

Statesmanship Through Christian Virtues
The J. Edgar Hoover Window

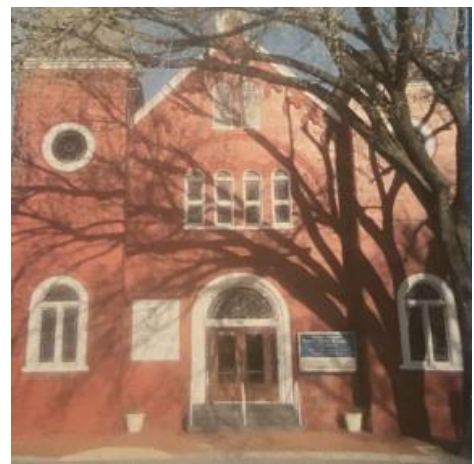


Capitol Hill
United Methodist Church

On April 30, 1961, four churches joined to form Capitol Hill Methodist Church. Plans for this unification had been in the works for two years.



North Carolina Avenue Methodist (*top left*), Trinity Methodist Church (*top right*), Waugh Methodist Church (*bottom left*), Wilson Memorial Methodist Church (*bottom right*)



THE SITE OF J. EDGAR HOOVER BIRTHPLACE IS ACQUIRED

In order to build a larger church building, the newly united church voted to acquire the two houses adjacent to 421 Seward Square in 1962. These are officially identified as Lots C and D of Square 820. One of these, the current parking lot of Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, (413 Seward Square, SE-Lot C, Square 820), was the birthplace and childhood home of the Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover.

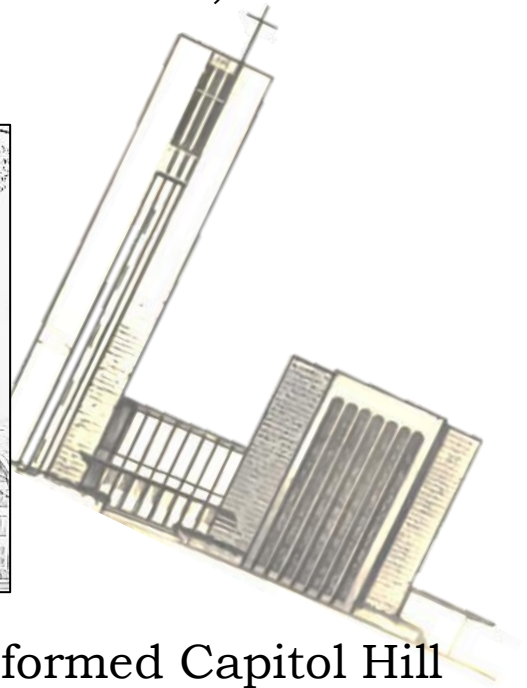
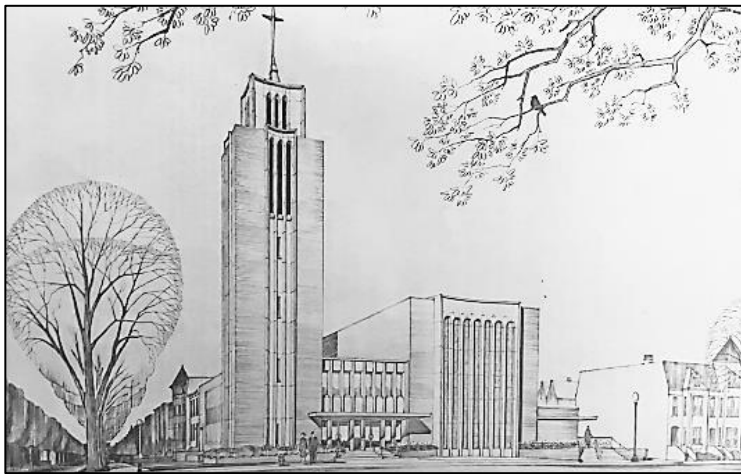
After the acquisition, some Hoover admirers started an effort to have the home declared a national landmark, but the effort died after Hoover stated he had no objection to the demolition.



A RENOVATED SPACE FOR THE JOINED CHURCHES

The Baltimore Washington Conference recommended the architectural firm A. Hensel Fink of Philadelphia. The firm had designed a number of churches in this and other Methodist conferences.

Major funding for the construction project was expected to come from selling the properties of Waugh, North Carolina Avenue, and Wilson Memorial churches. It would not however, cover the entirety of the project.



