

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: Luther Memorial Church

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

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: 315 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NorthCity or town: South St. Paul State: MN County: DakotaNot For Publication:  Vicinity: **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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**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.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: CONCRETE; Walls: BRICK,  
CONCRETE; Roof: SYNTHETICS

### 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.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Luther Memorial Church is located on the northwest corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North within a primarily residential area of South St. Paul, a first-ring Twin Cities suburb. In addition to the numerous single-family homes in the vicinity of the church are a 2006 senior housing facility, a 1960 commercial building, and a 1950 commercial building, located consecutively to the north; public athletic fields established in 1953, located across 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to the east; and an unaffiliated cemetery located across 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North to the south.

Luther Memorial Church is a combination school and church building in the Mid-Century Modern style. It was constructed in two episodes, the first completing a school and intentionally temporary sanctuary in 1956, and the second completing the permanent sanctuary and adjacent non-worship spaces in 1964. The building incorporates multiple sections that create an irregular plan. Although all sections are one story, the temporary and permanent sanctuaries are extended in height. The permanent sanctuary was designed by Lloyd F. Bergquist for Bergstedt, Wahlberg and Wold. It has a broad polygonal plan with curved southern corners, a slightly sloping roof, and an undulating façade, features that although subtle, represent the increasing experimentation with form in Modern church architecture during the 1960s. The exterior and the interior of the permanent sanctuary are additionally representative of the Mid-Century Modern style in the minimalism of the ornamentation and the combination of materials used. The latter includes the incorporation of materials relatively new and unique to churches at the time, including the

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prominent use of concrete in the exterior, terrazzo panels in the interior, and faceted stained-glass windows executed by a master, August Molder.

The period of significance is 1964, the year in which the permanent sanctuary was completed. The exterior of the 1964 construction is entirely unaltered, and its interior has undergone only minor alterations. The integrity of all aspects of the 1964 construction is therefore excellent. Although the 1956 portion of the building is less intact, its major exterior alterations are limited to two elevations largely obscured from public view. Its interior, which is not essential to conveying the significance of the building, has undergone alterations, but not in the north end of the education wing and only in limited fashion in the temporary sanctuary, which therefore bolsters the overall integrity of the building.

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## Narrative Description

### *Exterior*

Luther Memorial Church was constructed in two stages, one completed in 1956 and the other in 1964 (Figure 1; Photograph 1). It is irregular in plan; letter designations therefore have been assigned to each of its multiple sections to facilitate ease of reference in this form (Figure 2). The 1964 construction comprises Section A, the permanent sanctuary, and Section B, the lower-height construction wrapping around its west and south sides. Section C is the former temporary sanctuary. Section D is the section between the temporary and permanent sanctuaries and extending west to the education wing, which is Section E. All sections are one story, but the temporary and permanent sanctuaries are of an extended height. A basement level is present only under the south end of the temporary sanctuary, housing a maintenance storage office and HVAC mechanisms. All basement walls are poured concrete, while the foundation walls above are concrete block.

An exterior overview of the church with a photograph location key is provided in Figure 3.

Section A is rectangular in plan, but with curved south corners (Photograph 2). The roof slopes gently from north to south. The west and south elevations of Section A are faced in tan, light brown, orange, and red brick with inclusions, laid in a common-bond pattern, and are not fenestrated. The east elevation of Section A is similarly faced, but it features a brick relief of the water of life issuing from a heart and triangle into the cup of life near its north end. Affixed in individual metal letters south of and adjacent to the base of the cup is the Bible verse symbolized by the relief: "If any one thirst / let him come to me and drink / John 7:37.". At the north end of this elevation is a recess, the east-facing wall of which is occupied by an aluminum-framed, faceted stained-glass window protected on the exterior by semi-translucent plastic panels. The ceiling of

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the recess is clad in stucco. The north-facing wall of the recess is faced in brick, and the south-facing wall is the east end of the north elevation.

The north elevation of Section A consists of stucco-surfaced, precast-concrete panels alternating with recessed, aluminum-framed, faceted stained-glass windows, the latter protected on the exterior by semi-translucent plastic panels. In each instance, the panels are arranged to flare out slightly from the center, creating an undulating effect in the overall elevation. The sills for the windows are pentagonal slabs of cast stone, approximately one foot deep. Below the sills and panels, the foundation wall is parge coated.

Section B is generally an L in plan, but the north to south-running leg tapers in width as it extends south (Photograph 3). It has a flat roof. The walls of Section B are faced entirely in brick matching the color and pattern of that in Section A. In the east elevation at the junction with Section A is a recessed entrance which incorporates an aluminum-framed plate-glass door with a sidelight. The ceiling of the recess is painted, and the material could not be determined. The south elevation of Section B is fenestrated with five irregularly spaced, paired, aluminum-sash windows, each pair comprising a fixed light and a shorter fixed light over an awning window. A louver window is additionally present in this elevation. The west elevation contains seven single aluminum-sash windows, each incorporating a fixed light over an awning window.

Section C is rectangular in plan, and it has an asymmetrical gabled roof (Photographs 4 and 5). In this section, brick wall surfaces match those of Sections A and B. These are present in the lower half of the east elevation and in the full height of its north and south ends; the entirety of the north and west elevations; and the portions of the south elevation which remain visible above and to the front (east) of Section D. Near the base of the latter portion is the 1956 cornerstone (Photograph 6).

The lower half of the east elevation of Section C contains a single industrial metal door (see Photograph 4). Above the majority portion where the brick surfacing does not extend to the top, the east elevation features narrow, vertical, aluminum-sash window arrangements alternating with aluminum panels. The 1955 plans for this section indicate that the panels were Cemesto, which is likely sheathed rather than replaced by the aluminum. It is not known when the aluminum was added. Each window arrangement includes a small hopper window at the base, two larger rectangular fixed lights above it, and a fixed light matching the size of the hopper window at the top. The windows are "stained" via a colored film applied to their exteriors.

The north elevation of Section C holds a single louver window at the west end but is otherwise not fenestrated. The west elevation contains six regularly spaced, narrow, vertically oriented aluminum-sash windows, each consisting of a fixed light over a hopper light. An industrial metal

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double door is between the two northernmost windows. A gable-roofed wood storage shed has been placed outside of this elevation (Photograph 7).

The plan of Section D is essentially a square with an extension east off its south half. Section D has a flat roof. The east elevation of Section D, the location of the main entrance to the building, is almost entirely of aluminum-framed plate-glass elements (Photograph 8). These include two nearly full-height picture windows, each successively flanked to their exterior by a set of double doors and a sidelight. A brick pilaster separates the south sidelight from an inverted corner at the junction of Sections D and A. There, the east-facing wall holds a plate-glass window, and the north-facing wall an aluminum panel. A remnant section of the long, flat-roofed canopy system that historically sheltered the walkways leading to the church is present in front of this elevation, the eastern approximately one-third of which extends out farther, to the campanile, than the western two thirds. The canopy has deep-rib corrugated-metal ceilings supported by metal posts. Three plate-glass transom windows are present above the canopy in the east elevation. The campanile is faced in brick, and an industrial metal door is located in its rear (west) face. Affixed to the front of the campanile are metal letters spelling "LUTHER MEMORIAL CHURCH." They appear similar to those on and may have been taken from a sign historically present in front of the campanile within a curbed, landscaped island (Figure 4). The island and sign have since been removed. The finned steel belfry and surmounting cross of the campanile remain as built in 1964 (Photograph 9). The south elevation of Section D is primarily brick (Photograph 10). At the west end is a recessed entrance, with a sloped ceiling faced in deep-rib corrugated metal. The east-facing sidewall is clad in brick. The entrance includes south-facing, aluminum-framed plate-glass double doors with a transom window and a sidelight on the west which extends to the height of the transom window. At the east end of this elevation are two full-height arrangements consisting of paired, aluminum-sash windows with metal-sheathed panels above and below. Each pair consists of a fixed light and a fixed light over an awning window.

With the exception of a recessed entrance at its west end, which mirrors that on the south elevation, the north elevation of Section D was replaced in 2017 (Photograph 11). Historically consisting of a band of windows between upper and lower Cemesto panels, it is now faced in panels of rigid insulation with a protective coating. The east approximately half of the elevation is fenestrated with three sets of paired, aluminum-sash replacement windows, each consisting of a fixed light and a fixed light over a shorter light, presumably an awning window. An added aluminum-framed plate-glass door is located adjacent to and east of the recess and is only operable from the interior.

Section E is essentially rectangular in plan, but its north section angles off slightly to the north-northwest. It has a flat roof. As with the other sections of the building, the brick cladding its walls

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matches the rest where it is present, which is the entirety of the south and north elevations. No fenestration is present in the south elevation. The north elevation includes an added exit-only industrial metal door, from which the ground is accessed by an open, steel staircase.

The west elevation of Section E includes a recessed entrance to the education wing (Photograph 12). The sloped ceiling of the recess is clad in deep-rib corrugated metal, and the sidewalls in brick. The west-facing elevation holds an aluminum-framed plate-glass arrangement of double doors with a transom window, one sidelight extending to the height of the transom window on the south and two to the north.

To the south of the recess in the west elevation of Section E is a continuous band of aluminum-sash windows comprising six pairs of windows, each consisting of a fixed light and a fixed light over a hopper window. Above and below the band are aluminum-sheathed panels of the same width as each pair, the upper ones shorter in height than the lower. North of the recess, the center roughly one-third of the west elevation, formerly organized in the same fashion, has been replaced with rigid insulation panels and two instances of replacement paired windows, configured similarly to those to the south. The panels extend to an added single aluminum-framed plate-glass door, flush with the elevation, operable only from the interior. Beyond the door, the north approximately one-third of the elevation is arranged in the same manner as the south third.

The east elevation of Section E is interrupted by Section D. Here, the upper portions of the foundation walls are visible and are parge coated. To the north of Section D, the north approximately one-half of the elevation is configured in the same manner as the south third of the west elevation, and the remainder has been replaced with the same materials, window types, and door types used in the center third of the west elevation (Photograph 13). It incorporates two pairs of windows and two doors, the latter of which are operable only from the interior and exit to open steel staircases providing ground access. To the south of Section D, the east elevation of Section E is configured in the same manner as the south third of the west elevation but with only three pairs of windows (Photograph 14).

Metal coping is present along all rooflines, and all roofs are of the built-up variety.

### *Interior*

The current floor plan of the church with a photograph location key is provided in Figure 5.

The main entrance to the building leads into the narthex, in the north wall of which are the wood doors leading to the 1956 sanctuary / current fellowship hall (Section C). These are arranged as a double door nested between two single doors. The west and south walls of the fellowship hall and the lower half of the east wall are exposed concrete block (Photograph 15). The concrete



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block and all other materials described for this section are original unless otherwise noted. Small louver windows are located in the upper portion of the west wall. The upper half of the east wall consists of a regular arrangement in which a window is flanked on each side by a Cemesto panel between each set of neighboring steel piers.

The north wall of the fellowship hall is primarily a wood vertical slat wall (Photograph 16). Centered within the wall is a recess, the south-facing wall of which is exposed concrete block, to which is mounted a cross fashioned from steel I-beams. The sidewalls and ceiling of the recess are wood, and the recess can be closed off by two full-height wood doors. From the recess, the vertical slat wall extends 9.5 feet to the east and west. Here, it was added, likely in 1964, as a 1950s photograph shows this surface to originally have been concrete block flush with that in the recess (Figure 6). From these points, the vertical slat wall makes a 90-degree turn and extends 5.5 feet south, then turns outward again at 90 degrees to extend to the east and west walls. The south-facing sections omitted the boards in a 32-by-48-inch upper section to allow for the conveyance of sound from speakers mounted behind the slats.<sup>1</sup> The west-facing section contains a door, presumably with a storage room behind it. Except at the east and west ends, the north wall of the fellowship hall extends down to the back of a stage, originally the choir seating area, though the height has been reduced (Photograph 17). The stage floor is asbestos tile and at the east and west ends, four rubber tile-clad steps lead down to the main floor, which is also asbestos tile. The stage is fronted with a generally coursed, roughly dressed, mortared limestone wall. Formerly the backdrop for the altar, it too is roughly half the height that it was historically (Figure 7).

Exposed structural steel arches, the piers for which extend up the fronts of the east and west walls, support a steel deck ceiling. Padding has been wrapped around the lower portions of the piers.

Two doors in the west wall of the fellowship hall provide access to a kitchen, which is divided into two rooms, one currently used as a cooking and preparation space and the other for storage of tables, chairs, and supplies. The kitchen ceiling is plaster, and the preparation room has cupboards, a counter, and cabinets on the south wall. The kitchen has a storage room off each end. A restroom is located off the east end of the north storage room. South of the south storage room but not accessible from it is a door providing access to the stairwell for the basement, where the boiler room and a maintenance office are located.

