NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property
Historic name: Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
Other names/site number: Bethel A.M.E. Church
Name of related multiple property listing**:**
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location
Street & number: 499 West Madison Street
City or town: Franklin State: Indiana County: Johnson
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Date
Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [X]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site [ ]

Structure [ ]

Object [ ]

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RELIGION: religious facility
RELIGION: church-related residence

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RELIGION: religious facility
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Comment [RR1]: I believe at one point the parsonage was a private club/restaurant. It appears by driving by it is now a residence.

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER: side-steeple

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
foundation: CONCRETE
walls: WOOD: weatherboard
roof: ASPHALT
other:

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church of Franklin, Indiana, is located in Franklin, Franklin Township, Johnson County, Indiana, on the southwest corner of West Madison Street and Uitz Street. The nominated site includes the church (photo 0001) and a parsonage (photo 0002), located just east of the church. Both buildings face north on a half-acre lot raised approximately 2 feet above street level (photo 0003). Relatively flat, the lot includes a minimal amount of scattered trees, including specimens of maple and ash. The church is positioned snugly against the north border of the lot, creating an open grassy area to the south. Residences, divided by a paved ally, flank the adjacent south border and continue across Uitz Street to the west of the church. North of the church, across West Madison Street, are more

residences and Palmer Park, which is the former site of the Booker T. Washington School (demolished in 1981). The church dates from 1911, while the parsonage dates from c. 1925.[1]

Narrative Description

CHURCH

The mass of the church incorporates a simple one-story, front-gabled building with a medium-pitched gable-on-hip roof. A simple two story, square tower with a square cupola projects from the principal mass, and dominates the north façade; and a large one-story semi-hexagonal apse structure, which resembles a large bay window, protrudes from the south end of the church. The principle mass of the church is one and a half units wide and two units deep. The tower is one unit by one unit.

The church sits on an original concrete block foundation. The identical, decorative concrete foundation blocks are reminiscent of uncut, regular course stones; however, the small faux stones are smooth, symmetrical, and orderly (photo 0009). Basement windows are comprised of frosted glass blocks; however, several of the basement windows have been replaced by cinder blocks. A sill plate, painted taupe and measuring approximately 10 inches wide, trims the foundation.

The church is sheathed in horizontal wood clapboard with the exception of the belfry's vertical wood clapboard: all of the siding is original to the structure and painted white. The wood framing system is of balloon-frame construction. All windows are in good condition and original to the building. With the exception of a paired one-over-one double-hung window on the north façade, and the small casement windows in the tower, the church's windows are original one-over-one double-hung windows measuring approximately 9 feet high and 3 feet wide (photo 0004). Simple wood trim frames each window, with an entablature with cornice-styled window lintel above each opening.

Roofing material over the entire building is of black, plain, coursed, contemporary asphalt shingles. Wood soffits are plain and closed, and painted white to match the main structure. The principle mass' roof includes a wide eave overhang, boxed without brackets, with original, thin wood boards comprising the soffit. The principle structure hip-on-gable roof shape includes a vent.

The original primary entrance to the church is located on the north façade. A contemporary concrete sidewalk leads up six narrow concrete steps; the seventh step is broader, and creates a small stoop. Simple contemporary iron railings are located to the east and the west of the steps. The tower houses the inner vestibule, or foyer, which leads to the sanctuary. Access to the church is gained through the original, double poplar wood two paneled doors, located on the north façade of the tower and are painted white (photo 0005). The doors' original wood

[1] The parsonage was constructed between 1916 and 1927 according to the Sanborn Maps, while the County property card identifies a date of 1925. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, *Franklin, Indiana,* 1916; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, *Franklin, Indiana,* 1927; Johnson County, "KINGS 1ST ADD LOT 19," Property Improvements, http://beacon.schneidercorp.com/?site=JohnsonCountyIN (accessed 26 November 2013).

framework includes painted trim work, a simple painted cornice lintel, a rectangular, four-light transom, and brass hardware. The entranceway measures approximately 10 feet high by 6 feet wide. A brass lantern light hangs directly above the entrance doors. A sign painted black with white lettering reads "Bethel A.M.E. Church," and hangs approximately 2 feet to the west of the north façade's double doors.

The square tower of the church is placed in the northwest corner of the structure. The church's square tower previously functioned as a belfry. The bell has been rumored to remain, though access to the belfry is blocked by insulation. The tower's square cupola has a steeply pitched pyramidal hipped roof with a boxed, wide eave overhang, and rests atop the medium-pitched hipped roof, sporting a boxed, slight eave overhang. A brass cross boxed by a painted wood frame, measuring approximately 4 feet by 4 feet, decorates the north façade of the cupola. The east and west façades of the cupola have white painted wood vents. Small square casement windows, approximately 3 ½ feet by 3 ½ feet, with painted wood trim work are centrally located on the tower's north and west façades, between the north entrance doors/west tower window and the medium-pitch hipped roof. A one-over-one double-hung window is located on the west façade of the tower.

To the east of the tower, the north façade includes a centered paired double-hung window with a single double-hung window to the east. The paired double-hung window is approximately 9 feet high and 6 ½ feet wide. The church's east elevation (photo 0001) is comprised of four double-hung windows, spaced approximately 11 feet apart. The west elevation is comprised of three double-hung windows (photo 0006).

A double-hung window is located approximately 3 feet west of the semi-hexagonal apse (photo 0007) on the south elevation. The protruding semi-pentagonal apse houses the church's pulpit. Two double-hung windows, one facing east and one facing west, adorn the structure, which measure approximately 18 ½ feet across the center of the south façade. No openings exist on the apse's southeast, southwest, and south facing elevations. The structure is topped with a polygonal-hipped roof, with a wide eave overhang, boxed without brackets, and original wood boards on the soffit. The apse roof ridge meets the main roof about halfway up its slope. Allowing exterior basement access is a wood, cellar door (photo 0008) sheathed in plain asphalt shingles, directly east of the protruding structure. A rear entrance is located on the southeast corner of the south façade. Three concrete steps lead to the rear entrance's simple wood six-panel frame door, which is painted white. The rear door's wood framework includes original painted wood trim and an original painted wood, cornice lintel.

