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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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Peace Baptist Church
other names/site number J. H. Stenson Fellowship Hall, Sixth Street Peace Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number 302 Sixth Street, North N/A not for publication
city or town Birmingham N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL County Jefferson code 073 zip code 35203

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Elizabeth S. Brown
Signature of certifying official/Title

March 3, 2005
Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Alabama Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Carey A. Hull

4-22-05

Peace Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

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

Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: educational building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick; Concrete
walls Brick

roof Asphalt Shingle
other Metal; Wood; Glass; Vinyl

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets.

Peace Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)
Property is:

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

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Ethnic Heritage: African American

Period of Significance
1956-1963

Significant Dates
1963

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 - previously listed in the National Register
 - Previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local Government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Birmingham Historical Society,
Birmingham Public Library; Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Peace Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately three acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>516080</u>	<u>3707530</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
					<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carroll Van West, with earlier material by Linda Nelson and Marjorie White
organization Center for Historic Preservation date March 25, 2004
street & number Middle Tennessee State University—Box 80 telephone 615-898-2947
city or town Murfreesboro state TN Zip code 37132

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Sixth Street Peace Baptist Church (Rev. Hobby Mooror, Jr.)
street & number 302 Sixth Street North telephone 205-324-2781
City Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35203

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Peace Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VII. Description

Now isolated, from its earlier neighborhood roots in a downtown section of small businesses, industrial shops, and warehouses, Peace Baptist Church is at 302 Sixth Street North. It is a one-story brick gable-front church that rests on a full raised brick and concrete basement. It has an asphalt shingle roof. The historic building is now the J. H. Stenson Fellowship Hall of the adjacent Sixth Street Peace Baptist Church, a one-story brick building that has served the congregation since 1970.

The east facade is an austere square topped by a steep plain gable and flanked by two small, incorporated towers with pyramidal roofs. It is one of the city's last formal statements of the gable front and twin tower church, a general design approach to African-American churches that had been popular for the preceding fifty years. One difference between this church and others in the gable-front form is that the towers are not as high as the gable peak and do not project, making the facade an unbroken plane. It gives the church building a very commanding presence in the surrounding built environment. The three-bay façade is centered around a double door entry, which is reached by wide concrete stairs, with metal side railings and a metal center rail, that rise from the sidewalk up to the plain double central entry. The original doors were replaced with commercial-style metal-and-glass doors, c. 1995. A flat metal canopy, supported by three metal posts, is over the double door entrance. Flanking the entrance are two rectangular wood-frame single light windows. On the balcony level are two symmetrical pairs of metal-frame windows of made up of groups of 5-light panels. A soldier course defines the first-floor level.

The north elevation contains six bays, with brick square pilasters separating each bay. The vestibule bay contains a single 15-light window of pink-and-blue-toned painted glass. The middle three bays of the sanctuary have paired 15-light windows of pink-and-blue-toned painted glass. The fifth sanctuary bay contains a single 15-light window of pink-and-blue toned painted glass and a metal door, which is reached by a metal staircase. Bay six contains a 12-light window of pink-and-blue toned painted glass adjacent to the door and another 12-light window of pink-and-blue toned painted glass directly above. the sanctuary fenestration is repeated in the basement windows, likewise metal-frame but without the painted glass. The next-to-last bays contain a rear metal door entry and a 12-light window.

The west (rear) elevation has four bays. Two 15-light windows of pink-and-blue toned painted glass light the pulpit and choir area in the top half of the wall. On the middle of the wall, there are 12-light windows of pink-and-blue toned painted glass at the southwest and northwest corners. A metal door off-centered on the basement level allows access to the basement. A brick chimney flue extends over the roofline on the northwest side of the elevation.

The south elevation is similar to the north elevation, except that it lacks a side entrance. It is partially obscured by the close proximity of the later 1990 Sixth Street Peace Baptist Church building.

The interior is now used as a fellowship hall and has lost its sanctuary furniture but has retained its sense of openness and space. The vestibule retains restrooms in the corner towers as well as staircases to the balcony. Within the sanctuary, the open ceiling is quasi-barreled with laid-in tile covering it; the balcony surrounds three sides and is supported by thin metal poles. The dais is intact and the baptistery behind it is under a rather cavernous recession at the front of the room. The hardwood floor is also intact. Most of the interior has been faux wood-paneled, c. 1970.

Between the old building and the Third Avenue corner, the congregation erected in 1990 the Sixth Street Peace Baptist Church building, a modern gable-front meetinghouse with a minimally traditional tapered spire on top. (NC, due to date of construction.)

The church meets the registration requirements for church buildings in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. It retains a high degree of integrity in setting, location, design, exterior materials, exterior workmanship, and association. Although the building is no longer used as the primary church sanctuary, its conversion into a fellowship hall has been made without significant changes to the original space plan.

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Peace Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been conducted, the potential for subsurface materials exists.

VIII. Significance

Built in 1948, under the guidance of Reverend J. H. Stenson, Peace Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as one of the leading churches involved in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) in the Civil Rights era. It meets the registration requirements for Criterion A as a strategy center as found in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1978 MPS.

Rev. Dr. John H. Stenson became pastor of Peace Baptist Church in 1947 and he gathered the funds and plans to build a new large brick church, to serve his rapidly expanding post-World War II congregation. The construction of the new church began on June 3, 1948. As designed, it was the last major gable-front twin-tower black church in Birmingham.

