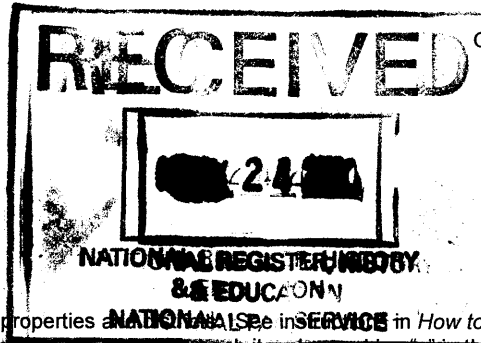


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



728

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and historic districts in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Beth Salem Presbyterian Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Tennessee Highway 30 at Watson Road not for publication N/A

city or town Athens vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county McMinn code 107 zip code 37303

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert A. Weese
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/19/00
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6-22-00

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

McMinn County, TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
1	2	objects
5	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Rural African American Churches in TN

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

SOCIAL: meeting Hall

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

SOCIAL: meeting hall

FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls Weatherboard

roof Tin

other WOOD, GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

- 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 N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1920

Significant Dates

ca. 1920

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

MTSU, Center for Historic Preservation

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

McMinn County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property One acre

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Athens, TN 125 NE

1 16 720780 3918870
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carroll Van West
organization MTSU, Center for Historic Preservation date January 1999
street & number PO Box 80 MTSU telephone 615-898-2947
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Dorothy Hitchcock (contact person)
street & number 609 Hitchcock Avenue telephone 423-263-5516
city or town Etowah state TN zip code 37331

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 listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

7. DESCRIPTION

The Beth Salem Presbyterian Church is located near the junction of Tennessee Highway 30 (Athens-Etowah Highway) and Watson Road in McMinn County, Tennessee. The nominated property includes the church and adjoining cemetery, which are both well preserved in an extant rural setting. The Beth Salem Presbyterian Church is a one-room, rectangular, weatherboard-covered building, with a metal-covered gable roof, that rests on brick piers.

The north facade of the church contains the only entrance to the building, a symmetrically placed original two-panel door. Above the door is a hand-written sign identifying the building as "Bethsalem Presbyterian Church."

The west elevation contains three symmetrical bays, with original wooden shutters protecting original two-over-two double-hung windows.

The south elevation is a solid weatherboard wall, except for a small original ventilation grill located at the gable point of the roofline.

The east elevation is similar to the west elevation. It contains three symmetrical bays, with original wooden shutters protecting original two-over-two double-hung windows.

The interior retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The walls and ceiling are bead board and the floor has its original hardwood boards. The pulpit stands at the south end, on an original wooden platform. The pews in the church date to circa 1920. Arranged in two sections facing the pulpit the pews leave a central passage open to the wooden altar railing in front of the pulpit. The altar railing separates the pulpit from the seating for the congregation. (C)

To the west of the church building is an open picnic and kitchen pavilion (circa 1990), known as "Hattie's Kitchen," that has a metal-covered shed roof supported by six symmetrically placed wood posts. (NC, due to date of construction)

Northwest of the church is a grouping of a monument and two markers about the history of Beth Salem Presbyterian Church. The oldest is a concrete monument (1926) that features three obelisks, with the center obelisk being the highest of the three. On the front of the center obelisk is a metal plaque that details early historical information about the church. (C)

East of the concrete monument is a Tennessee Highway Historical Marker titled "Bethsalem Presbyterian Church," erected c. 1990. (NC, due to date of construction)

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Section number 7 Page 2

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

West of the obelisk is a metal and plastic interpretive sign titled "Beth Salem Presbyterian Church" erected circa 1996 by the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association. (NC, due to date of construction)

Southwest of the church is an original men's privy (c. 1920), built with board-and-batten walls and a metal covered shed roof. (C)

Southeast of the church is an original women's privy (c. 1920), built with board-and-batten walls and a metal covered shed roof. (C)

Northeast of the church, across Watson Road, is the historic Beth Salem church cemetery, a contributing site to this property. It contains approximately 35 burials, with the oldest marked gravestone dating to 1911, and the majority of graves dating prior to 1950. (C)

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church meets the registration requirements for Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee, 1850-1970 MPN as an individual church building that has extant outbuildings and a church cemetery on the same property lot. According to the integrity guidelines set forth in the MPN cover sheet, the church is exceptional in its location, association, setting, feeling, design, materials, and workmanship. Few alterations have occurred to the church building since its original construction and there are no additions on the building. The historic cemetery contains a majority of burials prior to 1950.

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Section number 8 Page 3

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

8. Statement of Significance

The Beth Salem Presbyterian Church in McMinn County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its local significance as a rare, extant example of African-American church architecture from the early twentieth century. As discussed in the Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee, 1850-1970 MPN cover sheet, the church is an architecturally significant local example of a type of vernacular church architecture significant in the Jim Crow Era of segregation between 1890 and 1945. Its unadorned, no style appearance reflected socioeconomic realities as well as presenting a non-threatening African-American appearance in the local built environment.

