

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. Luke Catholic Church

Other names/site number: JSN 114

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number: 304 South Main Street

City or town: Nicholasville State: Kentucky County: Jessamine

Not For Publication:  NA Vicinity:  NA

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following

level(s) of significance:     national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:    A    B X C    D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <b>Craig Potts/SHPO</b> Date _____ <b>Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office</b>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>_____ Signature of commenting official: Date _____</p> <p>_____ Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

Religion/religious facility/church  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

Religion/religious facility/church  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Late Gothic Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property: Limestone

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## Narrative Description

### Summary Paragraph

St. Luke Catholic Church (JSN 114) was built in 1923, the second church building on its site on South Main Street in Nicholasville, seat of Jessamine County, Kentucky. The present church was constructed in the Late Gothic Revival Style with local limestone and by local craftsmen. The exterior remains generally unchanged since construction. Interior changes in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century followed guidance from the church's Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) calling for Catholic Churches to reorient the worship space, which had formerly emphasized the hierarchical division between the clergy and the laity, to effect a more egalitarian relationship between the priest and the worshippers. The area proposed for listing consists of 5 adjacent parcels with street addresses of 300 South Main through 310 South Main Street. The area proposed for listing is 2.0 acres, and includes one contributing building and 4 non-contributing buildings.



**St. Luke Catholic Church, Nicholasville, KY Latitude: 37.877236° Longitude: -84.573806°**

### Character of the site

The church property is in an urban setting and the site terrain slopes downward toward the southeast. Google Earth gives an elevation of 980 feet above sea level to the northwest corner of the lot—its highest point—and 968 feet to the southeast corner of the property. Asphalt, grass, a stone wall, and buildings cover the entire site, with asphalt being the majority surface material.

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The site also includes a statuary garden. A decorative stone wall of dressed limestone marks the boundary of the property along South Main Street to the north of the church. The stone is laid in an ashlar coursing with crenels decorating the top. The stone wall begins slightly north of the church's main entry and continues northward until the wall is interrupted by a gap and the curving of the wall portions inward, indicating the car entrance into the parking area.

Outdoor shrines have been designed by parishioners to enhance the beauty of the property. The garden includes a Shrine to the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Anthony of Padua, our Lady of Guadalupe, and a monument to the unborn have been erected. The most recent outdoor shrine was dedicated in December 2010 and is a part of the national Moses Project. The baptismal font original to the church has also been moved from inside to the shrine garden.

## Description of the site features

### St. Luke Catholic Church (1923)– Contributing building

Ground was broken for the basement of the new church building in June 1921. On Thanksgiving Day 1921, the first Mass was offered in the basement of the structure. Severe weather that winter slowed construction, but by Spring 1922, construction resumed and the church was dedicated on Sept. 9 1923.

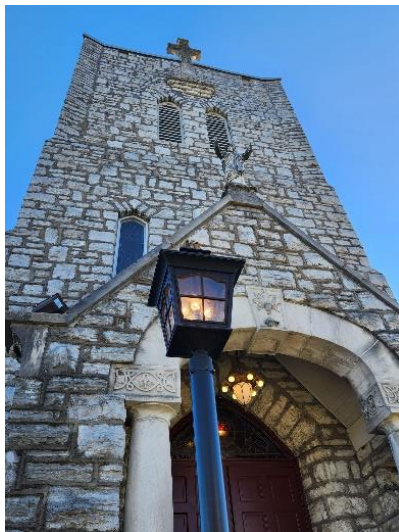
St. Luke Catholic Church has exterior masonry composed of quarried limestone in random widths and heights with thick mortar joints darker in color than the stone. The foundation is limestone. The roof is asphalt shingles, has a central ridge, and is steeply pitched. Metal box gutters line the roof edge. The front elevation has a prominent three-story bell tower, with crenelated finish. The 15-foot cross adorning the exterior front tower takes its design from Celtic origin and was carved out of a single piece of Kentucky marble. The arch above the front door displays Celtic lace work. The cornerstone reads DEO OPTMO MAXIMO MCMXXI – which translates to “Erected to the glory and honor of the Almighty and Supreme God 1921”



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The church has multiple stained-glass windows, most prominent are the 11 multi-paned windows marking the chancel and nave of the sanctuary. There are 5 of these windows on each of the north and south elevations. Each window is arranged with three columns and four rows of panes. The window opening is rectangular with an arch at the top of the opening. The windows are separated by limestone buttresses. Beneath each of the stained-glass windows are two one-over-one wood windows that bring light into the basement level.



**Front (west) elevation,**



**South elevation**

These art glass windows were produced by the G.C.Riordan & Company studio of Cincinnati, and are dated 1937; they were not original to the structure. The art glass at the chancel depicts the Crucifixion and through the nave, windows depict scenes in the chronology of Christ's life as well as depictions of Catholic Saints. These scenes run opposite the 14 stations of the cross which are inset in the plaster in the piers between each of the windows.



**Two of the 11 stained-glass windows**

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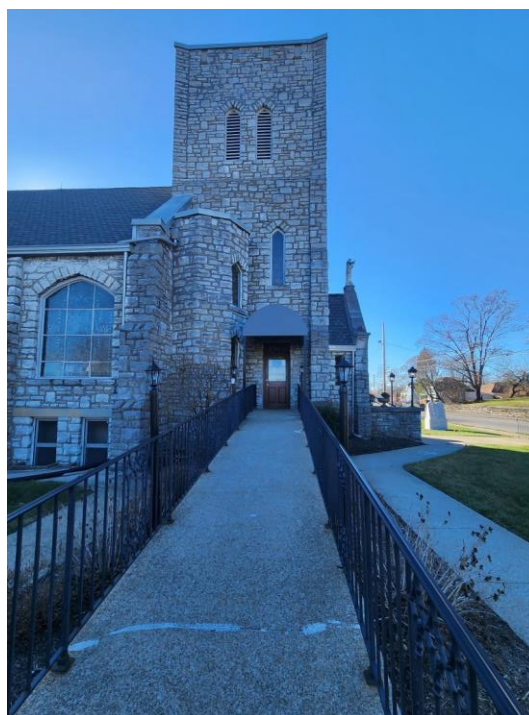
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The front façade is three stories high. The first story has a front gable over a carved stone arch which leads to the double entry doors, which are wood. The archway is supported by Doric columns and has Celtic imagery with the St. Patrick's trinity clover on the column capitals, the holy grail on the keystone, and a sculpture of apostle St. Luke tops the front gable. The front elevation of the second story has two tall vertical stained-glass windows with pointed arches. The belfry has paired pointed arched opening that are filled with wood vents. The roofline of the belfry is crenelated, though the openings have been filled with concrete. Between the vent windows, a stone cross carved in Celtic style projects above the roof line and sits on a corbeled stone ledge.



