

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name First Congregational Church  
other names/site number First Congregational United Church of Christ

### 2. Location

street & number 100 W. Works St.

N/A
N/A

 not for publication  
city or town Sheridan vicinity  
state Wyoming code WY county Sheridan code 033 zip code 82801

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
    national     statewide   X   local  
B. B. [Signature] DSHPO 11/18/2022  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
WY SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official Date  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
    entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register  
    determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register  
    other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Name of Property

Sheridan, WY  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Late Gothic Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Asphalt  
other: Stone: Limestone  
Metal

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The First Congregational Church occupies a prominent position on the southwest corner at the intersection of West Works and North Brooks streets, one block west of Main Street and one block north of the Sheridan County Courthouse, in downtown Sheridan. The site is a transition between the commercial downtown district and the residential neighborhoods to the west. Two other churches built around the same time, the First United Methodist Church and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, are within one block of the church. The site, which is raised up above the sidewalk level, is landscaped with grass lawn and a few trees and shrubs. The red-brick church building is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style, adapted to meet the practical needs of the congregation and the community. Gothic Revival features such as an imposing crenellated corner tower, peaked roofs, buttressed brick walls and numerous pointed-arch stained-glass windows of various sizes are combined with a square floor plan and asymmetrical massing that reflect the building's auditorium-style sanctuary and functional interior spaces. The east and north elevations, which share the corner tower, are almost identical, giving the building a cohesive corner facade.

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### **Narrative Description**

The two-story building has a raised basement, with the main level one story above. The concrete foundation is barely visible. The two levels are articulated by a limestone beltcourse. The lower level is finished in running-bond red brick with raked mortar joints, while the main level is finished with yellow-brown brick with shallower mortar joints and tinted mortar, giving it a smoother surface and making a clear division between the two levels. Full-height brick buttresses define the corners and the bays of all four elevations of the building and the tower. The buttresses are set back slightly in three stages, with stone caps articulating the setbacks. The building is topped by a hipped roof with intersecting gables on the north, east and south elevations that define the sanctuary space below. The hipped and gabled roofs are sheathed with asphalt shingles. Painted sheet metal cornices extend from the eaves of the hipped roofs. The flat roof of the bell tower is sheathed in metal roofing.

Basement windows are wood, one-over-one double-hung windows with metal storm sash. Unless otherwise noted, main-floor windows are pointed-arch, double-hung windows in-filled with stained glass, with arched tops trimmed in three rows of radiating, rowlock bricks with the third row projecting to form a drip molding. Stained glass windows have glass storm sash.

The north elevation is comprised of three sections: the tower at the east end, the central section (sanctuary) and a narrower section to the west. Each section is defined by brick buttresses. The meeting buttresses at the corners of the tower ascend in multiple stages from the foundation to the stepped parapet. Two shallow flights of concrete steps with iron side railings lead to a paneled wood double door. Short knee walls of brick with stone caps are on either side of the steps at the entrance. The doorway is topped by a pointed-arch window with a gabled stone drip molding above the brick trim. A small, square cross is recessed in the brick within the peak of the gable. Continuing up the tower is a pointed-arch stained-glass window with a stone sill. A decorative brick panel separates the main part of the tower from the bell tower, which has a large pointed-arch opening containing three arched sections of wood louvers. A recessed cross is centered in the roof crenellation, which is trimmed in stone. The east, south and west elevations of the bell tower are identical.

The 3-bay central section of the north elevation has three basement windows and a door to the basement in the lower level. The stone beltcourse serves as a sill course for the main-story windows. The two side bays of the central section have pointed-arch, stained-glass windows, while the central bay has a pair of rectangular double-hung windows with stone label moldings. Above these windows is a large, pointed-arch tracery window with a stone sill that extends the width of the bay and a brick molding which also extends the width of the bay at the impost. Centered above the large window in the gable end is a small, round stained-glass window with quatrefoil tracery. The parapet of the steeply pitched gable roof has stone coping terminating in a simple hip knob.

The west section of the north elevation has two flights of concrete steps with a center iron railing leading to a paneled wood double door which accesses the landing of the northwest staircase. There is a double-hung window to the east of the

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door. On the main level, above the door, is a small, pointed-arch, stained-glass window with stone sill and brick molding. The wall terminates at the cornice of the hipped roof.

The east façade is almost identical to the north façade. Two flights of shallow concrete steps with a central iron railing lead to the paneled wood double door of the tower. The central section is identical to that of the north elevation except for the "cornerstone" above the two central basement windows reading, "First Congregational Church A.D. 1911." Wood latticework conceals the equipment for the AT & T cell tower located in the tower. The south section of the east façade has two flights of steps leading to a paneled wood double door. A single, pointed-arch window lights the staircase in the southeast corner. The wall terminates at the cornice of the hipped roof.

The south elevation is similarly divided into three asymmetrical sections. The hip-roofed easternmost section has a small basement window and a pointed-arch window above it which interrupts the beltcourse, thus lighting the lower part of the staircase. The central section terminates in a parapeted gable which intersects the hipped roof. The basement of the 3-bay central section has a window in the east bay, a window and a coal chute in the central bay and a metal door accessed by three concrete steps in the west bay. A large central rose window with wheel tracery and brick molding dominates the main level. The window rises above the tops of the buttresses. Above it in the gable end is a round window matching those of the north and east elevations. The east and west bays of the central section have matching pointed-arch stained-glass windows below the level of the rose window. Just above the beltcourse in the east bay is an additional window with a stone lintel. The west section has two basement windows in the lower level and a pair of stained-glass windows on the main level. A tall brick chimney rises from the south slope of the hipped roof. Cell-tower equipment is discreetly attached to the chimney.

