

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel

other names/site number Bethel AME

name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 60 West 132nd Street

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

city or town New York

state NY code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10037

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 forth 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Roger Dawud Mackey Date 9/24/2018
Signature of certifying official/Title

DS4PO
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]
Signature of the Keeper

11/9/18
Date of Action

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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 the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION / Religious Facility

RELIGION / Church-related Residence

DOMESTIC / Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION / Religious Facility

RELIGION / Church-related Residence

DOMESTIC / Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS / Late

Gothic Revival

LATE VICTORIAN / Second Empire

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone (Granite), Brick

walls: Brick, Terra Cotta, Cast Stone

roof: Asphalt

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel (Bethel AME) is located at 60 West 132nd Street in the Borough of Manhattan in the City of New York. Bethel AME is located in central Harlem, approximately half a mile west of the Harlem River and one mile north of Central Park. The urban form of Harlem is largely characterized by low-scale residential blocks of brownstones on its side streets with commercial and institutional buildings, as well as a larger scale residences, lining the avenues. The church complex is situated on the south side of West 132nd Street, between Malcolm X Boulevard and Fifth Avenue. Moving from west to east along the block, the church complex includes the church, its former rectory, and the Bethel Manor apartment building. The north side of the street is dominated by the Lenox Terrace housing complex (1959), a sixteen-story tower-in-the-park style development. The south of West 132nd Street is lower in scale. Bethel AME Church has a row of historic three-story houses typical of Harlem to its west and five-story tenement apartment buildings lie to the east of the Bethel Manor apartment building.

The church, rectory, and apartment building each occupy nearly their entire lot. A contemporary metal fence runs in front of the entrances of the church, and is matched by fencing and the railing on the concrete steps in front of the rectory. Two raised planters with shrubbery and concrete steps and a ramp running parallel to the street are located in front of the apartment building. The nomination includes the parcels historically associated with Bethel AME Church, its rectory, and the Bethel Manor apartment building that it constructed to serve its congregation and the neighborhood.

Narrative Description

Bethel AME Church, 1913 (1 contributing building)

Two-story, one-bay by six-bay, Neo-Gothic church resting on a random ashlar granite foundation. The church's north elevation has a cast stone and terra-cotta facade and features a central gable flanked by two vertical piers. The building's east, west, and south elevations are covered in stucco and punctured by six pointed arch stained glass windows. The building is rectangular in plan, with a small annex attached to the building's southwest corner. The church's original design remains intact and the building's interior and exterior retain much of their original decoration.

The facade is dominated by an ornate central section with an entrance pavilion, large window, and gable. Three granite steps fronted by an attached non-historic wrought-iron gate on the sidewalk lead to a slightly projecting pavilion. The pavilion features three multi-paneled doors and transoms, each of which is set within a recessed pointed arch. While the wood paneling is undecorated, each door boasts a bronze handle with Gothic tracery. The spaces between the doorways are decorated by four decorative cast stone flowers, set within a rectangle and topped by blind lancet arches. A course of cast stone label molding highlights the entryway.

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The façade is dominated by a pointed arch stained glass window that rises above the entrance pavilion. The window's stained glass is arranged in an ornate geometric pattern. Surrounding the window is a terra cotta frame with ornamentation of blind pointed arches and quatrefoils. Above this, there is a cast stone pediment with a terra cotta belt course of blind arches pierced by a curved empty niche. The facade is topped by a pointed, ornamental crown with Gothic detailing that serves as a false front for the building's flat roof.

Two comparatively unadorned piers flank the front gable. Each pier is capped by vertical terra cotta elements which stretch upward from the second story to terminate in three blind lancet arches, topped by a crown of trefoil tracery and foliated pinnacles. A metal cross reading "AME CHURCH: BETHEL" protrudes outward from the eastern pier, and a pair of signboards sit on either side of the doorway.

On both the east and west elevations, the rough cast-stone cladding of the front extends around the corner to frame the first of six bays. The remainder of these side elevations are faced in stucco with a beige cementitious coating. These more austere elevations are punctured by six pairs of stained glass windows: each bay consists of a small, square window at the level of the first floor topped by a tall pointed arch window stretching up to the roofline. These stained glass windows feature a similar ornamental tracery to that found in the large window on the front facade. Five buttresses separate the windows, providing structural support to the building.

Rectangular in plan, the church is organized around two stories and a basement. The ground floor is divided into a narthex and the nave, with an administrative office in the annex. The second story is entirely devoted to gallery seating on the building's north, east, and west sides. The basement has an open layout for use as a group space.

The north facade's three entryways open into the narthex. This long, narrow space features two sets of stairs on either side that lead to the basement and the balcony seating. Three doors, set in rectangular frames, open into the nave. The nave, laid out with a center aisle and two side aisles, is a double height space with open balconies on three sides. These balconies are supported by six faux marbleized Doric columns. Pressed-metal ceilings, featuring either simple Gothic tracery or a square pattern, are found throughout. The space is lit on the east and west facades by the aforementioned sets of stained-glass windows. The stained glass windows have opalescent glass in a geometric patterns. The lancet windows on the side elevations include various symbols in the upper part of the window. Non-historic chandeliers line the sides of the space, with a larger one located directly in the center.

These aisles terminate in the choir, which is recessed from the main space. The flanking walls on either side of the choir house the pipes of the church's organ, which was originally installed in 1935 and rebuilt by Southfield Organ Builders in 2010. This section's ceiling boasts a distinct coffered pattern with stars painted onto a dark blue background. The choir hosts a tiered altar, featuring wood paneling with carved Gothic ornamentation. Above this rises a frontispiece of painted panels set within wooden quatrefoils and cusped arches. Inside the large central panel, set within a wide pointed arch, is a mural of Jesus Christ with the words "COME UNTO ME" painted below. Clusters of thin wooden colonettes, topped by carved angels, flank the frontispiece. This

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whole ensemble acts as a proscenium for the choir seating that is set back from the altar behind an open banded arch. Hanging in front of this Gothic complex is a large non-contributing chandelier, framed by two pendants, designed as Gothic plated crests with an Alpha and Omega symbol, respectively.

The second-story gallery runs along the north, east, and west sides of the space. The balconies feature tiered pew seating and a balustrade railing that separates the seats from the open central space. The large central window of the north facade rises behind the seating to light the space. An ornately carved wooden doorway provides access to the organ at the southern ends of both the east and west balconies.

The Bethel AME Rectory, constructed ca. 1870 and acquired by church 1913 (1 contributing building)

Two and one-half story over a raised basement, three-bay by six-bay frame residential structure. The building is covered in asbestos siding and has an asphalt-covered mansard roof; the foundation is covered by siding, but appears to be brick. A flight of non-historic concrete steps rising from east to west, provides access from the sidewalk to the front door. The rectory's raised basement has two small windows partially sunken below street level. On the first floor, the doorway is in the westernmost bay. It is flanked by two one-over-one double hung wood windows that stretch the full height of the door. The second floor features three smaller one-over-one double hung wood windows. This is topped by a mansard roof on the façade; the building is primarily covered by a shed roof. A pair of front-gabled dormers, each containing a twin set of one-over-one windows, projects from the roofline. The east and west elevations lack fenestration. The north elevation has a door and a non-historic safety glass window on the first floor, and two two-over-two double hung sash windows on each of the second and third floors.

The Bethel Manor apartment building, 1972 (1 contributing building)

Six-story, thirteen-bay by six-bay, flat-roofed brick building built in a simple modern style. The symmetrical building is roughly rectangular but is given some rhythm by projecting bays on each end and slightly projecting balcony bays four bays from each end. This setback of the other bays provides space for a ramp and two raised gardens, all of which are constructed of the same brick as the facade. On the first floor, the entrance is set slightly off center. A set of stairs leading up to a patio rises to the entrance, which has a pair of glass doors set within a recessed entry. The one-story entry porch is made up of a concrete slab cantilevered off a vertical concrete element set against the west side of the stair form. The building has regular fenestration; all of the bays, excepting the balconies, feature paired one-over-one windows with a built-in air conditioner underneath. On the second through sixth stories, the fourth bay inward from both ends of the building contains a set of balconies. These slightly projecting balconies are enclosed by brick walls on either side and divided in half by another wall that separates the outdoor space between the adjacent apartment units. The west elevation abuts the adjacent building, and the east elevation has a single window in each of the two central bays.