The narthex (Sections B and D) is original to 1964 in its layout and materials, with the exception of a section of carpet installed immediately inside the entrance in 1995 (Photograph 18). It has a

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<sup>1</sup> "Luther Memorial Church," plan set by Bergstedt and Hirsch (1955), Luther Memorial Church archives [Luther archives], South St. Paul, MN [Plans 1955].

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quarry-tile floor and acoustic-tile ceiling, and its walls are brick in tan, orange, brown, and red hues, laid in a Flemish-bond pattern. In the west wall directly opposite the entrance are the two wide, separated doorways to the coat room, south of which is a fairly shallow recess containing a bulletin board and information station. Immediately south of the recess are the four wood-framed, full-height, plate-glass windows and adjacent wood door for the main office. At the south end of the narthex, a short hall extends west for additional office access (see below). The east wall of the narthex includes the wood single door (north) and double doors (center and south) to the sanctuary, and a stone plaque etched with the words of Isaiah 12:3-4. The walls of the narthex are adorned by wood and copper sculptures made circa 2010 by Dr. Ron Felt, a congregation member and the church's former artist in residence (Photograph 19).<sup>2</sup> The width of the narthex tapers north to south, and its south end curves east, smoothly transitioning into a hallway that extends in that direction.

The sanctuary (Section A) evinces little alteration from the time of its construction (Photographs 20 and 21). All materials are original unless otherwise noted. The south minority of the east wall and the north, south, and west walls are faced primarily in brick matching that in the narthex. The majority of the east wall, which backgrounds the chancel, is faced in rustic (unpolished) terrazzo panels made with quartz aggregate. This type of panel also faces the west wall from the tops of and in equivalent width to the doors up to the ceiling above. Centered within the center stack of terrazzo panels in this wall is a steel sculpture of the cup centered on a cross within an abstraction of the world (see Statement of Significance), immediately below which a projector sits atop an added wood shelf. Doors and panels are flanked on both sides by full-height, brick-faced engaged pilasters, except to the north of the north door, which is flanked by the north wall.

The brick of the north wall faces the back side of the exterior concrete panels (Photograph 22). The panels therefore taper in slightly toward the center, creating the same undulating effect but in reverse from the exterior. Wood-faced baseboard heaters follow the angles of the brick sections. The seven full-height, faceted stained-glass windows between the brick sections are nine and a half inches wide within aluminum framing measuring 13 inches wide at its exterior. The bulkheads below them are faced in panels, possibly fiberboard, painted in a textured paint. The chipping used to create facets in the thick glass is readily evident (Photograph 23). The aluminum divides each colorful window into nine stacked, vertically oriented rectangular panels, but the composition of each is continuous. According to the dedication brochure specific to the art in the building, the top and bottom panels of each "are simply abstractions to blend with the design of the building or to complete the design of the window." The second panel from the top consistently

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor Patrick Joiner, personal communication, 2023.

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includes a representation of the hand of God, from which a vine winds down through the remaining panels, there becoming interspersed with symbols of various themes, such as a radio tower in the communications window and, as might be expected in a community whose economy was driven by the stockyards, a slaughtered animal carcass in the food production window. The themes, from east to west, are public service, food production, labor, commerce, communications, healing arts, and education.

An eighth stained-glass window is recessed behind the north end of the rear wall of the chancel (Photograph 24). It is nearly 33 inches wide within aluminum framing measuring three feet wide at its exterior. It is primarily but not entirely in blue and green hues to represent water, which flows through ten stacked square panels. A butterfly symbolic of the Resurrection is in the fourth panel down.

The chancel wall retains the original four steel sculptures, dove, Bible, chalice and host, and shell, near its north end (Photograph 25). A retractable projection screen has been installed in the center of the wall at a height roughly equivalent to the top of the Bible. A moveable cloth banner is present at the south end of the chancel wall.

The chancel incorporates a lower platform and, within it, an altar platform (Photograph 26). The floor surrounding the lower platform holds the pulpit at the north end, the choir area at the south end, and the baptismal font just north of the choir area. The pulpit is raised and therefore incorporates steps, which are masked by wood, faux board and batten panels. The front is faced in a polished black granite panel bordered by wood (Photograph 27). The same type of board and batten construction borders the choir seating area on the west and wraps around to the east for a short distance in front of the second of three risers of choir seating (Photograph 28). The lowest riser is equivalent to the lower platform of the chancel. The pews are the same here as in the nave, i.e., clean lined in their design, with semi-trapezoidal bench ends, but with taller backs. Contained within the area between the seating and the lower chancel platform are an electronic keyboard, a piano, and the console for the pipe organ. The pipes for the organ are on a wood-faced balcony above the east end of the choir seating, backed by a wood-framed screen. The balcony is faced in embossed plastic panels that collectively read "I AM The Vine And You Are The Branches." The baptismal font is square in plan but curves convexly on all four sides. The base, to which wheels are attached for mobility, is gray granite, and the top is black granite, upon which sits a wide steel bowl.

The lower platform is at a height for kneeling at the communion rail. The altar platform includes two wide steps on the west and on the east up to the top surface, upon which the altar is located. The majority of the main chancel floor and the lower platform have quarry-tile flooring. Exceptions are a rectangular inset within the choir area and the perimeter of the platform where the

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communicants kneel, which are floored in a polished black slate. The latter material also constitutes the surface of the altar platform. The north and south sides of the altar platform are faced in brick.

The communion rail consists of a simple, open arrangement constituting a continuous upper iron rail and regularly spaced vertical iron supports embedded into the floor of the lower platform. Centered in the spaces between the supports atop the iron rail are 14-inch-long wood caps, pentagonal in profile. The rail is arranged with a centered break along each side of the platform. On the north and south sides, four stations are present to each side of the break, and on the east and west sides, six are present to each side of the break. Adjacent to each of the north and south sides of the altar platform are moveable credence tables, with iron bases and black slate tops, in front of which are moveable iron plant stands.

A simple iron lectern is present at kneeling height on the second step of the altar platform on the west side. An iron handrail extends up both steps to the top of the altar platform on the east side. The altar is of simple but elegant design in granite (Photograph 29). The rectilinear top of the altar and the rectilinear top and bottom borders of the base are in polished black granite. The remainder of the base is in an unpolished, brushed gray granite, with concave curvature on all sides and two symmetrical oval cutouts through the center.

The floor of the nave, which the 1963 plans indicate was quarry tile with concrete aisles, is fully carpeted. The carpet was installed in 1989. The floor slopes slightly down in the direction of the chancel. The pews are clean-lined in their design, with semi-trapezoidal bench ends (Photograph 30). They form two full (north and center) and one half (south) sections. The front two rows of the north section have been removed to create a play area.

Consistent with the exterior roofline, the ceiling of the sanctuary slopes down to the south (see Photograph 20). It continues the undulating pattern of the north wall, with the points of tapering set perpendicular to those in the wall. All but the north end of the ceiling is clad in board and batten matching that described in other elements of the sanctuary. The north end, extending from the water-themed window to the terrazzo paneling above the north door, is clad in stucco. Hanging from the ceiling high above the altar is a wooden cross encircled by a steel ring, which is original to the 1964 construction (see Photograph 20). Additionally suspended from the ceiling are can replacement lights, wood ceiling fans, and modern speakers. A few recessed lights nearer the east end focus light on the cross and on the altar.

Extending behind the chancel wall, south from the recess in which the window-themed wall is located, to the same hallway that extends east from the narthex is a hallway providing access to rooms on its east (Section A). From north to south, these rooms currently function as a storage

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room, the sacristy, another storage room, and men's and women's restrooms. Access within the hallway is limited by wood doors present between the restroom area and storage area to its north and between both storage areas and the sacristy. Each room also has a door from the hallway. The hallway has concrete-block walls, acoustic-tile ceilings, and with the exception of in front of the restrooms, vinyl asbestos-tile floors. As these constitute the majority of the materials outside of the sanctuary, it should be assumed that these apply to the spaces discussed below unless otherwise noted. It should additionally be assumed that all materials are original unless otherwise noted. The hallway floor is quarry tile in front of the restrooms. It is noted that another doorway to this hallway is located at the south end of the chancel wall but is masked from the congregation by the full-height board-and-batten screen behind the organ. The choir can reach this doorway from the seating area by walking north down a short and narrow passage beneath the balcony holding the organ pipes.

The north wall of the north storage room, historically the pastor's sacristy, is occupied by wood shelving and paneling and a wood cabinet door. The east wall of the current sacristy, which the 1963 plans refer to as the working sacristy, is fronted with wood cabinetry and paneling and a sink within a countertop (Photograph 31). The countertop and backsplash are Marlite. The floor of the south storage room is exposed poured concrete.

The east-west running hallway that connects the one just described with the narthex extends from the east building entrance and provides access to rooms on its south side (Section B), which are original in layout and materials unless otherwise noted. From east to west, these include a restroom with attached storage room; the choir rehearsal room; three storage areas surrounding a custodial closet; a kitchenette; and the lounge. The hallway, which is floored in quarry tile, includes a ramp up from the door to the storage areas to the door to the kitchenette (Photograph 32). On the north side of the hall, just before (east) of the ramp is a door for access to the sanctuary at the front of the nave.

The back (east) wall of the kitchenette is occupied by wood cupboards, a Marlite backsplash, and lower cabinets with an integrated range and sink and Marlite countertop. A serving counter with Marlite countertop and wood cabinets is located on the west side of the kitchenette, open to the lounge. It may be closed to the lounge through wood folding doors. A wood door is located on the north side of the kitchenette for access between it and the lounge, and another is to the south side, another point of access to the storage areas/custodial closet.

The lounge has wood-paneled walls and replacement carpeting (Photograph 33). The ceiling consists of convex acoustic diffuser panels. These appear to be in the Astral pattern, one of many

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patterns offered by the United Lighting and Ceiling Company during the mid-1960s which were intended to make acoustic tile ceilings more decorative.<sup>3</sup>

Past the lounge, the hallway curves north, smoothly transitioning to the south end of the narthex. Returning to the narthex, two doorways on the west side provide access to the office block (Section B). One is near the south curve, and the other is the previously mentioned door to the main office. The one on the south leads to a short space, on the south side of which is a storage room and on the north side of which is a custodial closet. At the west end of this space is a north to south-running, carpeted hallway. At the south end of this hallway in the southwest corner of the building, adjacent to the lounge but without a doorway between the two spaces, is the pastor's office. It is carpeted and has wood-paneled walls, with built in shelves and cabinets on the south wall (Photograph 34). On the north end of the hallway is the south, non-public entrance to the main office. Between the pastor's office and the main office on the east side of the hallway, north of the custodial closet, are a restroom and another storage room. On the west side of the hallway are two more offices, originally constructed as a single conference room, and north of these, a small conference room, originally a second pastor's office. These three spaces all are carpeted and have wood paneled walls, with built-in shelving, countertop, and cabinets along one wall (Photograph 35). The carpet in the hallway and all offices except the northernmost one was installed in the late 1970s. The carpet in the northern office and the main office and workspace (described below) was installed in 1995.

Within the main office, a wood service counter extends from the north wall approximately three-quarters of the room width to a swinging door of the same height (Photograph 36). On the public side of the counter, the flooring is quarry tile. On the staff side, it is carpet. The walls are wood paneled. In the east wall is a doorway to a carpeted combination workspace and kitchenette, its east wall occupied by built-in shelving, a Marlite backsplash and countertop with sink, and cabinets.

Near the north end of the west side of the narthex, the coat room is a carpeted space with plaster ceilings. The carpet was installed in the mid-1970s. An iron coat rack system with attached wood shelves is suspended from the ceiling. A high-backed pew similar to those present in the choir seating area is located along the south wall, and a standard pew, likely one relocated for the sanctuary play area, is along the north wall. Just north of the coat room on the west, aluminum-

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<sup>3</sup> Ceilume, "How We Got Our Start," accessed June 7, 2024, <https://www.ceilume.com/how-we-got-our-start.cfm>. United Lighting and Ceiling Company, "Diffuser Panel Patterns," brochure, circa 1965, accessed June 7, 2024, <https://archive.org/details/UnitedLightingAndCeilingCo.1960s/mode/2up>.

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framed plate-glass double doors with a transom window and flanking full-height sidelights provide access to Section D and beyond that, the education wing.

Through these doors is an east to west-running hallway through Section D and into Section E (Photograph 37). From the doors at the narthex, it immediately ramps up to the west to the first doorway on the south, is then level through a perpendicular hallway at the west end of Section D, then ramps up again through the east half of Section E, ending at a lobby in the west half of Section E. The north wall of the hallway along the first ramp is faced in brick, but the walls are otherwise exposed concrete block, both of which are historical-period materials. The hallway is carpeted.

The hallway carpet and all other flooring in Section D beyond the narthex are replacement materials. Ceilings in the hallway and lobby are plaster as they are throughout Section D beyond the narthex, which was the case historically. The majority of the walls in Section D are exposed concrete block, which is original. Exceptions are noted below.

