

**The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Mother Church and Extension**
210 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115
(617) 450-2000

<https://www.christianscience.com/find-us/visit-the-mother-church>

Mary Baker Eddy. Called by her biographer Gillian Gill, “the most influential and controversial woman in America,” Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), launched her religious and healing movement, Christian Science, in Boston’s Back Bay in the late nineteenth century. With the 1875 publication of her unique commentary on the Bible, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Eddy’s non-materialist conception of reality, with its re-reading of God as dual-gendered Spirit or Divine Mind and its advocacy of prayerful healing, grounded her initial establishment of the Christian Science Association (1879) and a teaching institution, the Massachusetts Metaphysical College (1881-1889). Foremost among Eddy’s goals was the restoring of “primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing” (Gill 274). In her view, only “the pure Word contains . . . the living, health-giving Truth” (quoted in Gill 365). The founding of the First Church of Christ, Scientist would be the next step of the growing organization, and the erecting of the Mother Church (1895) established the group prominently in Back Bay.

The Mother Church, Architecture. A compact church in the Romanesque style, this building, designed by **Franklin I. Welch**, of Malden, MA, fit well with the late nineteenth-century residential scale of Back Bay while also responding to the organization’s desire for a monumental presence. Located on a wedge-shaped lot, the building featured a quarry-faced random ashlar New Hampshire granite façade, and a picturesque set of masses, including the prominent bell



tower buttressed by a projecting two-story bow at the apex of the lot. The interior featured an octagonal auditorium that seated 1100 people in pews curved around the steeply raked floor. Ornamentation was domestic and sumptuous. It included wainscoted and frescoed walls, green and gold mosaic floors, upholstered seats, a curly red birch balcony encircling the room, colorful stained-glass windows, and inscriptions from *Science and Health* running around the frieze. Lighting was provided by two electric standards on the stage

illuminating the dual reading desks, and 144 electric bulbs encircling the ceiling. Stained-glass windows feature stories of healing, including the Raising of Jairus’s Daughter, and women’s roles within the New Testament, including images of Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, and Mary Magdalene. The image of the Woman God-Crowned (Woman of the Apocalypse) from Revelation is located on the front wall.



Auxiliary rooms include a Sunday school and, located on the second floor of the bow on the building, a lounge called the Mother’s Room that was furnished by funds donated by children of the denomination from across the country who raised money for the purpose of making their beloved “mother” comfortable in the new church.

The dedication of this building in 1895 attracted thousands, and Sunday services swelled. Within a year, two services were held each Sunday and both were filled. The annual meetings had to be held in the larger Tremont Temple. Christian Science had caught on: its focus on self-improvement, right thinking and right relationship with the Divine, and the subsequent healing that came with understanding of Truth, was attractive to the growing middle class, particularly women but men as well.

The Extension, Architecture. By 1902, just seven years after the completion of the Mother Church, Eddy began to plan for a new, larger building. The Association began obtaining the other buildings on the block, and the decision to keep the Mother Church intact was made by Eddy. Architect **Charles Brigham**, designer of such public buildings as the (now destroyed) Art Museum in Copley Square, was hired, and he began

designing the building from the inside out—the primary need was for a huge, unobstructed auditorium. Partway into the design process, Brigham’s health declined and he left Boston for the Caribbean.

Christian Science devotee **Solon S. Beman** (1853–1914), architect of two Christian Science churches in Chicago, volunteered to



complete the design for what would come to be called, the Extension, a building that contrasted physically with the Mother Church in every way. Adopting a neoclassicism influenced by the then-popular Beaux Arts movement, Beman shifted Brigham’s original Byzantine architectural vocabulary toward the Italian Renaissance style but retained Brigham’s center dome and surrounding semidomes. He eliminated two minaret-like towers on the front façade, and created the semicircular entry porch supported by columns.

