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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 First Christian Church

other names/site number PP0125

2. Location

street & number 103 South Boston Avenue

☐ not for publication

city or town Russellville

☐ vicinity

state Arkansas

code AR

county Pope

code 115

zip code 72801

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.)

Cecilia Martinez  
Signature of certifying official/Title

4/7/06  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Elson H. Beall 5-24-06

First Christian Church  
Name of Property

Pope County, Arkansas  
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

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**

0

## 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 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/ Late

Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

## Narrative Description

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

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### SUMMARY

First Christian Church is located at the intersection of South Boston Avenue and East Main Place in Russellville, adjacent to the Main Street overpass that crosses the Union Pacific Railroad. The Late Gothic Revival-style church was constructed as a wood-frame building in 1885-86 and expanded and remodeled to its present-day appearance, including the application of a brick exterior, in 1925. An education annex, constructed in 1953-54 as an attachment to the rear of the church, made no changes to the Gothic features in the older portions of the building. The 1885-86 and 1925 portions of the building are constructed on a cast-concrete foundation, while the 1954 annex is built on a concrete slab. The building's exterior is red brick, laid in a running bond pattern. The 1885-86 and 1925 construction is covered by a high-pitched roof that extends to gables on all four sides, consistent with the sanctuary's cruciform pattern. This roof is covered with asbestos shingles, while the 1954 annex has a flat roof. The original portion of the building has 14 narrow, pointed stained-glass windows and its Late Gothic Revival style is complemented by a portico, built over the front entrance in 1925, which contains pointed-arch openings and is topped by a medieval-type battlement.

### ELABORATION

First Christian Church is located in the downtown area of Russellville, Arkansas, a small city of approximately 25,000 residents and the seat of Pope County. The church faces South Boston Avenue, one block east of the courthouse and one block north of Russellville's main post office. The original portion of the building was designed by architect J. D. Price of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in a Late Gothic Revival style and constructed by local contractors J. P. Eaton and A. K. Bollinger in 1885-86. In 1925, the rear of the original building was extended 35 feet by builders J. C. Woodson (a member of the congregation) and his brother, Warren Woodson. Their two-story extension attained harmony with the original construction by matching the pitch and height of the previously existing roof to achieve a continuation of the original roof line. The 1925 project also added a front entrance portico, applied a brick veneer to the building's exterior, installed stained-glass windows in the entry area and sanctuary to replace opaque, amber-colored panes used in the original construction, and modified the church's interior.

A single-story, flat-roofed education annex was constructed onto the rear of the 1925 building extension in 1953-54. An unidentified architect for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) national headquarters designed the annex and much of the construction was accomplished by members of the First Christian Church congregation. Although the annex did not follow the architectural style of the earlier construction, its addition did not adversely affect the building's Gothic Revival features and its red-brick exterior matches the brick applied previously to the older portions of the building. In 1998, an exterior walkway on the south side of the building, connecting the sanctuary in the original portion of the church and the 1954 education annex, was enclosed to provide wheelchair access into the sanctuary and protection from the elements for persons moving between the two parts of the building. This constitutes the only alteration to the church's exterior since 1954.



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The 1885-86 and 1925 constructions rest on a continuous cast concrete foundation and are topped by a steep roof, gabled on all four sides of the building, and covered with asphalt shingles, while the 1953-54 addition is built on a poured concrete slab and has a flat roof. The exterior of the entire building is red brick, laid in a running bond pattern.

