

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: New Bethel Baptist Church

Other names/site number: Orient Theater, Oriole Theater

Name of related multiple property listing:

The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 8430 Linwood Street

City or town: Detroit State: Michigan County: Wayne

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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      X B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

 <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Michigan SHPO</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<b>Deputy SHPO</b> <b>Date</b> <u>December 22, 2020</u>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b> _____ <b>Date</b> _____</p> <hr/> <p><b>Title :</b> _____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b> _____</p>	

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

James Gabbert  
Signature of the Keeper

2/8/2021  
Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater

RELIGION: Religious Facility

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Stucco

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

New Bethel Baptist Church was constructed in 1927 as the Orient Theater (shortly thereafter renamed the Oriole Theater). It is located at 8430 Linwood Street, at the southeast corner of Linwood and Philadelphia Streets in the city of Detroit, Michigan. The building consists of two volumes. On the west side, adjacent to Linwood Street, is a two-story former commercial block with a taller section on the north side adjacent to Philadelphia Street surmounted by a bell tower and spire. East of that is a four-story volume that contains the theater and sanctuary with the taller fly loft at the south elevation. The front elevation of the building faces north toward Philadelphia Street and centers on four sets of double stained wood-paneled doors sheltered under a shallow arched canopy with three stained glass windows above, while horizontal ribbon windows line the west elevation at the transition between floors. The interior is dominated by the two-story sanctuary, surrounded by a lobby and support spaces. The building was extensively remodeled in 1963 and thereafter embodied the vocabulary of the Modern Movement. The installation of synthetic stucco in 2007 has diminished the historic integrity of the property by obscuring or removing the significant mid-century historic materials and character-defining features. The interior, however, is largely intact. Common interior spaces retain their relationships and significant spaces, especially the sanctuary, retain their essential historic materials. The property, therefore, possess historic integrity and continues to convey its historic

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significance related to the civil rights movement and Reverend C. L. Franklin in Detroit, Michigan, between 1963 and 1969.

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## **Narrative Description**

### *Site*

New Bethel Baptist Church is located at 8430 Linwood Street, at the southeast corner of Linwood and Philadelphia Streets in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. Linwood Street divides the Wildemere Park and LaSalle Gardens neighborhoods. This area of Detroit, north of the Grand Boulevard and west of Woodward Avenue, was annexed as part of the early twentieth century expansion of Detroit. The land on which this property sits was annexed in 1915. To the east is the Lodge Freeway (M-10) and Detroit's New Center area, while to the west is one of the city's major radial streets, Grand River Avenue, and beyond that, the Jeffries Freeway (I-96).

New Bethel Baptist Church is within the Twelfth Street neighborhood, one of the first of Detroit's neighborhoods to truly open to middle-class Blacks in the post-World War II era. Several blocks south on Linwood Street is the Shrine of the Black Madonna, where Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr. led the militant Black Nationalist movement. Two blocks west of the Shrine of the Black Madonna is the two-flat house at 3201 Virginia Park Street where Rosa Parks moved in 1961 and from which she would base many of her civil rights-related activities in the following decades. To the south is the Northwest Goldberg neighborhood, where a number of prominent Black businesses, including Motown Records, relocated in the 1950s and 1960s as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley were razed for urban renewal. Southwest is one of the original Black neighborhoods of the city, the Old West Side, settled by middle-class Blacks in the 1920s.

The neighborhood is arranged in a typical city grid pattern (in this area of the city, the grid is angled off true north, such that north-south streets actually angle slightly northwest-southeast, while east-west blocks angle slightly northeast-southwest. For simplicity of description, cardinal directions are used throughout this nomination). The blocks are rectangular and longer east to west than north to south. While residential lots are oriented toward the east-west cross streets, the commercial corridor along Linwood Street has commercial blocks separated from the residential lots by an alley. The lots on the commercial blocks are oriented toward Linwood Street. There are a few small-scale apartment buildings in the neighborhood. In this area, east of Linwood Street is still relatively densely packed with houses, while west of Linwood Street there are more vacant lots due to demolitions. Linwood Street is a major north-south commercial corridor on the west side of the street, while farther north it expands to both sides of the street. New Bethel Baptist Church is one of the few buildings left on the east side of the street north of West Grand Boulevard.

The buildings in the neighborhood were largely constructed in the 1910s and 1920s, with some later additions scattered throughout. In the adjoining neighborhoods, these are largely one- and two-family homes with some apartment buildings. Commercial and institutional buildings along

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the corridor are mostly one to two story brick buildings with some larger ones such as the Shrine of the Black Madonna several blocks south. The topography of the area is relatively flat. Vegetation includes residential lawns, mown vacant lots, and street trees and domestic plants.

### *Construction History*

New Bethel Baptist Church was built in 1926-1927 as the Orient Theater.<sup>1</sup> Built for the Le-Win Development Company, it was designed by George D. Mason (1856-1948), termed by Detroit historian Clarence M. Burton as “the dean of Detroit architects.” A native of Syracuse, NY, Mason moved with his family to Detroit in 1870 and studied under Henry T. Brush. Mason was partnered with Zachariah Rice from 1878 to 1898, during which time he hired a young Albert Kahn as an apprentice. During his time at Mason and Rice, and afterwards, when he formed his own firm, George D. Mason and Company, Mason was one of Detroit’s most prolific and well-known architects, including the Detroit Masonic Temple, (second) Detroit Opera House, the Belle Isle Aquarium (with Kahn), the Charles T. Fisher house, and the Detroit Yacht Club. His other churches include First Presbyterian Church (with Rice), Central Woodward Christian Church, and Trinity United Methodist Church in Highland Park. Mason also designed Pilgrim Congregational Church, several blocks south of the theater, in 1925; this would become Shrine of the Black Madonna. The contractor was H. G. Christman Company, founded in 1894 in South Bend, Indiana. The company opened a branch office in Detroit in 1911, and at the same time as they were building the Orient Theater, they were directing the construction of two Detroit landmarks, the Masonic Temple and the Fisher Building.

The Orient Theater opened on March 21, 1927, with crowds stretching around the block before the doors opened. The *Detroit Free Press* noted that “The sumptuousness of its appointments and the splendor of its colors—Oriental in their brilliance and luster—were at once apparent.” The opening week films included Dorothy Devore in “Money to Burn” and Clara Bow in “It.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to films, the theater also hosted live entertainment, conventions and meetings, and Jewish community events such as high holy day services and an emergency relief benefit during the Depression. Shortly after it opened, radio station WJR began broadcasting “an hour’s frolic” from the theater, including a stage presentation and organ music.<sup>3</sup>

The Orient had only been open for a few months when it was forced to change its name because it violated the trademark of another theater being built in Detroit, the Oriental Theater on Adams.<sup>4</sup> The Orient then changed its name to the Oriole Theater. A historic photograph from around this time depicts the main theater block as a large rectangular volume of brick with stone vertical and horizontal banding, and a bank of doors at the north end of the first floor. At the northwest corner was a two-story stone-veneered entry block featuring Classical Revival details. The main entry to the theater was through four sets of doors on the Linwood elevation. A curved marquee extended above the entry and wrapped around to the north side. Over the marquee on

<sup>1</sup> “New Northwest Theater to be Ready Next Week,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 6, 1927, 43.

<sup>2</sup> “New Theater Opens Doors,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 22, 1927, 7.

<sup>3</sup> “Orient Theater Goes on at WJR,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 27, 1927, 14.

<sup>4</sup> “Miles Enjoins ‘Orient’ Theater.” *Detroit Free Press*, August 19, 1927, 4.

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the west side was a large blade sign reading “Oriole” in Oriental-style letters. Extending down Linwood Street to the south was a two-story retail block, containing three sets of storefronts with deep openings between them for theater exits, and paired windows above. The theater first appeared on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in 1950. Listed as the Oriole Theater, the map noted that the building had a steel truss roof, a hi-rib drop ceiling, a curved balcony, and stage and scenery at the south end. The lobby was at the northwest corner of the building, and the marquee wrapped around the same corner. Three retail spaces were shown along Linwood Street with the theater exits between.

It is unclear when the Oriole Theater ceased showing movies. Newspaper listings were sparse after 1937, although there was a showing of “Mrs. Miniver” in 1942 and a mention of a PTA theater party in October 1951. The building was purchased in November 1952 by Prophet James F. Jones, a colorful and well-known preacher who headed the Church of the Universal Triumph, Dominion of God.<sup>5</sup> Jones spent over 200,000 dollars to “refurbish” the church and rededicated it in December 1952. It is unclear what changes Jones made, as the newspaper focused on the five thousand dollars he spent to build and decorate a replica of King Solomon’s throne furnished in red plush with canary yellow trim. The article also mentions that Jones purchased a thirty-five-thousand-dollar organ, but it is unknown what happened to the original theater organ.<sup>6</sup> A photograph of the building from around this time show that the exterior had remained relatively unchanged except that the curved wraparound marquee and blade sign had been replaced (prior to Jones’ ownership) by a V-shaped marquee projecting above the entry.