The interior auditorium is covered by a massive dome, supported on pendentives and piers at the corners of a Greek cross plan. Round arches link the four piers and house three-tiered galleries on three sides of the room. In the front quarter, the massive round arch frames the pulpit stage like a huge proscenium. Originally, within this arch, two graduated arches receded, forming a partial enclosure for the organ pipe fence. Beneath this, the pulpit area,

several steps above the main floor, was railed. The original Hook and Hastings four-manual organ console abutted the right side of the pulpit stage on the main floor, but it was replaced in 1952 with the current Aeolian-Skinner instrument. The current configuration of the front features a thrust-stage strategy that brings the readers closer to the congregation seated in the original fan-shaped banks of curved pews separated by five aisles on the raked main floor.



Ornamentation in the room is spare, with neutral grey and cream walls throughout. Inscriptions from *Science and Health* are prominent on the piers. Rosettes in coffers line the arches, and a large roundel is inscribed in each pendentive. The window glass is predominantly clear, but the borders feature touches of color—green, gold, and blue—in figures of nature and the two seminal books, the Bible and *Science and Health*.

The Plaza. The Christian Science Center now covers some 14.5 acres and includes the Mother Church and Extension as well as the Christian Science Publishing House (1934), and three buildings designed in the Brutalist style in the early 1970s by **Araldo Cossutta** of I.M. Pei & Associates: the Reflection Hall (formerly the Sunday school), the 4-story Colonnade Building, and the 26-story Administration Building. All are linked by the 670-foot reflecting pool.

For Further Reading:

Gill, Gillian. *Mary Baker Eddy*. Reading, Mass.: Perseus Books, 1998.

Ivey, Paul Eli. *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

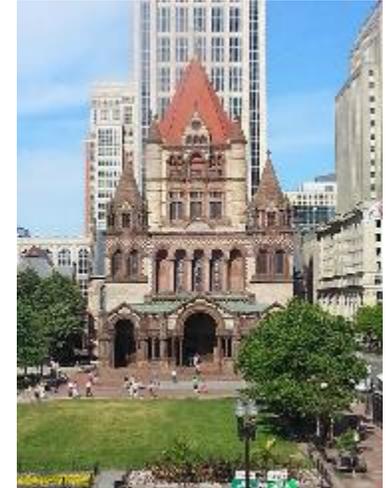
Kilde, Jeanne Halgren, "Material Expression and Maternalism in Mary Baker Eddy's Boston Churches: How Architecture and Gender Compromised Mind." *Material Religion* 1, no. 2 (2005): 164-97.

Buildings seen from tour path:

Boston Public Library
Copley Square
McKim, Mead, and White, 1895

Old South Church (Congregational, UCC)
Copley Square
Boylston and Dartmouth
Cummings and Sears, 1873
Allen & Collens, 1935-1935

Trinity Church in the City of Boston (Episcopal)
Copley Square (206 Clarendon Street)
Boston, MA 02116
617-536-0944
www.trinitychurchboston.org/



History: Designed by **H.H. Richardson** (1838–86), Trinity Church is routinely listed as one of the dozen most important buildings in the history of American architecture. It is also the second oldest Episcopal congregation in Boston, founded in 1733. The congregation's first two buildings were located near what is now Downtown Crossing. When the Great Fire of 1872 destroyed the second of these, the church resolved to relocate to the newly filled Back Bay. **Phillips Brooks** (1835–93) had become rector just three years earlier. He was regarded as one of the greatest preachers of his day, and the congregation was determined to build a large, new landmark building. The church was consecrated in 1877 and the porch added in 1897. Together with the Boston Public Library, the (New) Old South Church, and Fairmont Copley Plaza hotel (on the former site of Brigham's Museum of Fine Arts), the church has defined Copley Square, one of Boston's most important civic spaces.

Architecture: The makers of Trinity Church wished to create a distinctive worship space suitable especially for preaching and avoiding the constraints of Gothic used in the very same years for Emmanuel, Covenant, First, and other churches in Back Bay. They chose Henry Hobson Richardson to design the building. Richardson had recently completed the neighboring Brattle Square Church in a Romanesque style. But it was at Trinity that he pioneered his distinctive and widely copied version of Romanesque. It features short columns, broad arches, rough-faced multi-colored ashlar, and custom asymmetrical plans that suited the requirements of the program.

The parish house was the first unit to be completed, it housed a large worship space on its upper floor. Its position toward the rear of the lot was dictated by the oddly shaped site, for at that time Huntington Avenue continued across the square to the intersection of Boylston and Clarendon Streets.

