

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 1601 S. 13th St

Postal code: 19148

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: The Church of the Reconciliation

Current/Common Name: St. John's Baptist Church

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: place of worship

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1892 to ~~present~~ 2000

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1892 (church); 1899 (chapel and Sunday school)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Samuel Hall Day and Charles E. Oelschlager, architects

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: George Rowe, mason; George L. Harvey, carpenter

Original owner: The Church of the Reconciliation

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- PHC removed (e)
- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
  - ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
  - ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
  - ☒ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
  - ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
  - ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
  - ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
  - ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
  - ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
  - ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date 12/23/2019

Name with Title Kevin Block, consultant Email patrick@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut St, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146x5

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: December 23, 2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: February 10, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: February 11, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: St. John's Baptist Church

Address: 1601 S. 13th Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19148

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: May 20, 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: June 12, 2020

Date of Final Action: June 12, 2020

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

**Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places**



**St. John's Baptist Church  
1601 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

## 5. Boundary Description

While the current mailing address for the proposed designation is 1232 Tasker Street, the address stated in the deed for this property and per OPA is 1601 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

The boundary description of the proposed designation (Figure 1) is thus as follows:

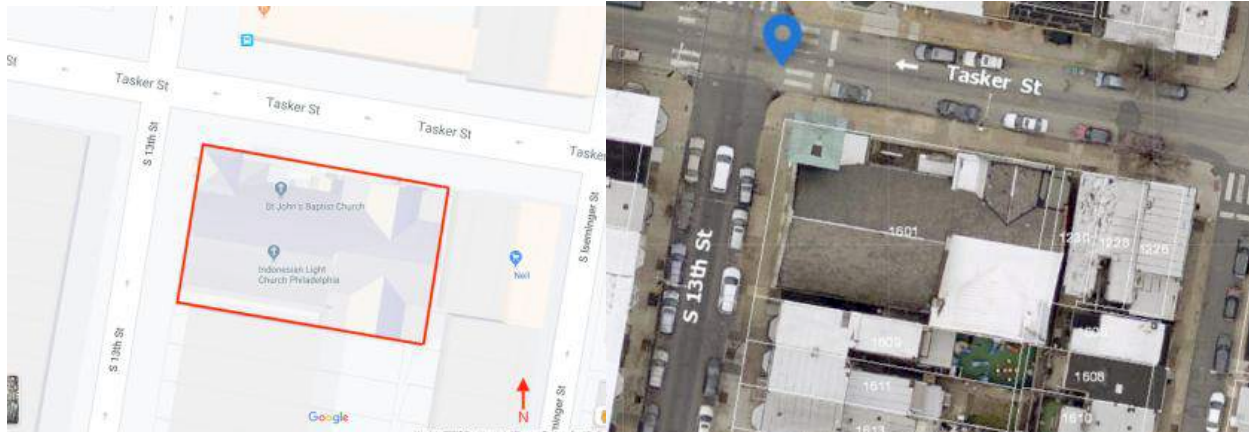


Figure 1. Aerial image of 1232 Tasker Street, showing the outline of "Premises 'A'" that is described in the deed for 1601 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street (Google Maps, left, and the Philadelphia Atlas interface, right).

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE at the Southeast corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Tasker Streets in the 39<sup>th</sup> (formerly part of the 26<sup>th</sup>) Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said 13<sup>th</sup> Street Sixty-four feet and extending in length or depth Eastward of that width along the South side of Tasker Street One hundred feet to a three feet wide alley leading into and from the said Tasker Street.

BOUNDED Northward by the said Tasker Street, Southward by ground now or late of Anthony J. Drexel, East by the said three feet wide alley and Westward by the said 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

BEING the Southeast corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Tasker Street.

BEING the same premises which The Reformed Episcopal Church of the Reconciliation of Philadelphia by Indenture date the 8<sup>th</sup> day of September A.D. 1920 and recorded at Philadelphia in the Office for the Recording of Deeds in and for the County of Philadelphia on 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September A.D. 1920 in Deed Book JMH 939 page 229 etc., granted and conveyed unto the Trustees of the Philadelphia Baptist City Missions, in fee.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> City of Philadelphia, Department of Records. Tax Account No.: 12s13-195-308. OPA Account #771267000. 25 April 1968. Accessed 6 December 2019.



## 6. Physical Description

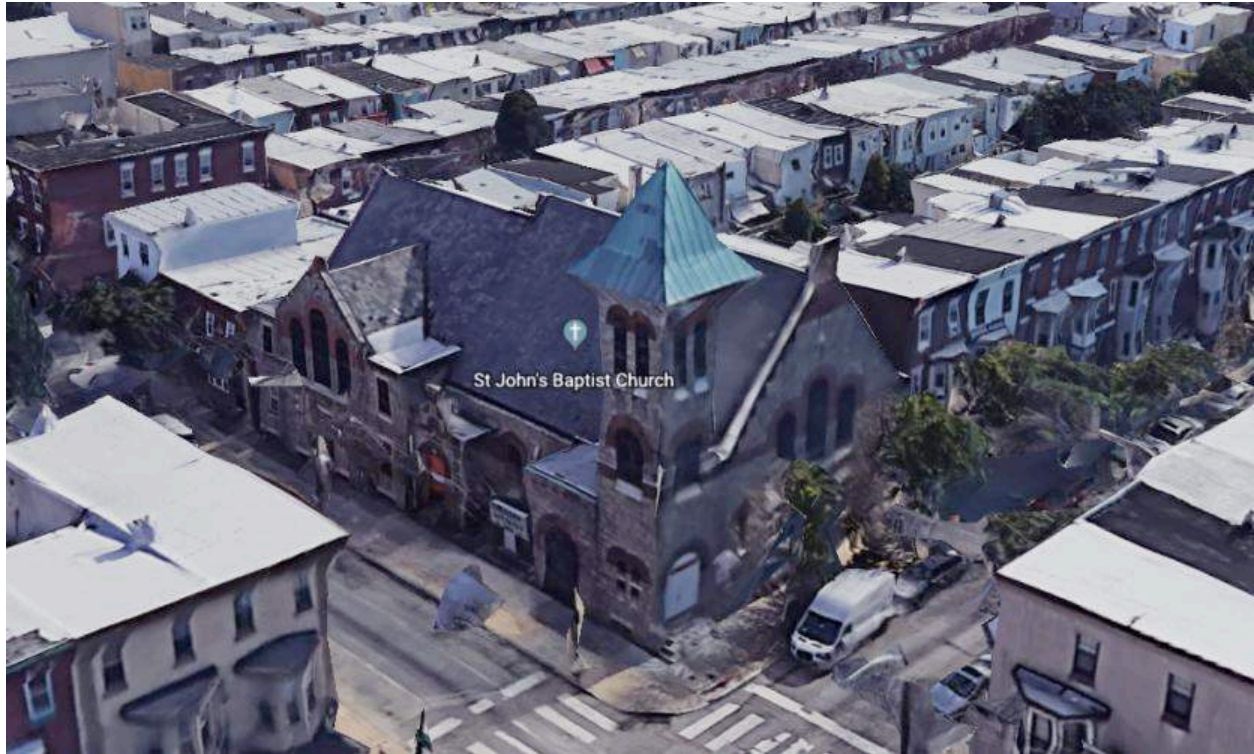


Figure 2. Oblique aerial image looking in the southeasterly direction of 1232 Tasker Street, currently in use as St. John's Baptist Church (Google Earth).

St. John's Baptist Church is a modest, two-story, gable-roofed Romanesque church and chapel complex located at the southeast corner of S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Tasker Street, near the border of the Passyunk Square neighborhood of South Philadelphia (Figure 2). The primary façade of the stone and brick building, including the main entrance to the nave and the Italianate campanile above it, faces westwards onto S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street. This is the oldest part of the complex; it was designed by the architect Samuel Hall Day in 1892 for The Church of the Reconciliation, an Episcopalian congregation led by Rev. F.H. Reynolds that sought to evangelize to the then-growing population of European immigrants in South Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> The eastern side of the

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<sup>2</sup> "Samuel Hall Day, architect, 925 Chestnut Street, some time since completed plans for a new church for the congregation of the Church of the Reconciliation, to be erected at Thirteenth and Tasker Streets, southeast corner, and has awarded the contracts for the work to George L. Harvey, the carpentry, and George Rowe, the masonry. Work will begin at once upon the foundations. The structure is to be of Leipsville and Indiana, stone and Pompeian brick, red tile roof. It will cost about \$12,000." "Architect Notes.," *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, December 23, 1891, sec. Vol. VI., No. 51, p. i. "The congregation of the Church of the Reconciliation, now nearly 300 strong, was organized fifteen years ago, worshipped for about two years in halls, and finally secured a handsome but small chapel adjoining the present church which was begun about a year ago. It is of the Romanesque style of architecture, of Indiana limestone with buff trimmings. The interior wood-work in handsome effects is of pine and oak. The roof is of Spanish tiles, making a pretty feature. The seating accommodation, including a big gallery, is 550. There are three entrances through a handsome loggio [sic] adorned with mosaic

northern façade of the church, including the chapel and Sunday school, was designed by Charles E. Oelschlager and constructed in 1899 as an extension to the building's original program.<sup>3</sup> Neither the southern-facing nor the eastern-facing facades, accessible via alleyways, are visible to public right-of-way. Since 1921, when The Baptist Union of Philadelphia bought this property, the building has been home to St. John's Baptist Church. Over the last century, the custodians of the building have made minor alterations to the façade, including the replacement of the original red tile roof with asphalt shingles, the replacement of the windows and window grates, the replacement of the original main entryway construction and chapel entryway construction with wooden infill, the replacement of what was likely a copper roof for the campanile with a green, patina-colored vinyl material, and the sealing of some basement windows with concrete.

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tiles, above which rises a splendid spire. The furnishings were made principally by the young people's organizations of the church. The architect was Samuel H. Day, G.L. Harvey superintending the construction." "Dedicated to God and His Worship," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 24, 1892, America's Historical Newspapers Online.

<sup>3</sup> "Architect Charles E. Oelschlager has completed plans and specifications and will take estimates this week for a new Sunday-school building for the Reformed Church of the Reconciliation, to be built at Thirteenth and Tasker streets. The new building will be two stories and a basement in height. The basement will be used for a drill room and gymnasium; the first floor will contain a main school, infant room, library, reception room and class room; the second floor class rooms and a church parlor. The cost will be about \$10,000. Steam heat, electric lighting, leaded glass, and all the latest improvements will be installed." "Real Estate News," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 28, 1899, 11.

## 6-1. Church (1892)

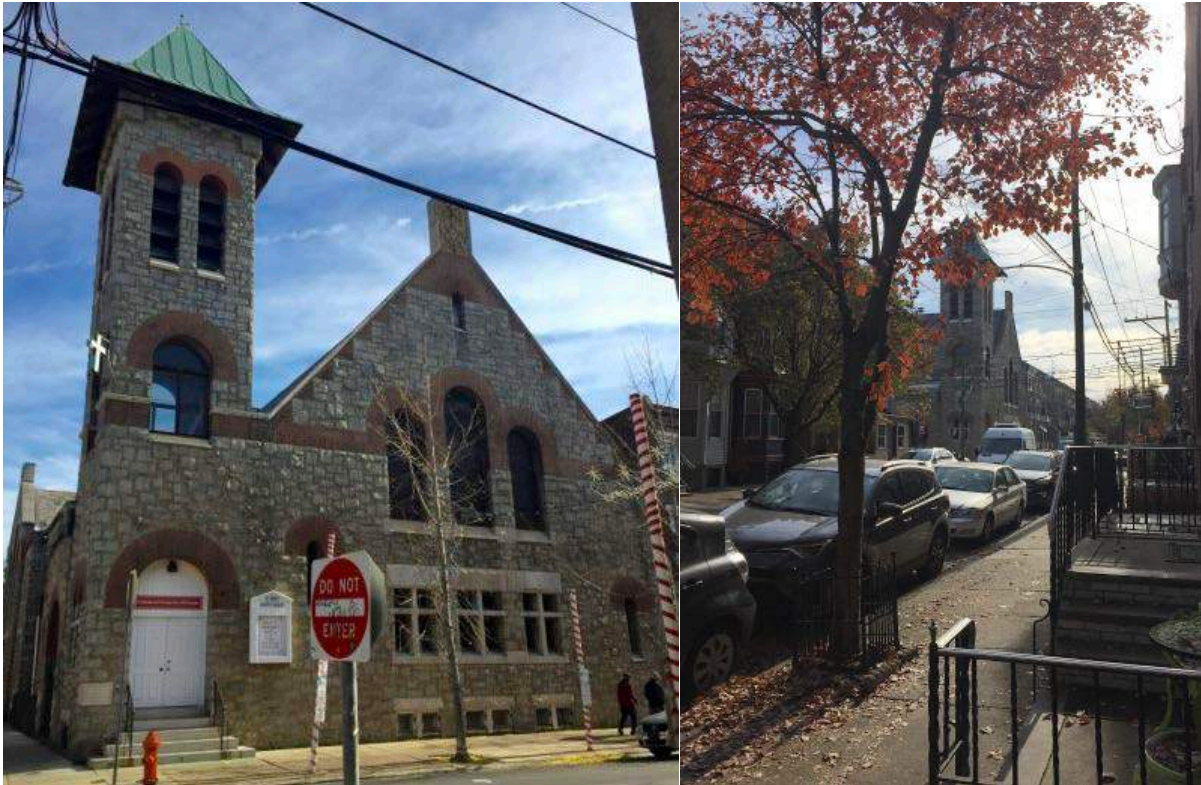


Figure 3. West (principal) elevation of *The Reformed Episcopal Church*, now in use as *St. John's Baptist Church* [Kevin Block, November 2019].

