

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Church of the Epiphany**  
Name of Property  
**Cook County, IL**  
County and State  
**98000067**  
NR Reference Number

**State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

I hereby certify that this additional documentation \_\_\_ move \_\_\_ removal  
\_x\_ name change (additional documentation) \_\_\_ other

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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title:

Date of Action

**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
- additional documentation accepted
- other (explain:)

DRAFT

**Reason for this Certification.**

The Church of the Epiphany was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 5, 1998, under Criterion C for Architecture. The request is to add additional areas of significance for Social History (Civil Rights) and Ethnic History for the church's association with the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. The church meets the registration requirements as outlined in the Multiple Property Document, The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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### Section 8,

#### Summary Paragraph, Statement of Significance

The nomination for the Church of the Epiphany is being amended to include additional areas of significance. The church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, for Social History and Ethnic Heritage for its association with of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party (ILBPP). The church meets the registration requirements for Religious Facilities, as outlined in the Multiple Property Document, The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. The church, located in the Near West Side Community Area, was a place for the ILBPP to offer political education for branch members, hold meetings and rallies, and offer survival programs such as the Free Breakfast for Children Program. ILBPP members affectionately designated the church at 201 S. Ashland "The People's Church." A broader context of the ILBPP and their programs/affiliations is provided in the MPD.

Since the offices of the ILBPP were demolished, the church has statewide significance as the building that has the closest association with the ILBPP. The building, which was repurposed into the Epiphany Center for the Arts, retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register.

#### Statement of Significance

From 1962 to 1987, the Church of the Epiphany was led by Reverend Rempfer Lees Whitehouse, A.K.A. R.L. Whitehouse (1923-2014). He was a decorated army sergeant in World War II where he earned the Distinguished Service Cross Medal. Details of the bravery that merited his award follow:

Exposing himself to devastating automatic weapons and small arms fire, Sergeant Whitehouse hurled fragmentation grenades into an enemy emplacement and single-handedly forced the surrender of six Germans. While approaching a second hostile position a short while later, he again was subjected to intense fire as he closed in on the gun. Although he was painfully wounded by fire from a machine gun ten feet away, he crawled to the gun position and dropped several grenades into the emplacement, killing three Germans and knocking the position out of action. Sergeant Whitehouse's intrepid actions, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, the 9th Infantry Division, and the United States Army.<sup>1</sup>

His son recalled that the event inspired him to enter the clergy: "After he was seriously wounded in the Battle of Hurtgen Forest, he promised that if he survived, he would dedicate his life to the Lord."<sup>2</sup> After

<sup>1</sup> "Rempfer Whitehouse - Distinguished Service Cross Recipient." The Hall of Valor Project. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/22784>.

<sup>2</sup> Graydon, Megan. "THE REV. REMPFER WHITEHOUSE: 1922-2014: SOCIAL JUSTICE PART OF CALLING." Chicago Tribune, May 06, 2014.

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the war Whitehouse became a lifelong advocate for peace. He was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in 1952 and became Vicar/Reverend of the Church of the Epiphany in 1962. That same year, he established the St. Gregory Episcopal School. The school was for elementary age “African-American boys from low-income families. Some of the 59 boys who currently attend live in nearby Chicago Housing Authority developments.”<sup>3</sup> St. Gregory Episcopal School was open from 1962 until 2010.

The Church of the Epiphany, under the leadership of Rev. Whitehouse, was to service the people of the West Side community. He welcomed antiwar protestors amongst the community to debate the then ongoing war in Vietnam on January 14, 1968. Later that year, the reverend would welcome his church to the ILBPP.

**Free Breakfast for Children Program**

The Free Breakfast for Children Program was a survival program initiated in 1968 by the BPP’s Central Committee in Oakland. Many underprivileged children did not receive breakfast in the morning. Hunger was a contributing factor to their poor performance in school. Many BPP members either remembered being hungry in school or had family members who were suffering from hunger. The community-based goal of the program was to help ease the people’s suffering by providing free meals, but it also had political motivations. The program not only proved that the state was not providing for the people, specifically Black Americans, but also showed that people working together could and should solve their own problems. By raising awareness to the causes of childhood hunger, it helped beg the question of why Black communities were occupied by police officers when the state could not provide basic housing and food to its citizens. Being fed, the party members said, was a right of all children and if the state cannot provide, the young adults of the community will find a way.

The ILBPP’s Free Breakfast for Children Program began in April 1969 and welcomed all children. When it began in Chicago, it immediately began serving over 500 children a day. By the end of May 1969, the Illinois Chapter and its allies operated Free Breakfast for Children programs across Illinois, mostly out of churches. The Church of the Epiphany at 201 S. Ashland, was one of the longest-running programs.<sup>4</sup> Reverend R.L. Whitehouse was very supportive of the Free Breakfast for Children Program, and he built a great relationship with party leaders.

**Education**

<https://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/rev-rempfer-whitehouse-1922-2014/docview/1520881240/se-2?accountid=12163>.

