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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: __Ebenezer Church_____
Other names/site number: _Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church, Ebenezer Methodist Church, Ebenezer United Methodist Church_____
Name of related multiple property listing**:**
___N/A_____

2. Location

Street & number: _1651 Eighth Avenue_____
City or town: _Huntington_____ State: _WV___ County: _Cabell_____
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide _X__local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A ___B ___C ___D

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office_____ ___

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions

RELIGIOUS FACILITY

Current Functions

RELIGIOUS FACILITY

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals/ Gothic Revival

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____

Walls: Red brick
Foundation: Concrete
Roof: Asphalt shingles
Other: Stained glass windows, wood doors, bell tower with pyramidal roof, interior plaster

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Ebenezer is a one-story, front-gabled brick church constructed in 1917. It exemplifies early twentieth-century Black ecclesiastical architecture, featuring vernacular Gothic Revival elements, including a prominent corner bell tower, arched stained-glass windows, decorative stone trim, and corbelled brick detailing. Unlike many traditional churches of the period, the façade is asymmetrical: the bell tower and main entrance with a small projecting porch are located on the left side of the gable front, accessed via four concrete steps. The property occupies a modest urban lot with a small lawn and a narrow walkway connecting the street to the porch. Despite some alterations to the bell tower, the building retains a high degree of historic integrity, with original masonry, fenestration, form and massing largely intact.

Narrative Description

The exterior walls are constructed of red brick laid in common bond, with decorative corbelled brickwork at the gable peak and around window openings. The gable-front roof is covered in dark asphalt shingles and has a modest overhang with simple wood fascia. The ridgeline extends across the main volume of the church, and the roof form is visually prominent from the street.

The bell tower rises at the northeast corner of the façade, with arched openings on each face and a steep pyramidal roof. A standing seam metal cap was added to the tower during renovations in the late 2010s, though much of the original form and brick detailing remains visible. The main entrance is positioned under a portico, with a recently added, non-historic triangular canopy supported by brick piers (originally there was a rounded arched canopy above the door). Four concrete steps lead from street level to original double leaf wood doors painted blue.

A large arched stained-glass window flanks the entrance, and additional windows along the side elevations allow ample natural light to illuminate the sanctuary. Stone trim accents at sills, lintels, and selected decorative features complement the brickwork and emphasize the Gothic Revival aesthetic. Each side of the building contains five stained-glass windows, with five translucent windows below them. The rear of the building features two smaller windows and a rear exit door. A plaque is featured on a brick ground sign at the front of the building, reading: “IN MEMORY, REV. AND MRS. C.E. MCGHEE, MRS. LUCIE MCGHEE FOUNTAINE, MR. IRVIN FOUNTAINE.” A cornerstone located at the southeast corner of the building reads: “1874, 1917 EBENEZER M.E. CHURCH, REV. A. HALL WHITFIELD PASTOR, TRUSTEES [] JOHN DAVIS [] E.R. HARVEY [] JOHNSON.” It is partially obscured by a modern gutter spout.

An off-center, gable end, interior brick chimney is located in the southwest corner of the church.

The interior sanctuary is an ample, open space with rows of wooden pews oriented toward the south wall, where a raised stage is located. A large arched stained-glass window above the pews

on the north wall serves as a focal point and fills the sanctuary with light. The ceiling height is generous for a one-story structure, with exposed roof beams. Circulation is simple, with a central aisle leading to the stage and access to pews from either side. A small office is located at the rear (northeast) of the sanctuary on the main floor, providing administrative and support space for the congregation. Additionally, there is a small room on the opposite side of the office (northwest) with a staircase leading to the basement. Most interior walls are plaster, although some deteriorating plaster on the north interior wall was removed during renovations, revealing the underlying brick masonry. The original wooden floorboards have been refurbished, retaining their historic material while improving durability and appearance.

A narrow stairway from the front entrance of the sanctuary leads down to the basement, which houses a kitchen and an open space for serving meals and hosting other activities. The basement experienced water damage and general neglect during the building's 2017-2019 vacancy but has been carefully renovated to functional use. The kitchen was modernized while retaining the historic spatial layout, and structural elements were repaired or stabilized. One-over-one basement windows were replaced with a mixture of single pane and one-over-one windows.

The foundation is concrete and slightly raised above street level, with small basement windows on the front elevation. The property includes a modest lawn and a concrete walkway connecting the street to the main entrance. The church maintains its historic orientation and relationship to the surrounding urban context, with neighboring commercial and residential buildings of similar early twentieth-century construction that do not detract from its historic character.

Integrity

Ebenezer retains a high degree of historic integrity in location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. Despite damage to the top of the bell tower that has resulted in the installation of a standing seam metal cap; the replacement of the original entrance canopy with an unsympathetic one; some interior plaster loss exposing the red brick from the interior of the church; and replacement of the basement windows, many original features—including the form and massing, the red brick masonry, arched stained glass windows, original pews, and

ground floor layout—remain largely intact. Rehabilitation efforts by Lewis Memorial Baptist Church between 2019 and 2024 preserved most of the exterior and interior character-defining features. The church retains the look and feel of an early twentieth century Gothic Revival style religious facility located within an urban setting.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- [X] 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

- [X] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

Ethnic Heritage: Black
Social History

Period of Significance
1917-1976

Significant Dates
1939
1965

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Ebenezer Church is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and as Ethnic Heritage: Black. It also meets Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties on the grounds of historic importance, primarily for its association with social history. Ebenezer's initial congregation was established in the early 1870s, shortly after Huntington's incorporation in 1871. It was one of the city's earliest African American churches. Its 1917 brick sanctuary, located at 1651 Eighth Avenue, embodies early 20th-century ecclesiastical architecture forms built by African American congregations in small cities, with a prominent bell tower and arched stained-glass window. As part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Ebenezer experienced the denomination's segregationist policy of organizing white and Black congregations into separate facilities and administrative units. Ebenezer's history parallels national African American religious and civic patterns: serving as a spiritual center, a hub of social and educational life, and later a site of interracial cooperation and social service innovation. Its pastors and members participated in civic initiatives focused on education and welfare, mirroring the broader pattern of Black churches serving as organizational backbones of civil rights activity. The period of significance begins in 1917 – the year the current church building was constructed – and ends in 1976, both the 50-year cutoff date and the year Ebenezer opened a daycare program which later expanded into the Ebenezer Community Outreach program. Significant dates are 1939, the year Ebenezer and other Black churches were formally segregated under the Methodist Church's race-based Central Jurisdiction, and 1965, when Ebenezer left the Central Jurisdiction and became formally integrated within the Methodist Church.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Black Methodism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The Black church played a significant role in the spiritual, material, and social development of African American communities throughout Reconstruction, Black migration, and the Jim Crow era in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For many Black families, churches were both a spiritual refuge and a source of tangible freedom: spaces where African Americans could lead, determine their own worship, and develop community institutions. Lincoln and Mamiya describe the Black church as "a concrete symbol of the will and capacity to be independent,"[1] expressing its role in fostering communal autonomy.

One of the more popular faith traditions among African Americans in the nineteenth century was Methodism. Methodist traditions were central to the spiritual and social lives of many African Americans, both enslaved and free. The predominant Methodist denomination was the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), established in 1784. While MEC churches accepted Black members, they often imposed varying degrees of segregation, limiting where, when, and how Black congregants could worship. Restrictions were also placed on Black pastors, preventing them from attaining higher ranks and responsibilities within the MEC.[2]

In response to these racial restrictions, some Black Methodists left the MEC to form their own all-Black denominations. Foremost among these was the African Methodist Episcopal (AME). The AME Church grew out of the Free African Society founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in Philadelphia in 1787, after white officials at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church forcibly segregated Black worshippers. Allen's establishment of Bethel AME in 1794 and his successful legal fight for congregational independence in 1807 and 1815 laid the groundwork for

[1] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990), 48.
[2] "End of the Central Jurisdiction," United Methodist Communications, accessed December 23, 2025, https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/end-of-the-central-jurisdiction.

a denomination rooted in religious autonomy and racial justice.[3] Other Black Methodist denominations created included the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1821) and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (1870). While the AME and other Black denominations operated independently, many African Americans remained in the MEC.

