

Historic Houses of Worship Tour – Denver, Colorado

David Bains, Samford University; Daniel Sack, Washington, D.C.; Gretchen Buggeln, Valparaiso University
A19-234 American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 19, 2018, 1—5 p.m.

Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception
(Roman Catholic)

St. John's Cathedral
(Episcopal)

Assumption of the Theotokos
Greek Orthodox Cathedral

Augustana Lutheran Church

Schedule

- 1 p.m. Depart Convention Center
- 1:10 p.m. Arrive Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception
- 1:50 p.m. Depart
- 2:05 p.m. Arrive St. John's Cathedral
- 2:45 p.m. Depart
- 3:05 p.m. Arrive at Assumption of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Cathedral
- 3:45 p.m. Depart by foot to walk 1 block to Augustana Lutheran Church
- 4:35 p.m. Depart
- 5:00 p.m. Arrive Convention Center

Denver Historic Houses of Worship Tour

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American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting

A19-234, meet at Convention Center registration desk

Text by David R. Bains (revised November 29, 2018)

Introduction

Gold prospectors founded Denver in 1858. It quickly became a commercial center. In 1867 it was named the capital of the territory of Colorado and three years later was linked by rail to the rest of the nation. This secured its place as a prosperous city that attracted people from across the United States and the world. Its population grew from 36,000 in 1880 to 134,000 in 1900.

Denver's religious landscape soon included many handsome houses of worship in popular medieval-revival styles. Surviving examples include: Sacred Heart Catholic Church (1880, 2760 Larimer St.); Temple Emanuel (1882), now residences (24 Curtis St.); Trinity United Methodist Church (1888, 1820 Broadway); St. Mark's Episcopal Church (1889), now The Church nightclub (1160 Lincoln St.); Christ Methodist Episcopal Church (1889), now the Sanctuary Lofts (999 E 22nd Ave.); and Central Presbyterian Church (1892, 1660 Sherman St.). The financial panic of 1893 and its depression of the silver industry brought to an end to this first phase of religious building.

Construction resumed about a decade later, but the tendency was toward more academically "correct" versions of revival styles. The dominant movement in urban planning and architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century was the City Beautiful Movement. In Denver it was championed by mayor Robert Speer. This movement favored neoclassical styles for public buildings and emphasized the importance of urban planning and parks, particularly parks that would set off public buildings. Denver's Civic Center is excellent example of the movement's work.

The government did not integrate religious buildings into the Civic Center, but many located themselves near the Colorado State Capitol (opened 1894). Major surviving buildings in the Capitol Hill neighborhood include Temple Emanuel's second building (1899), now Denver Community Church (1595 Pearl Street); First Church of Christ, Scientist, (1901–06, 1415 Logan Street); the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception (1902–11); and the Cathedral of St. John in the Wilderness (1909–11). Our tour will explore the two cathedrals. They were built as major statements of civic and denominational pride.

By 1960, Denver's population was 494,000 and distributed in many new automobile suburbs. The Greek Orthodox cathedral of the Assumption of the Theotokos (1972) and Augustana Lutheran Church (1959) both used modern construction techniques to make a significant statement on a busy suburban thoroughfare. Their large suburban sites have facilitated the development of an array of buildings for educational and fellowship activities. The history of the two buildings represents two different histories of adaptation of mid-century modernism by later generations. Among the many other mid-century modern houses of worship in Denver is the third home of Temple Emmanuel (1956, 51 Grape Street). It is located just four blocks north and two blocks east of Augustana Lutheran.

As residential patterns change and religious movements wax and wane, many historic houses of worship have found new purposes. Among the more unique ones in Denver is the Gothic revival building at 400 S. Logan Street in the Washington Park neighborhood.

Built in 1904, it served as Barnitz Memorial Lutheran Church and later as Mount Calvary Apostolic Church. In 2017 it reopened as the International Church of Cannabis with an interior painted by Spanish muralist Okuda San Miguel. Bright geometric patterns and mythological creatures provide an environment for church members, known as Elevationists, to partake of cannabis in order to become "a better version" of themselves. The exterior of the church features a graffiti mural by Los Angeles-based artist Kenny Scharf. This site is not included on this tour but may be seen at www.elevationists.org and during public hours on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons.

Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

Colfax and Logan Streets, Denver, CO 80203

303.831.7010 www.denvercathedral.org

History: Denver's first Roman Catholic church was erected in 1860 at 15th and Stout Streets. Dedicated to St. Mary, it was located one block from today's convention center. Joseph Machebeuf (1812–89), a French missionary, celebrated the first mass on Christmas Eve 1860. In 1868 Machebeuf became bishop of the newly created Vicarate Apostolic of Colorado and Utah. In 1887 he was named the first bishop of Denver and St. Mary's became his cathedral.

