Sacred Places: Historic Churches of Lexington, Virginia Open-House
May 17/ 11am -2 pm
1. First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church was built 1894-96 in the Gothic Revival style and features a gable-fronted nave with towers at its front corners. At the base of the shorter left-hand tower is a limestone cornerstone inscribed “1st Baptist Church/July 4, 1884/ W. Johnson, D.D.”. The right-hand tower is topped with an octagonal spire that is sheathed in its original shingle-pattern pressed metal. Each side elevation has six lancet-arch windows. The second window on the southwest side is a memorial window with a stylized palm tree shingle-pattern pressed metal. The windows, fabricated by the Lynchburg Stained Glass Company, were added in 1887 as part of a remodeling by Lexington architects Roberts & Kirchner.

2. R. E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church

In 1843, the Lexington Episcopalians chose Greek Revival for their new church, Grace Episcopal, which stood on the site now occupied by R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church. Following the death of Washington College president R.E. Lee, the church decided to construct a new church on the site. As noted in The Architecture of Historic Lexington, the new church (1872-83), by Baltimore architect J. Crawford Neilson, is a late form of ecclesiastical Gothic. Built of limestone, its steep slate-singled gable roof, the buttresses that flank the memorial-arched front entrance and line the sides, and the lancet-arched windows recall the medieval parish church architecture of the British Isles. Inside, laminated Douglas fir trusses in the form of lancet arches span the simply appointed nave and focus the eye on the chancel and its rose window glazed in shades of blue, gray, and red.

3. St. Patrick’s Catholic Church

St. Patrick’s Parish was established in 1873 largely by Irish immigrants, including John Sheridan who would later establish Sheridan Livery Stable on N. Main Street. In 1890, the parish bought first church on Henry Street where the Gothic-inspired brick building with center entry tower stands today. In 1848, the church acquired the Gassman property on W. Nelson Street as a building site (the 19th century Gassman House with its intricate woodcarvings serves today as the Parish House). The Philadelphia architectural firm of Gleeson & Muircooney was chosen to design the church. The design is almost identical to that of Huntington Court Methodist Church in Roanoke, which is cited in the architects’ specifications as the model for St. Patrick’s stonework. Construction began in 1952 and the building was dedicated in 1953. The stained glass windows, fabricated by the Lynchburg Stained Glass Company, were added in 1987 as part of a remodeling by Lexington architects Roberts & Kirchner.

221 W. Nelson Street

Lexington Presbyterian Church is a monumental, temple-form structure of stuccoed brick with wooden detailing. The church was designed by Thomas U. Walter in 1843 and completed in 1845. The building has evolved through numerous additions, including a Sunday school building added adjacent to the church in 1890. The Greek Revival church has six Doric columns across its temple porch with a soaring clock tower steeple above. Tragically, the church burned in 2000 leaving little but its walls and columns. The reproduction steeple one sees today was built off-site and hoisted in place.

Gen. Thomas Jackson worshiped at Lexington Presbyterian during his tenure at Virginia Military Institute. The Rev. William S. White was the minister of Lexington Presbyterian Church during this period and presided over Jackson’s funeral in the church. Rev. White was the first minister to reside in the 1848 Presbyterian manse located on today’s White Street. He is buried in Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery not far from the grave of Gen. Jackson. In 1873, the church also had constructed Beechenbrook Chapel above Jordan’s Point to serve as a place of worship for the workers at the Point.

120 S. Main Street

Trinity United Methodist Church was placed at this site. In 1890, the corner stone for this church was laid at this site.

7. Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church

617 S. Main Street

This building was designed by Virginia architect Milton Grigg (1865-1982), known for his restoration work at Colonial Williamsburg and Monticello. In his career as an independent architect in Charlottesville, he worked as a modernist within the Jeffersonian tradition. The church was constructed in 1961. It boasts a 24 foot tall wooden cross at the entrance and a sanctuary with wood arches that form the warped pine roof. Multi-colored block windows help lighten the sanctuary. The sanctuary and choir loft will comfortably seat 100 worshippers.

The other structure on the property is “Boxwoods”, a 1850 brick Gothic Cottage style building that served as an inn for travelers on the “Pitable Road” through Lexington. On the front gable, there is intricate bargeboard carving and a handsome quatrefoil. The front doorway has a Tudor arch transom. The original front veranda has been removed. Inside, the stair has a graceful curved walnut handrail that is typical of the era.