



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

We seek to restore the building and grounds and allow it to stand as a symbol of Loudoun's African American story. The building will return to its original glory, and be available for museum-type displays honoring the original congregation and local African American members of the Armed Forces, as well as meetings and community events.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

1. General Property Information

Property name: Grace United Methodist Church

Property address: 37729 BROOKS LN  
City or Town: Purcellville VA  
Zip code: 20132

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

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

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

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 1 acre \_\_\_\_\_

Setting (choose only one of the following):

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

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

The simple, two-story Grace church is built of native fieldstone and sits on a quiet 1 acre lot at the end of a gravel lane in the Quaker village of Lincoln within the Goose Creek Historic District in Loudoun County, Virginia. Another African-American church- Mt Olive Baptist Church- which is of similar construction but different design- is located southeast of the property; their conjoined pastoral cemeteries lay between them. The cemetery is in active use and headstones of varying size and condition fill the area.

The approach to the main-level entrance gives the appearance of a modest single-story front-gable church. Ruins of a stone retaining wall and wide masonry steps lead down to a lower grassy area. This area is level with the basement entrance in the left (south) wall of the structure. The gently rolling grounds are maintained to prevent vegetation overgrowth. Stepping stones placed by Boy Scouts several

years ago lead down to a spring which trickles from a masonry spring cover, between the church and the cemetery. Scouts also added a bench near the spring. Grace's tall windows and doors are boarded, and the metal roof has been patched over the years. The stone walls are sound, and the structure is solid.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Mid-Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Vernacular; local fieldstone construction

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

If the builder is known, please list here: NA

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1884-1885

#### Narrative Description:

**In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.**

A narrow gravel lane dead-ends in a grassy area approximately 15 yards from the church's east front entrance. The simple tan/brown fieldstone building appears to be one-story from this approach. Ruins of a stone retaining wall and wide masonry steps lead down to the lower level entrance located in the left (south) wall of the structure. The gently rolling grounds are maintained to prevent vegetation overgrowth. The old Grace Church building is vacant, and has been out of use since 1950. From 1885 until 1950 it served as a place of worship for the local African-American community. Oral histories reveal that Quaker women once taught vocational skills to African Americans in the lower level. The cemetery remains in active use by the descendants of the original congregants. In the 1960's-'70's, a local man named Jim Bell lived in the church as a squatter.

The building materials appear to be original. A noted upgrade appears to be the addition of electricity for lighting purposes. The building does not have plumbing. It does not have heat or air conditioning. At the time it was abandoned in 1950, the church was heated with a coal stove located in the basement that allowed heat to rise through a large floor grate in the sanctuary. The stove is no longer present.

The building's stone walls are straight, sound, and solid. The limestone mortar is intact in most places, and appears to have been applied with skill. A cornerstone in the NE corner of the front side reads; "MEC-July 30, 1885." The original pair of wooden doors in the center front entrance have been boarded over. The opening is 4' x 7' with a three-light transom, above. There are no windows on this side. There is a half-moon shaped slatted wood vent high above the door, under the apex of the roof.

The steepled belfry and large, iron bell were removed in 2002 and placed in storage. The standing seam metal roof has been patched with metal and rigid plastic over the years. The wood soffits are worn and have holes in some areas. The building interior is in disrepair. All damaged wood was removed in preparation for future restoration. Most of the main floor has been dismantled and one can see from the lower dirt basement to the soaring sanctuary ceiling, above. There are several missing floor joists on the upper level. Others are exposed due to missing floorboards. The joists are original to the building and span the width of the building, resting in beam sockets carved into the stone walls, and resting on a summer beam that is spliced to run the length of the sanctuary. Stacked on an area of remaining floor are several wooden pews, donated by the Grace Trustees.

