United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 05000298

Date of Listing: April 20, 2005

Property Name: Sardis Baptist Church

County: Jefferson

State: Alabama

<u>The Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham, Alabama, 1933-1979</u> Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

) Uniel J. Vim

Signature of the Keeper

April 20, 2005 Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5. Classification

The number of contributing resources is hereby changed to one (1), to reflect the fact that the educational building was erected as an addition to the church, not a separate building, in 1962-1963. Thus, the nominated property encompasses one (1) contributing building.

The total number of contributing buildings is hereby changed to one (1), to reflect these changes.

These changes were discussed with and approved by the National Register staff of the Alabama SHPO.

The Alabama State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION: National Register property file Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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

(explain:)

المستبدر سيسال ويصحون الجن بإنتيبة عباني ومبالياتهم			
historic name	Sardis Baptist Church	•	
- other names/site	umber Old Sardis Baptist Church		
2. Location			
street & number	1240 Fourth Street North		N/A not for publication
city or town B	mingham		N/A vicinity
state Alabama	code AL county Jeffer	rson code 073	zip code35204
3. State/Fede	al Agency Certification		
nomination National Register my opinion, the considered sign State of c State or Feder In my opinion, the additional comr Signature of c	rtifying official/Title	entation standards for registering prop essional requirements set for in 36 CFI egister criteria. I recommend that this ntinuation sheet for additional comme <u>MUMU 5, 0005</u> Date storical Commission	erties in the R Part 60. In property be nts.)
State or Feder	al agency and bureau		
4. National Pa	rk Service Certification		
determined National F	e National Register.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action

5. Classification				
Ownership of	Category of Property	Number of Reso	ources within Propert	<u>у</u>
Property			•	-
(Check as many boxes as	(Check only one box)	(Do not include previou	sly listed resources in count.)	
apply)				
🛛 private	building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing	
public-local	district	Contributing	Noncontributing	
public-State	site	2		buildings
public-Federal	structure	<u> </u>		- sites
	i object	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		- structures
				_
			0	_ objects
		2		Total
Name of related mult (Enter "N/A" if property is not p	iple property listing art of a multiple property listing.)	Number of Contri in the National I	buting resources previ Register	ously listed
Birmingham Civil Rights Mo	vement, 1933-1979 MPS	0		
			·····	
6. Function or Use				
			/	
Historic Functions		Current Function		
(Enter categories from in	structions)	(Enter categories f	•	
RELIGIOUS: church		RELIGIOUS: chur	ch	
**************************************				<u></u>
		••••••• <u>••</u> •••••••••••••••••••••••••••	<u></u>	
•·····································				
		<u> </u>	•	
7 Decemination				
7. Description				
Architectural Classifica	tion	Materials		
(Enter categories from in		(Enter categories f	rom instructions)	
(Enter categories non in		, -		
		foundation Brick		
Gothic Revival		walls Brick; Stor	ne; Concrete	
· · ·		roof Asphalt Shi	ngle	
		other Metal; Wo		

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

See continuation sheets.

Sardis Baptist Church Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama County and State

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8. Statement of Significance	
Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)	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
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 1956-1963
 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: 	Significant Dates 1956
A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.	Significant Person
B removed from its original location.	(Complete if Criterion B is marked) N/A
C moved from its original location.	Cultural Affiliation
D a cemetery.	<u>N/A</u>
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
F a commemorative property	Architect/Builder
☑ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.	<u>N/A</u>
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 prepar	ing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) Primary location of additional data:
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested previously listed in the National Register Previously determined eligible by the National Register 	 State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government University
 designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # 	Other Name of repository: Birmingham Historical Society Birmingham Public Library; Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	

Sardis Baptist Church Name of Property

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	515810	3709560	3			
		Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
	Zone				•		
2				. 4			
					See sheet	continuation	

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	n and Marjorie Wh	ite
organization Center for Historic Preservation	date	March 19, 2004
street & number Middle Tennessee State University—Box 80	telephone	615-898-2947
city or town Murfreesboro	state TN	Zip code37132

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 Old Sardis Baptist Church (Rev. Willie Smith)

street & num	ber	1240 Fourth Street North		tele	ephone	205-322-4362	
city	Birm	ningham	state	Alabama	_ zip code	35204	

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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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VII. Description

The historic Sardis Baptist Church, built c. 1910 as a frame church and then brick veneered in 1925, is at 1240 Fourth Street North in the Enon Ridge neighborhood, which is northwest of downtown Birmingham. The building is situated on a corner lot, with a public school across the street to the north and an extant historic neighborhood of bungalows and other early twentieth century examples of domestic architecture facing the church (east) and to the south of the church's education building.

