

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Bethel Baptist Church

other names/site number Bethel Missionary Baptist Church

Name of Multiple Property Listing African American Civil Rights in Idaho

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

## 2. Location

street & number 401 North 5th Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Pocatello N/A vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Bannock code 005 zip code 83201

## 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

 Tricia Canaday, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 8-12-21 Date

Idaho 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Bethel Baptist Church  
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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION – Religious Facility / Church

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION – Religious Facility / Church

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Concrete

Synthetic: Vinyl

roof: Asphalt

other: Brick

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## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

### Summary Paragraphs

The Bethel Baptist Church (today called Bethel Missionary Baptist Church) is located at 401 N. 5th Avenue on a small corner lot in Pocatello's Triangle neighborhood northwest of the downtown core. The congregation acquired this property in 1922 and constructed a raised basement structure with a low-pitched gable roof as its first house of worship. The building's upper level was completed in 1950. These two construction phases resulted in the building we see today – a rectangular, one-story, concrete-block building situated on a raised, poured-concrete basement. A wood-frame steeple punctuates the moderately-pitched gabled roofline. A prominent, two-sided concrete staircase marks the primary corner entrance to the church. Behind the church is a fenced lawn and gravel driveway.

Although the Bethel Baptist Church does not outwardly display an architectural style as defined by National Register guidelines, it is reflective of a vernacular architecture on which the focus should be the building's form and how it has evolved over time. The gable-front or open-gable building is a common American building form found in residential, commercial, and institutional architecture, and houses of worship throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in rural and developing areas. The gable-front form allowed for considerable adaptation of the interior spatial arrangement and was straightforward to construct.<sup>1</sup> These qualities are meaningful when assessing integrity and significance of the Bethel Baptist Church, a building that is home to a congregation that has endured and evolved on this site for a century.

The property meets the requirements for integrity that are outlined in the Multiple Property Document *African American Civil Rights in Idaho*. It has good integrity, retaining its historic massing, scale, most of its materials, and general spatial arrangement. The building's function has gone unchanged, and its integrity of location, feeling, and association, including with the Civil Rights movement, remains strong. It clearly conveys its historic use as a house of worship for a longstanding African American congregation in the heart of Pocatello's Triangle district.

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## Narrative Description

### *Location & Setting*

Located in southeast Idaho, Pocatello (2018 pop. 55,162) is the county seat and principal city of Bannock County (see figure 1). The city is in the Portneuf River Valley just southeast of the Snake River at the American Falls Reservoir. The Bethel Baptist Church is located at the west corner of the intersection of E. Fremont Street and N. 5th Avenue in The Triangle, which is northeast of the downtown core (see figure 2). The district is situated on an angled street grid that was influenced by both the natural topography and the path of the Union Pacific Railroad and is generally bounded by E. Center Street on the south, E. Sublette Street on the north, Pocatello Avenue and the rail yard on the west, and N. 7th Avenue on the east (see figures 11 through 13). Historically, this part of Pocatello was home to an ethnically and racially diverse population living and working in this area.<sup>2</sup> Reminders of this past are found in the variety of commercial buildings, industrial warehouses, and religious properties. The immediate vicinity of the church includes mid- to late-20th century and early-21st century automotive repair and retail shops, public service-oriented shops, and office buildings, all with plenty of surface parking lots.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular: Buildings and Interiors, 1870-1960* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 137, 143, 146, and 267-271.

<sup>2</sup> Idaho Purce, Mary Sanders Watkins, and Kevin R. Marsh, *The Triangle: A Slice of America*, Pocatello, ID: City of Pocatello, Planning & Development Services, 2005, 2.

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The church faces east toward N. 5th Avenue (old US Highway 91), which serves as a primary northwest-southeast thoroughfare through the city (see photo 1). The old Yellowstone Highway that followed 5th Avenue passed through the heart of the East Side, and automobile garages and dealerships that came to dot the landscape remain a fixture of this corridor. The church occupies the east (front) half of a 0.19-acre parcel, which is on lots 9 and 10 in block 292 of the Pocatello Townsite (see figures 3, 4, and 5). Public concrete sidewalks line the two street-facing sides of the building. A grass lawn with sloping edges occupies the area north and west of the building. A low concrete retaining wall with a chain-link fence encloses the rear lawn and a rear gravel driveway (see photos 2 through 9). A small house that was affiliated with the church occupied this area behind the church from the late 1940s until 1973.

*Exterior*

The Bethel Baptist Church is a rectangular, one-story, concrete-block building situated on a raised basement. The first-story exterior has modest embellishments that include rounded concrete blocks at the building corners and window and door openings, red-brick window sills, and a glass-block transom above the primary entrance (see photos 2, 4, and 10). The basement-level exterior is smooth-finish concrete with no embellishment or ornamentation. There are fixed-sash windows and one-over-one double-hung windows with vinyl sashes throughout the first-story, many with frosted glass. There are deep-set, horizontal window openings with sliding vinyl sashes at the basement level.

The building has a moderately-pitched, front-facing gable roof with asphalt shingles. The roof ridgeline is oriented northeast-southwest. Both gable ends are clad in vinyl as are the soffits. Gutters are attached to the eaves with a downspout at each corner of the building. A wood-frame, vinyl-clad steeple pierces the roof's ridgeline near the front of the building. It has a steep pyramidal roof with asphalt shingles and is topped by a fiberglass cross (see photos 3 and 5). An interior brick chimney at the rear of the building pierces the northwest slope of the roof (see photos 3 and 6).

The **primary elevation** faces northeast and overlooks N. 5th Avenue, a one-way, two-lane thoroughfare carrying traffic northwest. A prominent entry staircase with smooth-concrete retaining walls is located at the east corner of the property. The street-facing portion of the retaining wall features a cross scored into the concrete finish. Two sets of concrete stairs, each with nine risers, lead up from the public sidewalk's 5th Avenue and Fremont Street access to a shared platform walkway at the foot of the double-door entrance (see photo 10). The white, smooth-finished doors are modern replacements made of fiberglass with vertical panels and a fanlight window at the top of each door. Centered on the elevation is a large, single-sash fixed window with a brick sill. At the north corner near the base of the first story is a small corner stone embedded into the wall that lists past church deacons. The gable end above is clad in vinyl siding with a small octagonal louvered vent just below the peak (see photos 2 and 3).

The **southeast side elevation** overlooks E. Fremont Street, a two-way secondary street. There are four one-over-one windows and a small, fixed window with brick sills on the first story. The basement features four equally-spaced, horizontal sliding-sash windows. A metal shed roof that is supported by three square posts covers a partially enclosed staircase with five risers leading down to a basement entrance. A single-leaf, chain-link gate marks the entry to the basement entry (see photos 1, 2, 8, and 9).

The **rear elevation** faces southwest and overlooks the fenced lawn and an alleyway beyond. There are three small windows with brick sills on the first story – a fixed, vinyl sash (north) and two double-hung vinyl windows (center and south). Two basement window openings are infilled with wood panels. There is a ground-level coal chute beneath the south window. A concrete staircase with six risers and metal railings affixed to each side accesses the building's rear first-floor entry. The gable end above is clad in vinyl siding with a small octagonal louvered vent just below the peak (see photos 6 through 8).

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The **northwest side elevation** overlooks a narrow side yard. There are four one-over-one windows with brick sills on the first story. The basement features five horizontal sliding-sash windows. An air-conditioning unit with a line piercing the base of the concrete-block wall sits next to the building. It also connects to electrical service boxes affixed to the concrete-block wall (see photos 3, 4, and 5).

*Interior*

The interior spatial arrangement is typical of a small mid-century church, with an entry vestibule and large sanctuary space on the main level and a fellowship hall and kitchen in the basement. Offices, restrooms, and storage areas are concentrated at the rear of the building on both levels. There are two staircases connecting the floors – a straight-run staircase along the building’s south wall connecting the primary entry vestibule with the basement fellowship hall and a U-shaped staircase just inside the rear entry (see photos 15, 16, and 19).

A vestibule at the primary entrance accesses the spacious sanctuary that occupies much of the main level (see photo 11). Passage into the sanctuary is through a wide opening on the northwest wall of the vestibule. Previously, entry into the sanctuary was through an opening on the southwest wall of the vestibule, directly opposite the primary entrance. This change was made around 1990. The sanctuary pews are oriented southwest toward a dais along the southwest wall and are arranged around center and side aisles (see photos 12 and 14). The walls are painted plaster and narrow grooved trim surrounds window and door openings. The dropped, acoustical tile ceiling has fluorescent panel lights and a narrow crown moulding where it meets the walls. The sanctuary floor is carpeted with wood baseboards, and the original wood flooring is beneath. A rectangular baptismal, which dates to about 1975, is submerged in the floor just beyond the east corner of the dais.<sup>3</sup> When not in use, two hinged steel doors fold over the opening of the baptismal so that it is concealed in the floor (see photo 13).

A five-panel wood door in the southwest wall opens to a back corridor located directly behind the dais. This corridor accesses the pastor’s office at the south corner of the building, two restrooms, a partially enclosed U-shaped staircase, and the building’s rear entry (see photo 19). The carpet and finishes carry through from the sanctuary to the rear corridor and pastor’s office. The office has wood panel walls. The restrooms have been updated with newer pedestal sinks, toilets, and tile flooring.

In addition to the two aforementioned staircases, one can access the basement through an exterior door at the south corner of the building. It opens into a double-loaded corridor that extends the width of the building (see photo 18). This corridor opens to an office, the fellowship hall, a kitchen, two restrooms, small storage areas, and the rear staircase. The kitchen is situated along the northwest wall and has newer linoleum flooring, cabinets and countertops from various periods, a mix of wood panel and plaster walls, and a pass-through window into the fellowship hall (see photo 17).

The spacious fellowship hall occupies much of the basement (see photos 16 and 17). The floor is a newer laminate wood with narrow wood baseboards. The walls are a mix of plaster and wallboard with a painted finish. The space is bisected by square wood posts that support the ceiling and sanctuary floor above. Exposed ductwork runs alongside the center beam in the ceiling. Fluorescent-tube light fixtures are mounted to the ceiling and illuminate the gathering space. A five-panel door at the east corner of the fellowship hall leads to an enclosed storage area beneath the straight-run staircase (see photo 16).

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<sup>3</sup> Mary La Rue Sanders Watkins, “Historical Information of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church 1921-1996,” unpublished church history, Bethel Baptist Church: Pocatello, Idaho, 1996, 12 and 46. There had been a baptismal pool in the lower level of the church, but it was abandoned for a period beginning in the 1930s, when the church opted for outdoor baptisms. The original baptismal was removed in the 1970s due to poor drainage.

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### *Change Over Time & Integrity*

The Bethel Baptist Church building has functioned as a house of worship and religious fellowship since its construction in 1922. It was enlarged in 1950 to reflect its current massing and has been renovated over the years to adapt to the evolving needs of the congregation. The property's physical change over time has been documented in a 1996 church history written by Mary La Rue Sanders Watkins and also from recent oral history interviews with congregants. The following information comes from these sources:

- Around 1960, Rev. Elijah Harris returned to Bethel for a brief period as associate minister and assisted as needed. During this time, he paid for a below-grade reinforcement of the northwest side elevation.<sup>4</sup>
- Also around 1960, a cornerstone was installed on the front of the building. The cornerstone text suggests the church was established in 1918, but this is not consistent with the newspaper clippings (noted in Section 8) that document the church's organization in 1920.
- By the early-to-mid-1970s, the original baptism pool in the basement had been abandoned due to improper drainage. An initiative to install a new pool on the upper level took place and around 1975 it was complete.
- During the late 1970s and 1980s, under the pastorship of Rev. James L. Gates (1976-1989), various building improvements and alterations took place. Among them, a new roof, new sod around the church, a new furnace, and a new coat of paint on the exterior, as well as a new pulpit arrangement to replace the furnishings that Rev. Gates had donated elsewhere. In addition, the basement was equipped to accommodate a daycare. Operated by a community board, government funds underwrote the installation of the perimeter chain link fence as part of this effort.<sup>5</sup>
- Around 1990, under Rev. William S. Beard's pastorship, the congregation established a Building Fund for renovations and repairs. Upgrades and alterations included: a new HVAC system; lowering of the ceilings and new lighting fixtures in the sanctuary, reorientation of the entrance vestibule, infill of the door behind the dais, and modifications to the rear hallway; construction of the rear interior staircase; upgrading of restrooms and associated sewer system; and the purchase and installation of all new, cushioned pews.<sup>6</sup>
- The balustrade was removed from the dais ca. 2005.