From east to west within Section D, rooms on the south currently function as a lounge and women's and men's restrooms; the north is occupied by a nursery. The north and east walls of the lounge are in faux wood paneling, which was added in 1964. The south wall is clad in original Cemesto panels below the windows. The west wall is original plaster. Flooring here, which was the nursery in 1956, and in the current nursery, historically three offices, was updated in 2017 (Photographs 38 and 39). The restrooms were updated with ceramic-tile flooring and ceramic subway tile on the lower portions of the walls. The window (north) wall of the nursery is clad in gypsum board, a replacement material.

West past these rooms, just prior to reaching the perpendicular hallway, are a set of double wood doors. The perpendicular hallway leads to the north and south entrances; its west wall is faced in brick. The only room accessed by this hallway is a maintenance storage room on the west side of the north leg.

The lobby at the west end of Section E is inside the west entrance (Photograph 40). The north wall of the lobby is faced in brick, a continuation of the exterior sidewall of the recess in which the entrance is located. The south wall of the lobby is exposed original concrete block as are the majority of walls in Section E. Exceptions are noted below. East off the lobby on the north side of but not accessible from the east-west hallway is a completely updated daycare restroom. From the lobby, hallways extend to the north and south through the education wing (Section E).

The south hallway and adjoining rooms in the education wing were not included in the 2017 renovations, and the materials described below are original unless otherwise noted. Ceilings throughout this wing are plaster. On the east side of the south hallway is what is currently labeled

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as the teen room but in 1956 was an assembly room (Photograph 41). The west wall of the hallway comprises expanses of full-height corrugated glass and wood doors for three spaces, formerly classrooms, two of which are currently used for storage and one of which serves as an office. South of these and extending east so that the hallway terminates on the south at its doorway is a library, also formerly a classroom (Photograph 42). Flooring in these spaces is vinyl asphalt tile, except for the teen room, where it has been replaced or covered by carpet.

The north hallway runs through the south half of the north section of the education wing before expanding into a commons area in the north half. The rooms east and west of the hallway, historically classrooms, have all been updated for daycare facilities (Photograph 43). On the west, folding doors historically allowed the option of dividing each of the two rooms there into two spaces, as was the case with the single large room on the east. The folding doors have been removed, and flooring has been replaced. The west walls of the west rooms and the east walls of the east rooms, historically faced in Cemesto panels, are now gypsum board. These walls correspond to the locations of the exterior wall replacements for Section E.

The commons area, the carpeting for which was installed in 1995, and the rooms to its east and west, four to each side, were not included in the 2017 renovations, except for the exit door added at its north end (Photograph 44). The commons-facing walls comprise full-height expanses of corrugated glass and wood doors stenciled with classroom numbers. The floors of the eight rooms, formerly classrooms but now storage rooms, are vinyl asphalt tile (Photograph 45).

### *Integrity*

Luther Memorial Church meets Criterion C in the areas of architecture and art. As such, the most important aspects of its integrity are design, materials, and workmanship as expressed through the exterior and the main interior worship space of the 1964 construction. Although the integrity of these aspects in other interior spaces bolsters the ability of a church building to convey its significance, the liturgical movement was not concerned with how art and architecture affected the functions of, for example, offices or classrooms, and while architects would not have dismissed these areas in developing a cohesive design, worship was the primary function of the building. Without, therefore, any specialized circumstances identified as part of a church building's historic context, these secondary spaces take on less importance from an integrity perspective.

The church building continues to function as a church building in the place where it was constructed, on the west side of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North/north side of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North. Luther Memorial Church therefore has excellent integrity of location.

A park (Veterans Field) is across 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to the east. Surrounding construction is primarily single-family homes, including the former church parsonage (1957), but two small



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commercial buildings are at the southwest corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 4<sup>th</sup> Street North, and a large senior housing facility occupies the area between the commercial buildings and the church parking lot, with its driveway extending west to a large parking lot that exists along the north side of the 1956 church construction then wraps around to the back of the housing facility. The single-family residential, commercial, and park uses were present during the period of significance. The senior housing facility was constructed in 2006 on what was formerly vacant church property. Pedestrian circulation through the current church property is largely unchanged from 1964; but the canopies sheltering the walkways are largely removed. Also removed was a curbed and landscaped island within the parking lot. Given the proximity, scale, and by extension visual prominence of the senior housing facility and the alterations to elements of circulation on the church property, integrity of setting has been compromised. Its diminishment is somewhat mitigated by the substantially better retention of setting to the east, west, and south. The integrity of setting is therefore fair.

With the exception of the removal of a non-integrated structure, the canopy over the walkway on its north side, the 1964 massing of Luther Memorial Church appears as it did upon completion of its construction (compare Figures 1 and 4). As the permanent sanctuary has undergone no exterior alterations, its exterior essential physical features are intact, and the integrity of exterior design, materials, and workmanship, therefore, is excellent.

The massing of the 1956 construction is intact. Its exterior design and materials have been altered, as portions of two elevations have been replaced, involving substantial changes to materials and fenestration. These elevations, however, are largely obscured from surrounding streets, either by intervening construction and topography or being situated back from the road and recessed. In fact, the only strongly visible elevation is the east wall of the temporary sanctuary. Although it has been altered by the sheathing of the Cemesto panels with aluminum, it is possible that the sheathing was carried out in 1964. Even if the sheathing was installed later, its color and placement is consistent with the Cemesto, making the change indiscernible to most viewers; further, it is an easily reversible condition.

As previously noted, only minor alterations have occurred within the permanent sanctuary, which therefore retains its essential physical features. By and large, the 1964 construction overall is as it existed in that year. The narthex, offices, and lounge/kitchenette, for example, appear nearly identical in historical and current photographs (compare Figure 8 and Photograph 35, Figure 9 and Photograph 36, Figure 10 and Photograph 33, Figure 11 and Photograph 18, and Figure 12 with Photograph 34). Material alterations are largely cosmetic and consist primarily of added or replacement carpeting. Comparison of the floor plan in the 1963 drawings compared to the current floor plan shows the only notable spatial change to have been the addition of a wall in

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the original conference room, where the 1963 plan indicates a future wall. Functional revisions have not been noteworthy, with the north-south leg of Section B still being used primarily for office and meeting spaces and the east-west leg still being used primarily for the lounge and the choir.

Overall, the interior integrity of the design, materials, and workmanship of the 1964 construction is excellent with regard to architecture and art.

While integrity of the design, materials, and workmanship of the interior of the 1956 construction is not essential to conveying the significance of the building, retention of these aspects from the period of significance will bolster the integrity for the building overall, as well as the aspects of feeling and association from the period of significance. The north half of the north section and the south section of the education wing are in particularly good condition in this regard, as they are not altered and still exhibit the individual classrooms defined by corrugated glass walls and wood doors with stenciled classroom numbers. Integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association in the south half of the north section of the education wing has been diminished by the loss of the folding doors, the replacement of the Cemesto-paneled walls with gypsum board, and the replacement flooring. It is not, however, fully absent, due to the retention of the exposed concrete block in the other walls and of the layout of the rooms.

Luther Memorial Church is in the place where it was constructed, and it is highly intact, i.e., strongly able to convey to an observer its identity as a Mid-Century Modern suburban church. As indicated by the hitherto discussion of integrity, the physical features essential to conveying its historic character (see Statement of Significance) are present, and it continues to be used for its intended function. The church therefore has excellent integrity of association.

Integrity of feeling is by and large an outgrowth of the other six aspects of integrity, as it is only logical that the greater the retention of a property's composition, surroundings, and associations from a given historical period, the more the property will evoke the feeling of that period. Although integrity of setting is somewhat diminished, in this case, it does not weigh as heavily as other aspects of integrity, given that its architectural and artistic significance was not linked to its setting. The church's integrity of feeling, therefore, is excellent.

Luther Memorial Church, therefore, has sufficient overall integrity to convey its historic significance in Architecture and Art from the period of significance, 1964.

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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.)

ARCHITECTURE

ART

**Period of Significance**

1964

**Significant Dates**

1964

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Bergstedt and Hirsch (architect, 1956)

C. T. Funck (builder, 1956)

Bergquist, Lloyd F. for Bergstedt, Wahlberg and Wold (architect, 1964)

August Molder (stained-glass artist)

**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.)

Luther Memorial Church is individually significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a highly intact, excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style as applied to a suburban church during the post-World War II era. It is additionally significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of art for its incorporation of faceted stained-glass windows that strongly reflect the mastery of the artist, August Molder; the principles of Modern sacred art; and the 1960s-1970s movement for immanence in worship. Because its primary significance is derived from architectural and artistic distinction, Luther Memorial Church satisfies Criteria Consideration A. The period of significance is 1964, the year in which construction of the permanent sanctuary was completed.

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

*Minnesota's Modern Churches*

The associated historic contexts "Modern Church Architecture and Art, 1945-1975" and "Modern Churches of Minnesota, 1950-1975" address the design of Minnesota's Mid-Century and Late Modern Christian churches from the years between the end of World War II and the mid 1960s, when the nation's religious building construction boomed and peaked, through its subsequent decline over the next decade.<sup>4</sup> The boom in construction, due in no small part to the mass expansion of suburbia combined with an unprecedented national surge in membership in organized religions, corresponded to a period when Modernism and worship reform occurred in parallel. The contexts are summarized in the paragraphs below.

As detailed in the contexts, Catholic and Protestant worship-reform movements of the post-World War II era, particularly the liturgical movement, shared with Modernism the values of reducing elaboration, creating an authentic and honest "product," and ensuring that product resonated with and was relevant to contemporary users or potential users. A substantial percentage of these users were of the middle socioeconomic classes, who often perceived traditional styles as elitist and unwelcoming, or simply passé, and additionally found them to be cost prohibitive.<sup>5</sup> Churches, therefore, frequently determined Modern designs to be preferable to those evoking "the bombast of the past."<sup>6</sup> Architectural separation from the trappings of the past similarly accommodated worship reform, which had the goal of active participation by the congregation in corporate worship<sup>7</sup>, rather than adhering to medieval-period customs in which the congregation observed worship by the celebrant. Accomplishing this goal raised the appeal of Modernist architecture as the necessity of reconceptualizing church building interiors to facilitate such participation dovetailed nicely with an architectural philosophy that placed primacy on function over form. This common aim, however, was a broad one, and therefore beyond the eventual requirement to bring

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<sup>4</sup> Andrea C. Pizza, "Modern Church Architecture and Art, 1945-1975" and "Modern Churches of Minnesota, 1950-1975," in *Phase I and II Architectural History Investigations for the Trunk Highway 210 Improvements Project, Brainerd, Crow Wing County, Minnesota* (Deco Cultural Services LLC, 2023):10-102.

<sup>5</sup> Jay M. Price, *Temples for a Modern God: Religious Architecture in Postwar America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13. Gretchen Buggeln, *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xxii, xxiv, 134.

<sup>6</sup> Chester Nagel, quoted in Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 411.

<sup>7</sup> Corporate worship is worship by a gathered body of church members.

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the altar out from the far wall of the worship space to allow the celebrant to face the congregation, it did not present any form, layout, material, or other design requirements.<sup>8</sup>

During the period between 1945 and approximately 1960, Modern church architecture tended to lean into appealing to congregations that retained notions of what a church "ought to look like," and therefore rephrased historical ideals, hence the popularity, for example, of A-frame churches, which were cast as Modern Gothic. As various Christian denominations brought congregations into greater focus, however, a philosophical dichotomy emerged regarding the ways in which their participation was formed, that of transcendence versus immanence. Particularly over the course of the 1960s and into the 1970s, when the philosophy of immanence became better defined and found more theological and architectural adherents, where a church body located itself in relation to this dichotomy was the baseline for the design of the building. As explained by Torgerson, transcendence refers to the aspect of the Christian God (God) that transcends "[human] existence or dwell[s] outside of the realm of the earth," i.e., the divine. Immanence refers to the aspect of God present "in our world through the Holy Spirit, through occasional radical manifestations (for example, miracles), and through the followers of Jesus (the church)," i.e., the human. A sense of transcendence was seen as contributing to individual worship, and of immanence as contributing to community worship.<sup>9</sup>

Translated to church architecture, various devices of design were considered to be aligned with the conveyance of either transcendence or immanence. In an albeit somewhat reductive assignment of these, transcendence tended to be conveyed in worship space through larger scale and volume, which "emphasiz[ed] the significance of God in contrast to humans"; diminished light; richness and abundance of symbolism; amplification of décor; room design and furnishings that tend to minimize awareness of others; long, narrow spaces oriented toward a single focal point; and clearly differentiated spaces for clergy and laity. Immanence tended to be conveyed in modest, well-lit spaces; simplification and minimization of décor, and centrally planned spaces "where there is an intentional collapse of specific clergy and parishioner domains and where the worshipers are acutely aware of being in community (even to the point of looking into one another's eyes during worship)."<sup>10</sup>

Where religious philosophical alignment left off, overall Modern architectural trends and the societal interests that influenced them began. In the 1950s, for example, some churches took their architectural cues from the era's post-World War II banks and department stores, incorporating

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<sup>8</sup> Mark A. Torgerson, *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 32-35, 38-39, 66-69. Buggeln, *Suburban*, 127.

