

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

348

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name First Methodist Churchother names/site number First United Methodist Church**2. Location**street & number 412 West Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Tupelo

N/A vicinity

state Mississippi code MS county Leecode 81zip code 38802**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

11

Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Kenneth H. P. PoolJanuary 22, 1990

Signature of certifying official

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)Amy Federman3/15/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The First United Methodist Church is a red brick structure which faces south onto Main Street in the central business district of Tupelo, Mississippi. Completed in 1899, the Victorian Gothic building features a single story, cruciform sanctuary with a full basement below ground level. A tower punctuates the right side of the facade and a projecting wing with a high hip roof is located on the left side of the facade. Shed-roofed wings, subordinate to the main plan, are located on the right and left sides of the sanctuary. Simple brick chimneys are located at the northeast and northwest corners of the sanctuary.

In 1909 a two story brick structure with Victorian Gothic details was added to the rear of the church. The polygonal addition was added to provide additional Sunday School space. The addition features a truncated, low hip roof with projecting wings on the east and west sides. The projecting wings have low gable roofs with simple parapet gables.

In 1936 a devastating tornado struck Tupelo and the original steeple was blown down. The original tower was modified to incorporate a flat-topped, balustraded termination. The pinnacles at the four corners of the tower are Art Deco features. Twin pointed arch openings with regularly spaced quoins are located on each face of the tower below the stone balustrade. A projecting, moulded belt course articulates the top third of the tower. Groups of three small, pointed arch, louvered openings are located below the belt course on the south and east faces of the tower. Single lancet windows are located below the groups of three pointed arch openings.

The facade of the church features a parapet gable flanked by the tower on the right and the hip roofed entrance wing on the left. The gabled facade is punctuated by a large pointed arch window with tracery and is flanked by smaller pointed arch stained glass windows. These windows feature stone sills and engaged stone columns below stone imposts. Two courses of blond brick and a three-course red brick corbeled band form the pointed arches of the three windows. The principal window consists of four round-headed stained glass windows crowned by a large stained glass rose window. The gabled front is flanked by buttresses which are characterized by stone columns and metal spires.

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First Methodist Church, Tupelo, Lee County,
Mississippi

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The entrances to the sanctuary are located in the tower and the hip roofed entrance wing. Straight stairs lead to round-headed openings which house two-leaf wood doors with stained glass transoms. The doors have three square panels per leaf. The entrance opening of the tower features engaged stone columns below stone imposts. Two courses of blond brick and a three-course red brick corbeled band form the arches of both entrances.

The east elevation of the sanctuary consists of the tower, a shed-roofed wing and the gabled east arm of the cruciform building. The shed-roofed wing features three pointed arch stained glass windows with stone sills and two courses of blond brick at the heads of the openings. The east gable is characterized by a large pointed arch window flanked by smaller pointed arch stained glass windows. The principal window features three stained glass lancets crowned by a stained glass rose window. All windows of the east gable have stone sills and blond brick trim at the heads of the Gothic arches.

The west elevation of the sanctuary consists of the hip-roofed entrance wing, a shed-roofed wing and the gabled west arm of the cruciform buildings. The hip-roofed entrance wing features a double-hung stained glass window with a stone sill and plain stone lintel. The entrance wing roof is ornamented with a metal finial. The shed-roofed wing has been altered to include an additional entrance to the sanctuary. A ramp was added in 1982 to provide access for the physically handicapped. The west gable matches the gable on the east.

The two-story addition of 1909 features one-over-one, double-hung sash with stone sills. The projecting wings of the east and west elevations incorporate double-hung stained glass windows on the first floor and pointed arch stained glass windows on the second floor. A single story brick addition was added to the 1909 building in 1982. The single story addition features a low gable roof with a simple gabled parapet at the rear elevation.

A contemporary steel/plexiglass walkway extends from the 1909 building, connecting it to the Children's Building, which was constructed in 1956 to house the church school. This building--a two-story, brick, gabled structure with two-tiered galleries--does not contribute to the historic significance of the property.

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The sanctuary interior features plaster walls and a plaster ceiling, flat at the center and pitched at either side. Plastered beams subdivide the sanctuary into four bays. Simple oak trim surrounds windows and doors, and lighting is accomplished with contemporary recessed incandescent down lights. The original church pews and chancel rail are intact. A decorative plaster tracery screen that separates the chancel from the nave is not original.

