

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Other names/site number: St. John's Lutheran Church; St. John's Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 408 Colorado Ave.

City or town: Okarche State: Oklahoma County: Canadian

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_A      \_\_\_B      XC      \_\_\_D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGIOUS/Religious facility

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGIOUS/ Religious Facility

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Late Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

St. John's Evangelical Church in Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma, was established in 1892 and was the first Lutheran Congregation in the Oklahoma Territory. As such they often served as a host or homebase to other missionaries and pastors as they either traveled through the territory or set out on their independent missions. Nestled on the corner of Colorado Avenue and Fourth Street, the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church building is a site to behold. Dedicated on June 11, 1922, the Church building is a Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival interpretation of Late Gothic Revival and has strong ties to German Gothic styles and the Romantic movement. The exterior is built of brick and Bedford stone built using methods of load-bearing masonry. The 4,200 sq. ft. church building rests atop an approximately one-quarter-acre parcel flanked by a private residence to the north and a parsonage to the west. Significant features include a 65 ft. belfry tower and various pictorial stained-glass windows. The church is in excellent historic condition with minor modern alterations such as carpet over the historic wood doors, metal exterior doors, an elevator addition, storm windows, kitchen renovations, and an asphalt shingle roof. The church retains the important physical characteristics from its period of significance in that it conveys historic significance based on location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, feeling and association.

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## Narrative Description

### Site and Setting

The 1922 Church building of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church stands on its original site as a local landmark in the small agricultural town of Okarche, Oklahoma. The church is located at 408 Colorado Avenue. The tall bell tower has been tolling calls for mass or warnings of tornadoes and the building itself welcoming and sheltering worshipers and community members for over a century. The church is flanked by a small house on the north. St. John's Parsonage, constructed in 1955, is to the west. Parallel with the main entrance to the east runs 4<sup>th</sup> Street and across it, a newly poured parking lot. Colorado Avenue closes in on the church building on the southern face. The church sits atop a rectangular plot of grass measuring 0.28 acres flowing into well-tended decorative gardens between the building and a noncontributing brick sign erected around 1957.

### General Building Description

St. John's Lutheran Church is a 4200 square-foot Late Gothic Revival church that was designed by architect Roy W. Shaw and constructed by Stiles Construction Company in 1921-22.<sup>1</sup> In plan view, the church building takes the form of an eastern-pointing cross with towers in the northeastern and southwestern corners. The northern tower is two-thirds the size of the taller 65-foot bell tower to the south and in combination with the front face of the nave from direct view (east) draws the silhouette of a German Hall Church<sup>2</sup>. Castellated parapets line the top of the towers and the main entrance vestibule. The high-vaulted, A-shaped nave roof is comprised of asphalt shingles with symmetrical right-angled gables along the parapets of each face. A carved stone cross is situated on the peak of the exterior of the nave roof. Sturdily faced in red brick, the church is outlined and accented with near-white Bedford stone details. In addition to Gothic arches, many of the door and window openings feature stone quoin trim. (see Photo Log Number [PLN] 0001). The pier buttresses along the corners of the building and parapets on the roofs all give a heavy nod to the Late Gothic Revival style of architecture - as well as to the romanticism movement - as the church evokes past architectural ideas, including those from Gothic-era Germany.<sup>3</sup> Arched stained glass windows consistent with the Late Gothic Revival style can be found on every wall of the church, often forming rows of windows. Each window is protected by aluminum-frame storm windows. There are three large stained-glass windows which depict Jesus in Gethsemane, Jesus the Good Shepard, and Jesus knocking on the door situated at the north, south, and east walls, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, R.W. St. John's Lutheran Church Okarche Blueprints, Okla, May 16, 1921, St. John's Lutheran Church Okarche, Okla. St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession.

<sup>2</sup> Tikkanen, Amy. "Hall Church, Architecture." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 28, 2023.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/hall-church>.

<sup>3</sup> "Gothic Revival: Definition, Style, Architecture, Examples, & Facts, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 4, 2023,  
<https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-Revival>.

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### *East (main) Elevation*

There are three Gothic-arched openings are centered on the east (main) elevation. Each opening leads to slab metal doors topped with stained-glass transoms. The openings are accessed by a wide flight of external concrete steps. The concrete steps are flanked by half-height brick walls with cast stone caps and iron railings. The center arched opening is slightly wider than the flanking entries, containing a pair of doors while each flanking entrance contains only one door. The castellated parapet above the archways is adorned with Bedford stone caps. Set back from and above the parapet is a stained-glass window of Jesus knocking on the door. The window is set within a Gothic arched opening outlined by stone trim. Above the window, the vaulted attic of the nave is ventilated by a narrow, arched louver with an arched stone lintel and sill just below a carved Bedford stone cross. Carved Bedford stone gables flare with symmetrical right-angled accents (see PLN 0001).

To the left (south) of the main entrance is the taller of the two towers, standing at a grand 65 feet. Directly above the water table is a granite cornerstone commemorating the establishment of the original 1892 one-room church building and the construction of the new church building in 1921 (see PLN 0002). A vertical line of three stained-glass windows with stone sills and Gothic arched stone lintels ascends the tower. Simple buttresses climb the tower stopping at the top-most window. At the belfry level, a set of three arched louvers adorned with stone trim provide ventilation and the passage of the bell's sound throughout the town. The central louver has slightly larger dimensions than its flanking partners in a similar fashion to the entrance doors. A modern, incandescent Latin cross rests in the center of the louvers.