**Rear (east) end of church**



**Entrance on south side, near southeast corner**

The rear (east) end of the church projects out slightly from the central portion of the building. It has a gable end with a stone cross at the apex. It has a central stained-glass window in 12-pane configuration like those in the nave. On each north and south elevation is a stained-glass window in similar configuration to the windows of the nave. These windows are three rows by three columns with a pointed arch at the top of the opening. Due to the southeastward slope of the site, ground level access to the basement is available from the south. This entrance is covered with a shed roof and has aluminum storefront doors and sidelight configuration. A limestone header defines this opening.

The entry vestibule at the front of the church contains a pointed arch stained-glass window on the south wall. Two vertical paneled doors lead to the basement on the south wall and the balcony on the north wall. A contemporary chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The vestibule has laminated flooring and carpet in areas.

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The nave is entered through double wood doors. The carved wood pews are oriented facing the sanctuary, with a center aisle. Five stained-glass windows are located on each exterior wall. The Stations of the Cross panels are interspersed between the windows. Three pendant light fixtures hang over each row of pews. Modern can lights are also recessed in the ceiling in the sanctuary and the nave. The chancel is elevated from the nave by three steps. The altar is the focal point, standing three steps above the sanctuary. It is carved Italian marble and faces the nave. The communion table is carved wood. A stained-glass window depicting the crucifixion is located on the exterior wall behind the altar.



**View of the nave looking toward the altar**

On either side of the chancel, wood paneled doors lead to private rooms. On the south is the sacristy, which has stained wood cabinetry and bars for hanging robes and other garments used during the service. On the north end is the robe room. The confessional is located at the southwest end of the nave. There is no permanent baptismal font. A portable one is moved to the nave when ceremonies are held.

The balcony is located on the west (front) end of the building. Within the nave, the balcony is supported by an arched opening. A turned wood rail runs along the balcony's knee wall. Stairs



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from the entry vestibule lead to the balcony, which has plaster walls and ceilings and painted wood baseboard and casing. No profile exists on the wood trim. There are four pointed-arch stained-glass windows within the balcony space: 2 on the west elevation and 1 each on the north and south elevations. Pull down steps lead to the attic (belfry). The bell is operated by ropes which hang in the balcony near the attic steps.

The altar is carved of pure Carrara marble, imported from Italy and was first used during the Christmas Day service in 1923. Also made in Italy are the three stained glass windows located in the front of the church.

The parish center is in the basement. The basement has acoustic ceiling tiles and a poured concrete floor. It has tiled floors and wood paneling on the walls and columns. The basement also houses restrooms, the boiler room, and a kitchen area. A storage room is located at the west end of the basement.



**Views of the Parish Center space, basement**

**Former Dwelling (c. 1880)—non-contributing building**



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This building functions as the rectory and office. According to church records, this structure was purchased by the church in 1887 for use as a rectory.

The office and rectory, located in the former dwelling at 304 South Main Street, is a 1½-story house. The wood-framed dwelling is clad with metal siding. It has a pyramidal roof covered with asphalt shingles and dormers on each side. The dormers have three ganged windows and their own pyramidal roof. Two brick chimneys project above the roofline on the north and south sides of the house. The front elevation has three bays, a central entry and a front porch that spans the width of the house. The porch has four wood Doric columns with squared concrete bases. The windows on the north and south bay are two-over-two wood windows, paired at each opening. The window openings have non-functional shutters. The front door is surrounded by sidelight and a multi-light transom.

### **Former Dwelling (c.1900)—non-contributing building**



The St. Anthony Perpetual Adoration Chapel is located just south of the rectory and is also a former house. It is a wood-framed building with vinyl siding and a T-plan configuration. The one-story house has a bay window beneath the front gable, which has three six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows on each side of the bay. There is a rectangular vent window in the center of the front gable. The recessed front elevation contains the front door and a six-over-six double-hung wood sash window. There is a prominent end chimney on the south end and a central chimney, both are brick.

### **Modern Garage (late 20<sup>th</sup> century)—non-contributing building**

There is a contemporary garage building located on the southeast end of the site. It is sided in vinyl, has a shed roof with a front gable and a double garage door. There is a single window on the north elevation and a man door and window on the south elevation.

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**Modern Garage (late 20<sup>th</sup> century)—non-contributing building**

A second garage is located in the center of the site, behind the rectory. It is similar to the other garage, with a shed roof, front gable on the north elevation.



**Garage near the Southwest corner of site**



**Garage behind rectory**

**Changes to the Property since the Period of Significance**

Changes to the site include the construction of a garage in the 1960s. Several changes were made to the site in the 1980s, such as the redesign of the grotto in 1983, the remodeling of the rectory, and the purchase of the house to the south of the rectory and incorporation into the church property in the 1980s.

Exterior changes include the installation of art glass windows in 1937. In the mid-1970s, the stained-glass windows on the south side of the church were reinforced. The handicap ramp was built in the 1980s, at the time when the exterior entry into the basement was changed by the installation of a new door.

The interior changes were greatest beginning in the 1960s, when the church responded to the decisions in the Second Vatican Council (explained in the Statement of Significance). These changes occurred during the tenure of Father John P. Reilly, an Irish priest from Boston who transferred to St. Luke in 1963. Father Reilly designed a new altar of sacrifice that was added to the front of the marble altar. To accommodate this change, he also added a larger step and a new Communion rail. Initially, the new altar was modest and constructed of plastic laminate – a very contemporary material. It was not until the mid to late 1980s that the existing wood version was installed. Other alterations made in the late 1960s include overhead lighting and the interior walls and ceiling were painted white.

Under Father Carl C. Schaffer, who came to St. Luke in 1983, air conditioning was added, carpeting was installed under the pews and the sanctuary was wallpapered. New oak furnishings were added to the nave. The basement was also remodeled in the 1980s, which provided meeting rooms and restrooms inside the church building. A new organ was installed in the balcony and new St. Luke statue was installed in the sanctuary. In the mid-1990s, a new Baptismal font was donated as was a hand-painted St. Luke icon, which is now part of the vestibule.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Period of Significance

1923 - 1973  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Significant Dates**

1923, 1937, 1962-67

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Combs, John, architect

Harris, John, construction superintendent

Flynn, M.O., masonry contractor

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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

St. Luke Catholic Church (JSN 114) in Nicholasville Kentucky meets the first term of National Register Criterion C, it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.” Because the property is owned by a religious group, it also meets Criterion Consideration A, significant for its design values. The significance of the church’s architectural style is evaluated within the historic context “Church Architecture in Jessamine County, Kentucky, 1800-1945.” Within that historic context, St. Luke Catholic Church is significant as a strong local instance of Gothic Revival ecclesiastic styling. The building’s stylistic presentation is compared with the styling of churches elsewhere in Nicholasville.