The tracery screen is supported by the original triple-arched arcade carried on stone columns with composite capitals. The large round-headed, arched opening below the screen is flanked by smaller arched openings; the structural opening containing the screen is a Tudor arch. The space between the round-headed opening and the confines of the principal Tudor arch is subdivided into five smaller Tudor arched panels filled with decorative tracery. The original sanctuary exit doors on each side of the chancel are punctuated by a lowered ceiling and set apart from the sanctuary space by stone columns and half-columns.

The chancel furnishings and the marble baptismal font are original. The simple wood paneling behind the chancel is original; however, the original pipe organ installed in 1904 has been removed. A decorative wood screen composed of pairs of lancet arches was constructed where the original pipe organ had stood.

The original stained glass windows of First United Methodist Church form an integral part of the overall decorative scheme of the Victorian Gothic sanctuary. (Minor repairs to the existing original windows were required after the tornado of 1936.)

The predominant colors of the stained glass are amber, light purple and green with accent colors of burgundy and blue. The stained glass windows feature antique glass, machine-rolled cathedral glass and opalescent glass. The individual panels of glass are held together with extruded lead came. The principal decorative motif of the stained glass windows is geometric; however, some windows feature the figure of a bearded man, a dove, the cross motif and a church steeple design. The words FIRST METHODIST CHURCH and ALL FOR CHRIST are also incorporated in some of the window designs.

The facade of the sanctuary (south elevation) features a large pointed arch stained glass window flanked by smaller pointed arch

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stained glass windows. The large window is subdivided into four round-headed stained glass windows and a large eight-panel rose window. The overall height of the principal window is approximately eighteen feet; the width sixteen feet. The flanking stained glass windows measure approximately twelve feet in height and four feet in width. The entrances to the sanctuary feature semi-circular, stained glass transoms with the words FIRST METHODIST CHURCH incorporated into the window design. Both semi-circular transoms are original windows; however, the west transom window was relocated from an earlier building entrance of the west elevation. The transom windows are a matching pair. A single simple lancet window with stained glass adorns the church tower's south elevation.

The east elevation of the sanctuary incorporates three pointed arch stained glass windows which measure approximately six feet in height and two feet-six inches in width. A slightly larger pointed-arch stained glass window punctuates the first floor elevation of the tower. A single lancet window, matching the lancet window of the south elevation, adorns the tower's second floor east elevation. The gabled front of the east elevation is punctuated by a large pointed-arch stained glass window which is flanked by smaller pointed arch stained glass windows. The large window is approximately fourteen feet tall and seven feet wide and consists of three lancet windows crowned by a single round window. The round window is subdivided to incorporate the crucifix motif.

The west elevation of the sanctuary features a gabled front with stained windows which match the window configuration of the gabled front of the east elevation. A single pointed arch stained glass window which measures six feet in height and two feet-six inches in width is located south of the projecting gabled front bay. Rectangular stained glass windows measuring approximately three feet by six feet adorn the hip roofed entrance wing of the west elevation.

The 1909 Sunday School addition (north of the sanctuary) features eleven stained glass windows on the east elevation and eleven stained glass window on the west elevation. The windows are rectangular in shape on the first floor and the second floor windows feature pointed arches. The stained glass windows of the Sunday School addition are simple in design and coloration.

The integrity of the original structure and decorative elements of First United Methodist Church is significant. Major alterations to the exterior structure have been limited to the removal of the original steeple and the addition of a building entrance door in the projecting shed-roof wing of the west elevation. The single major alteration to the interior of the sanctuary is the removal of the 1904 pipe organ.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1899

1899

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Mr. Stinson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The First United Methodist Church in Tupelo, constructed in 1899, derives its significance from its architectural character (Criterion C), being the most significant surviving example of late Victorian Gothic religious architecture in Lee County. On the basis of the information available at this time in the Mississippi statewide survey files, this church is also one of the best remaining examples of late Victorian Gothic religious architecture in northeast Mississippi. Among the few other architecturally significant churches in northeast Mississippi of its style and period are the P.C.A. Presbyterian Church (1884) and the First Baptist Church (1908), both in Columbus, and the First Methodist Church (1912) in Aberdeen. All three are included in National Register historic districts.