The building's western façade (Figure 3) runs along S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The asymmetrical composition of the Leiperville stone façade, which is characteristic of Picturesque or "Romantic" styles like the Romanesque and the Italianate, includes three dominant masses: the *campanile* tower, the main entrance block, and the gable-end of the church that is centered on a tri-partite bay flanked by two slit windows. A band of vertically-laid Roman bricks separates the upper section of the façade from the lower section. Rising from the ground-up of the triangular gable-end, there are three pairs of square basement windows, each separated by a mullion of Indiana stone. The span of each window is supported by a heavy lintel of Indiana stone. Each of these paired windows is covered by spear-point iron window bars that are painted black. Above the basement windows are three windows divided into four sections by decorative cross-shaped mullions of Indiana stone. Above these middle windows is a triad of arched stained glass windows (Figure 4) that are protected by metal grating. The center window of the triad is taller than the latter two. Each of these three windows is capped by a semi-circular arch of Roman brick, which continues on either side as the belt course. Above the triad of arched windows is a thin arched attic window. The roofline of the gable end includes decorative brickwork that creates through color and material contrast the appearance of a crow-stepped gable roofline (also known as "corbie gable," i.e. corbelled gable). The roofline

converges on a false chimney stack, which features an ornamental panel of a floriated cherub motif carved in stone (Figure 6). There is a thin stone cornice at the edge of the roofline.

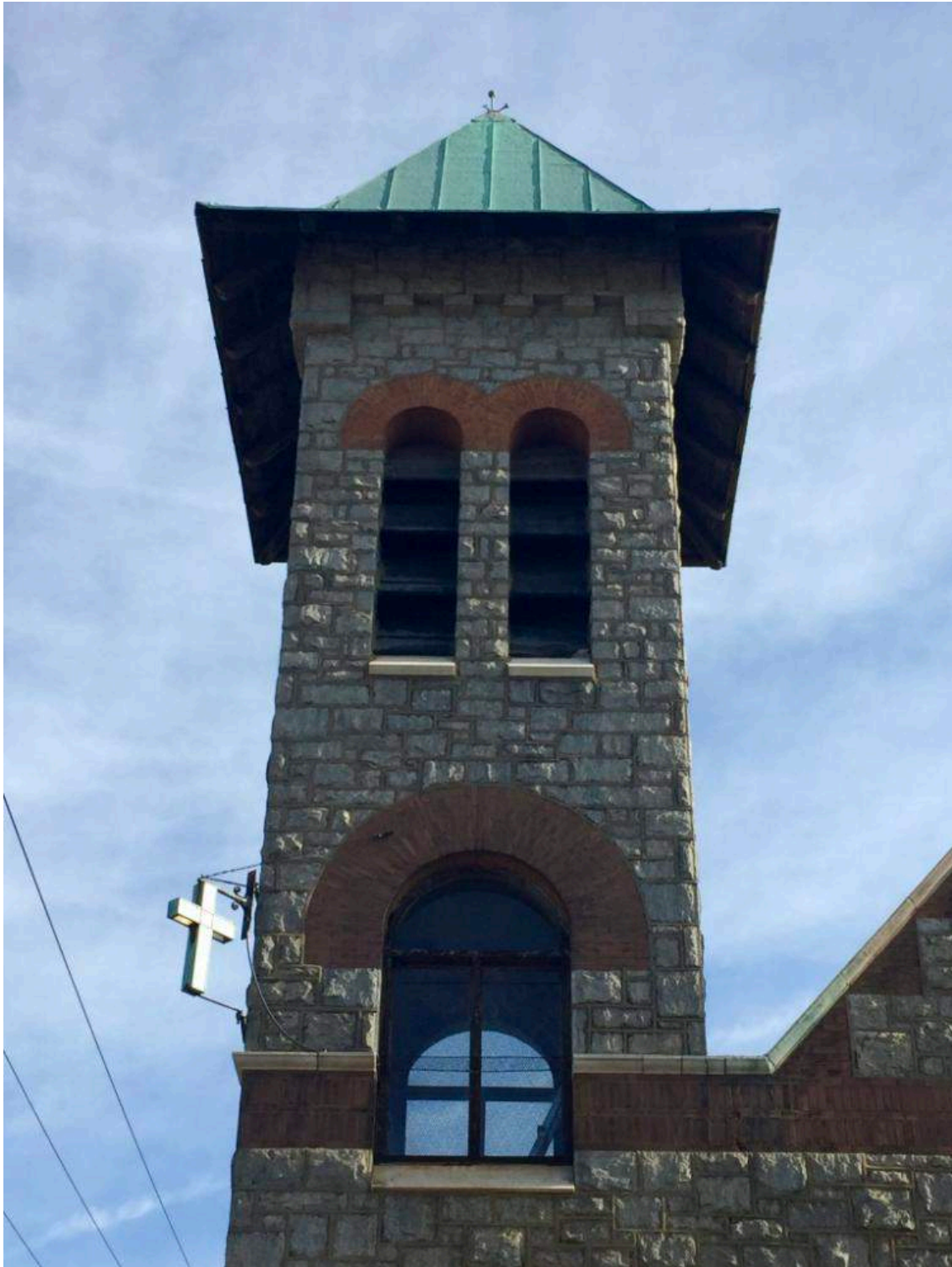
The portal to the main entrance to the church is on the northern side of the western (principal) façade, beneath a semi-circular arch of Roman brick (Figure 6). Granite stairs with iron handrails lead to a paneled wooden doorway of contemporary materials and construction. On the northern edge of the western façade is a cornerstone with the year of construction, 1892, inscribed onto it (Figure 6). To the right of the entrance is one of the two slit windows on the western façade that is capped by a semi-circular arch of Roman brick.

The campanile, the most visually prominent part of the building, rises two stories above the main entrance and features a pointed, hipped wooden roof covered in green vinyl and wide, overhanging eaves. For pedestrians walking along either Tasker or S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, the campanile serves as a visual landmark since it is more than a story taller than the original two-story building stock of the row home neighborhood. On the second story of the campanile, breaking the red belt of Roman brick that continues on the opposite side, there is an arched window. Above it, there is a semi-circular arch of Roman brick and then a pair of arched, slatted bell-openings capped by two arches of Roman brick. Castellated stonework marks the top of the campanile.





*Figure 4. The Roman brick arches and banding on the western (principal) façade, as well as the stepped gable ornamental brickwork [Kevin Block, November 2019].*



*Figure 5. The western (principal) façade of the campanile. Note the play of daytime light on the rusticated Leiperville stonework [Kevin Block, November 2019].*



Figure 6. Details of the west (principal) façade of St. John's Baptist Church [Kevin Block, November 2019].



## 6-2. Chapel and Sunday School (1899)



*Figure 7. Northern façade of St. John's Baptist Church, designed by Charles E. Oelschlager in 1899 [Kevin Block, November 2019].*

Oelschlager's 1899 cross-gable, forty-foot-long addition to The Reformed Episcopal Church of the Reconciliation picks up several of the design motifs found on Day's 1892 western façade, including the use of semi-circular brick arches (shorter than on the western façade), heavy stone lintels, a castellated cornice line, and a faux stepped-gable roofline of decorative brick that converges to a false chimney stack. There is no decorative carving on the false chimney stack.

Oelschlager composed the façade of the addition in five bays (Figure 7). The recessed exterior bays (#1 and #5), from the ground-up, include basement windows covered with iron grills beneath a stone lintel and rectangular window openings on the first and second floor with stone lintels above and below each opening. On the edge of Bay #1, there is a cornerstone with the date "1899" inscribed onto it (Figure 9). Bays #2 and #4 of the façade likewise include iron-barred basement windows and rectangular window openings with lintels above and below them. On the second story of the central three bays there is a triad of arched window openings,

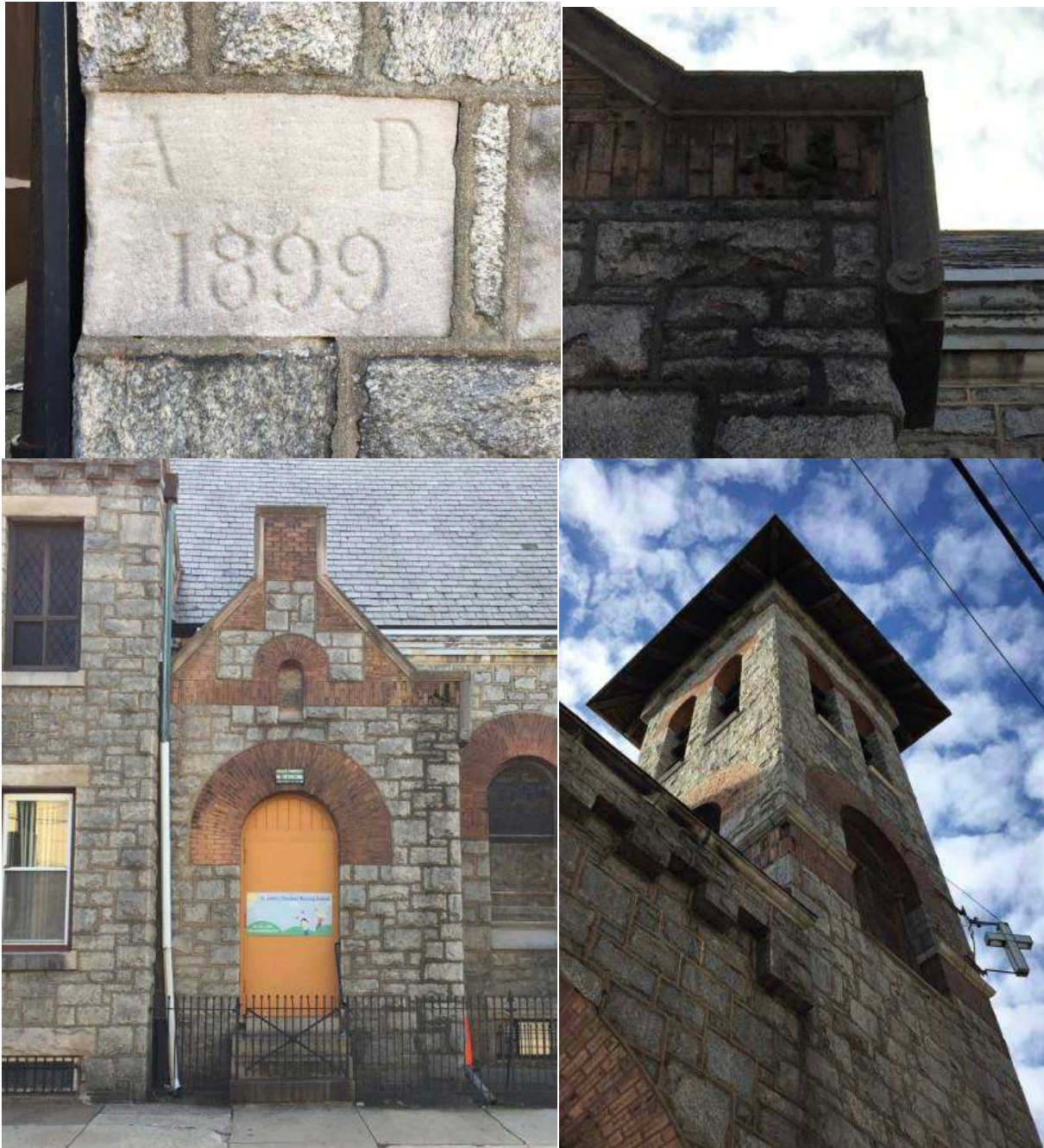


protected by more contemporary metal grates, echoing the triad on the western façade, except they are not filled with stained glass.

Oelschlager's entrance to the nursery for St. John's (Figure 9) repeats in compressed form the same façade motifs found on Day's western façade and the northern façade extension to the original building, while also serving to compositionally balance the mass of the loggia. The orange in-fill door is a replacement of the original.