The west elevation has four asymmetrical bays. The lower level is obscured by a double-run wood ramp which runs the width of the elevation. Behind the ramp are four basement windows. The upper level has six stained-glass, pointed-arch windows, one in the north bay, two each in the two central bays and one in the south bay. The stone beltline serves as the sill for all windows except the north window, which has been modified to include an access door from the ramp.

Interior

The sanctuary occupies the northeast corner of the church building. The formal entrances are from the north and east elevations of the tower. The two sets of double doors of the tower lead to a small landing, and a wood staircase rises to two interior doors at the sanctuary level. A wide central aisle leads from the entrance doors to the pulpit. The original wood pews, still equipped with umbrella stands, are arranged in a quarter circle on both sides of the central aisle, with two additional aisles on each side. A large wooden truss is exposed at the front of the sanctuary where the gable roofs intersect. The truss creates a star effect when viewed from below. Two Gothic-style glass light fixtures and two ceiling fans hang from the truss. All of the sanctuary windows are stained glass, with single windows on the main level and large, tripart windows on the north and east walls. A rose window lights the south wall, above the tall pipe organ installed in 1913. A curved gallery faced with dark wood paneling extends above the rear portion of the sanctuary along the north and east walls. The gallery contains 200 original "opera seats" with decorative metal bases with hat racks and wood folding seats, seat backs and armrests.

The southeast and northwest corners of the building house stairways. The parlor, which is used as a study and meeting space, lies directly west of the sanctuary separated by a wide, two-leaf, sliding wood door. The two door panels roll up into columns at each end, allowing the parlor to be used as overflow space for the sanctuary. To the south of the parlor is the study. These rooms, along with the northwest staircase comprise the western section of the building. All of the pews, gallery seats, door and window trim, chair rails, stairs and railings and most of the floors are original wood in excellent condition.

The lower level of the church contains a kitchen and a fellowship hall, where lunch is served every weekday. This space was originally a gymnasium used by the community. To the east of this space is the former shower room for the gym. The original shower room was recently converted to an accessible restroom, but a historic shower stall was retained. A small Sunday School room is also located at the east end of the lower floor.

First Congregational United Church of Christ has a high level of integrity. The building retains its original form and has never been added onto. Its historic exterior features and materials, including the two types of brick walls, stone trim, engaged buttresses and window and door moldings remain intact. Minor changes and maintenance, such as the replacement of the roof and upgrading of building systems, have taken place over time but have not altered

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the character-defining features of the building. The addition of the ramp on the west elevation in 1995 and the cell-tower equipment installed in the tower do not significantly impact the integrity of the building. The interior also retains a high degree of integrity with original woodwork, pews, lighting fixtures and other furnishings. Minor changes have been made to the interior layout to enhance accessibility.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1912

### Significant Dates

1912

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Morrison H. Vail, Architect

Nels A. Pearson, Builder

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance is the year the building was constructed.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

First Congregational Church meets Criteria Consideration A. Although owned by a religious institution and used for religious purposes, this property is also used by the greater community of Sheridan for social and cultural purposes. It is being nominated for its architectural significance and not for religious associations.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The First Congregational Church in Sheridan is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, with significance in architecture. It is an excellent example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic-Revival style church in the picturesque mode, displaying many of the typical features of the Gothic Revival style while also reflecting changes in liturgy and religious practices in protestant churches starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church is one of three churches within a block of each other built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is the only Gothic-Revival-style church of its kind in Sheridan.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion C**

The First Congregational Church is an excellent example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic-Revival style church in the picturesque mode, reflecting changes in liturgy and religious practices starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, many Protestant denominations began to diverge from the standard nave-style Gothic church design. As noted in a series of articles in *American Architect and Building News* in 1895, the “predominant note in current American church architecture is picturesque.” Picturesque churches eschewed the central nave design and formal Gothic exterior for a design based on interior needs. They tend to have a more complex plan with a variety of roof lines. The shape of the building as well as the size and placement of windows and doors are determined by interior functions rather than by a preconceived, ideal exterior design. Picturesque churches rarely have overtly religious references on the exterior, although they often have a tower, stained glass and pointed arch openings.

Changes in liturgy necessitated these changes in church design. The Congregationalist church, for example, adopted a more informal style, with the minister speaking from a wide platform raised one or two steps above the main floor level, where he could more closely relate to the congregation. Instead of rows of pews lined up along a central aisle, pews were arranged in an arc around the platform, with several aisles. These “auditorium-plan” churches had sloping floors, giving everyone in the congregation a good view of the minister. Congregants were able to see each other too, thus enhancing their sense of community. The atmosphere inside the auditorium was comfortable and cheery, rather than intimidating, with pews built to conform to the human body and central heating. Stained glass windows cast warm, subdued light. By the late 1800s, the auditorium-plan church was the preferred design for most Protestant churches except those of Episcopalians.

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century churches also added additional rooms, including a Sunday School room, library, study and parlor, reflecting the expanded role of the church in the community. Sliding doors allowed the sanctuary to expand, in order to accommodate a variety of functions. Many churches were raised up to accommodate another level below. These changes reflect a growing trend away from organized religion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the need for churches to expand from purely religious functions to addressing more social and economic issues. Church design accommodated these changes with the addition of fellowship halls, kitchens and dining rooms.