### Historic Context: Church Architecture in Jessamine County, Kentucky, 1800-1945

To gain perspective on church architecture in Nicholasville and Jessamine County, Kentucky, and what is significant in the design of St. Luke Catholic Church within that history, the survey files of the Kentucky Heritage Council were consulted to find important instances of Jessamine County church architecture. Among Kentucky’s 120 counties, Jessamine has seen much more thorough historic investigation than most. Currently the county has at least 879 properties documented for their historic qualities. That total comes from 99 properties recorded in Nicholasville, 226 recorded Wilmore, and the rest recorded outside of those two towns, primarily in unincorporated parts of the county. The county underwent a historic structures survey in 1977. In 1983, the buildings found to qualify for the National Register were nominated within the Multiple Resources Area format, titled the Jessamine County MRA (NRIS: 64000233).

The Kentucky Heritage Council (the SHPO) survey database was searched for the name “church” in Jessamine County, which resulted in 25 matches. Among those, three churches are individually listed on the National Register—Providence Church (JS 2, NRIS: 84001682), Ebenezer Presbyterian Church (JS 123, NRIS: 83002797), and Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church (JS 133, NRIS: 84001659), and 4 more churches have been listed within historic districts.

Three churches have been evaluated to meet the National Register criteria by their survey form preparers: Macedonia Baptist Church (JS 139), Macedonia Blackridge Baptist Church and School (JS 559), and Bethel AME Church (JSN 4). All three churches have associations with African American communities. The Macedonia Baptist Church was connected to the Black population who moved to the community known as Keene, established for farm workers shortly after the Civil War’s end. This church’s construction in 1874 gives evidence of the rapid flowering of a community that had gained citizenship less than a decade before. The Macedonia Blackridge Baptist Church, with a school and cemetery nearby, serves as a signpost of another African American community, which placed sufficient priority upon education to erect a school building on site. Bethel AME church organization was established in 1865, and by 1877 the county atlas indicates a church on this site. The inscription 1910 on the cornerstone of the current brick building suggests that this structure is a replacement for an earlier building. The

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survey form states that this is Nicholasville's oldest public building associated with its African American community.



**Macedonia Baptist Church**



**Macedonia Blackridge Baptist**



**Bethel AME Church**

**Chronolog of Churches in Jessamine County, Kentucky in SHPO's Survey Database**

Church	Constructed	Style	Status
Ebenezer Presbyterian (JS 123)	1803-4	Federal	NR individual
Providence Church (JS 2)	1849	Gothic Revival	NR individual
Nicholasville Baptist (JSN 58)	Ca. 1860	Greek Revival	Listed in district
First Baptist Church (JSN 8)	1870	Romanesque	Surveyed
Macedonia Baptist Church (JS 139)	1874	No style	Eligible for Ethnic Assoc.
Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church (JS 133)	1877	Romanesque	NR individual
East Maple Street Christian (JSN 6)	1891	Gothic Revival	Surveyed
Macedonia Blackridge Baptist (JS 559)	1900-1924	No style	Elig. Ethnic associations
Bethel AME Church (JSN 4)	1910	Gothic Revival	Elig. Ethnic associations
Methodist Episcopal South (JSW 29)	1912	Neoclassical	Listed in district
Presbyterian Church (JSN 26)	1916	Greek Revival	Listed in district
Wilmore Christian Church (JSW 79)	1900-1924	Gothic Revival	Listed in district
Nicholasville Christian Church, 104 S Second Street	1926	Classical Revival	Not surveyed-listed in district
St. Luke Roman Catholic (JSN )	1922	Gothic Revival	Proposed for NR listing

At their essence, churches convey community identity in Kentucky. Church buildings can certainly occupy an important place in an individual's personal identity, and they provide groups of people with sense of community. Historically, as places were being settled in Kentucky, before larger social organizations such as city and county governments began to exert their force on the local affairs, an early church gave people in the vicinity of that church a common place to interact with others in their world. Before the arrival of motor vehicles and paved roads, people may have attended church services near their homes as much to see neighbors as to declare their affiliation with one doctrine or another.

Kentucky was opened for general settlement at the end of the American Revolution, and within little more than ten years, it had a sufficient population to apply for statehood in the new nation. It took decades before roads, banks, newspapers, factories, and urban conditions followed.

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Churches provided one of the most powerful social activities for a people living on the frontier. Settlers 7 miles west of the center of Nicholasville invested the time, energy, and building material to erect Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in 1803. Their effort survives to this day.



**Ebenezer Presbyterian Church**

Following the lead of European Americans, African Americans in Kentucky sought to solidify their communities by establishing a church organization as quickly as they could. Emancipation and the granting of general citizenship were accorded to Blacks, but their social status and safety was often under attack in Kentucky. The church provided refuge, safety, and inspiration for its members. The three Jessamine County church buildings mentioned above—Macedonia Baptist, Macedonia Blackridge Baptist, and Bethel AME Church—bolstered African American communities in the county—two, immediately after the Civil War.

The National Register allows for churches and property owned by religious groups to be listed as long as the understandings and meanings of the resource can be shared by the entire people in a locality, such as the people of a city or a county where the church stands. Often, a church property is appropriate for the National Register if its significance relates to associations other than its primary religious use. Typical bases of significance for churches can be the structure's use by the community as an important meeting place, as the setting for an important historic event, or the church's architectural value. Some religious properties can be significant for their religious meanings, and listed on the National Register for that identity, if professional historians recognize the place's value within American religious history. The basis for evaluating the significance of St. Luke Church is architectural values.

The National Register's emphasis on integrity helps users of this program to clarify the meanings of church that can be shared by many in a community. Integrity is the relationship between historic value and the physical property. The evaluation of integrity requires a reflection upon how we value the history of a place or an activity, and how the physical resource supports that valuing. The evaluation of integrity within the National Register begins with an honesty about



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the multiple meanings that a church can have, and those meanings arise from the identity of the physical resource. Integrity emphasizes the meanings that the entire community can share, meanings that most strongly attach to the physical property.

