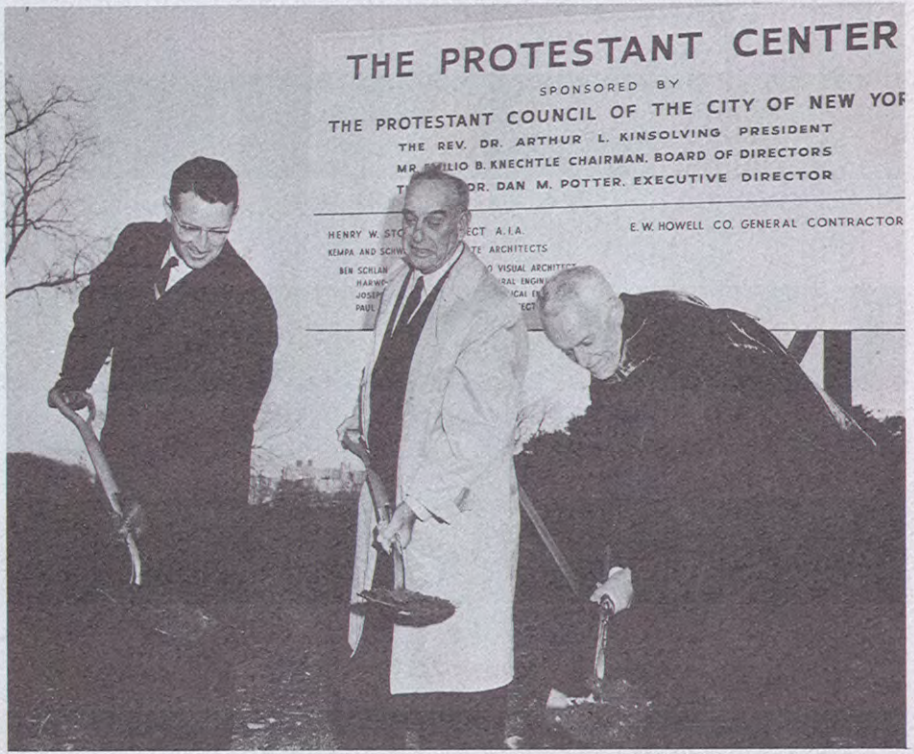
GROUNDBREAKING AT THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR 1964-1965

NOVEMBER 11, 1962

THE PROTESTANT CENTER AT THE FAIR



Participants at the Protestant Center groundbreaking ceremonies are: Emilio B. Knechtle, chairman of the Steering Committee; Robert Moses, Fair president; Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Kinsolving, president of the Protestant Council.

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF PRAYERS AND REMARKS GIVEN BY PROTESTANT CENTER AND WORLD'S FAIR OFFICIALS AT THE PROTESTANT CENTER GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONIES, NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1962.

Invocation — The Rev. Dr. Wilmer C. Fields, Public Relations Secretary, Southern Baptist Convention.

Holy Father in heaven, we have gathered here to launch a project to exalt Thy name. Conscious of our human frailties and our fragmentary vision of Thy will and way, we acknowledge our dependence on Thee in this enterprise also. We are aware that "Except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain who build it." Therefore we would invoke divine blessings on this Protestant Center. May this be none other than a house of God.

Bless, we pray, the leaders who have planned it, the workmen who shall construct it, those who shall direct it, the church bodies which shall use it, and the multitudes who shall visit it.

Cause to prosper this work of Thy servants, that it too may be an instrument of Thy praise; that Thy kingdom may come in the hearts of men; that Thy will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. We pray that a structure may rise on this site in the spirit of that forerunner of our Lord who could say, "He must increase, I must decrease." In that high and holy task we have assembled at this significant place this Lord's Day.

We reaffirm our desire that the edifice which now begins to materialize here shall contribute to man's understanding of the things of God. We seek Thy direction each step of the way. In these turbulent and tumultuous times may this creation of steel and stone be an effective witness to Thy love for all mankind, to Thy redemptive plans, and to the one unfailing light of the world, Thy Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In His name we pray. Amen.

Welcome — The Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Kinsolving, President, The Protestant Council of the City of New York.

On behalf of the officers and leaders of the Protestant Council we appreciate your presence at this gathering, your interest in the project.

In the perspective of American history this occasion fairly bulges with rich significance — to proclaim the Protestant witness to religious liberty, and toleration, to the dignity and worth of the individual and his immediate access to God, to the independence of religion from the support of the state, to the role of religion in the initiative and enterprise of men in a free society and also in their responsibilities as the vigilant guardians of the rights of man. All this constitutes a great part of our American heritage and our message of hope to an anxious world in ferment.

