

PH0022012

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: COUNTY: FOR NPS USE ONLY ENTRY DATE JUL 16 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: Luther Place Memorial Church AND/OR HISTORIC: Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church of Washington, D.C.; Memorial English Lutheran Church

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1226 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (Thomas Circle) CITY OR TOWN: Washington CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C. STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11 COUNTY: District of Columbia CODE: 001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One): District, Building, Site, Structure, Object OWNERSHIP: Public, Private, Both Public Acquisition: In Process, Being Considered STATUS: Occupied, Unoccupied, Preservation work in progress ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC: Restricted, Unrestricted, No PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate): Agricultural, Commercial, Educational, Entertainment, Government, Industrial, Military, Museum, Park, Private Residence, Religious, Scientific, Transportation, Other (Specify), Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Trustees of Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church of Washington, D.C. and Trustees of Luther Statue Association STREET AND NUMBER: 1226 Vermont Avenue, N.W. CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia

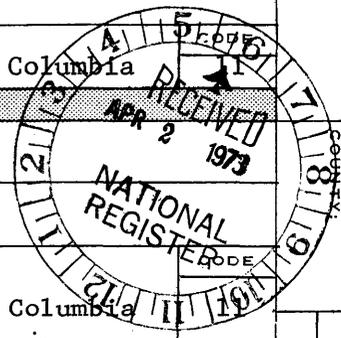
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder of Deeds STREET AND NUMBER: .6th and D Streets, N.W. CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia

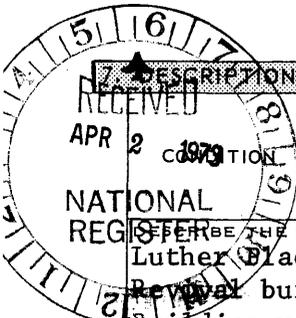
6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia additions to the National Register of Historic Places recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968 [X] Federal [ ] State [ ] County [ ] Local DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: National Capital Planning Commission STREET AND NUMBER: 1325 G Street, N.W. CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY



DESCRIPTION		(Check One)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
(Check One)		(Check One)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Luther Place Memorial Church is a handsome, quarry-faced red sandstone Gothic Revival building which occupies an impressive site on Thomas Circle. The building was designed by Judson York in 1867, but this design was modified when construction began in 1870. The church is more massive than early Gothic Revival churches of the 1840's and 1850's, but lacks the polychromy of High Victorian Gothic Revival designs of the 1860's and 1870's. The building defies clear stylistic categorization but due to its robust vitality and bold massing is very representative of post-Civil War architecture.

The visual impact of the church is integrally related to its location facing Thomas Circle, a Category I Landmark and one of the major elements of L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the Federal City. Luther Place Memorial Church and its western neighbor, the National City Christian Church, a Category III Landmark, are the architectural focal points of the circle. These buildings have strikingly different architectural styles and their juxtaposition gives vitality to the whole area, which has suffered from recent construction. National City Christian Church, a white granite colonial revival design by John Russell Pope built in 1930, tries to dominate the circle through its icy monumentality, but Luther Place Memorial Church rivals it due to the robust quality of its massive tower and of its red sandstone walls.

Luther Place Memorial Church is located on a triangular shaped lot on the north side of Thomas Circle. The lot is bounded by N Street on the north, 14th Street on the west, and Vermont Avenue on the east. Located at the narrowest part of the lot, the southern section nearest Thomas Circle, is the over lifesize bronze statue of Martin Luther. Luther is portrayed as a robed figure standing on a gray granite pedestal. The grassy area around the statue is the front yard of the church, and the main (south) facade of the church serves as a backdrop for the statue.

There are grassy areas at the east and west of the church. The parish house wing abuts the sidewalk at the north. There is a low red sandstone retaining wall around the yard at the west. Nearby buildings to the east and west, except the National City Christian Church, are modern highrise buildings. South of the church, across N Street there is a row of deteriorating late nineteenth century row houses. Not far north of the church on the west side of Vermont Avenue is Mount Olivet Lutheran Church. This smaller, brick Gothic Revival Church with tower and spire complements its more elaborate neighbor.

