

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received <b>MAY 23</b> 1983
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic First Christian Church

and/or common Wabash Christian Church

**2. Location**

street & number 110 W. Hill Street N/A not for publication

city, town Wabash N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Indiana code 018 county Wabash code 169

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Congregation, First Christian Church

street & number 110 W. Hill Street

city, town Wabash N/A vicinity of state Indiana 46992

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wabash County Recorder

street & number Wabash County Courthouse

city, town Wabash state Indiana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

## 7: Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Christian Church is a large brick structure located at the intersection of Miami and Hill Streets in downtown Wabash, Indiana. A fine example of Romanesque Revival architecture, the church is rectangular in plan with an elevated first floor and a simple gable roof, and features a domed tower rising from the center of the main facade. The church dates from 1865 and is thought to be one of the oldest structures in the city.

The main (south) facade of the church features a tripartite design, with the center section being a slightly projecting pavilion. A set of exterior concrete steps the width of the pavilion provides access from the street to the main entry on the first floor level of the pavilion. This entryway is contained in a large compound arched opening flanked by wall buttresses topped by gablets. A recessed brick panel featuring a corbel table separates this arched opening from the round stained glass window above. This window is five feet in diameter and features a curvilinear hood mold. Another decorative brick panel appears over this window, surmounted by a larger corbel table just below the projecting roof cornice. Rising above the roofline is an octagonal tower constructed of wood, with rounded-arch, louvered panels on each facade. This tower has a domical roof and is surmounted by a 20 foot tall cross believed to be an exact replica of the original, removed several years ago.

The bays flanking the pavilion are identical to each other in design, each featuring a single, segmental-arch window and wide brick belt course. A heavy molded brick water table appears above the windows and helps separate the basement area from the building's main floor level. Above this water table each bay features a large recessed brick panel containing tall, round-arched window openings with a simple hood mold. Each opening contains two narrow round-arched stained glass windows separated by a heavy wooden mullion. A corbel table appears in each bay above the window opening, just below the molded frieze. Octagonal buttresses appear on the east and west corners of this facade, and terminate just above the roofline.

The east and west facades of the building are each divided into six bays by simple brick pilasters. The basement area of each of these facades features segmental arched door and window openings, surmounted by a mold label course. Above the basement area, the five northernmost bays of each facade contain round-arched window units identical to those on the south facade. A brick corbel table is employed on both the east and the west facades, just below the plain frieze.

It was the intention of the building's designer to provide the best possible acoustics; consequently, the sanctuary's front (north) and rear (south) interior walls are curved, as are the junctures of the sanctuary walls with the ceiling. The north end of the sanctuary features a monumental blind arch flanked by large pilasters with heavily molded capitals. A large dais stretches across much of this north wall and provides a platform for the communion table, lecterns, and a grand piano. Oak pews with walnut trim, originally installed in the church in 1890, are arranged in a semi-circle around the dais. Along the south wall of the church is a wide gallery which features two clustered piers with heavily molded capitals.

Among the building's outstanding decorative elements are the large stained glass windows installed at the time of construction. On each side of the sanctuary, the five, round-arched window openings contain paired double-hung, stained glass windows whose designs include various religious symbols. Stained glass also is employed in three main window openings on the front (south) facade, and in the rounded-arch transom over the main entry door. These windows were all reconditioned in 1981.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1865-71

Builder/Architect Dr. James Ford

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Christian Church is significant for its architecture and for its role in the religious development of the town of Wabash, Indiana. The building is a fine local example of the Romanesque Revival style and features a fine collection of stained glass windows. Thought to be one of the oldest church buildings in the county, the structure has remained in continuous use since its completion more than 112 years ago.

The church was designed by Dr. James Ford, at the time one of the town's most prominent citizens. Ford was a medical doctor who had come to Wabash and established his practice in 1841. He also was interested in architecture and the study of acoustics. In 1865 Ford volunteered to design and supervise construction of the First Christian Church. Under his direction, brick was molded in more than 80 different varieties so that his Romanesque Revival design could be constructed without the use of expensive cut stone. Ford also designed the interior with some curvilinear wall surfaces in order to provide the best possible acoustics. The extensive use of stained glass was also a feature of the building's original design.

Although construction was initiated in 1865, the building was not completed and dedicated until January, 1871. The church congregation has kept the building in good repair since that time, with relatively few alterations. Recent restoration efforts have included the reconditioning of the stained glass windows in 1981 and, in 1982, the construction and installation of a replica of the cross which originally stood atop the church's domed tower.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Wabash

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	6	5	9	9	3	0	0	4	5	1	6	8	8	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

Lot Numbers 171 and 172 of the Town of Wabash, Indiana

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. F. Sodervick, Chairman

organization First Christian Church, Restoration Committee

date November 4, 1981

street & number 110 W. Hill Street

telephone 219/563-4179

city or town Wabash

state Indiana 46992

# 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature J. M. Redman

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date April 27, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 6/23/83

for Melrose Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Additions to the building were accomplished in 1938 and 1960. The 1938 addition, located at the north end of the building, contains two classrooms, a kitchen, a large meeting hall, and storage areas. The 1960 addition, located north and west of the original structure, contains restrooms, more classrooms, a nursery, and a larger meeting hall. The exterior of the building was painted sometime early in the 20th century; it currently is painted to match the brick color of the additions. Alterations to the interior of the building include the 1890 remodeling of the gallery and, more recently, the installation of acoustical tile in the sanctuary.

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Shaw, Henry K. Hoosier Disciples, St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1966.

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