minneapolis city limits.

The volatile summers of racial unrest on Plymouth Avenue in 1967 and 1968 prompted most of the remaining Jewish businesses and institutions still located in North Minneapolis to move. In 1969, Micro Kodesh, another North Side Orthodox congregation located just blocks from 810 Elwood, merged with Tifereth B'nai Jacob at the Xerxes Avenue North location. Just three years later, in 1972, the combined congregations merged with B'nai Abraham in St. Louis Park. The new congregation took the name B'nai Emet (Sons of Truth).⁵²

Architect Perry E. Crosier

Perry E. Crosier (1890-1953) was born on November 17, 1890, in Minneapolis. He began his career in 1909 as a draftsman for Minneapolis architect Harry Wild Jones. From 1910 to 1913 he worked for Bertrand and Chamberlin, architects; Harrington-Skiles, a real estate company; and J. L. Hedden, building contractors, all in Minneapolis. In 1914 Crosier formed his own company of architects and contractors, the Crosier Construction Company. After the firm broke up in 1916, he continued to practice architecture independently for the rest of his life, except briefly in 1921 when he worked for Liebenberg & Kaplan, although Crosier continued to collaborate with the firm for many years. He also designed dozens of movie theatres and apartment buildings, and a variety of other buildings.

Crosier's son Paul joined his father in practice in 1946 and the firm became Perry E. Crosier & Son. Crosier died in Minneapolis on July 25, 1953, and his firm was continued for two more years by his son.⁵³

Crosier also designed 14 houses in the Homewood Neighborhood on the Near North Side, located a short distance to the west from Tifereth B'nai Jacob. The enclave was populated with prosperous residents of the Jewish community.⁵⁴ Tifereth B'nai Jacob is the only known church or synagogue designed by Crosier.

⁵¹ Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers.

⁵² Laura Weber, "Tifereth B'nai Jacob Congregation, Minneapolis."

⁵³ Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Bibliographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 53-54.

⁵⁴ "Designation Study, Homewood Historic District, Minneapolis," Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, Minneapolis Department of Planning and Community Development, September 2017, 20-21.

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Liebenberg & Kaplan

Jacob "Jack" Liebenberg (1893-1985) and Seeman Kaplan (1895-1963) formed one of the most successful architectural practices in the Twin Cities. Jack Liebenberg was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on July 4, 1893. He attended the University of Minnesota and graduated in the first class from the newly formed School of Architecture in 1916. He earned a master's degree from Harvard the following year. Seeman Kaplan was born in Minneapolis on June 5, 1895. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in architecture in 1918.

In 1920, Liebenberg formed a partnership with Robert C. Martin and, about a year later, with Kaplan, who was also his brother-in-law. From 1923 on, the firm was known as Liebenberg & Kaplan. The firm served the Jewish community and designed synagogues and prestigious homes. Yet the firm's most noted specialty was the design of movie theaters.

After Kaplan died in 1960, Liebenberg remained in business with partners Saul Smiley and Joel Glotter. He left the partnership in 1973 and established a small private practice, which he maintained until his retirement in 1980.⁵⁵

Synagogues

The firm designed the following three, large synagogues within a two-year span.⁵⁶

Beth El, Minneapolis (1926)

Adath Jeshurun, Minneapolis (1927)

Temple Israel, Minneapolis (1928)

Four homes designed by Liebenberg and Kaplan for sites on the North Side of Minneapolis illustrate the thriving Jewish community that had begun to emerge. Built adjacent to each other on Washburn Avenue North between 1921 and 1938, the large period revival style homes are also notable for their expansive lots with views of Theodore Wirth Park to the west. Architectural historian Larry Millett refers to them as the "closest thing to a mansion district" on the North Side.⁵⁷

Dahlstrom and Weinberger

The Dahlstrom and Weinberger Painting and Decorating Company installed the 1932 wall paintings at Tifereth B'nai Jacob. The firm was formed by the partnership of Gunnar Dahlstrom

⁵⁵ Lathrop, 123, 138-139.

⁵⁶ "Minneapolis---A City of New Synagogues," *American Jewish World*, XVI, no. 4 (1927): 16.

⁵⁷ Millett, 294-295.

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and Martin Weinberger. Dahlstrom and Weinberger specialized in interior design and decoration and were best known for their work in theatres.

Gunnar Dahlstrom was born in Sweden in 1900. He immigrated to the United States in 1927 and settled in Minneapolis. According to Minneapolis City Directories, over the years Dahlstrom lived at several addresses in south Minneapolis, eventually moving to Hopkins, now a suburban area west of Minneapolis. Dahlstrom died in 1961.⁵⁸

Martin Weinberger was born in 1903 in Targu Mures, Romania, a town now located in north central Romania, not far from Bessarabia where many of Tifereth B'nai Jacob's founders emigrated from. The town was home to a large Jewish population. Weinberger arrived in Minneapolis in 1921 with his father. Not surprisingly, Minneapolis City Directories indicate that Weinberger lived at several addresses on the Near North Side, eventually residing in Homewood, a neighborhood favored by prosperous Jews. Weinberger's son, Dr. Richard Weinberger, stated that Dahlstrom and his father handled the installation of the wall paintings at Tifereth B'nai Jacob and that his father eventually joined Tifereth B'nai Jacob congregation. He also complimented Gunnar Dahlstrom on his artistic abilities. Martin Weinberger died in 1962.⁵⁹

Dahlstrom and Weinberger worked separately as "painters" and "decorators" before they formed their partnership, which likely occurred at about the time of their work on Tifereth B'nai Jacob. Over the years, the firm had offices in the Pence and McKnight Buildings in downtown Minneapolis and later at 39 Glenwood Avenue, on the northerly edge of downtown. They collaborated with architect Perry Crosier and the firm of Liebenberg and Kaplan on theater interiors. Dahlstrom and Weinberger were responsible for the interior decorations and murals in several Minneapolis theaters including the Camden, Ritz, Princess, Heights, Franklin, Homewood, and Nile, largely completed in the 1930s. They were also involved in the interior work at the Red Wing Auditorium. In 1937, the firm decorated Beth El, a North Minneapolis synagogue that is no longer extant. They also decorated the Robin Lanes bowling center in 1941.⁶⁰

The 1936 Nile Theatre designed by Perry Crosier was a particularly notable project because of its exotic Egyptian decor and wall paintings.⁶¹ An article published during World War II described how members of the Minneapolis Artist's Association had offered their services to assist in the war effort by assisting with creating camouflage, medical drawing, and map making. A quote in the article stated, "If you've been impressed by the simple, well-cut relief decorations in the new theater in Hopkins, they are the work of Gunnar Dahlstrom."⁶²

⁵⁸ "Gunnar Dahlstrom Obituary," *Star Tribune*, November 18, 1961, n.p.

⁵⁹ Dr. Richard Weinberger, interview with Marilyn Chiat on April 1, 1922.

⁶⁰ Presenting Robin Lanes in Robbinsdale," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, September 5, 1941, 7.

⁶¹ "The New Nile Theatre," *Star Tribune*, July 31, 1936, 13.

⁶² Virginia Stafford, *Star Tribune*, January 23, 1942, 25.

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Dahlstrom and Weinberger continued to advertise their services for both commercial and residential properties through 1960, not long before both men passed away in 1961 and 1962 respectively.

The History of African American Settlement in Minneapolis and the North Side

There has been significant research about Saint Paul's African American community including David Vassar Taylor's doctoral dissertation, "Pilgrim's Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870-1930," and Jon Butler's article, "Communities and Congregations: The Black Church in Saint Paul."⁶³ The African American community in Minneapolis, however, is not as well documented, despite the fact that by about 1910 the African American population living in Minneapolis outnumbered that of Saint Paul, and eventually Minneapolis replaced Saint Paul as the center of African American intellectual, social, and cultural life in the state.⁶⁴

According to the Minnesota Census of 1865, the combined African American population of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis was 78, with 50 living in Saint Anthony. By 1885, the number had increased to 673, and it doubled again by 1895. At that time African Americans were concentrated in the area near Nicollet Avenue and 10th Street. After 1900 the patterns of residential settlement shifted again. By 1910 African Americans were beginning to move from the Seven Corners area to the North Side. Although south Minneapolis also retained a sizeable African American community, the Near North Side began to attract an increasing number of African Americans who could afford the inexpensive rents in the area along Sixth Avenue North. As their numbers increased, they migrated to the Oak Lake Addition and the Near North Side. By 1920, Oak Lake Addition was predominantly African American.⁶⁵ As poor migrants packed into the rapidly declining housing stock the area suffered. As early as 1925, an organization of white women described the area thusly: "The squalor and degradation in the vicinity of Sixth Ave. N. can scarcely be realized by one who has not lived or worked in that section... The houses are dilapidated and unpainted. Many of them are little more than shacks... The section is the most congested in the city."⁶⁶ Historian David Taylor noted, "This pattern intensified until a ghetto was clearly definable in 1930."⁶⁷ A map depicting the African American population in Minneapolis as of 1930 clearly illustrates the concentration of residents on the Near North Side in the vicinity of Lyndale Avenue and 6th Avenue North.⁶⁸ (Figure 10)

⁶³ David Vassar Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870-1930" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1977); Jon Butler, "Communities and Congregations: The Black Church in St. Paul," *The Journal of Negro History* 56, (April 1971): 118-134.

⁶⁴ Marilyn Chiat, "Near North Side Minneapolis," Unpublished Manuscript, March 20, 2020, 4; David Vassar Taylor, "The Blacks," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Study of the State's Ethnic Groups*, edited by June Drenning Holmquist (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 81

⁶⁵ Taylor, 77-78; Chiat, 5.

⁶⁶ Women's Co-operative Alliance, Inc., "Minneapolis: A Study of Community Conditions, North District" (Minneapolis: Women's Co-operative Alliance, Inc., 1925), 12.

⁶⁷ Taylor, 78.

⁶⁸ Calvin F. Schmid, *A Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul*, 178.

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According to historian E. Franklin Frazier, "Negro congregations were a refuge in a hostile white world."⁶⁹ Their churches sustained the African American people. This was also the case in Minneapolis and St. Paul where churches served as community centers offering a wide range of social and recreational activities. The buildings were also used as public meeting halls where issues of the day were discussed. Other institutions were established to support the African American Community including the Twin Cities Urban League, the Phyllis Wheatley House on the Near North Side, and Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in St. Paul.⁷⁰

A 1936 study of the African American population in Minneapolis indicated that the level of illiteracy was relatively small, 1.7% of the population, compared to 3.0% among foreign-born Caucasians. However, literacy did not guarantee good jobs. A 1926 study of race relations in Minneapolis documented the prominent disinclination of white employers to hire Black workers, due to racist concerns about their capabilities and fear that doing so would encourage more African Americans to come to the city. As a result, the overwhelming proportion of African American men worked as porters, janitors, waiters, barbers, or on railroad and street construction. Women were employed as domestic help or worked "behind the scenes" in ironing, sewing, sorting inventory in shops where they were not allowed to handle money; few were performing clerical or professional work.⁷¹

The World War II era opened up more jobs for Blacks and also enabled them to gain skills and training that allowed them to retain those jobs after peace came. Yet, the Governor's Interracial Commission found in the mid-1940s that "the overwhelming number" of Blacks could not hope to buy or rent outside of definite neighborhoods to which white persons "expect Negroes to be restricted."⁷² Urban renewal, Model Cities planning, and freeway construction in the late 1950s and early 1960s displaced many residents from their restricted areas of the Twin Cities. In their attempts to revitalize the inner cities, urban planners altered socioeconomic and political bases that undermined the stability of neighborhoods, irrevocably damaging certain institutions, and compounding the housing problem.⁷³

While there had been some increase in opportunities for professional, technical, and managerial positions in the Twin Cities, there were no significant improvements in employment opportunities for unskilled and uneducated Blacks. During the prosperity of the 1960s, many Blacks remained in the service and menial sectors of the economy. Against this backdrop of discrimination and limited opportunities, it is understandable why the Twin Cities experienced serious civil disorder during the volatile 1960s. In what has been described as a decade of rising

⁶⁹ Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in American* (New York: Schocken Press, 1964), 44.