The National Register integrity evaluation steers the analysis of the following example. A particular congregation today may trace its roots to the early nineteenth century, and their current church building might have been erected in 1920. This group may seek National Register listing for their building, and point to the 200-year existence of their church group. The National Register's integrity analysis requires the nomination to recognize that the physical building erected in 1920 can give us much information about the community that produced it in 1920, and much less information about the community of 1820, from whom the group descended. The people who belong to that church have projected their congregation's 200-year-old group identity upon their building, and for them, their group's identity is sustained by the physical building. But members of that city or county, who do not belong to the church, would have a harder time identifying nineteenth century actions with a building that was not present during the nineteenth century. The integrity analysis of the National Register gives us a means of looking at buildings used by a particular religious group, and how to recognize their historic value, so that the valuing does not depend upon being a member of that congregation. Certainly, a church has meanings and values to its own users; the National Register requires us to find the meanings and values of places that are shared by larger groups than just the individual person or just the church body itself.

From the 25 churches surveyed in Jessamine County, those selected in the table above demonstrated some value for what their design communicated to the community at large. Most exhibit high style architectural presentation, which all people in Jessamine County can celebrate collectively. They can be considered to be Jessamine County's most highly aesthetic buildings used as churches. The analysis of this nomination will lead to an evaluation of significance according to the first term of Criterion C—the "Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction..." Often "type" is used in the National Register to define a style. In this nomination, the type will be church, and those churches that have the most stylized exteriors in the study area will be the most significant. This will bring together for comparison the churches that exhibit architect-designed facades, to identify which have the most academic stylistic treatments. The basis for this comparison of significance is grounded in the view that we might learn more from comparing, say, a Greek Revival-styled church and a Romanesque-styled church, more than we get from comparing the Greek Revival-styled church in a town and a Greek Revival-styled house in the same locality.

Rural Jessamine County holds the oldest surviving high style churches, the Providence Church and Mt. Pleasant Baptist (photos below). The surveyors in 1977 recognized the Providence Church's architectural value on the recording form, declaring it "one of the finest examples of design and craftsmanship among Jessamine County churches." The church combines the temple form, pediment, and pilasters from Greek Revival style, with Tudor style Gothic arch windows. Providence was a community along US 27, just south of the Fayette-Jessamine County line, which has been obscured today by the development of the south part of Lexington. Whether Providence was historically a dense or dispersed community, the community announced in 1849 their economic power and awareness of current building stylistic trends by how they adorned

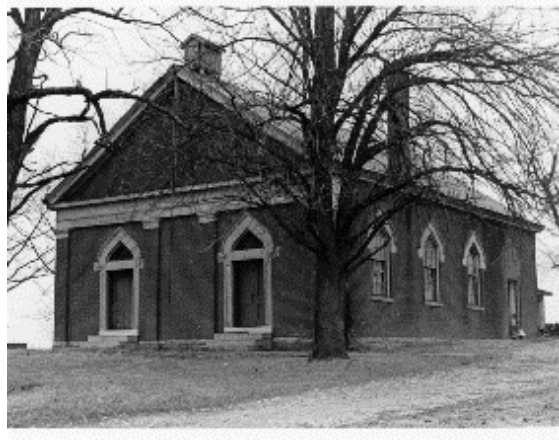
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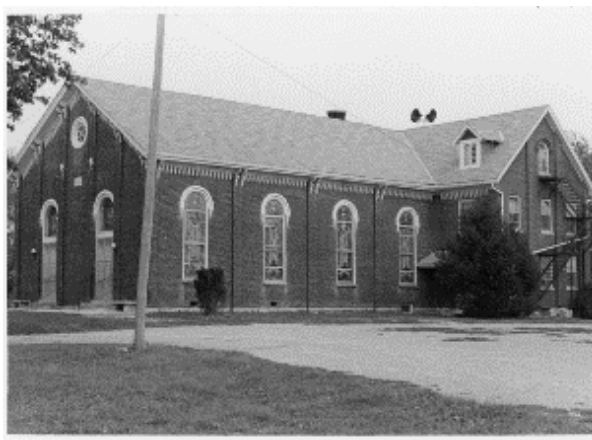
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their church building. Likewise, when the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church was erected in 1877, replacing an earlier church for a congregation that had been established in 1801 by folks near to the community of Keene, they decorated the church in one of the prevailing styles current in post-Civil War Kentucky: Romanesque. Obviously, these two church groups were not making a religious statement with the designs of their churches. The members of Providence Church did not identify with the religious practices held in ancient Greek temples nor did the Mt. Pleasant Baptists connect their building's Romanesque style with the Catholic architecture of Rome from which the style descended. They wished to announce to the larger Jessamine County community that they were a group that had cultural awareness on the level of style. When people of any belief system, or of no religious belief, passed these churches, the passers-by could recognize something positive about the people who belonged to this church.



**Providence Church**



**Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church**

While Providence and Mt. Pleasant churches indicate that rural Jessamine County had reached a level of economic success and cultural awareness shortly before and shortly after the Civil War, three church buildings remain in the county's two urban locations, Nicholasville and Wilmore, to help us interpret those communities during the nineteenth century.



**First Baptist Church, 200 York St, Nicholasville**



**Nicholasville Baptist Church**



**East Maple Street Christian**

The fortress-like First Baptist Church was built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but its later remodeling made it hard for the study team to know its history of use from visual evidence; the survey form does not report investigation of the church's history to interpret the

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exterior. At any rate, the message of strength is evident from its design. The Nicholasville Baptist Church, from around 1860, sought to distinguish itself through its Greek temple form. The East Maple Street Christian Church, built 1891, adopts a traditional asymmetrical massing for a church during the years when architects developed Queen Anne and other Victorian-era styles that explored asymmetrical façade composition. East Maple Street Church's tall bell tower is juxtaposed with the more squat sanctuary. The only other church in the county's comparative group, which also has asymmetrical frontal composition, is the Bethel AME Church, shown above, which was built in 1910.

The churches erected after 1900 appear to have the intent of giving the local people the message that identifies the users as a financially successful group who desires to be seen in a stylish house of worship. By 1900, some of these churches were replacement churches for a worn out building or for a congregation that was growing beyond the capacity of the original building. Some twentieth century buildings, also, originated when a faction within a church split-off and began a new congregation and needed a new building.

Denominational identity does not seem to be a strong predictor of exterior church form or style in Jessamine County. Three church congregations identified by the name "Christian" occupy three buildings that look quite dissimilar. The East Maple Street Church is shown above, and it is the product of Victorian-era stylistic tastes. The Wilmore Christian Church (ca. 1910) appears more akin to churches that dotted the Jessamine County farm landscape as much as two generations before. Its gothic arched windows and Italianate eave brackets came straight from the vocabulary of nineteenth century country churches, making it a curiosity in an urban setting. The Nicholasville Christian Church (1926) appears indistinguishable from many Baptist churches, which seem to have adopted a heavy Greek Revival portico for new urban churches sometime around the first World War. At that same time, many federal buildings were also returning to early American revival styles, which probably made the use of Greek Revival elements seem patriotic and monumental on early twentieth century churches.



