

Christ Church Lutheran is architecturally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion Four in the area of Architecture. The church is also associated with the National Historic Landmark themes of Expressing Cultural Values and Expanding Science and Technology, and the National Park Service Modern Architecture Theme. Christ Church Lutheran is nationally significant as the work of a master, Eliel Saarinen, one of the most important architects and educators of the 20th century. A highly acclaimed and influential building, it has been noted that, "Not so very long ago, Christ Church was the most lionized church in this country. Architects from everywhere made ritual visits to the Twin Cities to see for themselves what they'd heard and read about in *Life*, *Architectural Forum*, *Newsweek*, and even the *Lutheran Standard*."¹ These accolades culminated in 1977 when the church was awarded the Twenty-Five Year Award from the American Institute of Architects, an honor recognizing buildings of enduring significance. The award noted that, "Art, science, and faith achieve a serene harmony in this church whose spirit and simplicity of form recall the early Christian era. A living symbol of architectural integrity, it has provided inspiration and guidance to countless architects." According to historian Albert Christ-Janer, Christ Church is considered by many to be Saarinen's masterwork. He describes the church as without precedent in ecclesiastical architecture because of its focused design, lighting, and acoustics.

This building is a testament to Eliel Saarinen's unique style of Modernism in which through his use of materials, proportion, scale, and light he created a building with great dramatic effect and architectural impact, and yet which retained a very human scale and possessed a feeling of serenity and repose; qualities which distinguished Saarinen's work from that of his fellow modernists. The building was also a remarkably cost-effective design that served as an affordable modernist prototype that could be emulated by congregations throughout the United States.

The consistent quality of Eliel Saarinen's work is evidenced by the designation of four his designs as National Historic Landmarks including the Cranbrook Academy of Art (NHL, 1989), Crow Island School (NHL, 1990), the Kleinhaus Music Hall (NHL, 1989), and the First Christian Church (NHL, 2001). It is also noteworthy that Christ Church Lutheran was to be his last completed work. Remarkably, the church includes a later addition designed under the direction of Eliel Saarinen's son, Eero, also one of the most acclaimed architects of the 20th century.

¹Architecture Minnesota. December/January 1981-82. p. 29.