⁷⁰ Taylor, 82-83.

⁷¹ Abram L. Harris, *The Negro Population in Minneapolis: A Study of Race Relations* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Urban League and the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, 1926), 25-27; See also Chiat, 5.

⁷² Quoted in Taylor, 84.

⁷³ Taylor, 84.

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expectations, the Black urban population of Minnesota was becoming increasingly resentful of its exclusion from the country's prosperity.⁷⁴

The outbreak of civil disorder in the Twin Cities on Labor Day weekend in 1968 was influenced by national events although the extent of the local rioting never reached the level in some cities. Yet, it produced thousands of dollars in property damage and scores of personal injuries. The Near North Side commercial district on Plymouth Avenue, which consisted primarily of Jewish owned businesses, was among the areas significantly damaged during the civil disorder.

It should be noted, however, that in the 1950s and early 1960s the relationship between the African American and Jewish communities was frequently cordial and indicative of networks of engagement. Those interviewed by the University of Minnesota's Houses of Worship project who had lived on the Near North Side recalled having Jewish and African American neighbors and schoolmates. While their parents did not socialize, at least in part because many of the older Jewish residents only spoke Yiddish, the children interacted and many shared memories of their friendships. Grant School, located on Girard Avenue between 11th and 12th Avenues, had Jewish, Black, and Christian students well into the 1940s. Lincoln Junior High School and North High School continued to have a diverse student body well into the 1960s. As children, they walked to school together and played afterward, and were well aware of each other's houses of worship, although they only participated in their own.⁷⁵

As the Jewish community left the Near North Side, their former synagogues were sold and some were converted into Christian churches by the African American community. Tifereth B'nai Jacob and Sharei Zedeck became home to African American congregations.

In 1981, historian David Taylor noted:

The civil unrest of the 1960s helped to underscore the disparity in opportunity accorded Black Minnesotans. It was responsible in part for legislation and special program designed to counteract racism. The bulk of the gains in the decade of the 1970s were registered, unfortunately, by a small but cohesive Black middle class, leaving the undereducated and unskilled not much more advanced than they were in the 1960s. Although Blacks have been elected to the state legislature – the first since 1899 – and have been appointed to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, discrimination against Black people continues effectively to prevent their full participation in the social, economic, and political life of the state in the 1980s.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Taylor, 85

⁷⁵ Chiat, 5; See also, the Community Panel, *Art and Faith Bridging the Jewish and Black Communities in North Minneapolis*, May 11, 2023, accessed March 1, 2024, <https://cla.umn.edu/religious-studies/news-events/news/event-recordings-art-faith-bridging-jewish-and-black-communities>.

⁷⁶ Taylor, 85.

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Recent studies and events in the Twin Cities confirm that these disparities have continued up until the present day.

The importance of churches and other religious institutions for African Americans nationwide, but particularly for those who moved from the American South to northern cities like Minneapolis and Saint Paul is only now beginning to be fully examined by historians and appreciated by the public. Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s ground-breaking PBS documentary, *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (2021), acknowledges this gap and is among the first popularly accessible treatments of the topic, bringing together material from several historians of Black life in America. Another PBS documentary, also presented by Gates, *Gospel Live!* (2024), provides new insights into the origins and development of gospel music and also discusses the role of the Church of God in Christ. The gap in historical work on African American religious institutions in Minnesota is similar to that nationwide.

First Church of God in Christ

The 810 Elwood building's second and current owner, the First Church of God in Christ congregation, traces its roots to the first African American Holiness-Pentecostal denomination formed in the United States, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), which was founded in Lexington, Mississippi, in 1897 by Charles Harrison Mason. This denomination, informally known as the Sanctified Church, is currently the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States, and its membership ranks in or near the top six of all Christian denominations in the U.S.⁷⁷ The Church of God in Christ, a predominantly Black denomination that for decades was marginalized for its worship practices (resulting in the pejorative epithet "holy rollers"), is now being recognized for its substantial contributions to African American life and identity as contemporary historians of the denomination reconstruct its social history. The denomination's spiritually rich theology and its worship and healing practices, along with its foundational commitments to African and African American identity and racial justice, have been central to Black community-building throughout the twentieth century and to the present.

History of the Theological and Social Agendas of the (National) Church of God in Christ Denomination

Any discussion of the Church of God in Christ must begin with its charismatic founder and spiritual leader, Charles H. Mason, for it was he who developed the theological, ecclesiastical, social justice, and healing practices of the Church of God in Christ and steered the

⁷⁷ "Christianity in the United States," Wikipedia, accessed January 24, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_United_States#:~:text=All%20Protestant%20denominations%20a%20counted%20for,the%20largest%20individual%20denomination%20if. This compendium lists COGIC as sixth, behind the Catholics, Southern Baptists, Northern Baptists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and United Methodists. Membership figures of all groups, however, are only semi-reliable, given that they are self-reported.

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denomination's growth from the time of its inception through the mid-twentieth century.⁷⁸

Mason's religious message emerged from the spiritual and social conditions experienced by African Americans following the Civil War, particularly during the terror-filled post-Reconstruction period in the southern states when churches were among the few places of refuge and hope for African Americans in the face of discrimination, oppression, and violence perpetrated by white racists both inside and outside of civic structures.

Mason was born in 1866 near Memphis, Tennessee, to parents who had been enslaved. Even in this immediate post-Civil War period, the promise of freedom was fleeting, for as historian Elton Weaver notes "by the spring of 1866, black Memphians were living under constant fear of police brutality."⁷⁹ In 1870, his parents, Jeremiah and Eliza Mason, moved their family of seven children to Plumerville, Arkansas, where they, like many other Black families, became enmeshed in the sharecropping system, a system famously called "slavery by another name."⁸⁰ By the age of ten, Charles had taken his mother's place in the cotton fields alongside his father and brothers, doing what he could to help the family survive.

Charles embraced his mother's Black Baptist piety, including her certainty in the power of prayer and her healing expertise handed down from previous generations as a means of coping with the cruelty of slavery and the hardships of poverty. He also developed a strong sense of social injustice as he witnessed the discrimination faced by his father, a veteran who had served in the Union army, as he struggled to buy land and find a way out of sharecropping. By his early twenties, Mason was combining these two legacies into a religious message that expanded his mother's commitment to individual religious faith and spiritual healing into the realm of social healing and racial justice. These ideas were deepened when Mason learned of the power of the Methodist/Wesleyan theology of Holiness or "sanctification," a spiritual experience in which the Holy Spirit fully renews and purifies the heart of the individual.⁸¹

For Mason and other African Americans, it was through the experience of sanctification that a link was re-forged between spiritual and social justice concerns, connecting to earlier slave religion on two levels. First, the direct experience of the Holy Spirit and the ecstatic worship

⁷⁸ Several historical treatments of Mason and the origins and development of the Church of God in Christ exist. See Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Historical treatments produced by the Church of God in Christ include: Lemuel F. Thuston, *Decently & In Order in the Sanctified Church: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Bishop C.H. Mason & the General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ* (Farley, MO: C. McIntyre Publishing Company, 2013); and Church of God in Christ, "Our History," accessed January 3, 2024, <https://www.cogic.org/about-us/our-history>.

⁷⁹ Elton H. Weaver, III, *Bishop Charles H. Mason in the Age of Jim Crow: The Struggle for Religious and Moral Uplift* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020), 2.

⁸⁰ Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 6.

⁸¹ On Mason's early life, see White 16-20; Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 1-26; Lemuel F. Thuston, "C. H. Mason: Sanctified Reformer," in *From Aldersgate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal visions of the New Creation*, edited by Henry H. Knight, III, pp. 227-236 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 227-229; and Sherry Sherrod DuPree, *A Compendium: Bishop C.H. Mason, Sr., Founder of the Church of God in Christ* (Gainesville, FL: Displays for Schools, LLC, 2017), 9-27.

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practices that such experience promoted—key components of the Holiness tradition—aligned with African-based religious practices that had been carried on by enslaved people. This included the incorporation of music and traditional instruments such as the drum and guitar in worship, along with singing, shouting, and dancing. This connection to African worship heritage was seen by Mason as fundamental to preserving and asserting Black identity, and it became a recognized feature of the Church of God in Christ, which adopted Holiness sanctification by the late 1890s. Noted folklorist Zora Neal Hurston described the church in the 1920s:

“The Saints or the Sanctified Church is a revitalizing element in Negro music and religion. It is putting back into Negro religion those elements which were brought over from Africa and granted on to Christianity as soon as the Negro came in contact with it, but which are being rooted out as the American Negro approaches white concepts. The people who made up the sanctified groups, while admiring the white brother in many ways, think him ridiculous in church.”⁸²

Second, the experience of sanctification did not end with the liberation of the individual from sin but spread outward to the society. As theologian James Cone has observed: “sanctification in Black religion cannot be correctly understood apart from black people’s struggle for historical liberation. Sanctification is liberation—that is to be politically engaged in the historical struggles from freedom.”⁸³ In Clemmons’ assessment, as Black Americans were compelled to “reflect on the power of the powerless,” they were buoyed by “the power of the Spirit to confront political structures and social and economic systems that perpetuate the miseries of the poor and oppressed.”⁸⁴ For Mason, the experience of sanctification propelled him into evangelizing. As Weaver explains, “Mason believed sanctification was liberation and it brought justice to people struggling for freedom. The power of sanctification would enable the lower classes to surmount personal adversities and social injustices.”⁸⁵ Thus, Mason’s evangelizing message responded, as the current COGIC Bishop Lemuel Thuston asserts, to “the spiritual hollowness of his southern black Baptist denomination, the racism of white America, the abrupt backlash of post-reconstruction race reversals, and the unbridled passion he had for living victoriously the will of God.”⁸⁶

Church of God in Christ and the Great Migration

By 1897, Mason, with co-religionist Charles Price Jones and others, had established a church in Lexington, Mississippi, which they named the Church of God in Christ, a name that had come to

⁸² Quoted in Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ*, Centennial edition (Bakersfield, CA: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1996), 32; Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, (Berkeley: Turtle Island Pres, 1983), 103.

⁸³ Quoted in Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 20.

⁸⁴ Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason*, 29.

⁸⁵ Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 20.

⁸⁶ Thuston, “C. H. Mason: Sanctified Reformer,” 228-229.

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Mason in a dream.⁸⁷ Over the next decade, the church would expand, propelled in part by the onset of what is now called the Great Migration, as thousands of African Americans left southern states for California and northern industrial cities in search of jobs and opportunities.⁸⁸ Mason joined this migration, moving to Memphis, Tennessee. He was also motivated by his experiences during the now-famous Pentecostal revival that took place in a building on Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1907. There he experienced worship practices that came to define Pentecostalism: spirit baptism, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), and faith healing. Although these practices were highly controversial among mainline Christian denominations, including Black Baptist groups and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, they aligned with Mason's Holiness background, his mother's teachings, and his commitment to preserving slave religion. He enthusiastically adopted them.⁸⁹ In time, Mason would become widely known for not only his inspiring preaching but also for performing healings by laying on of hands, praying, and using a variety of uniquely shaped roots and plants in ways that harkened back to African spiritual and healing practices.⁹⁰

Re-organizing the Church of God in Christ in Memphis after the Azusa Street revival, Mason initially insisted the movement be interracial, as was the revival, with Black and White having "equal power and authority."⁹¹ Soon, however, this ideal became impossible to maintain, and in 1914 the Pentecostal movement divided along racial lines with COGIC remaining African American and the new Assembly of God church being white.⁹² It was during this period that Mason began to strategically direct the church's growth by planting missions in northern and western cities. Mary and W.G. Johnson were sent to Detroit in 1914 to establish a congregation.⁹³ Mason's protégé, Lillian Brooks Coffey, organized the first COGIC church in Chicago in 1917,⁹⁴ and a congregation was established in Milwaukee in 1921.⁹⁵ These and other new outposts ministered to the thousands of Black migrants moving to these areas to find work and escape the poverty and injustices rampant in the rural south. Their message was Mason's four-part gospel: (1) anchoring faith in God through Pentecostal-Holiness sanctification and worship practices, (2) healing the afflicted through prayer, (3) embracing African heritage and

⁸⁷ Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 31-36; Orvell Hamilton, *Sanctified Revolution: The Church of God in Christ, A History of African-American Holiness* (Itapira, Brazil: UP Books, 2021), 52-58.

