



SAINT ANNE'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND DAY SCHOOL

Saint Anne's Episcopal Church
(Est. 1955)
Atlanta, Georgia

Mid-century modern broadly describes the architecture, furniture, and graphic designs between approximately 1946-1964. The term was first used 20 years later, coined by art historian Cara Greenberg. Simplicity, clean lines, smooth curves, and an emphasis on nature and functionality characterize designs from this period.

The worship space of St Anne's Episcopal Church, built 1964-1966, is a fine example of mid-century modern design. The church is remarkable because it was executed through the collaboration of a married couple. Margaret (Peggy) Van Hook Swayze designed and fabricated the windows (with the exception of two). Her husband, Louis Swayze, was the principal architect of the church. Thus, the church is a singular vision; the magnificent windows reflect the architecture, and the form of the architecture reflects the windows. And yet, even though the church is decidedly mid-century modern style, there are indications of classic church design of centuries ago, central and side aisles, cross-shaped plan, vaulting, and more.

Once seen, the cohesive design and use of recurring themes is obvious. A few notable examples: the use of angles (particularly the hexagon) - the angular ceiling is repeated in the black dividers of the windows, in the light wells over the altar and the baptismal alcove, in the step at the pulpit, the floor of the pulpit and baptismal alcove, and the arcades of the side aisles. The vertical lines of the reredos (the screen behind the altar) are mimicked in the incised lines on the horizontal friezes at the back of the nave and the ends of the transepts, the vertical flanges of the light covers, and the benches in the chancel. When seen from the chancel steps, the bricks in the center aisle, laid in running bond pattern, have the same effect. Meanwhile, the plates holding the light fixtures to the wall form repeated crosses and the trinity is suggested with three lights per chandelier. Another unexpected feature: on sunny days, not only do the white walls provide a canvas on which the colorful windows are cast, the light covers reflect them as well. Flowing lines are even seen in the door handles coming into the nave - they are the same bronze material and curve as the supports at the altar rail, pulpit, and lectern.

Let your eye wander about the church; you will find more and more to delight you. In appreciation of their devoted talent which designed and realized this holy space, thank you, Peggy and Lou. You live on. God bless you both.

Jeffrey Collins, AIA
Pat Royalty
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