

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Bethlehem Baptist Church**

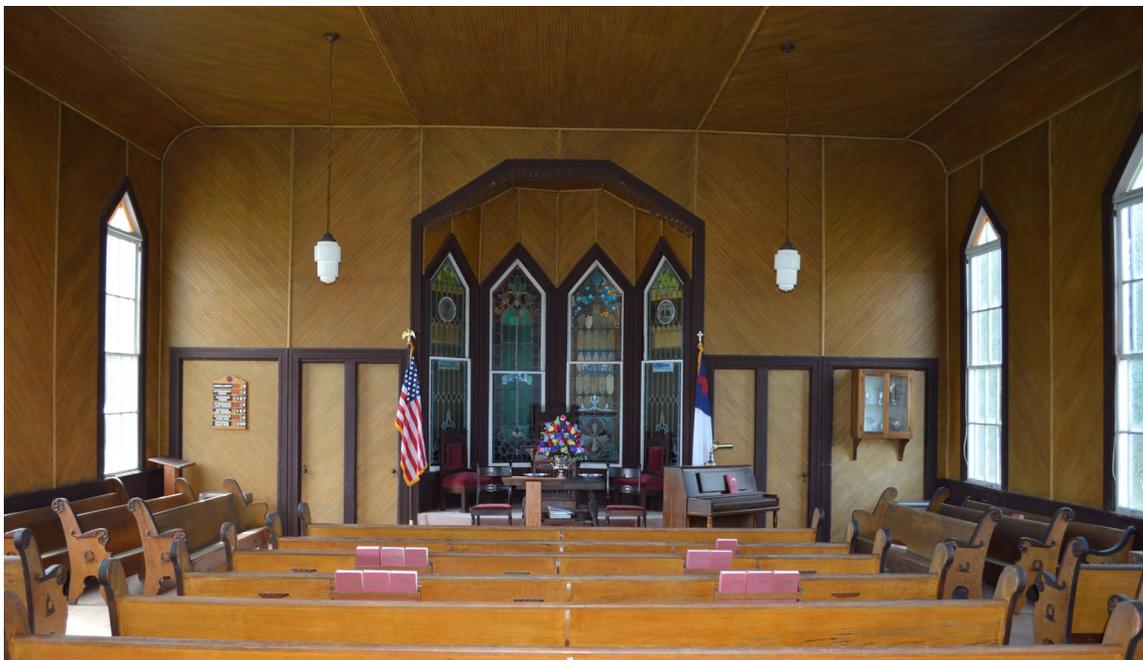
Bethlehem vicinity, Hertford County, HF0458, Listed 01/10/2019

Nomination by Michelle A. Michael

Photographs by Michelle A. Michael, September 2017



View of Bethlehem Baptist Church, looking southwest



Interior view of altar and sanctuary, looking southwest

**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: Bethlehem Baptist Church

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

**2. Location**

Street & number: 1024 NC 561 East (SW CNR NC 561 E and SR 1427)

City or town: Bethlehem State: NC County: Hertford 091

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

**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:

  A   B   X  C   D

<p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p><u>North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources</u></p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>  </u> meets <u>  </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

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 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religious/religious facility

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religious/religious facility

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Gothic Revival

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, Brick, Asphalt Shingles, Concrete Block

### 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

The Bethlehem Baptist Church sits prominently at an angle on an irregularly-shaped 1.13-acre parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection of North Carolina Highway 561 East and State Road 1427 in Bethlehem, an unincorporated community in rural Hertford County. It is approximately six miles east of the town of Ahoskie. The topography is flat. A driveway and parking area is in front of the church building. The northeast part of the parcel is covered with grass while the remainder of the parcel behind the church building is heavily wooded. Directly southwest of the church is a circa 1974 brick Ranch-style house that once served as the parsonage. It has recently been sold out of church ownership and is no longer associated with the church property. Agricultural fields make up all three opposing corners placing more emphasis on the church's stature in the landscape.

The picturesque church building is an intact example of a 1902 rural eastern North Carolina church. The three-bay wide, gable-front, frame church with central entrance is flanked by two triangular pointed-arch windows. The ends of the eaves have a slight flare. The gables and portions of the steeple are beadboard installed in a v-shaped pattern which is repeated on the

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exterior and interior of the building. The remainder of the siding is weatherboard. Side elevations show the church to be five bays deep delineated by triangular-arched windows. Clear, ripple glass, rather than stained glass is contained within the wood frames. The roofline is surmounted by a two-tier steeple. The building is eligible for listing under Criterion C for architecture and possesses a high degree of architectural integrity in regard to its location, setting, feeling, association, materials, workmanship, and design.