Most of the interior walls were finished off with plaster over the stone, except for areas in the basement, where the stone is bare. Much of the plaster remains-with evidence of pale blueish-white tinting-but it is severely damaged. The sanctuary's cove ceiling is light blue-painted tongue and groove wood in very faded and worn condition. Some ceiling boards are missing, and a couple of them hang vertically, at risk of falling. Two rusted metal chandeliers with extended arms and tapered light bulbs hang from long chains attached to the ceiling. Half of the sanctuary's pine floor is missing- removed several years ago due to rot. The original dark wooden choir and pulpit area are intact, located at the rear, SW corner of the sanctuary. This area is raised about 12 inches, fronted by a low wooden railing.

Grace's six main story windows are 41" x 88", 6 over 6, with 20' x12' glass. Most of the glass is missing or broken. All of the windows are boarded. The basement windows are 40 1/2" x 45". These are all No. 2 windows. Three in the north basement wall once opened into an exterior stone-walled trough; however, this trough has collapsed and filled with soil. There are two windows on the south basement wall; and two in the rear west side. All the basement windows are boarded, except for one in the rear, which has been covered with clear plexi-glass.

An entrance door is located in the center of the south basement wall containing a small, clear plexi-glass window. The basement once was finished with pine floors. The flooring was removed due to rot and termite damage. The basement floor is now dirt. (Termite treatment was completed.)The basement ceiling was once tongue and groove wood. Half of it has been removed. The basement has three chamfered supporting posts under the summer beam.

**Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.**

A spring flows from a small masonry springhouse structure about 3' tall, located in a low, grassy area between the south side of the church and the cemetery. A wooden bench is near the spring.

The cemetery appears to be one large cemetery lot, but it is actually two cemeteries with a property line down the center. The adjoining cemetery is owned by the Mt Olive Baptist Church, which lies just southeast of Grace Church. The churches are of the same period, and share some history. The Mt Olive Baptist Church still has regular services. The grassy cemetery area is undulating, and trees line the periphery. The cemetery is in very active use and headstones of varying size, age, and condition fill the space. The earliest legible headstone is for Edward Grimes, who died in 1882.

#### **4. Property's History and Significance**

**In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)**

**If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.**

The Grace Methodist Episcopal Church lies within the Goose Creek Historic District, which is recognized as an historic landmark. The Goose Creek Historic District, a rural historic district, consists of nearly 11,000-acres. Europeans first settled here in the 1730s, and Quakers established a meeting house in the village of Lincoln, then Goose Creek, by 1750. At one time, Goose Creek had the largest concentration of Quakers in Virginia. Quakers did not believe in slave labor, and Lincoln once had a

significant African- American population. In 1815, Lincoln area Quakers opened a private school- the Oakdale School-that was open to both black and white students, alike. (Loudoun County Design Cabinet, 2016).

After emancipation, Lincoln acquired one of the first African- American public schools in Loudoun County. The Grace Methodist Episcopal Church got its start in the "Old Lincoln Schoolhouse", officially called the Lincoln Colored School -B (built in 1866). The church's congregation first organized there in 1872 under the leadership of Reverend Henry Carroll.

In 1884, Quakers and Freedmen broke ground on the existing church just up the hill from the school. The "Methodist Episcopal Church, Colored" was deeded from land owned by Mary E. Birdsall on December 11, 1884 (LCDB 6-W-483) and November, 1887 (LCDB-Z-387). The trustees were Oscar Carry, Jesse Palmer, George Parker, John Lewis, and James R. Hicks (Lewis, 1973). Mary Birdsall reserved a right-of-way by a footpath to the spring on the property. She also granted the church a right-of-way road through her property from the church to the Lincoln Rd (Deed. 1887).

Stone Masons used native fieldstone and topped the structure with a bell. The building was dedicated on July 30, 1885, under the pastorate of Reverend John Bean, a circuit rider, whose churches included those in Middleburg, Leesburg, Lincoln, and Bluemont. Services were originally held on the second and fourth Sundays (Gibson, 2004), and the basement was used as a vocational school where Quakers taught sewing, cooking, shoe repair and other skills to the black community.