Access is gained to the church's interior through the double doors located in the north façade. The church's interior retains a notable degree of integrity. Located immediately inside the church's front doors, two steps lead upward to a small foyer (photo 0010). The foyer measures 15 feet by 17 feet. An open staircase, leading to the basement, is located alongside the west wall of the foyer. The staircase is enclosed by simple, dark-stained, pine wood banister approximately 3 ½ high, and a matching wood door with latch, which blocks entry to the stairs. To the north of the stairwell, on the west wall of the foyer, is a one-over-one double hung window with dark stained, pine wood trim, and a simple matching entablature-styled lintel. All interior windows

and doors have the same dark-stained pine wood features. The windows measure approximately 9 feet high and 3 feet wide. South of the stairwell, also on the west wall of the foyer, is a simple, small half-bath, a more recent addition, which contains a toilet and a small sink. The half-bath's ceiling measures approximately 8 feet from the floor, alongside the west and east walls of the foyer; creating a ledge. The foyer bathroom protrudes approximately 5 feet from the east wall and 5 feet from the south wall. A five-paneled door is located on the bathrooms east wall and of dark-stained pine wood, with a corresponding wide door frame. Flooring in the foyer is contemporary carpet. Foyer walls are of white painted plaster. The contemporary suspended ceiling, or secondary ceiling, is comprised of acoustical ceiling panels, and measures approximately 19 feet high. A simple single, suspended American vintage light fixture hangs from the ceiling. Swinging six-paneled double doors are located on the south wall of the foyer, and allow access to the sanctuary. Simple brass door plates adorn both sides of the double doors. A six-paneled wood door is located on the east wall of the foyer.

Access to the church's office, which also serves as the children's room during church service, is gained through the foyer's east door. The office (photo 0011) is approximately 12 ½ feet long and 19 feet wide. The contemporary carpet found in the foyer extends into the office, covering the entire office floor. Office walls are also of original painted plaster. The contemporary suspended ceiling is comprised of acoustical tile panels and measures approximately 19 feet high. A simple single, suspended American vintage light fixture hangs from the ceiling. A one-over-one double-hung window, with the same embellishments and measurements as the foyer window, is located on the east wall of the office. The corner wall where the office's south and east walls meet encases a protruding vent, measuring approximately 17 inches by 14 inches. A paired one-over-one double-hung window, measuring approximately 9 feet high and 6 ½ feet wide, is located on the office's north wall. The south wall of the office includes double, twelve paneled, wood pocket doors (photo 0011), one on either side, each measuring approximately 5 ½ feet wide by 7 ½ feet high. The doors are also dark-stained pine wood. The door frame is comprised of dark-stained pine wood trim work, and a simple matching lintel, which matches the rest of the church's windows and doors framework.

The office's original wood sliding doors allow access to the sanctuary. The sanctuary (photos 0012-0013) measures approximately 40 feet by 50 feet. A water fountain, added circa 1975, is located in the northwest corner, flush against the sanctuary's north wall. A contemporary suspended ceiling, 19 feet high, is comprised of acoustical panels. The ceiling features three simple, suspended American vintage light fixtures above the center aisle. Four contemporary ceiling fans with globe light fixtures are located in the sanctuary, with two on each side of the space. The sanctuary walls retain original, painted plaster. The east and west walls each feature three double-hung windows. These windows are framed in the same fashion as the double-hung window in the foyer. The pews are arranged in rows of nine on the sanctuary's east and west sides. Flooring under the pews is of dark-stained pine wood that is approximately 3 inches in width. Wide wood baseboard trims the perimeter of the entire sanctuary. The sanctuary's center aisle, covered by the contemporary carpet, leads to a three level, horse shoe shaped, raised dais on the south side of the sanctuary. The first level of the altar is raised approximately 8 inches off the floor and encircled by a wood 18 inch high railing, with carpeted open passage ways on either side. The first level flooring matches the dark-stained wood flooring located under the

pews. The second level of the altar is raised approximately 18 inches off the first level. The dark-stained pine wood pastor's pulpit is in its place on the second level of the altar. The third level of the altar is raised approximately 8 inches off the second level and is semi-pentagonal in shape. A straight dark-stained pine wood railing measuring approximately 30 inches high and 11 feet across, with open passage ways on either side, is located on the north end of the third level. Two double-hung windows are located on the east and west walls of the apse. The east portion of the south wall has a dark-stained, pine wood six panel door, which provides exterior access. The door's framework is in the same fashion as all the doors and windows – wood trim work, and a simple matching decorative lintel. A double-hung window is located on the west portion of the south wall of the sanctuary. A single pew is located on the west of the sanctuary across from the altar.

The basement is accessed through a wood staircase (photo 0014) in the foyer, completed c. 1915-1921.[2] Currently, the basement serves as a venue for storage. Comprised of concrete block walls and a poured, concrete floor, the first room encountered is approximately 14 feet by 19 feet. The south wall of the first room opens to a wide hallway. Two non-functioning bathrooms are accessed through doorways on the west wall of the hallway. A four paneled wood door on the hallway's south wall accesses a crawl space where the furnace is located. A large second room (photo 0015) is accessed from a doorway in the east wall of the first room. Located at the south end of the second room, a half partition wall separates a nonfunctioning kitchenette. A four panel wood door, located on the south wall, accesses a crawl space and a storage room, which accesses the cellar door.

