

Preserving Historic Architecture Within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has a long and rich history that is reflected in our historic churches and religious related buildings and sites throughout our country. These historic resources contribute to our legacy and help tell the story of our historical evolution. Contributing historic resources of the LCMS should be identified and require a special treatment to preserve their integrity for future generations.

In the spreading of God's word, many Lutheran churches have been blessed with chartered membership in original buildings still in use, or have been blessed with purchasing buildings of an age that qualifies those facilities as historic structures. While we often focus on the spiritual aspects of God's ministry, it is also important to recognize the blessings He bestows upon us in the facilities He allows us to use to spread His Word.

Identifying Historic LCMS Resources

Age is typically identified as the primary characteristic to be used in defining a structure as historic. It is true that any LCMS structure older than 50 years should be further investigated for historical significance prior to planning or beginning work. However, age is only one factor to be considered. A structure may be considered historic if it:

- reflects or exemplifies the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state or community;
- is identified with an historic person or people, or important events;
- embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, or is inherently valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction;
- is a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age (examples: Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles E. Stadel, etc.).

An LCMS structure that is at least 50 years old and which meets any of the above criteria can be considered historic and worthy of preservation. In some cases, historical status can be attributed to facilities younger than 50 years if they are exceptional examples of the above criteria

(Examples: NASA mission control facilities for the Apollo program and Dealey Plaza, the site of John F. Kennedy's assassination).

- Questions to ask before planning or beginning work:
 - a. Is the resource 50 years old or older?
 - b. Is the site or structure an outstanding example of past architectural styles or craftsmanship?
 - c. Was the site or structure created by a “master” architect, builder, or designer?
 - d. Has the building retained “integrity”? Does it still convey its historic significance through the retention of its original design and materials?

When in doubt about the historical significance of a particular structure, contact the state historic preservation officer (SHPO) in your state. State SHPOs are tasked with, among other things, assisting the public in evaluating and identifying historic structures. A listing of SHPO offices by state can be found at www.ncshpo.org. You may also contact a preservation professional with experience in evaluating historic structures.

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.



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The mission of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund is to support The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.

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