The auditorium-plan church was popularized by church plan books, which were widely used from the 1880s through the 1930s. Like the popular plan books for homes, these books provided floor plans and specifications so that a congregation could find an appropriate design without directly hiring an architect. Some architects of house pattern books, such as Palliser and Palliser, included plans for town halls and churches. In the 1878 *Palliser’s Model Homes*, the architect offered plans for an Episcopal Church, a Catholic Church and a Congregational Church. While the former two are traditional nave-plan churches, the Congregational Church has an octagonal sanctuary with rows of pews in an arc around a central platform. Architect Morrison H. Vail published *Protestant Church Plans and Designs* in 1911, the likely inspiration for the First Congregational Church.

The First Congregational Church reflects these national trends in its exterior form and details, its interior layout, and its furnishings. The auditorium-plan sanctuary, raised lower story, and addition of spaces for meeting and other community functions all reflect the change in liturgy and the role of the church that took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The furnishings reflect the emphasis on comfort and the stained-glass windows cast a soft, calming light. The exterior of the church is an excellent example of the picturesque mode of Gothic Revival architecture, with its square footprint, asymmetrical form, contrasting materials, corner tower entryway, cross-gable roof, pointed arch windows and tracery, and lack of any overtly religious references.

## Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Settlement of Sheridan, Wyoming, began in the late 1870s, along the route of the Bozeman Trail at the junction of the Big Goose, Little Goose, and Soldier Creeks on the eastern base of the Bighorn Mountains. During the 1880s and 1890s, a steady influx of cattle and sheep ranchers sparsely populated the area. The 1890 census showed Sheridan had a population of 281. Despite the low population, the area was an important stop for anyone transporting goods through the region, such as the stagecoach companies operating along the route of the old Bozeman Trail.

John D. Loucks arrived in the area in 1882 with the desire to build a town. He platted the townsite in the same year and successfully encouraged others to settle in the area. Soon, the young community had a blacksmith shop, a hotel and restaurant, a school, and streets named after Sheridan's founders. By the end of 1883, a general merchandise store and approximately fifty buildings existed in Sheridan. On March 11, 1884, John Loucks became the first mayor of the newly incorporated town.

Sheridan's Congregational Church community was formed in 1881, before Sheridan was incorporated as a town. In 1884, the Congregational Home Missionary Society sent Rev. Herbert E. Probert to begin holding services in Sheridan. He and other missionaries held services for people of all denominations, wherever they could gather, which was sometimes in a ranch home or schoolhouse. According to the Congregational Year Book of 1885, a church was organized in Sheridan on September 21, 1884 by Rev. Probert and Rev. Addison Blanchard.<sup>i</sup> Although this early church was run by a pastor paid by the Home Missionary Society of the Congregational Church, it was considered a community church and all denominations were welcome. In fact, in March 1888, a "Christian Union" was formed to firmly establish that the church was nondenominational.<sup>ii</sup>

Rev. Samuel J. Jennings took over the "Christian Union" churches in Sheridan and Bighorn in 1885, and occasionally held services at the Banner schoolhouse as well. However, by the end of the decade as Sheridan was growing and the coming of the railroad was imminent, new Methodist Episcopal and Baptist churches were formed and the union began to fall apart. Rev. Jennings followed suit in 1890 by reorganizing as the First Congregational Church of Sheridan, with 12 charter members.<sup>iii</sup> The church met in the Methodist Church building and other locations around Sheridan until a church building was completed on the southwest corner of Main and Burkitt streets in October 1892. The first church, which was the second church building built in Sheridan, was a simple Gothic Revival-style building. The rectangular frame building had a gable roof, a corner tower, and pointed-arch windows. The interior was furnished with "opera chairs" and had a Crown organ and a large chandelier. The church bell, still in use today, was given in memory of Florence Lewis by her parents.

With the coming of the railroad in 1892, Sheridan experienced exponential growth, from 281 in 1890 to 1,559 in 1900 and 8,408 in 1910. As the city of Sheridan developed, the First Congregational Church congregation grew rapidly, reaching a membership of 120 by 1905, with 113 children enrolled in Sunday school. Five years later, the congregation had grown to 157 and the Sunday school had reached its capacity, requiring some classes to be taught outside the church. In 1904 the church purchased lots at the corner of Works and Brooks streets, "one short block from the bustling thoroughfare of the city,"<sup>iv</sup> and the frame church was moved to this location. By November 1910, the church had approved a plan to build a new church building to accommodate the larger congregation and the many activities that the church was involved in. A May 1910 article in *The Daily Enterprise* noted that "a modern and more commodious church building [was] greatly needed in this growing city" and that the work of the church "was greatly hampered by the small and out-of-date building."<sup>v</sup>

The article goes on to say, "We intend to have an institution open seven days of the week, a place of rest and recuperation for the tired lady and weary man, facilities for a reading and amusement room; gymnasium and baths are being considered."<sup>vi</sup>

Plans for the new church building, provided by architect Morrison H. Vail of Chicago and Dixon, IL., were approved in May 1911. Vail was a member of the American Institute of Architects from 1901 to 1930, and was known to design churches, among other buildings. He is named as the architect of at least two Protestant churches in the West of the same era as the First Congregational, First Methodist Church in Pendleton, OR (1906) and Hazelton Presbyterian Church in Hazelton, ID (1916). He also published a pamphlet of church designs, *Protestant Church Plans and Designs* (1911), which he

<sup>i</sup> Rev. S. R. McCarthy, "Historical Sketch," *The Sheridan Press*, September 23, 1934 (on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Congregational Church of Sheridan).

