

WAKE COUNTY, NC 27  
LAURA M RIDDICK  
REGISTER OF DEEDS  
PRESENTED & RECORDED ON  
09/10/2015 09:05:35

*Rtn to:*  
*City Clerk's office*  
*City of Raleigh*  
*P.O. Box 590*  
*Ral, NC 27602-0590*

BOOK:016147 PAGE:00068 - 00073

**ORDINANCE NO. (2015) 472**

AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING THE GETHSEMANE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE PLANNING JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, A HISTORIC LANDMARK

**WHEREAS**, the property located at 501 S. Person Street, Raleigh, NC, is owned by Phuc Tran; and

**WHEREAS**, the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina authorized the creation of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission for the City of Raleigh and otherwise provided for the preservation of certain historic sites and buildings by the passage of Part 3C, Chapter 160A, Article 19 of the North Carolina General Statutes; and

**WHEREAS**, the Raleigh Historic Development Commission has made an investigation and recommended the following property be designated a historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources has made an analysis and recommendation that the following property be designated a historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, on the 7th day of July, 2015, a joint public hearing was held in the Council Chamber of the Avery C. Upchurch Municipal Complex, Raleigh, before the City Council of the City of Raleigh and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission to determine whether the hereinafter described property should be designated a historic landmark; and

**WHEREAS**, all requirements of Part 3C, Chapter 160A, Article 19 of the North Carolina General Statutes, preceding the adoption of this ordinance, have been complied with.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA THAT:**

**Section 1.** The property designated as Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church, in the planning jurisdiction of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, be and is declared a Raleigh Historic Landmark. Said property being more particularly described as follows:

The property located at 501 S. Person Street, Raleigh, NC, owned by Phuc Tran, that property described in deed book 14611, page 2638 recorded in Wake County Registry, comprising approximately .12 acres.

**Section 2.** Those elements of the property that are integral to its historical, prehistorical, architectural, archaeological and/or cultural significance or any combination thereof are as follows:

The c. 1922 one-story building and the approximately .12 acre upon which it sits. The concrete block church with a front gabled roof and lower, short, side-gabled wings that give the building's overall form the appearance of incorporating a transept at the rear—was the first Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church built in Raleigh.

The church is architecturally significant for its method of construction—unreinforced concrete blocks decorated with quartz pieces. Constructed in 1922, the simply detailed Gothic Revival style church building is one of three churches within the East Raleigh-South Park National Register Historic District to retain its historic integrity. The church is also culturally significant as the first SDA church, black or white, established in Raleigh.

Homemade decorative concrete-block construction reached its prime between the 1900s and 1930s. The building material's adaptability to different styles, its strength and durability, and affordability made it very popular and an ideal choice. Widely available block making machines made it easy for builders — homeowners, local contractors, and in Gethsemane's case, congregation members — to make blocks on site. After the concrete set up somewhat, mortar was poured into the remaining inch and one to six dozen pieces of quartz were pressed into the mortar by hand. Oral tradition holds that congregants helped apply quartz to the blocks. These quartz pieces varied in size, depth, and color, giving the new church building a decorative finish.

The front elevation of the Gethsemane SDA Church is composed of three bays and faces westward onto South Person Street. Originally, the church was built with a tower, characteristic of its Gothic Revival style in the center of the front-facing gable on the westward elevation. Today, the tower is gone, removed at an unknown date, cut off just five rows of concrete block above the top of the gothic arched window and double doors.

The building sits on a flat, corner lot at the northwest intersection of East Cabarrus and South Person Streets. The lot's landscaping is limited to bushes that grow along the north and west sections of a chain link fence that surrounds the property and scattered vegetation. The latter is likely unplanned or unmanaged growth.

A detailed architectural description and history is found in the 2015 Raleigh Historic Designation application and report and is hereby referenced.

**Section 3.** No portion of the exterior features of any building, site, structure, or object (including windows, doors, walls, fences, light fixtures, signs, steps, pavement, paths, or any other appurtenant features), trees, nor above ground utility structure located on the hereinbefore described property that is designated in this ordinance may be altered, restored, moved, remodeled, or reconstructed so that a change in design, material or outer appearance occurs unless and until a certificate of appropriateness is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Development Commission or its successors; provided however that the Raleigh Planning Director or designee may approve certificates of appropriateness for minor works as listed in the Bylaws and Rules of Procedure of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission.

**Section 4.** No building, site, structure, or object (including windows, doors, walls, fences, light fixtures, steps, pavement, paths, signs, or any other appurtenant features), trees, nor above ground utility structure located on the hereinbefore described property that is designated in this ordinance may be demolished unless and until either approval of demolition is obtained from the Raleigh Historic Development Commission or a period of three hundred sixty-five (365) days has elapsed following final review by the Commission of a request for demolition (or any longer period of time required by N.C.G.S. 160A-400.14 as it maybe amended hereafter); provided however, that demolition may be denied by the Raleigh Historic Development Commission in the event that the State Historic Preservation Officer determines that the building, site, or structure has statewide significance as provided by N.C.G.S. 160A-400.14.

**Section 5.** The Raleigh Historic Development Commission shall have no jurisdiction over the interior features of the property.

**Section 6.** All owners and occupants of the property hereinabove described, whose identity and addresses can be ascertained by the exercise of due diligence shall be sent by certified mail a copy of this ordinance.

**Section 7.** This ordinance shall be indexed after the property owner's name in the grantor and grantee indexes in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Wake County.

