

Churches and the
National Historic
Register

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Mark 12: 28-31

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- “One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”
- “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear of Israel, the Lord or God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

“Counterfeit Gods” by Timothy Keller

- The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters...
- Can we make our church buildings false idols or “Counterfeit Gods?”

From Keller's "Counterfeit Gods."

- . In the Epilogue he states that Paul shows that Idolatry is not only one sin among many, but at the core of what is fundamentally wrong with the human heart:
- “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him ... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.” Romans 1: 21, 25.

What have others done?

- I found 52 UMC or ME South church buildings on the National Historic Register in Arkansas (note, many are closed or part of a cemetery)
- FUMC Little Rock, Winfield UMC, now Quapaw Quarter,
- Dallas County, 4 Methodist churches (some former) FUMC Fordyce, Mt Carmel in Jacento, Zion Methodist in Carthage and Sardis Methodist. Was interested to note all four were added to the National Historic Register on October 28, 1983...then I noticed the Wynne home was put on the Register that same day...

FUMC Hamburg



On the National Historic Register
Suffered major roof and structure
problems.

Was awarded a \$103,000 grant toward
the cost of repairing the roof and a
wall from the Arkansas Historical
Society

What is the impact of listing a building on the National Historic Register

- By itself the listing does not place any restrictions or protections on the property. Restrictions are often placed on the property because it is in a historic district or when the building owners receive grants or other tax benefits for preserving the structure.
- According to the National Park Service, a property's integrity is part of the evaluation process. Properties that lose substantial integrity through changes and additions may lose their listing to the National Register.

So what does a church need to do if it wants to be on the National Historic Register?

- Because there is no incumference then initial registration does not appear to require any particular steps. However, before accepting grants, tax credit or agreeing to be part of a historic district that will create restrictions on the building, then the Book of Discipline must be followed.

The Trust Clause

- Paragraph 2501 of the BoD states that all local church property is held in trust for the United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

Paragraphs 2540 and 2541

- The following steps before any local church property may be sold, transferred, leased for a term of 30 days or more or mortgaged:
 - 10 day Notice of the proposed action and the date and time of the regular or special meeting of the Charge Conference from the pulpit and from the bulletin, newsletter or electronic notice.
 - A resolution authorizing the proposed action passed by a majority vote of the charge conference members present and voting at the meeting called to consider the action.
 - Written consent of the pastor of the local church and the district superintendent to the proposed action after the two of them and the District Board of Church Location and Building have ensured that a ...plan of action for the future missional needs of the community; (b) the transfer or encumbrance shall conform to the Discipline...”
- Any such contract needed to implement the actions authorized by the above resolution may be signed by any two officers of the church board of trustees or board of directors if incorporated.