P3 / PRESIDENT'S LETTER

2020 Census data are in, and the Park's population is larger and more diverse than ever. Consider volunteering to help out with programs or become a Society Board Member.

P9 / JEWISH WORSHIP IN THE PARK

We look to Carleton College's Religions MN program for descriptions of synagogues and unique Jewish institutions since WWII. P12 / DISPATCH/SUN LOOK-BACK

After WWII, public service advertisements promoting church-going for the moral development of the Park's youth ran weekly and were sponsored by top businesses.



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Volume 20.3 / Fall 2021

RELIGION IN THE PARK

Surveys of world religion show that the big four, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, account for about two-thirds of the world's eight billion residents.

In Minnesota, according to the Pew Forum's Religious Landscape Study, Christians dominate with a 75% share; non-Christian faiths total 5%, and Atheists, Agnostics and NRIPs (no-religion-in-particulars) make up the remaining 20%.

As churches go, St. Louis Park has a mostly Christian mix, with a wide variety of Protestants. Pew counts over 130 flavors of Protestantism in the U.S., including Methodists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Episcopalians. Two Catholic churches served the town for many years, reduced to one after 2012. The Park features some exotics as well – three Slavic churches, for example.

And, while the Park claims less than one-percent of the state's total population, it counts five Jewish places of worship in its borders, at least 15 percent of the synagogue total for the State of Minnesota.

We are often asked why Judaism in St. Louis Park has thrived since World War II ended. After reviewing the question from various angles, the answer is, "We don't know." But we share some thoughts below.

We offer an overview of Park religious institutions in approximate chronological order with photos of the buildings as they appear today along with a few historical photos. We have valuable historical insights in our collection as part of Norman Thomas' unpublished 1952 manuscript, "St. Louis Park: The Story of a Village:"

Some of the other problems afflicting the settlers were that of churches and schools. The Catholics, who had no

IN MEMORIAM

The St. Louis Park Historical Society has received gifts in remembrance of loved ones from the following persons:

- From James Robbins in memory of his wife, Patricia Robbins on Aug. 27, 2021.
- From Diane Steen-Hinderlie in honor of former City Manager Tom Harmening on Aug. 21, 2021.
- From Kenneth Benson in memory of Albert Yngve on July 22, 2021.

church in St. Louis Park until the 1920s, went to Hopkins (or West Minneapolis) to church. Most of the Catholics could be found among the Irish who lived in the north and the west sides of the township. But the largest group of Christians in the area were Protestants, largely from New England states, who belonged to Congregational and Methodist churches with a sprinkling of Presbyterians. No church building existed until the 1870's but itinerant and visiting ministers held services in various homes.

Many of the earliest settlers in the Park were rock-ribbed New Englanders, many from Maine, including our first mayor, Joseph Hamilton. Pre-Revolutionary Maine was a hotbed of Congregationalists, as noted at the Maine Historical Society website:

The image of New England towns with tall steepled

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Congregational churches as the center point is ubiquitous. Much of coastal Maine in the years following the American Revolution were largely Congregational, guided by Harvard educated ministers trained in Puritan theocracy and transmitting a vision of society as a well ordered hierarchy predicated on deference to God and the social elite.

Church buildings are typically purpose-built for large gatherings and are often recycled for new congregations. We have many examples of musical pews in the Park.

If a church building has been occupied by several congregations, we name them in the title of the section, with the current occupant in boldface.

We borrow and adapt and update much of what follows from Norman Thomas and our own website, material compiled in great detail by Jeanne Andersen.

Note: If a church building has been occupied by several congregations, we name them in the title of the section, with the current occupant in boldface.



BROOKSIDE METHODIST CHURCH CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

ST. DUNSTAN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH Built in 1915 as a Methodist church, the whiteframe building was constructed along classical

New England colonial lines and qualifies as the oldest church building in town. In the early 1950s the Methodist parish outgrew the building and it was sold to Christian Scientists.