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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage / Black

Social History

Period of Significance

1913-1972

Significant Dates

1913, 1917, 1971-72

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

African-American

Architect/Builder

F.W. Wengenroth & Matsin

Horace Ginsbern & Associates

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 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.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from the construction of First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel in 1913 to the completion of Bethel Manor in 1972. Although the rectory was built in 1870, its significance begins with its purchase by and association with the church in 1913.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel continues to be owned by its congregation and serve religious purposes, but the building is significant for its association with the history of its congregation and that of Harlem's African-American community. It is also significant as an example of early twentieth century neo-Gothic ecclesiastical architecture.

The Bethel Manor apartment building was constructed in 1971-72, less than fifty years ago. Its construction is exceptionally significant at the local level as a major project in the history of the congregation and for its reflection of the church's continued role in social activism and economic justice in Harlem into the second half of the twentieth century.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, more popularly known as Bethel AME, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of social and ethnic history for its association with one of Harlem's leading African-American congregations during the twentieth century. One of the first African-American congregations in New York City, Bethel AME was initially established in lower Manhattan in 1819. The congregation worshipped in a series of different buildings during the nineteenth century. Just as the city's black population began to root itself in Harlem, the congregation purchased several rowhouses on 132nd Street, keeping one as a rectory and demolishing the rest to create space for its new church, constructed in 1912-1913. Over the twentieth century, Bethel AME played an active role in the neighborhood, serving as an important gathering place and spiritual center for the neighborhood's African-American population and as a champion for social and racial justice. Notably, the church hosted Marcus Garvey's first speech given in Harlem. The church's pastors played important local roles in the civil rights movement and led the way in developing community programs and initiatives that responded to community needs. The property is exceptionally significant at the local level due to the congregation's leadership in constructing an early church-owned apartment building to provide affordable housing in the neighborhood. Conceived of during the mid-1960s in response to the local challenges presented by urban renewal, high rents, high poverty rates, and housing shortages, Bethel AME partnered with local banks to construct the Bethel Manor apartments in 1971-72. This substantial investment in the community predates the church-based housing projects which became more common in Harlem during the 1980s. The church building has remained in continuous use by its original congregation, which continues to be a social, cultural, and religious hub of the community. Together with the rectory and apartment building, the church complex reflects the congregation's long history and commitment to Harlem.

Bethel AME is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good local example of an early twentieth century neo-Gothic church. This cast stone faced building, designed in the neo-Gothic style by Wengenroth & Matsin, is a modest building that nonetheless expresses the pride and aspirations of a congregation establishing itself in a new neighborhood. Its design includes traditional Gothic elements, such as its large arched window, arched windows on its side elevations, buttress-like piers, and masonry façade, suggesting tradition and stability. The architects avoided slavishly reproducing a traditional Gothic building, blending these recognizable features with a rectangular plan better suited to Manhattan's narrow lots and Protestant worship and took advantage of cast stone technology to create detailing without the cost of stonecarving. Although the church's interior and exterior have seen minor alterations over the years, it retains a high degree of physical integrity.

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

Until 1609, when Henry Hudson first anchored his ship, the *Half Moon*, off of an inlet near present-day 125th Street, the area now-known as Harlem had been occupied for centuries by two groups of the Lenape Native American nation. The Lenape population was quickly displaced by Dutch conquest and settlement, and the

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Director-General of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant, founded Harlem in 1658. For most of its early history, Harlem remained an isolated village ten miles north of New Amsterdam. The community was initially linked with the growing port to its south by a Lenape Native American trail widened by enslaved African Americans. Even after a small British force “peacefully” conquered New Netherland in 1664, Harlemites retained their property rights and social norms. Shortly after taking control, the British officially delineated Harlem’s southern boundary, which cut diagonally across Manhattan Island from what is now West 129th Street on the Hudson River to present day East 74th Street on the East River.¹ The community maintained its rough and rural character, largely reliant on the re-christened port of New York but not sharing in the benefits of the city’s growth. Through the eighteenth century, the town became an increasingly prosperous farming community, as many prominent New York families, fleeing the summer heat of the city, began to maintain large estates on the heights overlooking the Hudson.² However, Harlem found itself within the crossfire of some of the earliest action in the American Revolutionary War, resulting in its destruction and abandonment. Although patriot Harlemites returned after the war, the village was slow to grow back into an independent community. It gained its first fire engine in 1804 and first proper marketplace in 1807.³ At this point Harlem was still relatively rural, but its inclusion as part of the grid of the 1811 Commissioner’s Plan placed the village within the vision of New York’s long-term urban expansion.

While Harlem has had a small African American population throughout its history, the story of Bethel AME and New York City’s black community largely begins downtown in the growing metropolis during the nineteenth century. A combination of poverty and discriminatory housing practices relegated most black New Yorkers to marginal neighborhoods. Bethel AME’s constant movement is reflective of the shifts in housing patterns and the varying accessibility of neighborhoods to African Americans at the time. Since it was first established in New York, the congregation consistently occupied peripheral locations in lower Manhattan until permanently relocating to Harlem and building a church of its own.

Founded in 1794 by Richard Allen, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, often called the Bethel (“House of God” in Hebrew) Church, was formed as the result of mounting tensions between white and black congregants at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. The congregation grew in numbers and prestige, so that by 1819 the Reverend Allen commissioned William Lambert “to go and labor in the city of New York” and create a branch of the AME church there.⁴ By the following year, “twenty individuals had united with Reverend William Lambert to lease a schoolroom on Mott Street for 7 years.”⁵ Despite this initial success, the congregation had trouble getting permanently situated, first locating in an old house on Allen Street, then the

¹ Andrew Dolkart and Gretchen Sullivan Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem: Four Walks in Northern Manhattan* (New York: New York Landmarks Conservancy, 1997), 8.

² Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 8.

³ Jonathan Gill, *Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History from Dutch Village to Capital of Black America* (New York: Grove Press, 2011), 1-75.

⁴ Daniel Alexander Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. C. S. Smith (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891), 34.

⁵ First AME Church: Bethel, "History." <http://www.famebethel.com/about-us/history/history-continued/>

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Mutual Relief Hall at 42 Orange Street, the basement of an organ factory on Centre Street, and another factory on Elizabeth Street before finally settling in a house on 2nd Street between Avenues B and C.

All of these locations were north of the city's commercial heart but easily accessible to the African American population that lived in the infamous Five Points neighborhood. While Five Points was typically defined by its poverty and depravity, this characterization neglects the story of self-determination illustrated by the presence of African American religious and educational institutions, such as St. Philip's Episcopal Church, the African Free School #2, and Bethel AME, in the neighborhood. However, Bethel AME sold its property in Five Points in 1860 as the congregation's numbers dwindled due to demographic shifts. An influx of Irish and German immigrants increased the demand for cheap housing and ultimately pushed the African American population out of the neighborhood. Simultaneously, the city's affluent population, which employed many black New Yorkers as house servants, began to move further uptown.⁶ As the upper class fled northward, a "Little Africa" developed nearby along Bleecker, Sullivan, Thompson, MacDougal, and Carmine Streets in Greenwich Village. Following its congregation across town, in 1862 Bethel AME purchased the former Methodist Episcopal Church at 214 Sullivan Street (no longer extant) for a sum of \$25,000. Rectangular in plan, this front-gabled church sat at the lot line with a facade dominated by three large round top windows.

