

Into the Light

Photography by Eric Mull

Text by Tori Woods

"But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

— John 3:21

The walls of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church are replete with stained glass. The windows' biblical scenes, such as the Garden of Gethsemane and The Last Supper, almost overpower the stone.

But for the Rev. Michael Hageman, it is clear which window is the most powerful, the most symbolic of his parish and his neighborhood.

"There's one particular window of Jesus holding a lamb," he says. "It inspires people to know that Jesus is there, carrying us, even when we're broken."

From the serene jewel-box windows of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church to the awe-inspiring grandeur of the tower above St. Stephen Roman Catholic Church on West 54th Street, these treasures of the city are becoming beacons of their neighborhoods.

In partnership with the Cleveland Restoration Society's Sacred Landmarks Assistance Program, 11 religious institutions have lighted their steeples, domes and bell towers. At least two more will soon follow.

"Cleveland sacred landmarks are really one of our signature architectural features as a city," says Michael Fleenor, director of preservation programs for the Cleveland Restoration Society. "We have so many magnificent sacred landmarks, built by different ethnic groups that settled Cleveland."

The Steeple Lighting Program, which began in 1995, offers consultations to eligible churches visible from the freeways. An architect, electrician and lighting designer provide an assessment of needed renovations and repairs as well as an illumination plan, often incorporating utility poles owned by Cleveland Public Power. Grants are available through the Cleveland Foundation for some repairs, and the full cost of the lighting installation is covered, up to \$22,500.

"[Our church] is visible from I-90, and very many people comment on that fact that they see it at night, as they go to and fro," says Sister Ann Kilbane of St. Colman Roman Catholic Church on West 65th Street. "There's a sense of pride. Even people in the neighborhood who aren't parishioners love seeing it. It's a beacon."

At night, when the carefully angled lights bathe the buildings just so, when stained glass demurely glows and steeples appear to rise out of darkness, it's an arresting vision. Whether traversing Lincoln Park to get to that new restaurant or cruising downtown for a game, you can't help but take a moment — whatever you believe — and appreciate the sight.

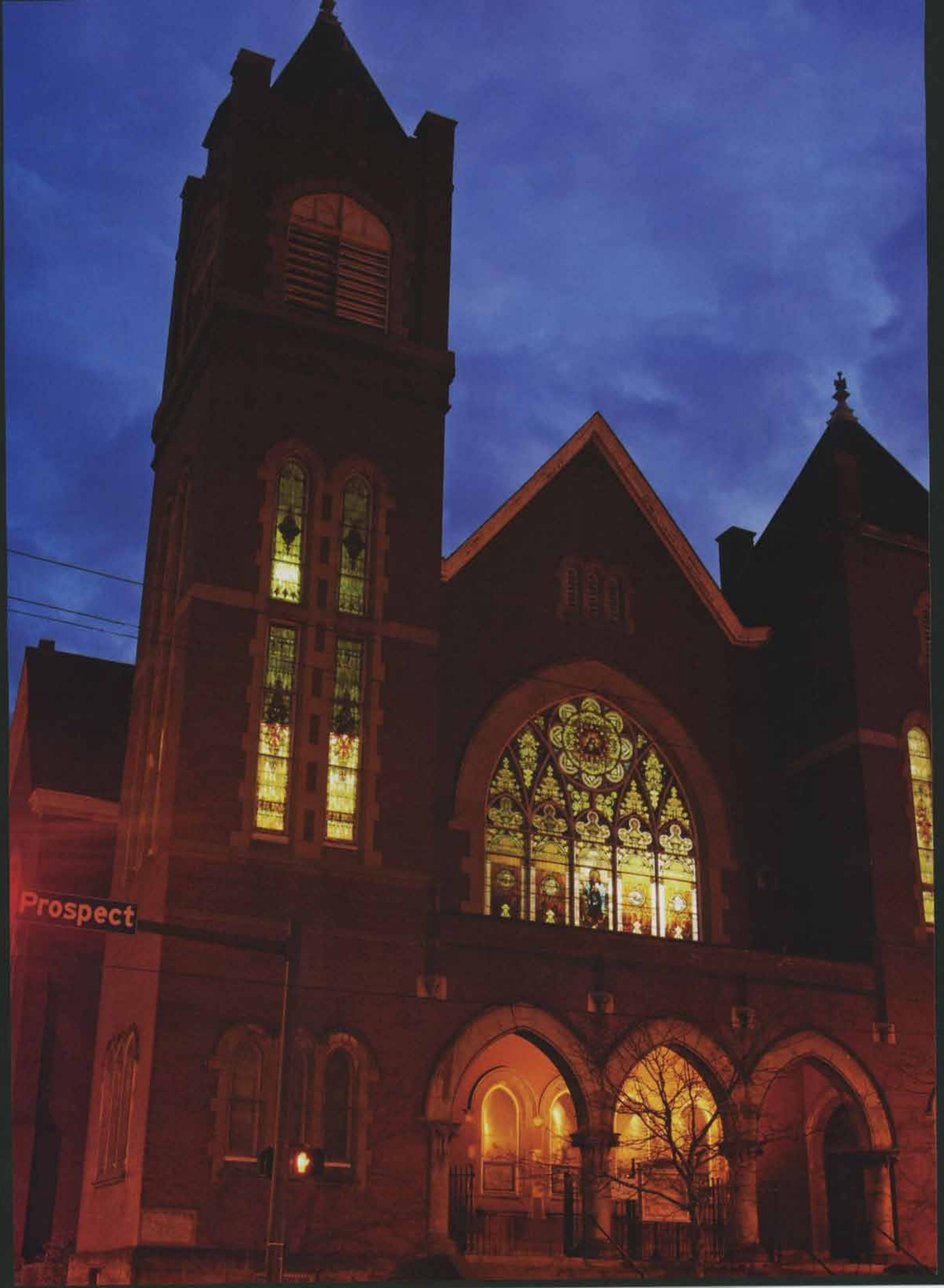
An innovative Cleveland Restoration Society program has illuminated 11 of the city's sacred landmarks, highlighting the beauty of the steeples, bell towers and domes, while creating beacons for our neighborhoods.