<sup>5</sup> “Prophet Jones Buys Theater,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 11, 1952, 10.

<sup>6</sup> “Prophet Jones Enthroned,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 19, 1952, 40.

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The north and west elevations of New Bethel Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan, after alterations by Detroit architect Nathan Johnson. Photograph dated March 30, 1969. Photograph courtesy of the Detroit News Photograph Collection (UAV002691), Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

The building was then purchased in 1961 by New Bethel Baptist Church, and was remodeled by architect Nathan Johnson. A graduate of Kansas State University's architecture program, Johnson came to Detroit in 1950, and worked for several other firms before starting his own practice around 1957. Johnson was developing a broad portfolio of church commissions, including his first, the Pure in Heart Baptist Church at Holcomb and Goethe, a "small box with a big glass front" that had been his first independent commission. Others included the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Ecorse, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at Twelfth and Glendale, Grace Episcopal Church at Twelfth and Virginia Park, and Church of Christ of Conant Gardens, while he was concurrently working on an addition to Second Baptist Church at 441 Monroe, and Apostolic Faith of Christ Church in Inkster.<sup>7</sup>

Johnson completely transformed the former theater. He retained the brick and stone-banded exterior of the main block, but moved the main entry to the north elevation and added a gracefully arched canopy over the doors. Above that, he designed a large geometric metal screen extending from the top of the canopy to the roofline. The former corner entry block was refaced with brick, and on the north and west elevations Johnson created full height bays with glass curtain walls separated by metal spandrels and geometric metal panels above. On the roof of the block, he placed a square steeple consisting of graduated metal panels. At the elevation along Linwood, Johnson replaced the façade with a full height glass and aluminum curtain wall separated by brick piers and with metal spandrels between the floors. It was a perfect expression of Johnson's design philosophy; like many Modernist architects, he rejected exhibitionism or dishonest copies of the past, preferring his buildings to be honest and to be beautiful because of their function.<sup>8</sup>

### *Exterior*

New Bethel Baptist Church occupies the north half of a commercial block on the east side of Linwood Street where it intersects Philadelphia Street. The building is built out to the right of way (sidewalks) on the north and west side, and abuts an alley on the east side. The south half of the block is occupied by a service station that partially abuts the south elevation of the church.

Spatially, the building consists of two volumes that speak to its history as a theater and evolution as a church. On the west side, next to Linwood Street, is a two-story former commercial block with a taller section on the north side adjacent to Philadelphia Street surmounted by a bell tower and spire. East of that is a four-story volume that contains the theater/sanctuary with the taller fly loft at the south elevation. It has a flat roof.

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<sup>7</sup> Hiley Ward, "His Ideas Add Sparkle to 'Sidewalk' Churches," *Detroit Free Press*, March 16, 1963, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

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The front elevation is on the north side (Philadelphia Street). The first floor is painted brick. At the first floor are four sets of double stained wood-paneled doors with leaded glass inset panels and flat transom panels above. A shallow-arched canopy extends over the entrance and is tied back to the main elevation by metal rods. Above the canopy are three rectangular stained-glass windows. At the east end of the first floor is a single-leaf aluminum and glass entry door with aluminum and glass sidelight and transoms. At the west end is a horizontal three-light wood window. The remainder of the elevation is covered with stucco painted tan and brown with stucco applied trim and the words "New Bethel Baptist Church."

The west elevation is brick on the first floor. It has three glass and aluminum single-leaf entry doors, one on the north end and two on the south end surrounded by stucco panels. Along the transition between the first and second floors are five sets of four-light horizontal window bands. The upper floor here is also covered by stucco painted tan and brown with stucco applied trim. This includes stylized lancet windows and the words "New Bethel Baptist Church."

The south elevation is painted common brick. There are no openings. The east elevation is also painted common brick. This elevation has several openings on the upper levels, including a six-light-window, a single-leaf steel entry door, and a four-paneled utility door. These are accessed by a metal fire escape. A painted brick chimney is located on the northwest corner of the fly loft. Rising from the roof above the northwest corner of the two-story section is the bell tower. It consists of two graduated rectangular metal boxes with corner finials, surmounted by a narrow metal spire with an attached cross.

### *Interior*

At the interior, the main entry doors (north elevation) open to a rectangular lobby with a curved rear wall. The lobby has ceramic tile floors and base, plaster walls with wood panel wainscot and trim, and a textured plaster ceiling with can lighting. At either end (east and west) are enclosed stairs to the balcony. Along the curved rear (south) wall are three sets of paired wood doors leading into the sanctuary. The lobby has two curved wood and laminate reception desks.

The sanctuary is a two-story volume and encompasses most of the interior space of the main volume. It is oriented north-south and has a flat ceiling. The floors are carpeted and the walls and ceilings are plaster. Plain shallow pilasters are spaced equidistant along the east and west walls. At the north end of the sanctuary is the balcony. It is tiered and has plain wood pews. The main level of the sanctuary has wood pews with paneled ends, and a small enclosed sound booth under the balcony. At the south end of the sanctuary is the raised altar set within a large square niche. The altar is reached by two steps. The niche walls are wood paneled about halfway up the wall, and above the niche is a large wood paneled arch. Set within the niche is a choir box with chairs set on tiers. To either side of the niche are wood paneled doors. Decorative grilles cover the sound panels on the east and west walls to either side of the niche and arch. Below these are wood paneled doors.

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To the west of the lobby and sanctuary, in the former commercial spaces, are a series of rooms including the church's history room, offices, and a multi-purpose room. The multipurpose room, which is often used for congregational meals, has a linoleum tile floor while the rest of the rooms are carpeted. The walls and ceilings are flat plaster with no trim. At the northwest corner of this area is a small second floor open space adjacent to the balcony and stairs. It has a carpeted floor and flat plaster walls and ceilings.

### *Integrity*

From its initial construction 1927 as a theater through its re-conception by Nathan Johnson in 1963, and to the more recent covering of the exterior, New Bethel Baptist Church has undergone multiple changes. Nathan Johnson's 1963 exterior design of the church was covered by a new skin in 2007, in an effort to attract younger worshippers. This synthetic stucco has obscured Johnson's exterior design. While interior renovations were carried out in 2001, these mostly included furnishings and alterations to the secondary spaces, leaving Johnson's sanctuary design intact.<sup>9</sup> The interior still retains the sense of a "vast expanse of whiteness" described following Johnson's renovation of the church. The interior, however, is largely intact. Common interior spaces retain their relationships and significant spaces, especially the sanctuary, retain their essential historic materials. The property, therefore, possess historic integrity and continues to convey its historic significance related to the civil rights movement and Reverend C. L. Franklin in Detroit, Michigan, between 1963 and 1969.

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<sup>9</sup> New Bethel Baptist Church, "About Us" (timeline), [www.nbbcdetroit.org/about-us/index.html](http://www.nbbcdetroit.org/about-us/index.html).

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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.)

- 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1963-1969

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1963

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Franklin, Clarence LaVaughn

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Mason, George D.

H. G. Christman Company

Johnson, Nathan

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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.)

New Bethel Baptist Church is significant under National Register Criteria A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History, at the local level of significance, for its association with and role in the Civil Rights movement in Detroit, Michigan, during the 1960s. The church is also significant under National Register Criterion B in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History at the local level of significance as the property that best illustrates the significant contributions of Reverend Clarence LaVaughn Franklin to the Civil Rights Movement and the freedom of African Americans, broadly speaking during the 1960s. The period of significance for these two criteria is from 1963, when the building was remodeled and occupied by New Bethel Baptist Church, to 1969. While Reverend Franklin continued to quietly support the civil rights movement after that date, ill health and legal troubles limited his participation, and his contributions after that date do not rise to the level of exceptional significance that would be required under Criteria Consideration G. The building meets Criteria Consideration A, as a building owned by a religious institution and used for religious purposes, because its significance is directly connected to the history of political, social, and cultural activities of the Civil Rights movement. This property is nominated under the MPDF for *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit* and meets the registration requirements for Buildings, subtype Religious Institutions, as described in that document.