**Section 8.** City administration and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have erected an appropriate sign on the site hereinabove described setting forth the fact that said site has been designated a historic landmark by action of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission and the City Council of the City of Raleigh provided, should the owners of the hereinabove described property not consent to the erection of said sign on the described premises, City administration and the Raleigh Historic Development Commission are hereby authorized and directed to have said sign located on the public right-of-way adjacent to said property.

**Section 9.** In the event any building, site, structure, or object designated by this ordinance is demolished in accordance with the ordinances of the City of Raleigh, this ordinance shall automatically be null and void.

**Section 10.** Any violation of this ordinance shall be unlawful as by law provided.

**Adopted:** August 4, 2015

**Effective:** August 4, 2015

**Distribution:** Department of City Planning  
Inspections Department  
Raleigh Historic Development Commission  
Wake County Tax Assessor  
Property Owner and Occupant (if not the owner)  
Registrar of Deeds



*City Of Raleigh*  
NORTH CAROLINA

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)  
COUNTY OF WAKE)

## CERTIFICATION

I, Ralph L. Puccini, Assistant Deputy Clerk of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina,

do hereby certify that the attached is a true and exact copy of City of Raleigh

**Ordinance No. (2015) 472** adopted August 4, 2015.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have unto set my hand and have caused the Seal of  
the City of Raleigh to be affixed this 31<sup>st</sup> day of August, 2015.



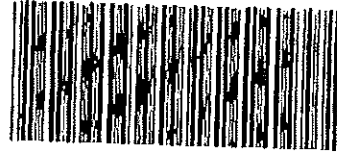
Ralph L. Puccini  
Assistant Deputy Clerk

One Exchange Plaza  
1 Exchange Plaza, Suite 1020  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

City of Raleigh  
Post Office Box 590 • Raleigh  
North Carolina 27602-0590  
(Mailing Address)

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222 West Hargett Street  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601



BOOK:016147 PAGE:00068 - 00073



**WAKE  
COUNTY**

NORTH CAROLINA

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**Please retain yellow trailer page**

It is part of the recorded document and must be submitted with the original for re-recording.

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**Laura M. Riddick**

**Register of Deeds**

Wake County Justice Center  
300 South Salisbury Street, Suite 1700  
Raleigh, NC 27601

New Time Stamp

\$25 Non-Standard Fee

Additional Document Fee

Additional Reference Fee

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 One Exchange Plaza  
 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
 Raleigh, NC 27602  
 919-516-2626

www.raleighnc.gov/planning

Fee	_____
Amt Paid	_____
Check #	_____
Rec'd Date:	_____
Rec'd By:	_____
Completion Date:	_____

**(Processing Fee: \$266.00 - valid until June 30, 2011 - Checks payable to the City of Raleigh.)**

**RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION**

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the RHDC, which makes its recommendation to the full commission which in turn makes its recommendation to the City Council. Procedures for administration by the RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC office at One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300, Raleigh or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission  
 PO Box 829 Century Station  
 Raleigh, NC 27602

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address):

Historic Name: Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church  
 Current Name: Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church

2. Location:

Street 501 South Person Street  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NC PIN No.: 1703862788  
 (Can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact):

Name: Phuc Tran  
 Address: PO BOX 12994  
 City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27605  
 Telephone No: ( ) ( ) - ( ) Fax No. ( ) ( ) - ( )  
 E-Mail: phucntran1@gmail.com

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner):

Name: Jessica A. Bandel and Cassandra Bennett for RHDC  
 Address: PO Box 12153  
 City: Durham State: NC Zip: 27709  
 Telephone No: (903) (449)-(1365) Fax No. ( ) ( ) - ( )  
 E-Mail: bronzebullconsulting@gmail.com

5. General Data/Site Information:

Date of Construction and major additions/alterations: built between October 1921 and April 1922, 1950s-1960s renovations

Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings: 0

Approximate lot size or acreage: 0.121 acres

Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: unknown

Original Use: church

Present Use: under renovation

6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s)       Structure       Object       Site

B. Ownership

Private       Public       Local       State       Federal

C. Number of contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	1	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	0	0

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): 12/01/2014, Cassandra Bennett



## E. National Register of Historic Places Status:

Check One:

Entered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date: 1990 (contributing resource in East Raleigh-South Park Historic District)	Nominated <input type="checkbox"/>
Determined Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Determined Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Nomination Not Requested <input type="checkbox"/>	Removed <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Significant changes in integrity since listing should be noted in section 10.B. below.	

## 7. Reason for Request:

8. Is the property income producing? Yes  No 9. Are any interior spaces being included for designation? Yes  No 10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

## A. Photographs/Slides:

See attached.

## B. Boundary Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17". A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at: <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>.

### C. Architectural Significance:

The Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church—a one-story, concrete block church with a front gabled roof and lower, short, side-gabled wings that give the building's overall form the appearance of incorporating a transept at the rear—was the first Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church built in Raleigh. The 1922 church is currently undergoing renovation due to unmitigated tornado damage and neglect. The building's footprint, as it appears in the 1950 Sanborn Fire insurance map (see Figure 1), remains largely the same, as shown in the 2003 survey map (see Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> This is due largely to its tight lot size, just 0.121 acres.