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Rev. S. R. McCarthy, "Historical Sketch," *The Sheridan Press*, September 24, 1934.

<sup>iv</sup> "Congregational Building Society Will Erect New Edifice," *The Daily Enterprise*, May 24, 1910.

<sup>v</sup> "Congregational Building Society Will Erect New Edifice," *The Daily Enterprise*, May 24, 1910.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid



marketed in various church publications. *The Sheridan Enterprise* wrote of Vail, “Mr. Vial [sic] this year has built twenty-five churches and his record for last year was fifty-two, or an average of one a week. He thoroughly understands church architecture and the Sheridan Congregationalists have derived the benefit of his long years of experience.”<sup>vii</sup> The *Sheridan Post* added (speaking of Vail), “His genius discloses itself in many features of the buildings – the lighting system, forced ventilation by means of radiators in the ventilating shafts, construction of the gallery, accessibility of the building, stereopticon connection in the gallery, etc.”<sup>viii</sup>

The new church was designed with community use in mind. *The Sheridan Post* article wrote, “With the exception of the new Orpheum the church has the largest seating capacity of any auditorium in the city, seating approximately 650 or 700. It is the only church in the city boasting a gymnasium and will be one of two churches with a public open-all-week reading room. . . . The basement is divided into four rooms. The reading room, in the east end of the building, is to be fitted up by the Boy Scouts. In the center of the building is the gymnasium, a room 35 x 44 feet. Adjoining the gymnasium on the west is the dining room and in the southwest corner of the building the church kitchen . . . . It is planned to make the gymnasium an undenominational feature of the new church. While the equipment will not be large, it will be sufficient to meet all ordinary needs. Regular classes for businessmen, schoolboys and others who may desire to take advantage of it, regardless of church affiliation, will probably be instituted.”

Since the architect is not mentioned in the First Congregational Church building dedication materials and did not seem to have a direct role in the construction of the church, it is likely that the congregation purchased plans from Morrison Vail and turned them over to local builder Nels A. Pearson who constructed the church. N.A. Pearson was a local contractor who emigrated to the United States from Sweden in 1892 and arrived in Sheridan in 1901. Pearson built many prominent buildings in Sheridan, including the Sheridan County Courthouse (1910, while in partnership with F.E. Ferguson), the Sheridan Elks Club (1909), and John B. Kendrick’s home, Trail End (1908-1913). John Johnson, a brick and stone contractor, was responsible for the exterior masonry work on the church. Johnson also emigrated from Sweden in 1881 and moved to Sheridan after the railroad arrived in 1893. He often worked with N.A. Pearson, including on the three projects mentioned above.

Once the new building was built, the original church building was sold and moved to 320 E. Brundage Street. It was demolished in 1975. The bell from the original church was installed in the new bell tower and is still pulled by rope to welcome congregants to church services.

The dedication for the new church was held during the week of November 3 – 10, 1912, with the dedication sermon given by Rev. W.B.D. Gray, superintendent of Congregational Churches in Wyoming. Rev. Gray declared the church to be “the most useful church building in the state.” *The Sheridan Enterprise* described it as “one of the most handsome buildings in Sheridan” and “a pride to every man, woman and child residing within the city portals.” It continued, “One is visibly impressed with the beauty of the architecture of the building from the outside and these impressions are greatly reinforced from a casual observation of the interior. . . . At every part of the auditorium whether on the main floor or in the gallery, the pulpit is kept within full view. . . . The acoustic properties of the auditorium are superb, throwing one’s voice from one end of the hall to the other without having it raised above an ordinary tone. This is accomplished by the dome effect of the roof.”<sup>ix</sup>

On November 3, the church held two services, in the morning and the evening, each of which was filled to the sanctuary’s capacity of 700 people. The week-long dedication celebration included a public reception and musical performance presented by the Congregational Semicircle and a Thursday evening “fraternal service” where other churches were invited to participate.<sup>x</sup>

According to the records of the Church Building Society, the complete cost for the church and furnishings was \$35,000, which in addition to the building itself included \$600 for the 31 stained glass windows, \$1,200 for seats, \$1,000 for carpeting and \$7,000 for a Hutchings pipe organ, paid for in part by a \$1500 grant from Andrew Carnegie and installed in 1913. Andrew Carnegie had a passion for church organs and paid for new organs in thousands of community churches across the country. The organ, which is still in use today, was custom built by George S. Hutchings of Boston and is one of

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<sup>vii</sup> “Description of the New Church Dedicated by Congregationalists,” *The Sheridan Enterprise*, November 4, 1912.

<sup>viii</sup> “New Church is Finished,” *The Sheridan Post*, October 29, 1912.

<sup>ix</sup> “Description of the New Church Dedicated by Congregationalists,” *The Sheridan Enterprise*, November 4, 1912.

<sup>x</sup> “New Church Dedicated,” *The Sheridan Post*, November 5, 1912.

the few known Hutchings organs still in use in the West, according to former church organist Gary Bowers. The organ underwent a major restoration in 1977.