To the right (north) of the main entrance, a slightly newer, protruding, brick façade gives away the elevator addition carrying passengers from the sidewalk level to the main level of the church. The elevator is accessed from the outside via a slab metal door. Above the elevator shaft is one stained-glass window identical in dimensions to those on the southern tower. Continuing up the tower is a set of three narrow, Gothic arched stained-glass windows with stone sill, lintel, and quoin accents (see PLN 0003). Both towers feature a stone cornice and castellated parapets with stone caps.

### *Northern Elevation*

Marked on the exterior by a Bedford stone water table, the church's basement is set partially above grade. Three glass block windows illuminate the kitchen interior in the center of the elevation, two on the transept and one centered on the main face between the northern tower and transept. Single hung windows with textured glass are at opposite ends of the elevation. One such window is at the base of the short northern tower, and the other is on the western edge of the northern elevation. To the right (west) of the transept is a rear emergency exit from the basement accessed by a concrete stairwell outlined by metal railings.

Above the water table, the transept is largely occupied by a large Gothic-arched stained-glass window depicting Jesus in Gethsemane. The window is framed by a stone sill, lintel, and quoins. Metal mullions partition the window to resemble a triptych with Gothic-arched transoms. A metal

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six-pointed star adorns the face of the vaulted, stone-capped parapet. On either side of the transept is a single stained-glass window. These windows are larger in dimension than those on the bell tower, but smaller than the transept window. Two stained-glass windows are arranged vertically on the north face of the northern tower. These windows are similar in style and dimension to the tower windows visible on the east elevation. Above these is a set of three stained-glass windows similar in dimension and style to those on the tower's east face (see PLN 0004 and 0005).

#### *Western Elevation*

The western elevation is dominated by the trapezoidal apse (see PLN 0006). Access panels for utilities protrude from the center of the apse below the water table. Below the water table and to each side of the apse is one single hung window with textured glass. Each window has a stone sill, with the water table serving as the lintel.

A single hung window with textured glass is centered in the apse. The window is set within a Gothic arched opening with stone lintel and sill. A stained-glass window of similar dimension and trim is to the right (south) of the apse on the main building face. The unique obtuse angles of the apse cause a pigeonhole seam in the brick exterior. The apse is capped with a simple brick cornice, aluminum gutter, and trapezoidal vaulted roof clad in asphalt shingles. An arched louver, similar in dimensions to the one on the eastern elevation, ventilates the gabled, vaulted attic above. The gable parapet is accented by right-angled stone cap nodes.

The belfry tower's western elevation features a set of three arched louvers identical to those on the east elevation. An aluminum downspout is set to the north of the louvers.

#### *Southern Elevation*

The southern elevation comprises, from west to east, a pastor's exit (PLN 0006), a transept with a pictorial stained-glass window, a covered basement exit, and the belfry tower. An ornamental garden decorates the base of the building along much of this elevation.

Concrete steps flanked by half-height brick walls with cast stone caps and iron railings lead from the southern sidewalk to the slab metal door of the pastor's office. The door is accented by a stained-glass transom with a stone Gothic-arched lintel. The pastor's exit is set within a slight, shed-roofed projection framed by buttresses and topped with a simple brick cornice and aluminum gutter.

The southern transept, flanked by buttresses, is similar in dimensions and characteristics to the northern transept. However, the stained-glass window depicts Jesus the Good Shepard. One stained-glass window is set to each side of the transept. These windows are similar in dimension to their counterparts on the northern elevation. Two rectangular, single hung windows with stone sills are at basement level of the transept, below the water table. A similar basement window is to the west of the transept, vertically aligned with the stained glass window above. A basement entrance accessed by a set of concrete steps is east of the transept. The entrance is housed in a non-

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original brick enclosure with a gable roof that was likely added during the 1977 renovation (PLN 0007).

Features on the southern elevation of the belfry tower are similar to those on the eastern elevation. A single hung window with textured glass is set at basement level below the water table. Above this window is a vertical line of three stained-glass windows, followed by the triptych of arched louvers with an incandescent Latin cross attached in the middle.

### **Interior**

St. John's Church interior is a classic example of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival style with cross configuration including a tall belfry, large pictorial stained-glass windows, ornate ceiling designs, an intricate altar, sloped floors and custom cast iron bell. Upon entering the church, a hallway-like vestibule extends north-to-south to each tower. The apse and altar form a grand area on the west wall<sup>4</sup>. The concave apse is painted light blue with gold stars and contains an intricately carved wood altar. The nave has high lofted ceilings and contains seven stained-glass windows. The pictorial stained-glass windows were likely designed by Pastor Otte, who served the congregation from 1913 to 1936, and built by K.C. Stained Glass Works Co. from Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>5</sup> The subjects of the two largest pictorials include Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Good Shepard (see PLN 0008). The geometric grillwork styling of the windows lends itself to the popular 20<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival style of the time.<sup>6</sup> Recessed walls on the north and south sides house the two largest stained-glass windows with the deepest rainbow hues forming the cross shape of the nave. The cross configuration of the nave is common in Late Gothic Revival and resembles a German Hall Church.<sup>7</sup>

A grand, red-carpeted, quarter-turn staircase spirals up to meet the balcony and belfry tower access. The belfry tower houses a 3,000-pound, century-old cast iron bell made by Stuckstede Bell Foundry Co. in 1921 with an inscription reading "Cast by Stuckstede and Bro. St. Louis MO. 1921 Dominus Surrexit Vere Ev Luth (The Lord is truly risen) Johannis Gem. U.A.C. 1892 1921" (see PLN 0009).<sup>8</sup> Arched louvers ventilate the belfry and allow the tolling of the bell to reach

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<sup>4</sup> Gooley, Tristan. "Churches Face East, Don't They?" The Natural Navigator. The Natural Navigator, January 24, 2022. Last modified January 24, 2022. Accessed June 28, 2023.