The plan of Luther Place Memorial Church was affected by the triangular shape of the lot. The church has four parts. The octagonal entrance tower with spire is at the south and faces Thomas Circle. Attached at the bottom of the north side of the tower is the narrowest part of the fanshaped auditorium. Projecting from the sides of the auditorium at its rear are low octagonal entrance towers. The three story, parish house wing is attached to the north sides of these towers and at the rear of the auditorium.

The auditorium is fanshaped in order to have a maximum of floor space. The parish house wing is basically trapezoidal and occupies the entire northern section of the lot. The main tower is not on axis with the auditorium

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

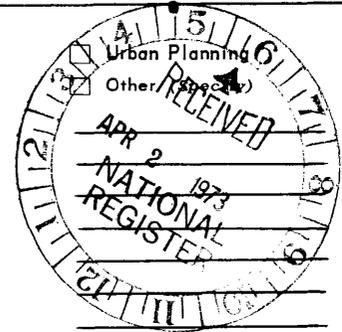
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable, and Known) 1870-1883

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated Luther Place Memorial Church a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. Due to its plastic massing, the red sandstone Gothic Revival building takes full advantage of its important location on Thomas Circle. Begun in 1870 the church is representative of post Civil War architecture and appropriately was built as a memorial to the ending of the Civil War and the freeing of slaves.

The property on which the church now stands was purchased in 1858 by Cabel Cushing from the Washington City Orphan Asylum. Cushing (1800-1879), the Attorney General of the United States under President Pierce, immediately turned the property over to St. Andrew's Mission Congregation, an Episcopalian group. In 1863 Cushing regained title to the property by paying back taxes.

In 1864 Dr. John G. Butler, the pastor of St. Paul's English Lutheran Church, then at 11th and H Streets, N.W., suggested founding a mission. His proposal was acted upon by members of his congregation and on April 2, 1866, Cushing's lot facing Thomas Circle and bound by Vermont Avenue, 14th Street, and N Street was put in trust "for the sole use and benefit of the Congregation of the Memorial English Lutheran Church." In 1873 the property was deeded to the church's trustees after they had erected their church on the site. Eight thousand dollars is generally given as the cost of the property to the congregation.

By 1867 plans for the church building had been prepared and on July 5, 1868, the Memorial Hall designed by Judson York was dedicated. This building contained a chapel, Sunday school classrooms, and an audience chamber. Little is known about York. He is not listed in Washington directories for 1866 and 1869, but in 1867 he was listed as an architect for the Treasury Department. At that time A.B. Mullett was Supervising Architect of the Treasury.

In 1870 the cornerstone for the church was laid. The church was attached to and in front of the Memorial Hall. York's design for the church was found to be too expensive and was modified by J.C. Harkness and H.S. Davis. The 1874 Washington Directory lists John C. Harkness as an architect at 916 New York Avenue, N.W. Henry S. Davis is listed but no occupation is given.

(Continued on Form 10-300a, page 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Atlas, Directories, Newspaper Clippings, and Photographs. Washingtoniana Collection. D.C. Public Library.

Columbia Real Estate Title Company. Deed Search Files. Case 128686.

Historical Committee of the Golden Jubilee Committee. Historical Sketch of Luther Place Memorial Church. Washington: Congregation of Luther Place Memorial Church, 1923.

National Capital Planning Commission, Landmarks Files. (Cont. Form 10-300a,p4)

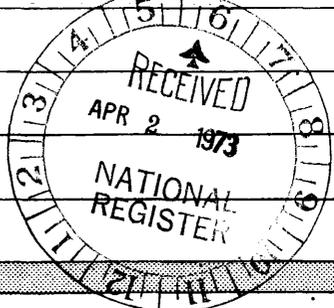
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	38°	54'	24"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	77°	01'	55"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **15,607 square feet .358+ acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **T. Robins Brown, Architectural Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **National Capital Planning Commission** DATE: **Feb. 29, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1325 G Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: *James B. ...*