PARSONAGE

The Bethel A.M.E. Church's parsonage is located directly east of the church. It is clad in original clapboard siding with original wood trim and contains a multi-gabled roof with contemporary asphalt shingles (photo 0002). The structure incorporates a wide eave overhang, boxed without brackets, with original, thin wood boards comprising the soffit. The north façade is comprised of a centrally located bay and a veranda located in the west corner. The east and west façades are similar in construction: both façades incorporate two one-over-one double hung windows with wood trim (photo 0003). The south façade integrates an additional veranda in the east corner. The interior of the parsonage has been altered; however, the exterior is in good condition and retains integrity as a secondary structure to the church.

[2] *Record of the A.M.E. Church: Franklin Indiana; Evansville District*, Bethel A.M.E. of Franklin Church Record, March 1919-January 1936, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

- [x] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

Period of Significance
1911-1964

Significant Dates
1911
1925

Significant Person (last name, first name)
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
Unknown

Architect/Builder (last name, first name)
N/A

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church begins when the current church was completed (1911) and extends to 1964 at the 50-year mark as it continues to serve and function in its original capacity.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based upon Criteria Consideration A because it derives its primary significance from its role in the ethnic heritage of the African American community.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), completed 1911, is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A, as a property associated with the ethnic heritage of African Americans in Franklin, Indiana. A.M.E. churches offered the black community refuge from discrimination, while promoting: personal growth; community involvement; and educational, political, social, and industrial progress and development. The Bethel A.M.E. of Franklin housed the first all-black congregation in Franklin, which welcomed worshippers of all denominations.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE

The Bethel A.M.E. Church represents the built heritage of the African American community of Franklin. It is located within a neighborhood that unofficially served the African American families of Franklin. The church building continues to serve the African American community of Franklin, while the parsonage is now in private ownership. The Bethel A.M.E Church in Franklin is one of the only architectural examples of the history of the African American community in Johnson County.

After the Civil War, a variety of religious denominations of the black community settled in Johnson County, Indiana. In 1867 Pastor W.S. Lankford,[3] of the Allen Chapel in Indianapolis, organized the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Franklin. Birthed by the Allen Chapel of Indianapolis, the church was affectionately referred to as "Little Bethel," though the word "little" was discarded by Reverend C.L. Upthegrove circa 1916.[4] Though unsubstantial

[3] Also referenced as J.W. Lankford, or W.H. or W.S. Langford.
[4] Also referenced as Updegrove. Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 156. *Record of the A.M.E. Church: Franklin Indiana; Evansville District*, Bethel

records were accumulated or maintained regarding the black population of Franklin, a disproportionate number of minority black families of various denominations settled in west-central Franklin; where the Bethel A.M.E. Church is appropriately situated on the southeast corner of Uittz Street and Madison Avenue.[5]

Recorded in Johnson County on August 27, 1867, a Warranty Deed lists lots 19 and 20, located in southwest Franklin, purchased for $150 from the Uittz family to the A.M.E. Church of Franklin.[6] In 1868, Franklin's first black house of worship was built on the western boundary of Lot 19 by Dr. W.R. Rebils, assisted by Reverend F. Roberts. A parsonage was built the same year on the northeast corner of Lot 19. Reverend Henry Brown, Sr. served as the Church's first pastor. The Bethel A.M.E. Church housed the small black religious community of Franklin, despite different denominational beliefs. On April 26, 1904, the Church members organized to discuss the future of the congregation. At that meeting, the members voted to build a new church on the northwest corner of the Lot 20. The foundation for the church was laid in 1907, but it was completed in October of 1911, while the current parsonage was constructed in 1925.[7] The Sanborn Map from 1916 illustrates the new church in the northwest corner of Lot 20, the original church in the west center of Lot 19, and the original parsonage in the northeast corner of Lot 19.[8] The Sanborn Map from 1927 just illustrates the current layout, with the church in the northwest corner of Lot 20 and the parsonage in the northwest corner of Lot 19.[9] Since its inception, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin has served as a religious center in Johnson County, and still houses Methodist congregations affiliated with the original Bethel A.M.E. Church.[10]

The Bethel A.M.E. Church served an important role in the education, spiritual development, and socialization of the African American population in Franklin. The church stewards organized concerts and socials, Thanksgiving dinners, a literary society, and Sunday school. The members were split into classes, where they would organize, meet, and receive education from their class leaders.[11] The parsonage played a significant role in the history of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, greatly contributing to religious undertakings of A.M.E. parishioners by providing an outfit where the church and community could convene. The building functioned as a place to host meals and community socials, and served as a meeting place for church committees and church clubs, in addition providing lodging for church pastors, which illustrates a traditional concept

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A.M.E. of Franklin Church Record, March 1919-January 1936, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives. *History of the Church Pastors*, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Record, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.

[5] S.W. Blizzard, "The City of Franklin: It's Location—History and Advantages; Public Buildings and Manufacturing Establishments," *The Democrat*, 10 December 1880, in *Illustrated Historical Atlas: Johnson County Indiana; 1820-1900,* Ed. John V. Bergen (Johnson County Historical Society], 153. In a map of Franklin dating from the 1890s, the locations of black families are identified, with a high concentration of those found in an area with W King Street to the north, N West Street to the east, W Madison Street along the south, and N Morton Street to the west.

[6] James M. Uittz, his wife Elizabeth Uittz, Albert Uittz, his wife Maria Uittz, Johnson Uittz, his wife Margaret, and Addison Uittz to John Fossett, John Pettiford, Augustus Hammond, Simpson Starks, and Willis Parks.

[7] Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Record, September 1896-April 1912, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives; P.D. Redmond, "Underground brought blacks to Franklin," *The Daily Journal,* February 25, 1983.

[8] Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, *Franklin, Indiana,* 1916.

[9] Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, *Franklin, Indiana,* 1927.

