

Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist

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Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist also Connects to:

- Chinese Christian Church of Milwaukee
- First Church of Christ, Scientist
- Second Church of Christ, Scientist
- Third Church of Christ, Scientist
- Fifth Church of Christ Scientist

Historical Overview

The origins of Christian Science can be traced to its founder, Mary Baker Eddy. Mrs. Eddy established the Church of Christ, Scientist following her recovery from an injury she sustained in 1866 that her doctor deemed fatal. Following over a decade of study and writing on the necessity of faith and a proper understanding of God for physical healing, Mrs. Eddy and her followers established the Mother Church in Boston in 1879. Christian Science does not have ordained clergy but practitioners, who are trained in healing methods, and worshipping members from the community. Any member can become a practitioner. In 1883 a dentist named Dr. Silas J. Sawyer and his wife, Jenny, who were followers of Eddy, became practitioners in Milwaukee, making it the second city to host the faith. Next to Boston, Milwaukee would become one of the most important centers of Christian Science activity in the country.

Today's Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist is not the first congregation in Milwaukee known by that name. Early in the twentieth century, there was a lot of movement among Milwaukee's Christian Science branches as the religion grew and groups split and merged together. Beyond their formal application to and recognition by the Mother Church in Boston, each Christian Science church is autonomous. As a result, many early Milwaukee branches formed or came together as people congregated around a desired practitioner or established churches in their respective neighborhoods. The original Fourth Church was formed in 1903, while a second iteration of Fourth Church dates to around 1910. The final iteration of Fourth Church, which remains an active congregation today, was organized in 1920 and formally recognized as a branch of the Mother Church in 1921.

On November 28, 1920 a group of Christian Scientists met in the Athenaeum, or Women's Club of Wisconsin, at 813 E. Kilbourn Avenue, on the corner of Cass Street, to vote on organizing a new branch to be known as Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist to serve community residents on the East Side of Milwaukee. The newly established congregation held services at the Athenaeum for eight months before securing a property on the corner of Kenwood Boulevard and Stowell Avenue on April 13, 1921, where a bungalow-style edifice with the capacity to seat three hundred people was built in the same year. According to the by-laws of the *Manual of The Mother Church*, Christian Science churches are required to have a Reading Room where a person can go to study

the Bible and Christian Science literature in a quiet place which is often situated in business districts. Introspective study is a key aspect of Christian Science; in addition to Sunday services, Christian Science churches hold Wednesday testimonial meetings where members may share any revelations or powerful experiences that occurred as a result of their study and prayer. Fourth Church established a Reading Room in the parlors of Kenwood Masonic Temple, 2648 N. Hackett Avenue, for several months and then moved it to a new location on 2639 N. Downer Avenue. In 1923, the rapidly growing congregation of Fourth Church purchased the remaining three lots on Kenwood Blvd. In 1929, the congregation replaced the bungalow edifice with a larger Georgian Revival style church designed by Charles Draper Faulkner of Chicago that was completed in 1930. The new structure included a main worship space that could seat 700 people, and adjoining wings for the Sunday School and Reading Room. On June 29, 1947, Fourth Church held formal dedication services to mark the occasion of the church being free from debt in accordance with Christian Science policy.

The second half of the twentieth century was a period of stability but eventual decline for Fourth Church. A long-time member of the congregation noted that in the 1960s-1970s the church did participate in outreach activities, including operating a van that would pick up kids for Sunday School. By the 1980s and 1990s, many Christian Science churches in Milwaukee began selling their historic church structures due to declining membership and costly maintenance. In 2000, the congregation of Fourth Church sold their Kenwood Boulevard building to the Chinese Christian Church of Milwaukee and relocated to a smaller building located on 2011 E Capitol Drive in Shorewood. The building used to be a storefront for an architecture firm that was renovated by Fourth Church to be a multipurpose space. It is located on a busy commercial street and it was modified to be closer to the sidewalk in an effort to attract curious visitors, keeping in the tradition of the desired public visibility of Christian Science Reading Rooms.

Timeline

- 1903 The first Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist congregation is organized on Milwaukee's south side but merged with Third Church soon after
- c. 1910 The second iteration of Fourth Church is organized
- 1918 The second iteration of Fourth Church purchases land on the corner of Kenwood Boulevard and Stowell Avenue for the construction of an edifice
- 1919 The second iteration of Fourth Church dissolves
- 11/1920 Current Fourth Church congregation is organized
- 12/04/1920 First services are held in the Athenaeum, or the Women's Club of Wisconsin, located at what is today 813 E. Kilbourn Avenue
- 3/17/1921 Fourth Church is recognized as a branch of the Mother Church in Boston
- 4/13/1921 Fourth Church secures the property on the corner of Kenwood Blvd and Stowell Ave

- 5/19/1921 Construction of a bungalow edifice for worship is authorized
- 8/21/1921 First services are held in the bungalow edifice
- 1923 Fourth Church purchases the remaining three lots on Kenwood Blvd
- 9/28/1928 Construction for a larger, permanent edifice on the site of the bungalow is authorized
- 4/1/1929 Construction for larger edifice begins
- 6/20/1929 Cornerstone is laid
- 9/1929 First church service and Sunday School exercises are held in the Sunday School Room of the new edifice, located at 2519 E. Kenwood Blvd.
- 6/29/1930 First church service is held in the Main Auditorium of the new edifice
- 6/29/1947 The Fourth Church edifice is paid off and formally dedicated
- 1977 The spire of the edifice is struck by lightning, removed, and reconstructed to replicate the original
- 1996 Fourth Church puts its Kenwood Blvd edifice up for sale
- 2000 Edifice on Kenwood Blvd is sold to the Chinese Christian Church of Milwaukee
- 2000 Fourth Church completes the remodeling of their current edifice at 2011 E. Capitol Drive in Shorewood

Annotated Bibliography

Christian Science. Church Collection. Milwaukee County Historical Society Library. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Milwaukee County Historical Society has several folders related to Christian Science. Included in the collection is a typescript history of "The Growth of Christian Science in Milwaukee" by Diane Turner from 1978.

Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist Records. Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist. Shorewood, Wisconsin.

Fourth Church has a "History Folder" located in their Reading Room which has pamphlets, photocopies of a church history done in 1947, postcards, and other ephemera related to Christian Science in Wisconsin (most of the items are not related to Fourth Church specifically).

"Historic Designation Study Report: Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist," 1996.

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityHPC/DesignatedReports/vticnf/FourthChurchChristScientist.pdf>

A report documenting the significance of the 2519 E. Kenwood Boulevard church location as a historical site. The report also includes a history of Christian Science in Milwaukee.

Hope, Andrew. "Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, 1929." Architecture of Faith. Accessed April 21, 2019.

<http://architectureoffaithmilwaukee.info/I-Classical-Tradition/12-Fourth-Church-of-Christ-Scientist.aspx>

An overview of the architectural history of the 2519 E. Kenwood Boulevard church location. Andrew Hope focuses on the history of the architect Charles Draper Faulkner of Chicago who designed numerous Christian Science churches around the country.

Jacobs, Jenna. "Christian Scientists." Encyclopedia of Milwaukee. Accessed April 21, 2019.

<https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/christian-scientists/>

A short article outlining the general history of Christian Science in Wisconsin and its development in Milwaukee.

Spatial History

1. Fourth Church meets for worship at the Athenaeum
2. Construction, use of bungalow edifice on Kenwood Boulevard
3. Construction, use of permanent edifice on Kenwood Boulevard
4. Dedication of permanent edifice
5. Edifice spire is struck by lightning and rebuilt
6. Move to current location on Capitol Drive