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: Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church

Other names/site number: Pilgrim Congregational Church, Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church, Central Congregational Church

Name of related multiple property listing:
20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 7625-35 Linwood Street

City or town: Detroit State: Michigan County: Wayne

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A _X_B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [X]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site [ ]

Structure [ ]

Object [ ]

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RELIGION: Religious Facility: Church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RELIGION: Religious Facility: Church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, STONE

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

Summary Paragraph

The Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (shortened to "Shrine of the Black Madonna" in subsequent references) was built in 1925 as Pilgrim Congregational Church, later known as Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church. The church hall was built in 1930. It is located at the northwest corner of Linwood and Hogarth Streets in the city of Detroit. The building is divided into two attached but functionally separate areas, the sanctuary on the south and church hall on the north. The sanctuary building is constructed of red brick with stone trim. Above its front-gabled roof, an octagonal bell tower rises from the center front (east). The building features a two-story pedimented Doric portico, stone water table and quoining, and round-arched stained glass windows. The church hall is also red brick with stone trim and has a flat roof with a dentilled cornice and balustrated parapet. It features a stone water table and stone quoining and has stone cartouches between the first and second story windows. A narrow one-story kitchen connects the two buildings. The Shrine of the Black Madonna retains a very high degree of integrity. Both exterior and interior are virtually unchanged from their

appearance either at the date of its original construction from 1925 to 1930, or during the Civil Rights context period.

Narrative Description

Site

The Shrine of the Black Madonna was built in 1925 as Pilgrim Congregational Church, later known as Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church. The church hall was added in 1930. It is located at the northwest corner of Linwood and Hogarth Streets. Linwood Street is the current dividing line for the Wildemere Park and LaSalle Gardens neighborhoods. This area of Detroit, north of the Grand Boulevard and west of Woodward Avenue, was annexed as part of the early twentieth century expansion of Detroit. The land on which this property sits was annexed in 1907. To the east is the Lodge Freeway (M-10) and Detroit's New Center area, while to the west is one of the city's major radial streets, Grand River Avenue, and the Jeffries Freeway (I-96).

In terms of the geography of historically African American areas of the city, the Shrine of the Black Madonna is within the Twelfth Street neighborhood, one of the first of Detroit's neighborhoods to truly open to middle class blacks in the post-World War II era. Several blocks north on Linwood Street is New Bethel Baptist Church, where Reverend C. L. Franklin preached and his daughter Aretha Franklin sang. Two blocks west is the two-flat house at 3201 Virginia Park Street where Rosa Parks moved in 1961 and from which she would base many of her civil rights-related activities in the following decades. To the south is the Northwest Goldberg neighborhood, where a number of prominent black businesses, including Motown Records, relocated in the 1950s and 1960s as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley were razed for urban renewal. Southwest is one of the original black neighborhoods of the city, the Old West Side, settled by middle-class blacks in the 1920s.

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

The buildings in the neighborhood were largely constructed in the 1910s and 1920s, with some later additions scattered throughout. In the adjoining neighborhoods, these are largely one- and two-family homes with some apartment buildings. Commercial and institutional buildings along the corridor are mostly one to two story brick buildings with some larger ones such as New Bethel Baptist Church several blocks north. The topography of the area is relatively flat. Vegetation includes residential lawns, mown vacant lots, and street trees and domestic plants.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna occupies the south half of a commercial block on the west side of Linwood Street where it intersects Hogarth Street. The building is built out to the right of way (sidewalks) on the east and south side, and abuts an alley on the west side. The church owns the vacant lot that takes up the remainder of the block on the north side of the building. The church maintains the lawn there as well as a small vegetable garden.

Construction History

The Shrine of the Black Madonna was constructed from 1925 to 1930 as Pilgrim Congregational Church, later Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church. Pilgrim Congregational was founded around 1915.[1] The 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for this year shows a rectangular, one-story stuccoed building to be built at 541 Linwood Street for Pilgrim Congregational, in the center of the block on the west side of the street between Hogarth and Whitney Avenues. The map notes that this building was "from plans" indicating that it was under construction at the time.

The cornerstone was laid for a larger building at the south end of the block on the corner of Hogarth Avenue in September 1925. A newspaper article on the cornerstone laying noted that "(w)hen completed, the Pilgrim church will be considered an outstanding addition to the sacred architecture of Detroit. It is said to be the finest example of colonial religious architecture west of New England, being of red brick trimmed with white stone and capped by a tower of the Sir Christopher Wrenn (sic) design.[2] The architect was George D. Mason (1856-1948), termed by Detroit historian Clarence M. Burton as "the dean of Detroit architects." A native of Syracuse, NY, Mason moved with his family to Detroit in 1870 and studied under Henry T. Brush. Mason was partnered with Zachariah Rice from 1878 to 1898, during which time he hired a young Albert Kahn as an apprentice. During his time at Mason and Rice, and afterwards, when he formed his own firm, George D. Mason and Company, Mason was one of Detroit's most prolific and well-known architects, including the Detroit Masonic Temple, (second) Detroit Opera House, the Belle Isle Aquarium (with Kahn), the Charles T. Fisher house, and the Detroit Yacht Club. His other churches include First Presbyterian Church (with Rice), Central Woodward Christian Church, and Trinity United Methodist Church in Highland Park.

Pilgrim Congregational Church was dedicated in April 1926, by which time Pilgrim Congregational had merged with the nearby Brewster Congregational Church and been renamed

[1] "Pilgrim Congregational Church Tenth Anniversary Services," *Detroit Free Press*, November 28, 1925, 4.
[2] "Pilgrim Stone Laid," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1925, 1.

Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church. Three years later, in February 1929, the 1915 building, which was being used as the parish house, was destroyed by fire. The congregation replaced it with the present church hall, constructed in 1930 and dedicated on November 16, 1930. It was described as seventy-eight by one hundred ten feet and featured an auditorium-dining room that was "the largest Congregational dining room in Michigan," seating over five hundred. The building included a stage, a kitchen with "every modern convenience," a ladies' lounge, and a second floor administration block containing offices, the pastor's study, and class rooms. The *Detroit News* claimed that the new hall "carries out the design of the church auditorium itself, built five years (ago), which is a replica of the old South church, Boston, and is considered one of the purest examples of colonial architecture west of New York."[3] A light was installed in the church tower in 1938.[4] The church is depicted on the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, including both the 1925 sanctuary building and the 1930 church hall. Adjacent to the building to the north was a large four-story commercial apartment building, which included six storefronts at the first floor and apartments above. A U-shaped cutout was located between the apartment building and the church hall.