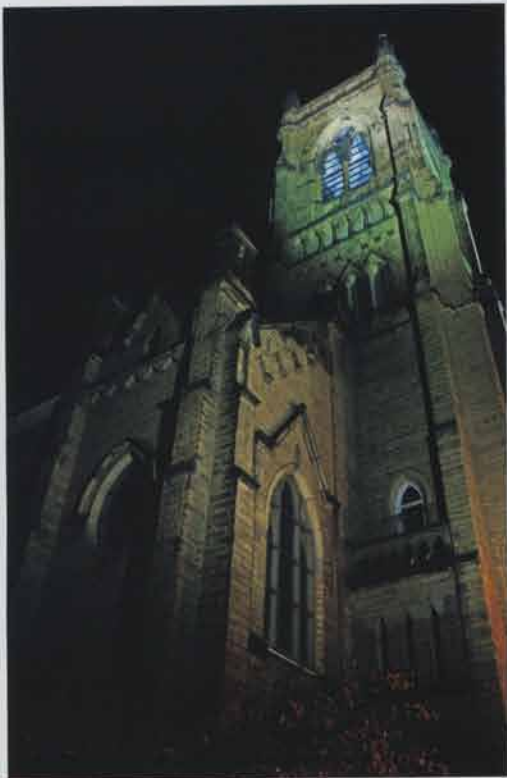
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

2062 E. 30th St.
(216) 861-2179

One of the first churches in America to use a lighted tree during Christmas Eve services, Zion is once again illuminated. The church works with kids in the neighborhood in tutoring and after-school programs and now also holds a second Sunday service called Divine Gospel. "People from different faith traditions come, but primarily people who come don't have any church background," says the Rev. Michael Hageman, pastor. "The families come through the church's work with their children."



Prospect



**St. Stephen
Roman Catholic Church**
(far left)

1930 W. 54th St., (216) 631-5633

St. Stephen's elegant Victorian-gothic tower, which is lit internally and externally on three sides, stands juxtaposed with its residential neighborhood. So the parish's Safe Zone Committee works with police and city inspectors on issues relating to safety and quality of life. "We work against crime problems like drugs and prostitution," says the Rev. Michael Franz, pastor of St. Stephen. "In the inner city, beauty and hope go together and are both important things."