The Bethel Baptist Church retains a good degree of integrity and meets the requirements outlined in the Multiple Property Document *African American Civil Rights in Idaho*. The building remains in the Triangle district where it was built a century ago, and thus its integrity of location is strong. The setting has been somewhat impacted by a century of change in the district, including street and highway development, but this does not negatively impact the property. The property still clearly exhibits the characteristics of an early- to mid- 20th-century church that served a small, thriving African American Baptist congregation. It retains its historic massing, scale, key design features, and some materials, including the exterior finishes, fenestration, entrances, general interior spatial arrangement, and some interior finishes. Aside from some altered or replaced features, the building clearly conveys its historic feelings and associations with The Triangle neighborhood and the community of African Americans who used the building for worship, fellowship, and community gatherings throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

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<sup>4</sup> Watkins, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Watkins, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Watkins, 14-15.

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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.)

- 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 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**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY: Civil Rights

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

**Period of Significance**

1922 – 1971

**Significant Dates**

1922 (First construction)

1950 (Building expansion)

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (if applicable)

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Harris, Rev. Elijah J. (designer)

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1922 with the construction of the Bethel Baptist Church. It includes the completion of the building in 1950. The period closes in 1971, the 50-year cut-off date that is recommended by National Register guidelines for properties with continued importance where no more specific date can be defined.

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**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The Bethel Baptist Church meets Criteria Consideration A for religious properties because its primary significance is derived from its historical importance in the areas of *Social History*, *Politics/Government*, and *Ethnic Heritage*. As the oldest surviving African American church in Pocatello, it is historically significant for its association with the local African American community and for its role in the advancement of racial justice through uplift and community engagement.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Bethel Baptist Church building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of *Social History* and *Politics/Government*, as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) *African American Civil Rights in Idaho*. It is also eligible in the area of *Ethnic Heritage* for its association with Pocatello's African American community. Constructed in 1922 and expanded in 1950, the building is locally significant for its role in the local Black community and the Civil Rights Movement as it manifested in Pocatello during the 20th century. It is the oldest extant Black church building in Pocatello and has been an important gathering space for the community, not only for serving the religious needs of its members, but also for hosting educational, social, charitable, and civil rights activities.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), *African American Civil Rights in Idaho*, provides the context for evaluating sites related to the struggle for freedom and equality in all facets of life for Idaho's African Americans including housing, employment, education, voting rights, and public accommodations. At the center of civil rights activism throughout the 20th century were Black churches. The MPDF identifies Black churches as places for collective socio-cultural and political resistance and activism. In order to be eligible for the National Register under this Multiple Property Listing, the events associated with the resource must contribute to the larger story of the Civil Rights Movement in Idaho. Additionally, the resource must exhibit its historic and architectural character in both physical and associative ways.

The Bethel Baptist Church meets these and other registration requirements that are outlined in the MPDF. The property is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of *Social History* for its association with social activism, community programs, and education. The property also is significant in the area of *Politics/Government* for its association with activities related to the political process, including local NAACP initiatives related to desegregation and equality. Finally, the property is significant in the area of *Ethnic Heritage* as a place built and used by African Americans and as such reflects an important chapter in the story of Pocatello's Black community.



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*African American Churches in Idaho*

While African Americans historically comprised one of the smallest numbers of Idaho’s racial minorities, according to the U.S. Census, the city of Pocatello had the highest percentage of Black residents in Idaho, peaking at nearly 2.5% in 1920 with 366 people. The initial growth in population was part of the Great Migration of African Americans out of the rural South to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West. Those coming to Pocatello found employment with the railroad and related sectors, particularly as irrigation increased agricultural output.<sup>7</sup> As Table 1 shows, the percentage of Black Pocatellans has remained very low over time, dropping below one percent of the city’s total population in 1980 and holding steady into the present day. Boise had the second largest Black community, reflecting similar trends but slightly lower overall percentages. These two cities served as hubs of social and political activity for the state’s African American community. At the center of this activity were Black churches.

Year	Pocatello Pop.	Pocatello Black Pop.	Percentage Black Pop.
1910	9,110	127	1.39%
1920	15,001	366	2.43
1930	16,471	267	1.62
1940	18,133	212	1.17
1950	26,131	406	1.55
1960	28,534	481	1.69
1970	40,036	474	1.18
1980	46,340	469	1.01
1990	46,080	395	0.86
2000	51,531	369	0.72
2010	54,255	527	0.97
2018	55,162	422	0.77

Table 1. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, data.census.gov & MPDF, p. E-2.

For small Black communities nationwide, the church served many purposes beyond spiritual engagement. Such was the case in Idaho where the Black churches in Pocatello and Boise served as centers for social gatherings, entertainment, club and political meetings, and general uplift activities that were available nowhere else. In Boise, this took place at St. Paul’s Baptist Church (founded ca. 1909)<sup>8</sup> and an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, and in Pocatello at the Allen Chapel AME Church (founded ca. 1910), Bethel Baptist Church (founded 1920), and later Corinth Baptist Church (founded 1945). These places “operated as centers of spiritual, cultural, social, and economic sustenance for Black residents in their respective areas. When Black people struggled to find work, places to stay, people to date, support networks, access to the arts, and avenues of expression, their churches—which were independent of white ownership and interference—became the all-around go-to places for such essentials.”<sup>9</sup>

As the examples presented in the following narratives demonstrate, Pocatello’s Bethel Baptist Church was such a place, where Black community members not only worshipped, but where they connected in mutual support of one another. Founding and longtime members Elijah and Listoria (Smith) Harris exemplified the leadership and service that sustained the church and its mission of service to the community. They set an example followed by many others who came later (see figure 15).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Great Migration, see Jill K. Gill, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “African American Civil Rights in Idaho,” Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, 2020, section E, pages 1, 3, and 9. See also: Thomas J. Surgue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, (New York: Random House, 2009); and Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*, 1st ed., (New York: Random House, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> The congregation’s 1921 building is located at 508 E. Julia Davis Drive and functions as the Idaho Black History Museum. This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>9</sup> Jill K. Gill, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “African American Civil Rights in Idaho,” Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, 2020, section E, page 10.

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### *Pocatello: The East Side*

The city of Pocatello developed in each direction along the northwest-southeast alignment of the Union Pacific and Oregon Short Line railroads, which paralleled the Portneuf River. Together they formed a bisecting spine around which two separate communities evolved – the East Side and the West Side. The East Side neighborhood surrounding Bethel church is known as “The Triangle,”<sup>10</sup> (see figures 11 through 13). This area – bounded by E. Center Street on the south, E. Sublette Street on the north, Pocatello Avenue and the railyards on the west, and N. 7th Avenue on the east – was home to a dynamic, multi-ethnic community. The Triangle, also known historically as the “4th Avenue”<sup>11</sup> neighborhood or simply the “East Side,”<sup>12</sup> included a vibrant community of African Americans, Greeks, Irish, Italians, Japanese, and Mexicans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This area was by far the most multicultural and multiracial in southeastern Idaho. A subeconomy of businesses, lodging houses, clubs, and houses of worship served this community, and some – like the Bethel Baptist Church – continue to thrive well into the twenty-first century.<sup>13</sup>

Commercial development was anchored along E. Center Street and the railroad yards to the west, with residential development in close proximity. Most Black citizens lived in Wards 1 and 2, which include The Triangle and the immediate vicinity. The 1920 federal census recorded 366 Black citizens living in Pocatello, with origins from 36 different states, with the majority being natives of Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Tennessee, and Idaho. Their occupations were heavily skewed toward railroad work, with “laborer,” “porter,” “cook,” and “janitor” the following most-common jobs for men. A variety of other occupations included machinist, barber, carpenter, driver, private detective, and pool hall proprietor. Women’s listed occupations were primarily restricted to laundress, seamstress, chambermaid, and house servant.<sup>14</sup>

By 1950, the Black population of Pocatello totaled 406 residents who still remained largely confined to The Triangle neighborhood due to discriminatory housing practices. One Black Pocatellan – “a veteran with four children explained, ‘a colored guy can’t even buy a lot, much less a home outside the slum district. He can’t find a clean place to live. There is no decent place for his family.’”<sup>15</sup> The Pocatello Housing Authority received federal funding to build affordable housing and also proposed using two public housing projects – Wyton and Portneuf Park – to address housing shortages among minority residents. The possibility of Black residents moving out of The Triangle prompted white property owners to organize, setting up a years-long struggle for housing equality. Housing as well as employment and education equality emerged as central issues that defined the local Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century.<sup>16</sup>

### *Early Church Organization & Property Development*

As early as 1904, Pocatello’s Black population was sufficient to warrant formation of a congregation, and the Colored Ladies’ Sewing Society of Pocatello reportedly organized the Christian Mission Church.<sup>17</sup> And, according to Watkins’ history of Bethel Baptist Church, an earlier Baptist church – the Colored Second Baptist

<sup>10</sup> The angled alignment of the railroad at the east edge of the railyard created the ‘triangle’ shape of the neighborhood, which was otherwise a traditional grid of streets and blocks aligned NW-SE parallel to the railroad.

<sup>11</sup> One secondary source suggested residents historically referred to the neighborhood as “4th Street,” but no primary resources confirmed this.

<sup>12</sup> Primary sources confirm the area was historically referred to as the “Red Light District,” the “burnt district,” and “the burnt fields,” from the early twentieth century through the late 1970s, however these were derogatory and discriminatory references used by outsiders and not the name used by residents. As such they are not used herein. Ing, “Buzz of the Burg,” *Idaho State Journal (Pocatello)*, November 14, 1956, 4; and Jill K. Gill, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “African American Civil Rights in Idaho,” Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, 2020, section E, page 8.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer Eastman Atterbery and Kathleen Lacey, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form “East Side Downtown Historic District,” Pocatello, ID: 1994, section 8, page 1; and Idaho Purce, Mary Sanders Watkins, and Kevin R. Marsh, *The Triangle: A Slice of America*, Pocatello, ID: City of Pocatello, Planning & Development Services, 2005, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ancestry.com. *1920 United States Federal Census*.

<sup>15</sup> Unattributed quote in “African American Civil Rights in Idaho” MPD, E-24.

<sup>16</sup> “African American Civil Rights in Idaho” MPD, E-24 to E-30.

<sup>17</sup> Watkins, 34.

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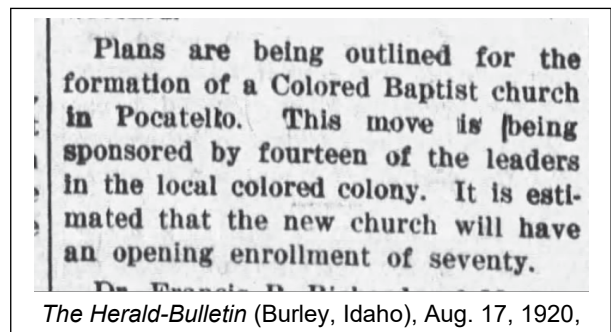
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Church – was organized and temporarily met in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints amusement hall before building their own structure in the fall of 1907. By 1909, an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation formed and temporarily held services on East Center Street between North 3rd and 4th avenues before making plans for a more permanent home.<sup>18</sup> The historic record suggests this was likely what became the Allen Chapel AME Church that first stood at 336 N. 3rd Avenue until it moved to 653 N. 7th Avenue. It closed in the 1960s.<sup>19</sup>

Despite apparent attempts at organizing a Black Baptist congregation, no permanent organization could be sustained. In late summer 1920, two Idaho newspapers briefly reported on meetings held regarding the formation of “a colored Baptist church” in Pocatello. A few weeks later, the organizers – calling themselves “members of the Bethel Baptist church of Pocatello” – made their first public appeal for funds to build a house of worship. Thus, these references mark the early beginnings of the Bethel church.