Building Description

The building is divided into three attached but functionally separate areas, the sanctuary on the south, the church hall on the north, and a narrow kitchen and stair hall connecting the two. For ease of description and clarity, they will be described separately.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary building is a two-story, rectangular building with its short side on Linwood Street and its long side on Hogarth Street. It is constructed of red brick with stone trim. The front gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has a bell tower rising from the center front (east). At the front (east) façade is a two-story Doric portico. At its base are shallow stone steps with stone block cheek walls leading up to the porch level. Four stone Doric columns on stone bases range across the steps and support the roof. At the back of the porch along the wall are engaged pilasters. The porch roof is a closed pediment with Classical entablature and dentils. The entablature and dentilled cornice continue to either side of the portico and wrap around to the east and west elevations of the building. The east wall of the building is brick with stone quoining. At the middle under the portico is a projecting section. At the first floor this contains the large entry opening surrounded by stone trim and entablature above. The paired entry doors and transom are non-original plain metal units. Above the entry is a tripled window consisting of three double-hung, four-over-four sash. To either side of the stepped entry bay under the portico on the first floor are narrow vertical window openings with double-hung, four-over-four sash. To either side of the portico on the second floor are single double-hung, four-over-four windows. All of the windows on this elevation appear to be original and are covered with protective metal mesh. Above and beyond the entry portico pediment, the gable end of the building is also

[3] "Will Dedicate Church Unit," *Detroit Free Press*, November 15, 1930, 8.
[4] "What's Doing Today in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, October 16, 1938, 4.

pedimented with dentils, but it is broken at the top where the bell tower rises above the roof. At the bottom of the wall on the south corner of the east elevation is a cornerstone that reads "Plymouth Congregational Church A.D. 1925."

The bell tower has a square brick base. Stepped above that is a smaller square brick section. On the center of each side of this is a slightly depressed section with a round opening in the middle. The opening is infilled with plain wood. Set atop the base is an octagonal wood belfry. It features Doric columns with round-arched openings between topped with keystones. The alternating openings have what appear to be the original multi-light windows with fan lights at the top, while the other openings were presumably originally open but have now been infilled. At the top of the belfry is a dentilled cornice that rises to form a balcony at the next level. Set within this balcony is the octagonal lantern. The alternating openings have round vents, while the others are flat panels. The lantern is topped with an octagonal wood-shingled roof that curves in at the top to a finial.

The south elevation is symmetrical. At either end are two slightly projecting bays. Each is brick with a stone base, stone quoining, and a stone entablature and dentilled cornice. At the first floor of these bays is a double entry opening with stone trim and entablature. The double entry doors and transom are non-original plain metal units. Above the doors are single rectangular windows with double-hung, four-over-four sash. The center four bays of the elevation are brick with a stone watertable and a dentilled cornice. Below the watertable are four basement window openings. The easternmost opening has been infilled with brick, while the remaining three windows have been infilled with glass block. Above the water table are four regularly spaced round-arched windows. They are outlined with brick and stone and have stone keystones. The windows are multi-light round-arched wood sash with multi-colored stained glass. The lower levels of these windows are protected by acrylic sheets, while the remainder of the windows on the elevation have wire mesh over them.

The north elevation is mostly obscured by adjoining church hall, but visible above that building's roof are four round-arched windows similar to those on the south elevation. The west elevation of the sanctuary building is also brick. The quoining of the south elevation wraps around to the south corner of the west elevation. It has a stone water table and a dentilled cornice which is partially missing. At either end of the elevation on the first floor are rectangular openings infilled with glass block and protected by wire mesh. At the center of the elevation is a large, round-arched opening with brick trim and a stone keystone. This opening has been infilled with wood panels. The gabled end of the building is a closed pediment with dentils, and a round window opening in the center which has been boarded up.

At the interior, the main entry doors (east elevation) open to a small lobby with open stairs to the north leading up to the balcony and down to the church hall, and open stairs to the south leading up to the balcony and down to a secondary entry door. The stairs have wood railings with turned balusters. The space has carpeted floors and flat plaster walls and ceilings with wood base and crown molding. On the west wall is an entry portal to the sanctuary. It consists of four wood and

glass panel doors with the inner and outer sets of doors separated by a narrow vertical paneled section. Above is a granite panel with the legend "The Mother Shrine of the Shrines of the Black Madonna" inscribed in gold. To the south of the doors is a niche with a statue of the Black Madonna and Child. On the second floor above the lobby is a small dressing room with French doors leading onto the balcony. The room has a barrel-vaulted ceiling, carpeted floors, and flat plaster walls and ceilings with wood base and crown molding.

The sanctuary is two stories high and encompasses most of the interior space of the main building. It is oriented east-west and has a barrel-vaulted ceiling. The floors are carpeted and the walls and ceilings are plaster. At the lower level, the walls have high paneled wainscoting divided by fluted pilasters. The top of the walls wide dentilled cornice trim. At regular intervals, the cornice trim projects slightly; below each of these projections is a floating Corinthian capital. The north and south walls each have full-height arched windows with the original multi-light, multi-colored stained glass. The ceiling has a flat plaster central section outlined in wood trim, and paneled flanking sections with decorative plaster trimwork. At the east end of the sanctuary is the balcony. It is tiered and has wood pews with paneled end. At the west end of the sanctuary is the raised alter set within a large arched niche. On the north and south walls of the niche are grilles with fanlight windows above. At the back of the niche is the Black Madonna mural for which the church is named. It is set within an arched panel and trimmed with granite. The alter is reached by three steps. To the north of the alter is a small office. The sanctuary has wood pews with paneled ends. Under the balcony behind the pews is a small enclosed sound booth. Below the sanctuary, partially below grade, is a gymnasium. It has concrete floors, walls, and ceilings. At the top of the north and south walls are rectangular window openings. These have been infilled with glass block on the south side and are covered by the adjoining building on the north side. Casement windows look onto the space from mid-level.

Kitchen and Stair Hall

Connecting the sanctuary to the church hall is a narrow, single-story kitchen with a two-story entry and stair hall at the east end. It is constructed of red brick with stone trim and the roof is a slanted skylight structure with infilled glass panes. At the first floor of the kitchen/entry wing on the east elevation is a one-story, flat-roofed wood entry porch. It sits on grade and is supported by two Doric columns at the front and engaged Doric pilasters at the building wall. Above that is a Classical entablature and a dentilled cornice. Within the porch are the paired entry doors with fanlight. On the main wall above the porch is a double-hung, six-over-six window protected by wire mesh. The entry bay is topped by a projecting dentilled cornice with a balustraded parapet above. The west elevation of the kitchen is common brown brick. It has two window openings, one infilled with glass block and the other with concrete block. A brick chimney rises from the center of the west wall.

The entry doors on the east elevation open into a small stair hall. To the south, a half flight of steps leads to the main building lobby, while to the north paired doors lead into the church hall. The kitchen is a narrow rectangular space. It contains the original cast iron wood-fired stove

along with a variety of more modern equipment. The kitchen opens onto the church hall through double-hung windows (described in the church hall interior section, below).

Church Hall

The church hall is also a two-story, rectangular building with its short side on Linwood Street and its long side on Hogarth Street. It is constructed of red brick with stone trim and has a flat composition roof. The east elevation is five bays wide. It has quoining at the corners, a stone water table at the base, and a stone entablature, dentilled cornice, and balustraded parapet at the top. The center three bays project slightly and are outlined by quoining. All five bays have symmetrically arranged paired windows at each level. The lower windows are double-hung, six-over-six sash while the upper windows are double-hung, four-over-four sash. All the windows are wood and are protected by metal mesh. Between the upper and lower windows of the center three bays are carved stone cartouches.