The changing social conditions of Lower Manhattan also began to impact previously isolated Harlem. New York City's rapid demographic growth and industrial expansion, as well as the accompanying social strife, made Harlem a place of retreat for both wealthy New Yorkers fleeing labor unrest and a small African American population displaced by violent events like the Draft Riots of 1863. Yet, even as shantytowns of Irish and German immigrants began to dot the landscape, mid-19th century Harlem retained its image as an inviting rural area, popular for "picnics and other outings."⁷

The explosive growth of Manhattan was fueled by successive waves of immigrant groups flooding into the city. By the 1880s, newly arrived Italian immigrants had overwhelmed the supply of housing and forced the black population out of Greenwich Village. Little Africa soon became Little Italy. Black New Yorkers resettled on the tenement blocks of the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill, formerly Irish neighborhoods on Manhattan's mid-West Side. Bethel AME remained on Sullivan Street until 1894, when its congregation purchased a Gothic Revival church at 239 West 25th Street, originally built in 1878 for the First Free-Will Baptist Church (no longer extant). This Gothic Revival church featured a large central gable with a doorway and window set into pointed arches, flanked by a pair of pinnacles on each side.

At the turn of the century, the city's black population was concentrated in a handful of densely populated blocks that were scattered between 20th and 63rd Streets in present-day Midtown. The Tenderloin District's nebulous boundaries encompassed the portion of this area between 20th and 53rd Street. While a majority of the African American churches in Greenwich Village had relocated to the West Side by 1900, many new institutions were

⁶ Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 35.

⁷ Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 9.

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established in this neighborhood as well. West 53rd Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, became the Tenderloin's black "Main Street." As a former Bethel AME pastor noted, it "was the principal resort for *our* group."⁸ Bethel AME congregants were active participants in the community's civic life, as demonstrated by Emma Ramson, wife of Bethel AME pastor Reverdy Ransom, who was elected president of the Colored Women's Branch of the YWCA at 143 West 53rd Street. Centered on institutions like this, the Tenderloin developed as the cultural, intellectual, and social center of the city's black community. Nevertheless, the blossoming cultural scene belied the fact that the average African American "had to work more hours to earn less money than anyone else."⁹

The movement of African Americans into the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill can be partly attributed to the demographic shifts facilitated by construction of the Second, Third, and Eighth Avenue elevated railways between 1878 and 1880, which opened up both eastern and western Harlem to speculative residential construction.¹⁰ Initial development in the western portion of Harlem was characterized by rowhouses and some apartment buildings, accompanied by social and cultural institutions that catered to middle- and upper-middle-class residents fleeing commercial development and tenement construction in neighborhoods below 59th Street. These families often came with servants, who were primarily young women from Ireland, Germany, and Sweden or African American migrants from the south.¹¹ The eastern section of Harlem took on an entirely different character, dominated by tenement buildings housing Italian and Eastern European Jews.

Until the turn of the century there were still large swaths of Harlem that remained undeveloped. This changed with the completion of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company's [IRT] subway in 1904, which ran from Times Square along Broadway, through the densely populated commercial areas and tenement neighborhoods, like the Tenderloin District, to a branch that turned onto Lenox Avenue and ran through the center of Harlem to 145th Street. The section of Harlem along Seventh and Lenox Avenues, between 130th and 150th Streets, was where speculation "was probably more widespread and involved larger expenditures than realty manipulations in other sections of Harlem."¹² It was here that speculators constructed higher quality, "new law" tenements for the working and middle class, with property values grossly inflated by the proposed subway connection. Between 1901 and 1907, over 450 tenements were constructed in an area stretching from 135th Street and 155th Street in Central Harlem.¹³ However, the arrival of the IRT in 1904 did not bring the promised demand for rentals, and "speculators sadly realized afterward that too many houses were constructed at one time."¹⁴

The housing glut uptown coincided with factors that exacerbated the overcrowding and social unrest of the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill. The construction of the massive Pennsylvania Station in 1910 resulted in the

⁸ Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 14-15.

⁹ Osofsky, *Harlem*, 16.

¹⁰ Virginia Kurshan, "62 West 130th Street House Designation Report," (New York: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1981).

¹¹ Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 11-12.

¹² Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 89.

¹³ Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 14.

¹⁴ Osofsky, *Harlem*, 90.

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demolition of entire blocks of tenements and spurred industrial and commercial development in Midtown, further diminishing the district's housing stock. Additionally, simmering racial tensions amongst Irish and black residents on the west side erupted into riots in 1900 and 1905. Prominent individuals and institutions within the black community advocated that leaving the Tenderloin was necessary to advance as a group.

The pressures pushing blacks out of Midtown, combined with new transit connections and an excess in housing uptown, is typically identified as the catalyst for Harlem's transformation into an African American community. However, by 1900 around 25 percent of the city's black population already lived in Manhattan's 12th Ward, which included Harlem.¹⁵ This dispersed, largely working-class black population occupied blocks and buildings scattered among the milieu of socioeconomic groups occupying the neighborhood at the time. Nevertheless, the transformation of the neighborhood into a predominantly black community did not occur until the short-lived Afro-American Realty Company, along with affluent black individuals, capitalized on the aforementioned housing glut and began to purchase and rent property to black tenants during the 1900s. The new housing options offered in this section of Harlem represented a vast improvement over the tenements of the Tenderloin District that blacks were leaving behind.

As the African American community became increasingly visible and concentrated, white property owners resorted to the use of restrictive racial covenants. These covenants, recorded on the deed to the property, maintained residential segregation patterns by prohibiting sales or leases to African Americans. Resisting this discrimination, African American buyers used deception to procure land or simply bought property from a seller willing to violate a covenant. For instance, the pastor of St. Philip's Church, who easily passed as white, started accumulating property in 1907 before passing it onto the congregation in 1910.¹⁶

When the relatively short terms of the covenants expired, often after fifteen years, most property owners conceded to the seemingly inevitable shift in the community. After the neighborhood's white population began leaving the area in increasing numbers, even more real estate speculators and white property owners to begin selling and renting to African Americans, effectively re-segregating the community. By the late 1920s, black Harlemites had moved beyond the blocks of apartment buildings and began living in the rowhouse district south of 125th Street that was once the bastion of the upper-middle-class.¹⁷

Bethel AME Moves to Harlem

Most of the city's well-established African American churches soon began campaigns to move up to Harlem as well. By selling their old churches in the Tenderloin just as property values in Midtown were skyrocketing, African American congregations had the resources to actively invest in Harlem's real estate market. In fact, the African American churches moving into Harlem were often older, wealthier, and larger than the neighborhood's relatively small white congregations that were still financially burdened with debt from

¹⁵ Kevin McGruder, *Race and Real Estate: Conflict and Cooperation in Harlem, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 3.

¹⁶ McGruder, *Race and Real Estate*, 103-105.

¹⁷ Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 15.

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construction. Therefore, many rapidly expanding black congregations found more spacious accommodations in the vacated white churches than those they left behind downtown, despite the obstacles initially presented by restrictive covenants. The congregations' growing wealth, combined with the relatively low property values in Harlem, also enabled them to purchase apartment houses, evict the white tenants, and begin leasing to African Americans. As New York City's black population established itself in Harlem, its numbers were bolstered by the Great Migration of southern blacks and Caribbean immigrants to northern cities, turning the neighborhood into an African American neighborhood of unprecedented scale in the city's history.¹⁸

In 1911, the houses which stood at 52-54, 56-58, and 60 West 132nd Street were being advertised in the *New York Age*, a newspaper with a largely black readership base, for rent at rates of \$50 and \$60 a month.¹⁹ These houses were part of a row of eleven smaller-scale frame rowhouses which were constructed ca. 1870.²⁰ Under the leadership of Pastor Reverdy Ransom, Bethel AME purchased this land on 132nd Street from Solomon Brooks and Joseph Bichler, paying \$100 and assuming two mortgages totaling \$35,000. The congregation retained one of the houses, a three-story Second Empire style rowhouse on lot 52, for use as a rectory, and quickly began construction of a new church building. Bethel AME's history states:

On May 18, 1912, ground was broken on lots 52 and 54-60 West 132nd Street to build a new house of worship. Bethel's first service at the 132nd Street location was held on September 13, 1913 at 6:30 a.m. At 10:30 a.m., the morning worship service opened with a thankful, proud, and happy processional of people. Bishop Tyree delivered the message. The church's praise and celebration continued for the week.²¹

Built at a cost of \$60,000, Bethel AME was designed by the firm of Wengenroth & Matsin, whose office was located at 29 Broadway. While there are no known works attributable to Matsin, F.W. Wengenroth can be associated with four brick and stone stables built in 1908 for the Burns Brothers Coal Company. No longer extant, these buildings once stood at 134th Street between the Hudson River and the tracks of the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad. While there is not much known about the architects of Bethel AME, the church's neo-Gothic design is fairly typical of protestant churches built at the time, including those of other African-American congregations in Harlem (Figure 1-2).

