

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

OCT 12 1982

1. Name

historic GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

and/or common

2. Location

street & number CORNER OF 9th and West Sts. NA not for publication

city, town WILMINGTON vicinity of _____ congressional district ONE

state DELAWARE code 10 county NEW CASTLE code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property NA

name GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

street & number 904 WEST STREET

city, town WILMINGTON vicinity of _____ state DELAWARE

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. NEW CASTLE COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS

street & number 800 FRENCH ST. - CITY/COUNTY BLDG.

city, town WILMINGTON, DEL. 19801 state _____

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wilmington Cultural Resource Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records HALL OF RECORDS

city, town DOVER, state DELAWARE

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

GRACE METHODIST CHURCH

DESCRIPTION

Grace Methodist Church is a Victorian Gothic structure with a substantial degree of original architectural integrity. It is located at the northwest corner of Ninth and West Streets in Wilmington, Delaware, on a terrace approximately four feet above the West Street level. The church building is approximately 166 feet by 102 1/2 feet in plan. The needle spire of the church rises to a height of 186 feet and is topped by a Celtic style cross.

The exterior walls of the church are of serpentine stone of a light pea green color, quaried on the banks of the Brandywine near Chadds Ford. The use of this stone was inspired by the example of the Birmingham Friends Meeting Church in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Other building materials include Connecticut River Valley stone, and "drab stone" from Nova Scotia. The three combined to produce the polychromatic effect so prevalent in Victorian Gothic architecture. The spire and roof were of slate that was varigated in shape and color, but were covered in 1948 with aluminum for protective and weatherproofing reasons.

The "drab stone" dressings are used in the angles, sills, jambs, arches to all openings, buttresses, weatherings, eaves, courses, copings, etc., and form a "frame" to the serpentine walls. The dressings are grooved on the face in a style peculiar to Scottish masons.

Exterior stained glass windows are lancet shaped with tracery featuring quatrefoil and trefoil designs. The main entrance to the church is from the east (on West Street) through three spacious doorways of compound lancet arched design into the vestibule and then to the main section of the church.

Entrance to the side chapel is through a door similar to the main entrance placed behind the spire and facing Ninth Street. Entrance to the back section of the church, including the "Memory Room" and the upper floor is also possible through the adjoining building that houses the present-day Sunday school and child care facilities.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Through the main (West Street) entrance, one enters the vestibule, most notable for its heavy wooden panelled doors and dark wainscoting. Two sets of carved wooden doors give entrance into the sanctuary. The sanctuary is divided into three seating sections, the center section being wider than the sides. All pews are of a dark, rich wood with a decorative ball handgrip and side ornamentation in a single leaf shape. Some of the front pews display brass nameplates from the time when the pews were rented to raise money for the church. The pews have golden seat cushions; the rug is a rich bright red color. This color scheme is a change from the original green and black color scheme. Today's balls are a light cream color in contrast to the original light blue. Interior walls and ceiling are plastered; original molding and wood beams in the ceiling have been retained.

Choir pews are more ornate than those in the main sanctuary, with higher backs and sides featuring an enclosed circle and a quatrefoil design. The pews are arranged facing the altar at the left front of the sanctuary and in front of the pipe organ.

The organ is one of the main features of the interior, standing 28 feet high, 10 feet 4 inches deep, and 16 feet wide on the west wall of the sanctuary behind the pulpit. The exposed pipes are displayed on either side of the altar. It was built by John Roberts of Frankford, Pennsylvania, and contains four separate, independent organs, with a total of 2,056 pipes. It required 15,000 feet of lumber and two tons of metal for its construction.

The altar is raised several steps above the level of the sanctuary. The raised level also contains a lectern, a pulpit, and several ornate chairs carved with Gothic patterns in a dark wood. These chairs are used whenever there is a Bishop's visit. The pulpit and lectern are also of dark panelled wood featuring a quatrefoil design.

Another distinctive feature of the sanctuary is the large, soft hued stained glass chancel window depicting Christ as the Good Shepherd. Backlighted and curved so as to embrace the altar, the window has over 18,000 individual pieces. The window was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Melville Gambrille in 1924, replacing the original three long, narrow stained glass windows behind the pulpit.