The north elevation is constructed of common orange-red brick. The eastern portion is two stories high and is roughly finished indicating another building was formerly adjoining the building (Sanborn maps show an apartment building on the north half of the block). At the top of the wall is exposed clay tile, suggesting that there may have been a cornice here formerly. The rear (western) portion of the building is one story high. The center part of the north wall has six sets of paired multi-light steel windows. At the west end, it has no openings aside from a small glass block panel infilled panel. The hall building's south elevation abuts the sanctuary building and is not visible.

The west wall of the hall building has two levels. At the alley is the one-story section. It has three boarded up utilitarian doors, and a brick-infilled window opening. Rising from the southwest corner of this elevation is a rectangular stair block with common brick on the west side and concrete block on the remaining walls. It has a rectangular window opening infilled with glass block. The west wall of the second level has a stucco finish and six double-hung, one-over-one wood windows.

At the interior, the east end has a small hallway opening up from the stair/entry hall with paired French doors leading to the main room, and a narrower room that can be connected to or separated from the main space by large openings filled with sliding accordion panels. At the north end of this space is a raised alter with a wood paneled backdrop. The multi-purpose room has a stage at the west end with a proscenium arch outlined in wood trim. Along the south wall, seven double-hung windows with frosted glass open into the kitchen. Below the windows are built in wood cupboards and drawers. The hallway, small room, and large room have terrazzo floors, flat plaster walls, and beamed ceilings with crown moldings. The large room has a wood chair rail. To the west of the multipurpose room is the stage and a stairway. On the second level is a central corridor with classrooms opening from it. This area has linoleum tile floors, textured plaster walls and ceilings, and wood bases and chair railings.

Integrity

The Shrine of the Black Madonna retains a very high degree of integrity. Aside from non-complementary replacement doors and the infill of some openings on the lower level and the steeple, the exterior is virtually unchanged from its appearance either at the date of its original construction from 1925 to 1930, or during the Civil Rights context period. The interior is similarly virtually unchanged, particularly in the major interior spaces such as the sanctuary, balcony, and church hall. Minor alterations include the installation of a sound booth under the balcony and newer floor coverings. The Black Madonna painting covered an earlier arched window in the west end of the sanctuary; however, this mural is significant in the context of Civil Rights.

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.)

- [x] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [x] 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.)

- [x] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Ethnic Heritage
Politics/Government
Social History

Period of Significance
1958-1970

Significant Dates
1958
1967

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr.

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
George D. Mason

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 Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (shortened to Shrine of the Black Madonna for subsequent references) at 7625-35 Linwood Street is significant under National Register Criteria A, at the national level, as the location where many significant 20th century African American civil rights activities took place in the late 1950s and 1960s. It is also significant under National Register Criteria B, at the national level, for its association with the Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr. (Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman), a nationally significant African American civil rights leader who was a leader in the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. The period of significance is from 1958, when the building was purchased by Central Congregational Church (renamed Shrine of the Black Madonna in 1967) to 1970. While Rev. Cleage continued to work for African American civil rights until his death in 2000, his activities after 1970 focused more on expanding the Black Christian Nationalist Movement as a religious denomination. The building meets Criteria Consideration A, as a building owned by a religious institution and used for religious purposes, because its significance is directly connected to the history of political, social, and cultural activities of the civil rights movement. Because the period of significance overlaps the 50-year mark by only one year, it does not need to meet Criteria Consideration G.

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

The Shrine of the Black Madonna is nominated under the Multiple Property Submission prepared concurrently) for 20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, Michigan, 1900-1976. It meets the registration requirements for the property type of Buildings, subtype Religious Institutions for that cover document under Criteria A and B, at the national level. The Multiple Property Documentation Form is organized according to four periods of significance identified in the National Park Service's *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. The Shrine's significance falls under the two final periods identified in the framework, "Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964," and "Second Revolution, 1964-1976." These two periods were characterized, nationally and in Detroit, by the maturation of the modern civil rights movement and the efforts of African Americans to capitalize on the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in enforcing and expanding gains made earlier in the century. Despite modest advances in employment and housing equality, African Americans still faced significant discrimination and barriers to equal access in all areas of their life and work. Two strands of activism developed during the period, one that focused on non-violent civil disobedience, modeled after the movement led nationally by Martin Luther King, Jr., and a more militant approach which, in the late 1960s and 1970s, gave rise to the Black

Power Movement and black nationalism, in which African Americans demanded self-determination, control over black institutions, and pride in their race, heritage, and achievements. The MPDF identifies black religious institutions and leaders as a key theme, under "The Role of Detroit's Black Churches in the Civil Rights Movement." Detroit's African American church leaders were at the forefront of the civil rights movement in Detroit, and a number of them became well known on a national level. Reverend Cleage was among the leaders of the black nationalism movement nationally and was highly visible for his militant stance on equality and self-determination for African Americans. The Shrine hosted speeches by national civil rights figures and was the site of the People's Tribunal in 1967 following the Detroit rebellion.

Because the building is owned by a religious institution, and is used for religious purposes, it must meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration A. As documented in the following text, The Shrine of the Black Madonna is significant for its connection to political, social, and cultural activities that took place within its walls or that are related to its leader, Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., who was a significant figure in the civil rights movement in Detroit and the United States.

Early Religious Career and Civil Rights Work

Albert B. Cleage Jr. was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in June 1911 to Dr. Albert Cleage, Sr and his wife Pearl. The Cleage family moved to Detroit soon after, where his father helped to establish the city's first African American hospital, Dunbar Hospital (NRHP 1979), in Black Bottom. The family lived in the West Side neighborhood, at Scotten Street and Moore Place, near Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. While this was a historically African American middle-class neighborhood, this did not insulate Cleage from racism and prejudice, particularly in the schools. He was mentored as a teenager by three influential black activist pastors, Father Malcolm Dade of Saint Cyprian's Episcopal Church, Horace White of Plymouth Congregational Church, and Charles A. Hill of Hartford Baptist Church. During his religious studies, he became interested in youth ministry and education, interests that would be sustained throughout his religious career. After graduating with a divinity degree from Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in 1943, he married and was ordained as a minister in the Congregational Christian Church. He served as a pastor in Lexington, Kentucky; San Francisco, California; and Springfield, Massachusetts, before returning to Detroit in 1950. It was in Springfield that Cleage expanded his civil rights activism, working for the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), although he was not yet seen as a radical activist.[5]

Cleage returned to Detroit as the pastor of St. Mark's Presbyterian Church and continued his mainstream civil rights work, joining the Detroit NAACP branch and preaching on topics where religion and civil rights intersected, earning him the notice of the local African American newspaper, *The Michigan Chronicle*, which covered one of his sermons on the evils of intra-

[5] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 240-250.

racial prejudice in 1952.[6] Cleage noted that "…in Detroit, my ideas developed rapidly" and he found himself at odds with the Presbyterian Church's leadership. He and a group of followers formed St. Mark's Congregational Church, eventually renamed Central Congregational Church.[7]

Central Congregational Church purchased the former Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church building at 7625-35 Linwood Street in 1957. According to Bishop Mbiyu Chui, the congregation of Brewster-Pilgrim was shrinking, and they were looking for a buyer for the building.[8] It is likely that Brewster-Pilgrim saw its congregation shrinking due to the combination of white flight and suburbanization, although Brewster-Pilgrim had held citywide interdenominational and interracial events as early as the 1940s.[9] Brewster-Pilgrim followed its flock to the suburbs, opening in a temporary facility in Livonia after selling the church before building a permanent sanctuary.

