

**Tour of New York Houses of Worship:  
Central Harlem and Morningside Heights**

Friday, January 2, 2015, 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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This tour will visit three sites in the uptown neighborhoods of Central Harlem and Morningside Heights: Mount Olivet Baptist Church, the Church of Notre Dame, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Together they represent some of the historic diversity of religion and architecture in these uptown neighborhoods. We are grateful for these churches being open to us on this Friday afternoon of an extended holiday weekend.

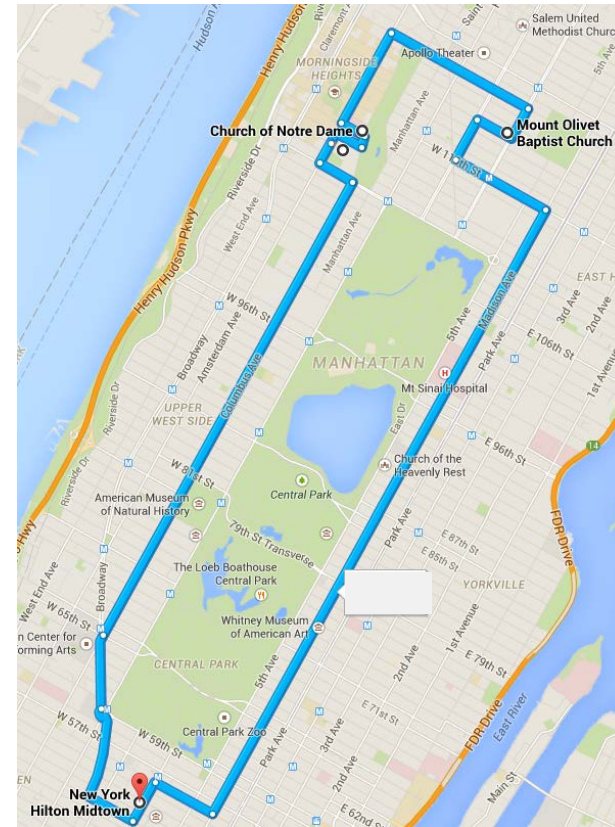
**Schedule**

Assembly in Americas Hall I, Hilton Midtown

- 2:30 p.m. Walk outside to bus
- 3:05 p.m. Arrive Mount Olivet Baptist Church  
201 Lenox Avenue [Malcolm X] at 120th Street  
New York, NY 10027
- 3:25 p.m. Depart Mount Olivet
- 3:45 pm. Arrive Church of Notre Dame  
405 West 114th Street at Morningside Drive  
New York, NY 10025
- 4:15 p.m. Depart Church of Notre Dame
- 4:25 p.m. Arrive Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025

5:00 p.m. Depart Cathedral of St. John the Divine [The cathedral is scheduled to remain open until 6 p.m. Tour members may stay on if they are willing to find their own way back to the hotel. Subway stops are a few blocks away.]

5:30 p.m. Arrive Hilton



Map shows locations and possible route.

## Harlem

Harlem takes its name from the Dutch settlement on upper Manhattan Island which was formally incorporated under the name *Nieuw Haarlem* (New Harlem) in 1660. The area developed gradually and was annexed into the City of New York in 1873. As with much of the rest of the city, the demographics of the neighborhood have changed steadily over time and many houses of worship have served a variety of ethnic groups and religions. For example, the current home of Mt. Neboh Baptist Church at the corner of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd. and West 114th St. was built for the Jewish Congregation Anshe Chesed (1907-09). The Jewish population of Harlem peaked at almost 200,000 around 1915 and then declined swiftly. In 1927 Spanish Vincentians made the synagogue the Roman Catholic Church of Our of the Miraculous Medal. Then in 1980 the building was purchased by Mount Neboh, an African American Baptist congregation founded in 1937.