<sup>9</sup> Torgerson, *Immanence*, 2-5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-5.

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liberal amounts of glass in the exterior to invite passersby to visually access the interior of the building in the hopes that they would then physically access it.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the national promotion of A-frame vacation homes as easy and economical in their construction translated to perhaps the most prolific Modern church architectural form of the decade.<sup>12</sup> During the 1960s and early to mid-1970s, a general national fascination with the futuristic on one hand, fueled by the Space Race, manifested in such conditions as the cladding or creation of substantial surfaces or the incorporation of major elements using technologically modern materials; the use of these or traditional materials, e.g., stone and brick, in a more expressive manner than what was permitted by traditional engineering systems; and creating unique, exaggerated, occasionally futuristic church forms. On the other hand, the era's rising natural-environmentalist movement, combined with the early to mid-1970s energy crisis, resulted in more "earthly" designs, either through natural materials or artificial materials meant to mimic them; integrating church buildings with the landscape in which they were being constructed; and/or grounding them through a reduction or recessing of windows, with a corresponding increase and prominence in visually solid materials, frequently brick or concrete, in wall surfaces. Church buildings of this bent tended to "display heavier massing, more aggressive angularity, solidity, and inwardness."<sup>13</sup>

During the post-World War II era, worship reformers additionally were attending to the art adorning church interiors and finding Modernist artistic expressions fulfilled their desire for honesty and authenticity. As their attention grew, the practice emerged of architects abandoning the design of a shell to be filled with commercial-house goods to work in partnership with various artists and artistic consultants to have aesthetically and functionally integrated churches. In Protestant churches, incorporated artistic expressions tended to be quantitatively minimal, a carryover from the Reformation-era history of many Protestant denominations, in which countless religious artworks were destroyed for their purported encouragement of idolatry. Still, qualitative commonalities existed between Protestant and Catholic religious art. As with architecture, material honesty was important, hence a desire for hand-crafted rather than mass-produced goods. Some of the literature on sacred art argued that authenticity was imbued by an artist's attunement to the population of the church, in some instances broadly as a resident of the United States, i.e., that art should not be imported from overseas, but in other instances, as a member of the relevant or closely related denomination. Another, more prominent theme was the elimination of naturalism in favor of the abstract, as realism was, at its core, imitation. The abstract, however, was not to be taken to such extremes that meaning could not be realized by the viewer. Works meeting

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<sup>11</sup> Price, *Temples*, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Chad Randl, *A-frame* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 127, 136.

<sup>13</sup> Buggeln, *Suburban*, 27.

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these conditions did so through a wide range of conventions, including but by no means limited to proportional distortion; obscuration or omission of facial features; strongly geometric composition; clean, minimal, and open line work; and reliance on shading to convey form.<sup>14</sup>

Minnesota's Modern church architecture was in line with national patterns, as the contexts discuss in detail. During the 1960s, the decade in which Luther Memorial had its permanent sanctuary designed and built, Minnesota churches opted much more frequently for church buildings with greater equivalence of dimension in the opposing axes than they had in the 1940s and 1950s. It did not take long for circular-plan and, more so, broad polygonal-plan (including square) buildings to manifest a regular presence in the 1960s. Generally, though, the circularity or broad polygonality of a plan did not, in Minnesota, point to a central placement of the altar or pulpit, with numerous, possibly most 1960s and 1970s churches making more moderate concessions in the arrangement of worship space. Typically, the altar was not brought so far out as to be truly central, particularly by those Protestant denominations that put equivalent or more weight on the Biblical word and therefore might opt for less drastic measures such as slightly sloping the floor down toward the chancel to provide greater visibility to it from farther seats; radial or angled seating; excluding physical barriers such as rails or screens between the chancel and the nave; or constructing a nave wider than it is long, to bring the congregation and the celebrant closer together without giving undue weight to the altar.<sup>15</sup>

Particularly in churches with sizeable congregations and limitations of lot size, such concessions brought congregants in the back still only so close to the events of the service, but a church's modernity did not always hinge on the arrangement of the worship space; for example, Edward Sovik, who was a Lutheran, an architect, and one of the strongest proponents for an architecture of immanence, indicated that his firm's two-time award-winning design for the sanctuary of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Moorhead (1967) served the liturgical purpose by being absent "a special apse or chancel by the asymmetry."<sup>16</sup> An interior photograph, however, from the back of the seating area, seems to show a somewhat traditional aspect, with the separation of the

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<sup>14</sup> Henry Clifford, "The Delight of the Innocent Eye," *Liturgical Arts* May (1944): 60. Rev. Anthony J. Jacobs, "Religious Art and the Priest of To-Day," *Liturgical Arts* November (1945): 4, 7. Harold Rambusch, "To the Editor of Liturgical Arts," *Liturgical Arts* May (1946): 73. Joan Morris, "The International Society of Sacred Art," *Liturgical Arts* August (1947): 101-102. H. A. Reinhold, "'Liturgical' Art," *Liturgical Arts* February (1953): 33. Anton Henze, "The Potentialities of Modern Church Art and Its Position in History," in *Contemporary Church Art*, ed. Maurice Lavanoux (New York, NY: Shed & Ward, 1956), 17. Andrew T. Coates, *What is Protestant Art?* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Buggeln, *Suburban*, 128. "New Church Designs Reflecting Changes in Liturgy," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1968.

<sup>16</sup> "Twelfth Annual Design Awards: Minnesota Society of Architects," *Northwest Architect* September-October (1968): 37.



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altar and pulpit area by both distance and elevation. Still, Sovik's remarks leaned more strongly on the material combinations and forms used in the building, which from an exterior perspective were intended to "give to a residential neighborhood both a relief and a companion," and from an interior perspective to provide a "general sense of earthiness." Both award juries noted the detailing and materials in their justifications.<sup>17</sup> Despite the visual interest that may have been generated in this way or through material or other means in Minnesota's Modern church buildings, in truth, Minnesota churches tended toward caution in the exterior regard as they did in their interior arrangements; even the more futuristic-leaning forms tended to be aesthetically grounded by their materials.

### *Luther Memorial Church*

Luther Memorial Church was formed in 1953 through the merger of two South St. Paul churches at a time when the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) synods were contemplating merging at the national level. At that time, St. Paulus Lutheran Church, which had originated in 1892 with South St. Paul Lutherans of German heritage, was an ALC-affiliated congregation, and Trinity Lutheran Church, which had originated in 1928 with those of Scandinavian heritage, was an ELC-affiliated congregation. Both, in the early 1950s, found themselves in need of enlarged and updated building spaces because of increased membership, particularly to accommodate their Sunday schools, and both had created building committees by early 1953.<sup>18</sup>

Although several conditions made it sensible for the local merger to occur, the construction of a new church building was both a catalyst and an immediate priority for the newly formed Luther Memorial Church. In fact, a location committee had been appointed three months prior to the August 4, 1953, finalization of the merger, to find and obtain a building site sufficient for the needs of a congregation numbering over 1,000 members. The site selected included five lots at the northwest corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North, which were donated by Awalt Schmidt, a member of the church, and the remainder was purchased by October of 1954 from the city of South St. Paul, including the land west to present-day 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and, with corner lot exceptions, north to 4<sup>th</sup> Street North, including an abandoned rock quarry.<sup>19</sup> Architect

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 37. "Architectural Awards – 29<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Religious Architecture," *Faith and Form* July (1968): 16.

<sup>18</sup> Wilfred Bockelman, "The Gospel Comes to 'Packington,'" *Lutheran Standard* 112, no. 36 (1954): 9, 13, 22. Mary Schimpf and Linda Sorenson (editors), "Luther Memorial Church, 1892-1992," (1992): 3-6, Luther archives, ["Luther Memorial, 1892-1992"].

<sup>19</sup> Gerald B. Smith, "Inter-Synodical Unity Joins Two Congregations," *The Lutheran Brotherhood Bond* 33, no. 3 (1956):3; "Luther Memorial, 1892-1992," 9.

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interviews were conducted in the fall of 1954 and resulted in the selection of Bergstedt and Hirsch.<sup>20</sup>

The firm of Bergstedt and Hirsch was formed by Milton Bergstedt and James Hirsch in 1951. Bergstedt, who graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota in 1931 and the following two years attended the Harvard Graduate School of Design, worked in various firms before striking out to head up his own firm. Hirsch received the same degree from the University of Minnesota in 1948 and joined the firm of Ingemann and Bergstedt the same year, then left with Bergstedt to be the junior partner in his new firm. In 1955, the *American Architects Directory* listed under both architects' entries their principal works as the Elmer Andersen House in St. Paul (with Ingemann and Bergstedt, completed 1952), the Midway YMCA in St. Paul (1953), the Red River National Bank in Grand Forks, North Dakota (1955), and the South St. Paul Municipal Building (completed 1956). By that time, Clark Wold and Charles Wahlberg were employed at the firm, both having started in 1953. Wahlberg became a partner in 1955 and Wold in 1957, and in 1959, the firm was reorganized as Bergstedt, Hirsch, Wahlberg and Wold. Hirsch left to start his own firm in Wisconsin in 1962, after which the firm was known as Bergstedt, Wahlberg and Wold.<sup>21</sup>

In 1958, a year prior to the firm's first reorganization, *Northwest Architect* published a monograph on Bergstedt and Hirsch, noting, "The practice of this firm, built largely on religious and institutional work, now includes educational, commercial, medical, and industrial work."<sup>22</sup> At that time, 17 employees worked at the firm in addition to the four partners, notably Lloyd Bergquist. Bergquist, a specialist in church architecture, had joined the firm in 1957 and would be named a principal in 1965. Mentioned among his works when his principal status was announced was Luther Memorial Church. After Wold left the firm in 1968, it was renamed Bergstedt, Wahlberg, Bergquist Associates, to which (Fritz) Rohkohl was added in 1974.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Report to the Board of Trustees," (June 8, 1954); "Plot Plan & Gen. Notes," (August 5, 1955); "Report of Board of Trustees (October 1954), Luther Memorial Church Building Committee Meeting Minutes, Luther archives [Building Committee Minutes].

<sup>21</sup> George S. Koyl (ed.), *American Architects Directory First Edition* (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1955): 39, 249. George S. Koyl (ed.), *American Architects Directory Second Edition* (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1962): 51, 733, 774. Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Directory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 102.

<sup>22</sup> "Bergstedt and Hirsch, Architects and Engineers," *Northwest Architect* 22, no. 4 (1958): 19.

<sup>23</sup> "Bergstedt, Wahlberg & Wold Announces New Principal." *Northwest Architect*, 29, no. 2 (1965): 67. John F. Gane and George S. Koyl (eds.), *American Architects Directory Third Edition* (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1970): 66, 1007. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects*: 102.

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Bergstedt was "an ardent supporter of civil rights,"<sup>24</sup> and he started his own firm "to take on numerous community projects and help mentor a new generation of like-minded designers."<sup>25</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that Modernism dominated the firm's works, given that, in part, the movement was grounded in the notions that architects had "professional obligations toward society,"<sup>26</sup> and that architecture must exist on the economic and sociological rather than the academic plane. Its early proponents maintained that the use of new design principles combined with building material and other technological innovations could solve societal ills, such as subpar dwellings for the lower socioeconomic classes and gender inequality within the home.<sup>27</sup> Some of the notable works of the Bergstedt firm under its various names include the Degree of Honor building in downtown St. Paul; Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights; and Arrowhead Resort in Alexandria.<sup>28</sup>

At the March 18, 1955, meeting of the Luther Memorial Church building committee, Bergstedt presented "several sketches and layouts which were discussed and suggested changes taken into consideration."<sup>29</sup> The layouts were based on the previous determination by the building committee that construction of the church plant would need to occur in two phases, based on the finances available at that time. Bergstedt returned for the April meeting with Clark Wold and new plans, which were "discussed at great length and changes made."<sup>30</sup> On the basis of these, the Church Council approved the building committee "to go ahead with the detailed plans and specifications of the proposed church building."<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, as Bergstedt and Wold were working up revised plans, the building committee visited seven churches in the Twin Cities to gain a better sense of what would and would not work for their needs. After a period of design negotiations which additionally encompassed a June 27, 1955, approval by the congregation, the project was put out for bids in early August, to be due on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month. The general contract was awarded to C. T. Funck, based in South St. Paul, on September 8, after the

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<sup>24</sup> "In Memory," *Architecture Minnesota* 24, no. 5 (1998): 13.

<sup>25</sup> "1985, Milton V. Bergstedt, AIA," Whitney M. Young Jr. Award Recipients, The American Institute of Architects, 2019, <https://www.50yearsafterwhitneyyoung.org/milton-bergstedt-aia-young-award>.

<sup>26</sup> Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, "La Sarraz Declaration," (1928), translated by Michael Bullock, in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971).

