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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 St. Luke AME Church	· ·		
other names/site number N/A			
2. Location			
street & number 2803 21 st Avenue No	orth	N/A not fo	
city or town Birmingham state Alabama code	AL county Jefferson	code 073 zip code	vicinity 35234
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	1		
As the designated authority under the National nomination request for determination of e National Register of Historic Places and meet my opinion, the property meets doe considered significant nationally state State Historic Preservation State or Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property meets doe additional comments.) Signature of certifying official/Title State or Federal agency and bureau	eligibility meets the documentation stand ts the procedural and professional requir as not meet the National Register criteria ewide Iocally. (See continuation she for Office, Alabama Historical Co bes not meet the National Register criteri	lards for registering properties in the rements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In a. I recommend that this property be set for additional comments.) W3, W05 ate	
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:)	Came A Shi	f the Keeper <u> </u> <u></u>	Date of Action

St.	Luke AME Church	n
Na	ne 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)		urces within Property usly listed resources in count.)	
⊠ private □ public-local	⊠ building(s) □ district	Contributing	Noncontributing	
public-local		2		buildings
public-Federal	Structure			_ sites
	D object			structures
		2	0	_ objects _ Total
Name of related multiple (Enter "N/A" if property is not par	property listing t of a multiple property listing.)	Number of Contr in the National R	ibuting resources previc egister	ously listed
Birmingham Civil Rights Move	ement, 1933-1979 MPS	0		
6. Function or Use			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
Historic Functions (Enter categories from inst RELIGIOUS: church DOMESTIC: single dwellin		Current Function (Enter categories RELIGIOUS: chui RELIGIOUS: educ	from instructions) rch	
7. Description				
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categories f foundation Stone	•	
Gothic Revival		wallsBrick; Stor		
		roof Asphalt Shi other Metal; Woo		

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

See continuation sheets.

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.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	Social History Ethnic Heritage: African American Architecture
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.	Period of Significance 1926, 1957-1963
 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. 	Significant Dates 1926, 1963
B removed from its original location.	Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked) N/A
C moved from its original location.	Cultural Affiliation
D a cemetery.	N/A
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. 	Architect/Builder Rayfield, Wallace, architect
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more co	ontinuation sheets.)
9. Major Bibliographical References	
Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing 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 #	ing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) 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
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	

St. Luke AME Church

Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama County and State

10	. G	ieog	rap	hio	cal	Data
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Acreage of Property Approximately two acres					
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)					
1 <u>16 517660 3711460</u> Easting Northing Zone	3	Zone	Easting	Nor	thing
2	4	Sheet	e continuation	on	<u>-</u>
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 <u>Carroll Van West, with earlier material by Linda Nelson and</u> organization <u>Center for Historic Preservation</u>	da	ite _M	larch 23, 20		
street & number Middle Tennessee State University—Box 80	telepho	one e	615-898-294 	47	
city or town Murfreesboro state	e <u>TN</u>		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 lo A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large ac		r numer	ous resourc	ces.	
Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.					
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)					
Property Owner				· .	
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)					
name _St. Luke AME Church (Rev. Sam Walker)					
street & number 2801 21 st Avenue North		tele	phone _2(5-252-3717	
city Birmingham state	e Alab	ama	zip code	35234	

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

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

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

VII. Description

St. Luke AME Church, a restrained Gothic Revival design by African-American architect Wallace Rayfield, sits on a large, landscaped and fenced lot in north Birmingham. It is a gable-front buff-colored brick one-story church, originally built in 1926, which rests on a full basement that is faced in fieldstone. It has a flat asphalt roof. The present flat parapet is capped in terra cotta all around; a low roof interior to the parapet is visible from the sidewalk. A soldier course marks the first floor level.

The north façade features three symmetrical bays with a tiny parapet crest in the center over a louvered vent. Originally a bracketed wood pediment, supported by massive wood brackets, masked the crest and grille, but this featured deteriorated, and the congregation chose to replace it c. 1965 by the present one-story plain portico with pediment, which is supported by wrought iron poles. The ghost of the earlier structure is still visible on the parapet face. Three nearly square wood windows of stained glass symmetrically arranged on the balcony level. On the main level there are four openings: the outer stained glass windows are in line with the upper but are rectangular in shape. The inner two are double sets of double six-panel wood doors, which are replacement doors, c. 1985. Two levels of stone and concrete steps lead from the front sidewalk and from both sides to the sanctuary entrance. In the middle of the staircase is a metal railing. On the first level of the stairs are two large wrought iron poles, which once held exterior lamps. These poles are converted steel pipes, stamped with the date 1938 and made at the nearby ACIPCO plant. On the basement levels, on both sides of the staircase, are double metal door, which provides access to a storage area underneath the staircase.