Title: Assistant to the Mayor for Housing Programs

Date: MAR 30 1973

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

*Robert ...*  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/16/73

ATTEST: *[Signature]*  
Keeper of the National Register

Date: 7 10 73



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Description - Luther Place Memorial Church

but this is not particularly apparent probably due to the oval shape of the auditorium's mass. The side entrance towers are parallel to the streets they face rather than parallel to each other. The auditorium and main tower are approximately 100 feet in length on the north-south axis. The auditorium is approximately 70 feet wide at its point of greatest width. The parish house wing has a depth of approximately 35 feet and is about 100 feet in width along the east-west axis.

The church has a low red sandstone foundation and an unfinished basement with dirt floor. The quarry-faced red sandstone supporting walls have regular ashlar bonds. They are supported by pinnacled, stepped buttresses. Openings in the church's walls have pointed arches and are deeply recessed. The parish house wing has red brick walls and most of its openings have flat arches.

The most striking element of the exterior is the octagonal main tower with slate covered octagonal spire. This heavily buttressed tower rises from an approximately square base with projecting entrance gables on three sides. The fourth side is attached to the auditorium. In the entrance gables are large deeply recessed doorways above which are large tracery windows. The diameter of the tower does not appreciably reduce in the transition from the base to the octagonal belfry. The belfry has eight louvered openings under gablets. Before 1904 the stone walls were smooth on the belfry story, but now they are quarry faced to the gablets. Above the gablets rises the spire crowned by a finial. Below the band which divides the spire are vents on every other slope.

The one story auditorium is covered by a gray slate covered mansard roof. The curving east and west walls are divided by pinnacled buttresses into six bays, each containing one tracery window.

The side entrance towers are much lower than, but complement, the main tower. The walls of these towers are the height of their entrance gables which project less than, but are similar to, those of the main tower. Their octagonal, slate covered roofs are surrounded by gablets and terminated by finials.

The parish house wing, said to have "collegiate perpendicular gothic lines," is an awkward addition to the church. The contained rectilinear forms of this flat roofed wing detract from the plastic, piling up effect of the buttressed masses of the church.

Except for the replacement of the brick, 1868 Memorial Hall with the present parish house wing in 1950-51, the church's exterior has not been seriously changed since the completion of the spire in the 1880's. With the exception of the change in the surface of the stone on the belfry story, the tower was rebuilt along its original lines after the fire in 1904.

York's 1867 design for the church was modified to reduce cost. York's design as illustrated on a "Memorial Building Bond" had greater verticality. Windows  
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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7. Description - Continued

were taller and walls higher. The main tower narrowed considerably before the belfry level making the tower much less massive. The side towers had onion-shaped roofs. The auditorium was seven bays long instead of six. Crockets were used profusely.

Today the auditorium is entered through the side towers. The entrances in the main towers are no longer used. This is a practical change as the doorways connecting the main tower and auditorium are in the altar wall. The auditorium is fanshaped and the floor slopes down to the narrower chancel area. Four aisles radiate from the semicircular chancel. In 1969-70 two rows of pews at the rear (north) were removed when a smoked glass screen was installed. Above this screen is a balcony supported on four cast iron columns. The balcony is reached by enclosed stairways at the east and west. Behind the altar wall is the tower. Its interior was remodeled in 1969-70 and now contains the working sacristy, the pastor's mediation room, offices for the organist, the pipes of the organ, and a bathroom. The parish house wing can be reached through the side entrance towers, through the auditorium and its balcony, and through a separate entrance on Vermont Avenue. This wing contains meeting rooms, classrooms, offices, and a chapel.

The auditorium has been modified a number of times, but retains a number of interesting features. Particularly notable are the five exposed wooden arches of the ceiling, the altar wall with arched choir gallery flanked by composite piers, the Gothic panels with heavy mouldings of the balcony and the tracery windows with stained glass.