The historic church is another of the city's substantial gable-front sanctuaries, with prominent Gothic-styled corner towers that make the building a visual landmark in Enon Ridge. The building is faced with smooth evenly toned red brick on a rock-face block foundation; the foundation and all the doors and window trim are now painted white. Contrasting colors define and visually separate the primary sections of the building, adding to the building's sense of massiveness and permanence.

The east façade has a piano *nobile* main sanctuary floor. A prominent front porch of concrete steps is centered on a broad parapet wall. Flanking the central entrance are large corner towers of unequal heights; the lower south one lacks the broach pyramidal roof of the higher north one. The towers, each about half the width of the gable front, project on front and sides and so give some relief to the massiveness of the structure, a massiveness enhanced both by the broad double concrete stair, with a metal rail installed c. 1954, and by the building's placement on the very top of the ridge. The basement level entrance contains a plain hollow-core double door (c. 1980) flanked by single sash windows, now painted over. The main sanctuary doors, which are accessed from the open porch, are a pair of modern solid wood replacements of the original paneled doors, installed c. 1954. Windows are rectangular wood-frame with leaded painted glass, arranged symmetrically across the façade. The towers have single ones while there are three across the balcony level of the gabled front wall. Each of the four main side bays contains a pair of 1-over-1 sash windows, and a smaller rear bay contains one. The north tower's upper windows are taller and topped by a semi-circular arch that is now occluded with sheet metal; the same metal occludes the large rectangular vent in the front gable peak.

The north elevation has five symmetrical bays. The sanctuary level windows are paired multi-paned slag glass painted blue. Small corbelled buttresses define the side bays on the foundation level but stop just above the floor line. The basement level windows are one-over-one clear glass, double hung, but metal security bars have been installed over the windows c. 1985.

The south elevation, which is similar to the north elevation, of the original church was partially obscured by the construction of the flat roofed, asymmetrical fenestration of the two-story education building c. 1962-63, which connected to the older building by a one-story brick hyphen on the second story, which turned an original exterior window to a doorway.

The high rear wall of the church's west elevation contains a slag glass pained blue multi-paned window to either edge and two smaller lozenge painted glass windows toward the center on the sanctuary level. On the basement level, there are three asymmetrical bays. At the northwest corner is a one-over-one double-hung clear glass window. Also near the northwest corner, to the south of the window is a metal door entrance with security gate, installed c. 1985. In the center of the level is a paired one-over-one double-hung window, with the lower pane boarded over. One end-exposed brick flue rises from the basement level and extends above the roofline.

The sanctuary's arrangement is typical with a double aisle, front dais with choir and baptistery behind a broken chancel arch, central pulpit and sacrament table, with piano and organ to either side of the dais. A large balcony extends across the rear of the sanctuary. The room is largely paneled in a pale wood; the ceiling shows a typical semi-coved shape with acoustical tile overlay, installed c. 1954, and two intersecting beams. Lights are small Gothic lanterns. Some of the original furniture from 1910 is sitting in an anteroom off the entrance.

The education building, constructed 1962-1963, is an asphalt flat roof red brick building with a concrete foundation. Its east façade has five bays of equally sized casement windows, except for a double entrance door at the northwest corner of the building. It has a metal security gate, installed c. 1985. The south elevation has six symmetrical casement windows on both the first and second stories. The north elevation has four bays of casement windows, again on both stories, and at the northwest corner the education building extends to the wall of the original church. Thus, the rear of the education building,

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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

the west elevation, shows the walls of the two buildings touching. The five bays are asymmetrical. A set of concrete steps rises from the rear parking area to two metal doors. Due to the building's association with the civil rights activities of the congregation, it is a contributing building despite its comparatively recent age. (C)

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The Sardis Baptist 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, workmanship, and association. The addition of the rather unadorned educational building in 1962-1963 detracts from the architectural quality of the building, but the addition is historically associated with the church's activism in the Civil Rights Movement and occurred during its period of significance. Although some changes in the materials and workmanship have occurred in the interior spaces, these changes have not overwhelmed the original design, materials, and craftsmanship of the interior. Like the education building addition, the interior changes also occurred largely during the church's period of significance in the Civil Rights Movement and reflect the expansion and updating of church services that took place during those years.

