

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.459
Historic Name:	Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church
Common Name:	Saint Barnard's Roman Catholic Mission Church
Address:	53 Church St
City/Town:	Concord
Village/Neighborhood:	West Concord
Local No:	24, 248, C9-2411
Year Constructed:	1903
Architect(s):	Chickering and O'Connell
Architectural Style(s):	Queen Anne
Use(s):	Church
Significance:	Architecture; Religion
Area(s):	CON.E: Concord Junction CON.EH: Church Street Historic District
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (04/27/2005)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Glass; Wood; Wood Shingle Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut



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Massachusetts Historical Commission
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FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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Pl. W. Concord
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AREA

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CON. 459

FORM NO.

459

West Concord

Town

53 Church St.

Address

Historic Name

Our Lady Help of Christians Church

Use: Present

Roman Catholic Church

Original

DESCRIPTION

Date

1903-4

Source

Church records; Concord Enterprise

Style

Late Queen Anne

Architect

Exterior Wall Fabric

Wood shingle

Outbuildings

none

Major Alterations (with dates)

Doors

replaced, kitchen rebuilt, ca. 1969-70

Condition

good

Moved

Date

Acreage

Approximately 1 1/4 acres

Setting

At the crest of an open hill,
opposite a late-19th/early-20th century
neighborhood of wood-frame houses;
backed by the small stores of Concord
Junction and the Harvey Wheeler School.

Recorded by

A. Forbes

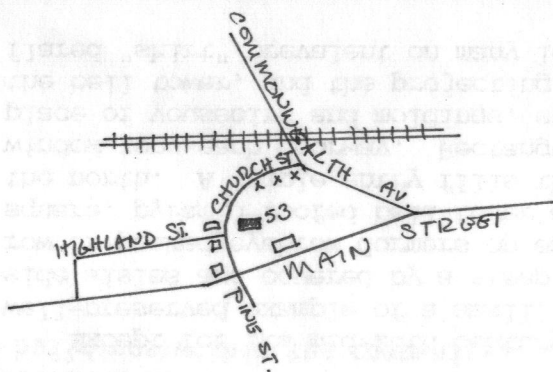
Organization

for Concord Hist. Comm.

Date

6/10/88

Sketch in geobelt in



UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

Except for its mid-20th century flush entry doors, Our Lady Help of Christians is a well-preserved example of a small, unpretentious, late Queen Anne church. The nave and side aisles are covered by a steeply-pitched asphalt roof, its planes broken only by a row of peaked eyebrow dormers on each side. The facade is asymmetrical, featuring a square, pyramid-roofed bell tower at the south corner, and a pitch-roofed entry porch at the north. A triple entry fills the facade; a graceful, pointed-arched, stained-glass window tops each doorway. Rectangular shingles are the main wall decoration, taking the place of voussoirs and moldings, especially in the dormer windows, the upper sections of the bell tower, and the projecting facade gable. The gable and tower even display the flared "skirt" prevalent on many local houses of the period.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

The only Catholic church in West Concord, Our Lady began as a mission church of St. Bernard's parish, to serve the growing number of Catholics in the area, many of whom had come to West Concord during the late 19th century to work in its expanding industries. All Concord Catholics had attended St. Bernard's in Concord center until August, 1902, when arrangements were made to celebrate mass, (under Rev. Fr. Twomey,) in Association Hall on Commonwealth Av., until a church could be built in the western part of town. The fire which destroyed the hall in September 1903 made the need for the new church more urgent, and the cornerstone was laid, on one of the lots laid out on former Ralph Warner land by the Concord Junction Land Co., on October 18. The Catholic population continued to increase after the turn of the century, leading to the establishment of Our Lady Help of Christians as an independent parish in 1908.

Local residents instrumental in the founding of the church included farmer, contractor, and selectman Jeremiah Sheehan, and summer resident, congressman John F. Fitzgerald.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Assessor's Records.
Building Permit Records.
Interview with Father Curley, pastor, 6/88.
The Concord Enterprise, 1902-4.



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Concord

Our Lady Help of Christians Church
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION by Anne Forbes, Preservation Consultant, October, 2004. Additional research by Corina Favorito.

ASSESSOR'S MAP and PARCEL: C9-2411

USGS Quadrangle: Maynard

2004 PHOTOGRAPHS: 04-I-5, 6, 10, 14, 16, 17, 19

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

Setting.