*Figure 8. Northern façade of St. John's Baptist Church [Google Maps, November 2019].*



*Figure 9. Details of the northern façade of St. John's Baptist Church [Kevin Block, November 2019].*





*Figure 10. Decorative iron gate and mosaic tiling on the northern façade of St. John's Baptist Church. The loggia was part of Day's original design [Kevin Block, November 2019].*



*Figure 11. Visible deterioration of the brick arch on the underside of the northern façade's loggia [Kevin Block, November 2019].*



## **7. Statement of Significance**

The building currently occupied by St. John's Baptist Church has significant character, interest, and value as part of the development of South Philadelphia's ethnic and religious diversity, particularly the Italian Protestant community but also the city's Southeast Asian immigrant community.

In addition to exemplifying the cultural and social heritage of these communities, St. John's Baptist Church also merits nomination on aesthetic grounds. The building was the work of two architects. First, Samuel Hall Day, a Philadelphia architect who designed the original structure in 1892. And second, Charles Oelschlager, who designed the extension to the building in 1899, one of many architectural commissions that he completed in Philadelphia around the turn of the century. Thanks to Day's original design and Oelschlager's sensitive extension, the building, although modest in decorative terms, embodies distinguishing characteristics of both the Romanesque Revival and the Italianate styles.

The property therefore meets the following criteria for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places as established in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

- d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

## 7-1. Urbanizing the Italianate, Abstracting the Romanesque

*Criterion D: Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.*

*Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.*

Construction notices for Day's Church of the Reconciliation describe the building simply as "Romanesque," but in truth the building, with its characteristically Italianate campanile, is something of a stylistic hybrid. The semi-circular round arches, brick beltcourse, heavy masonry massing, and asymmetrical composition of the facade clearly mark Day's design as Romanesque Revival. In most cases, however, Romanesque Revival buildings constructed later in the nineteenth century, especially those associated with Henry Hobson Richardson and his followers, feature cylindrical towers and conical roofs. The square campanile of the Church of the Reconciliation harkens back to an earlier phase of the Romanesque Revival in the United States that began with James Renwick's 1846 design for the Smithsonian Institution, which also features a square campanile with a steep, hipped-roof.<sup>4</sup>

One reasonable explanation for the stylistic hybridity found in Day's design is that he associated the Italianate—a Picturesque, primarily domestic architectural style that originated in England in the 1830s—with the Italian immigrants that his clients, Rev. F.H. Reynolds and the Episcopal Diocese of Philadelphia, hoped to convert. The association reflected that simplistic, quintessentially nineteenth-century equation of style with culture: Italianate for the Italians, in other words. Perhaps Day's architectural design would have seemed familiar or "fitting" to potential converts, but there is no historical evidence available to support such conjecture. The more likely explanation is that the association of architectural style with an immigrant culture seemed fitting to Day. The Romanesque, meanwhile, had long been associated with Protestantism, whereas nineteenth-century American architects often gave Catholic churches classical forms.<sup>5</sup>

In Philadelphia, the Italianate style was closely associated with Samuel Sloan, the designer of Woodland Terrace (constructed in 1861) and several other Italianate homes on Pine Street

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<sup>4</sup> Carroll L. V. Meeks, "Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States," *The Art Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (1953): 17–33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3047457>; Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Meeks suggests that there was a liturgical explanation for the usage of the round-arch style in Congregationalist, Methodist, Unitarian, Presbyterian, and other Protestant churches in Great Britain and the United States. "Their type of service, as in the Colonial days, deliberately eschewed altars, chancels, and pews tucked away in the shadow, behind a stately column. They were unmoved by the Camdensians and aimed simply to get the largest number of sitting possible in clear view and hearing of the axial pulpit. Galleries were welcome; side-aisles, chapels, apses, chancels were not." "Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States," 18.

(between 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> in the “streetcar suburb” of West Philadelphia).<sup>6</sup> Sloan followed apostles of taste like Andrew Jackson Downing, the author of *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), in trying to popularize the Italianate as a rustic, “republican” style that was suitable for Americans.<sup>7</sup> In widely-circulated texts like *The Model Architecture* (1851-53), *City and Suburban Architecture* (1859), and *Sloan's Homestead Architecture* (1861). For example, one print from *Sloan's Homestead Architecture* (Figure 12) shows a “Villa in the Italian Style.” As in Day's façade design for the Church of the Reconciliation, the design for this villa features a square campanile tower with hipped roof, prominent semi-circular lintels above arched windows, and triads of windows on the upper stories. Sloan's popularization of the Italianate villa around midcentury, as well as the reappearance of an older Romanesque Revival style in local projects like Charles M. Burns' Protestant Episcopal Church of the Saviour (1889), are the likely sources of Day's hybrid design. Having grown up in Philadelphia and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's Towne Scientific School in 1879, Day would have been familiar with both stylistic vocabularies.<sup>8</sup>

The Church of Reconciliation was one of the few projects that Day completed as a solo practitioner. Between 1886 and 1891, he worked in partnership with Edward Hurst Brown in the residential architecture firm of Brown & Day, which produced several Queen Anne homes in Delaware County. In 1892, Day partnered with H. Crawford Coates, Jr., a fellow graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, in the architecture firm of Day & Coates. With Coates, Day worked on a more diverse collection of projects, including factories, hotels, the Belmont Cricket Club, an office building, and a casino. In the period after Day's partnership with Brown ended and before his partnership with Coates, Jr. began, Day received the commission for the Church of the Reconciliation and completed his design. At that point in his career, it was his first non-residential commission.<sup>9</sup>

What is most notable about the design for the Church of the Reconciliation are the “bushy-eyebrow” semi-circular arches of Roman brick, which appear almost like generic abstractions of the Romanesque Revival. They are the work of an architect exaggerating stylistic markers for the sake of visual clarity (or possibly budget constraints) rather than using a more elaborate decorative program. A similar, historically coincident usage of the round arch can be seen at Sacred Heart Parochial School (1892-3, Figure 14), where the arches almost seem to be drawn onto the façade of the building. Borrowing the round-arch in such a superficial manner was not uncommon for American architects in the late nineteenth century, but Day's combination of

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<sup>6</sup> National Register of Historic Places, West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, National Register #97001669. See also Harold N. Cooledge Jr, *Samuel Sloan Architect of Philadelphia 1815-1884* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800-1850*, 1st edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815–1852*, Reprint edition (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> “Day, Samuel Hall (1858-?),” Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, accessed November 20, 2019, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/22662](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22662).

<sup>9</sup> “Day, Samuel Hall (1858-?).”

this motif with brickwork that mimics a stepped-gable roofline (most often associated with Flemish architecture rather than either the Italianate or the Romanesque), exemplifies the spirit of Eclectic experimentation.<sup>10</sup>

Oelschlager's 1899 addition to the original church building is a sensitive, practical response by an architect who was just beginning his career. Oelschlager studied at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art from 1891 to 1893 and launched his own firm in 1897. According to the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings database, Oelschlager was "prolific," completing at least 189 projects before retirement in the mid-1930s.<sup>11</sup> At the Church of the Reconciliation, however, he did not try to upstage Day. As described in the previous section of this nomination, the northern façade makes every effort to repeat in compressed form the stylistic motifs of the western façade. The building and its extension form a whole through visual repetition of these motifs rather than any organic connection shared by the layout of the ceremonial and more informal parish spaces.

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<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Curran addresses how American architects of the late nineteenth century tended to isolate the round arch from the rest of the Romanesque style in "The German Rundbogenstil and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 47, no. 4 (1988): 351–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/990381>. The recently demolished Protestant Episcopal Italian Mission and Church of L'Emmanuel at 1020 Christian Street also featured a stepped gable. See

<sup>11</sup> "Oelschlager, Charles E. (Fl. 1891 - 1935/36)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, accessed November 20, 2019, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/19007](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/19007).



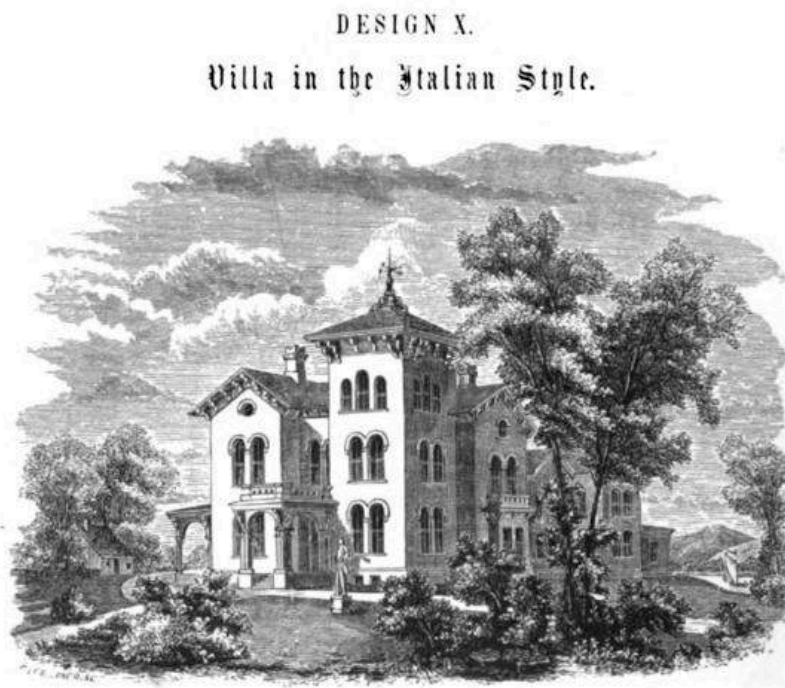


Figure 12. "Design X. Villa in the Italian Style," from Sloan's Homestead Architecture (1861). Note the rounded lintels of the window treatments.



Figure 13. The Protestant Episcopal Church of the Saviour (now known as the Episcopal Cathedral of Pennsylvania). Designed by Charles M. Burns and constructed in 1889 [Wikipedia, 2010].



*Figure 14. Sacred Heart Parochial School (1892-3) at 231 Reed St., designed by architect William P. Regan. The façade of this building, like that of St. John's Baptist Church (1892) reduces the Romanesque Revival into an abstract linearity [Staff of the Philadelphia Historic Commission and Celeste Morello, July 2019].*

## 7-2. A Monument to "Christian Americanization" in South Philadelphia

*Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*

South Philadelphia has never been an exclusively Italian-American urban enclave, nor has it been exclusively Catholic. From the beginning to the end of the 1890s, the decade when the Church of the Reconciliation was constructed, the number of Italian immigrants to South Philadelphia increased 12-fold, from 1,193 to 14,540, but still there were more Russian and Irish immigrants than Italian immigrants in the area.<sup>12</sup> The growing presence of immigrants to Philadelphia from southern Italy, however, represented a threat to a Protestant establishment in the city that feared "Romanism," or the influence of the Catholic Church in the United States. Some members of this establishment reacted defensively and lobbied the municipal and federal governments for immigration restriction along nativist lines, an effort that eventually resulted in the quota-based immigration laws of the 1920s. Other members of this establishment, including Philadelphia's Episcopalian and Baptist communities, organized to assimilate these immigrants into Protestant America by establishing missionary churches like the Church of the Reconciliation that would help to spread "American" (i.e. Protestant) values among the foreign-born, a cultural platform that came to be known as "Christian Americanization."<sup>13</sup> The growth of these missionary churches was meant to stifle or at least offset the proliferation of Roman Catholic churches throughout Philadelphia, which an older generation of Italian-Americans had established around midcentury. Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi at 714 Montrose Street, established in 1852 by Saint John N. Neumann, was the first of this kind.

Establishing Protestant missionary churches in the immigrant communities of Northeastern cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia often involved the support of a national and interdenominational coalition of Protestant leaders. When the Church of the Reconciliation

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<sup>12</sup> Murray Dubin, *South Philadelphia: Mummies, Memories, and the Melrose Diner*, First edition (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 1996), 12–13.

<sup>13</sup> "A universal starting point for Protestants in any discussion of the foreign influx centered upon the widespread hatred of Catholicism. As the eighties merged into the nineties, disdain for the Church of Rome filled the hearts of 'liberal' and 'conservative' alike, of the minority group of social gospellers and the majority of Baptists who preached an individual gospel. This rather common feature of the American tradition once again united with anti-foreignism to form an insistent nativism, and the fear of Romanism helped lead Baptists to advocate shutting out those newcomers who revealed a fundamental inadequacy by clinging to the faith of their fathers. The prevalent habit of attributing 'that which is great and good in our nation and its institutions to the spirit and enterprise of Protestantism' made the arrival of large numbers of Catholics all the more alarming. Apprehension of the power of Rome now became overwhelming, and as Protestantism began to doubt its own viability, governmental barriers seemed the only solution." Lawrence B. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 66. The standard work on nativism in this period remains John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, Revised Edition (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

opened in 1892, for example, Rev. F.H. Reynolds shared his pulpit with clergymen from all over the region. A newspaper reporter in attendance writes,

Hundreds crowded the bright, warm interior, resplendent in its dainty dress of flowers and plants, during the morning to hear the sermon by Bishop William R. Nicholson, D.D., who spoke of the character, relations and spirit of the Church. The attendance was augmented at the afternoon meeting at which addresses were made by Rev. E.B. Bruen, Rev. J.R. Miller, D.D., of the Presbyterian denomination; Rev. J.B. String of the Methodist Episcopal; Rev. G.W. Folwell, of the Baptist, and Rev. E.R. Cassady of the Lutheran Church. Each was a kind tribute, irrespective of denominational differences, to the energy of the congregation which had reared this new home of the Gospel. There was Scripture reading, prayer, further addresses and singing, comprising a fine program.