In the decade after the church was completed, the church membership continued to grow. By 1928 there were 257 members, thanks in part to public talks given by the pastor, Rev. George Winters, intended to engage the wider community. Starting in 1931, the pastor of the Sheridan church also served the church in Dayton, thus increasing membership and income. This continued until 1959 when the Dayton congregation hired its own pastor. By 1948, membership was 348, with 123 students enrolled in Sunday school. Around this time was the first proposed merger of the Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches. Church members voted against this in 1948, as did the Congregational Church in Dayton. When this proposal was brought forth again, in 1956, all the Congregationalist pastors in the state except Cheyenne voted in favor of it, and the United Church of Christ was created.

In February, 1961, the membership voted on whether to support or oppose the union that created the United Church of Christ. The merger was approved by a vote of 109 to 76. Those opposed to the merger filed a civil suit against the church. When they lost the suit, 40 members withdrew in protest of the union and began attending church in Dayton. The church struggled many years to recover from this split in the church, since many of those who left were prominent citizens of Sheridan. In 1965, membership was down to 235.

Over the past 50 years, the First Congregational United Church of Christ has explored various mergers and church-sharing opportunities. They began holding joint summer services with the First Presbyterian Church in 1972, and the following year a committee began exploring a merger between the two churches. The Presbyterians shared the Congregational church building for 11 months while their new building was under construction; however, the merger never materialized. The church later explored a merger with the First Christian Church. From 2012 - 2017 the Rock Contemporary Church shared the space of FCC-UCC's entire facility for weekly services and other functions until their new church home could be found and was made ready.

#### Community use of the building

From the beginning, one of the cornerstones of the First Congregational Church has been community outreach, and the church building has been consistently used by the community at large as well as the congregation. Most of the lower level of the building was designed as a gymnasium for community use, complete with bowling alley and showers. It remained the only gymnasium in town for many years. When no longer needed as a gym, the space was converted to a fellowship hall.

The Sheridan Congregational Society (later the Women's Circle) was organized the year the church was founded, and was the first of many men's, women's and youth groups to provide service to the church and the greater Sheridan community. Another women's group, the Semi-Circle, was organized in 1909 (its name was later changed to the Plymouth Guild) and a men's group, the Congregational Brotherhood, was organized in 1910. As early as 1912 the First Congregational Church hosted a Boy Scout troop with 36 boys and a Campfire Girls group.

Throughout its history the First Congregational Church has cooperated with other Sheridan churches to provide education and other services for youth and others in need in the Sheridan community. In 1994, the congregation teamed up with eleven other churches and dozens of partners to offer a free quality lunch Monday through Friday and most holidays to all in the community. Called "Lunch Together," this program has endured for almost 30 years, with thousands of volunteers serving more than 300,000 meals.

In addition to Lunch Together, the fellowship hall is regularly used by three Alcoholics Anonymous groups, Girl Scouts, and Mercy Grace Ministries for their Sunday evening services. "Last Friday at First" is a free concert in the auditorium organized by volunteers for the entire community's enjoyment. Several community boards and committees periodically use the parlor space adjacent to the sanctuary for meetings, and the kitchen and fellowship hall have been used for a variety of activities and events. Historically, the fellowship hall and sanctuary have also been used for weddings, vow renewals, baptisms, and other celebrations.

In 2019, the First Congregational United Church of Christ was selected by Partners for Sacred Places as a valuable asset for its history and its community work.

### Work on church since construction

Over the years, the church has had various repairs such as a new boiler, plaster repair and painting, new carpeting and a new roof, but the building never received any additions and both the interior and exterior remain largely intact. A 2013 building assessment by a preservation architectural firm pointed out structural issues that were promptly addressed by the congregation.

In 2019 the 31 historic stained-glass windows were repaired, and upgrades to the kitchen and the fellowship hall completed, including renovations to the lighting and heating systems, repair of drywall, and painting the fellowship hall, kitchen and stairwell to the kitchen. Electrical wiring was replaced throughout the church to comply with fire codes. A 2019 grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places provided funds for an accessible restroom on the lower level, a wheelchair platform in the sanctuary, and repair of crumbling exterior cement steps, brick work, and railings.

### First Congregational Church in the context of other churches in Sheridan.

The First Congregational Church represents a period of growth in Sheridan following the arrival of the railroad and the development of the coal industry. Gradually the original frame buildings that lined Main Street and surrounding blocks were replaced by sturdier brick or stone structures. Today, only two other early 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic-Revival-style churches remain in Sheridan, St. Peter's Episcopal Church at Tschirgi and Loucks streets and the former Immanuel Lutheran Church at Park and Custer streets. St. Peter's Episcopal Church was built concurrently with the First Congregational Church by the former business partner of Nels A. Pearson, Frank Ferguson. The brick and stone church is a more traditional Gothic-style nave church with an elongated rectangular footprint. The congregation is still active, and St. Peter's Episcopal Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

The former Immanuel Lutheran Church, built in 1908, is a small rectangular wood-frame church with a central entry tower. After the congregation built a larger brick building, the original church was sold to a new congregation. Currently, the church is owned by the Church of the Living God, which no longer has a congregation in the area. Another Gothic-Revival-style church, the First Presbyterian Church (1910), was built in the form of a cross to resemble Westminster Abbey, with white-pressed bricks and trimmed in stone. The building was demolished in 1978 and the church held services at the First Congregational Church until the new building was completed. Some of the stained-glass windows were retained for the new church building.