Whatever its glories in the past, the Protestant witness to the Divine revelation in Christ, the Light of the world, is yet more significant in the age now unfolding.

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We acknowledge with gratitude the World's Fair Corporation's generosity in granting this favorable location and ample space. It is our part to do our utmost to support and fulfill the project, to make it worthy of the opportunity to extend its creative message to the millions who will come to the Fair from all over the world.

Greetings — The Rev. Dr. Philip A. Johnson, Executive Secretary, Division of Public Relations, National Lutheran Council.

Long before "protest" meant to object or to complain, it meant to bear witness or to declare. We denominations who are planning to exhibit in The Protestant Center are here to protest — to bear witness that the Christian faith belongs at the very heart and center of life.

As we stand today amidst this chaos of construction we affirm our faith in a Creator-God who, out of primeval chaos brought into being a universe of order and beauty, a universe of infinite complexity and of infinite potential.

As we today break ground for a building whose tower will hold high a cross, we affirm our faith in Jesus Christ in whose earthly life we see the intersection of God's immeasurable love with man's profoundest needs.

As we, only a few hundreds, stand today where millions upon millions of people will go streaming by — men divided by race and creed, by caste and color, by nation and by station — we affirm our faith in the Spirit of God who unceasingly calls men into unity; not the unity of mere geographical proximity, whether on the Fairgrounds or on this shrinking globe, but unity in the deepest sense, arising out of a faith in One God and issuing in reconciliation and brotherhood among men.

We believe that in the chatter and clatter, the blare and the glare of a great exposition, the visitor will be glad to find a place of peace; in the jumble of sights and sounds a place where he can — if he wishes — find the key to life's meaning.

We believe that where the magnificent achievements of man on this planet are displayed, the picture is truer and more honest when the Giver of life and the Shaper of man's hand and mind is honored.

We believe that where man dares to project his dreams into the promising precarious future, He who is Lord of the future, Judge of the nations, and the only Redeemer of the world must be proclaimed.

Greetings — The Rev. Dr. J. Quinter Miller, Assistant General Secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

This Protestant Center, at the New York World's Fair, 1964-1965, will be a manifestation of the Christian Faith which has made this country great. This Christian Faith is precious to the churches constituent to the National Council whose greetings I now extend. The building design and the reception center will, we hope, symbolize the trust and dependence upon God which all people who visit the Fair sorely need.

Certain divisions of the National Council will furnish, through exhibits, examples of their world encircling ministry to human need — through Christian education,

through Church World Service, through the development of hospitals, through supplies of food and clothing and the resettlement of refugees.

The marvelous progress in the realm of science, the arts, music and technology, and the wonders the New York World's Fair will portray, could be misunderstood unless those who come here are reminded of the source and author of these blessings— of life and liberty and happiness. The Protestant and Orthodox millions, cooperating through their National Council of Churches represent a community of Faith in man's future and destiny. It is our prayer that God will bless this Protestant Center to the end that all who visit and work here will be drawn Godward in thought and deed; and that the love of God and neighbor may be nourished in everything The Protestant Center will exemplify.

Thus the personality of this Center may serve as a beacon light, radiating to all who attend the New York World's Fair, the inexhaustible power of the Christian Faith.

Greetings — The Rev. Gerald B. Smith, Assistant to the President and Director of Public Relations, The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Someone has said that only those who can see the invisible can do the impossible. Standing upon this vacant and barren site today, we pay tribute to those who have already taken a long step forward in faith and expectation.

