



United States Department of the Interior


NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

March 14, 2011

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically entered in the National Register of Historic Places. This is due to the fact that the publication of our Federal Register Notice: "National Register of Historic Places: Pending Nominations and Other Actions" was delayed beyond our control to the point where the mandated 15 day public comment period ended after our required 45 day time frame to act on the nomination. If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day. The nomination is technically adequate and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation, and thus, automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name First Christian Church Historic District

other names/site number Church of Tomorrow

2. Location

street & number 3700 North Walker Avenue

city or town Oklahoma City

state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109 zip code 73118

☐ not for publication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 X 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 X 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 X local

Bob Blackburn
Signature of certifying official/Title

1-24-11
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

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:)

For Edison Beall
Signature of the Keeper

3.14.11
Date of Action

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
1	1	structure
0	2	object
5	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religion: Religious Facility

Recreation/Culture: Theater, Sports Facility

Commerce/Trade: Organizational

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religion: Religious Facility

Recreation/Culture: Theater

Education: School

Commerce/Trade: Organizational

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Modern Movement, Neo-Expressionism

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Stone, Concrete

roof: Concrete, Asphalt

other:

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Located at the corner of Northwest 36th Street and North Walker Avenue at the intersection of the Edgemere and Crown Heights neighborhoods of Oklahoma City, is the First Christian Church Historic District. The resources scattered over a slightly rolling terrain includes a tributary of the Deep Fork Creek along the northern property boundary.

It is a tribute to the imagination of the architects and the workmanship of the buildings as well as to the pride of the congregation that the First Christian Church was born out of functionality and has managed to preserve its essential integrity and identity in the downtown area to the present day. The First Christian Church was conceived as a whole, using the portion of an early golf course in Oklahoma City. The design of the resources, dating from 1947 to 1964, reflects the original designs of practical architects at the time. The District is located in a residential area with no commercial intrusions.

The Historic District is comprised of four buildings and one object that are contributing; the main building, amphitheatre, youth center, Oklahoma Disciples Center and tower. The main building, with its three parts, is attributed to architect R. Duane Conner but Fred Pojezny also design portions of the main building. The Youth Center and Oklahoma Disciples Center are attributed to architects Fred Pojezny and William Fearnow.

SETTING

The resources within the First Christian Church Historic District occupy a very large parcel equaling 32 acres. The buildings are scattered throughout the entire parcel with two buildings facing south onto Northwest 36th Street. A large loop private street is accessed from the center of the parcel on Northwest 36th Street and terminates in the center of the parcel on North Walker Avenue. A small drop-off area is located at the southwest corner between the fountain and the southwest façade of the main building. The main drop-off area is located east of the main building. An expansive parking area is located east of the main building, a smaller parking lot is located north of the Youth Center and a smaller parking lot is south of the Disciples of Christ Center. A mall creates a vista connecting the main building to the youth center. Deciduous trees follow the meandering stream located on the property and around the amphitheater.

DESIGN

The First Christian Church Historic District has a rolling topography located at the corner of North Walker Avenue and Northwest 36th Street. The entire parcel contains buildings designed in the Modern Movement style; with the Main Building specifically linked to the Neo-Expressionism movement. Defining elements of this style can be seen in the main building's organic form, sculpted shape and the extensive use of concrete and brick. The remaining resources exhibit the trends of the Modern Movement; wide overhanging eaves, flat/low pitched roofs, contrasting wall materials and textures and unusual window shapes.

INTEGRITY

The First Christian Church Historic District retains the distinctive qualities of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, association and feeling that distinguish it as a modern movement collection of buildings. The size and placement of the buildings communicates the organic nature of the property. The only significant exterior changes to property are the transformation of the fountain to a planter, the reflecting pool to a playground and the covering of the structural system around the skylights in the dome. On the interior of the Main Building the alter has been changed, including the moving of the pipes for the organ and the lectern/pulpit, the installation of an elevator adjacent to the open staircase between the Sanctuary and the Education wing and the porte-couchere on the education wing.