In 1844, the MEC split over disagreements regarding the morality of slavery. Methodist churches in the South formed the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), which supported slavery. The original MEC, which opposed slavery, was confined primarily to the northern states. Both denominations still included Black congregants. During slavery, these Black Methodists created "invisible institutions" through the churches that sustained both faith and resistance.[4]

After the Civil War and emancipation, Black congregations organized more openly, often building their own churches. The MEC found great success in recruiting Black congregants after the war, when it actively evangelized freed people throughout the South. Black Methodists left the MECS in droves to join the MEC, which had more lenient racial policies. All-Black MEC churches were established across the South. Though these Black churches were technically part of the same denomination as white churches, they were not autonomous in practice. Historian J. Gordon Melton notes that Black members in MEC settings were "formally under the authority of the…white ministers annually assigned" by the conference, showing the structural dependence that defined MEC racial policy in the post-Civil War period.[5] This system ensured that most Black MEC congregations remained segregated in function and constrained in decision-making, even as they participated in the same denomination.[6]

Despite their structural limitations within a white-controlled denomination, Black MEC congregations remained vital community anchors. African Americans used these churches to build networks of mutual aid, pursue literacy, and cultivate ministerial and civic leadership.

[3] AME Church, "Our History - AME Church," AME Church, 2016, https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/.
[4] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990), 24.
[5] J. Gordon Melton, "African American Methodism in the M. E. Tradition: The Case of Sharp Street (Baltimore)," *The North Star: A Journal of African American Religious History* 8, no. 2 (2005), https://doi.org/1094-902X, 7.
[6] Ian B. Straker, "The Central Jurisdiction," *Methodist History* 54, vol. 1 (October 2015): 37-70.

Lincoln and Mamiya note that Black Methodist congregations were central sites of education and political organizing throughout Reconstruction and Jim Crow, asserting that even today they still "provide a natural training ground for the development of leadership skills that can be transferred to almost any arena."[7] The MEC offered access to denominational resources, though with continuing white supervision.

The MEC was divided into a hierarchy of organizational entities to better administer the institution as a whole. Churches in a given area were organized into districts, and districts were organized into conferences. In 1864, the MEC began allowing the creation of all-Black conferences to advance outreach efforts among newly emancipated populations. That year, the Washington Conference was organized in Baltimore, Maryland. West Virginia's Black MEC churches were included within its jurisdiction. By the 1870s, the Washington Conference had facilitated the organization of a handful of Black MEC churches in West Virginia, including in Charleston and Huntington.[8]

Great change came to Black Methodist churches in 1939 when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church to form a single denomination called simply the Methodist Church. As a precondition for the merger, the MECS demanded that the new denomination be officially segregated. As a result, the Methodist Church created new geographical organizational entities called jurisdictions, composed of all the conferences within a particular section of the country. All the Black churches and conferences, however, were shunted into one separate jurisdiction based on race rather than geography. This was called the Central Jurisdiction. Black Methodists in the Central Jurisdiction held full voting privileges in the Methodist Church's quadrennial General Conference. However, their organization into a single jurisdiction limited the resources and opportunities available to the denomination's Black churches and clergy. According to the United Methodist Church, the 1939 merger "formalized the segregation of the church under

[7] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990), 235.
[8] "End of the Central Jurisdiction."

stricter and more odious methods."[9] The action was strongly opposed by Black Methodists, with 17 out of 19 Black conferences voting against the merger plan.[10]

The segregation controversy plagued the new Methodist Church throughout its short history. Many Black and white Methodists urged a reexamination of the jurisdictional system. The 1956 General Conference of the Methodist Church passed Amendment IX, which provided a framework for churches to transfer out of conferences and conferences to transfer out of jurisdictions. By the 1960s, growing numbers of Black churches were leaving the Central Jurisdiction and transferring to formerly all-white jurisdictions aligning with their geography. It took another merger, however, for the churchwide segregation system to finally end. In 1968, following several years of talks, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church combined to form the United Methodist Church (UMC). The Evangelical United Brethren made abolition of the Central Jurisdiction and complete integration a key requirement for agreeing to the merger.[11]

Huntington, West Virginia and Black Migration

Huntington, West Virginia, was incorporated in 1871 as a planned railroad town along the C&O Railroad, leading to attendant commercial and industrial growth.[12] The new city grew rapidly, attracting workers, entrepreneurs, and families seeking new opportunities. Huntington's expeditious development especially attracted Black migrants from rural Cabell and neighboring counties, as well as from Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio, who sought employment and community in the expanding industrial town.

[9] Ibid.
[10] Joy Butler, "50 Years on, the Central Jurisdiction's Shadow Still Looms," *United Methodist Insight*, April 20, 2018, accessed December 23, 2025, https://um-insight.net/in-the-church/50-years-on-the-central-jurisdiction-s-shadow-still-looms/.
[11] "Our Roots," The United Methodist Church, accessed November 2025, https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/history/our-roots.
[12] Marshall Digital Scholar, "Iron Road: The Rise of Huntington," 2018, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2146&context=etd, 12.

The Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad played a defining role in Huntington's demographic and social composition. Its expansion westward in the 1870s and 1880s drew a racially mixed workforce, including many Black laborers and craftsmen. Rail employment offered stable, though segregated, wages and helped foster a Black middle class whose children would populate churches like Ebenezer and schools like Douglass High School. The C&O also facilitated mobility and communication among Black Appalachians, linking Huntington to other industrial centers such as Charleston, Ashland, and Bluefield. Through these networks, ministers, teachers, and civic organizers shared strategies for institution-building and advocacy.

However, as in much of post-Reconstruction West Virginia, Black residents of Huntington faced exclusion from many civic, religious, and educational spaces. In response, they established their own institutions, such as churches, schools, newspapers, and fraternal organizations, which became the foundation of Huntington's Black civic life. In this milieu, Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church (later Ebenezer United Methodist Church) emerged as an early focal point of Black communal organization in Huntington. Much as in other towns across the South, Black churches served not only as religious centers but also as civil, educational, and social institutions. They fostered neighborhood identity, nurtured leadership, and provided spaces for collective action in an era when public resources for African Americans were severely constrained.

The Fairfield Neighborhood and Community Identity

As the Black population in Huntington grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Fairfield neighborhood – on the south side of the C&O Railroad tracks – became the city's principal center of Black social, cultural, and professional life. Here, Black residents and businesses were mostly concentrated along Eighth Avenue, between 16th and 20th Streets. This neighborhood developed likely because of its proximity to the railroad, which was one of the largest employers for Black residents.[13] Fairfield was home to many Black institutions, like the A.D. Lewis Community Center, Huntington's first African American swimming pool.[14] Oral

[13] Cicero M Fain, III, *Black Huntington: An Appalachian Story* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019, 93.
[14] Trent Spurlock, "Survey of Cabell County, West Virginia, African American Historical Sites" (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. , July 2014), https://mapwv.gov/shpo/docs/PDFs/ArchitecturalSurveys/RCB-11.pdf, 85.

histories describe Fairfield as cohesive and industrious, sustained by mutual care and a strong Black middle class. Marcia Williams, who grew up in Fairfield during the 1960s and 1970s, recalled in an interview that in both Fairfield East and West, there were "a lot of hardworking families… barbers… doctors… a lot of Black doctors… [and] three Black dentists," alongside small stores and neighborhood businesses that kept the community vibrant.[15]

Fairfield also provided refuge for Black students at nearby Marshall University, which did not integrate until after nationwide school desegregation took place in 1954.[16] "There were very few Black students at Marshall," remembered Roy Goines, who grew up in the neighborhood in the 1950s, noting that "Black student social life revolved around family and the Fairfield neighborhood," at a time when Black residents still faced barriers to restaurants and other public spaces.[17]

By the Civil Rights era, community organizing in Fairfield intensified. According to Sandra Clements, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) under leaders such as Bunchie Gray "gathered people together, giving them a voice, and making them see that they could make things different," helping to mobilize local activism.[18] Churches anchored that structure. Located in Fairfield, the Ebenezer Church served not only as a religious home but as a cultural and educational hub. Williams noted that the congregation's minister encouraged youth to talk openly about "the color of Jesus' skin with the white people."[19] Such recollections point to Ebenezer's role in creating a sense of racial pride and cross-racial dialogue, an uncommon stance in mid-century Huntington.

