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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 Baptist Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 405 Telfair Street

N/A

not for publication

city or town Dublin

N/A

vicinity

state Georgia

code GA

county Laurens

code 175

zip code 31021

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

 national statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title: Dr. David C. Crass 1 JUL 7 2019 Date

Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper David C. Crass

Date of Action 8/14/19

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Late Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK

walls: BRICK

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

First African Baptist Church is a one-and-a-half story, corner-tower church located on Telfair Street, approximately half a mile southwest of downtown Dublin. The church, built in 1914, occupies a corner lot and sits on a continuous brick foundation. It is constructed of red brick and has a large front-facing gable. A prominent square tower with a crenellated parapet houses the two main entrances, which are on the east and north elevations. The corner tower also contains a large cast bell, and narrow, pointed-arch vents are found on all sides. In addition to the tower, the façade has three pointed-arch, stained-glass windows at the first floor and a similar, but larger, window in the center of the upper half-story. This type of window is found on all but the rear elevation, which was modified in 1970 when a two-story addition was constructed. Each pointed-arch window has a pronounced keystone and sill. A beltcourse runs below the windows along the sides of the church, and a partial daylight basement is evidenced as the lot slopes away from the street. Buttresses define the five bays of the side elevations and quoins mark the exterior corners. Both entrances through the tower are within pointed-arch openings and have double doors with a transom. The entrance vestibule, or narthex, is separated from the sanctuary by a modern media room and pairs of swinging doors. The sanctuary is a large open space with a coffered ceiling, three banks of pews, and a raised altar with pulpit and choir loft. Additional seating areas are found to the north and south of the altar. Doors topped by arched wooden panels lead to half-flights of stairs that access the choir loft and the two floors of the 1970 addition. This addition creates an overall T-shaped building footprint and houses the education wing of the church, as well as offices, a library, a kitchen, and large dining/fellowship hall. With its flat roof and metal horizontally-divided windows, the addition is reflective of its mid-20th century build date. A non-historic, one-story, gable-roofed brick building and large parking lot are at the rear of the property.

Narrative Description

Portions of the following description were written by Deborah J. Stanley, Director of Grants & Community Development for the City of Dublin as part of the "First African Baptist Church," Historic Property Information Form, May 2016, on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Stockbridge, Georgia. The description was compiled and expanded by Laura Beth Ingle, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division.

First African Baptist Church is a vernacular Gothic Revival-style brick church located approximately half a mile southwest of downtown Dublin in Middle Georgia. This 1914 building replaced an earlier wooden church established at the same location in 1867. It occupies a corner lot at the intersection of Telfair and South Church streets and faces southeast. Portions of the lot are also bounded by South Rowe Street to the southwest and the Seaboard Coastal Railroad to the northwest. The National Register-listed Dublin Commercial Historic District and Stubbs Park-Stonewall Street Historic District are located nearby, to the northeast and west, respectively.

Exterior

The one-and-a-half story church is constructed of brick and has a wide front-gabled roof facing Telfair Street (photograph 2). The façade has four bays with the northernmost bay containing the projecting corner tower and main entrance. The tower is square in plan and capped by a crenellated parapet. Slender vent openings containing fixed-in place louvered shutters are found in pairs on the east and north elevations (photograph 5). Like the windows found throughout the church, these vent openings have pointed arches accented by a concrete keystone. Above and below the vent openings in the tower, there is simple decorative brickwork, such as narrow string courses, inset rectangular panels, roundels, and quoins. Each corner of the tower is supported by a buttress, which extend to approximately half the tower's height. At the base of the tower, two main entrances (accessed from Telfair Street and South Church Street) are within pointed-arch openings and contain double doors topped by a transom. In addition to the entrances, the tower also contains a large cast bell, which was installed in the 1920s and weighs over 3100 pounds (photograph 26).

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Immediately south of the tower, the façade has three Gothic-influenced pointed-arch windows on the first floor and a larger pointed-arch window is centered in the gable above (photograph 1). The point of each pointed-arch is accented by a keystone of painted concrete, and the sills are also painted concrete (photograph 3). The north, east, and south elevations all contain large, original stained-glass windows. These sanctuary windows were installed at the time of construction in 1914 and are each dedicated to the memory of previous church members. Since 1989, the windows have been covered with plexiglass to prevent damage. Also on the façade, a low gabled parapet extends just beyond the roofline and features a small amount of brick corbelling. Below the three first-floor windows is a long, narrow inset panel. Much like the tower, there are quoins and a buttress at the façade's southeast corner.

Side elevations have many of the same features as the façade. A painted concrete beltcourse runs below the pointed-arch windows along the sides of the church, and a partial daylight basement is evidenced as the lot slopes away from Telfair Street (photographs 7 and 10). Buttresses define the five bays of each side elevation, and rectangular concrete caps highlight their stepped levels.

The roof is asymmetric, with a gable at the front and a hip at the rear. A small hipped roof hyphen at the rear of the building connects the 1914 church with the two-story, 1970 addition (photograph 9). The concrete beltcourse extends to the addition and a small, segmentally-arched opening in each side contains a stained-glass window. The 1970 addition creates an overall T-shaped building footprint and houses the education wing of the church. The addition has a flat roof with slightly overhanging eaves. Metal windows with horizontal panes are aligned within regularly-spaced vertical stucco panels that extend the full height of this portion of the building (photograph 9).

The main entrance to the 1914 church is accessed from Telfair Street by brick stairs and a centered iron handrail (photograph 2), while a modern wheelchair ramp provides access to the South Church Street entrance (photograph 7). Both entrances feature a set of replacement double wooden doors that were refurbished in 2003.

A large cornerstone at the northeast corner of the church confirms that the congregation was established in 1867 and the church building was rebuilt 47 years later (photograph 4). A listing of deacons, the building committee, and the pastor at the time of construction further commemorate the individuals who helped make this building a reality.

Probably the single most well-known event in the church's history occurred in April 1944, when a young Martin Luther King, Jr., won first prize for his speech, "The Negro and the Constitution." King was taking part in an oratory competition sponsored by the Colored Elks Club of Georgia, and the speech marked one of his earliest public discourses on race and the Civil Rights Movement. In 2008, a plaque commemorating this event was installed at the Church Street entrance (photograph 6).

Interior

The entrances within the corner tower open into a small vestibule, or narthex, which was remodeled in the 1950s (photograph 11). Several walls in this small room retain historic wainscoting and floors are carpeted. A pair of swinging doors separate this area from the sanctuary. A small, non-historic media room can be accessed from this vestibule, as well as from the sanctuary.