The west elevation has seven symmetrical bays, with the bays for the vestibule and the pulpit/choir area slightly projecting beyond the other five bays. These interior bays are defined by slim brick buttresses with flat concrete caps. The sanctuary level windows are paired slender tripartite panels of stained glass. The basement level windows are paired six-over-six double-hung wood windows, all with prominent concrete headers. The windows for the vestibule are smaller one-over-one stained glass windows. The rear bay contains a stone and concrete step of steps that lead to frame side entrance; the stairs also extend from the rear of this room.

The south (rear) elevation contains five bays on the sanctuary level, with the center three bays being stained glass windows. Flanking the stained glass are one-over-over double-hung frosted glass windows. A stone and brick chimney flue extends from the basement to about two feet above the roofline. The basement level also has three windows, each with a prominent concrete header. The southwest window is six-over-six double-hung; the off-center window is a three-over-three double-hung; and the southeast window is a single pane. Original metal gutters run along the wall at the southwest and southeast corners. An asphalt shingle shed roof concrete block addition has been added, c. 1970, to the southwest side of the elevation.

The east elevation is similar to the east elevation, except there is no side entrance in the final bay. Rather the east elevation has a one-over-one double hung stained glass window.

The vestibule, sanctuary, and basement Sunday School rooms retain a high degree of integrity to their appearance during the Civil Rights Movement years of 1956 to 1963. The large sanctuary, which is well illuminated by the high stained glass windows and original globular light fixtures in the ceiling, is divided by double aisles. The wide aisles, with carpet covered the original hardwood floors, led to the dais and central pulpit, behind which is an elevated choir loft. The wall behind the loft and pulpit is lit by three stained glass windows. The church furniture and pews are historic. The chancel area is narrowed between closed passages on either side, leading to the rear of the church. The sanctuary has mostly plastered walls, with a dark wood wainscot below the window-sill level. The flat ceiling exposes well the grid of exposed dark wooden roof beams. The balcony at the rear of the sanctuary has a slight curvature where it joins the side walls, which relieves the strong rectangular angularity of the interior.

The basement level is divided into restrooms in the front corners, side rooms for classrooms, and a large, open center space that serves as a fellowship hall. A modern kitchen has been installed, c. 1985, in the south end of the basement.

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

The church meets the registration requirements for church buildings in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. It retains a high degree of integrity in setting, location, materials, design, workmanship, and association to its period of significance from 1956 to 1963.

Sharing the large church lot is the original parsonage (1926), a one-story buff-colored brick building in a gable-front style, also believed to have been designed by Wallace Rayfield. The parsonage is a contributing building. (C).

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been conducted, there is potential for subsurface materials.

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

VIII. Significance

St. Luke AME Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and the related themes of Social History and Ethnic Identity as a locally significant property associated with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) and the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham from 1956 to 1963. It is also eligible under Criterion C as an extant representative example of the work of African-American architect Wallace Rayfield. The nominated property meets the registration requirements for Criterion A and Criterion C as found in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1978 MPS.

Rev. Andrew W. Thomas, who was pastor at St. Luke AME from 1956-69, was an activist in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) and he opened his church doors for numerous mass meetings of the ACMHR. According to former ACMHR secretary Lola Hendricks, civil rights meetings occurred at St. Luke as early as 1957. 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.

The best record of the meetings at St. Luke AME church emerges from police files from 1961 to 1963, when the Birmingham police began to regularly attend the meetings and take notes on the participants and the topics. At a July 30, 1962, meeting, Rev. Edward Gardner, Rev. Abraham Woods, Jr., Rev. Nelson Smith, Jr., Rev. Calvin Woods, and Emory Jackson, the editor of the *Birmingham World* spoke to an audience of 300 on issues of black pride (urging members to subscribe to the local newspaper and *Ebony* magazine). The speakers also criticized the community for not being more activist in voter registration, like the successful drive to register voters in Fayette County, Tennessee, and more recently in Mobile, Alabama.