⁸⁸ An excellent study of the Great Migration is Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Sons: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

⁸⁹ Hamilton, *Sanctified Revolution: The Church of God in Christ*, 65-71; Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason*, 44-47.

⁹⁰ Lucille J Cornelius, compiler and editor, *The Pioneer: History of the Church of God in Christ* (Church of God in Christ, 1975), 14; DuPree, *A Compendium*, 25-27.

⁹¹ Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 195.

⁹² Calvin White, Jr., *Rise to Respectability: Race, Religion, and the Church of God in Christ* (University of Arkansas Press, 2012), chapter 1; Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 185-195.

⁹³ Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 60; see also Michigan Southwest Third Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ, Inc., "History of the Southwest Third Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ, Inc.," <https://www.sw3micogic.org/history>

⁹⁴ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, 58.

⁹⁵ Jenna Jacobs, "Pentecostals," *The Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, 2016, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/pentecostals/#:~:text=Within%20Milwaukee's%20expanding%20African%20American,of%20the%20first%20Pentecostal%20denominations.>

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continuing African-derived spiritual practices, (4) striving for racial justice in the face of Jim Crow.

Sanctification brought with it high ethical standards, so echoing earlier Methodist disciplines, the personal comportment and discipline of members were monitored, and rules were developed alongside the theological elements. COGIC members eschewed alcohol and profanity, strove for modesty and purity in dress and comportment, abjured immoral behavior, and participated in regimens of fasting and prayer during the twenty-day holy convocations held initially in the November and December.⁹⁶ The ecclesiastical structure of the church is episcopal, with the office of Overseer equivalent to that of Bishop. Male overseers were assigned regionally, to supervise the congregations, which themselves were led by an all-male pastorate and deaconate. A Women's Department headed by a female Overseer was created to govern women members and organizations, which on the regional level were led by church Mothers.⁹⁷ Although administratively separate, the men's and women's sections of the membership carried on their responsibilities and activities with a near-military sense of discipline and precision.

Church of God in Christ religious and social commitments, however, were not uncontroversial within Black communities. Whereas other Black Christian congregations—Baptist and AME, for instance—strove for respectability in the hegemonic white society, COGIC developed as a “religion of the oppressed,” in the terminology of Black scholars.⁹⁸ COGIC worship practices were seen by outsiders as emotionally undisciplined and backward, and many non-COGIC African Americans feared they confirmed white perceptions of Black people as inferior and uncivilized. As a result, Holiness Pentecostal practices and COGIC congregations not only appealed primarily to those on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder, but they also became a marker of a lower status within the broader Black community.⁹⁹ The Saints' (as they called themselves) ecstatic worship practices were also disdained by many whites, adding another layer to racial suspicions and resulting in the occasional disruption and even suppression of COGIC services.¹⁰⁰

Holiness/Pentecostal music, however, had a significant impact on American popular culture far beyond the denomination itself, in large measure through COGIC musicians' interest in blending African influences into the gospel music genre developing in the early 20th century. COGIC member Utah Smith from Louisiana penned and sang the wildly popular song, “I've Got Two Wings,” and performed it throughout the county. Similarly, COGIC member Rosetta Tharpe

⁹⁶ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, 40-41, 46-47; Weaver, *Bishop Charles H. Mason*, 164.

⁹⁷ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, 40-41,

⁹⁸ Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason*, 87.

⁹⁹ A good deal has been written on the economic and social class divisions among Black communities in the North. See, for instance, Omar M. McRoberts' study of Black religious communities in the Boston area, *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's class study of the struggle toward respectability, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁰ Calvin White, Jr., *Rise to Respectability: Race, Religion, and the Church of God in Christ* (University of Arkansas Press, 2012), chapter 1.

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combined musical genres in a unique way that earned her the nickname, “godmother of rock and roll.”¹⁰¹

For Black migrant communities in the north, the social significance of religion generally, and the Church of God in Christ denomination particularly, cannot be overstated. Weaver argues that “the Holiness-Pentecostal churches were self-governing social centers where black leaders nurtured the spirit of liberation that gave rise to social protest,” and he agrees with historian Leon Litwack who argued that “Holiness churches were places of refuge that filled an emptiness in black lives, that raised people out of despair.”¹⁰²

Although COGIC congregations were central to the well-being and advancement of early Black communities in cities across the Midwest, their buildings have rarely been recognized by historians or listed as historic sites for their social contributions. Because early COGIC congregations had few financial resources, their services were held in very modest buildings, usually homes or storefronts, which have not survived. By the 1920s and 1930s, some congregations were able to build or purchase churches. Few of these buildings, however, have been recognized as historic sites. Exceptions are the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ in Detroit, Michigan, which has been recognized as a historic site by the City of Detroit; the Patoka Church of God in Christ and Patoka Colored School in Patoka, Indiana, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places; and most notably, the Mason Temple, the denomination’s national headquarters in Memphis, which has been listed in the National Register since 1992, when it was approved for its significance to Black religion stemming from both the building’s centrality to Mason’s work and the development of the denomination as well as to its having been the site where, during the Memphis sanitation workers strike in April 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his final speech, “I Have Been to the Mountaintop,” the day before he was assassinated.

The History of the First Church of God in Christ in Minneapolis

As with all Church of God in Christ congregations, the origins of the First Church of God in Christ (a.k.a. First Church, a.k.a. the Graham Temple) in Minneapolis are rooted in the Great Migration of African Americans out of the southern United States in the wake of repressions imposed on them by white supremacists following the collapse of Reconstruction in the post-Civil War years. First Church developed over a period of twenty-five years, from 1923, when three missionary couples arrived in Minneapolis from Oklahoma, likely at the behest of Charles

¹⁰¹ Sister Rosetta Tharpe, *Wikipedia*, accessed February 8, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sister_Rosetta_Tharpe.

¹⁰² Elton H. Weaver III, “Equal Power: Bishop Charles H. Mason and the National Tabernacle Fire,” in *Black Struggles for Freedom in Memphis, Tennessee*, pp.61-85 (University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 63. He quotes Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 395-97. See also Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 179-80; and C. Eric Lincoln, ed. *The Black Experience in Religion*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 66.

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Mason, to 1957 when the building at 810 Elwood was purchased and the name First Church of God in Christ was adopted. This Minneapolis congregation was somewhat late on the national COGIC scene, but it advanced the same theological and social agendas as the national church, and its contributions to the development of the Black community in Minneapolis are compelling.

Minneapolis was something of a backwater during the Great Migration. Between 1860 and 1930, the Black population in the city grew from 12 to 4,176, a much smaller growth than industrial cities like Chicago and Detroit experienced.¹⁰³ Not surprisingly, given the relatively small Black population, the founding of the COGIC in Minneapolis has garnered less historical attention than the development of the denomination in other northern cities involved in the Great Migration. Nevertheless, the processes that brought COGIC missionaries to the Twin Cities and the significance of the work they did upon arrival provide an illuminating example of personal and local responses to the national situations, both religious and social.

According to church histories, little is known about any activities by the Church of God in Christ in Minnesota prior to 1923. However, as of 1923, it is known that an Elder Thompson and an Elder and Mother Drake were conducting revival meetings in a tent on Cedar Avenue. But at this time there were no buildings, just tents. Then on July 11, 1923, three young COGIC missionary couples from Muskogee, Oklahoma, arrived in Minneapolis to spread the Holiness-Pentecostal faith. Felix and Alice Chaney, Robert McConnell and Aiarwe Luella Breedlove McConnell, Lincoln Berry, Sr. and Lizzie Berry arrived in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, where they connected with Elder and Mother Drake. The Oklahoma group may have initially lived with the Drakes. In August another group arrived, this one from Sand Springs in northern Oklahoma. The members of this group are listed in Mary Dunn's history as "Elder Malachi Green and his wife, Charlie and Anna Belle James, Garrett and his wife, Ella and Sister Williams and her husband."¹⁰⁴ Both of these groups were most likely sent at the behest of and with the support of COGIC founder Charles Mason.¹⁰⁵

The Oklahoma origins of these missionaries and evangelists directly links them to the Great Migration and the efforts of African Americans to seek better lives outside of the south. Moreover, it links them to the notorious Tulsa Race Massacre, the violent destruction of the prosperous African American section of Tulsa, known as the Greenwood neighborhood, which

¹⁰³ Calvin F. Schmid, *Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies, 1937), 172. For comparison, Chicago's Black population grew from 44,000 in 1910 to over 109,000 a decade later, and 234,000 by 1930. Detroit's Black population grew from 6,000 in 1910 to 120,000 in 1930 (Schmid, 173).

¹⁰⁴ [Mary E. Dunn], "History of the Church of God in Christ," The Minnesota Jurisdiction, Women's Department, The Church of God in Christ, Inc., [Minneapolis, MN], July 23, 1980, n.p.; See also "Our History," Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, Church of God in Christ," accessed January 8, 2024, <https://www.mnejcogic.org/history>; "History of Graham Temple and First Church of God in Christ," in *Pastor and First Lady's Anniversary*, November 16, 2014; and "Minneapolis, Minnesota: Church of God in Christ (Pentecostal)," Works Progress Administration, report by Ellen Nelson, December 1938, available in the Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

¹⁰⁵ According to Lois Berry Steward, Charles Mason had prayed for and healed Lincoln Berry's mother, Temperance, and from this experience Lincoln became saved (Lois Berry Steward, Oral History Interview by Jeanne Halgren Kilde and Rolf Anderson, June 15, 2023, St. Louis Park, MN).

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resulted in 800 people being injured and perhaps as many as 300 deaths.¹⁰⁶ The bodies of many of the dead, having been dumped into the Arkansas River, floated downstream and were retrieved and provided proper burials by Black residents in Muskogee, the home of the Chaney, Breedloves, and Berrys. Moreover, according to Lincoln Berry's daughter, Lois Berry Steward, the Greenwood store of her father's uncle, Sandy Berry, was burned to the ground during the Massacre.¹⁰⁷

The two Oklahoma groups are considered the pioneers of the Christ of God in Christ in Minnesota. In September 1923, they moved to the Near North Side and established a church, with Felix Chaney as pastor and Lincoln Berry as assistant pastor. The congregation is recognized by the denomination as the first Church of God in Christ congregation in Minnesota. This initial congregation met near the intersection of Lyndale and 6th Ave. North (now the Olson Memorial Highway), a bustling corner of two main commercial streets in the heart of the city's Black and Jewish populations. The vast majority of African Americans arriving in the north had very few economic resources, and, unfortunately, Twin Cities employers were by and large unwilling to hire Black employees.¹⁰⁸ As a result, the new migrants gravitated to this commercial area on the Near North Side where they might find work and housing. The modest economic character of the congregation can be traced through its addresses in Minneapolis City Directories. The 1924 City Directory shows Felix Chaney occupying rooms at 614 Lyndale Avenue and pastoring a (storefront) church 622 Lyndale Ave. N. The congregation remained at this address until the 1928 City Directory indicates it moved to 616 Lyndale Avenue N. By 1926, Cheney is listed as having moved to 602 Lyndale, where he is also working as a barber while also pastoring the church. In the 1929 directory, he is listed as still barbering and living once again at 614 Lyndale. In 1931, Cheney has moved five miles north to 5016 Irving Ave. N. and the church is listed at 700 Lyndale Ave., N., where it remained until about 1937 (Figure 11). Chaney pastored the church until 1937, when P.L. Lockett took over.¹⁰⁹

What we know of Felix Chaney's life is representative of many COGIC leaders and illustrative of the importance of his leadership and the church to the growing African American community.