<https://www.naturalnavigator.com/news/2010/12/churches-face-east-dont-they/>.

<sup>5</sup> Makowski, Deryn, and Katie Phillips. "Information from Kim Pickett on St. John's 1922 Church Building." Personal, June 7, 2023; Ingle, Jeremy A. "St. John's Lutheran at Okarche." *Kingfisher Times and Free Press*. Kingfisher, September 2004; Shaw, R.W. St. John's Lutheran Church Okarche, Okla, May 16, 1921, St. John's Lutheran Church Okarche, Okla. St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession.

<sup>6</sup> Sowers, Robert W. "17th through 20th century stained glass." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed September 15, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/art/stained-glass/20th-century>.

<sup>7</sup> Tikkanen, Amy. "Hall Church, Architecture." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hall-church>.

<sup>8</sup> Otte, T. C., and Paul Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church at Okarche Oklahoma*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942. Pages 6-12.

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throughout Okarche. Belfry walls are simple exposed brick with beveled brick detailing on the second floor.<sup>9</sup> Under the belfry, the staircase descends to the basement.

The nave reaches skyward with tan walls ending in a patterned tin ceiling painted blue to resemble sky. Ornate tin outlines the crown molding and vault pinnacles in a deeper blue with tan ridges and a filigree pattern dusted with gold leaf common in Late Gothic Revival fashion (see PLN 0010 and 0011). The same tin patterned ceiling tiles are painted white in the belfry tower. Outside of the nave, the ceilings are made of simple, white-painted drywall. The basement has a suspended acoustic tile ceiling.

A stairway behind the apse has plaster-finished walls and ceiling. Wood lath has been exposed in some areas. This area is entirely comprised of original materials, including a winding wood plank staircase, displaying the building methods and materials used for the church interior in the 1920s.

Floors throughout the main level are red oak planks covered in red carpet, including the staircases in the bell tower. Basement floors are covered in carpet and linoleum. The belfry floors are nailed-down plank boards covered in oriented strand board or plywood in places.

### **Modifications**

Changes to the building since its original construction include carpet over the historic wood floors, the removal of patterned and textured wall murals in the nave, removal of wall art and murals behind the altar and repainting of the apse, replacing the exterior wooden doors with metal doors for security, the addition of an elevator and storm windows, changes to the basement columns, kitchen renovations, and the switch to an asphalt shingle roof.

Originally bare red oak floors in the nave were previously covered by harvest gold carpet, as was popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The harvest gold carpet was replaced by the current red carpet during 2004 renovations, extending throughout the main level of the church.<sup>10</sup> The original wood floorboards, or some variation, can be seen in the narrow hallway and stairwell hidden behind the altar.

The walls in the nave were once decorated with murals with edges of molding in the center of every wall of the nave before the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> The same can be said for the decorative mural or molding behind the altar seen in a 1942 picture. The apse was painted over in 1962 in blue with gold stars

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<sup>9</sup> Elliston, J. Edward. 1899. "A Treatise on Architecture and Building Construction. Fig. 106." in *A Treatise on Architecture and Building Construction*. Kessinger Publishing, p. 576.

<sup>10</sup> Makowski, Deryn, and Katie Phillips. "Information from Kim Pickett on St. John's 1922 Church Building." Personal, June 7, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> *St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma 1892-1992*. Okarche, Oklahoma: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1992. Pages 3-50.

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(see Figure 1 and 2).<sup>12</sup> Today the walls are tan with simplistic grey window tracery painted around the stained-glass windows as well as the edges of the apse (see PLN 0010 and 0011).

In 1977, an elevator addition was added to the exterior, slightly altering the balance of the front (eastern) entrance and removing one small stained-glass window that would have faced east at the base of the small northern tower (see PLN 0005, Figures 3 and 4). Although covered in the same brick pattern, the elevator shaft is less weathered, giving it a bright appearance next to the bricks that have been weathered for a century. Elevator doors were installed in the sitting room on the main level of the north tower and in the basement.<sup>13</sup>

In 2004, all exterior wooden doors were replaced in the original openings with heavy metal security doors, and aluminum-framed protective storm windows were added to the exterior stained-glass and textured-glass windows. An asphalt shingle roof was also installed at this time.

The basement has seen the most changes since the building's dedication in 1922 (see Figure 5). Basement columns supporting the nave above, once cylindrical with flared tops, are now hidden behind textured drywall casing, creating a warm meeting place. The floor is currently finished in grey carpet. The kitchen was added sometime after 1922 and renovated in 2005 with linoleum floors and new cabinets and appliances (see PLN 0012).

