

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 *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 St. Luke AME Zion Church
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3937 12th Avenue North N/A not for publication
city or town Birmingham N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35234

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.)

[Signature] March 3, 2005
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Office, Alabama 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:)

Signature of the Keeper Came D Shull Date of Action 4-22-05

St. Luke AME Zion Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick; Concrete
walls Brick

roof Asphalt Shingle
other Metal; Wood; Glass

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets.

St. Luke AME Zion Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

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

(Mark "x" in all the 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 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Ethnic Heritage: African American

Period of Significance

1960-63

Significant Dates

1962

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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: Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham Public Library

St. Luke AME Zion Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 520360 3711490
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, with earlier material by Linda Nelson and Marjorie White
organization Center for Historic Preservation date March 24, 2003
street & number Middle Tennessee State University—Box 80 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 St. Luke AME Zion Church (Rev. Sondra Coleman)
street & number 3937 12th Avenue North telephone 205-592-3146
city Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35234

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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St. Luke AME Zion Church, Jefferson County, AL

VII. Description

St. Luke AME Zion Church is at 3937 12th Avenue North, on a small urban lot surrounded by residences from the 1920s and 1930s and facing Patton Park. The building is an imposing *piano nobile* red one-story brick church that rests on a full basement. It is of eclectic Gothic Revival interpretation, appearing primarily Gothic by its corner towers and pointed belfry vents and Romanesque by its solidity and large round-arched recessed tower entry at the top of a spillage of steps. The original battlemented towers, which originally rose 15 feet above the front parapet, were lowered c. 1950 to a concrete course-line and now are capped with low pyramidal roofs;

The north façade has three sections: a projecting center section of four bays flanked by square towers. The projecting main block has four narrow rectangular windows, divided one-two-one by pilasters, with concrete headers and sills and with lozenges inset above. The glass is translucent and tinted in metal jalousie frames, with concrete headers and sills. This central projecting section terminates at the top with blind arches, battlements and pinnacles which, judging from a 1939 photograph before the towers were truncated, reflected the decoration of the tower parapets. The lancet tower windows are now punched out and occluded by panels of some material. Entries in both the main-level tower and the center of the ground-level front are six-panel double wood doors. On the lower level the doors are flanked by plain two-over-two double hung translucent metal-frame windows. A concrete belt course separates the basement and sanctuary levels;

The east elevation has nine bays. At the vestibule (the east side of the tower) and first sanctuary bay windows (bays 1-2) and at the rear bay (bay 8), the windows are metal-framed five-stacked panes of translucent glass with the three middle panes being painted glass in a brown-blue-brown pattern. The six sanctuary windows are larger with a large untinted upper light. These nine windows of the sanctuary level have brick segmental arches while the eight windows on the basement level do not. These are two-over-two translucent glass windows in metal frames. At the south end of the elevation is an asphalt shed and flat roof one-story brick addition, which dates c. 1950, that stretches across the rear of the church. A raised concrete staircase with metal railing reaches a side entrance on the sanctuary level. Flanking the metal six-panel door, installed c. 1990, are paired four-pane metal frame translucent glass windows with a brown-blue window in the middle of the four. This elevation was damaged by a bombing in 1962. The bomb left a gaping hole in the east elevation and blew out the original windows. The congregation repaired the church immediately that year.

The south elevation is a brick wall, the rear of the c. 1950 addition, which has a metal six-paneled door off-centered on the sanctuary level. A concrete staircase with metal railing leads to the door.

The west elevation (street side) is similar to the east elevation in its nine bays and metal frame windows, but since it was not severely damaged by the 1962 bombing there is much more ornamentation in its design in a pattern similar to the façade. There is a concrete belt course separating the sanctuary and basement levels. The sanctuary windows have flat concrete headers and sills and they are divided by pier buttresses. The cornice over the sanctuary windows is similar to the façade, with blind arches, battlements, and pinnacles. The basement-level windows are two-over-two translucent glass windows in metal frames. At the basement level on the c. 1950 addition is a metal door, with a shed metal canopy.

The sanctuary contains the standard pattern of two aisles dividing the pews into three sections, with the longer pews being placed in the center. The aisles are angled towards the front, where the sacrament table, dais and pulpit are arranged in the traditional manner. The choir section is behind the pulpit, and is recessed like a chancel with three pew rows.

In the main sanctuary, the ceiling is slightly bowed or barreled over the central section and flat over the side sections. In renovating and repairing the church in the aftermath of the 1962 bombing, the congregation also decided to make minor changes to the interior. It added wood wainscoting to the plaster walls. The original coffered ceiling is now covered in acoustical tiles (although restoration of the original is anticipated); new wood pews were installed (although two pews survive on the lower level), and red carpet was installed over hardwood floors. It also substituted metal-frame for wood-frame windows after the 1962 bomb damage sustained by the church.