At the evening service Rev. John De Peu, of the Congregational Church, at Norfolk, Conn., preached. During the present week, the evening sermons will be delivered successively by Rev. John Bliss, D.D., of Washington Heights, N.Y.; Rev. William Tracy of Christ Memorial Church, West Philadelphia; Bishop J.A. Latane, of Baltimore, and Rev. W.T. Sabine, D.D., of the First Reformed Church, of New York. A grand Sunday school rally has been arranged for Friday evening, at which Bishop Nicholson will preside and Rev. D.M. Stearns will speak.<sup>14</sup>

As the surnames of these clergymen reveal, few of them were ethnically Italian. This lack of Italian-American clerical leadership may have contributed to the failure of the Church of the Reconciliation to sustain a vibrant congregation after the turn of the century, resulting in the sale of the building to The Baptist Union in 1921. The Italian Baptist movement, in contrast to the Episcopalian missionaries, included bilingual, Italian-American leaders like Rev. Alberto Chiera and Rev. Angelo di Domenica, the first two pastors of St. John's Baptist Church. While Di Domenica was an ardent supporter of Christian Americanization, he also recognized that Italian immigrants did not want to sacrifice their ethnic identity in the process of becoming American. "I often hear people talk about the Americanization of the so-called 'Aliens' or 'Foreigners' and little do they realize that the real Americanization of these people can never be realized without the gospel of Jesus Christ," di Domenica wrote.

The word, 'Americanization,' is repulsive to the ears of the immigrants, because it carries with it the idea that the Americans are superior to them, and, as such, they are expected to adopt everything which is American. Even the word, 'Christianization,' is abhorred by them, because they think they are Christians by birth. But they do not object to the word, 'Evangelization.' They like this term better than any other, and this is shown by the fact that the Italians who are evangelized call themselves 'Evangelicals' and not Protestants.<sup>15</sup>

The Italian Baptist movement in the United States expanded rapidly. According to di Domenica, the first Italian Baptist missionary work in America began in 1887 at the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of Newark, New Jersey.<sup>16</sup> The first Italian Baptist missionary work in Philadelphia began in 1891, when Antonio Pinto opened the Calvary Baptist Church, then located on Fifth Street,

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<sup>14</sup> "Dedicated to God and His Worship."

<sup>15</sup> Angelo di Domenica, *Protestant Witness of a New American: Mission of a Lifetime.*, First Edition (Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles: The Judson Press, 1956), 73.

<sup>16</sup> Domenica, 31.



below Carpenter.<sup>17</sup> Chiera was called to begin missionary work in South Philadelphia in 1907 by the Baptist City Mission Society and on May 4, 1909, he assembled the first Italian Baptist congregation in the Olivet Baptist Church at 6<sup>th</sup> and Federal Streets. From 1914 until 1921, this congregation, still without a permanent home, met at the old South Broad Street Baptist Church at Broad and Reed streets under di Domenica, who directed the Sunday school classes and instruction in the English language and American citizenship.<sup>18</sup>

One reason for the rapid expansion of the Italian Baptist movement was that it was, from the beginning, transnational. The movement found a foothold in Italy prior to spreading throughout the United States. By 1870, members of the Southern Baptist Convention of America, including the Rev. George B. Taylor (former Chaplain at the University of Virginia), had begun missionary work in southern Italy. Antonio Mangano reported that by 1917, "the Baptist mission in Italy has 32 ordained Italian pastors, 46 churches, and 70 out-stations, with 1,362 members, 40 Sunday-schools with 1,144 pupils, a theological seminary, two religious papers, and a monthly religious review."<sup>19</sup> Given the presence of Baptists in Italy, then, it is fair to presume that at least some Italian immigrants to South Philadelphia would have been familiar with the Baptist denomination prior to their arrival.

The Italian Baptist movement also grew because it began to buy and build church buildings. By the beginning of the '20s, Di Domenica had become insistent that St. John's Baptist Church— itinerant for over a decade—required a permanent building. His rationale for building or acquiring a building was multifaceted. First, he believed that Italians were natural architectural enthusiasts. "It is deplorable to hear people say that anything is good enough for the Italians, just because they are foreigners and are poor," he wrote. "But their foreign birth and their poverty cannot destroy the artistic temperament which is born in them. They are lovers of beauty and the fine arts."<sup>20</sup> Second, di Domenica believed that a multipurpose facility, including educational and healthcare facilities, was necessary to minister to the immigrant population and control the social life of Italian-American youth.

The Italian young men of the South Broad Street section have no decent place for recreation, where they can meet and spend an hour in the evening. Saloonkeepers, corrupt dance halls, gambling places, pool rooms have attractive places for them, and they get them. The children of darkness in their generation are wiser than the children of light. If we had an adequate building, we could have a fine reading room where young men could go and spend their time in a wholesome manner; but so long as we do not have these things, they will go where they can find them.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Domenica, 62.

<sup>18</sup> "St. John's Baptist Church - About St. John's," accessed December 11, 2019, <https://sjbc19148.org/about-st-john-s>.

<sup>19</sup> Antonio Mangano, *Sons of Italy: A Social and Religious Study of the Italians in America* (New York, Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917), 87–88, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015027007866>.

<sup>20</sup> Domenica, *Protestant Witness of a New American*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> Domenica, 77.

Third, Italian Baptists required a building if they were to compete with Philadelphia's Roman Catholic churches. In his memoir, di Domenica appears to have reproduced part of a sermon on this topic. He wrote,

The superb buildings of the Roman Church in this country attract the attention of the people. That church never starts missionary work in a store. Oftentimes they begin to build a church and put a roof above the basement, where they remain until they have the necessary funds to finish the work. But they call that a church and not a store. Why do not the children of light learn how to do such things from the children of darkness?

Brethren: I want to be frank with you this afternoon. I want to tell you what I told our dear president in a private letter, that I left New Haven because of the greater opportunity which this field offers for a colossal Italian work. We cannot do the work if we do not have the tools to do it. If you will not give us the necessary tools, I felt that I cannot waste my time here. Are you going to continue to play with this hopeful and promising work, or are you going to do a work worthy of our Baptist denomination? 'Let us plan great things for God if we are to expect great things from Him.'<sup>22</sup>

In 1921, di Domenica located an available church building and convinced Philadelphia's Baptist Union to buy it. The Church of the Reconciliation became St. John's Baptist Church and remained under the leadership of di Domenica until 1953 (Figures 15-17).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Domenica, 83.

<sup>23</sup> "A real estate broker, Mr. Pasquale Del Vecchio, met me and asked if it was true that I was looking for a church, because he had a property located in our vicinity which was for sale. It was the Reformed Episcopal Church at the corner of Thirteenth and Tasker Streets. I went to see it immediately and became interested in the prospect of our buying it for our work. The Baptist Union bought it for \$45,000 and spent \$10,000 to remodel it for a Baptist Church. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1921, the rededication of this church—and the chapel attached to it—took place. My joy and that of our congregation cannot be described in words. Two years later, a house next door to the church was bought for \$10,000 and another \$10,000 was spent for remodeling it and adapting it for our clinic and other activities of our Christian center." Domenica, 111–12.



*Figure 15. The congregation of St. John's circa 1930 in front of the northern façade of the church loggia [author and exact date unknown].*

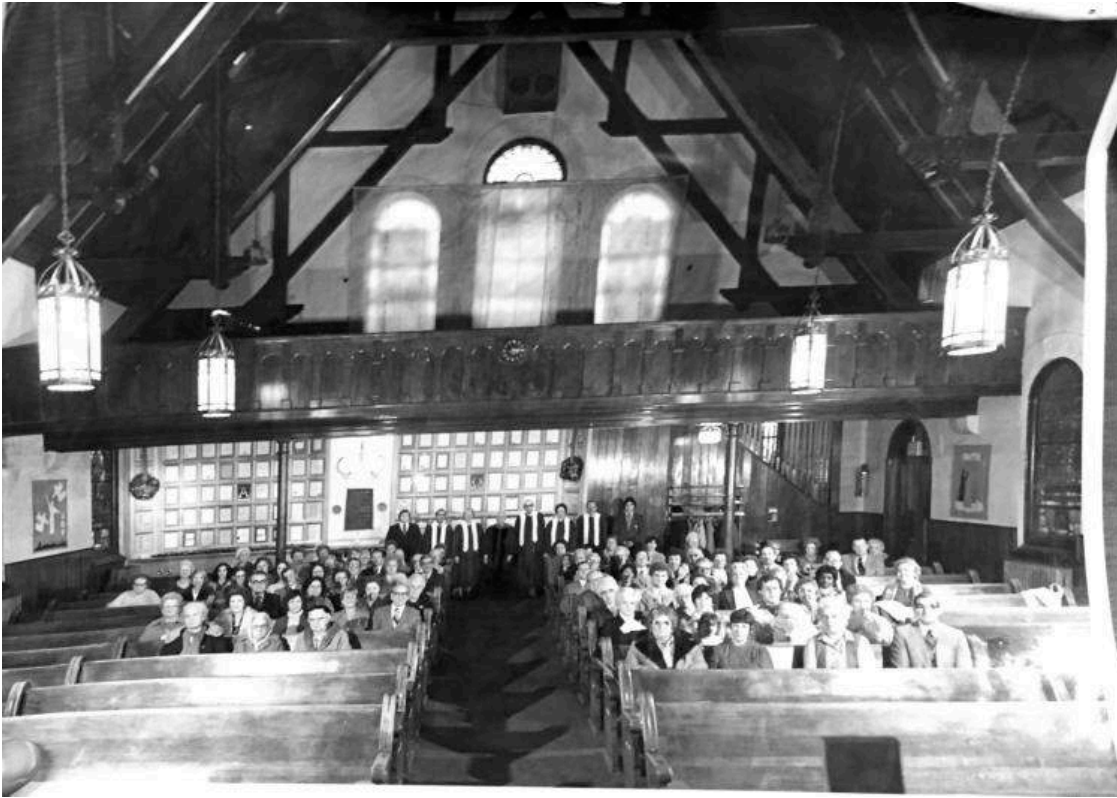


Figure 16. Inside St. John's, facing westwards from the altar [St. John's collection, date and author unknown]. Note the hammer beam timber truss.

## The NEW AURORA

AN EVANGELICAL WITNESS TO PEOPLE OF ITALIAN BACKGROUND AND OTHERS  
"That they may know Him and the power of His resurrection." — (Phil. 3:10).



ANGELO DI DOMENICA  
May 29, 1872 — May, 13, 1970  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE "NEW AURORA"

"When I go — just announce that Angelo Di Domenica has gone to his reward." From one of his letters.

VOLUME 68 Single subscription \$3.00 per year \$1.50 per copy Summer 1970

## LA NUOVA AURORA

ABBONAMENTO ANNUALE TRE LITTELLA, LIRE 1960  
In agenzia al Sign. Mario Giordani, Piazza in Locata 14, Roma

### In Memoria del Dottore e Pastore ANGELO DI DOMENICA

Maggio 29, 1872-Maggio 13, 1970

In questa tribuna di affetto il fate dei nostri sentimenti a la storia del pastore Di Domenica, e viene insigniti di lagrime ad trovare il canale di essere vivente che a raccolta la tua Salvo. La legge eterna e immutabile di Colui che tutto muove, da tempo ha scritto, tutte le Creature nate e quelle che nascono, su questa eterna pianeta per circostanze diverse a tempo indifferente dovranno tenere al gesto di partenza verso la Città Del silenzio.

Il Signore della vita e della amore dopo 97 anni in cui 60 anni datti per Evangelizzare gli italiani l'America a volare richiudendo a se per datti la corona immortale che a preparato per tutti la sua bene.

Non della prima Chiesa Battista di Filadelfia, ora Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista non dimanderemo mai il lavoro Missionario, che insieme a tua moglie, avete espletato nella Comunità Indo-Americana nel Sud Filadelfia.

Del stato nostro Pastore, Maestro, Fratello, Padre, Consiglieri Missionari, al tuo alto sapere acciarti le vire del tuo cuore; e qualunque picchia al tuo cuore non tornava mai vuoto. Noi che siamo ai tuoi figli, e a quelli che furono legati per un'ora e per l'eternità, le nostre (per) scritte consolatorie. Signe le tue vire non fiori, non lagrime, non rimorsi di morte, ma sempre nel in eterno, alga il sorriso dell'amore che mai non muore!