Organized in August 1866, the Beth Salem Presbyterian Church was the first African-American congregation established in the three-county area of Polk, McMinn, and Meigs. The church's establishment is a significant example of the impact of White missionaries on Tennessee's religious institutions in the wake of the Civil War. Among the founders were two African-American ministers, Rev. George Waterhouse and Rev. Jake Armstrong, and a white Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Fate Sloop. Patsy Fight, a White woman, donated land for the original church building of 1866. The Beth Salem congregation first met at a brush arbor on the current church property; at an undetermined date a log church was built. For rural African-American Presbyterians, Beth Salem became a religious and social gathering place, just as the First United Presbyterian Church in Athens, eight miles to the northwest, became a religious center for urban African-American Presbyterians in McMinn County.

This log church building also served as a public school for African Americans; the first black teacher was Smith Henderson. The congregation used the initial log building until a fire destroyed it circa 1920.

The leaders of the construction of the frame church building circa 1920 were John Melton, Jim Melton, George Walker, Calvin Prater, Horace Melton, and Ray Lessley. Lessley was a white neighbor who donated the lumber for the building's construction. With a horse-drawn wagon, Horace Melton hauled the lumber sixteen miles to the church lot. The building also served as a school for an undetermined time; most blacks in McMinn County attended school during the 1920s at the Rosenwald School Building Program's schools at Athens, East Etowah, West Etowah, and Union.

In 1928, the Beth Salem church hosted a two-week camp revival for African Americans from McMinn, Monroe, and Loudon counties. At this time the tradition of "Hattie's Kitchen" began. Hattie Buchanan wanted a kitchen for food preparation for the revival attendees. Nearby the

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Section number 8 Page 4

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

church, where the current pavilion now stands, men from the congregation constructed an eight foot by ten foot frame kitchen. The men included Jim Caves, Luther Boyd, Alfred Caldwell, and Abner King. Helping Hattie Buchanan in the kitchen were Mary Caves, Jane Springs, Alice Webb, Callie Ferguson, and Mary Brown. "Hattie's Kitchen" became an important tradition at the church and the food preparation is still outdoors when the annual Beth Salem Homecoming takes place in August.

Regular church services at Beth Salem ended in the 1950s due to the migration of rural African Americans to the towns and cities and the ease of automobile travel; many rural black Presbyterians could drive to Athens and attend services at the First United Presbyterian Church. Beth Salem then became the site of an annual August homecoming, which attracts one hundred or more former members and their descendants to this rural setting. As recorded in the *Athens Daily Post-Athenian*, August 31, 1988:

The tin roof is rusted and warped, and the sanctuary needs a little whitewash, but the church looks much as it did 60 years ago. An electric fan is the only modern convenience, and a lamp on the pulpit for the preacher to read the Bible, all powered by a generator out back. . . . But visitors can understand why the church is special. It was built in a time of turmoil and still stands for what it was built for--a house of worship.

Since that 1988 report, the roof was repaired and the building painted. Otherwise, the church still retains its circa 1920 materials and appearance and it is a rare and extremely important example of the type of unadorned, yet dignified architecture found in rural African-American churches during the Jim Crow Era. Most black congregations that still meet regularly have typically replaced their late nineteenth and early twentieth century frame buildings with brick or brick-veneer buildings. If the congregation had still been viable in the 1950s and 1960s, the church at Beth Salem perhaps would have been rebuilt in that manner. However, the end of the congregation also meant that there was no need to expand or remodel the old church building. Thus, it survives as a compelling artifact of the past African-American religious experience in McMinn County.

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Section number 9 Page 5

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Beth Salem Presbyterian Church file." Tennessee Rural African-American Church Project. MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

Hitchcock, Dorothy. Letter to Carroll Van West, October 15, 1998. Filed at Tennessee Rural African-American Church Project. MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

Hill, David. "Small country church comes alive for Homecoming." *Athens Daily Post-Athenian*, August 31, 1988.

Tennessee Historical Commission. *Tennessee Highway Historical Markers*. Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1996.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 6

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Beth Salem Presbyterian Church is adjacent to the junction of Watson Road and Tennessee Highway 30 and is Parcel 17 on the attached McMinn County Tax Map 82.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property contains all of the property historically associated with the Beth Salem Presbyterian Church.