**Nicholasville Christian Church**



**Wilmore Christian Church**

Other instances of the monumental Greek Revival entry are seen in the Nicholasville Presbyterian Church (1916) and Wilmore's Methodist Episcopal church (1912)

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**Nicholasville Presbyterian**



**Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmore**

If there is a way of summarizing this analysis of church architecture, churches as a designed cultural resource have multiple meanings. Church interiors probably have greatest meaning for their particular group of users—the church community. Church exteriors have been considered here as a social expression that would have meaning for the larger community, those people who do not belong to that church, but will regard it and understand the people who are connected to it as being solid citizens. Insofar as architectural style has become a mode of communicating messages that are not overtly religious, churches in Jessamine County exhibit an architectural language that transcends religion and is understood on more social levels, in a way that parallels the social messages of residential, commercial, governmental building designs that give meaning to our cultural landscape.

### **History of St. Luke Parish and St. Luke Church**

The chronology of the Catholic faith and its worship practices follow a familiar trajectory in Jessamine County as they do across the United States. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Jessamine County, Kentucky was merely a Catholic mission served by the assistant pastor of St. Peter Church in nearby (and much larger) Lexington. The pastor would frequently travel from Lexington to Nicholasville on horseback to serve the small congregation of local followers and perform Mass in the homes of early residents.

Moreau Brown, a man of Methodist faith, donated the land to his Catholic neighbors for a church on South Main Street just south of downtown Nicholasville. Local lore has it that the wood used in construction of the first church building was repurposed from demolished buildings at Camp Nelson. Established in 1863, Camp Nelson, about 5 miles away from downtown Nicholasville, served as a supply depot, a hospital, and a base during the Civil War. Notably, it also served as a recruiting post for white Unionists fleeing Confederate occupation in the region and Black men and their families escaping slavery. It is now a National Monument and is the site of a National Cemetery.

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That wood-framed and wood-clad building was dedicated by Most Rev. George Aloysius Carrell, SJOD, the first bishop of Covington, on April 25, 1867. Shortly after the first church was built, the Rev. C. Divine opened a Catholic school under the name of St. Stanislaus, which served the Nicholasville area until 1885. In 1887, the present rectory was purchased from Mrs. Sallie Welch. It is a Victorian cottage located just south of the church building.



**Original St. Luke Church, Nicholasville, from *Jessamine Journal*, February 19, 1897**

In 1895 the original church building underwent repairs inside and out. But by the spring of 1921, it was apparent that the wooden structure was too small for its growing congregation. Donations from parishioners and their estates as well as fundraisers – bazaars and lawn fetes—were held to pay for the construction. Volunteers also contributed their labor to the project.

Ground was broken for the basement of the new building in June 1921. On August 21, 1921, Rev. H.F. Hillenmeyer, Chancellor of the Diocese of Covington, laid the cornerstone in the rising stone building.

Architect John T. Combs of Pittsburgh designed plans for the current building. Local resident John C. Harris acted as on-site architect and superintendent. M.O. Flynn was the masonry contractor. Mr. Flynn died before the church was finished, but his sons completed the remaining work. Marion Stratton was the general contractor.

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On Thanksgiving Day 1921, the first Mass was offered in the basement of the structure. Severe weather that winter slowed construction, but by Spring 1922, construction resumed, and the church was dedicated on Sept. 9 1923.

There is a long list of local and nearby residents who have contributed to the evolution of the church building over the years:

- The limestone cross on the front façade was donated by a Mr. Richard Lynch of Frankfort, as was the chalice cut into the keystone.
- Miss Ann Maloney and other families paid to have eight stained glass windows designed and made in Cincinnati to replace the original plain glass windows in 1937.
- Parishioner Maggie Reynolds designed a window that includes WWI soldier Joseph Carr Reynolds, who was killed in an explosion in France on Dec 15, 1918 – age 24.
- John W. Wheeler donated the cornerstone and the marble table set in the tower behind the statue of the Blessing Christ.
- Mrs. Harry McCarthy donated the bell that is still in use today.

### **Physical Changes to Catholic Church Interiors after the Second Vatican Council**

In Catholicism, the term *Church* refers to the living temple, God's People, and *church* is commonly used to describe "the building in which the Christian community gathers to hear the word of God, to pray together, to receive the sacraments, and celebrate the eucharist."

Throughout the Church's history, the church's interior design has been arranged consciously to reinforce theological perspectives. The interior of a Catholic Church very often has been the product of intentional choice to achieve symbolic and religious impacts. St. Luke's interior at once time provided a view of Catholicism in the 1920s. Worldwide changes within the Catholic Church in the first half of the 1960s, usually referred to as the Second Vatican Council, gave direction to the current interior of St. Luke Church and thousands of historic Catholic churches nationwide. While this discussion of the church's interior does not provide insight into the National Register evaluation of St. Luke Church's significance, the changes to the interior are being explained to help with the integrity analysis.

According to the current teachings of the Catholic Church, the church interior must be suited to sacred celebrations, and must be dignified and beautiful. Discouraged are building, art and artifacts that are "trivial, contrived, or lack of beauty."

The New Testament speaks of the upper room where Christ gathered the apostles for the Last Supper and appeared to them after the resurrection, and where the Holy Spirit descended on the Blessed Virgin and the Twelve at Pentecost. After the Lord's ascension, believers gathered in homes for the celebration of "breaking of the bread." Such homes evolved into "house churches" and became the Christian community's earliest places for worship. The unique forms and architecture of the Roman and Byzantine world provided the Church with an architectural language in the form of the basilica. With its long nave and an apse for the bishop and clergy, the basilica quickly became a standard architectural form for churches of the West. The effect of these architectural forms is still reflected in the structure of our liturgical life today."

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In 1962 Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council to help the Church renew its sense of mission. Convened at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Italy, it was the 21<sup>st</sup> such council and its purpose was to update some of the church's practices and teaching in a way relevant to the times. From these meetings, which lasted over the course of 4 years, came the first of the conciliar documents, *Sacrosantum Concilium*. It called for revision of the material elements involved in the liturgy, particularly the design and construction of churches and altars, the placement of the tabernacle and the baptistry, and the application of images and ornamentation in an effort to encourage more active, purposeful participation from the congregation during service.