¹⁰⁶ "1921 Tulsa Race Massacre," Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, accessed January 8, 2024, <https://www.tulsaohistory.org/exhibit/1921-tulsa-race-massacre/#flexible-content>.

¹⁰⁷ Lois Berry Steward, Oral History Interview by Jeanne Halgren Kilde and Rolf Anderson, June 15, 2023, St. Louis Park, MN. On Muskogee, see Cathy Spaulding, "Greenwood District Survivors Find Safe Haven in Muskogee," *Muskogee Phoenix*, May 31, 2021. See also, Mary Jane Warde, "The Historic Context for African American History in Muskogee, Oklahoma," 2014, accessed January 8, 2024, <https://www.okhistory.org/shpo/docs/MuskogeeAAHC.pdf>. Many Whites feared that Muskogee's Black citizens would mount an attack on Tulsa in retaliation for the Massacre.

¹⁰⁸ An excellent study of the Black population in the Minneapolis in this period is Abram L. Harris's *The Negro Population in Minneapolis: A Study of Race Relation* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Urban League and the Phillis Wheatley Settlement House, 1926). In this sociological study, Harris documented the working and housing situations of hundreds of Black families and surveyed white employers regarding their attitudes toward Black employees. Occupations were limited (p.16) and white employers hesitated or refused to hire Black workers, in fear of encouraging the growth of the Black population (p. 26, 56).

¹⁰⁹ "Minneapolis, Minnesota: Church of God in Christ (Pentecostal)," Works Progress Administration (WPA) Report by Ellen Nelson, December 1938.; "All are Welcome," advertisement, *St. Paul Recorder*, February 1937.

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Chaney and his wife Alice, who became the First Mother in Minnesota, were committed to advancing the church. He earned his living through barbering, and it appears that some of the early meetings were held in the same location as the barbershop. Like Mason and other COGIC leaders, Chaney was also committed to racial justice and civil rights. In June 1934 he was listed on the NAACP Honor Roll.¹¹⁰ In 1936, he was called upon, as a respected community member, to witness in the Rafield Johnson pandery case.¹¹¹ He also served as the Overseer of the Minnesota Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ.

Most importantly, he worked with Alice, Lincoln Berry, the McConnells, and other evangelists to build the First Church congregation and address the needs of the growing number of Black residents of the neighborhood.¹¹² Emphasizing COGIC spiritual gifts, including healing, Chaney dubbed the church “The Powerhouse” and invited people to attend through advertisements in the local African American newspapers, including the *Twin Cities Herald* and the *St. Paul Recorder*. The church offered weekly services, a variety of congregational organizations (the Prayer and Bible Band, the Young People’s Willing Workers, the Ladies Sewing Circle, the Sunday School, and the Rosebuds),¹¹³ summertime revival meetings, and yearly spiritual convocations. In September 1935, the congregation baptized three new members in the small lake in Glenwood Park. Over 100 people attended.¹¹⁴ Yet, like other Holiness-Pentecostal churches around the country, First Church, with its enthusiastic worship practices, was seen by many as disruptive. First Church historian Mary Dunn notes that “it was not an easy job building this Church of God in Christ or forming these new establishments because many, many church services were put to a stop by the authorities. Such reactions by the authorities and the neighbors around the church frightened some of the pioneers out of the church and out of the state.”¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, by the

¹¹⁰ “Honor Roll,” *Twin-City Herald*, June 30, 1934.

¹¹¹ “Prominent Clergyman Praises Bardwell,” *Twin Cities Herald*, September 19, 1936.

¹¹² Lincoln Berry also attempted to start a COGIC congregation in Duluth in the late 1920s but met with little success. He returned to the Twin Cities and founded a church at 589 West Central Avenue, in the Saint Paul Rondo neighborhood. In the mid-1960s he began missionary work in Belize. (Oral history, Lois Berry Stewart, June 15, 2023.) Both the Minneapolis Near North Side neighborhood and the Rondo neighborhood in Saint Paul came into existence as a result of racial covenants, or “redlining.” As early as 1914, real estate transactions were restricting the residences of Black and Jewish citizens, excluding them from certain neighborhoods. By 1924, nearly 4,500 racial covenants had been written into property transactions and residential deeds in Hennepin County, relegating both Jews and Black to neighborhoods like the Near North Side. On racial covenants in Minneapolis, see *Mapping Prejudice*, University of Minnesota, <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>.

¹¹³ The organizations are listed in the “Minneapolis, Minnesota: Church of God in Christ (Pentecostal),” Works Progress Administration, report by Ellen Nelson, December 1938, available in the Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

¹¹⁴ “Father Chaney Conducts Baptism at Glenwood,” *Twin City Herald*, September 7, 1935.

¹¹⁵ [Mary Dunn], *History of the Church of God in Christ*, July 23, 1980. As Lois Berry Stewart explained, “I don’t think they were welcomed because they were a noisy bunch. They made a lot of noise, you know. They believe in making a joy unto the Lord. So they had the guitars and the tambourines and the drums. Of course, they’d get happy and holler. And they sang really loud, and whenever they were amplified, you know, if they use their mics and stuff, of course you could hear them probably a block away. I just remember him saying that in their earlier meetings that people would get mad at them and throw rotten tomatoes at them, and stuff like that. And then there were stories of the police coming. But he didn’t talk about that. My dad was a very positive person. He didn’t talk to us a lot about the bad things that happened.” (Oral History, June 15, 2023.)

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1940s, additional Christ of Christ congregations had been established in Minneapolis and St. Paul and the denomination continued to grow.¹¹⁶

In 1937, Felix and Alice Chaney moved to Milwaukee, perhaps again at the behest of Mason. Pastor Chaney was replaced temporarily by P. L. Lockett. Soon, however, a new pastor, John Wesley Graham arrived, and he would build upon Chaney's work, moving the church into two monumental buildings in the next two decades.

John W. Graham, who was born in Stonewall, Louisiana, in 1891, and ordained in 1925, arrived in Minneapolis in or around 1937. Like other COGIC evangelists, he had been serving Black migrants from the south who had moved to the industrial north, specifically, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The community and neighborhood he found in Minneapolis were in transition. The neighborhood around the intersection of 6th Avenue North and Lyndale was a concentrated mix of commercial and residential buildings, deemed by urban elites to be substandard—a “slum,” in the language of the 1925 Women's Cooperative Alliance study noted above.¹¹⁷ City efforts to “clean up” the area began in earnest in 1937, which saw the destruction of most of the businesses on the north side of 6th Avenue North and on the west side of Lyndale Avenue (north of 6th), in preparation for widening the street to a thoroughfare, the Olson Memorial Highway (1936-1938), and the creation of the Sumner Field Housing Project (1936-1938). While the highway project destroyed much of the 6th and Lyndale commercial hub, the housing project razed hundreds of homes, dislocating their residents. 700 Lyndale Avenue survived these disruptions, and continued as the congregation's home at least initially after Chaney left, but by 1939 Minneapolis City Directories indicate that it housed the Old Southern Barbecue restaurant of Dorothy Buford, a First Church member.¹¹⁸ In 1939, the First Church of God in Christ congregation, pastored by Graham, was listed in the Minneapolis City Directories as located at 627 6th Avenue North, a storefront on the south side of the thoroughfare, rather than the north side where Chaney's earlier congregation had met. Later, he and the church were located at 631 Olson Memorial Boulevard, where Graham lived on the second floor of the building and operated a “chicken lunch room” on the first floor where church services were also conducted.¹¹⁹ Graham, like Chaney, used his entrepreneurial skills to make a living and welcomed his

¹¹⁶ Dunn, “History of the Church of God in Christ,” n.p.

¹¹⁷ Among those listed as contributing information to the study were Pastor Felix Chaney, the Rev. J.E. Jackson of Zion Baptist, and Rabbi David Aaronson of Beth El, who was also the principle of Talmud Torah and head worker at the Emanuel Cohen Center. The interpretation of the author was summed up thusly: “The squalor and degradation in the vicinity of Sixth Ave. N. can scarcely be realized by one who has not lived or worked in that section...the standards of living in the section between Sixth Ave. N. and Plymouth Ave. extending from Washington to Humboldt, where the majority of Blacks and Jews are living...is deplorable, according to school and social workers. The section is the most congested in the city.” Grace E. Pratt, *A Study of Community Conditions: North Precinct*. Minneapolis: Women's Co-operative Alliance, Inc., 1925, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ City Directories show Buford's restaurant (the Old Southern Barbecue) at 700 Lyndale Avenue North through 1955 (last issue in the online resource).

¹¹⁹ “Building Housing Church is Damaged,” *The Minneapolis Star*, February 17, 1942, 1.

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congregation into that same business space for worship—a situation that was not uncommon at the time.

This period of peripatetic movement exemplifies the hardships experienced by Black migrant communities during the Great Depression throughout the United States, but particularly in Twin Cities, where employment was hard to find and housing was often substandard and unstable. By 1942, the congregation was worshipping in a two-story building at 731 6th Avenue North, and Graham was residing in a house at 411 Colfax Avenue North, a few blocks to the south. By 1946, the address for the congregation was listed as another two-story building located next door at 733 6th Avenue North. The two buildings at 731 and 733 6th Avenue North were commercial buildings; thus, it is likely the congregation was renting space. By that time Graham had moved to a residence at 429 Colfax Avenue North.¹²⁰

In 1948, however, a significant change occurred as the congregation purchased the impressive former Keneseth Israel synagogue located at 518-524 Lyndale Avenue North, a monumental building located southeast of the area that had been marked for renewal a decade earlier.¹²¹ (Figure 12) (The synagogue congregation had moved to a location further west on Plymouth Avenue.) The building became known as both the First Church of God in Christ and the Graham Temple, reflecting a common naming practice in the denomination that honored the primary evangelist. As of 1950, Graham's Temple Cafe is listed at the same address, indicating that Graham continued to operate a restaurant. By 1955, Bishop Graham had moved to a residence at 531 Lyndale Avenue North, located across the street from the church. The purchase of the building was a daunting challenge for Graham and his congregation. The purchase price was \$35,000 with a down payment of \$15,000. However, as newspapers reported, the congregation had only raised \$7,000. Graham borrowed \$3,000 from another bishop in Memphis, Tennessee (most likely Bishop Mason), and convinced representatives from Keneseth Israel to accept a \$10,000.00 down payment and annual payments of \$5,000.00 thereafter. The purchase of building fulfilled Graham's goal of acquiring a building large enough to hold a general assembly of the denomination.¹²²

The congregation enjoyed considerable success in this building. Graham's dream of holding a large assembly came to fruition in 1955 when the International Youth Congress of the Church of

¹²⁰ Information about the various locations associated with the First Church of God in Christ congregation was determined in large part by researching Minneapolis City Directories found at the Hennepin History Museum and Hennepin County Libraries, and from research conducted by Ryan Mattke, Map and Geospatial Librarian and head of the Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota Libraries, utilizing Sanborn Insurance Maps for the City of Minneapolis. City Directories from ca. 1950 list a Church of God in Christ located at 702 Lyndale Avenue North, less than two blocks to the north of Bishop Graham's building at 518-524 Lyndale Avenue North. The purpose of the 702 Lyndale Avenue North location is not known or its connection to the Graham Temple.

¹²¹ Over the years, Minneapolis City Directories as well as Sanborn Insurance Maps have assigned several street addresses to the building, including, 518, 522, and 524. It is not known if this involves a misstatement or whether different street numbers might have been assigned to various portions of the building, such as the main level and the lower level, which had a separate entrance.