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East End Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

The church meets the registration requirements for church buildings in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. It retains a high degree of integrity in setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The primary changes that have occurred to the building since 1930 took place during the period of significance, when a bomb severely damaged the building's exterior and interior.

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological testing has been conducted, the potential for subsurface materials remains.

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3East End Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VIII. Significance

Dating to 1930, the St. Luke AME Zion Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as one of the leading Birmingham churches involved in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in the Civil Rights era and as a scene of conflict in 1962 when it was bombed and damaged. It meets the registration requirements for a Conflict Center as discussed in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS.

Rev. John O. Hart, the church's minister from 1960-63, gave spiritual and financial support to the Birmingham's Civil Rights struggle and Civil Rights meetings took place at the church building during his tenure. Historians of the Civil Rights Movement have long discussed the intersection of faith and activism in the mass meetings held at various Birmingham churches. Historian and Baptist minister Wilson Fallin, Jr., emphasized:

The influence of the African-American church and its peculiar culture on the ACMHR stands out most vividly in the organization's weekly mass meetings. These meetings were essentially African-American church worship services. The meetings began with a thirty-minute devotional service made up of prayers, spirituals, and meter hymns, followed by singing by the ACMHR choir. The presider, usually ACMHR vice-present, the Reverend Edward Gardner, offered brief remarks. A local supporting pastor delivered a sermon. President Shuttlesworth then made some remarks and the ushers took up the offering. The meetings were very emotional with much shouting. . . The emotionalism of the mass meetings, as in an African-American church, provided not only emotional release but also the courage to fight the forces of segregation in a hostile environment. (Fallin, 15-16)

Furthermore, the mass meetings were important tools of oral communication for a society that had few other public options, since open discussion of civil rights strategies over the airwaves or in print could provoke severe reactions from white extremists. Furthermore, activists knew that to reach the core working-class residents of their neighborhoods, meetings in the churches were much more effective venues than print or electronic media. It was thus at the churches where activists, often a combination of local ministers, community leaders, and the occasional visitor from another Civil Rights hotbed, relayed the important messages and key strategies to be debated and carried out. The churches were considered safe havens in an often hostile environment.

But sometimes the hostility overwhelmed the church's role in America as a safe haven. Due to the church's public support for the Movement, it became a target for domestic terrorists, who bombed the church, along with two others, on January 16, 1962. The bombers targeted New Bethel Baptist Church at 13th Avenue and Sipsey Street, St. Luke's AME Zion Church, and Triumph Church and Kingdom of God and Christ at 2505 24th Street North. Of the three churches, St. Luke's AME Zion was the most damaged. The blast blew out the original windows and knocked a large hole in the east wall. These three churches were the first to be bombed in Birmingham since Bethel Baptist Church had been bombed for the second time in 1958. The bombings were attempts to deter and discourage the recent progress of the ACMHR and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in pushing for the desegregation of public parks and pools and the beginnings of the Selective Buying Campaign.

Rev. Hart and the congregation were not deterred and remained in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. They also rebuilt the damaged wall and renovated the damaged interior, which today remains extant. The congregation held meetings here in the spring of 1963 to plan its involvement in the Project C demonstrations of April and May 1963. The congregation also sponsored workshops for voter registration in 1964-1966.

St. Luke AME Zion Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A as listed in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. The church was an important strategy center for the Movement in the Project C demonstrations and it became a significant conflict center due to being bombed and damaged in 1962.

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St. Luke AME Zion Church, Jefferson County, AL

IX. Bibliography

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Eskew, Glenn. *But for Birmingham*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Fallin, Wilson, Jr. "Rock Solid Faith: African American Church Life and Culture in 1956 Birmingham." Marjorie L. White and Andrew M. Manis, eds. *Birmingham Revolutionaries: The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000. 7-18.

Hendricks, Lola. Interviews with Marjorie L. White. 1999. Birmingham Historical Society.

Fieldwork notes, July 24, 2003. In possession of the author.

St. Luke AME Zion Church Files, Birmingham Historical Society Civil Rights Collection-Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Civil Rights Churches Files, Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham, Alabama. Files include Board of Equalization Records, City Directory Trace, and Photographs.

Temple, Chanda and Jeff Hansen. "Ministers' Homes, Churches Among Bomb Targets." *Birmingham News*, July 16, 2000.

White, Marjorie L., *A Walk to Freedom-The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Movement for Human Rights*. Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1998.

X. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated boundaries of St. Luke AME Zion Church at 3937 12th Avenue North are represented by Lots 11-12, Block 47, East Birmingham Land Company, as marked on the attached Jefferson County Tax Map 01-23-19-1, Sections NE ¼ 19, Township 17 South, Range 2 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the St. Luke AME Zion Church.

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Photographs Page

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St. Luke AME Zion Church, Jefferson County, AL

St. Luke AME Zion Church
Birmingham, Jefferson Co., AL

Photographs (exterior) by: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
July 2003

Photographs (interior) by: Birmingham Historical Society
January 2000

North façade, facing south
1 of 10

North façade, facing southwest
2 of 10

North façade and east elevation, facing southwest
3 of 10

North façade and west elevation, facing southeast
4 of 10

South elevation, facing northeast
5 of 10

Sanctuary, facing south
6 of 10

Pulpit, facing south
7 of 10

Sanctuary, facing east
8 of 10

Sanctuary, facing west
9 of 10

Sanctuary, facing north
10 of 10

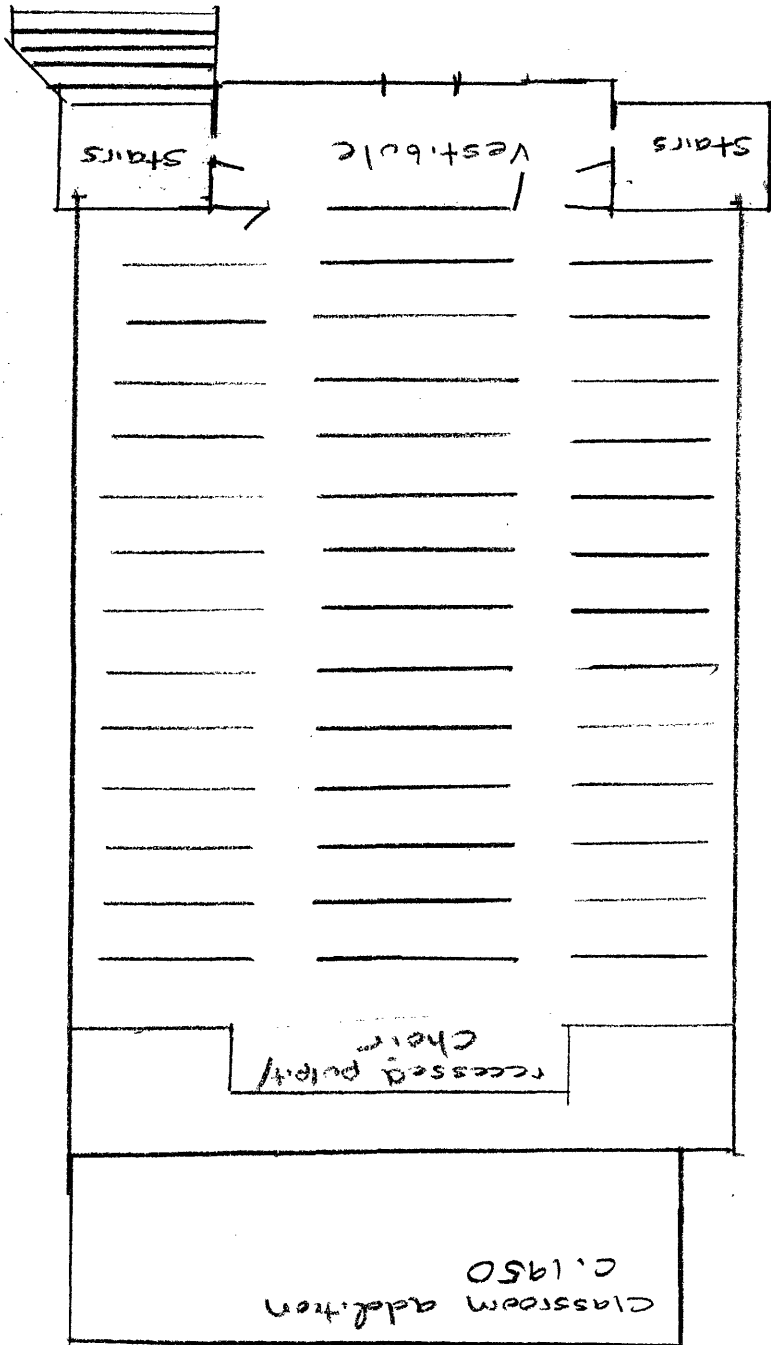
St. Luke AME Zion
3937 12th Ave North
Birmingham AL

2003:NTS
N ↑

Pattern Book

12th Avenue N

39th Street N



Side of
Church
Bombed
1962
→