Our Lady Help of Christians occupies the highest point in Concord Junction, overlooking West Concord's small downtown area. The church was built on a 1.25-acre property adjacent to the former West Concord School (demolished.) By 1930, the two formed part of a cluster of five municipal and institutional buildings at the intersection of Main Street (Route 62), Pine, and Church Streets. The 1886 West Concord School occupied the northeast corner of the intersection; the 1893/1909 West Concord Union Church (MHC #461) was located opposite it on the southwest corner, the 1918 Harvey Wheeler School (MHC #458) stood just east of the other school at 1276 Main Street, and the 1930 Fowler Library (MHC #460) occupied the northwest corner. Today, four of the five buildings remain; the site of the West Concord School is now occupied by a recently built one-story wood-frame daycare center. The church, the Harvey Wheeler School (since the 1980s Concord's Senior Center,) and the daycare center all share a parking lot located between the buildings.

Our Lady Help of Christians faces west, opposite the foot of residential Highland Street. A long lawn slopes northwest from the church to the curve of Church Street and what may be West Concord's oldest tree, a 200+/- year-old maple. At the upper end of the lawn, sheltered by the north wall of the church, is a small memorial garden that was developed in the mid-1990s as a place for quiet meditation and reflection. The garden area is landscaped with a bench, statuary, and a rough wood rose arbor. A line of crabapple trees lines the north edge of the garden, and lilacs and hydrangeas are planted along the south side, against the church. Other plantings include ornamental shrubs, a clump of birches, and a young plane tree.

Church exterior.

The west façade and the north elevation of the building are relatively unchanged since the historic inventory form for the church was written in 1988, as is the flat-roofed sacristy east of the apse, which retains its 2-over-2-sash windows. The rear portion of the south side, however, was recently enlarged by a 1 1/2-story addition which provides updated handicap-accessibility to the building. This shallow section, which is clad in the same materials as the church, was built under a continuation of the main roof, and abuts the south side of the sacristy. The addition incorporates interior ramps and an elevator, and features a pair of gabled wall dormers which shed light into broad hallways leading into the sanctuary and the lower church.

Windows. The church is extremely fortunate to have retained its full component of early 20th-century pointed-arched, leaded stained-glass windows. The windows in the side aisles of the nave consist of two panels divided by a center mullion, with smaller decorative glass panes filling the spaces between the wooden tracery under the arch. The bottom portion of these windows opens outward to provide ventilation, and it is only in a few of those sections that a minor amount of damage is evident. Overall, the windows are in remarkably good condition. The glass of the nave windows is arranged in nearly identical geometric architectural motifs featuring a liberal amount of quarry glass and grisaille. A quatre-

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

foil medallion in the center of each main panel depicts a liturgical symbol executed in enamels. Each of the painted images is different from the rest, as are the names of donors written in cartouches in the bottom panels, which include many church families and the Concord chapters of the Knights of Columbus and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Two tall richly colored unmulioned windows in the northeast and southeast upper faces of the apse are of a different type, consisting of compositions of figures based on Spanish Renaissance paintings by Bartholome Estaban Murillo (1618-1682.) The northeast window, given in memory of John W. Sullivan, depicts the Annunciation. The southeast window, of the risen Christ, was a gift in memory of ten year-old Thomas Shaughnessy, who died in September, 1904.

At the west end of the church, the main focal point of the façade is the large rose window, set into a pointed-arched surround, again featuring geometric designs, some grisaille, and heads of cherubs rendered in enamelwork. Below the rose window, stained glass in a palette of greens, browns, and ochres fills the tympani above the three entry doors. Windows in the south and west faces of the tower include two more medallion windows, and at the upper level, two paired windows composed of geometric designs in white, yellow, red, and purple.

At basement level, above the granite-block foundation, the clear glass, multi-paned windows of the lower chapel were replaced in recent years with double-glazed units.

Interior.

The floor plan of the main part of the church consists of a "single vessel" worship space of nave with open side aisles, a polygonal apse at the east end, and a narthex at the west end with stairs ascending the corner tower. The large open space of the nave is uninterrupted by posts or piers, with the exception of a pair of posts which divides the easternmost bays of the aisles into two small side chapels. Between the chapels, and extending into the apse, is the altar, where the layout and furnishings date to the period of liturgical change in the early 1990s, when all barriers between the nave and altar area were removed. The original architectural plans (on file at the Massachusetts State Archives) suggest that the two present banks of pews (painted, with trefoil-molded oak ends,) which extend into the side aisles, are the originals. The ceiling is plastered and vaulted, its curving, painted ribs meeting the ribs of the side aisles at a longitudinal beam extending the length of the church on either side. Hanging from the longitudinal beam are what appear to be the original hexagonal brass and milk-glass light fixtures.