Since Back Bay was once water and marsh, forty-five hundred wooden piles were driven into the fill to support the weight of the church. Upon these were built the church's stone foundation, including massive pyramids. These were partly excavated at the beginning of the twentieth century to provide for space under the nave for congregational life. Given the oddly shaped site, Richardson

chose to place the tower over the center of the church. He based its design in part on that of the old cathedral in Salamanca, Spain.



In the decoration of the church, Richardson worked with muralist **John La Farge** (1835–1910) to incorporate warm, vibrant colors, and commanding murals of prophets around base of the central lantern tower. Short, wide transepts intersected with the broad nave to create a massive crossing in which much of the congregation was

assembled, making the church primarily a central plan space rather than a basilican one. Richardson designed a massive gas-light fixture to illuminate the central crossing. It was taken down, however, when the church converted to electricity .

The original chancel was much simpler than today's. It featured a large free standing wooden table with a D-shaped wooden communion rail surrounding it. The preacher's pulpit desk was positioned in the central part of the chancel, in front of the altar. Both the altar and pulpit reflected the low-church or evangelical practice of Brooks and the congregation.

In 1916 the pulpit on the north-east pier was added as a memorial to Robert Treat Paine a lay leader in building the church. Like the statues on the porch and the bas reliefs in the chancel, it features a series of famous Christians culminating in Phillips Brooks. A few re orderings of the chancel took place before the present altar and decoration were dedicated in 1938. They are the work of architect and designer **Charles D. Maginnis** (1857–1955). A platform enabling the clergy to celebrate the eucharist facing the congregation was installed in the mid 1990s.

Iconography: The church has many different iconographic cycles. All except the murals were added after the church was completed and are by a variety of artists working in a variety of styles. Only a few parts of the iconography can be described here.

The pulpit features carved statues of preachers (Paul, John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, Hugh Latimer, and Phillips Brooks) and panels depicting the life of Christ. In the chancel, the ends of the cross are marked with the symbols of the four evangelists. The chancel windows by Clayton and Bell of London are scenes from the life of Christ. The bas reliefs beneath the windows are from right to

left, Paul, the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, John Wycliffe, John Wesley, and Phillips Brooks.

The windows over the north gallery were designed by Edward Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris. They depict scenes from Jesus' infancy narratives. The windows over the south gallery are by Eugène Oudinot of Paris and depict the Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost. Over the rear or west gallery is a triumphant Christ in the act of blessing by John La Farge. The windows in the nave under the gallery are by Margaret Redmond of Boston. Restoration projects in recent decades have restored many of the murals and windows to a greater brilliance.

For Further Reading:

O'Gorman, James F., ed. *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

Williams, Peter W. *Religion, Art, and Money: Episcopalians and American Culture from the Civil War to the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Rectory of Trinity Church
Newbury & Clarendon
H. H. Richardson 1880
Third floor added later

First Baptist Church
Commonwealth & Newbury
H. H. Richardson, 1872
built for Brattle Street Church (Unitarian)
used by First Baptist since 1882

First Church in Boston (Unitarian)

66 Marlborough St., at Berkeley
1868 building by Ware and Van Brunt almost completely destroyed by fire in 1968. New building by Paul Rudolph, 1972.

First Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod)

299 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116

(612) 536-8851

<https://www.flc-boston.org/>

History: The First Lutheran Church traces its history to the German Lutheran Society of Boston, which, in 1839, received the first charter for a Lutheran church in New England. The congregation erected a red brick church in Boston's South End in 1847 and, in 1899, erected a new building, also in the same neighborhood. In 1954 the congregation purchased two lots at the present location, and hired then MIT Dean of Architecture, **Pietro Belluschi** (1899-1994) to design their church. The building was completed in 1957.



Architecture: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) enthusiastically embraced architectural modernism in the post-World War II period. Other well-known modernist LCMS churches include Church Lutheran in Minneapolis (1949), designed by Eliel Saarinen, and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne (1953–58), designed by Eero Saarinen. Belluschi, who resided in Portland, Oregon, until his move to Cambridge in 1951, had designed a few churches in the region, including Portland's Zion Lutheran (1950).