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

New Bethel Baptist Church, located at 8430 Linwood Street in Detroit, Michigan, is nominated under the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit*. It meets the registration requirements for the property type of Buildings, subtype Religious Institutions for that cover document under Criteria A and B, at the local level of significance. Although its 1963 remodeling under African American architect Nathan Johnson may have qualified it under Criterion C, subsequent alterations have diminished its design integrity such that it does not meet the registration requirements for that criterion at this time. The MPDF is organized according to four periods of significance identified in the National Park Service's (NPS) *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. The significance of New Bethel Baptist Church falls under the two final periods identified in the NPS framework, "Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964," and "Second Revolution, 1964-1976." These two periods were characterized, nationally and in Detroit, by the maturation of the modern civil rights movement and the efforts of African Americans to capitalize on the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in enforcing and expanding gains made earlier in the century. Despite modest advances in employment and housing equality, African Americans still

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faced significant discrimination and barriers to equal access in all areas of their life and work. Two strands of activism developed during the period, one that focused on non-violent civil disobedience, modeled after the movement led nationally by Martin Luther King, Jr., and a more militant approach which, in the late 1960s and 1970s, gave rise to the Black Power Movement and Black Nationalism, in which African Americans demanded self-determination, control over Black institutions, and pride in their race, heritage, and achievements. The MPDF identifies Black religious institutions and leaders as a key theme, under “The Role of Detroit’s Black Churches in the Civil Rights Movement.” Detroit’s African American church leaders were at the forefront of the civil rights movement in Detroit, and a number of them became well known on a national level. Among them was Reverend Clarence LaVaughn (C.L.) Franklin, who leveraged his national fame as a preacher and his friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr. to bring attention to the cause of civil rights in Detroit and across the nation. Reverend Franklin drew King and other notable civil rights activists to speak at New Bethel Baptist Church, and it was the location of a notorious civil rights incident in 1969, when city police officers fired on a meeting of the radical civil rights group the Republic of New Afrika.

Because the building is owned by a religious institution, and is used for religious purposes, it must meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration A. As documented in the following text, New Bethel Baptist Church is significant for its connection to political, social, and cultural activities that took place within its walls or that are related to its leader, Reverend C. L. Franklin, who was a significant figure in the civil rights movement in Detroit and the United States.

#### *New Bethel Baptist Church and the Early Leadership of Reverend C. L. Franklin*

Detroit’s New Bethel Baptist Church was founded in March 1932, growing out of a Christian women’s prayer group called the “The Helping Hand Society.” According to church history, it was organized in the home of Samuel and Mamie Varnadore at 2627 Leland Street (no longer extant), while Nicholas Salvatore, biographer of Reverend C. L. Franklin, places it in the home of Eliza Butler, who resided in Paradise Valley (address unknown).<sup>10</sup> During this period, Paradise Valley was one of two contiguous neighborhoods on Detroit’s lower east side that were home to the majority of Detroit’s Black population. Black Bottom, south of Gratiot Avenue, was the older residential community, but by the 1920s African Americans had begun moving north of Gratiot Avenue. While Paradise Valley was traditionally the commercial district, there were residential properties throughout the neighborhood.

For the first thirteen years, New Bethel Baptist Church was led by three successive pastors, Reverend H. H. Coleman, Reverend N. H. Armstrong, and Reverend William E. Ramsey. The church had some twelve hundred members by 1945, when Ramsey left the church to establish Gospel Temple Baptist Church. Some of New Bethel’s members with him. The church then that called a Mississippi-born preacher named Clarence LaVaughn Franklin to lead them.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> New Bethel Baptist Church, “About Us” (timeline), [www.nbbcdetroit.org/about-us/index.html](http://www.nbbcdetroit.org/about-us/index.html); Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 112.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 113.

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Clarence LaVaughn Franklin, known as C. L. throughout most of his life (or sometimes “Frank” to friends), was born on January 22, 1915, in Sunflower, Mississippi, outside of Indianola. Franklin grew up in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, where he was poor but part of a “rural community sustained both by faith and by the Delta blues of fellow Mississippians such as B.B. King, Son House, and Charley Patton.”<sup>12</sup> As a young man in the Jim Crow south, Franklin was also steeped in systemic racial discrimination, from the daily humiliations of second-class status to the horror of lynching. Decades later, Franklin noted, “I knew segregation in the raw...I vividly remember walking to school and being passed by a bus full of white kids, who shouted abuses...from the windows.”<sup>13</sup>

As a teenager, Franklin experienced a powerful religious conversion during a revival at St. Peter’s Rock Missionary Baptist Church in August 1929 and embarked on a religious career. Franklin preached on a “circuit” of multiple churches in Mississippi from 1933, when he turned eighteen, to 1938, also attending Greenville Industrial College (Afro-Baptist) during this period. He moved to Memphis in 1938, where he became pastor of the New Salem Baptist Church. In Memphis, Franklin and his wife Barbara Siggers Franklin had three of their four children, Erma (1938-2002), Cecil (1940-1989), and Aretha (1942-2018). Franklin moved his family north to Buffalo, New York, in 1944 (where their youngest child, Carolyn (1944-1988) was born) to take the pulpit of Friendship Baptist Church. While there, he was invited to speak at the National Baptist Convention held at Olympia Stadium in Detroit, in September 1945. When the pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church resigned in February 1946, the congregation invited Franklin to deliver a trial sermon. On the strength of that sermon the congregation called him to their pulpit. Reverend Franklin preached his first sermon as the pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church in June 1946.

The church Franklin came to Detroit to lead was located in a “somewhat shabby” converted bowling alley at the corner of Hastings and Willis Streets.<sup>14</sup> It was, however, at the heart of Paradise Valley, and Hastings Street was the principal commercial corridor along which there was a thriving business and entertainment district. Two of Franklin’s first choices introduced his new congregation to the “flair” that would characterize his ministry for the next thirty years. Rather than holding his installation dinner in the church, he chose the Gotham Hotel, Detroit’s premiere African American hotel. Franklin also moved into a mansion in one of Detroit’s foremost neighborhoods on East Boston Boulevard. This district, historically the home of some of Detroit’s most prominent White businessmen and leaders, was just opening up to African Americans in the late 1940s, as the city’s White elite began moving to the suburbs. It was also not far from the North End, a more modest Black neighborhood that was the northern extension of Paradise Valley. The North End was home to a thriving music scene and a number of future

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<sup>12</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 269.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Young, “The Rev. Clarence Franklin: Civil Rights Firebrand of 1960s – a little weary, has changed his style,” *The Detroit News*, September 26, 1977, 3A.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 112-113.

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musical stars including Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, Jackie Wilson, and the young men who would go on to form the Miracles, the Four Tops, the Temptations, and the Spinners. Mary Wilson, a founding member of the Supremes, worshipped in Franklin's congregation at New Bethel Baptist.

For his first ten years or so at New Bethel, Franklin concentrated on developing his ministry and building the reputation of himself and his church. He welcomed a wide swath of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley residents, from sex workers and drug dealers to blue collar workers and professionals. Franklin's daughter Erma later remembered:

people flocked to the church...they would show up at our home...seeking relief from whatever their problems were, i.e. sons in trouble, financial problems, marital problems, unfair civil rights, civic disputes, etc. He always listened and if he thought their situation warranted it—after investigation by church officials—he fought their battles for them.

Among the people who spent time at the Franklin home were politicians like Detroit's mayor, the governor of Michigan, and civil rights leader and New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr.; and musicians Sam Cooke, Berry Gordy, Smokey Robinson, and Marvin Gaye.<sup>15</sup>

Among Franklin's earliest accomplishments was the building of a new church. The old converted bowling alley church was torn down in 1948, and construction began on a new building in its place. When Franklin struggled to find the money to complete it, his earlier work in engaging the community paid off. As the local African American newspaper the *Michigan Chronicle* recorded, "night club owners, beauty and barber shop operators, numbers bankers, professional and business people, and plain citizens were all donating money to start a new building for the young minister they heavily admired."<sup>16</sup> Franklin had so gained the admiration of his congregation that they voted to give him a lifetime contract in 1950. For a Baptist church this was highly unusual, and even more so in that Franklin was only thirty-five.

The new church opened in October 1951. In its dedication sermon Franklin gave the first hint of his future civil rights leadership, taking up the theme of "second or third class citizenship" from the Bible and making the connection to the status of Blacks in Detroit. As Salvatore observed, "Here, in this new building, C. L. took a great step forward, using for the first known time the ritual of the sermon to challenge his people to free themselves."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Erma V. Franklin, "Memories of the Franklin Family," typewritten manuscript in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>16</sup> *Michigan Chronicle*, October 10, 1953.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 135.

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### *The Preacher with the Golden Voice*

Reverend Franklin became a nationally-known religious figure for his charismatic preaching during the mid to late 1950s. In the course of learning his trade, Franklin had “developed a captivating preaching style based on his rich and sonorous singing voice...interweaving the secular and the sacred, the blues and the Bible.”<sup>18</sup> For Reverend Franklin, there was no conflict between religion and popular music like the blues or even pop. “From the very beginning, he sensed the Black sermon’s intimate roots in an oral, Black folk tradition that, together with blues, tales, and church music, carried the moral and ethical beliefs of a people across generations.”<sup>19</sup> Franklin became particularly famous and beloved for his “whooping,” a blend of spoken chanting, singing, and call-and-response preaching designed to evoke emotion and participation among the congregation. It often came toward the end of a sermon and segued into gospel singing.