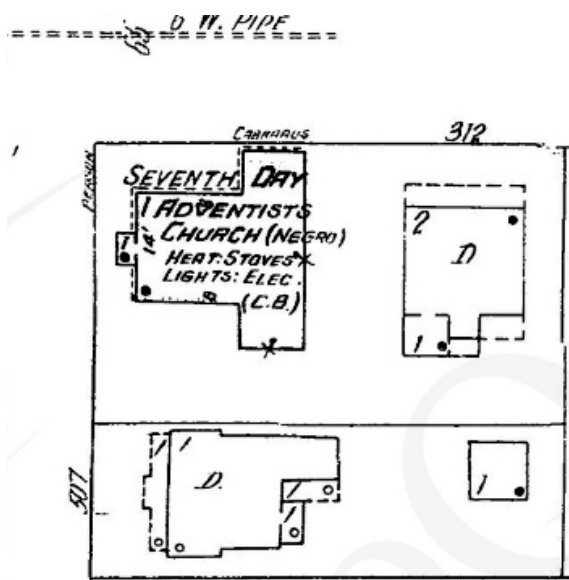


Figure 1. 1914-1950 Sanborn Map.

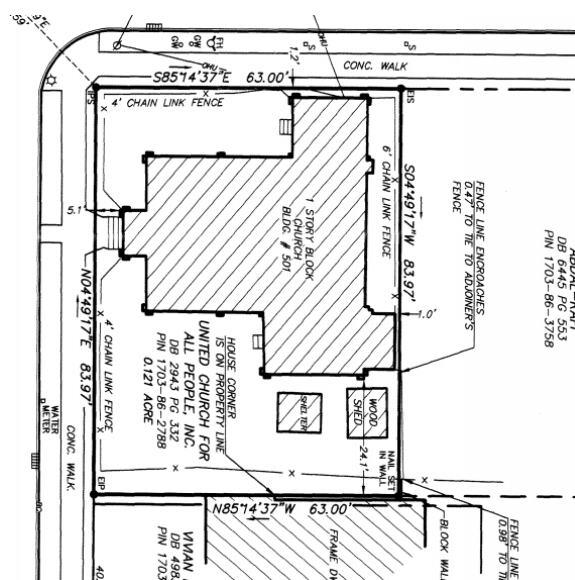


Figure 2. 2003 Survey map of 501 S. Person.

Gethsemane SDA Church (501 South Person) is located in a historically African-American residential and commercial neighborhood east and southeast of Raleigh's historic commercial business district. The building sits on a flat, corner lot at the northwest intersection of East Cabarrus and South Person Streets. The lot's landscaping is limited to bushes that grow along the north and west sections of a chain link fence that surrounds the property and scattered vegetation. The latter is likely unplanned or unmanaged growth. It is worth noting the three-midsized trees growing between the curb and sidewalk on South Person Street.

Gethsemane SDA Church is an architecturally distinctive building in the East Raleigh-South Park National Register District for its late gothic revival style and unique concrete-block construction. The 1990 National Register nomination identified eight historic churches located in the district. Of those, the Gethsemane SDA Church was one of three that still retained its historic integrity. This district nomination identifies the building's architectural style as either Pueblo Revival style or a merging of both Pueblo and late Gothic Revival. In assigning the Pueblo style to the building, the survey erroneously cites its stuccoed elevations and now non-existent battered tower.<sup>2</sup> The building does not have a stuccoed finish.

<sup>1</sup> Sanborn Map, Raleigh, 1914-1950 (Sheet 37); Survey Map, Property of United Church for All People, Inc., October 29, 2003, Wake County, North Carolina, Book of Maps 2003, page 2043.

<sup>2</sup> National Register of Historic Places, East Raleigh-South Park Historic District, Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina, National Register #90001527, section 7, page 12 and 54.

In October 1920, the congregation purchased the lot upon which they would build their church. A year later, the Carolina Conference's president reported "a considerable amount of money [was raised] with which they are expecting in the near future to erect a nice edifice." The first published mention of a completed church was in a *Field Tidings* article dated May 17, 1922. In talking about the congregation, R. I. Keate states that he "spoke to a fine company of colored believers in their new concrete block church building in Raleigh" at the end of April 1922.<sup>3</sup> See *Figure 3*.



*Figure 3. Early-undated photographs of the Gethsemane SDA Church.*

The church Keate described was a simple gothic style church. While the building featured many Gothic characteristics like buttresses, steep gabled roofs, wings, and two arched windows (one over the front entrance and one behind the altar), these are all implemented very simply. The use of concrete blocks decorated with quartz pieces adds time-consuming details to an otherwise simple façade.

The rarity of concrete-block buildings in Raleigh prior to the 1930s also makes the church building locally significant. A 2005 National Register nomination for the Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House notes that only a handful of concrete-block homes in Raleigh were built in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The building method became more common after the 1930s with the mass production of concrete blocks.<sup>4</sup>

Homemade decorative concrete-block construction reached its prime between the 1900s and 1930s. The building material's adaptability to different styles, its strength and durability, and affordability made it very popular and an ideal choice. Though more expensive than clapboard over a wood frame, it was cheaper than brick or stone. In addition, widely available block making machines made it easy for builders – homeowners, local contractors, and in Gethsemane's case, congregation members – to make blocks on site. Gethsemane SDA church's 1922 construction fits

<sup>3</sup> Deed from D. P. Lane to B. W. Abney et als, October 19, 1920, Wake County, Deed Book 364, page 340; "President's Report of Carolina Conference: New Building," *Field Tidings* 13, no. 35 (October 12, 1921), 5; and R. I. Keate, "Carolina: Among the Churches," *Field Tidings* 14, no. 16 (May 17, 1922), 3.

<sup>4</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House, Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina, National Register #5000320, section 8, page 6-7.

into the nationwide “woodshed” or “backyard” phase of concrete-block construction.<sup>5</sup> Gethsemane’s blocks were likely made this way.