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

Narrative Description

(**Bold** indicates contributing resources)

1) **Main Building**, R. Duane Conner and Fred Pojezny, architects, 1956, Contributing

Sanctuary, Constructed 1956:

The Sanctuary portion of the facility, a parabolic arch, is designed resembling an egg, extending 110 feet high. The roof is constructed of a thin shell of concrete while the base walls of the dome are clad with narrow horizontal dimension stone. The distinctive white roof is accentuated by a line of skylights located in a northeast-southwest/northwest-southeast line, creating an "X." The dome is capped with an aluminum spire. The façade of the circular building faces southwest with a glass wall entrance created by a parabola of concrete extending from the face of the building. The glass wall of the entrance has two sets of metal framed glass doors leading into the vestibule. Eight arch sections continue around the building from the southwest facade to the east elevation. The south facing arch has a set of metal slab doors with long narrow stained glass windows serving as the transom. These doors are accessed via a flight of concrete stairs. The arch section facing southeast has metal frame windows at the base that are topped with a wide scribed concrete lintel. The arch section facing directly east has a set of metal frame glass doors in the center of the elevation with metal frame glass windows on extending on either side of the entry. The windows are topped with a wide scribed concrete lintel. The central entry has a projecting scribed concrete detail in a "T" shape that is supported by two slender stone columns. The arch section facing northeast has metal frame windows at the base that are topped with a wide scribed concrete lintel.

A two-story wedge shape is located at the northeast elevation as the sanctuary connects to the education facility. The first floor of the east elevation of this wedge has four sets of metal frame glass doors and a ribbon of metal frame windows. The second floor is clad with scribed concrete and has a band of metal frame windows. The west elevation is one-story and has two sets of metal frame glass doors and metal frame windows. A scribed metal awning extends in an "L" pattern from these doors and leads to the tower.

Sanctuary Interior: The first floor of the sanctuary portion has office space and a small chapel. Upon entering from the east elevation, there is an escalator leading to the second floor sanctuary space. The escalator can travel in either direction; ascending or descending. Once inside the sanctuary, the skylights from the dome roof illuminate the interior space. Around the central skylight in the dome are light bulbs; these have not been changed in years as the only access to them is through the exterior of the dome. The main aisles create a cross pattern. The pulpit, now utilized by the organ, in the sanctuary rises slightly on a mechanical system up which allowed the minister to be slightly elevated above the pulpit. Movable panels behind the altar conceal the baptistery. From the southwest entrance, there is a vestibule before entering the sanctuary. From the vestibule, a spiral staircase provides access to the audio booth.

Education, Constructed 1956

The Education portion of the main building is designed in a four-story circular pattern, measuring 100 feet in diameter, with a flat roof. The east half of the building is four stories while the west half has the first floor at ground level and only the upper three floors are visible. The entire building, on the third and fourth floors, unless otherwise noted, is clad with metal sun louvers. The repetitive pattern of the louvers is nine vertical louvers and one diamond shaped vertical panel.

The first floor has metal frame windows except at the center of the east elevation where there is a set of metal frame glass doors sheltered by a flat roof porte-couchere. The northern most elevation has an exterior metal fire escape with a metal slab door at each landing. The west elevation has a set of metal frame glass doors located in the center of the elevation. There is also a metal slab door in each classroom, for a total of four, leading to the exterior on the west elevation.

Education Interior:

The main floor has a kitchen facility and a large open space. The second through fourth floors contain classroom space and choir space. Each room is wedge shaped.

Theater, Constructed 1956

A one-story flat roof wing connects the Education portion, main floor dining room, of the main building to the Theater. This portion of the main building has metal frame windows and metal/glass doors on the east elevation. The circular theater has a poured concrete water table. The walls are clad with nine colored concrete panels faced with marble chips. Located

First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

between the series of nine panels is a triangular inscribed detail extending from the base to above the roof line. The west elevation is partially concealed by the slope of the property. The north elevation has a one-story flat roof wing with metal frame windows and two metal slab doors. A wide scribed concrete roof extends over the entry. The north wall has an exterior set of stairs leading up to the base of the tower.

Theater Interior:

The Theater is designed in the round with the seating on the outside and the stage at the west side of the building. Costume storage, dressing rooms and stage controls run along the west end of the building.

2) **Tower**, Constructed 1955

Located at the top of the knoll at the northwest corner of the property is a 130-foot high slender tower. The center portion of the tower is circular and has buttresses extending in the four cardinal directions. Where the buttress meets the main core of the tower, on each elevation, are two circular openings which house the audio portion of the chimes. The top of the tower is capped with an aluminum spire. The interior of the tower has a ladder that extends to the top. A gas pipeline also extends from the base to the top of the tower as the tower at one time was "lit" with a gas flame.