For most of the twentieth-century, Central Harlem has been associated most strongly with the African American community. Its black population surged from 10% to 70% between 1910 and 1930. Black Protestant churches moving into the neighborhood frequently purchased buildings from white Protestant or Jewish congregations. Later many congregations purchased theatres and converted them into churches, as at Canaan Baptist Church of Christ (132 W. 116th St.) built in 1911 as Loew's 116th St. Theatre and Greater Refuge Temple (2081 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd. at W. 124th St.) built in 1889 as the Harlem Casino and given a multi-colored modernist façade by the church in 1966. Other congregations moved into churches erected originally for white congregations of the same denomination. One noteworthy example of this is St. Martin's Episcopal Church which is located two blocks north on Malcolm X Blvd from our first stop. Manhattan's best extant work of Richardsonian Romanesque, the church was designed by William A. Potter in 1887 for Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. The percentage of Harlem residents who are African American has steadily declined in recent decades, while remaining a majority.



### Mount Olivet Baptist Church

201 Lenox Ave. [Malcolm X Blvd.] at 120th St.  
New York, NY 10027

<http://www.mountolivetbaptistchurch.org/>  
212-864-1155

Like many other historic African American congregations, Mount Olivet moved to Harlem from Midtown Manhattan. The congregation was organized 1878 by Daniel W. Wisher. Within a decade it had built its own building at 161 West 53rd St., less than one block from today's Hilton Midtown.

In 1925 the congregation moved to a classical revival structure that could readily be taken for a concert hall, library, or Christian Science church. Small Stars of David in the capitals of its columns reflect its origin as the home of Temple Israel. Built in 1906/7, its architect, Arnold W. Brunner (1857-1925), was at the forefront of the movement for classical revival synagogues. With his partner Thomas Tyron, Brunner initially conformed to the custom of the time and incorporated Moorish and Romanesque elements in his synagogues such as the 1891 Temple Beth El (now demolished). By 1897, however, he had become a champion of the classical revival as the best style for synagogues, as witnessed by his firm's design for Congregation Shearith Israel (the United States' oldest Jewish congregation) at Central Park West and 70th St. Brunner's advocacy of Beau-Arts Classical designs for synagogues was based in more than the widespread popularity the style enjoyed in America following the 1893 Chicago world's fair. In a 1907 article in *Brickbuilder*, he advocated taking up the aborted development of early Judean synagogues. "As far as one may see," he wrote, "the style of early Judean buildings, if it had been allowed to progress and develop, might not unreasonably have become to-day what we may call modern classic architecture."

Given the changes in Harlem's population Temple Israel moved out in 1920 for another classical revival synagogue on the West Side. A Seventh-Day Adventist congregation worshiped in the building for a few years before it was acquired by Mount Olivet. The building has served Mount Olivet well as it has continued its leading role in racial justice and social reform.

## Morningside Heights

Located west of Central Harlem, Morningside Heights was known as Harlem Heights early in its history. The name “Morningside” is derived from its eastern edge which overlooks Harlem. There, Morningside Park and Morningside Drive are located.

The neighborhood remained primarily undeveloped farmland into the late nineteenth century. Then it became home to many educational and religious institutions. Because of its height and promised importance early developers promoted it as the “American Acropolis.” The 1890s were a pivotal decade for the development of the neighborhood. In that decade, Columbia University, St. Luke’s Hospital, and Teacher’s College, all opened their first architectural units. Over the coming decades they would expand and be joined by Union Theological Seminary, Jewish Theological Seminary, the Riverside Church, and the Interchurch Center among others. Given its many educational institutions it is sometimes termed the “Academic Acropolis.”

### Church of Notre Dame Église de Notre Dame

405 West 114th Street at  
Morningside Drive  
New York, NY 10025  
(212) 866-1500  
<http://ndparish.org/>



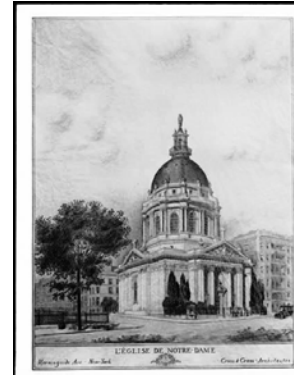
The *Église de Notre Dame* on Morningside Heights began in 1910 as a mission of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul (on West 24th Street). The architectural firm Dans and Otto designed a chapel and a replica of the grotto where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France in 1858. According to one source, the land for the church was donated by Geraldine Redmond whose son had been cured at Lourdes. The grotto and chapel were completed in 1911.