In the southwest corner of the nave is a recently constructed or rebuilt confessional, which occupies the location of the one originally specified in the architect's plans. A choir and organ loft is located above the narthex at the west end. Its parapet is decorated in relief with a motif of gothic arches. The main wall of the sanctuary below the windows is finished with oak wainscoting of tongue-and-groove beaded boards.

"Lower church"

The chapel/parish hall under the sanctuary has been altered somewhat over the years to adapt it to multiple uses, including extra services and overflow attendance at the larger Masses, receptions, a food pantry, and a nursery. The original architectural plans show this space to have been designed as an auditorium with a raised, curve-fronted stage at the east end. The stage and the small anterooms to either side of it have been converted into small rooms and storage space, and the northeast anteroom now forms a passage to the one-story kitchen that was attached to the north side of the sacristy in the 1940s or 1950s.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The architects of the church were Chickering and O'Connell, who designed several churches and parochial schools in eastern and central Massachusetts around the turn of the 20th century. Among their other churches are St. Laurence O'Toole's Church in Lawrence, Saint Paul's in Warren, and St. Louis de France in West Springfield. Schools they designed include Cheverus Centennial School in Malden, St. Anne's in Montague, and Academie Brochu in Southbridge (NR-Ind.)

For the hundred years that Our Lady Help of Christians has occupied the hilltop at the heart of the Concord Junction neighborhood, the church has been an integral part of the lives of West Concord's Catholic residents. In its early years it served the religious needs of both the Irish-American and Canadian-American families who came to Concord to work in West Concord's industries, and later welcomed immigrant groups from Italy, as well, functioning as a true community center for the diverse population of the west part of town. The building grew over time to include a kitchen that for years has provided meals for the needy as well as for functions of the church, and which has recently been renovated. In the mid-1990s, the small garden dedicated to the memory of Beth Pile (1949-1992) was planted against the north wall of the church, providing a place of quiet contemplation to all who seek it—both parishioners and the general public. In 2002, the church's operations were expanded into a two-story, wood-shingled parish house which was built on the lawn east of the church—a building which now offers ample space for meetings, classes, offices, etc.

The church and parish were closed by the Boston Archdiocese on October 25, 2004. Both the church and parish of Our Lady Help of Christians will be combined with St. Bernard's with all services held there at 12 Monument Square (MHC #303), in Concord center. It is anticipated that the new parish will be named Holy Family Parish. Plans for the West Concord properties as currently stated by the Archdiocese involve retaining the new parish house to serve the needs of the combined Concord parish. The church will be divided out on its own parcel and sold. Our Lady's rectory at 1404 Main Street (MHC #1394) will also be put up for sale.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES, continued

Chickering & O'Connell. "Roman Catholic Church for the Rev. M.E. Twomey, Concord." Architectural plans and elevations, 9/27/1903. (Mass. State Archives: Dept. of Public Safety Inspections file.)
 Raguin, Virginia. Stained glass of Our Lady Help of Christians. October, 2004.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible only in a historic district

☒ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Anne Forbes, Consultant, 10/25/2004

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Our Lady Help of Christians Church, 53 Church Street, Concord, meets Criteria A and C of the National Register at the local level, both individually and as part of a district which could include buildings constructed in the heart of commercial, industrial, and residential village of West Concord from the late 19th- to the mid-20th centuries. It also meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious property primarily significant for its architectural distinction and for its historical importance to the development of West Concord.

The property is significant under **Criterion A** for the important role it played in the lives of the Catholic residents of West Concord, most of whom were of Irish or French Canadian descent, having come to town to work in the factories and businesses of Concord Junction and Westvale. From its inception, the church was the nucleus of both the spiritual lives and social activities of that population and a major factor in facilitating the acclimation of the town's largest groups of immigrants to life in their adopted country. In the west part of town, small Catholic church services were first held in homes, then for about a year in Association Hall on Commonwealth Ave., followed closely by the 1903-04 building of the church and the formation of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish as Concord's second Roman Catholic parish in 1907-1908. The establishment of the church and parish was partly the result of efforts by some of West Concord's most influential citizens of the time, both Catholic and protestant. Among them were farmer and building contractor Jeremiah Sheehan, Concord Reformatory Superintendent Joseph Scott, postmaster and store owner Loring Fowler, (who also bequeathed funds for the branch library across the street), and Congressman and later Boston Mayor John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald.