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The sanctuary has stained glass windows on either side of the pews -- a total of 28, illustrating various songs and biblical passages, such as Christ giving a sermon on the mount, or the angel at the tomb making the resurrection known to the three Marys. These windows were added in 1913 and 1914.

Above the balcony at the rear of the sanctuary (and over the vestibule) is an original stained glass window in an arch shape with five lancet shaped subsections surmounted by a circular rose design. The window is executed in rich primary colors, particularly designed to catch the early morning, eastern sun during services.

The rear portion of the church has been subdivided into what is called the "Memory Room" and a small chapel. The Memory Room contains records of the church, old photos of the church, graphs of the land, church members and ministers, and various liturgical memorabilia as well as a small round circular window containing a dove which had originally been above the three chancel windows. The small second chapel is decorated in a more modern fashion than the rest of the church. It has pale wooden pews, light tone walls, bare except for the wall behind the altar; this wall features a crucifix and a religious inscription.

The original Sunday school was held in a second floor room measuring 46 feet by 80 feet above the small chapel. This room is now a theatre used to house the Children's Repertory Theatre of Wilmington, complete with stage, audience chairs, and all necessary technical supports. Rooms for the choir and storage purposes complete the second floor. The basement of the church serves as a church dining room with an attached kitchen.

Grace Church was designed by Thomas Dixon, Esquire, a native Wilmingtonian who had moved his architectural practice to Baltimore. The cost of the construction came to \$200,000 with the church's completion in 1868. The church stands adjacent to a parsonage that faces Washington and Ninth Streets. The 1890 parsonage is also of serpentine rock, but not as elaborate in style as the church itself. In 1915, the "church house" was built next to the church facing West Street; a connector between the church house and the church was built in 1942.

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Justification of boundaries

The boundaries as described in this nomination encompass only the Church itself, and not the surrounding buildings which were added at later dates.

The existing legal boundary for the Church: bounded on the east by (the westerly right-of-way edge of) West Street, on the south by (the northerly right-of-way edge of) West Ninth Street, on the west by a line 190' of and parallel to the westerly right-of-way edge of West Street, and on the north by a line 100 feet north of and parallel to the northerly right-of-way edge of West Ninth Street.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1868 **Builder/Architect** Thomas Dixon, Esq.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Grace Church is an excellent example of Victorian Gothic architecture in an ecclesiastic rendering. It is particularly notable for the polychromatic building materials used: serpentine rock of a light pea-green color, "drab stone" trim, and a base of Connecticut brownstone. Grace Church is one of only two remaining buildings in the City of Wilmington constructed with serpentine rock (the other is a commercial building standard for its time, located in the lower Market Street Historic District, already on the National Register, and lacks the architectural distinction represented by Grace Church). The Church has also historically served a variety of social uses in addition to Methodist services. It has been used for community meetings and presently houses a day care center for the children of many downtown workers, and a complete theatre facility used by the Children's Repertory Theatre of Wilmington. Grace Church remains an integral part of Wilmington's downtown, both in a visual/architectural and a social/spiritual sense.

Therefore, Grace Church is being nominated on the basis of meeting National Register Criteria A, being associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our (local) history, and Criteria C, embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction that represents the work of a master and possesses high artistic values.

Level of Significance

Grace Church's significance has been deemed as local since it is primarily a Wilmington architectural landmark.

Because its significance is architectural, Grace Church is an exception to the religious structure exclusion rule.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Grace United Methodist Church Records
 "Amazing Grace", published by the Church on the 111th Anniversary
Journal Every Evening, January 23, 1868

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property est. .5

Quadrangle name Wilm. South Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	4	52	7	0	5	4	13	99	5	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing						

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Item 7, P. 4

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia A. Maley, Planner II March 1982

organization Wilm. Dept. of Planning date (302) 571-4402

street & number 800 French St. telephone

city or town WILMINGTON state DE. 19801

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Daniel H. Griffith*

title Deputy SHPO date Sept. 30, 1982

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register date 11/12/82

for Nelson Byrum
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