[15] Marcia L. H. Williams, Marcia Lynn Hoard Williams, interview by Kelli Johnson, *Marshall Digital Scholar*, July 19, 2021, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=african_american_oral_nps.
[16] George M Reger, "Integration and Athletics: Integrating the Marshall University Basketball Program, 1954-1969," *Marshall Digital Scholar*, 1996, https://mds.marshall.edu/etd/268.
[17] Kelli Johnson, Roy Goines, *Publications* 6 (2020), https://mds.marshall.edu/african_american_pub/6.
[18] Sandra Clements, interview by Kelli Johnson, *NPS AA CR Civil Rights in Appalachia Grant. 2.* (NPS AA CR Civil Rights In Appalachia Grant, 2022), https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=african_american_oral_nps, 12.
[19] Marcia L. H. Williams, Marcia Lynn Hoard Williams, interview by Kelli Johnson, *Marshall Digital Scholar*, July 19, 2021, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=african_american_oral_nps, 5.

Together, these oral history accounts paint the picture of Fairfield as Huntington's vibrant, historic Black center: an ecosystem of Black professional life, education, mutual support, and civic organizing. Within this landscape, the Ebenezer Church served as both a spiritual and cultural institution, emblematic of the neighborhood's resilience and central to its long-standing communal identity.

Early History of the Ebenezer Church

Prior to 1871, the nearest Black congregation was Macedonia Baptist Church in Burlington, Ohio—known as "the Mother of the Black Baptist Church movement in this part of the country."[20] Once Huntington was established, African Americans in Cabell County sought to build their own worship spaces closer to home. Two Black congregations emerged in the early 1870s – Mt. Olive Baptist Church (later renamed First Baptist Church of Huntington) and Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Cicero M. Fain III, Huntington native and historian, writes in *Black Huntington* that the contributions of the two congregations "to the growth of black institutions and the social-cultural evolution of black Huntington cannot be overstated."[21]

There is some dispute over which church came first. Ebenezer claimed to have been established in 1871, which would make it the first Black church in Huntington.[22] Mt. Olive Baptist, however, was the first to receive recognition as a church from the City of Huntington, which occurred in 1872. The earliest references to Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church, according to Fain, date to 1874.[23] Additionally, the building's cornerstone says 1874 (Photo 4). Most likely Black Methodists began holding worship services in 1871 but did not formally incorporate as a church until 1874. A man named Lewis Foes is credited as the church's founder for spearheading the movement to organize an MEC congregation, and Rev. Jacob Owens served as the first pastor.[24]

[20] Cicero M Fain, III, *Black Huntington: An Appalachian Story* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019, 93.
[21] Ibid., 95.
[22] *116th Anniversary Ebenezer United Methodist Church 1871-1987*, Marshall University Special Collections, Huntington, WV.
[23] Fain, *Black Huntington*, 95.
[24] *116th Anniversary*.

Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church was organized as part of the Washington Conference and the MEC. The congregation initially met on Norway Avenue near Spring Hill Cemetery (in space shared with Mt. Olive Baptist) and later at a temporary building on the corner of Sixteenth Street and Artisan Avenue. In 1917, under the leadership of Rev. A. H. Whitfield, the congregation constructed the current brick sanctuary at 1651 Eighth Avenue, a significant investment that established both permanence and visibility within the Fairfield neighborhood.[25] Local white architects Robert and Sidney Day designed the building, a modest Gothic Revival brick structure with a prominent corner tower (Figure 5).[26] Fain notes that it is "the oldest church building serving Huntington's black community."[27]

In 1939, Ebenezer and the Washington Conference were transferred to the Central Jurisdiction as part of the merger that created the Methodist Church. At this time Ebenezer dropped "Episcopal" from its name, in line with the new denomination's name.

Ebenezer in the Mid-Twentieth Century: Civil Rights, Integration, and Community Leadership

The mid-20th century marked a turning point in African American civic mobilization nationwide, and Ebenezer actively participated in that transformation. Evidence suggests that Ebenezer played a role in facilitating efforts to advance civil rights in the community. Articles in *The Parthenon*, an independent student newspaper for Marshall University, record that Ebenezer hosted interracial discussion groups and meetings on racial justice, as well as meetings with student organizations, such as FREE (Freedom and Racial Equality for Everyone) and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee).[28] Ebenezer's pastor Harry Coleman was one of

[25] Trent Spurlock, "Survey of Cabell County, West Virginia, African American Historical Sites" (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., July 2014), https://mapwv.gov/shpo/docs/PDFs/ArchitecturalSurveys/RCB-11.pdf, 9.
[26] Robert and Sidney Day Collection, 1894-2009 Find Aid, Marshall University Special Collections, Huntington, WV, accessed December 18, 2025, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1709&context=sc_finding_aids.
[27] Fain, *Black Huntington*, 95-97.
[28] "Weekend Digest," *The Parthenon*, March 7, 1969, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2342&context=parthenon; "FREE Members Will Meet Friday," *The Parthenon*, May 14, 1969, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2342&context=parthenon; "Non-Violent Group Director to Speak," *The Parthenon*, May 21, 1965, https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2342&context=parthenon.

the few (mostly Black) ministers in Huntington who advocated for civil rights in the 1960s. Coleman was part of a delegation of West Virginia civil rights leaders that met with Governor William Wallace Barron in October 1963, urging him to issue an executive order against racial discrimination.[29]

As part of its efforts to promote racial equality, Ebenezer moved to abandon the Methodist Church's organizational segregation policy. In 1965, it transferred from the Washington Conference to the previously all-white West Virginia Conference, and from the segregated Central Jurisdiction to the Northeastern Jurisdiction. Ebenezer claimed to be "the first church in our city and state to become integrated."[30] That Ebenezer was the first Methodist church in Huntington to integrate is likely, but it is uncertain whether the church was the first in all West Virginia. Another Black MEC church, Simpson Memorial Methodist Church in Charleston, transferred from the Washington to the West Virginia Conference on June 9, 1965.[31] Whether Ebenezer transferred before that date, after, or at the same time is unclear. By exiting the Methodist Church's segregationist system, Ebenezer placed itself at the intersection of religious, racial, and civic change in the region.

In 1968, following the merger that created the United Methodist Church, Ebenezer changed its name once more, rebranding as Ebenezer United Methodist Church.

The church also honored leaders such as influential Black businessman, politician, and pastor Charles E. McGhee, who was included in a commemorative plaque on the sign in front of the church, reading "In Memory, Rev. and Mrs. C. E. McGhee, Mrs. Lucie McGhee Fountaine, Mr. Irvin Fountaine."[32] Rev. C. E. McGhee's involvement in statewide Black institutions, such as the West Virginia Colored Orphans Home, shows Ebenezer's connection to broader African

[29] Bruce A. Thompson, "An appeal for racial justice: the Civic Interest Progressives' confrontation with Huntington, West Virginia and Marshall University, 1963-1965," MA thesis, Marshall University, 1986, accessed December 23, 2025, https://files01.core.ac.uk/download/pdf/232751892.pdf.
[30] *116th Anniversary*.
[31] "Simpson UMC, Charleston." West Virginia Conference, accessed December 22, 2025, https://www.wvumc.org/simpson-umc-charleston.
[32] Trent Spurlock, "Survey of Cabell County, West Virginia, African American Historical Sites" (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. , July 2014), https://mapwv.gov/shpo/docs/PDFs/ArchitecturalSurveys/RCB-11.pdf, 80.

American advocacy networks.[33] McGhee established the orphanage at Bluefield in 1899, but shortly moved it to Huntington.[34] He is not known to have held a position at Ebenezer; McGhee pastored several Baptist churches in Mercer County but seemingly none in Huntington. The Ebenezer Church's effort to commemorate the McGhees was likely due to their superintendence of the orphans home, which lasted until Rev. McGhee's resignation in 1915.[35] Lucie Fountaine, meanwhile, was the McGhees' daughter and a local leader in Black education. At one time, she was president of the Cabell County Negro Teachers Association, among other duties.[36] While documentation of the McGhee-Fountaine family's association with Ebenezer is limited in our available sources, that commemorative connection underscores the congregation's recognition of its heritage in Black institutional networks.

Community Outreach and Medical Ministry (1970s Onward)

By the 1970s, as federal programs contracted and economic conditions worsened in urban Appalachia, Ebenezer extended its mission from spiritual to direct social service. As Huntington's economy shifted through the 20th century due to the decline of the coal industry, reducing the prominence of the river and rail industries,[37] the church adapted by emphasizing social outreach and community programs.

