

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION
FORM A
NEW MEXICO STATE REGISTER OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES
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9. Present and Original Appearance of Property

Summary

Mision Capilla Nuestra Senora de la Luz, also known as the Mission Chapel of Our Lady of Light, and as Our Lady of Light Church, was built ca. 1926 and is located on the north side of New Mexico Highway 41 (Santa Fe County Road 33; Old Lamy Trail) west of the village of Lamy's small commercial and residential center, which includes the historic Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (AT&SF) depot and the Legal Tender Saloon (NMSRCP: 1986; NR:1987). Five prehistoric pueblo ruins listed in the New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties are in the vicinity. The church is about one mile east of U.S. Highway 285 and is flanked on the east, west and north by scattered residences, manufactured dwellings and storage sheds, vacant land and the ruin of a stone and adobe building. South across County Road 33 the terrain drops sharply to the south along a steep embankment; at the bottom are railroad tracks and beyond are scattered dwellings, barns and corrals. The ca. 1880s Lamy Cemetery is located about a quarter mile northwest of the church. **Figure 1** shows the location of Our Lady of Light and the cemetery within the community. The church is a visually prominent, early 20th century vernacular building displaying stylistic references to Mission Revival and Spanish Neo-Classical architectural forms. Built by community members from plans thought to have been supplied by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Our Lady of Light's character-defining elements are its original materials and design, massing, fenestration patterns, stained windows, curvilinear gable and bell tower. Significant interior elements are its apse/sacristy type floor plan, which features a narthex and bell tower access room, nave, apse, and sacristy. Its second floor choir loft, and its pine flooring, wood window surrounds and detailing, pine pews and confessional, pressed tin ceilings, the wood railings that mark the bema, choir loft and staircases and the original interior doors and hardware also are significant elements. The east elevation sacristy appears to be original. Alterations are limited and include reconstruction of the roof, removal of two brick chimneys, and foundation stabilization conducted in 2000 by Cornerstones Community Partnerships in conjunction with the Lamy community; reconstruction of the deteriorating bell tower dome in 1986; removal of some original lighting fixtures, church furnishings and religious statuary; boarding over of windows, application of a limited amount of non-historic cladding on the east wall of the sacristy; removal of exposed vigas in the bell tower, and installation of a metal hand rail on the front steps after 1933. Portions of the exterior walls, buttresses and stone foundation are covered with concrete plaster, which dates to 1932; interior walls of the nave and sacristy also are finished with concrete plaster. The church has been vacant and unused since about 1990, but it is largely secured against the elements.

Geographical Setting

Our Lady of Light Church is located in Santa Fe County about 17 miles southeast of Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the unincorporated community of Lamy (population 137; 2000 Census). **Figure 2** shows the location of Lamy to Santa Fe and the surrounding area. The village of Lamy is largely linear, and follows the contours of County Road 33. The village occupies the shallow Galisteo River valley defined on the east by the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, through which runs, in Apache Canyon, the AT&SF Railway right-of-way. In the canyon, the tracks cross the Galisteo River on the Apache Canyon Bridge (NMSRCP:1977; NR:1979). To the south of the river are rolling hills and to the north an escarpment. To the west, the valley levels out as the river flows southwest across rolling, grassy plains toward the town of Galisteo. Perhaps the most prominent feature of the area is Cerro Colorado, a sandstone butte southwest of the village of Lamy. Cerro Colorado was the source for the stone used in the construction Santa Fe's Loretto Chapel (lorettochapel.com) and is the likely source for some of the stone used in the exterior walls of St.

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Francis of Assisi Cathedral in Santa Fe (Ellis, 1985:33)¹. The butte is also thought to be the source for the sandstone foundation that supports Lamy's Our Lady of Light Church (RCASFL&A:3). Another important geologic feature of the local landscape "...is the great series of red beds, chiefly sandstone, which run to 3,500 feet in thickness (NMSRC&A, v:4), and a "...layer of blue clay containing the remains of freshwater shells and insects of the Permian age. These beds are easily visible along the railroad cut from Glorietta [sic], and also east of Lamy" (NMSRC&A, v:4). Copper and iron deposits are found near Glorietta (NMSRC&A, v:7). The Lamy area traditionally supported farming (**Figure 3**) along the Galisteo River and grazing on the upland plains (NMSRC&A, y5). Originally a focal point and center of community life, the church has been largely unused since about 1990 and vacant since 1994, but it remains the most visible feature within the village, which has lost not only most of its population, but a number of its historic buildings.