Central Congregational's new home was located in the Twelfth Street neighborhood, one of the first of Detroit's neighborhoods to widely open to middle class blacks in the post-World War II era. Formerly a Jewish neighborhood settled in the 1920s, the Twelfth Street area became available to blacks in part because Jewish residents were willing to live near or sell to African Americans. Jewish Detroiters, however, eventually joined the middle class white migration out of the city, settling in the northwest suburbs in the 1960s. Cleage's Central Congregational Church was joined in the early 1960s by the Reverend C. L. Franklin's New Bethel Baptist Church, which had been forced out of its Black Bottom neighborhood due to urban renewal and created a new home in the former Oriole Theater at 8430 Linwood Street.

Led and supported by Reverend Cleage and his Central Congregational Church, the Twelfth Street neighborhood became the geographical and ideological center of Detroit's black consciousness movement, particularly as that movement became more militant in the face of continued white resistance to acknowledging African American rights. By the early 1960s, Cleage and many of his fellow black activists were becoming frustrated with their lack of progress and with the more conservative tactics of organizations like the NAACP. To provide a source of alternative viewpoints, Cleage and his brothers, Henry and Hugh, who owned a printing business, began publishing in 1960 a weekly newspaper covering topics relevant to the black community. Both Albert Cleage and another brother, Louis, were contributing editors, and Albert Cleage often wrote a feature article for the issue on a topical subject, like the 1963 Walk to Freedom (see below). In 1961, Cleage and two brothers, Milton and Richard Henry (Gaidi and Imari Obadele), formed the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) as an alternative grassroots civil rights organization. GOAL organized political activity to combat segregation in housing and the public schools and police brutality, and was instrumental in unifying the black

[6] "Reverend A. B. Cleage Condemns Evils," *Michigan Chronicle*, February 23, 1952.
[7] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 250-51.
[8] Bishop Mbiyu Chui, interview with Saundra Little and Ruth Mills, April 13, 2019, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7635 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan.
[9] "World Battle to Add Note," *Detroit Free Press*, April 9, 1944, 6.

community to help elect Democratic mayor Jerome Cavanagh. GOAL filed lawsuits against the city's urban renewal program and to force the Board of Education to hire black teachers and eliminate bias in textbooks. GOAL also supported UHURU, a black nationalist youth organization that was instrumental in the Black Power movement in Detroit.[10]

Activists like the Henry brothers found a home, at least for a time, at Central Congregational, as did other radicals like James and Grace Lee Boggs and Edward Vaughn. Although Rosa Parks was officially a member of the St. Matthews AME Church on Petoskey Street, she also attended events at Central Congregational, which was just a few blocks from her home on Virginia Park Street.[11] Cleage was also drawing national civil rights leaders and African American entertainers to speak or perform at Central Congregational in the early to mid-1960s. Among these were Dr. Rufus Clement, president of Atlanta University and the first African American elected to the Atlanta Board of Education, Congressman Charles C. Diggs Jr., Eldridge Cleaver, and Stokely Carmichael (the latter was photographed with Rosa Parks outside Central Congregational Church in 1966). Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee sang here as well.

The "Black Revolt of 1963"

Cleage's political activism accelerated beginning around 1963, when it seemed as if he was involved in nearly every civil rights activity and organization in the city. Among the most significant of these was the Walk to Freedom in Detroit in June 1963. Along with Reverend Franklin, Cleage was among the initiators of the march; he felt that the civil rights movement was stronger in the south than in the north, and that a high profile event highlighting injustice in the south would bring attention to discrimination in the north, as well. In early May 1963 Cleage and a small group of civil rights activists met in Detroit to discuss how they could aid the cause of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC). The SCLC, an African American civil rights organization headed by King, targeted Birmingham, one of the most racially divided cities in the country, in a campaign to address segregation in public facilities. Whites dug their heels in, led by the militant Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, who unleashed guard dogs and firehoses on protestors. King, fellow civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy, and numerous other demonstrators were arrested on April 12, 1963. During the week that he was in custody, King wrote his famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail" defending his policy of non-violent civil disobedience. As a result of its activities in Birmingham and the legal expenses incurred to defend its members, the SCLC was running out of money in the spring of 1963.

Among the attendees at the meeting with Cleage were John Conyers, Jr., a civil rights lawyer who would be elected to the United States Congress the following year, George Crockett, co-founder of the first integrated law firm in the country, and Reverend Nicholas Hood of Plymouth

[10] Dara R. Walker, "Group on Advanced Leadership," in Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young, eds., *Black Power Encyclopedia: From 'Black is Beautiful' to Urban Uprisings* (Westport, CT: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2018), 349-352.
[11] Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013), 179.

United Church of Christ. The group decided to combine their forces with Reverend Franklin, who had called a mass meeting for May 17 at New Bethel Baptist. Cleage spoke at that meeting alongside Franklin, where together they formed the Detroit Council for Human Rights (DCHR), and began planning the march for the following month.[12]

Cleage and Franklin were not ideological allies. Cleage was by this time convinced that only militant action would achieve results, while Franklin preferred the nonviolent civil disobedience approach practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr. However, according to Bishop Mbiyu Chui, although Cleage disagreed with their tactics, he was at heart a coalition builder and attempted to find common ground to advance the cause of civil rights. When the NAACP and more conservative civil rights organizers attempted to wrest control of the march from Reverend Franklin, Cleage supported him. In part, this was likely because King would only work with Franklin, and Cleage saw that the march would have a greater impact if King attended.[13] But Cleage had also clashed with the local NAACP chapter when he argued strongly that the march be "as militant and Black led as possible."[14]

The Walk to Freedom was held on June 23, 1963, exactly twenty years after the 1943 racial conflict in Detroit. With about 125,000 participants (some estimates went as high as 200,000), it was the largest civil rights demonstration in the nation's history to that point, and King wrote shortly after the march that "America has never seen anything like (it)." [15] The march's success was due in large part to the pre-march organizing by Cleage and his fellow religious leaders. As James Boggs noted, "…blacks had organized all over the city and churches. Reverend Cleage did lots of organizing. All of the preachers agreed that they would have a rally, and every one of their churches had a pre-march rally. That's what got out so many people."[16] Cleage marched down Woodward Avenue alongside King, Franklin, U.S. Representative Charles Diggs, Jr., former Governor John Swainson, and United Auto Workers leader Walter Reuther. Cleage was one of the speakers on the program at Cobo Hall following the march, speaking just before Reverend King, who gave a preliminary version of his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The Detroit march was a significant precursor to the August 1963 March on Washington.

