LET THERE BE LIGHT!
KRAMER CHAPEL WINDOW RENOVATION SET FOR 2026

"Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The light no darkness can overcome."

Evening Prayer Service, *Lutheran Service Book*, 243.

Last fall, the Modernist Collection circulated a post on social media featuring an image of Kramer Chapel, pointing out "the minimalist Kramer Chapel's dramatic lighting effects" from the overhead skylights and side window. It's Kramer, to be sure, but it's a better version, with bright light streaming through the windows.

A note on the post indicates that the image was digitally restored, but other historical photos attest to a time of purer light shining on the altar in Kramer Chapel. Photos today, in contrast, document how much the windows have changed over time, losing their battle against the elements.

As CTSFW prepares for the future, the time has come to restore light to the chapel.

"We've known for some time that the fiberglass along the south side of the chancel has been yellowing, much like an old lampshade that's gotten too close to a hot, incandescent bulb," said Dr. Paul Grime, Dean of the Chapel. "About five years ago it became difficult to keep the green plants in the chancel alive, and they had been there for decades. We even threw out the old and bought new plants, but to no avail. They simply wouldn't grow."

As CTSFW prepares for the future, the time has come to restore light to the chapel.

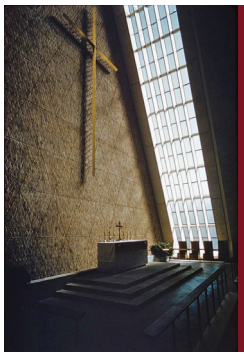
It won't be the first time the windows have been restored. In 1993, the skylights, including the lights overhead on the top ridge and the bank of panels running from top to bottom on the south side, were replaced in conjunction with a renovation of the upper plaza. That skylight system had an estimated life span of thirty years.

The Rev. Robert Roethemeyer, the Wakefield-Kroemer Director of Library and Information Services, joined the CTSFW faculty just a few years after the new system was installed. "When I arrived in 1997, the light in the chapel was clear and bright," said Roethemeyer. "I've seen the light there literally deteriorate before my eyes, especially in the last few years."

The seminary is now evaluating its options with the help of City Glass Specialty, Inc., a Fort Wayne glass company that handled the 1993 installation. One option would be to replace the windows with a similar translucent panel system, which is lighter and less expensive than glass but remains susceptible to discoloration and delamination.

A glass curtain wall system, by comparison, would be more UV-stable and thus would not yellow rapidly or delaminate. It would also restore the chapel to its original plan, though with stronger glass than the clear baroque wire glass that City Glass removed in 1993. "The question will be the added weight of tempered glass, which the architects will have to sort out," said Grime.

The skylight restoration is slated to begin shortly after commencement in 2026. The project will include



"The chapel was, of course, the building that required the most thought and imagination. This is the building where spiritual values are epitomized and these are the hardest qualities to express in brick and mortar. We realized that light is an effective agent in creating a spiritual atmosphere. We used very low lighting from the side walls as well as lighting from above to get the restful, balanced quality we sought. Additional side windows dramatized the altar as a focal point."

From *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, ed. Alina B. Saarinen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

Image: Concordia Theological Seminary (originally Concordia Senior College), Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1953-58. Chapel interior. Balthazar Korab, photographer. Korab Collection, Library of Congress.

Photo: John Dreyer

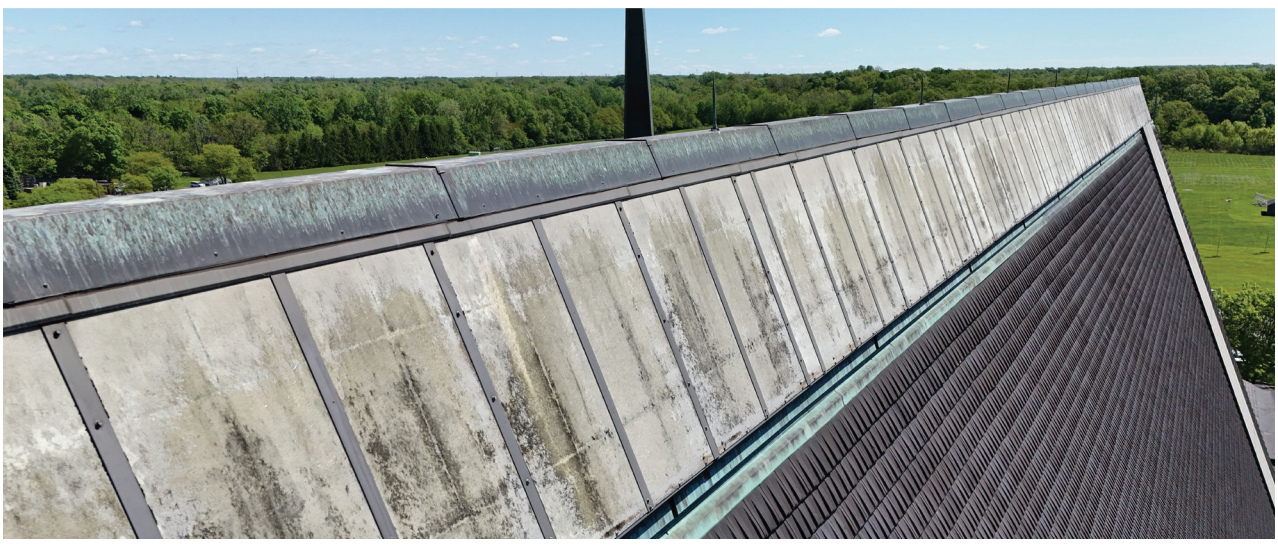


Photo: Design Collaborative

some repairs to the exterior of the chapel, but it will not include a roof replacement, as originally planned.

"We expected to have to replace the roof, because the underlayment doesn't have nearly the life expectancy as the tiles, which are supposed to last 100 years or more," said Chief Operating Officer Lance Hoffman. "We had the roof inspected this spring, and we found out that the underlayment is actually in pretty good condition, which was good news."

The chapel will thus be back in service by the fall of 2026, with light that illuminates the space within as intended.

To support the skylight restoration and other master plan projects, visit ctsfw.edu/support or scan the QR code. If you'd prefer, you may mail a gift or call CTSFW Advancement at (877) 287-4338.