The property fulfills **Criterion C** as a well-preserved example of a modest yet stylish wood-frame church in the late Queen Anne style embellished with gothic detailing, and is an important illustration of the work of architects Chickering & O'Connell, significant designers of Catholic churches in Massachusetts at the turn of the 20th century. The building retains most of its original features and detail, including over 20 intact stained-glass windows, most of which apparently date to between 1904 and 1910. The patterned glazing of most of the windows harmonizes with the small, domestic scale of the building. Pictorial details in the rose window at the west end and in the double windows of the aisles are outstanding illustrations of the use of quarry glass and of both grisaille and enameling techniques. The two large figured windows in the apse depicting images based on Spanish Renaissance paintings employ opalescent glass in the recent tradition of John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany.

In spite of some minor recent changes, including the alteration of the setting with the building of the adjacent parish house at the turn of the 21st century, the property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.



*Church, with
Harvey Wheeler
School, looking
East*



West facade

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View north,
with parish house



Interior view,
looking east to
altar

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View South
North elevation

View Northeast





Nave, view west



A.O.H. Window, south aisle

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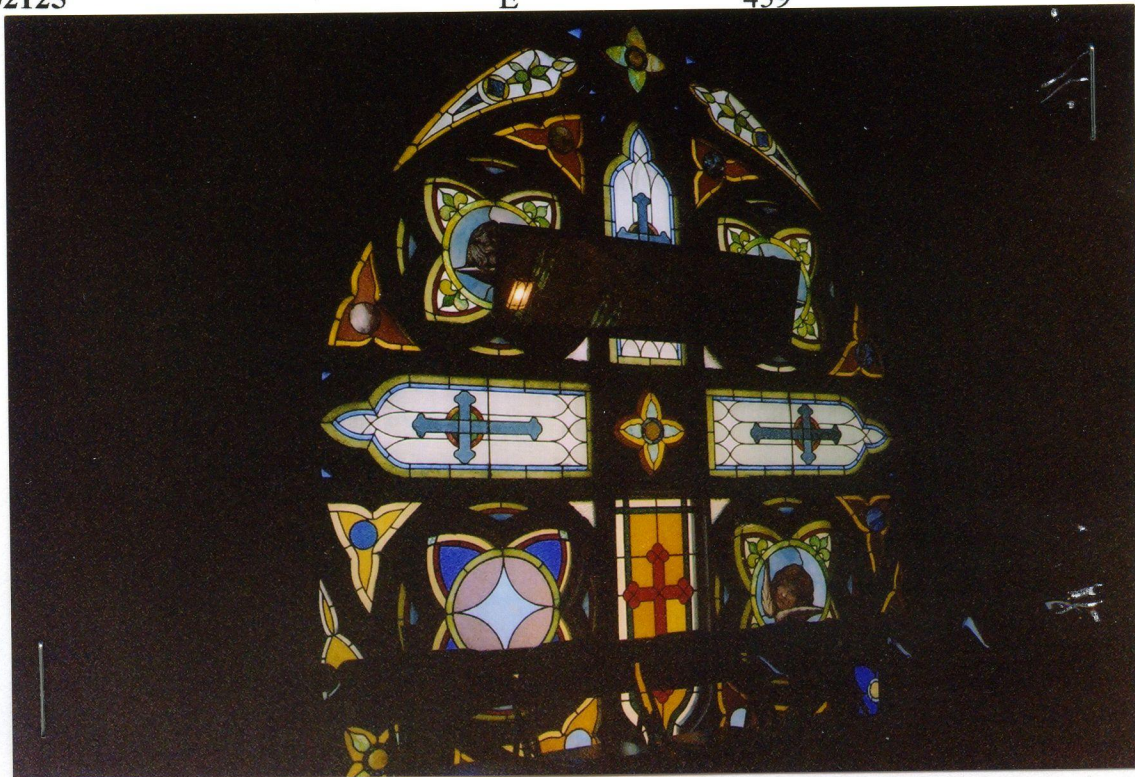
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Rose window
from choir loft



Rose window:
detail

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Center + northwest
tympanum windows

South + west
tower windows,
upper level



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Nave, view to west



Nave, view
 east to altar

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GLOBE PHOTOS/ZARA TZANEV

A parishioner enters Our Lady Help of Christians in West Concord to attend a recent Sunday morning service. The church will hold its last Mass today.

