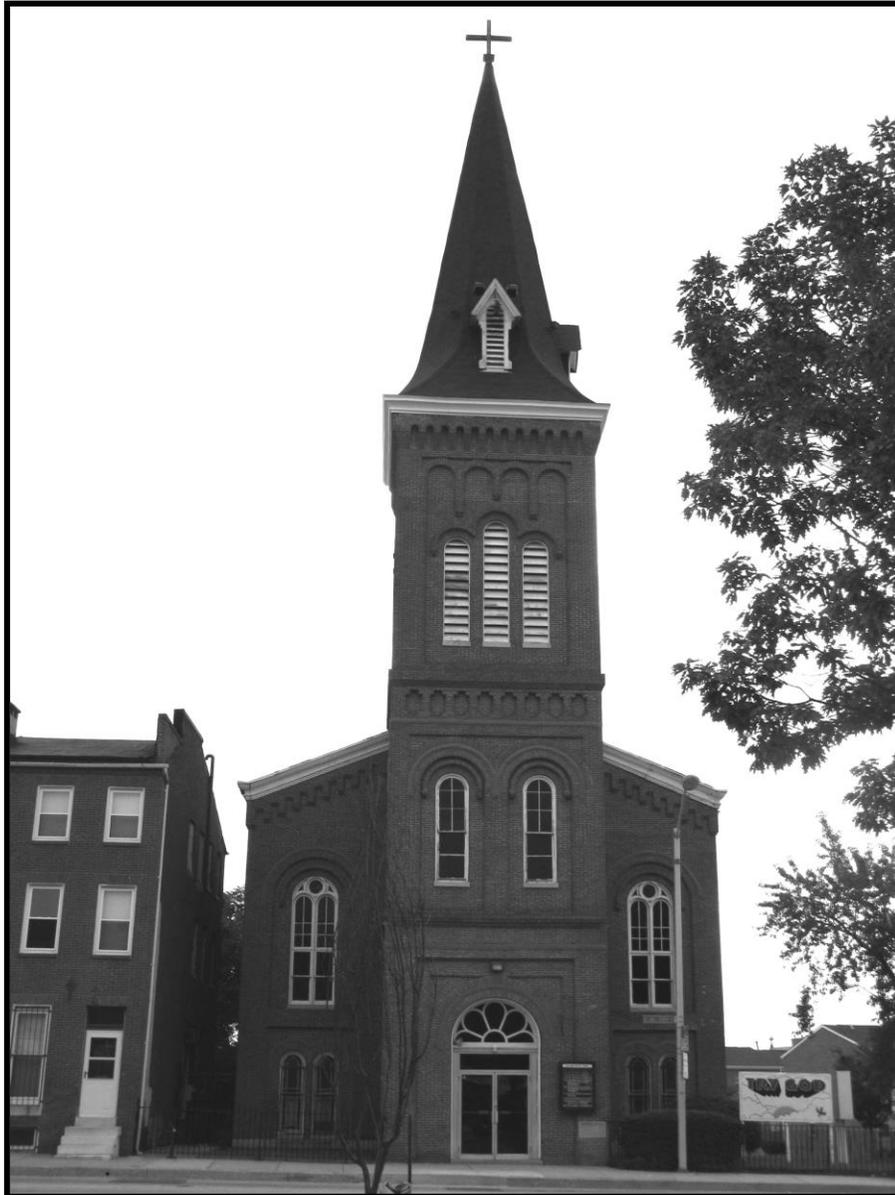


**The Commission for Historical and Architectural  
Preservation - Staff Report  
September 11, 2007**



**Landmark Designation Report  
Nazarene Baptist Church  
1201 Harford Avenue  
Baltimore, MD**

The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) has the responsibility of recommending to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore the adoption of ordinances designating districts and landmarks within the limits of the City of Baltimore, having special historical, architectural, educational, cultural, social or community significance, interest, or value as Baltimore City Historic Districts or Landmarks, thereby necessitating their preservation and protection. In making its recommendation, the Commission shall give appropriate consideration to the following standards. In reaching its decision, the Commission shall clearly state which standards have been applied.

A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

1. dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore; or
2. is associated with the life of an outstanding historical person or persons; or
3. is the site of an historic event with a significant effect upon the cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of Baltimore; or
4. is significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or
5. contributes information of historical, cultural, or social importance relating to the heritage of the community; or
6. has yielded, or may be likely to yield, archeological information important in history or prehistory.