Soon after unification, the newly formed Capitol Hill Methodist Church hired fundraising consultant, R. C. Agne to advise on a capital campaign. Agne recommended that a “Loyalty Dinner” be held offsite to solicit membership pledges. Four hundred people attended the event at the Intercontinental Hotel (a.k.a. “The Willard” Hotel). *J. Edgar Hoover was invited to address the group but declined.*

In addition to membership pledges, consultant R. C. Agne recommended, "there are three special efforts that should be productive. First, since you are absorbing the J. Edgar Hoover birthplace and home, it would be well to designate the particular area as a J. Edgar Hoover Chapel or Hall and solicit some special gifts from most interested friends for this purpose. Working with your architect, it is possible to determine the special project and in conference with Mr. Hoover work out some attractive significant project." The other two 'special efforts' were related to 2) purchasing furnishings, and 3) encouraging bequests.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE WINDOW

Rev. Lewis, pastor of Capitol Hill Methodist at the time, appointed Rev. Wilbur E. Hammaker to head the fundraising effort for the window. Hammaker was a retired Methodist bishop and regular attendee of Capitol Hill Methodist since his retirement in 1948. When he was elected Bishop in 1936, he had been serving as Pastor of Trinity Methodist Church in Youngstown, Ohio for more than 15 years. A member of that congregation, Rev. Ed Lewis visited Hoover's aide C. D. DeLoach to describe the building project and ask permission to name the window for Hoover and to approach his friends and colleagues in the fundraising effort. A member of that congregation, L. A. Beeghly was an industrialist and noted philanthropist, particularly of Methodist and temperance causes. Beeghly and his business partner, W. E. Bliss completely financed the window as a tribute to J. Edgar Hoover.

The window was constructed at Conway Universal Studios, Winona, Minnesota, transported to Washington, DC, and installed in sections.



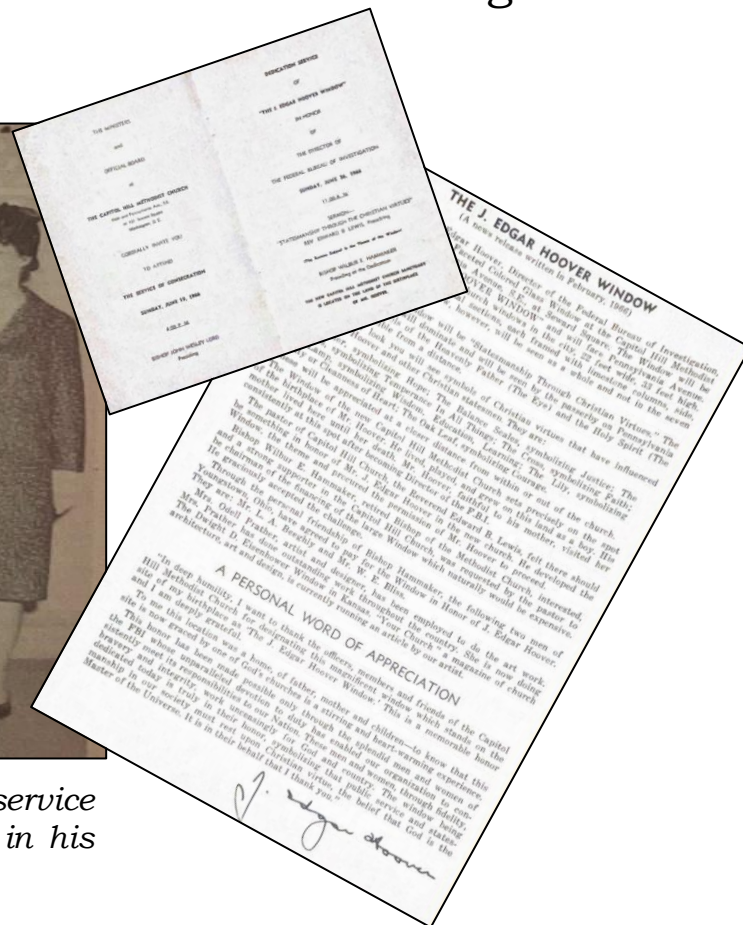
The Artist, Odell Prather, was a Philadelphia based artist who regularly worked on projects with the architectural firm A. Hensel Fink. Her work appears in other Methodist churches in our region and at the Place of Meditation at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas.

DEDICATION OF THE WINDOW

On a Sunday morning in 1966, the dedication service was held with Hoover and numerous white Methodist Bishops in attendance. The dedication service featured sermons and prayers by prominent white clergymen who stated that Hoover was eminently merited for a dedication to Christian virtues. The Rev. Edward Lewis, the pastor of Capitol Hill UMC, preached on the scripture passage about the divine calling of the prophet Samuel who helped turn the nation of Israel back to God from sin and idolatry. Rev. Lewis said that Hoover was a modern Samuel who had heeded God's call to turn America away from subversion and back to God. Before offering a prayer Bishop Hammaker confessed to being an "unashamed hero worshipper" of Hoover and then prayed for Hoover and the FBI to "continue to bring salvation to the nation."



J. Edgar Hoover attending the special dedication service for the Christian Statesmanship window created in his honor.



Research and data collection by Capitol Hill United
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