Franklin had built his Memphis and Buffalo ministries through radio shows, a method he continued in Detroit. The local radio station WJLB began broadcasting Franklin’s sermons in the early 1950s, and they were such a hit that people flocked to New Bethel Baptist Church to hear him in person. Hastings Street record store owner Joe Von Battle approached Franklin with a plan to record and sell his sermons, at a time when such records were virtually unheard of. Like Franklin’s radio program, the recorded sermons were an “immediate sensation” and Von Battle could barely keep up with their popularity...his daughter Marsha remembered her father having to call the police to break up the crowds who had gathered to listen to the recordings at his store. Eventually, Von Battle leased the rights to press the recordings to Chess Records, and from 1953 to 1979, Franklin made seventy-six live recordings. Von Battle’s 1953 recording of “The Eagle Stirreth Her Nest,” perhaps Franklin’s most well-known sermon, was added to the Library of Congress’ National Recording Registry in 2010. In listing it, the Library of Congress noted that “Franklin’s many and varied vocal devices inspired not only other preachers, but also gospel and rhythm-and-blues artists who appropriated many of his techniques. Franklin was a national figure in the African-American community from the 1950s on and a close friend and ally of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”<sup>20</sup> In 1956 radio station WLAC in Nashville began broadcasting Franklin’s sermons on a Sunday evening. WLAC had a powerful signal, reaching over a thousand miles, which further extended Franklin’s national audience.<sup>21</sup>

On the strength of his radio and record reach, Reverend Franklin began touring around the country. He became a “circuit flyer,” which harkened back to his days as a circuit rider when he preached to multiple congregations. Rather than only riding, Franklin often flew to preach to

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<sup>18</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 269.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 32.

<sup>20</sup> Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Board, 2010 List of Recording Registry Inductions, [www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/recording-registry/registry-by-induction-years/2010/](http://www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/recording-registry/registry-by-induction-years/2010/).

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 155-156, 190.

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congregations around the United States as well as internationally. Audiences crowded into auditoriums to hear him, which prompted one publication to write in 1957 that, “today, there is hardly a spot in the United States where Negro Protestants have not heard of the sensational Rev. C. L. Franklin of Detroit.”<sup>22</sup> While the “gospel tour” was already a well-established practice, a preaching tour like this was unusual, and Franklin was a pioneer. He was able to command large fees for his appearances, as much as four thousand dollars, an enormous sum at the time.

Franklin’s daughter, Aretha, who was in her early teens, began accompanying him on these tours, where she sang as a “warm up” to his sermons. Joe Von Battle recorded Aretha singing and playing piano on nine tracks in 1956 at New Bethel Baptist Church, several of which were released as singles by Von Battle in the 1950s and on one side of Von Battle’s 1956 album *Spirituals*.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Walk to Freedom and Northern Civil Rights Leadership*

Reverend Franklin, like many of his fellow preachers, found the pulpit was a powerful medium for more than merely religious exhortation. Church was the Black community’s core institution, frequently serving as the most common gathering place for African Americans. Detroit’s African American churches and clergy had a long record of using their moral authority to further the cause of progressive political activism, from Second Baptist Church, which had sheltered and assisted people escaping slavery, to St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, which hosted the Detroit branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in its early years, to Reverend Charles A. Hill of Hartford Baptist Church, who in the early to mid twentieth century fought for equality in housing and employment and demonstrated against police brutality.

With nearly eight thousand members by the mid 1950s, New Bethel Baptist Church was poised to become an important vehicle for advancing the cause of racial justice, and Reverend Franklin increasingly joined the ranks of social activists during this period. He gave Detroit activists James and Grace Lee Boggs access to New Bethel’s pulpit to discuss African independence in 1954, although he did not consider himself a “political comrade” of the revolutionaries. The following year, in the wake of the murder of Emmett Till, Franklin wrote a public letter in the *Michigan Chronicle* admonishing the NAACP for not doing enough to advance “racial progress.” While Franklin was a member of the organization, he felt that their work was not relevant to the average working-class Black person. It was a public assumption of the role of civil rights campaigner for Franklin, and he believed that Black Detroiters were ready for political action.<sup>24</sup>

Franklin was, in general, not a natural grassroots organizer, preferring to act as a catalyst and encourage others to continue the work. This often took the form of opening New Bethel Baptist

<sup>22</sup> “The Preacher with the Golden Voice,” *Color*, 11:14 (January 1957).

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 184-185, 188.

<sup>24</sup> *Michigan Chronicle*, October 22, 1955.

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Church to political candidates and activist groups. Decades later, he recalled that this was not universally accepted by all members of the congregation, but he argued that “religious people gotta walk on sidewalks, use electricity, and drink water too – to say nothing of having a job...(t)herefore it behooves us to be concerned about who controls those services.”<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Franklin took a more active role toward the end of the 1950s. An early attempt in this work was the formation of the Metropolitan Civic League for Legal Action, an organization he founded in 1959 to provide legal aid for victims of police brutality. Despite Franklin’s cache and effort, the organization was short-lived and closed within a few years.<sup>26</sup>

The early 1960s were a very busy period for Franklin. He accepted the pastorate of a church in Los Angeles in 1960 while still retaining his position at New Bethel, dividing his time and loyalties. At the same time he needed to look for a new home for New Bethel after the Hastings Street church, barely ten years old, was slated for demolition due to urban renewal in the Paradise Valley area. Urban renewal in Black Bottom and Paradise Valley displaced tens of thousands of residents, businesses, and institutions in the 1950s and 1960s. Many settled into the Twelfth Street neighborhood, a historically Jewish district where barriers to relocation were lower than in many White neighborhoods. It was here that Reverend Franklin relocated New Bethel Baptist Church, remodeling a 1920s movie palace into a religious institution.

The theater had been purchased in November 1952 by James F. Jones, a colorful and well-known preacher, known throughout the country as Prophet Jones. Jones established the Church of the Universal Triumph, Dominion of God, after a break with the Triumph Church and Kingdom of God. Jones remodeled the theater’s interior into a church, but his tenure in the building was short. According to local reports, Jones paid approximately forty thousand dollars for the building, and by 1955 the building and its furnishings were claimed to be worth a half million dollars.<sup>27</sup> Jones, noted as “an usually gifted orator,”<sup>28</sup> who, between 1952 and 1955, had become “one of Detroit’s best known persons,” and had developed a local congregation of several thousand.<sup>29</sup> In February 1956, Jones was arrested “on a morals charge”<sup>30</sup> which set in motion a series of misfortunes that led to his downfall.

Despite these misfortunes, which included the loss of a large house on Arden Park Boulevard, repossession of numerous automobiles, and a fire that destroyed a significant portion of his personal belongings,<sup>31</sup> Jones appears to have retained ownership of the Oriole Theater building until it was purchased by Reverend Franklin and New Bethel Baptist Church.

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<sup>25</sup> Barbara Young, “The Rev. Clarence Franklin: Civil Rights Firebrand of 1960s – a little weary, has changed his style,” *The Detroit News*, September 26, 1977, 3A.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 225-226.

<sup>27</sup> Miller Hollingsworth, “Prophet Jones Makes Records, Plans U.S. Tour,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 28, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Hiley H. Ward, “Prophet Jones Dies at 63,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 13, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan Oates, “Mounting Throne was Glorious for Prophet,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 30, 1958.

<sup>30</sup> Hiley H. Ward, “Prophet Jones Dies at 63,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 13, 1971.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan Oates, “Mounting Throne was Glorious for Prophet,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 30, 1958.

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Reverend Franklin's purchase of the building from Jones through Detroit real estate broker James Del Rio in 1961 was not without controversy. Some members of church tried to block the sale as usurping the authority of the church board. However, a judge lifted the injunction when church members met and nearly all voted to support Franklin.<sup>32</sup>

While Prophet Jones had done little to change the exterior appearance of the church, Franklin commissioned the "first major all-Negro building project in the city."<sup>33</sup> Franklin commissioned Nathan Johnson, a prominent Black architect in Detroit to redesign the church. Johnson had opened his own practice in 1956 or 1957 after working with Donald White and the firm of White & Griffin for several years. According to the *Detroit News*, White was the first Black architect ever licensed in Michigan.<sup>34</sup> Since the time he had established his own practice, Johnson had received many church commissions since that time. Thought at that time "a newcomer to church architecture,"<sup>35</sup> Johnson completely transformed the former theater for Franklin over the next several years. On March 10, 1963, the congregation of New Bethel Baptist Church proceeded from their temporary home in the Gold Coast Theater at Twelfth and Seward (no longer extant) and held their first services in the new church. Reflecting Reverend Franklin's status as a national star, congratulatory telegrams arrived from President John F. Kennedy, Franklin's friend Martin Luther King Jr., and many others.<sup>36</sup>

New Bethel Baptist Church was now located in a neighborhood that had become the locus of Detroit's Black Consciousness movement. Already, Reverend Albert B. Cleage, a Black nationalist, had moved his Central Congregational Church to a former White church a few blocks down Linwood Street, and many of Detroit's radical Black activists met in the area.