Due to its proximity to downtown, the Civil Rights activism of Dr. Stenson, and its large meeting space, Peace Baptist Church became one of the early congregations involved in the ACMHR. According to an interview with former ACMHR secretary Lola Hendricks, conducted by the Birmingham Historical Society, Peace Baptist Church supported the ACMHR in its early years of 1956-58. In its 1958 annual report, the ACMHR listed the church among a number of others "where we have met—so many times" and where the doors had been "generously opened for us." In this listing, the ACMHR asserted that "This is a people's movement—of all the people. Nothing stops the people from enthusiastically coming each night to sing, pray and to give. These are Mass heroes." Historians of the Civil Rights Movement have long discussed the intersection of faith and activism in the mass meetings held at various Birmingham churches. Historian and Baptist minister Wilson Fallin, Jr., emphasized:

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

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

Dr. Stenson served as minister at Peace Baptist until 1969 and his church was active in the 1960s events associated with the Civil Rights Movement. The church hosted an ACMHR meeting on April 23, 1962. The meeting, led by Rev. Ed Gardner and secretary Georgia Price, encouraged continued commitment to the downtown "selective buying" campaign. Rev. Gardner even asserted that those who continued to shop downtown in defiance to the boycott were little more than traitors to African-American pride and identity.

During the Project C confrontation of April-May 1963, many members of the congregation played an active role; the building was located west of downtown, but within easy walking or quick driving distance to Kelly Ingram Park, the center of the demonstrations. The church was a place where the congregation discussed its involvement in the demonstrations and a place where residents and members gathered before proceeding downtown to the Kelly Ingram Park area.

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Peace Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

Peace Baptist Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A as listed in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. The church was an important strategy center for the ACMHR and members of the congregation played an active role in the early mass meetings of the ACMHR, the Selective Buying Campaign of 1962, and the Project C demonstrations of 1963.

IX. Bibliography

Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) Meeting and Police Department Records, Eugene ("Bull") Connor Papers, Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham, Alabama.

Annual Report, 1958, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Birmingham: ACMHR, 1958.

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

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

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

Hicks, Willie. Interview, December 13, 1999. Birmingham Historical Society.

McWhorter, Diane. *Carry Me Home.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

"1956-Eight Years of Progress-1964." *Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, Inc., Annual Report.* Birmingham: ACMHR, 1964.

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

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

X. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated boundaries of the historic (Sixth Street) Peace Baptist Church at 302 Sixth Street North are represented by Lot 10, Block 41 of Jefferson County Tax Map 01-22-35-3, Sections SW ¼ 35, Township 17 South, Range 3 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the (Sixth Street) Peace Baptist Church.

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Photographs Page

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Peace Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

(Sixth Street) Baptist Church
Birmingham, Jefferson Co., AL

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

Photographs (interior) by: Birmingham Historical Society
December 1999

East façade, facing west
1 of 10

East façade and north elevation, facing southwest
2 of 10

East façade of historic building and east façade of new church, facing west
3 of 10

Dedication marker, facing west
4 of 10

West elevations of historic building and new church, facing northeast
5 of 10

Sanctuary, facing west
6 of 10

Sanctuary, facing north
7 of 10

Sanctuary, facing south
8 of 10

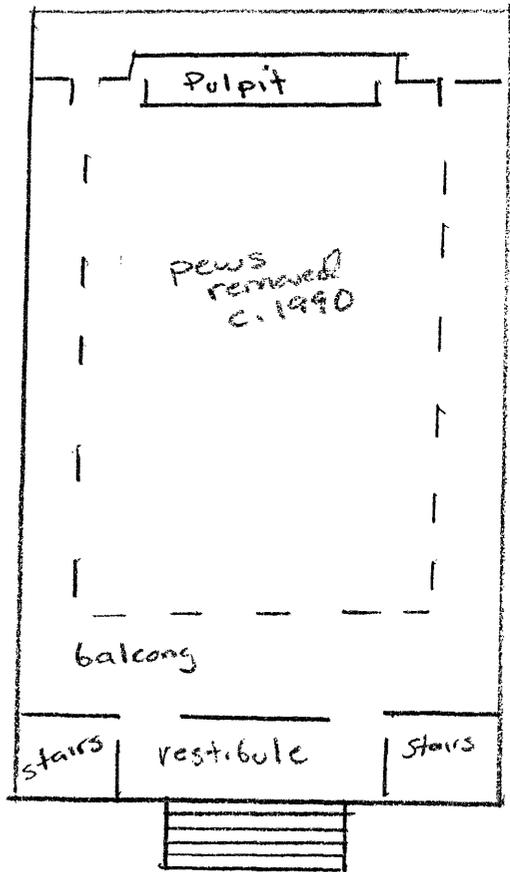
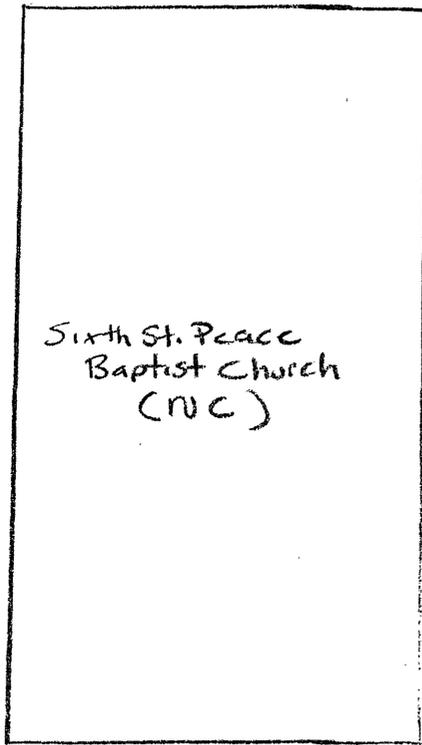
Sanctuary, facing east
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Balcony, facing northeast
10 of 10

Peace Baptist Church
Birmingham AL

parking

Peace Baptist Church
c. 1948



Sixth Street North

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NTS: 2004