## Integrity

St. John's Lutheran Church meets all the seven aspects of integrity including Location, Design, Settings, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling and Association based on the following:

The church is associated with and has its origins in the 1890s when German immigrants moved into Okarche and German was a widely used language in the community. The Okarche German community was part of the important historic trend of 1.5 million German immigrants coming to the United States in the 1880s.<sup>14</sup> Churches were a way that immigrants sought to keep faith and customs from Germany alive in their new home. The church community was founded in 1892. As with many historic churches in the United States, St. John's Lutheran Church building was an important cultural center for German immigrants in Oklahoma at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Okarche was where they chose to establish their culture in a foreign landscape for the sake of future generations. This setting served as a host or homebase to other missionaries and pastors as they either traveled through the territory or set out on their independent missions.

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<sup>12</sup> Makowski, Deryn, and Katie Phillips. "Information from Kim Pickett on St. John's 1922 Church Building." Personal, June 7, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> *St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma 1892-1992*. Okarche, Oklahoma: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1992. Pages 3-50.

<sup>14</sup> "The Germans in America: Chronology." The Germans in America (European Reading Room, Library of Congress), April 23, 2014. Accessed October 2, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/european/imde/germchro.html>.

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Since 1922, St. John's Lutheran Church sits in its original location keeping continuity of form and function due to an active Lutheran community that maintains the integrity of the building, history and culture. The essential features of St. John's design are intact such as original stained-glass windows, cross configuration, exterior materials and buttresses. Almost all of the historic materials are present including brick and Bedford stone trim. The church is evidence of the craft of Late Gothic Revival as to form and assembly techniques of the period. The church is connected to the original Lutheran community in Okarche which continues to actively use the building and maintain it for future generations. Despite some modifications such as the construction of the elevator addition, the building has not been substantially altered since its original construction.

The choice of expensive custom features and materials such as the stained glass, custom bell and intricate carved altar reveal the preferences of the Lutheran community. Additionally, the exterior materials of brick and Bedford stone were expensive at the time of construction and remain completely intact and preserved. The workmanship and diligent maintenance of the church for over a century is a testament to its importance within the Lutheran community. Like a beacon, the building drew in like-minded people and helped expand the town of Okarche.

The 1922 building was also the meeting place for the organization convention of the Oklahoma District, where the Oklahoma District synod constitution was signed in the basement in May 1924.<sup>15</sup> Today, a large custom designed bell serves as a tornado warning for the town and call to service that has been heard throughout Okarche for over a century. The belfry serves as a prominent feature of the Okarche skyline.

Broadly, the church is a prime example of 1920s Oklahoman religious architecture. More specifically, it is an example of the late 19th century/early 20th century Late Gothic Revival style, with German and Romantic influences. The stained-glass windows and bell illustrate the aesthetic principles of the German Lutheran community. The Late Gothic Revival theme of the building expresses the aesthetics of 1920s German Lutheran communities. The church's association with the original Lutheran community in Oklahoma evidences the community's commitment to Oklahoma and longevity.

St. Johns Church should be considered significant for its historic association due to retaining essential architectural and physical features that make up its character or appearance during the period of 1922 due to its workmanship, setting, materials, design, location, association, feeling, and location.

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<sup>15</sup> Otte, T. C., and Paul Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church at Okarche Oklahoma*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942. Page 9; Makowski, Deryn, and Katie Phillips. "Information from Kim Pickett on St. John's 1922 Church Building." Personal, June 7, 2023.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

June 11, 1922  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Shaw, Roy W./Architect  
Stiles Construction Co./Builder  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 408 Colorado Avenue, Okarche, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as a locally distinct example of the Late Gothic Revival style. Designed by architect Roy W. Shaw, St. John's was built and dedicated in 1922, replacing an 1892 one-room church building that once stood on nearby lots. The 1922 building remains at its original location. A 1977 renovation added an elevator, and a 2004 renovation updated the roof, interior details, and doors. Aside from these updates, St. John's materials, design, and workmanship maintain historic integrity. The 1922 church building served the first Lutheran congregation in the state and was the meeting place for the organization convention of the Oklahoma District, where the Oklahoma District synod constitution was signed in the basement in May 1924.<sup>16</sup> St. John's Lutheran Church is a physical testament to Shaw's work as well as to the evolution of a congregation with very humble beginnings dating to September 1893. Criterion Consideration A is applicable as this is currently and has been a religious institution since its construction and dedication in 1922.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Historic Context**

German immigrants flooded Okarche in the late 1890s so that the population was mostly German speakers.<sup>17</sup> At that time, they established the Lutheran church, which was St. John's in 1892, and the Catholic Church, which was Holy Trinity, in 1893. Currently in Okarche denominations in order of popularity are Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Lutheran.<sup>18</sup>

The congregation of St. John's officially started on September 11, 1892, immediately after Reverend Mencke, a pastor who had traveled from the Kansas Synod to minister to those in the Oklahoma Territory, gave a sermon in Okarche. However, this congregation's origins do not start there. In 1889 President Harrison opened what was later termed "Old Oklahoma" from Indian land into land that was now available to settlers in a series of land runs. Two brothers, Carl and Fritz Schroeder, homesteaded a mile east of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. William Lemke

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<sup>16</sup> Otte, T. C., and Paul Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church at Okarche Oklahoma*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942. Pages 1-16; Chada, Tammie. *Zion Lutheran Church. Logan County Churches Index*, 2008. Last modified 2008. Accessed June 28, 2023, <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ok/county/logan/churches/zionchhist.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Richard C Rohrs. 1980. *The Germans in Oklahoma*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980; Otte and Hoyer, *Golden Anniversary*. Pages 1-16.

<sup>18</sup> Religion in Okarche, Oklahoma. Accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.bestplaces.net/religion/city/oklahoma/okarche>.

