

**STAFF REPORT:** 10/12/2022 REGULAR MEETING

**PREPARED BY:** J. ROSS

**ADDRESS:** 4001 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET

**APPLICATION NO:** #2022-8052

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** SHALOM FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

MINISTRIES/FOURTEENTH AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**APPLICANT/OWNER:** DEBORAH ALLEN

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT:** 10/1/2022 & 10/6/2022

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 9/22/2022

**SCOPE:** DEMOLISH EXISTING FRONT STEPS, CONSTRUCT NEW FRONT STEPS

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Per the City of Detroit's Historic Designation Advisory Board:

The red-orange brick and Bedford limestone church building is a tall, two-story edifice on a basically rectangular footprint anchored at its northeast corner by a massive square tower. It sits on a high basement that allows for a spacious, fenestrated sub-ground space. Originally roofed in slate, its large gable roof is now clad in asphalt shingles. The front façade of the church is composed of three bays, unified by limestone banding, buttress caps, water table, molded coping, and trim. Small rectangular panes of green opalescent stained glass occupy the windows on the front façade and tower. The central entrance bay is articulated as two levels. Several steps between wide, sloping wing walls lead to the main entrance, which is composed of double doors with a Gothic arched, three section transom above. The entrance is set within a buttressed, gabled masonry frame. At the upper level is a large tracery window framed by a gabled arch. Both levels of this entrance section are framed by masonry tabs. At the apex of the gable is a stone crest set into a square block. The entrance is flanked by a small narrow window with a flat stone arch on either side. To the north of the central bay is the three-stage tower anchoring the northeast corner of the building, with a stone gable enflamed entrance at ground level; a single small elongated window at the mid-level, and a pair of louvered windows at the top. To the north of the entrance, beneath the water table and foundation stone, are two cornerstones, the bottom one: HAVEN 1871 ARNOLD 1888 UNITED 1911 and the top one: FOURTEENTH AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1912.

The north side of the tower has a double window at its lower level; a small window at its mid-level, and a louvered double-opening at the top. The tower is topped by stone crenellation. A new bell was installed in the tower in 1941. Continuing with the north elevation facing Poplar Street, the three identical bays west of the tower are composed of large, square replacement windows at clerestory level, and below, brick panels that replaced windows, with a panel of brick in between, all framed with limestone. The transom arm juts out to a modest degree, and features a single-door entrance famed in limestone with a wooden gabled porch hood supported by triangular brackets. At second story level is a double hung window. Beyond the transom is the single-story apse composed of a blind Gothic arch flanked by wall buttresses and a small window to its west. A low, single-story section spans the width of the rear of the church, extending to the alley running north-south behind the property. The south elevation has no transept arm or entrances. Its multiple bays are articulated similarly to the three bays between the tower and transept of

the north elevation, occupied by replacement windows on the upper level the original windows are still on the first story. These original groupings of two or three double hung sash windows in wood frames are protected by metal security bars. The last, westernmost upper windows are in a smaller opening that still has its stained glass upper sashes. On this south elevation are a few visible star-ended metal tie rods beneath the eaves that allow for the span of the ceiling on the interior.



**Current conditions (staff photo taken on 10/1/2022)**

## **PROPOSAL**

The building's primary entrance is accessed by masonry steps. The steps are composed of sandstone treads that are tied to brick and stone wingwalls. The steps and wingwalls have been covered with a cementitious material and then painted. Please note that the application materials state that the historic steps/treads are limestone. However, staff did speak with the contractor and he indicated that he felt that the historic steps/treads are sandstone.

With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to replace the existing steps with concrete. A metal handrail will be installed (location, height, and style not specified) and the existing wingwalls will be retained and restored per the submitted scope.



**Current conditions at steps. Note thick layer of cement which covers the steps (staff photo taken 10/6/2022)**

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

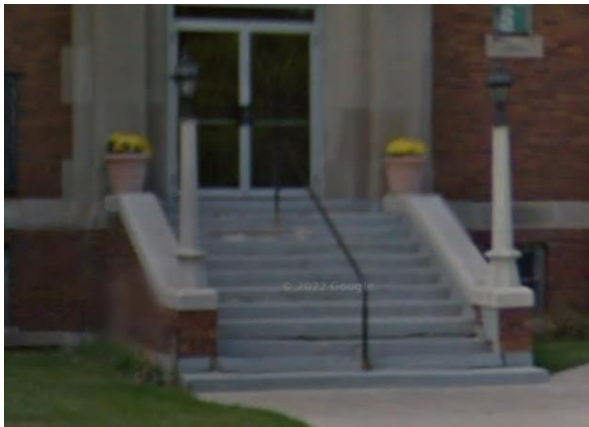
- The current cementitious coating was present at the time of the district’s designation in 2020.
- A review of Google Streetview images revealed that the cementitious coating was applied as a means to patch cracks/deterioration at the steps between 2007 and 2009. It appears that the coating was routinely added/added to over the over the years in order to temporarily address deterioration/patch holes and cracks as they materialized.



2009 appearance



2011 appearance, note cracked step



2013 appearance, note extensive/advancing deterioration



2018 appearance, note cementitious coating has been added to repair deterioration

- Staff did reach out to the project’s contractor and the applicant to ask why they are seeking to install concrete steps instead of stone. The contractor noted that they “... choose the concrete over the stone due to the design of the original build. The original build was designed to have the stone treads tie into the wing walls for bearing the load so if we went back with stone treads, we would have to rebuild the wing walls, potentially the wing wall footings and also some of the surround concrete flags. Also, the price and lead time for stone for surpassed the concrete by far.” The contractor also noted that the stone steps beneath the cementitious coating were “...not in good condition.” Her further stated that

the cost to install new stone steps would be twice as much (approximately \$60,000) as the current \$28,847 quote.

- As previously noted, the stone steps were covered with the current cementitious coating and paint at the time of the district's designation. It is also staff's opinion that the stone steps appear to be in an advanced state of deterioration and the cost of any possible repair would not be financially feasible. As such, it is staff's opinion that the submitted proposal is a compatible, financially- feasible option and does meet the SOI Standards as an appropriately stained concrete would adequately match an historic stone step.

## **ISSUES**

- None

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – Certificate of Appropriateness**

HDC staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as presented because it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and is in keeping with the district's elements of design. However, staff does recommend that the Commission issue the COA with the following conditions:

- HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the style, location, and height of the porch handrail prior to the issuance of the project's permit
- The new concrete cannot be "bright white". Rather, it shall be tinted a color which matches the stone trim/detailing found at the building's exterior walls. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the color of the tint prior to the issuance of the project's permit.