His protégée and successor, the French-born Nicholas Matz (1850–1917), broke the ground for the new cathedral in 1902. Completed in 1912 it was dedicated to Mary under the title the Immaculate Conception. The Immaculate Conception had been patroness of the United States since 1846. Because of its significant architecture and place in church life, Pope John Paul II named it a minor basilica in 1979. He later celebrated mass at the cathedral as part of World Youth Day in 1993. The cathedral is the liturgical seat of the archbishop of Denver, Samuel J. Aquila. The offices of the archdiocese are located some four and a half miles to the southwest.

An urban parish, the cathedral is a significant site of social ministry, musical performance, and Christian witness. Its regular activities include five weekend masses, three daily masses, and daily times of adoration and confession. It also hosts a monthly Respect Life Holy Hour.

The cathedral has become a center of the cause for canonization of Julia Greeley. Greeley was born into slavery at Hannibal, Missouri, prior to 1848. She entered the Catholic Church at Denver's Sacred Heart parish in 1880 and became an enthusiastic promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She joined the Third Order of St. Francis in 1901 and died in 1918. After her cause was officially approved by the Vatican in 2016, her remains were transferred to the cathedral in June 2017.

Architecture: Just as its first two bishops were French, so is the Gothic style of the cathedral. It was designed by Leon Coquard (1860–



1 Cathedral Basilica, interior

1926), a Detroit architect who is also well-known for his churches, especially the Catholic cathedral in Covington, Kentucky. The Denver cathedral was inspired in part by the Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas in Bishop Matz's hometown of Munster in Alsace, France. This is particularly evident the twin 210-foot spires. Completed by the Denver architects, Aaron Grove and Thomas Walsh, the church is built of Colorado granite and Indiana limestone. Interior stone work includes structural marble from Marble, Colorado, and Carrara marble for the altars, statues, and bishop's chair.

The church is built on a steel frame. This allows much thinner columns than if were supported by stone. It help gives the church an open floor plan and a light and airy feel. The floor slopes toward the front to improve the assembly's view of the pulpit and altar.

Characteristic French features of the cathedral include the rose window on the church's façade and its semi-circular apse. The cruciform church measures 195 by 116 feet. The nave is 68 feet high. The church features 75 stained glass windows from the Royal Bavarian Art Institute in Munich. Such "Munich-glass" windows were very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are characterized by brightly colored, painterly scenes that are framed by Gothic tracery depicted in the glass. The scenes cross the different lights of a given window opening. Thus the windows present to worshipers easily legible scenes almost as if they were murals. Most depict scenes from the life of Christ, others depict saints and Marian themes.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the church has been reordered several times. It now features an expanded chancel with a large table-like marble altar in the crossing. The original altar rail was

relocated around the baptismal font near the entrance. This reordering reduced the seating available for the congregation from 1,000 to 800. The bishop's chair, or cathedra, is located on the left-hand side of the chancel, while the chair used by other presiders is located on the right. Also on the right is the red and yellow *umbraculum* that designates the church as a minor basilica. The basilica's *tintinnabulum*, or bell banner is between the cathedra and the high altar.

The church's 1911 Kimball organ is in the rear gallery. It was updated by Morel & Associates of Denver in 1996. In 1997 the east spire of the cathedral was struck by lightning, it was repaired the next year. A major restoration project began on the church's front and spires in 2016.

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St. John's Cathedral

1400 N Washington Street, Denver, CO 80203

303.831.7115 www.sjcathedrals.org

History: The first services of the Episcopal Church in Denver were conducted by the Reverend John H. Kehler who arrived from Sharpsburg, Maryland, in January 1860. He named the new parish St. John's in the Wilderness since the nearest Episcopal church was several hundred miles away. The first cathedral was a red brick Romanesque revival structure at 20th Street and Welton. Completed in 1882, it was destroyed in a 1903 fire. Its first dean, English immigrant H. Martyn Hart, was one of the organizers in 1887 of what later became the United Way.

The cornerstone of the present cathedral was laid on January 24, 1909. The building opened on November 5, 1911. While financial

considerations meant that the cathedral was never completed to its original plans, the prominent congregation grew steadily. Its fourth dean, Paul Roberts remained a committed pacifist throughout World War II. In the 1960s and 70s, the cathedral experienced many of the difficulties facing urban congregations from suburban migration and social unrest. Later revitalization, however, has provided the church with a surer foundation as "an inclusive, welcoming, and worship-centered community of faith." A Sundanese Anglican congregation also holds services at St. John's.