Soon, however, an expansion of the church was deemed necessary and the firm of Cross and Cross prepared plans for a grand, domed church modeled after the Church of St. Louis in Paris, often known as *L'Église*

*des Invalides*. The exterior of this church, without the projected dome, was completed in 1915. The decoration and furnishing of the interior continued over many decades. In 1925 a Cassavant organ from Quebec was installed and in 1927 a Carrara marble altar from France. The striking feature of the interior is rough-faced grotto which is visible above and behind the main altar of the elegant neo-classical church.



The church was staffed the Fathers of Mercy, a French order, until 1960 when the Archdiocese of New York took responsibility for the church. At the same time, the long delayed plans to complete the massive drum dome were formally abandoned and a low dome and roofline installed instead.



For much of its history, the church has served many different ethnicities. Today weekly masses are celebrated in English, French, and Spanish. The life of the parish is closely united with the life of Morningside Heights’ institutions, particularly the neighboring St.

Luke’s Hospital (originally founded by Episcopalians) and Columbia University whose Catholic campus ministry was entrusted to the Church of Notre Dame in 1988.

### Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025  
<http://www.stjohndivine.org/>  
212-316-7540

Considered the fourth largest Christian church in the world, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine defies brief summary. The Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, it was incorporated in 1873 but

economic depression delayed fund raising and site selection until 1887, when Bishop Henry Codman Potter resumed the effort. The choice of Morningside Heights for the Episcopal cathedral helped influence the relocation of two other institutions related to the denomination to the neighborhood, St. Luke's Hospital and Columbia University.



The cathedral has been shaped by two different designs. The initial design was by George Heins & Christopher Grant LaFarge. Chosen in 1891 after an extensive competition, it was an eclectic design featuring Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic elements.

Construction of this design commenced in 1893 with the crypt being opened for worship in 1899. An important element of their design were seven chapels arranged along the apse at the east end of the church. These chapels represented seven different nationalities that had immigrated to New York: Spanish, Italian, French, Eastern Mediterranean, British, German, and Scandinavian. Each was dedicated to saint associated with each people group.

The inclusion of these different nationalities in the architecture of the church was representative of the Episcopal Church's self understanding of itself as a comprehensive national church, as well as an effort to raise support for the cathedral from as broad a group as possible. In line with this, Cathedral leaders often presented the Cathedral as belonging to all, not just Episcopalians. The limits of this establishmentarian ideal, however, occasionally became apparent. In the 1920s, Baptist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. accompanied a major gift to the cathedral with the request that the leadership of the cathedral be made more consistent with its fund raising and include non-Episcopalian Protestants. Bishop William T. Manning abruptly dismissed this request, and in response Rockefeller turned his attention and money to building the neighboring Riverside Church.

In 1907, architect George Heins died thus breaking his firm's contract with the cathedral and giving cathedral leaders to opportunity to adopt a new design. In the decade and a half since the initial design was adopted American church architecture had largely turned from the Romanesque and the eclectic squarely to the classical and gothic revivals. In particular, Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) had established himself as America's leading church architect and convinced Episcopalians of the glory of Gothic. Accordingly he was appointed architect in 1911.

Cram sought to rework the cathedral to be as thoroughly Gothic as



possible. The major completed product of his design is the cathedral's massive, long nave. A unique feature of Cram's design is that the side aisle are all raised to the full height of the nave. The full length of the cathedral was completed and consecrated on November 30, 1941.

Construction of the south bell tower on the west front resumed in 1982 but stopped in the mid 1990s.

#### **Selected sources:**

- Dolkart, Andrew. *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture & Development, The Columbia History of Urban Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Dunlap, David W. *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Gruber, Samuel D. "Arnold W. Brunner and the New Classical Synagogue in America" *Jewish History* 25.1 (2011): 69-102.
- Religions of Harlem* <http://religionsofharlem.org/>
- "The Church of Notre Dame" *Daytonian in Manhattan* <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/>