[10] *James M. Uitts and Others to Augustus Hammond and Others*, Warranty Deed granting Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin ownership of Lots 19 and 20, 16 August 1867, Deed Record Book 2, City of Franklin Recording Office, 507. *Franklin West Plat by G. King and Addition 1 to West Franklin*, Plat map locating Lots 19 and 20, 10 August 1852, Plat Cabinet A, City of Franklin Mapping Office, 46-48. Ed. John V. Bergen, *Illustrated Historical Atlas*, 173, 182. Sylvester Crowe, *Bethel A.M.E. of Franklin, Indiana: Church History*, (Johnson County Historical Museum) 25 September 1994.

[11] Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Record, September 1896-April 1912, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.

once common for religious properties. The impact of the church on the community was not only the church, but the freely dispensed guidance given by the pastor, whose house was open to the public.

Throughout its history, the Bethel A.M.E of Franklin has considered how national affairs and politics affect the black community. On December 2, 1935, church minutes reveal an A.M.E. Brotherhood Club meeting in which a discussion was held, "whether the negro should vote either democratic or republican."[12] Records also indicate a meeting held that same year, in which Church members contemplated whether, "the Negro have a better opportunity in the South than he has in the North."[13] Since the A.M.E.'s inauguration, black clergy have been viewed by the African community not only as religious shepherds, but as inspired political leaders, who have blazed trails in civil rights, education enrichment, and community development.[14]

The Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin labors to nurture and maintain enduring relationships with local community organizations. Committees and Commissions of the Bethel A.M.E. Church have partnered with Franklin College and the Franklin community to commemorate and mark historic national events, as well as host national organizations. Contributions to the Franklin community include: pitch-in meals, in which other community organizations were invited to participate; tea's sponsored by A.M.E.'s Missionary Society; a statewide Bible teacher's convention, which the church hosted in 1912; and various reunions in which the Bethel A.M.E. served as the meeting site.

Many active and principle members of the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin have contributed to significant historical events both locally and nationally, as well as acquired prominent positions in Franklin society and government. A.M.E. preacher and committee member John Fosset, who also appears on the 1867 deed, served in the Union Army and was later appointed chaplain of the Grand Army of the Republic in Franklin. His wife Mary Fossett begged the first dollar for the first church building, and nailed the first church lath on the new church building in 1911.[15] Their daughter Hattie Fosset, born December 14, 1864, was the first black student to attend Franklin High School and Franklin College. An active member in the A.M.E. Church, Ms. Fosset served as its Sunday School Superintendent, President of the Missionary Society, and taught adult Bible classes. Additional noteworthy black citizens of Franklin and members of the A.M.E. Church include former slave H.C. Moorman, who served as pastor circa 1903; and Civil War veteran Semuel Stokes who served as pastor in 1906 (also listed on the 1867 deed).[16] Franklin native and A.M.E. member John Montgomery was the first black man to be elected to Franklin's City Council, where he served a four-year term ending in 1980. For service to the church and community of Franklin, the Bethel A.M.E. Church bestowed the Quality of Life Award to resident Martha Wales, who was Franklin's "first black person to ever be appointed to run a city

[12] *Engish IV: Brother Hood Club; 1935-1936*, A club established by male members of the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.
[13] Ibid.
[14] *The Black Church in America*, Progressions: A Lilly Endowment Occasional Report, vol. 4, issue 1 (Indianapolis: Lilly Endowment, Inc.), 10.
[15] *Record of the A.M.E. Church: Franklin Indiana; Evansville District*.
[16] *History of the Church Pastors*, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Record, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.

department."[17] Both past and present congregations of Bethel A.M.E. are ripe with acclaimed citizens who have contributed substantially to Franklin's black history.[18]

A.M.E. Churches have served as the center of black communities throughout America. They have played significant roles in the education of the black population, while providing spiritual and moral guidance. A.M.E. Churches have sheltered blacks in dark times: allowing them freely participate and be treated as equals; and discuss politics, philanthropic endeavors, and the role of the black person in society. The building which houses the Bethel A.M.E. Church serves as a representative of Franklin's black community and their efforts. Its preservation epitomizes America's struggle to procure and maintain freedom and equality for people of all creeds, as well as preserve the ethnic heritage of the African-Americans of Franklin and their contribution to its history. Prominent members of Franklin's A.M.E. have honored their churches teachings by contributing to historical local and national affairs.

Comparables

The Bethel A.M.E. Church illustrates the ethnic heritage of African Americans at the local level of significance in Franklin, Indiana. The church is located in a historically predominate African American neighborhood in Franklin and served as a community center for the population. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was identified as Notable in the 1985 Johnson County Interim Report.[19] Two other community buildings served the African American community in Franklin: the Booker T. Washington School and the Second Baptist Church. The Booker T. Washington School was located in the lot to the north of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, but was demolished in 1981. The Second Baptist Church is still extant and is located on West Madison Street, to the northeast of the Bethel A.M.E. Church. The Second Baptist Church was only identified as contributing in the 1985 Johnson County Interim Report; the Bethel A.M.E. Church retains a higher level of integrity than the Second Baptist Church.[20] In comparing the two congregations, the congregation and history of the Bethel A.M.E. Church has deeper ties to the history of the African American community at large in the City of Franklin. As such, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin best illustrates the architecture of the Ethnic Heritage of the African American population in Franklin.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

Development of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

At the end of the eighteenth century, the United States free black population experienced discrimination in churches of mixed race, thereby; they established churches of their own where they could freely participate and enjoy equality. First assembled by Richard Allen in Philadelphia during 1794, the African Methodist Episcopal Church emerged as the United States

[17] P.D. Redmond, "Leaders Foresee Good Future," *Daily Journal*, 25 February 1983.

