



The ART AND ARCHITECTURE of the
Brick Presbyterian Church

f. 1767



from the pastor's desk

Welcome to The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, a vibrant and growing congregation that makes its home in these remarkable church buildings. This booklet tells the story of the architecture, art and history of the sanctuary, chapel and other spaces in which our congregation now worships and carries out its many activities.

Since its founding in 1767, our congregation has had three permanent homes. The first Brick Church was located at Beekman and Nassau Streets. In 1858, we moved to our second home at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 37th Street. The present sanctuary building - much akin to the earlier two - was dedicated in 1940. As you will read and see, it is an extraordinary work of ecclesiastical architecture.

But a church is not a building. The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York is a vital family of Christians from many backgrounds and parts of the world. These buildings are but the spaces in which we pray and study, enjoy fellowship, and teach our children. We go out from this place striving to serve Christ in the world by mentoring children in Harlem, building homes with Habitat for Humanity, feeding people in need, and supporting a variety of agencies which serve others in our neighborhood, city, and the world. We celebrate our rich history; we celebrate the vitality of this moment; and we celebrate the promise of a future ever calling us to new service and witness.

Please know how welcome you are, not only to visit and enjoy the beauty of our church, but also to worship with us on Sundays. If you are seeking a new and friendly church home, consider participation and membership in the great congregation these bricks shelter.

The Reverend Michael L. Lindvall
Senior Minister

linking past to present



The Brick Presbyterian Church enjoys a rich history in the City of New York, spanning more than two centuries. The first Brick Church (so named for the material from which it was built) was located at Beekman and Nassau Streets in Lower Manhattan near the present City Hall. The congregation's first minister was The Reverend Dr. John Rodgers, who would serve as the first Moderator of the first Presbyterian General Assembly in the United States in 1789. Rodgers also served as a chaplain to American troops during the Revolutionary War and was pastor of the earlier Wall Street church from which our congregation grew. In 1809, the church was incorporated as The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York.

As the city expanded northwards, so did the churches. In 1858, a new Brick Church was dedicated at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 37th Street. Then, 80 years later, the congregation decided to move again. In 1938, the cornerstone of the present building was laid by The Reverend Dr. Paul Austin Wolfe, Minister of The Brick Church, and Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Mayor of the City of New York. The structure was completed two years later and dedicated on April 14, 1940.

Brick Church's current home consists of four main buildings: the sanctuary, chapel and the old and new parish houses. The principal structure is a Georgian-style building, in which the architectural firm of York and Sawyer brilliantly

captured the spirit of the first church. York and Sawyer also designed the New-York Historical Society Building on Central Park West, the Federal Reserve Bank at Liberty and Nassau Streets, and the Academy of Medicine at 103rd Street and Fifth Avenue.

From ground to weathervane, The Brick Church rises 149 feet. The exterior is of red brick and Indiana limestone. A close look reveals the stone carvers' initials on some of the swags and other details of the façade. The tower incorporates

elements from earlier buildings: the weather vane is from the Fifth Avenue building and the clock bell, cast in 1824 by the G.H. Holbrook Foundry of Medford, Massachusetts, is from the first building. The carillon, by the Verdin Company, began to ring in 2005.