The Ebenezer Community Outreach Program, piloted by the church, began as a daycare in 1976 and evolved into a multipurpose outreach center by the 1980s.[38] In 1986, volunteers established a

[33] Trent Spurlock, "Documentation of West Virginia Colored Orphans' Home, Cabell County, West Virginia" (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. , n.d.), https://mapwv.gov/shpo/docs/PDFs/ArchitecturalSurveys/RCB-11.pdf, 6.
[34] Sarah Shepherd, "West Virginia Colored Orphans Home (1899-1956)," Social Welfare History Project, November 15, 2022, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/youth/west-virginia-colored-orphans-home-1899-1956/.
[35] "Charles E. McGhee," West Virginia Archives and History, accessed December 11, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20190319105128/https://wvculture.org/history/histamne/mcghee.html; Sarah H. Shepherd, "West Virginia Colored Orphans Home (1899-1956), VCU Libraries Social Welfare Project, November 15, 2022, accessed December 11, 2025, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/youth/west-virginia-colored-orphans-home-1899-1956/.
[36] *McDowell Times* (Keystone, WV), October 4, 1940.
[37]https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/bureau_be/article/1353/&path_info=Huntington_Area_Economic_Outlook_2021_2025.pdf Javier Reyes et al., "Economic Outlook Huntington Area," 2021, https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/bureau_be/article/1353/&path_info=Huntington_Area_Economic_Outlook_2021_2025.pdf.
[38] *126th Anniversary Ebenezer United Methodist Church 1871-1997*, Marshall University Special Collections, Huntington, WV.

free medical clinic in the church basement, an early example of faith-based healthcare delivery. Through partnerships with the Marshall University School of Medicine, this initiative grew into Ebenezer Medical Outreach, Inc., formally incorporated in 1996.[39] Though it became an independent entity no longer affiliated with the church, Ebenezer Medical Outreach has continued to grow; as of 2025, it provides an array of primary care, women's health, minor surgery, dental clinic, pharmacy services, chronic disease management, and community outreach programs such as HIV/AIDS education (CRUSAIDS), Save Our Sisters, and medically indicated food boxes.[40] It remains one of Huntington's most critical health resources for the uninsured and underinsured, as well as for Medicaid beneficiaries in the Huntington area, especially in the Fairfield West community, continuing Ebenezer's 150-year legacy of care and community outreach.

Ebenezer Closure and New Ownership

After remaining steady throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, membership and regular attendance at Ebenezer United Methodist Church began a steep decline after the mid-2000s. By 2016, membership had dwindled to 31, over a hundred fewer than a decade ago. No new members had joined since 2006 as well. Faced with an attendance crisis and continuing operating costs, the United Methodist Church closed the Ebenezer Church. The congregation officially dissolved on June 13, 2017, although regular services seem to have ceased as early as December 2016.[41]

Tax records indicate that Lewis Memorial Baptist Church purchased the former Ebenezer Church building in 2019.[42] The church undertook extensive rehabilitation, preserving the original

[39] "Our History | Ebenezer Medical Outreach," Ebenezer Medical Outreach, 2025, https://emohealth.org/about-us/our-history/.
[40] "Community Outreach Projects | Ebenezer Medical Outreach," Ebenezer Medical Outreach, 2025, https://emohealth.org/services/community-outreach-projects/.
[41] "Ebenezer United Methodist Church (Hunt) – Closed," General Council on Finance and Administration for The United Methodist Church, accessed November 25, 2025, https://gcfa-umdata.brtsite.com/church?church=969082; "Audrey Farrow McClinton Obituary," Hall Funeral Home, accessed November 25, 2025. https://www.ehallfuneralhome.com/obituaries/audrey-mcclinton/obituary.
[42] "WV Property Viewer," 2025, https://mapwv.gov/parcel/?pid=06-05-0031-0149-0000.

flooring, stained-glass windows, and other character-defining features.[43] Damaged windows were replaced, and water damage in the basement was repaired. Some damaged plaster on interior walls was removed, revealing brick underneath. A standing-seam metal cap was added to the top of the bell tower as an affordable stabilization measure. These efforts mostly maintained the building's overall exterior and interior integrity while enabling renewed use for religious activities. Lewis Memorial used the building as a church plant, establishing a new congregation called Ebenezer Community Church in 2024. In addition to functioning again as a place of worship, the church began conducting new community service activities such as regular lunches for EMS, fire, and police workers.[44] The rehabilitation of the building itself, and revival of the church's activity, demonstrate the continuing relevance of Ebenezer's historic significance and its role as a community landmark.

Need For Recognition

Listing Ebenezer Church on the National Register of Historic Places would formally acknowledge the church's profound local and statewide significance, honoring its role as one of Huntington's earliest African American institutions and a central site of faith, education, and civic leadership. Recognition would not only provide eligibility for potential preservation funding and technical assistance but also lend institutional support for future rehabilitation projects to keep the sanctuary in active use. Preserving the building safeguards its architectural integrity—its brick construction, bell tower, and stained-glass windows—while allowing future generations to experience a tangible link to the cultural and spiritual life of Huntington's Black community. Moreover, NRHP designation situates Ebenezer within the broader national narrative of African American churches as critical spaces for self-determination, social organization, and resilience in the face of systemic exclusion. As the site continues to serve community needs through programs like Lewis Memorial Baptist Church's ministries and

[43] Taylor Eaton, "Lewis Memorial Baptist Working to Restore Historic Church in Huntington," https://www.wsaz.com (WSAZ, January 11, 2020), https://www.wsaz.com/content/news/Lewis-Memorial-Baptist-working-to-restore-historic-church-in-Huntington-566892431.html.
[44] "Ebenezer: A Ministry of Lewis Memorial Baptist Church," Ebenezer Community Church, 2025, https://lmbc.org/ebenezer.

outreach initiatives, formal recognition would affirm Ebenezer's dual legacy as a sacred space and a center of social service, reinforcing its enduring significance in both local memory and American history.

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Ebenezer United Methodist Church is significant under Ethnic Heritage: Black for its longtime association with Huntington's Black community. Founded in the early 1870s, Ebenezer emerged as one of Huntington's earliest Black institutions. The church provided a dedicated space for worship, identity formation, and mutual aid during a period of widespread racial discrimination. Its congregation helped sustain Black community life by offering religious education, social support, and continuity across generations.

Social History

The church is also significant under Criterion A: Social History for its role as a hub of Black civic life during the Jim Crow era and beyond. Beyond its spiritual functions, Ebenezer served as a meeting place, engaged in community service endeavors, and supported local efforts to address segregation and economic hardship. Through these efforts, the congregation helped to organize community initiatives, strengthen networks of support, and reinforce collective resilience, making the church a cornerstone of African American social life in the area.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency

____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _0.24__

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[ ] NAD 1927 or [x] NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17N	Easting: 375391	Northing: 4253095
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated boundary of the Ebenezer United Methodist Church is shown on the accompanying map (Figure 2; parcel outlined in blue). The nominated boundary includes the Cabell County tax parcel: 06-05-0031-0149-0000.

Boundary Justification

The selected boundary was chosen as it represents the legal boundary indicated by Deed Book 1389, page 288, (parcel number 0149).