The following spring, presumably after some funds had been raised, the Idaho Falls *Post-Register* reported on an early April planning meeting held between the Black Baptist minister, J. Polk Taylor, and Rev. Arthur Willey, pastor of the local white First Baptist Church in Pocatello. Held “in the basement” of the white Baptist church, the account suggested collaboration between the churches with regards to organizational specifics.<sup>20</sup> Following this meeting, the Bethel congregation sponsored fundraisers for a church building while holding gatherings and worship services at various locations – including a nearby Japanese church and a pool hall.<sup>21</sup>

By 1922, the church was working to acquire land at the corner of N. 5th Avenue and E. Fremont Street (Town of Pocatello Plat, Block 292, Lots 9 and 10). Church trustees were F. L. Vorse, E.J. Harris, William Robertson, and A.W. Peterson.<sup>22</sup> In an interview of early church member Elijah Harris, recorded ca. 1972, he said he was among those that “sort of decide[d]” on the name of the new church and “then we got busy trying to draw plans, the dimensions of the church and so forth.”<sup>23</sup> Instrumental in church planning and among the first deacons, Harris was apparently given the honor of turning “the first shovel of dirt at the land breaking.”<sup>24</sup> After the basement had been excavated, “Rev. Keller asked a local carpenters union to build forms for the concrete,” and “about 21 men agreed to do the work, although the church could only afford to pay them with their



<sup>18</sup> This location has not been corroborated through other sources.

<sup>19</sup> Watkins, 34.

<sup>20</sup> “Twenty Years Ago Taken From the Files of This Paper,” *The Post-Register* (Idaho Falls, Idaho), April 9, 1941, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Watkins, 1; and “Evangelist Here,” *Pocatello Tribune*, May 28, 1921, 2; and “Members of Church Once Held Services in Pool Hall Here,” *Idaho State Journal*, April 7, 1969, 2.

<sup>22</sup> The property transfer was finally complete and officially recorded with Bannock County on January 4, 1926. Book 53, page 633.

<sup>23</sup> Elijah J. Harris (presumed), oral history interview, conducted c.1972. Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, identifier “isu\_ohp\_music\_bethel\_greek\_streaming” available from <https://cdm16942.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16942coll20/id/37/rec/28>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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meals.”<sup>25</sup> Together with church members, they completed construction of a concrete foundation and walls that formed the first Bethel Baptist Church (see figure 11). When “a portion of the roof was completed, members began holding services in the sheltered areas.”<sup>26</sup> Watkins’ church history recalls that the basement space was made comfortable with pews, a coal-burning “heatrola,” and a kitchen equipped with a coal and wood cooking range. Additional features came to include restrooms, a baptism pool, and a raised pulpit platform sufficient to accommodate the choir and piano. The church remained as such for the next quarter century.<sup>27</sup>

The church was a busy and heavily used building, with both morning and evening worship services and Sunday School, as well as mid-week prayer meetings. In addition to regular religious activities such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals, special services and programs took place on most major holidays.<sup>28</sup>

The original baptismal pool in the lower level of the church was abandoned for a time at some point in the late 1930s, after which baptisms took place in a canal out in the country northwest of Pocatello at a place known as Bulls Eye swimming hole. A temporary lean-to provided some shelter for changing clothes and conditions were not particularly comfortable, however “the idea of being baptized much like our Savior Jesus Christ” was meaningful for those who experienced these outdoor baptisms.<sup>29</sup>

Under the leadership of Rev. Lucious A. Platt (1936-1941), the congregation erected a parsonage behind the church. It faced southeast and was addressed 530 E. Fremont Avenue. A nearby house was acquired, moved “3-1/2 blocks down an alley, pulled by Rev. Harris’ ‘ole jitney,’ as he called it.” The house was rebuilt as the parsonage, “with cooperation from the Women’s Missionary Society and the youth of the church.”<sup>30</sup> Rev. Harris led the reconstruction, which included the participation of several parishioners. Completed around 1937, Rev. Platt and his wife Maurine (Mattie) were the first to reside there.<sup>31</sup> The 1948 Sanborn Co. Map depicts the parsonage as a modest-size, one-story, wood-frame dwelling (figure 10). By the early 1970s, the parsonage had fallen into disrepair and bids for rehabilitation were beyond the means of the congregation. As a result, they allowed



*Bethel Baptist Church, before the mid-century renovation, is shown in the background. Source: Robert Robertson.*



*1944 Bethel Church musical cast. Source: Bannock Co. Historical Society.*

<sup>25</sup> “Members of Church Once Held Services in Pool Hall Here,” *Idaho State Journal*, April 7, 1969, 2; and Watkins, 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Watkins, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Watkins, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Watkins, 46 (within unpaginated attachments section).

<sup>30</sup> “Members of Church Once Held Services in Pool Hall Here,” *Idaho State Journal*, April 7, 1969, 2; and Watkins, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Pocatello City Directory, 1938; and Ancestry.com, 1940 U.S. Census.

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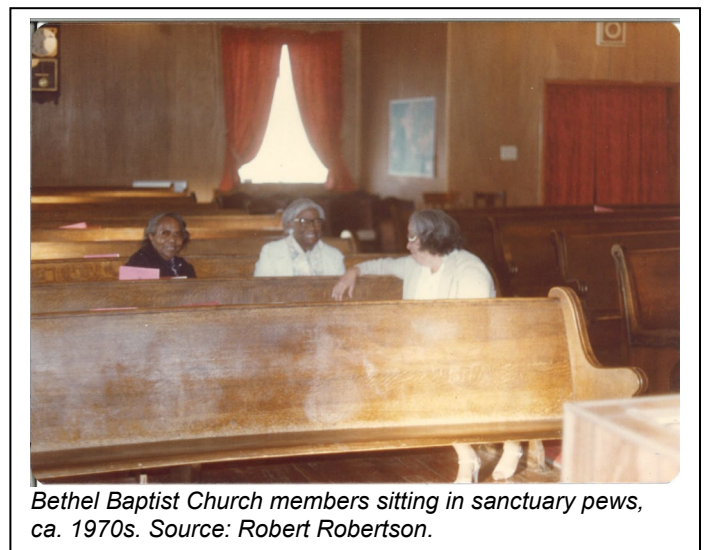
the Pocatello Fire Department to raze the house for training purposes in 1973.<sup>32</sup>

With a thriving congregation and a new parsonage to house the pastor and his family, church leaders turned their attention to improving the church building. Under the direction of Rev. William H. Hicks (1944-1947), planning for the construction of an upper-level auditorium began. The church formed a trustee board that included non-church members, created a building fund, and began hosting fundraisers. One such fundraiser included a musical drama put on by an all-Black cast of 45 that was held on December 4, 1944, at the Pocatello High School (pictured above).<sup>33</sup> The church paid an architect \$75 for a “blue print of the church” in October 1946, but according to Watkins’ church history, the architect’s design was too expensive so it was abandoned.<sup>34</sup> By 1947, the congregation had secured the funds to expand the church upwards and complete the current main floor. Work began in 1947 and during construction, services and all other activities took place in the parsonage. After three years of fundraising, planning, and construction, work was complete by the summer of 1950, and the new cinder block building was dedicated on July 23 that year.<sup>35</sup>



*Bethel Baptist Church members at front of sanctuary, ca. 1950s-60s. Source: Alfreda Vann.*

The post-World War II period, from 1945 to 1970, were years of change and advancement for Black churches across the country, which was often displayed through physical improvements to houses of worship. The Bethel church was no different, and it continued to improve and upgrade its well-used building. Among the improvements were the addition of wood paneling in the sanctuary (1960s); the installation of a new baptismal pool in the floor of the sanctuary (1970s); a new roof, exterior paint, new sod around the church, and a rear fence (1970s-80s); and a new HVAC system, a lowered sanctuary ceiling with new light fixtures, and upgrading of restrooms and the sewer system (1990s).



*Bethel Baptist Church members sitting in sanctuary pews, ca. 1970s. Source: Robert Robertson.*

*Church Involvement in Community Uplift & Civil Rights Activism*

Scholars of and commentators on African American history, culture, and religion have pointed to the church as the most important institution in the Black community. The church has long been at the heart of Black social uplift, education, and activism, and it is significant to the story of the struggle for civil rights in the United

<sup>32</sup> “Former Baptist Home Destroyed for Practice,” June 20, 1973, 7. In Blacks in Pocatello – Publication Unknown (1970-1975). MC 108 JoAnn Ruckman Collection, Folder #1. ISU library.

<sup>33</sup> Watkins, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Watkins, 7 and 45 (within unpaginated attachments section). Watkins cites the 1944-1946 Baptist Young People’s Union (BYPU) minute books as the source of her account of the payment to an architect. She found no other indication of payments nor any building plans from that period.

<sup>35</sup> “Bethel Baptists To Dedicate Church Building,” *Idaho State Journal*, July 14, 1950, 5; and Watkins, 7.

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States.<sup>36</sup> In the northern and western U.S., as elsewhere, Black churches offered a place for the community to gather for activities beyond worship, including educational and social activities and club and political meetings. The history of Bethel Baptist Church and its founders and leaders and their role in the Pocatello community reflect these important historical themes related to uplift and activism that are typical of Black churches throughout the U.S.

This theme of uplift emerged in organizers' earliest efforts to form a Baptist church in Pocatello. Their first public appeal for support in 1920 said they were "looking forward to the uplift of our race spiritually, morally and industrially."<sup>37</sup> Pocatello's Black community numbered around 366 people when Bethel organized in 1920.<sup>38</sup> Their growing number set the stage for social and political activity in the 1920s. They organized clubs along political party lines and, Bethel church leaders welcomed political and civic groups "to use Bethel's facilities for meetings and rallies prior to elections."<sup>39</sup> They also held election-day dinners at the Pocatello Memorial Building on North Johnson Avenue often in cooperation with Allen Chapel AME Church, attracting politicians and Pocatello residents citywide.<sup>40</sup> An early example of political activism included Bethel Baptist's Rev. G. A. McGriff, who spoke at a gathering of Bannock County Black voters organized by the Civic League, "one of the most prominent of the colored organizations in the city." According to a newspaper account, the "meeting promise[d] to be one of the outstanding rallies of the campaign."<sup>41</sup>

Black women were especially politically active during the 1920s. For example, a group of "prominent Negro women" gathered in April 1924 at the AME church to form the Negro Women's Republican Club of Pocatello.<sup>42</sup> They hosted meetings to support political candidates. The same year, a Bethel Baptist church committee of women brought forth concerns about the local police department, claiming the department was not properly enforcing laws nor sufficiently protecting residents from crime.<sup>43</sup>

This early activism laid a foundation for continued activism throughout the 20th century. Bethel's history is replete with individuals who served the greater Pocatello community through activism and outreach, and several of them are highlighted below and are worthy of additional study:

- **Rev. A. R. Keller** served at Bethel church from 1921 through at least 1925. During this time, he roomed at 664 North 4th Avenue about two blocks northwest of the church and was apparently quite active in the community, particularly when it came to political activities and civil rights advocacy. Prior to his arrival at Bethel, Rev. Keller had been in California, where a San Bernardino County newspaper article referred to him as a "traveling evangelist for the [Baptist] denomination."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Scholars and commentators too numerous to list include John Hope Franklin, Nell Irvin Painter, Quintard Taylor, Eric Foner, David Blight, etc. For additional context on Black churches, see Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); and Carroll Van West, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee, 1850-1970," (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> "A Five Thousand Dollar Rally," *Pocatello Tribune*, September 4, 1920, 6.

<sup>38</sup> The Bethel Baptist Church filed articles of incorporation with the Idaho Secretary of State in December 1925.

<sup>39</sup> Watkins, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Watkins, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Watkins, 3, quoting "Civic League Rally Friday -Colored Voters to Attend Entertainment and Celebration," *Pocatello Tribune*, October 19, 1926, n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Shelley Hale, "Pocatello's Black Relations," unpublished manuscript, 1983, 10. [Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, Pocatello]

<sup>43</sup> Hale, 11, citing *The Pocatello Tribune*, April 5, 1924.

<sup>44</sup> Watkins, 3; and "Mrs. Rowena Anderson," [obituary], San Bernardino County Sun, July 7, 1920.