[18] Sylvester Crowe, *Bethel A.M.E. of Franklin*. *History of the Church Pastors*. Helen Irene Dawson, *A Pioneer of Franklin*, The history of significant church member Hattie Fossett, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives. *Bethel A.M.E. Church Annual Report: 1987-1988.* P.D. Redmond, "Leaders Foresee Good Future." P.D. Redmond, "Underground Brought Blacks to Franklin," *Daily Journal*, 25 February 1983.

[19] Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, *Johnson County Interim Report* (Indianapolis, IN: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1985), 45.

[20] Ibid., 45.

most important black church.[21] The mission of the A.M.E. Church "included development of the mind and 'elevation of race' through temperance, good personal habits, and fulfillment of spiritual needs."[22] In 1830 in Philadelphia, Allen led what appears to be the first colored convention. A.M.E. clergy actively participated in subsequent conventions, which were held to raise racial consciousness, frame "petitions for the removal of constitutional and legal disabilities," and to implore blacks to "improve their position through education and industry."[23] A.M.E. Churches have emerged as one of the largest and most important black church in the United States. After the Civil War, A.M.E. Churches were the most prevalent among the black population in Indiana, and commenced wherever large Negro communities congregated.

Throughout the United States, A.M.E. Churches have served as the religious, social, and political center of the black community. They provided leadership and participated substantially in governmental affairs concerning the black populations fight for freedom and equality. In his book, *12 Million Black Voices*, novelist Richard Wright declares, "It is only when we are within the walls of our churches that we are wholly ourselves, that we keep alive a sense of our personalities in relation to the total world in which we live… "[24] In 1858, an African American expressed the A.M.E. Church's contribution to the black population, asserting "If there never had been an A.M.E. Church in this country there would have been no place where we could have exercised to any extent the talent which God has given to us."[25] He further states, "The A.M.E. Church has done more for the elevation of the colored people than all the other denominations in this country…All the religious liberty that the colored people enjoy in this country is attributed to the organization of the A.M.E. Church."[26] A.M.E. Churches not only offered religious sanction and refuge from discrimination, but were a dynamic force in promoting morality, pride, unity, and education for the development and enhancement of the black community.

African Americans in Indiana

In the antebellum era, Indiana acquired three general groups of immigrant blacks: "free persons in the state which they resided before coming to Indiana;"[27] recently emancipated slaves; and fugitive slaves. Though slavery in Indiana was forbidden, harsh laws and intolerance made life complicated for the black community, none-the-less, many were able to obtain land establishing themselves as independent farmers, find work as laborers, and gain work employing a variety of other expertise. The Indiana census of 1820 lists 1,420 African Americans: by 1860 their number increased substantially to 11,428.[28] By 1854, more than one-fifth of blacks in Indiana were members of the A.M.E. Church, with a total membership of 1,387.

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[21] Born into slavery, Allen was allowed to purchase his freedom after he converted to Christianity. Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1993), 153.

[22] Lori B. Jacobi, *More than a Church: The Education Role of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Indiana, 1844-1861*, in *Indiana's African American Heritage: Essays from Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993)], 3.

[23] Emma Lou Thronbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900,* 143-146, 153.

[24] Norma Jean Lutz, *The History of the Black Church* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), 51.

[25] Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana*, 151.

[26] Ibid., 151-152.

[27] Ibid., 32.

[28] Ibid., 31-32, 156.

The city of Franklin, the county seat of Johnson County, is situated near the center of the county, twenty miles south of Indianapolis. Rich and fertile soils beckoned farmers, bringing the first settlers to Franklin. Laid out in 1822, Franklin had a population of approximately 1,750 by 1850, and was officially organized as a city by 1862. By 1880, six church buildings existed in Franklin. Four housed congregations of mainly white worshipers representing the Baptist, Christian, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations. Two represented the black population of Franklin: the Second Baptist Church and the Bethel A.M.E. Church.

Bethel A.M.E. Franklin's Role in the Community

On November 23, 1987, church records denote a convocation held at the Franklin College Chapel to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On February 21, 1988, the Bethel A.M.E. Church organized a joint worship service between Franklin College and the Franklin community in celebration of Black History Month. Franklin citizens, community leaders, and students gathered to hear guest speakers Reverend Walter W. Reid, Professor Paul T. Nugent, and Franklin College President Bryan Martin.[29]

Since its inception, the Bethel A.M.E. Church has been committed to helping the elderly, impoverished, and disadvantaged people of Franklin. Franklin's current A.M.E. Church parishioners maintain the founder's aspirations of community involvement and aid. Community undertakings include visiting those unable to attend church, because of disabilities, and assembling and distributing food, clothes, and personal items to the indigent and handicap. Church records state, "The Church supplied four needy families with turkey, hams and all the trimmings for a wonderful Thanksgiving day dinner."[30] Additionally, the A.M.E. Church has catered meals for bereaved families succeeding funerals, and provided assistance to destitute foreign countries.

Due to lack of funding, in 1974, a church committee elected to rent the parsonage as a way to offset the costs of maintaining both buildings.[31] However, the committee had difficulty collecting rent from tenants and financing general maintenance, and chose to sell the parsonage in 1980.[32]

[29] *Bethel A.M.E. Church Annual Report: 1987-1988*, Includes brief history of church, events associated with church, and committee members, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives. Richard G. Biever, "College Promises Fight Against Bigotry," *Daily Journal*, November 1987, 1. Annette Jones, "Gathering Reunites Community that Thrived in 1950's," *Daily Journal*, 2 July 2004. "Dance Will Open Weekend Activities," *Franklin Evening Star*, 13 April 1946.

[30] *The Bethel A.M.E. Church Annual Report.*

[31] *Weekly Financial Report of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Bethel A.M.E. of Franklin Church Record, 1973-May 1975, Bethel A.M.E. Church of Franklin Archives.