At around the same time, Cleage was among the organizers of the Freedom Now Party. The announcement of the new, all-black national political party came a few days before the March on

[12] Joseph E. Coles, Interoffice Memos dated May 17 and May 22, 1963, Mayor's Interracial Committee. In Folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.
[13] Bishop Mbiyu Chui, interview with Saundra Little and Ruth Mills, April 13, 2019, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7635 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan.
[14] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 269-270.
[15] Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., letter to Reverend C. L. Franklin, July 10, 1963, in folder "Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963," in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
[16] "James Boggs" in Elaine Latzman Moon, *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918-1967* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 155.

Washington. In introducing the new party, its founders, including William Worthy, a journalist for the *Baltimore Afro American,* and Conrad Lynn, a New York-based attorney, both on the radical end of the civil rights spectrum, believed that the white-dominated Republican and Democratic parties would never effectively represent black interests.[17] It was a philosophy that aligned with Cleage's. He had asserted the previous year that only blacks could adequately represent their own interests in government: "What I want is the election of qualified, militant Negroes who will fight for their people's interests."[18] Cleage was among the national leaders of the party; he hosted the national party's 1964 convention at Central Congregational Church and was even considered at one time as a possible presidential candidate for the party.[19] Cleage was the state chair of the party and was nominated for Governor on the party's statewide ticket. Unfortunately the party's slate had a disappointing performance in the general election, and Cleage and Grace Lee Boggs, who was also on the 1964 electoral slate, resigned from the party two weeks after the election.[20] The party itself largely disappeared after 1965.

The DCHR had succeeded in bringing together a broad-based coalition to promote the 1963 Walk to Freedom, and in the months following the march it attempted to capitalize on the momentum. Among the plans of the organization were an annual march on the fourth Sunday in June and support for the March on Washington then being planned. The DCHR voted to become a membership organization, with Franklin as chair and Cleage on the board of directors.[21] Following the death of Cynthia Scott, an African American sex worker, at the hands of a white Detroit Police patrol officers on July 5, the DCHR attempted to interest the United States Attorney General in investigating the case, while board member James Del Rio made plans to call a meeting of mayors of suburban cities to discuss police protection for African Americans who had purchased repossessed FHA and VA homes.[22] Cleage also helped organize mass demonstrations at Detroit police headquarters and the city-county building after Scott's killer was cleared.[23]

Cleage began working again with Franklin to organize another national event in the late summer and early fall of 1963, this time a conference of national black civil rights leaders, to be held in Detroit in November. Called the Northern Negro Leadership Conference, the event would feature U.S. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, a national civil rights leader, as its principal speaker, as well as Mahalia Jackson and several members of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s staff. In the months prior to the event, however, Franklin and Cleage's uneasy alliance deteriorated over their competing visions for the civil rights movement. Although both rejected gradualism, Franklin

[17] M.S. Handler, "An All-Negro Party for '64 is Formed," *New York Times*, August 24, 1963, 1.
[18] "Minister Says Negroes Must Elect Negroes," *Pittsburgh Courier,* October 13, 1962, 16.
[19] "National Slate Considered by the Freedom Now Party," *New York Times,* January 15 1964, 38
[20] Documented in the *Michigan Chronicle*, September to December 1964.
[21] Notes on Proceedings, June 28, 1963, in Folder "Council for Human Rights," in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
[22] . Joseph E. Coles, Interoffice Memo, August 7, 1963, Mayor's Interracial Committee. In Folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.
[23] "Edwards' TV Talk Assailed by ACLU," *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1963.

aligned with the nonviolent integrationist methods of his friend King, while Cleage increasingly embraced a militant separatist approach. In late October, a few weeks before the planned conference, Cleage abruptly quit the DCHR, citing Franklin's unwillingness to allow radical speakers like Cleage's fellow Freedom Now Party founders, William Worthy and Conrad Lynn. In leaving the DCHR, Cleage charged that the organization "…lacks the vision necessary to maintain the fleeting spectacular June 23 Freedom March…"[24] Cleage organized a rival conference for the same weekend, the Northern Negro Grassroots Leadership Conference, held at King Solomon Baptist Church. Despite a last-minute attempt by King to promote Franklin's conference, the event was overshadowed by the Grassroots conference, which was memorable for Malcolm X's "Message to the Grassroots."[25] In the wake of Cleage's departure and the failed conference, the DCHR faded away. Despite the very public falling out, Cleage and Franklin continued to collaborate when they felt it was in the interests of the greater movement. Cleage later invited Franklin to speak at Central Congregational and he appeared on panels with Franklin, demonstrating both men's belief, as observed by Franklin biographer Nicholas Salvatore, that "The freedom struggle ultimately demanded that individuals transcend personal differences to work together whenever possible."[26]

Although Cleage had invited Malcolm X to the Grassroots Leadership Conference, they also differed in their approach to civil rights. Although both were identified as black nationalists, there were key differences between the two. Malcolm X, a member of the Nation of Islam, which had been founded in Detroit in the 1930s, envisioned a physically separate nation, declaring in the Message to the Grassroots that "(a) revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation." Cleage, on the other hand, believed in black nationalism as a political, economic, spiritual and cultural construct. Blacks would not carve out their own piece of land, either in the United States or elsewhere, but would set up parallel institutions that would serve their own needs and give them the power to compel equality rather than beg for it from white institutions. Nevertheless, Cleage saw the value of a political alliance with Malcolm X and black Muslims.[27]

By the end of 1963, Cleage believed that blacks had reached a decisive turning point in the civil rights movement. Reflecting on the events of the year, he observed

> In northern centers a new kind of "Black Nationalism" began to emerge. The Negro, disillusioned with "integration," began to look for another way—an independent course he could chart and travel alone. Black men began to talk of Black History, Black Art, Black

[24] "Rev. Cleage Quits DCHR," unattributed newspaper clipping in folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Records, Accession #267, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.
[25] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 273.
[26] Nicholas Salvatore, *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 276.
[27] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 271-272.

> Economics, Black Political Action and Black Leadership. Black Nationalists didn't merely talk black, they began to act black.[28]

Over the next several years, Cleage continued his political activities in Detroit, including an unsuccessful run for Detroit Common Council in 1965. Despite his loss in the primary, Cleage immediately instituted a "Vote for Four" campaign to persuade black Detroiters to vote only for the four black candidates in the general election, urging that "The only way to elect any Negroes to the Common Council…is by Negroes voting for four and no more."[29] In early 1966, Cleage was invited by the United Church of Christ headquarters in New York City to join the Committee for Racial Justice Now, a national group of African American clergy who would explore the next steps in achieving racial justice. [30] The following summer, Cleage held a Black Arts Conference at Central Congregational Church.