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- **Rev. Elijah Harris** and his wife **Listoria (Smith) Harris** were founding members of Bethel Baptist Church and prominent community members (see figure 15). In addition to their long association with Bethel, they were instrumental in establishing Pocatello's Corinth Baptist Church at 455 North 4th Avenue in 1945. Elijah served as pastor there well into the late 1970s. A native of Alabama, Elijah came to Pocatello by 1917 by way of St. Louis to work for the Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad.<sup>45</sup> After serving in the U.S. Army in World War I, he returned to Pocatello. In 1921, he married Listoria E. Smith (1900-1993), a native of Texas who had only recently arrived in Pocatello with her parents. For the next several years, Elijah and Listoria rented residences at two different locations in The Triangle while Elijah worked as a janitor at OSL and the Telephone Company.<sup>46</sup> By 1929 the couple bought their own home at 615 North 5th Avenue (nonextant), where they lived for decades. Their home was "an informal community center for Black Pocatellans." The Harris family owned the only car in the neighborhood and put it into service for their neighbors and the church as needed. As an active community leader, Listoria "dedicated her life to advancing, assisting, and protecting Black people amid a segregated discriminatory city." According to the Harris' daughter, Fannie Lee Lowe, Listoria, knew how to get Black people connected to what they needed at any given time. Whether it be related to jobs, food, a place to rent, legal assistance, or occasionally help from well-positioned white people, she facilitated when discrimination made access to services difficult.<sup>47</sup>
- **Rev. Allan A. Banks, Sr.**, (pictured at right) who served as Bethel pastor from 1927 to 1929, was a leader on the National Baptist Evangelical Board and took his religious and social messages of uplift well beyond his home church in Pocatello.<sup>48</sup> As part of his role on the national board, he traveled within Idaho and the surrounding states giving sermons and helping establish missions, a role he maintained well into the mid-century. Although much is yet to be documented about Rev. Banks' life and his relative short time associated with Bethel Baptist, his son Allan A. Banks, Jr., a graduate of Pocatello High School, carried on his father's passion and became a national leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Rev. Dr. Banks, Jr. served as pastor of Detroit's Second Baptist Church from 1947 to 1977. Perhaps recalling his Pocatello upbringing, he was devoted to the civil rights struggle, and in 1964 was appointed as one of the original members of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. He also served as president of the Metropolitan Detroit Council of Churches and as a board member of the National Council of Churches.<sup>49</sup>
- In the mid- and late-1930s, Bethel Baptist church supported a small congregation in Idaho Falls – the Second Baptist Church. Without a regular pastor, Bethel's **Rev. Daniel W. Burt** would drive the 50 miles north from Pocatello to minister to them, and several of Bethel's members would join the trip and amplify their fellowship services. Former Bethel pastor **Rev. Allan Banks, Sr.**, also conducted services and served as their



<sup>45</sup> Elijah J. Harris, oral history interview.

<sup>46</sup> Pocatello City Directories, 1921-1929.

<sup>47</sup> "African American Civil Rights in Idaho" MPD, E-10-11.

<sup>48</sup> "Would Save a Million Souls," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, August 10, 1928, 5.

<sup>49</sup> "Buzz of the Burg," *Idaho State Journal*, December 29, 1968, 4; and Boston-Edison Historic District (Detroit, MI) website:

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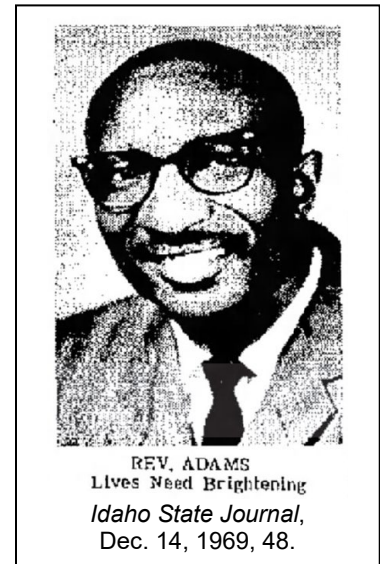
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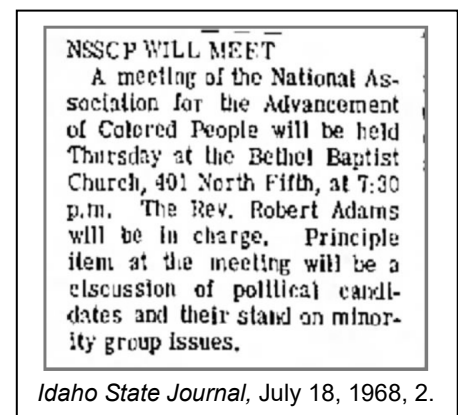
pastor in 1938.<sup>50</sup> This Idaho Falls church no longer exists, but its connections with Bethel and Pocatello's Black community are worthy of further study.

- **Rev. Robert D. Adams** (pictured at right) came to Pocatello from Ogden, Utah, where he had served as pastor for St. John Baptist Church. Rev. Adams was active in Pocatello civil rights issues during his pastorate at Bethel Baptist from 1966 to 1970. He served as president of the local chapter of the NAACP, was a member of the Pocatello Civil Rights Committee, and participated in local equal employment and housing discrimination initiatives. As NAACP president, he hosted meetings at Bethel Baptist.<sup>51</sup> He worked to integrate job sites, including "threatening Pocatello's Safeway store with a boycott until it hired a Black person."<sup>52</sup> One source called Rev. Adams a "one-man employment agency," and that "through his resourcefulness and connections, Adams has placed many Pocatello Negroes into jobs."<sup>53</sup>



Rev. Adams' work on employment issues was particularly meaningful to him. An account in the *Idaho State Journal* said, "His personal philosophy is expressed in the Gospel of St. James, 'Man has a responsibility to God.' He feels that there is dignity in constructive work, and that God's call is not to an occupation but to His service."<sup>54</sup> He also started a "traditional free Christmas dinner for the needy" that was held in the basement of Bethel Baptist Church on Christmas day.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated during Rev. Adams' tenure at Bethel Baptist Church. Following the assassination, the Pocatello community held two inter-faith services – one was at St. Andrew's Catholic Church and the other was at the First Methodist Church and was sponsored by Bethel Baptist. Approximately 175 attended the latter service, and an offering was requested to raise funds to send Rev. Adams to Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta.<sup>55</sup>



- In October 1973, Pocatello's Superintendent of Schools, Rulon M. Ellis, appointed Bethel's **Rev. Shadrach J. Thomas** to serve as a "race relations consultant" to the Pocatello High School. This followed a period of tensions at the school involving racial slurs, and Rev. Thomas was hired to "work to improve communication among minority students, parents, white students, the faculty and administration."<sup>56</sup> Within two months, he reported that "the whole program is working exceedingly well." Not only did he counsel Black students, but also white and Mexican American students. Extra-curricular

<sup>50</sup> "Second Baptist Church," *The Post-Register (Idaho Falls)*, September 18, 1936, 2; and "Second Baptist Church Building Is Moved," *The Post-Register*, September 29, 1937, 3; and "Second Baptist Church," *The Post-Register*, February 11, 1938, 2; and "Second Baptist Church," *The Post-Register*, March 4, 1938, 14; and Watkins, 43 (within unpaginated attachments section).

<sup>51</sup> "NSSCP [sic] Will Meet," *Idaho State Journal*, July 18, 1968, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Watkins, 10; and "African American Civil Rights in Idaho" MPD, E-44; and "NAACP Sets Talk Tuesday With Safeway," *Idaho Statesman*, October 19, 1968, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Publication Unknown, Blacks in Pocatello (1970-April 1975), Folder No. 1, JoAnn Ruckman Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, Pocatello.

<sup>54</sup> "God's Call is to His Service Says Bethel Baptist Minister," *Idaho State Journal*, December 14, 1969, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Blacks in Boise – Intermountain Observer (1967-1973), p. 3. Folder No. 4, JoAnn Ruckman Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, Pocatello.

<sup>56</sup> "Pocatello High Hires 'Race Relations' Aide," *Idaho State Journal*, October 9, 1973, 2; and Mike McPeck, "School District Deplores 'Racial Slurs,'" *Idaho State Journal*, October 9, 1973, 2.



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student groups had organized, including the Afro-American Club and the Mexican-American Club. Units covering more diverse topics were added to the history and government classes, and a “Black Day” recognizing the day Martin Luther King, Jr., died was planned.<sup>57</sup> Rev. Thomas resigned his post as pastor in April 1974, but continued in his role with the school district while pursuing a degree in Education Administration at Idaho State University.<sup>58</sup>

- In 1964, a 19-year-old Dorothy Johnson (1945-2017), whose family had lived in Pocatello since the early 1930s and were longtime members and leaders of the Bethel Baptist Church, represented Idaho as Miss Idaho in the Miss USA pageant. Although she was not the pageant’s first African American contestant, she was the first Black semifinalist.<sup>59</sup> Her parents, Pompie and Nellie Johnson, were originally from Georgia and worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. Dorothy earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Idaho State University and lived with her husband Robert LeVels and their family in California, where she worked for more than 40 years as a teacher.
- Bethel Baptist hosted a state-licensed daycare center operated by a community board in the basement of the church in the late 1970s.<sup>60</sup>



There are many more individuals whose contributions to the community are found in the stories of the Bethel Baptist Church, and they are worthy of documentation. Collectively, they demonstrate how the church served as a safe haven and beacon for African Americans, bringing together individuals committed to the advancement and equality of the greater Pocatello community over many decades.

In summary, these stories that are documented through newspaper accounts, Watkins’ church history, photographs, and personal accounts reflect the importance of the Bethel Baptist Church in the greater story of uplift and civil rights activism within Idaho’s African American community. Thus, the building meets the registration requirements for National Register nomination as part of the Multiple Property Listing *African American Civil Rights in Idaho* under Criterion A in the areas of *Social History*, *Politics/Government*, and *Ethnic Heritage*. It also meets Criteria Consideration A for religious properties because its primary significance is derived not from its religious history but rather from its associations with the history of Pocatello’s Black community.

<sup>57</sup> “Black Requests are Fulfilled,” *Idaho State Journal*, December 21, 1973, 40.

<sup>58</sup> “Minister Resigns,” *Idaho State Journal*, April 19, 1974, 29.

<sup>59</sup> “Miss Idaho Not Heartbroken; was ‘Miss Universe’ Finalist,” *Jet Magazine*, August 13, 1964, 60-61. Robert Johnson, Dorothy Johnson (1945-). BlackPast.org (September 5, 2008). Accessed online March 23, 2021. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/johnson-dorothy-1945/>

<sup>60</sup> Watkins, 13.

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"Second Baptist Church," September 18, 1936, 2.

"Second Baptist Church Building Is Moved," September 29, 1937, 3.

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- "Pocatello," August 10, 1920, 4.
- "Articles of Incorporation," December 19, 1925, 5.
- "Would Save a Million Souls," August 10, 1928, 5.
- "NAACP Sets Talk Tuesday With Safeway," *Idaho Statesman*, October 19, 1968, 15.

**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: Idaho State Historical Society (SHPO)

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Bethel Baptist Church  
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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>42.868761</u>	<u>-112.446471</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the church property is shown in the Bannock County Parcel Map in Figure 3. Pocatello Townsite, Block 202, Lots 9 and 10. Parcel No. RPRPPOC183000.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination boundary includes the parcel of land that is historically associated with Bethel Missionary Baptist Church.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sarah J. Martin & Kerry L. Davis, architectural historians, date December 2020  
with contributions from Dan Everhart & Emily Fritchman  
organization SJM Cultural Resource Services telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 3901 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NE #202 email sarahmartincrs@gmail.com  
city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98105

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Figure 1: Regional Location Map**
- **Figure 2: Local Location / USGS Map**
- **Figure 3: Tax Lot / Parcel Map**
- **Figure 4: Close-in Aerial Image**
- **Figure 5: Site Plan**
- **Figure 6: Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Figures 7 & 8: Photo Location Maps**
- **Figures 9 & 10: Sanborn Maps**
- **Figure 11: Historic Aerial Image, Pocatello**
- **Figure 12: Historic Aerial Image, East Side**
- **Figure 13: Map of Triangle Neighborhood**
- **Figure 14: 1969 newspaper image of Bethel Baptist Church**
- **Figure 15: 1979 newspaper clipping**

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, 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:** Bethel Baptist Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Pocatello  
**County:** Bannock **State:** Idaho  
**Photographer:** Dan Everhart / Emily Fritchman  
**Date Photographed:** Feb. 17 & 19, 2020

*All digital images labeled as follows: ID\_BannockCounty\_BethelBaptistChurch\_000#.tif*

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

Photo	#1	View west toward church, showing the setting along N 5th Ave. Camera facing west.
Photo	#2	View of church, showing primary and side elevations. Camera facing west.
Photo	#3	View of church, showing primary and side elevations. Camera facing south.
Photo	#4	View of church, showing northwest side elevation. Camera facing south.
Photo	#5	View of church, showing northwest side elevation. Camera facing east.
Photo	#6	View of church, showing rear elevation. Camera facing northeast.
Photo	#7	View of property from beyond the rear fence line. Camera facing northeast.
Photo	#8	View of church, showing rear and side elevation. Camera facing north.
Photo	#9	View of church, showing southeast side elevation and sidewalk along E Fremont St. Camera facing northwest.
Photo	#10	View of church, showing exterior stairs to primary entrance at the east corner of the building. Camera facing west.
Photo	#11	Interior view, showing area inside primary entrance at the east corner of the building. Camera facing northwest.
Photo	#12	Interior view, showing the church sanctuary. Camera facing west.
Photo	#13	Interior view, showing the in-floor baptismal near the south wall of the sanctuary. Camera facing south.
Photo	#14	Interior view, showing the church sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.
Photo	#15	Interior view from near the building's primary entrance, showing the staircase to the basement. Camera facing southwest.
Photo	#16	Interior view, showing basement fellowship hall. Camera facing northeast.
Photo	#17	Interior view, showing basement fellowship hall facing kitchen. Camera facing southwest.
Photo	#18	Interior view, showing basement corridor. Camera facing southeast.
Photo	#19	Interior view, showing rear entrance to main level. Camera facing west.