Belluschi faced a number of challenges in designing First Lutheran: a lot bound by other buildings, a historic neighborhood that needed to be respected, and a busy street. The result is the domestic scale building with gradual transitions zones leading from the street to the sanctuary, and the two modules of the building blend with the surrounding area. The rectangular brick sanctuary topped by a gentry curved bow roof rises to the height of the nearby houses while the lower entry area with its decorative iron grate brick flooring, and lush plantings offers a welcoming transition from the street.

The sanctuary interior continues the used of brick, a favored material of modernist architects, inside. The rectangular plan room with its bow ceiling features two-story brick walls on the two street sides. Pierced at near the top with regular groups of small square ventilation holes, these brick walls feature an irregular surface, with random bricks protruding slightly from the main plane, a strategy also used in the walls of MIT's Chapel, being designed by Eero Saarinen at the same time, and borrowed originally from architect Aalto Alvar's Baker House dormitory (1948) on the MIT campus. Another possible reference to Saarinen's chapel is in the lighting of First Lutheran. While the cave-like MIT chapel is lit by reflected sunlight reflecting up from a moat around the lower perimeter of the main room, Belluschi's First Lutheran is lit by a clerestory around the upper perimeter of three sides of the room, a feature that seems to make the roof hover gracefully above the walls. A bank of ceiling-high windows in the west wall lights the chancel and farther down the wall, a lower windows light the seating area. The effect is a room that is at once closed in a protected from the street noise while also filled with natural light.



As is typical in modernist churches, ornamentation is minimal. A plain cross hangs on the chancel wall, and two rows of cylindrical lights hang from the ceiling. The natural textures of the brick walls; glass windows; wood seats, organ case, chancel wall, pulpit and altar rail; and seasonal plants lend an organic quality that echoes the welcoming air of the exterior.



A Wicks organ at the back of the sanctuary was replaced in the 1990s by the current Richards, Fowkes & Co. tracker organ. The case is of German design. The maker's website notes that "there are 7 independent reed stops over the two manuals and pedal including 3 (with a short length 16 foot Dulcian) in the Rückpositive. The Rückpositive also has the distinction of having the intra-manual coupler connect the Werk to the Positive in the Dutch tradition rather than the more normal Positive to Werk."

For further reading:

- Buggeln, Gretchen. *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Post-War America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Clausen, Meredith L. *Spiritual Space: The Religious Architecture of Pietro Belluschi*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.
- Price, Jay M. *Temples for a Modern God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Church of the Covenant (Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ)

Berkley and Bolyston

Richard M. Upjohn, 1865–67. It was built for Central Congregational Church. It merged with First Presbyterian in 1931.

Emmanuel Church in the City of Boston (Episcopal)

15 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116

(617) 526-3355

www.emmanuelboston.org/

History: Emmanuel Church was founded in 1860 in the house of William R. Lawrence at 98 Beacon Street. Lawrence's family was instrumental in filling in Back Bay to allow for more development near downtown. Completed in 1861, Emmanuel was the first building on Back Bay's Newbury Street. Organizers quickly secured **Frederic Dan Huntington** as rector. As a Unitarian, Huntington had been Harvard's preacher to the university in 1855. In late 1859, however, he announced that he had developed Trinitarian views, resigned from Harvard, and applied for Episcopal ordination.

A socially prominent church in a fashionable neighborhood, Emmanuel was active in various social gospel efforts, but became best known in the early twentieth century under rector Elwood Worcester (1862–1940) for the **Emmanuel Movement**. It advocated some New Thought ideas, small group discussions, and lay psychotherapy to change habits and achieve mental healing.

The church has long played a leading role in Boston's musical life with paid instrumentalists and singers. In the 1960s, the church hosted jazz concerts including one by Duke Ellington. Since 1970 it has included the **weekly performances of cantatas by J.S. Bach** with the original orchestration within



the Sunday service. This practice began when music director Craig Smith (1947–2007) founded Emmanuel Music. It continues today from September to May under the ensemble's artistic director Ryan Turner. Presently the cantata occurs near the end of the service, following communion.