### West/Front Elevation

The 34-foot wide west elevation, facing South Boston Avenue, is dominated by the church's main entrance, which includes six poured concrete steps and a concrete porch covered by a brick portico in the form of a rectangular-shaped tower, all constructed in 1925. The tower portico is built in a hybrid Gothic-Romanesque style, with a curved Roman arch over the entrance steps and pointed Gothic arches, matching the 1885-86 Gothic windows, on the sides. The tower has three rectangular stained-glass windows, installed in wood frames at the second-floor level, and is capped by a medieval-style battlement. The stained-glass window on the front of the tower measures 56 inches high by 49 inches wide, while the two windows on the sides of the tower are 56 inches high and 24 inches wide. The words CHRISTIAN CHURCH are etched in stone above the tower's entry arch and the numbers 1885 and 1925 are etched in separate stones on opposite sides of the arch, reflecting the year construction began on the original building and the year an expansion, which included the tower portico's construction and placement of brick over the church's exterior, was accomplished.

The west elevation also contains two of the church's 14 large Gothic stained-glass windows. Each measures 9.5 feet high by 32 inches wide and features an Easter lily design, as do the rectangular stained-glass windows in the portico tower. The windows are installed in wood frames that date from the 1885-86 construction and could originally be raised to provide ventilation; the windows have been sealed, however, since air conditioning was installed in the building in the 1960s.

With the exception of replacement wooden front doors, the appearance of the church's west/front elevation has remained unchanged since 1925.

### North/Side Elevation

The 125-foot-long north/side elevation, facing East Main Place, contains six of the church's 14 wood-framed Gothic stained-glass windows of the same size and design as the two on the front of the building. A door into the sanctuary (now sealed) is topped by a stained-glass Gothic fanlight of the same Easter lily pattern used in the large windows. Four of the six large stained-glass windows are installed in a 32-foot-long section that projects eight feet from the north elevation. This section is topped by a short gabled roof projecting 90 degrees from the building's long (east-west) roof axis, and is a feature of the original construction's cruciform pattern.



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Windows in the 1925 and 1953-54 additions to the rear of the building have rectangular shapes and do not contain stained glass. Those in the education annex at the east end of the north elevation are metal-framed and the others have wood frames. A low roof, projecting eight feet northward and approximately three feet above ground level, covers a portion of a basement area in the center of the north elevation. The north elevation contains one entrance that is currently in use; it is located in the education annex near the rear of the building. The education annex projects northward 28 feet from the rest of the building's north side.

Except for the addition of the 1953-54 education annex, which occupies the 37 feet nearest the building's rear, the appearance of the church's north elevation has remained unchanged since 1925.

### East/Rear Elevation

The 72-foot-long first floor of the rear elevation is the long axis of the flat-roofed education annex, constructed in 1953-54. It contains nine rectangular metal-framed glass windows that are in a minister's office, fellowship hall, and two Sunday school rooms. The east end of the 1925 building addition, with its gabled roof extending from the 1885-86 roof, is visible above the education annex. This elevation is unchanged since 1954.

### South/Side Elevation

The front half of the south elevation is virtually identical to the building's north side. This portion of the south elevation contains the front entry and sanctuary areas of the church, with the same gabled roof and cruciform extension as the north elevation. These are all part of the original 1885-86 construction. Similarly, this elevation contains six of the church's 14 large Gothic stained-glass windows, but one is not visible from outside the building. It was covered in 1998 when an outdoor walkway from the sanctuary to the education annex at the rear of the building was enclosed to provide handicapped access and protection from the elements for persons moving between the two parts of the building. The walkway enclosure was designed to avoid damaging the enclosed stained-glass window and to provide sufficient light to illuminate it, but it is now visible only from inside the building.

The first floor of the middle portion of the south elevation contains the 1998 walkway enclosure, with its entrance for handicapped individuals. The flat-roofed education annex, constructed in 1953-54, comprises the rear/eastern 37 feet of the south elevation. Unlike the north elevation, the south wall of the education annex is flush with the main part of the south elevation; the annex has an entrance into a kitchen. The second floor and roof of the 1925 building extension are visible above the enclosed walkway.

