

# Landmark Designation Report for the



## Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Originally prepared by:  
Dr. Dan L. Morrill & Stewart Gray  
CMHLC  
May 2017

Revised by:  
Susan V. Mayer, Principal  
SVM Historical Consulting  
June 2021 | September 2023

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HISTORICAL  
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Charlotte, North Carolina  
<https://www.svmhistorical.com>

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## General Information

<b>Historic Names of Property:</b>	Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
<b>Address of Property:</b>	1017 Parkwood Avenue, Charlotte, North Carolina 28205
<b>PIN:</b>	08309309
<b>Deed Book &amp; Page:</b>	Mecklenburg County Deed Book 32209, Page 29
<b>Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated:</b>	0.606 acres
<b>Ad Valorem Tax Value:</b>	The 2023 assessed real estate value of parcel 08309309 which include the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is \$3,600,100.
<b>Recommendation for Designation:</b>	Exterior designation of the former Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church building and all the property within Mecklenburg County parcel 08309309.
<b>Name/Address of Current Property Owner:</b>	A and E Rental Homes LLC 3426 Spencer Street Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

## Chain of Title

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Deed Book/Page
Carolina Annual Conference, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Incorporated, also known as Carolina Annual Conference INC C.M.E. Church, and Trustees of Parkwood Institutional CME Church	A and E Rental Homes, LLC	October 19, 2017	32209/29
Trustees of Parkwood Institutional C.M.E. Church	Carolina Annual Conference INC C.M.E. Church	March 2, 2000	11124/477
Gary H. Watts Realty Company	Trustees of Parkwood CME Church	August 11, 1990	6350/233
Trustees of Williams Tabernacle Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	Trustees of Parkwood Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	October 8, 1982	4583/623
J. H. Ross, Trustee, and J. B. McLaughlin and wife, John O. Ross and wife, A. M. Beattie and wife, J. W. Daniels and wife, F. R. Gates and wife, T. H. Miller and wife, M. H. Dwyer and wife, G. W. Pressley and wife, W. W. Orr and wife, J. D. Morris and H. M. Deal	Board of Trustees of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of the South	August 3, 1909	246/622
J. H. Ross, Trustee of and for J. B. McLaughlin, John O. Ross, A. M. Beattie, J. W. Daniels, F. H. Gates, T. H. Miller, M. H. Dwyer, G. W. Pressley, W. W. Orr, D. M. Morris and H. M. Deal	F. G. Campbell	July 3, 1907	226/36

# Abstract

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## Statement of Significance

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, which opened in January 1929 as Villa Heights Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, was and remains the most architecturally significant church building in the Villa Heights neighborhood, an early twentieth-century Charlotte suburb. The church draws special significance from its place within a collection of imposing church buildings erected by Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregations in Charlotte in the first half of the twentieth century. The architect of the church was Louis Asbury, Sr., the first North Carolinian to belong to the American Institute of Architects and an architect of local and regional importance. The transfer of ownership of the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to the Parkwood Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church was a manifestation of the changing racial population of the Villa Heights Neighborhood, a phenomenon that was occurring in many inner suburbs of Charlotte and throughout the South in the mid-twentieth century as increasing numbers of whites moved farther from the city centers.

## Integrity Statement

### Location

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has a high degree of integrity of location, as it has been located at its current site since its construction.

### Design

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church retains a decent level of design integrity in light of its adaptive reuse from a church into multi-family residential units. While changes made to the exterior—including the addition of a raised front entry, metal structures housing HVAC systems along the side elevations between fenestration, and replacement and infill of the arched sanctuary windows—has altered the appearance of the structure, the former church is still recognizable as the structure once serving the religious needs of the Villa Heights community.

### Setting

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is located in Villa Heights, a middle-class early twentieth century residential neighborhood that has retained a moderate degree of integrity. Many of the original homes have been razed and replaced with larger new construction residential, including the non-contributing duet buildings adjacent to the former church.

### Materials

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church retains a moderate degree of integrity of materials. Original materials include exterior brick, stone elements including carved signage above the front entrance, and stained-glass windows.

### Workmanship

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was designed by noted North Carolina architect Louis Asbury, Sr. The structure is indicative of the high level of design commonly seen in Asbury's work, which combined elements of Neoclassical and Gothic Revival architecture.

The workmanship evident in the masonry, stone, and stained glass elements reflect the abilities of craftsmen in the early twentieth century and possess a high degree of integrity.