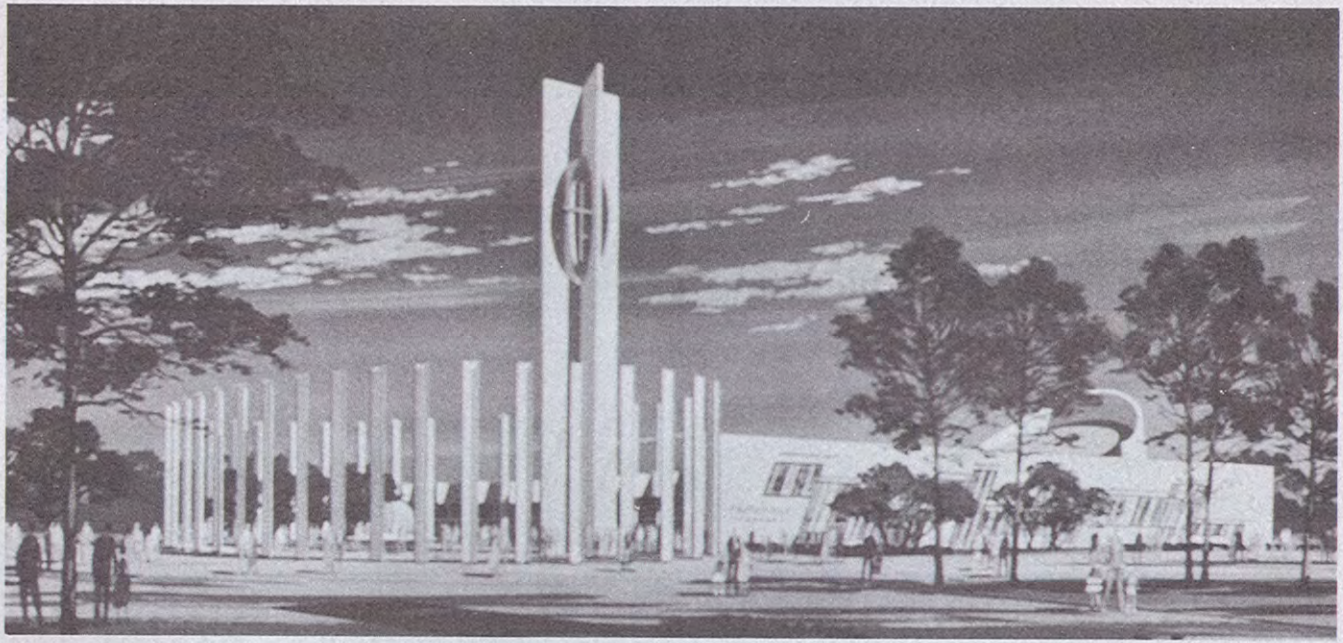
We speak of those who months ago stood here and were able to envision in the mind's eye a colorful, completed structure which is soon to take shape.

We speak of those who had more than a dream — those whose concept of an effective evangelical witness at the World's Fair caused them to press forward with faith and enthusiasm. Their prayers and their plans have brought us all to this hour of groundbreaking for The Center which is to house, in dignified and noble fashion, many exhibits of what has been accomplished among all men everywhere through the love and grace and power of the living Christ.

It is more than just a trite expression to remind ourselves that when the world is at its worst, Christian men and women must be at their best. The society of man's making in which we live contributes daily to dread and fear and unrest. Could there be any more fitting or more opportune time to join hands and hearts in our testimony that we have found a life-changing power through the glad acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ? In this time when nearby neighbors and faraway nations seem to note only the gathering darkness, let us be alert to every opportunity in which we may faithfully reflect the true Light of the World, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Challenge — Mr. Emilio B. Knechtle, Chairman, Board of Directors, The Protesant Council of the City of New York.

The World's Fair offers the Christian Church the unique opportunity of exposing eighty million people, coming from all the nations of the world, to the central



The Protestant Center at the Fair occupies a 76,416 sq. ft. site. An open, elliptical-shaped forecourt, eighty feet wide and 160 feet long, surrounded by thirty-four columns dedicated to the pioneers in the Protestant movement. The Protestant Center is being sponsored by the Protestant Council of the City of New York.

Designers: Henry W. Stone, architect, New York City; Emil Kempa and Robert E. Schwartz, associate architects, New York City; Ben Schlanger, consulting audio-visual architect, New York City; Paul M. Friedberg, landscape architect, New York City.

Builder: E. W. Howell Company, New York City; Babylon, New York; New Canaan, Connecticut.

message of Christianity.

The Christian religion asserts that nearly 2,000 years ago God, whose vast and complex wisdom science is daily uncovering, sent forth His Son to visit this small planet of ours in Person. This is the most important event in the whole human history.

Through the life, and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has made peace with man. This is the heart and center of the Christian faith, this is the Gospel or Good News which those who had witnessed this extraordinary event went out to tell the world.

This, we suggest, should be the message of our Church at the World's Fair.

What could be more exciting than to know that the very feet of God have walked this earth of ours, that His authentic voice has spoken to men like ourselves? It is on this issue that men have to make up their minds and adjust their hearts.

The Good News may have to be rescued from the encrustations of tradition, the confines of caution, and the dullness of familiarity, but it is still there.

The historic fact remains, and we in 1964, with a conception of God infinitely greater than that of any previous generation, may have to short-circuit the centuries and let this startling truth break over us afresh.

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

This truth must be presented by us in the twentieth century with the same life and enthusiasm as it was done by the men and women belonging to the Church of the first century.

This is our vision. We need your ideas, your time, your financial support to bring it to pass.

Welcome — The Hon. Robert Moses, President, New York World's Fair 1964-1965.

Dr. Kinsolving and Friends: It was our hope at the inception of Fair that, following the example set by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and William Church Osborn in the 1939-1940 Fair, there might be at Flushing Meadow in 1964 and 1965, and perhaps afterward, a Temple of Religion in which all believers in God could have a share and to which each would bring a unique contribution.