3) **Reflecting Pool**, Constructed 1955

Constructed south of the tower and west of the Education wing of the Church is the reflecting pool. This structure served as a coolant for the air conditioning system but also reflected the image of the tower. The base structure of the pool is extant but the area no longer maintains its historic function. The water and pumps have been removed and the area has been converted to a play area with swing sets and other outdoor equipment. It has also been enclosed by a fence.

4) **Fountain**, Constructed 1956

Located at the southwest corner of the property is a circular stone fountain area. The fountain function, pump and water, have been removed and converted into a planter. A historic wall rises above the fountain on the northeast elevation and tapers down to the level of the main fountain. The southwest elevation of the wall has individual letters affixed "FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH." Sidewalks and benches have been added to the "pool" portion of the fountain.

5) **Sign**, Constructed 2002

Located on the south side of the property, facing so that traffic flowing in an east/west pattern along Northwest 36th Street can read, is a metal sign. The "stand" for the sign is a single arch representing the dome on the main building. Seven metal rods support the interior illuminated rectangular message board located in the center, open area, of the arch.

6) **Amphitheater**, Constructed 1947

Located north of the church and separated by an interior road running east and west is the amphitheater constructed in 1947. The amphitheater has 3,500 seats facing north and a large stage area facing south. The stage is elevated and has a rock wall facing. The stage is accessed via stone steps at the east and west corners of the stage. Adjacent to the steps is a stone retaining wall with plantings and a stone "box" which holds audio equipment. From the center of the stage, a sidewalk runs south through the center of the seating and along each end of the seating area. Half way from the stage area to the rear of the amphitheater, along the outside sidewalks, is a stone pier which also conceals audio equipment. The seats of the amphitheater are concrete with wood backs.

At the south end of the amphitheater complex are two concession stands. Both are identical unless otherwise noted. The buildings have a shed roof with exposed rafter ends on the north elevation. The north elevation of the west building has four window openings. The north elevation of the east building has two window openings. The interior of the building are accessed via a metal panel door.

7) **Youth Center**, Fred Pojezny and William Fearnow, architects, Constructed 1961

The Modern Movement Youth Center has a gable front main core with a flat roof wing on either side of the gable. The façade, west elevation of the building, is concave to mimic the circular nature of the entire complex. The first floor of the gable front section has multiple metal frame windows and two sets of metal frame glass doors. This area has a curved metal overhang. The clerestory level of the gable front has a multi-pane metal frame window. The wings have metal frame

First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

multi-pane windows on the west elevation. The east elevation of the wings have ribbon windows under the eaves. The façade is accentuated by a courtyard. The courtyard is circular to mimic the curve of the Youth Center. It is surrounded by a concrete block wall used to create a lattice pattern.

Youth Center Interior:

The interior space has classrooms in the wings, two office areas in the central section of the building and a large gymnasium which extends to the east.

8) Oklahoma Disciples Center, Fred Pojezny and William Fearnow, architects, Constructed 1964

This Modern Movement building was constructed 1964. The one-story building is clad with narrow horizontal rough faced stone. Located in the center of the façade, south elevation, is a one-and-one-half story atrium with a thin concrete shell triple arch roof. This central portion has a set of aluminum frame doors and multi-pane aluminum frame windows. The one-story wings have aluminum frame multi-pane windows. Both the east and west elevations have a metal slab door.

Oklahoma Disciples Center interior:

The main area is an open lobby with a conference room directly to the north. The windows in the conference room provide a vista of the stream running through the property. Individual offices extend east and west off of the main lobby.

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

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.)

Property is:

- ☒ 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1947-1964

Significant Dates

1947, 1956, 1961, 1964

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Conner, R. Duane & Pojezny, Fred &

Fearnow, William

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the property extends from when the first building was constructed on the site, 1947, to the construction of the final building on the site, 1964.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The First Christian Church significance lies in its restrained architectural properties within the context of modern architecture in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Since its significance lies in its physical qualities it meets criteria consideration A.

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The First Christian Church Historic District is an architecturally significant district in Oklahoma City with its organic form, sculpted shape and the extensive use of concrete and masonry. It is eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Modern Movement including specifically the Neo-Expressionist design of the main building. Designed by R. Duane Conner, Fred Pojezny and William Fearnow of Oklahoma City, the buildings are a representation of form and functionality.