The sanctuary is quite large, measuring more than 4600 square feet. This worship area has three banks of pews and a raised altar with pulpit and choir loft (photograph 12). The current pews were installed in 1989 and are the third iteration for the church, as the originals were replaced in the 1930s. Additional seating areas are found to the north and south of the altar. Seating to the north is reserved for deacons, while seating to the south is for musicians and additional choir members. The south corner of the sanctuary has also long been known as the "amen" corner, presumably for enthusiastic worshippers who chose to sit close to the pastors and altar.

The original coffered ceiling is intact, and stabilization work was completed on it in 1989 (photograph 13). At that time, new lighting was installed and central heat and air were added to the church. Original beadboard wainscoting is found on all walls of the sanctuary, and original hardwood floors are retained beneath the non-historic carpet. In the northeast corner of the sanctuary, adjacent to the main entrance, is the media room which has large windows looking into the sanctuary.

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In addition to the original stained-glass windows on the front and side exterior walls, there are also two small windows behind the pulpit (photograph 15). These windows depict two former pastors, Reverend N.G. McCall and Reverend R.W. Walker. The windows were refurbished and rededicated in 1967 and again in 1979.

At the front of the sanctuary, several wide steps lead up to the pulpit, which has seating for six pastors (photograph 14). The wooden lectern at the front of the pulpit was purchased for use in the church in the 1940s and features a large white cross on its shaft. The original baptismal pool is located in the floor of the pulpit and is accessed by large removable panels (photograph 17).

The choir loft is inset on the west wall of the sanctuary behind a wide arched opening and the pulpit (photograph 14). This arch was created during sanctuary renovations in 1989. The choir loft includes four rows of seating for choir members and a 1950s Hammond organ. Access to the choir loft is through the pulpit or through anterooms on either side of the pulpit. Doors at the front of the sanctuary, topped by arched wooden panels, lead to half-flights of stairs that access the anterooms (photograph 18). The door to the north of the pulpit also accesses the 1970s education wing addition.

Education wing addition

The ground was broken for an educational wing on September 1970; however, the symbolic cornerstone was not laid until the construction loan for this addition was paid in full in September 1979. The two-story addition is attached to the rear of the 1914 building and contains a kitchen, dining/fellowship hall, library, classrooms, reception room, choir rooms, offices, nursery, restrooms, and storage rooms. Throughout the building, walls are largely cinderblock, the ceiling is a suspended grid system, and windows are metal with horizontal panes.

A large multi-use dining/fellowship hall and kitchen comprise much of the first floor of the addition (photographs 19 and 20). The second floor has a central hall and is divided into many smaller rooms – such as offices, classrooms, choir rooms, and the library. Similar to the first floor, there is minimal ornamentation in these spaces (photographs 21 and 22). The hallway and stairwells are also very simple with suspended grid ceilings and block walls. The hall is adorned with photos and plaques commemorating the history of the church (photograph 23).

Grounds

The overall yard setting is casual with grass and simple foundation plantings at the front and sides of the building. The church's parking area is located behind the building and was extended west to the railroad in 2002 (photograph 8). The parsonage, once located at 308 South Rowe Street, was demolished in 2010. That same year, First African Baptist Family Life Center was constructed in the former location of the parsonage, and it is a noncontributing resource. The family life center is a one-story, gabled roof building facing the asphalt parking lot and South Church Street. A large portico protects the main entrance, which consists of a modern glass double door with sidelights and a transom.

The surrounding community consists of residential, commercial, and community landmark buildings. There are sidewalks and many large elm, oak, and pecan trees throughout the neighborhood. The residential areas include a substantial number of historic houses, many of which have additions. Several other churches are also nearby: the First Church of the Nazarene, established in 1936, and the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, established in 1878.

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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.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1914-1970

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1914 with construction of the church and ends in 1970 with completion of the two-story education wing addition.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

First African Baptist Church meets Criteria Consideration A because it derives significance from its architectural distinction as an excellent example of a defined church type and a vernacular representation of an architectural style and its historical associations with the African American community of Dublin, Georgia.

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

First African Baptist Church is significant at the local level in the areas of architecture and black ethnic heritage as an excellent example of a defined church type displaying elements of an architectural style and as a stronghold in the African American community of the city of Dublin. First African Baptist Church was established in 1867 at the site of the current church building. When the original wood building was demolished in 1914, the current building was constructed in its place, making First African Baptist the most longstanding African American congregation in the city. As noted in *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia* by Carole Merritt, the church is an important resource within African American communities, as it serves the members' spiritual needs and fosters their social interaction. Many members of the church have been active leaders in the community, fighting for equality since the 1880s. The church has always had an engaged congregation, with its pastors encouraging and inspiring members to participate and serve the community. In turn, the community appears to have flocked to the church, with an active membership of 301 parishioners in 1967, a century after the church's founding. These members took part in multiple choirs, a missionary department, and clubs catering to all – from men's fellowship and matron's clubs to Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops. The church also hosted community events, such as an oratory competition in 1944 sponsored by the Colored Elks Club of Georgia, where a young Martin Luther King, Jr., won first prize for his speech, "The Negro and the Constitution." The speech marked one of King's earliest public discourses on race and the Civil Rights Movement and he noted the trip in his autobiography, released posthumously in 1998. The church also represents the corner-tower church type with its prominent, square corner tower at the northeast corner of the façade. The corner-tower church type is defined in *Church Types in Georgia*, a guide to church building types found throughout the state. The corner-tower church type is generally found in small county seats, such as Dublin, and typically dates from the 1890s to the 1930s. The church is also a good example of the vernacular Gothic Revival style of the early 20th century, with its pointed-arch stained-glass windows, crenellated tower, and multiple buttresses, all of which are indicative of the style.

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

First African Baptist Church is an African American church located in the city of Dublin in Central Georgia. It is locally significant in the area of black ethnic heritage because, in addition to its role as a religious institution, it has long served the African American community of Dublin as an important social institution. As noted in *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*, a statewide context by Carole Merritt, the church is an important resource within African American communities as it serves the members' spiritual needs and fosters social interaction. Like many African American churches across Georgia, and throughout the southeast, First African Baptist Church served, and continues to serve, as a center for social and charitable organizations and as a focus point of civic activity.