In planning the 1964-1965 World's Fair we found plenty of goodwill to achieve the same end, but in the face of so many insistent demands in the several churches, the time was too short and the financial and technical difficulties too great. Therefore it was finally agreed that each denomination would proceed separately, but that all would be in one section of the Fair and would work in complete harmony. I may add, and not facetiously, that with the apparent retirement of the communists behind the Iron Curtain, we have more space available for our own ideologies and into this space the Saints Have Come Marching In.

I am delighted to welcome the beginning of work on the Protestant Center with its displays, reception center, chapel, children's center, music garden, tower and illuminated cross.

By way of reassurance, I should add that while we shall have plenty of fun, entertainment and amusement at the Fair, it will not be of the vulgar catchpenny variety which is supposed to be the main attraction at fairs and expositions. We can assure you that you will have no offensive neighbors.

Finally let me thank your leaders again for your decision to join us in an enterprise which will feature American idealism and enterprise, enhance our prestige here and abroad and, help us lift up the banners of universal brotherhood and world peace.

Prayer of Dedication — The Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Sweeney, Pastor Emeritus, St. Mark's Methodist Church, Manhattan.

Almighty and everlasting God Who art ever exalted yet always nigh, grant that we may worthily offer unto Thee this ground upon which we stand to be made holy with sacred aspiration and divine purpose as a place upon which to build The Protestant Center for the World's Fair, where Thy glory shall be made manifest among us. Pour into our hearts the courage, resolve and determination so necessary, if we are to be partners with Thee in lifting high the Cross of Christ for teeming millions to see.

As Thou didst break the bread beside the sea to feed the multitude, may we, in breaking this ground, point the way to the light in the face of Jesus Christ Who is the Light of the world, that our spiritual darkness may be dispelled, and our hunger satisfied.

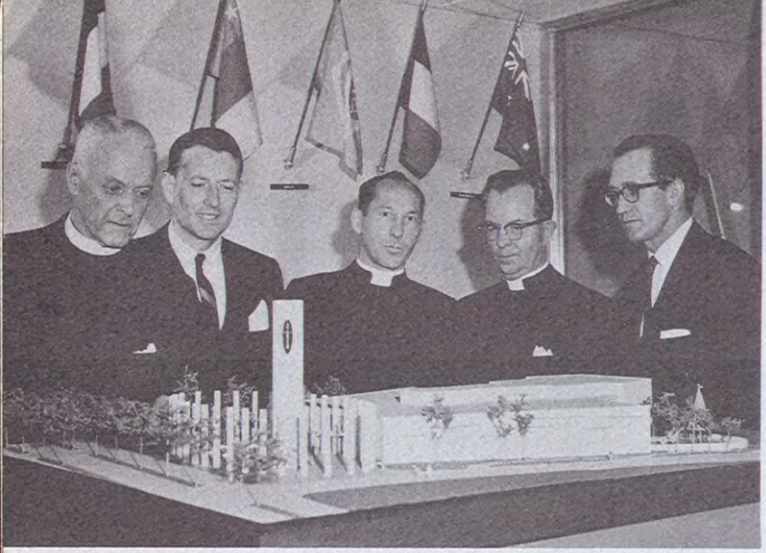
Let Thy blessing be upon us as we dedicate ourselves to this project.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction — Brother Bud Stumbaugh, Minister, Queens Church of Christ, Flushing.

Our Father which art in heaven, because Thou hast been so good to us and hast blest us bountifully with Thy mercy and grace, we are almost ashamed to ask other favors of Thee. But because we depend on Thy strength and Thy care, we are asking one more blessing from Thy loving hand. Even above all that has already been said, oh Father, we pray that Thou wouldst guide each individual here, and mold all of us and develop the potential for good in each of us in accordance with Thy will. Help us to submit to Thy precepts and teachings in all that we do so that our main purpose in life will be to glorify Thee and hold up Christ's doctrines to light the world. May all that has transpired here today that is in accord with Thy will come to pass, and anything that does not please Thee, we pray, defeat us in this. Finally, protect us as we leave here; keep us in the hollow of Thy hand; help us always to obey; save us; is our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Special music at the groundbreaking ceremonies by the Salvation Army Hempstead Citadel Band. Refreshments, courtesy the Salvation Army Queens County Mobile Canteen.



Appearing with the model of the Protestant Center at the Fair are: Rev. Dr. Arthur Kinsolving; Emilio B. Knechtle; Rev. Dr. Dan M. Potter; Rev. Dr. J. Quinter Miller; Rev. Dr. Wilmer C. Fields.

UNISPHERE

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