**Immanuel Evangelical
Lutheran Church**
(left)

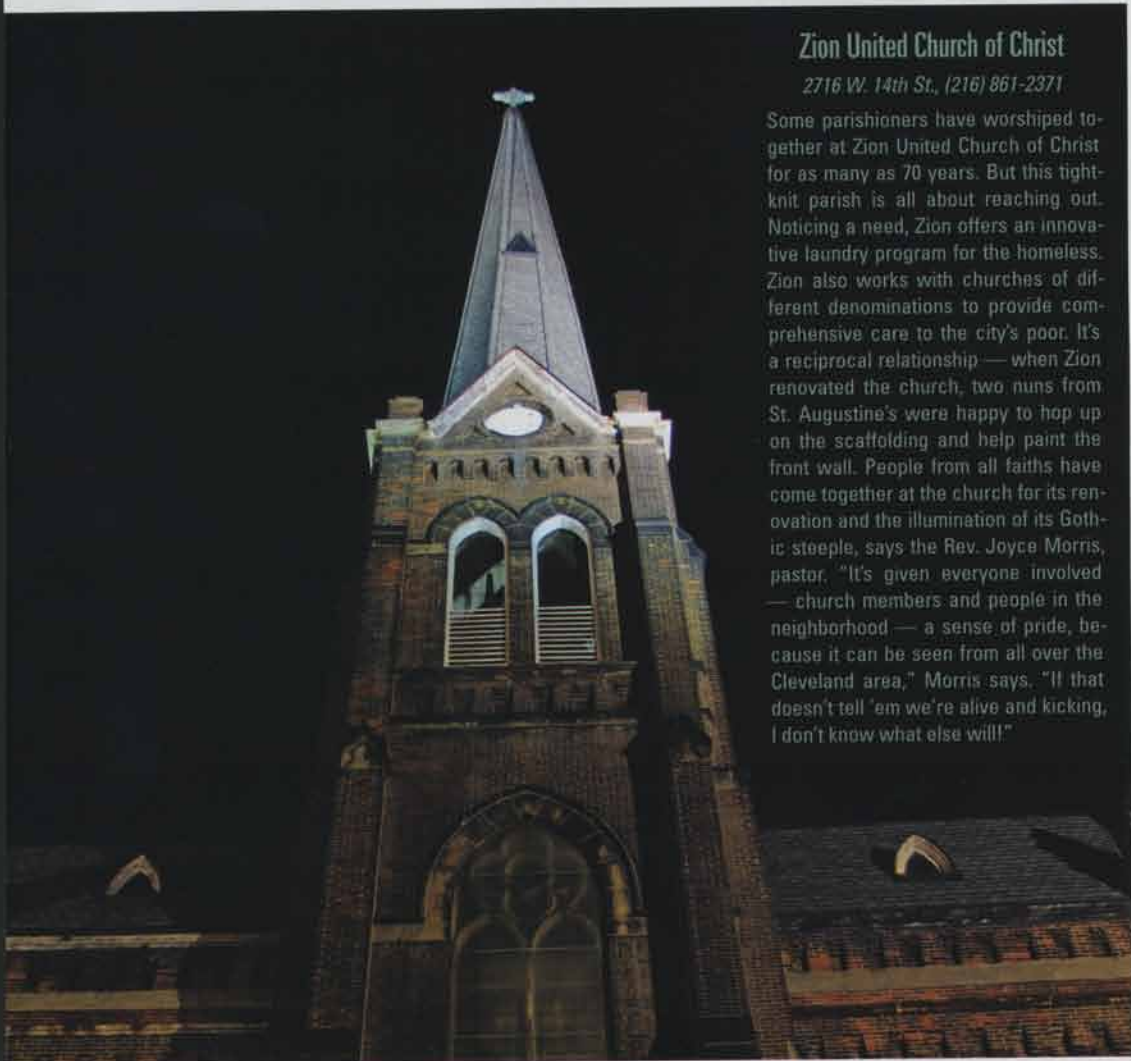
2928 Scranton Road,
(216) 781-9511

At Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mass is still offered in German. "The Germans are here to stay," chuckles the Rev. Horst Hoyer, pastor for 50 years. "They didn't move!" English wasn't added to the services at Immanuel until more than 40 years after its 1880 founding. Immanuel's Gothic bell tower is now illuminated externally, which complements the stained-glass window's interior lighting. "It increases our exposure," Hoyer says. "It also gives extra security, being lighted. So far we've been really blessed, because the community gives us better insurance and coverage than the professional insurance policy could give me."