According to Merritt, "in the years following emancipation, most blacks withdrew from white congregations to found their own churches. Sometimes land was granted by white churches or individuals," and the church was often the first building constructed in the black community. This appears to be the case with First African Baptist Church (FABC), as the oldest African American church in Dublin. Black congregants left First Baptist Church to establish their own church in 1867 and built their first church building on land sold by a member of the white congregation to founders of FABC for one dollar.

Since the church was first established, many members have been active leaders in the community, serving on school boards and as involved participants in political parties. FABC has always had an engaged congregation, with its pastors encouraging and inspiring members to participate and serve the community. In turn, the community appears to have flocked to the church, with an active membership of 301 parishioners in 1967, a century after the church's founding. These members took part in multiple choirs, a missionary department, and clubs catering to all.

Perhaps the most well-known event to have occurred at FABC involved a statewide oratory contest sponsored by the Colored Elks Clubs of Georgia on April 17, 1944. A 15-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his first formal public speech, "The Negro and the Constitution," and won the competition. The church continues to hold an annual competition to nurture public speaking skills of the community's youth and to promote King's legacy.

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In addition to events such as the 1944 oratory competition, FABC has long played an active role in the larger Dublin community. Local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops used the church as a meeting space. The church also hosted regional events, such as the opening-night concert for the first General Missionary Baptist Youth Convention in the 1970s. Attendees came from around the state, and the choir was comprised of community youth from throughout Dublin and Laurens County. Additionally, the church operated one of the first daycares and learning centers for Dublin's African American children. The First African Baptist Church Daycare Center was established in 1973 and operated for 40 years, run by retired educators and professionals of the congregation. It was one of the largest daycares in the city and was known for providing excellent care and early childhood development. In the 1990s, the mayor of Dublin proclaimed a week in mid-October as First African Baptist Church week. This was a onetime event celebrating the church's 127th anniversary. The fact that a church was so celebrated well over a century after its beginnings shows its longstanding and prominent place in the community.

First African Baptist Church is also locally significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the corner tower church type, as defined by the statewide context *Church Types in Georgia*. In this church type, the entrance is found in the projecting tower at the corner of the building. According to the context, this type, while not as prevalent as the gable front and central tower types, was a fairly common type from the 1890s to 1930s. It is especially common in small county seats such as Dublin. The projecting corner towers of this type contain the main entrance, as it does at FABC. The church also exhibits many elements of the Gothic Revival style. These elements include the large pointed-arch stained-glass windows, the crenellated tower top, and the corner buttresses. The church retains the character-defining features, details, and craftsmanship to convey its type and architectural style.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The following history was written by Deborah J. Stanley, Director of Grants & Community Development for the City of Dublin as part of the "First African Baptist Church," Historic Property Information Form, May 2016, on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Stockbridge, Georgia, with minimal edits by Laura Beth Ingle, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division.

Beginnings of First African Baptist Church

In the city of Dublin, the first churches solely serving African American congregations were established shortly after the Civil War. Eager to exercise their newfound freedom, former slaves began leaving integrated churches to form their own. Prior to the war, membership numbers at Dublin's First Baptist Church hovered around 50 to 90 individuals, of which 39 of these members were African American, enslaved people. In 1867, those former slaves from First Baptist Church formed their own church a few blocks away at the intersection of Telfair and South Church streets and continued to use the name First Baptist Church for many years. As was typical at the time, members of the white church aided in the new church's organization until it was able to function on its own.

The new congregation's first building was a small wood-frame church with wooden benches. It stood on the southern portion of the current church property. An old-fashioned wood burning stove was used for heating, and kerosene lamps were used for lighting. The congregation consisted of teachers, doctors, postal workers, and everyday working people. The members would gather each Sunday in the wood-frame building for worship service. For baptismal services, they would walk or ride in their buggies, wagons, and buckboards to Hunger and Hardship Creek, a tributary of the Oconee River located northeast of downtown Dublin.

Reverend Fred Robinson was First African Baptist Church's (FABC) first pastor, and his leadership gave strength to the young church. The first deacons were Hamlet McCall, Pink Hughes, George Washington, Callie Smith, and Crawford McCall. These men were prominent and influential in Dublin's African American community and many were also involved in local politics as members of the Republican Party. In the early 1880s, Crawford McCall began demanding political equality for African Americans in Laurens County, and on May 17, 1882, several of these men, including Crawford McCall, attended a mass meeting of African American residents about their chances of being elected to public office.

On March 5, 1885, the Laurens County Clerk's office record book, page 198, recorded an agreement made between John T. Duncan, owner of the land where the church stands, and several deacons of the church, including Hamlet McCall, George Washington, and Crawford McCall. In this document, FABC is referred to as the "Colored Baptist Church." Per the

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agreement, the deacons purchased the land where the church is currently situated for the sum of "one dollar in hand," securing the church's long future at this location. Duncan was a highly honored public servant of Laurens County and communicant of the white First Baptist Church. He was a large landowner who generously donated the parcel on which FABC developed.

Surrounding neighborhoods and early congregants

At the end of the 19th century, the area surrounding the property was known as the "town's commons." FABC and neighboring St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church were the only two churches in the vicinity, with the remainder of the immediately surrounding area mostly occupied by white residents, fraternal lodges, and businesses. Other area African American churches were not established until the 1970s.

Early members of the church generally came from the nearby communities of Southside and Scottsville. FABC faces the "Southside" district, which runs along Telfair Street and extends to South Decatur Street at the Oconee River. The exact date of the Southside community's beginnings is unknown, but presumably its development began during the Reconstruction period (1865-1870). The area developed as owners of businesses began providing housing for former slaves and their families. The Southside residents worked on riverboats and in the agri-businesses that were increasing along the river.

Northeast of FABC is the Scottsville community, a renowned center of African-American local businesses and professionals. The Scottsville area is bounded on the southeast by East Gaines Street, the southwest by North Decatur Street, the northwest by East Mary Street, and the northeast by the Oconee River swamp. The area first began to develop in 1898 with the establishment of a factory that was surrounded by tiny lots with shotgun houses built for factory workers. African American farmers of Dublin-Laurens County organized their own fair in 1917 on South Decatur Street, known as the Central Colored Peoples' Fair Association which operated until 1970.

Historically, African Americans have lived in the eastern part of Scottsville and along the lower edges of South Washington and South Jefferson streets, which were populated by more wealthy African Americans doctors, teachers, and other upper middle-class professionals. Ninety percent of the congregation of FABC today consists of retired teachers, public service, and government workers who live within three miles of the church in either the Southside or Scottsville communities.