Since 2005, Emmanuel Church has been the home of **Central Reform Temple**, a newly-organized progressive Jewish Congregation. The temple holds Shabbat Eve services in Emmanuel's sanctuary twice a month. Committed to Classical Reform Judaism, Central Reform unconditionally welcomes interfaith families and conducts its services primarily in English. With Central Reform's presence, Emmanuel describes itself as increasingly an interreligious community. Central Reform's rabbi, Howard A. Berman, serves the church as rabbi-in-residence and preaches in its Sunday services. The two congregations sponsor Emmanuel Center, which sponsors educational programs exploring the intersection of spirituality and the arts.

Architecture: Glancing from the street one is immediately aware that Emanuel has a more complicated architectural history than the other churches on this tour. At the west end (closest to the Convention Center) is the Lindsey Memorial Chapel, an elegant, slender building with perpendicular-style Gothic features. To the east a nave runs parallel to the street. It is bisected by a massive, rather plain transept that runs out to side walk with a simple narrow entrance. While all in Gothic-revival styles, these three parts were designed by three architects over a roughly sixty-year period.

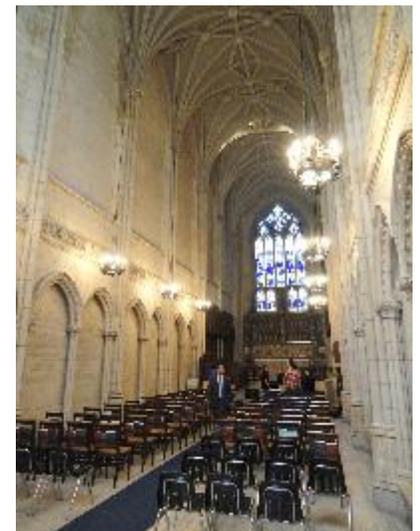


The gable wall of the transept is part of the original church completed in 1861 according to the designs of **Alexander Esty** (1826–81). Two of his churches in neighboring Cambridge are on the National Register of Historic Places, Prospect Congregational Church (1851, now Christ the King Presbyterian) and Old Cambridge Baptist Church (1869). Esty's church ran perpendicular to the street (south-to-north). To accommodate additional worshipers, a transept was added to the west a few years later. In 1898 most of Esty's church was taken down for a new, larger church designed by **Francis R. Allen** (1843–1931). It includes a chancel on the east end which shifted the orientation to west-to-east with worshipers entering the church on its long south side.

This design maximizes the use of the small mid-block site to create an impressive Gothic interior. The light colored walls of the interior contrast sharply with the dark wood beams. The broad nave and slender columns holding up the clerestory, maximize sight lines to the chancel.

The church hosts a large and diverse collection of **stained glass**. A fine example of glass from America's pre-opalescent era is the window by Samuel West of the four evangelists over the main south entrance which was installed in the mid-1860s. Opposite this is another notable window, Emmanuel's Land (Frederic Crownshield, 1899). It presents a scene from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Further to west on the same wall is the Incredulity of St. Thomas by Tiffany Studios, 1889. Some of the windows in the chancel are from the 1920s and by Charles J. Connick of Boston.

The **Lindsey Memorial Chapel** was completed in 1924 as a memorial to Leslie Hawthorne Lindsey, who perished with the sinking of the *Lusitania* less than two weeks after her 1915 wedding. The architect was again Francis R. Allen, now in partnership with **Charles Collens** (1873–1956). Allens & Collens designed many ecclesiastical buildings in the first three decades of the twentieth-century, including Harvard's Andover Hall, Union Theological Seminary, Riverside Church, and the Cloisters in New York. In designing this chapel they partnered with **Ninian Comper** (1864–1960), the British designer who designed all of its furnishings, statues and windows.



For further reading:

Central Reform Temple <http://www.centralreformtemple.org/>

Robeson, Harriet A. *Emmanuel Church in the City of Boston 1860-1960: The First One Hundred Years*. Boston, 1960.

Symondson, Anthony and Stephen Arthur Bucknall. *Sir Ninian Comper: An Introduction to His Life and Work with a Complete Gazetteer*. London: Spire, 2006.

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