This guidance has been supplemented over the years, as discussion and interpretation in parishes across the country continued, by both the Apostolic See and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. In the US, the 1978 publication of *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* had additional impact on the building of new churches and the renovation of existing churches.

In 1990, *Environment and Art* was replaced with *Built of Living Stones* to address the needs of the modern parishes in building and renovating their places of worship. The document recognizes the importance of church art and architecture and begins with a theological reflection on the liturgy and liturgical art and architecture. Also outlined in the text are liturgical principles for renovation and construction projects and spatial demands for major liturgical celebrations during the year. Suggestions for including art, selecting artists, developing master plans, and special consideration for historic art and architecture are also included.

The presence of Christ imagery in material signs is tantamount to enlivening worship within the church and thus, liturgical principles for building and renovating churches are defined by the Second Vatican Council and subsequent documents implementing its decrees. There, though, are no universal blueprints or plans for church design; rather, guidance recognizing that each church employs their programs and practices differently.

Following the guidance, scope of design for designated parts of the church include:

- The Building - The Place for the Liturgical Assembly Gathered as One Body in Christ
- The Congregation's Area – also called the nave. The guiding principles include that “the community worships as a single body...” and “The priest celebrant and ministers together with the congregation to form the liturgical assembly, which is the Church gathered for worship.” The document dictates that each act in unison to promote the mission of the Church.
- The Sanctuary Area – where the altar and the ambo stand and where the chair of the priest celebrant sits, and from where the services are performed.
- The Altar – designed as the natural focal point of the sanctuary. Directives call for the altar to be made of natural stone (representing Christ, the Living Stone) in the form of a table or mensa (or other worthy materials). The guidelines call for it to be “not so elevated that it causes visual or symbolic division from the liturgical assembly.” This interpretation is drawn from the Second Vatican Council.

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- The Ambo – where the word of God is proclaimed during the worship service

Also described are the Chair for the Priest Celebrant, Stations of the Cross, the Baptistry, the Tabernacle, the Narthex, and other spaces and furnishings that serve specific functions in the operation of the church.

The publication goes further to address Special Issues in the Renovation of Churches.

Specifically, for the Alteration of Historic Structures, it is stated that:

“Over time, as public expressions of worship change, there is a consequent shift in the demands on the physical spaced used for the Church’s liturgy. In accord with the norms of the liturgical reform, it is sometimes necessary to alter historic structures that pose a challenge. In projects of this kind, a delicate balance can be achieved through a selection of designs and appointments that respect and protect the Church’s ancient artistic heritage and, at the same time, effectively serve the requirements of contemporary worship.”

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on the Liturgy, Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship <https://nyliturgy.org/wp-content/uploads/BOLS.pdf>

### **Evaluation of Significance of St. Luke Church within the Historic Context “Church Architecture in Jessamine County, Kentucky, 1800-1945”**

St Luke Catholic Church has been a part of Nicholasville’s community of religious organizations since its first inception as a Catholic mission outpost. With the donation of land on South Main Street, the Church mapped its physical presence just after the Civil War, and this role in the community was further reinforced by the 1920s campaign to enlarge the church to the structure which stands today.

Both the earlier structure and the current one present two strong messages to the community within the church archetype. Both churches show in their basic form a willingness to engage with the traditional church typology. However, the St. Luke Church has taken a quite distinctive expression of its church form. While almost all the area churches in Jessamine County surviving since the Civil War display an exterior that does not distinguish that group from other Christian groups, the Gothic Revival style on St. Luke’s is strongly identifiable with Catholicism. From the era of the Reformation that began in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the schism in Christianity between Catholics and Protestants took many forms. A mutual attitude of criticism toward the other group characterizes much of Christianity, even today.

Thus, St. Luke’s gothic design marks the church as distinctively Catholic during an era when Catholics held a self-view as a superior group. The Catholic’s strong identification with the church’s history, which the sect traces back in an unbroken line to the birth of Christianity, makes the selection of the Gothic style an overt celebration of that medieval past. The design of St. Luke gives witness to a centuries-long battle between two Christian groups, Protestants and Catholics, that has had many consequences in American life.



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**Celtic images incorporated into the façade of St. Luke**

St. Luke Church, in its 1920s design, tells of a church group which wished to project a message of standing apart from its civic community. We would need to look outside of Jessamine County to find good comparable examples of the style. One church building similar to St. Luke is St. Mark Catholic Church in nearby Richmond, Kentucky. St. Mark is a stone edifice, with a central three story bell tower, built in 1908. It is also built in the Gothic Revival style, with pointed arch stained-glass windows, a steep gable roof and limestone buttresses on the exterior walls.



**St. Mark Catholic Church, 608 W Main St, Richmond**

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The Second Vatican Council offered a self-criticism of Catholicism, beginning with this attitude of chauvinism. The Council directed Catholics to find more commonality than differences among all people of all faith traditions. These imperatives called for changes within church architecture that reduced divisions between Catholics themselves, i.e., between the clergy and the laity. St. Luke Church's interior has been refashioned according to these directives. Other historic Catholic Churches took more extreme responses to these directives, stripping themselves of much of the church statuary, painting white over the murals, and other radical steps to erase their distinctive Catholic features. The design of Catholic churches erected post-Vatican II has resulted in buildings that draw from the Modernist vocabulary of church, and in so doing, have exterior expressions that align somewhat more closely with many Protestant churches built at the same time.

Given that this nomination is focused on the exterior of local church design, the interior of St. Luke is less relevant to the history of church design in Jessamine County as discussed in this nomination. And that interior has been changed from its 1920s incarnation. The evaluation of the significance of the interior of St. Luke is beyond the scope of this nomination, but because much of its remodeled interior is now more than 50 years old, and helps interpret Post-Vatican Catholic church design, it may be significant within the context of Post-Vatican Catholic Church history.

### **Evaluation of the Integrity between the Significance of St. Luke Church and the Physical Condition of the Church Today**

St. Luke Church is being nominated according to the first term of Criterion C, as a type of construction, a church in Jessamine County, Kentucky. The primary integrity factor for eligibility under Criterion C will be integrity of feeling. The property will have integrity of feeling if it retains integrity of materials and design, as an integrity of materials and design together produce the physical property that gives us the feeling of how churches express their social identity at any point in time in Jessamine County's past.