<sup>27</sup> Ross Wolfe, "The sociohistoric mission of modernist architecture," accessed June 7, 2024, [https://thecharnelhouse.org/2011/09/20/the-sociohistoric-mission-of-modernist-architecture-the-housing-shortage-the-urban-proletariat-and-the-liberation-of-woman/#\\_ftn92](https://thecharnelhouse.org/2011/09/20/the-sociohistoric-mission-of-modernist-architecture-the-housing-shortage-the-urban-proletariat-and-the-liberation-of-woman/#_ftn92)

<sup>28</sup> David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977): 135, 152. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects*: 19-21, 101, 220.

<sup>29</sup> Building Committee Minutes, March 18, 1955.

<sup>30</sup> Building Committee Minutes, April 11, 1955.

<sup>31</sup> Building Committee Minutes, June 6, 1955.

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congregation approved the construction. Construction was largely completed one year later, with some interior elements remaining to be completed or corrected.<sup>32</sup>

Bergstedt and Hirsch's design for Luther Memorial Church was in the Modernist vein. Although the building committee listed one of the design's advantages as "attractive being of conservative contemporary design,"<sup>33</sup> the committee meeting minutes did not record any points of discussion surrounding the choice of style. The first unit was of an irregular plan in three sections, and though originally intended to have stone facing, the building was ultimately faced in brick (Figures 13 and 14). To accommodate the sloped site without putting any of the sections underground, the three sections were connected by ramped floors in the interior. A small basement area, however, was created to house the boiler room.

The east section was the temporary sanctuary, a rectangular-plan massing oriented on a north-south axis with a low-pitched, asymmetrical gable roof. The extension of the latter west was to shelter the kitchen, two storage rooms, and the sacristy, as well as a stairwell for access to the boiler room. The upper portion of the street-facing (east) elevation included narrow vertical window arrangements alternating with Cemesto<sup>34</sup> panels. Running along the east elevation below the window arrangements of its south elevation, then forming a U at the east elevation of the second section of the building before extending south toward 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, was a flat-roofed canopy. Adjacent to the east side of the canopy at the south end of the sanctuary was a rectilinear brick-faced structure approximately 50 feet in height, which lacking bells at the time, was referred to alternately as a shaft or stack. Attached to the front of the shaft near the top and extending above it was a large, simple metal cross. The interior exhibited exposed steel arches and a half-wall of stone that had been extracted from the quarry on the property, which served as both facing for the raised platform where the choir sat and a backdrop for the altar. This altar was not situated away from the wall so that the celebrant could face the congregation (Figure 15; see Figures 6 and 7).

The main entrance to the building was within the east elevation of the second section of the building. It had a flat roof and an L plan, wrapping around the remainder of the south elevation of the first section and the south end of its west elevation at its east end and extending west from there. This section was designed to contain the narthex at the entrance and behind (west of) that,

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<sup>32</sup> Building Committee Minutes, April 29, August 2, and August 31, 1955, and September 22, 1956.

"Special Congregation Meeting," June 27, 1955, Luther Archives. "Progress Report," Building Committee to the Church Council, May 25, 1956, Luther archives.

<sup>33</sup> "Appraisal of Present Building Plan," May 1955, Luther archives.

<sup>34</sup> A product of the Celotex Corporation, Cemesto consists of fiberboard made from sugar cane waste faced with asbestos cement (Time 1943:86).

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a coat room, a nursery, offices, and restrooms. The west end of the second massing connected to the east elevation of the third section, the education wing.

The education wing, also flat-roofed, was close to rectangular in plan; however, its south half ran due north-south along the west elevation of the office section and south, while its north half was angled slightly northwest-southeast. Only the north and south elevations of the education wing were faced in brick. The east and west elevations were occupied by bands of windows paired as one fixed and the other fixed over an awning light, with Cemesto panels to the top and bottom.

Design of the permanent sanctuary was roughly conceived in the 1950s, as shown by renderings included in a 1955 newspaper article announcing the forthcoming first-unit construction and on the back of the 1956 dedication program. The dedication program noted that the image shown was "but one of many variations possible which are readily adaptable, and which would complement the present building design." This variation depicts a relatively narrow building along the lines of a truncated A-frame, with vertically oriented, full-height, smooth panels bearing crosses alternating with windows of equal height and width in the north elevation (Figure 16).

In January of 1963, six subcommittees of the church's building committee were assigned to study different aspects of planning for the final design of the future church plant. One of these, the Committee on Worship and Fine Arts, was tasked with the study of six aspects of the future sanctuary, which it listed in its resulting report as:

- 1) Seating arrangement in the sanctuary and our concept of worship.
- 2) Location of the altar as it relates to our concept of worship.
- 3) Location of the communion rail with practical and traditional considerations.
- 4) Location of the choir.
- 5) Altar Guild facilities.
- 6) Pews and kneelers.

The report noted, "The committee . . . tried to seek out the advantages and disadvantages of the different traditions as they have been brought down thru [sic] the years. The older "Gothic tradition" was compared to the newer Contemporary tradition. Lutheran tradition also had to be used as a guide line [sic]." Among its recommendations were placement of the communion rail level with the nave; the use of pews with kneelers; placement of the choir near the front but off to the side of the altar and above the level of the nave; inclusion of a working sacristy near the altar; and seating arrangement:

. . . in "Contemporary Tradition." In choosing this arrangement we felt that the congregation would be drawn in closer to the altar and pulpit . . . This would enable all worshippers to see the minister without undue elevation of the altar and pulpit.

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It also tends to symbolize a balanced emphasis upon the administration of the Sacrament and the proclamation of the Word, which is a sound Lutheran emphasis."<sup>35</sup>

As a result of the latter recommendation, the rectangular plan had been broadened in the specific design plans created by Lloyd Bergquist in 1963. His design also saw the east and west rooflines angled down to the south where they intersected curved corners, and on the north elevation, undulating, textured precast concrete panels substantially wider than the stained-glass windows with which they alternated (Figure 17). This approximately 40-foot-tall section of the otherwise brick-faced sanctuary was situated within the ell of a flat-roofed, L-plan section that wrapped around the lower half of its south and west elevations to house functional spaces relocated from the first unit, such as the narthex (expansion), the coat room, and offices, and new ones, such as a lounge and a dedicated choir rehearsal space. The revised design placed a steel belfry atop the existing shaft, with each side formed of parallel triangular fins and surmounted by a metal cross.

The interior of the permanent worship space, intended to accommodate 476 attendees, was designed to emphasize community worship or as the 1964 dedication program phrased it, the "feeling of worshipping in a family group." To this end, it employed "a wider nave, rather than using the more formal longer and narrower design"; a freestanding altar; prominent placement of the baptismal font, "in keeping with the custom of incorporating baptisms into the regular worship service, with the family, sponsors and congregation participating together in the Holy Sacrament"; and a communion rail segmented into 40 stations to give "each communicant an individual place at the Lord's Table" but retaining the sense of community by fully surrounding the altar. The design aligned the two and a half sections of pews traditionally on a floor sloping slightly down toward the chancel. There, the pulpit was at the north end, the altar centered on the aisle between the north and center pew sections, and the organ centered on the aisle between the center pew section and southern half-pew section. The design placed slightly raised choir seating facing the altar at the south end of the chancel around the south and east sides of the organ and the baptismal font to the north of the organ (see Figure 17).

As was typical of Protestant churches, the artistic elements of the building were designed to be symbolic rather than objects of veneration and though relatively minimal had been carefully considered, as evidenced by the issuance of a separate dedication day brochure devoted to their interpretation.<sup>36</sup> These include a nearly full-height brick relief of the water of life issuing from a

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<sup>35</sup> "Report of Committee on Worship & Fine Arts, Luther Memorial Church," Luther archives.

<sup>36</sup> "The Symbolism and Art of The New Luther Memorial Church," Luther archives.

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heart and triangle "representing the love of the Triune God"<sup>37</sup> into the cup of life on the east exterior wall (see Photograph 2); a recessed window abstracting water through largely blue and green glass and incorporating a butterfly to symbolize the Resurrection at the north end of the elevation; four vertically arranged steel sculptures, consisting of a dove (Holy Spirit), Bible (the Word), chalice and host (Lord's Supper), and a shell (baptism) near the north end of the rear wall of the chancel (Figure 18); and above the rear of the nave, a steel sculpture incorporating a cup centered on a cross within an abstraction of the world (Figure 19). These were designed by a local student/graphic artist, John Baskerville, and the steel sculptures made by the Donald Jacobson family, all members of the congregation.<sup>38</sup>

John Baskerville collaborated in the design of the most striking artistic aspect of the sanctuary, the faceted stained-glass windows, with August Molder. Molder, an Estonian immigrant forced to flee in 1944 as German and Russian forces collided in his home country, moved from Australia to the United States in 1958. Molder was both a painter and "a pioneer of a mosaic art technique of faceted stained glass," and his "windows were commissioned for numerous churches in the upper Midwest."<sup>39</sup> His works incorporated inch-thick glass, and the pioneering aspect included the material in which it was set.<sup>40</sup> While others used concrete, those works were plagued by cold weather cracking and appearance issues:

Molder knew something of plastic after working in Australia, so he contacted [two chemists] at General Mills, where [his wife] worked. They developed an epoxy resin . . . and it worked . . . An independent research laboratory tested Molder's panel and reported that its adhesion, over-all strength, resistance to wide temperature extremes and insulation properties were "astonishing, unbelievable." So he began to refine the technique, and soon a few commissions came dribbling in and Molder cast about for a better studio than a friend's garage.<sup>41</sup>

That studio turned out to be at Augsburg College in Minneapolis where, in 1961, he became the Artist in Residence and the following year, an art instructor, positions he held until his death in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "August Molder (1914-1982)," Gallery 5004, accessed June 7, 2024, <https://www.gallery5004.com/august-molder>.

<sup>40</sup> "Augsburg artist: He saw happiness through a stained glass window," *The Minneapolis Star* (Minneapolis, MN), February 13, 1979. "Stained-glass artist, Augsburg teacher August Molder dies," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), October 13, 1982.

<sup>41</sup> "Mosaic artist, 68, finds apprentice at last: Now his secrets will survive," *Minneapolis Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), May 1, 1982.

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1982. The 1968 university catalog notes that the art department emphasized the "function of art in history and religion," and states, "In addition to the courses offered for credit, students have the opportunity to study and discuss with August Molder . . . problems of art related to the making of stained glass windows."

In addition to the aforementioned abstraction of water, Molder made seven windows for Luther Memorial Church to occupy the spaces alternating with the precast concrete in the north elevation. Each window contains numerous symbols associated with one of seven overarching themes consisting of contemporary cultural and economic activities in the area served by the church: education and fine arts, healing arts, communications, commerce, labor, food production, and government and public service (Figure 20). Additionally associated with a relevant bible verse, these were intended "to express the idea that for the Christian the important thing is not what his calling may be, but how, and the spirit in which, he fulfills his vocation."<sup>42</sup>

Outside of the sanctuary, the majority of the ceilings throughout the 1964 construction were acoustic tile, with a couple of plaster exceptions. Walls in the pastors' offices and main office, lounge, and conference room were wood paneled, and the floors there were carpeted, while most other spaces featured concrete-block walls and vinyl asbestos tile floors. The main corridor, including the narthex, incorporated brick walls and quarry-tile floors (Figure 21; see Figures 8 through 12). Plaster ceilings and concrete-block walls were used throughout the 1956 construction beyond the temporary sanctuary, except for the wood-paneled walls of the pastors' offices and the Marlite (laminated) walls in the restroom off the sacristy. Flooring was primarily asphalt tile, with quarry tile used in the education wing restrooms, the coat room, and the narthex.

### Construction History

The groundbreaking service for the first unit of Luther Memorial Church was held on September 11, 1955, and construction began the next day.<sup>43</sup> Excavation was by South Park Excavation; electrical work by Leonard Anderson; and cement work by Melvin Mahler, all out of South St. Paul. Masonry was by the Al Schneider Company, plastering by the St. Paul-based Minuti Brothers, and plumbing, heating, and ventilation by H. J. Ross out of Newport.<sup>44</sup> Construction was substantially completed over the course of one year, and the dedication service, the first service in the new building, was held on September 9, 1956.

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<sup>42</sup> "The Symbolism and Art of The New Luther Memorial Church," Luther archives.

<sup>43</sup> "Progress Report, Building Committee to the Church Council, Luther Memorial Church, May 25, 1956," Luther archives.

<sup>44</sup> Letter, C. T. Funck to Bergstedt and Hirsch dated September 14, 1955, Luther archives.



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Construction of the permanent sanctuary unit began with a groundbreaking ceremony on February 16, 1964, and it was complete in time for a November 29, 1964, dedication service.

The plans for the 1964 construction indicate a "future wall" bisecting the conference room into two spaces. The reasons for waiting to build this wall are unknown, but it was carried out at an unknown later date.