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

The land-run of Monday, April 22, 1889 saw Oklahoma City spring up in a day. On the following Sunday there were two church services in the morning and a union service in the afternoon. Nine of those in the afternoon service began discussing the formation of what was to become the First Christian Church and began meeting. By May 18th they had placed a notice in the newspaper and on June 2nd, 1889 held a baptismal service on the North Canadian.

The first church facility was constructed on Robinson in downtown Oklahoma City. It was four bays wide and eight bays deep. It had a front gable roof concealed behind a false front and vertical wood siding on each elevation. By 1902, they moved into a new red brick building at 3rd and Robinson; expanding with each move. Both historic locations are non-extant; replaced by Interstate 40. That same year saw the formation of a church orchestra, an early indication of the emphasis on the fine arts that has long been a part of the character of the congregation. Constructed in 1910 and occupied by 1911, the congregation moved into would be its home for forty-five years, a new church building at 10th and Robinson (NRIS # 84003383).

It was a dream of Bill Alexander, the minister of the congregation from 1942 to 1960, to have spaciousness for the church activities. He wanted tennis courts, baseball fields, picnic areas and perhaps a bridge trail. In the spring of 1946, the school land commission announced that the golf course would be sold at auction. Alexander immediately began talking to board members, deacons and other members of the congregation about a church with a forty-acre opportunity to serve the community. Alexander spoke with fervor as he painted the possibilities of a property landmark, futuristic sanctuary, a youth center, a little theatre, a new educational building, an amphitheater for programs "under the stars" and an abundance of parking spaces.

Board members, as well as Bill Alexander, attended the auction. The bids skyrocketed fast and the price ended up double what they had approved to pay for the land. Bill Alexander, a very charismatic man, promised to raise the additional money for the acquisition of the land; and, he did just that. In very little time, the people of First Christian Church were hiking, picnicking and playing ball on their new property.

In August 1947, a 3500-seat amphitheater was dedicated; evening worship services were held for the community. Sunday evening services became known as "Edgemere Under the Stars", an inspirational outdoor service featuring the preaching of Bill Alexander and choral music. At the same time the amphitheater was being constructed, plans for the entire facility were being developed. Architects R. Duane Conner and Fred Pojezny developed the architectural plans for the main building. On December 27, 1953, the church held groundbreaking ceremonies for a three-in-one building: the sanctuary, the educational building and the music and fine arts center. Just prior to the ground breaking ceremony, youth from the congregation canvassed the neighborhoods announcing the congregation's "Christmas present to Oklahoma City;" an ultra-modern facility.

Plans for the construction of The First Christian Church were announced on December 25, 1953 in the *Oklahoman*. The location of the Church was important; at the edge of an established neighborhood at the edge of downtown Oklahoma City and at a very high point in the City that could be seen on the skyline from all directions.

The commission for the design of the church facilities was granted to two members of the congregation, architects R. Duane Conner and Fred Pojezny. When questioned on how the designed was achieved, Conner stated "They wanted the most for the least money, and that design is the way to get it." While no terminology for the design existed at the time of

¹ *Oklahoman*, "Tomorrow's Church Nears Completion," May 27, 1956.

First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

construction, perspective on the design classifies the architecture of the main building as Neo-Expressionism. It exhibits the defining characteristics of the style: fragmented lines, organic shapes, massive sculpted shapes, extensive use of concrete and a lack of symmetry. The curving nature of the building along with the other decorative elements are not reflective of symbolism, "the building was designed strictly for economy and as a functional structure" stated Conner.ⁱⁱ The circular design of the main building allowed for non-traditional designs on the interior. In the Education portion of the building, Conner opened up the walls and provided vistas between rooms and between indoor spaces and the outdoors by the horizontal windows that flooded each room with natural light. The views of the Oklahoma City skyline was created with aluminum louvers, glass and window frames. These design features broke up the framed panoramas but also reminded the tenant of being "inside" a building.

The dome of the sanctuary was constructed by putting concrete on a steel mesh that was laid on a wooden form. The wooden form was removed after the concrete was fully cured. To give a sense of height, a series of arches were created at the base of the dome. The roof projects over the arches to give it added support. The clear glass "bubbles" on the dome provide light into the sanctuary. The tower at the northwest corner of the church was intended to be constructed as one continuous pour so that it would be a seam-free object.ⁱⁱⁱ Workmen pouring six inches of concrete an hour would jack up the four-pointed star form and pour more concrete before the lower section dried. However, rain storms delayed the completion of the tower in one 24 hour period. The tower was completed in 1955.