**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 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.).

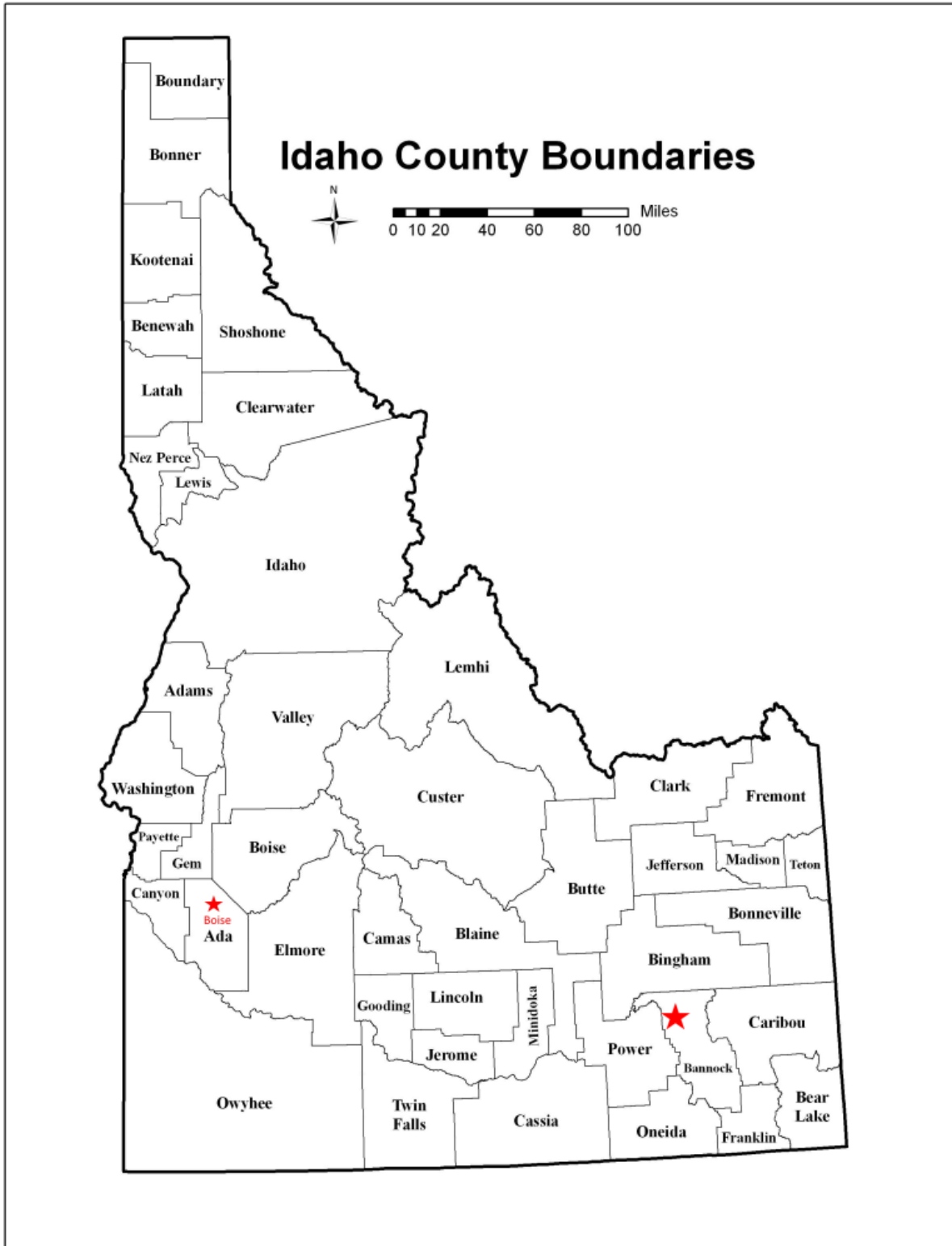
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC

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**Figure 1. Regional Location Map.**

Map of State of Idaho showing counties, state capital, and the location of the Bethel Baptist Church in Bannock County.

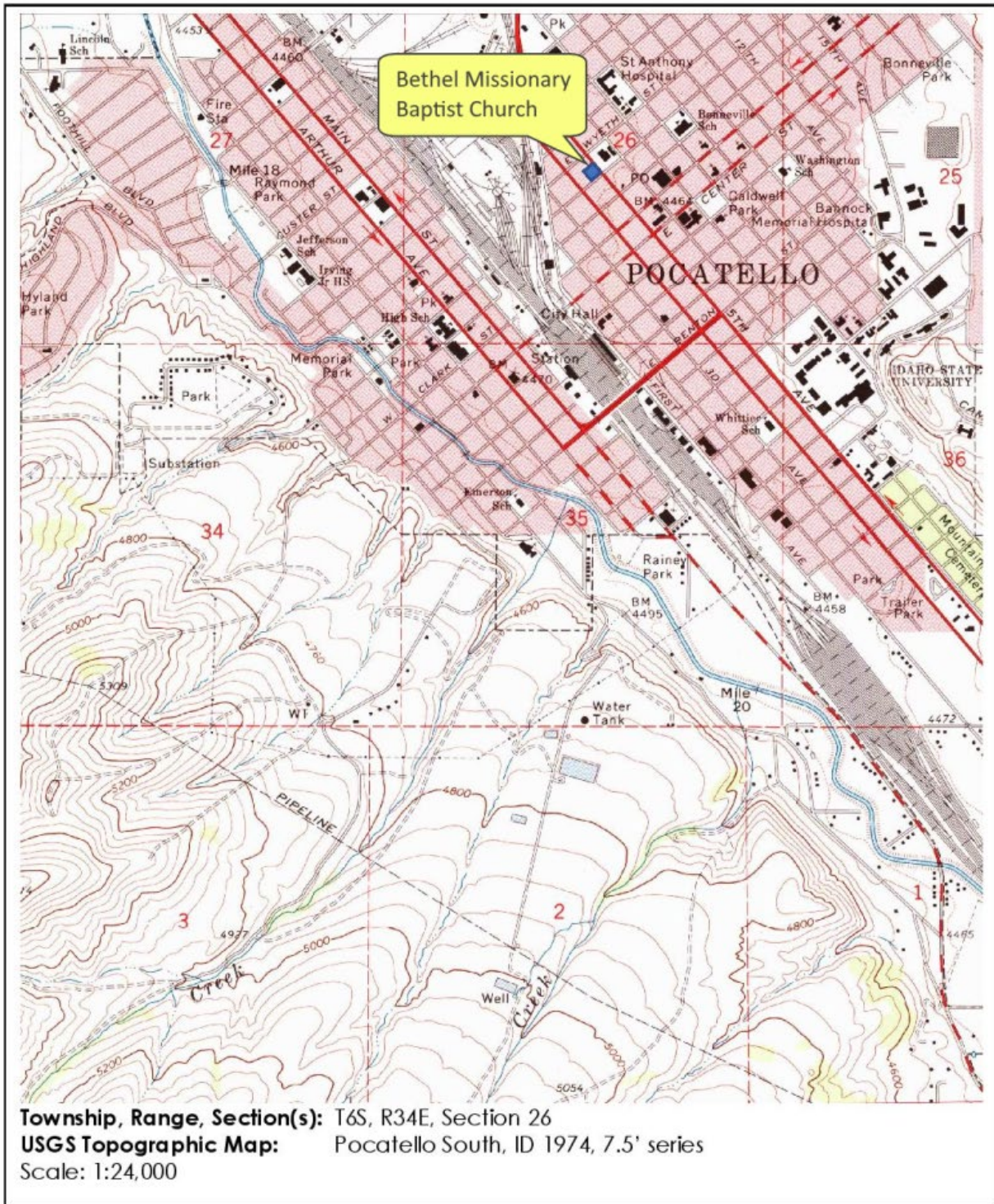


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**Figure 2. USGS Quadrangle Map**

Pocatello South, Idaho Quadrangle, 2020, 7.5-minute series, Scale: 1:24,000 (partial image)





Bethel Baptist Church

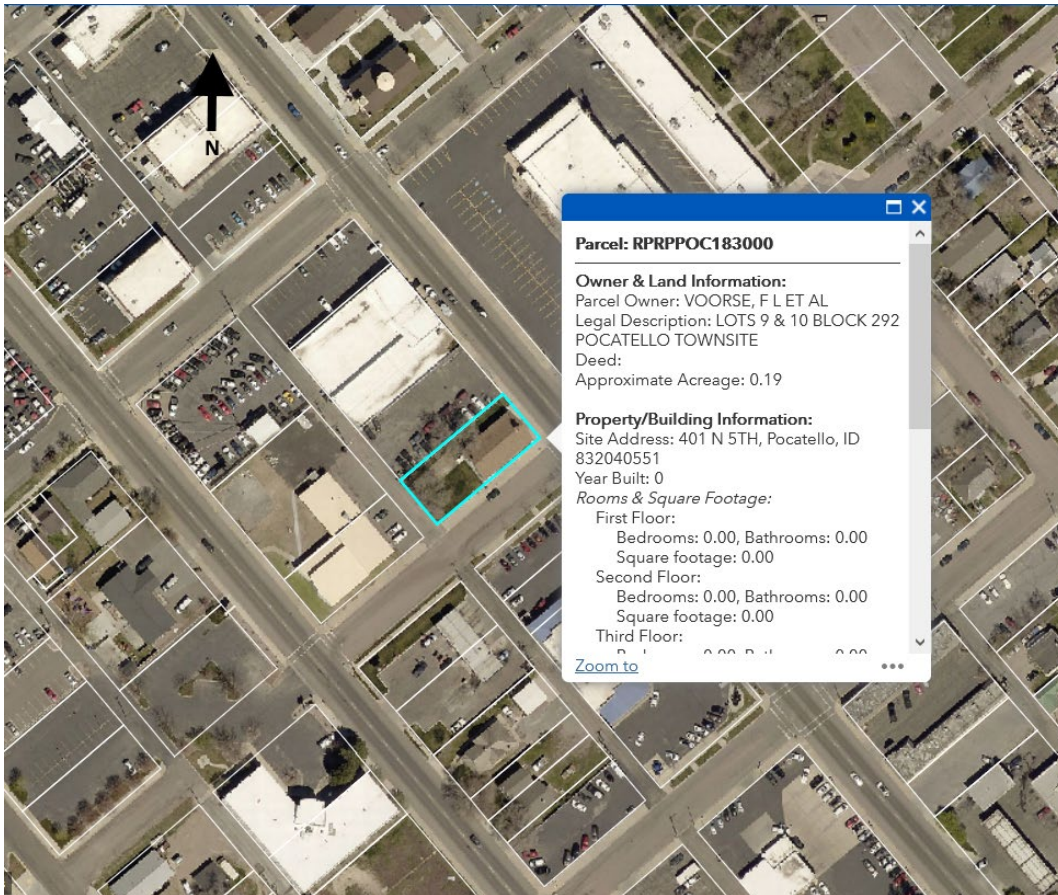
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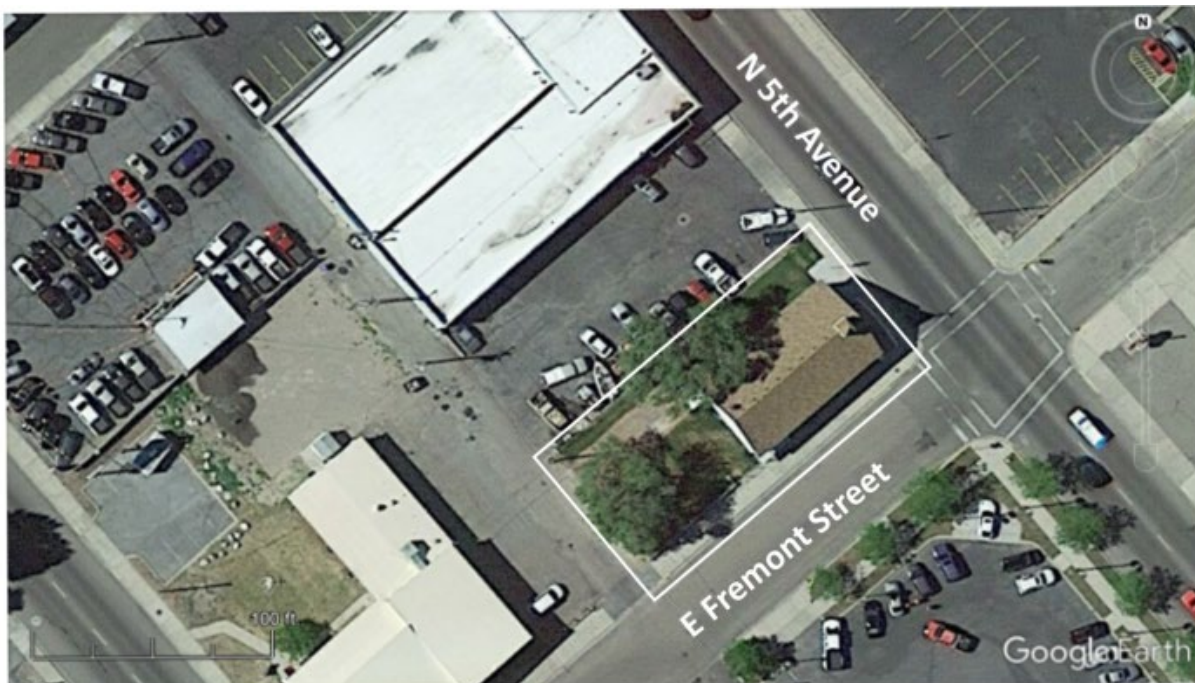
County and State