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Maria Morgan, WV SHPO Intern; edited by Cody Straley, National Register Coordinator
organization: WV State Historic Preservation Office
street & number:
city or town: state: zip code:
e-mail
telephone:
date: December 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Figure 1: USGS Map
Figure 2: Parcel Map
Figure 3: Ground Floor Plan
Figure 4: Basement Floor Plan
Figure 5: Architectural Drawing of Church
Figure 6: Interior of Church, 1939
Figure 7: Photo of Church from 1987 Program

Figure 1 USGS Map

Figure 2 Parcel Map with Photo 5 Keyed - Tax Parcel: 06-05-0031-0149-0000

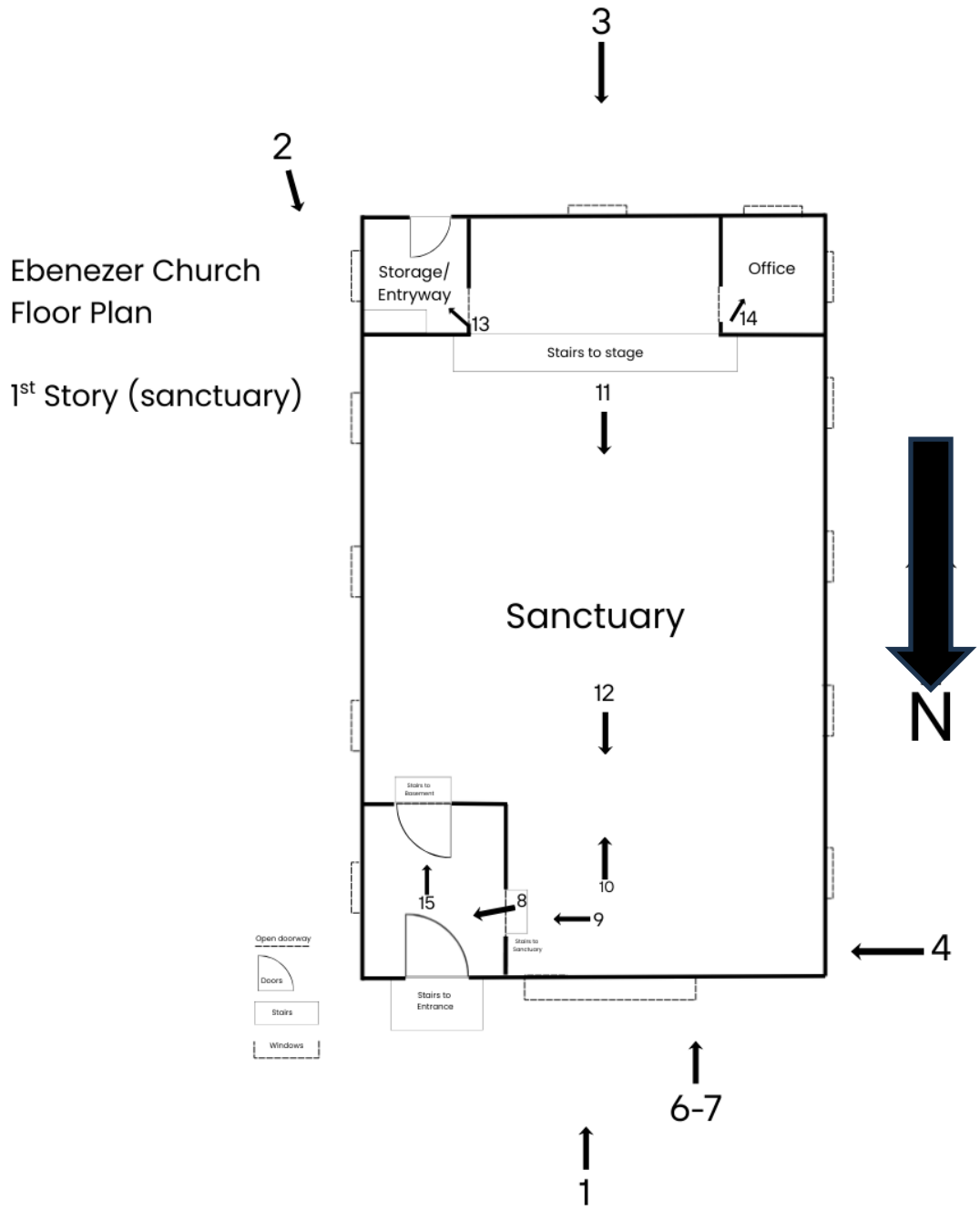

Figure 3 Ground Floor Plans with Photos Keyed

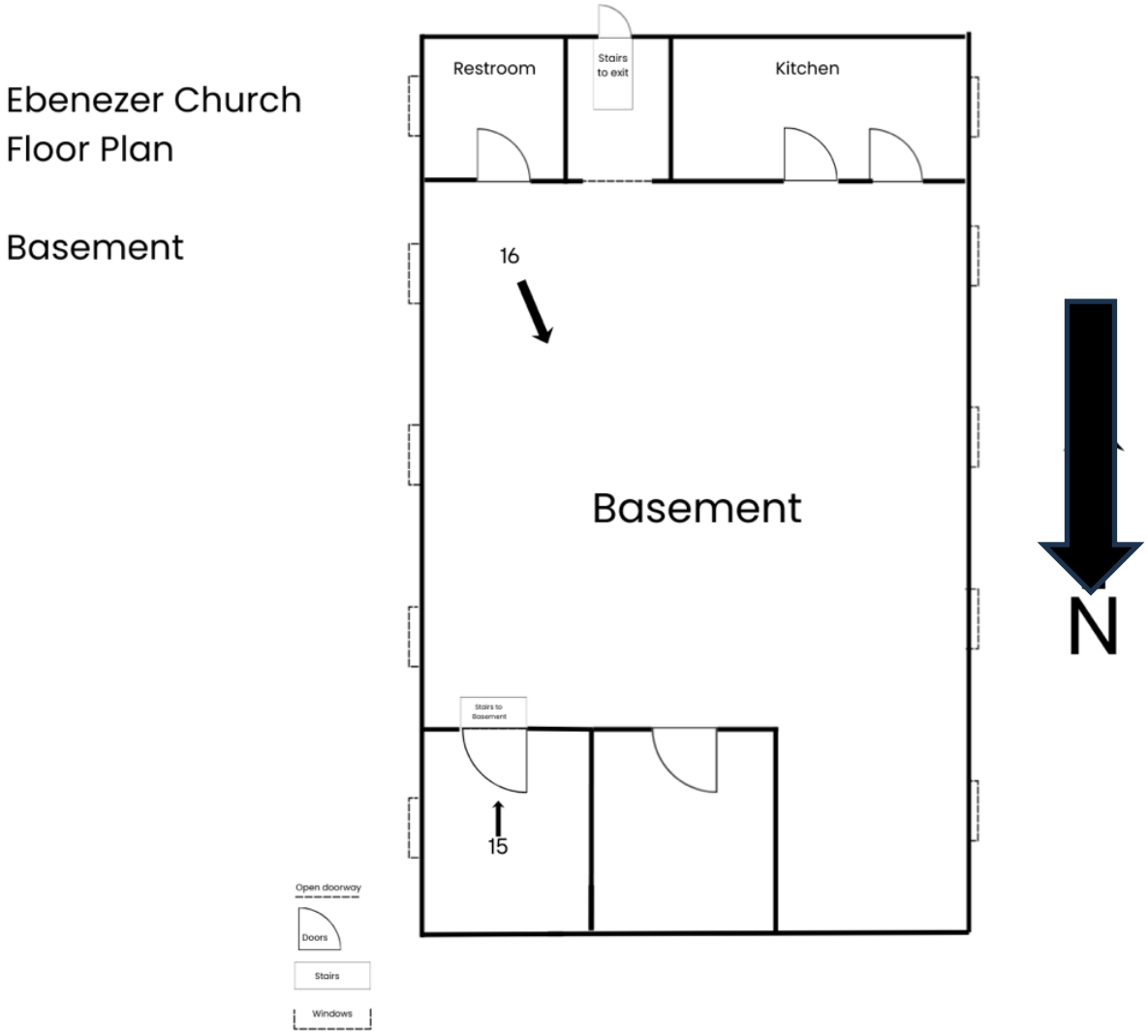

Figure 4 Basement Floor Plans with Photos Keyed

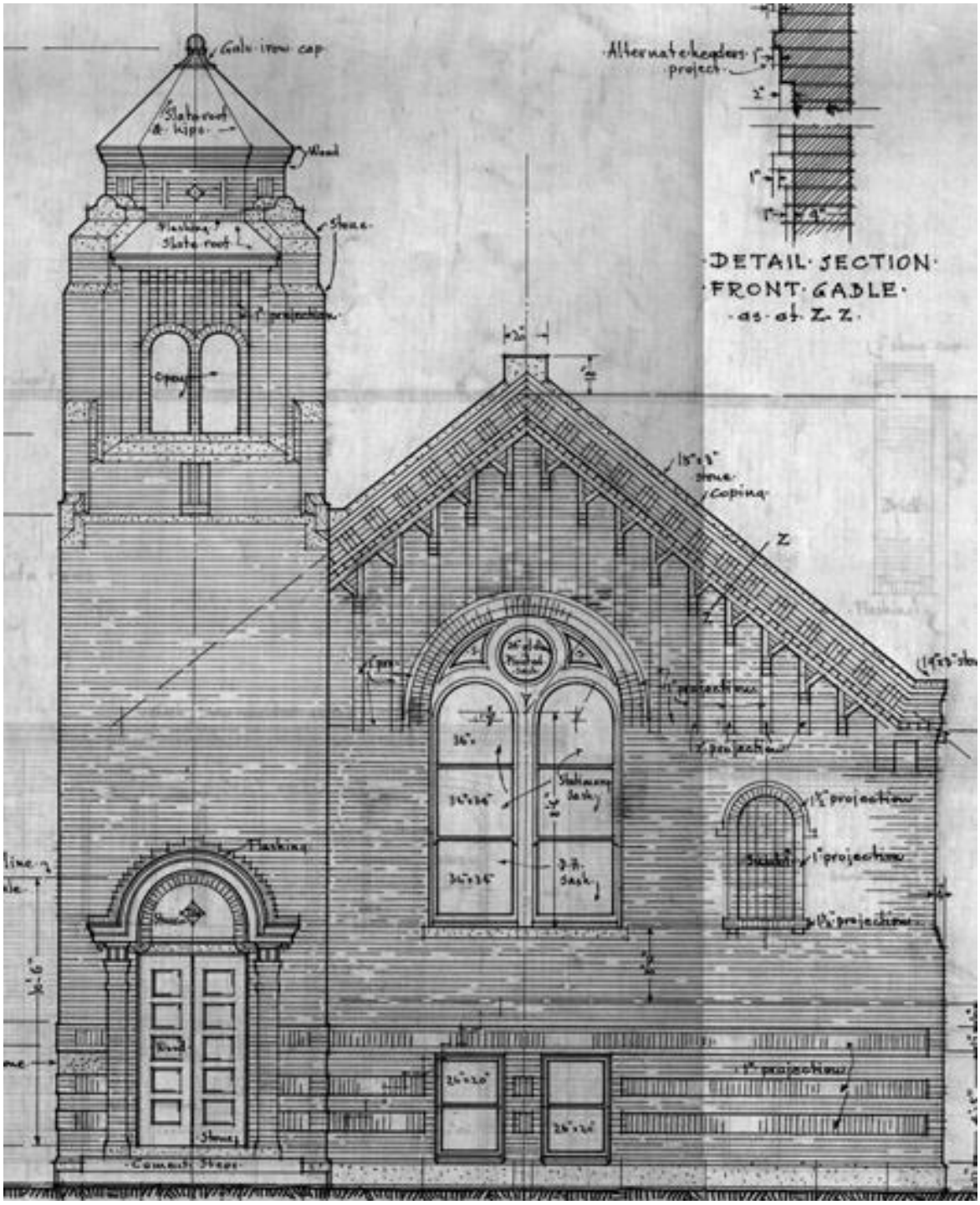

Figure 5 Architectural Drawing of Church, Sidney L. Day Collection, Marshall University Special Collections

Figure 6 Interior of church sanctuary, 1939. Carl Barnett Photograph Collection, Marshall University Special Collections

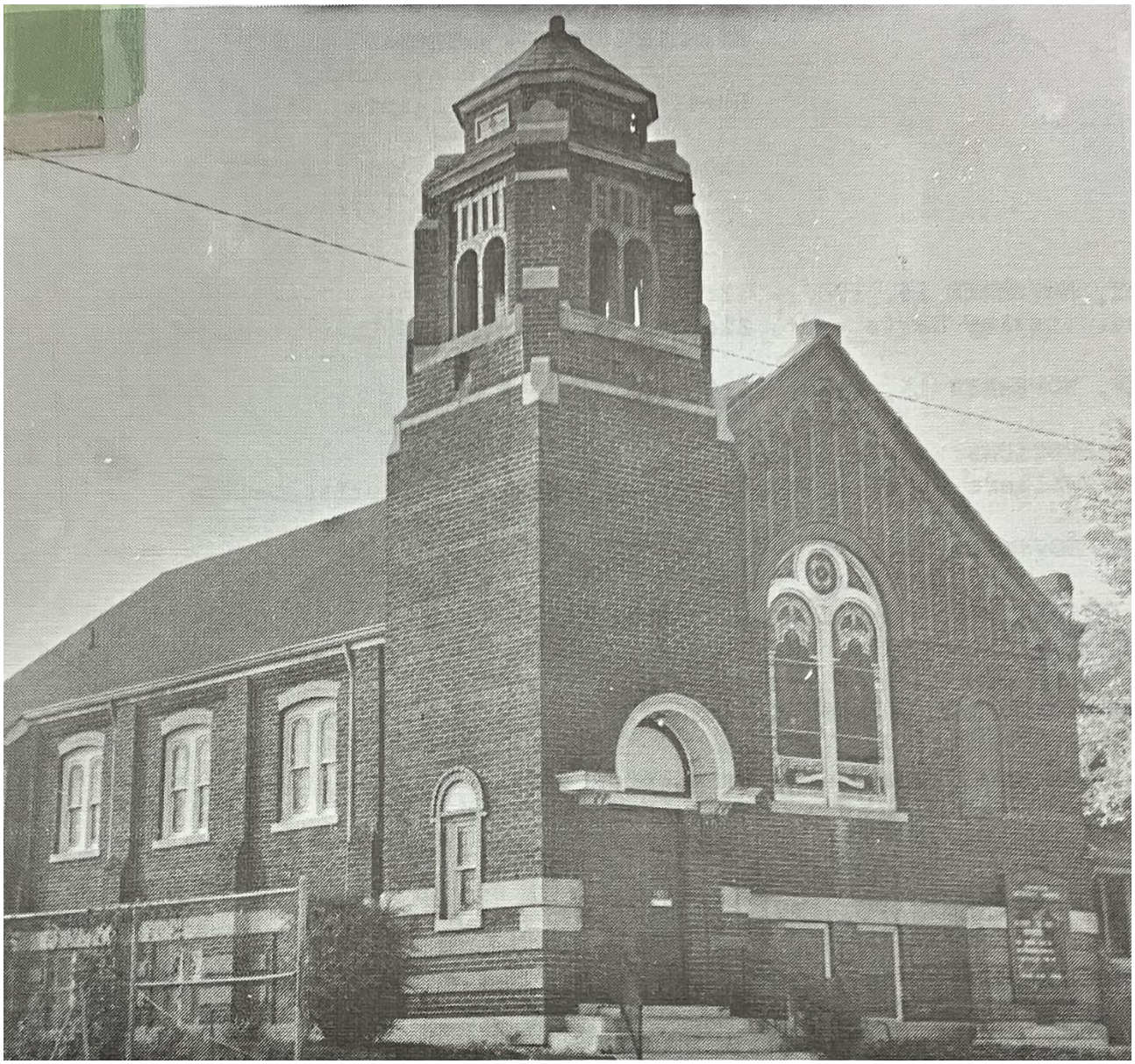

Figure 7 Photo of Church from 1987 Program

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Ebenezer United Methodist Church

City or Vicinity: Huntington

County: Cabell State: West Virginia

Photographer: Maria Morgan

Date Photographed: October 14, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 16: Street view of church; camera pointed south.