The building never had plumbing, so water was carried from the nearby spring located south of the building. Two outhouses, one each for men and women were located on each side of the rear of the church and were reportedly "two-seaters." (Sims, 2004) Archaeologists discovered the location of one outhouse but the location of the other is still a mystery.

After around 1915, most of the congregation resided in Purcellville and nearby Cooksville and walked to Lincoln for services. The church was active and lively, and celebrated an annual homecoming in August attended by large crowds where potluck meals were shared. The church also celebrated "children's day" and enjoyed occasional joint-services with nearby Mount Olive Baptist Church. (Sims,2004)

Money was scarce, so fundraising was a constant effort. The more popular fundraisers included "Tom Thumb Marriages" in which tickets were sold to witness staged weddings acted out by young children (Gibson, 2004), and "Fan Drills", theatrical line- dances featuring young girls dressed up in colorful costumes including overskirts that "fanned" out.

The church served as an anchor and stabilizing force in Lincoln until 1942. In the early forties, then-Reverend Otis Jasper was encouraged by his church District Superintendent to have the Lincoln Church move to Purcellville where most of the congregation resided.

In September 1949, Grace Annex United Methodist Church broke ground for the new building on A Street in Purcellville and the old stone church in Lincoln was eventually abandoned. The Grace Annex Church changed its name in 2017 to Agape United Methodist Church. Although the congregation maintains an active cemetery in Lincoln, the old stone church has been in disrepair and out of use since the early 1950's.

In 2002, the Lincoln Preservation Foundation, along with the trustees of the church, united in efforts to rescue and restore the abandoned building and tell its story. That same year, the Preservation Alliance added the village of Lincoln to its list of 10 Most Endangered Historic Sites. The Grace church building figured prominently in that designation.

The 501(c)(3) Friends of Grace Multicultural Center's Board of Trustees own the present Grace building. This group was formed by descendants of former Grace Church congregants. A contractual agreement with the Lincoln Preservation Foundation Board of Trustees creates a partnership in which both groups contribute to the decision-making and maintenance process of the current property. LPF provides financial oversight.

**Significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property:**

**The following people are buried at the Grace/Mt Olive Cemetery:**

**Carey family graves** - the Carey family lived in the Lincoln area for several generations from the early 19th century. They had a close connection to the Lincoln community Friends as well as a connection with area Underground Railroad activity. Oscar Carey worked for Samuel and Elizabeth Janney. Samuel was an antislavery spokesman from the 1820s until the Civil War, and a known conductor on the Underground Railroad.

**Charlie Clark** (August 1907- May 31, 2016) 108 years old at the time of his death, Mr Clark was the oldest living confirmed WWII veteran receiving health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Administration. Clark's unit was the 3238 Quartermaster Service Company, an all-black unit of the 9th Armored Division. Clark and his unit were part of the over 2.5 million African-American men registered for the draft during WWII and among the 125,000 African-American men who served overseas during WWII. (Staff, 2015) He was honored by President Barack Obama and presented with a medal for his war service in a private meeting in Leesburg on August 2, 2012. (Staff, 2015)

**Billy Pierce** (14 June 1890 – 11 April 1933) was an African American choreographer, dancer and dance studio owner who has been credited with the invention of the Black Bottom dance that was a national craze in the 1920's. He was born and raised in Purcellville, attended the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church in Lincoln, and is buried at the cemetery.

The Billy Pierce Dance Studio on Broadway was a huge success and helped launch the Harlem Renaissance. His studio was the professional home of African American choreographer Buddy Bradley and taught famous stars including Oscar-winning character actor, Clifton Webb.

