

Heritage Citation



St Francis of Assisi Anglican Church

Key details

Addresses	At 62 Cavendish Street, Nundah, Queensland 4012; At 44 Cameron Street, Nundah, Queensland 4012; At 66 Cavendish Street, Nundah, Queensland 4012
Type of place	Church
Period	Postwar 1945-1960
Style	Ecclesiastical
Lot plan	L32_RP34499; L1_RP34511; L33_RP34499
Geolocation	-27.394684 153.061281
Key dates	Significant Development — 1958 Local Heritage Place Since — 28 February 2020

People/associations Ford, Hutton and Newell (Architect)

Criterion for listing (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

The current St Francis of Assisi Anglican Church was designed by the architecture firm Ford, Hutton and Newell and built in 1958. It is a striking and intact example of a 1950s Modernist church. It also features a large Modernist sculpture by Erwin Guth over the altar, depicting the crucifixion.

This later building replaces an earlier church building from the 1920s and demonstrates the increased development in the area including the expansion of St Francis of Assisi Church in the 1950s.

History

In July 1918, the Corporation of the Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane purchased three roods of land on the corner of Cavendish and Cameron Streets, Nundah, from Rebecca Southerden, wife of Robert William Southerden. The first St Francis of Assisi Church was built on this land between 1921-1922 and fronted Cameron Street. A rectory was built in 1922 which fronted Cavendish Street. A church hall was also erected next to the church, sometime before 1940. The church was named for the patron saint of animals and the environment, who established the first order of Franciscan brothers in 1209.

Although the population of Nundah and Northgate did not expand a great deal in the post war era, it was the surrounding suburbs such as Virginia and Banyo which saw major population growth at this time. Before the war, Virginia's population was 430 in 1954 and had risen to 2457 in the early 1970s; Banyo's population was just over 5000 in 1954 and had reached 8300 by the early 1970s. With this increase in the local area's population, there was a demand on the existent facilities, in particular churches.

The late 1950s heralded a new wave of church building for the Anglican Church in Brisbane. Not only was there a reinvigoration of attendance at services, there was also an increased focus on church fundraising by congregations due to the increased economic stability of the time. The building material shortage that Brisbane experienced in the immediate post war period had ended by the late 1950s and so too the labour shortage.

As the congregation of St Francis' Church expanded in the 1950s, the decision was made to construct a new and modern church at the apex of the hill and beside the 1922 rectory. On 3 October 1957, Brisbane City Council granted approval for the construction of a new church. It appears work may have commenced before this however; as an aerial photo taken on 1 April 1957 shows that the foundations of the church have been constructed by this date. On 6 October 1957, a commemorative stone was set and blessed by the Archbishop of Brisbane, Sir Reginald Charles Halse.

The architects commissioned for the design were Ford, Hutton and Newell. Although the layout of the church followed the traditional cruciform plan, new materials and techniques were adopted to construct the Modernist design.

At the dedication of the church in 1959, Archbishop Halse attended and stated "When I hear people say that

modern buildings cannot rise up to the older standards, I am prepared to say “Come and see this new church” ... In spite of much reasonable criticism in conservative circles, it still remains true that most modern churches are much more inspiring than the dull old wooden or brick pseudo-Gothic buildings which sprang up in the 19th century, and which are out of keeping with all that is good in modern architecture”.

The old church was retained to the rear of the new one until about 1977, however the church hall was demolished before the construction of the new church began.

Description

St Francis of Assisi Church is located at a prominent junction, on the corner of Cameron and Cavendish Street in Nundah. This striking and intact 1950s Modernist church is a large brick structure with concrete and glazed fins and a dominant triple gabled roof form.

The rectangular corner site remains level to the church entrance then slopes away from Cavendish Street. A low face brick fence surrounds the site, continuing around the corner and retaining a terraced lawn area then stepping down and following the fall of the street. A central pedestrian entrance on Cavendish Street has simple metal double gates and a wide concrete path that broadens to create a large concrete concourse area to the front of the church. Elevated gardens connect to the surrounding areas of lawn with large gum trees to the southeast, a pencil pine to the entry, an established poinsettia to the northern corner, and border gardens with mixed plantings to Cavendish Street. Additional pedestrian access from Cameron Street connects to a lower floor level to the rear of the site. Concrete stairs, paths and flat lawn with occasional shrubbery dominate the southeast portion of the site. Contemporary signage is located on the corner of the site.

The Cavendish Street elevation has a low pitched open gable double height portico with full height face brick blade walls to each side, and a large area of clerestory glazing above the low-level spanning concrete awning. A simple metal cross is fixed at the apex of the roof. The entry doors are simple timber double doors with subtle trim and small metal star motif to the centre. The doors are flanked by the marble dedication plaques set into the brickwork walls. A square face brick bell tower, which has recently had a small roof added, features at the front of the church, to the north.

The Cameron Street elevation features an exaggerated triple gable detail to the southern roofline with expressed concrete eaves and shadow detail to the fascia over. The roof is supported by concrete blade columns flanking the three sets of glazed aluminium framed double doors to the side of the building which also have low level concrete awnings over. The door handles are engraved with the cross motif. Full height glazing runs adjacent to the concrete fins within the brick walls and downpipes are expressed. A large glazed section to the rear of the elevation appears to have feature leadlight details. A cantilevered concrete landing runs along the side of the church, connecting to the stair access to the additional level under as the site slopes away to the rear. There is an access door to this lower level of the church. The northern elevation is similar to the southern elevation.

The rear elevation is symmetrical, with a feature blank rendered wall and adjoining recessed glazing to the upper level, topped with a projecting gable awning. At the lower level is a bank of glazed doors with a projecting enclosed glass enclosure above at the mid-level. The flanking sidewalls are face brick and feature four concrete blade columns to each side at the lower level.

The interior of this church has not been inspected. Publicly available photography documents the altar and the sculpture depicting the crucifixion on the full height wall behind it as important parts of the church's design. This includes the original blue and white, "Wedgewood" colour scheme of the wall and sculpture.

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:

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as an excellent example of Modernist ecclesiastical architecture.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a striking and intact example of an innovative 1950s Modernist church.

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 a major symbol of faith and as an ongoing place of worship for the Nundah Church of England community.

Supporting images



L. & D. Keen Pty. Ltd. (photographers) for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Queensland Chapter), 'St. Francis of Assisi Anglican Church, Nundah, Queensland, 1959', John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

The architects were Lund, Hutton & Newell. The church was built in 1959. (Description supplied with photograph)

References

1. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
2. Brisbane City Council Detail Plans
3. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
4. Queensland Post Office Directories
5. Aerial Photos, QImagery
6. Holland, Jonathon Charles, "The Past is a Foreign Country: A History of the Church of England in the Diocese of Brisbane 1950-1970" [Thesis], University of Queensland, 2006
7. Hilliard, David, *A Church on Every Hill: Religion in Brisbane in the 1950s*, Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Volume 14, p242-262
8. Good Neighbour, 1 August 1959, p2
9. Daily Mail, 11 April 1922, p2

Copyright Brisbane City Council

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.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



Dedicated to a better Brisbane