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and F. Dannehl lived to the southeast. All these men had something more in common than just their proximity: they were Lutherans. At the time there were no Lutheran ministers to preach to them and their families inside Oklahoma Territory, which is why they petitioned the Kansas Lutheran Synod to bring a pastor to them. In 1892, the lands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes were opened for settlement. What would become Okarche at this time was a cattle loading station for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (C.R.I. and P.) railroad, which saw thousands of head of western cattle.<sup>19</sup> The town consisted of a freight car-turned-depot and stockyards then, but the townsite for Okarche was laid out before the run of 1892 and this would finally make Okarche into the town it is today: a cozy agricultural community.<sup>20</sup> The Okarche post office and depot was established in 1890, but the town was not incorporated until 1905.<sup>21</sup>

Okarche's name comes from the words Oklahoma, Arapaho, and Cheyenne, which is said to have been the work of Charles Hunter.<sup>22</sup> Reverend J.V. Kauffeld was sent by the Kansas synod and was the first Lutheran pastor or missionary to preach in Okarche and in Oklahoma Territory in general. He was sent on an exploratory mission, with a heavy focus on the area of Okarche. Three pastors would later follow his example, with the lengths of their missions varying. They were F. Droegemuller of Shady Brook, A. Grambauer of Lincolnville, and O. Mencke of Herington. The Okarche Lutheran community and St. John's was the hub for these missionaries to organize and plan their ministry to those in the territory.<sup>23</sup>

Over a truly brief period the congregation of St. John's built their original one room church in 1892. One year later in 1893 they purchased several lots and a one room house to add to St. John's properties. In the fall of the same year the congregation decided to open a church school, which operated out of the parsonage house and be taught by the pastors.<sup>24</sup>

At this point in time Okarche now had its first pastor in residence, Rev. M. J. Von der Au. He had originally been stationed to serve the Santa Fe railway line mission station while another would serve the Rock Island railway line mission station. But the pastor who was stationed at the Rock Island line soon left, and Von der Au was moved to the Rock Island area with his headquarters to be in Okarche at St. John's. Reverend Claus Pape was given charge of the Santa Fe line mission station, but by an unknown agreement with Von der Au, he too made St. John's parsonage his homebase in Oklahoma Territory. After Von der Au left Okarche in 1895, Pape served both mission stations until Reverend Hamm came to reside at St. John's. The original church building was enlarged to a T-shape during Hamm's pastorate. Reverend Theo. Meyer took charge next, in

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<sup>19</sup> Veenendaal, Augustus J. Jr. "Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway." Oklahoma Historical Society | OHS. Oklahoma Historical Society, n.d. Accessed June 28, 2023.

<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=CH032>.

<sup>20</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*, Pages 1-9.

<sup>21</sup> Savage, Cynthia. "Okarche." Oklahoma Historical Society. Accessed June 29, 2023.

<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=OK001>.

<sup>22</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*, Page 5, and George H. Shirk, *Oklahoma Place Names* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), Page 175.

<sup>23</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942. Pages 1-9.

<sup>24</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942. Pages 1-9.

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1903, and the parsonage was enlarged to include four rooms. Reverend Cotte was called and inducted into office in 1913 and served the congregation until 1937.<sup>25</sup>

The congregation had been bilingual since the beginning of St. John's formation. Up until the First World War the sermons were completely in German, after which they began to shift to English sermons. During the Second World War, English and German used in Church services, with German losing favor.<sup>26</sup> However, the congregation still retained bilingual services until 1954. The services stopped being conducted in German after Reverend Hoyer's departure, except for a couple special occasion services for a few years. The school was the first to use English predominantly and the church's sermons began to have an equal four-to-four ratio of German-to-English sermons given per month. This inevitably switched to predominantly English, and the German was 61% to 39% for communion and still half and half for services during the early 1940s.<sup>27</sup>

Criteria Consideration A applies because St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is owned by a religious organization and used for religious purposes. "Evangelical" in the name refers to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod origin. Evangelical itself simply means pertaining to the "Good News" brought to sinners by Jesus. Historically, Evangelical Lutherans were Martin Luther's followers who were centered on the Gospel and protested the Catholic majority in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

### **Architectural Significance**

Drawing inspiration from medieval architecture, the Late Gothic Revival movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century swept through the United States and Great Britain. The style is popular for its picturesque and romantic qualities that go beyond simple structural integrity or functionality. Typically, Gothic structures are covered in dramatic spires and ornamentation with pointed arched doorways and windows and steep-pitched roofs. The Late Gothic Revival movement was popular in the United States in direct opposition to the Neoclassical (Classical Revival) movement simultaneously sweeping the nation. Many churches favored the romantic themes of the Gothic Revival opting for the celebration of human creativity. Catholic and Lutheran churches, especially, adopted Late Gothic Revival styles.

St. John's Lutheran Church was built in the Late Gothic Revival style with a blend of German Romanticism. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Germans, French, and English all wished to claim medieval Gothic architecture as their own, resulting in intense romantic nationalism. This romantic nationalism found its way to the small town of Okarche, Oklahoma, likely with the ideals of the German immigrants. Roy W. Shaw designed St. John's Lutheran Church in a Gothic style perhaps

<sup>25</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942, Pages 1-16.

<sup>26</sup> *St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma 1892-1992*. Okarche, Oklahoma: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1992. Pages 3-132

<sup>27</sup> Otte and Hoyer. *Golden Anniversary*. Okarche, OK: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1942, Pages 5-16. *St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma 1892-1992*. Okarche, Oklahoma: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1992. Page 34.