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## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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CTA Architects Engineers. "General Treatment Plan for the First Congregational United Church of Christ." 2013.

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*The Sheridan Post*. “New Church Dedicated.” Tuesday, September 5, 1912.

*The Sheridan Post*. “Will Erect New Church.” Tuesday, December 13, 1910.

White, James F. *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .38

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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Zone      Easting                      Northing

Zone      Easting                      Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of this property correspond to the boundaries of 100 W. Works St: Sheridan Original Town Block 20, lots 9, 10, 11, 12

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The boundaries correspond with the lot lines of the property.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mary Humstone and Megan Stanfill

organization Alliance for Historic Wyoming date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number PO Box 123 telephone 970 333-3508

city or town Laramie state WY zip code 82073

e-mail execdirector@historicwyoming.org

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: First Congregational Church

City or Vicinity: Sheridan

County: Sheridan

State: WY

Photographer: Mary Humstone (unless otherwise noted)

Date Photographed: May 28, 2022 (unless otherwise noted)

Photographer: Sheila Naismith

Date Photographed: July, 2021

(001) exterior of church showing north and east elevations, photographer facing southwest

1 of 31

(002) North façade, photographer facing south/southwest

2 of 31

(003) North façade, photographer facing south

3 of 31

(003.1) North façade, detail of tower, photographer facing south

4 of 31

(004) North and west elevations, photographer facing southeast

5 of 31

(005) East facade, photographer facing west

6 of 31

(005.1) East façade, detail of tower, photographer facing west

7 of 31

(006) East façade, detail of construction plaque, photographer facing west

8 of 31

(007) East façade and south elevation, photographer facing northwest

9 of 31

(008) Detail of door hardware, south end of east façade, photographer facing west

10 of 31

(009) South and west elevations, photographer facing northeast

11 of 31

(010) West and south elevations, photographer facing northeast

12 of 31

(011) Detail of exterior wall showing two types of brick and stone beltcourse, west elevation, photographer facing northeast

13 of 31

(012) Detail of window treatment, west elevation, photographer facing east

14 of 31

(013) Interior: tower entrance at northeast corner of building showing steps and doors to sanctuary, photographer facing southwest

15 of 31

(014) Interior view of tower doors and stained glass, photographer facing northeast

16 of 31

(015) Sanctuary, photographer facing northeast  
17 of 31

Photographer: Steve Bourne  
Date Photographed: July, 2021

(016) Sanctuary showing gallery, light fixture and stained-glass windows, photographer facing north  
18 of 31

(017) Interior view of north stained-glass window, photographer facing north  
19 of 31

(018) Sanctuary showing organ and rose window, photographer facing southeast  
20 of 31

(019) Sanctuary showing pipe organ, rose window and ceiling truss, photographer facing south  
21 of 31

Photographer: Steve Bourne  
Date Photographed: July, 2021

(019.1) View of ceiling truss from directly below, showing "star" formation  
22 of 31

(020) Pipe organ, photographer facing southwest  
23 of 31

(021) Gallery seating, truss, light fixtures, woodwork photographer facing southeast  
24 of 31

(021.1) Detail of gallery seating iron work  
25 of 31

(022) Detail of sanctuary seating  
26 of 31

(023) Wood sliding door separating sanctuary from parlor, photographer facing southeast  
27 of 31

(024) Parlor entrance. photographer facing southwest  
28 of 31

(025) Office, photographer facing southwest  
29 of 31

(026) Basement. Fellowship hall and kitchen, photographer facing west  
30 of 31

(027) Old coal furnace  
31 of 31

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

---

name First Congregational United Church of Christ

street & number 100 W. Works St telephone 307 752-4864  
city or town Sheridan state WY 82801

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).  
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