The congregation's use of the neo-Gothic style for its new home, perhaps referencing the Gothic Revival style of its old church on 23rd Street, is representative of the style's popularity among congregations at the turn of the twentieth century. Due to its association with historic European churches and cathedrals, medieval design was popularly understood to be the architectural embodiment of traditional Christian values. Bethel AME was not the first African American church in Harlem to employ this style. St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, at 210-215 West 134th Street, was designed and built by Tandy & Foster between 1910 and 1911. One of the

¹⁸ Dolkart and Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem*, 21.

¹⁹ Office of Philip A. Payton, Jr., Company, "Private Houses to Let," advertisement, *The New York Age*, April 21, 1910.

²⁰ The rowhouses do not appear on the 1867 atlas, but are there by 1879. Mathew Dripps, *Plan of New York City, from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek* (New York: Mathew Dripps, 1867); G.W. Bromley & Co., *Atlas of the Entire City of New York, complete in one volume* (New York: G.W. Bromley, 1879).

²¹ First AME Church: Bethel, "History."

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oldest black congregations in the city and one of the first to move to Harlem, St. Philip's was designed in the neo-Gothic style; its facade lacked a central entrance but featured principal doorways at the foot of each side aisle, allowing liturgical processions to form in the central narthex without interruption from latecomers.²² Other churches in Harlem that were built after Bethel AME also utilized the neo-Gothic style; they include Abyssinian Baptist Church (Charles W. Bolton & Son, 1922-23) and Mother AME Zion Church (George W. Foster Jr., 1923-1925). These designs "adopted modern construction techniques, but incorporated traditional Gothic features modeled on forms found in twelfth- and thirteenth-century European churches and cathedrals."²³ Bethel AME, with its use of cast stone and terra cotta to affordably replicate carved Gothic details, also represents this.

Similar to other churches built in Harlem at this time, Bethel AME presents a neo-Gothic street elevation that fronts a building with a rectangular plan, which more readily lent itself to the narrow lots established by Manhattan's gridiron blocks. While their facades may represent a return to medieval inspiration, the interiors of churches like Abyssinian, Mother Zion, and Bethel AME were not laid out in the traditional cross plan, but "retain the auditorium plan that became popular for Protestant churches (other than Episcopalian) in the mid-nineteenth century... [which] permitted all members of the congregation to see and hear the preacher, an indication of the central role played by the minister and the importance of the sermon in the service."²⁴

Bethel AME and other congregations' use of the neo-Gothic in their church buildings represents an attempt to assert their legitimacy, permanence, and shared religious traditions in a neighborhood fraught with social tensions at the time of construction. However, as Kevin McGruder asserts, "from the perspective of many white Harlem residents, the idea that these black newcomers would also establish churches in the community and seek to acquire buildings constructed by white congregations was going too far."²⁵ To many African Americans, church membership and the stability of a congregation with ownership of its property also served as a counterpoint to the common stereotypes of criminality and lawlessness typically attributed to their community by whites. Occupying a building of its own for the first time in its long history, Bethel adopted the architectural language of its contemporaries, and using cost-effective and modern construction materials, to assert its permanence in a new community and stake a claim among the other well-established and more prominent churches in Harlem.

Churches were among the few independent institutions controlled by African Americans, simultaneously filling the role of social center, political forum, and charitable organization. Upon its move to Harlem, Bethel AME continued to keep an active presence in the social and cultural life of the black community. Among its programs,

²² Charles Savage, "St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church Designation Report," (New York: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1993), 1.

²³ Christopher Moore and Andrew Dolkart, "Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Designation Report," (New York: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1993), 5.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

²⁵ McGruder, *Race and Real Estate*, 97.

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the church maintained a Sunday school with primary, junior, intermediate, and adult departments.²⁶ In 1927, the congregation began operating “a free clinic for the poor of Harlem” that was reported as “one of the first of its kind in the city.”²⁷ The congregation’s community work was shaped by the church leadership’s perceived role of spirituality in African American life. In 1930, Reverend Edward Clark asserted in a Sunday sermon that “Religion is the birthright of the Negro and that gift should be clung to and developed to its fullest extent.”²⁸ Seeing religion as a key component of black identity, Bethel AME took up the charge of advocating for African Americans’ civil rights.

According to historian Jeffrey Perry, “Bethel A.M.E. Church had a history of activism, particularly since the period of 1907 through 1912 when it was headed by the Socialist minister Reverdy C. Ransom.”²⁹ Hubert Harrison, the radical founder of the New Negro movement, likely considered the importance of the church in the black community when he chose Bethel AME as the location for his first mass-meeting in 1917. Despite relying on word-of-mouth and just one handout to draw in the public, Harrison managed to attract a crowd of 2,000 that packed into the small church at 8:00 PM on June 12, 1917. This rally marked the inauguration of the Afro-American Liberty League, an organization credited with spearheading the “New Negro Movement.” The New Negro Movement “promoted a renewed sense of racial pride, cultural self-expression, economic independence, and progressive politics” that formed the foundation for the Harlem Renaissance.³⁰ Among the guest speakers was Marcus Garvey, at that time a relatively unknown activist and proponent of black nationalism. Giving his first speech since he had returned Harlem, Garvey captivated the crowds at Bethel AME, compelling many to join his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a black nationalist fraternal organization.³¹

Even during the 116th anniversary celebration in 1936, when the church could boast of a recent redecoration, a new \$11,000 pipe organ, and a completely rebuilt altar, the keynote speaker at the ceremony took the opportunity to address the fact that “minority groups must fight for any recognition they might get in the public life of the country.”³² However, Bethel’s community engagement is best represented in the smaller-scale programming that the church provided to the community throughout its history. In 1930, Bethel AME’s weekly offerings included church services, classes, “A.C.E. League” meetings, a prayer meeting, and a Sabbath school.³³ Decades later, in August of 1967, Bethel was listed as a member of the Central Harlem Association of Neighborhood Church Enterprise, which was participating in a “satellite center” project to provide summer

²⁶ “Bethel A.M.E. Church,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 17, 1929.

²⁷ “Bethel, A. M. E. Church to Operate Free Clinic,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 1927

²⁸ “Upholds Religion as Birthright and Frowns on Economic Mastery Desire: Supremacy in Business and Power Belongs to White Man, Asserts Bethel Pastor, Who Urges Negro to Develop Spirituality,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 16, 1930.

²⁹ Jeffrey Babcock Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 282.

³⁰ Library of Congress, “The New Negro Movement.” <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-new-negro-movement.html>.

³¹ Robert A. Hill and Marcus Garvey, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. 7 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).

³² “Fight for Rights, Audience Is Told: Delany Urges Preparedness as Bethel Continues 116th Anniversary,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, May 2, 1936.

³³ “Manhattan and Brooklyn Religious Activities: Where to Go to Church,” *The New York Age*, November 22, 1930.