<sup>28</sup> Hillerbrand, Hans J. "Lutheranism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 15, 2023.  
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with the Missouri Synod's German heritage in mind. Pastor Thomas Otte was known to have designed the interior pews and kneelers, as well as the beautiful stained-glass windows and may have worked with Shaw on designs.<sup>29</sup>

St. John's resembles a German Hall Church where above its nave sits a single immense roof.<sup>30</sup> It is an open, tall floor plan. This design gives ample space for many worshipers and guides their focus to the far (west) end where the apse encases the altar.

What makes St. John's Gothic are its vertical proportions, asymmetry, pointed arches, external buttressing, and vaulted ceilings. The body of the nave is transept, or cross, shaped as is traditional in Gothic architecture. The ceilings are vaulted. Each major corner on the exterior has pier buttressing. Every window and archway on the main level and above has pointed arches. The bell tower and steep-pitched roof with pointed gables make the eastern profile of the building taller than it is wide. The northern tower is two-thirds the size of the southern tower creating asymmetry on the eastern elevation.

What makes St. John's unique from Okarche's other Gothic Revival-style religious building, Holy Trinity Catholic Church (1903) is the lack of traditional Gothic spires on its towers, opting instead for flat roofs and castellated parapets. Additionally, the nave's enlarged stained-glass windows, disproportionate to the majority, and thick vertical mullions in stone tracery show some influence from the Perpendicular style of late Gothic architecture.<sup>31</sup> Red brick makes up the majority of the exterior facade. Both St. John's and Holy Trinity feature brick exteriors and Bedford stone trim, suggesting brick was likely the most common and sturdiest material available.<sup>32</sup> On the highest point of the nave's peaked roof sits a carved stone cross. Traditional Gothic churches have grand flying buttresses, but St. John's, like other Oklahoma Gothic Revival churches, has simpler pier buttresses that are stepped as they climb.<sup>33</sup> Overall, St. John's church evokes an American or Oklahoman take on German Romanticism and the Late Gothic Revival architectural style.

## Architects

St. John's architect, Roy W. Shaw, has several buildings he designed already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Shaw is widely renowned and one of Enid's most prolific architects,

<sup>29</sup> *St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Okarche, Canadian County, Oklahoma 1892-1992*. Okarche, Oklahoma: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1992. Pages 3-50; Ingle, "St. John's Lutheran at Okarche." *Kingfisher Times and Free Press*. Kingfisher, September 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Tikkanen, Amy. "Hall Church, Architecture." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hall-church>; Frankl, Paul, and Paul Crossley. *Gothic Architecture*. Yale University Press, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Kuiper, Kathleen. "Perpendicular Style, Gothic Architecture." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/art/Perpendicular-style>.

<sup>32</sup> Everett, Dianna. "Brick Manufacturing." Oklahoma Historical Society. Accessed December 4, 2023. <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=BR014>.

<sup>33</sup> La Chiusa, Chuck. "Buttress." *Buffalo Architecture and History*. Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://buffaloah.com/a/DCTNRY/b/butt.html>; Howard, Erica and Kate Singleton, "City of Oklahoma City Intensive Level Survey of Downtown: Phase 3" (2011), Page 13. <https://www.okhistory.org/shpo/docs/ILSofDowntownOKCPhase3.pdf>.

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employing many different styles to match each building's purpose.<sup>34</sup> Shaw brilliantly applied an Oklahoman take on the Late Gothic Revival style with German Romanticism influence to the design of St. John's Lutheran Church in the 1920s.

Roy W. Shaw was born in Geneseo, Illinois, then moved to Enid, Oklahoma in 1900. He was listed in Enid as an architect in 1910 and his career lasted for over 40 years. Shaw was an active church and Mason member, as well as civic leader. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Oklahoma Chapter. He lived in Enid until his death in 1947.

Shaw's work included public schools, churches, homes, and other public buildings across central Oklahoma garnering national attention. He served as a member of the state board of architects and was president of the American Institute of Architects Oklahoma chapter for three terms. His work exhibited an understanding of the wide variety of popular contemporary architectural styles including Gothic Revival, Art Deco, Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Prairie School, and Tudor Revival.<sup>35</sup>

St. John's is the only known Shaw-designed building in Okarche, making it locally distinctive. However, St. John's is not Shaw's only Gothic Revival design. Enid's First Presbyterian Church, built in 1926, is similar in design to St. John's, with the major difference being Gothic stone spires at the corners of each parapet at the top of the asymmetric towers. Where St. John's has a centered main entrance, First Presbyterian has an entrance at the base of each tower with a set of stained-glass windows on the nave between them. First Presbyterian displays Gothic-arched cornices below the belfry that are more complex than St. John's cornices. Several other accents give First Presbyterian more of a traditionally Gothic flare than the simpler Oklahoman style of St. John's. The College of the Bible Building, or Marshall Hall (1938, NRIS #15000868), on the former Phillips University campus, shows Shaw's Gothic Revival style using sandstone instead of the bricks and emphasizes pointed spires on corners and buttresses. Carrier Congregational Church, also in Enid, displays Shaw's Colonial Revival architecture. While similarly built of brick, St. John's has distinct Gothic-arched windows and lintels, whereas Carrier Congregational has rounded lintels (NRIS #16000370). St. John's layout is cruciform with two towers while Carrier's layout is rectangular with a single bell tower.