Riposa in Pace.

ANTONIO GENTILE

THE NEW AURORA

### La Bibbia Nel Giudizio di Molti Eminenti Filosofi



Siamo contenti di citare almeno alcuni dei nostri ingegni filosofi. Antonio Roselli dice: Nel principio della stessa creazione la Bibbia Scrittura era l'unico testo d'istruzione che a veramente il libro del genere umano. L'umanità e' dipinto dal principio alla fine, conosciuta collettivamente del mondo e termina nella futura sua distruzione. L'uomo viene se stesso in tutte le sue modificazioni di cui e' assorbito. Si trova una risposta precisa, sicuro ed evolutivo a tutte le grandi interrogazioni che ha sempre a fare a se' stesso e la mente di lui si resta appagata, con la scienza e col mistero, non il suo cuore si resta pace appagato, colla legge e colla giustizia. In quel libro l'eterna verità parla in tutti i linguaggi e ora annunzia, ora avverte, ora cetta; la memoria e' pacifica colla storia; l'immaginazione dischiama colla poesia; l'intelletto Ra-

Page 11

Figure 17. An obituary for Angelo Di Domenica, the second pastor of St. John's Baptist Church and a co-founder of *The New Aurora*, an Italian-Baptist missionary journal that published in English and Italian [The New Aurora, Summer 1970].



### 7-3. Baptist Cosmopolitanism at St. John's

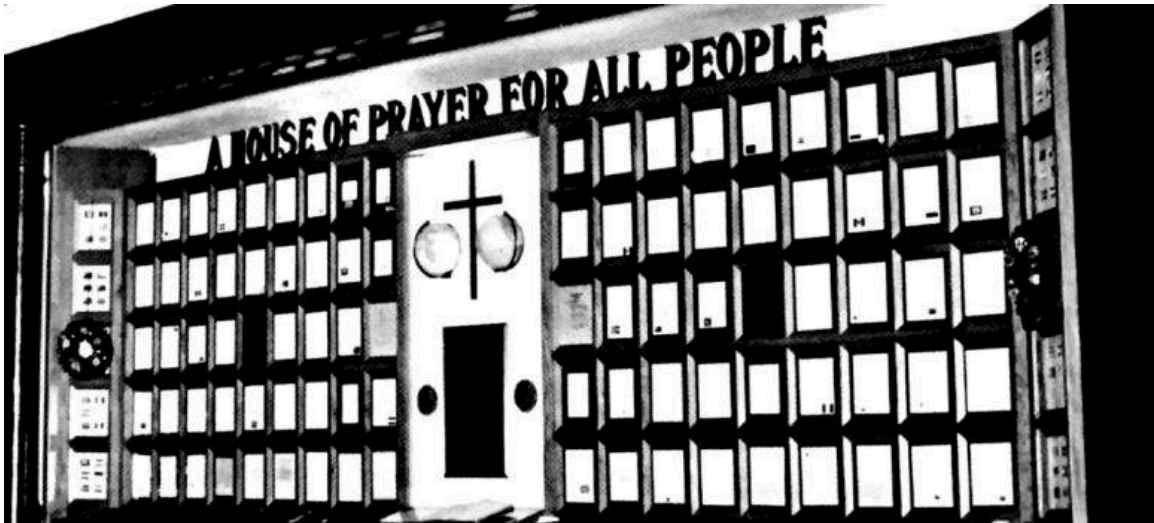


Figure 18. The display for "A House of Prayer for All People" at the back of the St. John's Baptist Church, sometime after 1956 [author and exact date of photograph unknown].

In 1953, after di Domenica's retirement, Rev. Anthony Vasquez became the third pastor of St. John's. Three years later, Vasquez rededicated St. John's as "A House of Prayer for All People" (Figure 18), a moniker inscribed on a panel display at the back of the sanctuary of St. John's that was meant to celebrate the cosmopolitan and humanitarian values of the evangelical congregation. To memorialize these values, Vasquez led his congregants on world tours (often to Italy, perhaps not surprisingly; Figure 19) and began a multi-decade letter writing campaign in which he would contact political and religious leaders from around the world, express his congratulations or well-wishes, and ask for a flag or another kind of token that he could display on the "A House of Prayer for All People" panel (Figure 20). By 1956, there were 104 nations represented. A large collection of responses to these letters, written on official stationery, remain in the pastor's office of St. John's. Vasquez letter-writing campaign also included local political leaders, such as Frank Rizzo, the mayor of Philadelphia from 1972-1980.

As an institution dedicated to cosmopolitanism, St. John's should be understood as a response to the influence of Mussolini's fascist regime on Italian-Americans during World War II and the growing ethnic self-consciousness of Italian-Americans in the postwar period. In the 1930s, the Fascist regime used Italian priests and parochial schools in the United States to help spread ethno-national propaganda, which local officials like di Domenica and Cardinal Dennis J. Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia, tried their best to curb.<sup>24</sup> In the postwar period, more progressive Italian-Americans struggled to dissociate their community from the Mafioso world of organized crime while also celebrating their Italian heritage. In 1961, for example, there was a successful campaign to rename Passyunk Square, located two blocks north of St. John's

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<sup>24</sup> On the influence of Mussolini's regime in Philadelphia, see Stefano Luconi, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 93.

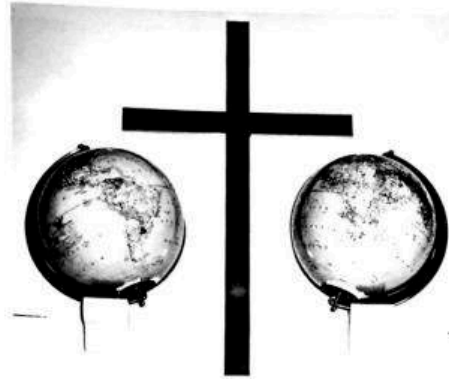
Baptist Church, Columbus Square in order to celebrate the memory of the Italian navigator, Christopher Columbus, who discovered America.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the Vasquez era and that of his successor, Rev. David M. Powles, St. John's Baptist Church symbolized an alternative to ethnic militancy. When the demographics of South Philadelphia began to shift in the 1970s with the arrival of immigrants from Southeast Asia (especially from Vietnam and refugees from Cambodia), St. John's welcomed them.<sup>26</sup> Today, as the ethnic and socioeconomic demographics of South Philadelphia continue to change alongside real estate development, interim pastors Tony Campolo and Rev. Dr. Lyndell D. Backues lead St. John's Baptist Church (Figure 21) and are trying to revive its dwindling congregation. The cosmopolitan tradition started under Vasquez, however, continues as the church hosts Indonesian and Burmese evangelical congregations on Sundays (Figure 22).

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<sup>25</sup> Luconi, 119.

<sup>26</sup> For one of the more recent analyses of the immigrant communities in Philadelphia, see Ayumi Takenaka and Mary Johnson Osirim, eds., *Global Philadelphia: Immigrant Communities Old and New* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

## World Outreach



World Outreach



Fellowship and Goodwill Tour 1968



Representative of Nations



Goodwill tour Meeting with the Mayor of Florence, Italy



Inter-faith Award  
1967

Figure 19. Rev. Vasquez's commitment to world outreach.

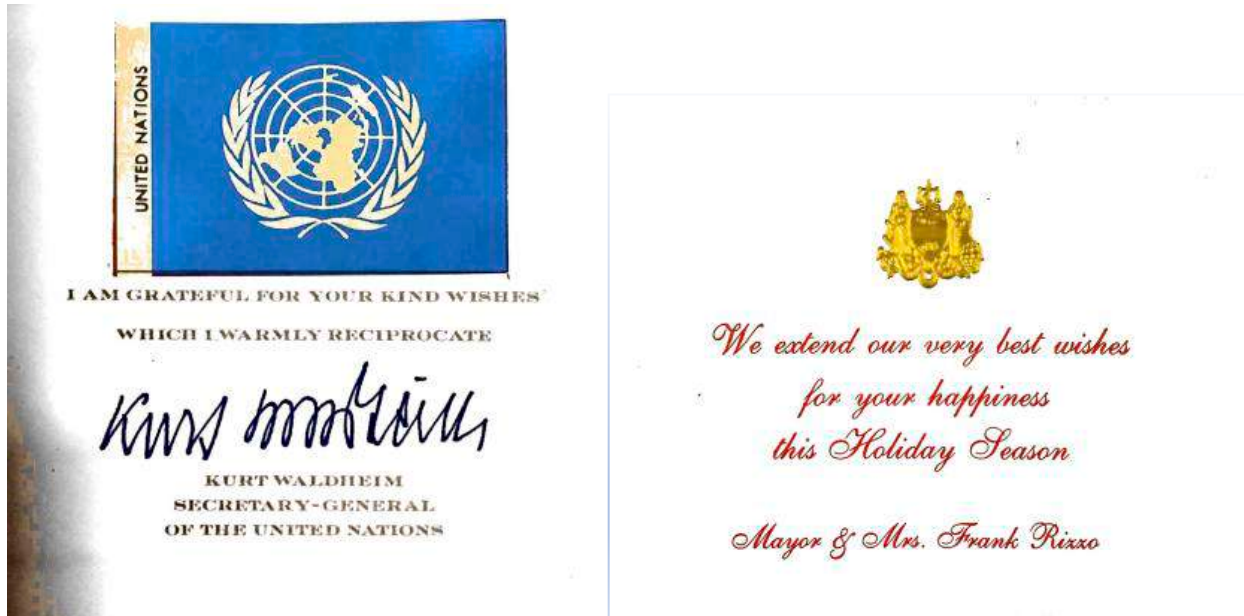


Figure 20. The global and the local. Rev. Vasquez



Figure 21. [Grace Maiorano, *South Philly Review*, February 2019].





*Figure 22. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Rev. Chiera and St. John's Baptist Church congregated in the buildings of more established Protestant churches. Today, St. John's welcomes Burmese and Indonesian evangelical congregations into its building, continuing a South Philadelphia tradition. [Kevin Block, November 2019].*

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**Contributors**

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With the assistance of Mr. Patrick Grossi, Director of Advocacy, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.



## **Appendix**

Included in this appendix are documents from "St. John's Baptist Church" file for the George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Clippings collection held at the Special Collections Research Center at Temple University.

Ground was broken yesterday morning for the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Reconciliation, southeast corner of Thirteenth and Tasker streets. The services were most appropriate to the occasion, consisting of an address by the pastor, Rev. F. H. Reynolds, followed by a prayer by Rev. Mr. Tracy, the singing of the doxology and the benediction. The first shovelful of ground was taken up by Mrs. Margaret Pechin, who has given or collected most of the money necessary to erect the church. The contractors are George Rowe, masonry, and George L. Harvey, carpentry. The architect is Samuel Hall Day. The building is to be of Leiperville and Indiana stone and Pompeian brick, surmounted with a red tile roof. The building will cost \$12,000.

The first large shipment of fire bricks

# Jews and Christians To Share Prayers

Jews and Christians will share prayers tomorrow in the House of Prayer of St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts., during a service dedicated to Israel, Dr. Anthony Veasquez, pastor, announced today.

The service, starting at 10 A.M., is part of a program begun years ago in which special prayers are offered weekly for various nations for the world.

The services have brought the church many national flags and souvenirs, Dr. Veasquez, said, including letters of thanks from the heads of foreign government, such as President Shazar and Ambassador Avraham Harman, of Israel.

**MAY 22 1965**

# Rev. A. F. Vasquez Gets Baptist Pastorate

The Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez has resigned as Christian education director of the Philadelphia Baptist Association to become full-time pastor of St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts.

He has held the association post, directing a wide variety of youth activities, ranging from religious to recreational, for the last eight years. He is also youth director for the Italian Baptist Convention of America, and editor of "The Phila-baptist." He will be installed in the pastorate on November 24.



# 'House of Prayer' Gets Gift of Menorah

A Hebrew menorah, or candle holder, will be presented to the "House of Prayer for All People" at St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts., today by Max Varon, the Israeli consul, as the gift of Ambassador Abba Eban.

It is to be part of a permanent "gift of nations" exhibit that the church is planning to have dedicated on February 21. Gifts have been received from Bolivia, China, Libya, Poland, the Philippines, Norway, Turkey and Rumania, and are in transit from several other countries. The Rev. Anthony Vasquez is the pastor.

*"My House shall be called of all nations the House of Prayer."*

**ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH**  
"A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE"  
Philadelphia, Pa.

**Tenth Anniversary Service**

Sunday, February 27, 1966 — 10:00 A. M.