Stabilization and rehabilitation work required after a 2011 tornado provided preservationists with insight into how Gethsemane’s blocks were made. Jenny Harper, now a Raleigh Historic Development Commission member, was involved in the process and noted that the original blocks were likely poured into molds in the following manner. As the concrete was poured into “I” shaped forms, the makers left about an inch of room at the top of each form. After the concrete set up somewhat, mortar was poured into the remaining inch and one to six dozen pieces of quartz were pressed into the mortar by hand. Oral tradition holds that congregants helped apply quartz to the blocks. These quartz pieces varied in size, depth, and color, giving the new church building a decorative finish.<sup>6</sup>

In her research, Harper found that the type of quartz used to decorate the church is commonly found in creek beds. While there are no modern creeks near 501 South Person Street, an 1872 bird’s eye view map of Raleigh shows at least two creeks in the vicinity. It is possible this was the source for the Gethsemane SDA church’s quartz.<sup>7</sup>

Without the financial means to purchase stone for the façade and likely wanting to upgrade from a wood framed church, the congregation handmade concrete blocks and finished them with the quartz pieces. These hollow, unreinforced, concrete blocks formed an “I-beam” once stacked on top of each other. In laying the blocks, the builders carefully retained the underlying concrete blocks’ shape. Each block is clearly defined and does not have any pebbles overlapping the mortar.

The front elevation of the Gethsemane SDA Church is composed of three bays and faces westward onto South Person Street. Originally, the church was built with a tower, characteristic of its Gothic Revival style in the center of the front-facing gable on the westward elevation. Today, the tower is gone, removed at an unknown date, cut off just five rows of concrete block above the top of the gothic arched window and double doors. Presently, the arched window has wood casing. A semi-translucent windowpane, likely fiberglass, obscures stained glass. The stained glass features a cross and “WELCOME.” See Figure 4.

The north and south elevations, including their wings, mirror each other. The main portion of the building is composed of two bays, with a buttress at the western-most corners, midway down the elevation, and one where each wing joins the building. Each bay has a two-over-two window. The western elevation of each wing has a door and a buttress at the southern- and northern-most corners. The wing mirrors itself on its north and south elevations, both have a pair of two-over-two windows. Gethsemane SDA Church’s east elevation, its rear, features one large gothic arched window with stained glass. See Figure 5.

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5 National Register of Historic Places, Dr. Elmo N. Lawrence House, Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina, National Register #5000320, section 8, page 6; and Pamela H. Simpson, *Cheap, Quick, & Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 14-16, 151.

6 Jenny Harper, phone interview by authors, February 7, 2015; and Jenny Harper, email to Cynthia de Miranda, January 9, 2015.

7 C. N. Drie, *Bird’s Eye View of the City of Raleigh, North Carolina 1872* [map], drawn and published by C. Drie: Raleigh, 1872. Library of Congress, <<http://www.loc.gov/item/75694901>>; and Jenny Harper, phone interview by authors, February 7, 2015.



*Figure 4. Detail of the gothic arched window, 1950s or 1960s stained glass, and buttresses.*



*Figure 5. East elevation with north wing and the stained glassed gothic arch window shown.*

Although this application does not seek Landmark status for the Church's interior, it is worthwhile to document the interior's historic use. While the Gethsemane congregation resided in the building, the two front doors off of South Person Street lead directly into the sanctuary where two rows pews were split by a central aisle. At the far east of the building, its rear, the north wing housed the pastor's office while the south wing served as the Sabbath School's classroom.<sup>8</sup> See Figure 6.



*Figure 6. Undated (before the 1950s-1960s renovations) photograph showing a group of congregants gathered outside the Gethsemane SDA Church. Image shows the north wing, which housed the pastor's office.*

Since construction in 1922, the church was modernized over time. The first known renovation was in the 1950s or 1960s. It was then that the congregation removed many of the two-over-two operable windows in the sanctuary and replaced them with stationary stained glass windows. They retained the original windows in the wings. See Figure 7. In the late 1960s, a small concrete-block addition for restrooms was added in the south wing (accessible only through the classroom). At some point after the Gethsemane SDA congregation sold the building, the new occupants painted the exterior white in the late 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Billy Morris, interview by author, Raleigh, NC, September 28, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; Jenny Harper, phone interview by authors, February 7, 2015; and Jenny Harper, "About the Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church," 2014.



Figure 7. Undated photograph showing the operable two-over-two windows original to the Gethsemane SDA Church.

A tornado in April 2011 significantly damaged the building, leading the City of Raleigh to condemn it in November 2011.<sup>10</sup> According to a January 5, 2012 *News and Observer* article by Josh Shaffer, 200 area residents signed a petition supporting the preservation of the building.

At that time, Phuc Tran expressed interest in purchasing and restoring the historic Gethsemane SDA Church building. Tran purchased the building within 24 hours of a planned demolition by the prior owner. With a historic preservation protective easement from Preservation North Carolina, Tran purchased the building just eight days after Shaffer's article brought attention to the building's threat of demolition.<sup>11</sup>

Extensive stabilization and renovation work was required after the 2011 tornado. This included the fabrication of new concrete blocks to replace damaged ones. In addition, many of the 1950s or 1960s stained glass windows were destroyed. These were not replaced; instead, the workers recreated the original two-over-two windows and installed them in the nave. The stained glass on the east elevation, behind the alter, and above the main entry were retained. As of February 2015, the building had been stabilized, the 1980s paint was removed from the concrete blocks, and the interior plaster was completed.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> City of Raleigh, Building Permit for 501 South Person Street, *Group #262956*, Online Development Center, issued November 7, 2011, <http://www.raleighnc.gov/onlinedevelopmentcenter> (accessed November 25, 2014); Josh Shaffer, "Historic Church has New Owner," *News and Observer*, February 1, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Deed of Sale from Amalgamated Empire Properties, LLC, to Phuc Tran, January 13, 2012, Wake County, North Carolina, Deed Book 14611, page 2638. Register of Deeds Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>12</sup> Jenny Harper, phone interview by authors, February 7, 2015.