St. John's exemplifies a blending of designs inspired from the congregation's Germanic origins with the Gothic Revival fixation of the 1920s. What started as a hub for missions throughout Oklahoma Territory blossomed into a community-integrated congregation housed in this Gothic Revival style building with German romanticism undertones. As an Okarche landmark, St. John's continues to draw a dedicated community as it had with German Lutheran immigrants in the 1920s.

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<sup>34</sup> Mize, Richard. October 3, 2015. "Story of Enid, Oklahoma, architect R.W. Shaw, 1880-1947, yet to be fully told. *The Oklahoman*. Accessed October 3, 2023. <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/business/real-estate/2015/05/16/story-of-enid-oklahoma-architect-rw-shaw-1880-1947-yet-to-be-fully-told/60745909007/>

<sup>35</sup> Mize, "Story of Enid, Oklahoma, architect R.W. Shaw."

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Colorado Avenue; turn North and proceed 92 feet paralleling the short side of the Parsonage, turn East and proceed 128 feet parallel to the northern residential home; turn South and proceed 92 feet back to the POB parallel to 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses only the area historically associated with the 1922 building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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telephone: 405-286-9326

date: 10/13/2023

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: St. John's Lutheran Church

City or Vicinity: Okarche

County: Canadian

State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Deryn Makowski, Kaitlyn Phillips

Date Photographed: June 7, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

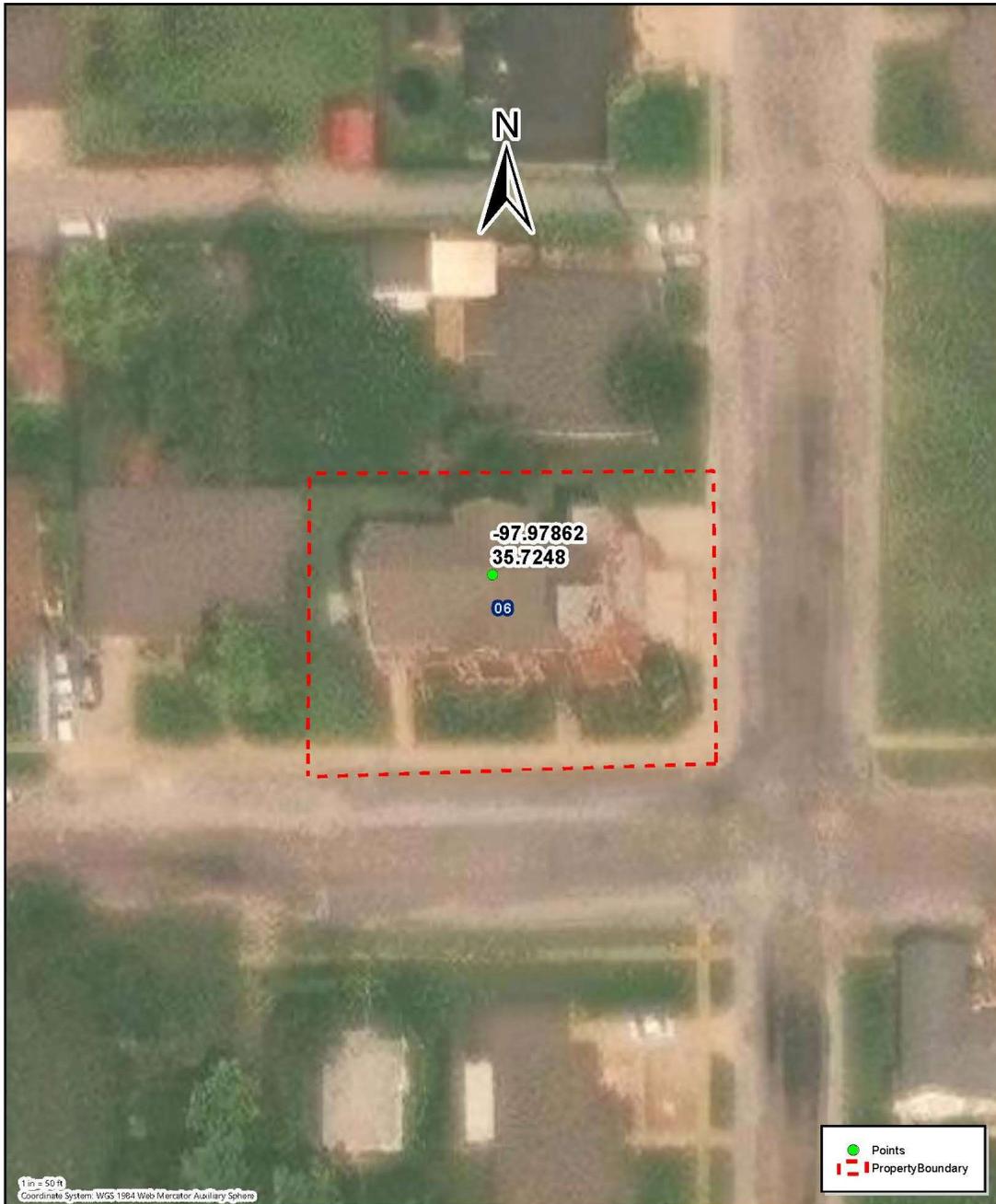
Photo #	Description	Direction
0001	Eastern façade of Church building	W
0002	Southeast Cornerstone	W
0003	Elevator add-on versus the arched canopy and small tower	W
0004	Western portion of Northern Elevation	SW
0005	Northeast corner of Church building	SW
0006	Rear view of Church building	NE
0007	Brick tunnel basement entrance on Southern elevation	N
0008	One of the big stained-glass windows, Jesus the Good Shepard, close up	S
0009	Close up of Church bell and yoke	N
0010	Nave and ceiling from underneath balcony	W
0011	Nave, ceiling, and balcony from altar	E
0012	View of gathering area of basement, with kitchen	W