Sunday, December 23, 1956 marked the opening of the First Christian Church. On Sunday morning, the two thousand seats of the new sanctuary were filled with worshippers, an overflow crowd filled the aisles, and several hundred others were seated in the dining room to hear the service over the speaker system. The local newspaper, *The Oklahoman* article title stated it succinctly "Tradition-Breaking Church Dedicated." The article itself stated that the church was "shattering time-honored concepts of church architecture."^{iv} Bill Alexander, the minister at the time, in referencing the new facility stated that "no great thing for the world.....has ever been accomplished by clinging to static ideas."^v The nationally circulated *Life* magazine featured the building on February 4, 1957 by including photographs of the exterior and interior. It also recognized the importance of the modern building; "of the many modern churches designed in the U.S. none has departed more from tradition than the First Christian Church of Oklahoma City."^{vi}

Architectural Significance

Many churches were built throughout Oklahoma City from 1945 to 1971. The new optimism that swept the country was carried into the churches and religious communities. As the population grew, so did the size of many congregations, in some cases resulting in the need for larger facilities. Many chose to share their new-found wealth with their churches and soon new buildings were constructed.

Religious buildings are a resource type that did not automatically embrace the modern architectural styles within the boundaries of Oklahoma City. It was not uncommon for churches during this period to employ traditional styles, most frequently Gothic Revival. Some churches of this period were actually designed in a transitional style that included traditional elements, such as Gothic-arched openings, but in a sleek stripped down form with little applied ornamentation. Other churches boldly embraced the new styles. In Oklahoma City, many new churches were constructed. Stylistically, they range from traditional to Modern and include examples of that "transitional" style. Most made use of the modern materials available at the time.

In a recent modern architecture survey of Oklahoma City, with the boundaries identified as I-44 to the north and west, I-35 to the east and I-240 to the south, 224 buildings were identified as constructed between 1950 and 1971. The buildings in the survey were limited to publicly owned and commercial buildings. Of the buildings surveyed 48 were government sponsored buildings and 47 were religious facilities. From the total surveyed 72 were determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places of which 16 were identified as religious facilities. Of the three resources identified as Neo-expressionism, only one, the First Christian Church, was identified as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Oklahoman*, "Weather Halts Church's Tower," May 21, 1955.

^{iv} *Oklahoman*, "Tradition-Breaking Church Dedicated," December 24, 1956.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} *Life Magazine*, "A Church's New Form," February 4, 1957.

First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

The main building of the First Christian Church creates a visual impact on the Oklahoma City skyline giving one a sense of location and identification. Details that make up the building's distinctive Neo-Expressionism style include the strikingly white concrete dome, sunscreens/louvers, tower and its spire. The district, however, is more than just the main building; the other modern buildings are a contrast to the spectacular main building. The main building has its expression while the supportive buildings their function without destroying either. Both the Youth Center and the Disciple of Christ Center emphasize the horizontal lines, create ornamentation using the structure and theme of the building, and exhibit a simplified form.

In conclusion, the First Christian Church Historic District merits recognition as an excellent local example of a Modern Movement complex in Oklahoma City. It is an exceptional local example of this style of architecture as applied to religious buildings in Oklahoma City. Within the context of local architecture, the First Christian Church Historic District was at the forefront of modern design and is therefore eligible under Criterion C as it retains sufficient integrity to merit recognition of its architectural significance. The First Christian Church historic district is a distinctive collection of buildings since its construction from 1947 to 1964. The multiple architects for the project exhibited the relationship between religious identity and the buildings they utilize within their own expression of Modern architectural style.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Oklahoma City was first settled in 1889, and by the time that Oklahoma was admitted to the Union in 1907, the City was the population center and commercial hub of the new state. The community had become a major regional commercial center, railway hub and had several large meat packing plants. Oil was discovered in the city proper in 1928, and the influx of oil money within the community greatly accelerated the city's growth and the construction of many high-rise and significant buildings in the city core. Even during the Great Depression some residents who had made money during this early oil boom escaped serious financial difficulties but the majority of Oklahomans did not.