In 2017, alterations were made to sections of the 1956 construction for the church's daycare facilities; specifically, the section housing the original narthex, coat room, nursery, offices, and restrooms; the north approximately one-third of the north to south-aligned part of the education wing; and the south approximately one-half of the northwest to southeast-aligned section of the education wing. Alterations to the interior generally were not structural, consisting largely of such elements as floor, ceiling, and lighting replacements, restroom upgrades, and modernization of HVAC systems; still, a few instances of partial or full wall removal to obtain larger spaces or differently direct interior accesses occurred. Alterations to the exterior included the replacement of some windows, doors, and wall cladding, along with the addition of a couple of doors and staircases.

### *Conclusion*

Luther Memorial Church is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style as applied to a suburban church building during the post-World War II era. The broad polygonal plan of the permanent sanctuary is a clear accommodation of some Christian denominations' movement toward architecture with a focus on immanence during that era, as it aimed to bring the members of the congregation in greater proximity to each other and to the celebrant and to avoid excessive elevation of the altar and pulpit. While it may not have done so in dramatic fashion, a more moderate approach was often taken in Minnesota churches, particularly when comparing the earlier to the latter half of the 1960s. As such, the absence of a longitudinal plan; the slight slope of the floor down toward the chancel; the relatively minor elevation of the altar and pulpit; and the arrangement of the communion rail to fully surround the altar platform are sufficient to capture the congregation's intent for community-centered worship via the architecture of its building.

The church building committee was deliberate in its selection of a Modern design, the result of which is a building whose style is not diluted by historical references or attempts at hybridization. Again, although subtle, the increasing experimentation with form during the 1960s is evidenced in the permanent sanctuary through its curved southern corners, the slope of the roof line, and the undulating concrete of the north elevation. The prominence of the concrete, a material not characteristic of traditional church exteriors, additionally speaks to the style, as does the general

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absence of ornamentation on the church exterior overall; although a brick relief is present, it is unelaborate, and it is restricted to one portion of a single face.

The interior of the permanent sanctuary is similarly quiet in its ornamentation. The uncomplicated, monochrome steel sculptures are able to convey their messages because they are without a plethora of visual competition. The furnishings, including the altar, pulpit, and baptismal font, are simple of line and materially honest. Even the faceted stained-glass windows are relatively subtle, as they are narrow and recessed via the repetitive angularity of the wall. The worship space demonstrates an incorporation of relatively newer and unique material applications, typical of Mid-Century Modern architecture. These include the rustic terrazzo panels and the faceted stained glass set within Molder's recently developed epoxy resin formula, which were used in combination with brick, wood, slate, and quarry tile.

The faceted stained-glass windows of the church embrace an avoidance of realism through a mitigated abstractness achieved through the combination of strongly geometric pieces. At the same time, they skillfully incorporate motifs of direct relevance to the congregation in the real world, thus emphasizing the community and imbuing the windows with the type of symbolic purpose which contemporary literature suggests was preferred by Modernist-minded Lutherans of the era. The windows are attractive and well executed, with Molder's mastery in faceting and artistry in combining the glass fragments readily evident. As such, the windows have high artistic value.

Luther Memorial Church is additionally a highly intact example of Mid-Century Modern religious architecture, the sanctuary having undergone only the most minor of changes, such as the removal of a few pews, and the exterior untouched.

Luther Memorial Church is therefore significant at the local level under Criterion C in the areas of architecture and art. Because its primary significance is derived from architectural or artistic distinction, it satisfies Criteria Consideration A. The period of significance is 1964, the year in which the permanent sanctuary was completed.

Character defining features of the property consist of, but are not limited to, the broad polygonal plan of the permanent sanctuary, the curved southern corners of the permanent sanctuary; the form and materials of its north, stucco-clad-concrete elevation; the exterior face brick and associated brick relief without paint, stucco, or other cladding; and the slight, singular slope of its roof.

The interior character defining features are located in the main worship space as well as the public spaces throughout the church. Given the importance of material integrity to the Modernist and liturgical movements, these include the board and batten wood ceiling and the wall claddings,

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including face brick, rustic terrazzo panels, and board and batten wood, all of which are left natural; the quarry tile flooring within the chancel, narthex, hallways, and main office, as well as the slate flooring within the chancel; the furniture related to worship; and the faceted stained-glass windows. The retention of the latter additionally is of particular importance in conveying the artistic significance of the building. Beyond materials, character-defining features of the design of the church include the slight slope of the floor down toward the chancel and the relatively minor elevation of the altar and pulpit, which combine to provide greater visibility between the altar and farther seats; and the arrangement of the communion rail to fully surround the altar platform. These features capture the congregation's intent for community-centered worship via the architecture of its building.

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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: Luther Memorial Church Archives

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DK-SPC-00067

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.8

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15	Easting: 495798	Northing: 4971254
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

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

The south boundary of the property is 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North. The east boundary of the property is 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The north boundary follows the centerline of the driveway that runs east-west between parking spaces for the church to its south and for the senior housing complex to its north, extended past the end of the driveway to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The east boundary extends approximately 110 feet south along 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North from the north boundary. From there it extends southeast and then south around the separate parcel on which the former parsonage is located to meet with the south boundary.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries selected are equivalent to the current boundaries of the parcel owned by Luther Memorial Church and occupied by the church building. Although the church historically owned the current parcels to the north of this one, development there historically was limited to a parking area along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, and currently it is occupied by a senior housing complex. While the church additionally owned the current parcel to the west where the former parsonage is sited, the parsonage does not have any relevance to the reasons for the architectural or artistic significance of the church, and it currently exists as a non-affiliated, single-family home.



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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Andrea C. Pizza, Principal  
organization: Deco Cultural Services LLC  
street & number: 207 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
city or town: South St. Paul state: MN zip code: 55075  
e-mail: andrea@decocultural.com  
telephone: 651-276-9446  
date: February 3, 2025

## 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.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Luther Memorial Church

City or Vicinity: South St. Paul

County: Dakota

State: Minnesota

Photographer: Andrea C. Pizza

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Date Photographed: June 7 (Photographs 15-36), June 13 (Photographs 37-45), and June 14 (Photographs 1-14), 2023

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

*All digital images labeled as follows: MN\_Dakota County\_Luther Memorial Church\_0001*

- 1 of 45. Overview, looking southwest
- 2 of 45. Sanctuary (Section A), looking southwest
- 3 of 45. Section B, looking northeast
- 4 of 45. East elevation of Section C, looking southwest
- 5 of 45. North elevation of Section C, looking south
- 6 of 45. 1956 cornerstone, looking north
- 7 of 45. West elevation of Section C, looking southeast
- 8 of 45. Main entrance (east elevation of Section D), looking west
- 9 of 45. Campanile, looking west
- 10 of 45. South elevation of Section D, looking northeast
- 11 of 45. North elevation of Section D, looking south
- 12 of 45. West elevation of Section E, looking east-southeast
- 13 of 45. East elevation of Section E, north of Section D, looking northwest
- 14 of 45. East elevation of Section E, south of Section D, looking north-northwest
- 15 of 45. Fellowship hall, looking south
- 16 of 45. North wall of fellowship hall, looking northwest
- 17 of 45. Stage in fellowship hall, looking west
- 18 of 45. Narthex, looking south
- 19 of 45. Example of 2010 art in narthex, looking west
- 20 of 45. Sanctuary, looking east
- 21 of 45. Sanctuary, looking west
- 22 of 45. North wall of sanctuary, looking northeast
- 23 of 45. Faceted glass detail (right is up)
- 24 of 45. Stained-glass window in east end of sanctuary, looking east
- 25 of 45. Steel sculptures on east chancel wall, looking east

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- 26 of 45. Chancel, looking northeast
- 27 of 45. Pulpit, looking northeast
- 28 of 45. Choir and organ area, looking southeast
- 29 of 45. Altar, looking east
- 30 of 45. Detail of pews, looking south
- 31 of 45. Sacristy, looking south-southeast
- 32 of 45. Hall ramp up to kitchenette, looking west
- 33 of 45. Lounge and view to kitchenette, looking northeast
- 34 of 45. Pastor's office, looking southwest
- 35 of 45. Conference room/former pastor's office, looking southwest
- 36 of 45. Main office, looking west
- 37 of 45. Hall west from narthex, looking west
- 38 of 45. Section D lounge, looking southeast
- 39 of 45. Nursery, looking west
- 40 of 45. Education wing lobby, looking northwest
- 41 of 45. Teen room, looking south
- 42 of 45. Library, looking west-southwest
- 43 of 45. Representative daycare room, looking north-northwest
- 44 of 45. Education wing commons, looking north
- 45 of 45. Representative former classroom in north of education wing, looking east

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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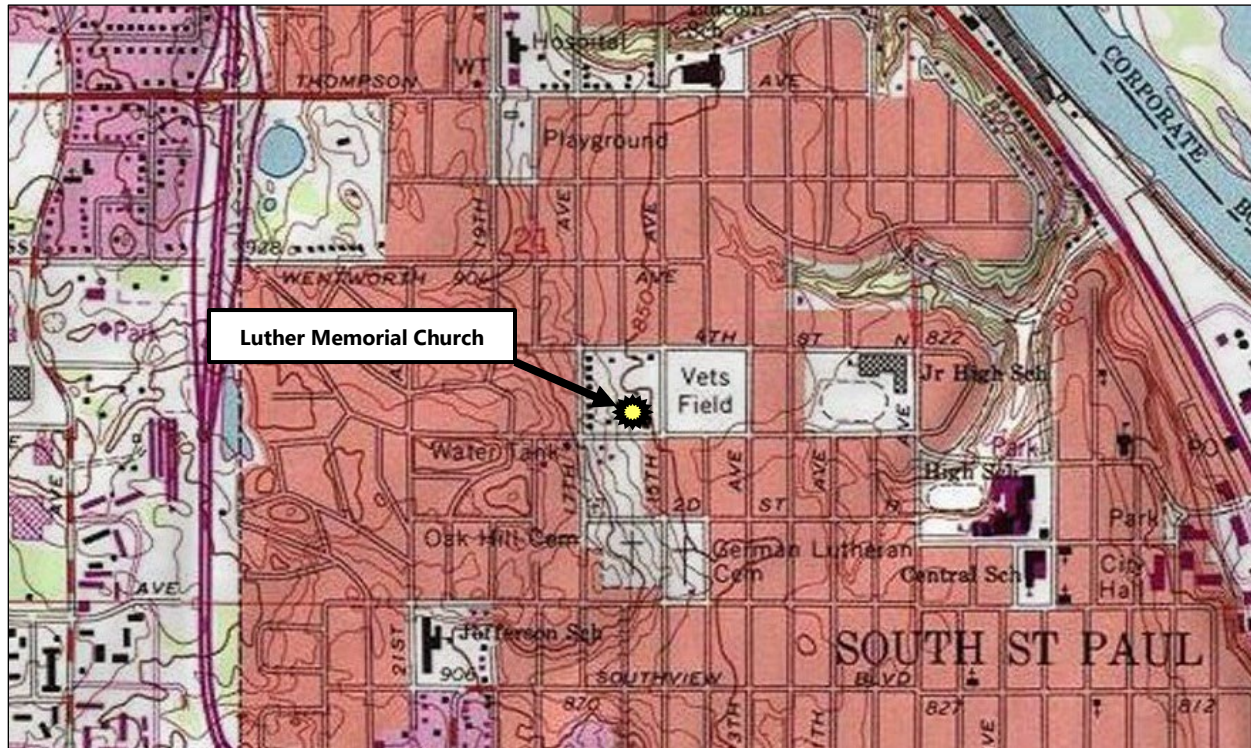
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Maps



