

Good afternoon Stewart-

Attached is a copy of a letter written in response to the proposed designation of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery. Two paper copies of this letter will be sent to you via US Postal Service mail this afternoon. One copy is intended for you and the other copy is for the Commission Chairman. Also attached is a copy of a designation confirmation form for the property. A paper copy of this form will be enclosed with the letter. The third attachment is a cemetery site form, which I attached as a precaution. I am not sure if OSA has marked this cemetery or not. However, Lindsay Ferrante is copied on this email and she can confirm if OSA needs a cemetery site form for the property or not.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends refining the argument for special significance, framing the argument for significance within the broader context of Charlotte and referencing whether there are any comparative properties in the area. The report should also explain why the commission is designating a cemetery associated with a congregation and not the church:

- The fact that a congregation has been around for a long time and the current members descended from the original congregation, is not a defensible argument for special significance, as stated in the first paragraph of Landmark Report Section 8a. Charlotte had a number of churches over its history. What makes this church and congregation unique and its cemetery worthy of designation as a local landmark?
- The report does not offer any information about other African American churches in the area, especially those that may have been established by formerly enslaved people. We recommend revising the report to include this information and also answer the following questions. If other churches like Antioch Missionary Baptist were present in Charlotte historically, do they still exist? What is left that represents this story elsewhere in Charlotte? Why is this congregation important among them?
- Was this congregation associated with a significant African American community in Charlotte (within walking distance of the church)? Is the cemetery the only historic association left of that community?
- Are there other African American cemeteries left in Charlotte? Or is this about the congregation?

Staff also recommends revising the report to include specific information about the materials used for the headstones, dates of burials (if known), known number of burials, and information about landscape features, which may be added to the physical description of the property. While making revisions to the report the author should consider the following questions.

- How many standing stones are present in the cemetery? How many fieldstones or unmarked graves?
- How did you determine there are 72 graves present in the cemetery?
- Has there been an archaeological investigation of the cemetery using GPR or LIDAR? What information did these studies yield?
- What materials are the majority of the gravestones fashioned with (this will help you know how to treat them for preservation)? Concrete? Marble? Granite? Sandstone?
- Were the names of carvers engraved on the back sides of any of the gravestones?
- Is there any significance to the funerary art (usually minimal art in African American cemeteries) present in this cemetery?

- Include the earliest known burial date in the report. The cemetery could have started earlier given evidence of unmarked graves. However, the date of the first marked burial is unclear in the report. The report should also discuss if it is possible some of the graves were never marked or had headstones such as wood markers that may have deteriorated over time.
- Could there have been a cemetery here when the congregation purchased the land?
- What are the landscape features you want to protect?
 - Was it always forested? Many African American cemeteries were.
 - Any family plots marked by concrete block or stone etc., that may be character-defining features of the property?
 - Any paths?
 - Any other features, fencing, etc., you wish to protect. The report should include a detailed description of all the elements that contribute to the special character of the property.

The report claims the cemetery deserves recognition. Please elaborate as to why the cemetery deserves recognition.

The report also states that this is an important church community. Please provide a clear explanation as to why this church community is important to Charlotte and its history.

Please update the “tax map” to read Proposed Designation Boundary for the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery. Also, please label the cemetery on the map.

If you have a site map of the cemetery please add it to the report.

We also recommend adding birth and death dates to the inventory of burials found on page 9.

Please contact Jenn Brosz, National Register Coordinator at jenn.brosz@ncdcr.gov or at 919.807.6587 with any questions you may have regarding staff comments.

Best wishes!

AMBER E. STIMPSON, MA

Local Preservation Commission/Certified Local Government Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office

NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources

919 807 6575

amber.stimpson@ncdcr.gov

109 East Jones Street | 4617 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