St. Luke Church retains integrity of **location** and **setting**. In this nomination's analysis, the architectural significance of a church has been interpreted as a means of that church's community to project its image to its community. Certainly a church's location is an important feature of its community's identity. Likewise, a setting helps establish and reinforce whether that community is rural or urban, whether the church stands in isolation or within a developed area. St. Luke's location and setting have remained stable since its completion in 1923. The setting and location of St. Luke contribute to its feeling, but do not seem to be the essential elements that support the feeling that leads to its eligibility.

The church exterior retains much of its integrity of **materials** and **design**. Its materials and design remain intact save for two exterior changes. In 1937, within the period of significance, art glass windows were installed and are marked as "G.C. Riordan & Co., 1937 Cincinnati, OH."

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**Stained-glass window maker's etching**

Riordan was a native of Limerick, Ireland. He was first employed as manager of the William Coulter & Son company (previously Coulter and Finagin's), before he purchased the firm in 1892. He passed away in 1936 with his son John assuming control of the family business (<https://www.beauverre.net/history>). The other observable change has been a reworked entrance to the basement near the southwest corner of the building, toward the back of the south side. The stained-glass windows are not only compatible with the design, but in a sense fulfill it, as stained-glass windows are a social mark, to the onlooking community of the 1930s, of economic success of the church body and its continued affinity with the biblical values. In other words, installation of stained-glass windows in the middle of the nation's Great Depression furthered the overall social impression of St. Luke Parish as a strong group, which is the social messaging established by the original church design. The impact of the basement entrance remodeling in the 1980s does not have a noticeable impact on the overall quality of the Gothic Revival styling due it being obscured by the site's statuary and landscaping.

The changes in the sanctuary and elsewhere on the interior made after 1965 certainly change the ability of this church to maintain its identity as a 1920s institution. The changes to the interior are more visible to the Catholic users of the church, less so to the Nicholasville and Jessamine County community. Since the middle 1960s, the Catholic Church has indeed undergone internal changes that it struggles with even at the present. The changes to the environment of worship within St. Luke provide a very authentic portrait of a church which continues to define its own identity. Many Catholic parishes had strong and divisive reactions to the changes in this sacred space called for by the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council. Those reactions to changes in sacred space parallel the struggles within the church over which parts of the past should be retained and which modernizations will better satisfy the mission of the Church. The National Register judgment called "integrity" places a positive value upon maintenance of physical intactness. If the interior of St. Luke had complete integrity as the National Register defines that term, and had not changed physically since the 1920s, that interior would lack an integrity with the way that Catholicism defines itself as a living body. This nomination calls us to recognize the cultural importance of the church's *exterior* design as a statement to the larger Jessamine County community, and differentiates the *interior* space as more the province of the St. Luke community.

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With this church possessing integrity of material and design integrity, and with the support of integrity of location and setting, the church possesses an integrity of **feeling** to how “church” was articulated in Jessamine County in the early twentieth century. To conclude that the church possesses integrity of feeling, it then qualifies for National Register listing under Criterion C.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

[http://genealogytrails.com/ken/jessamine/churches\\_jessamine.html](http://genealogytrails.com/ken/jessamine/churches_jessamine.html)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on the Liturgy, Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship <https://nyliturgy.org/wp-content/uploads/BOLS.pdf>

St. Luke Catholic Church programs

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_ JSN 114 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

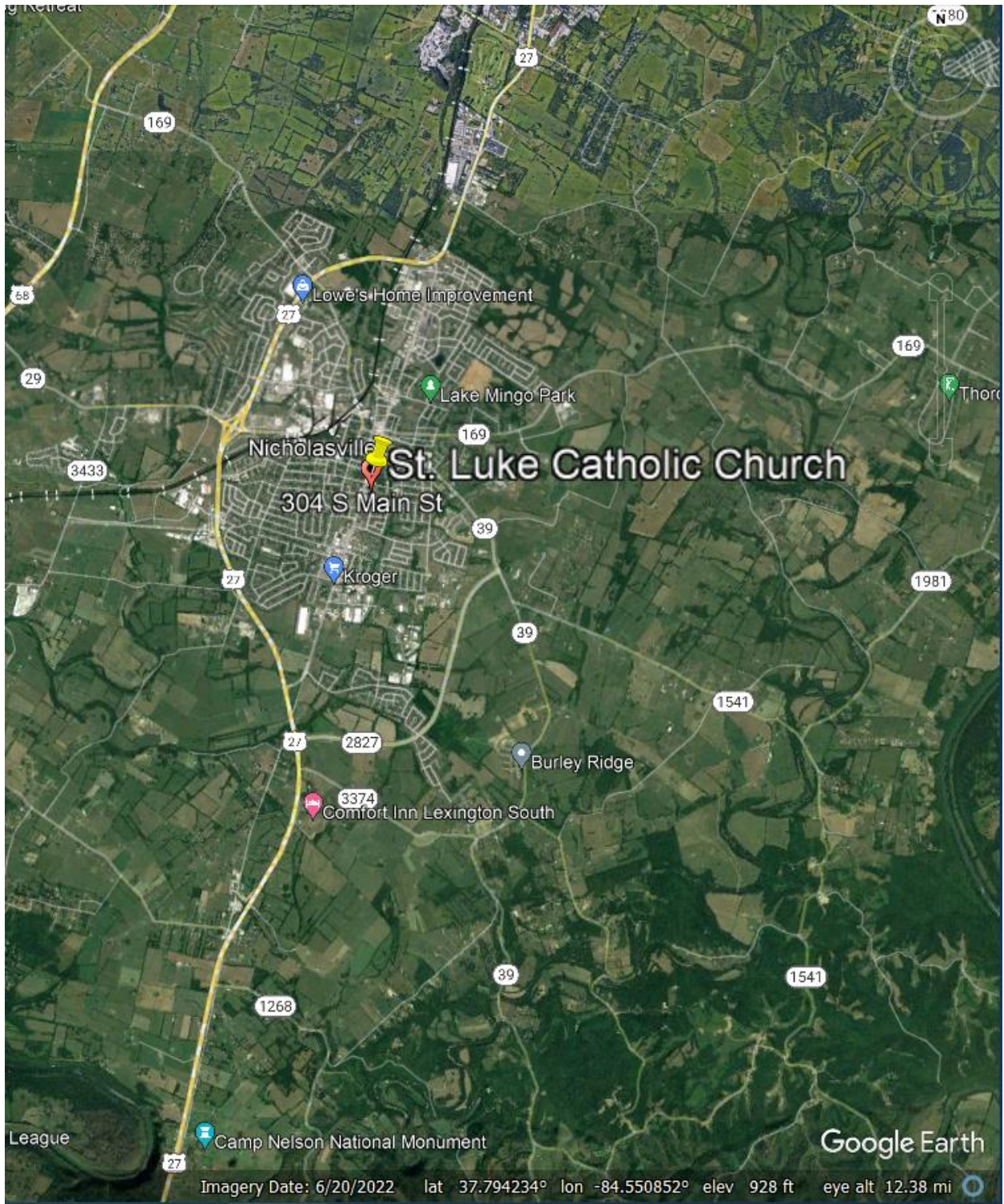
Acreage of Property 2.0 acres

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**Large area map of location of St. Luke.**