¹²² "Bishop's Dream for 18 Years Fulfilled," *The Minneapolis Star*, June 29, 1955, 26. See also, "Church of God Purchases Former Synagogue," *St. Paul Recorder*, December 10, 1948, 1.

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God in Christ held a seven-day meeting at the Graham Temple. More than 2,500 delegates and visitors were expected to attend, coming from the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Africa, and the West Indies. Local speakers included Minneapolis Mayor Eric Hoyer and Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman.¹²³ The Youth Congress, which brought national recognition within the denomination, was a major coup for the congregation, which had struggled to survive for three decades. The Congress focused on evangelism and worship, with all-night services, musical events that included the choirs of other local congregations, and guest speakers from around the country.¹²⁴ Over the years, the church would also host regional conferences as well as statewide convocations. A 1950s photograph depicts attendees of a Minnesota convocation standing in front of the church. (Figure 13) Two photographs from 1954 depict Sunday School staff and students. (Figures 14-15) Additional special events also occurred, including the August 19, 1950, performance of noted gospel singer (and rock & roll pioneer) Rosetta Tharpe and the Rosettes. During this period, congregation member Dorothy L. Buford was serving as the "State Mother" of the denomination.

From the time of Graham's arrival the congregation had moved several times, but always within a few blocks of the Lyndale Avenue North and 6th Avenue North intersection. By the late 1950s, however, another disruption wracked the neighborhood and the First Church community when plans were developed to route the new Interstate I-94 highway through the area. The former synagogue was in jeopardy, and the congregation was forced to move once again. All buildings in the area would be razed by 1963, thus obliterating the long physical history of the First Church of God in Christ in that area.

Graham, who was ordained a bishop in 1956, led the effort to again find a new home for the congregation. In 1957, they purchased another former synagogue, Tifereth B'nai Jacob, at 810 Elwood, the focus of this nomination. Located about one mile to the west of their former location, the building has remained the home of the First Church of God in Christ since that time. Graham moved to a residence at 1018 Irving Avenue North, just a few blocks to the northeast of the church.

First Church's purchase of a former synagogues--although perhaps unique in the fact that they did so twice--was a common practice throughout many cities in the post-WWII years. Blacks and Jews had been redlined to the same marginal neighborhoods in cities across the country, including Minneapolis, but by the post-war years, Jews were finding greater economic and educational opportunities and began migrating to suburban areas. In Minneapolis, the Near Northside saw a gradual shift westward of Jews away from the Lyndale Avenue area, particularly after the destruction of innumerable businesses along 6th Avenue when it was redesigned as Olson Memorial Highway. Blacks, however, systematically excluded from many

¹²³ Several front-page articles in the *St Paul Recorder* focused on the youth congress. See "Church of God Officers in this State," "Delegates who had arrived at Press Time of Paper," Officers of International Youth Conference Convening Here," "Scene of Youth Congress Sessions, June 29 to July 5," "Bishop O. T. Jones Youth Congress Leader Cites Urgency of the Time," in *The St. Paul Recorder*, July 1, 1955. See also, "Negro Church Group Will Open Parley Tomorrow," *The Minneapolis Star*, June 28, 1955, 25.

¹²⁴ Lois Berry Steward, oral history, June 15, 2023.

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types of employment and with reduced educational opportunities, tended to remain in the redlined neighborhoods, re-purposing the extant buildings as needed.¹²⁵

An article in *The Minneapolis Star* announced the sale of the building to the First Church of God in Christ congregation.

Because of shifting populations and the march of redevelopment and freeway programs in North Minneapolis, Tifereth B'nai Jacob congregation has conducted its last services in the 31-year-old synagogue building. . . .

As of Friday, the building is to be taken over by its new owners, the Church of God in Christ, a Negro congregation.

Change of ownership of the building thus becomes part of a pattern repeating itself. . . .

The Church of God in Christ feels that its members, many displaced by the freeway and redevelopment work which took their previous house of worship, will find homes near the new location.¹²⁶

A photograph of Bishop Graham was featured in the *Star Tribune* in March 1958 shortly after the building was purchased. Bishop Graham is standing in the sanctuary with the synagogue's elaborate Torah Ark shown in the background. (Figure 16)

In May 1958, a month-long revival was held at the building, which preceded its formal dedication in June. Articles and advertisements in the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder* announced the event. The featured speaker was Reverend S. G. Simmonds of Indianapolis, Indiana.

The revival which is attracting good crowds because of the excellent singing and music and great preaching will continue through May 30. The public is cordially invited.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Additional examples of this transfer of property are seen in, for instance, the purchase of Chicago's Kehilath Anshe Ma'arev (1891) by the Pilgrim Baptist congregation (1922), or the purchase of Chicago's Anshe Sholom synagogue (1926) by the Stone Temple Baptist congregation (1954). This latter building boasts a Chicago Landmark Designation for its architecture, ethnic (Jewish) heritage, and noted architect, not, surprisingly, for the role it played as a prominent site for Civil Rights activism, hosting rallies with Martin Luther King, Jr. on several occasions. See *Landmark Designation Report*, May 1, 2024, https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Anshe_Sholom_Synagogue_Bldg.pdf. See also https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Anshe_Sholom_Synagogue_Bldg.pdf https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Anshe_Sholom_Synagogue_Bldg.pdf.

¹²⁶ "Synagogue Building Sold, to Become Negro Church," *The Minneapolis Star*, December 12, 1957, 2.

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The building's dedication was held from June 20-26, 1958, and featured various speakers and musical groups from across the region.

Plan to attend these services which will begin every night at 8 p.m. There will be singers from different states as well as great speakers. Mother C. Sims (and her gospel singers) from Milwaukee, Bishop V. M. Barkers from Kansas City, Kans., Bishop B. Bostlick of St. Louis, and many other prominent men and women of God will be present.

Bishop Bostlick of St. Louis will deliver the dedication sermon.

Free dinner will be served Sunday, June 22, at 3 p.m. Please come and help us dedicate this wonderful edifice of God.¹²⁸

A program was printed for the dedication services and included detailed information about the events as well as photographs of various church officials. One notable photograph pictures the Sunday School standing in front of the congregation's new building. (Figure 17)

The building at 810 Elwood saw the growth of the congregation through the 1960s and beyond. First Church became well-known in the region for its New Year's Eve musicals, which brought together local choirs, instrumentalists, combos, and vocalists with those from around the country. By the time of Bishop Graham's death in 1967, the First Church of God in Christ had become the headquarters for the Minnesota jurisdiction and was referred to as the "mother church."¹²⁹

Following Bishop Graham's death, Earl Demming was named pastor, with his wife, Lottie Mae Demming, taking office as First Lady. Demming (1920-2007) had come to Minneapolis from Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1951. A photograph from the 1970s depicts the congregation standing in front of the building. (Figure 18)

Following Demming, Raymond B. Darden took up the pastoral mantle until 2013, when Horace Hughes was named pastor, and his wife, Vera Hughes, First Lady. Pastor Hughes, a native of Jackson, Michigan, who moved to Minneapolis as a young man in 1959, rented an upper-floor apartment from a Jewish couple who lived next door to the church, and became the church custodian, was instrumental both in preserving the building and in beginning the National Register nomination process. Hughes, who had served in the US Air Force during World War II,

¹²⁷ "Graham Temple Revival Draws Interest - Crowds," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 8, 1958, 4; "Big Revival Featuring the Dynamic Preacher Reverend S. G. Simmonds at Graham Temple," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, May 8, 1958, 4.

¹²⁸ "Week's Service to Dedicate Graham Temple," *St. Paul Recorder*, June 13, 1958, 4; "Her Singers Will Sing Nightly," *St. Paul Recorder*, June 13, 1958, 1; "Graham Temple is Being Dedicated All This Week," *St. Paul Recorder*, June 20, 1958, 4.

¹²⁹ "Our History," Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, Church of God in Christ," accessed April 17, 2024, <https://www.mnejcogic.org/history>.

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became the first Black graduate of the Dunwoody Industrial Institute in Minneapolis, having earned a degree in building interiors. After graduating, he worked initially for Baker Properties in Minneapolis but soon accepted a position with the Minneapolis Public Schools. At the time of his retirement, he had served for 32 years as the Director of Building Interiors for the school system.¹³⁰ In large measure, it was Hughes's expertise that preserved and maintained the 810 Elwood building over many decades.¹³¹ The congregation, now under the leadership of Pastor Tierre Webster, is committed to continuing this stewardship and is planning to develop a congregational museum and archive within the building to preserve the history of the community.

Thus, over time the First Church of God in Christ congregation grew and evolved from conducting services in residences, then commercial buildings, and eventually in substantial church buildings they owned. Their progression mirrored the demographic changes on the North Side and the displacements caused by urban renewal. In addition, their experiences and interactions with the Jewish residents and congregations illustrate the types of mutually beneficial relationships that existed within marginalized, redlined communities in Minneapolis.

Conclusion

For nearly 100 years, the nominated property has functioned as a house of worship, serving an important role for its Jewish and African American congregations, whose histories are multi-layered and remarkably intertwined. Their shared building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage for representing this important story of the struggles and achievements of two marginalized communities that were compelled to settle on the Near North Side of Minneapolis. The building is also significant in the area of Religion as the first Minnesota congregation of the Church of God in Church and for its important leadership role in the state.

The building is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion C in the area of Art for its rare and remarkably well-preserved wall paintings that represent an important example of American Jewish art.

The building retains historic integrity for its period of significance from 1926 to 1974.

¹³⁰ Horace K. Hughes, Funeral service program. October 8, 2022.

¹³¹ Jeanne Kilde, report of phone conversation with Horace Hughes, January 29, 2021, and sent in an email message to Rolf Anderson, January 29, 2021.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): HE-MPC-8080

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .69 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

2. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

3. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

4. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☒ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 476270 | Northing: 4981310 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 12, 13, and that part of lot 14 lying south of the north 22.50 feet thereof, Block 9, Oak Park Addition (Abstract); and Lot 3, Block 1, Eight and Irving Addition (Torrens)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the building historically associated with the property.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rolf Anderson and Marilyn Chiat, with Jeanne Kilde and research assistance from Jessie Merriam and Jade Ryerson

organization: _____

street & number: 212 West 36th Street

city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55408

e-mail roanders6@aol.com

telephone: 612-724-7807

date: April 24, 2024

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue-First Church of God in Christ

City or Vicinity: Minneapolis

County: Hennepin

State: Minnesota

Photographer: Rolf Anderson (except as noted)

Date Photographed: November 2023-February 2024 (except as noted)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 36. South and west elevations, facing northeast
- 2 of 36. West elevation, facing east
- 3 of 36. Entrance doors, west elevation, facing east
- 4 of 36. Capital atop entrance piers, west elevation, facing east
- 5 of 36. Lantern at the north side of the entrance, west elevation, facing northeast
- 6 of 36. Round arch with windows above the entrance, west elevation, facing east
- 7 of 36. Sign, west elevation, facing northeast
- 8 of 36. South elevation, facing north
- 9 of 36. North elevation, facing southeast
- 10 of 36. East elevation, facing west
- 11 of 36. Stairway with beam supported by decorative bracket, vestibule, facing southwest
- 12 of 36. Stained glass windows above entrance doors, vestibule, facing west
- 13 of 36. Stained glass window in south stairway, facing south
- 14 of 36. First Church of God in Christ seal, set in floor of the vestibule
- 15 of 36. Sanctuary, facing east
- 16 of 36. Sanctuary from the balcony, facing east
- 17 of 36. Sanctuary facing the balcony, with signs of the zodiac, facing west
- 18 of 36. Chancel/bimah with Torah Ark set within recessed arch and flanked by trompe l'oeil columns and painted curtains above, facing east
- 19 of 36. Chancel/bimah with Torah Ark and wall paintings, facing southeast
- 20 of 36. Balcony, facing east
- 21 of 36. Balcony with clouds and stars depicted on the ceiling, facing southeast
- 22 of 36. Upper portion of Torah Ark with painted urns and vases and sky and clouds in the background, facing east
- 23 of 36. Upper portion of the right side of the Torah Ark with a painted vase and urn, facing east.
- 24 of 36. Upper portion of the right side of the Torah Ark with a painted urn, facing east
- 25 of 36. Trompe l'oeil column with stenciled capital, west wall of sanctuary, facing west