St. Dunstan's Anglican Church arose as a result of the Episcopal General Convention held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in September 1976. In January 1977, four founders who disagreed with the outcomes of that convention incorporated the Anglican Church of St. Dunstan as an independent Episcopal parish, not affiliated with the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota.





Left, above: Original Union Congregational church building moved from Excelsior and Wooddale; Right, above: Brownlow Methodist, lost to fire in the 1920s. Below, current Union Congregational Church, built, 1941.



UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Park's oldest congregation and first church structure is Union Congregational. It began as the Clarke Chapel at the intersection of Wooddale and Excelsior Boulevard in1870, when services were held in the Pratt School, also at that intersection. Clarke Chapel was built in 1878. In 1890 it was moved to its present Alabama Ave. location. The current building was dedicated in 1941.

The 1941 building still operates but is downsizing and recently sold its attached school wing to a local developer for affordable housing construction.

After the Congregationalists came the Methodists. Thomas B. Walker, who bought up most of the Park south of Minnetonka Blvd. in 1890, sponsored the Brownlow Methodist a church near his industrial core. Built in 1893, it suffered a fire in 1911 and severe tornado damage in 1925. The church was not rebuilt, but its bell was given to Brookside Community Church.

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The numbers are in, and St. Louis Park population, per the 2020 census, hit 50,010. That means we have finally surpassed the previous population peak of 48,883 from 1970. And our growth of 11% since the 2010 census is right in line with the metro region growth rate. A lot has changed in 50 years (yes, 1970 is 50 years ago...).

To start, we have seen a lot of growth in apartment buildings. There have been at least 15 buildings over the past decade which added 2,200 apartments to the city. This includes large developments in the West End, the repurposing of the Eliot School site, the Ellipse building on the former Al's Bar site, and Hoigaard Village with multiple townhomes and apartments.

The makeup of our residents has also changed over time. The percentage of our population identifying as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) has grown from 5% in 1990 to 23% today.

Reflecting on just the past couple of years, changes can be felt in the schools, which recently started the school year. Fortunately, school routines are mostly back to normal, with fully in-person instruction five days a week. The only key difference is that all students and staff wear masks while indoors. However, there have been key renovations to the schools during the pandemic. For example, the Middle School has a beautiful new performing arts center, new media center, some new classroom space and a refreshed cafeteria.

And there are some small changes for our organization. In our office, we have hung some more pictures on the walls and put out more items from the collection including some old roller skates from the Roller Garden auction. And over at the Depot, the city installed a small piece of original rail track next to the building along with a 1912 corner stone monument from one of the rail bridges.

As always we are looking for volunteers. And if you are considering a Board seat, now is a good time to start attending our meetings each month to learn more about the operation of the Society and decide if a Board position is right for you.

With Park pride,

CONNECT WITH US

Stop by: 3546 Dakota Ave. S., Suite C St. Louis Park Saturdays, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment
Call: (612) 465-9288
Email: slphistory@gmail.com
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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society collects, preserves and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today* is an official publication of the Society.

> Editor WILLIAM BEYER

> > Writers TED EKKERS

Contributing Writer JEANNE ANDERSEN

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FIRST [ENGLISH] LUTHERAN CHURCH MACEDONIAN EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH

NEW BEGINNINGS BAPTIST MINISTRIES

Park's second oldest church building, 3208 Xenwood, has had many owners and uses over its 97-year lifespan. The First Lutheran Church had its roots in a Ladies' Aid Society, organized in the home of Mrs. H.E. Nye in 1915. The group met at Fern Hill School but had to move when the city made an addition to the school. In 1922, a lot was purchased from T.B. Walker, by the First Lutheran Church and \$110 was donated by Mrs. Walker. The church basement was built in November of 1924; the superstructure completed in 1928.