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### **Narrative Description**

Bethlehem Baptist Church is sited on a prominent corner in the rural, relatively flat, agricultural landscape of Hertford County, North Carolina. The church stands at an angle, facing northeast, on an irregularly-shaped 1.13-acre parcel. The northeast part of the parcel is grass while the rest of the parcel is heavily wooded. An unpaved drive and parking area are located in front of the church. Next door to the southwest is the former church parsonage, built in 1974. This separate parcel was sold out of church ownership on March 20, 2018, and is not part of the National Register nomination. As a standard brick Ranch-style residence it does not hold exceptional significance that would contribute to or add to the significance of the church building. The other three corners of the intersection are all active agricultural land.

Bethlehem Baptist Church is a gable-front, wood-frame church building that stands one-tall story capped by a two-tier steeple. The symmetrical gable-front façade has a central, projecting three-bay entrance vestibule composed of a central double-leaf door surmounted by two-light transom and triangular pointed-arch. The wooden entry doors each feature six panels: small at the top, large in the middle, and medium sized at the bottom. Tall and narrow windows, with similar triangle-arched windows with molded surrounds to match, flank the entrance. Each window is composed of two, four-light sashes of frosted glass surrounded by narrow strips of clear glass and capped by two triangular-shaped panes framed by strips of color glass. Plain weatherboard sheaths the first floor of the façade of the projecting portion. The gable is marked by corner posts and gable returns supported by a pair of decorative brackets on each side of the façade, marking a change in the façade sheathing from weatherboard to a v-shaped pattern of beadboard. An elongated diamond-shaped motif covers the original diamond-shaped window opening and is centered in the gable. This change was made at an unknown date. Gentle flares of the roof on the vestibule portion, add flourish to the architectural charm of the building. The main body of the church is sheathed with weatherboard and serves as the backdrop to the projecting entrance vestibule. The vestibule is blind on both side elevations. A concrete block foundation supports the church and an asphalt shingle roof protects it.

An ornate, two-part, steeple crowns the building. The first tier sits partially atop the projecting gable of the vestibule and the main body of the church. It is four-sided marked by corner posts and triangular pointed-arch ventilators on the side elevations. The front of the first tier is also a gable roof with flared eaves, molded cornice and paired decorative brackets, mimicking those on the façade of the vestibule. The lower portion of the first-tier façade is flush vertical sheathing under the eaves while above is beadboard laid in a v-shaped pattern around a framed diamond-shaped motif. Weatherboard sheathes the other three sides of this portion. A second rectangular-shaped tier sits atop the first and is crowned by a four-sided enclosed gable roof. The sides of the

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second tier are sheathed in beadboard forming a v-shape which is repeated in the gables. All sides of both tiers feature delicate decorative brackets and exposed eaves. A simple wooden finial with a bulb-shaped base and spire top is placed at the top of the second tier.

The sides of the building are five-bays deep. The open eaves are marked by a molded cornice and flat fascia. Decorative brackets are centered over each of the windows and support the eaves. Five bays are delineated by the tall, narrow, triangular, pointed-arch windows, matching those at the front vestibule. Each window, like the ones on the front elevation, is composed of two, four-light sashes of frosted glass surrounded by narrow strips of clear glass, capped by two triangular-shaped panes framed by strips of colored glass. The rear of the early church building is visible at the second floor and shows four, evenly-spaced, six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows along the back.

A one-story, wood-frame addition with very low-hip roof runs along the back of the building and perpendicular to it. It is sheathed with weatherboard, while the foundation is concrete block and the roof is asphalt shingle. This portion was added in 1970 for classroom, restroom and kitchen use. The addition extends beyond the sides of the church so that a single door is visible on either side of the main church building. Both doors are two panel with six-light engaged transom. The addition is three-bays deep. The window closest to the front on both sides are larger than the other two windows. They are all six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash windows. Three, six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows also run along the rear elevation of the addition. Only the first floor of the rear elevation is hidden by the addition, the second-floor windows and gable are still visible. Two original exterior doors are extant and provide access to the addition from the historic church building.

The entrance vestibule is accessed by the central, wooden, double-leaf door. It is a narrow space, six-feet deep and almost twenty-five feet long. A wainscot with vertical beadboard and molded chair rail runs along the perimeter of the room. The side walls are sheathed with horizontal-laid beadboard while the front and back walls are laid in a v-pattern. The ceiling is approximately fifteen feet tall and is also sheathed with beadboard in a straight-laid pattern. Two, four-panel, wooden, side-aisle doors lead to the sanctuary and are capped with two-part transoms of two-light rectangular transom capped by a triangular-shaped transom to match the one on the front entrance. The floor is linoleum.