Archaeological Component

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

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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VIII. Significance

The congregation of the historic Sardis Baptist Church, better known today as Old Sardis Baptist Church, dates to 1884. The present church building was constructed in three phases during the twentieth century. First, the congregation built a frame Gothic Revival-styled building at this Enon Ridge location c. 1907. By 1925, Board of Equalization records note that the church has been brick veneered. Then in 1962-63, the congregation added a two-story education building to the west elevation of the older building.

Sardis Baptist Church served a stable working-class community on Enon Ridge and was very much a community center, still symbolized today by the rather imposing presence still conveyed by its brick material and its massing compared to small, residential buildings of the neighborhood. In 1985, Rev. Samuel Pettagrue observed, "we had a freedom we had nowhere else. We could lead the church the way we wanted. It was a refuge for our men who worked in the steel mills where they were discriminated against. The church was a place [where] they had dignity and pride." (*Birmingham Post-Herald*, February 16, 1985)

Rev. Pettagrue's predecessor, Reverend Robert L. Alford, had earlier established that tradition of African-American identity during his years of leadership in the 1950s and 1960s. As reported in the 1958 *Annual Report* of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, Rev. Alford was a member of the Board of the Alabama Council for Voting and Registration, which had offices in the Colored Masonic Temple (NR) in downtown Birmingham. He also was a founder of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, serving as its first vice-president, and hosted the mass meeting that created the ACMHR on June 5, 1956.

The next day the *Birmingham News* reported the event with a front-page story in its June 6 edition. Counting between 1,000-1,100 attending, the newspaper reported that "Negro ministers told the overflow crowd the new organization may provide leadership for Negroes over Alabama and possibly the entire South." For the primary address, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth asserted that "The Citizens Councils won't like this. But then, I don't like a lot of things they do." The newspaper then gave more from Shuttlesworth's speech on page 11: "Our citizens are restive under the dismal yoke of segregation These are the days when men would like to kill hope, when men in Mississippi can be declared ' not guilty' (of murder), when men can be shot down on the steps of the courthouse. These are dark days. But hope is not dead. Hope is alive here tonight. We seek nothing which we would not deny others. . . . Would you be willing tonight for a white man to sit down beside you. Then you believe in integration." After Shuttlesworth's address, Rev. Nelson H. Smith, Jr., read the ACMHR's Declaration of Principles and the mass meeting ratified the organization's first group of officers. At the end, Rev. Shuttlesworth remarked, "that the state may have gotten 'the goose that laid the golden egg,' as one Alabama legislator had called the NAACP, adding, 'but I'm not sure that some of the eggs she laid before [they] got her won't hatch out. He called on the people to be prepared to support the new organization with financial gifts and with continued attendance at weekly mass meetings, warning them once more: 'This is not the time for Uncle Toms." (Manis, 99)

The creation of the ACMHR at Sardis Baptist Church was one of the key events of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham in specific and in Alabama and the South in general. Replacing the outlawed NAACP, the ACMHR expanded the Civil Rights Movement across the state, and its leaders played central roles in such national organizations as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. (Eskew, 125)

Rev. Alford continued to exercise leadership in the ACMHR and his church hosted the weekly Monday night meetings of the organization several times in the late 1950s. 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."

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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

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 tradition of community service that he established in the 1950s continued with the pastor Rev. C. H. George. Parishioner Daisy Jeffries attended and graduated from Miles College. In her interview with Horace Huntley, on May 12, 1995, at Miles College, Jeffries remembered her church as very involved. It was "walking distance from my house. But it was some people there and we had a pastor, Rev. C. H. George, he was an elderly man, but he wasn't afraid of anything and that's where we got our encouragement from him. And we had our meeting and some we would get there and the police just almost like people dropping handkerchiefs, standing all around the door and we would go there and stand and finally they would move and let us come in. I got to the place we just weren't afraid of anything" (Jeffries Interview, 4).