A lifelong civil rights supporter, Billy was elected to the Board of Directors of the Loudoun County Emancipation Association in Purcellville one year before his death. After funeral services in New York City and Washington DC, Billy Pierce was given a star-studded funeral in the tiny village of Lincoln. (Pierce, 2007)

**Basham Simms**, a Purcellville resident and brickmason, was born on January 5, 1924. A community leader, Mr. Simms was one of the first two African Americans to hold elected office in Loudoun County. Voted onto the Purcellville town council in 1967, he served for 27 years and was also Vice Mayor. The Basham Simms Wastewater Facility on 21st street in Purcellville is named for him. Mr Simms was an oral history resource for LPF's early research of the church, and other local African American projects. Mr. Simms died on March 31, 2006 at age 82 and is buried in the shared Mt. Olive Baptist/Grace Methodist Episcopal Church cemetery in Lincoln.

**Mackley Garnet Lucas** (1924-2008)

Mr. Lucas was raised in the Lincoln area and was a former student at the Lincoln School B. He served in the U.S. Army in Germany and England during World War II. He joined the Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Lincoln in 1946 and became an ordained deacon in 1974. Mackley Lucas was an entrepreneur and

wanted to work for himself. He ran the Lucas Cab Co. for 16 years while also working for the Loudoun Milk Transportation Company in Purcellville. He drove the milk truck for 15 years and was the first driver in Loudoun County to pick up milk with a tanker. During this time, he also founded the Lucas & Chinn Refuge Service, which he operated for 23 years until his retirement. Mr Lucas was an oral history resource for LPF's early research of the church, and other local African American projects.

**Katherine Shorts Gibson (1909-2009)**

Mrs Gibson was an oral history resource for LPF's early research of the church, and other local African American projects. Katherine Gibson was born in 1909 and at ninety-five, was the oldest surviving member of the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church at the time of our interview in 2004. She was one of the last officers of the Loudoun County Emancipation Association in Purcellville before it dissolved in the late 1960's.

**Veterans**

A current project is underway at this time to identify African American war veterans buried at the Grace/Mt Olive cemetery. To date, about 60 veterans have been located, with more anticipated. The veterans thus far primarily served in WW1 and WW2.

**References:**

Staff. (2015). Oldest Living WWII Veteran In Martinsburg. Blue Ridge Leader. Loudoun County, VA.

Staff. (2012). Charles Clark, Loudoun's Oldest WW2 Veteran Turns 105; Meets the President. Blue Ridge Leader Loudoun County, VA.

Gibson, (personal communication March 10, 2004)

Loudoun County Design Cabinet. (2016). Grace Methodist Church Restoration & Reuse. Design Charrette Summary. Leesburg, VA. Loudoun County Department of Planning and Zoning.

Lewis, John. (1973). Historic Landmarks Commission Survey Form. File number 53.205

Loudoun County Deed. March 14, 1887

Pierce, L. D., Greene, S., & Friends of the Thomas Balch Library. (2007). Billy Pierce: Dance master, son of Purcellville. Leesburg, VA: Friends of the Thomas Balch Library.

Simms, (personal communication March 26, 2004)

**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: Board President- Jeffrey Jackson Board Treasurer- Garry Smith  
organization: Friends of the Grace Multicultural Center 501 C 3  
street & number: 801 South 15th St  
city or town: Purcellville state: VA zip code: 20132  
e-mail: raafik@aol.com telephone: 703-945-5345 (Garry Smith)

Legal Owner's Signature: *Jeffrey L. Jackson* Date: 3/29/2018  
•• 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: Garry Smith, Treasurer, Friends of Grace Multicultural Center  
Daytime Telephone: 703-945-5345

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

name/title: Carol Dukes/ VP Lincoln Preservation Foundation  
organization: Lincoln Preservation Foundation  
street & number: PO Box 151  
city or town: Lincoln state: VA zip code: 20160  
e-mail: Lincolnpreservation@yahoo.com telephone: 703-727-5576

**6. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager

name/title: Tim Hemstreet/ Loudoun County Administrator  
locality: Loudoun County, VA  
street & number: 1 Harrison St SE, Mail Stop #02 PO Box 7000  
city or town: Leesburg state: VA zip code: 20177-7000  
telephone: 703-777-0200

# Grace Church Sketch Map



03/30/2017