Early church leaders

Following Reverend Robinson's death, the following pastors succeeded him: Reverend Warren Miller, Reverend N.G. McCall, and Reverend Samuel Reynolds. In addition to leading the church, Warren Miller served as chairman of the Board of Dublin Colored Schools in 1882, and backed by prominent African Americans, he announced his candidacy for the Legislature; however, he was not successful in that bid. Miller was succeeded by Reverend N.G. McCall, who began the first Sunday school classes and led the church into the state convention.

Reverend McCall was a native of Dublin and one of the most beloved pastors of FABC. He was so admired and loved by the members of the community that his funeral procession was reportedly more than a mile long. Prior to serving as FABC's pastor, he was a riverboat hand for the best part of his life and supposedly could carry a 400-pound weight on his back. He was a tower of strength, not only in the physical sense but also in the moral realm. He kept order among his people and maintained a discipline that was rigid enough to administer physical punishment with his own hands to those who broke his code of manners and uprightness. Like his predecessor, he also served on the Board of Dublin Colored Schools, serving as secretary for some time. McCall is one of the two pastors depicted in the paired stained-glass window behind the pulpit and choir loft.

Other early pastors include: Reverend J.S.P. Watson, Reverend S.D. Rozier, and Reverend Bolivar Davis. It was during Reverend Davis's ministry that the wooden church building was torn down and the present building was erected.

Building a new church

The new structure was built with red bricks and erected on the same site as the previous building. The old benches were replaced with factory-made pews that remained in the sanctuary until the late 1930s. The stained-glass windows, a baptismal pool, and a large bell were included in the plans for the 1914 structure. A pump organ was also purchased for the new building.

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The original and intact stained-glass windows were purchased and installed in the church and dedicated to the memory of previous members. There are four windows on each side of the sanctuary, three across the front, a double window behind the pulpit, and a smaller window in the anterooms on either side of the pulpit. Because of their substantial cost, most windows were sponsored by and dedicated to more than one family, with approximately 20 church families represented in total. Additionally, several groups (including the white congregants at First Baptist Church) dedicated windows in honor of members and former pastors.

The church cornerstone was laid in to the northeast corner of the corner tower at the base of buttress. This placement allowed for three sides of the stone to hold inscriptions and give a brief history of the construction. The front of the stone states, "First Baptist Church; Established A.D. 1867; Rebuilt A.D. 1914; Rev. Bolivar Davis, Pastor." The left side of the cornerstone lists the deacons at the time of construction, "Deacons' W.L. Hughes, C.L. Malloy, J.J. Jenkins, Henry Lyons, Joseph Chambers, S.D. Deloach, Edmond Holmes, and N.P. Proudford." The right side of the stone lists the building committee, "W.V. McCall, James Taylor, Anthony Griffin, Dr. H.T. Jones, Sr., T.R. Walker, C.H. Harris, James Hill, W.L. Simmons, and Joseph Hudson."

Reverend Davis served until 1915, but construction of the church was not fully finalized under his leadership. His successor, Reverend R.W. Walker, was serving when the church was officially completed. Walker led the church from 1915 to 1918, and he is one of the two pastors depicted in the paired stained-glass window behind the pulpit.

The growing church

In 1918, Reverend P.W. Wrenn, a great organizer and spiritual leader, was called to lead the church. Under Reverend Wrenn's leadership, the parsonage at 309 South Rowe Street was built and the first choir was organized. The choir rendered music for each church service, and it is rumored that FABC was the first church in Dublin to have proper choir robes.

Also during Wrenn's tenure, the historic church bell was installed in the corner tower. In 1920, the 54-inch diameter bell was cast by the C.S. Bell Company of Hillsboro, Ohio and is the largest-sized bell cast by the company. C.S. Bell Company began as an iron foundry and cast bells into the 1950s. The bell assembly's total weight is 3,150 pounds, with the bowl alone weighing 2,060 pounds. Church members presume it took several years to plan, cast, and install the bell into the tower once the building was complete. A recent inspection of the bell tower revealed that the bell remains in sound condition.

Reverend Wrenn left to assume another pastorate in 1922, and Reverend David Green Smith occupied the parsonage for a short time. In 1923, a courageous and strong leader, Reverend J.C. Adams, was called and served until his death in 1930. At that time, Reverend H.E.C. Evans, a church member, served as acting pastor until Reverend C.N. Ellis accepted the call to the church. During Ellis's pastorate many of the old organizations were given new life, and the members were rejuvenated and inspired to do greater service. Reverend Ellis served until 1934. Reverend J.C. Brown, a theologian at Benedict College followed Reverend Ellis and served for one year. He found the combined duties at the college and at the church too strenuous, therefore he resigned. Reverend I.S. Powell was called in 1935. Under his leadership, new pews were purchased and the church's missions, the matron's club, and the junior missionary department were organized. Reverend Powell served until 1939. The church was without a pastor for a short period, until Reverend N.T. Young, a conscientious leader, was called in 1940. Under his administration, the pulpit lectern, new floor covering, and new light globes were purchased and installed throughout the building.

Young Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks at FABC

On April 17, 1944, a young Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his first formal public speech at First African Baptist Church as part of an essay contest sponsored by the Colored Elks Club of Georgia. The event was hosted by the Norman G. McCall Elks Lodge of Dublin. The state's Elks Clubs each sponsored a local high school student in the statewide contest. A 15-year-old King was the winner representing Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta. In his speech, "The Negro and the Constitution," King called for the better health and education of his people. He spoke of Christianity and the Golden Rule. He urged fair play and free opportunities at home, the same as the country was fighting for in Europe and Asia. He suggested that if African Americans were given the franchise, "they will be vigilant and defend, even with their arms, the ark of federal liberty from treason and destruction by her enemies." In his autobiography, King noted the event and an important incident that occurred on his way back to Atlanta:

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When I was 14 [Note - according to his confirmed birthdate, he was actually 15 at the time], I traveled from Atlanta to Dublin, Georgia with a dear teacher of mine, Mrs. Bradley. I participated in an oratorical contest there and I succeeded in winning the contest. My subject, ironically enough, was 'The Negro and the Constitution.' That night, Mrs. Bradley and I were on a bus returning to Atlanta. Along the way, some white passengers boarded the bus, and the driver ordered us to get up and give the whites our seats. We didn't move quickly enough to suit him, so he began cursing us. I intended to stay right in that seat, but Mrs. Bradley urged me up, saying we had to obey the law. We stood up in the aisle for 90 miles to Atlanta. That night will never leave my memory. It was the angriest I have ever been in my life."