Originally the auditorium was very dark. There were no clerestory windows; woodwork was dark; and walls, carpets, and cushions were green. It is doubtful that the two large sun light reflectors from the U.S. Reflector Company of New York gave much light. Today there is a large, round crystal chandelier and woodwork has been painted. The auditorium was remodeled in 1969-70 to make it brighter. The stained glass windows closest to the chancel were replaced by modern designs with lighter glass. A free-standing white formica covered piece of furniture serves as altar, pulpit, and font.

8. Significance

The first regular service was held in the church on February 2, 1873, and the building was complete at this time except for its towers. The congregation was not officially organized until after the erection of the building. In 1870 trustees for the "Memorial English Lutheran Church" were appointed during a meeting held at St. Paul's English Lutheran Church, but not until March 11, 1873, was the church organized as "a Memorial to God's goodness in delivering the land from slavery and from war." At this time the church's name was

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8. Significance - Continued

changed from "Memorial English Lutheran Church" to "Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church of Washington, D.C." The original membership consisted of 48 persons from St. Paul's and Dr. Butler became the first pastor.

On June 7, 1874, the church building was dedicated. The Washington Evening Star of June 6, 1874, described the building as "very fine" and as "a unique structure, but the Gothic style of architecture predominates." The three towers were not finished until the early 1880's when George Ryneal, Jr., a local merchant, paid for their completion as a memorial to his father and mother.

The church did not receive the name by which it is commonly known until the 1880's. On May 21, 1884, the Luther Statue Association unveiled the statue of Martin Luther which stands in front of the church. This bronze, over life-size statue is a copy of a statue in Worms, Germany, and commemorates the 400th anniversary of Luther's birth. In 1886 the trustees of the church deeded the land on which the statue stands to the Luther Statue Association. The statue has lent its name to the church and it is popularly known as "Luther Place Memorial Church.

On January 28, 1904, the church caught fire during a birthday party for its minister, Dr. Butler. Part of the main tower, part of the auditorium, and the stained glass windows in the auditorium were destroyed in the blaze. The building was promptly repaired and when it reopened on January 29, 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt gave an address.

On August 2, 1909, Dr. Butler died. He served as pastor of Luther Place Memorial Church until his death and for a long period was the oldest minister in Washington. He had a distinguished career and served as Chaplain of the House of Representatives for six years and Chaplain of the Senate for seven years. Lloyd C. Douglas, who later wrote The Robe, was the church's minister from 1909 to 1912. Subsequent ministers are listed below.

The church has played an active role in religious organizations and has an admirable history of community service. From 1889 to 1919 Dr. William K. Butler, the son of the pastor, operated a free infirmary for eye, ear, and throat diseases in Memorial Hall. During the week the parish house wing is now used for an Early Childhood Development Center operated by the city's United Planning Organization.

During the twentieth century the auditorium, particularly the chancel, has been remodeled several times. The most recent remodeling, in 1969 was carried out under the supervision of the architectural firm of Neer and Graef of Alexandria. In 1950 Memorial Hall was torn down and replaced by a parish house wing designed by L.M. Leisenring, a Washington architect and a member of the parish. This wing was dedicated on September 30, 1951.

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8. Significance - Continued

Ministers of Luther Place Memorial Church

- 1873-1909 John G. Butler
- 1909-1911 Lloyd C. Douglas
- 1912-1918 Henry A. Anstadt
- 1919-1929 George M. Diffenderfer
- 1930-1940 Carl C. Rasmussen
- 1940-1942 Charles B. Foelsch
- 1943-1953 L. Ralph Tabor
- 1954-1960 Walter B. Freed
- 1961-1962 John R. Taylor
- 1963-1969 James M. Singer
- 1970- John F. Steinbruck

9. Bibliography (Continued)

The National Cyclopedia of American Biography. New York: James T. White, 1897, pp. 151-152.

Washington Evening Star. July 5, 1868; June 6, 1874; June 7, 1874; Jan. 30, 1904; Jan. 30, 1905.

Washington Federation of Churches. Survey of Luther Place Memorial Lutheran Church. Washington: Washington Federation of Churches, March 1945.