The cathedral serves as the seat of the Episcopal bishop of Colorado and the diocesan offices are adjacent to the cathedral. In October 2018, Kimberly (Kym) Lucas was elected as the next bishop of the diocese. Her consecration will be held in the cathedral in May.



2 St. John's Cathedral, interior

Architecture: The church was designed by the New York firm of Evarts Tracy (1868–1922) and Egerton Swartwout (1870–1943). Both had worked for the firm of McKim, Mead, and White. They would be best known for their public buildings, including the Missouri State Capitol (1917). The only other major house of worship associated with either architect is Washington, D.C.'s neo-classical National Baptist Memorial Church (1921).

Like the Episcopal cathedrals in Washington and New York, St. John's is built solely of masonry. There is no steel frame. The original design for St. John's used flying buttresses

to support the roof, this proved too expensive and the cathedral was redesigned with thicker walls and smaller windows. The transepts and central tower called for in the initial design were also never built. Though the church was built in Indiana limestone, the chancel was

built of brick. It was intended to be temporary and taken down after a larger stone chancel was built around it.

Stylistically the building employs Gothic in a manner associated with the late or perpendicular Gothic period, particularly as interpreted by the American Gothic revival architects Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Goodhue from the 1890s to the 1920s. The nave is 130 feet long, 65 feet high, and 52 feet wide. In order to maximize sight lines the structural aisles have been reduced to passageways.

Several components of the cathedral are legacies of the building destroyed in 1903. The iron and brass screen separating the nave from the chancel and the oak reredos with its thirteen carved figures both came from the old building. Likewise the circle-arched window frames in the apse were designed to hold glass rescued from the earlier Romanesque revival cathedral. Those windows deteriorated, however, and new windows were commissioned.

The church's more than fifty stained glass windows are mainly the work of two firms. The Edgar Frampton Studio of London made the Last Judgement window above the main doors. They also designed eight of the aisle windows. The Boston-based studio of Charles Connick and its successor Connick Associates designed most of the rest of the windows including fourteen of the sixteen windows in the clerestory, all eleven windows in the apse, and two of the aisle windows. Connick's windows contrast sharply with the Munich windows at the Catholic cathedral. Connick sought to be faithful to medieval styles by composing windows as mosaics of small pieces of glass. He believed that the most important role of a stained glass window was to shape the character of light admitted into the room. The display of images was a secondary concern. Furthermore these images were to respect the medium of glass and thus were in no sense "painterly." They lack the illusion of depth and do not extend across multiple lights. As a result, Connick's windows are often less legible than windows in other styles, but they often reward careful inspection.

The church's Kimball organ was installed in 1938 and restored in 2011. A free-standing altar has been placed in the middle of the

chancel to facilitate the priest facing the people while celebrating the eucharist.

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Williams, Peter W. *Religion, Art, and Money: Episcopalians and American Culture from the Civil War to the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

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Assumption of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Cathedral

4610 E Alameda Avenue, Denver CO 80246

303.388.9314 www.assumptioncathedral.org

History: Greeks first arrived in Denver in the early twentieth-century as railroad workers, shopkeepers, restaurateurs, and laborers. The first Greek Orthodox church opened in 1908 at 37th Avenue and Lafayette Street, northwest of downtown. With the growth of the community, a new church was opened in 1933 at Sixth Avenue and Pennsylvania Street, approximately 1.25 miles south of the Roman Catholic cathedral. This still-existing building served as the spiritual home of the Greek Orthodox community for forty years.

The current site of the cathedral on East Alameda at Dahlia Street was dedicated in 1961. Services were held in the adjoining social hall until the new cathedral



3 Greek Orthodox Cathedral and chapel

opened in 1971–72. It is located on the brow of a hill overlooking the Cherry Creek Valley. The iconography was completed in time for the church's consecration on the feast of the Assumption in 1998. The Assumption, also known in Orthodoxy as the Dormition, is observed on August 15 and celebrates the end of Mary's earthly life and the reception of her soul by God.

The church's large, 800-seat, capacity and bold design is cited as one reason that the seat of the metropolitan bishop was moved from Houston to Denver in 1974. The metropolis includes fifty parishes, three chapels, and two monasteries scattered over 1.3 million square miles in fourteen states from Idaho to Louisiana. Metropolitan Isaiah oversees these parishes from offices located adjacent to the cathedral. Denver is one of eight metropolises in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Architecture: The 1972 cathedral is a bold modernist expression of Greek Orthodoxy. Like Frank Lloyd Wright's Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1956–61), it simplifies traditional Greek Orthodox architecture into its most distinctive form, a single domed space. But whereas at the archetypal church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople the great dome rested on other half domes and ultimately on square walls, here there is only one dome resting on circular walls.