Five meetings took place at the church in 1963, with the speakers including some of the most significant leaders from the national Civil Rights Movement. On January 7, 1963, for example, Rev. Edward Gardner and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth addressed the crowd, discussing the implications of the potential change in Birmingham city government and addressing an interesting issue: by participating in demonstrations and other action agendas was the ACMHR becoming more like the Ku Klux Klan in its approach? Rev. Shuttlesworth said no; the organization was devoted to non-violent principles and by keeping those at the forefront, the demonstrators would achieve victory. In the midst of the Project C demonstrations of April and

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

May, 1963, St. Luke AME hosted a huge meeting on April 29, 1963, where Rev. Ralph Abernathy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both spoke, with Rev. Edward Gardner presiding as the local ACMHR official. In this address, Rev. King affirmed his commitment to change in Birmingham and promised to stay involved until the Movement's demands were met: "I am committed to Birmingham. When I came here 27 days ago I made it clear that I would be with you until we gained our victory." King asserted that "what's happening in Birmingham is the most important and decisive thing in the world today." He related that if the downtown boycott proved successful and that blacks should shop and work in the downtown without being second-class citizens, that single development "would make Birmingham a magic city, instead of a tragic city." He urged the ACMHR members to stay the course: "We got to keep it up and not go back to town until they treat us like a person with dignity. We intend to put justice in business. We have got to bring pressure to bear on the economic structure of Birmingham." (Eskew, 262-63)

After the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in mid-September 1963, the ACMHR met again at St. Luke AME, this time to deal with continuing grief over the death of the four girls but also to plan the organization's response to federal authorities. Rev. Edward Gardner led a meeting of 500 people, which designated committee to go to Washington and meet with President John F. Kennedy. The speakers also decried the long tradition of police brutality and wondered why the bombers in this heinous crime were still walking the streets of the city.

Two additional recorded meetings took place at the church in October and November, 1963. At the October 9 meeting, Rev. Gardner and Rev. James Bevel of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee spoke. At the November 25 meeting, attended by 500, Rev. Gardner, Rev. Abraham Woods, Jr., and Rev. Shuttlesworth spoke in the wake of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. They called for continued demonstrations and expressed their frank worries about the negative impact of Kennedy's death on the movement.

St. Luke AME Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A as a strategy center that was locally significant in the activities of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, especially during the Project C demonstrations of 1963.

The church building is eligible under Criterion C as a locally significant example of the architectural work of Wallace Rayfield, an early twentieth-century African-American architect in Birmingham, who also worked across the South. The building largely retains its appearance from its time of construction, in 1926, and contains such unique elements as the steel pipes used for exterior lamps. Its restrained styling was a sensible design solution for a congregation that was prominent within the workingclass neighborhoods of north Birmingham but one that also lacked the financial means for both a large church and one with ornate stylistic ornament. Rayfield's sense of balance and proportion—along with the practicality of providing room for a big congregation—is well illustrated at St. Luke AME Church.

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

IX. Bibliography

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- Annual Report, 1958, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Birmingham: ACMHR, 1958.
- Eskew, Glenn T. But for Birmingham: the Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Fallin, Wilson, Jr. "Rock Solid Faith: African American Church Life and Culture in 1956 Birmingham." Marjorie L. White and Andrew M. Manis, eds. *Birmingham Revolutionaries: The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000. 7-18.

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

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- McWhorter, Diane. Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- St. Luke AME 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.

Smith, Robbie B. Interview, November 1, 1995. Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Archives.

Ward, Mildred. Interview, December 11, 1999. Birmingham Historical Society.

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

X. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated boundaries of St. Luke AME Church at 2803 21st Avenue North are represented by Block 21 as noted on the attached Jefferson County Tax Map 01-22-24-2, Sections NW ¼ 24, Township 17 South, Range 3 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the St. Luke AME Church.

Photographs Page

St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

St. Luke AME Church Birmingham, Jefferson Co., AL Photos by Carroll Van West (exterior) MTSU Center for Historic Preservation July 2003 Photos by Michelle Crunk (interior) Birmingham Historical Society December 1999

Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission 468 South Perry Montgomery, AL

North façade, facing south 1 of 17

North façade, detail, facing south 2 of 17

Dedication marker, facing south 3 of 17

North façade and east elevation, facing southwest 4 of 17

East elevation, facing southwest 5 of 17

West elevation, facing east 6 of 17

South elevation and west elevation, facing northeast 7 of 17

South elevation, facing north 8 of 17

Steel pipe, front staircase, facing north 9 of 17

Parsonage, facing southeast 10 of 17

Sanctuary, facing south 11 of 17

Sanctuary, facing southeast 12 of 17

Sanctuary, facing southwest 13 of 17

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St. Luke AME Church, Jefferson Co., AL

Pulpit, facing south 14 of 17

Balcony, facing west 15 of 17

Pulpit, from balcony, facing south 16 of 17

Balcony, from pulpit, facing north 17 of 17





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