**Figure 3. Bannock County Parcel Map**

Parcel: RPRPPOC183000. Lots 9 & 10, Block 292, Pocatello Townsite. Map courtesy of Bannock County.



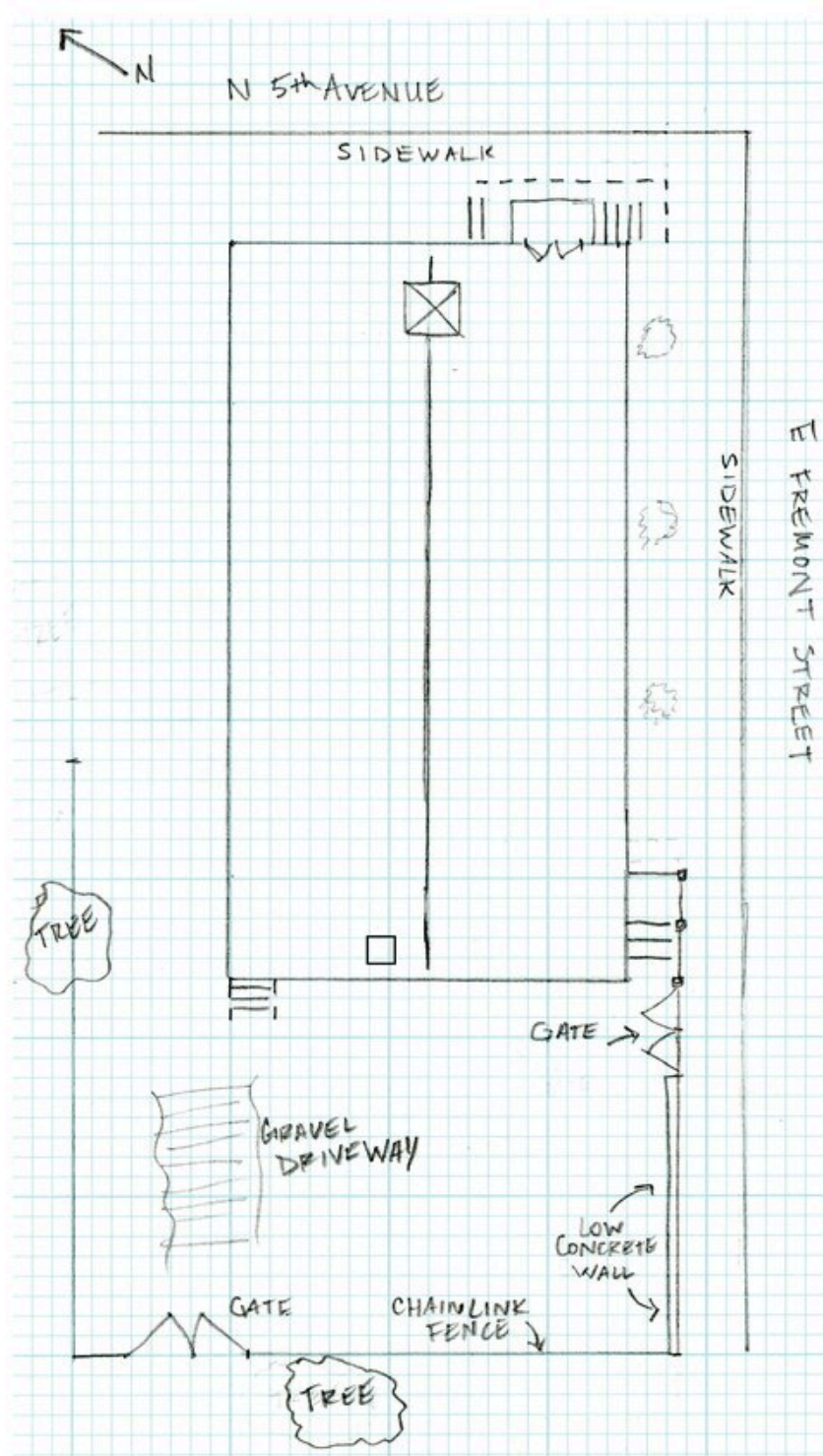
**Figure 4. Boundary Map.** Close-in aerial image. Google Earth, 2020.



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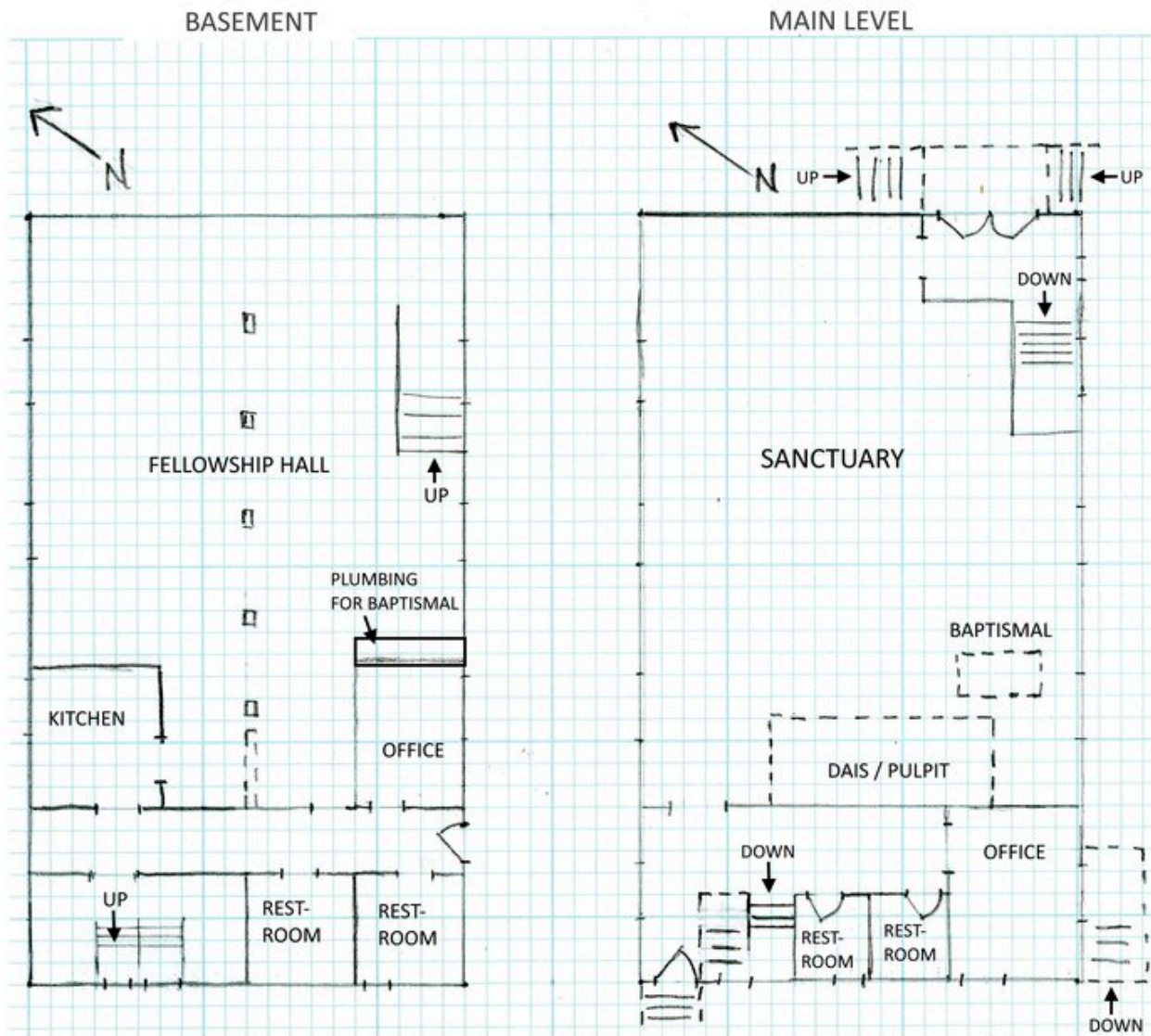
**Figure 5.** Site Plan (not to scale)



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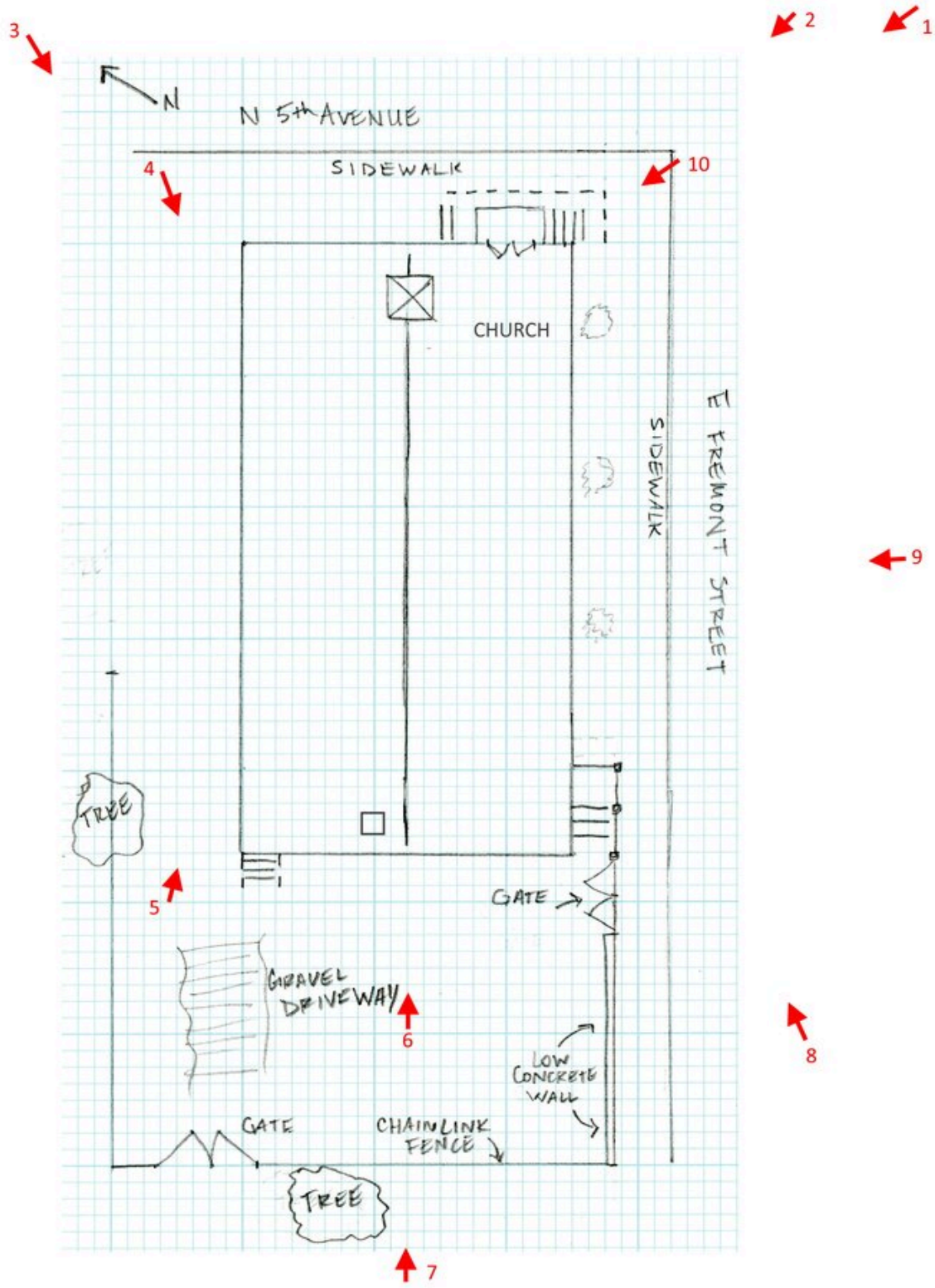
**Figure 6.** Sketch Plans (not to scale)