#### D. Historic Significance:

R. L. Woodford, former president of the South Atlantic Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church, traces the beginning of the black SDA movement in the South back to 1876 when an SDA evangelist preached to an integrated congregation in Quitman, Georgia and baptized nine freedmen into the church. From that humble beginning, the SDA message spread throughout southern black communities as SDA schools “paved the way for the establishment of churches.” In its early efforts, the SDA’s Southern Missionary Society organized two schools in Georgia and Florida and one school each in South Carolina and North Carolina.<sup>13</sup>

More schools soon followed, and the arrival of missionaries and their tent efforts introduced the SDA message to black communities throughout the state. If successful, the tent effort resulted in an organized congregation, which then began fundraising for the construction of a brick-and-mortar church. As a result of the missionaries’ efforts, black SDA congregations popped up in Asheville, Durham, Greensboro, High Point, Kinston, New Bern, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem in the early 1900s. Despite being the capital of the state, Raleigh remained without an SDA church, black or white, until the arrival of a charismatic black evangelist named Benjamin W. Abney in 1920.<sup>14</sup> See Figure 8.<sup>15</sup>

Even before the construction of the Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the SDA organization had boots on the ground in Raleigh, spreading their message in black communities through colporteurs, or booksellers, peddling SDA literature. Black colporteur Willie White first arrived in Raleigh on July 1, 1919 to sell copies of William A. Spicer’s *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy*, a book that analyzed the Second Advent of Christ. Growing interest in the SDA message soon prompted White to organize Friday-night Bible readings in addition to selling SDA books. By the beginning of March 1920, seven people joined White in keeping Sabbath, and this may be the genesis of the SDA movement within Raleigh’s black community. “I am sure that the printed page has opened the way for a tent here in Raleigh, and some day hope to see one of the leading colored churches in North Carolina here,” wrote White in March.<sup>16</sup>

SDA leadership agreed and organized a tent effort in Raleigh’s black community known as South Park to be held from June 3 to September 18, 1920. The tent was pitched on a lot belonging to a black lawyer named David P. Lane on the southeast corner of Person and Cabarrus, the same lot upon which the church presently stands. Benjamin W. Abney, assisted by Raynes and Carrie Soaries, Miss A. E. Martin, and Margeretta Willis, presided over the services, reporting that the first Sabbath meeting drew 103 people and donations totaling nearly \$400. Over the course of the summer, the audience grew until the tent could no longer accommodate the visitors with seats, forcing many to stand through services. The effort resulted in a dedicated congregation numbering fifty-five and a Sabbath school attendance of more than one hundred. By the end of the effort, total

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13 R. L. Woodford, “South Atlantic Conference,” *The North American Informant* 31, no. 2 (March 1, 1977), 21.

14 This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of black SDA churches at the turn of the century. It is meant only to illustrate the larger black SDA movement in North Carolina during that time. It should also be noted that not all of these congregations were successful in constructing or acquiring their own building for worship. “North Carolina Tithe for the Conference Year Ending June 30, 1910,” *Field Tidings* 2, no. 29 (August 10, 1910), 2; “Statement by Churches for the North Carolina Conference...for the First Six Months of 1918,” *Field Tidings* 10, no. 28 (August 28, 1918), 3.

15 Image from “Portrait of a Pioneer: Elder Benjamin William Arnett Abney,” *North American Regional Voice* 1, no. 5 (November 1979), 2.

16 Willie White, “Colporteurs’ Experiences,” *Field Tidings* 11, no. 44 (December 31, 1919), 5-6; Willie White, “Colporteurs’ Experiences,” *Field Tidings* 12, no. 1 (February 18, 1920), 5-6; Willie White, “Colporteurs’ Experiences,” *Field Tidings* 12, no. 3 (March 3, 1920), 5-6.





Figure 8. Undated photograph of Benjamin W. Abney, founding pastor of Gethsemane.

donations amounted to more than \$1,400.00, of which \$415.00 was allocated to a church building fund. "The people are anxious for a building, and are working earnestly and sacrificingly [sic] for it," reported Abney.<sup>17</sup>

Towards the end of their first tent effort, in October, the fledgling congregation elected a board of trustees, consisting of Pastor Abney, William Haywood, Charles W. Alston, and Frederick S. Thompson, and entered into a mortgage with B. F. Montague for the purchase of the lot upon which the tent effort was held. See Figure 9. The board paid Lane \$100.00 and "other valuable considerations" as a down payment in October 1920.<sup>18</sup> In the winter months, as the congregation worked towards the construction of a proper building and the tent proved too cold, services were held in the "Hall of Haywood" or "Haywood Hall."<sup>19</sup> Despite being the first SDA church in Raleigh,

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17 Benjamin W. Abney was an influential church organizer and evangelist within the black SDA movement. Following graduation from Oakwood Manual Training School, Abney became an ordained minister and was tasked by SDA leaders to raise up churches in North and South Carolina. From 1931-1938, he served as the first black SDA missionary to apartheid South Africa. Upon returning to the United States, Abney worked predominantly in the South until his retirement in 1957. "Portrait of a Pioneer: Elder Benjamin William Arnett Abney," *North American Regional Voice* 1, no. 5 (November 1979), 2-5. "Carolina News Items," *Field Tidings* 12, no. 21 (July 14, 1920), 2; B. W. Abney, "Raleigh, N.C.," *The Gospel Herald* 11, no. 11 (November 1920), 5; B. W. Abney, "Among the Colored People in Raleigh, N.C.," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 97, no. 49 (December 2, 1920), 12.