It was against this socio-geographic background that Reverend Franklin's most significant leadership in the local and national civil rights struggle would take place over the next several years. One of his most high-profile contributions to the movement was prompted by events in Birmingham, Alabama in late 1962 and early 1963. Alabama had been the site of one of the seminal events of the civil rights movement, the 1955-1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott, triggered by the refusal of Rosa Parks to surrender her seat to a White person (Parks was by 1963 also living in Detroit). It had also propelled the young Baptist minister Martin Luther King, Jr., to the forefront of the civil rights movement in America. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an African American civil rights organization headed by King, targeted Birmingham, one of the most racially divided cities in the country, in a campaign to address segregation in public facilities. Whites dug their heels in, led by the militant Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, who unleashed guard dogs and firehoses on protestors. King, fellow civil rights leader and Baptist minister Reverend Ralph Abernathy,

<sup>32</sup> "The Troubles Down the Rev. Franklin's Road," *Detroit Free Press*, June 15, 1969, 1A, 4A.

<sup>33</sup> "New Glory for Old Theater," *Detroit Free Press*, March 11, 1963, 3. Although the article referred to "architects, contractors, financiers," it did not list the names of the project team.

<sup>34</sup> Michael H. Hodges, "Saturday Tour to Celebrate Detroit's Early Black Architects," *Detroit News*, October 8, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Hiley H. Ward, "His Ideas Add Sparkle to 'Sidewalk' Churches," *Detroit Free Press*, March 16, 1963.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 244-45.

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and numerous other demonstrators were arrested on April 12, 1963. During the week that he was in custody, King wrote his celebrated "Letter From Birmingham Jail," in which he eloquently and forcefully defended his policy of non-violent civil disobedience. As a result of its activities in Birmingham and the legal expenses incurred to defend its members, the SCLC was running out of money in the spring of 1963. Martin Luther King, Jr. turned to the best fundraisers among his friends, including Mahalia Jackson, Harry Belafonte, and Reverend Franklin.

King and Franklin had developed a friendship, but it is unclear exactly how they met and became friends. Franklin's obituary in the *Michigan Chronicle* claimed that the two met while King was a student at Morehouse College.<sup>37</sup> However, King was at Morehouse, located in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1944 to 1947, while Franklin was still in Buffalo, or shortly after he arrived in Detroit (Franklin was fourteen years older than King). They may also have met and become friends through their mutual participation in the National Baptist Convention (NBC). The Convention, which had formed in 1894, was a cooperative organization of African American Baptist ministers, and by the mid twentieth century it was "the largest mass organization, sacred or secular, black Americans possessed" and its leaders were highly influential.<sup>38</sup> Reverend Franklin was a member as early as 1940, and it was his speech at the 1945 annual meeting in Detroit that secured him his position at New Bethel Baptist Church. By the mid 1950s Franklin was a national leader in the Convention when it became involved in an internal struggle over the appropriateness of participation in the civil disobedience activities of the civil rights movement. Franklin aligned himself with the progressives who supported this in contrast to the "self-help" approach of more conservative members, although Franklin remained with the organization when many of the progressives were expelled or left to form the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Franklin was the chair of the NBC's Evangelist Board for ten years (it is unclear exactly which years he served in this capacity, although it was at least partially during the 1960s).<sup>39</sup> Both Martin Luther King, Sr. and Jr. were active in the National Baptist Convention until the schism resulted in their departure in 1961, and Franklin was friends with both father and son; Franklin biographer Nicholas Salvatore claims that Franklin was King's "favorite preacher," a strong possibility given Franklin's national popularity at this time.<sup>40</sup>

In response to King's call for fundraising, Franklin helped Mahalia Jackson organize a SCLC fundraiser in Chicago in late May 1963. Among the headliners at the concert was Reverend Franklin's daughter Aretha. By this time, Aretha Franklin was already a national star herself. In 1960 she had crossed over from gospel to pop, with her father's blessing, and within a year singles from her first secular album were hits in the United States, Canada, and Australia. By the mid 1960s she had earned her sobriquet, "The Queen of Soul." Although Aretha had moved to New York City to pursue a recording career prior to move of New Bethel Baptist Church to Linwood Street, she never abandoned her roots in the church or in gospel music. Aretha Franklin's brother Cecil noted that she prioritized "performing her civic duty" over her

<sup>37</sup> "Minister Mourned by Many," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 4, 1984, 4A.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 72, 192.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-230.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

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professional career by singing at civil rights-related events like the SCLC fundraiser. According to Cecil, "...if Daddy called and said 'Ree, I want you to sing for Dr. King,' she'd drop everything and do just that," even if it conflicted with an important professional opportunity. According to *Jet* magazine, at the SCLC fundraiser Franklin was in a "tough spot" at the end of the program and "literally broke up the show by sending the crowd home shouting when she closed with a back-home rendition of 'Precious Lord.'"<sup>41</sup>

The significance of Aretha Franklin's musical performances to the civil rights movement should not be underestimated. As historian Angela Dillard observed, music "is an integral part of social activism...it was a tradition that would continue to express itself over and over, from the performance of...Aretha Franklin in her father's church in Detroit to the explosion of Motown Records."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the importance of music to the African American struggle for freedom from slavery and for civil rights is well documented, from the spirituals sung by enslaved people as a form not only of religious expression but of covert resistance, to the anthems of the mid twentieth century civil rights movement such as "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" and "We Shall Overcome." Such songs, which were rooted in traditional religious songs, served as social commentary, protest, and as a means to bring people together. As Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon observed in "Wade in the Water," the seminal National Public Radio series that documented and celebrated African American sacred music traditions, "the songs of the movement were the voice of the struggle."<sup>43</sup>

At the same time as he helped to organize the Chicago benefit, Franklin was also planning a major civil rights demonstration in Detroit, one which would solidify his national credentials in the movement. The march was intended to solicit political and monetary support for the SCLC and the Birmingham demonstrators. Following a small invitation-only event on May 10, Franklin hosted a mass meeting on May 17 at New Bethel Baptist Church, where the group formed a new organization, the Detroit Council for Human Rights (DCHR), and began planning the march, eventually called the "Walk to Freedom" for the following month.<sup>44</sup> Franklin was joined in organizing the DCHR and the march by Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr. of Central Congregational Church. While Cleage and Franklin were not ideological allies, they were united in their criticism of the NAACP for being "too close" to Whites and not aggressive enough in its pursuit of racial justice.<sup>45</sup> Both were, not surprisingly, disliked by the NAACP and more conservative civil rights campaigners in the city, who were also dismissive of Franklin's capacity to plan the march. Franklin refused to step aside, and Cleage supported him, seeing an opening to overturn

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<sup>41</sup> Both quotes from David Ritz, *Respect: The Life of Aretha Franklin* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014), 110.

<sup>42</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 126.

<sup>43</sup> "Episode 5: The Power of Communal Song," *Wade in the Water* (radio series), National Public Radio, originally aired 1994, <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/20/711806804/wade-in-the-water-ep-5-the-power-of-communal-song>.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph E. Coles, Interoffice Memo dated May 17, 1963, Mayor's Interracial Committee. In Folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>45</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 269-271.

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the old guard. Franklin's ace in retaining control of the march was his friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr., who preferred to work with Franklin rather than any other of Detroit's civil rights leaders.

Despite the tensions in Detroit's civil rights community, the DCHR was able to bring together a broad-based coalition for the march. Churches like Franklin's New Bethel Baptist and Cleage's Central Congregational were in the vanguard, and much of the march's high attendance figures were due in large part to organizing by Franklin, Cleage, and their fellow religious leaders, who held pre-march rallies to generate enthusiasm.<sup>46</sup> Old line organizations like the NAACP, Urban League, and Booker T. Washington Business Association, recognized the significance of the event, and ultimately participated wholeheartedly. These organizations were joined by state and local politicians, powerful United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, and local organizations from block clubs and businesses to school groups. While there had been some debate among the organizers as to whether it should be an exclusively African American event, eventually it was decided to allow Whites to participate, although the march was dominated by Blacks.