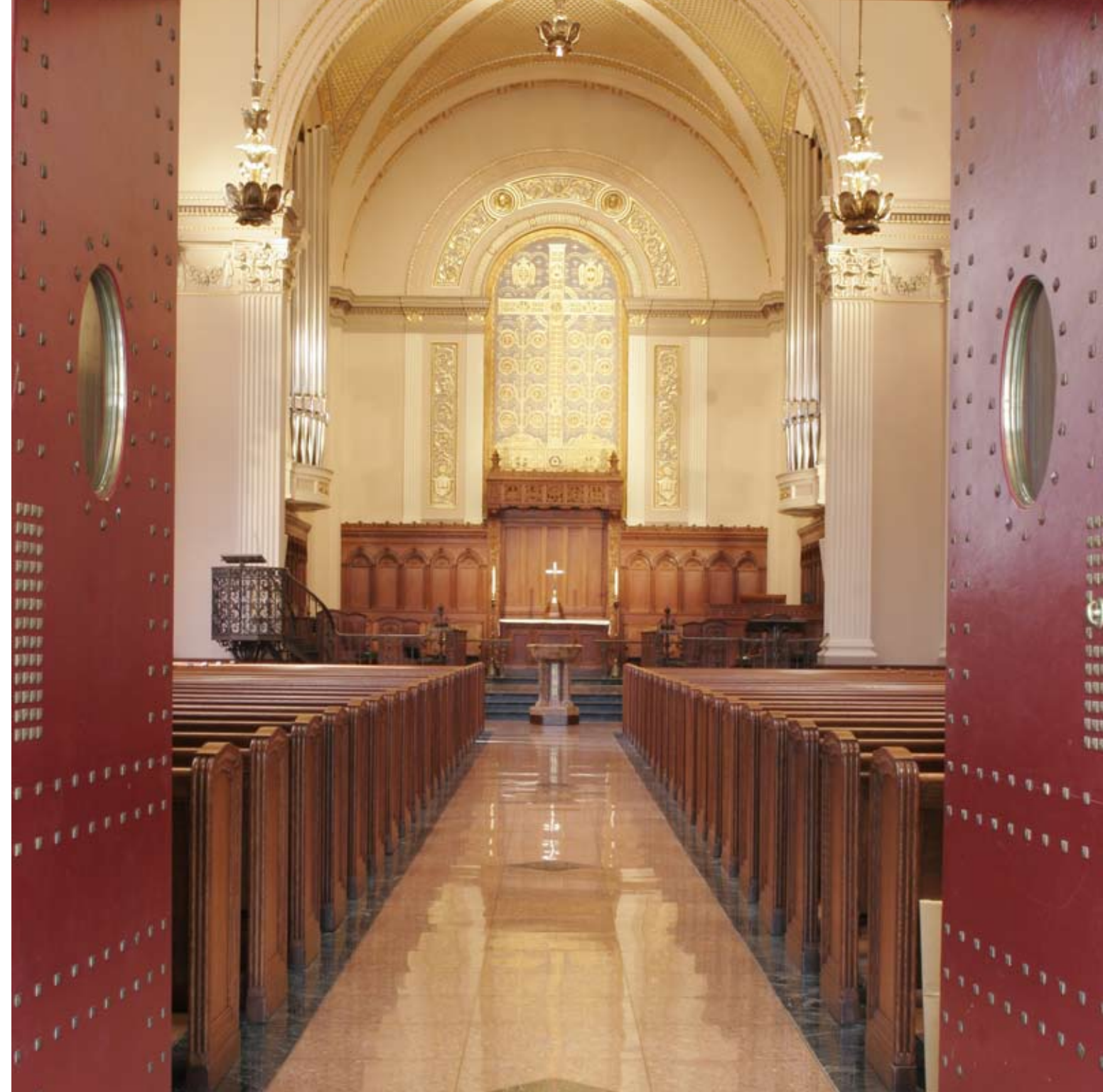


In the early 2000s, the church undertook an extensive restoration, guided by architect Jeffrey S. Lydon R.A., to return

the interior of the sanctuary building to its original glory while accommodating our new organ, upgraded lighting and other features. The team spent two years researching the original design, craftsmen, materials and finishes of the interiors of the sanctuary and chapel buildings as well as the intent of the architects and designers. Painstaking work revealed not only lost elements, but some features that were left out during the original construction due to lack of funds.

the sanctuary

Red leather doors open to reveal the interior of the sanctuary. Its magnificent neo-Georgian style interior is the work of designer Barnet Phillips, whose use of light and color reflects the influence of Georgian-era Scottish architect, Robert Adam.