As new businesses and industries moved into the downtown, the city necessarily expanded. In terms of geographical area, the city covered 15.6 square miles in 1910, 17.2 square miles by 1920, and by 1930 it had grown to 25.2 square miles.^{vii} Oklahoma City, between 1945 and 1971, experienced unprecedented growth and opportunity. The period is marked by a tremendous building boom and annexation. This period is also marked by the shift to modern times as new technology changed how Oklahomans lived. Starting in 1949, Oklahoma City annexed so much surrounding land that it almost doubled in size from its 1930s numbers. The growth was not strictly concentric, but had a northward pattern. From this expansion came new commercial centers and accelerated movement out of the downtown into the growing community. New schools were built to educate the growing number of children as a result of the population boom in Oklahoma City. New churches were building in the growing neighborhoods. New was seen as good and wherever possible, new buildings were constructed to meet the need of the new Oklahoma City.

During World War II, the City saw an influx of population, 25% above the previous decade, along with an increase in the number of retail and wholesale businesses.^{viii} With the installation of Tinker Air Force Base in 1941 and Midwest City Douglas Aircraft Company Plant in 1942, a war-based economy surfaced in Oklahoma City. By the end of the war, Oklahoma's economy successfully combined war-industry and oil-industry to create a growing Oklahoma City. These production, manufacturing and military giants, along with the side industries that supported them, provided many new jobs for both blue and white collar residents.

As the population and territory expanded at the end of WWII, so too did the use of automobiles and trucks on Oklahoma City roads. With improved roads and plenty of gas available after WWII, trucks began to haul goods greater distances. To meet the demands for needed transportation routes, the City built or expanded Grand Boulevard, Shields Boulevard, 39th Street Expressway and Classen Boulevard. The Federal government also played a crucial role in supplying needed transportation routes. With the signing of the Federal Interstate Highway Act in 1956, Interstate Highways 35, 40 and 44 were planned and eventually constructed through and around Oklahoma City. The Southwest 74th Street Expressway, begun in 1961, tied Interstate 35 with the planned H.W. Bailey Turnpike. Companies that might have once built near rail lines now built in suburbia and trucked their goods wherever needed.

^{vii} Workers of the Writers Program of the Works Project Administration, *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), p. 182-183.

^{viii} Harland Bartholomew & Associates. *The Comprehensive City Plan*.

First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property

County and State

The varied economic base developed through the first half of the twentieth century continued to fuel expansion of the city through the 1950s, so much so by 1960 the Oklahoma City population reached 324,253. While growth slowed over the ensuing decade, in 1970, 366,481 persons resided in Oklahoma City.^{ix}

Oklahoma City, between 1945 and 1971, experienced unprecedented growth and opportunity. The period is marked by a tremendous building boom. It is also marked by the shift to "modern" times as new technology changed how Oklahomans lived. Buildings were built and equipped with modern conveniences such as electric appliances. New industry developed to manufacture a wide variety of new goods. New shopping centers with new retail businesses were constructed to meet the growing desires of Oklahomans to spend their new-found wealth. New schools were built to educate the growing number of children as a result of the "baby boom" following the war. New churches were building in the growing neighborhoods. "New" was seen as "good" and wherever possible, new buildings were constructed to meet the need to the new Oklahoma City.

The First Christian Church Historic District was constructed during a period of growth in Oklahoma City and as such functioned in a capacity of outreach to the community. Because of the size of the facility, the church was capable of hosting meals, preparing meals for the needy, sponsored multiple boy scout troops, hosted evening dances, served as the Miss Oklahoma City Pageant location as well as the Miss Oklahoma Pageant, and many other civic minded events.

The facilities role in the community was solidified when it served a critical role to the residents of Oklahoma City on the day of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing in 1995 and through the immediate aftermath. The Compassion Center (the Center), a family assistance center at the First Christian Church, was operational by 3:30 p.m. on the afternoon of the bombing. The Center, initially set up by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Oklahoma Funeral Directors Association, provided approximately 20 funeral directors to greet families. By the next day, April 20, the American Red Cross was operating the Center serving victims and families. The Center also was supported by the hundreds of local clergy, police and military chaplains, and mental health professionals from across the Nation. The Center was located in the First Christian Church in the Edgemere neighborhood because of its proximity to the bombing site, the size and floor plan of the building, and adequate parking for about 1,200 vehicles.