The Walk to Freedom, held on June 23, 1963, was incredibly successful. It was held exactly twenty years after the 1943 racial conflict in Detroit. Reverend Franklin, alone among organizers, tied it back to that event. He argued that nothing had changed since then. Michigan Governor George Romney issued a proclamation declaring June 23 "Freedom March Day," although he did not participate in the march. Martin Luther King, Jr. was at the forefront of the march, which began on Woodward Avenue north of Grand Circus Park. Beside him were Franklin, Cleage, United States Representative Charles Diggs, Jr., James Del Rio, former Governor John Swainson, and Walter Reuther. Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh was in the second row. The march proceeded down Woodward Avenue to Detroit's convention center, Cobo Hall, where Martin Luther King gave a preliminary version of his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Franklin did not speak, unlike his colleague Reverend Cleage, but he did participate on stage, introduced dignitaries, and raised the offering (Aretha Franklin was not at the march). The march was, in King's estimation, "a magnificent demonstration of our commitment to nonviolence in this struggle for freedom all over the United States."<sup>47</sup>

With about 125,000 participants (some estimates were as high as 200,000), the Walk to Freedom was the largest civil rights demonstration in the nation's history to that point. While it was eclipsed just two months later by the March on Washington, DC, also led by King, the Detroit march was a significant precursor for that event. A few weeks after the Detroit march, King wrote to Reverend Franklin to thank him for organizing the event, commend his leadership, and express his appreciation for the money raised for the SCLC from the rally. "Never before have I participated in a Freedom Rally and a public demonstration so profoundly meaningful and so

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<sup>46</sup> "James Boggs" in Elaine Lutzman Moon, *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918-1967* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 155.

<sup>47</sup> Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Address at the Freedom Rally in Cobo Hall, June 23, 1963. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/address-freedom-rally-cobo-hall>.

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numerically successful. I can assure you that America has never seen anything like the Detroit Freedom March.”<sup>48</sup> A few days later, Hobart Taylor, Jr., special assistant to Vice President Lyndon Johnson, also wrote to Franklin to congratulate him for his “fine works...on behalf of all the citizens of Detroit” and especially the “now famous” Walk to Freedom.<sup>49</sup>

In the months following the Detroit march, the DCHR attempted to capitalize on the momentum it had built. Among the plans of the organization were an annual march on the fourth Sunday in June and support for the March on Washington then being planned. The DCHR voted to become a membership organization, with Franklin as chair and Cleage among the board of directors.<sup>50</sup> Following the death of Cynthia Scott, an African American sex worker, at the hands of Detroit police on July 5, the DCHR attempted to interest the United States Attorney General in investigating the case, while board member James Del Rio made plans to call a meeting of mayors of suburban cities to discuss police protection for African Americans who had purchased repossessed FHA and VA homes.<sup>51</sup>

Franklin and Cleage began organizing another national event in the late summer and early fall of 1963, this time a conference of national Black civil rights leaders, to be held in Detroit in November. Called the Northern Negro Leadership Conference, the event would feature U.S. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, a national civil rights leader, as its principal speaker, as well as Mahalia Jackson and several members of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s staff. In the months prior to the event, however, Franklin and Cleage’s uneasy alliance deteriorated over their competing visions for the civil rights movement. Although both rejected gradualism, Franklin aligned with the nonviolent integrationist methods of his friend King, while Cleage increasingly embraced a militant separatist approach. In late October, a few weeks before the planned conference, Cleage abruptly quit the DCHR and organized a rival conference for the same weekend, the Northern Negro Grassroots Leadership Conference. Despite a last-minute attempt by King to promote Franklin’s conference, the event was overshadowed by the Grassroots conference, which was memorable for Malcolm X’s “Message to the Grassroots.”<sup>52</sup> In the wake of Cleage’s departure and the failed conference, the DCHR faded away. Franklin was identified as the chair as late as 1966, but there is little evidence that the organization did any work after late 1963. Despite the very public falling out with Cleage, Franklin continued to collaborate with Cleage and other movement leaders where their goals aligned. Later in the 1960s Franklin spoke at Central United Congregational Church and appeared on panels with Cleage and other Black

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<sup>48</sup> Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., letter to Reverend C. L. Franklin, July 10, 1963, in folder “Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963,” in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>49</sup> Hobart Taylor, Jr., Special Assistant to the VP, July 19, 1963, C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>50</sup> Notes on Proceedings, June 28, 1963, in Folder “Council for Human Rights,” in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>51</sup> . Joseph E. Coles, Interoffice Memo, August 7, 1963, Mayor’s Interracial Committee. In Folder “Detroit Council for Human Rights,” Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>52</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 273.

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Nationalists. As Salvatore observed, “the freedom struggle ultimately demanded that individuals transcend personal differences to work together whenever possible.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Civil Rights Activism in the Turbulent Late 1960s*

Although the failure of the leadership conference was a disappointment, Franklin remained active in both the local and national civil rights movement for the next several years. In 1964, the *Michigan Chronicle* named him as one of “eight outstanding religious leaders working on behalf of human rights.” He opened New Bethel Baptist Church to political candidates, where John Conyers, Jr. began his successful 1964 campaign for United States Congress. Franklin continued to work closely with Martin Luther King, Jr., serving on the Executive Board of the SCLC and holding a rally at New Bethel Baptist Church to raise money for the Selma voting rights campaign in 1965, which culminated in three protest marches from Selma to Montgomery in March. Both Martin Luther King, Jr., and his wife Coretta Scott King came to New Bethel Baptist Church to speak, Mrs. King for Women’s Day in November 1965, and Reverend King for Men’s Day in October 1966. Reverend Franklin later recalled an incident from the latter visit:

Dr. King sat right in my basement one Sunday night...(h)e had spoken for my Men’s Day, and he said, ‘Frank, I will never live to see forty. Some of our white brothers are very, very sick, and they are dangerous. I’ll never see forty.’ And he was thirty-nine when he was killed.<sup>54</sup>

The month after King’s visit on Men’s Day, James Meredith, who had been shot at a rally during the March Against Fear earlier that year, spoke at a rally at New Bethel Baptist Church.

New Bethel Baptist Church was at the geographic heart of the July 1967 rebellion in Detroit, which was touched off by a police raid on an African American club several blocks away at Twelfth Street (now Rosa Parks Boulevard) and Clairmount Avenue. Fires burned on Linwood Street, and New Bethel Baptist Church suffered some fire damage. Reverend Franklin was among a number of African American leaders who spoke to the community on radio station WJLB during the rebellion. Following the end of the conflict, Franklin drafted “An Open Letter to White America” in which he framed the events of July 1967 in Detroit as a “rebellion against established authority” resulting from ongoing oppression by police and White businesses, not a “race riot.” He called for treating African Americans as a:

man...who is not dehumanized and demoralized by his society, who has the opportunity to work wherever he has the ability to work, for the same wages as any other worker, who can live in any section of his city where he is financially

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<sup>53</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 276.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Todd Titon, “Reverend C. L. Franklin: Black American Preacher-Poet,” *Folklife Annual 1987*, (American Folklife Center, 1988), 87.

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able to live, whose opportunity for higher and quality education is the same as any other citizen...<sup>55</sup>

It is unclear if this document was ever completed or published. However, Franklin was appointed head of a committee to present African American “grievances” to political leaders in the city and state, further evidence that he remained a significant civil rights leader in the city.<sup>56</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr. again called on Reverend Franklin to lend his voice to the civil rights movement in March 1968, at a rally for striking Black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. The rally, originally planned for March 22, had been postponed to March 28, due to a snowstorm. Franklin did not participate in the pre-rally march, which erupted in violence. King called off the rally, and both he and Franklin left Memphis. Just one week later, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on the balcony of a hotel in Memphis. Franklin attended his friend’s funeral, and two months later, he participated in the SCLC’s Solidarity Day in Washington, DC, the culmination of the Poor People’s Campaign in which participants converged on “Resurrection City,” a campsite on the Southwest Mall near the Washington Monument to lobby for more equitable access to housing, employment, and welfare programs. Reverend Franklin preached a sermon at St. Stephen’s Baptist Church in Washington on June 21 entitled “They Wouldn’t Bow” in which he drew Biblical parallels to the practice of civil disobedience and criticized the government for putting law above justice. “I feel like if the state was as concerned about justice as they are about law and order—there wouldn’t be any need for Resurrection City.”<sup>57</sup> Several weeks later, Reverend Franklin was a speaker at the SCLC convention in Memphis.

Also featured at the 1968 SCLC convention was Franklin’s daughter Aretha, who sang hymns. Aretha had continued to use her visibility to bring attention to the cause of civil rights during the previous years, as she became one of the most admired recording artists in the country. Her producer, Jerry Wexler, described her activism: “At the same time, she gave a large piece of her life over to the civil rights cause. She jumped into the political fray at this exact moment when everything was breaking loose [for her personally]. She could have easily excused herself from the political rallies and benefits that she headlined, but she did not. When Dr. King called for her services, she was always there—in Chicago, in Atlanta, it didn’t matter where. She was his staunch supporter.”<sup>58</sup> King had flown into Detroit for Aretha’s concert at Cobo Hall in February of 1968, as a thank you for her “extraordinary service” to the SCLC. Two months later, she sang at King’s funeral.

New Bethel Baptist, and Reverend Franklin, were involved in one the most notorious incidents in Detroit’s civil rights history in March 1969. Franklin had given the nationalist Republic of New

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<sup>55</sup> “An Open Letter to White America,” Draft in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>56</sup> “Lay Blame to Hoodlums, Hatemongers,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 25, 1967, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 268.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in David Ritz, *Respect: The Life of Aretha Franklin* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014), 180.