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: <b>37.877236°</b> | Longitude: <b>-84.573806°</b> |
| 2. Latitude:                   | Longitude:                    |
| 3. Latitude:                   | Longitude:                    |
| 4. Latitude:                   | Longitude:                    |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The area proposed for listing consists in 7 parcels that form a single unit identified by the Jessamine County Property Valuation Administrator under these parcel numbers:

058-20-25-088.00	058-20-25-087.00	058-20-25-086.00
058-20-25-085.00	058-20-25-084.00	058-20-25-083.00
058-20-25-082.00		

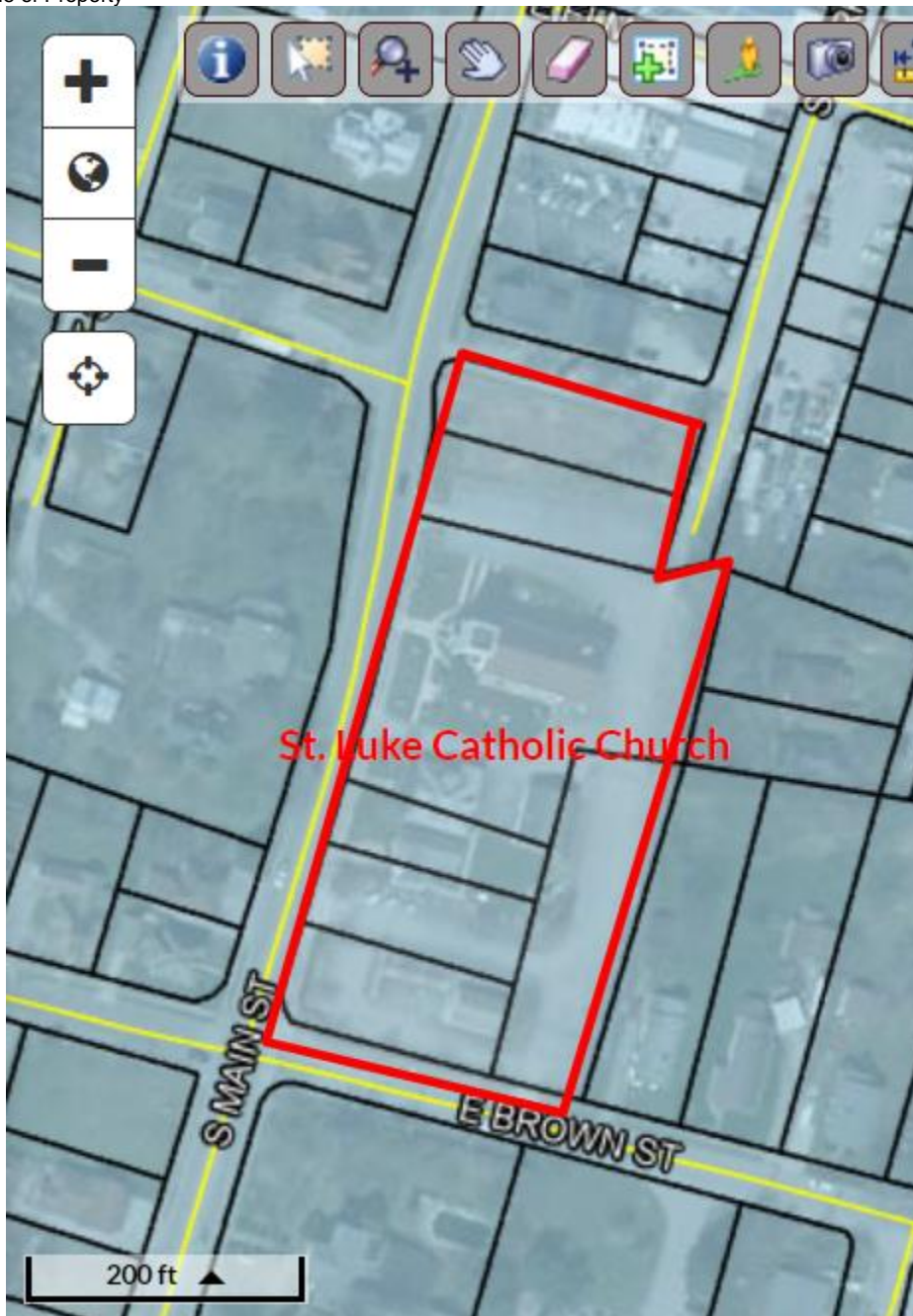
This area is shown in the following map from the Property Valuation Administration office.

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### Boundary Justification

The area proposed for listing includes the architecturally significant resource with a sufficient amount of land that helps communicate the historic church identity. The church's identity is what gives rise to the architectural design and is what gives that design significance to the Jessamine County community.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jen Williamson, Natalie Wilkerson  
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street & number: 307 Washington St  
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telephone: (502) 682-7954, (502)330-3088  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Photographs/Photo Log

Name of Property:	St. Luke Church
City or Vicinity:	Nicholasville
County:	Jessamine
State:	Kentucky
Photographer:	Jen Williamson
Date Photographed:	Dec 14, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 16 – Front Entry and Belltower (looking east southeast)
- 2 of 16 – View of Belltower looking up disabled access ramp (looking south)
- 3 of 16 – North elevation of Church (looking south)
- 4 of 16 – Rear elevation of Church (looking west)
- 5 of 16 – South elevation of Church with remodeled basement entrance (looking north)
- 6 of 16 – Detail of corbelled stone and Celtic Cross at top of Belltower
- 7 of 16 – Interior view of Sanctuary (looking east)
- 8 of 16 – View of stained glass (looking southeast)
- 9 of 16 – Chancel and Alter (looking southeast)
- 10 of 16 – View from chancel to nave and loft (looking west)
- 11 of 16 – Narthex (looking northeast)
- 12 of 16 – Rectory building (looking east)
- 13 of 16 – Chapel building (looking east)
- 14 of 16 – Streetview of Chapel, Rectory and Church (looking north northeast)
- 15 of 16 – View from south parking lot to Church through other structures (looking north)
- 16 of 16 – View looking west with Church to right and Rectory to left.