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### Interior

The dimensions and arrangement of the sanctuary are basically unchanged since the original 1885-86 construction. It contains two aisles from the entry area to the chancel, which divide the seating area into a large center section and two smaller side sections. There are also narrow aisles behind the side sections and along the exterior walls. Seating is in traditional wooden pews, with cushioned padding. Facing from the pews, the slightly elevated chancel area contains an organ on the left side, communion table in the center, and choir area (folding chairs) on the right, with a pulpit on each side for use by the minister and lay worship leader during services. A baptistery at the rear of the chancel is concealed by 22-foot-long drapes that are opened when baptisms are performed. A large, unadorned wood cross is installed in front of the baptistery drapes.

Fourteen large windows in the entry area and sanctuary, each measuring 9.5 feet high by 32 inches wide, date to the 1885-86 construction and have pointed arches characteristic of the Gothic design. Each window has a stained-glass Easter lily design that was installed in the window's original wood frame in 1925. There are also stained-glass Gothic fanlights above two sanctuary doors that feature the same Easter lily design.

The 35-foot-long, two-story extension behind the chancel area was constructed in 1925. It contains rooms now used as a library, parlor, several Sunday school classrooms, and a partial basement. The basement, originally a fellowship room and kitchen, is now used for a children's Sunday school classroom and storage.

The rear section of the building is a single-story education annex, constructed in 1953-54. It includes a fellowship hall, minister's and secretary's offices, kitchen, nursery, and two Sunday school classrooms.

### Integrity

The integrity of the First Christian Church building is essentially intact. With the exception of the 1998 walkway enclosure on the south side, the building's exterior has not changed in more than a half century, the west/front of the building is identical to its 1925 appearance, and the Gothic Revival characteristics of the church have almost all been retained. The primary exterior modifications to the original 1885-86 building occurred in 1925, when a wooden spire, which had become unstable, was removed from the roof and replaced by a brick portico tower above the front entrance and the wood church exterior was covered with a brick veneer. The church's wood shingles were replaced by asphalt shingles at the same time.

Although interior redecorating projects have been carried out and changes made in the use of several rooms, the interior is basically the same as when the various portions of the building were completed in 1886, 1925, and 1954. These interior changes have not altered the Gothic Revival character of the original building.

**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.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **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.)

**Levels of Significance** (local, state, national)

Local

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1885-1925

**Significant Dates**

1885, 1925

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

J.D. Price, architect/J.P. Eaton and A.K. Bollinger, builders

**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):**

- ☐ 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: First Christian Church



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## SUMMARY

First Christian Church is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its Late Gothic Revival architecture. Constructed in 1885-86, it is the oldest active church building in Russellville and an excellent ecclesiastical example of the Late Gothic Revival style. The church's 14 narrow, pointed, stained-glass windows and pointed front portico arches are characteristic of the Gothic style, as are the steep, gabled roof and the cruciform pattern of the sanctuary. The church is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A: Religious Property**.

## ELABORATION

The church's official name is First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Christian Church denomination was founded in Kentucky in 1832 through a merger of "The Disciples," led by Alexander Campbell, and "The Christians," whose leader was Barton Stone. For more than a century, the denomination was known simply as "Christian Church," but the formal title "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada" was adopted in 1968 to distinguish the denomination from others using the "Christian Church" term in their titles. The shorter name "First Christian Church" is widely recognized in the Russellville area, the church having been identified as such for much of its history. In the interest of simplicity, this is the primary name used to identify the church in this nomination.

First Christian Church was formally organized with 52 charter members January 29, 1882, after a few families had worshipped in private homes for several years. During the organization meeting, which was conducted in the Masonic Hall, lots were cast to select elders and deacons. The first elders were S. R. Ezzell, Dr. George W. Harkey, Dr. J. M. Yancey, and T. C. York. Deacons were Jacob L. Shinn and J. S. Church. J. M. Harkey was appointed Secretary and Treasurer. Initially, the church had no minister and Dr. George W. Harkey, an elder who had previously led the informal worship meetings, served as worship leader.