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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average one hundred hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering, and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Aerial Plat  
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Sec. 06-T14N-R07W, Canadian County, Oklahoma

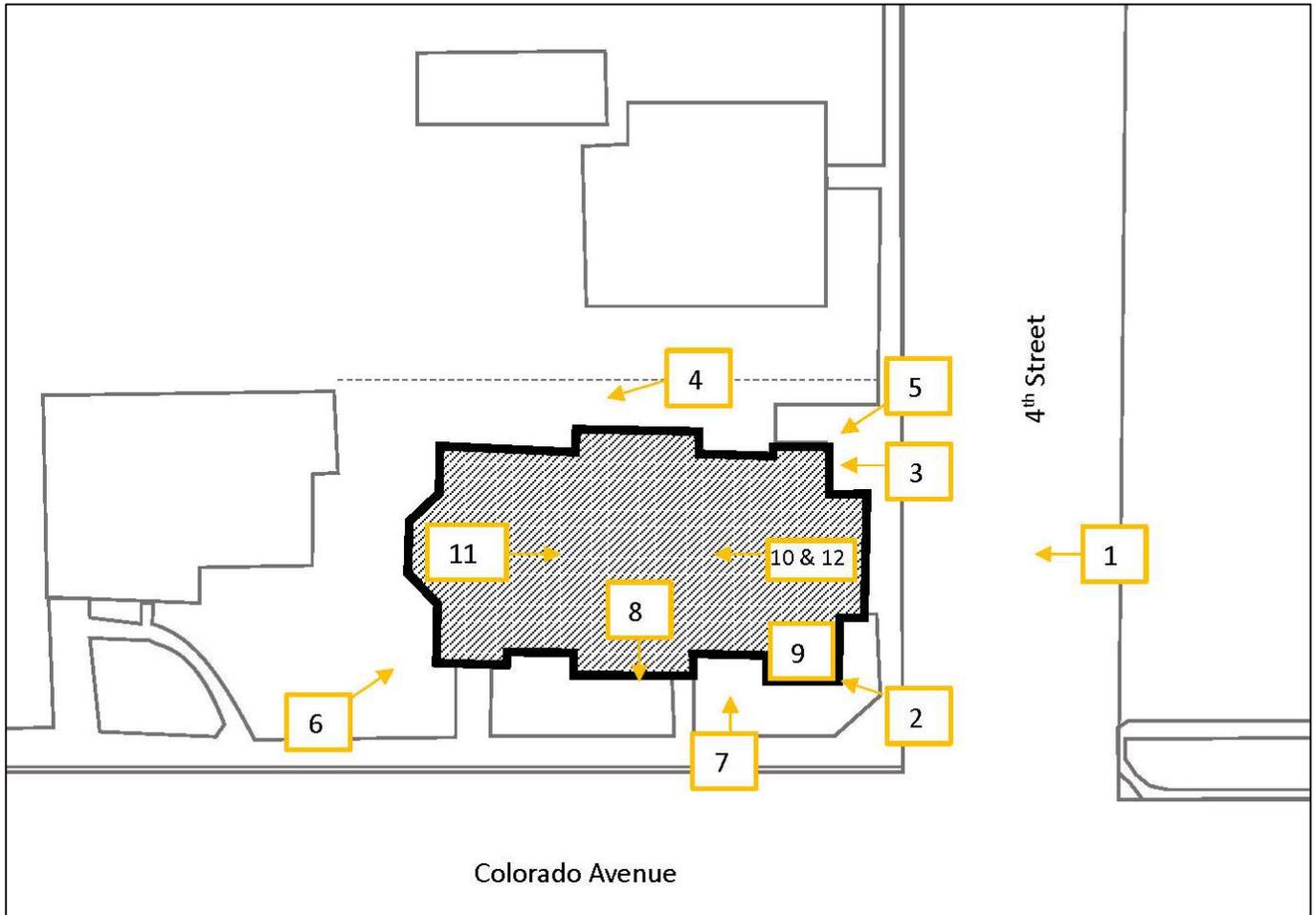
This map is a user generated  
static output from Land 500 and is  
for reference only. Data values that  
appear on this map may or may not  
be accurate, current, or otherwise  
reliable.



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### Key for Photographs



### Big Picture

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	<p>Aerial Plat of St. John's Lutheran Church                  St. John's Lutheran Church                  St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession                  Section 06 - T14N - R07W IM, Canadian County, Oklahoma</p>	<p>This map is a user-generated                  digital output from LandScan and is                  for reference only. Data layers that                  appear on this map may or may not                  be accurate, current, or otherwise                  reliable.</p>	
<p>Path: G:\scratch-savannah\ARCH_ST_JOHNS_LUTHERAN_CHURCH\ARCH_ST_JOHNS_LUTHERAN_CHURCH.mxd</p>		<p>Author: SK</p>	<p>Date: 8/3/2023</p>

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**Figure 2**

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**Figure 4**

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**Figure 5**

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