

# A Living Link

THE ARCHITECTURAL AND SPIRITUAL LEGACIES  
OF MAITLAND'S ORIGINAL LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

BY JOHN MARINI

**T**he Rev. Henry B. Whipple may have founded the Church of the Good Shepherd in Maitland more than 125 years ago, but the structure as well as the community of faith it housed not only remain intact, they're thriving.

Dubbed "Straight Tongue" by Native Americans because he always kept his word, Whipple was the first Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota and an ardent advocate for Native Americans' rights. Whipple corresponded with 11 presidents and even convinced Abraham Lincoln to pardon 265 Dakotas who were sentenced to hang after the Dakota War of 1862.

The bishop began visiting Maitland in the 1870s and built a winter home on Lake Street, where the Maitland Shores apartments stand today. In 1879, Whipple began conducting Episcopal services in his parlor. He later donated land across the street for the site of his Church of the Good Shepherd, which he presided over until his death in 1901. Dating to 1883, the late Gothic Revival-style structure is used as a chapel today, while a newer building added in 1963 serves as the church's main facility.

In March, Whipple's original church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was recognized not only for its architectural style, but also for its beautiful stained glass windows, which are memorials to many area pioneers.

"To have a building of that age, especially in Central Florida, in and of itself is fairly significant," says Andrea Bailey Cox, executive director of Art & History Museums—Maitland. "The architectural style is very indicative of many churches of that time period. There are not very many of them still existing, so that's an important point for preservation."



**LEFT: REV. HENRY B. WHIPPLE** started the Church of the Good Shepherd (right) in Maitland in the late 1880s. Today, the historic building is a local landmark and serves as a chapel.



LEFT: MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY; RIGHT: ART & HISTORY MUSEUMS—MAITLAND

Interestingly, the church's more modern building also has architectural merit: It was designed by the late Nils Schweizer, a parishioner and protégé of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Today the Nils M. Schweizer Fellows is dedicated to preserving the work of Schweizer and other local purveyors of that architectural style.

"People tend to forget that history isn't just in the far past, but that we are making it every day," Cox says. "Mid-Century Modern buildings are some things that need to be preserved. Currently we are starting to see some wear and some issues with preservation, so it's wonderful to have that group started and trying to protect the buildings in this area."

While the church's structures are a source of pride to congregants, Reverend Sarah Bronos, Church of the Good Shepherd's rector, believes that its most

significant heritage is that of Whipple's ideals, which remain a foundation for the organization even today.

"Both the chapel and the church are primarily viewed by the congregation as beautiful spaces in which to worship God and to gather as family," Bronos says. "However, by far the greatest legacy comes from the continued focus of the congregation in revealing the love of the Good Shepherd by caring for his sheep and searching for those who are lost to bring them into his family, where he heals and makes whole."

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