Black Christian Nationalism

Reverend Cleage became relatively well known among the African American civil rights community in Detroit and nationally during the early 1960s through his participation in the Freedom Now Party and his work on high profile events like the Walk to Freedom and the Grassroots Conference. But it was during the turbulent late 1960s that, as the *New York Times* would recall in his obituary, Cleage "became a focus of national attention."[31] *Life* magazine, in introducing a feature on militant black leaders in December 1968, explained that 1955 to 1965 had been the "great decade of civil rights," when leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thurgood Marshall had spoken *for* blacks to the white world. Yet when the legal victories of that decade, culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, failed to lead to real equality, the militancy of the late 1960s was spawned. New voices began speaking *to* blacks, urging them, as Malcolm X did, to "look what you can do for yourselves" and to assert their rights rather than bargain for them with whites who refused to grant them. Among the nine profiled "men who are speaking *to* black America, and are being heard," was Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr. In his piece, Cleage wrote, "My concern is bringing the black church into the struggle…they must rebuild the worship service and the approach of the church…The Old Testament is the Testament for black power, black pride, the search for black identity."[32]

It was a neat encapsulation of Cleage's newly expressed religio-political philosophy: Black Christian Nationalism. In the introduction to *Black Messiah*, a collection of sermons he published in 1968 (and which carried the subtitle "The religious roots of Black Power—a strong and uncompromising presentation by America's most influential and controversial black

[28] Albert B. Cleage, Jr., "The Next Step," *Illustrated News*, November 1963.
[29] "Primary Loser Urges Support Only for Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, September 28, 1965, 8.
[30] W. Sterling Cary, Letter to Albert B. Cleage, Jr., February 28, 1966, in Albert B. Cleage Jr. papers, 1949-2005, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
[31] "Albert Cleage is Dead at 88; Led Black Nationalist Church," *New York Times*, February 27, 2000.
[32] "A Separate Path to Equality: The Shift from Moderates to Militants," *Life*, December 13, 1968, 82-89. The other eight men profiled were Rev. Jesse Jackson, Roy Innes, Dick Gregory, LeRoi Jones, Harry Edwards, Eldridge Cleaver, Thomas Matthew, and Julian Bond.

religious leader"), Cleage wrote that Jesus was a revolutionary black leader, literally a black man who had led a revolt against Rome, and that "our rediscovery of the Black Messiah is a part of our rediscovery of ourselves." The role of the black church was not to help black people endure oppression, but to strengthen them in their fight.[33]

Cleage's vision was unveiled to his congregation, quite literally, on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967. Prior to this, at the west end of Central Congregational Church was a stained glass window depicting the landing of George Winthrop and the Pilgrims at Massachusetts Bay on Plymouth Rock, an inheritance from its time as Pilgrim Congregational Church. According to Edward Vaughn, Cleage was increasingly irritated with the visual message this conveyed for his black congregation. Cleage told Vaughn, "I am sick and tired of these pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock. I want to get something black up there."[34] Vaughn organized the Black Heritage Committee to raise funds for a mural; although Cleage wanted an image of Jesus as the black Messiah, Vaughn convinced him to have a mural of the Black Madonna instead. Vaughn commissioned black artist Glanton Dowdell (1923-2000), a Detroit native, to paint the mural. Dowdell had exhibited a one-man show of "prison scenes" during a stint in prison from 1949 to 1962, one of which earned an honorable mention in a 1958 juried exhibition called the Michigan Artists Show. Following his release from prison, Dowdell operated a small art gallery in the Twelfth Street neighborhood (destroyed during the 1967 rebellion), and helped to organize the 1966 Detroit Black Arts Conference at Central Congregational. He was also active in Detroit's radical black labor movement, joining the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, an umbrella organization for a number of automotive plant-based union movements that had formed in the late 1960s to protest racial inequity in the labor movement. A few years after painting the Black Madonna mural, Dowdell, fearing assassination or imprisonment in retaliation for his activism, sought and received asylum in Sweden, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Of the mural, Dowdell stated that it was meant to symbolize the connection between the Madonna and "any negro mother." [35]

Vaughn also recalled that some members had, ironically, felt that the Black Madonna was "too black," a sentiment confirmed by Bishop Chui. When Vaughn conveyed this to Dowdell, the latter refused to change her color, but he did paint her with light shining on her face so that her features could be seen. Behind the Madonna, at the hem of her dress, can be seen buildings burning in the distance, symbolic of blacks being burned out of their homes by the Klan. The

[33] Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *Black Messiah* (Sheed and Ward, 1969), 4-7.
[34] Edward Vaughn, Oral Interview by Paul Lee, October 6, 2013, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, excerpt posted at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg.
[35] Edward Vaughn, interview by Paul Lee, October 6, 2013, Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7625 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg&feature=youtu.be; Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 288; Melanee Harvey, "Black Power and Black Madonna: Charting the Aesthetic Influence of Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Glanton Dowdell, and the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1," in Jawanza Eric Clark, ed., *Albert Cleage Jr. and the Black Madonna and Child* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 139-141.

unveiling of the Black Madonna was polarizing for the church, and many members who were not sympathetic to Cleage's black nationalism left the church.[36]

However, Cleage's activism and advocacy for the cause of black nationalism drew many more members to church, accelerated by his leadership in the aftermath of the July 1967 rebellion, which began at Twelfth Street and Clairmount Avenue, just a mile from Central Congregational Church. The month after the rebellion, Cleage published a front-page article in the *Michigan Chronicle* expressing his exasperation with the internalization of white criticism and the efforts of some to disassociate themselves with those who participated in the rebellion. In response to a black woman who was attempting to deny any black involvement with the revolt, he wrote "This is old-time slavery talk. We haven't even got the sense to revolt by ourselves. Somebody else had to come in and tell us what to do. I personally would rather be a criminal than be somebody who doesn't even have the sense to revolt by myself."[37] In his regular column in the *Chronicle* later that month, Cleage also wrote "It is not only 'The Man' who has held us in bondage for 400 years. We have also fashioned chains for each other. The real test of the success or failure of the Black Revolution which is now sweeping America will lie in our ability to come together and stay together."[38]

In a community shocked and polarized by the aftermath of the rebellion, Cleage clearly articulated his position on black separatism, which was considered by many whites and even some members of the black activist community as dangerous. "I'm dealing with reality. White people don't want integration. I think it's a waste of time and self-defeating for black people to try to integrate into a society that doesn't want them." Cleage believed that black people needed to stand in a position of power rather than weakness before they could consider integration with the white community, and he pointed out that attempts at integration often resulted in whites fleeing from integrated institutions, leaving them all black anyway.[39]

Cleage's Central Congregational Church (which he soon renamed the Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church after its mural) hosted another important event in August 1967. During the rebellion, three young black men were killed by police at the Algiers Motel. After the officers involved were cleared in the incident, the Citizens City-wide Action Committee, a grassroots organization of black militants and nationalists co-founded by Cleage in the aftermath of the rebellion with Glanton Dowdell, the artist who had painted the Black Madonna, held a "people's tribunal" to hear the case. Over two thousand people attended, and it was covered in the national and international press. The jury, which included Rosa Parks, found the officers guilty of murder; while the verdict was in no way legally enforceable, it did give the community a chance to grieve and express its outrage.[40]

---

[36] Edward Vaughn, Oral Interview by Paul Lee, October 6, 2013, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, excerpt posted at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg.
[37] Albert B. Cleage Jr., "We Must Control Our Community," *The Michigan Chronicle*, August 12, 1967.
[38] *Michigan Chronicle*, August 26, 1967.
[39] "Black Men in Search of a New Reality," *Detroit Free Press*, September 9, 1968, 15.
[40] Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013), 198-199.