The Xenwood Ave. building was sold to the Andahazy School of Ballet, which shared the old building with the church until 1968. The dance school occupied the building until at least 1987. Subsequent owners are unclear; The building lay vacant from 1995 to 1997. The Macedonian Baptist church bought it in the spring of 1997. Many of its approximately 50 members had previously attended Zion Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Current occupant appears to be the New Beginnings Baptist Ministries, which has a second campus in South Minneapolis.



FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH SPIRIT OF CHRIST CHURCH

The First Lutheran congregation moved to a new church building, located nearby at 5801 Minnetonka Blvd in 1968. In 2009 First Lutheran and Ascension Lutheran Church merged to form the Spirit of Christ Community Lutheran Church.



METHODIST MEETING HOUSE ALDERSGATE METHODIST CHURCH

A third Methodist group came to St. Louis Park in 1942 with the organization of the Meeting House which was located at 2940 Salem until 1944 when it was decided to merge with Brookside. The 1946 merger of Brookside and Meeting House resulted in the extinction of the two old names when the name Aldersgate was adopted. Ground was broken for a new church building on April 30, 1950.



NORTHSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH WESTWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH EMMAUS ROAD CHURCH THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD SLAVIC CHURCH

Started as a Sunday school in 1920, the congregation was surveyed in 1943 and found that about 36 percent preferred Lutheran affiliation. In 1944 the Evangelical Lutheran Church group formed the North Side Lutheran Church. Built across the road from Eliot School on Cedar Lake Road, the name was changed to Westwood Lutheran Church in 1947. The original Northside building reopened as Ascension Lutheran Church in 1956, briefly from 2005-2012 as the Emmaus Road Church, and today is the Light of the World Slavic Church.



WESTWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH Westwood church built a new building further west on Cedar Lake Road in 1948.



WOODDALE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

VISTA LUTHERAN CHURCH

In May of 1929 a group which was to become the Wooddale Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Northwest Synod of the United Lutheran Church of America began worshiping in the home of Mrs. Frances Perry on Utica Avenue. Their first church was built in 1937 with additions in 1939 and 1942.

Prince of Peace Church held its first services in the Oak Hill School lunchroom in 1948. The church was officially organized in 1949, as the Church of the Good Shepherd English Evangelical Lutheran, changing its name in 1950 to Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church to avoid confusion with two other churches with similar names within five miles. The new church was built and dedicated in 1955. At one time the stained glass window was thought to be the tallest glass work of its time.

Vista started as a consolidation of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and Wooddale Lutheran Church, two faith congregations with a combined 160 years of outreach to the Park community.



PEACE PREBYTERIAN CHUCH

Rev. Willard Reeves took the first steps toward the organization of the St. Louis Park Presbyterian Church in the fall of 1956; first service was held at Eliot School in 1957. The church building, located at Quebec and Cedar Lake Road was first used for services on June 1, 1958.

Peace Presbyterian Church is a member of the Presbytery of Minneapolis/St. Paul.



PARK BAPTIST CHURCH FIRST UKRAINIAN EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH

The older of two Baptist congregations began to meet in October 1943 in an old tavern at the corner of Natchez and Excelsior; it became too small for the congregation and early in 1948 a new building was begun at 41st and Highway 100. Park Baptist merged with the First Baptist Church of Hopkins in October 1969 to become Cross of Glory Baptist Church which then moved to the First Baptist Church of Hopkins site.

From 1970 to 1996 the building was variously the home of the First Foursquare Gospel Church (1970), Evangelic Missionary Fellowship, Messianic Jewish Congregation, Full Gospel Temple, and Faith Assembly of God. In 1996 the building was purchased by the First Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Church.



CROSS OF CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

CALVARY WORSHIP CENTER

SOUL'S HARBOR

The congregation first met in what was (constable) Gerald Longabaugh's garage at 9441 Minnetonka Blvd. In 1953 the congregation bought the land at 9500 Minnetonka Blvd. and dedicated the new church in 1955 with Mayor Russell Fernstrom and Councilman Torval Jorvig present.