Immediately, the Compassion Center put policies in place to limit media intrusion upon those who wanted privacy, while allowing access to the survivors and family members who wanted to speak with the press. The Center was a place to exchange information. First, the families themselves provided detailed information, photographs, and medical/dental records to identify loved ones who were still missing. Second, it served as a humanitarian effort, the Center provided information about emergency services, mental health counseling, security, and comfort for victims and surviving family members. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and a liaison from the Governor of Oklahoma provided twice daily updates to the victims' families on the rescue-and-recovery efforts. The "family room" set up in the Center protected relatives from the additional trauma of media intrusions. The family room also offered special areas where people could receive messages, eat meals, and use donated long-distance phone services. For 16 days, the First Christian Church, functioning as The Center, served thousands of victims, survivors, family members, and rescue workers seeking news, information, and solace.

^{ix} Ibid., 24-25.

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

The Daily Oklahoman. September 24, 1953, pg. 29; December 25, 1953, pg. 15; May 21, 1955, pg. 21; May 27, 1956, pg. 19; December 16, 1956, pg. 46; December 24, 1956, pg. 25.

First Christian Church: 1889-1989 Centennial Book. 1989.

Harland Bartholomew & Associates. *The Comprehensive City Plan*. OKC: OKC Planning Commission, 1949.

Henderson, Arn, FAIA. "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form", n. d.

Life. "A Church's New Form." Volume 42, #5, February 4, 1957, pg. 67.

Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. "Reconnaissance-Level Survey of Modern Architecture in Oklahoma City," 2009.

Workers of the Writers Program of the Works Project Administration. *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 32

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A	14	634130	3930370	C	14	634520	3930413
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
B	14	634438	3930378	D	14	634511	3930525
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation page

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

Part of the southeast quarter of Section 16, Township 12N, Range 3W beginning at southwest corner of the southeast quarter thence north 829.9 feet along south line of Edgemere Heights to west right-of-way line of highway thence south and southwest along w right-of-way of highway to point 33 feet north & 899.12 feet east of southwest corner of southeast quarter thence W899.12 feet to beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This nomination includes all of the land that is historically associated with the Church.

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lynda B. Schwan, Architectural Historian/National Register Program Coordinator

organization OK SHPO

date August 10, 2010

street & number 800 Nazih Zudhi Dr

telephone 405-522-4478

city or town Oklahoma City

state OK

zip code 73105

e-mail lschwan@okhistory.org

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: First Christian Church Historic District

City or Vicinity: Oklahoma City

County: Oklahoma

State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Lynda B. Schwan

Date Photographed: June 15, 2009 & July 30, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

No.	Subject	Dir.
0001	Main Building	West
0002	Sanctuary	Northeast
0003	Interior of Sanctuary	
0004	Amphitheater	North
0005	Youth Center	East
0006	Oklahoma Disciples Center	West

First Christian Church Historic District
Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name First Christian Church
street & number 301 NW 36th Street telephone _____
city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73118

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

First Christian Church Historic District

Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 10 Page 1

UTM References

E: 14	E634609	N3930808
F: 14	E634588	N3930895
G: 14	E634487	N3930838
H: 14	E634345	N3930622
I: 14	E634122	N3930604



First Christian Church Historic District
3700 North Walker Avenue
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma





First Christian Church Historic District
 3700 North Walker Avenue
 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Photograph Key



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY First Christian Church Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: OKLAHOMA, Oklahoma

DATE RECEIVED: 1/25/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/02/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/17/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/12/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000081

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT ___DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The First Christian Church Historic District is locally significant under National Register Criterion C (Architecture). Completed over a period of 17 years between 1947 and 1964, the district reflects the ambitious plans of the First Christian Church leadership to develop an expansive complex of modern facilities for its historic Oklahoma City congregation. The choice of local modernist architects Duane Conner, Fred Pojezny, and William Fearnow for the commissions resulted in a unique collection of non-traditional ecclesiastical buildings featuring Neo-Expressionist architectural forms, innovative construction technologies (thin shell concrete construction, monolithic concrete tower), and compatible planning. Widely praised upon construction, the buildings continue to stand out among Oklahoma City's rich legacy of mid-century Modern designs.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Criterion C