The sanctuary holds many visual surprises for those who delight in the details. Elements of the ceiling and columns are highlighted by gilding. Observers will spot cherubs among the neoclassical decorative motifs of the ceiling and arches.

The chandeliers were designed and made by Edward F. Caldwell, a preeminent lighting designer of the 1920s and '30s. His work also can be found in St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

The pierced grill over the center door of the sanctuary, between swags and cherubs, was created during the restoration and reflects elements of the original design. Its center plaque marks the years 1767, when The Brick Church was founded; 1938, when the cornerstone of the current building was laid; and 2005, when the sanctuary renovation was completed.

The sanctuary windows are made of Blenko Antique glass, produced in West Virginia using traditional techniques. This glass has subtle amber and lavender hues.



The sanctuary's center aisle leads to the raised area called the chancel. On the left is the pulpit, from which sermons are preached. On the right is the lectern, where worship leaders read the Scriptures. In the center of this space is the communion table, where the elements of bread and wine are set for the observance of Holy Communion.

The chancel's ironwork was created by Samuel Yellin, one of the 20th century's foremost artisans in iron. An immigrant from Poland who became a leading citizen of Philadelphia, he was noted for his attention to detail.

Architecture buffs can visit another building designed by York and Sawyer with interiors by Barnet Phillips and ironwork by Samuel Yellin, the Apple Bank for Savings (originally the Central Savings Bank) at 73rd Street and Broadway.

In the center aisle in front of the chancel steps is the baptismal font given by Henry Van Dyke, a former minister of the church, in memory of a son. Dr. Van Dyke, in later life a noted author and educator, also wrote the hymn, "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee," and the famous Christmas story-sermon, "The Other Wise Man."

Throughout the sanctuary are decorations hand-carved in English oak. Cherubs, plants, animals, and other carvings adorn the communion table and various parts of the chancel. The seats,

called stalls, behind the communion table are also crafted from English oak.

The reredos, or panel on the back wall immediately above the communion table, was designed and executed by Barnet Phillips in bas-relief plaster, gold leaf and color. The Cross is the principal motif. At its center is the symbol of Christ, with the symbols of the four Gospel writers on the arms and upright of the Cross: the winged eagle of John, the winged man of Matthew, the winged lion of Mark, and the winged calf of Luke.



The shields of Peter and Paul are above the Cross on the left and right, respectively.

The Cross stands on a broad foundation that includes symbols of God the Father, the outstretched hand; the Holy Trinity, the triangle and three fish; and the Holy Spirit, the descending dove. Resting on this foundation and on either side of the Cross are open books, the Old and New Testaments.

Rising from the Old Testament is a tree of life with the shields of eight minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Zachariah. A close observer will find Jonah's whale. Above the New Testament are symbols of eight of Jesus' apostles: Simon, James the Lesser, Thomas, Jude, Bartholomew, Philip, Andrew and James the Greater.





sanctuary organ

The organ in the sanctuary was built by Casavant Frères of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, and installed during the summer of 2005. This organ has four manuals (keyboards), 118 ranks (sets of organ pipes of a certain tonal quality), and consists of 6,288 pipes. It is one of the largest organs in New York City and the largest installed in the city in well over 50 years. The tonal qualities of the instrument were designed by Minister of Music, Keith S. Toth, in collaboration with Casavant's tonal consultant, Jean-Louis Coignet.

It is modeled after instruments of the famous 19th century Parisian organ builder, Aristide Cavallé-Coll, and is designed to reproduce the sounds of the great French organs. The organ is the gift of an anonymous donor and is dedicated to the Glory of God and in recognition of the dedicated ministry of The Reverend Dr. Herbert B. Anderson and his wife Mrs. Mary Lou Anderson. Dr. Anderson was Senior Pastor from 1978 until 2001.