Church closes, will merge to form new Concord parish

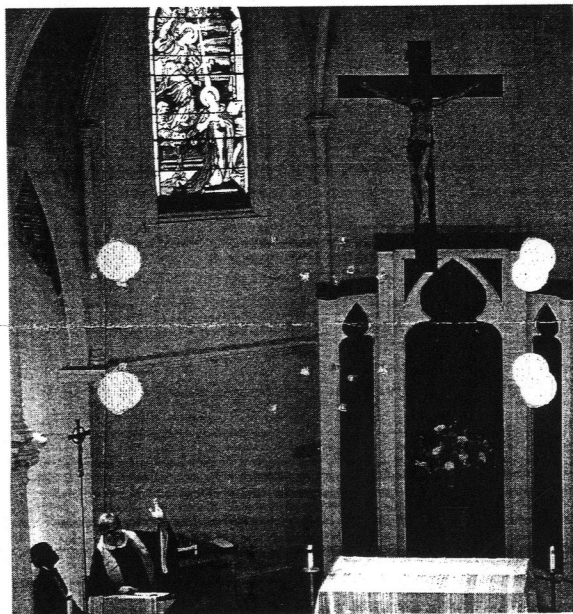
► CHURCH
Continued from Page 1

lage and the green space around it is lovely. I just feel it should be saved."

Fear that the building and garden will be sold and destroyed to make way for new construction, or that their appearance will be radically altered, has galvanized residents of various faiths and neighborhoods, town staff, and members of several town boards. The town's goal is to be ready to act quickly to protect the church and garden when the archdiocese puts the property on the market.

Selectmen planned to send a letter last week to the archdiocese outlining their preferences for use of the church. The first is that it be used by a religious group as a church. Also, a town task force is exploring various actions — such as changing the zoning in the neighborhood of the church — that could be taken to protect the property.

The town is operating under the belief that it will have at least 90 days after the property is offered for sale in which to react. Last month, the selectmen sent a



The church, which was built in 1903 and 1904, has more than 20 stained-glass windows. Some local citizens would like to see the building added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Concord church closing its doors

Officials want edifice preserved

By Sally Heaney
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CONCORD — Parishioners of Our Lady Help of Christians Church in West Concord will take a detour on their way out the door after Mass today. They will walk up to the front of the church to say farewell by placing a kiss on the altar. After the farewell kiss at the end of the last Mass, the doors of the church will be locked.

Tomorrow, Our Lady Help of Christians Parish will cease to exist, as part of a plan to close some 83 parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston. It will merge with St. Bernard's Parish on Monument Square in Concord Center to form the new Holy Family Parish. The new combined parish will worship at the former St. Bernard's Church.

While the futures of the two parishes and St. Bernard's Church are known, the destiny of the historical Our Lady Help of Christians Church and adjacent garden, which many people feel are the heart of West Concord, remains unclear.

"The church is a historic landmark in West Concord that's a beautiful building with an important piece of green space," said Joann Gibson, a member of a grass-roots preservation group. "Where it sits in relation to the vil-

CHURCH, Page 9



GLOBE PHOTO/ZARA TZANEV

Our Lady Help of Christians

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE

10/24/04

Continued

letter to David O'Brien, director of real estate and facilities management for the archdiocese, confirming a telephone conversation between Town Manager Christopher Whelan and O'Brien on which the selectmen are basing this belief. The letter asked for written confirmation of the 90-day marketing timeframe, which has not been received.

Ann Carter, a spokeswoman for the archdiocese, said she could not say what would happen to any of the property left after the archdiocese closes the parishes. Carter provided a copy of an Oct. 8 story in the archdiocese's newspaper, *The Pilot*, which reported that property from the closed parishes will remain on the market for a minimum of 90 days. The story said the church's social mission will be taken into account on all sales, which don't need to be to the highest bidder. Affordable housing is mentioned as one use that is appropriate for the church's mission.

The archdiocese plans to save the Our Lady Help of Christians parish center for use by the new parish, depending on the final disposition of the rest of the property, according to the Rev. Austin Fleming, who is pastor of Our Lady Help of Christians and will be pastor of Holy Family. The parish center is a separate building that was constructed behind the church about a year and a half ago.

"I know the archdiocese will dispose of the rest of the property and the rectory," Fleming said.

At their meeting last Monday, the selectmen decided to send their letter to the archdiocese explaining the town's objective of preserving the exterior of the church and the green space. Whelan, who drafted the letter, said on Wednesday that it was expected to go out last Thursday.

He said the letter describes the town's preferences for reuse of the building, in decreasing order of preference: as a church for another faith community; for local nonprofit or cultural groups; for a small number of housing units, ideally with a portion of them designated as affordable housing; or for a commercial use consistent

with the surrounding area.

Marcia Rasmussen, director of planning and land management, said the Planning Board wants to put into place zoning that would allow the creative reuse of the church building while preserving its exterior and the open space next to the church. The property is now zoned for residential use.

She added that the best reuse would be another church. "If we could find another religious organization who would make the church their home, that would be the ideal," she said.