The sanctuary is an intact architectural composition. The doors open to two aisles that divide the floorplan into three sections of pews. The pews are all original pine, faux painted to resemble oak. Each pew has a wood-carved floral ornament stained a darker color applied to each side. The floors of the sanctuary are unfinished heart pine, which may have historically been waxed. The hardwood floor from the original 1858 church was reused in the 1902 church. Though the stoves are gone, the brick flues remain in place as a reminder of this earlier source of heat. Electricity was introduced to the church building 1944 and the original Art Deco, milk-glass light fixtures still illuminate the interior. The church was damaged by a lightning strike in 1948 and repairs and renovations were made in 1954. These included refinishing the floors and installing carpet in the aisles, repainting, refinishing the walls, and repairing the classrooms and roof (Bazemore, p. 6). The ceiling is sheathed in narrow beadboard with curved or coved corners

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marking the junctions of the northwest and southeast walls. The walls have a vertical beadboard wainscot that has been painted or stained a dark brown and the walls above are varnished, shellaced, or lightly stained beadboard laid in a v-pattern. Narrow raised strips of molding separate the v-shaped sections.

A polygonal-shaped apse is located at the southwest end of the sanctuary, behind the raised alter. The "v"-shaped wall sheathing pattern continues on the walls and ceiling of the apse. The apse is recessed in the rear wall of the sanctuary and is framed by a molded wood surround with a border at the top of Eastlake-style trim. The back wall of the apse contains four stained-glass windows with the following inscriptions: "In loving memory of Abraham Thomas and his wife Nancy"; "Mrs. Anne Wardmoore, 1834-1901"; "In loving memory of M.J. wife of A.B. Adkins, 1841-1901; and "J.O. Hoggard and wife Elizabeth." The windows are executed with colored pebble glass, trimmed in white, and surrounded with a molded surround stained or painted in dark brown.

The rear wall of the sanctuary has a horizontal band of molding that sets apart the lower half of the wall. This lower portion contains two narrow doors on each side of the apse that lead to the rear three classrooms and stair hall in the church building. The doors are finished with the beadboard to blend with the remaining sanctuary walls. The doors only make up half of the wall space. On the east side is a wider panel that is a slide-up door so that larger items can be moved in and out of the sanctuary or classroom. On the west side of the apse, the space is finished in beadboard, but it is a solid wall that holds a display case of historically important items, including a communion set and early bible.

Behind the doors in the rear portion of the original church building is an off-center stair hall flanked by three classrooms. The classrooms have hardwood floors, and beadboard walls and ceilings similar to the sanctuary except they are painted off-white. There are two classrooms on the southeast end and one in the northwest end. A pocket door separates the stair hall from the northwest classroom. Four-panel doors with two-light transoms are at the back of each classroom and lead to the rear addition. The stair in the historic building leads to the second floor and four small classrooms. The stained-glass windows of the apse are visible in the stair hall and in the interior classrooms on the second floor. The second floor has wood floors, painted beadboard sheathing, also in a v-shaped pattern, throughout. At the top of the main stair there is a landing that then splits to the right and left with short sets of steps to the classrooms. There are two classrooms on each side of the stair hall. The second-floor space is efficiently used by fitting the smaller interior odd-shaped classrooms on either side of the stair hall. The exterior flanking classrooms are larger and the coved ceiling evident in the sanctuary continues in these rooms. The windows are all framed by flat surrounds with splayed lintels. Doors have five-horizontal panels.

The one-story rear addition which runs perpendicular to the main building contains men and women's restrooms, a small kitchen, and three classrooms. It is finished with wood floors, acoustical tile ceilings, and paneled walls.

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**Integrity Statement**

The Bethlehem Baptist Church is a remarkably intact vernacular expression of the Gothic Revival style in rural North Carolina. It remains in its original location at a rural crossroads intersection, surrounded by its historic setting of agricultural fields and maintains a feeling that that is reminiscent of it when it was constructed. The building maintains its association as an active religious facility and church. Lastly, it retains its distinctive original materials, workmanship and design both on the exterior and interior of the building. There have been only minor changes made to the original church building. The only alteration of note is the 1970 1-story addition to the rear elevation, constructed to provide classrooms, kitchen, and bathrooms. This type of addition was a common occurrence as church buildings adapted to changing needs of their congregations. The addition is subservient and small scale, and therefore does not detract from the overall integrity of the church. The Bethlehem Baptist Church expresses an exceptional degree of architectural integrity and is one of the most intact church buildings of the vernacular Gothic Revival churches in Hertford County, North Carolina.

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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.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1902  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1902  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Hofler, Willis, builder  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

The Bethlehem Baptist Church, built in 1902, located in rural Hertford County, North Carolina is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, significant at the local level for architecture. It is a fine example of rural Gothic Revival religious architecture in eastern North Carolina. The applied decorative detail on both the exterior and interior of this well-preserved, rural frame church exhibits a high level of local craftsmanship. It also meets Criteria Consideration A, as this religious property derives its primary significance from its architectural distinction within the context of rural eastern North Carolina. The building maintains an exceptional degree of architectural integrity in regard to location, setting, association, feeling, design, workmanship, and materials that conveys its architectural significance from the date of construction.