The Church

Our Lady of Light Church (**Photo 1, Photo 2** and **Photo 3**) is a 1½-story vernacular adobe and wood-frame religious building clad in concrete stucco. The building occupies Tract F-2 of the 1996 "Plat of Lands for Santa Fe Southern Railway, Inc., Lamy Townsite Development Plan" (**Figure 4**) and faces south onto Santa Fe County Road 33. The associated Lamy Cemetery is located about a quarter mile northeast of the church. Some graves bear markers that date to the late 19th and very early 20th centuries. The church rests on an above grade square-cut, random coursed sandstone foundation above a nearly full basement. The church is topped with a non-original front-gabled metal roof. Our Lady of Light was built about 1926 as a replacement for an earlier, adjacent church. Construction was conducted by local residents using plans thought to have been supplied by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe. The church's asymmetrical front façade is detailed with an attached, shed roof entry, known as a narthex, flanked by concrete pilasters that may serve as extra support for the adobe walls. Rising behind the narthex and recessed back from it is a curvilinear Mission Revival style wood frame and stucco gable that is pierced with a round window enclosed with a Mudejar-inspired stained glass window. The parapet is finished with concrete coping and topped with a wood cross, now partially missing. A Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival style 2½ story staged—or terraced—bell tower at the southwest corner is topped with a modest lantern pierced by four round arched openings and capped with a concrete dome and wood cross (**Photo 4**). The openings are enclosed with plywood. A one-story side-gabled metal roofed sacristy projects from the northeast corner of the building, modifying the church's rectangular form into an L-plan. A one-story, five-sided apse projects from the nave, terminating the north end of the building (**Photo 5**).

The primary elevation of the church is its south façade where the original, centrally placed round arched doorway pierces the narthex façade and is enclosed with original two-leaf wood plank doors. A set of concrete steps detailed with metal hand rails provides access to the entry. A secondary entry is on the south elevation of the sacristy and features an original 1-leaf round arch wood plank door reached by concrete steps. Concrete buttresses with non-original iron anchor ties—four on the east elevation and five on the west—help support the building and are a distinctive design element (**Photo 6, Photo 7** and **Photo 8**). Elaborate round arch, stained glass 1/1 pivot type windows on the east and west elevations are set in the recesses between the buttresses just above a concrete water table and are detailed with concrete hood molds and concrete lug sills); most windows are covered with wood. Round arch, 5/2 wood frame double hung sash windows, now covered with wood, are centrally placed in the east and north façade walls of the sacristy. Small wood frame windows are in the south and west elevations of the first floor bell tower. A small rectangular access door in the west elevation of the foundation provides access to the

¹ Bruce Ellis in his book *Bishop Lamy's Santa Fe Cathedral* refers to an 1883 article in the Santa Fe New Mexican that identifies some of the stone used for the Cathedral as coming from Lamy (p. 33) but does not specifically mention Cerro Colorado, although that outcrop is the most likely location for stone quarried at Lamy.

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basement. Historic-era decorative wire fencing encloses a small area west of the church and may house a subterranean well; a metal pipe protrudes above ground. Historic-era decorative wire fencing encloses a small area in front of the church and contains a one-leaf wire gate that leads to the entry steps.

Inside, the church is divided into five spaces: the narthex, bell tower access room, nave, apse and sacristy (**Figure 5**), and reflects the hall plan used in many Spanish Colonial churches in North America (Kennedy, 1993:84). This plan type also is known as the apse/sacristy plan (Pratt 1993:160). This plan form is closely associated with the Roman Catholic Church as well as with high-church Protestant denominations. Two-leaf, 2-panel, swinging, pine doors detailed with eight-light windows and set within an arched alcove detailed with flat board molding provide access from the narthex to the nave. Stenciled in blue paint above these doors are the words "Our Lady of Light." Narthex flooring is original wood planking and the ceiling is covered with original, decoratively patterned, pressed tin. Walls are original or historic-era concrete plaster over adobe. To the left (west) of the narthex is the access room to the bell tower. It is reached via an original 1-leaf wood panel door detailed with flat board trim. Wood stairs lead to the top of the bell tower, and concrete stairs to the nearly full basement under the church, which houses a historic-era wood burning stove.