Of course, King went on to fight for civil and constitutional rights for the next 24 years of his life. Essentially carrying on the ideas first presented at FABC and attempting to end injustices like the one he experienced on his return trip to Atlanta. Tourists and history buffs continue to flock to the church to see where King began his path as a civil rights leader, and in cooperation with the city, a plaza, mural, and monument were created adjacent to FABC to commemorate the location.

Church continues to grow

Reverend Young resigned in 1947, to accept the call to another church. Reverend T.T. Ball followed Reverend Young and served for a short time. Reverend Ball was succeeded by Reverend E.L. Griffin, who served a brief period before leaving due to poor health.

In December 1950, the church extended the call to Reverend W.J. Mason. He had quite a long tenure, serving until his resignation on June 2, 1967. During his time at FABC, he implemented many changes and improvements, such as establishing a Trustee Board, organizing a city-wide all denominational youth fellowship group and a junior usher board, revitalizing the senior choir, and starting the Sunbeam choir, junior choir, and Royal Ambassadors Boys Choir. A Hammond Organ, that is still being used during church services, was purchased and other physical improvements to the church included laying of new floor coverings, remodeling the vestibule, and erection of the outside bulletin board in the front of the church facing Telfair Street, courtesy of the Men's Fellowship Club. The church's land holdings also increased, as a plot of land adjacent to the original property line and extending to the railroad track was purchased for the purpose of erecting an educational building in the future.

The congregation celebrated its centennial in 1967 with Reverend J.P. Salter as acting pastor. The Centennial Dinner was served in the parsonage, which was repainted and renovated during Salter's temporary tenure. The church's stained-glass windows were also repaired and rededicated during this time.

In November 1967, Reverend Hezekiah B. Johnson, Jr., a native of Florence, South Carolina, was called to serve as pastor. Reverend Johnson, a visionary and organizer, brought much new life into the church by organizing and re-organizing a number of groups. Before the year was completed, there were a total of 301 active members in the church. Active organizations, which included Sunday school classes (with an average attendance of 210 members each Sunday), the Bible study group, deaconess board, pulpit aide club, the missionary department, Boy Scout, Girl Scout, and Brownie troops, and seven choirs.

Building an education wing addition

The land acquired several years earlier was soon put to use, as the first Sunday in September 1970, ground was broken for an educational wing addition. The members launched out on faith and through the Equitable Church Bonds, Inc. of Atlanta, members and friends secured a total of \$160,000.00 for construction. A committee of 19 male and female church members formed to direct the planning and construction of the addition, which was to include Sunday school and Baptist Training Union (BTU) classrooms, a kitchen, fellowship hall, library, reception room, choir rooms, offices, nursery, restrooms, and storage rooms. New furnishings were also purchased for the new addition.

The church floated the bond and did not lay the cornerstone until the construction loans were paid off. A mortgage-burning service was held on September 2, 1979, and at 4:00 in the afternoon, the addition's symbolic cornerstone was laid at its northwest corner.

Ministries and community involvement continue to grow

In 1973, FABC Daycare Center was established with Rebecca Myers as its first director. Within several years, it was the largest daycare in the city, with 84 children, ages six weeks to six years old. A Youth Ministry was also organized around this time, with the youth conducting a monthly worship service.

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To recognize the outstanding service of members in different organizations within the church, a Miss FABC Coronation event was started. This event was a culmination of fundraising efforts and served as an incentive for the members to put forth extra effort in supporting the group from which the queen or (despite the name of the event) king was named. In the 1980s, this event was renamed "Harvest Day."

The coronation event called on the generosity of members, but many parishioners expressed substantial generosity on their own accord. Two church-member families donated land on Marcus and South Jefferson streets to further increase the church's land holdings, and one member, Mrs. Louise McCall-Wright, created a scholarship fund for the youth of the church, which continues to benefit young high-school graduates today.

The church's various outreach ministries continued to expand as well. In the early 1970s, the Radio Broadcast Ministry began, and one hour of the worship service was broadcast each Sunday morning on a local radio station. In 1976, the church renewed its affiliation with the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, Inc., and hosted the very first State Youth Convention in Dublin.

Reverend Johnson resigned in September 1981 to accept the call to another flock. The church operated without a shepherd for several months, but in March 1982, it extended the call to Reverend D. Franklin Hall. Under his leadership, even more outreach ministries were established. These included a Love-Ride Program (transportation services for the elderly and handicapped) and a Food Bank Ministry. Reverend Hall also encouraged congregants' participation in the Department of Family and Children Service's "Meals on Wheels Program." Music has long been important in the FABC community, and one of the highlights during Reverend Hall's administration was the appearance and performance of the Harlem Boys Choir from New York.

Reverend Hall resigned in 1984 and in May of that year, Reverend Daniel Johnson was called to lead the flock. However, Reverend Johnson's tenure was brief, and he resigned in May 1985. Just a few months later in August 1985, Reverend James Hall of Macon, Georgia was elected acting pastor, a position which soon became permanent. Under Reverend James Hall's leadership, many longstanding church auxiliaries and organizations continued to progress while others were revitalized. In 1989, the church celebrated 75 years in its current building with a complete renovation of the sanctuary. In September of that year, Reverend James Hall resigned.

On March 4, 1990, the church extended the call to Reverend Vernon D. Lloyd, Jr., and he was officially installed September 30, 1990. Under his leadership, several special days were implemented at the church, including a Church Family Day and Senior Members Day. The Anniversary Birthday Club, which called on members for a one-dollar donation for each year of the church's existence) was also implemented in celebration of the church's 123-year anniversary. Reverend Lloyd served until August 1999, and under his leadership, the church joined the Oconee Zion Missionary Baptist Association.

The church operated without a pastor for several months, until December 15, 2000, when Reverend William D. Harvey was called as pastor. Under his administration, the following ministries were organized or re-organized: the Mother's Board ministry, the drama club, a first-aid ministry for emergency situations, the Nehemiah ministry (to generate funds for renovation), the youth ministry, the bus ministry, and the youth choir. Reverend Harvey re-established the church's membership in the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia, Inc. and in the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc. Harvey also established a one o'clock, midweek prayer service. With renewed membership, FABC hosted the General Missionary Baptist Convention, Inc.'s 12th District Convention Program in support of the presidential candidate Reverend Clarence Moore from Augusta. Reverend Harvey resigned on July 19, 2006, and the church was without a shepherd for two years.