The congregation moved elsewhere after 1965, and the church, once fronting on Minnetonka Blvd., now is mostly hidden. A congregation that started out as Calvary Temple in downtown Minneapolis in 1946 moved to 9500 Minnetonka Blvd in 1984 and was renamed Souls' Harbor.



OAK HILL EVANGELICAL CHURCH OAK HILL BAPTIST CHURCH KNOLLWOOD CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The second Baptist church, located at 3639 Quebec, was the Oak Hill Baptist Church. A group of sixty began to worship together in 1950. Since 1965, the Knollwood Christian Church has occupied the site which now includes a directlyadjacent youth center building to the east.



LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION

WAT PROMWACHIRAYAN BUDDHIST CHURCH

The Lutheran Church of the Reformation began on November 14, 1954... the first service held at the St. Louis Park Theater in 1957. A building fund was started in May 1958...The building was described in the Dispatch (May 1, 1958) as: a concrete structural frame, enhanced with a thin shelled concrete vaulted roof...designed by architects Hammel and Green...dedicated on January 4, 1959.

One of the newest religious outposts in the Park belongs to Wat Promwachirayan, which practices Theravada Buddhism, and is dedicated to engaging and supporting people of all backgrounds in the Twin Cities through meditation, arts, cultural activities and community event. Wat Thai of Minnesota was founded in 2003, the first of three Thai Buddhist sects in and around the metro area.



ST. LOUIS PARK EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PARK COMMUNITY CHURCH

In March 1946 the first public worship service was held in the basement chapel. Construction of the superstructure was begun in the spring of 1950, completed and dedicated in 1951. The church continued to purchase and build on adjacent property in 1961 and 1988. In the fall of 2012, a group of Park residents attending Antioch Community Church of NE Minneapolis began an association with the Free Church, In August 2015, their new CityVision Church came together, becoming Park Community Church.



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholics of St. Louis Park were without a parish or church until the mid-1920s when the Holy Family church was built. The Holy Family parish was organized at the request of local Catholics and the church which seated about 200 was built... a new structure was erected which is doing service as a school with a chapel in which religious services are held. Most Holy Trinity, the second Catholic parish, was established in 1945 and was merged by the Archdiocese with Our Lady of Grace in Edina in 2012. The former site now features the Wooddale Flats Condominiums.



ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. George's Episcopal Church found its beginnings when a group of families met together in the village hall and asked Bishop Keeler for instructions on how to organize a parish Services were held in the band room at the high school...A somewhat larger group met and organized the parish and on June 2, 1947 the body was formally incorporated. Meanwhile services were held in the Legion Hall. The church building which was built shortly after the organization of the parish burned partially before it was ready for occupancy and was rebuilt.



PARK ASSEMBLY OF GOD PARK HARBOR CHURCH

Park Assembly of God found its origins in 1953 at Lenox Elementary School, then moved to 1615 Texas Ave. S. in 1957. A new sanctuary and educational facility was built in 1969; a larger facility with a gymnasium and extra parking was built in 1991. Renamed Park Harbor Church, it is part of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal fellowship.



ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH SLAVIC CHURCH EMMANUEL

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, affiliated with the Missouri Synod, began In 1926 with a few families from Hopkins and about four families from St. Louis Park. Within a year a church was built at 41st and Webster but it was found to be too small and was enlarged in 1950.



TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Timothy Lutheran Church, which began as a mission under the name Park Lutheran was established in 1951 with services led by ministers sent here weekly from Martin Luther College of New Ulm. Moved from a remodeled house on Texas Avenue to a site just east on Minnetonka Blvd.

JEWISH WORSHIP IN THE PARK

In his 1952 manuscript, Norman Thomas profiled over 20 Protestant and Catholic churches and congregations and noted, "The B'nai B'rith, a service organization of Jewish men, are currently making a survey of the community to discover whether the area needs a synagogue, community center, and Talmud Torah."