### **Staff Recommendation: Approval**

**Nazarene Baptist Church** meets CHAP's standards for landmark designation **One, and four:**

**ONE** – Nazarene Baptist Church meets CHAP standard one as a congregation that has contributed to the development of Baltimore since 1942. The congregation has organized and sponsored several charitable organizations and has supported the community with several outreach efforts.

**FOUR** – Nazarene Baptist Church meets CHAP standard four as an historic structure designed by J. W. Hogg in 1851 (builder of Evergreen and superintending architect of Bayview Asylum) and significantly rebuilt in 1874-75 by architect Norval W. Wall and builder James L. Smith. The structure is an excellent example of a mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century church extensively remodeled with Victorian period architectural motifs.

## **Building Description:**

The Nazarene Baptist Church, built in two periods (1851 and 1874), is a two-story with tower, three-bay church structure. A highly ornamented four-part tower, which serves as the main architectural component to the primary façade, sits in the middle bay of the church. The main entryway centers on the first story of the tower and is framed by a recessed, blind flat-arched panel capped with an intricate tracery fanlight. Twin round-arched lancet windows, placed in blind arches and surrounded by brick window hoods, fenestrate the second level of the tower. On the third level, a three-part louvered opening, flared at the top with brick window hoods, frame a recessed panel. Long, thin brick corbels accent the top of the recesses panel and merge with a multiple-tiered brick cornice. A broach spire with small dormer windows juts up from the cornice line. This tower is attached to the original ca. 1851 structure. The side façade is fenestrated with round-arched windows and a corbelled cornice line.

Inside the church, the vestibule encases the upper floor stairs with railing which leads into a large, undivided sanctuary. An elaborately curved iron gallery (balcony) wraps the inside of the sanctuary on the south, west and north walls. Delicate, molding wraps the gallery, and slender cast-iron columns and crocketed capitals support the gallery.

## **Summary History**

Nazarene Baptist Church, founded by W.A. Hall, moved into the former Harford Avenue M.E. Church in May of 1942. Since that time the church has had only two pastors, W. A. Hall who served the church from 1942 to 1981 and Reverend James Thompson from 1981 to the present. Nazarene Baptist Church has been a driving force in the community since 1942.

The former congregation, the Harford Avenue M. E. Church grew out of a Sunday School founded by Reverend Daniel McJilton in 1843. The Sunday school built a small chapel, probably located at 1308-10 Harford Road (now demolished). On May 29, 1850, the congregation laid the corner-stone and in January 1851, opened the church for services:

On Sunday last, the M. E. Church, situated on Harford Avenue, was solemnly dedicated to Almighty God – religious services being held throughout the day. Collections were taken up which amounted to \$1,000 dollars, which is quite a liberal sum when the size of the congregation and their means are considered. The house is now finished and constituted a desirable ornament to the neighborhood (Baltimore Sun, January 9, 1851).

Between 1850 and 1874 The Harford Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church helped establish three new congregations: Waverly, Greenmount Avenue, and Mt. Lebanon. In 1874, the congregation began extensive renovations of the structure:

***Church Improvements.***- Harford Avenue M.E. Church, on the corner of Harford avenue and Biddle street, Rev. W.T. L. Weech pastor, has been undergoing extensive repairs for some months, under the superintendence of James L. Smith, builder and contractor, which, when completed, will render it one of the most beautiful church edifices in the northeastern section of the city. The entire basement, used as a Sunday school room, has been raised four feet by underpinning the walls, and a beautiful large room, 42 by 60 feet in size by 12 feet high, has been procured, which, with the adjoining classrooms, gives ample room for school purposes. Glass partitions divide the main room into three parts, but by sliding the sashes back and folding them against the wall the whole can be thrown into one room. A new brick tower has been built at the Harford avenue front, 70 feet in height, surmounted by a spire 58 feet high. The finial is a gilt cross about six feet high. A fine-toned bell, costing \$400 and weighing 1,233 lbs., has been placed in the tower, and was rung last Sunday morning for the first time. The main auditorium of the church is being extensively renovated. The ceiling will be re-plastered and the walls and ceiling frescoed. Walnut pews, with cushions, will be substituted for the old seats. The seating capacity, including the gallery, will be about 700 persons. The improvements will cost \$15,000. The Sunday school room has been in use for some months, but the church proper will not be ready for occupancy until September next. The building committee is composed of the following gentlemen: Messrs. James S. Suter, Levi Perry, Edwin Bennett, B. F. Nalls, and George Martinet. The architect is Norval W. Wall (**Sun 6/24/1875**).