Zion United Church of Christ

2716 W. 14th St., (216) 861-2371

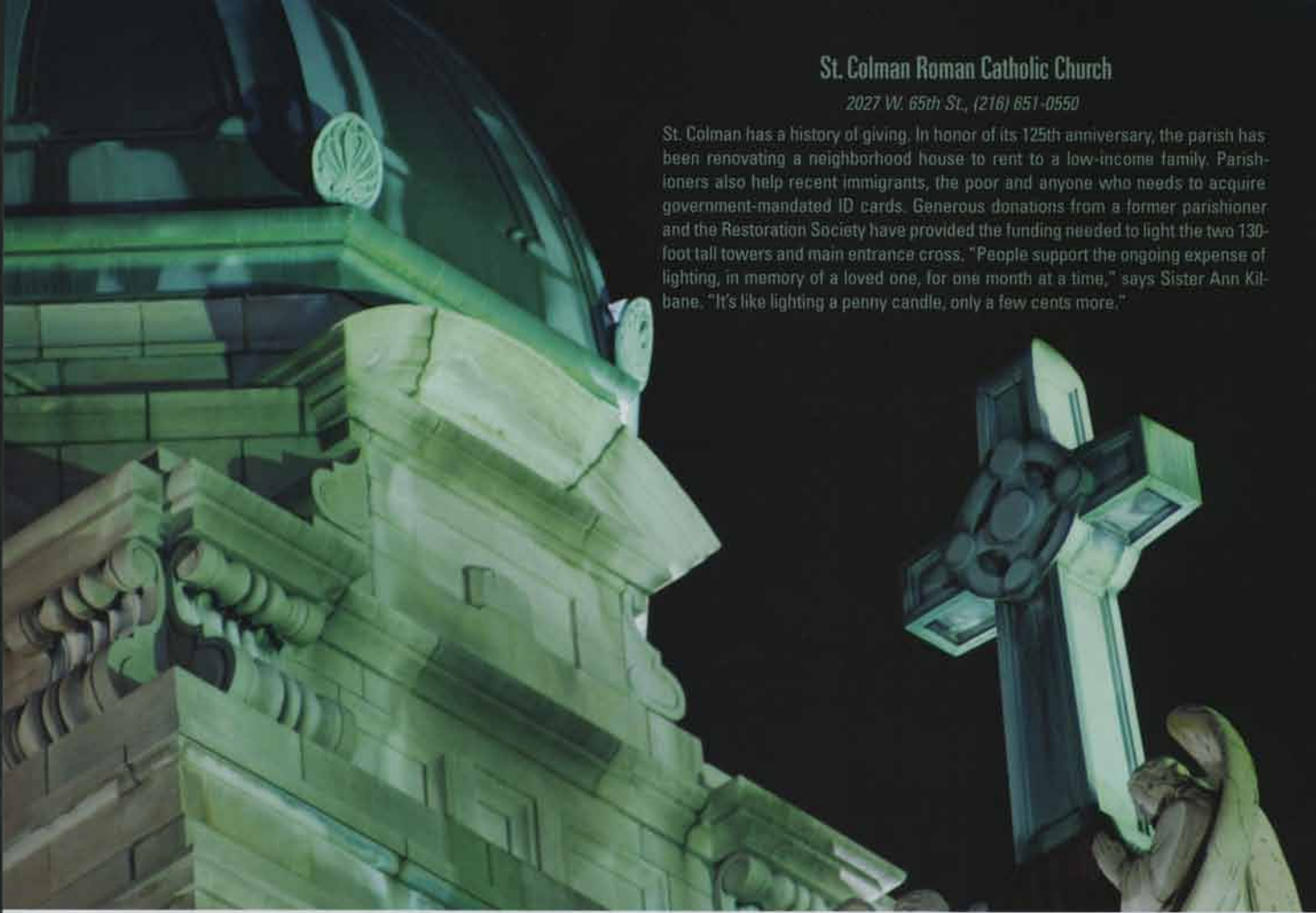
Some parishioners have worshiped together at Zion United Church of Christ for as many as 70 years. But this tight-knit parish is all about reaching out. Noticing a need, Zion offers an innovative laundry program for the homeless. Zion also works with churches of different denominations to provide comprehensive care to the city's poor. It's a reciprocal relationship — when Zion renovated the church, two nuns from St. Augustine's were happy to hop up on the scaffolding and help paint the front wall. People from all faiths have come together at the church for its renovation and the illumination of its Gothic steeple, says the Rev. Joyce Morris, pastor. "It's given everyone involved — church members and people in the neighborhood — a sense of pride, because it can be seen from all over the Cleveland area," Morris says. "If that doesn't tell 'em we're alive and kicking, I don't know what else will!"



St. Colman Roman Catholic Church

2027 W. 65th St., (216) 851-0550

St. Colman has a history of giving. In honor of its 125th anniversary, the parish has been renovating a neighborhood house to rent to a low-income family. Parishioners also help recent immigrants, the poor and anyone who needs to acquire government-mandated ID cards. Generous donations from a former parishioner and the Restoration Society have provided the funding needed to light the two 130-foot tall towers and main entrance cross. "People support the ongoing expense of lighting, in memory of a loved one, for one month at a time," says Sister Ann Kilbane. "It's like lighting a penny candle, only a few cents more."