As an example of the meetings Jeffries attended, the Birmingham police records includes an account of an ACMHR meeting on March 26, 1962. Local Civil Rights leaders Rev. Nelson Smith, Jr., Rev. J. S. Phifer, Rev. Ed Gardner, and Rev. W. E. Shortridge spoke on Rev. J. S. Phifer being put in jail and urged those in attendance to support the Easter downtown store boycott then underway in the Selective Buying Campaign.

From 1963-1965, additional rallies took place in the sanctuary while planning meetings moved from the basement of the church to the church offices of Rev. Alford in the new education building, which was dedicated in 1963.

As a major strategy center at the founding of the influential Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, and the home church of Rev. Robert Alford, a key early ACMHR officer, the historic Sardis Baptist Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A of the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS.

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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

IX. Bibliography

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Birmingham World, June 6, 1956.

Birmingham News, June 6, 1956.

Birmingham Post Herald, June 6, 1956.

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Eskew, Glenn T. But for Birmingham. 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.

Fieldwork notes, July 23, 2003. In possession of the author.

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

- Jeffries, Daisy, interview with Horace Huntley, May 12, 1955, at Miles College. Archive Division, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.
- Manis, Andrew M. A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

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

- Sardis Baptist Church, East Thomas 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 Sardis Baptist Church at North are represented by Lots 9-11 of Block 12 of the Southern Realty Company Subdivision of Block 12 and the North ½ of Block 13, McDaniel Subdivision as marked on the attached Jefferson County Tax Map 01-22-26-3, Sections SW ¼ 26, Township 17 South, Range 3 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the historic Sardis Baptist Church.

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

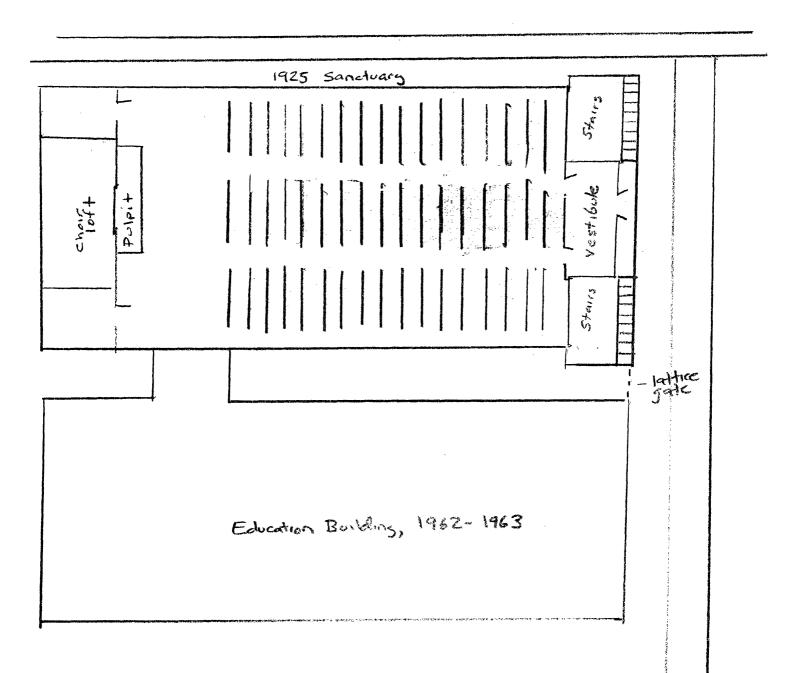
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Sardis Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

Sardis Baptist Church Bessemer, Jefferson Co., AL		
Photographs (exterior) by:	Carroll Van West MTSU Center for Historic Preservation July 2003	
Photographs (interior) by:	Birmingham Historical Society January 2000	
East façade with Education Buil 1 of 14	ding, facing northwest	
East façade, facing northwest 2 of 14		
East façade, detail, staircase an 3 of 14	d entrance, facing northwest	
East façade and north elevation 4 of 14	, facing southwest	
West elevation, facing east 5 of 14		
South elevation, facing northwes 6 of 14	st	
Education building, east façade, 7 of 14	facing west	
Education building, north elevati 8 of 14	on, facing southeast	
Education building, east façade 9 of 14	and south elevation, facing northwest	
Education building, west elevation, facing east 10 of 14		
Sanctuary, facing west 11 of 14		
Sanctuary, facing east 12 of 14		
Sanctuary, facing southwest 13 of 14		
Sanctuary, facing northwest		

Old Sardis Baptist Church. Enon Ridge, Birminsham



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