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

**Historical Background:**

The prevalent denomination of Christianity within Hertford County is Baptist, which gained popularity at the end of the eighteenth century and remains dominant today (Van den Hurk, p. 73). Built in 1902, Bethlehem Baptist Church is the third church building on this site for the Bethlehem Baptist Church congregation. The church was organized in 1835 by members of nearby Ahoskie Baptist Church when Abraham Thomas donated two acres of land for which to erect the first church building. The Chowan Association admitted Bethlehem Baptist into membership in 1835. "The first messengers were W. Hill, A. Thomas, and James L. Grimes" (Bazemore, p. 1). In 1851, Reverend William P. Britton, Jr. was Bethlehem's pastor and during that year he baptized "forty-one white persons and ten colored" (Ibid, p. 2). It is also during this time that the first mention of Sunday school is in the records with Augustus Bass, Sr. as superintendent (Ibid).

Construction began on the second Bethlehem Baptist Church in 1858 behind the original church building and had four doors to the sanctuary (Ibid, p. 2). It was completed in 1859. As is tradition, women sat on the right side and men sat on the left, while enslaved people sat in the second-floor gallery accessible from an outside stair.

Under the leadership of Reverend L. M. Curtis, the third and current church building was built at the same location. Willis Hofler of Gates County was hired to build "a nice, handsome, workmanlike building" similar to the Connaritsa Church for \$375.00 and to be completed by fall of 1902 (Ibid, p. 5). Connaritsa Church was located in nearby Bertie County and is no longer extant. Willis Hofler was listed as a house carpenter living in Gatesville in Gates County according to the 1900 US Federal Census. The hardwood floor from the 1858 church was reused in the 1902 church. Electric lights were added in 1944. In 1948, a lightning strike damaged the church building, including the steeple. Repairs included repainting, refinishing the walls, and repairing the classrooms and roof. In 1954, the floors were refinished, and carpet was installed in

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the aisles. It was at this time that the steeple lost its third tier and was not replaced (Bazemore, p. 6).

In 1970, a single-story, full-width, hipped-roof addition was constructed at the rear of the church. This addition provided restrooms, a small kitchen, and classrooms. Adjacent to the church on the same lot, the congregation built a one-story parsonage in 1974. Due to a decline in the church membership in recent years, a parsonage is no longer needed for the church. That parcel with the house was recently separated and sold out of church ownership on March 20, 2018, reducing the size of the church lot to 1.13 acres (DB799/Page 10).

The congregation has waned in recent years and is currently down to four full-time members. They no longer have services or a regular pastor but two of the members do continue to meet on Sundays for Bible study. Bethlehem has suffered from the loss of population that is plaguing rural eastern North Carolina.

### **Architectural Context**

The Bethlehem Baptist Church, built in 1902, located in rural Hertford County, North Carolina is significant at the local level for Criterion C in the area of architecture. It is a fine example of rural Gothic Revival religious architecture in eastern North Carolina. The applied decorative detail on both the exterior and interior of this well-preserved, rural frame church exhibits a high level of local craftsmanship.

Nationally, vernacular church design was described by overall form and organization of interior space. The gable-end church and the center-steeple church were two of the most popular vernacular church types constructed in the United States. Both church types typically had the following exterior features in common: single-story, gable-front roof, wood framing with wood clapboard siding, central entry doors, round headed or Gothic arch windows, and symmetrical fenestration. The difference in the two types was evident in the steeple and gable features. The center-steeple type was dominated by a central tower, often square and pierced with a window or louvered vent, generally topped by a lantern and/or belfry, and a spire terminating with a finial. The tower, either built into the wall or standing separate from it, was about half the height of the entire building with the lantern/belfry and spire together equally proportioned to the tower. The rest of the façade wall was typically modestly decorated. The gable-end church lacked a tower, presenting a simple gabled-end wall. The gable-end church had a short steeple (or no steeple) with the lantern and spire placed behind the gable end. In this form, the gable-end was often more decorative, sometimes including shingles, brackets, stickwork, decorative motifs or gable returns (Gottfried and Jennings, p. 268-270). These common forms could be adapted with a variety of nationally popular building styles, most commonly, Gothic Revival and Colonial Revival styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through decorative elements of the style applied to the common form.