18 Sanborn Map, Raleigh, 1914 (Sheet 37); Deed from D. P. Lane to B. W. Abney et als, October 19, 1920, Wake County, Deed Book 364, page 340; "The History of Gethsemane," *Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church: Homecoming Celebration, October 26-29, 2006* (Raleigh: Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 2006), 4.

19 This is most likely a reference to the home of William H. and Lillie Haywood, founding church members, whose home sat on a lot bordering the southern boundary of the church lot at 507 S. Person. Billy Morris, interview by author, Raleigh, NC, September 28, 2014; Deed from D. P. Lane and B. F. Montague to Lillie and William Haywood to A. M. Bonner, November 3, 1910, Wake County, Deed Book 309, page 355; Marie Alston Macon, "The Oldest Member of Gethsemane: Reflections from the Womb," *It's Good to Be Home: Homecoming 2013* (Raleigh: Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 2013), 27.

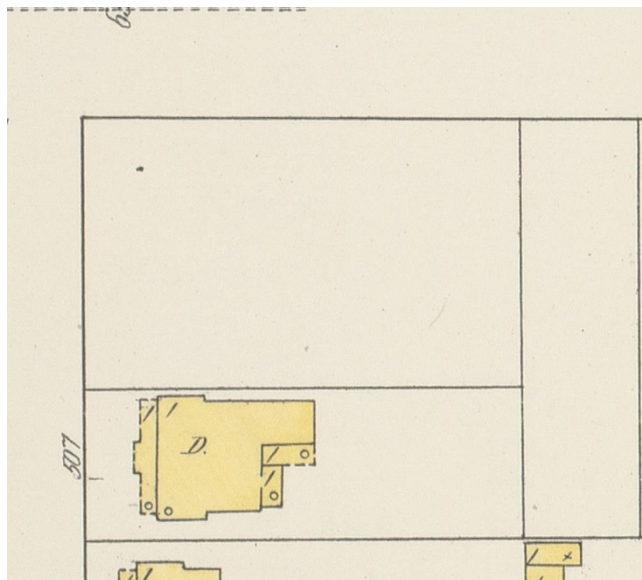


Figure 9. 1914 Sanborn map showing empty lot upon which Gethsemane was built. Note Haywood house to the south.

within the Carolina Conference Gethsemane was known officially as the “Raleigh No. 2 church.”<sup>20</sup> Early church officials included Charles Alston, Elder-in-Charge; Sarah Cooke, Sabbath School Superintendent; Minnie Powell, Dorcas Club; Gertrude Copeland, First Deaconess; and Mary Godly, Church School Teacher.<sup>21</sup>

A second tent effort materialized in June 1921, and this too was reportedly “largely attended.” Abney, aided by a tent master and two Bible workers, once again presided over the effort. Through the summer months, Abney and the growing congregation continued to conduct missionary work and spread the word of their church. Their efforts resulted in the baptism of eleven new members on July 31. Abney later reported that the congregation nearly doubled in size in 1921. To accommodate their growing numbers and to provide worshippers a dedicated house of prayer, a simple concrete block church building was constructed on their lot sometime between October 1921 and April 1922. A visiting church official attributed its construction to the “good work Elder Abney has been doing at this place.”<sup>22</sup>

With Gethsemane up and running and the new congregation off to a strong start, Abney moved on to Greensboro to begin a new effort and was replaced as pastor by Raynes Leopold Soaries.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The number-two designation was given to all black SDA churches regardless of when they were organized. “Sparks from the Harvest Ingathering Anvil,” *Field Tidings* 14, no. 38 (October 25, 1922), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Godly requested a transfer after her husband died and was replaced by Rosetta Baldwin. Baldwin later transferred to Wilmington to replace Maude Dixon Bookhart, who stepped down from her post after giving birth to a son. Baldwin was then replaced as schoolteacher at Gethsemane by Bernice Palmer. “The History of Gethsemane,” *Homecoming Celebration*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> “Carolina: News Notes,” *Field Tidings* 13, no. 20 (June 29, 1921), 3; “Carolina: From My Mail,” *Field Tidings* 13, no. 26 (August 10, 1921), 3; “President’s Report of Carolina Conference: Evangelistic Work,” *Field Tidings* 13, no. 35 (October 12, 1921), 4; “Carolina News Items,” *Field Tidings* 14, no. 4 (February 2, 1922), 6; R. I. Keate, “Carolina: Among the Churches,” *Field Tidings* 14, no. 16 (May 17, 1922), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Raynes Leopold Soaries was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1896 and immigrated to the U. S. in 1917. A tailor by training, young Soaries soon linked up with the SDA church as a colporteur in Charleston, SC. Petitions for Naturalization of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, 1865-1937, Petition No 220122-220500, Series: M1879, Roll 824, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.; “Colporteurs’ Report:

Despite the change in leadership, the church's success continued. By July 1922, the congregation numbered seventy-three, making it the third largest black church and the fourth largest church overall (when accounting also for white churches) in the Carolina Conference. The Sabbath school proved even more popular, boasting seventy-nine pupils by June 1923. The congregation's large size and zeal for missionary work resulted in their largest fundraising effort in the short history of their church in 1922. Harvest Ingathering (now known simply as Ingathering) was an SDA-wide fundraising campaign held each November to support missionary work. Despite bearing the heavy burden of a "tremendous debt" on their church building, the congregation managed to bring in \$400 in a single month. Over the course of the year, they raised a grand total of \$1,588.69. Their fundraising efforts to "clear up some debts on the church" nearly matched that, coming in at an annual total of approximately \$1,100.<sup>24</sup>

Following three strong years of growth, the church's early success began to wane. Perhaps due to rapid changes in leadership, the congregation lost twenty-seven members between 1923 and 1926, dropping from seventy-three to forty-six. The shrinking congregation also struggled mightily to pay down the debt on their church. In October 1921, on the heels of the post-World War I recession, the board of trustees entered into a new agreement with James Moore, indebting them to the tune of \$4,000 at an interest rate of six percent to be paid semi-annually. Default would result in the whole amount coming due.

By the spring of 1925, the church's indebtedness threatened to bring an end to it all. Desperate to meet their obligations, the congregants launched a thirty-day campaign in late March to raise \$1,000. Led by Charlotte Weeks, the fundraising effort fell short by \$300. The timely intervention of the SDA organization and its supporters, however, staved off foreclosure. With \$1,500 in appropriations from the General Conference and the Southern Union, \$500 of their own money, and a \$2,000 loan from an unnamed SDA member, the church paid off the original mortgage in full in April 1926. The balance of the new loan was to be paid off in regular installments over four years at a much lower interest rate. With the old mortgage off the books, the trustees convened a special meeting on the night of April 29. Citing the "usual custom and practice" of the SDA organization and the organization's large financial contributions toward Gethsemane's debt, the trustees voted to transfer ownership of the church to the Carolina Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, Inc. A deed of conveyance dated May 3 made it official.<sup>25</sup>

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Southeastern Union," *Field Tidings* 11, no. 49 (February 4, 1920), 4; R. Leo Soaries, Untitled Essay, *Field Tidings* 12, no. 7 (March 31, 1920), 3.

24 The Carolina Conference comprised both North and South Carolina. At the time of the July 1922 report, there were a reported forty-one churches in the Carolina Conference, twenty-two of which were black. "Carolina News Items," *Field Tidings* 14, no. 22 (June 28, 1922), 4; "Carolina: Our Mission Offerings," *Field Tidings* 14, no. 23 (July 5, 1922), 8; R. Leo Soaries, "Harvest Ingathering at Raleigh," *Field Tidings* 14, no. 41 (November 15, 1922), 3-4; R. I. Keate, "Yearly Report of Tithe and Mission Offerings: Carolina Conference," *Field Tidings* 15, no. 4 (February 21, 1923), 5; "Financial Statement of the Carolina Sabbath Schools for the Quarter Ending June 30, 1923," *Field Tidings* 15, no. 30 (August 22, 1923), 4; R. W. Schwarz, "Harvest Ingathering, A History," *Adventist History Library*, <https://adventisthistory.wordpress.com/2008/10/13/harvest-ingathering-a-history/> (accessed November 25, 2014).

25 "How We Stand," *Field Tidings* 17, no. 16 (March 25, 1925), 7; J. S. Green, "Raleigh Colored Church," *Field Tidings* 16, no. 2 (January 9, 1924), 3-4; "Carolina News," *Field Tidings* 17, no. 18 & 19 (April 8, 1925), 4; "Carolina News Items," *Field Tidings* 17, no. 23 (May 6, 1925), 3; R. I. Keate, "The Work in Carolina," *Field Tidings* 18, no. 21 (May 26, 1926), 3-4; Deed of Trust from Rev. B. W. Abney et als to Ernest P. Maynard, dated October 31, 1921, Wake County, North Carolina, Deed Book 383, page 545; Deed of Conveyance from Trustees Person St. Seventh-Day Adventist Church to Carolina Conference Association of Seventh Day Adventists, Inc., May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1926, Wake County, North Carolina, Deed Book 486, page 598.

Despite their financial struggles, church members proved resourceful and continued to move forward with modest internal improvements. In April 1926, the Colored Missionary Volunteer Society, led by Lee Arthur Cook, turned a “vacant room of the church” into a small library for “the benefit of the young people.” Youth members undertook much of the work themselves, painting the walls and furnishing the space. Donated books stocked the shelves, and the library soon proved to be “quite a gathering place for the young people of Raleigh. Placing a high priority on education, Gethsemane’s school also thrived at this time. In October, a visiting SDA official described the classes as “crowded for room,” concluding that “more students would attend if there was room for them.” Under Bernice Palmer’s leadership, pupils learned “how to use their hands as well as their minds,” inferring that the curriculum incorporated development of practical skillsets in addition to traditional academic lessons. By the fall of 1930, Gethsemane had the largest black school in the conference.<sup>26</sup>

Under N. B. Smith’s stewardship, Gethsemane once again enjoyed religious and financial progress. By February 1931, membership had rebounded to sixty-one, and the congregation had many successful years fundraising to pay their debt. Their hard work paid off in November 1935 when, after struggling with the mortgage for fifteen years, the congregation was finally able to dedicate “their church building and property to the Lord free from debt.” In preparation for the dedication, the congregation made “some needed repairs” and painted the walls. S. A. Ruskjer, president of the Southern Union Conference, J. G. Thomas, black evangelist for the Southern Union Conference, and Robert Patterson, secretary of the Negro Department of the General Conference, attended the dedicatory services, which were held on the afternoon of December 7. Thomas led a responsive reading as the “act of dedication,” and F. A. Osterman gave the prayer of consecration.<sup>27</sup>