The Redeemer Presbyterian Church would like to be that religious organization, according to Michael Leigh, a ruling elder in the church. The 150-person congregation, which does not have a church of its own, has worshipped at the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School for the past seven years.

Leigh said his church sent a letter to the archdiocese expressing its interest in the Our Lady Help of Christians' building and received a letter of acknowledgement. The Presbyterian church has financial resources and is now looking into how much it could borrow, according to Leigh.

"We're trusting in God to provide, and we know a facility like that would help our ministry," Leigh said. "We've been praying for it and hoping it would work out."

Leigh said the Presbyterians are discussing teaming with other groups that would also use the building and help meet expenses. One such group is the Concord Youth Theatre.

Jay Vogt, a member of the theater's board of directors, said his organization's first preference is to continue leasing space at the Emerson Umbrella Center for the Arts in Concord. However, the theater is involved in litigation with Emerson Umbrella, which holds the master lease on the town-owned building. The youth theater is fighting eviction.

"Under the threat of eviction, we have to be open to alternatives," Vogt said. "We are looking for a permanent home, are interested, and are in early discussions

with the Redeemer Presbyterian Church. We're not sure there would be physical compatibility, but we are open to discussion."

Another potential buyer for part of the property is the town. Selectwoman Virginia McIntyre said representatives of the town's conservation and open space groups are looking into whether the garden next to the church would be appropriate to acquire for a public park. If so, it would reduce the amount of money a church congregation would need to come up with to buy the building.

McIntyre is on the special task force that has been meeting weekly and reporting to the selectmen. The task force, other town boards and town staff, and a grass-roots group of citizens have been discussing zoning and historic preservation tactics that could be used to preserve to the church and garden.

Possibilities include creating a historic district in West Concord; applying the town's demolition-delay law; creating a new zoning district, and imposing a temporary building moratorium in West Concord while the new zoning district is being created. Whelan, the town manager, has obtained the dates that the high school is available in case a special Town Meeting must be hurriedly called to implement any of these tactics.

Architectural historian Anne Forbes of Acton is helping the grass-roots group prepare to apply for the building to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. "It's just in very original condition," she said. "So many churches have been greatly changed."

The church was built in 1903 and 1904 and played a prominent role in the lives of Irish and French Canadian immigrant workers who were drawn to the area's factories and businesses, according to a document Forbes provided. It is in late Queen Anne style and has more than 20 stained-glass windows, most of which appear to date from the early 20th century.

Sally Heaney can be reached at heaney@globe.com.

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Stained Glass of Our Lady Help of Christians

53 Church Street, Concord Massachusetts

MASS. HIST. COMM

Abstract: Our Lady Help of Christians is a building of high aesthetic and historical significance. It is extremely rare to have a building retain almost all details of its original structure as well as décor. The stained glass is integral to its structure, a remarkably sensitive response to the Queen-Anne architectural style as well as the confessional needs of the Catholic congregation. To lose this remarkable ensemble, its lightness, delicacy, and welcoming "domestic" interior would be an irreparable loss to Concord's sense of its own past as well as the history of architectural achievement. Of the many buildings now selected for closing in the archdiocese of Boston, there is none so well balanced to reflect architecture, setting, and interior decoration as eloquently as Our Lady Help of Christians

The stained glass of Our Lady Help of Christians is integral to its structure, a remarkably sensitive response to the Queen-Anne architectural style as well as the confessional needs of the Catholic congregation. Although the precise studio is as yet unknown, the style places the windows as American; commission patterns would suggest a Boston firm, for there were many at this time enjoying the flourishing trade of leaded and painted windows in the city. The program of glazing takes into account the lightness of the building, from its white clapboard exterior cresting a hill to the single-vessel, unobstructed worship space of the interior. The scale and detail is decidedly domestic, in contrast to the aggressive brick and granite structure associated with Catholic building at the turn of the century. The windows are also conceived in a "domestic" mode resonating in the clear tones and pastel hues with the welcoming tonalities of summer cottages.

This patterned glazing of the majority of the windows has a long tradition and was a superb decision for the designers of Our Lady Help of Christians. This kind of glass was the express choice of Cistercian monasteries in the 12th and 13th centuries, consistently used in programs throughout the Middle Ages and revived again in the 19th century. The first book advocating the Gothic style in the United States was the 1836 *Essay on Gothic Architecture* by John Henry Hopkins, Episcopal Bishop of Vermont. Bishop Hopkins was a firm supporter of stained glass to modulate light in order to produce an atmosphere conducive to prayer. Aware, however, of the limited technical and financial resources in this country, he suggested that "a very beautiful effect may be produced at small expense, by transparencies painted on linen or muslin in the Gothic style and fixed inside the windows." Hopkins' own church of St. Paul in Burlington had such stained glass substitutes until true stained glass of a non-figural (like Our Lady Help of Christians) was installed during a renovation campaign in 1851.