On April 17th, 2008, the Victim's Advocate Commemoration Program was held at FABC. Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts, Jr., Pastor Emeritus of the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta was the keynote speaker. Upon learning that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had delivered his first public speech at FABC, event organizers felt that it was appropriate to honor him at this location. A copy of Dr. King's speech "The Negro and the Constitution" was given to the church and a bronze plaque honoring Dr. King was erected adjacent to the main entrance.

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Just over a month later, another plaque was erected, this time for a longtime church member. On May 25, 2008, a plaque bearing a photo of Sister Viola Lee Anderson was donated by her son, Tallmadge Anderson, in memory of her longevity, service, and dedication to the church. The plaque was hung in the education wing hallway between Sunday school rooms.

In the summer of 2008, Reverend Keith Anderson was elected as pastor by a majority vote. Under Reverend Anderson's leadership, new life was brought back into the church. Many new projects were completed and new programs established, these include: renovating the kitchen, painting the sanctuary, establishing an advisory board, implementing a monthly newsletter, organizing children's church, creating a media ministry (offering services on DVD and CD) and a church website, re-organizing the dance ministry, and starting the television broadcast/Internet ministry "Pressing Higher."

In July 2010, FABC held a groundbreaking service for the Family Life Center, located behind the church. In 2013, the FABC Daycare Center closed due to the changing economy. The "Pressing Higher" program was discontinued, but an E-Church Program was launched, which allows the pastor to electronically communicate the word of God with others through text messages. Several new ministries were organized, including: the C.A.R.E. (Connecting and Reaching Everyone) ministry, senior fellowship, deacons-in-training ministry, and educational and historical ministries. In 2015, in partnership with the Faith and Family Program in the Laurens County School System, a room on the second floor of the educational wing was set aside and decorated as a memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his first public speech. Today, the church continues to grow and serve the greater community in Dublin.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Collins, Dorothy. "Southside Historic District." *Historic District Information Form*, March 29, 2004. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Stockbridge, Georgia.

First African Baptist Church Files. "The History of the First African Baptist Church (1914-2015)." First African Baptist Church, Dublin, Georgia.

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Merritt, Carole. *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*. Atlanta: Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1984.

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Stanley, Deborah J. "First African Baptist Church." *Historic Property Information Form*, May 20, 2016. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Stockbridge, Georgia.

Thompson, Scott B. "Fifty Who Made a Difference, Contributions of African Americans to Laurens County and Beyond." *Pieces of Our Past*, January 28, 2009. <http://dublinlaurenscountygeorgia.blogspot.com/2009/01/fifty-who-made-difference-contributions.html> (accessed February 12, 2016).

Thompson, Scott B. "First Century for First Baptist." *Pieces of Our Past*, May 2, 2014. <http://dublinlaurenscountygeorgia.blogspot.com/2014/05/first-century-for-first-baptist.html> (accessed February 16, 2016).

Thompson, Scott B. *The African American Heritage of Dublin, Laurens County and East Central Georgia*. Dublin, Georgia: The Emerald City History Company, Inc., 2008.

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Thompson, Scott B. Multiple interviews with the First African Baptist Church Historical Committee and Deborah Stanley.
Dublin, Georgia, October 2014-April 2016.

Wagner, Clarence M. *Profiles of Black Georgia Baptists*. Privately published, 1980.

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):

N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.39 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. **Latitude:** 32.535457

Longitude: -82.907102

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

The National Register boundary is indicated by the heavy black line on the attached parcel map, which is drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary is the legal boundary associated with the church. It contains all character-defining features of the property, including the historic addition.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Beth Ingle

organization Historic Preservation Division, GA Dept. of Natural Resources date July 2019

street & number 2610 Georgia Highway 155, SW telephone (770) 389-7844

city or town Stockbridge state GA zip code 30281

e-mail laurabeth.ingle@dnr.ga.gov

First African Baptist Church
Name of Property

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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 Baptist Church

City or Vicinity: Dublin

County: Laurens State: Georgia

Photographer: Deborah J. Stanley, Director of Grants & Community Development for the City of Dublin

Date Photographed: October 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1 of 26. | View of façade. Photographer facing northwest. |
| 2 of 26. | View of façade. Photographer facing southwest. |
| 3 of 26. | Detail of stained-glass window in façade. Photographer facing west. |
| 4 of 26. | Detail of cornerstone at northeast corner of church. Photographer facing northwest. |
| 5 of 26. | View of crenelated corner tower. Photographer facing south. |
| 6 of 26. | Detail of bronze plaque commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.'s early speech given at the church. Photographer facing south. |
| 7 of 26. | View of north elevation. Photographer facing south. |
| 8 of 26. | View of northern portion of 1970 educational-wing addition and parking lot. Photographer facing west. |
| 9 of 26. | View of southern portion of 1970 educational-wing addition and connection to church. Photographer facing northwest. |
| 10 of 26. | View of south elevation. Photographer facing north. |
| 11 of 26. | View of entry vestibule, or narthex. Photographer facing northeast. |
| 12 of 26. | View of sanctuary. Photographer facing west. |
| 13 of 26. | View of sanctuary, with media room in northeast corner. Photographer facing northeast. |
| 14 of 26. | View of pulpit and choir loft. Photographer facing northwest. |
| 15 of 26. | View of choir loft. Photographer facing west. |
| 16 of 26. | View of sanctuary. Photographer facing east. |
| 17 of 26. | View of pulpit with covered baptismal pool and choir loft. Photographer facing southwest. |
| 18 of 26. | View of choir loft and access anteroom and 1970 addition. Photographer facing west. |
| 19 of 26. | View of dining/fellowship hall on the first floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing southeast. |
| 20 of 26. | View of kitchen on the first floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing south. |
| 21 of 26. | View of classroom on the second floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing southwest. |
| 22 of 26. | View of classroom on the second floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing north. |
| 23 of 26. | View of hallway on second floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing southeast. |