The interior arrangement of space was also important to the overall building design. Two possible options include the center-aisle plan, with one center aisle leading to the pulpit, or side-aisle plan, with three blocks of pews, a center block flanked by side aisles, and two narrow outer

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blocks of pews near the long side walls. The center steeple church type usually had a side-aisle arrangement, while both were common in the gable-end church (Ibid). These design elements were considered by builders and congregations when planning their new church buildings and are seen in rural areas and small communities in eastern North Carolina

North Carolina is well known for its religious roots and this is especially evident in predominately agricultural eastern North Carolina. This region of the state has a few urban centers, including Rocky Mount, Greenville, Wilson, Wilmington, and New Bern. The rural population in eastern North Carolina is scattered throughout small towns and in crossroad communities, which often established at least one church over time. Many, like the congregation at Bethlehem Baptist Church, which was founded in 1835, built more than one building on the original site. New church construction was often driven by the need for additional space as congregations grew. In response to the need for additional space, churches often chose to rebuild rather than add on to existing buildings (Van Den Hurk, p, 73). More established congregations often replaced the earlier, simpler church buildings with ones that were influenced by nationally popular stylistic trends, particularly the Gothic Revival style.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Gothic Revival style became the most prevalent among newly constructed church buildings in North Carolina. Catherine Bishir explains in *North Carolina Architecture*,

Although plain buildings remained the norm for many small congregations, during the late nineteenth century the Gothic Revival style entered small-town and rural church architecture and became the most popular style for churches of all denominations. So universal was its acceptance, in fact, that most stylized renditions of its elements – a pointed arch, a triangular headed door or window, a tower – became standard indicators of a church (Bishir, p. 370-371).

In Hertford County, like other counties in the eastern part of the state, rural Gothic Revival-style churches with either center-steeple forms or gable-end forms were prevalent. Bethlehem Baptist Church, though one of several in the county, remains a fine example of rural Gothic Revival religious architecture, exhibiting a high level of local craftsmanship in the applied decorative detail on both the exterior and interior. In fact, in the *Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Hertford County, North Carolina*, Bethlehem Baptist Church is said to be “perhaps the most intact example” of an historic Baptist Church in the county (Van Den Hurk, p, 58). Bethlehem Baptist Church’s form displays a hybrid of the center-steeple and gable-end form, with a projecting gable-front vestibule with decorative details on the gable-end and a tower-like steeple set back from the vestibule, yet projecting from the main façade. The interior layout features a side aisle plan. The church, constructed by local house carpenter, Willis Hofler, is most notable for its elaborate detailing in the vestibule’s gable-end, two-tier steeple elevations, and throughout the church’s interior, executed in a v-shape pattern in period beadboard. The remainder of the exterior features weatherboard siding. This level of detail is not commonly seen in other rural frame churches in Hertford County, either due to loss of historic features, covering of historic features with vinyl or synthetic siding, or lack of construction in the first place. Gothic Revival style details are evident in the triangular pointed-arch transoms above the central entry door and

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two doors leading from the vestibule to the sanctuary, as well as the triangular pointed-arch windows throughout. Clear, ripple glass is contained within the wood frames of the exterior windows, while the back wall of the apse contains four stained-glass windows. Other notable details include the delicate decorative wooden brackets and exposed eaves at the rooflines and all sides of the steeple at both tiers. A simple wooden finial with a bulb-shaped base and spire top is placed at the top of the second tier of the steeple. The church was modeled after Connaritsa Baptist Church in nearby Bertie County which is no longer extant. The form and window openings are similar based on a documentary photograph of the Bertie County church but the detail of the beadboard sheathing, flared eaves, and substantial steeple design are uncommon for designs in this rural county.

The exterior and interior remain remarkably intact with only minor changes made since the 1902 construction. On the exterior, the diamond-shaped window in the gable has been covered or infilled but the date is unknown. The most substantial change is the removal of the third tier from the steeple after a lightning strike in 1948. However, this does not diminish the significance of the remaining steeple design or its contribution to the building's composition. The interior finishes are completely intact except for the removal of the two original wood stoves that used to flank the sanctuary. Though the stoves are gone, the brick flues remain in place as a reminder of this earlier source of heat. The only other change is the one-story rear addition, which housed classrooms, kitchen, and bathrooms. This is a typical change in rural church buildings to accommodate the needs of growing congregations. The addition is subservient and small scale.

There are several examples throughout Hertford County, like Bethlehem Baptist Church, that display the Gothic Revival style applied to the gable-front form or center-steeple form. At the opposite end of Hertford County to the north at the intersection of US 258 and State Road 1316 in the community of Como is the Buckhorn Baptist Church. Built in 1913, Buckhorn is also an impressive example of early twentieth-century Gothic Revival-style, wood frame, rural religious architecture. However, it is a completely different interpretation of the style than Bethlehem Baptist Church. Buckhorn Baptist Church is grand in scale which is exaggerated by an enormous entrance tower centered on the façade and capped by a pinnacled crown. It also has large, Gothic-arched stained-glass windows incorporated into the gable wall dormers on the side elevations. The interior of Buckhorn Baptist Church has beadboard ceilings and wainscoting but not as extensively detailed as the interior treatment of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Menola Baptist Church is another rural, wood frame, Gothic Revival style church with similar features to Bethlehem Baptist Church. Located at 938 Menola-St. John's Road in the western Hertford County crossroads community of Menola, the church was completed in 1911 and features Gothic Revival details including Gothic Revival pointed-arch windows and door transoms and an entry tower, although its weatherboard siding has been covered in recent years by vinyl siding. Unlike the Bethlehem Baptist Church, its form is a modified Akron Plan, meaning that it features a cross gable or gable and ell with the steeple placed in the crook of the two wings. The interior is a large rectangular space with folding doors to divide the spaces for use by sanctuary and Sunday school rooms. The walls are plastered with a wainscot using narrow vertical-board sheathing. The ceiling has a decorative pattern composed of narrow boards placed diagonally within separate squares. The ceiling pattern shares similarity with the interior finish of