In 1885, after meeting in the Masonic Hall for three years, First Christian Church began construction of its own building on property donated by Jacob L. Shinn, a charter member of the congregation and one of its first elders. Shinn was a North Carolina native and Mexican War veteran who had moved to Pope County with his parents in 1840 and established one of the first stores in Russellville in 1852. (His store building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) A building committee, composed of J. M. Haney, James H. Shinn, J. W. Pruitt, and Josiah H. Shinn, employed Philadelphia architect J. D. Price to design the church and hired local contractors J. P. Eaton and A. K. Bollinger to construct it. The church was built on Lots 5 and 6, Block 40, J. L. Shinn Addition to Russellville, Illinois Township. Later additions to the church expanded the building onto adjoining Lot 4.

The church, described by a contemporary source as "perhaps the costliest wooden church building in the state," was completed and the first services conducted sometime in 1886, with Rev. H. V. Dale, a circuit minister who also served other churches, as the first paid minister. The church's first wedding ceremony was

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conducted November 17, 1886, when Lucy Harkey, a charter member of the congregation, married J. L. Tucker.

By the end of 1887, according to one published source, it was generally agreed among the denomination's state hierarchy that the church was already one of the nine strongest Christian Church congregations in Arkansas (along with Little Rock, Fort Smith, Harrison, Fayetteville, Beebe, Prescott, Hope, and Texarkana). Under the leadership of Rev. John A. Stevens, the church's second paid minister, fund-raising efforts resulted in sufficient funds to pay off a \$1,700 debt that remained from the building's construction and spend an additional \$400 for furnishings. The deed to the church property was turned over to the congregation February 28, 1889.

A baptistery was installed in the church sometime between 1888 and 1892 to conduct baptisms, which had previously been performed in a water tank in a nearby ice plant. The baptistery was located in the center of the chancel, just behind the pulpit. Because no city water system then existed, an arrangement was made to have a city street sprinkler wagon haul water and fill the baptistery when needed. A large, gas-lighted chandelier was also installed in the church in the early 1890s.

In 1890, the church requested that the Russellville town council approve the removal of a small cemetery that encroached onto the church property to accommodate future expansion. The council approved the request and agreement was reached for surviving family members to approve or disapprove the removal of individual graves to another cemetery south of the city. Addressing concern that unmarked graves might remain on the site, the church agreed not to pour concrete over the cemetery site, while retaining the right to build above ground in that area. Following removal of the cemetery, a wood-frame parsonage was constructed east of (behind) the church in 1892 as a dwelling for J. B. Wright, a graduate of Transylvania College in Kentucky, the church's first full-time minister. A one-room wooden classroom building was later constructed by the congregation's members (in a single day) in 1916 on the south side of the church and a storage shed was built southeast of the church about 1925. The last of these three outbuildings was razed in 1953.

Thirty members of First Christian Church served in the Armed Forces during World War I, from a congregation of approximately 150.

A major expansion of the building occurred in 1925, with a two-story extension of the rear (east side) that was approximately 35 feet long and included a partial basement. The new addition contained five Sunday school classrooms, a fellowship room, kitchen, and restrooms. The building's original roof line and pitch were maintained, although a Gothic spire, which had become unstable, was replaced by a rectangular portico

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tower over a new porch at the church's main (west) entrance. The new and original portions of the church exterior were covered with brick during the expansion. A portion of this expansion was built above the ground from which the cemetery had been removed in 1890. Some stone fragments reportedly remain in the crawl space beneath this part of the building, but it is unknown whether these are parts of headstones or whether any graves actually remain.

Inside the church, a narthex (entry area) was constructed, with a balcony above it, at the main entrance. At the same time, a choir loft was constructed above the chancel area, new pews were installed, and the sanctuary floor was reconstructed to slope downward from the entry area. The baptistery was also moved from the center to the rear of the chancel. The beadboard walls in the sanctuary were modified by covering them with chicken wire, then applying plaster and paint. Electricity and plumbing were also installed for the first time, along with a heating system. Following the expansion, a 1926 newspaper schedule of Russellville religious services noted that electric fans in the Christian Church permitted attendees to "worship in comfort."