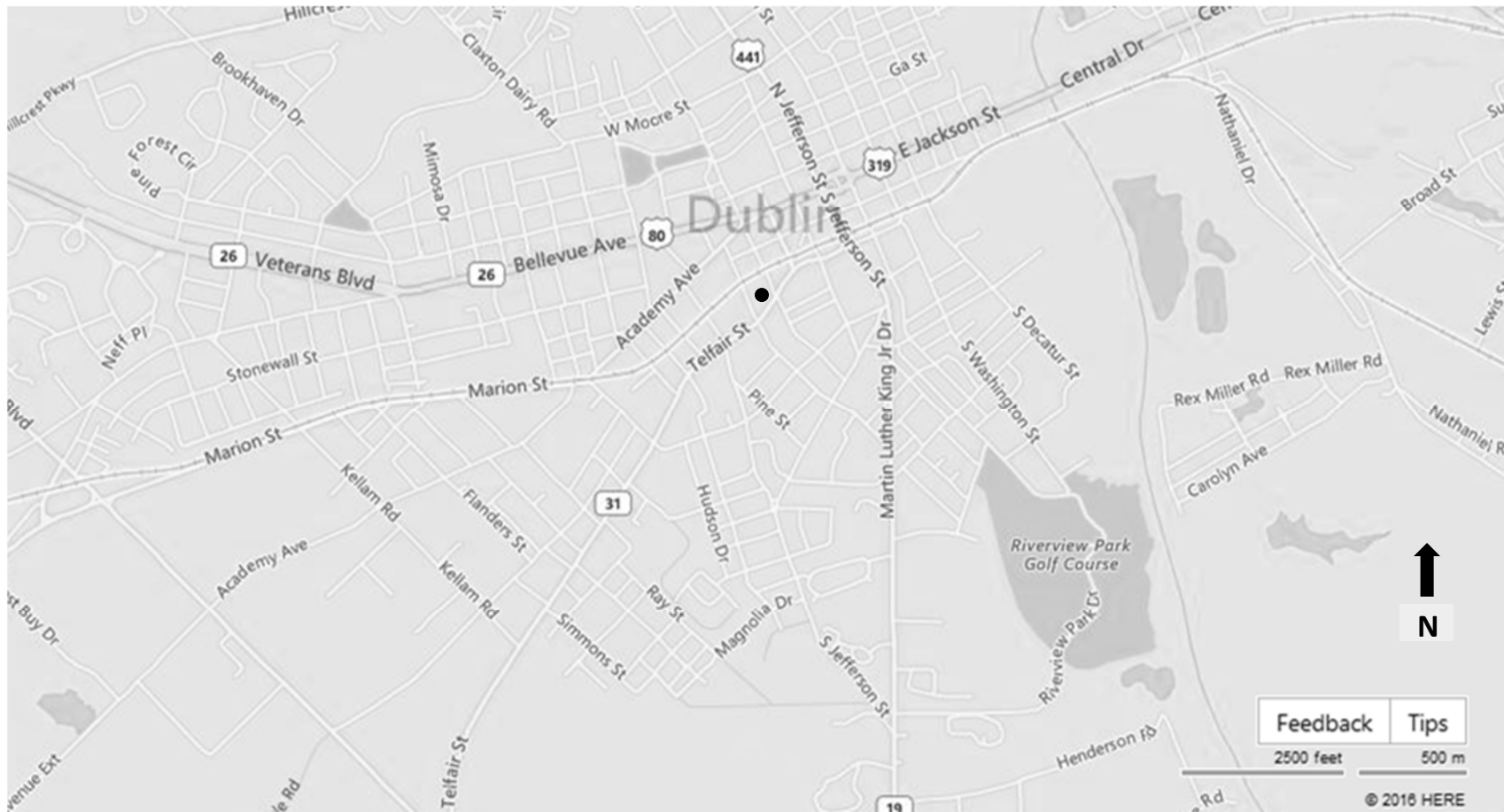
First African Baptist Church

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- 24 of 26. View of stairway from second to first floor of 1970 addition. Photographer facing north.
25 of 26. View of tower interior. Photographer facing northeast.
26 of 26. View of tower interior and church bell. Photographer facing southwest.