**ORDER OF SERVICES**

*Jesus said:*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God"*

PRELUDE: "Psalm XIX" — Benedetto Marcello  
(The Heavens Declare the Glory of God)

Mr. Carmen Giordano  
Organist and Choir Director

PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 386

(Congregation will rise and sing as choir enters)

INVOCATION — The Lord's Prayer

Dr. Anthony F. Vasquez, Pastor

CHORAL EXHORTATION "Beloved Let Us Love One Another"

Choir

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 56:1-7

Dr. Thomas B. McDormand  
President, Eastern Baptist College and Seminary

CHORAL SELECTION "Church's One Foundation" Wesley-Rasely

Choir

OFFERTORY PRAYER

The Rev. Joseph Bolognese  
Associate Pastor

OFFERTORY ANTHEM "From All That Dwell Below the Skies" G. Young Choir

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 19:36-44

Mr. Bolognese

SOLO: "Largo" from Sonata in a Minor, Corelli

Mrs. John Parisano

SERMON "Eleventh Hour Warning"

Mr. Robert G. Torbet  
President, American Baptist Convention

SERVICE OF RE-DEDICATION

Dr. Warren Mild  
President, Baptist Institute a Junior College

REMEMBERING IN PRAYER THE PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS

Dr. McDormond

CHORAL RESPONSE "God the Father" Provenzano-Vasquez

Choir

HYMN No. 311 "Lead On O King Eternal"

BENEDICTION

Dr. Vasquez

(Guest will move toward the back of the church to be  
greeted by the members of the congregation.)

CHORAL AMEN — Chimes

ORGAN POSTLUDE "Concerto in A-Minor  
(1st Movement) Vivaldi-Bach

Mr. Giordano



## NATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

AFGHANISTAN	GREAT BRITAIN	NEW ZEALAND
ARGENTINA	GREECE	NICARAGUA
AUSTRIA	GUATAMALA	NIGER
AUSTRALIA	HAITI	NIGERIA
BELGIUM	HONDURAS	NORWAY
BOLIVIA	HUNGARY	PAKISTAN
BRAZIL	ICELAND	PANAMA
BURMA	INDIA	PARAGUAY
CAMBODIA	INDONESIA	PERU
CANADA	IRAQ	PHILIPPINES
CEYLON	IRELAND	POLAND
CHAD	ISRAEL	PORTUGAL
CHILE	ITALY	RUMANIA
CHINA (TAIPEI)	JAMAICA	SAUDI ARABIA
COLOMBIA	JORDAN	SPAIN
CONGO (BRAVILLO)	KOREA (SOUTH)	SWEDEN
CONGO (LEOVILLE)	LAOS	SWITZERLAND
COSTA RICA	LEBANON	SYRIA
CUBA	LIBERIA	TAIWAN
CYPRUS	LIBYA	TUNISIA
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	LIECHTENSTEIN	TURKEY
DAHOMY	LITHUANIA	UNITED STATES
DENMARK	LUXEMBOURG	UNITED STATES OF SOUTH AFRICA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	MALAGASY	U. S. S. R. (RUSSIA)
ECUADOR	MALI	UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC
EGYPT	MALAWI	YUGOSLAVIA
EL SALVADOR	MEXICO	ZAMBIE
ESTONIA	NETHERLANDS	
ETHIOPIA		
FINLAND		
FRANCE		
GERMANY (WEST)		
GHANA		



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# Church Prayer Center Here Gets Flags From 50 Nations

By HARRISON W. FRY  
Religious Editor of The Bulletin

Fifty nations have sent their national flags to St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts., which is to be dedicated as a house of prayer for all people.

Ambassadors and other world leaders from 76 countries, in addition, have sent the church letters of goodwill or prayer to be placed in a prayer center designed by Anthony J. Macalusso, architect.

## Exhibit of Handicrafts

The young people and other members of the congregation have prepared books of friendship for every nation that contain, in addition to a history of the country, brief biographies of some of its outstanding leaders. These books, to be placed in the pray-

er center, will be available to all. The congregation is gathering articles of interest and representative handicrafts of the nations. This exhibition may be loaned to responsible groups for educational purposes.

At the center of the prayer sanctuary is a bronze plaque bearing a prayer by the pastor of the church, the Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez: "God, the Father, is here. Here, too, are hopes of men by faith inspired. Close your eyes; open your heart. Bow your head; lift your voice. May your prayer, with theirs, seek Heaven's amen. Let suppliant brother's love peace implore. Then, listen. Prayer is the soul's highway to God, that reaches back to you. Amen."

The flag of the United States and the church flag occupy the places of honor. In the center are flags of Israel and Arab nations and of Russia and the other members of the United Nations.

## Dedication February 17

The Prayer Center for All People and the Flags of Nations will be dedicated on February 17, designated by the National Council of Churches as World Day of Prayer. Dr. Herbert Gezork, former general secretary of the German Baptist Youth movement, until it was dissolved under the Hitler regime, which he opposed, will deliver the dedicatory address.

Within recent years he has gone

to Europe three times on missions for the U. S. Government. At present he is president of Andover-Newton Theological Seminary. Ross Bunze, president of the Philadelphia Council of Churches, and Dr. William Hermann, moderator of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, will have a part in the program. Governor Leader has been invited to unveil the prayer center and plaque.

## Nation for Each Sunday

A part of the worship service each Sunday, after the dedicatory service, will be to single out a nation and make a brief statement about it. Worshippers will be asked to pray for that nation and all the peoples of the world in a chain of prayer to help build bridges of understanding and break down the walls of prejudice and ignorance.

A campaign will be launched at the dedicatory service to enlist all people in a covenant of prayer in which they promise to pray daily for peace and brotherhood for all peoples of the world.

Consuls who will represent their nations at the dedicatory service include: J. Affra, Portugal; M. Pierre Gabard, France; Miss Indira Nalin, India; Mathias J. Moe, Norway; Nuzhet Baba, Turkey; Bela Nyitrai, Hungary; Tishiro Shimanouchi, Japan; Joseph Ku, China; Miss Zilah M. Peixoto, Brazil; Max Robbin, Switzerland; Terrence Empson, Great Britain; Jacques Leroux, Belgium; Charles S. Bayer, Netherlands; Francisco Serrano, Ecuador; and Constantine A. Triantaphyllakos, Greece.



# Hispanics observe St. John festival

The four-day Festival of St. John  
the Baptist being celebrated by the  
Hispanic community of Philadelphia  
will include activities at the Cruz  
Recreational Playground, 6th and  
Master sts., from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.  
today and from 10 A.M. to dusk  
tomorrow. JUN 23 1979 -A

Today's events will include athletic  
competitions for area youths.  
Events tomorrow, the concluding  
day of the festival which began  
Thursday, will include games and pi-  
natas for children, dancing to Span-  
ish music, the selling of homemade  
Spanish food, and a fireworks dis-  
play. The festival commemorates St.  
John the Baptist, the patron saint of  
Puerto Rico.

**139 nations represented**

# House of prayer for all people

FEB 26 1979 -E 1

FEB 26 1979

By PAULA HERBUT  
Of The Bulletin Staff

The Sunday worship guide yesterday at St. John's Baptist Church in South Philadelphia looked ordinary at first glance.

But then, tucked in among the listing of hymns, scripture reading, offertory and sermon were the announcements, "Remembering in Prayer the People of South Korea" and "Greetings from H. E. Young Shik Kim, Ambassador."

There were other indications of something different at this church. Outside on the large red door of the main sanctuary at 13th and Tasker sts. are the words, "House of Prayer for All People."

Inside the sanctuary, flags of 78 nations circle the pulpit area — each of the flags was sent by its nation's ambassador or head of government. At the rear of the room and upstairs in the church, letters from 139 heads of government to the church are displayed or filed.

Inside the smaller adjacent "Gift of Nations Room," where the congregation gathered yesterday for the worship service, are gifts from nations around the world, most of them hand-crafted items, and signs above the glass cases with the words "God is Love" in more than 20 languages.

"This morning as usual we continue in remembering those who are part of the nations of man," the Rev. Dr. Anthony F. Vasquez told his congregation from the pulpit. "This morning it is Korea South Korea."

He read a letter to the congregation from the South Korean ambassador to the U.S. "I am deeply moved and heartened" that South Korea will be "remembered in meditation and prayer for peace and brotherhood," the ambassador wrote.

"Let us bow our heads in prayer," Dr. Vasquez told his congregation.

The Sunday before it was North Korea that was remembered by the church. Two Sundays ago it was Kenya. In fact, for the past 23 years, a different nation around the world each week has been prayed for by the congregation of this American Baptist church.

The congregation numbers 250 and many of the members are Italian-



**A  
visit to  
your  
church**

Americans who, like their pastor, grew up in the South Philadelphia neighborhood. Yesterday, there were less than 100 attending the 10 A.M. service.

But belief in the power of prayer is strong. So is the conviction that the idea of peace and brotherhood can grow.

"Can't you imagine, if everyone thought the way we did?" one member of the church, Anthony Griffoni, 53, of Northeast Philadelphia, said after the service.

The idea for the House of Prayer for all People came after Dr. Vasquez, an immigrant to Philadelphia from Sicily who became a leader of Philadelphia Baptist and Italian-American clergy organizations, visited the Middle East in the mid-1950s. Israel and Jordan were at the end of one war. "The hatred was so bitter it just killed you," Dr. Vasquez said in an interview in his office.

"And so when I came back, I said what am I going to do about this — I can preach a sermon, but it's just going to be an out for me," he said. He then heard a speech by President Eisenhower calling for "an army of people around the world praying for peace and brotherhood," he said.

"I wrote to the President and told him I would like to start a house of prayer for all people in which we would enlist all the nations of the world to cooperate," Dr. Vasquez said. Then he contacted the heads of governments around the world to ask for the presentation of a flag and "a letter of prayer or goodwill," he said.

Twenty-eight nations sent representatives at the dedication of the House of Prayer in 1956. To date, 139 have sent flags, letters of goodwill or representative gifts. Meanwhile, people from around the world who have visited the church have joined the House of Prayer by signing pledges to pray for peace and brotherhood, he said.

"I don't know of any religious group, any denomination, any faith, that doesn't have the common denominator of prayer," he said. "So if I can get people praying for each other, we can get at least a common denominator."

Besides, he added, "it's impossible to hate people that you pray for."

# **Dedication Service**

OF THE

## **Gifts of Nations**

IN A

**House of Prayer For All People**

**An International Sanctuary of**

**Prayer**

**For Peace and Brotherhood**

*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall  
be called the Children of God."*

**St. John's Baptist Church**

**THIRTEENTH AND TASKER STREETS**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA.**

**Friday, February 21, 1958**

**8:00 P. M.**

# Order of Services

Reverend Anthony F. Vasquez, Pastor  
Presiding

## ORGAN PRELUDE

"Prelude and Fugue" J. S. Bach ..... Mr. David D. Raycroft

PROCESSIONAL HYMN #387 .... "We've A Story To Tell To The Nations"

INVOCATION ..... Reverend Yam Tong Hoh,  
Pastor of the Chinese Christian Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

SCRIPTURE READING I John 4: 1-12 ..... Reverend Enrique Rodriquez  
Pastor Spanish Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

## CHORAL SELECTION

"God Is Our Refuge and Strength" .... Dudley Buden Senior Choir

## OUR HONORED GUESTS

MR. ROBERTO BARTHEL-ROSA, Consul of Brazil in Philadelphia

MR. C. P. PENG, First Secretary of the Chinese Embassy, Washington, D. C.

DR. F. BREDHAL PETERSEN, President of the Baptist Union of Denmark

REV. ERLING NEILSEN, Vije, Denmark

MISS GAMEELA S. KHALI, Egyptian Education Bureau

MR. NICHOLAS PEDROSO, Consul of El Salvador in Philadelphia, Pa.

MR. HORST PELCKMANN, Consul of Germany, Phila., Pa.

MR. R. O. MENSAH, Embassy of Ghana, Press Attache

MR. RAYMOND PACE ALEXANDER, Ancien Consul d'Haiti

MR. TIBOR ZADOR, First Secretary of the Hungarian Embassy, Washington, D. C.

MR. R. M. HALDER, Embassy of India, First Secretary of Education

MR. APUL PANGGABEAN, Cultural Counsellor of Indonesia.

MR. AHMED MINAI, Embassy of Iran, Press Attache

MR. MAX VARON, Consul of Israel, New York City

MR. IN HAN PAIK, Embassy of Korea, Second Secretary

MRS. ANNE CHELEDIN, Representing Lithuania

MR. CORNELIS A. C. TENSEN, Vice Consul of the Netherlands, Philadelphia, Pa.

REV. EILIF JOHAN JACOBSEN, Representing the Consulate of Norway in  
Philadelphia Pa.

MR. S. M. HAG, Embassy of Pakistan, Press Attache

MR. JOSE BERNARDINE HENRIQUE, Consul Portugal in Philadelphia, Pa.

MR. MAX ROBBI, Chancellor, Consulate of Switzerland, Philadelphia, Pa.

