

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic First Presbyterian Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2100 4th Avenue North N/A not for publication

city, town Birmingham N/A vicinity of congressional district 6

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Birmingham Presbytery

street & number P. O. Box 6027

city, town Birmingham N/A vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 North 21st Street

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Jefferson Co. Historic Sites Survey; Downtown Birmingham Historic Sites Survey
title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1972, 1976; 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Jefferson County Historical Commission; Birmingham Historical Society

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Presbyterian Church is built of red pressed brick in the Victorian Gothic style. Characteristic Gothic features include pointed and Tudor arches, stone tracery, and strong vertical emphasis given by the windows and narrow towers flanking the entrance, the gable above the entrance, and the large imposing bell tower with its pinnacles and pointed spire. Victorian influence is evident in the polychromatic decoration and ornamental terra cotta tiles on the exterior. Although softened by age and soot, the green, blue, and yellow tiles can still be seen in bands along the walls and in designs in the slate roof. The bell tower is the church's most distinctive feature, not only because of its size and height, but also because of its handsome spire with pinnacles, the tall open tracery windows, and the complex relationship it establishes with the similar though smaller-scaled forms on the main entrance. The 25 bells of the Rushton Memorial Carillon were cast in Loughborough, England, by the Taylor Foundry and mounted in the tower in 1924.

The main entrance to the church was originally in the west facade, off 21st Street. Repeated widening of the street first necessitated reconfiguration of the steps and then, in 1921, removal of the entrance to 4th Avenue.

The vaulted ceiling is original, and noteworthy, being of corrugated iron; it is supported by Tuscan columns. Handsome stained glass windows, designed and made by D'Ascenzo Studios of Philadelphia, date from the 1940s and 1950s.

The Phillips Chapel was added in 1950. In 1957 an east wing, which carefully reproduces the style and materials of the original building, was added; it was designed by architects D. H. Green and W. N. Chambers. The addition encloses a grassy courtyard that opens onto 4th Avenue.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1888

Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Presbyterian Church is the most refined and sophisticated example of Victorian Gothic architecture in the city, as seen in its complex massing and the use of terra cotta ornament to subtly enrich its fine brickwork. It is particularly distinguished by the dominant bell tower, with its spire and pinnacles and pointed-arched opening with stone tracery. The tower originally marked the main entrance and since 1924 has housed a 25-bell carillon. Although the interior of the church has been remodeled, its corrugated iron vaulted ceiling, supported by Tuscan columns, is original and believed to be unique in Birmingham and rare in Alabama and the Southeast. The stained glass windows are distinguished additions dating from the 1940s and 50s. The rest of the church complex enhances the setting of the original church, particularly the east wing (1957) which carefully reproduces the style and materials of the original building. The landscaped courtyard also adds refreshing green space in the central business district.

* * * * *

The First Presbyterian Church, the oldest church building standing downtown, was built by one of Birmingham's pioneer congregations. The church was organized in 1872, some five months after the incorporation of the city; their first sanctuary was a frame structure moved from nearby Elyton. The present sanctuary, the first of the city's permanent masonry churches to be constructed, was built during Birmingham's first major period of growth, sparked by the ironmaking boom of 1886-87.

The First Presbyterian Church also provides important clues to understanding Birmingham's early cityscape. It originally marked the boundary between the residential neighborhood, to the north, and the commercial district, to the south. Along with the Jefferson County Courthouse (1889-1930; sited, with the jail, on the half block bounded by 21st Street and 3rd and 4th Avenues) and St. Paul's Cathedral (1893 ; in process of nomination to NRHP), it made up the city's most important public square, known as Courthouse Square. The first Presbyterian Church and St. Paul's Cathedral had a particularly strong relationship with the courthouse, since all three buildings were set back on their sites and featured prominent towers that activated the city's skyline, creating a distinctive urban space. Although the central focus is gone, the churches still contribute strongly to the urban landscape.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .72

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	5	1	8	0	1	0	3	7	0	1	8	5	1	8	1	0
Zone				Easting				Northing									

B

Zone				Easting				Northing									

C

Zone				Easting				Northing									

D

Zone				Easting				Northing									

E

Zone				Easting				Northing									

F

Zone				Easting				Northing									

G

Zone				Easting				Northing									

H

Zone				Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

Downtown Birmingham. Block 58. Parcels 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 140' x 225'

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alice M. Bowsher, Kidd, Wheeler & Plosser, Architects & Ellen Mertins

organization Alabama Historical Commission date July 15, 1982

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone (205) 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11-10-82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date 12/28/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date 12/27/82

Chief of Registration

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Downtown Birmingham, Marjorie Longenecker White, p. 104; Birmingham Regional Planning Commission

Historic Sites of Jefferson County, Alabama, 1972, p. 126; Kilian, Clarence M., ed.

A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama, (Birmingham: Birmingham Publishing Co. Carolyn Green Satterfield

Historic Sites of Jefferson County, Alabama, 1976, p. 13,

A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama, Clarence M. Kilian, ed. (Birmingham: Birmingham Publishing C., 1952).



First United Methodist Church

Christia Learning Center
Church
office/ Chapel

Cathedral Church of Advent

church
WALL
Climbing
Carpenter House
Hobby Hall
Furniture

First United Methodist Church

School
Restory
Church

First United Methodist Church

6TH

7TH

20TH

AVENUE

6TH

22ND

STREET

21ST

STREET

AVENUE

5TH

AVENUE

STREET

4TH

AVENUE

18TH

19TH

AVENUE

22ND