The long, rectangular nave features a central aisle and two side aisles and measures approximately 70 feet long by 34 feet wide. A bema with original wood steps, railing and gate leads to the wood altar platform located in the five-sided, 24 foot wide by 14 foot deep apse at the north end of the church (**Photo 9**). A stone is located at the center front of the bema and bears the inscription NSDLALUZ 1900. This was a cornerstone or commemorative marker from the older church that was demolished after the current church was finished.² At the south end of the nave, the centrally placed 22 foot long choir loft (**Photo 10**) projects about 8 feet out from the wall just below the circular, Mudejar-inspired window and is reached by an original wood staircase with wood hand rail at the southwest corner of the room. Walls in the nave and apse are original or historic-era concrete plaster over adobe and were stabilized about 1998 with the insertion of new steel rods, which span the room from east to west at regular intervals. The concrete water table visible on the outside of the building projects slightly into the nave and creates a low chair rail. Flooring of both nave and apse is original wood planking and the 20 foot high ceilings in the nave and apse are covered with original, decoratively patterned, pressed tin sheeting. Three historic-era light fixtures featuring milk glass lanterns hang from the nave ceiling on metal rods. Other ceiling light fixtures have been removed, as evidenced by the connections that remain. A plaster-covered brick chimney is located in the west nave wall; it vented the extant basement wood stove that heated the church. A decorative iron grill is located in the center aisle of the church; it appears to have been in the intake air vent for the wood furnace. The church's elaborate and colorful stained glass windows, four on the east elevation and five on the west are largely boarded over with wood planking. However, one is fully visible. It bears the Spanish inscription "Donada por Roque Tudesque y Familia" (donated by Roque Tudesque and family) and was provided by a prominent local family. The stained glass windows are set in metal frames located within original decorative wood surrounds detailed with Neo-Classical style keystones at the top and wood lug sills below. The church's south elevation round window enclosed with an original Mudejar-influenced stained glass design is trimmed with the original wood molding detailed with keystone motifs at the cardinal points.

The sacristy is accessed from the nave through an original 1-leaf wood panel door near the northeast corner of the nave. The sacristy measures about 16 feet by 12 feet and features two 5/2 wood frame double hung sash windows set in decorative surrounds detailed with Neo-Classical keystone motifs and wood lug sills. A wood stove heated this room, which has concrete plaster walls, linoleum sheeting over wood plank flooring, and a decoratively

² The date of 1900 is unexplained, as the earlier church was present in 1891 and perhaps as early as 1889. A fire in 1909 reportedly destroyed that church, which was rebuilt. Perhaps the date of 1900 refers to a major remodeling or expansion of the earlier church.

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patterned pressed tin ceiling. Built-in wood storage cupboards also are found in the room. An original 1-leaf wood plank exterior door is in the south wall of the sacristy. The ceiling light fixture is detailed with a milk glass shade.

Although the sacred furnishings and other elements associated with the church were removed by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe as part of the 1994 church deconsecration, the church retains 29 pine pews, the altar platform, the organ and the pine confessional, which features Classical detailing. A brass plaque attached to a wood base with a rabbet in the back center, perhaps for placement as a crosspiece on a cross, was found in the church during the 1999-2000 work (OLOFHF, a). The plaque is inscribed as follows: En Memoria de Jose D. Sena E. Isabel C. de Baca y Jose Clouthier y Juanita Beaubien. The connection of these individuals, who all bear surnames prominent in the history of Northern New Mexico, to Our Lady of Light Church was not uncovered during research. It is possible that an unidentified member of one of these families donated funds for the church's construction and honored his or her family members with the plaque. Various non-historic worktables, storage cabinets, folding chairs and construction materials are stored in the church in anticipation of continuing rehabilitation of the building by community members.