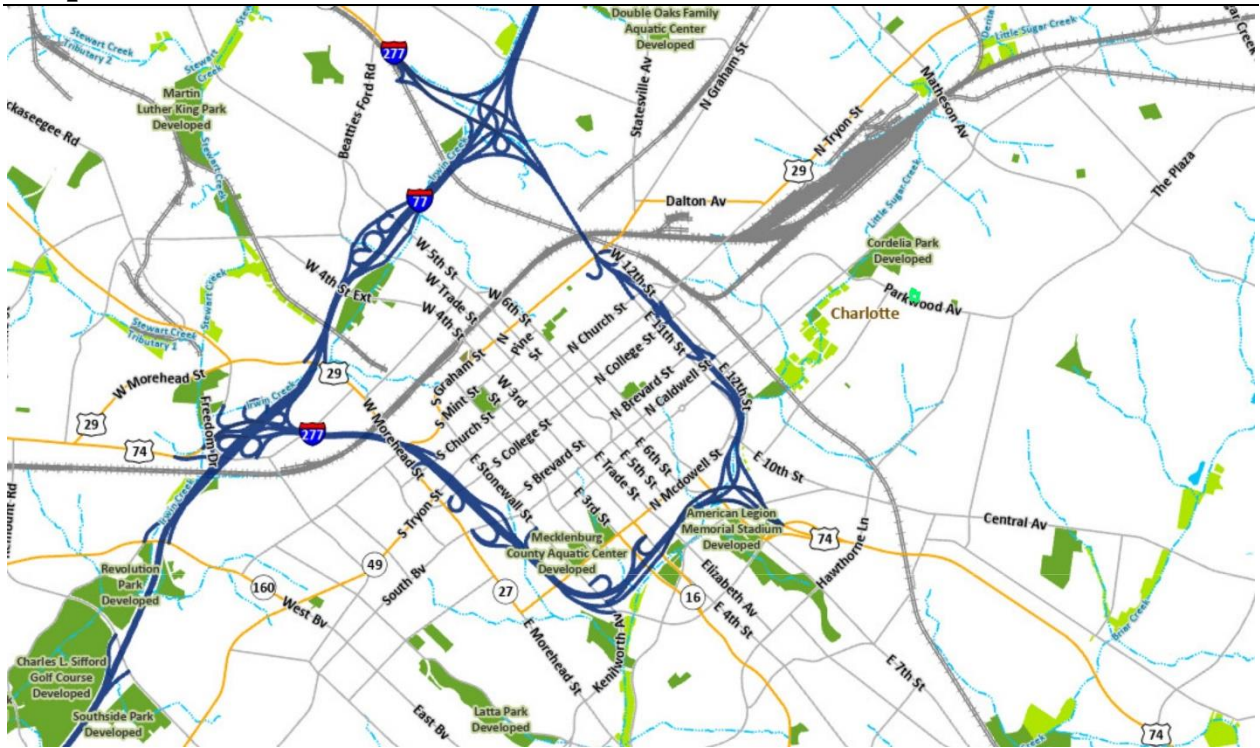
**Feeling**

Completed ca. 1929, the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church retains materials and location which evoke the aesthetic and historic sense the structure's use as a church and an important structure within the Villa Heights community. While infill development has created more density within the neighborhood as well as on parcels adjacent to the property, its prominent location at the corner of Parkwood Avenue and Allen Street and material contrast to the new construction helps retain integrity of feeling.

**Association**

The Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is relevant as the most architecturally significant church building in the Villa Heights neighborhood, a representation of imposing church buildings erected by Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregations in Charlotte in the first half of the twentieth century, and as an extant work of architect Louis Asbury, Sr. While Asbury was a prolific architect with many works in Charlotte that have been designated as local landmarks, only one other church, Hawthorne Lane Methodist Church, is an extant landmark as Mt. Carmel Baptist Church is slated for demolition.

# Maps



Source: POLARIS 3G



Source: POLARIS 3G

# Historical Background

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Prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, May 2017

Updated by Susan V. Mayer, June 2021

The history of the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is intimately bound up with the process of suburbanization that occurred in Charlotte in the first half of the twentieth century. Villa Heights was one of several Charlotte suburbs that came into existence in the early 1900s. In 1985 Dr. Thomas W. Hanchett, then a preservation consultant for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, opined in his survey of the built environment of Villa Heights that the Parkwood A. R. P. Church (1929) is the “most architecturally noteworthy church in the area.”<sup>1</sup> Also attesting to the special significance of the Parkwood A. R. P. Church is that the architect of record was Louis H. Asbury, Sr. (1877-1975).<sup>2</sup> Not unimportant is the fact that the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, when combined with other twentieth century A.R.P church buildings in Charlotte, especially First A. R. P. Church, East Avenue Tabernacle A. R. P. Church, and Chalmers Memorial A. R. P. Church, demonstrates that the Associate Reformed Presbyterians were experiencing significant growth in Charlotte in the early 1900s but were unable to sustain their initial success.<sup>3</sup> Finally, a fundamental cultural shift occurred in 1968, when the Christian Institutional Methodist Episcopal Church acquired the property on Parkwood Avenue formerly owned by the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. Thereafter, the sanctuary became primarily a place of worship for African Americans until 2015, when the sanctuary was abandoned.

## Villa Heights

On December 30, 1900, an advertisement in the *Charlotte Observer* announced that one hundred lots in Villa Heights were being offered for sale. “This property is beautifully located, commands a splendid view of the city, and is fast becoming thickly populated,” the newspaper reported.<sup>4</sup> Located on the eastern ridge of the Little Sugar Creek Valley and developed by Brown & Co., Villa Heights was one of many middle class suburbs that appeared in Charlotte at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Charlotte’s population increased from 11,557 in 1890 to 34,014 in 1910, an increase of a third. Spurred mainly by the establishment of textile mills and the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, “The Belmont-Villa Heights-Optimist Park Survey Area,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1985, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190909141654/http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/neighborhoods/belmont-et-al.html>, accessed June 8, 2021. Hereinafter cited as Hanchett, “Villa Heights.” Hanchett refers to the church as the “Former Villa Heights Associate Reform Presbyterian Church.” The correct nomenclature for A. R. P. is Associate Reformed Presbyterian. This church had the name Villa Heights Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church from its founding in 1908 until 1929. In 1929 the name of the church was changed to Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

<sup>2</sup> City of Charlotte Building Permit No. 8969, June 6, 1928. Interestingly, the list of projects in the Louis Asbury Papers in the Special Collections Department of the Akins Library at UNCC does not include either Villa Heights Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church or the Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Both Morrill and Mayer believe that the building permit provides adequate proof of Asbury’s having designed the building.

<sup>3</sup> None of the churches listed has an active congregation today.

<sup>4</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1900.

<sup>5</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1900. According to Hanchett’s Villa Heights survey, the head of Brown & Co. was Clayton O. Brown.