<sup>3</sup> Grumman, Cornelia. "WEST SIDE CHURCH POISED FOR A REBIRTH." Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext), Jan 06, 1995.

<https://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/west-side-church-poised-rebirth/docview/283837946/se-2?accountid=12163>

<sup>4</sup> F Rice, John. *Up on Madison, down on 75th Street : Part 1 : A History of the Illinois Black Panther Party*. Evanston, Ill.: The Committee, 1983. p 38.

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The church was also used by members of the ILBPP to train new members. Political education was of considerable importance to the BPP and central to its mission. All new members had to learn the organization's beliefs and practices and were required to read the 10-Point Platform and Program, Rules of the BPP, and issues of the *Black Panther* newspaper. Additionally, they had to attend six weeks of political education classes. Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton and Deputy Minister of Education Billy Brooks were the principal leaders for the Illinois recruits. Section leaders organizing in the field also taught political education to the community. If Illinois headquarters did not send an organizer to a branch location, then those members were required to travel to Chicago to receive instruction. Two of the primary locations where political education training took place -- ILBPP headquarters and the southside office at 4233 S. Indiana -- have been demolished, leaving the People's Church and Precious Blood Church at 2411 W. Congress being the two extant properties in Chicago associated with this event.

### Speeches and Meetings

Before Illinois Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton was killed in the pre-dawn hours of December 4 in a police raid, he led his last meeting at the church on December 3, 1969. Leaders from the Midwest region had been called into Chicago for meetings and instruction, and Peoria Defense Captain Mark Clark was also killed in the same raid. The survivors were arrested and charged with attempted murder. Lawyers for the survivors of the raid delivered a message to Bobby Rush: He was next. The police raided Rush's apartment on December 5th, but he had gone underground. No one knew where he was until he showed up at the People's Church two days later for a press conference condemning the killings of Hampton and Clark. This meeting was recorded in the media as a memorial to Hampton, and Rush turned himself in at Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket.

The ILBPP continued to hold meetings and events at the church after the assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. Whitehouse welcomed the ILBPP and other social activists to use the church to continue their work in a safe place. Below is a summary of some ILBPP events:

- On December 6, 1969, memorial service for Hampton and Clark was held at the church. One week after their death, the ILBPP led a press conference at the church regarding the deaths of Hampton and Clark at the hands of the Chicago police. These events were a part of a larger attempt by the ILBPP to publicize the murder of the Black Panther Party members.
- The church also served as a gathering place for an ILBPP after organized rally held on April 12, 1970. The rally at the Civic Center Plaza (Richard J. Daley Center) was attended by Chicago public school students, was to protest racism in schools and the imprisonment of Black Panther Party Chairman Bobby Seale. Seale had been convicted of 16 counts of contempt and four years in prison after he was bound and gagged in court during the "Chicago 8" trial. Rush and the ILBPP led the students to Chicago's federal building after the rally at the People's Church.



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- On August 1, 1970, Illinois Deputy Minister of Defense Bobby Rush and Chief of Staff David Hilliard spoke at the Church of the Epiphany following the death of Omowale Babatunde (a.k.a. Clifton Morgan). Omowale was one of the ILBPP's best organizers whose body was found on July 27, 1970, just outside of the city next to Illinois Central Railroad tracks. He had been in Downstate Illinois establishing the National Committee's to Combat Fascism (N.C.C.F.) He was 26 years old.<sup>5</sup> The explanation from the authorities was that he had accidentally blown himself up either carrying or trying to detonate a bomb.<sup>6</sup>

**Conclusion**

The Church of the Epiphany is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for Black Heritage and Social History. The church, now the location of the Epiphany Center of the Arts, has statewide significance for having the strongest association with the ILBPP since its offices have been demolished.

**Section 9, Bibliography**

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Grumman, Cornelia. "WEST SIDE CHURCH POISED FOR A REBIRTH." *Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, Jan 06, 1995.

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<sup>5</sup> Hogsette, Samuel. *Bobby L. Rush, Rise Of A Black Panther Politician: The Price Of Resistance In America* [Wayne State University Dissertations | Wayne State University](https://www.waynestate.edu/dissertations/waynestate.edu), p. 33. Accessed July 11, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Rutberg, Susan. "Nothing but a Northern Lynching: The Death of Fred Hampton Revisited." (HuffPost, December 7, 2017).

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Sheppard Jr, Nathaniel. "PLAINTIFFS in PANTHER SUIT 'KNEW WE WERE RIGHT.'" *The New York Times*, November 14, 1982, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/14/us/plaintiffs-in-panther-suit-knew-we-were-right.html>.