The architect of the Denver cathedral departed from Wright's prairie sensibilities which kept his dome low and stretched. In Denver the dome is a full hemisphere clothed in gold. It evokes the nearby mountains and the golden dome of the state capitol. The effect is enhanced when the hilltop church is viewed from the valley below.

The simplicity of the hemisphere, however, came to be judged as too modern and insufficiently evocative of Greek Orthodoxy's historic tradition. A cruciform chapel in a traditional Greek style has recently



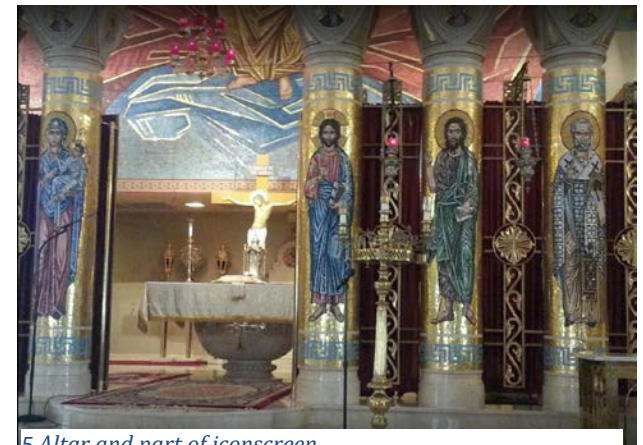
4 Greek Orthodox Cathedral, interior

been added next to the cathedral. It was designed by Eidos Architects of Greenwood Village, Colorado. Connected to the cathedral's narthex, it creates an intriguing yet successful juxtaposition that seeks to bring the modernist structure more into line with a traditional aesthetic. Interestingly, however, while the cathedral itself follows ancient custom in being oriented toward the east, the new chapel is not. The decoration of the chapel is currently being completed with mosaics by the Italian iconographer Salvatore Bruno.

The Metropolis Center located on the other side of the parish buildings was designed by CJK Design Group. Like the chapel it has a more traditional aesthetic evoking traditional churches of northern Greece in its exterior. It was completed in 2003. CJK Design Group was also involved refurbishing the narthex and parts of the church in a more traditional fashion.

The interior of the church follows Orthodox tradition in the arrangement of its iconography. Above the altar, an infant Jesus is depicted as enthroned upon his mother Mary. For almost thirty years this mosaic and the icon screen were the church's only iconography. Later the congregation had the resources to commission Leonidas Diamantopoulos, an iconographer based in Athens, Greece, to design and create a complete iconographic program for the dome. Christ Pantokrator, the universal ruler looks down from the center of the dome. Biblical scenes appear on either side of the church in the dome's lower registers. Icons of saints, prophets, and angels fill the space between these scenes and the Pantokrator. The icons were painted on canvas in Greece and then installed on the cathedral's concrete dome.

The iconscreen is formed by eight columns with



5 Altar and part of iconscreen

metal grills in between. Saints appear on the columns rather than on panels between wooden supports. The deacons' doors are at either end of the screen perpendicular to the royal doors. Curtains have been added to the once open grills in a move to make the once open icon screen more opaque as had long been common.

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<http://www.cjkdesign.com/projects/faith/assumption-greek-orthodox-cathedral-denver-co/>

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<https://www.thegreekfestival.com/assumption-cathedral-of-denver/>

Augustana Lutheran Church

5000 E Alameda Avenue, Denver, CO 80246

303.388.4678 <http://www.augustanadenver.org/>

History: The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denver was organized in 1878 by seven individuals meeting in the chapel of the German Methodist Church at Arapaho and 18th Streets. It was admitted to the Augustana Synod as Augustana Lutheran Church two years later.

The Augustana Synod had been formed by American Swedish Lutherans in 1860. It took its name from the Latin form of the Augsburg Confession, a Lutheran confession published in 1530. In 1962 the Augustana Synod merged with some other U.S. Lutheran bodies to form the Lutheran Church in America. In 1988 the LCA united with two other Lutheran denominations to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Denver congregation erected its first building at 18th Street and Welton in 1880. It was a simple brick hall with Gothic details. This was near today's Grand Hyatt and two blocks from the first Episcopal cathedral. Later a cruciform Gothic revival church with a tall corner spire was built at 23rd and Court Place. While at this location, the congregation started two other churches, Bethany in 1908 and

Highlands in 1923. It also established the Augustana Lutheran Home for the elderly in 1918. English services were added to Swedish ones in 1919, and after World War II Swedish services were phased out.