[32] Ryan Trares, "Community of Believers," *Daily Journal*, 11 November 2009.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Trares, Ryan. "Community of Believers." *Daily Journal* (11 November 2009).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:
____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 081-222-290042

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

Use the UTM system

UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[ ] NAD 1927 or [X] NAD 1983

1. Zone: 16	Easting: 580719	Northing:	4370582
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Kings 1st Addition Lots 19 and 20

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes both lots historically associated with the church. The parsonage is located on lot 19 and the church is on lot 20.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Cortney Spear, Intern; Rebecca Smith & Raina Regan, Community Preservation Specialist
organization: Indiana Landmarks
street & number: 1201 Central Avenue
city or town: Indianapolis state: Indiana zip code: 46202
e-mail: central@indianalandmarks.org
telephone: (317) 639-4534
date: January 2, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
City or Vicinity: Franklin
County: Johnson State: Indiana
(The above applies to all photographs)

1 of 15
Photographer: Rebecca Smith Date: March 13, 2012
Description: North and east façades, Camera facing southwest

2 of 15
Photographer: Rebecca Smith Date: March 13, 2012
Description: North façade of parsonage, Camera is facing south

3 of 15
Photographer: Rebecca Smith Date: March 13, 2012
Description: Location of Church in conjunction with Parsonage, Camera is facing southwest

4 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Represents example of exterior single double-hung window, North façade, Camera is facing south

5 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Main entrance located on North façade, Camera is facing south

6 of 15
Photographer: Rebecca Smith Date: March 13, 2012
Description: West and South elevations, Camera facing northeast

7 of 15
Photographer: Rebecca Smith Date: March 13, 2012
Description: Apse on southern façade, Camera facing northeast

8 of 15
Photographer: Cortney Spear Date: June 14, 2012
Description: Door and cellar on south façade, Camera facing north

9 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Decorative concrete foundation blocks and cornerstone, Camera facing southeast

10 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Interior foyer, Camera facing south

11 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Office, Camera facing west

12 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Sanctuary with twelve paneled sliding wood pocket doors, Camera facing northwest

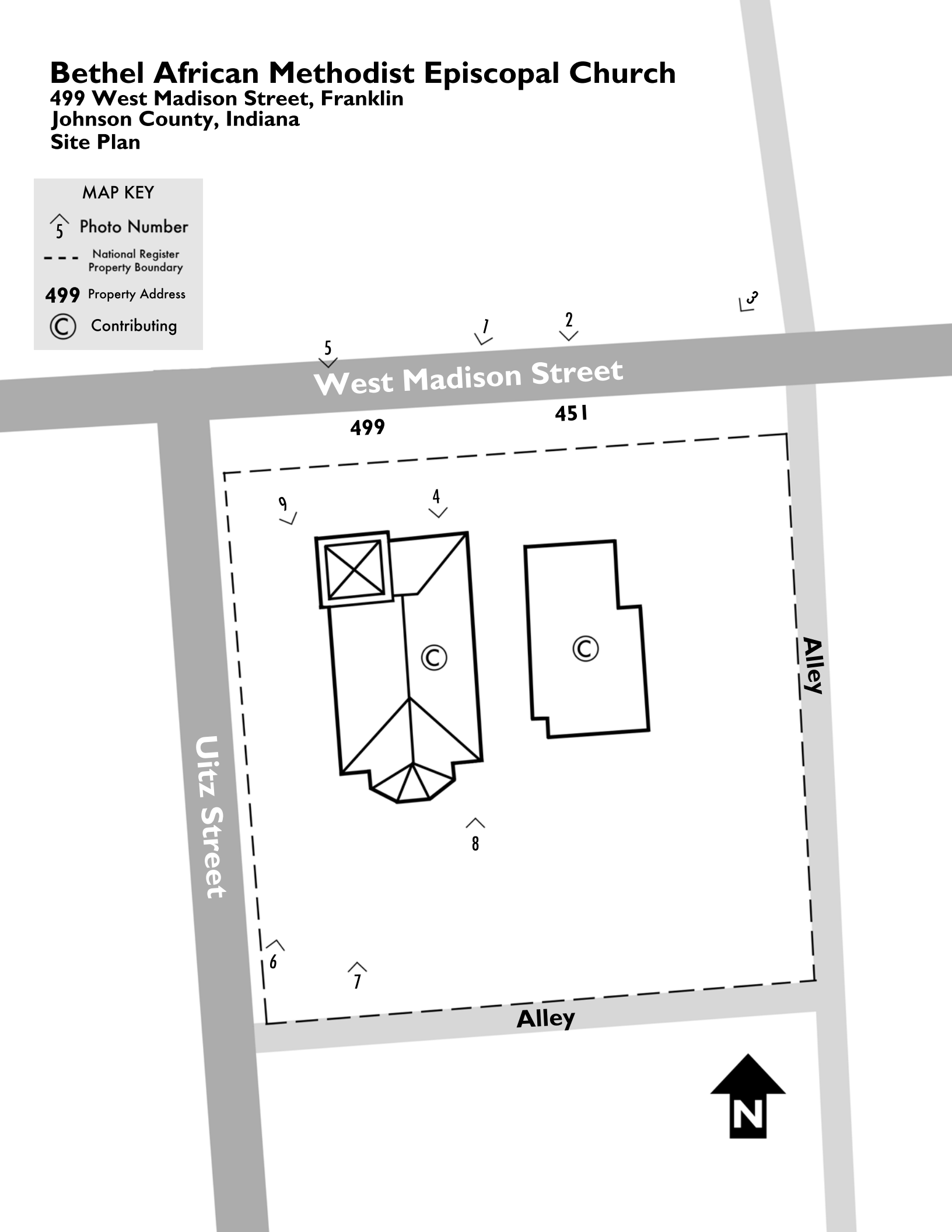
13 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Sanctuary and pulpit, Camera facing south