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Afrika permission to hold a meeting at New Bethel Baptist after another church had withdrawn their invitation. After the program was over, two police officers arrived on the scene, there was a confrontation with an armed man near the Linwood Street door, and the officers were shot, killing one. Police, under the impression an armed insurrection was taking place, massed and shot into the church. An investigation by the *Michigan Chronicle* suggested that members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, and Detroit Police Department had been among the crowd, and used the melee as a pretext to attack.<sup>59</sup> According to Judge George Crockett, the New Bethel incident represented a “coming of age” for Black Detroit. When Franklin was criticized for renting the church to the Republic of New Afrika, he pointed out that “we are in the throes of a revolution, a social revolution. Some people have lost their lives in this revolution. And we have lost a little glass.” He refused to denounce the Republic of New Afrika members, instead criticized police for overreacting.<sup>60</sup>

### *Reverend C. L. Franklin and the Later Years of New Bethel Baptist Church*

Although Reverend Franklin’s support for racial justice was as strong in 1969 as it had been in 1963, this would be his last major political role. His decision to step back from a visible national leadership role may have been influenced by the failure of his International Afro-American Musical and Cultural Foundation. Founded “to bring about a sense of unity among Afro peoples of their artistic values,” the signature event of the foundation was to be the “Soul Bowl,” a massive benefit concert in Houston to raise money to aid African American businesses and promote low-cost housing. The Soul Bowl drew national attention and the support of SCLC President Ralph Abernathy, and the program was a “who’s who” of African American performers. As the date drew nearer, though, the event was moved from its originally planned venue, the Houston Astrodome, to successively smaller locations, until it was eventually cancelled the week before the scheduled concert.<sup>61</sup> During the early 1970s, Reverend Franklin also struggled with health issues and legal troubles, and gradually reduced his role in civil rights activism and in the pulpit of New Bethel Baptist Church. In 1977 he blamed his “fast paced lifestyle and constant investigation by the federal government” for his semi-retirement. He further states that, “for 18 years I exposed myself to the physical wear and tear involved in crusading. Anybody would get tired after that steady grind.”<sup>62</sup>

Franklin continued to encourage and support the civil rights movement, but let a younger generation assume leadership roles. Among this generation was his daughter Aretha. In late 1970, she offered to post bond for Angela Davis, a feminist and civil rights activist who had been charged with involvement in the kidnapping and murder of a prison guard in California. Aretha spoke out publicly about her support of Davis, saying:

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<sup>59</sup> “Informants May Have Seen All,” *Michigan Chronicle*, April 19, 1969.

<sup>60</sup> Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 294-296.

<sup>61</sup> “Soul Bowl Set for June at Houston Astrodome,” *The Journal News* (White Plains, NY), May 3, 1969, 12; “Soul Bowl Canceled by Pastor,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 13, 1969, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Barbara Young, “The Rev. Clarence Franklin: Civil Rights Firebrand of 1960s – a little weary, has changed his style,” *The Detroit News*, September 26, 1977, 3A.

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I'm going to see her free if there is any justice in our courts, not because I believe in communism, but because she's a black woman and she wants freedom for black people. I have the money; I got it from black people—they've made me financially able to have it—and I want to use it in ways that will help our people.<sup>63</sup>

She also helped to raise money for Reverend Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH, an organization founded in 1971 to improve economic conditions in Black communities, and would remain a lifelong supporter of the civil rights movement. Aretha returned to her gospel roots in the early 1970s, recording a live gospel album at New Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles in early 1972 called *Amazing Grace*, which remains the highest selling live gospel music album of all time.

Reverend Franklin was at the altar of New Bethel Baptist Church in April 1978 to preside over his daughter Aretha's marriage in April 1978 (she had moved from New York City to California in 1976). A little over a year later, in June 1979, C. L. Franklin was shot by robbers in his home on LaSalle Boulevard and lingered, comatose, for five years. He died July 27, 1984. According to Detroit historian Herb Boyd, "it took two days of 'homegoing' at New Bethel to accommodate the mourners."<sup>64</sup> Following Franklin's injury, New Bethel Baptist Church was led by Reverend C.L. Moore. After Franklin's death, Reverend Robert B. Smith Jr. was elected as the new pastor, where he remains to the present. In 1985 Linwood Street from Grand River Avenue to Clairmount Avenue was renamed C. L. Franklin Boulevard to honor Reverend Franklin's contributions to Detroit and the nation. Two years later, Aretha Franklin recorded the gospel live album "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" at New Bethel Baptist Church.

### *Period of Significance*

The period of significance for the church begins in 1963, when the building was remodeled and occupied by New Bethel Baptist Church, to 1969. While Reverend Franklin continued to quietly support the civil rights movement after that date, ill health and legal troubles limited his participation, and his contributions after that date do not rise to the level of exceptional significance that would be required under Criteria Consideration G.

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in David Ritz, *Respect: The Life of Aretha Franklin* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014), 228.

<sup>64</sup> Herb Boyd, *Black Detroit* (New York: Harper Collins Press, 2017), 250.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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"Soul Bowl Set for June at Houston Astrodome." *The Journal News* (White Plains, NY), May 3, 1969, 12.

Titon, Jeff Todd. "Reverend C. L. Franklin: Black American Preacher-Poet." *Folklife Annual 1987*, American Folklife Center, 1988.

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*Wade in the Water* (radio series). National Public Radio, originally aired 1994,  
<https://www.npr.org/series/726103231/wade-in-the-water>.

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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**

**Acreege of Property** 0.326

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

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

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.368018 | Longitude: -83.104707 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

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**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |          |           |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

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

Lots 40 through 46 of Doran’s La Salle Boulevard Annex Subdivision, City of Detroit.

Legal Description: E LINWOOD 40 THRU 46 DORANS LA SALLE BLVD ANNEX SUB L39 P27 PLATS, W C R 10/118 142 X 100

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

The boundary includes the entire footprint of the building, which is built out to the lot lines. The legal description is obtained from the City of Detroit Parcel Viewer, <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/city-detroit-parcel-viewer>, for Parcel ID: 10007428.008, accessed December 22, 2020.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Saundra Little, Architect, and Ruth Mills, Senior Historian  
organization: Quinn Evans Architects  
street & number: 4219 Woodward Avenue, Suite 301  
city or town: Detroit state: Michigan zip code: 48201  
e-mail: rmills@quinnevans.com  
telephone: (313) 462-2550  
date: December 22, 2020

New Bethel Baptist Church  
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### 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.)

### 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: New Bethel Baptist Church  
City or Vicinity: Detroit  
County: Wayne County State: Michigan  
Photographer: Quinn Evans Architects  
Date Photographed: February 2019

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

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Exterior looking south  
0001 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Exterior looking southeast  
0002 of 0009

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Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Exterior looking east  
0003 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Sanctuary looking south  
0004 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Sanctuary looking north  
0005 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Lobby looking southeast  
0006 of 0009

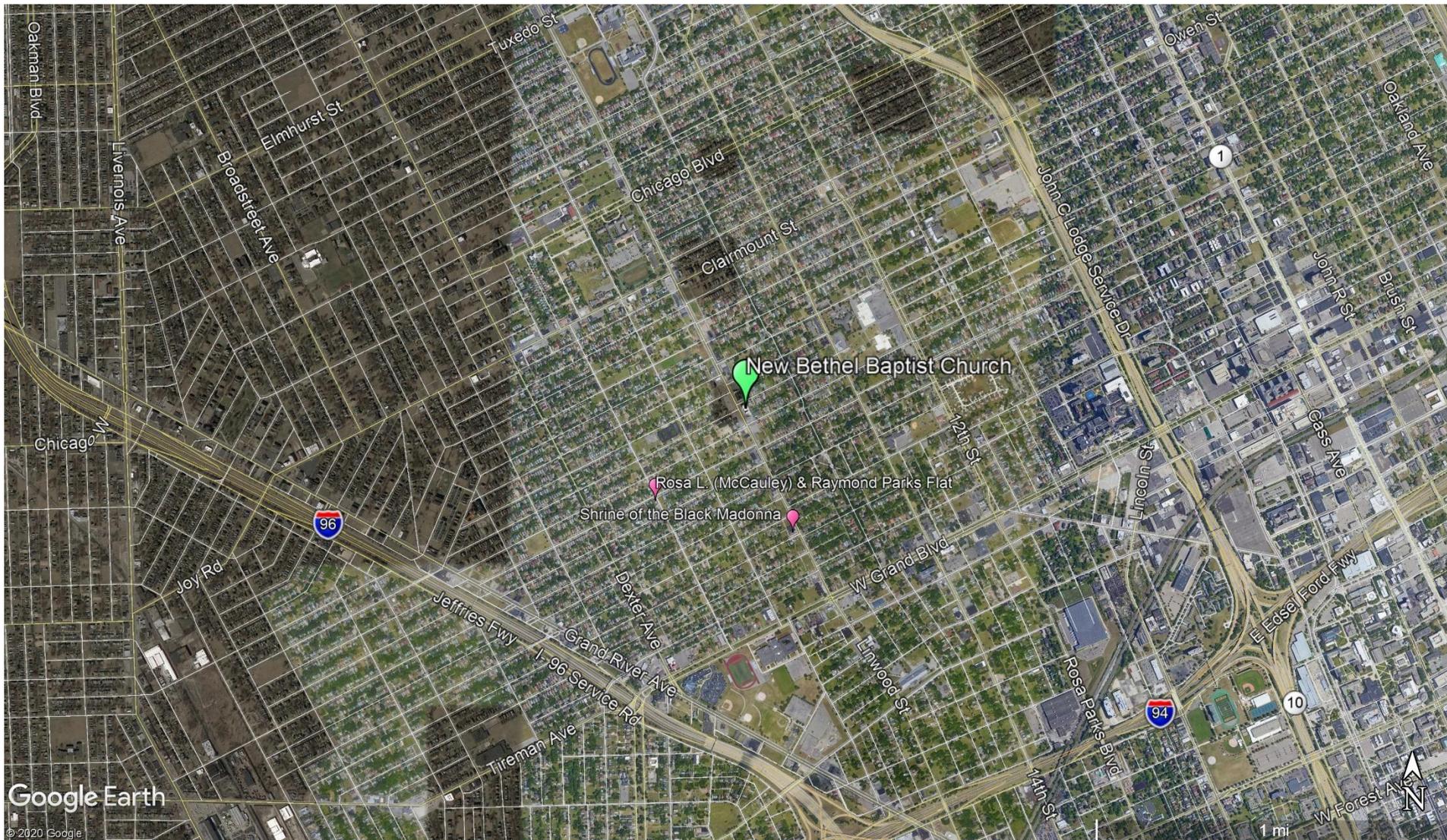
Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: History room, first floor looking west  
0007 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Dining room, first floor looking north  
0008 of 0009