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- 26 of 36. Stenciled sunburst, south wall of sanctuary, facing south
- 27 of 36. Stenciled frieze, west wall of sanctuary, facing west
- 28 of 36. Six signs of the zodiac on the face of the balcony, from right to left, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces, facing northwest (September 23, 2022)
- 29 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Sagittarius on face of balcony, facing north (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 30 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Capricorn on face of the balcony, facing northwest (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 31 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Aquarius on face of the balcony, facing west (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 32 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Pisces on face of the balcony, facing west (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 33 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Aires on face of the balcony, facing west (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 34 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Gemini on face of the balcony, facing southwest (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 35 of 36. Sign of the zodiac depicting Virgo on face of the balcony, facing west (Photo John Lewis, March 3, 2023)
- 36 of 36. Gathering space on the basement level, facing west

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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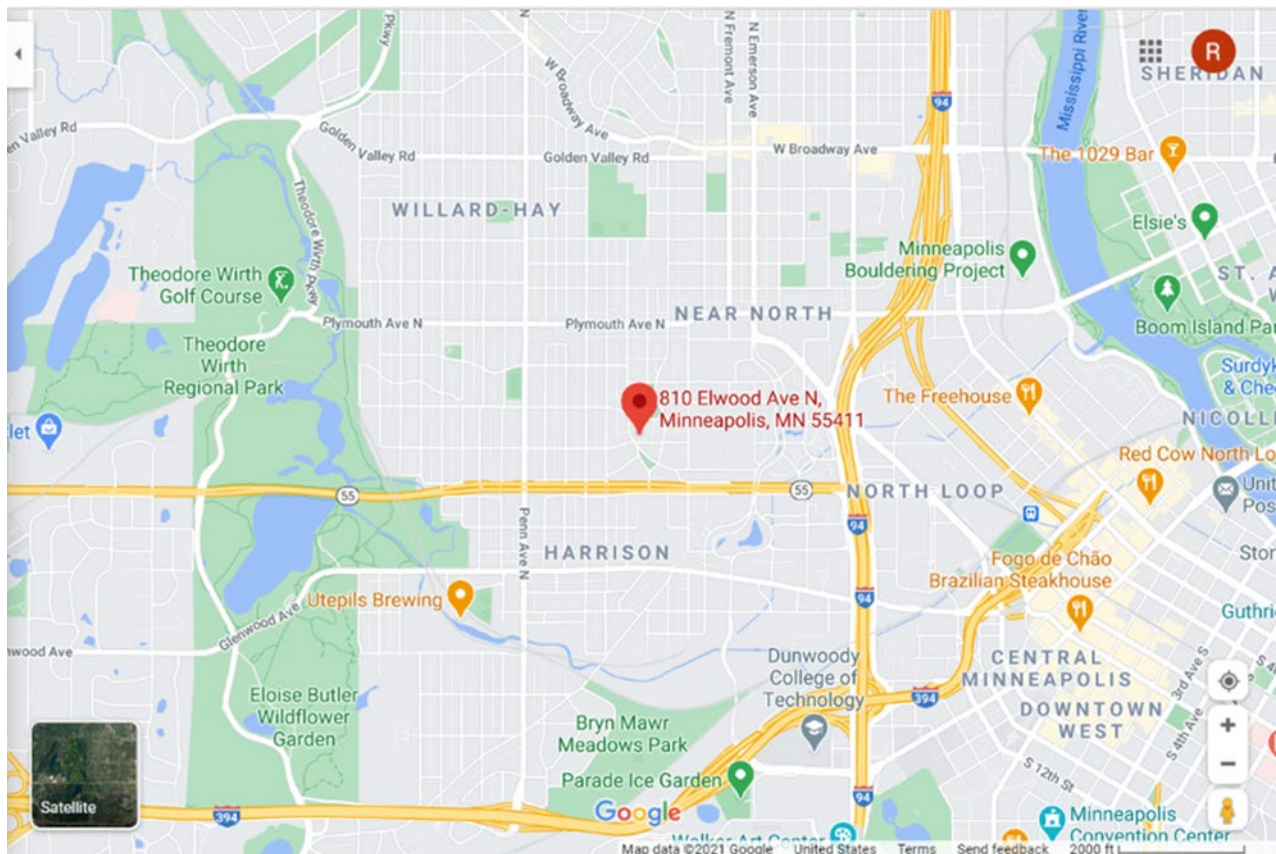


Figure 1. Location of Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue/First Church of God in Christ at 810 Avenue North. Image Google Maps

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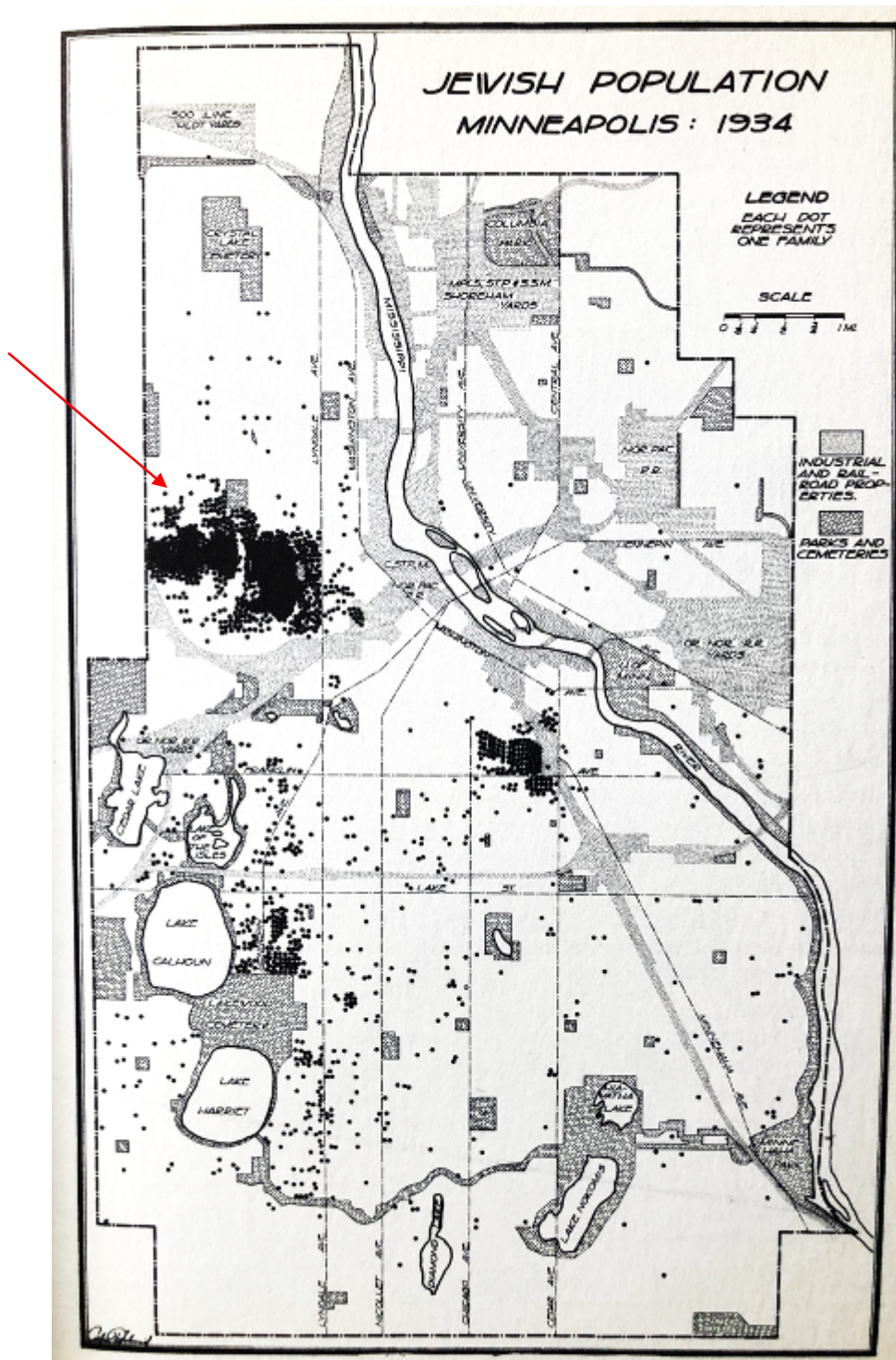


Figure 2. Jewish Population, Minneapolis, 1934. Note the concentration of the Jewish population on the Near North Side of Minneapolis indicated with red arrow. Calvin F. Schmid, *A Social Saga of Two Cities*, 151.

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Figure 3. 1914 Atlas of Minneapolis depicting the future location of Tifereth B'nai Jacob.
Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

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ORIGINAL **PERMIT TO BUILD OUTSIDE OF FIRE LIMITS.** \$80.00 No. B195691

Owner Tifereth B'nai Jacob Cong. Office of the INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS,
Architect Larry Cropper Minneapolis, Minn., April 1 1926
Builders Balkin Const. Co.

PROPOSED LOCATION OF BUILDING

No.	Street	Part of Lot	Lot	Block	Town, Addition or Subdivision	Ward	Plate
808-10	Elwood Ave.		13	9	Oak Park		57

DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING

Front	Depth	Height	Stories	Build of	Material of Construction	To be Used as	To be Completed	Estimated Cost
53.80	31	1	1	Brick	Synagogue	4/1/27	40,000	

City Cl. subject to street detail
Balkin Const. Co.
S.B. 25'

Permission is hereby granted to Balkin Const. Co. to construct the building foundation described in the above statement. This permit is granted upon the express condition that the person to whom it is granted, and his agents, employees and workmen, in all the work done in, around and upon said building, or any part thereof, shall conform to all respective ordinances of the City of Minneapolis, regarding the construction, alteration, maintenance, repair and removal of buildings within the city limits; and this permit may be revoked at any time upon violation of any of the provisions of said ordinances.

WARNING
The term "ordinances" as used in this permit shall also include consideration of the existing laws of the City of Minneapolis, and being a duly sworn officer, I hereby certify that the facts stated by me and contained in the above permit are true as therein stated.

AGREEMENT AND SWORN STATEMENT.
I, Balkin Const. Co., hereby agree to the proposed work in accordance with the description above set forth and according to the provisions of the ordinances of the City of Minneapolis, and being a duly sworn officer, I hereby certify that the facts stated by me and contained in the above permit are true as therein stated.

Subscribed and sworn to before me at Minneapolis, Minnesota, this 1st day of April, A. D. 1926.

My commission expires 5/14-1932

Inspector of Buildings.
Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minn.