the narthex

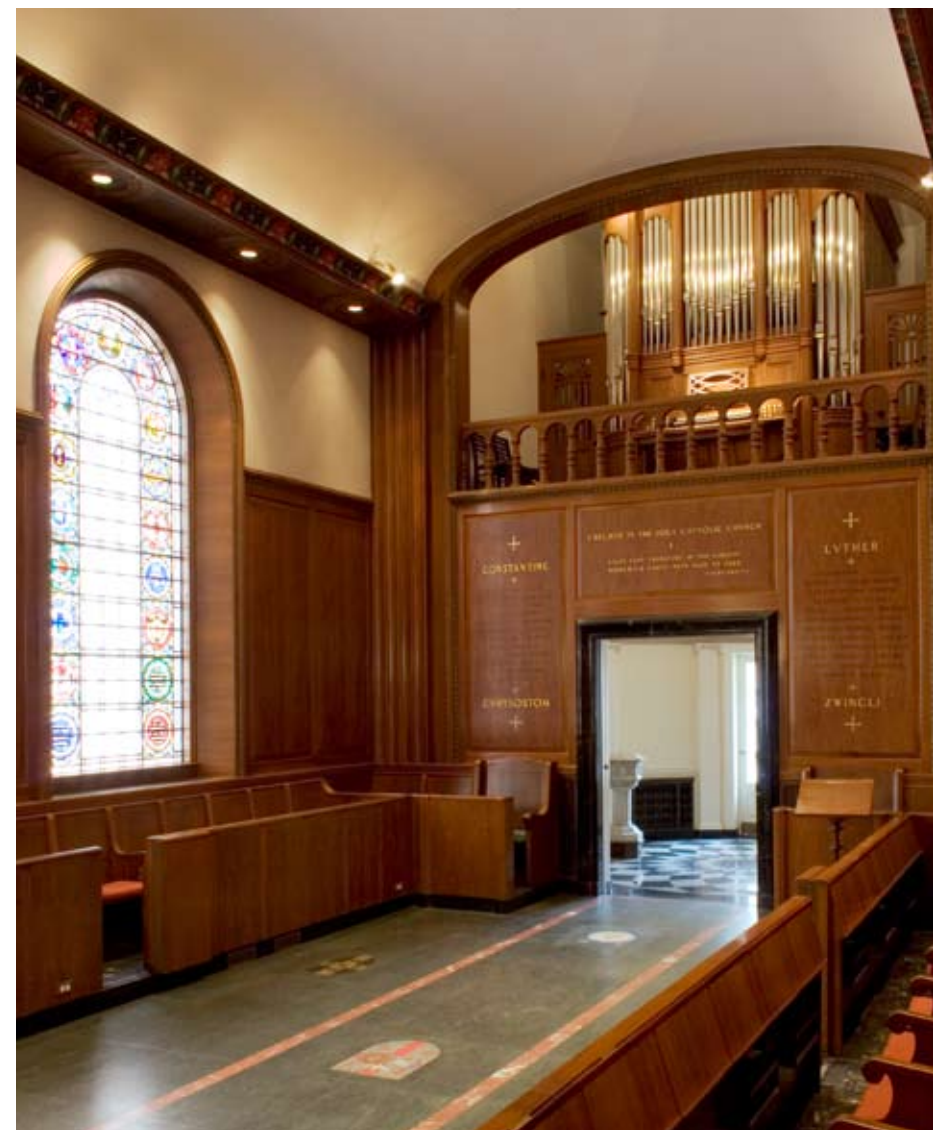
The narthex, or lobby, on Park Avenue contains white marble plaques commemorating Dr. John Rodgers, The Brick Church's first pastor, and his successor, Dr. Gardiner Spring. Its ceiling, and that of the chapel narthex, continue the neo-Georgian decorative theme.



the chapel and its narthex

To the left of the chapel entrance on Park Avenue is a replica of a foundation stone from the original Brick Church, with a carving that reads "PVB Livingston." Peter Van Brugh Livingston, an Elder of the congregation in 1766, was a noted patriot and President of the Provincial Congress in the troubled year of 1775. Mr. Livingston was instrumental in securing the land for the building of the first church.

