

Explore!

Bakersfield's Unique Church Buildings

Bakersfield is a city of churches. Although most of our grand church buildings were destroyed in the 1952 earthquake, several unique religious buildings can be found in Bakersfield. Here are just a few:

A. First Presbyterian Church. Designed by architect George Rible, the cornerstone from the original 1913 building remains in the current building. It was completed in 1955 after the original was destroyed in the 1952 earthquake. *1705 17th St. at "H" St.*

B. The former First Baptist Church is on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1931, it is the only religious structure of its era to survive the 1952 earthquake. It also is one of the few downtown buildings to remain relatively unaltered over the ensuing years. It is now an office complex known as Old Church Plaza and the location is very popular for weddings. *1200 Truxtun Ave. at "L" St.*



C. Let Sing Gong Temple. "Bakersfield may be the only U.S. city that had distinct Chinatowns at the same time. These were called Old and New Chinatown."¹ Let Sing Gong Temple is the last remnant of New Chinatown. *701 18th St at "R" St.*

¹ Ellen Miller, "The Bakersfield Californian, December 10, 2010

D. Congregation B'nai Jacob. The year 1958 marked the opening of the congregation's new location as well as the hiring of a new rabbi. The previous synagogue at 16th and "H" streets was damaged in the 1952 earthquake. The current synagogue's triangle shape seems to mirror that of Mill Creek Christian Church across 17th Street. *600 17th St. at "S" St.*

E. Mill Creek Christian Church was originally known as First Christian Church. Its first services at this location were held in 1955 after the congregation's previous site on 16th Street between "H" and Eye streets was damaged in the 1952 earthquake and condemned for public assembly. *1660 "S" St. at 17th St.*

F. St. George's Greek Orthodox Church was built in 1947. Both it and the church hall next door (built in 1924) suffered damage from the 1952 earthquake. The church hall was later destroyed. The church was dedicated in 1956 and still stands today. *401 Truxtun Ave. at "U" St.*

G. Church of Religious Science (Center for Spiritual Living) is on the Bakersfield Register of Historic Places. Originally a home built in 1927 by James Curran, founder of Sandstone Brick Co., it was sold to the church in 1954. The front door was made from the wood of a walnut tree that had been cut down when the house was built. *222 Eureka St. at Sonora St.*

H. San Clemente Mission. The current buildings were constructed in 1994 and look similar to the style of California missions with their arcades and columns. There are 15 leaded glass panels in the main sanctuary, representing various important religious figures at crucial times in the Church's history.² *1305 Water St, just west of Haley St.*

² Source: Scarab Glass Works



- A. First Presbyterian Church 1705 17th Street
- B. The former First Baptist Church 1200 Truxtun Avenue
- C. Let Sing Gong Temple 701 18th Street
- D. Congregation B'nai Jacob 600 17th Street

- E. Mill Creek Christian Church 1660 "S" Street
- F. St. George's Greek Orthodox Church 401 Truxtun Avenue
- G. Church of Religious Science 222 Eureka Street
- H. San Clemente Mission 1305 Water Street



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