**Figure 1. The former Harford Avenue M. E. Church, 1935.**

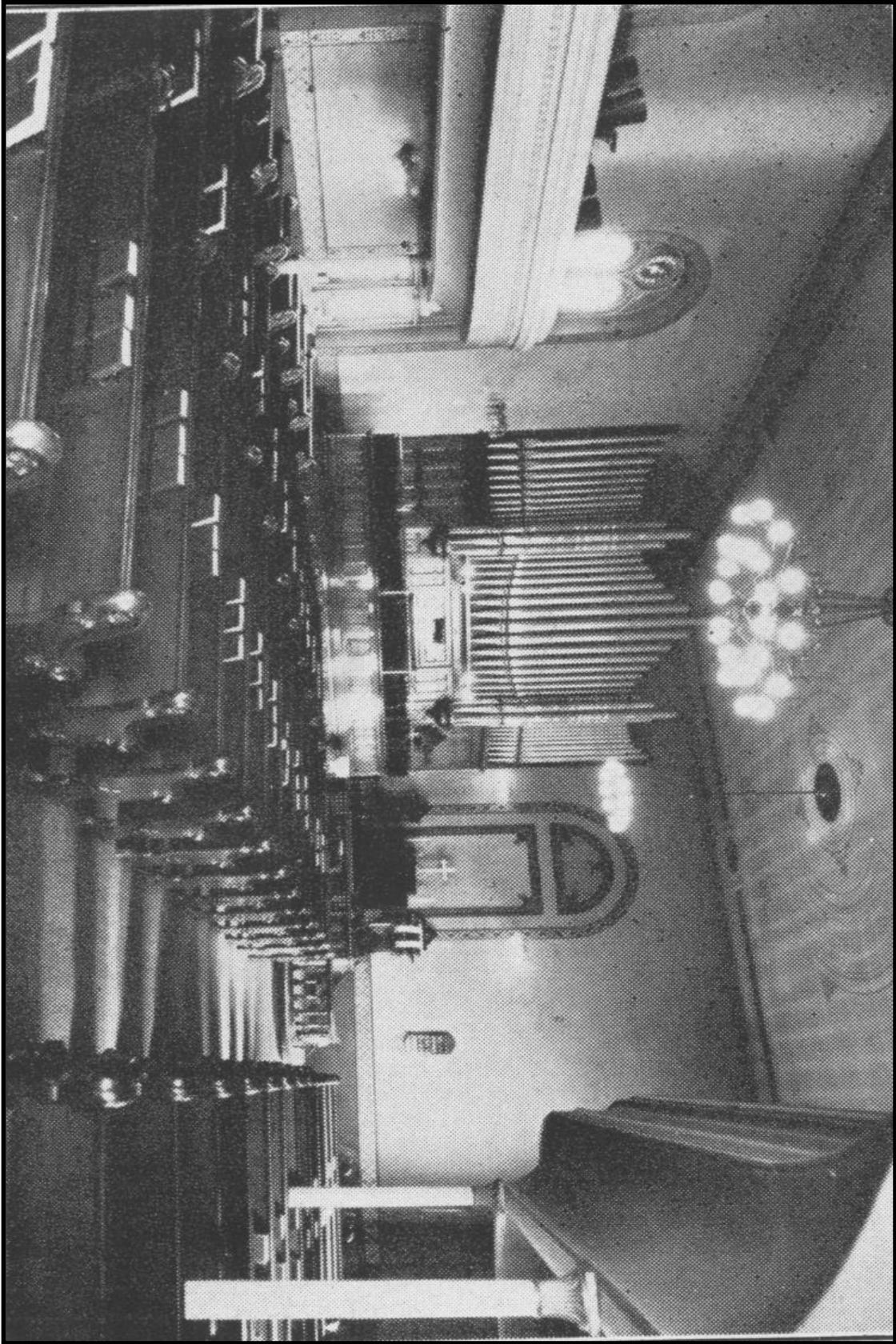


Figure 2. Interior of the former Harford Avenue M. E. Church, 1935.

In 1942, Nazarene Baptist Church bought the property under the leadership of Reverend William A. Hall. In 1981, Reverend Hall passed away and Reverend James Thompson was officially installed on December 6, 1981. During Thompson's tenure, major improvements have occurred on the building which included removing the formstone, repointing the brick, replacing HVAC and pews, and installing handi-capped access chair and exits. In addition, the church has been very active in neighborhood and city-wide issues and acts as a sanctuary for the neighborhood.