Although Cleage had lost some members of his congregation over his advocacy of black nationalism, his message of power and self-determination also resonated with many young people who joined the church in the hundreds and thousands. Within a few years, Cleage became head of a "700,000-member Detroit Black community."[41] In late 1967, Cleage founded another organization, the Federation for Self-Determination, whose commitments were to "Community Unity, Self-Determination, and Accountability." Among its members were Edward Vaughn, civil rights lawyer Kenneth Cockrel, Sr., and U.S. Representative John Conyers. While Cleage preferred to keep disagreements between black civil rights organizations within the black community, the Federation very publicly clashed with the New Detroit Committee (NDC), an integrated group of Detroiters which had been formed in 1967 with a mission to prevent another rebellion.[42] Led by Joseph L. Hudson, Jr., the NDC had offered the Federation access to a grant from the Ford Foundation. The Federation emphatically rejected it on the grounds that the NDC had attached too many strings to the money. Cleage wrote in the *Michigan Chronicle* that "Obviously Hudson does not understand the meaning of self-determination. For the New Detroit Committee to suppose for one moment that it could 'oversee' the work of a Federation devoted to self-determination or that it could coordinate the work of black organizations throughout the city was to indicate a complete inability to comprehend the state of mind of black people in the city of Detroit."[43] According to Angela Dillard, the incident "led activists in Detroit and Black communities across the country to raise important questions about self-determination and community control."[44]

From 1967 to 1969 Cleage was one of the most visible faces of black nationalism across the country, frequently cited in newspapers as the head of America's most militant black church (in its obituary of Cleage, the *New York Times* noted that Cleage's was not the only black nationalist church, but his was "one of the biggest and most influential"[45]). In a widely syndicated interview in December 1967, journalist Carl Rowan interviewed Cleage, repeatedly asking leading questions about Cleage's attitude toward "guerilla warfare in urban areas" and whether he really believed that African Americans were threatened with genocide. While Cleage refused to be drawn by Rowan's tactics, it was an indication of the degree of alarm and fear that black nationalism engendered among some whites. Indeed, Rowan's article hints that Cleage's City-wide Citizens Action Committee was under investigation by the President's Commission on Civil Disorders, noting that the "commission reportedly agrees that Mr. Cleage and his group

[41] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 287.
[42] "Federation for Self-Determination," Folder in Box 19, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations, Accession #267, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.
[43] Rev. Albert B. Cleage, "Self-Determination and Accountability," *Michigan Chronicle,* January 13, 1968. See also Bill Gilliam and Carol Schmidt, "Traditional Leadership, Corporations Get a Slap," *Michigan Chronicle,* January 13, 1968.
[44] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 295.
[45] "Albert Cleage is Dead at 88; Led Black Nationalist Church," *New York Times*, February 27, 2000.

have a very large following—and that the black nationalism preached in and by CCAC has become a force that no American ought ignore."[46]

For Cleage and his fellow militants, the focus on "guerrilla warfare" was absurd in the face of ongoing violence against blacks. In a sermon preached in the wake of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s murder in April 1968, Cleage pointed out the irrationality of being told by whites that retaliation for King's murder would go against his wish for nonviolence, when he had been violently murdered by a white man. Nonviolence would never work in a fundamentality racist society, and it inherently precluded the possibility of self-defense in the face of white violence. He similarly criticized United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, recalling a meeting with Reuther where the latter discussed his opposition to criminal activity. Cleage accused Reuther of hypocrisy given how had built the UAW, saying "…he can't stand criminal activity. Nobody can stand it after they win." [47]

Refocusing on Church Development and Later Life

Beginning around 1970 Cleage began to withdraw from high-profile political activities to concentrate on the development of Black Christian Nationalism within the church and expanding the reach of the Shrine of the Black Madonna. He believed the way to empower African Americans was for them to develop their own nation within a nation, a self-sufficient black community. Cleage held the first convention of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement (later renamed the Pan African Orthodox Church) at the Shrine of the Black Madonna in 1970. The previous year, he had founded Black Co-Operative Services, Inc. to develop black-owned businesses in the city. Among its projects were a gas station at Clairmount and Linwood, an "Afro-style" clothing factory at 4808-10 Whitfield, a day nursery at 13535 Livernois (now the Shrine of the Black Madonna Bookstore and Cultural Center), and the Black Star Co-Op market at 7011 Gratiot.[48] In 1972 Cleage published another volume, *Black Christian Nationalism*, which focused on how to restructure the black church to make it more relevant to black nationalism. With hundreds of thousands of members, the Shrine also expanded to several new locations in Detroit and in other states, notably Atlanta, Georgia and Houston, Texas. Cleage did not give up on his commitment to civil rights for African Americans, but increasingly focused on working within the framework of his church, believing that the church was the "only real institution black people have." [49] Bishop Chui, who joined the church during the early 1970s, noted that for Cleage, education was paramount. He had always had a strong youth mission program, and Chui remembers being inspired by the emphasis on education and learning, noting that no one walked through the door of the church without books in their hands.[50]

---

[46] Carl T. Rowan, "Negro Threatens Guerrilla Warfare," *San Antonio Express*, December 3, 1967, 8-G.
[47] Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *Black Messiah* (Sheed and Ward, 1969), 202, 139
[48] "Black Co-op to Offer Stocks, Seeks $100,000 in capital," *Detroit Free Press*, January 25, 1969, 4.
[49] Betty DeRamus, "A Man of Controversy Achieves 'Black Realism'," *Detroit Free Press*, December 26, 1972, 3A, 20A.
[50] Bishop Mbiyu Chui, interview with Saundra Little and Ruth Mills, April 13, 2019, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7635 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan.

At the same time, Cleage continued to support civil rights activities in the city, albeit in a more low-key fashion. He continued to provide space in the church for many activities that would support the civil rights struggle. Community, social, and political organizations held meetings, presentations, and other events at the church. Cleage created a political arm of the Shrine, the Black Slate, to endorse candidates (black and white) who would work to advance black equality. Black Slate endorsed, and was instrumental in, the election of Coleman Young as the first black mayor of Detroit in 1973.[51]

Reverend Cleage passed away in 2000. While the Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church is not as large in terms of members as it was during the height of the civil rights struggle, the community continues activities connected to his ideology of self-sufficiency and self-determination of black people, including a mission in Liberia, and a farm, Beulah Land, in South Carolina.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for the property is from 1958, when the building was purchased by Central Congregational Church (renamed Shrine of the Black Madonna in 1967) to 1970. While Rev. Cleage continued to work for African American civil rights until his death in 2000, his activities after 1970 focused more on expanding the Black Christian Nationalist Movement as a religious denomination. Because the period of significance overlaps the 50-year mark by only one year, it does not need to meet Criteria Consideration G.