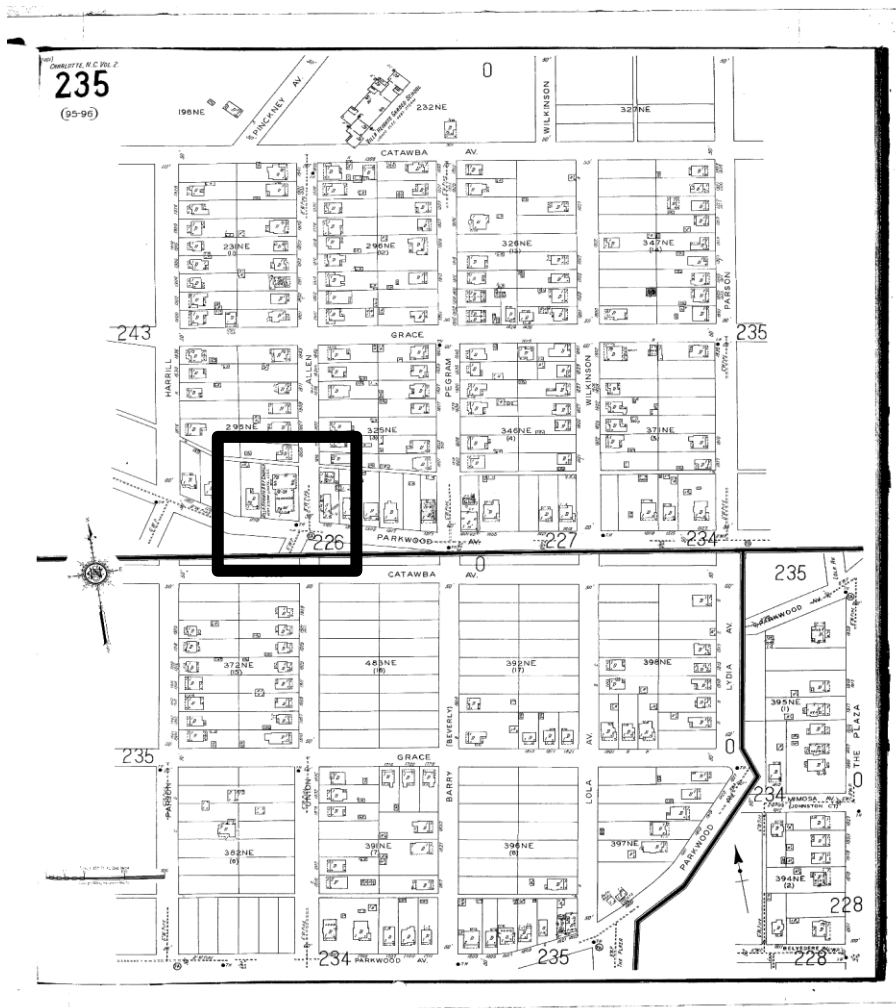


Figure 1 1929 Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte, Vol. 2. Page 235.

city's emerging role as a wholesale distribution center, Charlotte's economy was on the upswing, thereby giving rise to a greater demand for moderate-income housing. On November 26, 1909, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* reported there were "some 40 odd residences" in Villa Heights.<sup>6</sup> The newspaper noted the following spring that in Villa Heights and other Charlotte suburbs "are heard the ring of the hammer and the harsher tone of the saw as new homes are going up."<sup>7</sup> By 1911 a bridge had been constructed to cross Little Sugar Creek at 18th Street "because of the considerable amount of traffic, that comes to Villa Heights."<sup>8</sup> The Sanborn

Insurance Map of 1929 reveals that Villa Heights had indeed become the location of a significant concentration of middle class homes by the end of the 1920s.<sup>9</sup>

### **Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church**

The residents of Villa Heights understandably wanted churches built in their neighborhood. The impetus for the establishment of an Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Villa Heights was provided by members of East Avenue A. R. P. Church in center city Charlotte.<sup>10</sup> The origins of the A. R. P. denomination harken back to eighteenth century Scotland, when opponents of the Established

<sup>6</sup> *Charlotte Daily Observer*, November 26, 1909.

<sup>7</sup> *Charlotte Daily Observer*, March 17, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> *Charlotte Daily Observer*, November 26, 1911. Automobiles were included in the traffic.

<sup>9</sup> The convenience of residing in Villa Heights was positively impacted by the completion by 1914 of a streetcar line that ended at the intersection of Pegram Street and Parkwood Avenue. See Hanchett, "Villa Heights." Automobiles also appeared on the streets of Villa Heights in the early years of the neighborhood. See *Charlotte Daily Observer*, March 17, 1910.

<sup>10</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, July 31, 1938.

Presbyterian Church refused to submit to Royal supremacy and episcopal forms of church governance. Caught up in the Scots Irish migration to America in the 1700s, two groups of these dissenters, Associate Presbyterians and Reformed Presbyterians, united to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Philadelphia in 1782. As increasing numbers of Scots Irish settled in the Carolinas and Georgia, the need to establish A. R. P. churches in the South amplified. Mecklenburg County was no exception. One of the earliest and most influential A. R. P. churches was Sardis Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church, which would establish a close relationship with the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church. Mostly because of their geographic separation from their fellow believers in Pennsylvania, the A. R. P. congregations in North Carolina and South Carolina created their own Synod of the Carolinas in 1822. It was to this organization that Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church would eventually owe its allegiance.<sup>11</sup>

Known as the Villa Heights Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church until 1929, the A.R.P congregation on Parkwood Avenue began as a Sabbath School in October 1907 and was organized as a church in 1908. A lot was purchased on Parkwood Avenue at the present church location. The building formerly used by Sardis A. R. P. Church was dismantled, and the materials were used to erect a frame sanctuary for Villa Heights A. R. P. Presbyterian Church. That building was almost totally destroyed by a windstorm that swept through the neighborhood on August 31, 1911. A second wooden church was constructed, which served as the house of worship for the congregation until 1928.<sup>12</sup>