HIS EXCELLENCY JULIO A. LACARTE, Ambassador of Uruguay, Washington, D. C.

OFFERTORY ..... Offering

SOLO .... "Lord, Make Me an instrument of Your Peace" Harry Banks  
John Parisano

RESPONSIVE READING ..... Reverend F. Bredhal Petersen, D.D.  
President, Baptist Union of Denmark

Leader: Lord, thou didst make us from the dust of the earth and  
didst breath into our nostrils the breath of life, giving  
us free and living spirits.



- Congregation:** Create in us a clean heart that we may be aware of the precious gift of human friendship.
- Leader:** Thy ways are not our ways, we have stood upon holy ground, yet none has bowed in humiliation, nor confessed his sin.
- Congregation:** We give thanks for the love which suffereth long and is kind, which hopeth all things, believeth all things, and never faileth.
- Leader:** Disturb, Thou, the clay of our humanity by thy Spirit, Grant that we might seek truth, beauty and goodness for all people.
- Congregation:** Mark our lives with such love for all Thy children that no man or race shall be called common or unclean.
- Leader:** Make us Thy willing instruments to redeem the world from the blight of selfish interests and the arrogance of inordinate national pride.
- Congregation:** Fulfill through us Thy will for a better life, Thy urging for personal holiness, and constrain us to greater efforts for peace and brotherhood among all people.
- Leader:** Save Thy People, O Lord, Thou King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### LET US PRAY

- Unison:** Thou Great Companion of the sons of men, Thou dost invite us to seek Thee daily and daily offerest Thyself to be found, Thou art ever with us, in our homes, in the fields, in the sanctuary and on the highway.
- We come out of varying experiences but pleading a holy cause and a common need. Save us, body, mind, and spirit, that we may praise Thee, not only with our lips, but with our lives: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### CHORAL AMEN

**DEDICATORY ADDRESS** ..... Reverend Clarence Cranford, D.D.  
President of the American Baptist Convention

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION** ..... Reverend Edwin Luther Cunningham, D.D.  
Pastor of St. Paul's Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

**BENEDICTION** ..... Reverend Anthony F. Vasquez

**RECESSIONAL HYMN #386** ..... "O Zion Haste"

**ORGAN POSTLUDE** "Fanfare" J. Lemmens .... Mr. David D. Raycroft



The congregation is invited to meet our guests and also see the Gifts of Nations in the DiDomenica Prayer Room.

Kindly follow the leading of the ushers to avoid confusion.

The following nations are represented by their national flags, letters of prayer or good-will, or with gifts for our permanent exhibition, or in all three ways.

We extend to them our deep appreciation for their cooperation.

ARGENTINA	GREECE	NICARAGUA
AUSTRALIA	GUATEMALA	NORWAY
AUSTRIA	HAITI	PAKISTAN
BELGIUM	HONDURAS	PANAMA
BOLIVIA	HUNGARY	PERU
BRAZIL	ICELAND	PHILLIPPINES
BURMA	INDIA	POLAND
CAMBODIA	INDONESIA	PORTUGAL
CANADA	IRAN	ROMANIA
CEYLON	IRAQ	SAUDI ARABIA
CHILE	IRELAND	SPAIN
CHINA	ISRAEL	SWEDEN
COSTA RICA	ITALY	SWITZERLAND
CZECHO-SLOVAKIA	JAPAN	THAILAND
DENMARK	JORDAN	TUNISIA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	KOREA	TURKEY
ECUADOR	LAOS	UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA
EGYPT	LEBANON	U. S. S. R. (RUSSIA)
EL SALVADOR	LIBERIA	UNITED STATES
ETHIOPIA	LIBYA	URUGUAY
FINLAND	LUXEMBOURG	VENEZUELA
FRANCE	MOROCCO	VIET NAM
GERMANY	NETHERLANDS	YEMEN
GHANA	NEW ZEALAND	YUGOSLAVIA
GREAT BRITAIN		

#### CHURCH STAFF

REV. ANTHONY F. VASQUEZ, B.D., Pastor

REV. ANGELO DiDOMENICA, D.D., Pastor-Emeritus

REV. JAMES L. LOWE, A.B., Student Assistant

MISS ELIZABETH ROBINSON, Director of The Christian Center

MR. DAVID D. RAYCROFT, Organist and Choir Director

MISS SHIRLEY UNANGST, Kindergarten Teacher

FEB 23 1958 JK

# Modest Baptist Church in South Phila. Grows Into International Goodwill Shrine

By **GEORGE RILEY**

*Of The Bulletin Staff*

For nearly 50 years, St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts., has been a modest neighborhood church, quietly serving a part of South Philadelphia.

But now the community church has assumed a "One World" consciousness. The congregation and pastor, the Rev. Anthony Vasquez, over the past two years have assembled a "museum of international goodwill."

The church now calls itself "A House of Prayer for All People."

## Letters From Statesmen

Its sanctuary is a blaze of color with the closely grouped flags of 65 nations, including Russia. They were given by the countries

or by the embassies in Washington.

In attractive new oak paneling, covering the entire rear wall of the church, there are framed letters signed by statesmen of these nations. Nearly all of them are expressions of goodwill and hope for world peace and friendship.

A room off the sanctuary houses the new "Gifts of Nations" museum. It contains some 500 examples of arts and crafts of many of the nations, all of them contributed, and many quite valuable.

A service to dedicate the museum on Friday night had an intercultural, interracial, international atmosphere.

Taking part with the Italian American pastor, Mr. Vasquez, were the Rev. Yam Tong Hoh, of

the Chinese Christian Church; the Rev. Enrique Rodriguez, of the Spanish Baptist Church, and the Rev. E. Luther Cunningham, of St. Paul's Negro Baptist Church.

## Visiting Notables

Notable visiting participants were the Rev. Dr. Clarence Cranford, of Washington, president of the American Baptist Convention, and the Rev. Dr. Bredhal Petersen, president of the Baptist Union of Denmark.

In the front pew were representatives from the embassies in Washington of China, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Korea and Pakistan, and the Philadelphia consuls for Germany and Switzerland.

Dr. Cranford paid high tribute to the church for "lighting a

window of world friendship" that would inspire every congregation in the American Baptist denomination to widen its outlook.

Reflecting the concern of Baptists for fellow Baptists in Russia, Dr. Cranford said that he would visit there in April in company with Congressman Brooks Hays, of Arkansas, who is president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Truly International  
Is Shrine Set Up  
By St. John's Church  
In South Phila.**

FEB 12 1956 INQ.

BY EDGAR WILLIAMS

**F**OR Protestants and members of the Eastern Orthodox faith from here to Hiroshima, next Friday is World Day of Prayer. Nowhere will it have greater manifestation than in a little church in South Philadelphia.

At St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker sts., there will be dedicated a prayer center, a shrine to the brotherhood of nations under God. Called "A House of Prayer for All People," it is a very real expression of the One World theme.

The prayer center extends along the entire rear wall of the sanctuary. Dominated by a cross and twin terrestrial globes, it has a place for people to kneel and a book in which they can write their personal prayers for peace and brotherhood. Arrayed at both ends are small reproductions of national flags, 90 in all. The remainder of the space is utilized for the display of letters from prominent figures of many nations, among them former President Truman; Madame Chiang Kai-shek; Syngman Rhee, President of South Korea, and Abba Eban, Israeli ambassador to the U. S.

On a bronze plaque beneath the cross is this inscription, written by the Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, pastor of St. John's:

*God, The Father, is here. Here, too, are hopes of men by faith inspired. Close your eyes. Open your heart. Bow your head. Lift your voice. May your prayer with theirs seek Heaven's "Amen." Let suppliant brother's love peace implore. Then, listen. Prayer is the Soul's Highway to God that reaches back to you.*

The theme isn't confined to the rear of the sanctuary. Massed at the altar are the flags of 57 nations, gifts of those nations to St. John's. Eventually, it is hoped, every nation will be represented. Linking the flags is a golden cord, symbolic of brotherhood.

"The aim," says Mr. Vasquez, "is to have people think of all countries not in terms of governments, but of human beings. When the project of displaying the flags in the church was broached, somebody said: 'But it will look like the Olympic Games.' The answer to that was simple—where is a better place for the flags of all nations to be united?"

The germ of the idea was born in September, 1954, when President Eisenhower asked Americans of all faiths to pray for peace. The people of St. John's, mostly Italian-Americans, not only prayed but wrote to the Presi-

**Today...**

**The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Magazine** FEBRUARY 12, 1956



The Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, pastor of St. John's, adjusts cord connecting the flags of 57 nations.

# A House of Prayer

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# House of Prayer: *CONTINUED*



Working on flag booklets: the pastor, Gabe Cimino, Maria Mattioni, Judy Saracino, Gemma and Bill Pellegrini.



The minister at the rostrum in St. John's Baptist Church. Back of altar in the background are arrayed the flags of 57 nations.

dent, assuring him of their support. "But they wanted to do still more," recalls the pastor. "The question was—what?"

Last summer, St. John's pastor attended the World Baptist Alliance in London. Later, in Paris, he saw an American flag. "Suddenly," he says, "it came to me. That flag reminded me of people. What a wonderful thing it would be, I thought, if we could enshrine the flag of every country in a sanctuary as a constant reminder that all people are members of God's family."

Returning to St. John's, he outlined the idea to his congregation: create a prayer center open to all and use flags "to remind people of people." Given approval, he set to work. He and his

secretary, Mrs. Rose Marie de Polis, wrote to the heads of 76 nations, asking that each contribute a flag of his country to the display. Also, outstanding figures in various countries were asked to send messages of good will for display in the prayer center.

Harry Truman replied: "I think you are on the right road with this idea. I hope it is a successful undertaking." Madame Chiang Kai-shek wrote in part: "While most of the people of the world long for peace, I feel that prayers for brotherhood, justice and righteousness . . . must come first. Peace cannot be had for the asking. It is a by-product of understanding and doing God's will."

From Syngman Rhee: "If your (project) only results in introspection

in countries where God is not recognized, it will have served a worthy purpose. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man form the foundation for true peace on earth." From Abba Eban: "The immortal idea of universal peace, as first proclaimed in the Land of Israel by our Prophets of old, is very close to the hearts of the people of modern Israel, and we are happy to join with you in your endeavor for understanding and good will among the nations of the world."

A request for both a flag and a letter of good will was sent to Russia's Nicolai Bulganin, but thus far the only reaction has come from a secretary in the Soviet embassy in Washington, who expressed the hope that the request would be fulfilled.

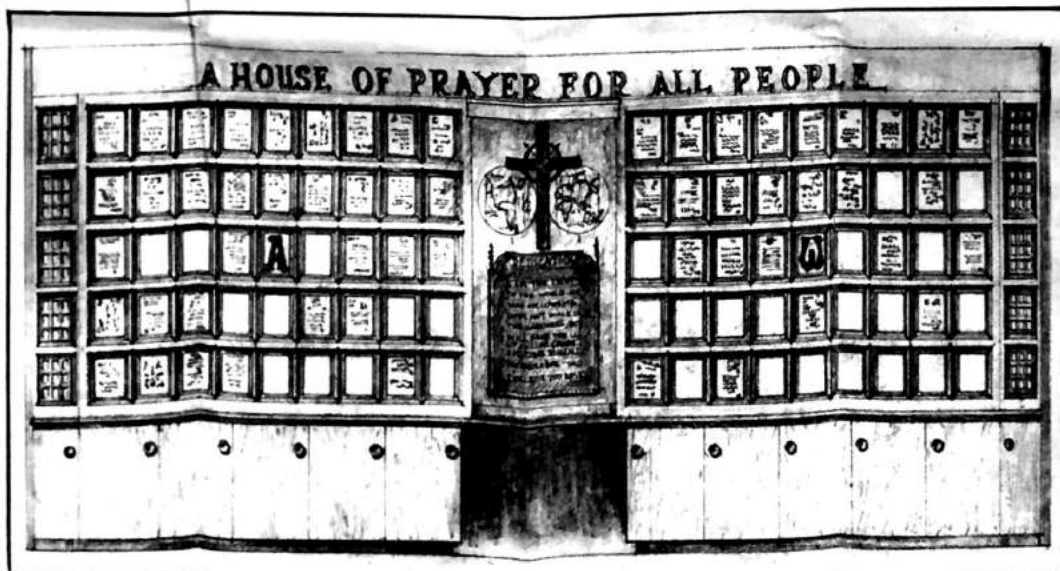
By the time all the bills are paid, the project will cost about \$7000. "We didn't have a nickel for it when we started," Mr. Vasquez says. "We had faith. There was no drive for funds. An architect named Anthony J. Macaluso, a Catholic, heard about the project and drew the plans for the prayer center without charge. We began construction on borrowed money. Two people who are not members of our church came to us and promised us a total of \$3300. Other contributions are coming in."