[51] Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017), 304.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

"Albert Cleage is Dead at 88; Led Black Nationalist Church." *New York Times*, February 27, 2000.

"A Separate Path to Equality: The Shift from Moderates to Militants." *Life*, December 13, 1968, 82-89.

"Black Co-op to Offer Stocks, Seeks $100,000 in capital." *Detroit Free Press.* January 25, 1969, 4.

"Black Men in Search of a New Reality." *Detroit Free Press*. September 9, 1968, 15.

Cary, W. Sterling. Letter to Albert B. Cleage, Jr., February 28, 1966, in Albert B. Cleage Jr. papers, 1949-2005, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Chui, Bishop Mbiyu. Interview with Saundra Little and Ruth Mills, April 13, 2019, at Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7635 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan.

Clark, Jawanza Eric, ed. *Albert Cleage Jr. and the Black Madonna and Child.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

Cleage, Albert B. Jr. *Black Christian Nationalism*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972.

Cleage, Albert B. Jr. *Black Messiah*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969.

Cleage, Albert B. Jr. "The Next Step." *Illustrated News*, November 1963.

Cleage Rev. Albert B. "Self-Determination and Accountability." *Michigan Chronicle.* January 13, 1968.

Cleage, Albert B. Jr. "We Must Control Our Community." *The Michigan Chronicle.* August 12, 1967.

Coles, Joseph E. Interoffice Memos dated May 17, May 22, and August 7, 1963, Mayor's Interracial Committee. In Folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

DeRamus, Betty. "A Man of Controversy Achieves 'Black Realism'." *Detroit Free Press*. December 26, 1972, 3A, 20A.

Dillard, Angela. *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2017.

"Edwards' TV Talk Assailed by ACLU." *Detroit Free Press.* August 9, 1963.

"Federation for Self-Determination." Folder in Box 19, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations, Accession #267, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

Gilliam, Bill and Carol Schmidt. "Traditional Leadership, Corporations Get a Slap." *Michigan Chronicle.* January 13, 1968.

Handler, M.S. "An All-Negro Party for '64 is Formed." *New York Times*, August 24, 1963, 1.

King, Reverend Martin Luther, Jr. Letter to Reverend C. L. Franklin, July 10, 1963, in folder "Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963," in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Minister Says Negroes Must Elect Negroes." *Pittsburgh Courier,* October 13, 1962, 16.

Moon, Elaine Latzman. *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918-1967.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994.

"National Slate Considered by the Freedom Now Party." *New York Times,* January 15 1964, 38.

Notes on Proceedings,.June 28, 1963, in Folder "Council for Human Rights," in C. L. Franklin Papers, 1957-1991, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Pilgrim Congregational Church Tenth Anniversary Services." *Detroit Free Press*. November 28, 1925, 4.

"Pilgrim Stone Laid." *Detroit Free Press*. September 14, 1925, 1.

"Primary Loser Urges Support Only for Negroes." *Detroit Free Press*, September 28, 1965, 8.

"Reverend A. B. Cleage Condemns Evils." *Michigan Chronicle*. February 23, 1952.

"Rev. Cleage Quits DCHR." Unattributed newspaper clipping in folder "Detroit Council for Human Rights," Box 18, Part 3, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Records, Accession #267, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

Rowan, Carl T. "Negro Threatens Guerrilla Warfare." *San Antonio Express*, December 3, 1967, 8-G.

Salvatore, Nicholas. *Singing in a Strange Land: C. L. Franklin, the Black Church, and the Transformation of America.* New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005.

Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Theoharis, Jeanne. *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013.

Vaughn, Edward. interview by Paul Lee, October 6, 2013, Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7625 Linwood Street, Detroit, Michigan, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg&feature=youtu.be.

Walker, Dara R. "Group on Advanced Leadership." In Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young, eds., *Black Power Encyclopedia: From 'Black is Beautiful' to Urban Uprisings.* Westport, CT: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2018, 349-352.

"What's Doing Today in Detroit." *Detroit Free Press*. October 16, 1938, 4.

"Will Dedicate Church Unit." *Detroit Free Press*. November 15, 1930, 8.

"World Battle to Add Note." *Detroit Free Press*. April 9, 1944, 6.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

---

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <u>Less than one acre</u>

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: -83.060783 Longitude: 42.214698

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:

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

The south 18 feet of Lot 4 and Lots 5 through 8 of Crosman and McKay's Subdivision, City of Detroit.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the entire footprint of the building, which is built out to the lot lines.

---

11. Form Prepared By

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

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church
Detroit
Wayne County, MI

Photographer: Unknown
Date Photographed: ca. 1960s
Description: Historic exterior, looking northwest
0001 of 0022

Photographer: Unknown
Date Photographed: ca. 1960s
Description: Historic sanctuary, looking south
0002 of 0022

Photographer: Unknown
Date Photographed: ca. 1960s
Description: Historic sanctuary, looking west, showing west window before installation of the Black Madonna mural
0003 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: East elevation of sanctuary looking west
0004 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: East elevation belfry detail looking west
0005 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: East elevation of church hall, looking west

0006 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: North elevation looking south
0007 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: West elevation looking east
0008 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: South elevation of sanctuary looking north
0009 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Lobby looking west
0010 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Lobby stairs looking south
0011 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Second floor lounge looking southwest
0012 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Balcony looking south
0013 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Sanctuary from the balcony looking west
0014 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans

Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Sanctuary from floor level looking northwest
0015 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Sanctuary looking southeast
0016 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Church hall lobby looking west
0017 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Kitchen looking east
0018 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Church hall looking west
0019 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Church hall looking east
0020 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Gymnasium under sanctuary looking east
0021 of 0022

Photographer: Quinn Evans
Date Photographed: February 2019
Description: Second floor office area, typical
0022 of 0022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

N

Boundary

Geographical Coordinate
Latitude: -83.060783 Longitude: 42.214698

N

Boundary

Geographical Coordinate
Latitude: -83.060783 Longitude: 42.214698

Shrine of the Black Madonna, 7635 Linwood Street
National Register of Historic Places Nomination
Boundary Map

Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
February 2019

Shrine of the Black Madonna Boundary

1 Contributing Building

N

THE MOTHER SHRINE
of the
Shrines of the Black Madonna

Welcome to the Black Nation
Home of
Black Christian Nationalism
Rev. Albert B. Cleage Jr. Minister and Founder
OUR CREED
I believe that both my Survival and my Salvation depend upon my willingness to Submerge my individualism in the Black Nation and so I commit my life to the Black Christian Nationalist Movement
Entering a New Era

PAOCC
65th Anniversary
Entering a New Era

Freedom