REVIEWER Paul R. Lusignea DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



First Christian Church Historic District
Main Building

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Lynda B Schwan

OKSHPO

June 15, 2009 / July 30, 2010

photograph #1

West



First Christian Church Historic District

Main Building

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Lynda B Schwan

OKSHPO

June 15, 2009 / July 30, 2010

photograph #2

Northeast



First Christian Church Historic District
Interior

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Lynda B Schwan

OKSIHPO

June 15, 2009/July 30, 2010

photograph #3



First Christian Church Historic District

Amphitheater

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Lynda B. Schwan

OK SHPO

June 15, 2009 / July 30, 2010

photograph #4

North



First Christian Church Historic District
Youth Center

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Lynda B. Schwan

OKSHPO

June 15, 2009 / July 30, 2010

photograph # 5

East



First Christian Church Historic District

Oklahoma Disciples Center

3700 North Walker Avenue

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

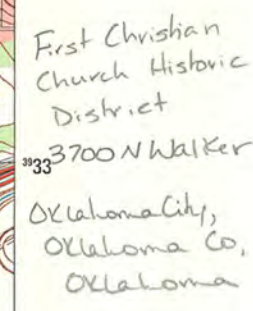
Lynda B Schwan

OK SHPO

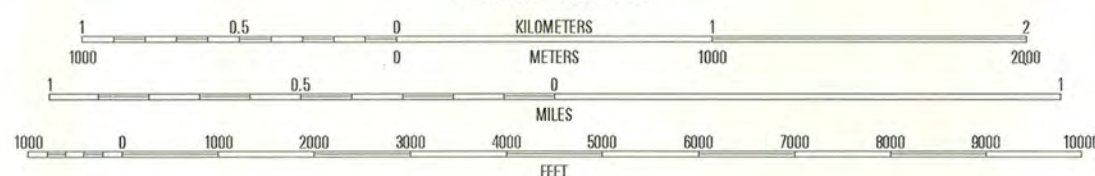
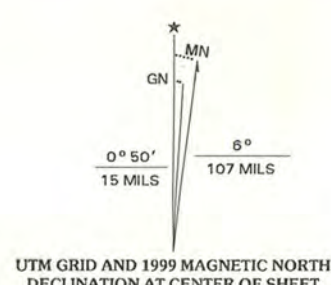
June 15, 2009/ July 30, 2010

photograph #6

West

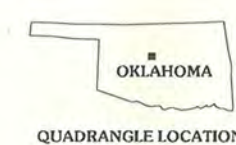


Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1984. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1995 and other sources. Public Land Survey System and survey control carried over to 1985.
Underwater contours in Lake Hefner by Water Resources Division
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1 000-metre grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 14
10 000-foot ticks: Oklahoma Coordinate System of 1983 (north zone)
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed contour ticks. Tick values are the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 1-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software
Landmark buildings verified 1985

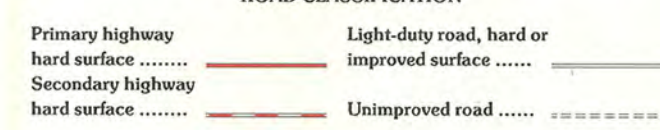


CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
AND OKLAHOMA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

BRITTON, OK
1995

NIMA 6455 II SE-SERIES V883

1	2	3	1 Piedmont 2 Bethany NE 3 Edmond
4		5	4 Bethany 5 Spencer 6 Mustang
6	7	8	7 Oklahoma City 8 Midwest City

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

ISBN 0-607-92481-0



Oklahoma Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

Founded May 27, 1893

Oklahoma History Center • 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive • Oklahoma City, OK 73105-7917
(405) 521-6249 • Fax (405) 522-0816 • www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpom.htm

January 21, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull
Acting Keeper of the Register
National Park Service 2280, 8th floor
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20005



Dear Ms. Shull:

We are pleased to transmit two National Register of Historic Places nominations for Oklahoma properties as well as one additional documentation. The nominations are for the following properties:

Cities Service Station #8, Tulsa, Tulsa County
First Christian Church Historic District, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County

Peter Conser House (additional documentation), Heavener Vicinity, LeFlore County

We look forward to the results of your review. If there may be any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Lynda B. Schwan of my staff or myself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melvena Heisch".

Melvena Heisch
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

MKH:lbs

Enclosures

Recommendation: SLR Return Action: SLR Return None

Documentation Issues Discussion Sheet

State Name: OK County Name Oklahoma Resource Name First Christian Church Historic District

Reference No. 110000031 Multiple Name 1

Solution:

A Little overflow into < 50 is Acceptable

As long as there continues to
flow over for All Resources. CC G NOT Req.

OK

Problem:

1) less than fifty years - CC 'G' not indicated

2) All ok Flagged

POS to 1964 OK for district

"G" not needed - *Edson*

Resolution:

SLR: Yes No

Database Change