St. Paul East, 7.5' Quadrangle

UTM Coordinates (NAD 1983, Zone 15) = 495798E, 4971254N

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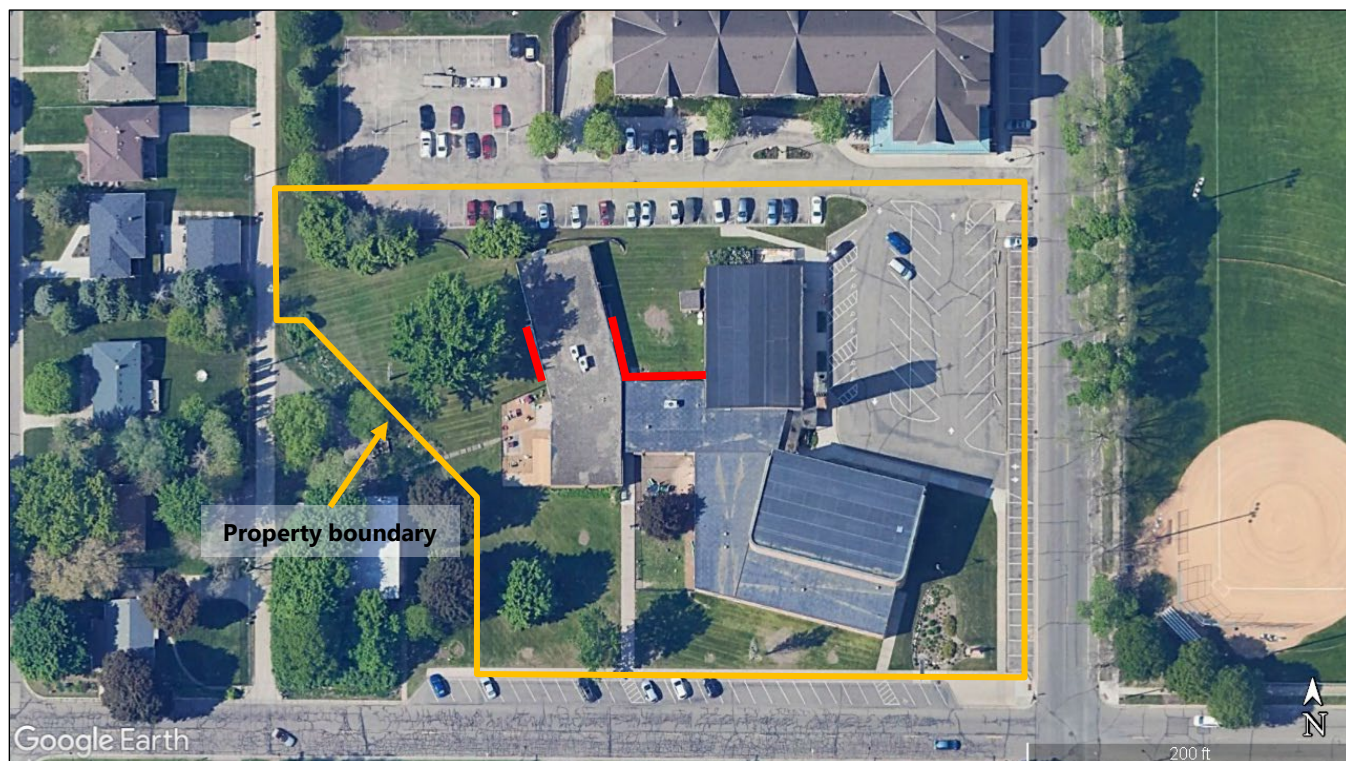
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Red lines = non-historic exterior wall surfaces



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FIGURE 1. OVERVIEW, JUNE 2023, LOOKING SOUTHWEST

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FIGURE 2. REFERENCED SECTIONS



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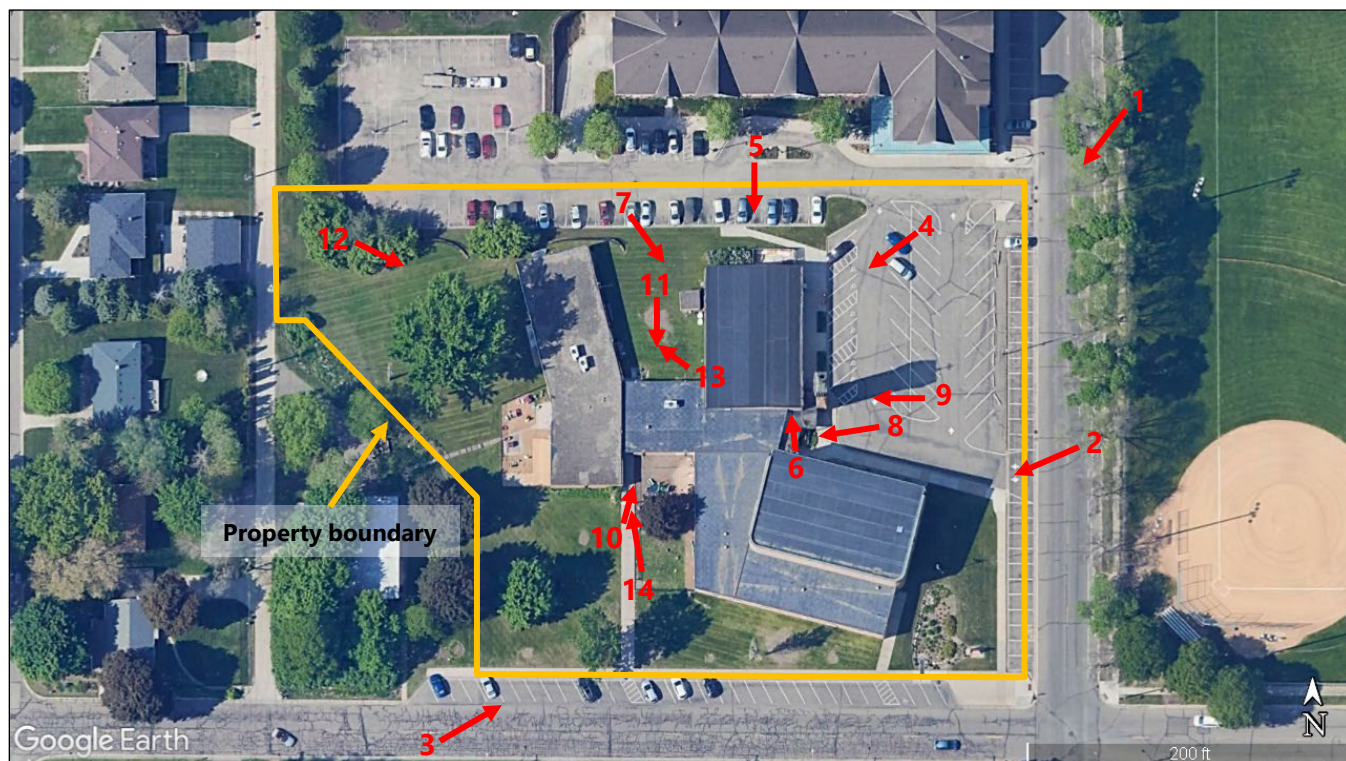


FIGURE 3. EXTERIOR OVERVIEW, WITH PHOTO KEY

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**FIGURE 4. PERMANENT SANCTUARY, 1964, LOOKING SOUTHWEST**

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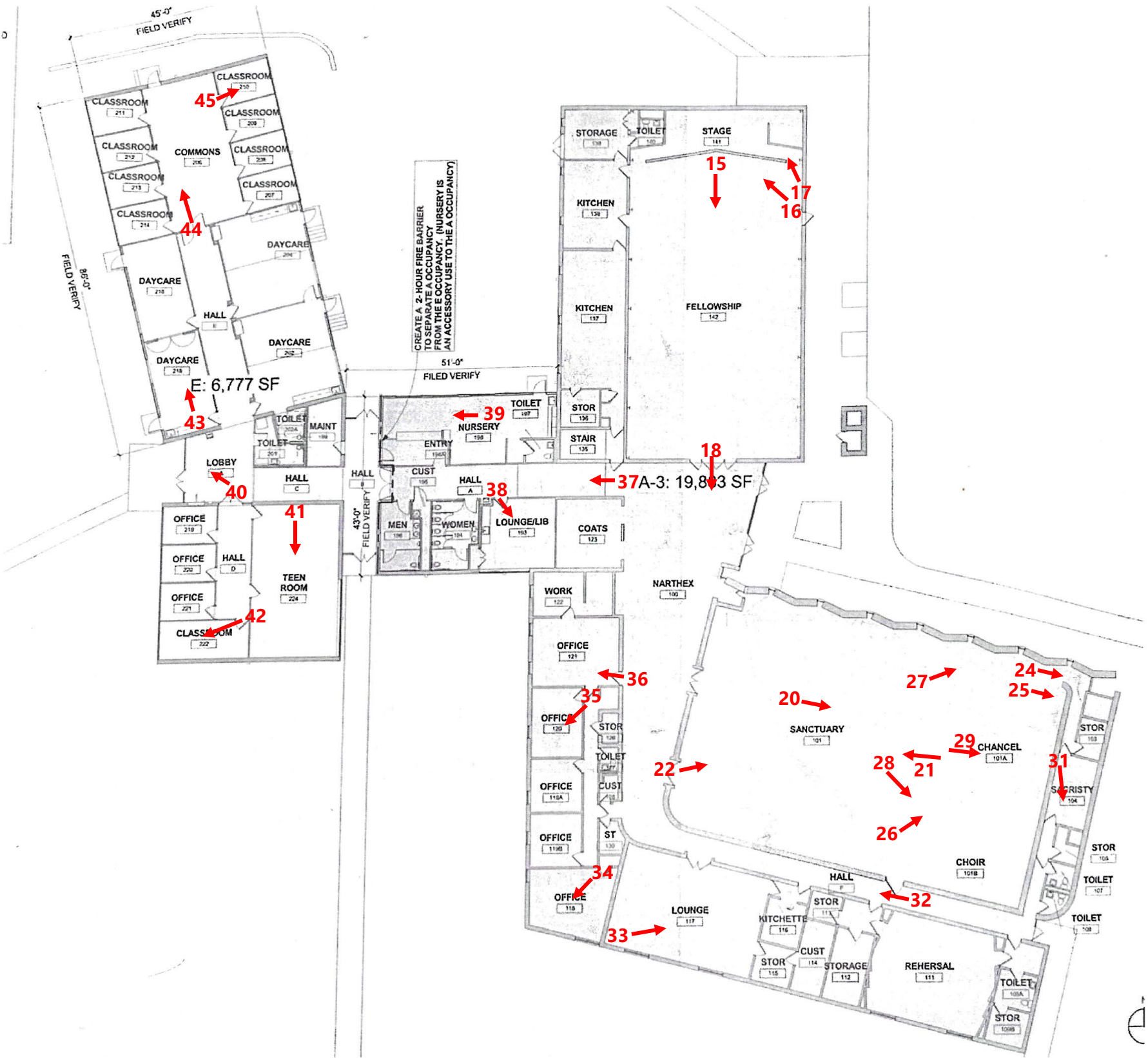


FIGURE 5. CURRENT FLOOR PLAN, WITH PHOTO KEY



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FIGURE 6. TEMPORARY SANCTUARY INTERIOR, 1956, LOOKING NORTH

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FIGURE 7. TEMPORARY SANCTUARY INTERIOR, 1956, LOOKING NORTH



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**FIGURE 8. ONE OF TWO PASTORS' OFFICES, 1964, LOOKING SOUTHWEST**

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**FIGURE 9. VIEW TO MAIN OFFICE FROM NARTHEX, 1964**

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**FIGURE 10. LOUNGE TOWARD KITCHENETTE, 1964, LOOKING EAST-SOUTHEAST**



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**FIGURE 11. NARTHEX, 1964, LOOKING SOUTH-SOUTHEAST**

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**FIGURE 12. SECOND OF TWO PASTOR'S OFFICES, 1964, LOOKING SOUTHWEST**



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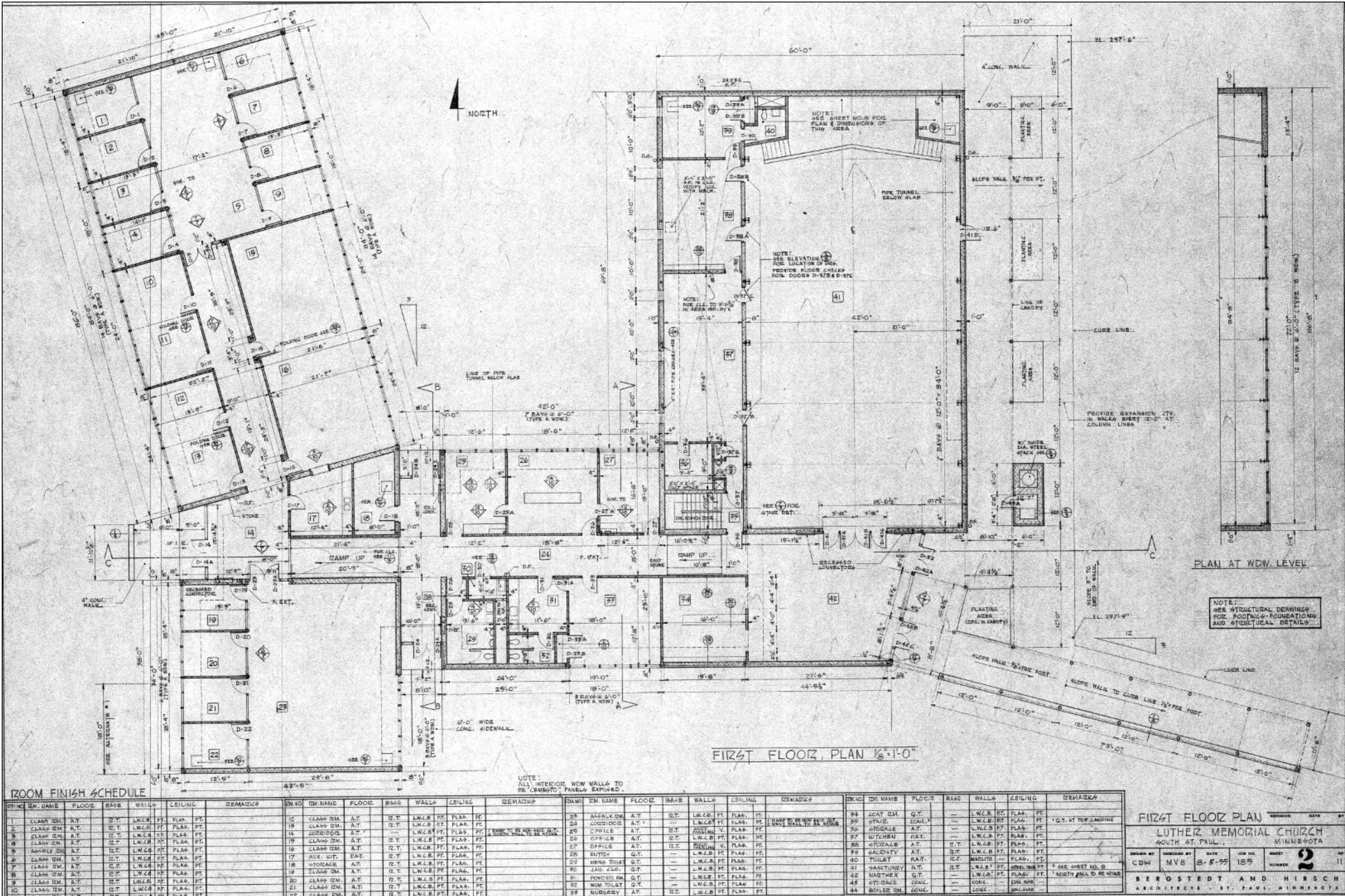