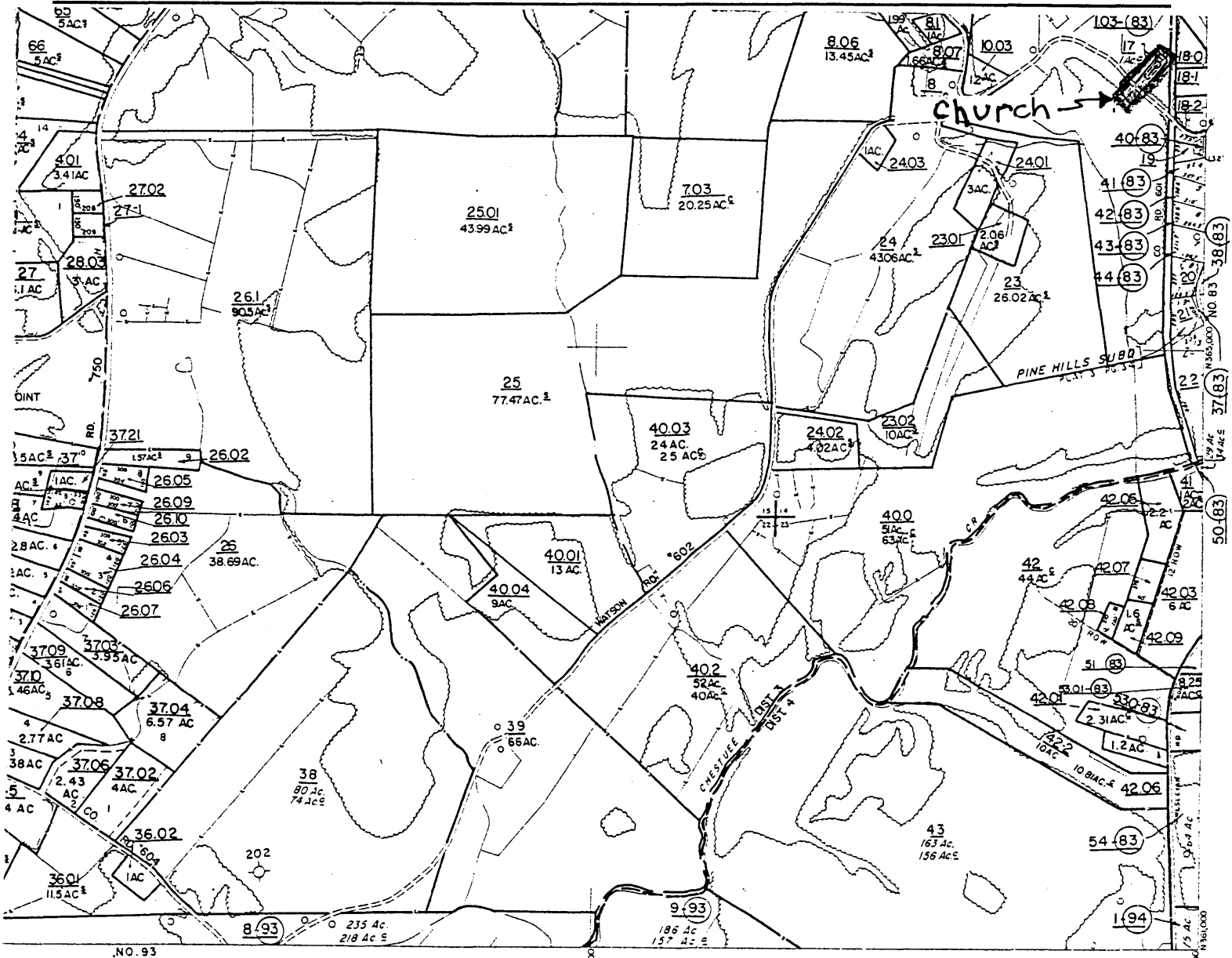
The Tax Map for this nomination has the scale 1" = 800'. The Tennessee State Board of Equalization prepares this scale tax map for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 800' adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service.

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Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

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- EL & CONTROLLING MAP NO.
DUMENT
E
TERRY
CH
OL
AQ AREA
- CREEK
 - STATE LINE
 - CO LINE
 - CORP LIMITS
 - TRANSMISSION LINE
 - ROAD
 - RAILROAD

71	72	73
81	82	83
92	93	94

REVISIONS		
1	6-11-65	6-27-80
2	1-7-69	7-12-81
3	1-0-72	8-9-84
4	1-1-75	8-27-85
5	10-7-78	10-87-97
		11-8-90
		12-7-92
		13-4-95
		14-2-97
		15-4-98

MCMINN CO. TENN.		MAP NO.
SCALE: 1" = 800'	DISTRICT: 182	82
DATE OF FLYING: DEC 1963		
DATE COMPILED: FEB. 12, 1965		

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County
Comptroller of The Treasury

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National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

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Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Beth Salem Presbyterian Church, McMinn Co., TN

Photos by: Carroll Van West
 MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Date: June 1998

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
 2941 Lebanon Road
 Nashville, TN 37243

Beth Salem Church and Cemetery, facing southwest
1 of 15

North facade, facing south
2 of 15

Front door detail, north facade, facing south
3 of 15

West elevation and south elevation, facing northeast
4 of 15

South elevation and east elevation, facing northwest
5 of 15

Pulpit and sanctuary, facing southwest
6 of 15

Ceiling detail
7 of 15

Sanctuary, facing west
8 of 15

Kitchen/picnic pavilion, facing northwest
9 of 15

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Beth Salem Presbyterian Church
McMinn County, Tennessee

Women's privy, facing southeast
10 of 15

Men's privy, facing south
11 of 15

Monument and markers, facing south
12 of 15

Cemetery, facing north
13 of 15

Carl Melton tombstone, facing east
14 of 15

W. G. Carlock tombstone, facing east
15 of 15