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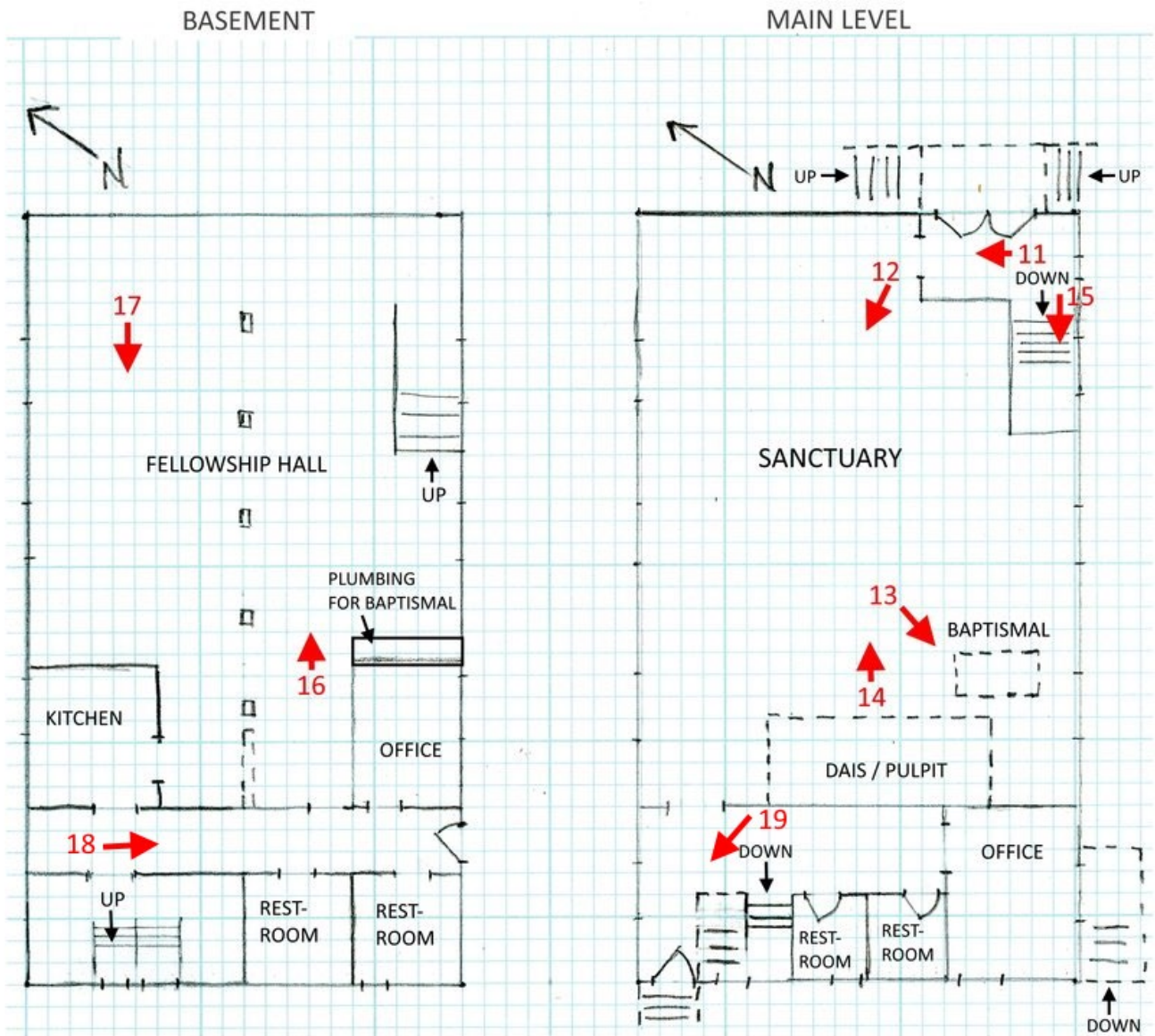
Figure 7. Photo Location Map – Exterior photos 1 through 10.



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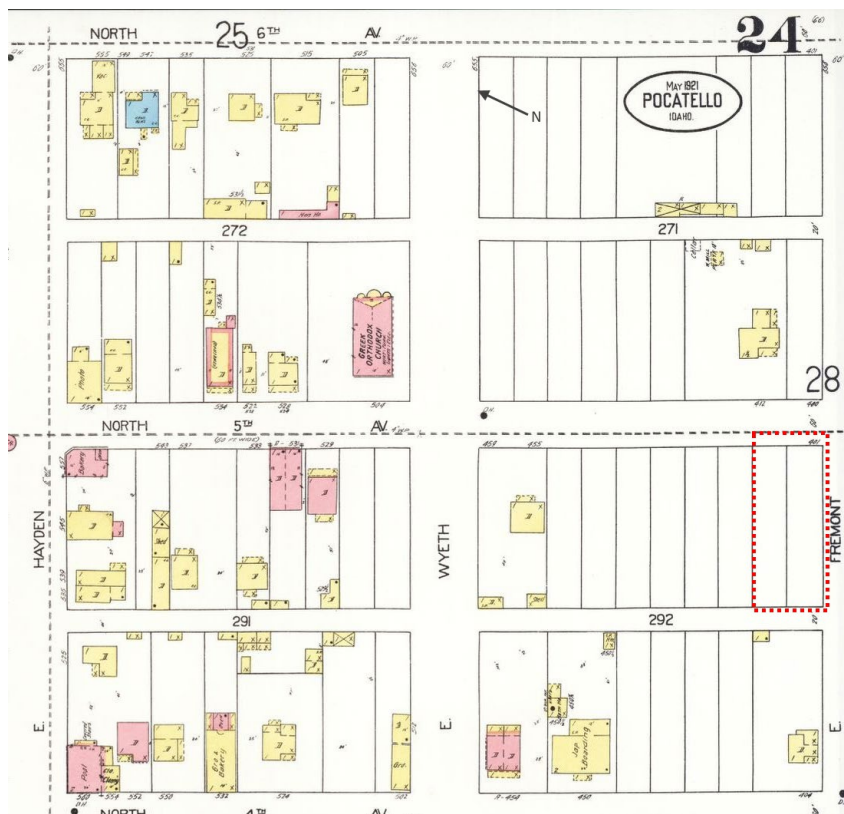
Figure 8. Photo Location Map – Interior photos 11 through 19.



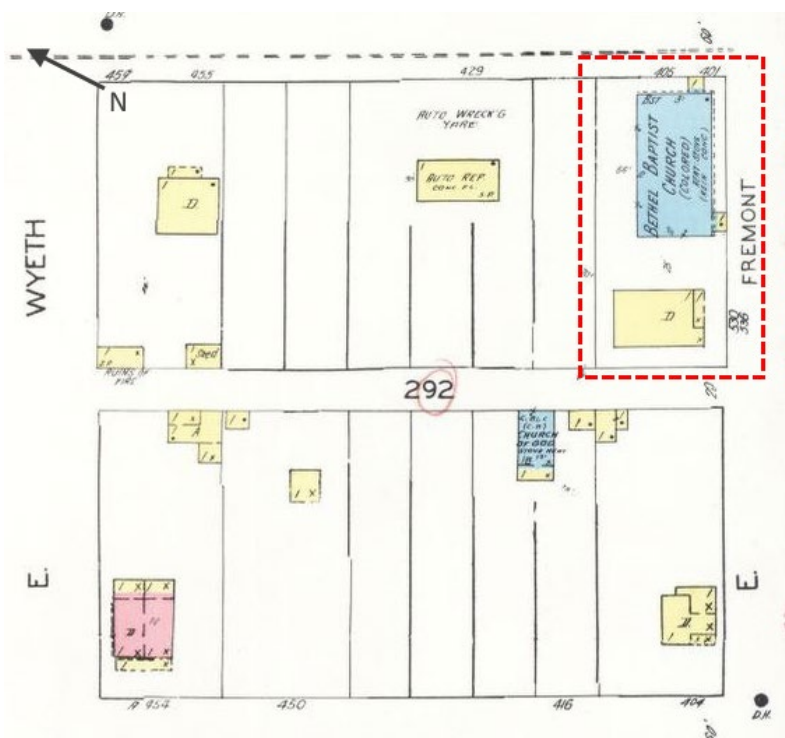
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**Figure 9.** Sanborn Co. Fire Insurance Map, 1921, Map 24, Pocatello, Idaho. The red dotted-line box notes where the church would be built.



**Figure 10.** Sanborn Co. Fire Insurance Map, 1948, Map 24, Pocatello, Idaho. Note the parsonage behind the church.



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**Figure 11.** Aerial photograph of Pocatello, ca. 1930. The photo pre-dates the completion of the parsonage behind the church, which was completed around 1937. Source: Idaho Transportation Department.



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**Figure 12.** The East Side, Pocatello, undated. Source: Bannock County Historical Museum collection.

