

**CHRIST CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION**  
**4015 EAST LINCOLN Drive.**  
**PARADISE VALLEY, AZ 85253**  
**RECOMMENDATION TO TOWN COUNCIL**  
**February 12, 2026**

On October 15, 2025, Reverend Rodney S. Hurst appeared before our Committee to present Christ Church of the Ascension, located at 4015 East Lincoln Drive, for consideration in the Historical Property Recognition Program.

Christ Church of the Ascension held its first worship service on Christmas Eve in 1963 inside a repurposed movie studio at Cudia City, located at 5100 North 40th Street. In 1965, as the church grew, it temporarily relocated to Phoenix Country Day School and later held services in the basement of the First Federal Savings building at 20th Street and Camelback Road. In 1966, seeking a permanent home, the church received a generous gift from Peggy and Senator Barry Goldwater—more than eight acres of land along Lincoln Drive that would become the church’s future campus.

Construction began in March 1967 under the master plan and architectural vision of Benny Gonzales. Renowned for blending modernism with Spanish Revival influences and local desert sensibilities, Gonzales used clean lines, with thoughtful use of natural light, and regionally inspired materials. His design philosophy for the church emphasized a cohesive campus where buildings relate harmoniously through courtyards and circulation paths encouraging pedestrian movement and visual continuity. The church campus feels unified and intentional despite being built over several decades.

The Memorial Garden, though not a building, is an essential part of this design. It serves as a serene, contemplative space enriched by sweeping views of Camelback Mountain. Within the garden rests the Goldwater Crypt, where the ashes of Peggy and Senator Barry Goldwater are interred—further linking the site to the heritage of Paradise Valley.

Over the years, the church campus expanded in phases as the needs and resources allowed. While Gonzales created the vision and designed the first two buildings—Craig Hall, dedicated on November 19, 1967, and the Main Sanctuary, dedicated on February 23, 1975—subsequent structures were crafted to reflect his architectural style. Buildings such as Parish Hall (dedicated April 6, 1997) and the Christ Church School facilities (opened in 2003) continue the aesthetic and spiritual intent of the original plan, embodying both the practical growth and the enduring mission of the church.

Today, Christ Church of the Ascension stands as a cultural and spiritual anchor in Paradise Valley. It is a place of worship, education, and outreach, and a site deeply connected to the legacy of Barry Goldwater and the artistic vision of Benny Gonzalez. The Barry Goldwater Memorial statue overlooks the town he cherished, his home on the hillside, and the church that became possible through his generosity.

As Chair of the Town’s Historical Advisory Committee, I am pleased to recommend Christ Church of the Ascension to the Town Council for recognition within the Historic Property Program.

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Photo: CCA Archives.

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