The First United Methodist Church in Tupelo features such Victorian Gothic elements as pointed-arch openings, lancet windows, a wide gabled facade with steep roof and side tower, and the use of materials of contrasting color and texture (red brick, blond brick, stone and metal) to enliven the building surface. The church holds the added distinction of being the oldest surviving brick building in Tupelo. At the time of its construction, there were only two other brick buildings in Tupelo: the Clark-Hood store on West Main Street and a building almost directly across the street from the church in the 400 block of West Main Street. Both of these buildings have been demolished ("Notes of Dr. W. J. Cunningham on First Methodist Church History," 1964, p. 2).

Although the church has undergone alterations and additions, it nevertheless retains a high degree of integrity. In 1909, just ten years after completion of the church, a two-story brick addition with pointed-arch openings was added to the rear (north) elevation. This addition was sympathetic to the original design of the church. A small one-story brick addition, constructed in 1982, extends from the rear of the 1909 addition but does not diminish the overall integrity of the building. A tornado in 1936 damaged the tower and destroyed the steeple. The tower was rebuilt employing pointed-arch openings in the

☒ See continuation sheet

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First Methodist Church, Tupelo, Lee County,
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Section number 8 Page 1

Victorian Gothic mode, but rather than rebuilding the steeple the tower was modified to incorporate a flat-topped, balustraded termination.

The interior of the church is intact and retains the original pews, chancel rail, chancel furnishings, marble baptismal font, and stained glass windows. Alterations to the interior of the sanctuary are minimal and are limited to the removal of the 1904 pipe organ, the addition of a decorative wood screen constructed where the original pipe organ stood, and the addition of a decorative plaster tracery screen supported by the original triple-arched arcade that separates the chancel from the nave.

The 1956 Children's Building, constructed behind the church, does not have a negative impact on the setting of the church.

In 1869, nine persons met in Tupelo to organize a Methodist congregation, which remained quite small until 1870 when a Methodist evangelist, Rev. C. C. Mayhew of Nashville, conducted a revival that brought a large number of people into membership. As a result of this increase in membership, the Methodists decided to build a church. A lot was purchased for \$150 on the east side of the 300 block of North Church Street, and a small frame structure was built in 1870. In 1889, the Tupelo church was made a station church, and the 1870 structure soon became inadequate. In 1896, a building committee was appointed to purchase a site and make plans for a new church (J. W. Carroll, "A Centennial History of the First Methodist Church of Tupelo, Mississippi," 1967, pp. 4-6). On April 14, 1898, the present site was purchased from Thomas J. Bibb for \$1,000 (Lee County, MS, Deed Book 58, p. 70). The First United Methodist Church, constructed by a Mr. Stinson of Columbus at a cost of about \$4,900, was completed in 1899 (Carroll, p. 6).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Carroll, J. W. "A Centennial History of the First Methodist Church of Tupelo, Mississippi," 1967. (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. Statewide Survey of Historic Sites, Lee County. Tupelo.)

Lee County, Mississippi. Chancery Clerk. Deed Book 58, p. 79.

"Notes of Dr. W. J. Cunningham on First Methodist Church History," 1964 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. Statewide Survey of Historic Sites, Lee County, Tupelo.)

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 # _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.6 acres

UTM References

A 16 342775 3791860
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 48½ and 50 in the City of Tupelo, Lee County, State of Mississippi, according to the Harris and Thomason Survey of said City, in the Northeast quarter of Section 31, Township 9, Range 6 East.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries reflect the property owned by the church and include the historic church building and the modern Children's Building, which are connected by a steel/plexiglass walkway. The modern building, constructed to the rear of the church, does not have a negative impact on the setting and does not sacrifice the integrity of the church.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger A. Pryor, Project Architect
organization Dale/Dale and Dean Architects
street & number 618 Second Avenue South
city or town Columbus

date March 29, 1984
telephone (601) 327-9558
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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First Methodist Church, Tupelo, Lee County,
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Section number Photos Page 1

The following information is the same for all photographs:

- (1) First Methodist Church
- (2) Tupelo, Lee County, Mississippi
- (3) Charlotte Mullinnix
- (4) March 19, 1984 (field checked December 1989)
- (5) Mississippi Department of Archives & History

Photo 1 -- (6) Front (south) facade, view to north

Photo 2 -- (6) South & east elevations (children's building
on right), view to northwest