Since last fall the young adults of St. John's have been engaged in preparing booklets on the nations whose flags are on display. The booklets give brief histories of the nations and emphasize customs of the peoples. These will be kept at the prayer center for reference.

Each Sunday hereafter the pastor plans to single out a flag of a different nation, talk briefly on that nation and lead the congregation in a special prayer for its people. "We will not," he says, "dispense with our customary prayer for the whole family of nations. Rather, we will supplement it."

With the prayer center a reality, St. John's is preparing to sponsor another project. It is the pastor's dream to establish a world-wide league of people of all faiths who will pledge themselves to pray daily for peace and brotherhood. Three weeks ago the congregation voted unanimously to undertake the project.

"There will be no meetings to attend, no pleas for money," Mr. Vasquez explains. "All we ask is that people sign peace prayer pledge cards which we will provide, then live up to the pledge. We will start on a modest scale in our own area, but I foresee the day when it will extend much farther. The power of prayer has no limitations."



Prayer center extends along rear wall of sanctuary. Letters from many prominent persons are on display.



P R E S S   R E L E A S E

HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE

ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH  
13th and Tasker Streets  
Philadelphia 48, Penna.

Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, Pastor

Friday  
4/18/66  
Dewey 4-1282

23 Representatives of nations will be the honored guests at the Dedication of the "HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE", on Friday evening, February 17th. Nations who have designated representatives when the PRAYER CENTER OF ALL PEOPLE and the Flags of Nations will be dedicated are:

Mr. Jacques Leroux, Consul of Belgium  
Miss Zilah Mafra Peixoto, Consul of Brazil  
Mr. Joseph Ku, Chinese Embassy  
Mr. Francisco Serrano, V., Consul of Ecuador  
Mr. Nicholas Pedroso, Consul of El Salvador  
Mr. Pierre Garbard, Consul of France  
Mr. Terence Empson, Vice Consul of Great Britain  
Mr. M. Leonard Matt, Consul of Guatemala  
Mr. Raymond Pace Alexander, Consul of Haiti  
Miss Bela Nytrai, Legation of Hungary, Washington, D. C.  
Miss Indira Nalin, India  
Mr. Max M. Varon, Consul of Israel, New York City  
Dr. Ludovico Barattieri, Consul of Italy  
Mr. Toshiro Shimanouchi, Embassy of Japan, Washington, D. C.  
Mr. Charles Samuel Bayer, Jr., Consul for the Netherlands  
Mr. Mathias J. Moe, Consul of Norway  
Mr. Syud Ahmud, Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, D. C.  
Mr. C. Gardenas-Garcia, Consul of Peru  
Mr. Jose Bernardino Henriques, Consul of Portugal  
Mr. J. Affra, Portuguese Embassy, Washington, D. C.  
Mr. Max Robbi, Chancellor, Consulate of Switzerland  
Mr. Nuzhet Baba, Turkish Embassy, Washington, D. C.  
Mr. Josip DeFranceski, Embassy of Yugoslavia

68 nations have thus far sent letters of good-will or prayer to be enshrined in a specially designed PRAYER CENTER. Ambassador George V. Melas of the Royal Greek Embassy in Washington, D. C. was the latest to write. He said in part:

"By virtue of its spirit and its age-long traditions, the Greek nation is perhaps best qualified to figure in your project as it has always sought to grasp and give expression to the fundamental values of spiritual man, which can find their ultimate perfection only in the serenity of peaceful meditation and prayer.

It is in this spirit that we would like to participate in your endeavors and to join with you in prayer for peace and good-will among nations."

Three college and seminary presidents will participate in the program.

They are: President Herbert Gezork of Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, who will give



the Dedicatory Address. Dr. Gezork is one of the American Churchmen who recently was invited to visit Russia in March. He will go with eight others named by the President of the National Council of Churches. President Gilbert L. Guffin of Eastern Baptist College and Seminary will give the Pastoral Prayer, and President Sankey L. Blanton of Crozer Theological Seminary will give the Dedicatory Prayer. Others participating are Mr. J. Ross Bunce, President of the Philadelphia Council of Churches, and Dr. William J. Herman, Moderator of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. The Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, Pastor of the church will lead in the Service of Dedication, and Dr. Angelo DiDomenica, Pastor Emeritus will give the Benediction. Mrs. Grace Parisano, Cellist, will be the soloist. The choir will be under the direction of Mr. David D. Raycroft, Church organist and Choir Director.

Besides the letters of prayer and good-will sent in by the various nations and leaders of the world, two letters written by educators are included. They were selected by representatives of all such institutions who are training youth for a new world. Dr. Merle C. Odgers, President of the Bucknell University wrote in behalf of Colleges and Universities, and Dr. Sankey L. Blanton, President of Crozer Seminary was the other.

A crusade to enlist all people of every race, color, and creed in a Prayer Fellowship will be launched that evening at the Dedicatory Service. They will be asked to fulfill the following Covenant:

### ALL PEOPLE

#### UNITED IN PRAYER FOR PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD

- BELIEVE - I believe in the power of prayer to God.  
UNITE - I willingly and gladly join with others of similar mind and heart in a fellowship of prayer.  
ACT - I promise to pray daily for peace and brotherhood for all peoples of the world.

At this time too, the BOOKS OF FRIENDSHIP will be placed in the Prayer Center. A book has been prepared for every nation by members and friends of the church. The signed names of those who helped to compile and arrange the material appears on the last page of each book. A foreward written by the pastor is as follows:



FOREWARD

St. John's Baptist Church of the City of Brotherly Love is privileged to have this part in building bridges of understanding and friendship between the nations of the world.

Here, in this Sanctuary, we would seek to fulfill our Lord's aspiration to make His House, "A House of Prayer for All People".

This booklet speaks of people. People whose nation men call (NAME OF NATION).

Read their story. Note their ways. Meet their great men. These, too, are people whom God did create in His own image and likeness.

Their story will remain unfinished, until God's Great and Final "Amen".

Pray for them that they too may fulfill their Divine Mission as part of the "Family of Nations under God."

Pastor

February 17, 1956  
Philadelphia, Penna.





PAUL REMWEY

©MP

**St. John's Baptist Church**  
***"A House of Prayer for All People"***

13th & TASKER STREETS  
PHILADELPHIA 48, PA.

1963



# Dedicatory Plaque



## IN THIS SANCTUARY

God, the Father, is here.  
Here, too, are hopes of men  
By faith inspired.  
Close your eyes:  
Open your heart;  
Bow your head:  
Lift your voice.  
May your prayer with theirs  
Seek Heaven's Amen.  
Let suppliant brother's love  
Peace implore.  
Then, listen.  
Prayer is the Soul's Highway  
To God  
That reaches back to you.

February 17, 1956



## "... OF ALL NATIONS A HOUSE OF PRAYER."

This is our international sanctuary of Prayer. May you be inspired to acknowledge God as your Heavenly Father and your fellow-man as your brother.

"A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE" was established to unite all people of the world in a daily fellowship of prayer for peace and brotherhood. Truly, it has been said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God".

In 1955, President Eisenhower called upon all Americans to pray for peace and brotherhood throughout the world. The Reverend Anthony F. Vasquez felt that St. John's Baptist Church should act upon Mr. Eisenhower's plea. The suggestion of flags of all nations came to him after a trip to Europe in the summer of 1955. He attended services in the American Cathedral in Paris. Seeing the American flag there gave him the idea of flags of all nations being placed in the Sanctuary of St. John's.

His plan was adopted. Letters were sent to all nations and world leaders requesting from them a letter of prayer or good-will and the presentation of their national flag.

The dedicatory service was held on February 17, 1956. Twenty-six nations sent representatives for this ceremony.

**THE FLAGS OF ALL NATIONS** are placed in front of the Sanctuary and are tied together by a golden cord at the top of each Flag. This symbolizes the Love of God uniting all nations in one family.

Each Sunday at the morning worship service, a nation is chosen for a brief descriptive message and the worshippers are asked to remember it in prayer and meditation. Usually a letter of greeting is received from the Ambassador or some official of that nation, which is read before prayers are offered.

**THE PRAYER CENTER OF ALL PEOPLE** is located in the back of the Sanctuary. Letters of prayer and good-will sent by national ambassadors and world leaders are placed here. A bronze plaque with the dedicatory inscription written by Dr. Vasquez claims the center of these three panels. Above the plaque is a plain bronze cross. Underneath the arms of the cross are two illuminated globes of the world.

**BOOKS OF FRIENDSHIP** — one for each nation — are kept in the lower center panel of the prayer center. Each book contains brief histories of the nation and emphasizes customs of the people and gives other pertinent information. The Foreword reads:

"St. John's Baptist Church" of "the City of Brotherly Love" is privileged to have this part in building bridges of understanding and friendship between the nations of the world.

"Here, in this Sanctuary we would seek to fulfill our Lord's aspiration to make His House, "A House of Prayer for All People".

"This book speaks of people. People whose nation men call (Name of Nation).

"Read their story. Note their ways. Meet their great men. These, too, are people whom God did create in His own image and likeness.



"Their story will remain unfinished, until God's Great and Final  
'Amen'.

"Pray for them, that they too may fulfill their Divine Mission as part of  
the Family of Nations under God."

**GIFTS OF NATIONS** may be found in the Di Domenica Prayer  
Chapel. This is a collection of arts and crafts from many nations presented  
by members and friends of the "House of Prayer for All People", also by  
national embassies, and world leaders.

**PRAYER PLEDGE CARDS** are available at the Prayer Center. It  
reads as follows: "ALL PEOPLE UNITED IN PRAYER FOR PEACE AND  
BROTHERHOOD. **Believe**—I believe in the power of prayer to God. **Unite**—  
I willingly and gladly join with others of similar mind and heart in a  
fellowship of prayer. **Act**—I promise to pray daily for peace and brother-  
hood for all peoples of the world." Upon receipt of the card signed by  
the individual, a membership card is issued. These signed cards are kept  
in a special depository in the Prayer Center together with letters of  
prayer and good-will of all national leaders.

There are no membership fees or costs. Contributions to carry  
on this work are appreciated.

**WELCOME:** A most cordial welcome is extended to Church  
groups, fraternal organizations, schools, clubs, etc., to visit our 'House  
of Prayer for All People'.

Write or call for an appointment.

"A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE"

St. John's Baptist Church

13th and Tasker Streets

Philadelphia 48, Pa.

DEwey 4-1282

(The Prayer Center and the panels of the Flags of Nations were  
designed by Mr. Anthony J. Macaluso, a Philadelphia architect and  
executed by the Ray Barnabeo and Sons Construction Company.)

The Reverend Anthony F. Vasquez, D. D. — Pastor  
Miss Elizabeth L. Robinson — Director, Christian Center



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1960  
ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH  
"A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE"  
REV. ANTHONY F. VASQUEZ, PASTOR  
13th and Tasker Sts., Phila. 48, Pa.

Press Items on the House of Prayer for All People

"For Protestants and members of the Eastern Orthodox faith from here to Hiroshima, next Friday is World Day of Prayer. Nowhere will it have greater manifestation than in a little Church in South Philadelphia.

"At St. John's Baptist Church, 13th and Tasker Sts. there will be dedicated a prayer center, a shrine to the Brotherhood of nations under God. Called 'A House of Prayer for All People', it is a very real expression of the One World theme."

The Phila. Inquirer Magazine; February 12, 1956

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"The Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, minister extraordinary of the City of Philadelphia, Ambassador of goodwill of the United States, and proponent of brotherhood in general.

"That's a thumbnail description of the pastor of St. John's Baptist....There is hardly a nation in the world which has not received a letter from Philadelphia....over Mr. Vasquez's signature these letters must have done much for the cause of brotherhood and to represent the U.S. as a friendly nation."

The Phila. Daily News; February 19, 1956

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"CHURCH PRAYER CENTER HERE.

"...Ambassadors and other world leaders from 76 countries have sent the church letters of goodwill or prayer to be placed in a prayer center....

"The young people and other members of the congregation have prepared books, of friendship for every nation, that contain in addition to a history of the country, brief biographies of some of its outstanding leaders. These books are placed in the prayer center...."

The Evening Bulletin of Phila.; February 10, 1956

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"Modest Baptist Church in South Phila. Grows into International Goodwill Shrine.

"A room off the sanctuary houses the new 'Gifts of Nations'. It contains some 500 examples of arts and crafts of many of the nations, all of them contributed, and many quite valuable."

The Evening Bulletin of Phila.; February 22, 1958

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"Brotherhood Spreads World Wide Via Goodwill Created Here Through Unique and Valued 'House of Prayer for All People', St. John's Baptist Church, Pastor is Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez."

The South Philadelphian; February 24, 1956

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"ONE MAN'S DREAM - A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE

"For Rev. Anthony F. Vasquez, pastor of the Church, the colorful dedication attended by 26 delegates from around the world was the culmination of a dream...."

The Crusader; February, 1956

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