Another important element of the 1925 expansion was the installation of stained glass windows in the front entry area and sanctuary, using the wooden window frames from the original 1885-86 construction for the 14 large Gothic sanctuary windows. To finance the stained glass window purchase, church members and groups were given the opportunity to pay the \$48 cost of a large window and have their name or the name of one or more honorees stenciled at the base of the window. As a result, 13 of the 14 large windows are inscribed as follows:

GEORGE W. PATTERSON BIBLE CLASS  
MR. & MRS. CHAS. W. SHINN  
DR. & MRS. S.C. BURGESS  
J. L. TUCKER FAMILY  
MR. & MRS. J. L. SHINN  
LOYAL DAUGHTERS CLASS  
MR. & MRS. ROBT. L. SMITH  
MEMORY OF DR. FRANK L. BROWN  
MEMORY OF MR. & MRS. U. G. SHOPTAW & T. M. MOSELEY  
MR. & MRS. H. W. PATRICK  
MR. & MRS. R. C. BROWN  
YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL  
EDD HARKEY FAMILY



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The remaining large stained-glass window is not inscribed, presumably because its interior view is partially blocked by a staircase in the entry area. In addition to the large Gothic windows, a 56-inch by 49-inch window in the entry tower portico is stenciled with the name of its sponsoring group:

### SUNBEAM CLASS

The identity of the stained glass designer/creator is, unfortunately, unknown. Rev. George W. Patterson, whose Bible class paid for one of the stained-glass windows, was minister of First Christian Church from 1921 to 1933, one of the two longest terms served by the church's 35 ministers. The major expansion in 1925 was accomplished during his tenure, as was the church's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration October 2, 1932 (the 46<sup>th</sup> year in the building). The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary included an all-day meeting that was attended by 280 people, including a representative from the Arkansas Board of Christian Churches.

Another notable event in the church's history occurred April 5, 1934, when the minister, Rev. Leslie G. Smyth, conducted a one-day revival on Palm Sunday that added 59 new members to the congregation. Rev. Smyth was a Tennessee native and an Army veteran from World War I. Following his military service, he had achieved "A" grades in all his classes at Texas Christian University. Rev. Smyth was renowned as a physical education instructor who, as a young man, had been a professional wrestler and boxer known as "The Fighting Parson."

In 1936, during the tenure of Rev. John A. Morris, the interior of the church sanctuary was refurbished, without changing its size, shape, or basic arrangement. Carpet was installed in the entry and chancel areas, and carpet runners placed in the aisles. A choir loft was also removed from above the chancel area and the baptistery was moved further to the rear of the chancel.

Eighty-one members of First Christian Church served in the Armed Forces during World War II, from a congregation of approximately 300. During their absence, many of the leadership positions in the church were filled by female members who had not previously been given the opportunity to perform those duties.

The last major change to the church building was made in 1953-54, when an education annex was built onto the rear (east side) of the building. The annex included five Sunday school classrooms, a fellowship hall, a new kitchen and restrooms. The addition was designed by an architect of the national Christian Church denomination and built by various contractors and members of the congregation. The annex, with a nominal value estimated at \$30,000, was completed at a cost of \$20,900 through the use of stringent cost controls and many hours of volunteer labor. During the dedication ceremony, attended by Christian Church state executive director Lester M. Bickford, it was noted that the outstanding debt at the completion of the project

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was only \$2,400. The exterior of the new annex was of the same brick used earlier on the older portions of the church. The annex was topped by a flat roof. The addition of the education annex permitted a smaller fellowship room in an older part of the building to be used as a children's Sunday school room and recreation area.