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programming to over 2,000 youths in Upper Manhattan.³⁴ The focus of Bethel's activism shifted over time in response to the changing issues faced by African Americans both in Harlem and across the country, such as the increasing concentration of poverty in black urban communities. In the winter of 1969, Judge William H. Booth, former chairman of the New York City Commission on Human Rights, spoke to an audience about prostitution, narcotics, and gambling, emphasizing that "crime was not unique to Harlem" and arguing that "we don't need new laws but enforcement of those we already have."³⁵ Bethel also remained active within the community of African American churches. In 1970, for instance, Bethel AME hosted the summer session of the Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Church, drawing members of the clergy from all fifty states.³⁶

This reputation for social justice work served as a draw for other activists in the black community. For example, A. Philip Randolph, a leader in the civil rights and American labor movements, became an official member of the congregation in 1957. While he had moved away from religion during his lifetime, Randolph had great respect for Bethel AME's social justice work and had been heartened by the mobilization of the larger black religious community within the past decade.³⁷ This social justice orientation can be partly attributed to the church leadership's continued association with black activist organizations since the days of minister Reverdy C. Ransom. The Reverend Richard Allen Hildebrand, who served as Bethel's pastor from 1950 to 1965, was simultaneously the president of the New York branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.³⁸

Bethel AME's determination to address the challenges facing Harlem continued into the second half of the twentieth century. By the 1970s, decades of unrest and urban renewal led many black families to leave the neighborhood entirely for more stable neighborhoods, returning only for church on Sundays. Urban renewal's impact on Harlem was complex. New housing projects could provide affordable, attractive apartments, but they often provided less housing than they replaced and resulted in the concentration of poverty. Conditions resulting from high poverty rates and high rents, which were on average one-third higher than comparable poor white neighborhoods, were exacerbated by New York City's fiscal crisis and the resulting cuts to essential services.³⁹

In addition to its strong leadership role within the community, Bethel AME worked to help provide and model solutions; this is perhaps best exemplified in the construction of the Bethel Manor apartment building, located just east of the rectory at 50 West 132nd Street. Bethel AME's congregation had a front-row seat to the impact that urban renewal projects could have on a neighborhood. The three blocks north of Bethel AME were cleared to construct Lenox Terrace, a Title I housing development for middle-income African-Americans, displacing 1,683 families. The new modern towers, completed in 1959, offered upper-end amenities like balconies, on-site

³⁴ "Church-Sponsored Moves Take 2,000 Kids Off Streets," *N.Y. Amsterdam News*, August 19, 1967.

³⁵ "Crime Fight Gains Support: Hold Meetings on Crime," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1969.

³⁶ "Convention Site," *N.Y. Amsterdam News*, July 4, 1970.

³⁷ Cynthia Taylor, A. *Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African-American Labor Leader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 179-180.

³⁸ "Hildebrand, S. African Choir at Easter Services," *N.Y. Amsterdam News*, March 21, 1964.

³⁹ Gill, *Harlem*, 385-387, 406-409; Brian D. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle Over Harlem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 21.

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parking, retail, and well-dressed doormen; it instantly became a fashionable address for prominent residents of Harlem and remains desirable to the present day.⁴⁰

While Lenox Terrace was successful at keeping wealthier black families in Harlem, the overall effort to construct new housing, reduce overcrowding, and remake the city forced hundreds of families to relocate, effectively increasing the housing problem elsewhere. Only sixty percent of the families living on the cleared blocks were eligible to relocate to new planned public housing, while the remainder were left to find new apartments on their own.⁴¹ Community groups, community development corporations (CDCs), and local institutions began working to find solutions to the growing problem. Notably, St. Philip's Episcopal Church, which had bought several apartment buildings in Harlem soon after moving to the neighborhood in 1910, began building housing and community centers during the 1960s.⁴²

Following St. Philip's lead and presaging the kind of work that church-based CDCs would undertake in the 1980s, Bethel AME took direct action to assist with the problems of displacement of church and community members. Church leadership first had first conceived of the idea during the mid-1960s, and worked with religious, civic, political, and banking leaders to make it a reality. Bethel AME and two local banks, The New York Bank for Savings and Bowery Saving Banks, partnered to finance the \$1.5 million project to construct the Bethel Manor apartment building to provide more affordable housing. At the dedication ceremony in January 1972, Bishop Bright acknowledged how Bethel Manor would help to "relieve the 'terrible shortage of living space in the Harlem area.'" (Figure 3) The building was completed and opened to new residents in September. Bethel Manor contained 47 rental units ranging in size from one- to three-bedrooms with an average monthly rental of \$42 per room and was projected to be the first of many apartment houses built in the neighborhood.⁴³

Built of red brick and concrete elements in a vernacular modern style, the six-story apartment building was designed by the firm Horace Ginsbern & Associates. Horace Ginsbern, a Jewish immigrant from Russia, rose to prominence as a designer of apartment houses in the Bronx throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Notably, Ginsbern played a role as part of the design team for the Harlem River Houses (National Register listed), the first federally funded and federally owned public housing project in New York City, which was completed in 1937. In 1944, Ginsbern, along with, Marvin Fine, and Jules Kabat, and his son his son, Frederick Morton Ginsbern,

⁴⁰ Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 21-22; Citizens Housing Planning Council, "The 1951 Slum Clearance Plan for Lenox Terrace." <http://chpcny.org/2014/04/the-1951-slum-clearance-plan-for-lenox-terrace/>; Lenox Terrace, "Harlem's Best Address." <http://lenoxlegacy.com/history/>

⁴¹ Citizens Housing Planning Council, "The 1951 Slum Clearance Plan for Lenox Terrace." <http://chpcny.org/2014/04/the-1951-slum-clearance-plan-for-lenox-terrace/>; Brian David Goldstein, "'The Search for New Forms': Black Power and the Making of the Postmodern City," *Journal of American History* 103 (2016): 379.

⁴² Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life, Columbia University, "M. Moran Weston and St. Philip's Episcopal Church," <https://ircpl.columbia.edu/2011/03/02/m-moran-weston-and-st-philips-episcopal-church/>

⁴³ "Formal Dedication for Bethel Manor," *N.Y. Amsterdam News*, December 18, 1971; "Housing Dedication," *New York Recorder*, January 29, 1972; "\$1.5 Million Housing Project Dedicated by Bethel Church," *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 15, 1972; Brian David Goldstein, "A City within a City: Community Development and the Struggle Over Harlem, 1961-2001" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013), 324, 339-343.

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established the firm of Horace Ginsbern & Associates. Although the senior Ginsbern passed away in 1969, the firm continued to operate until 1986.⁴⁴

The congregation continues to own and operate the Bethel Manor Apartments, which serve their original mission of providing affordable housing to the community. Bethel AME remains vibrant into the twenty-first century. It continues to serve its various roles as a religious, social, cultural, and charitable center, providing educational services and programming to its congregation and surrounding community and remains active in missions for social justice.

⁴⁴ Jennifer L. Most, "Grand Concourse Historic District Designation Report," (New York: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2011), 115.

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<http://chpcny.org/2014/04/the-1951-slum-clearance-plan-for-lenox-terrace/>

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“Upholds Religion as Birthright and Frowns on Economic Mastery Desire: Supremacy in Business and Power Belongs to White Man, Asserts Bethel Pastor, Who Urges Negro to Develop Spirituality.” *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 16, 1930.

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): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .55 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>589326</u> Easting	<u>4518353</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

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

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was drawn to include the parcels historically associated with the First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel's church, rectory, and the Bethel Manor apartment building.

