



**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

*Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.*

**DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff)** 002-0760

**1. General Property Information**

Property name: Sand Road Baptist Church

Property address: 5399 Secretarys Sand Road

City or Town: Esmont

Zip code: 22937

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Albemarle County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X      Site \_\_\_\_\_      Structure \_\_\_\_\_      Object \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 0.36

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural X

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

Sand Road Baptist Church sits around the halfway point of Secretarys Sand Road, an approximately nine-mile road in southern Albemarle County running generally parallel to Scottsville Road (VA-20). Secretarys Sand Road begins about a half mile northwest of the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Hardware River and proceeds southwest until it meets with Irish Road in Schuyler between Rocky Branch and Green Creek.

The small lot on which Sand Road Baptist Church sits was carved from the forest just east of Alberene and adjacent to the 525-acre Enniscorthy property, formerly part of a 6,500-acre plantation. Within this forest are approximately twelve other properties, all residences. On the northwest (front) of Sand Road Baptist Church is Secretarys Sand Road; on the northeast and southwest are single-family homes shielded by trees; and in the southeast (rear) is the Enniscorthy-facing forest accessible by old access roads used by quarry employees to get to the railway that used to run near the church. In this forest near to the church are the remnants of two privies, one for men and the other for women. Little remains of these outbuildings, but the foundation of the women's privy is visible from the rear yard of the Church.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Carpenter Gothic

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

If the builder is known, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of construction (can be approximate): ca. 1910

#### **Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):**

Sand Road Baptist Church is one of only a few well-preserved examples of Black Baptist churches in Albemarle County. It was built by hand in the Carpenter Gothic style, then a popular church form across the Commonwealth. The carpenters were almost certainly local men who may have also been responsible for other area churches (e.g., the similarly styled 1882 Mt. Alto Baptist Church). The church sits on a slope of several feet, allowing nearly at-grade access to the main floor of the church from the front and at-grade access to the basement from the rear.

The church is predominantly gable-front in form, with two gable-front additions in the front and rear. It is sided in horizontal white vinyl over wood siding with a metal seam roof. On the original portion, the foundation is whitewashed fieldstone constructed in full around the rear and on piers toward the front. The space between the piers was later filled with CMU, and CMU was used to provide the foundations for the 20<sup>th</sup> century additions.

The church is rectangular in plan. The front addition, probably constructed in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, comprises an entrance vestibule (narthex) below and bell tower above. Investigation confirmed that the original bell remains in the tower, although it has not rung for some time. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, shed-roof restrooms were added to each side of the entrance vestibule to replace privy outbuildings. Gray weatherboards with green trim visible above the drop ceiling in the entrance vestibule suggest the church may have been sided entirely in colorful beaded weatherboard. Beyond the entrance vestibule is the nave, which is lined with several dark wood pews decorated with rosette motifs said to be original to the building. The room is lit by eight pointed lancet windows, three on each side (southwest and northeast) and two in the rear (southeast). At the end of the nave facing to the rear of the church is the sanctuary and choir, with a choir room on the left (northeast) and pastor's study on the right (southwest). The sanctuary and offices were added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, possibly at the same time as the restroom additions. In 1959–60, parishioners dug out the basement by hand to accommodate a kitchen, storage space, and an area for dining. A drop ceiling was later added throughout the space, probably in the 1970s or 1980s. Despite these additions, little appears to have been destroyed and much of the original fabric is accessible.

Existing angled joists discovered above the basement ceiling suggest that the church was originally axial in plan with a canted or semi-octagonal sanctuary. On the northwest (entrance) side was a door that opened directly into the nave, and the church was heated with a pair of stoves at the head of the nave near the sanctuary. Above the drop ceiling in the nave are vertical white beadboard walls and a striking teal vaulted ceiling, which may very well be the original interior color scheme or close thereto. Cedar shakes found in the attic suggest that the roof was originally shingled before being replaced by the present metal.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- Remains of two outhouses, first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

#### **4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)**

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Sand Road Baptist Church is a historically Black Baptist church constructed around 1910. The original congregation was part of the large free Black community in and around what is now Esmont, Alberene, Keene, and Porters. Many of original parishioners were formerly enslaved on nearby plantations, including Esmont, Enniscorthy, and Estouteville. For much of the post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow periods, Sand Road Baptist Church was the center of life for a large and robust congregation, serving the spiritual, social, and educational needs of its community. The Sand Road School just up the road provided the educational foundations for the youngest congregants, while the Sand Road Baptist Cemetery provides a place of rest for many congregants who have passed.

The construction of the church coincided with the opening of the first quarry in Alberene, which would prove to be the economic driver of the area. By the 1920s, Alberene Soapstone Company was one of the three largest soapstone operations in the world, and many Company employees and their families were parishioners at Sand Road Baptist Church. As the quarries began to close and residents moved elsewhere seeking employment, the congregation at Sand Road dwindled. Weekly services ceased following the untimely death of Rev. Benjamin Franklin Paige, Jr., in December 2020. The church nevertheless remains a pillar of the community, serving a shared congregation with Mt. Alto Baptist Church in Howardsville and acting as a repository of local history, both in its historic fabric and in the dedicated congregants who remain involved.

The survival and great state of preservation at Sand Road Baptist Church is a testament to the many generations who have stewarded the property with care and attention since the congregation formed in 1883 (it was the property of a congregant before the Church was constructed ca. 1910). It is a significant surviving Black church in Albemarle County and a striking example of fine craftsmanship in the Carpenter Gothic style. It embodies the strength, resilience, and rich experiences of the Esmont community that continues to this day.



Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

- Oral histories:
  - Douglas Bush (parishioner)
  - Sharon Vest (parishioner)
  - Edward Brooks (historian and community leader)
- Historical Booklet Committee of the Sand Road Baptist Church, "One Hundredth Anniversary of Sand Road Baptist Church, 1883–1983," 1983 (in the possession of Sharon Vest).
- Church minutes in the possession of Sharon Vest.
- Maxwell Johnson, "Sand Road Baptist Church," Scottsville Museum, 2018. Retrieved from <https://scottvillemuseum.com/esmont/esmontchurches/sandroadbaptistchurch.html>.
- Building archaeology expertise of Joseph Dye Lahendro, former Historic Preservation Architect at the University of Virginia.

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private:  X  Public\Local   Public\State   Public\Federal

**Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Sharon Vest, Roberta McIntosh, Lawrence Randolph, Dennis Childress, Trustees

organization: Sand Road Baptist Church

street & number: 5399 Secretarys Sand Road

city or town: Esmont state: VA zip code: 22937

e-mail: sharyvon@aol.com telephone: (434) 981-4467

Legal Owner's Signature: Sharon Vest

Date: January 9, 2025

• • **Signature required for processing all applications.** • •

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person:

Daytime Telephone:

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Noah Duell

organization:

street & number: 1243 Cedars Court Apartment B24

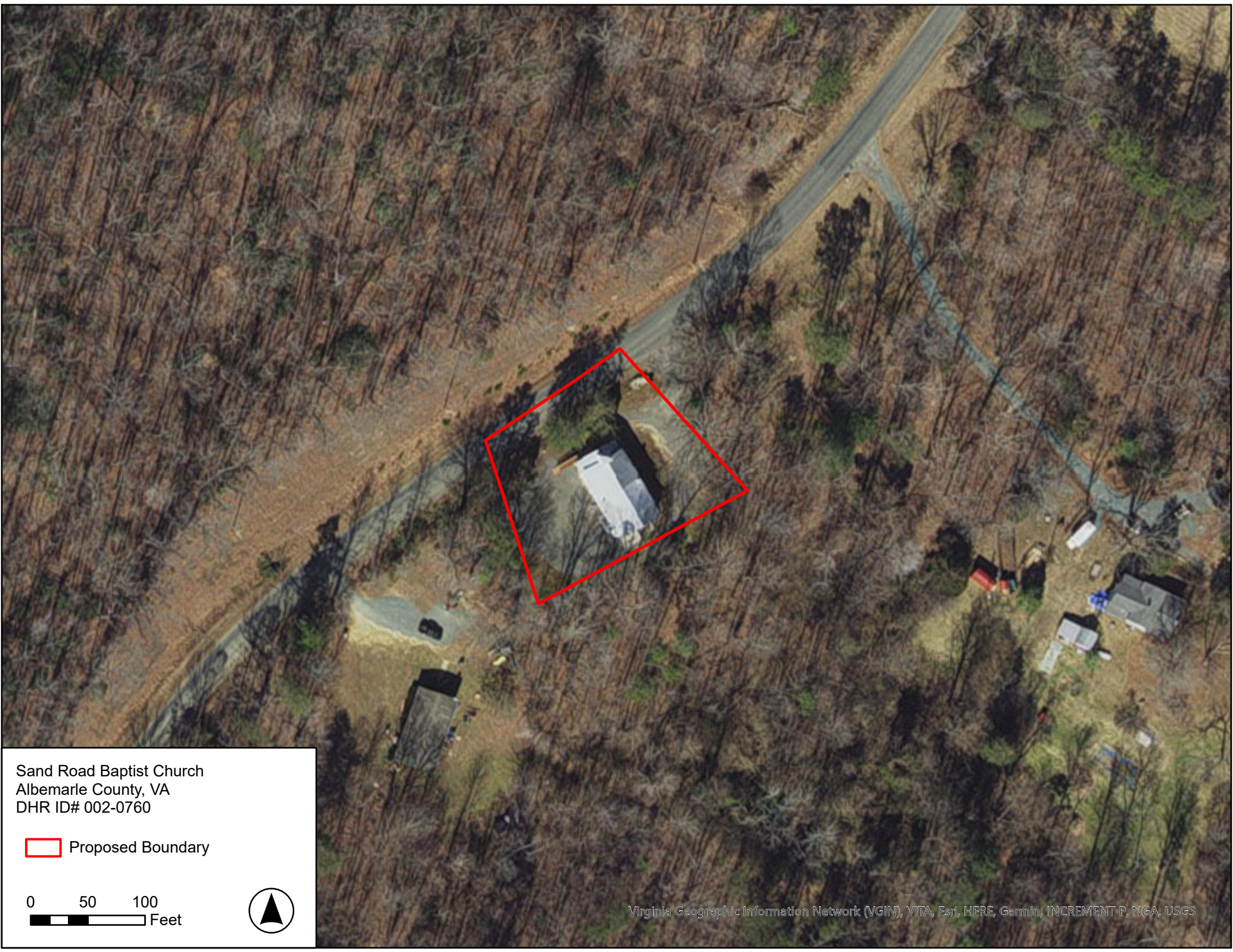
city or town: Charlottesville state: VA zip code: 22903

e-mail: noahduell@gmail.com telephone: (518) 932-4165


Date: January 9, 2025


**PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH CONTINUATION SHEETS TO THIS FORM. THANK YOU!**





Sand Road Baptist Church  
Albemarle County, VA  
DHR ID# 002-0760

 Proposed Boundary


0 50 100  
 Feet








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