First Christian Church celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary (the 71<sup>st</sup> in the building) in 1957, during the ministry of Rev. R. D. Chambless. The congregation of 290 members expressed gratitude and satisfaction for the church's accomplishments since its founding and recognized the many contributions of Edd Harkey, the only living charter member.

A final remodeling of the sanctuary interior was accomplished in 1966 when new wood trim was installed in the chancel area, 22-foot-long drapes were hung in front of the baptistery, and worn carpeting was replaced. A large, unadorned cross was installed in front of the baptistery drapes.

First Christian Church celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 1982 (the 96<sup>th</sup> year in the building). Joy Greer, state moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), was the featured speaker at the anniversary service and a history of the congregation was published by the centennial committee. The minister at this time was Rev. Norman Prose, one of the two longest-serving ministers in the church's history. His 12 years as religious leader of the congregation (1979-1991) ties the longevity record of Rev. George W. Patterson, who was minister from 1921 to 1933.

Rev. Dan March, First Christian Church minister from 1991 to 1994, was appointed Chaplain of the Arkansas House of Representatives for the 1992 biennial state legislative session by L. L. "Doc" Bryan, a member of the congregation, who was then serving as Speaker of the House.

A need to improve access to the church for handicapped individuals motivated a final, relatively minor, structural modification to First Christian Church in 1998. To satisfy this need, a hallway was constructed where a sidewalk had previously existed along a portion of the south side of the building. This provides ground level access into the church and a wheelchair ramp into the sanctuary, while giving protection from the elements to persons moving between the sanctuary and the education annex in the rear of the building.

Two major events occurred in the building in 2000. In June, Christy Marie Newton, a member of First Christian Church since her childhood, was formally ordained as a minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is the only ordained minister to emerge from the congregation's membership in its 124-year history. Later (in 2004-05), she served the church for eighteen months as its interim minister before departing to pursue a Doctor of Divinity degree in California. In September, 2000, the church celebrated an all-day homecoming event after extending invitations to every former member or attendee who could be

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located. Several hundred people attended the homecoming, which included religious services, music, food, and general fellowship. Many invitees who couldn't attend sent congratulatory messages.

In the First Christian Church building's 120-year history, religious services have been conducted for thousands of worshippers by 35 ministers and at least four interim ministers. In addition to regular services, the church has hosted hundreds of weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other special events, attended by both members and nonmembers. The church was also the site of statewide meetings of Arkansas Christian Churches in 1895, 1906, and 1963, before the statewide meetings were discontinued. One example of the church's support for the general community is that it has permitted a local Alcoholics Anonymous group to meet three times a week in its fellowship hall, without charge, for many years.

Since First Christian Church's 1885-86 construction—only fifteen years after Russellville was incorporated as a city—the building has been closely associated with the local area's history. Despite a relatively small membership, the church continues to meet its members' spiritual needs and maintains an optimistic outlook about the future. The congregation has a high level of respect for the church's past accomplishments and still has active members descended from the 52 people who founded the church in 1882.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

First Christian Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its Late Gothic Revival architecture. The church is the oldest active church building in Russellville and an excellent example of the Late Gothic Revival style. First Christian Church's 14 narrow, pointed stained-glass windows and pointed portico arches, steep gabled roof, and cruciform sanctuary pattern are characteristics of this style. The property is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A: Religious Property**.



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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A Century of Worship." *The Courier*, Russellville, Arkansas, September 17, 2000.

Allen, Phyllis Sloan. *Beginnings of Interior Environment*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Burgess Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985.

"At the Churches." *Courier-Democrat*, Russellville, Arkansas, June 24, 1926.

"Christian Church to Dedicate Education Annex." *Courier-Democrat*, Russellville, Arkansas, January 28, 1954.

"Congratulations, Russellville." *Arkansas Christian*, Little Rock, Arkansas, March, 1954.

Deane, Ernie. *Arkansas Place Names*. Published by *The Ozarks Mountaineer*, Branson, Missouri, 1986.

