

## Child's Memorial Temple

Demolished 2018

1763-1771 Amsterdam Ave



*The proscenium arch at the Child's Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ, a remnant of the Harlem building's days as a theater. Photo: David W. Dunlap/The New York Times*

Childs Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ, formerly the Bluebird Theatre, was located at 1763 Amsterdam Avenue. In 1920, the architectural firm of Arthur G. Carlson & Harrison G. Wiseman filed a permit for a one-story brick bowling alley and stores on behalf of owner John Healy. The theater's name changed several times, to the Ramona in 1930, Teatro Granada in 1938, and Lido Theatre, year unknown.

The theater was also used as a synagogue, as evidenced by the Star of David previously affixed to the parapet. Dr. Alvin A. Child's bought the building from the Lido Theatre in 1951 for \$175,000 and renamed it Faith Temple Church of God in Christ.

Unlike other theater buildings of the period that are remembered for their palatial exteriors and opulent décor, this unassuming, non-descript building would have faded away, unremembered, except for Dr. Childs's courageous act of hosting the funeral services for Malcolm X, on February 27, 1965. After the assassination of Malcolm X, Percy Sutton,

Manhattan Borough President from 1966 to 1977, and Malcolm X's legal counsel, was unable to find a church to host the funeral until Dr. Childs agreed to do so.

For the funeral, loudspeakers were set up for the overflow crowd outside of Harlem's 1,000-seat Faith Temple Church of God in Christ, and a local television station carried the service live. Among the civil rights leaders who attended were John Lewis, Bayard Rustin, James Forman, James Farmer, Jesse Gray, and Andrew Young. Actor and activist Ossie Davis delivered the eulogy, describing Malcolm X as "...our shining black prince...who didn't hesitate to die because he loved us so."

Dr. Childs passed away on August 11, 1973. The church was renamed Childs Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ in 1974.

In 2015, Bishop Kevin Griffin sold the building to developer Empire Development Fund LLC for \$2,588,327, with Griffin allegedly receiving \$900,000.

On November 11, 2021 Attorney General Letisha James filed a [complaint](#) on behalf of the People of New York State against Griffin, stating, "Defendant Kevin Griffin ("Griffin" or "Defendant") is the Senior Pastor and President of Childs Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ ("COGIC"). Griffin violated his fiduciary duties when he acted in his own self-interest to the detriment of Childs Memorial Temple Church ("Childs Memorial" or the "Church") and its parishioners in connection with the sale of the Church's most asset—its house of worship in Harlem—to an inexperienced developer, Moujan Vahdat, who has reneged on his obligations to the Church. (Vahdat, together with his business entities, is referred to herein as the "Developer")."

The building was demolished in 2018. The lot is still vacant.