Photo 3 -- (6) South & west elevations, view to northeast

Photo 4 -- (6) East elevation, view to west

Photo 5 -- (6) Rear (north) elevation, view to south

Photo 6 -- (6) Nave, view to south

Photo 7 -- (6) Chancel, view to north

Photo 8 -- (6) Chancel & nave, view to north

Photo 9 -- (6) West wall of nave, view to west

Photo 10 - (6) Col. J. A. Blair memorial window, east wall
of sanctuary, view to east

Photo 11 - (6) Rev. E. H. Moon memorial window in sanctuary



First Methodist Church, Photo 1 of 11

First United Methodist Church

Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

Facade, South Elevation

Direction of Camera: North

PHOTO NO. 1



First Methodist Church, Photo 2 of 11

First United Methodist Church

Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

Contextual View

Direction of Camera: Northwest

PHOTO NO. 2



First Methodist Church, Photo 3 of 11

First United Methodist Church

Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

West Elevation

Direction of Camera: East

PHOTO NO. 3



First Methodist Church, Photo 4 of 11

First United Methodist Church
Tupelo, Mississippi
Lee County
Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix
Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

East Elevation
Direction of Camera: West

PHOTO NO. 4



First Methodist Church, Photo 5 of 11

First United Methodist Church
Tupelo, Mississippi
Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix
Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

North Elevation
Direction of Camera: South

PHOTO NO. 5



First Methodist Church, Photo 6 of 11

First United Methodist Church

Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

View of Nave

Direction of Camera: South

PHOTO NO. 6



First Methodist Church, Photo 7 of 11

First United Methodist Church
Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

View of Chancel

Direction of Camera: North

PHOTO NO. 7



First Methodist Church, Photo 8 of 11

First United Methodist Church

Tupelo, Mississippi

Lee County

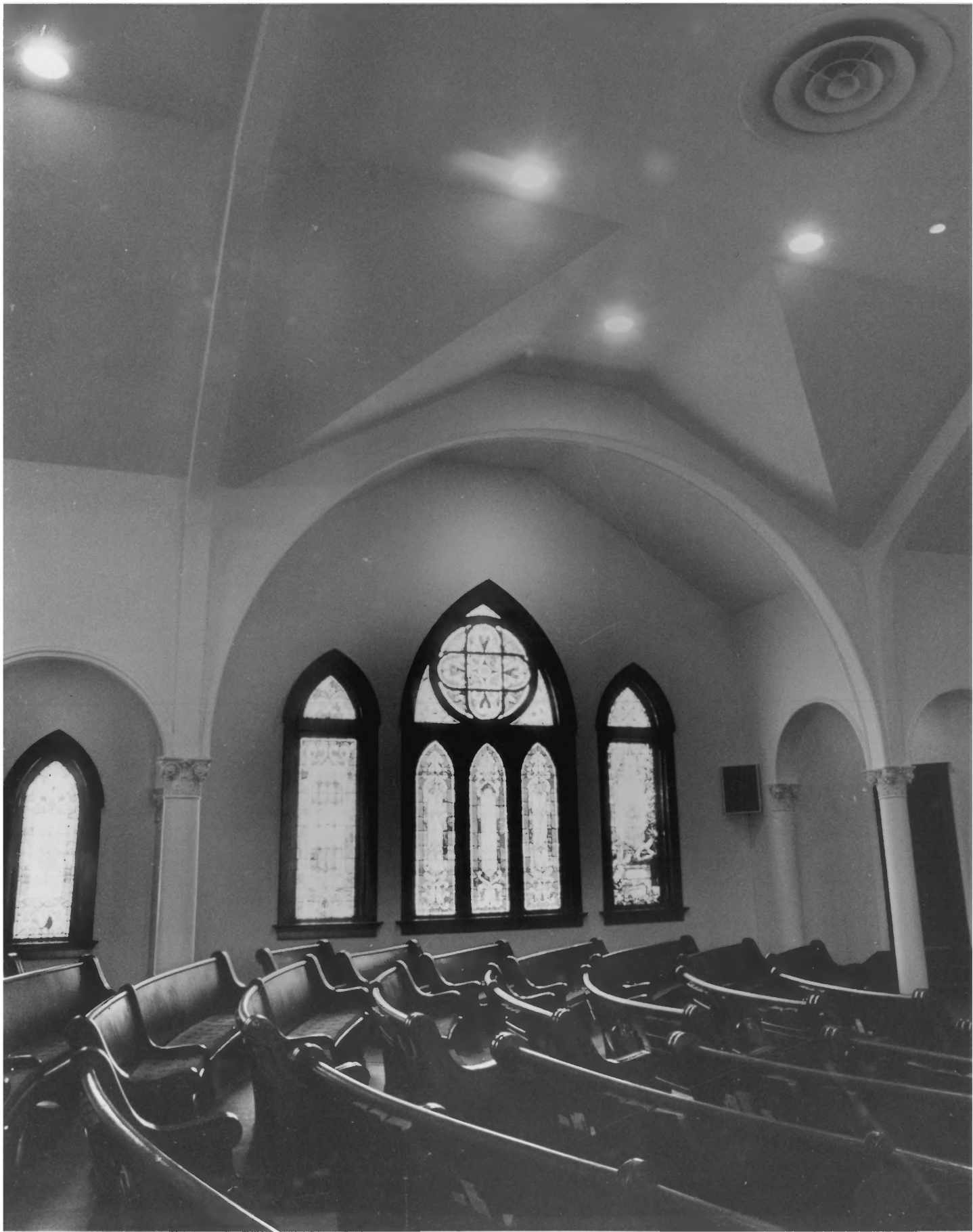
Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix

Photograph Date: March 19, 1984

View of Chancel and Nave

Direction of Camera: North

PHOTO NO. 8



First Methodist Church, Photo 9 of 11

First United Methodist Church
Tupelo, Mississippi
Lee County

Photographer: Miss Charlotte Mullinnix
Photograph Date: Match 19, 1984

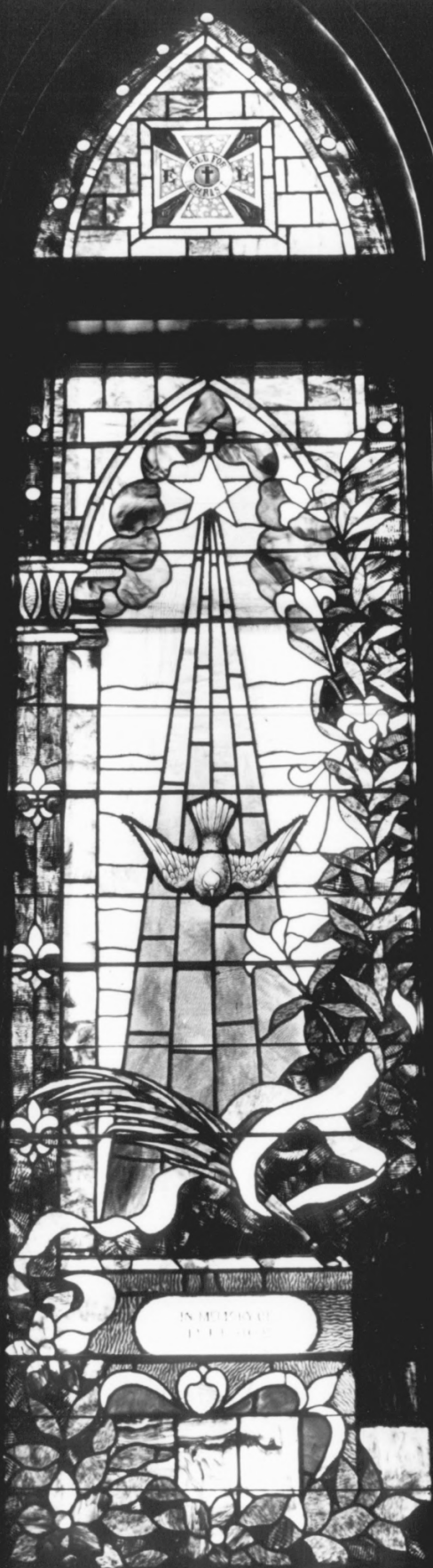
View of West Wall of Nave
Direction of Camera: West

PHOTO NO. 9



First Methodist Church, Photo 10 of 11

First United Methodist Church, 1200, N. 15th St.



First Methodist Church, Photo 11 of 11

First defined Method. Check - True Photo, miss.