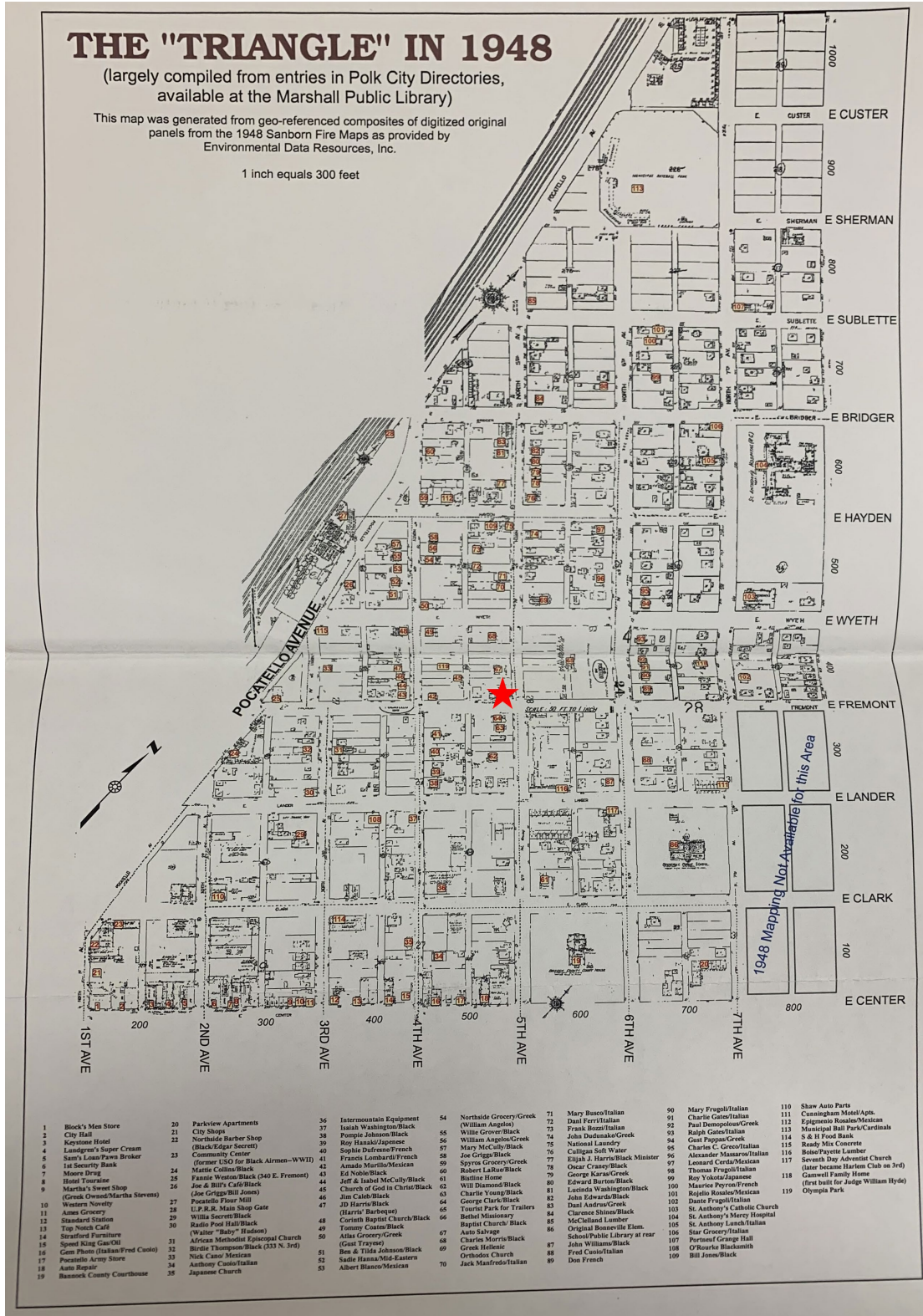




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**Figure 13.** The Triangle neighborhood of Pocatello, 1948. Bethel church is noted by the red star. Source: Idaho Purce, Mary Sanders Watkins, and Kevin R. Marsh, *The Triangle: A Slice of America*, (Pocatello, ID: City of Pocatello, Planning & Development Services, 2005), n.p.



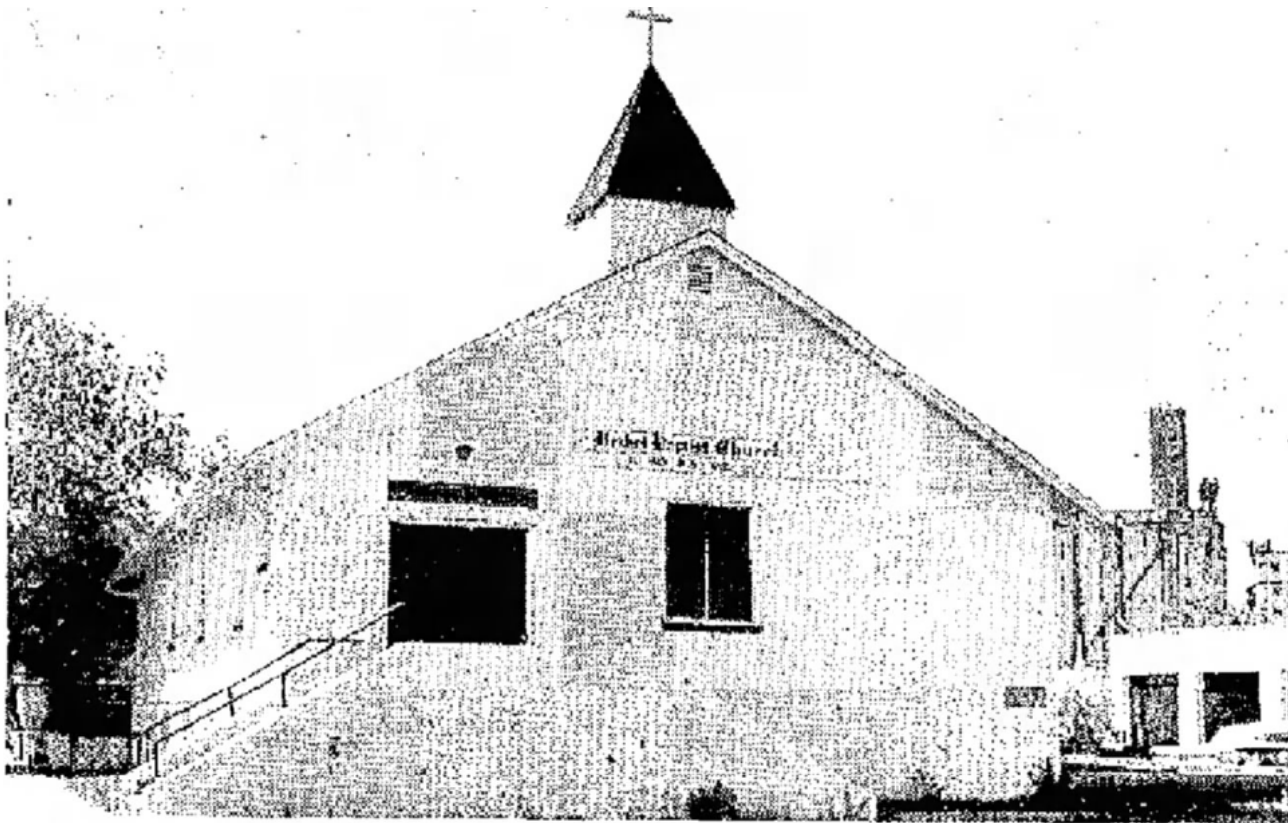
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**Figure 14.** Bethel Baptist Church, 1969. Source: *Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello, ID), Dec. 14, 1969, p. 48.



# BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

401 North Fifth

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Figure 15. Source: *Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello, ID), May 21, 1979.



## NAACP Pla Award Dinn For Pioneer

Pocatello's chapter of the Association for the Advance Colored People (NAACP) will "Pioneer Day" awards banquet to honor older black Pocatello.

According to Don Kelly, president, the dinner will be the Hilton Inn beginning at 7 Kelly said around 20 older blacks came to Pocatello during the 1900-1940 will be presented with certificates of recognition.

The charge per person will and the meal will include beef, potatoes, zucchini, tosse and apple pie. A cocktail will precede the dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Entertainment will be provided by the Kirkland dancers and M. Gibson, a Pocatello pianist and dancer.

Guest speakers will be Les Pocatello's first black mayor working for the state in Boise. Rev. Wendell Wallace of Portland will speak on "Black ing" and Wallace on "Trek Across Oregon Trail."

Kelly said this is the first year a banquet has been held, and that for the event was the brain Mary Watkins, NAACP vice president and banquet program director.

"We wanted to honor those who seem to have been forgotten," Kelly said.

Those planning to attend the banquet should contact Kelly at 234 Lela Liggins at 233-2562 as soon as possible.

REMEMBERING — Pioneer Pocatellans (from left to right) Mrs. E. J. Harris, the Rev. Elijah J. Harris, and Mrs. Lillian Burton (Mrs. Harris' cousin) look over scrapbooks accumulated during their combined 182 years of residence in Pocatello. Mrs. Harris

came here in 1920, her husband in 1917, and Mrs. Burton in 1918. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) will host a banquet Saturday to honor pioneer blacks. See story. (Journal Photo by Tom Shanahan)

- IDAHO STATE JOURNAL

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**Photo 1.** View west toward church, showing the immediate setting along N 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Camera facing west.



**Photo 2.** View of church, showing primary and side elevations. Camera facing west.



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**Photo 3.** View of church, showing primary and side elevations. Camera facing south.



**Photo 4.** View of church, showing northwest side elevation. Camera facing south.



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**Photo 5.** View of church, showing northwest side elevation. Camera facing east.



**Photo 6.** View of church, showing rear elevation. Camera facing northeast.



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**Photo 7.** View of property from beyond the rear fence line. Camera facing northeast.



**Photo 8.** View of church, showing rear and side elevation. Camera facing north.



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**Photo 9.** View of church, showing southeast side elevation and sidewalk along E Fremont Street. Camera facing northwest.



**Photo 10.** View of church, showing exterior stairs to primary entrance at the east corner of the building. Camera facing west.





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**Photo 11.** Interior view, showing area inside primary entrance at the east corner of the building. Camera facing northwest.



**Photo 12.** Interior view, showing the church sanctuary. Camera facing west.



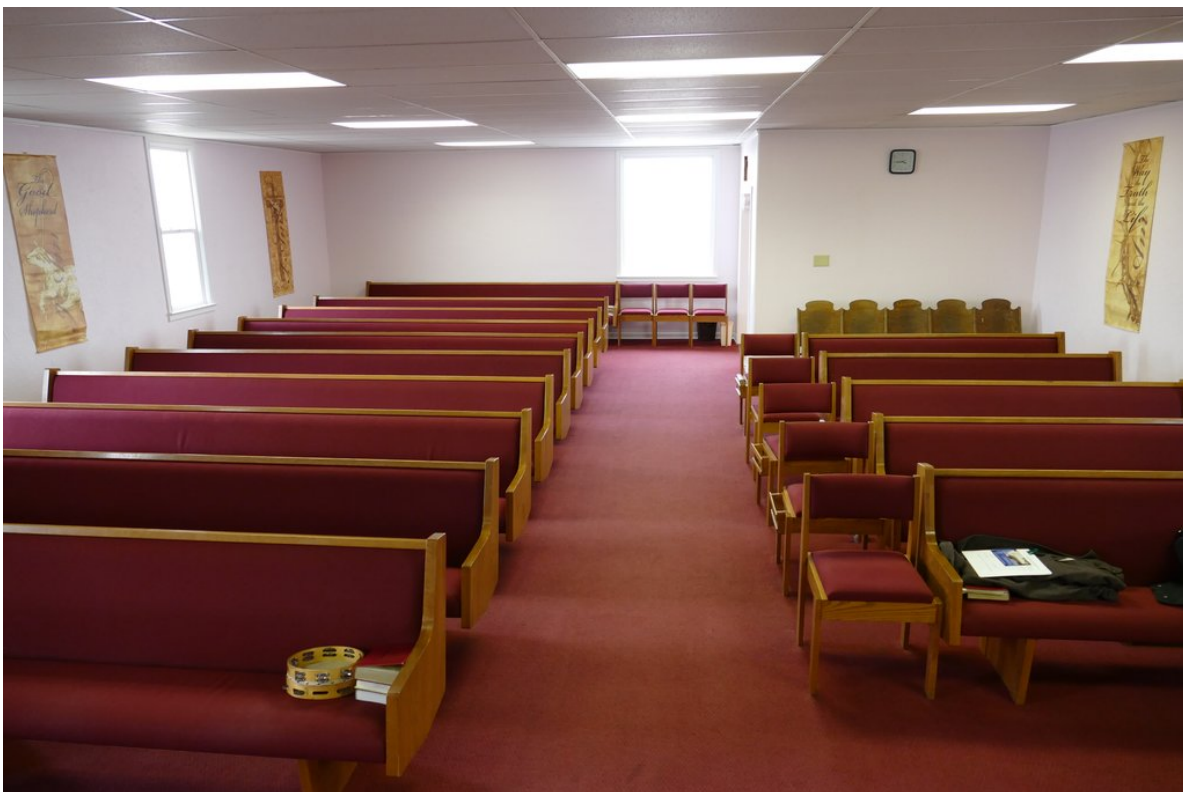
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**Photo 13.** Interior view, showing the in-floor baptismal near the south wall of the sanctuary. Camera facing south.



**Photo 14.** Interior view, showing the church sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.



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**Photo 15.** Interior view from near the building's primary entrance, showing the staircase to the basement. Camera facing southwest.



**Photo 16.** Interior view, showing basement fellowship hall space. Camera facing northeast.



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**Photo 17.** Interior view, showing basement fellowship hall facing kitchen. Camera facing southwest.



**Photo 18.** Interior view, showing basement corridor. Camera facing southeast.



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**Photo 19.** Interior view, showing rear entrance to main level. Camera facing west.