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Bethlehem Baptist Church but overall it is a very different plan than that at Bethlehem Baptist Church. According to the Hertford County Survey, "Whereas, the Menola Baptist Church did not follow the Akron Plan in every detail, it clearly marked a departure from the traditional church forms seen across Hertford County up to then" (Van Den Hurk, p, 100).

There are several other gable-front, wood frame, vernacular religious buildings with Gothic Revival-style elements in Hertford County. Newsome Grove Baptist Church, Earlys Baptist Church, Holly Springs Baptist Church, and St. John Baptist Church are all frame, vernacular interpretations of the simple Gothic Revival, with a central entry with variations of the gable-front or center-steeple form. Newsome Grove Baptist Church at 433 Newsome Grove Road in Ahoskie is frame with a later brick veneer. All others have either been partially or fully encased in vinyl siding which has diminished the architectural integrity and obscured the details of the buildings. Earlys Baptist Church, at 310 S. Early Station Road in Ahoskie, is a gable-front form with a small steeple behind the gable roof and an attached gable-front porch supported by square posts. Gothic Revival influence is displayed in the stained-glass windows and entrance door transoms, which have triangular pointed-arches. The steeple at Holly Springs Baptist Church, located in Cofield at 703 River Road, is a simple four-sided form with conical cap surmounting a central projecting entry tower. The Gothic Revival style is subtly expressed in the triangular pointed-arch stained glass windows throughout. St. John's Baptist Church, located at 1644 NC 461 in St. John, like Bethlehem Baptist Church, has a steeple incorporated into a projecting gable-front vestibule wing, although it has an attached gable-front porch. Each gable projection is smaller in scale than the one behind creating a stepped form and adding architectural interest to the otherwise plain building. The steeple is also a simple two-tiered rectangular shape with a short conical roof which is slightly flared. The church also features Gothic Revival pointed-arch windows throughout. Interior views of the churches are not available, and therefore it is unknown whether their interiors remain intact or whether they have a comparable level of decorative detail to Bethlehem Baptist Church. As compared to other local similar churches, Bethlehem Baptist Church, with its original wood sheathing and decorative beadboard inside and out remains one of the best representative examples and most intact of the rural frame Gothic Revival style churches in Hertford County.

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Hertford County, NC  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Bazemore, Helen P. "Bethlehem Baptist Church, Route 4, Ahoskie, North Carolina," unpublished typescript, May 19, 1985.

Bishir, Catherine W. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1991

Bishir, Catherine W. and Michael Southern, *A Guidebook to Eastern North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1995.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Buildings and Interiors, 1870-1960*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009.

Hertford County Register of Deeds, Ahoskie, NC

Hertford County Tax Records, Ahoskie, NC

North Carolina Death Certificates, North Carolina Archives

United States Federal Census, Gates, County, North Carolina, 1900

van den Hurk, Jeroen with Ansley Wegner, *Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Hertford County, North Carolina*, Tarboro, NC, 2011.

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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:

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Hertford County, NC  
County and State

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** HF0458

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** 1.13 acres +/-

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: 36.277325 Longitude: -76.885517

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**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:

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Hertford County, NC  
County and State

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.) The property that encompasses the Bethlehem Baptist Church is that owned by the church according to the Hertford County, NC tax records and referenced by tax pin number 6922-36-1546 and located at the southwest corner of Hwy 561 and SR 1427 containing 1.13 acres more or less.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) This boundary encompasses only the historic site of the church building and the land associated with Bethlehem Baptist Church. Historically, two acres were deeded to the church. The adjacent property of the 1974 parsonage building was subdivided and sold in March of 2018 and is no longer part of the Bethlehem Church Property. The remaining acreage is the remaining acreage associated with the church property.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michelle A. Michael, Architectural Historian and Consultant  
organization: Bethlehem Baptist Church  
street & number: 204 Woodburn Road  
city or town: Raleigh state: NC zip code: 27605  
e-mail historybydesign@aol.com  
telephone: 910-257-3047  
date: August 28, 2018

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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.)