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New York, New York Co., NY

60 West 132nd Street
New York, NY 10037



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



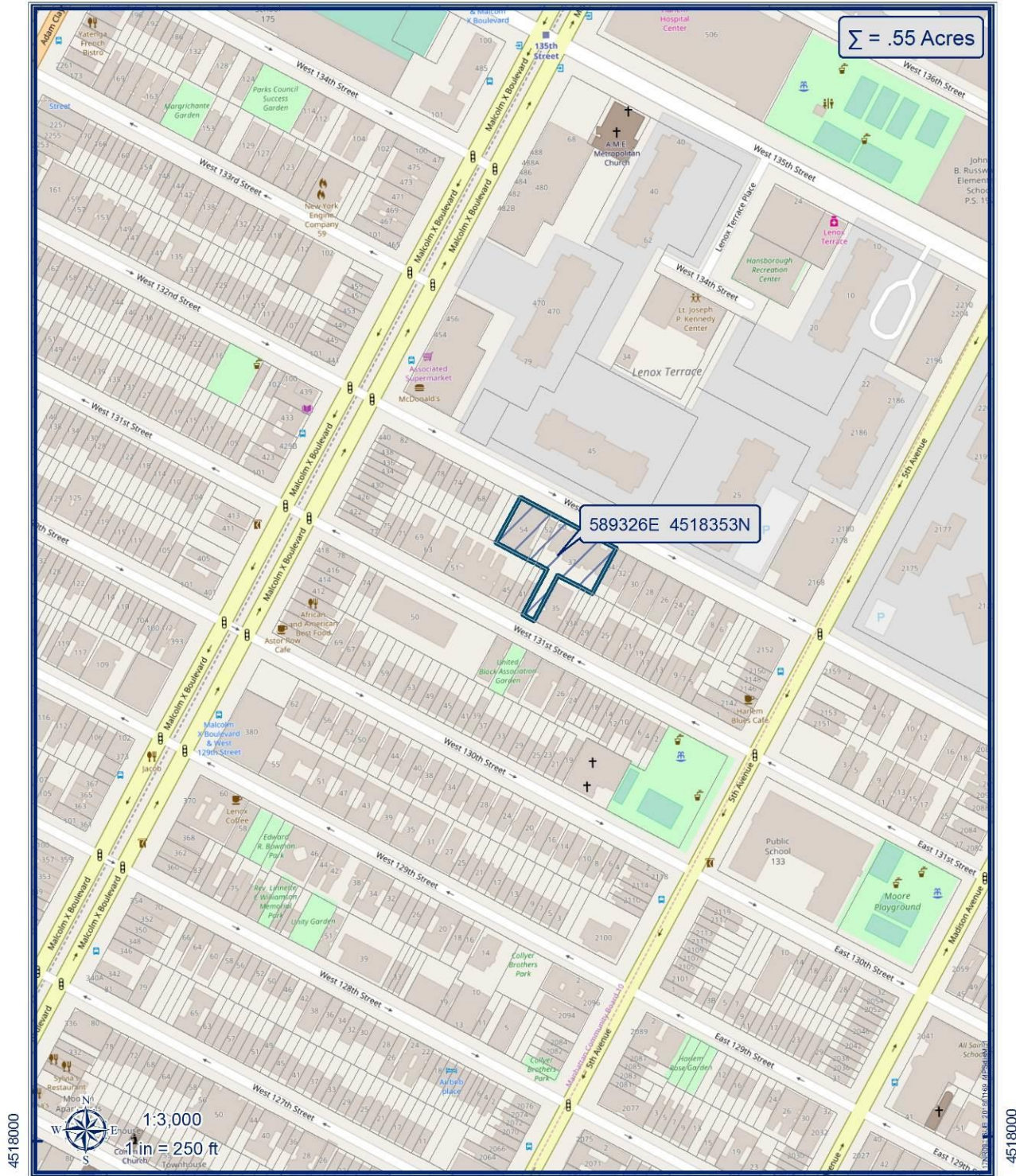
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

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First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel
New York, New York Co., NY

60 West 132nd Street
New York, NY 10037



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charles Hovanic, edited by Jennifer Betsworth (NY SHPO)
organization Columbia University Graduate School date August 2018
street & number 1172 Amsterdam Avenue telephone _____
city or town New York state NY zip code 10031
e-mail ch3093@columbia.edu

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel

City or Vicinity: New York

County: New York State: NY

Photographer: Charles Hovanic

Date Photographed: 2016-2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0001

View of church's north façade. Camera facing south. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0002

View of church's north façade. Camera facing southeast. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0003

View of western piece of north façade, including the terra cotta crowning element on the western pier of the north facade. Camera facing southeast. Taken: 9/28/2017.

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NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0004

View of cast stone detail, including florette elements, label molding, and recessed pointed arch, surrounding the central doorway on the north façade. Camera facing south. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0005

View of the narthex. Camera facing northwest. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0006

View of pressed metal ceiling and non-contributing chandelier underneath gallery. Camera facing northwest. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0007

View of nave and choir from narthex entrance. Camera facing south. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0008

View of stained-glass windows and gallery seating on the church's west side. Camera facing west. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0009

View of choir ceiling and carved wood frontispiece. Camera facing south. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_010

View of detail on the large stained-glass window of church's north facade. Camera facing north. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0011

View of choir from eastern gallery. Camera facing southwest. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0012

View of carved wooden doorway providing access to organ from western gallery. Camera facing south. Taken: 2/9/2016.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0013

View of rectory's north façade. Camera facing south. Taken: 5/5/2018.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0014

View of church's north façade. Camera facing southwest. Taken: 5/5/2018.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0015

View of Bethel Manor's north façade. Camera facing south. Taken: 5/5/2018.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0016

View of Bethel Manor's north façade. Camera facing southwest. Taken: 5/5/2018.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0017

View of Bethel Manor's entrance. Camera facing southeast. Taken: 5/5/2018.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0018

View of, from west to east, First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, the church rectory, and Bethel Manor from the north side of West 132nd Street. Camera facing southeast. Taken: 5/5/2018.

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NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0019

View of open group space in church basement. Camera facing south. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0020

View of nave and stained glass windows from eastern gallery seating. Camera facing northwest. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0021

View of church's east façade and rectory's south façade. Camera facing northwest. Taken: 9/28/2017.

NY_ NewYorkCo_BethelAME_0022

View of the east façade of the church annex in rear yard. Camera facing west. Taken: 9/28/2017.

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 18 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.