2 of 16: Side view of church, bell tower; camera pointed northwest.

3 of 16: View of back of church; camera pointed north.

4 of 16: View of cornerstone; camera facing west.

5 of 16: Wide angle of front of church, across the street; camera pointed south.

6 of 16: View of brick structure in front of church with plaque; camera pointed south.

7 of 16: Close-up view of plaque in front of church; camera pointed south.

8 of 16: Interior view of front entrance of church; camera pointed northeast.

9 of 16: Interior view of sanctuary; camera pointed east.

10 of 16: Interior view of sanctuary, facing stage and back of pews; camera facing south.

11 of 16: Interior view of sanctuary, facing arched stain glass window and front of pews; camera facing north.

12 of 16: Interior view of sanctuary, close-up of arched stain glass window; camera facing south.

13 of 16: Interior view of a small room in the northwest corner of the first story of the building and the second set of stairs leading to the basement; camera pointed northwest.

14 of 16: Interior view of an office located in the northeast corner of the building; camera pointed northeast.

15 of 16: Interior view of building entrance, facing door and stairs leading to basement; camera facing south.

16 of 16: Interior view of refurbished basement in use; camera facing northwest.

Photo 1: Street view of church; camera pointed south.

Photo 2: Side view of church, bell tower; camera pointed northwest.

Photo 3: View of back of church; camera pointed north.