**DRAFT**

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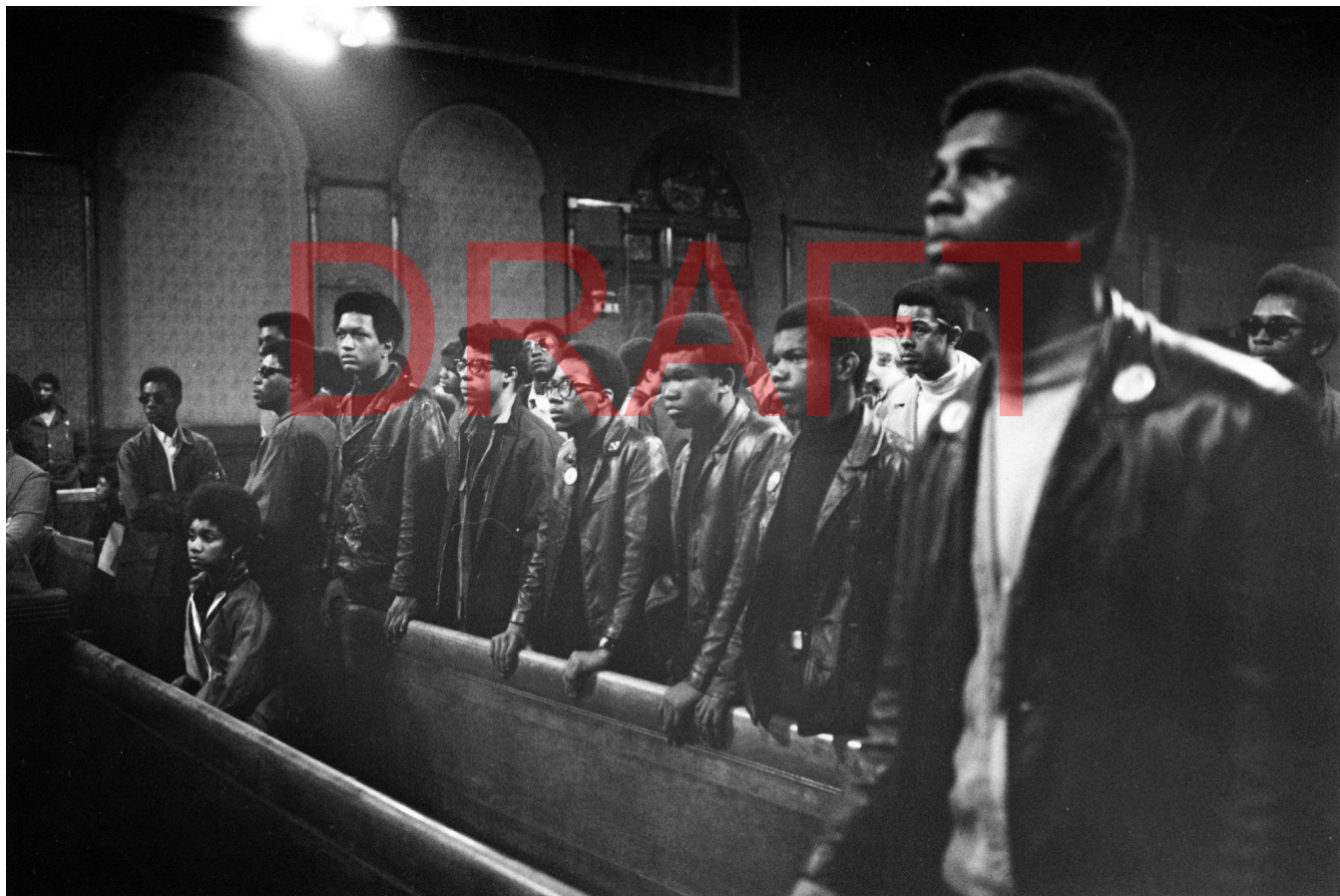
**Additional Documentation**

**List of Figures**

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

**Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party Meeting at the Church of Epiphany**

In 1969, ILBPP Members listen to Illinois Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton at the Church of the Epiphany, known as The People's Church. Photo: Paul Sequeira/Getty Images



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**Illinois Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton Speaking at the Church of Epiphany in 1969**

Photo: Screenshot from *The Murder of Fred Hampton* documentary



*Chicago Historical Society*



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**Press Conference at the Church of the Epiphany After Hampton and Clark's Killing 1 of 2**

Black Panther Party leader Bobby Rush holds a press conference on December 6, 1969, at People's Church regarding the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by police. Photo: John H. White, ST-19020329-0022, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum



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**Press Conference at the Church of the Epiphany After Hampton and Clark's Killing 2 of 2**

"Black Panther Party leader Bobby Rush holds a press conference on December 6, 1969, at People's Church regarding the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by police. Photo: Walter Kale, *Chicago Tribune*





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### Student Rally Led by the ILBPP at the Church of Epiphany

April 12, 1970, Chicago public school students participate in a rally organized by the Black Panthers to protest racism in schools and the imprisonment of Bobby Seale. Photo: Duane Hall, ST-19030996-0016, Chicago Sun-Times collection, Chicago History Museum



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Exterior of Epiphany Arts Center, formerly Church of the Epiphany  
Photo: Wikipedia





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Interior of Epiphany Arts Center, formerly Church of the Epiphany  
Photo: Leila Wills, August 2023



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Interior of Epiphany Arts Center, formerly Church of the Epiphany  
Photo: Leila Wills, August 2023