Deed dated February 28, 1889, transferring ownership of Lots 5 and 6, Block 40, J. L. Shinn Addition, from J. L. and Martha Shinn to Christian Church of Russellville. Deed Book V, p. 516, Pope County Recorder's Office, Russellville, Arkansas.

"Diamond Jubilee Anniversary Bulletin." First Christian Church, Russellville, Arkansas, January 27, 1957.

"First Christian Church to Mark Its Centennial Year Today." *Daily Courier-Democrat*, Russellville, Arkansas, May 18, 1982.

*History of Pope County, Arkansas*. Pope County Historical Association and Hunter Publishing Company, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1979.

Homecoming Booklet. First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Russellville, Arkansas, September 24, 2000.

"Local Church to Observe Anniversary." *Courier-Democrat*, Russellville, Arkansas, January 24, 1957.

McAllister, Lester G. *Arkansas Disciples: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arkansas*. Richmond, Virginia, 1984.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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*One Hundred Years of Service, 1882-1982.* First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Russellville, Arkansas, 1982.

Rifkind, Carole. *A Field Guide to American Literature.* Bonanza Books, New York, 1984.

Scrapbooks in possession of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Russellville, Arkansas.

Smith, H. Buford, Jr. Interview conducted December 5, 2005 by Robert Edwards. This life-long Russellville resident, age 86, has attended First Christian Church regularly since he was a small child and became a member of the congregation in 1930, at age 11. His grandparents, J. L. Tucker and Lucy Harkey, were the first couple married in the church building in 1886. Interview notes on file in First Christian Church.

*Yearbook and Directory, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).* Annual editions published by national headquarters of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Indianapolis, Indiana, 1954 through 2005.

First Christian Church  
Name of Property

Pope County, Arkansas  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>488006</u> Easting	<u>3903886</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

☐ 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 Elizabeth A. James/National Register Historian  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date April 7, 2006  
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone 501-324-9789  
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

## 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 First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
street & number 103 South Boston Avenue telephone 479-967-3874  
city or town Russellville state AR zip code 72801

**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.



First Christian Church

Name of Property

Pope County, Arkansas

County and State

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

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### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 4, 5, and 6, Block 40, J.L. Shin Addition to Russellville, Illinois Township.

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

This boundary contains all the land historically associated with First Christian Church.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY First Christian Church  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Pope

DATE RECEIVED: 4/13/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/26/06  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/11/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/27/06  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000418

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 5-24-06 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS  
ELIZABETH JAMES

FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

NORTH SIDE, LOOKING SOUTH

1 of 6





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS  
ELIZABETH JAMES

FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

SOUTHEAST CORNER, LOOKING NORTHWEST

2 of 6





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS

ELIZABETH JAMES

FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

EAST SIDE, FACING WEST

3 of 6





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS COUNTY

ELIZABETH JAMES

FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

WINDOW DETAIL, SOUTH SIDE, FACING NORTH

4 of 6





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS

ELIZABETH JAMES

FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

WEST SIDE, FACING EAST

5 of 6





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

POPE COUNTY, ARKANSAS

ELIZABETH JAMES

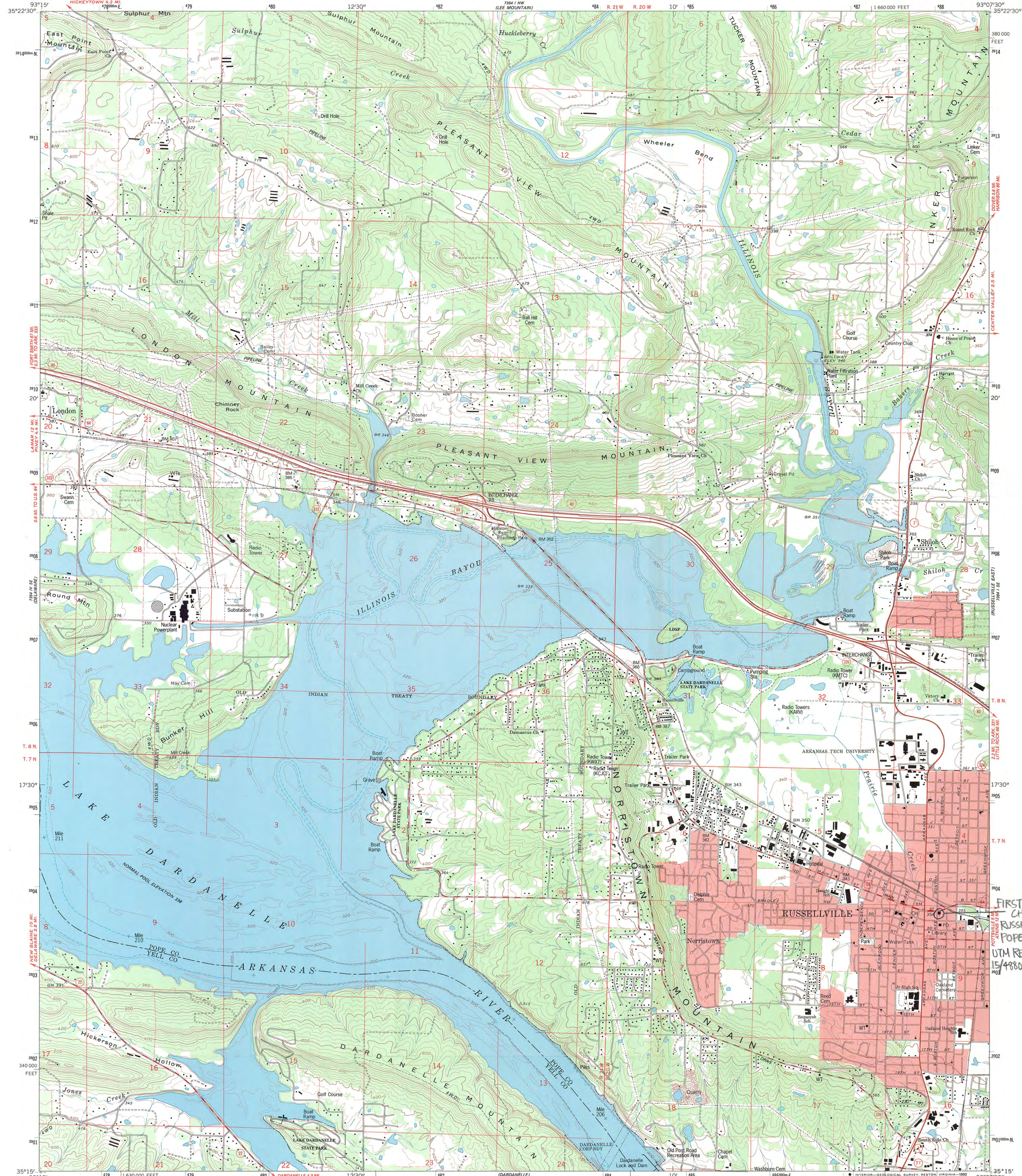
FEBRUARY 2006

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

SOUTHWEST CORNER, FACING NORTHEAST

6 of 6









# The Department of Arkansas Heritage

Mike Huckabee, Governor  
Cathie Matthews, Director

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Natural Heritage  
Commission

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

Mosaic Templars  
Cultural Center

Old State House Museum



## Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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e-mail: [info@arkansaspreservation.org](mailto:info@arkansaspreservation.org)

website:

[www.arkansaspreservation.org](http://www.arkansaspreservation.org)

An Equal Opportunity Employer



April 6, 2006

Dr. Janet Matthews  
Chief of Registration  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
8th Floor  
1201 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005



RE: First Christian Church – Russellville, Pope County

Dear Dr. Matthews:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Elizabeth A. James of my staff at (501) 324-9789. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews  
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:eaj

Enclosure