



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**STONE TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LANDMARKS HONOR**

*90-year-old North Lawndale building hosted frequent sermons by Dr. Martin Luther King*

A North Lawndale church that hosted frequent sermons by Dr. Martin Luther King will be considered for designation as an official Chicago landmark, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today.

"Stone Temple Baptist Church has been a community icon in North Lawndale for decades, providing a forum for Dr. Martin Luther King's vision for equitable housing in Chicago during the civil rights era, and a place of worship for community residents since the 1920s," Mayor Emanuel said. "It's entirely appropriate that the Landmarks Commission should consider honoring its important role in the community with a Landmark designation."

The Landmarks Commission will consider a preliminary recommendation for Landmark status at its meeting on Feb. 4, 2016.

Located at 3620 W. Douglas Blvd., the monumental brick and stone edifice was built in 1926 as a synagogue for Romanian Jews who came to the U.S. to escape state-sanctioned anti-Semitism in the Kingdom of Romania. In 1954 the synagogue was bought by an African-American congregation who moved their Baptist church from the South Side into the former synagogue under the leadership of Reverend J. M. Stone.

Rev. J.M. Stone supported the civil rights movement, and within a year of moving into the building Stone Temple hosted speeches and meeting in support of civil rights. Rev. Stone was a friend of Atlanta pastor Martin Luther King, Sr., and as early as 1959 Martin Luther King, Jr. began speaking at Stone Temple Baptist Church.

In 1966, King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference refocused their civil rights work from the South and turned their attention to poverty and segregation in northern cities. King chose Chicago to conduct a campaign of nonviolent action known as the Chicago Freedom Movement to end urban slums that trapped African Americans in poverty.

Stone Temple Baptist Church was one of a handful of churches that welcomed King and he preached their frequently during the Chicago Freedom Movement. The campaign's marches to all white

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neighborhoods raised the national consciousness about housing discrimination and forced the city administration and business leaders to the negotiating table where a summit agreement was forged to open the city's housing market. King regarded the summit agreement as the "first step in a thousand mile journey" and the Chicago Freedom Movement shaped the debate that led to the passage of 1968 Fair Housing Act. The Stone Temple Baptist Church Building is a tangible link to King's crusade in Chicago.

The current pastor, Bishop Derrick M. Fitzpatrick, is Rev. J.M. Stone's grandson and has led the congregation since the 1980s. Bishop Fitzpatrick honors both the Jewish and African-American heritage of his church building and has requested landmark designation.

If the Commission on Chicago Landmarks votes to initiate the landmark status, a six-to-nine-month designation process would begin, ultimately leading to a final recommendation for landmark designation that would be forwarded to City Council for consideration.

As a landmark, the church would be officially recognized as one of Chicago's most historically significant buildings and be protected from significant alteration and demolition.

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