First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel
Name of Property

New York County, NY
County and State

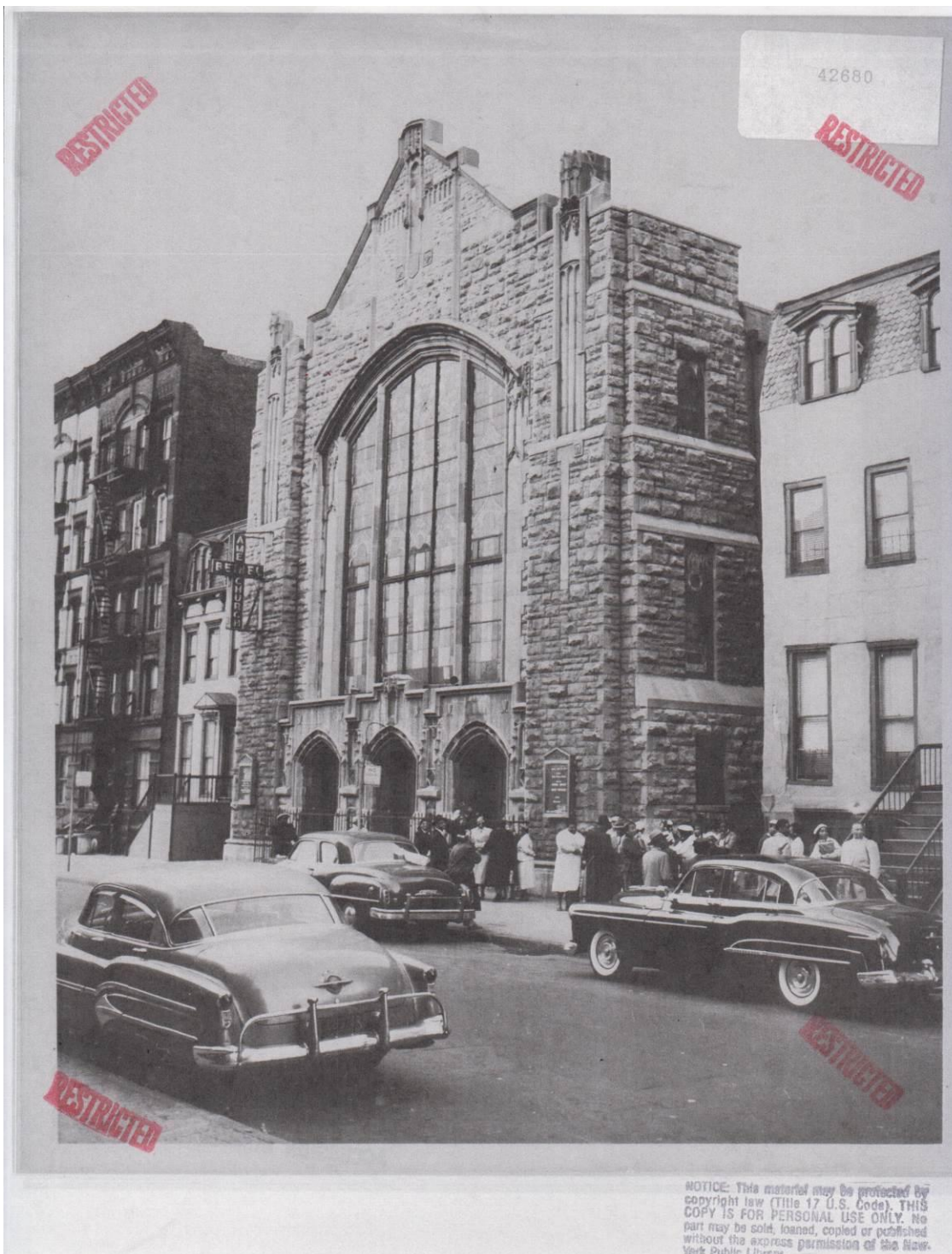


Figure 1. Undated view of Bethel AME, taken from northeast. Source: New York Public Library's Schonberg Center for Research in Black Culture

First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel
Name of Property

New York County, NY
County and State

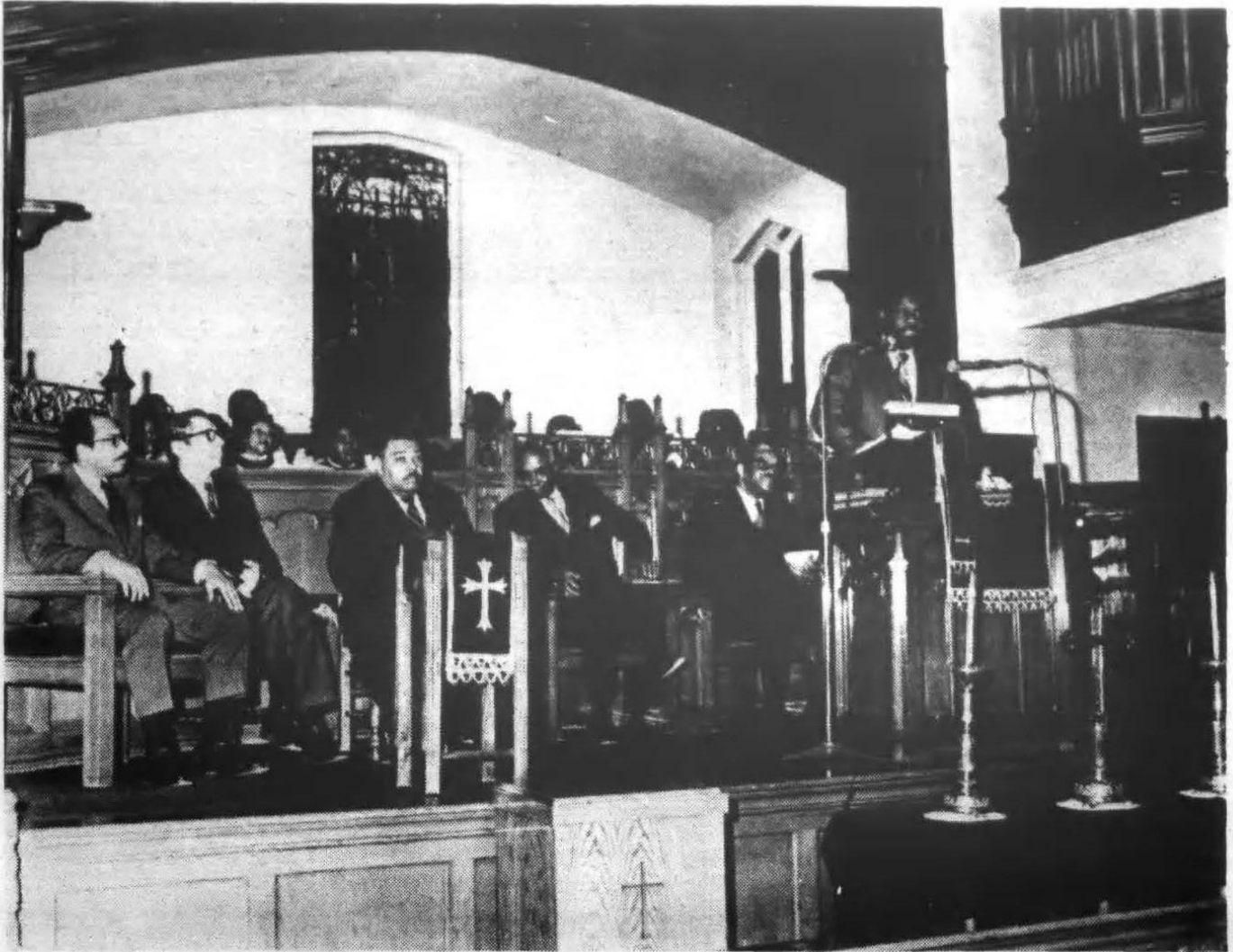


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Figure 2. Undated view of Bethel AME's interior, taken from north. Source: New York Public Library's Schonberg Center for Research in Black Culture

First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel
Name of Property

New York County, NY
County and State



HOUSING DEDICATION -- Civil Court Judge Howard Bell, a prominent member of the Bethel AME Church, Harlem, welcomes guests to the dedication ceremonies of Bethel Manor, a 47-apartment housing project sponsored by the church which is due to be completed next September. On the rostrum are (left to right): Pazel Jackson, Jr., Assistant Vice President, The Bowery Savings Bank and William P. Schweickert, Senior Vice President, The New York Bank For Savings, of the two financial institutions that financed the \$1.5 million development; State Senator Sidney Von Luther, Rev. Henderson R. Hughes, Pastor of Bethel, and Bishop John Douglas Bright, Presiding Bishop First District, African Methodist Episcopal Church. (Photo By Gilbert)

Figure 3. "Housing Dedication." *New York Recorder*, January 29, 1972.