14 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: Basement and staircase, Camera facing west

15 of 15
Photographer: Raina Regan Date: December 3, 2013
Description: East room with kitchenette, Camera facing south

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
499 West Madison Street, Franklin
Johnson County, Indiana
Site Plan

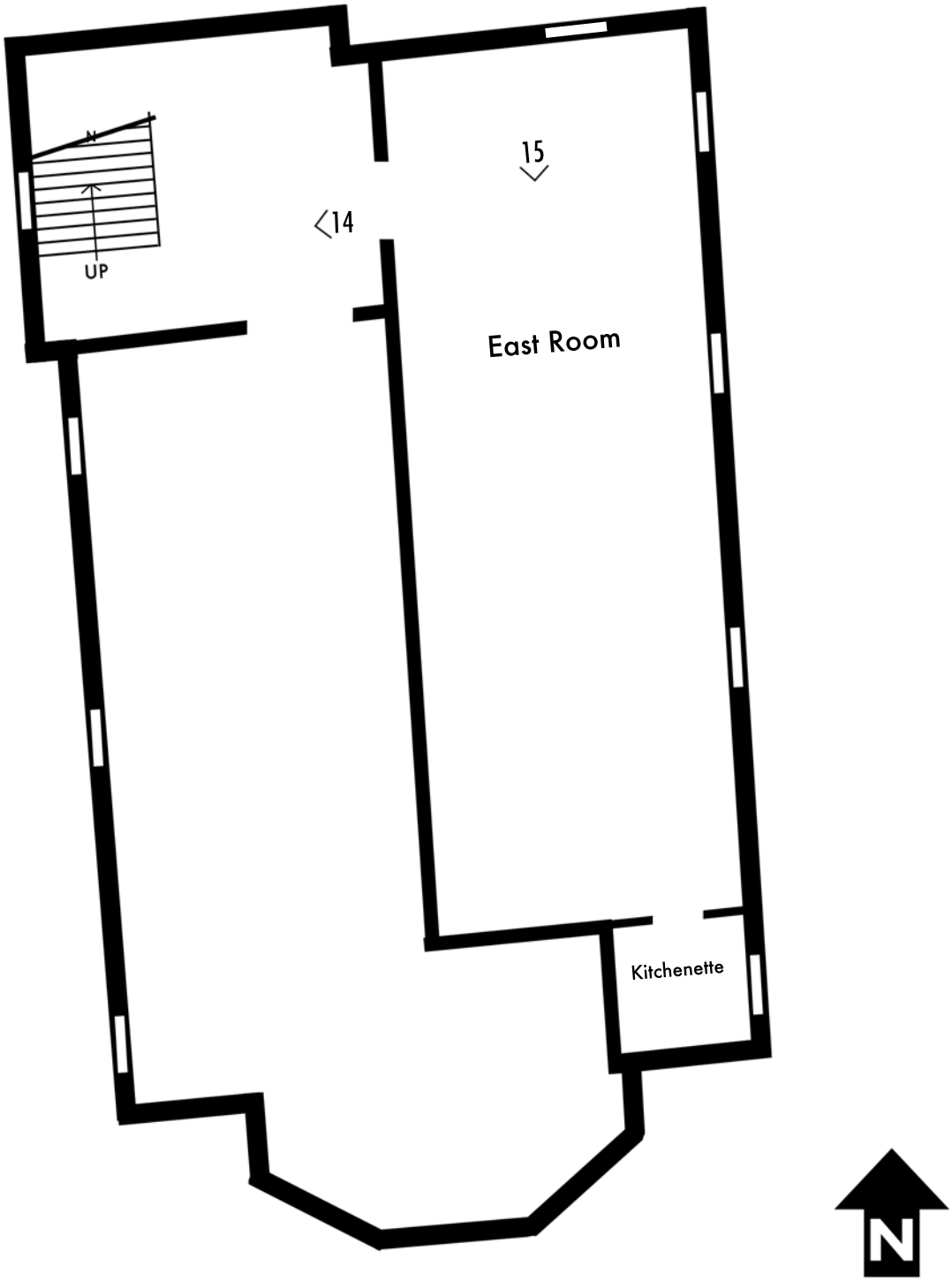


Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

499 West Madison Street, Franklin
Johnson County, Indiana
Basement Floor Plan

MAP KEY

5 Photo Number

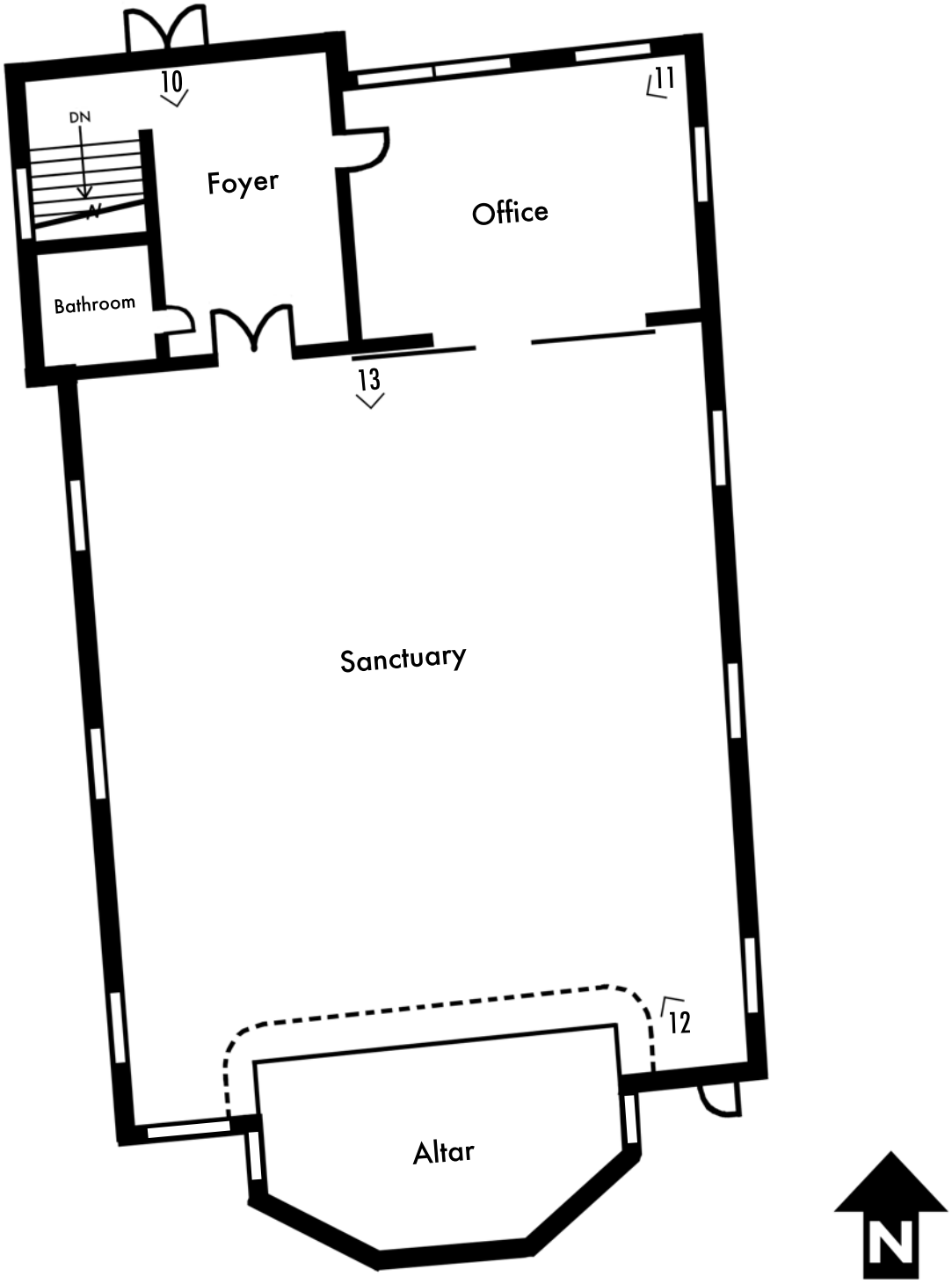


Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

499 West Madison Street, Franklin
Johnson County, Indiana
First Floor Plan

MAP KEY

5 Photo Number



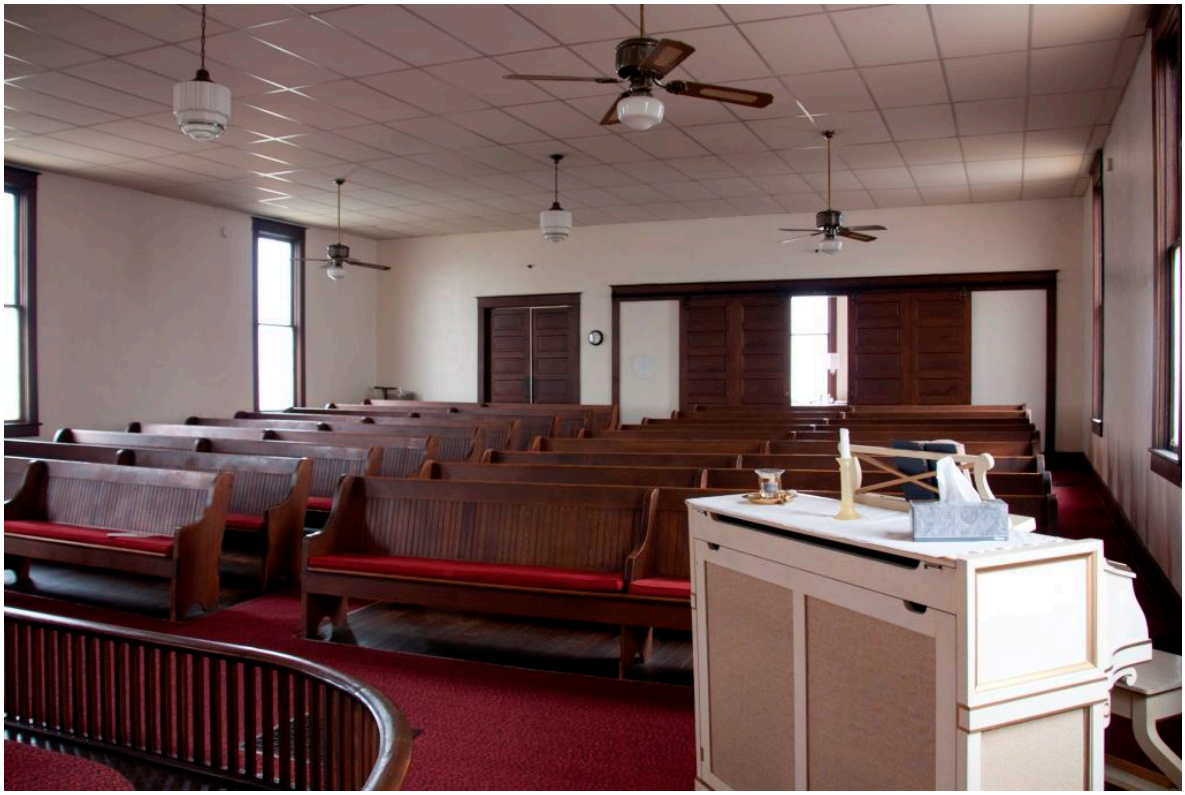
Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0001

Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0003

Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0006

Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0009

Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0010



Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0012

Bethel AME Church, Franklin, Johnson County photo #0013