Alterations to the church include the 1986 reconstruction of the wood frame bell tower dome, the 2000 removal of louvered wood screens and projecting log vigas in the tower lantern, removal of a tall interior red brick chimney that pierced the roof of the nave on its west slope and a similar chimney located on the north elevation of the sacristy roof, and reconstruction of the nave roof structure and replacement of the non-original asphalt shingle roof with the current 5-V crimp galvanized steel roof. The current nave roofing is based on the 5-V crimp metal roof located on the apse that likely dates to 1932, when the church was re-roofed (Watson communication). The original church roofing material is unknown. The foundation also was stabilized in 2000 and drains installed. Metal hand rails on the front entry steps were installed sometime after 1932. Other changes include some modification to the exterior cladding of the east wall of the sacristy, and removal by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe of the church bell, statuary, stations of the cross, altar pieces and other related sacred furnishings. A non-historic metal pump handle is located near the southeast corner of the church, and a metal pipe and other objects are located west of the church within a small area enclosed by a historic-era decorative wire fence. The function of the items within the enclosure is not known, but may be related to the building's water system. **Figure 6** shows the church about 1932. At an unknown time, but perhaps in the late 1950s or early 1960s, electricity was installed in the church, as is visible by an exterior meter on the rear wall of the sacristy. A small amount of vandalism in the form of graffiti was noted by Cornerstones Community Partnerships in their 1997 condition assessment report; other vandalism may have occurred. No vandalism was noted during fieldwork for this nomination. The church is in fair to poor condition and is deteriorating. Cracks in the adobe walls are visible on both the interior and exterior and birds can access the building through small openings in the bell tower, resulting in the deposition of guano in the narthex and other areas of the church. Brush and small volunteer trees are located on the site, most at some distance from the building. Despite these changes and condition issues, the church retains a high degree of integrity.

Religious Properties

Our Lady of Light Church is classified as a religious property. This category includes churches, chapels, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other places of worship, as well as related resources with a religious focus. Construction materials used for religious properties include wood, stone, brick, tile, concrete, stucco, adobe and other materials as well as mixtures of more than one material type. Religious properties can be high-style forms built from architect designed plans or vernacular buildings erected from standardized plans created by institutional divisions within a large church structure. Religious properties also can be designed and built by carpenters and builders using pattern books or their own construction knowledge, and by lay people using formal plans or their own designs. While formal architectural styles are typically associated with high-style religious buildings designed

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by architects, vernacular properties are built by lay builders and may modestly reference one or more style through the use of detail elements derived from an established architectural style.

High-style architecture and vernacular forms both have the potential to be highly significant examples within the context of the settings in which they are located and which they served. Religious properties are significant because they reveal information about the spiritual focus and needs of community residents and the patterns of life within communities. Built with private funds, religious properties reflect the importance of church systems to individuals and communities and provide information about the ways in which religion participated in the social and cultural life of communities.

Religious resources most likely to be individually eligible for New Mexico State Register listing are those that are at least 50 years of age, retain a high to moderate degree of exterior integrity, have strong associations with one or more historic context, have educational significance, possess historical or cultural significance, and are suitable for preservation.

Summary of Physical Condition and Integrity

With limited alterations since its ca. 1926 construction, Our Lady of Light Church is a rare example in Northern New Mexico of a Mission Revival style church. Built by community labor from a plan thought to have been provided by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the church's architectural form references the town's associations with the AT&SF Railway, which utilized the Mission Revival style for many of its depot and hotel buildings, including those at Lamy. The church's architecture also pays subtle homage to the Franciscan order, which built the 18th and early 19th century mission churches of California that inspired the Mission Revival style, and which pastored Our Lady of Light Church throughout its history. Although the church is in fair to poor condition and is deteriorating, alterations are limited; most can be remedied through rehabilitation. The building's exterior and interior character-defining elements—massing, adobe, stone and wood construction, fenestration patterns, windows and doors and their detailing, ceilings, flooring, mechanical and lighting systems and roof form are largely intact and fully recognizable to their period of significance. They continue to convey a sense of time, place and usage. Surviving historic photographs of the church will support appropriate rehabilitation or restoration. The church displays a high level of integrity of location, design, craftsmanship, and materials, but its setting is somewhat changed due to the loss of, or remodeling of, nearby historic buildings, and the introduction of manufactured housing and auxiliary sheds and storage buildings to the rear. Its deconsecration as a church in 1994 lessened its specific religious feeling and associations, but that act did not diminish its architectural form or its high degree of association within community memory as a religious and social focal point. Despite alterations and its deteriorating condition, Our Lady of Light Church retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, craftsmanship, and materials and a moderate degree of feeling and association within the period of significance. It possesses historical and cultural significance, is suitable for preservation and has educational significance.