With their hardest trial behind them, Gethsemane’s congregants were finally free to shift their full focus onto their missionary work, revival meetings, tent efforts, ministries, and community outreach. The Dorcas Society, a women’s group within the church, collected clothes, shoes, hats, and coats for the poor. Influential black SDA leader Earl E. Cleveland moderated Gethsemane’s first radio broadcast, a program entitled “Your Bible Speaks,” in the 1940s. A major push by C. C. Cunningham, Temperance secretary of the South Atlantic Conference, in early 1959 resulted in admission of half of the congregation, including youth members, into the American Temperance Society, a higher percentage than in any other church in the conference.<sup>28</sup>

The population boom spurred by the establishment and success of Research Triangle Park contributed to an increase in Gethsemane’s membership. By 1980, the congregation numbered 215 and had well outgrown its circa 1921 building. Bathrooms proved inconvenient, and church members wanted facilities for children. Desiring a new building that could better accommodate

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26 G. M. Mathews, “A Modest Request,” *Field Tidings* 18, no. 18 (May 5, 1926), 3; C. L. Butterfield, “Among the Churches,” *Field Tidings* 18, no. 43 (November 3, 1926), 2; F. R. Isaac, “Among the Schools of Carolina,” *Field Tidings* 20, no. 19 (May 9, 1928), 2; “Carolina News Items,” *Field Tidings* 22, no. 44 (October 29, 1930), 2.

27 Only fragmentary reports of the church’s fundraising efforts could be found. Charlotte Weeks reported in May 1927 that another fundraising push to pay down the church’s debt brought in \$444.13. Another \$365 for the same purpose was raised in September 1930. “Gleanings from the Carolina Field,” *Field Tidings* 19, no. 18 (May 4, 1927), 3; J. S. Green, “Colored Work in the Carolina Conference,” *Field Tidings* 22, no. 40 (October 1, 1930), 3; C. L. Butterfield, “Durham and Raleigh,” *Field Tidings* 23, no. 7 (February 18, 1931), 3-4; “Carolina News Items,” *Southern Tidings* 27, no. 49 (December 4, 1935), 4; “Carolina News Notes,” *Southern Tidings* 27, no. 51 (December 18, 1935), 5; “Raleigh Colored Church Dedication Services,” *Southern Tidings* 27, no. 52 (December 25, 1935), 3.

28 J. O. Marsh, “Raleigh Colored Dorcas Society,” *Southern Tidings* 39, no. 8 (February 21, 1945), 4-5; *Homecoming Celebration, 2006*, 5; C. C. Cunningham, “The Lord’s Side,” *Southern Tidings* 53, no. 4 (January 28, 1959), 13.

their needs, the congregation bought a new lot on Sanderford Road and broke ground for the new building on August 10, 1980. On July 15, 1981, Gethsemane's president and secretary, R. B. Hairston and John A. Simon, respectively, sold the sanctuary and lot to the United Church of Christ for All People. Phuc Tran, who currently owns the building, is renovating the historic sanctuary for commercial use.<sup>29</sup>

The building was surveyed once by Raleigh Historic Properties Commission, Inc. (Previous name of the Raleigh Historic development Commission), as part of the East Raleigh-South Park Historic District nomination for the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

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**Past Pastors**<sup>30</sup>

Benjamin W. Abney  
 John S. Green  
 Robert L. Ryles  
 Lawrence Hasting  
 John Baker  
 David Joyner  
 Warren S. Banfield  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Boyd  
 Isaac Johnson  
 Ralph Franklin  
 D. M. Jones  
 James Best  
 Calvin Preston  
 Joseph Follette, Jr.  
 Larry E. Johnson  
 Lloyd Johnson

Raynes Leopold Soaries  
 Thomas Moses Fountain  
 F. A. Osterman  
 Frank L. Bland  
 Samuel Winston  
 Harold D. Singleton  
 Franklin Hill  
 Phillip Morgan  
 Joseph Powell  
 Owen Holness  
 Barry Black  
 Robert Sloan  
 Kenneth Moore  
 Gary Jouette  
 Gregory Saunders  
 Larry E. Johnson

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<sup>29</sup> Prior to the building's sale to the United Church of Christ for All People, it was leased for approximately one year by the Raleigh Apostolic Faith Temple. "Starting this Beautiful Church," Raleigh Apostolic Church, <http://www.raleighapostolic.org/about.history.html> (accessed October 11, 2014); Stephanie Johnson, "South Atlantic Conference Divides," *North American Regional Voice* 2, no. 7 (July 1980), 2-3; "Southern Union," *Adventist Review* 157, no. 49 (October 30, 1980), 22; Billy Morris, interview by author, Raleigh, NC, September 28, 2014; Deed of Sale from Person Street Seventh Day Adventist Church, to United Church for All People, July 15, 1981, Wake County, North Carolina, Deed Book 2943, page 332.

<sup>30</sup> "Shepherds in His Service: 1920-2013," *It's Good to Be Home: Homecoming 2013* (Raleigh: Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 2013), 21.

#### D. Special Significance Summary:

Gethsemane Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 501 South Person Street is architecturally significant for its method of construction—unreinforced concrete blocks decorated with quartz pieces. Constructed in 1922, the simply detailed Gothic Revival style church building is one of three churches within the East Raleigh-South Park National Register Historic District to retain its historic integrity. The church is also culturally significant as the first SDA church, black or white, established in Raleigh. Many of Gethsemane's elders and pastors went on to become influential leaders in the black SDA movement, most notably Benjamin W. Abney.

