MODERN WORSHIP

1. Ralph Rapson Hall
   89 Church Street SE
   Minneapolis

2. Saint Columba Church
   1327 Lafond Avenue
   Saint Paul

3. Mount Zion Temple
   1300 Summit Avenue
   Saint Paul

4. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Chapel
   1604 Grand Avenue
   Saint Paul

5. Jehovah Lutheran Church
   1566 Thomas Avenue W
   Saint Paul

6. Christ Church Lutheran
   3244 34th Avenue S
   Minneapolis
Modernism on the Prairie
Docomomo National Symposium: Modern Worship Tour

June 4, 2015
2:30 - 5:30
Tour Guide: Tim Quigley, AIA
CHURCH OF ST. COLUMBA

Tucked away in an unassuming working class neighborhood is this monumental limestone-clad church by one-time Prairie School architect Barry Byrne. Byrne, who practiced in Chicago, once worked for Walter Burley Griffin, then had a notable career designing Catholic churches sprinkled throughout the country (Racine, WI and Tulsa, OK have expressionistic brick marvels from the early 1920’s). Here the ecumenical fish shape generated the plan; the tower derives from an Irish castle source (his patron bishop was from Ireland). A sister church was built in Kansas City, MO.
Mendelsohn’s later career in the United States produced buildings in Cleveland, St. Louis and San Francisco as well as St. Paul, which was completed after his death. A German Jew, Mendelsohn achieved commercial success and acclaim in Berlin by the early 1930’s. Hitler’s rise led to a productive exile, first in London, then the US. St. Paul’s oldest Jewish congregation built ambitiously: two copper clad volumes rise vertically to express the worship spaces within; a school wing forms the main mass, all set on an ample Summit Avenue site.
WEYERHAEUSER MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Macalester College is a small, liberal-arts college nestled in a genteel neighborhood in St. Paul’s West End. The chapel is a serene little jewel: a glass hexagon floating above a dry moat. Its interior is of brick and natural wood; the tree-like structural supports are reminiscent of Breuer at St. John’s, though executed in wood. Robert Cerny was a leading Twin Cities architect of the 1950’s and 1960’s. His most noteworthy contribution was in developing talent: a great many noteworthy local architects trained in his firm, Thorbeck included.
Jehovah Lutheran, Harold Spitznagel, 1963
1566 Thomas Avenue W. St. Paul, MN

JEHOVAH LUTHERAN

This deftly-composed modern church is the work of Harold Spitznagel of Sioux Falls, SD, who had a national reputation. “Hidden in plain sight” might describe this building, which sits on a busy street completing a commercial block. Like Mt. Zion, it is of an ambitious scale, with a large educational wing and small chapel to compliment the main worship space. The exterior of the crisp form is animated with precast concrete panels. The working class congregation has dwindled over the years as neighborhood demographics have changed.
Christ Church Lutheran, Eliel and Eero Saarinen, 1949; 1962
3244 34th Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN

CHRIST CHURCH LUTHERAN

Minnesota’s finest modern religious structure is now a national landmark, yet the commission only went to “Papa” Saarinen because a Gothic church was deemed too expensive and “modern” was less expensive (this too was a working class neighborhood and congregation). Saarinen’s understated essay in brick and local Kasota stone is typically Scandinavian: not showy nor flashy, but pragmatic, with real substance. The detailing and morning light in the chancel are noteworthy. This is a sister church to Saarinen’s masterful First Christian in Columbus, IN (1942). The expansive education wing was designed a decade later by Eliel’s son, Eero.