Patterned designs were a standard aspect of American and English production, much of which is found in the United States). Heaton & Butler, London, advertised in its 1860 catalogue for 14 varieties of *geometrical lead work, glazed in strong lead, and in any tint of Cathedral glass with coloured borders, and occasional pieces of colour*. A second plate showed 10 choices of "grisaille glass." The text reads: *Grisaille and ornamental quarry glass is now favourably received as a decoration for the aisle and clerestory windows of churches, especially when subdued light is required. The general effect is warm and silvery, and, when a little color is added, it is a most pleasing decoration. Grisaille glass often forms the groundwork for a window in which subjects, figures, or heraldry are introduced*. These are the windows of Our Lady Help of Christians; the patterns support a single medallion carrying a symbol. These include the monogram of the Virgin (MR- Maria Regina, Mary Queen); or of the name of Jesus (HIS); or of

the symbol of Faith (an Anchor), executed in enamels. Enamels are intensely colored ground-up glasses that are painted onto the base glass, which is often a light tint for best effect. They fire at lower temperatures than opaque vitreous paints, and often demand considerable skill in their application.

The two windows depicting images of the Virgin above the altar, however, are in opalescent stained glass with element of traditional painted glass. Opalescent glass is a rolled translucent, to semi-translucent milky glass. It is often streaky, with a mixture of different colors. While glass objects had been made for centuries using milk-white glass, it was not made into flat sheets for stained glass until the late-1870's when artists John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany began exploring its possibilities. Its development gave birth to the American Opalescent Style. The images are based on Renaissance paintings inspired by Bartholome Estaban Murillo (Spanish, 1618- 1682). From the early years of the revival of stained glass in the 19th-century, models were consistently taken from paintings. This reliance on The Great Masters remained typical of glazing installations at the turn of the century, as seen in these two windows of Our Lady Help of Christians. The most sophisticated patrons favored such evocation of tradition in the arts, exemplified in the windows of the Memorial Church in Stanford University, California, installed between 1900 and 1901. Jane Stanford, widow of Leland Stanford, Governor of California, major railroad financier and founder of Stanford University, demanded images based on Great Master paintings.

The organization of the entire church, not simply the individual details of Our Lady Help of Christians superbly demonstrates long-held traditions of ecclesiastic architecture. The church shows the "favourably received" system of grisaille and ornamental quarry glass in aisle and the relegation of the "signature" figural windows to designate the altar. The relationship of tonality and balance of interior light and image is exemplary. Of the many buildings now selected for closing in the archdiocese of Boston, there is none so well balanced to reflect architecture, setting, and interior decoration as eloquently as Our Lady Help of Christians. It is an almost unique survival of a Queen Anne style, one of great warmth and engagement for an ecclesiastical site.

Virginia C Raguin, Professor of the History of Art, College of the Holy Cross

Author: *Stained Glass from its Origins to the Present*, New York: Abrams, 2003

Church property still on the minds of selectmen

BY BETSY LEVINSON
STAFF WRITER

With less than a week until Our Lady Help of Christians Church closes its doors, and sends the key to the Boston Archdiocese, the Board of Selectmen is fine-tuning a vision for the historic building and adjacent green space.

The board intends to send a short letter to the Archdiocese this week that will highlight the town's interest in preserving at least the exterior of the building and the mini-park, central features in the West Concord landscape.

The selectmen have grappled for weeks with the lack of a clear vision for the reuse of the church, beyond not wanting to see a dense housing development there, or its demolition.

A "fast-track task force" composed of selectmen, Planning Board members, historic preservationists and a grassroots group of neighbors continues to meet weekly, according to Selectman Virginia McIntyre.

The Planning Board is working with historic preservationist John Althouse on a study of the four buildings on the

corner of Main and Church streets that could be included in a potential new historic district. Althouse's study on the merits of a new district will be completed in mid-November.

Under one scenario, the new historic district would include the Harvey Wheeler Community Center, the Fowler Library, the West Concord Union Church, and Our Lady's. Creation of a new district would require Town Meeting approval, but no meeting is scheduled.

Another strong possibility expressed by the selectmen is limiting a new historic district to just the Our Lady's building and green space.

"The task force feels this is a good idea," said McIntyre.

An appraisal of the church and green is due at the end of the month so the town will know approximately how much the church would cost to purchase, although there are no firm plans to buy it.

McIntyre said "another faith group" is interested in the building as a new home.