Archwood United Church of Christ

2800 Archwood Ave.,
(216) 351-1060

For 13 years, Archwood United Church of Christ's steeple has hosted the Steeple Vigil. But after the Georgian structure's renovation and lighting, the event keeps getting better. "We spend 24 hours in the steeple, collecting a couple tons of food," says the Rev. David P. Bahr, pastor. Donations go to Brookside Center, a neighborhood food pantry. Archwood, founded in 1819, also hosts Head Start, before- and after-school programs, Alcoholics Anonymous, gay and lesbian organizations and many other groups. "The steeple is a beacon in the neighborhood," says Bahr, "and shows the church as a place of welcome."





☀

**St. George Antiochian
Orthodox Christian Church**
(far left)

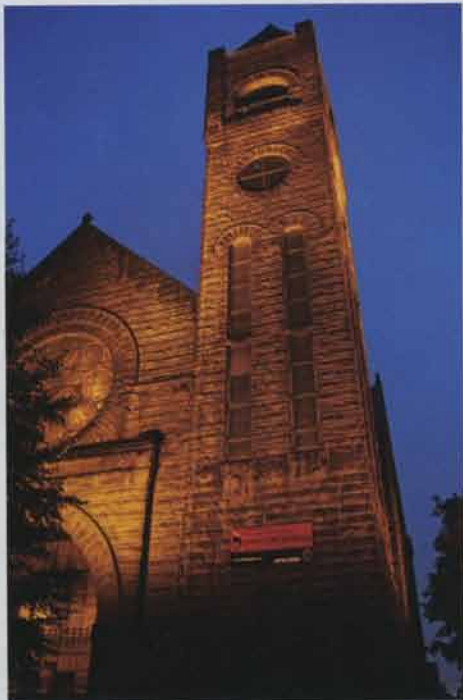
2587 W. 14th St., (216) 781-9020

In the 1930s, fire ravaged St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church. But over the next two years, the congregation carefully rebuilt and restored it — which may explain why the members so cherish its architectural details: a cross that adorns the tip of the Richardsonian Romanesque steeple, onion-shaped finials, rounded arches and short, pointed bell tower. “[Members of the community] were very happy to see those brilliant lights highlighting their church, as well as the other churches, to the public at night,” says the Very Rev. Jean Djaimi, pastor. “This will help reflect the real identity of the historic Tremont area.”

**Pilgrim Congregational
United Church of Christ**
(left)

2592 W. 14th St., (216) 861-7388

“It’s not just a light,” says the Rev. Kathryn Huey, an associate pastor of Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ. “It says something about what’s going on here.” The first to illuminate its steeple with the Restoration Society, the church used to be dark, closed up and not used very often. “Now it’s used all the time by so many groups,” Huey says, including an interfaith hospitality network day center, a day center for homeless families, an adoption agency office and the national offices for United Church Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender Concerns. “We would be happy if it were used 24/7, down to the gymnasium.”



**Trinity Evangelical
Lutheran Church**

2031 W. 30th St., (216) 281-1700

Trinity’s world-famous German organ, with its 3,500 pipes, draws classical music fans from all over. “We minister to people musically and through the arts,” says Brian Upton, assistant to the Rev. Jeffrey Johnson, pastor. They also minister to the community by offering ESL courses, which have attracted a large number of African immigrants. Now, a Swahili worship service is offered: “It’s amazing, you can be in a community for years and years, and you can become invisible. [The lighting] has helped people realize we’re here,” Upton says. “Symbolically it represents what God has been up to here on the Near West Side. He is the one that deserves the credit.”



**Our Lady of Mercy
Roman Catholic Church**

2425 W. 11th St., (216) 781-8277

Our Lady of Mercy, in collaboration with other Christian churches, offers an Easter sunrise service and breakfast in Lincoln Park. Now, the park is just as welcoming and beautiful in the evening. “In our little corner, [the lighting] has made a huge difference,” says the Rev. Joseph Hilinski, pastor. Founded by Slovak Catholics, Our Lady of Mercy’s pinkish-brown Tennessee crab stone façade (which has never required washing), octagonal bell tower and metal and stone crosses are now illuminated. “Just to walk around and to sit on the benches in the park and see something so beautiful illuminated at night — it adds a lot of warmth to the area.”

**St. Patrick
Roman Catholic Church**

3802 Bridge Ave., (216) 631-6872

The stained glass of St. Patrick's century-old Gothic steeple had lost some of its charm. Necessary window coatings, installed 10 years ago to protect it, dulled its glory. So the Restoration Society's lighting designer backlit the 3-foot ocular window. "To have it radiate the way it does at night is absolutely beautiful," says Ed Kroger, facilities manager. The parish's food center and hot meals program, which provide hot meals and free groceries to several hundred people a week, are just as spectacular.