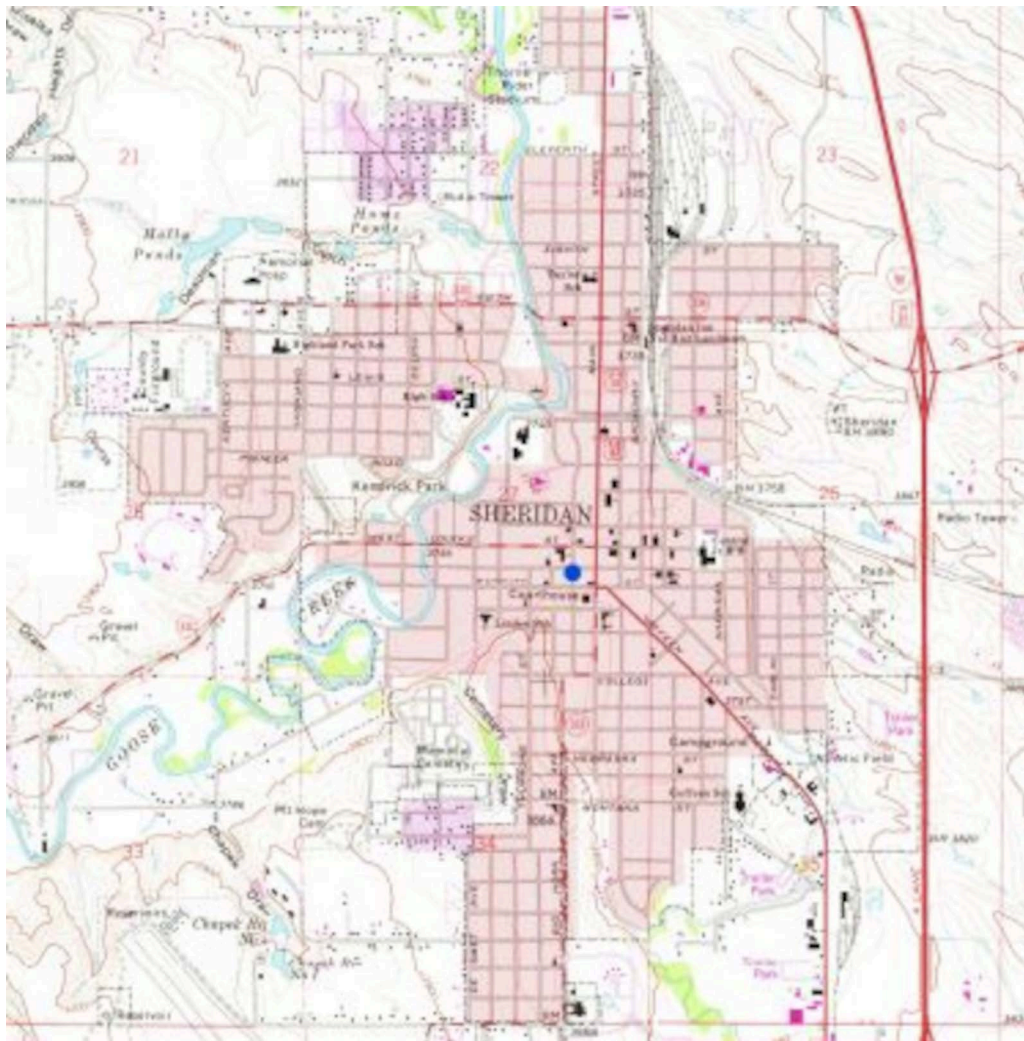


Figure 1: Map of Sheridan showing the location of the First Congregational Church.

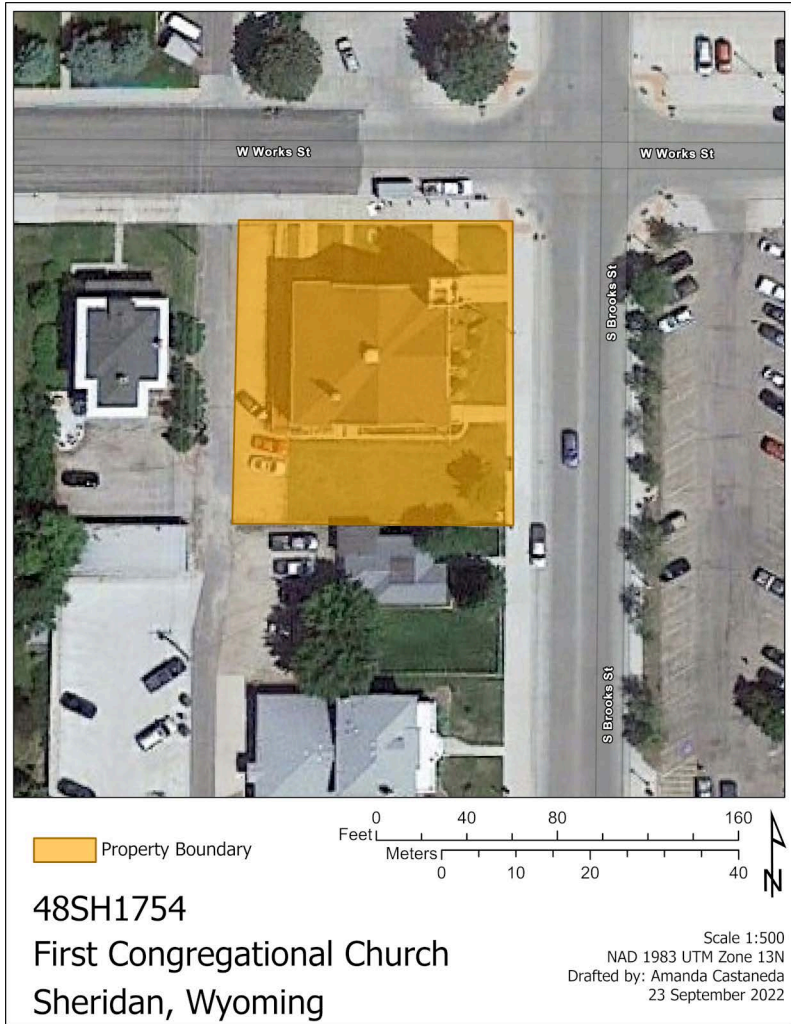


Figure 2: Map with the location of the First Congregational Church.