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Hertford County, NC  
County and State

## 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: Bethlehem Baptist Church

City or Vicinity: Bethlehem

County: Hertford

State: NC

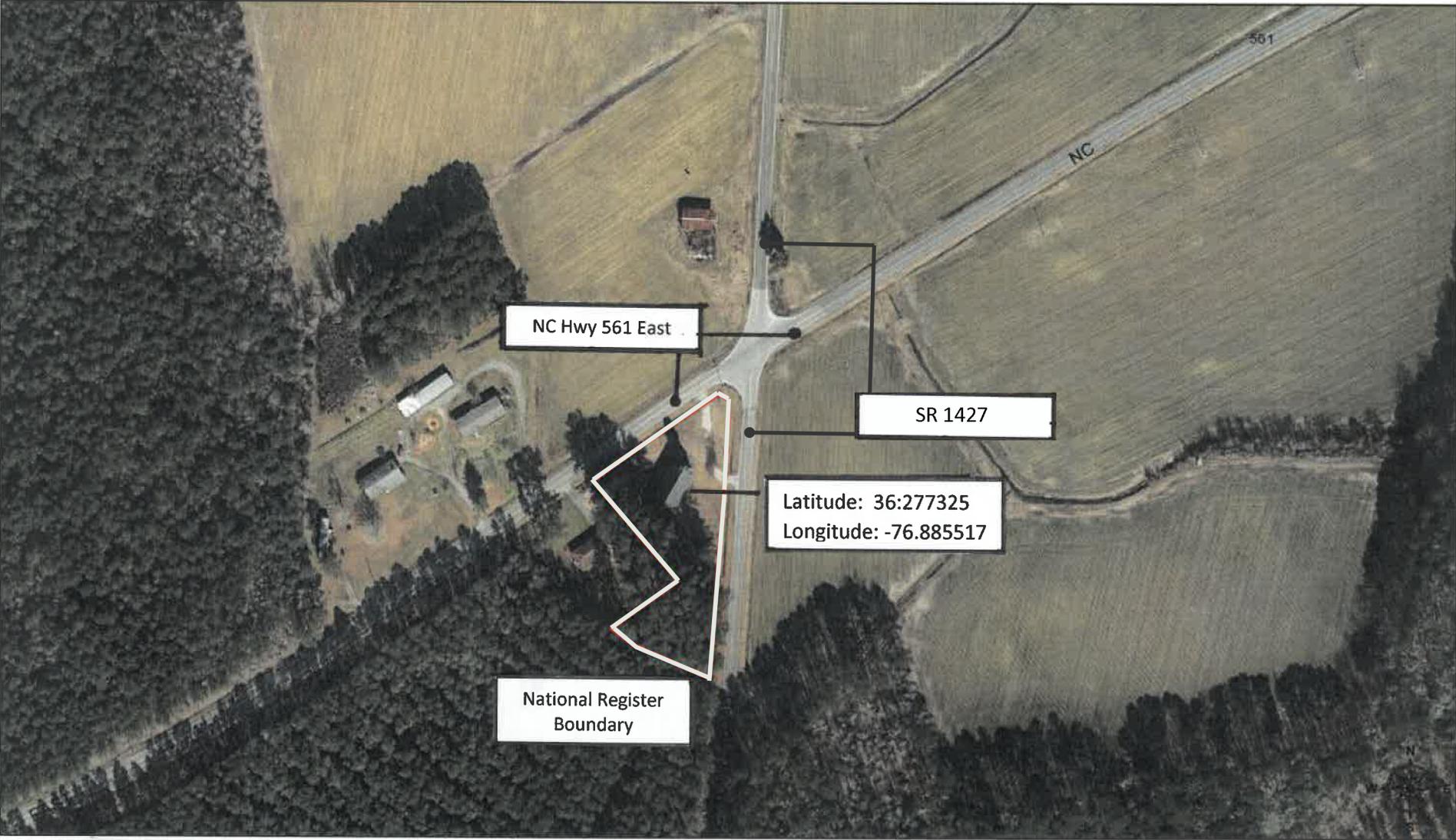
Photographer: Michelle A. Michael

Date Photographed: September 23, 2017

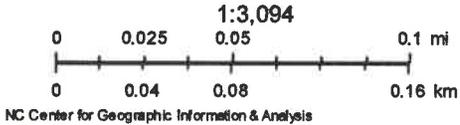
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1) View of Bethlehem Baptist Church looking southwest.
- 2) View of the vestibule looking west.
- 3) Oblique view of Bethlehem Baptist Church, northeast corner.
- 4) Oblique view of Bethlehem Baptist Church, southeast corner.
- 5) View of west side elevation looking east.
- 6) Interior View of Alter and Sanctuary looking southwest.
- 7) Interior View of Sanctuary looking northeast.
- 8) Interior View of stairhall looking southwest.
- 9) Interior View of easternmost first floor classroom.
- 10) Interior view of hall in addition looking east.
- 11) Interior view of second floor stair looking east.
- 12) Interior view of easternmost second floor classroom.