In 1952, a synagogue committee of the Park B'nai B'rith chapter convened a meeting of Jewish families at Lenox School. Discussions went on with Jewish congregations in Minneapolis until an "amalgamation with B'nai Abraham evolved." In 1954, the Anti-Defamation League, a branch of B'nai B'rith, presented a booklet to the Superintendent of Schools that included a schedule of the Jewish holidays and suggestions for teachers. In May 1956 B'nai Abraham moved to a three-bedroom house at 3115 S. Ottawa Ave; growing to 294 families by the fall.

THE ERUV

A Carleton College program provides a detailed and comprehensive look at Judaism in St. Louis Park as an element of ReligionsMN. We quote extensively from its pages:

St. Louis Park...has a disproportionately large population of observant Jews, and close-knit Orthodox and Conservative communities are based there. Several of the city's congregations, such as the Orthodox Kenesseth Israel and the Conservative Bnai Emet, have long histories in Minneapolis and relocated to St. Louis Park in the 1950s and 1960s, along with many of their members. The heart of the Jewish population lies within the eruv, an area of around one square mile, symbolically bounded for Talmudic legal reasons but which has taken on a larger meaning for the community.

Our project summarizes the history of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Park Jewish communities and the eruv, and explores the ways in which living in a concentrated community affects the religious and cultural life of the Jewish community in St. Louis Park.

An eruv is a symbolically bounded space with roots in Jewish Talmudic tradition relating to the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat). For observant Jews, Shabbat (which occurs from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday) is a day of rest, with strict laws preventing any work from being done. The interpretation of work includes thirty-nine categories, which proscribe such basic actions as turning on or off any electrical device or motor



vehicle, cooking and, importantly, transferring objects from one domain to another. Basically, this means that no object can be transferred outside an enclosed space (the home).

The eruv is a means of converting a non-home space, such as a neighborhood, into an extension of the home under Halachic (traditional Jewish) law using preexisting boundaries, allowing such objects as keys, prayer books and baby strollers to be carried on Shabbat... Eruvim exist in Orthodox communities across the United States and the world; several metropolitan areas such as New York, Houston and San Francisco have multiple eruvim.

JEWISH CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE ERUV



KENESSETH ISRAEL

An Orthodox congregation, one of the oldest in Minnesota. was founded in 1891 on Minneapolis's North Side, becoming a vital part of Jewish life there. In 1971, due to the largescale migration of Jews to the northern and western suburbs, the congregation moved into its current home in St. Louis Park.



BAIS YISROEL

An Orthodox congregation formed in the late 1980s by yeshiva-educated Kenesseth Israel congregants who wanted to embrace the Haredi tradition and did not feel that Kenesseth Israel offered enough opportunities for intensive religious study.



BETH EL

A Conservative congregation founded in 1926, originally on the North Side of Minneapolis, by younger people who wanted to practice a more forward-looking brand of Judaism then their Orthodox parents. It moved to its present home in 1968.



DARCHEI NOAM

An Orthodox congregation formed in 2005 by Kenesseth Israel congregants who wanted to integrate the modern world into their practices to a greater degree. For several years, Darchei Noam met in congregant's homes and in the basement of a local church until they constructed their own synagogue in 2013.

BNAI EMET

A Conservative congregation, it moved to St. Louis Park in 1958. The congregation merged with Adath Jeshurun and moved to Minnetonka in 2011. The recently expanded Park campus is now home to Yeshiva of Minneapolis, a private Jewish boys' school.

KEHILAT SAR SHALOM

Beyond the Eruv and opened in 2016, the Kehilat Sar Shalom Messianic Jewish Community describes itself as, "a Messianic Jewish community dedicated to teaching and living out the Jewish foundations of our faith in the Messiah Yeshua...our community was founded 27 years ago and is a member of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations & Synagogues." Its synagogue building was constructed in 1965 as the home of Gemelus Chesed - an Orthodox Jewish Community formerly located in



North Minneapolis. The Conservative congregation moved to Minnetonka in 2012.