As the congregation grew and moved to the suburbs, a larger site was needed. The current church on Alameda Avenue was dedicated in 1959. Christ Chapel and the education wing were completed six years later. It was located on the crest of the hill with an unobstructed view of the mountains to the west. Early planners did not envision that later the tall dome of the Orthodox cathedral would partially obstruct the view. The congregation prizes its music program, traditional worship, and active ministry in the community.

Architecture: The 1959 was designed by the noted church architect Edward A. Sövik (1918–2014) of Northfield, Minnesota. Sövik would later advocate spaces that he referred to as "non-churches" because of their untraditional emphasis on the immanence of God in the congregation and their lack of a distinction between nave and chancel. Augustana, however, is representative of many suburban churches built in the decades after World War II in its use of modern architecture to create a traditional aesthetic and the emphasis given to spaces for education and fellowship. The design of the church reflects the influence of several pioneering churches in the previous decades. It follows the Church of Corpus Christi in Aachen (Rudolf Schwartz, 1928–30) and two churches by Eliel and Eero Saarinen First Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana (1942) and Christ Church Lutheran in Minneapolis (1949) in using modern material to create a tall basilican worship space similar to Gothic revival buildings such as St. John's Cathedral. Unlike, St. John's, however, the chancel is not in a separate structure from the nave. Leaders and laity are contained within the same hall. This is a step toward the emphasis on an architecture of immanence that Sövik would later champion.

Also unlike St. John's and like these pioneering modernist churches, there is an element of asymmetry that takes into account the



6 Second church building

particular location of the church. A solid wall on the north side hides the parking lot and the street and is broken only by a narrow clerestory of windows. These were originally plain. Beginning in 1972 they were replaced by a double rainbow designed by Eo Kirchner, a member of the congregation. They were fabricated by Willet Studios of Philadelphia. Windows in the aisle on the southside let in light and provide views of valley below, but since then do not extend up the wall they keep the midday southern sun from overwhelming the church. Also the hanging lights in the nave are only on the south side. The liturgical arrangement of the church is derived from the Gothic revival and is similar to that at St. John's. Pulpit and lectern are placed on opposite sides of the chancel. Behind them the choir sits on both sides facing the center aisle, and at the far wall is the altar. The choir is arranged on either side of the chancel. with the choir on either side of the altar, a communion rail, pulpit and lectern. The chancel rail features the emblems and names of the twelve apostles.

Two large needlepoint banners along with the kneelers were created by members of the congregation. The themes of the two banners are "The Promised Land" and the "I Am" sayings of Jesus. The kneelers depict the history of the Christian church and this congregation.

While the altar is now freestanding, it remains at the far end of the church. Like St. John's and unlike the Cathedral Basilica, alterations to the liturgical arrangement of the church have been minor.

The church's Christ Chapel features the other popular liturgical arrangement of the period, a free-standing table surrounded by a circular communion rail.

The building has minimal decoration. Simple forms of metal, wood, and glass are featured. The slightly trapezoidal cross-section of the church suggests the influence of



7 Christ Chapel, Augustana Lutheran Church

Trinity Lutheran Church, Walnut Creek, California (Pietro Belluschi and Skidmore, Owinings, & Merrill, 1956).

On the exterior a freestanding metal tower is surmounted by a cross. This was a popular device in marking mid-century modernist buildings as churches. One of the earlier examples was Eero Saarinen's chapel for Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN (1953-58). At Augustana the church's hilltop location accentuates the cross's prominence from the west and south. Architects took advantage of hillside location to place the church's fellowship hall underneath the sanctuary but provide windows along the south side.

The church's organ was built by the Reuter Organ Company for the previous church building in 1940 and rebuilt in 1985. It is an important part of the church's vibrant music program.

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Figures in text 1. Cathedral Basilica interior, Bianca C. 2018 Yelp.com, 2. St. John's Cathedral interior, Neil Corman Photography 2014 <https://www.neilcormanimages.com/>; 3. Raul J. Garcia, Denver Ecclesiastical Architecture, Behance, 2010 <https://www.behance.net/gallery/860891/Denver-Ecclesiastical-Architecture-2010>; 4 Koko ZG, Google Maps, December 2017; 5 Daniel McClew, Google Maps, September 2016; 6 & 8 Augustana Lutheran Church <http://www.augustanadenver.org>; 7 Ryan Dunnewald, 2012, The OHS Pipe Organ Database <https://pipeorgandatabase.org/OrganDetails.php?OrganID=21914>