Figure 4. Building Permit No. B195692 dated April 1, 1926, City of Minneapolis, for the construction of the Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue. Image courtesy Minneapolis History Collection, Hennepin County Libraries

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue
First Church of God in Christ
Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

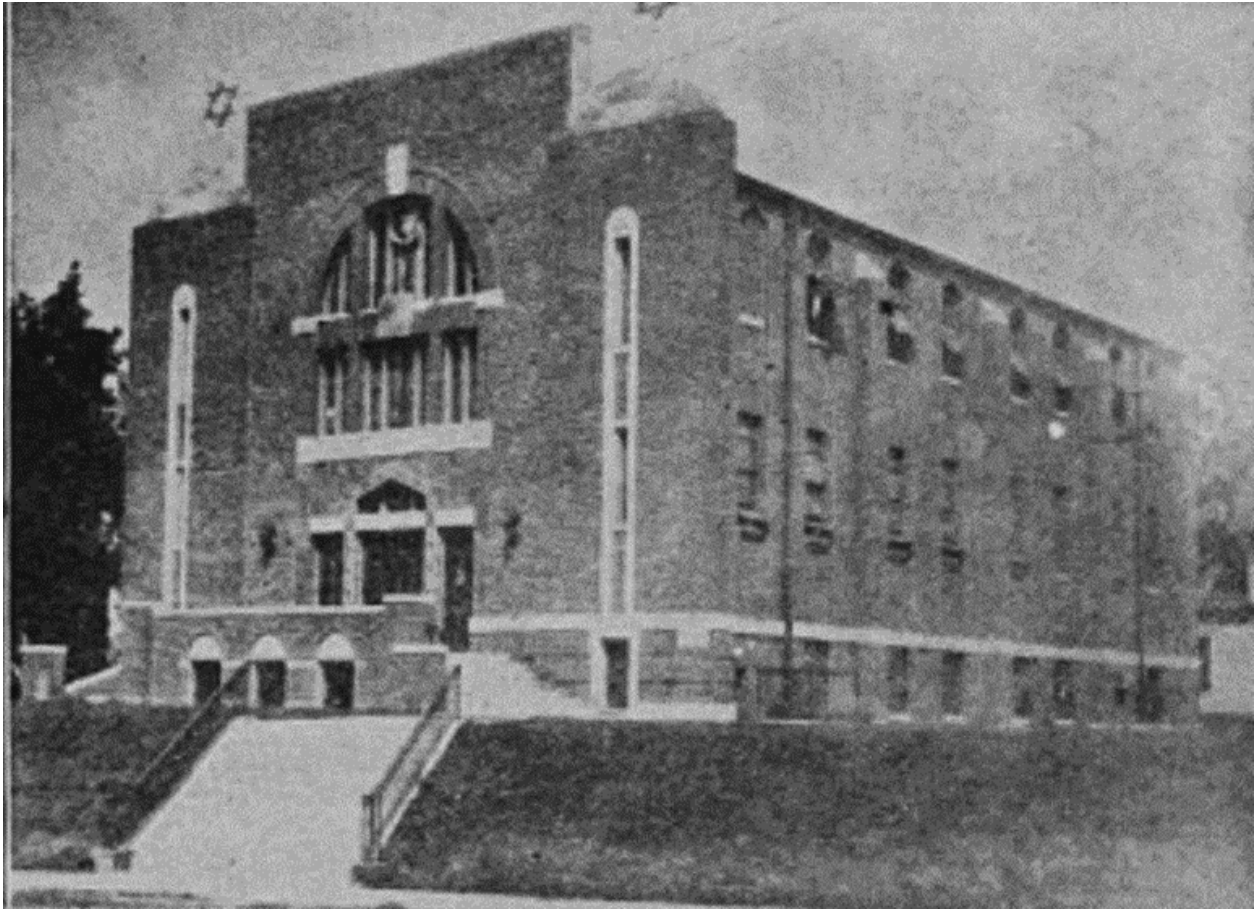


Figure 5. 1927 photograph depicting Tifereth B'nai Jacob with its original entrance. Photo *American Jewish World*, September 23, 1927.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue
First Church of God in Christ
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Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

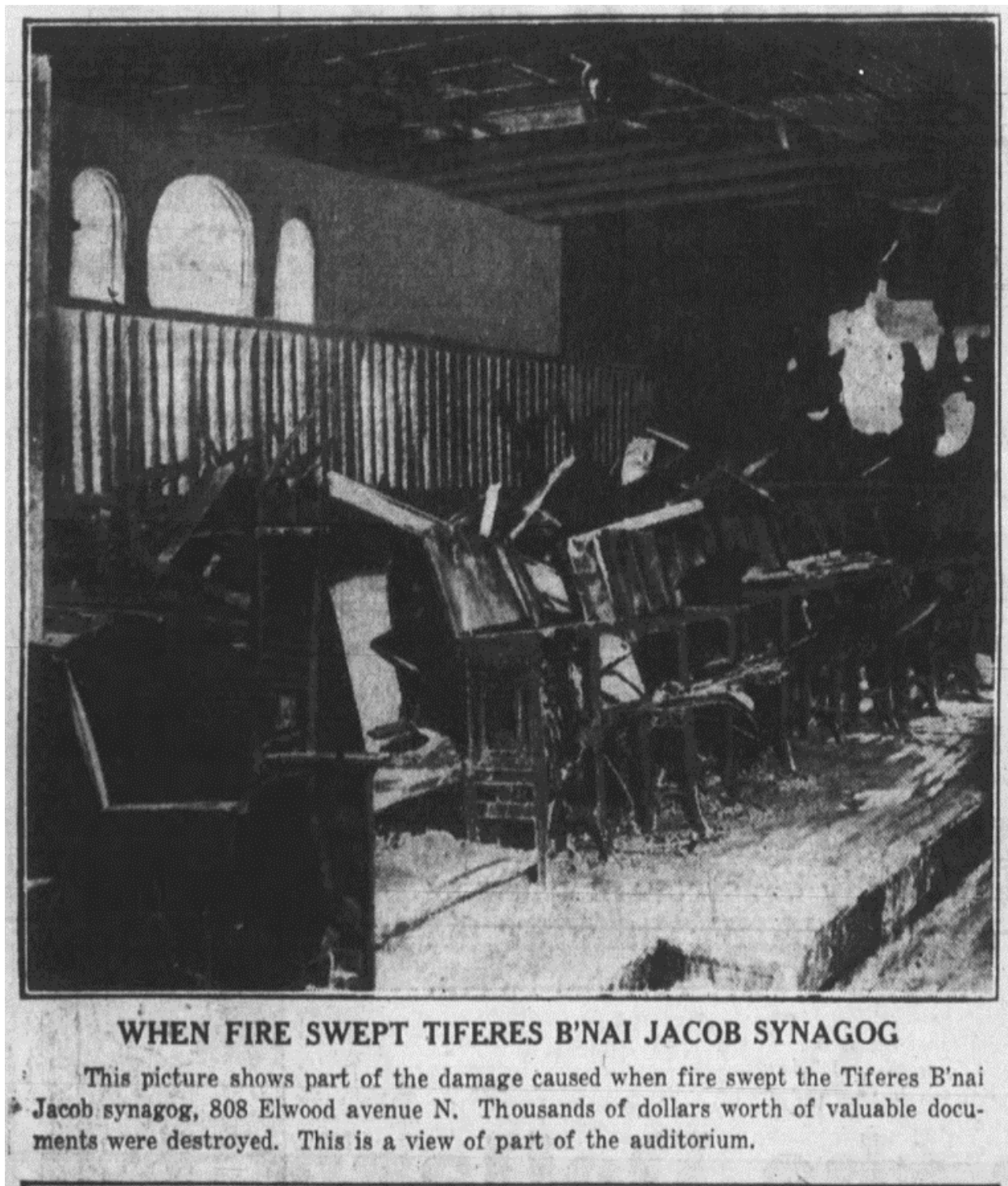


Figure 6. View of the balcony in the aftermath of the fire at Tifereth B'nai Jacob. *The Minneapolis Journal*, January 20, 1932, page 12.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue
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Figure 7. Tifereth B'nai Jacob, 1936, depicting the 1932 changes to the entrance and stairway. Robert C. Busch, photographer, Minneapolis Star Tribune. Photo courtesy Hennepin County Library.

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Figure 8. Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue, 1948. Photo Minnesota Historical Society

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Figure 9. Wedding at Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue, 1951. Photo courtesy Marilyn Chiat

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First Church of God in Christ
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Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

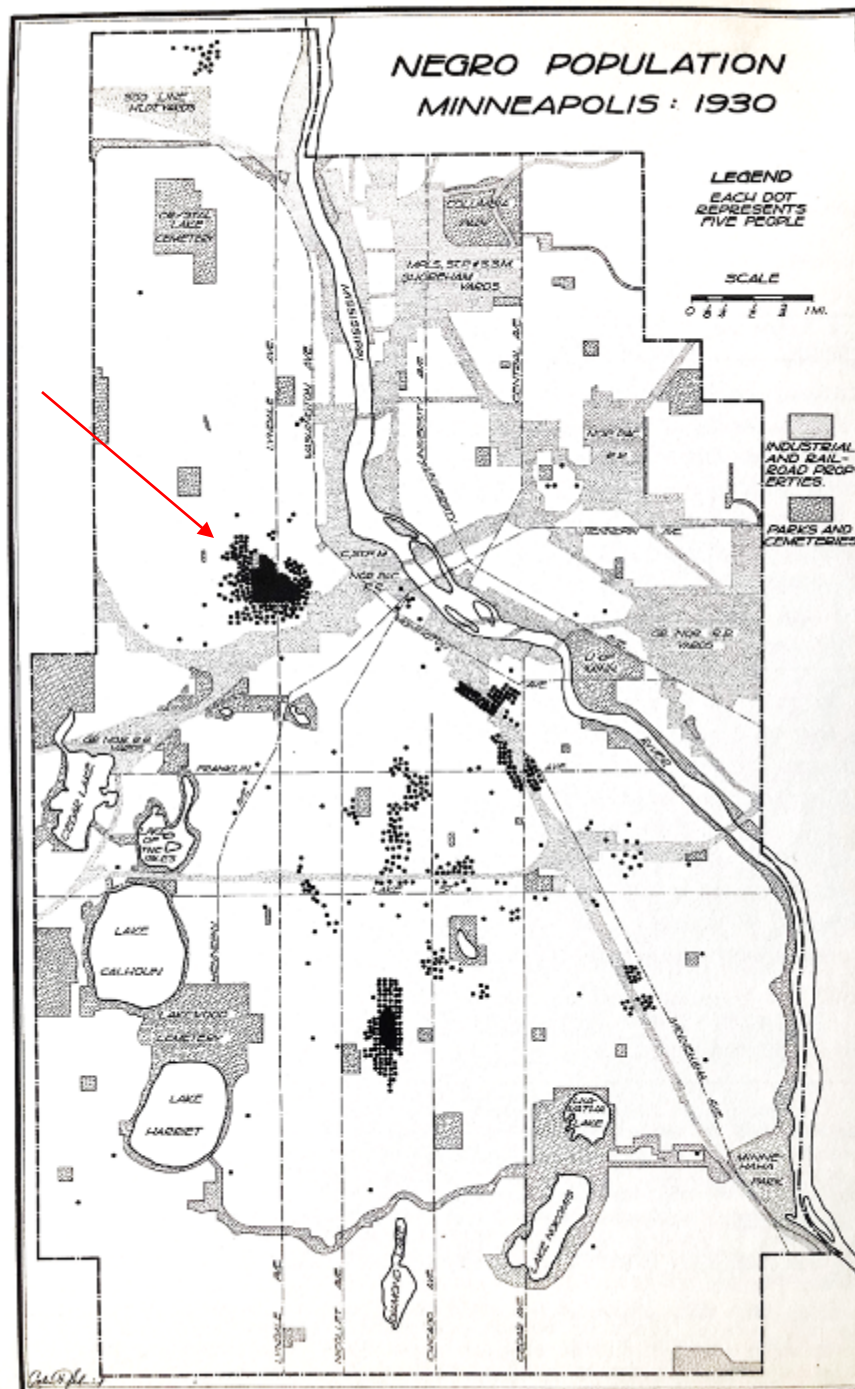


Figure 10. Negro Population, Minneapolis, 1930. Note the concentration of the African American population on the Near North Side of Minneapolis indicated with red arrow and centered near Lyndale Avenue. Calvin F. Schmid, *A Social Saga of Two Cities*, 178

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Figure 11. First Church of God in Christ at 700 Lyndale Avenue North, 1936. Minnesota Historical Society Photo

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Figure 12. The former Keneseth Israel Synagogue, ca. 1948. Located at 524 Lyndale Avenue North, the building was purchased by First Church of God in Christ and was then known as Graham Temple (note sign). Photo courtesy First Church of God in Christ

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Figure 13. Attendees of the annual state convocation of the Christ of God in Christ, ca. 1955. The attendees are standing in front of the Graham Temple (formerly Keneseth Israel Synagogue). Photo courtesy First Church of God in Christ

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Figure 14. Sunday School staff, 1954. Photo courtesy First Church of God in Christ

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Figure 15. Sunday School, 1954. Photo courtesy First Church of God in Christ

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Figure 16. Bishop John W. Graham at First Church of God in Christ with the synagogue's elaborate Torah Ark in the background. Photo Star Tribune, March 3, 1958.