WHY THE CONCENTRATION OF JEWISH INSTITUTIONS IN THE PARK?

The Society often gets questions about reasons for the significant influx of Jewish residents to the Park after WWII. As noted in the introduction, we don't have definitive answers, but here are some thoughts:

ADOLPH FINE DEVELOPED HOUSING

In places across the U.S., Jews, along with Blacks and other minorities, were excluded from home ownership by real estate covenants. Adolph "Bob" Fine was a major developer of homes in St. Louis Park, particularly in the northwest part of the village and city. He first built here in 1939 with just two houses, but most of his activity took place in the years following World War II.

Fine Homes was headquartered at 6301 Minnetonka Blvd. as early as 1947. He built at least 2,000 homes in the Park and sold to members of the Jewish community when others had restrictive covenants, greatly contributing to the migration of the Minneapolis Jewish community to St. Louis Park.

A WELCOMING SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

A story from our website:

In 1949, as usual, the Park's High School Prom was to be held at the Automobile Club in Bloomington. A manager there found out that a Jewish student planned to attend and banned him. When Park School Superintendent Harold Enestvedt was informed, he told the Club that if all his students were not welcome, the Prom would be held elsewhere. The Club reversed itself and everyone went to Prom as scheduled. Enestvedt served as superintendent for 24 years, from 1948 until 1972.

Word-of-mouth can be a powerful thing, and finding out that your children and prospective children were likely to be welcomed in St. Louis Park perhaps led many Jewish families to move here from Minneapolis, which, before Hubert Humphrey's term as Mayor, reportedly harbored the worst of anti-Semitism in the U.S. CHURCH-STATE CONTROVERSIES IN MINNESOTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS SINCE 1950

An article by Bruce Dierenfield, "Rooting Out Religion," in the Winter 1993 issue of Minnesota History magazine described a school/religion conflict in the Park in 1962:

...Holiday observances and school calendars continued to spark unresolved controversy into the 1960s, especially when school boards attempted to schedule school breaks that did not coincide with the Christian calendar. In 1962, for example, the St. Louis Park school board provided for a spring, rather than an Easter, vacation. Board member Mrs. John P. Northcott explained, "It's a logical break from intensive schoolwork with uninterrupted nine-week periods. Our intention was to strengthen our educational programs."

But the change provoked a "tidal wave" of opposing telephone calls and letters from ministers and church members, leading Superintendent Harold R. Enestvedt to declare, 'Tn my fourteen years as an administrator, there have not been as many calls and letters as on this one issue." He also learned that his teachers approved of an Easter vacation by a three-to-one majority. In the face of such public sentiment, the board retreated and reinstated Easter break for 1963.

Privately, Rabbi Moses B. Sachs of B'nai Abraham Synagogue thought the issue "brings into the open a lot of covert anti-Semitism in the community" because Jews were blamed for the initial calendar switch. In a brief note to Samuel L. Scheiner, the JCRGM's executive director, he suggested that the St. Louis Park Jewish community might, nevertheless, be better off taking its licks silently.

We can only conclude that religion in the Park is a constantly evolving landscape, adding to the richness of community life.





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DISPATCH LOOKBACK

Back in 1950, when the Park was accelerating its postwar boom, the Dispatch ran public service ads like this one weekly. "Corwee" the boy was considered dangerous if the good Christian citizens of the town failed to deliver him to church on a Sunday morn for religious and moral training.

The ad's sponsors were listed beneath, and included, Barnum's Shell Service and Jerry's Shell Service, Behning Hardware, Brookside Drugs and Brookside Hardware, Good Foods (makers of Skippy Peanut Butter), Home Hardware, Joppa Pharmacy, Lilac Lanes, Mileage service Station, Nordeen's Park Portraits, Park Drug, Plehal Heating, Republic Creosoting, Rodgers Hydraulics, Swenson's Meats and Groceries, Fred Vogt Heating, Walbom's Apparel and the Dispatch itself.