The rotunda contains a marble font, and a stained glass window dedicated to the ministry of Dr. and Mrs. Anderson. The window was created by the Rambusch Company of New Jersey.



the chapel of the reformed faith

The Chapel of the Reformed Faith was dedicated in 1952. Its interior, designed by the firm of Adams and Woodbridge, was inspired by the Wren Chapel at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The flags represent several national churches and leaders of the Reformed Faith. The flag of Zurich, where the reformer Zwingli worked, has a silver and blue diagonal design. The flag with the gold candlestick and stars honors the Waldensians, 12th century forerunners of the Reformation who were cruelly persecuted. The Huguenots, French Protestants, are represented by the flag with the Cross, dove and tear. Huguenot leader Admiral Coligny's flag bears a silver eagle on a red field. The flag of Geneva has an eagle and key. Lions adorn the flag of William the Silent, founder of Dutch independence in the 16th century. The white flag with the blue shield represents St. Andrews, Scotland, where John Knox preached.





The windows of the chapel carry the seals of hospitals, colleges and universities, and seminaries established by the Reformed Faith. These windows were executed by Reynolds, Francis and Rohnstock of Boston, whose work can also be seen at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

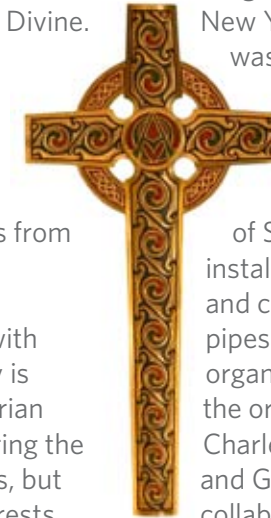
Around the walls are the names of notables from the early church, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, and theologians and lay leaders from recent times.

The chapel floor is decorated with Italian mosaics. Near the entry is the official seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), separated during the Civil War era into two branches, but reunited in 1983. The mosaic crests represent the Reformed Churches of the United Kingdom and Europe.

The polychromed Cross of Iona, carved in Italy, bears runic knots and fanciful scrolls. The Island of Iona is the location of the monastery founded in 563 A.D. by St. Columba, who brought Christianity to

Scotland. Red marble outlines another cross on the chapel floor.

On the backs of the seats on either side of the chapel are carved the names of congregations in the Presbytery of New York in 1952, when the chapel was dedicated, and the date of their founding.



The chapel organ was built by the firm of Guilbault-Thérien of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, and installed in 1996. It has two manuals and consists of 25 ranks and 1,200 pipes. It is modeled after the choir organs built by Cavallé-Coll, including the organ he built for composer Charles Gounod in Paris. Mr. Toth and Guy Thérien of Guilbault-Thérien collaborated on its tonal qualities. This organ also is the gift of an anonymous donor and is dedicated to the Glory of God and in recognition of the music ministries of Dr. Clarence Dickinson, organist and choirmaster of The Brick Church from 1909 until 1963, and Dr. T. Charles Lee, organist and choirmaster from 1959 until 1984.





anderson library

On the first floor of the old parish house is the Anderson Library and Archives, named in honor of Dr. Anderson. This is a purpose-built space with climate control, museum lighting and security to protect valuable church records and rare books. When entering the library, visitors will see a woodcarving bearing the legend, "Holiness to the Lord," which hung over the pulpit in the first two church buildings. The library's meeting room features French doors with ironwork details.



carnegie room

On the third floor of the new parish house is a meeting space dedicated to the memory of Louise Whitfield (Mrs. Andrew) Carnegie, a devoted member of this church for many years. The Chinese wall panels are of special interest. They are believed to have come from the sewing room of the Carnegie mansion, located at Fifth Avenue at 91st Street, now the Cooper Hewitt Museum. One additional panel, in the same style as the others, was painted by Elder David Wilson.





The Brick Presbyterian Church

PARK AVENUE and 91ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY