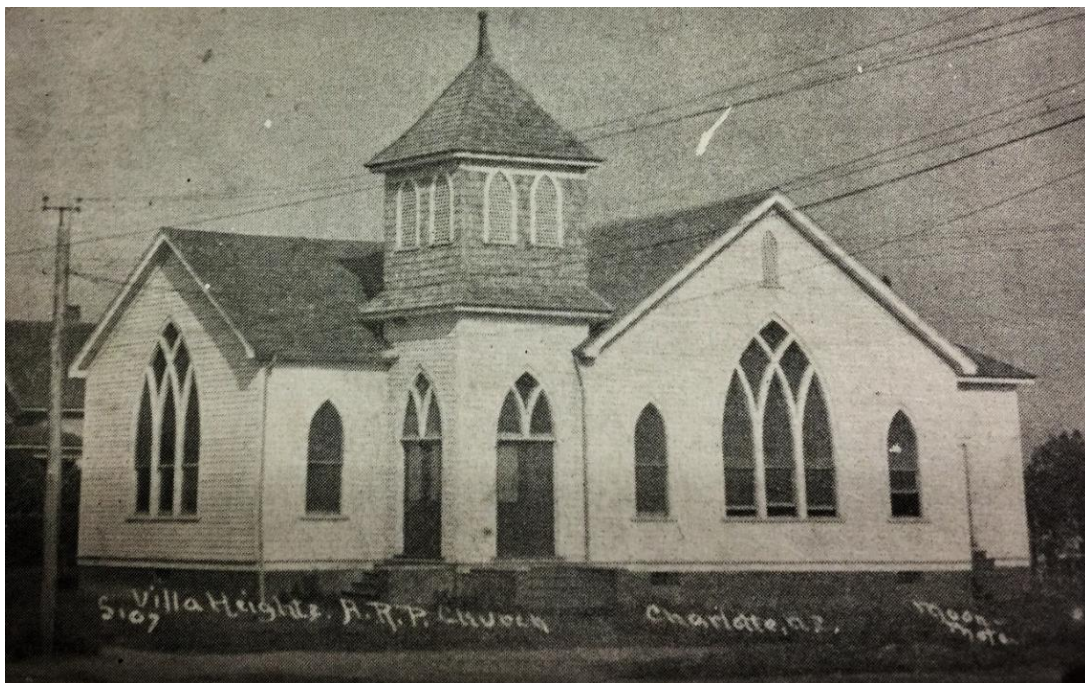


Figure 2 This iteration of Villa Heights A. R. P. Church was dedicated on April 1, 1912, and served the congregation through 1928.

<sup>11</sup> *The Centennial History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., 1905), 1-4; Charlotte Observer, July 31, 1938,

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Observer, July 31, 1938.

Charlotte newspapers are chockfull of articles that describe the routine activities of the Villa Heights A. R. P. Church. Weddings, funerals, Bible classes, bazaars, revivals, prayer meetings, worship services, all were regular happenings. By 1927 the congregation had grown to such a degree that it needed a new, larger facility. On July 24, 1927, a “special program” was held so “plans for a new church building” could be presented to the congregation.<sup>13</sup> The *Charlotte Observer* reported on May 19, 1928, that worshippers would meet in a nearby school until the “new church is completed.”<sup>14</sup> The building permit for a “two-story brick and tile church” was issued on June 7, 1928, and by the beginning of July the foundations of the building were in place.<sup>15</sup> On the afternoon of January 6, 1929, a large crowd gathered at the new church to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone. “The erection of a church in any neighborhood,” said one of the speakers, “means more to a community in a moral and spiritual way than the erection of a dozen houses, or banks, or structures of any sort.”<sup>16</sup> The first worship service was held in the new home of Villa Heights A. R. P. Church on January 20, 1929.<sup>17</sup> With an imposing new building, the congregation renamed the church the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church.<sup>18</sup> Like most early twentieth-century suburbs in North Carolina, Villa Heights had housing that was essentially modest and simple. It was in their churches that residents of such suburbs gave expression to their desire for more sophisticated architecture.<sup>19</sup>

### **Louis H. Asbury, Sr.**

The architect of record of the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church was Louis H. Asbury, Sr. (1877-1975).<sup>20</sup> A native of Charlotte, Asbury, who had helped his father build houses, graduated from Trinity College (now Duke University) in 1900. He received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, completing his studies in 1903. After working as a draftsman in New York City, Asbury moved back to Charlotte in 1908. He established an architectural firm and remained professionally active in Charlotte and the Piedmont until his retirement in 1956.<sup>21</sup> Asbury made major contributions to the professional standing of architects in North Carolina. He was the first native North Carolinian to be elected to the American Institute of Architects. Asbury was one of the founders of the North Carolina chapter of the A.I.A. and was among the initial group of architects licensed to practice in North Carolina, receiving license #4.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, July 23, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, May 19, 1928.

<sup>15</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, July 1, 1928.

<sup>16</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, January 7, 1929.

<sup>17</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1929.

<sup>18</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 9, 1929.

<sup>19</sup> For a scholarly discussion of the built environment of early twentieth-century suburbs in North Carolina, see Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Earley, *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina* (Lillington, NC: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1985).

<sup>20</sup> City of Charlotte Building Permit No. 8969, June 6, 1928.

<sup>21</sup> Ryan L. Sumner and Dr. Dan L. Morrill, “Survey and Research Report on the Parks Hutchinson School,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, September 1, 2002. Hereinafter cited as “Parks Hutchinson School.”

<sup>22</sup> William B. Bushong and Catherine W. Bishir, “Asbury, Louis H. (1877-1975),” *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000449>, accessed June 8, 2021.

Asbury designed an impressive array of structures in Charlotte and its environs. The *Charlotte Observer* editorially called Louis Asbury the “Builder Of A City.”<sup>23</sup> Asbury, an adroit businessman as well as an architect, responded to the conservative proclivities of the majority of his clients. Most of his plans looked to the Neoclassical and Gothic Revival styles for their inspiration. Such prominent Asbury-designed buildings in Charlotte—the Mecklenburg County Courthouse and a multitude of churches, including Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church in Elizabeth, Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Biddleville, Myers Park United Methodist Church, Mulberry Presbyterian Church on Tuckasegee Road, First Christian Church in Dilworth, and the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church—attest to this stylistic preference.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 3 Louis Asbury-designed churches in Charlotte include (clockwise from top left) First Christian Church, Mulberry Presbyterian Church, Myers Park United Methodist Church, and Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church.

Thomas Hanchett argues that the preference of Charlotte’s upper and middle classes for revivalist architecture in the 1920s reflected their satisfaction with the status quo. “To be ‘Fine Architecture,’” says Hanchett, “a building now had to be clothed in an identifiable historic style, to seem old and romantic and -- the watchword -- quaint.” He continues, “The more literal the imitation of the past,

<sup>23</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, March 24, 1975.

<sup>24</sup> “Parks Hutchinson School.”

the better the building was regarded.”<sup>25</sup> The 1929 sanctuary of the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church fits readily within this genre of architectural style and illustrates Asbury’s commitment to revivalist design.

### **The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church**

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian denomination has had churches in Mecklenburg County from at least the late 1700s. Isaac Grier (1776-1843), a Georgia graduate of Dickinson College, became the first minister of Sardis A. R. P. Church in ca. 1804.<sup>26</sup> Conservative on social issues and committed to Biblical inerrancy, A. R. P. congregations were located mainly in rural sections of the Carolinas. A vexing problem for the A. R. P. denomination has been its inability to make significant inroads into the cities. “A truism of ARP history” is that the denomination “has never made it into the city,” writes one observer.<sup>27</sup>

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed what at first seemed to be a promising opportunity for major growth of the A. R. P. presence in Charlotte. The Associate Reformed Presbyterians “overcame a long-standing inability to gain a foothold in cities,” write Lowry Ware and James W. Gettys in their history of the A. R. P. Church.<sup>28</sup> Many of the new residents of Charlotte and other Southern cities had previously lived in the rural countryside and were therefore sympathetic to the traditional beliefs espoused by the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. The early success of the Villa Heights A. R. P. Church and the construction of its new sanctuary in 1929 contributed to this optimism about the prospects for the A. R. P. denomination in Charlotte. East Avenue A. R. P. Church completed a grand building in 1914 at what is now the intersection of East Trade Street and McDowell Street.<sup>29</sup> The First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church erected a stone Gothic Revival style sanctuary on

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, “Charlotte Architecture: Design Through Time Part 2,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

<sup>26</sup> William H. Huffman and Stewart Gray, “Grier-Rea House New Site,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1989-2015, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GRIER.pdf>, accessed June 8, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> William B. Evans, “Whither or Wither?,” reformation21, <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/whither-or-wither.php>, accessed June 8, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Lowry Ware and James W. Gettys, *The Second Century: A History Of The Associate Reformed Presbyterians 1882- 1982* (Greenville, SC: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center, 1982), 3. The Associate Reformed Presbyterians held to traditional Scottish traditions, which taught that forms of worship should adhere strictly to the dictates of the Bible. Only the Psalms were to be sung, not hymns written and composed by humans. Many congregations excluded musical instruments, including organs, from their sanctuaries. The A. R. P. Church had regulated or closed communions, and they strictly observed the Sabbath.

<sup>29</sup> Emily D. Ramsay, “Survey and Research Report on the East Avenue Tabernacle A. R. P. Church (Former),” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, August 1, 2001, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/East-Ave-Tabernacle-A.-R.-P.-Church-SR.pdf>, accessed June 8, 2021.

North Tryon Street in 1927.<sup>30</sup> Chalmers Memorial A. R. P. Church was situated at the corner of South Boulevard and East Boulevard in Dilworth.<sup>31</sup> None of these A. R. P. congregations exists today.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 4 Former A. R. P. churches in Charlotte include Chalmers Memorial A. R. P. Church (now Grace Covenant Church), First A. R. P. Church (now the McColl Center for Art + Innovation), and East Avenue Tabernacle A. R. P. Church (now the Great Aunt Stella Center).

The second half of the twentieth century has seen profound shifts in the dominant cultural and religious sentiments in the United States, especially in urban centers. The Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Rights Movement, and more recently demands for acceptance of a broader expression of gender identities, have weakened support for conservative social perspectives. Not surprisingly, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has experienced consequent retrenchment. In 1928 the six A. R. P. churches in Charlotte had a total membership of 2,258.<sup>33</sup> A striking manifestation of the denomination’s decline in Mecklenburg County occurred in 1951, when Sardis Presbyterian Church, the church that had donated its unused sanctuary to the Villa Heights A. R. P. Church, voted to withdraw from the A. R. P. Synod.<sup>34</sup>

### **Parkwood Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church**

On February 5, 1967, the members of the Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church approved a motion by a vote of 112 to 22 to relocate. On September 17, 1967, the congregation voted to merge with Plaza Hills A. R. P. Church to form New Covenant A. R. P. Church. Parkwood Avenue A. R. P., once a

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<sup>30</sup> Dan L. Morrill, “The First Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, September 7, 1987, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/First-ARP-Church-SR.pdf>, accessed June 8, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> For a sketch of Chalmers A. R. P. Church, see *Charlotte Observer*, September 19, 1909.

<sup>32</sup> The East Avenue A. R. P. Church is now the Aunt Stella Center, a venue for a variety of cultural events. The First A. R. P. was totally destroyed inside by a fire on November 14, 1984. Today, it is the McColl Center for Art + Innovation. The Chalmers Memorial A. R. P. Church, which never acquired the steeple featured in the 1909 sketch, is now Grace Covenant Church. Chalmers relocated to the Starmount neighborhood off South Boulevard in 1996 and rebranded as Starmount Church in 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Ware and Gettys, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Jennings B. Reid, *A Goodly Heritage: The Bicentennial History of Sardis Presbyterian Church, 1790-1990* (Charlotte: Sardis Presbyterian Church Communications Committee, 1989), 196-199.

centerpiece of the neighborhood, closed its doors.<sup>35</sup> A major reason for the church's decline was the changing racial makeup of Villa Heights.<sup>36</sup> Ownership of the Parkwood Avenue property was conveyed in 1968 to the Parkwood Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, which belonged to a historically African American denomination. Established in Jackson, Tennessee in 1870 by formerly enslaved people and known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church until 1954, the C. M. E. Church had established congregations in Charlotte by the 1890s.<sup>37</sup>

Parkwood Institutional C. M. E. Church held its first worship service in the former Parkwood A. R. P. Church on June 9, 1968. Bishop Henry C. Bunton came from Washington, D. C. to deliver the sermon.<sup>38</sup> The daily happenings at the C. M. E. Church resembled in many respects what had occurred while the Associate Reformed Presbyterians had worshipped there—weddings, funerals, revivals, Bible studies, and the like. There was one important change, however, as political activism became a significant component of the church's role in the community. Interestingly, a memorable event in the political career of Elisabeth "Liz" Hair (1920-2014) occurred at Parkwood C. M. E. Church in the early 1970s. Hair, a Democrat who was the first woman to be Chair of the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, visited the church during her first campaign for public office. She was introduced as "the most powerful woman in Mecklenburg County." Hair would later state that this was a "turning point" in her career, as it made her aware of the impact she could have in the community.<sup>39</sup>

On September 20, 1998, the Parkwood Institutional C. M. E. congregation gathered for a service on Tom Hunter Road to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new sanctuary.<sup>40</sup> The church had relocated to its new home by February 2000.<sup>41</sup> The church used the 1929 sanctuary on Parkwood Avenue as a satellite site until 2015.<sup>42</sup> It sat vacant until being sold in October 2017 to Eid Refaey and his A and E Rental Homes LLC, a luxury home builder and developer.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Session Minutes of Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church (located in archives of New Covenant A. R. P. Church).

<sup>36</sup> Email from Scott Robar to Dr. Dan L. Morrill, April 17, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, November 18, 1894.

<sup>38</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, June 1, 1968.

<sup>39</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, March 19, 2014.

<sup>40</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, September 16, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 23, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Interview of Rodney Faulkner by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, April 19, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 32209, Page 29.



Figure 5 The church as it appeared in 2017.

Refaey proposed converting the former church into apartments with the addition of luxury duplexes on adjacent lots. Working with Cluck Design Collaborative, a Charlotte architecture firm, Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church was transformed into the Church on Parkwood. To create eighteen apartments, the sanctuary and much interior space was demolished and renovated. As part of the rezoning process, the City of Charlotte required the replacement of the front porch steps, which were too close to Parkwood Avenue. In consideration of the historic nature of the property and its architectural integrity, especially since the Historic Landmarks Commission had completed a Survey & Research Report for the property in 2017, the design team worked to retain as many original elements as possible. Also under construction on the site are two luxury duplexes, called duets.<sup>44</sup> As of September 2023, a third duet unit has been completed behind the former church building at 1815 Allen Street.

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<sup>44</sup> Will Sherman, "Developer Plans to Preserve History While Reshaping Villa Heights Church for the Future," Villa Heights Community, July 2018, <https://villaheightscommunity.org/2018/07/12/developer-plans-to-preserve-history-while-reshaping-villa-heights-church-for-the-future/>, accessed June 8, 2021; "The Building," The Church on Parkwood, <https://www.thechurchonparkwood.com/the-building>, accessed June 8, 2021.





*Figure 6* The duet units under construction in June 2017. They are located on the western portion of the property along Parkwood Avenue.



*Figure 7* The Parkwood Avenue duets as they appear in September 2023.



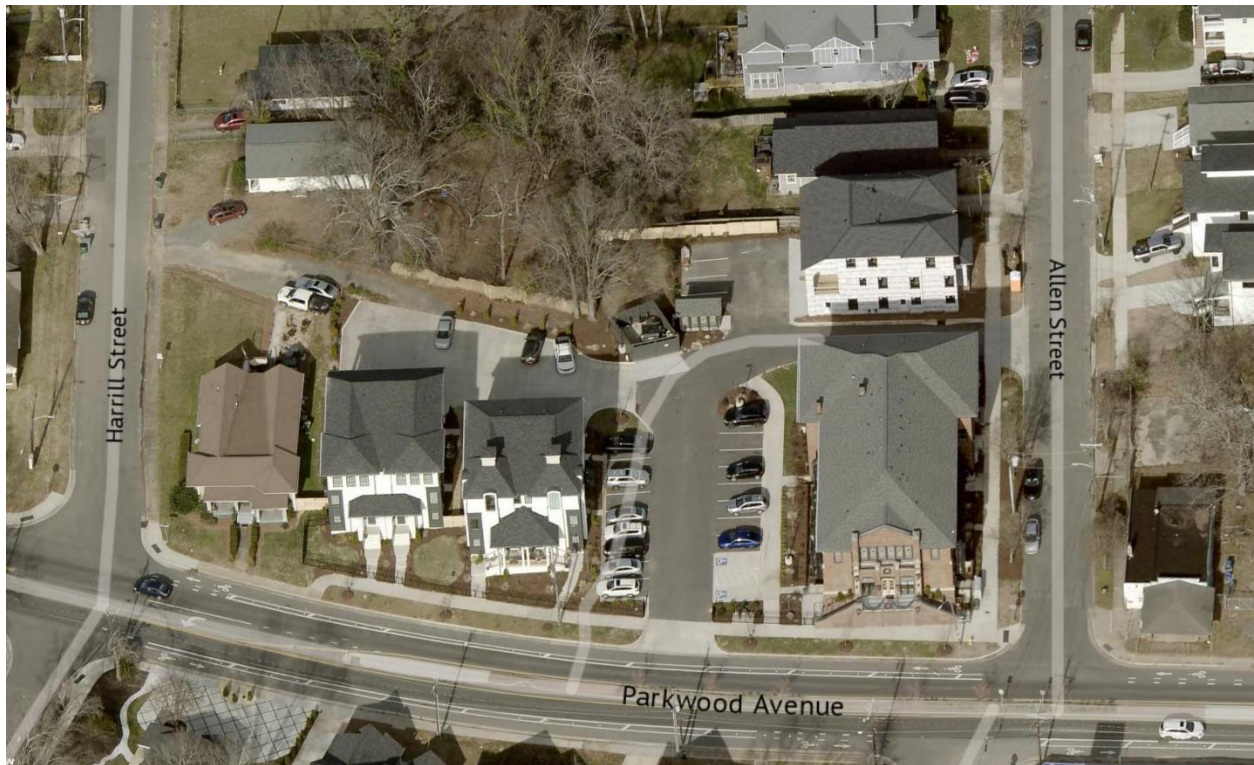
*Figure 8* The Allen Street duet as it appears in September 2023.

# Architectural Description

Written by Stewart Gray, May 2017

Updated by Susan V. Mayer, June 2021, September 2023

**\*\*Note:** Updated photographs showing the reinstallation of stained-glass windows on the south elevation and completed HVAC enclosures on the east and west elevations are included where applicable.



*Figure 9* Aerial view of the former Parkwood Avenue A. R. P. Church property in January 2023. From Mecklenburg County GIS.

The former Parkwood Avenue Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is located at 1017 Parkwood Avenue at the northwest corner of Parkwood Avenue and Allen Street in the Villa Heights neighborhood of Charlotte. The church, which is located at the southeast corner of the 1.056 acre site, is three stories in height with two stories above ground level and the basement just below ground level. Also on the site are two duplexes/duets built ca. 2021 and located immediately to the west of the church fronting Parkwood Avenue. A parking lot is located on the west side of the church, and a ca. 2023 duet is located behind the church on Allen Street. At the northwest corner of the parking lot is a gable-roofed pavilion covering the mailboxes.



*Figure 10* South elevation, 2023.

The church is set on a tall basement delineated by a beveled stone water table. Wire-cut bricks are laid in a running bond in foundation and on the other exterior walls. The façade is dominated by a projecting center bay. Prominent masonry steps formerly spanned the width of the center bay. But due to the widening of Parkwood Avenue, the City of Charlotte specified the steps' removal and replacement with new concrete steps that approach the building from either side. Fourteen steps on the west side and thirteen steps on the east side, since the site slopes slightly from east to west, are flanked by a low brick wall topped with a tube steel railing. Steel pipe railings are located on the side of the low brick wall and on the face of the building. The front face of the porch is accented with three brick arches between brick pilasters. The porch features a decorative wrought iron railing topped with fleur de lis finials.



*Figure 11* South elevation without stained glass windows flanking the entry, 2021.

In 2021, the property owners applied for landmark designation. HLC recommended the reinstallation of the stained-glass windows on the main level of the former church. The property owners complied and have reinstalled the windows as shown in Figure 10.



*Figure 12* Center bay of the south elevation.

The steps lead to a porch and a pair of wood six-light arched doors. The original stained-glass transom has been relocated within the building and has been replaced with wood infill. The doors are flanked by two-light wood storefront windows and retain the original stained-glass transoms. The bay is defined by two brick buttresses that feature tall recessed concrete panels. The doorways are topped with one-and-one-half brick soldier-course segmental arches each topped with a corbeled band. The fenestration is separated by brick pilasters that feature recessed parged panels and are topped with cross-gabled stone caps. The buttresses and the pilasters are connected by a parapet with simple stone caps. The central section of the parapet is taller and features a stone panel inscribed “Parkwood A. R. Presbyterian Church,” although “A. R. Presbyterian” has been obscured with a thin coat of mortar.

Above the parapet the buttresses are stepped back with the steps protected by half- pyramidal caps. The bay is recessed behind the parapet and features a full-width bank six tall casement windows, each containing stained glass. The windows rest on a continuous brick sill and are topped with a row of soldier-course brick. Above the windows is a brick gable. The gable features bricks set in a basket-

weave bond, and a deep corbelled barge. The buttresses extend past the gable and are topped with pyramidal stone caps.

To either side of the projecting central bay, the façade on the upper story is pierced by a single tall double-hung window with stained glass. Each feature a simple brick sill and a soldier-course lintel. Similar windows were originally on the lower story but were removed due to programmatic changes and code requirements, and the openings filled with brick matching existing. Flush with the façade, stepped buttresses project to the east and west sides, with no interruption in the brickwork. The buttresses each feature a beveled coping stone at the step, and a sloped stone cap. To the east and west of the center projecting bay, the eave of the hipped roof forms a deep overhang with a tongue-and-groove board soffit featuring a simple moulded wooden cornice and freeze-board. This deep overhang is present on the remainder of the building.



*Figure 13* West elevation, 2023.

The east and west elevations of the nave are five bays wide. The bays are separated by stepped buttresses with beveled coping stones at the steps. The buttresses are topped with a sloped stone cap. The bay closest to the façade is narrow and is pierced by a single double-hung window containing stained glass. The other four bays are of equal size. Tripart one-over-one rectangular windows consisting of wider double-hung new windows are flanked by the narrower original stained-glass

windows.<sup>45</sup> Above this fenestration are new peaked casement windows. The windows feature a simple brick sill and are topped with a row of soldier-course brick. A corbelled architrave of stretchers begins at the sill, runs past the lintel, and forms the outline of a pointed arch above the window. A smaller pointed arch composed of headers was located where the peaked casement windows are installed, with the lower portion of these arches remaining. The tall basement level is delineated by a stone water table. At the basement level the narrow front bay on the west elevation contains a new steel door. The four wide window openings with brick lintels on the east and west elevations at the basement level, which were previously infilled with brick and wood panels, have been reopened as egress window wells. Though similar on the east and west elevations, they differ in their arrangement and order of fenestration. The flanking bays of the west elevation feature a full-light door nearest the center and paired casement windows with brick sills. The two middle bays have paired full-light doors. Each bay has a concrete pad below ground level. Brick-topped concrete retaining walls with steel picket fencing surround each window well. The flanking bays have concrete steps and tube steel railings up to ground level and the parking lot.



*Figure 14* East elevation, 2023.

At the east elevation, as viewed from left to right, the first and third bays feature paired casement windows with brick sills and a full-light door. The second bay is comprised of paired full-light doors. The fourth bay has tripart casement windows with a brick sill. As at the west elevation, the three

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<sup>45</sup> The original center section stained-glass windows have been relocated to the mail pavilion on site.



egress window wells have concrete pads below ground level, brick-topped concrete retaining walls with steel picket fencing, and concrete steps up to ground level.

