

## Post-War: 1946 – Present

The most important influence on Anglican church design since 1945 has been the impact of the modern movement in architecture. This has changed the way churches look. Equally important, if less obvious factors have been the movement of the Anglican population away from the farms and villages settled by their forebears, to towns and cities, and the increased mobility afforded by highways and automobiles. This has meant the closure of many small country churches, while in Winnipeg, Brandon and other regional centres, new churches have been built. In most instances these new churches have replaced an earlier structure grown too small or fallen into disrepair, but in Winnipeg the demands of a growing and prosperous suburban population in the 1950s and 60s caused a mini-boom in church construction.

The trend of church design since the early 1950s can be observed in the career of one of Winnipeg's most successful church architects, J.T. Laurie Ward. Born in Winnipeg and trained at the University of Manitoba Laurie Ward gained a familiarity with the Gothic traditions of Anglican church architecture in the office of J. Edgar Prain, a Winnipeg architect best known for his design of St. John's Cathedral. Laurie Ward's first post-war church's, St. Anne's, Burrin Street, Winnipeg is itself noticeably Gothic in spirit, with a long nave, pitched roof and traditional massing (Figure 90). But in keeping with the new spirit of modernism, the church is filled with light while decoration is kept to a minimum and abstracted. Ten years later, at St. John the Baptist Church, Carman (1965), the traditional plan of oblong shaped box with tower still visible at St. Anne's is gone (Figure 91). It has been replaced by an abstract, strongly horizontal shape determined by the plan and the structural system. Particularly striking is the use of light, which is introduced in the form of a bay behind the altar, to organize and give focus to the church.



**Figure 90.**  
St. Anne's, Winnipeg, 1953.

**Figure 91.**  
St. John the Baptist, Carman, 1965.

In Laurie Ward's last church, St. Stephen's, East Kildonan (1978) the motif of light is developed further so that now it replaces tradition as the central idea behind the design (Figure 92). Streaming upon the altar through glass set high in the superstructure it is used symbolically to organize and define the structure (Figure 93). Just as Jesus, the light of the world is the focus of the Christian Church, so light is now the pivot around which the physical church and the congregation revolves.

The movement of architectural design away from the Gothic forms which dominated church design for at least 100 years can be seen not just in Laurie Ward's work but in the design of Anglican churches in general. St. Alban's, Winnipeg built in 1951 displays the clean surfaces of modernism, but its form, and especially its timber roof looks back to the churches of the 1920s and 30s (Figure 94). St. Paul's, Fort Garry (1958) by John Graham, Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, exhibits a new conception of architectural space. The church is organized as a series of independent units, rather than as a single mass following the traditions of English architecture (Figure 95). St. George's, Crescentwood is perhaps the best example in this survey of high style modernism adapted to church design (Figure 96). Designed by the Winnipeg architect, G. Leslie Russell, its perfectly controlled volumes, sheathed in polished limestone and articulated by a subtle movement of pattern across the façade is a watermark in church design in the province.

Outside of Winnipeg the prosperity of the post-war years encouraged many congregations to modernize existing churches, or to build anew. St. James, Rivers is notable for its symbolic use of the cross as an organizing device (Figure 97).



**Figure 92.**  
St. Stephen's, Winnipeg, 1978.

**Figure 93.**  
Interior, St. Stephen's, Winnipeg



**Figure 94.**  
St. Alban's, Winnipeg, 1951.



**Figure 95.**  
St. Paul's, Winnipeg, 1958.



**Figure 96.**  
St. George's, Crescentwood,  
Winnipeg, 1957-58.

Since the mid-1970s the pace of church construction has slackened. This is a reflection of economic and population circumstances, but also of a renewed interest in traditional architecture. Many congregations have begun to reconsider their historic churches in a new light, renovating them and bringing them back to life. For instance at Fort Alexander the congregation has taken the decision to restore its Red River frame church built in the 1870s and turn its modern church (1970s) to another use. Even where new churches have been built, for instance at St. Michael's, Victoria Beach (Figure 98), the influence of vernacular design and the use of local materials has once again begun to play an important part in church design.



**Figure 97.**

St. James, Rivers, 1958.

**Figure 98.**

St. Michael's, Victoria Beach, c. 1972.