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Figure 17. Sunday School students and staff on the steps of the church, 1958. Photo from the "Dedication of Graham Temple" pamphlet, June 1958.

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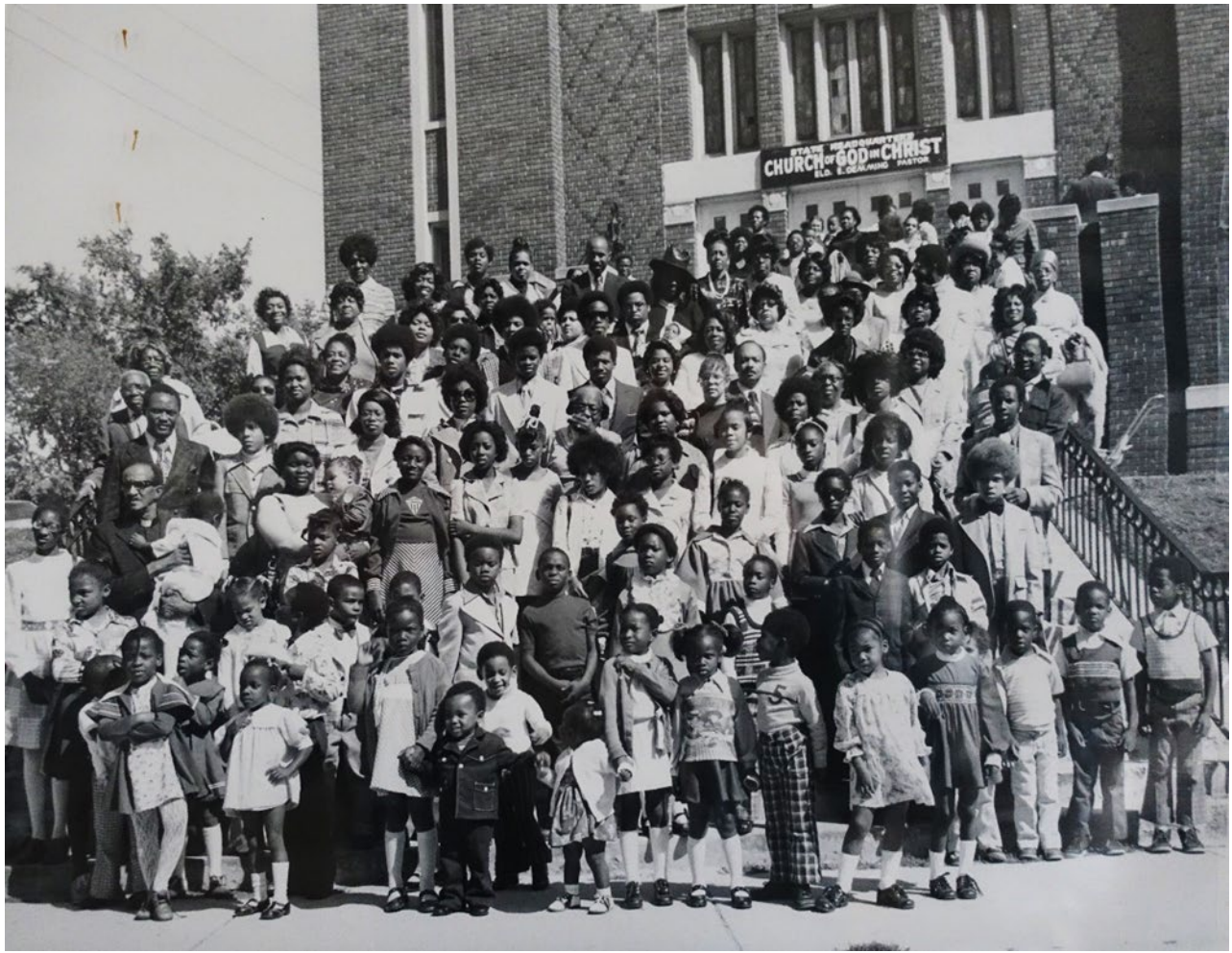


Figure 18. The congregation standing in front of the First Church of God in Christ, ca. 1970.
Photo courtesy First Church of God in Christ

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue
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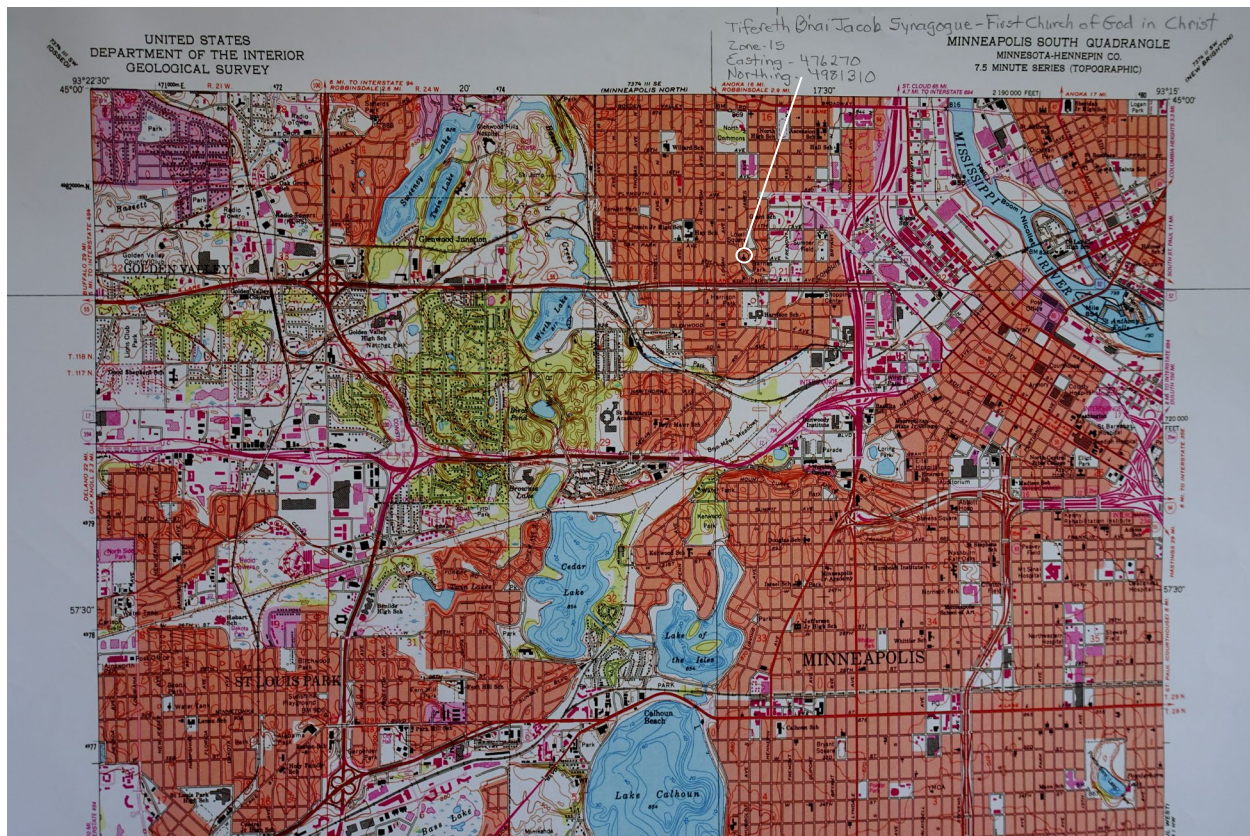


Figure 19. USGS map, Minneapolis South Quadrangle, 1 of 2. Tifereth B'nai Jacob-First Church of God in Christ is located near the top, right of center.

Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue
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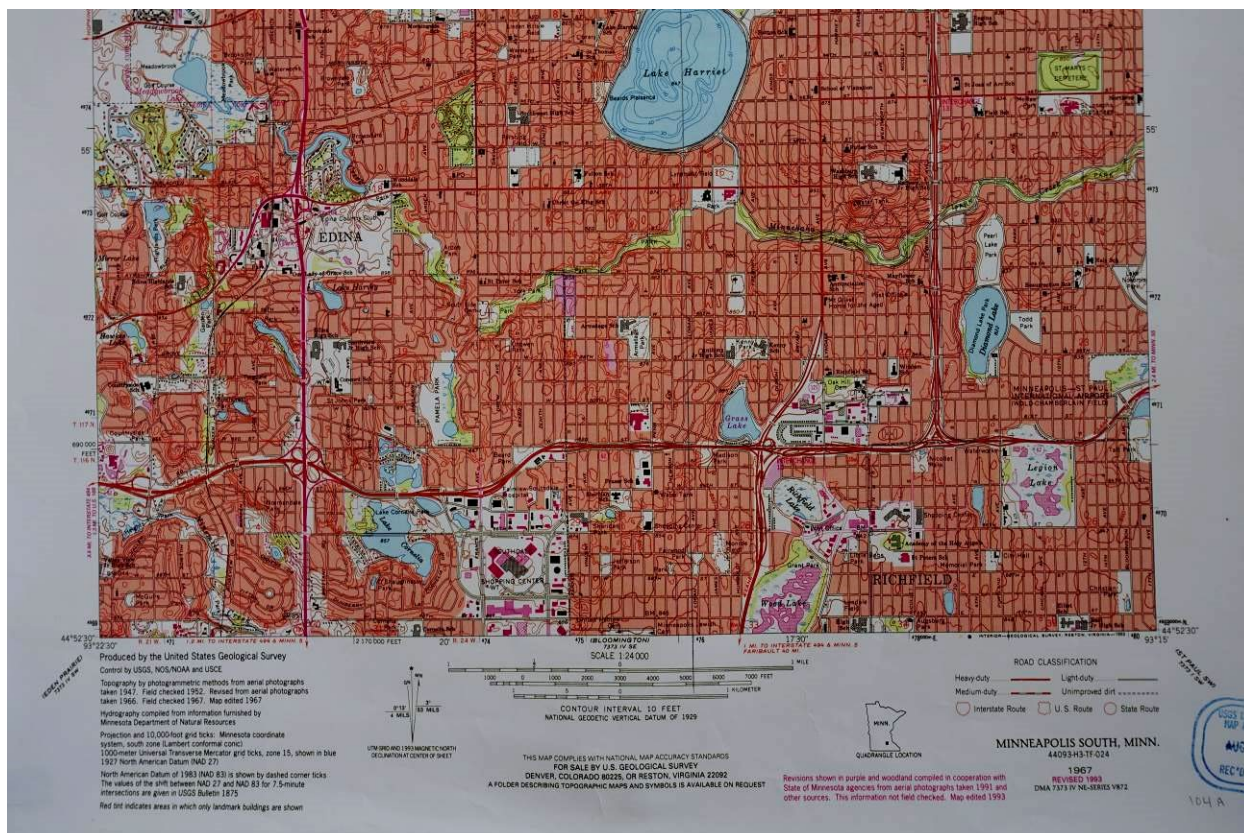


Figure 20. USGS map, Minneapolis South Quadrangle, 2 of 2