Photo 4: View of cornerstone (reading: 1874, 1917 EBENEZER M.E. CHURCH, [REV.] A. HALL WHITFIELD PASTOR, TRUSTEES [] JOHN DAVIS [] E.R. HARVEY [] JOHNSON" ; camera facing west.

Photo 5: Wide angle of front of church, across the street; camera pointed south.

Photo 6: View of brick signage structure in front of church with plaque; camera pointed south.

Photo 7: Close-up view of plaque in front of church; camera pointed south.

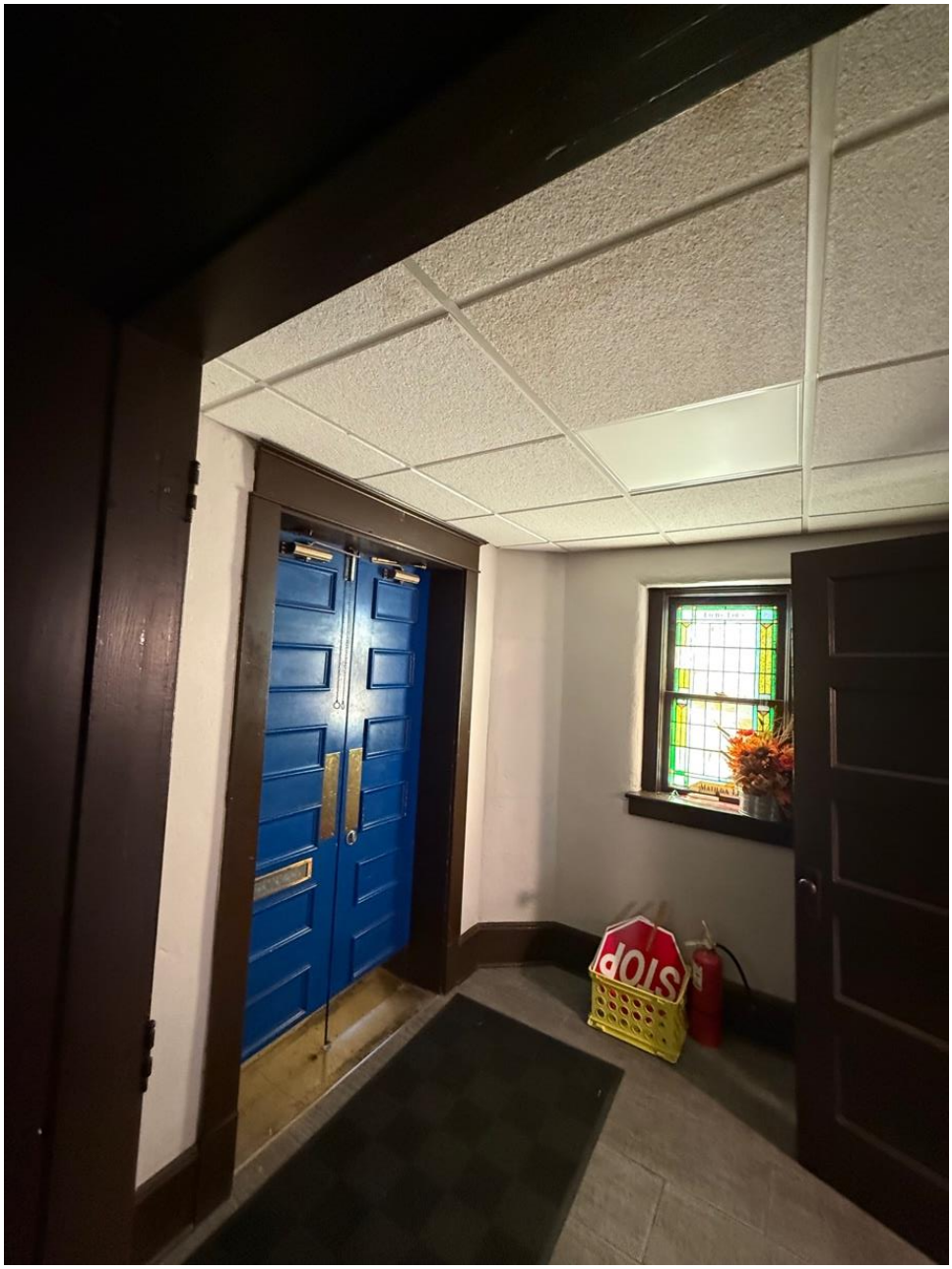

Photo 8: Interior view of front entrance of church; camera pointed northeast.

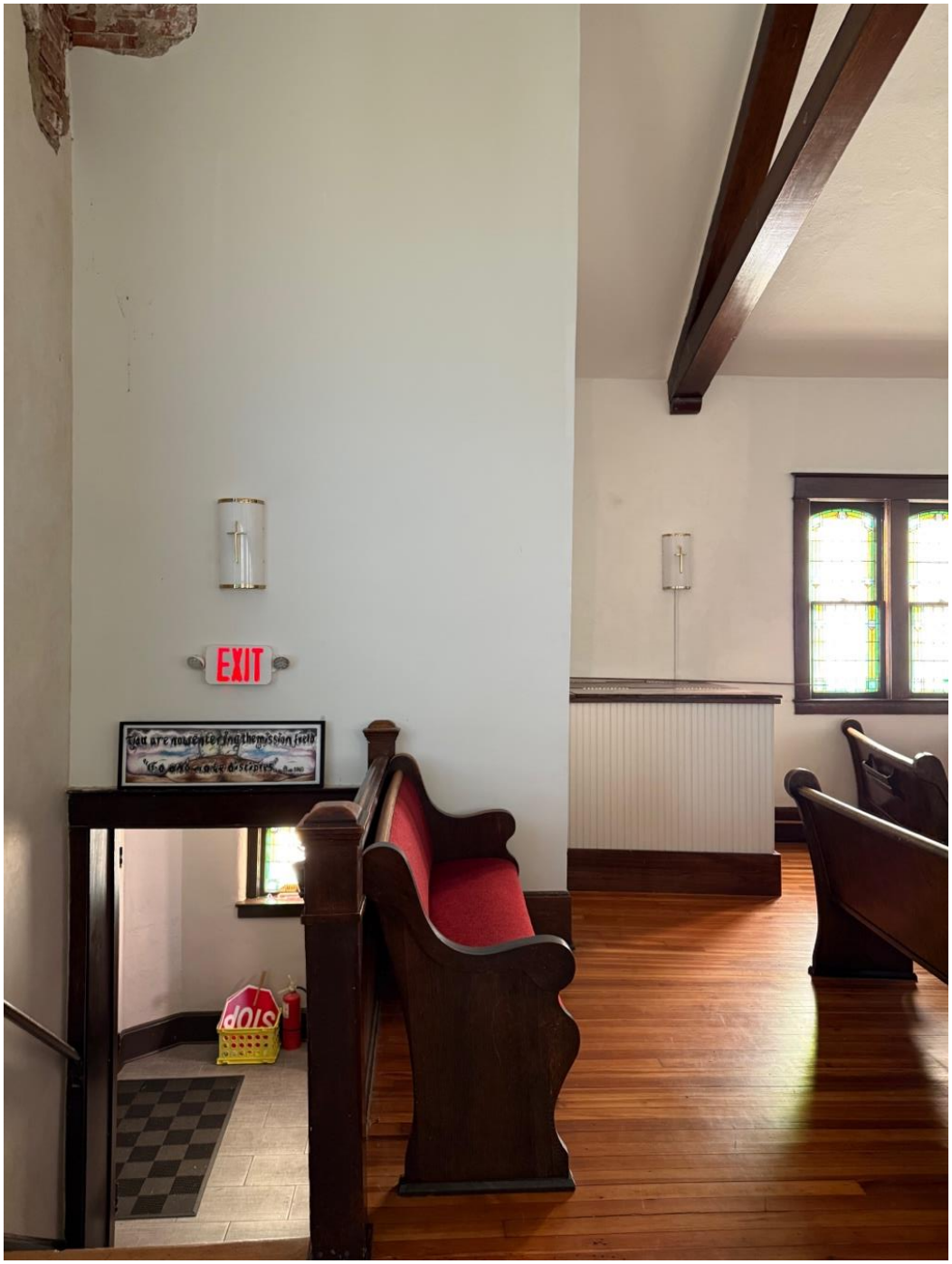

Photo 9: Interior view of sanctuary; camera pointed east.

Photo 10: Interior view of sanctuary, facing stage and back of pews; camera facing south.