Photographer: Quinn Evans  
Date Photographed: February 2019  
Description: Second floor landing looking southeast  
0009 of 0009

**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.



## New Bethel Baptist Church

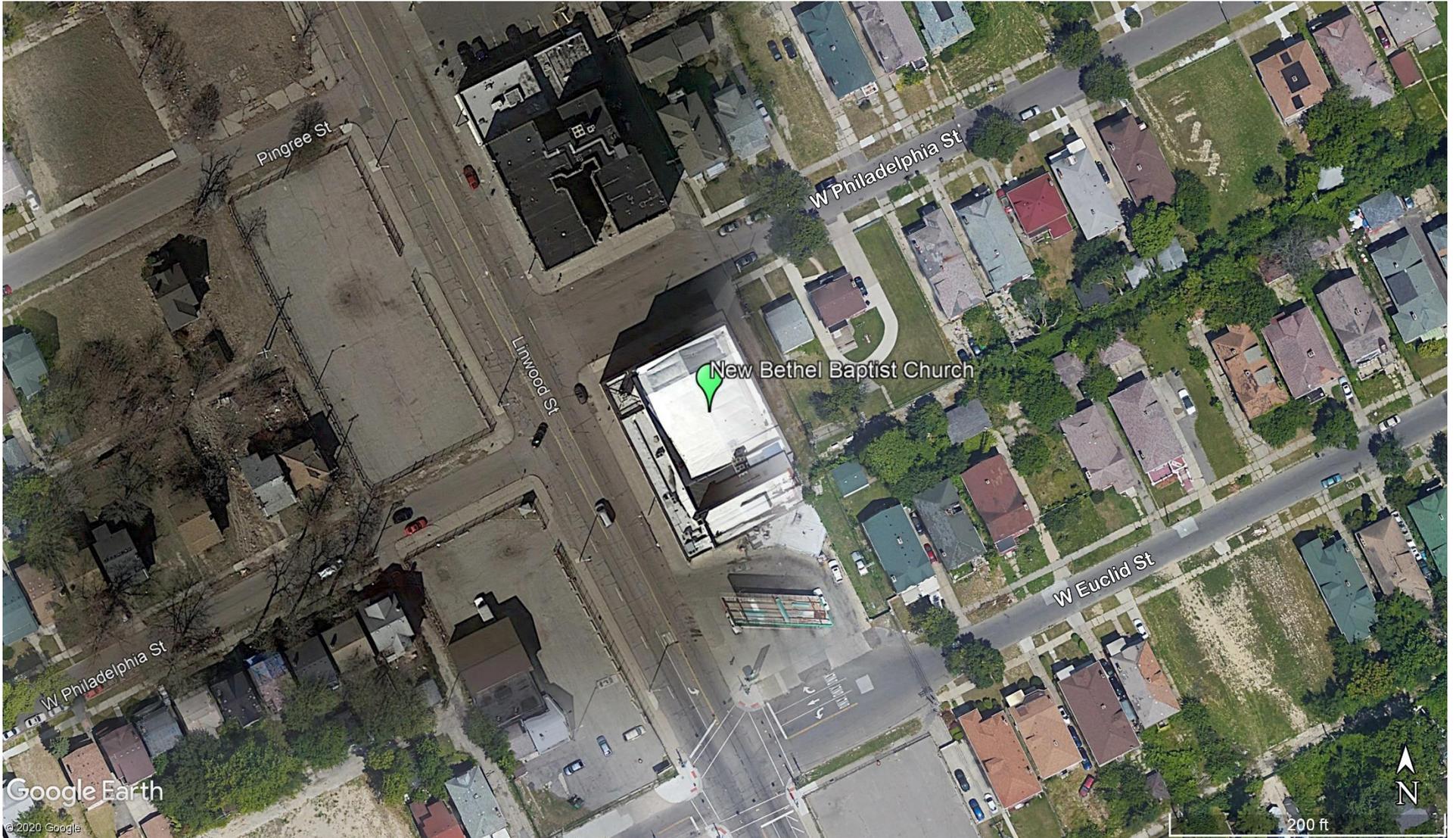
8430 Linwood Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.368018

Longitude: -83.104707

Map note: map depicts two properties (fuschia markers) related under the *Civil Rights Movement in Detroit, Michigan, 1900-1976*, MPDF to illustrate geographic relationship





## New Bethel Baptist Church

8430 Linwood Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.368018

Longitude: -83.104707





NEW BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0001



MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0002



NEW BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

8450



MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0003



ONE LORD  
ONE FAITH ONE BAPTIST

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2019  
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BAPTIST  
12644

MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0004



MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0005

**THE MISSION**

**EVANGELIZE THE LOST**  
 The mission is to seek the salvation of the lost by telling the Great Commission. (Mat. 28:18, Mark 16:15-16)

**EXALT GOD THROUGH WORSHIP**  
 It is the mission of SBC to glorify God in worship and to exalt Him through worship. (1st Cor. 14:26, 27, 33)

**EMPOWER & ENRICH GOD'S FAMILY**  
 All members and visitors of the church are to be equipped with the Word of God for their personal and family life. (1st Tim. 2:15, 2 Cor. 13:14)

**KEEP GOD'S PEOPLE FOR SERVICE**  
 Every aspect of the church is to be used by the Word of God for its responsibility to maintain the spiritual growth and discipleship. (Eph. 4:12, 13, 16, 17)

**THE VISION**

To see lost souls come to the knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

To fill up Christ through education, spiritual edification, social empowerment, productive public programs and any other means available.

To become a citadel of hope and center for service to lost, hurting and dying humanity without stigmatizing or ostracizing them.

To perpetuate, sustain and uphold Christian families and values through a comprehensive family ministry.

To be a Church that is committed to honoring God with the absolute rendering of His Talents and Offerings.

To serve in the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

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MI\_Wayne County\_New Bethel Baptist Church\_0008



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 12/28/2020      Date of Pending List: 1/21/2021      Date of 16th Day: 2/5/2021      Date of 45th Day: 2/11/2021      Date of Weekly List: 2/12/2021

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      2/8/2021 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

MARK A. BURTON  
PRESIDENT

Monday, December 22, 2020

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed files contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **New Bethel Baptist Church, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan**. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a  X  New Submission \_\_\_\_\_ Resubmission \_\_\_\_ Additional Documentation \_\_\_\_ Removal.

- 1  Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- 2  Locational maps (incl. with nomination file)
- 0  Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (incl. with nomination file)
- 1  Pieces of correspondence (incl. with nomination file)
- 9  Digital photographs (incl. with nomination file)
- \_\_\_\_ Other:

COMMENTS:

- \_\_\_\_ Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
- \_\_\_\_ This property has been approved under 36 CFR 67.
- \_\_\_\_ The enclosed owner objections constitute a majority of property owners.
- X  Other: This property is nominated under *The Civil Rights Movement in Detroit, Michigan, 1900-1976*, Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at (517) 335-9854 or walsht@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Martha MacFarlane-Faes  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