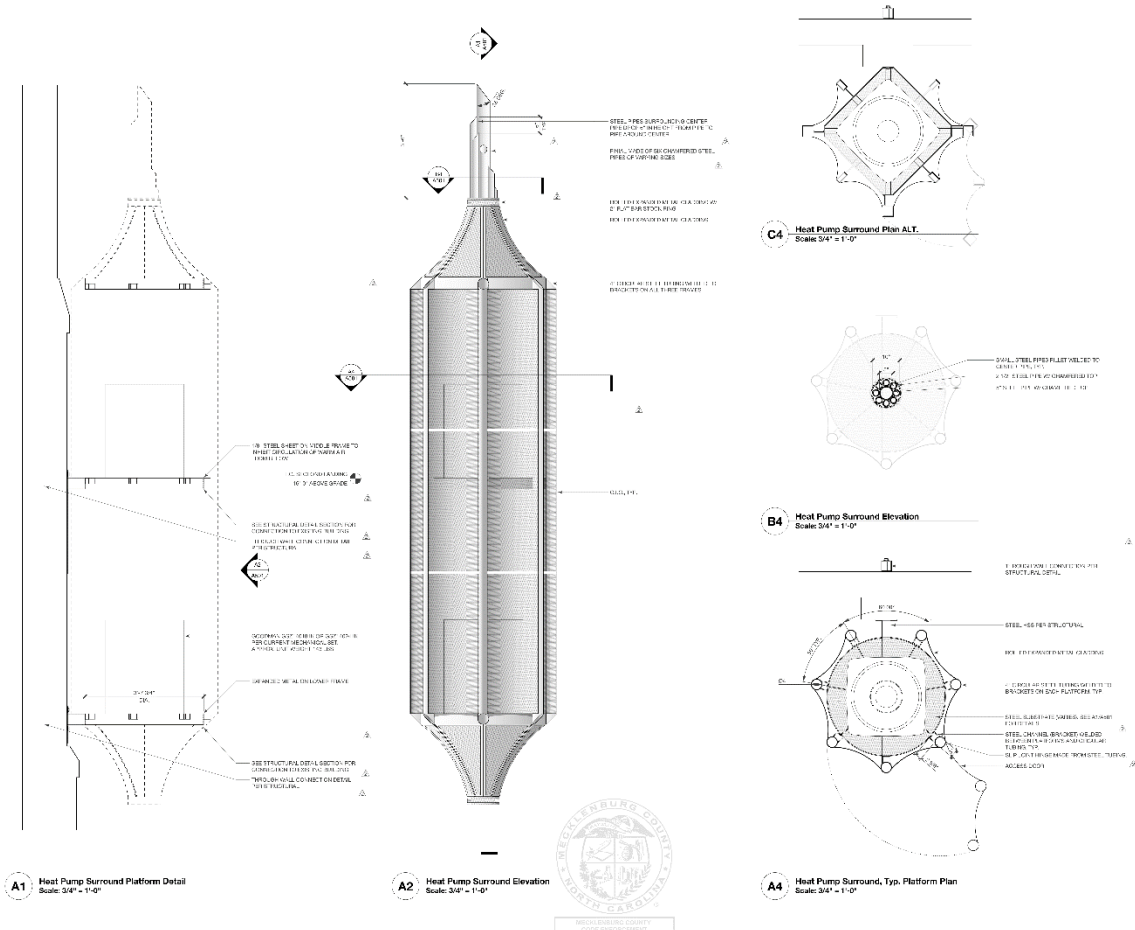


Figure 15 Construction documents showing heat pump surrounds at east and west elevations.

At the east and west elevations, structures to support the heat pumps for the apartment units have been installed at the buttresses. They are constructed of steel and are bolted to the wall above the stone delineation of the water table. The architects designed these heat pump surrounds to mimic the organ pipes that were originally located inside the sanctuary and for minimal impact to the exterior sheathing.



*Figure 16* Typical heat pump surround at east elevation, 2023.



*Figure 17* East and north elevation of the transept, 2021.

The tall one-story nave tapers into a two-story transept. The transept projects past the nave one bay to the east and the west. On the west side of the building, this narrow south-facing wall is blank. On the east side of the church, the bay contains a new steel door at the basement level topped with a brick lintel. Above the door is a single window.

All the windows in the transept are six-over-one double-hung windows, with a brick sills and soldier-course brick lintels. The east elevation of the transept is three bays wide. The basement level is delineated by a corbelled soldier course and formerly featured three window openings infilled with brick. The middle and right openings have been restored with paired double-hungs. The left opening remains bricked and is now the location of the building's electrical meters. The main level and second story each have three window openings located directly above the basement bays. Single double-hungs are present in the left bay, and the windows in the middle and right bays are paired double-hungs.



*Figure 18* North and west elevation of the transept, 2021.

The west elevation of the transept is four bays wide with single double-hungs on each story. The upper and lower levels have four double-hungs. A stairwell which led from the basement level to the lower level has been removed, and the former door opening has been filled with brick. The concrete landing at the lower level has been cut back to the face brick. At the basement level, three of the four previously bricked-in window openings have been restored. The fourth basement window bay, which is second from the right, remains bricked, though the extant brick lintel indicates its position.

The rear of the transept is three bays wide at the upper and lower levels and five bays wide at the basement. The three centered bays of all levels are vertically aligned and feature paired double-hungs. At the basement level, a paired double-hung and a single double-hung respectively flank the center bays.



*Figure 19* The mail pavilion incorporates stained glass panels from the former church, 2021.

A mail pavilion is located behind the building to the northwest. It is a wood gabled structure roofed with asphalt shingles. Four stained glass panels are hung between wood support columns on the north and south elevations. These panels were previously in the tripart windows which line the former sanctuary.

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