The town's Planned Production Housing Plan was submitted to the state Department of Housing and

Community Development on Oct. 8, the selectmen said. If the plan is okayed, the town will be able to ward off unfriendly low-income housing developments, so-called 40B plans, since the town will show that it is striving to reach the state-mandated 10 percent level of affordable housing.

Another thrust undertaken by the grassroots group is to have the Our Lady's church listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The application to the National Register describes OLHC as "a religious property primarily significant for its architectural distinction and for its historical importance to the development of West Concord."

"The establishment of the church and parish was partly the result of efforts by some of West Concord's most influential citizens, both Catholic and Protestant, at the turn of the 20th Century," the application states. "Among them were farmer and building contractor Jeremiah Sheehan, Concord Reformatory Superintendent Joseph Scott, postmaster and store owner Loring Fowler, and Congressman and later Boston Mayor John 'Honey Fitz' Fitzgerald."

A related "vision statement" from the grassroots group "deems it essential that the exterior features of the building remain unchanged." The statement stresses the importance of Our Lady's to the West Concord neighborhood, and says "any reuse of the church building be in character with the village neighborhood immediately surrounding the church."

The grassroots group feels the "best protection" would be to sell it to another faith group. Another good idea, the group stated, is to create a historic district for at least the church and lawn.

"Our Lady church building deserves the Historic District protection that the five Concord Center churches enjoy," the statement reads.

The selectmen's letter stressing the historic importance of the church is an effort to act before the Archdiocese to list the property for sale.

"We believe that waiting to learn in which 'bundle' these properties will be included for sale by the Archdiocese is a reactive form of interacting with the Archdiocese and would not serve our interests well," the grassroots statement maintains.

BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT—DISTRICT POLICE

PLAN RECORD ✓

CASE B RACK 1 APART. 32 NO. 3095

BUILDING St. Bernard's R. C. Church. STORIES 1B

CITY OR TOWN Concord. STREET

TO BE USED FOR Religious Purposes.

CLASS Church

OWNER R. C. Bishop of Boston.

Wood.

ARCHITECT Chickering & O'Connell.

CERTIFICATE APPROVAL—SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS—REFERRED

DATE Aug. 27, 1903

INSPECTOR WHITE. f

FORM 41. 10,000. 2-2-'18.

Original yellow form: Eligibility file

Copies: Inventory form ☒

Town file(w/corresp.)

Macris

NR director _____

Community: Concord

MHC OPINION: ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER

Date Received: 10/28/04

Date Due:

Date Reviewed: 11/3/04

Type: ☒ Individual☐ District (Attach map indicating boundaries)

Name: Our Lady Help Church

Inventory Form: 459

Address: 53 Church St

Requested by: LHC/Anne Forbes

Action: ☒ Honor ☐ ITC ☐ Grant ☐ R & C ☐ Other:

Agency:

Staff in charge of Review:

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

☐ Eligible
☒ Eligible, also in district
☐ Eligible only in district
☐ Ineligible
☐ More information needed

DISTRICTS

☐ Eligible
☐ Ineligible
☐ More information needed

CRITERIA: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ DLEVEL: ☒ Local ☐ State ☐ National**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE by Peter Petrisko**

The Our Lady Help Church, 53 Church Street, Concord is a c. 1903 Queen Anne church in excellent condition built by Chickering and O'Connell. Sited on 1.25 acres of land amidst other institutional and public buildings, the church is in excellent condition. Recent renovations to the property are mainly from the late 20th century and are minor. In c. 1970 the kitchen and lower auditorium were rehabbed with some window replacement at the cellar level. In the late 1990s a small addition was built at the rear of the church to facilitate handicap access. The largest alteration was the construction in 2002 of a new parish house behind the church. Remarkable in its preservation is the interior of the church and stained glass windows. Except for some minor partition removals in the mid 1990s the church retains its turn of the century appearance. Outside the church are a memorial garden (1990s) and a 200-year old maple tree – possibly one of the oldest in this part of Concord.

The church meets Criterion A and C on the local level. Since 1903 this church has been the center of the West Concord community of French Canadian and Irish workers who came to Concord to work in the factories of West Concord. The church also meets Criterion C as an excellent example of the Queen Anne style and as the work of Chickering and O'Connell, an architectural firm that was active in designing Catholic churches at the turn of the century. The building retains most of its features including intact stained glass windows. A nomination should explore the designer of these windows and provide information regarding any changes or other alterations to the property. There is also a potential for a small district in this area that would include the church, parish house and the other surrounding institutional buildings, but a site visit would be required to determine the boundaries.