

Heritage Citation



Church of Christ

Key details

Also known as	United Free Methodist Church
Addresses	At 430 Ann Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Church
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Gothic
Lot plan	L1_RP10123
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — May 2003

Construction

Roof: Corrugated iron;
Walls: Masonry - Render

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

This nineteenth century, Gothic style church was the main Church of Christ in Brisbane for many years. It has been extended three times to accommodate the growing and changing demographics of the congregation. The influx of American Servicemen to Brisbane during World War II swelled the congregation and gives the building an important place in Brisbane's history. As part of the Church of Christ's commitment to outreach, the church building is also used by Indonesian Christians for services.

History

This rendered brick church, built in the Gothic style, was constructed by the United Methodist Free Church circa 1881. Situated at the junction of Spring Hill, Fortitude Valley and the city, the church was ideally positioned to serve this rapidly developing area. The building was occupied by the Methodists from 4 August 1881 until 1898 when the Church of Christ, a new denomination in Brisbane, purchased it. Since then, the Ann Street Church, as the "mother" church, has played a central role in the development of the Church of Christ ministry in Brisbane.

This church was constructed at the beginning of the 1880s economic boom in Brisbane, which was fuelled by a large influx of immigrants to the city. Between 1881 and 1891, Brisbane's population more than doubled and during the first half of the decade, the majority of residents lived in the inner city suburbs where much of the new building was taking place.

The Ann Street Church, near Petrie's Bight, was the principal church of the United Methodist Free Church. Churches were also established at Wellington Road, Downfall Creek (now Chermside) and Stafford on Kedron. The United Methodist Free Church amalgamated with the Wesleyan Church in 1898 and the Ann Street Church was purchased by the Church of Christ.

The Church of Christ in Brisbane was formally founded on 23 September 1883 when a small group held their first meeting. Stephen Cheek, an evangelist who in 1882 unsuccessfully attempted to establish a Church of Christ in Brisbane, wrote that the city was "noted for its apathy". By 1884 however, the membership of the church had grown to twenty-one and in 1889, a Church of Christ community was established at Zillmere. The small Brisbane congregation used a number of different venues for worship including the Temperance Hall in Edward Street, the Synod Hall and a former Baptist chapel on the corner of Adelaide and Wharf Streets. During the 1890s, open air services played an important part in the church's ministry.

The present Church of Christ in Ann Street was purchased in 1898 at a cost of £1,100 under the guidance of the minister of that time, W.T. Clapham. The necessary deposit of £100 was borrowed from the London Bank, whose manager Mr Booty was at one time a member of the church. No serious attempt to clear the debt on the church was made until after the arrival of minister W.H. Nightingale in 1912. A share scheme, sales of handiwork by women in the church and donations, raised large sums towards this end. Plans to sell the property in the 1920s were abandoned when the city valuer advised church officials that the site's value would increase

dramatically with planned Council improvements to the area, including the formation of Barry Parade and Centenary Park and, later, the building of the Story Bridge.

When purchased by the Church of Christ, the Ann Street Church was described as "well situated and of good size, with comfortable seating accommodation for from 500 to 600 people. The lower hall could easily hold 100 persons." A beautification scheme was carried out under the ministry of F. Collins in the 1930s. At this time, the tiled baptistery with its rich leadlight background window depicting the River Jordan was added. This was a gift in memory of Mr and Mrs W.T. Clapham, the first minister of the Church and his wife. Extensions costing £7,000 were carried out in 1952-3 as part of the church's jubilee anniversary project. These included extending the social hall to Perry lane at the rear of the building and improving the kitchen facilities. At this time, the foundations of this ground floor extension were strengthened, so that two additional floors could be supported in the future. An extra floor was added above the social hall with addition of a mother's room in 1965 and the construction of the Fanny Ratcliffe Memorial Room in 1971.

For almost 100 years, the Ann Street Church of Christ has played a significant role in the evangelical and community life of this denomination in Brisbane. Considered the Mother Church, the Ann Street ministry was responsible for the establishment of suburban churches at Albion (1911), Annerley (1914), Hawthorne (1914) and Moorooka (1931). Community involvement has ranged from women's gymnastic groups in the 1920s to cricket and tennis teams in the 1940s.

During World War II, the church had difficulty in accommodating the congregation, which was swollen with scores of Australian and American servicemen. American chaplains frequently preached at the church during the war. By 1957, the church's membership had grown from over 200 in 1903 to 458. The post-war decades were a time of consolidation and training and the formation of a Metropolitan Conference. The church's commitment to outreach has also continued with several evangelistic missions held during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the Ann Street Church of Christ continues to cater for the spiritual needs of the community. The building is also used to hold services for the Indonesian Christian Church.

Description

This rectangular building, elevated approximately 1.8 metres above Ann Street level, occupies most of the site.

The building is situated approximately 5-6 metres from the front alignment and approximately 1 metre from the side alignment to facilitate eaves overhang, access to side entry in the north eastern side and external access to the lower area. The building extends to the rear alignment along Perry Lane.

The elevation of the building above Ann Street allows for the provision of a small hall under the rear of the building.

Access to the building is by means of a flight of steps on the Ann Street alignment.

The external walls are constructed of brickwork set in a lime mortar with the Ann Street facade and entrance porch rendered to represent stonework. This render has been painted.

The brickwork is set on a masonry plinth built up to floor level.

Access to the entry porch is through a single pair of timber doors containing a cast escutcheon plate and door hinges. This doorway is unprotected to the elements. The words "Church of Christ" appear in the rendered portal over the doors. A slate threshold is set under the entry doors.

Above the entrance doors are three tall lancet windows containing stained glass.

A continuous semicircular band of bullnosed brickwork along both sides forms the sill line for the stained glass lancet windows. The jambs to these windows are formed in a lighter colour brick than that of the main walls. The brick voussoirs spring to a peaked arch from the staggered jamb brickwork.

The steeply pitched corrugated iron roof discharges into eaves gutters along the side alignments. The eaves overhangs are lined with timber boarding. The deep timber fascia is supported on timber fascia brackets.

The rear wall to Perry Lane has been extended in recent years to provide additional accommodation at the rear of the building. This extension contains aluminium framed sliding glass windows, which are out of character with the remaining fenestration on this facade.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history as a Gothic style church built in the inner-city in the late nineteenth century.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a good example of a small, rendered brick, Gothic style church, built in the 1880s

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as the main Church of Christ in Brisbane and as a church that was extended three times in the twentieth century, bearing witness to the expansion of the Church of Christ ministries.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a church that was associated with the influx of American servicemen and chaplains during World War Two who swelled the congregation.

References

1. Brisbane Centenary Celebrations Committee 1924, *Brisbane Centenary Official Historical Souvenir*, Brisbane
2. *Fifty Years in Ann Street 1948*, Church of Christ, Toowoomba
3. Watson, N. 1983, *A Century of Witness 1883-1983*, Church of Christ, Brisbane

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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