BETHEL
A.M. CHURCH

BETHEL
A.M. CHURCH

BETHEL
A.M. CHURCH



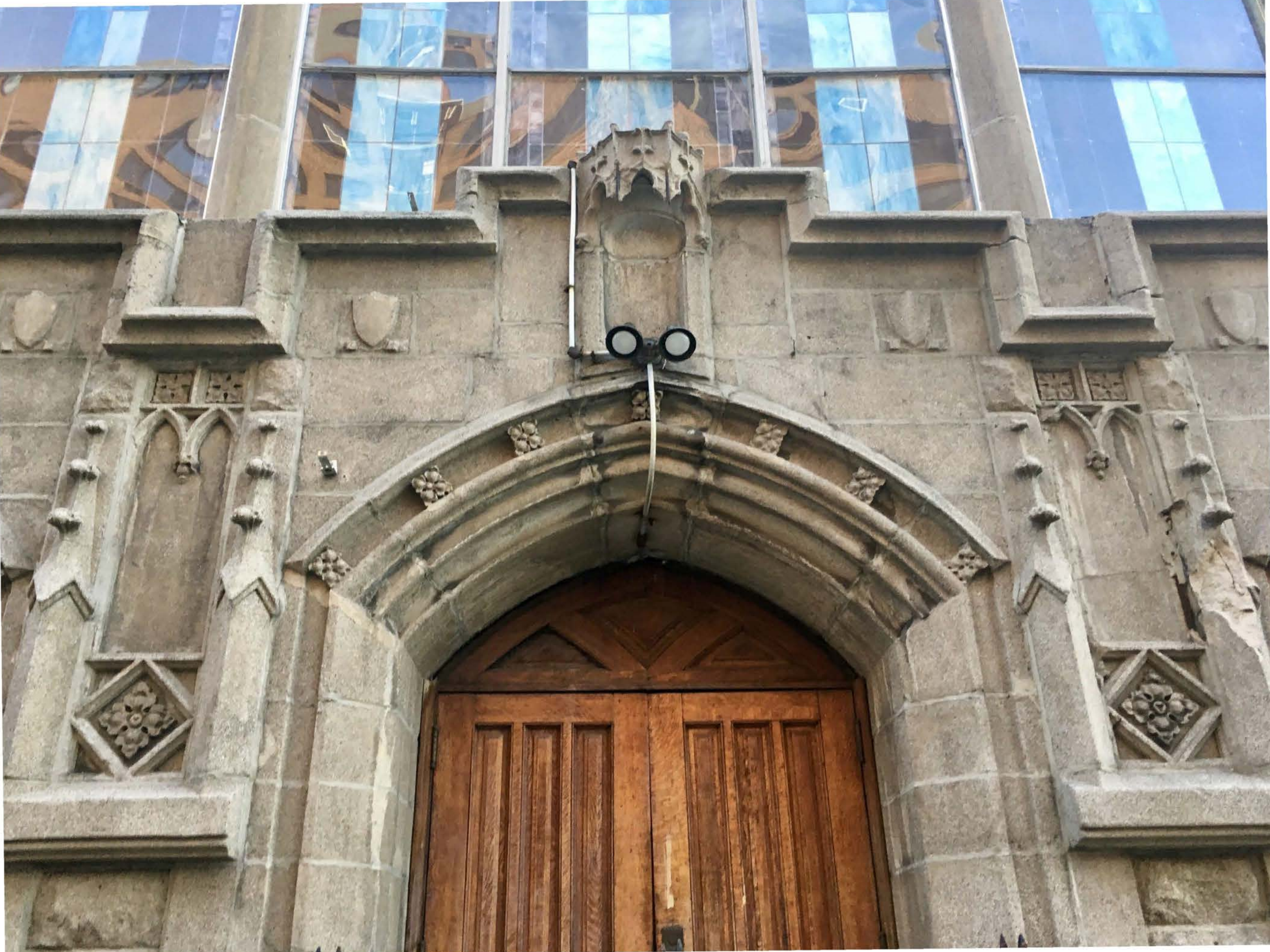
AME
BETHEL
CHURCH

NO PARKING
ANYTIME

NO PARKING
Anytime

We make it easy to
make it easy to
make it easy to















COME UNTO ME











AME
BETHEL
CHURCH





BETHEL
MANOR
50
West 132nd

PROHIBIDO EL PASO
Este edificio es una propiedad protegida y no debe ser ocupado por personas que no sean residentes autorizados.

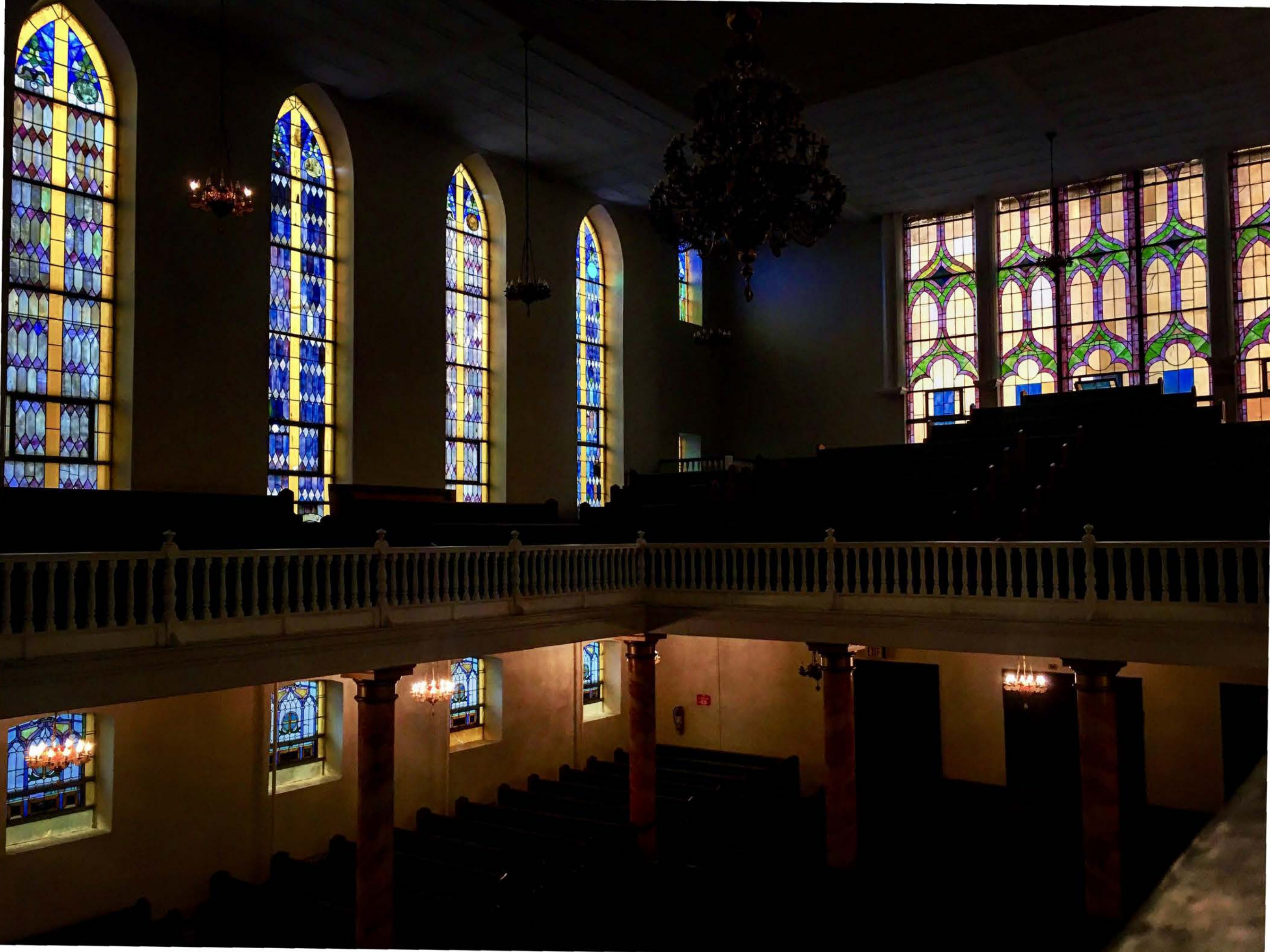


BETHEL
A.M.E. CHURCH

BETHEL
A.M.E. CHURCH
WEEKLY WORSHIP
SUNDAY MORNING 10:00 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 AM
WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM
SUNDAY A BELATED
WELCOMING

NO PARKING
Anytime
←→









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 10/2/2018 Date of Pending List: 10/25/2018 Date of 16th Day: 11/9/2018 Date of 45th Day: 11/16/2018 Date of Weekly List: 11/9/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 11/9/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Sarah Carroll
Executive Director
SCarroll@lpc.nyc.gov

August 23, 2018

1 Centre Street
9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7902 tel
212 669 7797 fax

R. Daniel Mackay
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Pebbles Island Resource Center
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Re: First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, located at 60 West 132nd Street, Manhattan [Block 1729; Lots 52, 57 and 58]

Dear Deputy Commissioner Mackay:

I am writing on behalf of Vice Chair Frederick Bland in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, located at 60 West 132nd Street in Manhattan, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission's Director of Research, Kate Lemos McHale, has reviewed the materials you submitted and has determined that the church and the rectory appear to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Commission has no comment on the eligibility of the apartment building. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Carroll".

Sarah Carroll

cc: Kate Lemos McHale, Director of Research, Landmarks Preservation Commission



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



27 September 2018

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following eight nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

- Norwich Pharmacal Company Warehouse, Chenango County
- Christ Church, Nassau County
- First Reformed Church of College Point, Queens County
- First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, New York County
- North Park Branch Library, Erie County
- Methodist Episcopal Church of Jacksonville, Tompkins County
- Chandler Street Industrial Buildings, Erie County
- Abingdon and New Abingdon Apartments, Jefferson County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office