Photo 11: Interior view of sanctuary, facing arched stained glass window and front of pews; camera facing north.

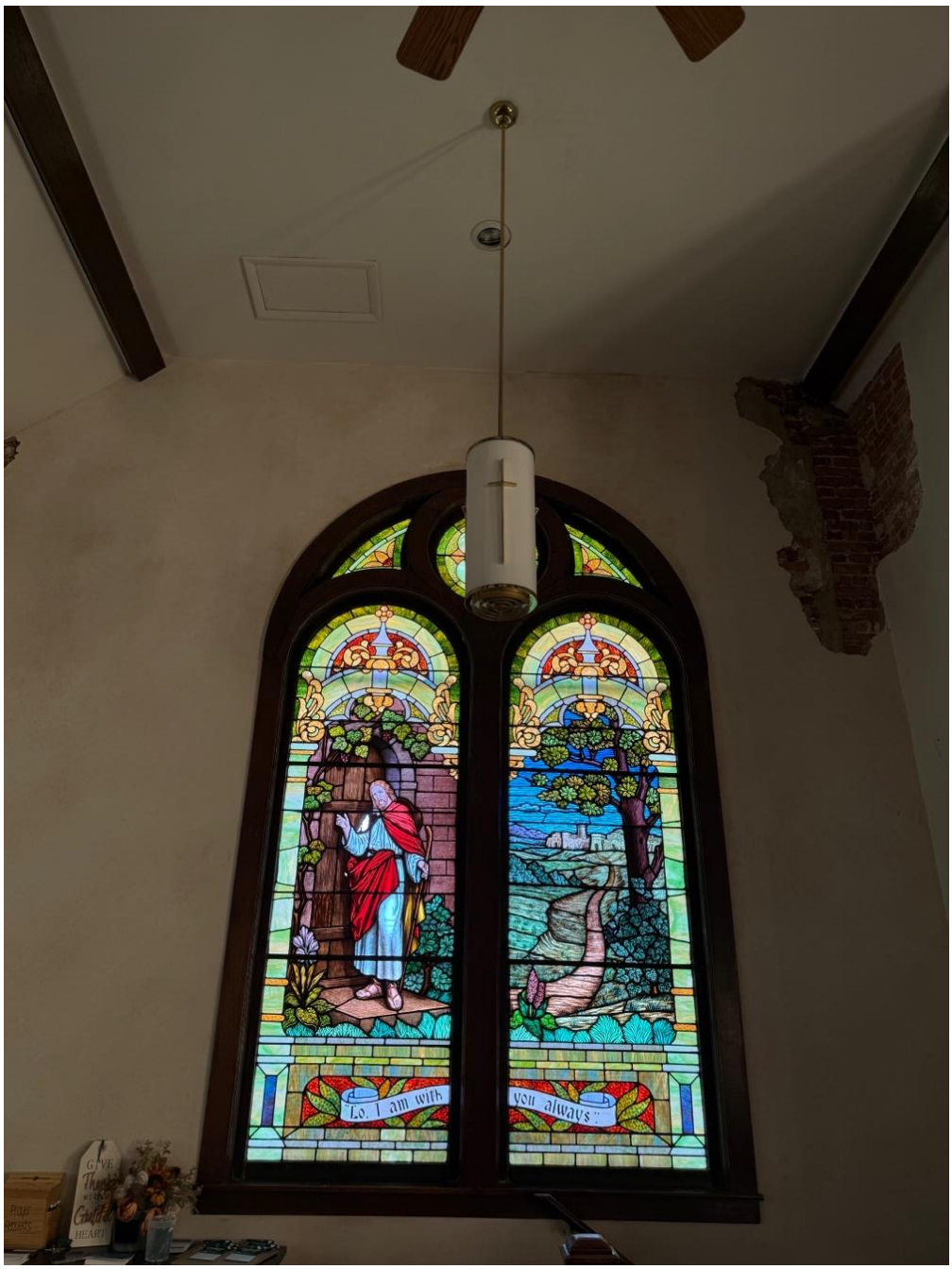

Photo 12: Interior view of sanctuary, close-up of arched stained glass window; camera facing south.

Photo 13: Interior view of a small room in the northwest corner of the first story of the building and the second set of stairs leading to the basement; camera pointed northwest.

Photo 14: Interior view of an office located in the northeast corner of the building; camera pointed northeast.

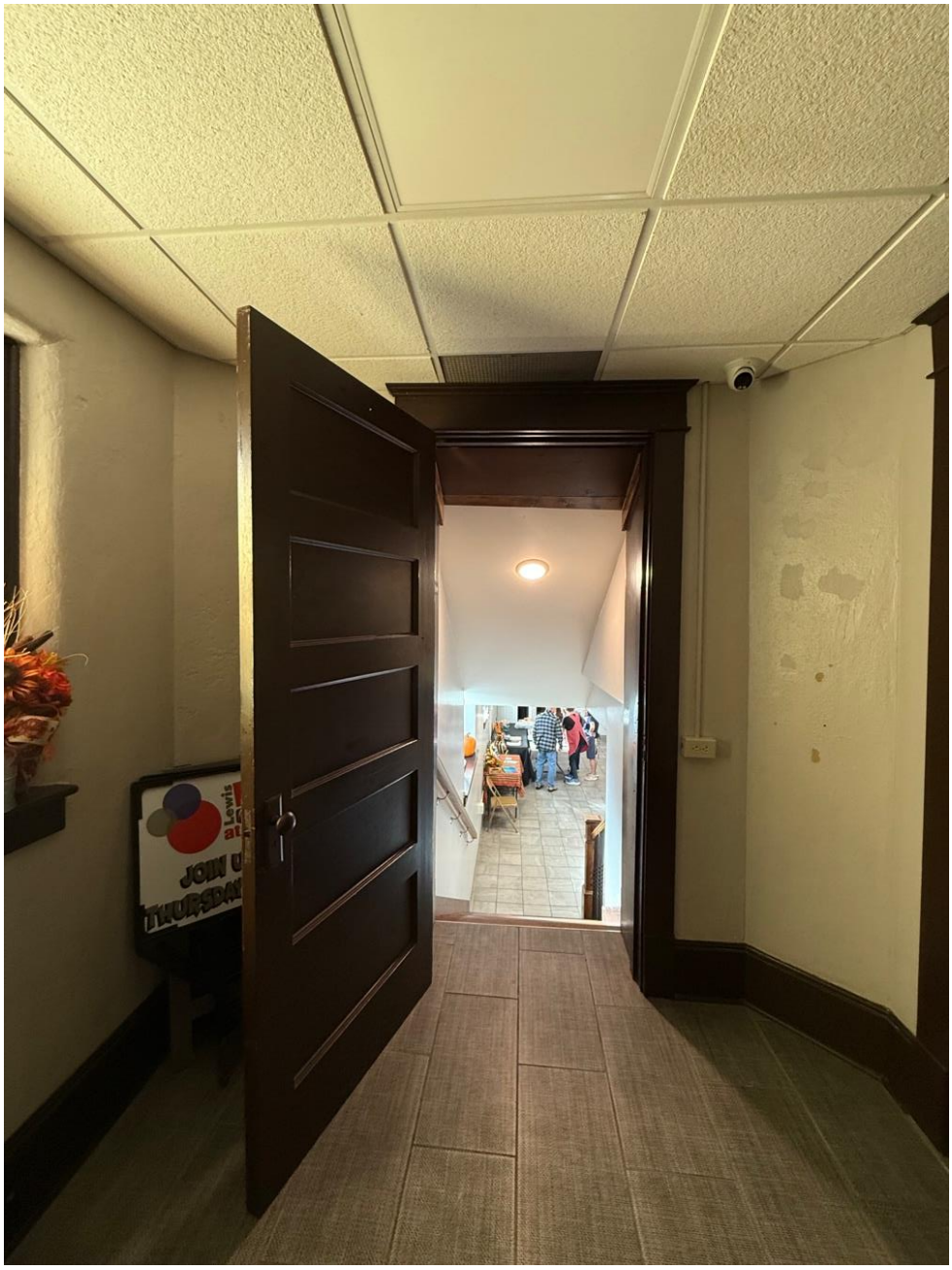

Photo 15: Interior view of building entrance, facing door and stairs leading to basement; camera facing south.

Photo 16: Interior view of refurbished basement in use; camera facing northwest (faces blurred for anonymity).

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.