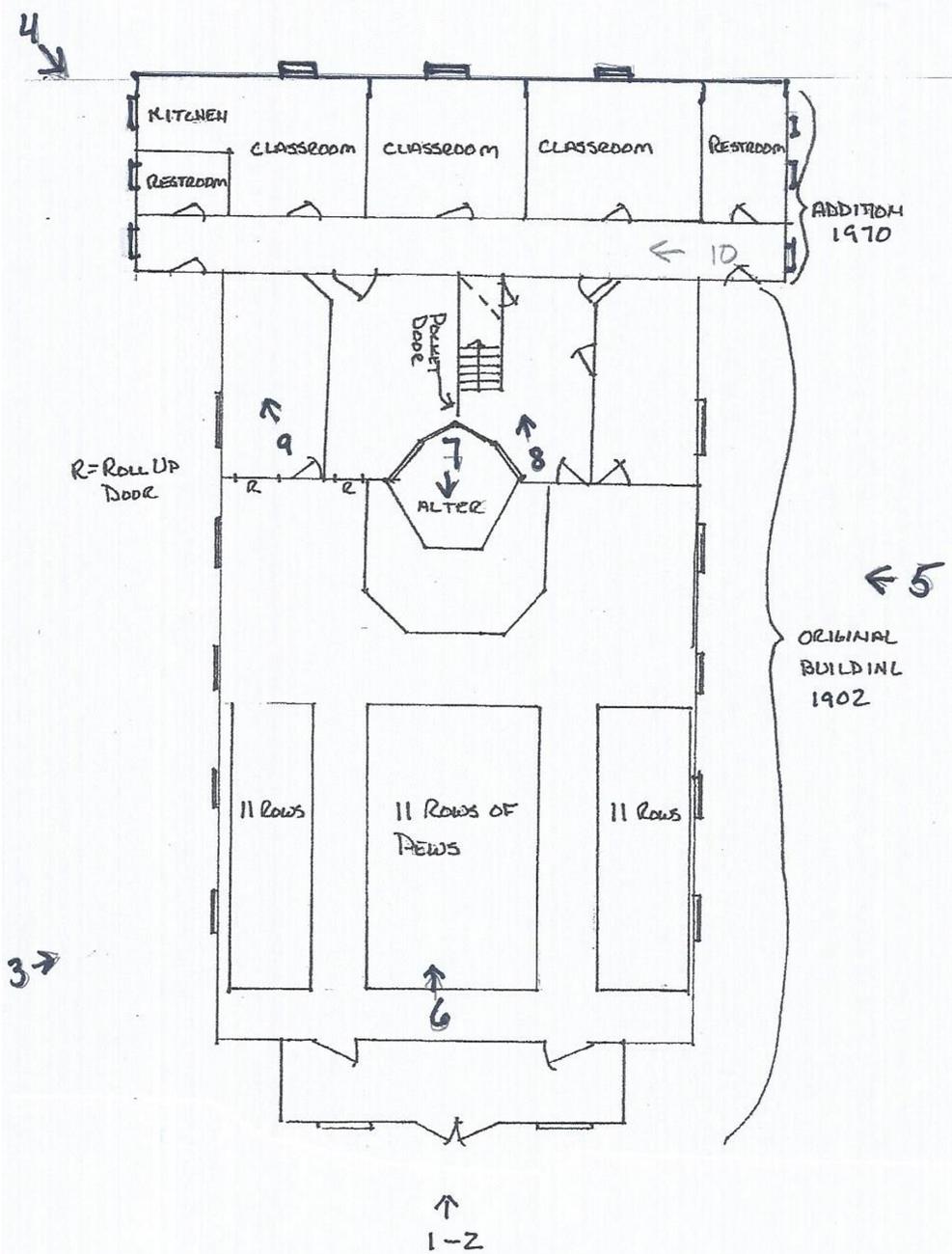
# Bethlehem Baptist Church, Hertford Co., NC



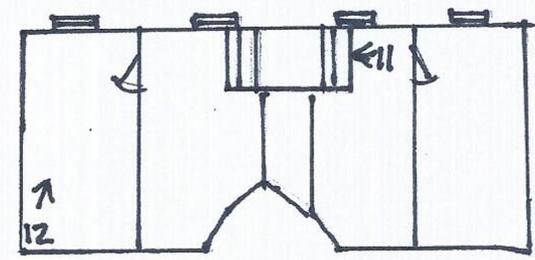
National Register Boundary Map  
Bethlehem Baptist Church  
1024 NC 561 East  
Bethlehem, Hertford County, NC



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



First and Second Floor Plans

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
1024 NC 561 East  
Bethlehem, Hertford County, NC