FIGURE 13. FIRST-FLOOR PLAN FOR 1956 CONSTRUCTION, 1955

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**FIGURE 14. OVERVIEW, 1956, LOOKING NORTHWEST**



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FIGURE 15. ALTAR AND CHOIR SEATING AREA IN TEMPORARY SANCTUARY, 1956, LOOKING EAST-NORTHEAST

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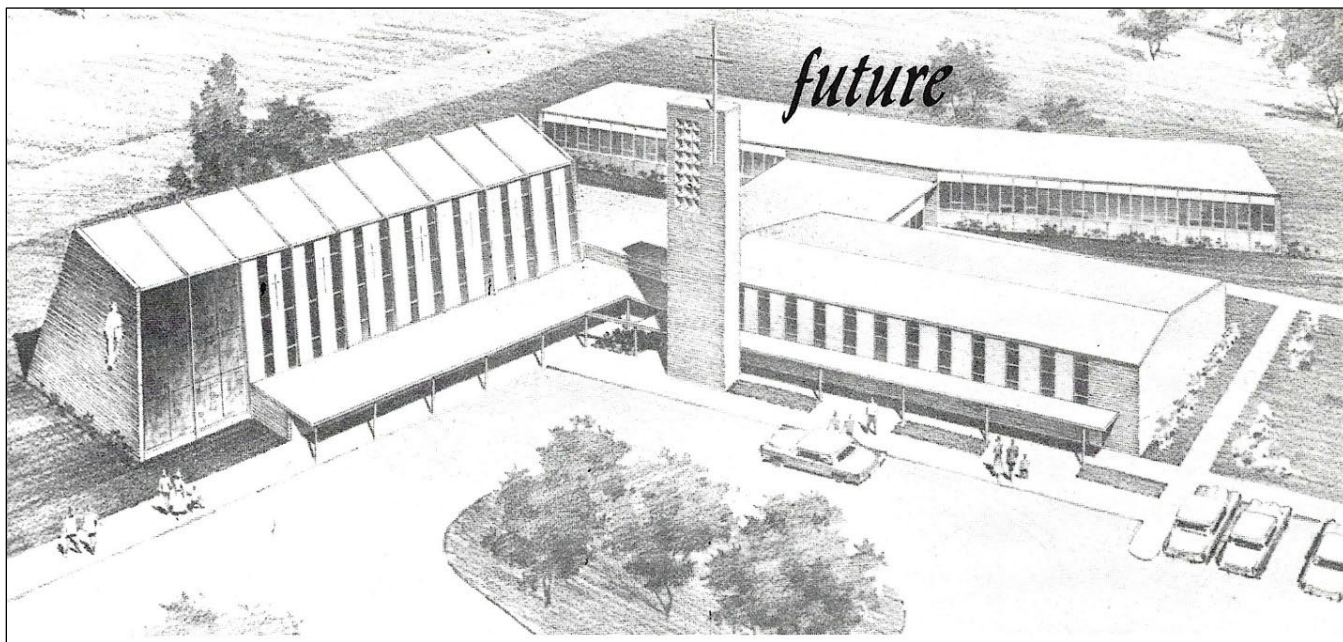


FIGURE 16. FUTURE SANCTUARY CONCEPT (LEFT) FROM 1956 DEDICATION PROGRAM

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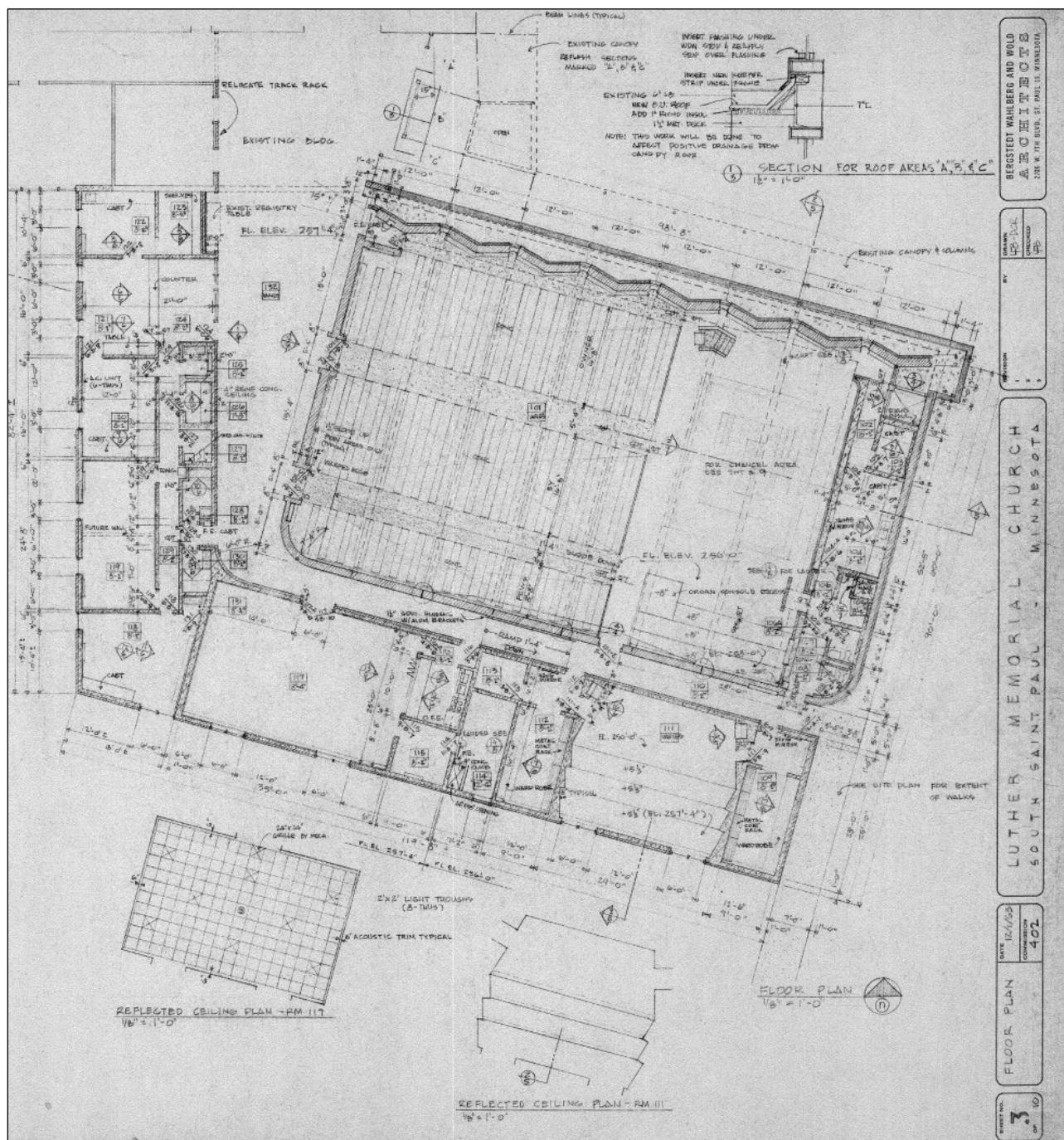
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FIGURE 17. FIRST-FLOOR PLAN OF 1964 CONSTRUCTION, 1963



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FIGURE 18. VIEW TOWARD CHANCEL, 1964, LOOKING EAST



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FIGURE 19. VIEW TOWARD NAVE, 1964, LOOKING WEST



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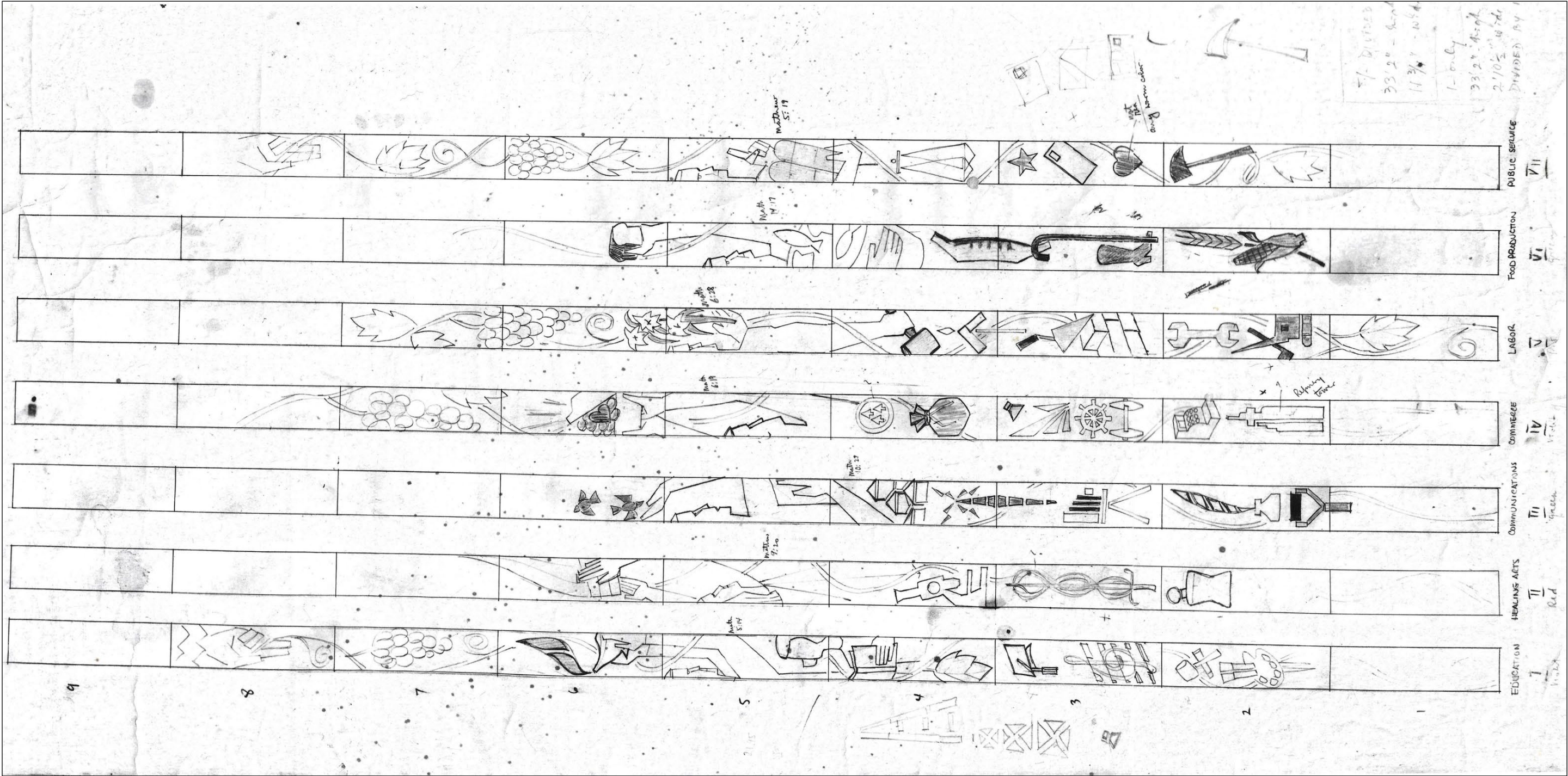


FIGURE 20. WORKING DRAWINGS FOR STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS, CIRCA 1964



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**FIGURE 21. CONFERENCE ROOM, 1964, LOOKING SOUTH-SOUTHEAST**