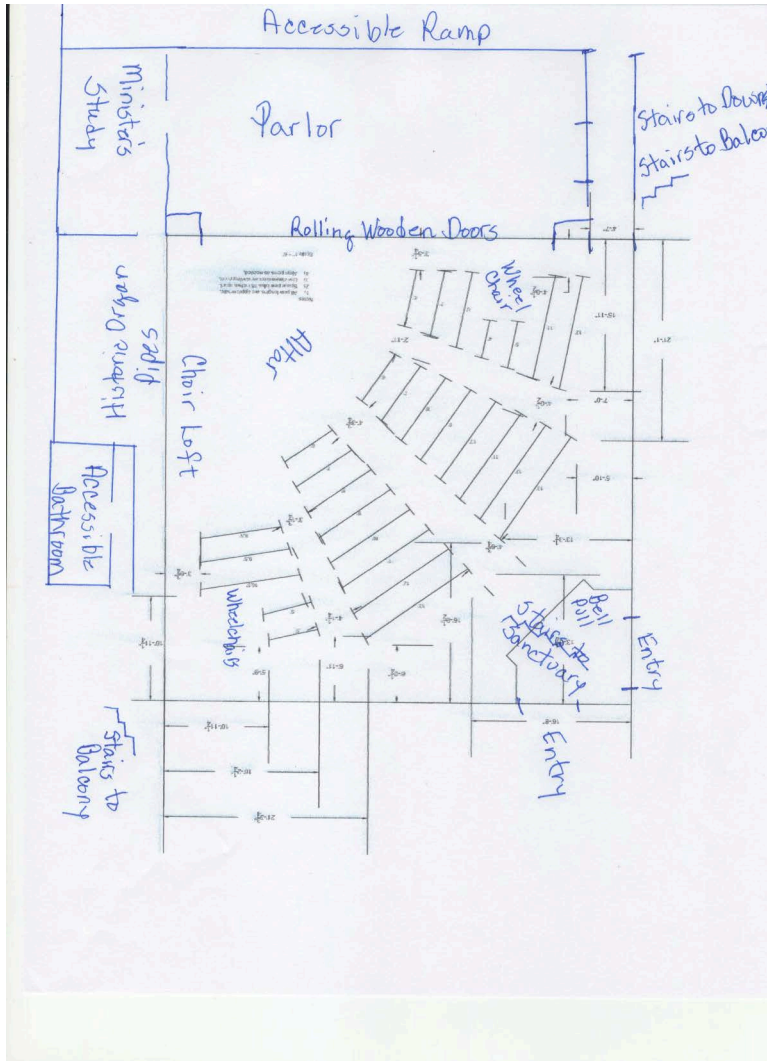


Figure 3: Floor plan of the main floor of the First Congregational Church.









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A.D. CHURCH 1911









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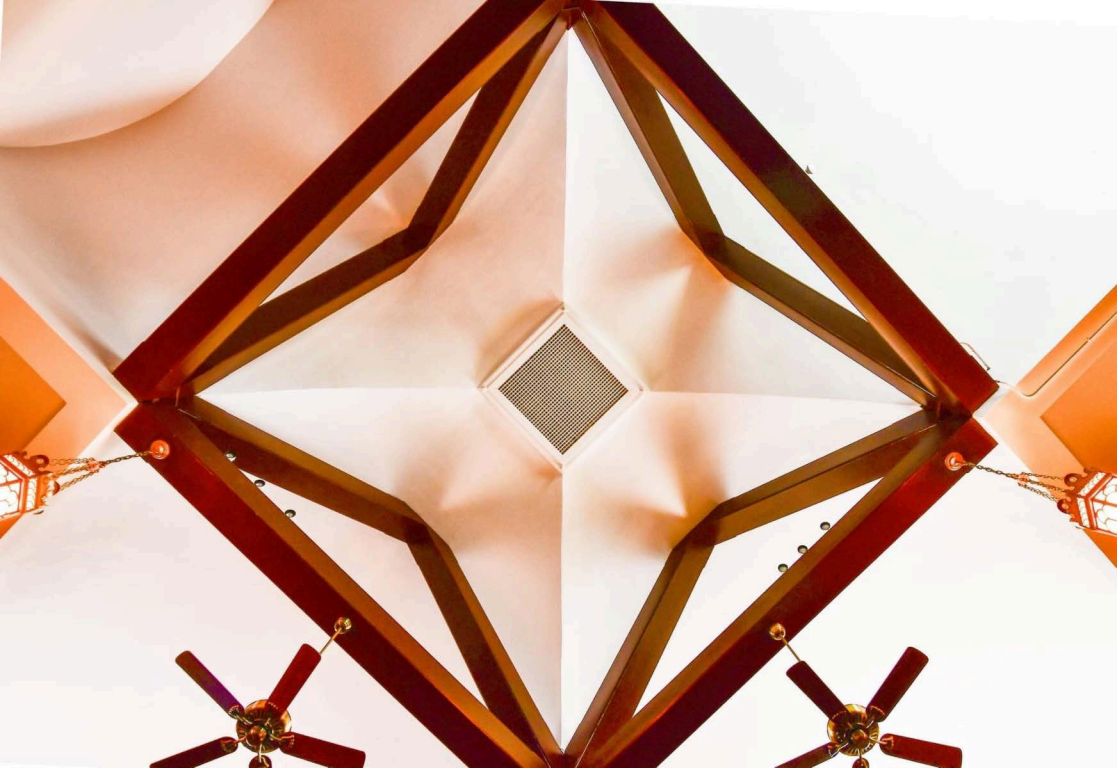














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### Hall Usage

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LT 10-2  
LT 10-2  
LT 10-2

Lunch Together SoupKitchen  
Calendar

Day	Event	Time
Monday	Lunch Together	12:00 - 1:00
Tuesday	SoupKitchen	12:00 - 1:00
Wednesday	Lunch Together	12:00 - 1:00
Thursday	SoupKitchen	12:00 - 1:00
Friday	Lunch Together	12:00 - 1:00
Saturday	SoupKitchen	12:00 - 1:00
Sunday	Lunch Together	12:00 - 1:00







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MAY 18 1884



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