



The Colonnade



The West Façade



Colonnade Detail



South Façade Detail



The Courtyard



The Main Entrance



The East Transept & Memorial Garden



The West Window



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The First Congregation Church of Western Springs

Many of us believe that the architecture of our Sanctuary and Education Building is a sublime expression of the connection between religion and the arts.

Architect George G. Elmslie envisioned the Prairie style of architecture as fitting for a Congregational Church. The Congregational tradition is democracy in religion; the people (the congregation) discern God's vision for their future — together. Elmslie imagined that the horizontal emphasis of the Prairie style was well-suited to this theology in that it would emphasize the immanence of God — literally, God with us.

This church, thus, is a home where our congregation assembles for the praise and glory of God. Although the buildings are beautiful, the soul of this church is not the structures, but the members, friends, and strangers who gather here. Elmslie may have designed the house, but it is the members and visitors who make this church a home. It is a blessing to us; we hope its beauty will touch you as well.

— Rev. Dr. Richard Kirchherr



FIRST Congregational Church

WESTERN SPRINGS



AN ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE



The First Congregational Church of Western Springs was designed by the renowned architect George G. Elmslie. The Sanctuary was completed in 1929 and the Education Building in 1930. The church is an eclectic example of Late Gothic Revival, Arts and Crafts, and Prairie School architecture. In 2005, the Sanctuary was extensively renovated. At this time, original details, including the oak string course, oak paneling, stencils, and wall colors were restored to their 1929 appearance.

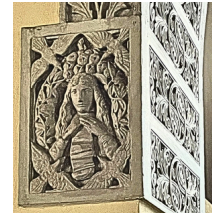
The pointed arches throughout and cross-shaped floor plan are typical of the Gothic style. The exterior Lannon stone construction, relatively shallow slate roof, and exposed scissor beam ceiling are Arts and Crafts characteristics. Numerous Prairie School features are incorporated, including emphasis on horizontal lines, use of natural materials, integrated stencils, art glass, sawed wood details, earth tone colors, and organically inspired ornamentation.

In August 2006, The First Congregational Church of Western Springs was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is an official list of places significant in American history, architecture, or archeology, kept by the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. The National Register is a way of honoring significant buildings in American history, and provides protection from state and federal projects.



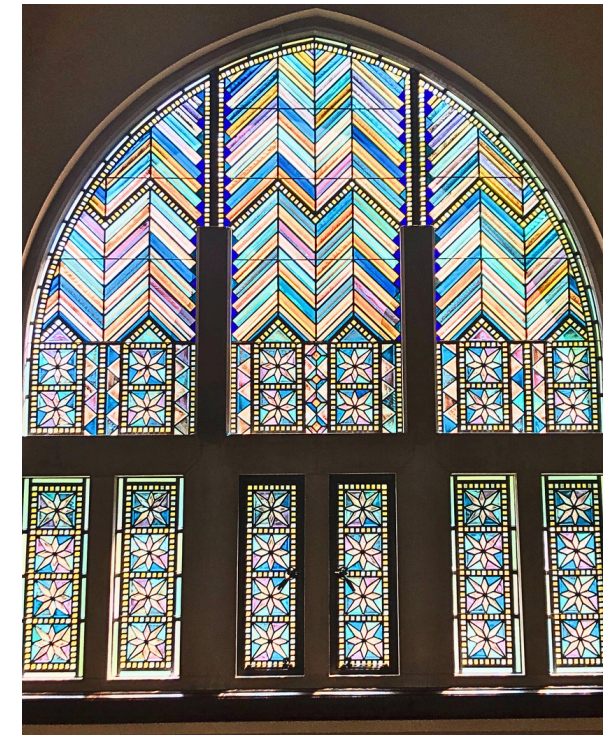
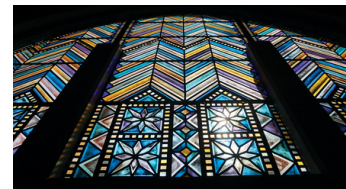
Elmslie designed the 18" high leaf-patterned ceiling stencil in deep blue, deep red, and brown. Elmslie also designed the 12" high wall stencil pattern (on the following page), where the brown of the ceiling is replaced with metallic bronze — a color that changes appearance depending on the light. These stencils were carefully researched and recreated during the 2005 renovation.

The wall stencil is an overlapping, curvilinear design incorporating flower, leaf, and seed motifs. Along with the oak string course, this stencil underscores the horizontal emphasis of the building design.



Decorative plaster elements finished to look like carved stone are found throughout the Sanctuary. These elements, as well as all of the exterior ornamentations, were designed by noted Chicago sculptor Emil Zettler, who often collaborated with Elmslie. This panel, one of two located at the base of the chancel arches, depicts a Gospel writer holding his text.

The 12' high stained glass windows on the north elevation and in the transepts are original. They were fabricated by Temple Art Glass Company of Chicago. Pointed arches are a typical Late Gothic Revival detail. These windows integrate a variety of typical Prairie School colors, including various shades of blue, purple, and gold, formed in geometric, flower-like patterns. Their chevron design is a common Elmslie motif.



Sawed wood details designed by Elmslie are incorporated into this organ pipe chamber screen, which subtly includes musical notes. Elmslie also designed the wood carvings for the pulpit, choir rails, and reredos. The ornamentation on these elements was derived from organic forms, a typical Prairie School detail and, while it has no specific Christian meaning, it is intended to be spiritually uplifting.