First African Baptist Church

405 Telfair Street
Dublin, Laurens County, Georgia

Latitude: 32.535457, Longitude: -82.907102

Source: Google Maps, 2016



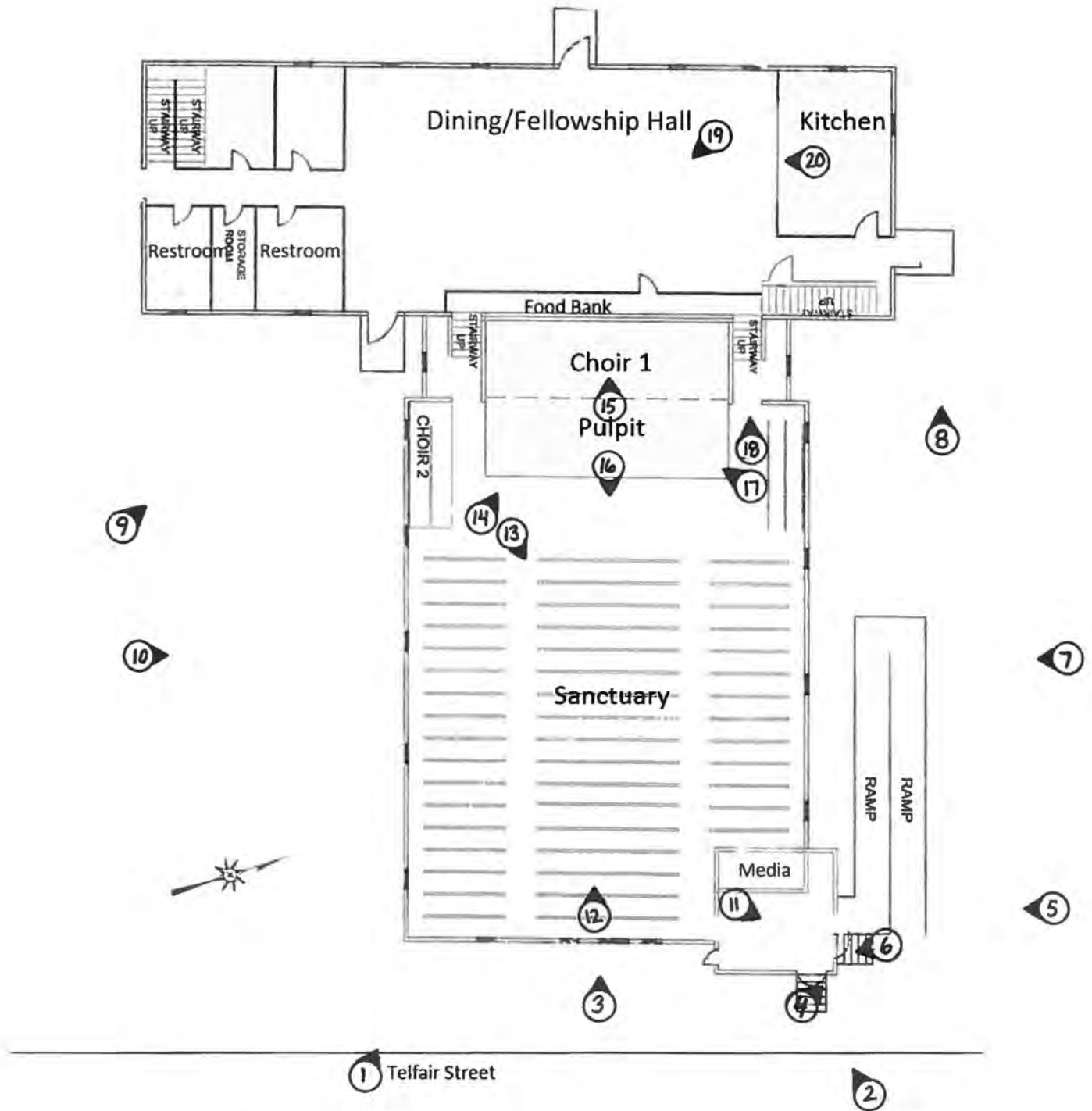
First African Baptist Church

Dublin, Laurens County, Georgia

National Register boundary: —

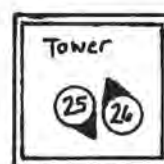
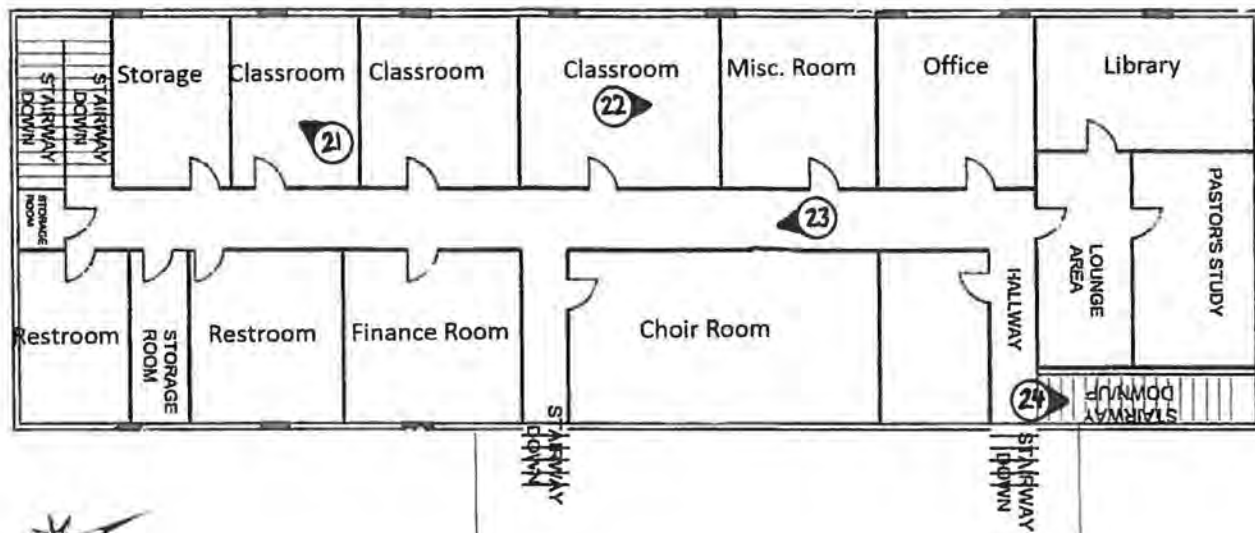
Source: Laurens County qPublic maps, 2016

North: ↑



First African Baptist Church
Dublin, Laurens County, Georgia
 Exterior and first floor plan and photo key
 Photograph # and direction of view: #
 North: ➔

Not to scale



**First African Baptist Church
Dublin, Laurens County, Georgia**

Second floor plan and photo key

Photograph # and direction of view: #

North: →

Not to scale



Welcome
SOUTH GA. MATT
Worship Ser.
8:00 AM
10:45 AM
Bible Study
Wed. 7:00 PM
Pastor:
Rev. Keith Anderson

SOUTH GA. MATT





DEDICATED TO THE
FIRST PASTOR CHURCH-COLORED
SHED 1867
FIRST PASTOR

DEACONS

W. L. HUGHES

C. L. MALLOY

J. J. JENKINS

HENRY LYONS

JOSEPH CHAMBERS

S. D. DELOACH

EDMOND HOLME

N. F. PROUT

FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH

ESTABLISHED 1860

RECORDED

REV. W. E. ...





ON APRIL 17, 1944, IN THE
1ST A.B. CHURCH OF DUBLIN, GEORGIA,
FOURTEEN YEAR OLD MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
DELIVERED HIS FIRST PUBLIC SPEECH
"THE NEGRO AND THE CONSTITUTION."
AT THIS SITE, A SEED WAS PLANTED IN HIS HEART
THAT WOULD GROW INTO HIS LIFE'S WORK.
HIS JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP BEGAN HERE.

Presented by



April 17, 2008









































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: First African Baptist Church

Multiple Name:

State & County: GEORGIA, Laurens

Date Received: 7/9/2019 Date of Pending List: 7/30/2019 Date of 16th Day: 8/14/2019 Date of 45th Day: 8/23/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004299

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 8/16/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary AOS: Architecture, Ethnic Heritage: Black; POS: 1914-1970; LOS: local
Comments:

Recommendation/ NR Criteria: A & C.
Criteria

Reviewer Lisa Deline

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239

Date 8/14/19

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.



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

MARK WILLIAMS
COMMISSIONER

DR. DAVID CRASS
DIVISION DIRECTOR

July 3, 2019

Kathryn Smith
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C St, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, D.C. 20240



Dear Ms. Smith:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **First African Baptist Church in Dublin, Laurens County, Georgia** to the National Register of Historic Places.

- ☒ Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- ☒ Disk with digital photo images
- ☒ Physical signature page
- ☐ Original USGS topographic map(s)
- ☐ Sketch map(s)/attachment(s)
- ☐ Correspondence
- ☐ Other:

COMMENTS:

- ☒ Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
- ☐ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- ☐ The enclosed owner objection(s) do ☐ do not ☐ constitute a majority of property owners.
- ☐ Special considerations:

Sincerely,

Olivia Head
National Register Specialist