

## Heritage Citation



### St Joachim's Catholic Church

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 41 Yuletide Street, Holland Park West, Queensland 4121
<b>Type of place</b>	Church
<b>Period</b>	Late 20th Century 1960-1999
<b>Style</b>	International
<b>Lot plan</b>	L39_RP38085; L38_RP38085; L37_RP38085; L36_RP38085; L35_RP38085
<b>Key dates</b>	Significant Development — 1961 Local Heritage Place Since — 26 July 2019 Date of Citation — April 2019
<b>People/associations</b>	PJL Hanman (Architect)

## Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social

St Joachim's Catholic Church was constructed in 1961 and designed by Brisbane architect, P.J.L. Hanman. It is one of the most innovative churches built in Brisbane in the 1960s due to its unusual fan-shaped design. Hailed by contemporaries as 'revolutionary', the church's design was a step away from the traditional cruciform layout of a Catholic church. The design, which pre-dated the sitting of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, or Vatican II, from 1962, placed the altar centrally with the pews surrounding it. Today, the church is a striking example of Modernist ecclesiastical architecture in Brisbane and plays an important role in the lives of the St Joachim congregation.

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## History

Before 1967, Holland Park and Holland Park West were collectively called Holland Park. It was the extension of the tramline from Greenslopes to Holland Park in 1926 which became the catalyst for suburban development. By the late 1920s there was a post office, a hotel and a primary school. During World War Two, a very large area of Holland Park was used as a military hospital by the United States forces.

The suburb boomed in the post-war era when a great deal of new housing was constructed and supported by the establishment of several schools including Cavendish Road High School and Marshall Road Primary School. By the 1960s the population of Holland Park was 19,948 people.

Archbishop James Duhig purchased the subject land at Holland Park in 1918 with the intention of establishing a church and school for the district's growing community. It was not until the 1930s, however, when the foundation stone was laid for the new church and school building. In 26 July 1936 Archbishop Duhig blessed the foundation stone and by November that year the completed church and school was again blessed and opened by the archbishop. The new building was to serve as both the church and the school.

St Joachim's was the first Catholic church in the district and became an important spiritual, educational and social centre for the rapidly expanding Holland Park community. On Archbishop Duhig's invitation, a number of Sisters of St Joseph came to the parish in 1938 to begin teaching children and by the 1940s there were seven sisters at the school. The convent was situated on Crown Street across the road from the school.

In March 1937 a presbytery had been completed and was opened by the archbishop who stated at the time that it was the thirty-fifth presbytery he had opened over twenty-five years. The number of sisters at the parish increased in the immediate post-war era and a new convent which could accommodate the eleven nuns was constructed across the road from the school on Crown Street in 1949.

As the post-war era suburban expansion in Holland Park and surrounding districts took place the congregation of St Joachim's also expanded. The original small church could no longer accommodate the increased number of parishioners and a decision was made to build a new and modern church.

The Catholic Church in Queensland, throughout the time it was under the direction of Archbishop Duhig, had many churches built which were architect-designed in the very latest styles. The architect commissioned to design the new church for St Joachim's was Brisbane based architect, P.J.L. Hanman. Better known for his

domestic work from the 1950s, Hanman resided nearby in a house he designed for himself and his family in 1948 in Renton Street, Camp Hill.

Father Slyney, the parish priest, gave several directions to Hanman in relation to the specifications for the new church design. Included in this was the desire to have the congregation seated as close as possible to the altar – a move away from the traditional liturgical layout of a Catholic church. As well as this, the design of the church could not encroach upon the primary school grounds behind it. This, therefore, constrained the size of the church and influenced the ultimate design.

In February 1961 the foundation stone of the subject church was blessed by Archbishop Duhig, who stated at the time that “the new church, which is of unusual design, and will cost £36 000, is dedicated to St Joachim”.<sup>1</sup> The 1960s in Brisbane was a time of great activity in relation to church building. As the population boomed so too did the need for churches of varying denominations throughout Brisbane. There were over one hundred new churches constructed in the 1960s. Only a few of these were remarkable expressions of Modernist ecclesiastical architecture.

The 1960s was an era of great change in the Catholic Church throughout the world. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, better known as Vatican Council II, or Vatican II, was a series of assemblies from October 1962 until December 1965 amongst the leading figures of the Catholic Church and were held at the Vatican in Rome. The council was a response to the ever-growing disenchantment of many Catholics in relation to the views and position of the Catholic Church in a post-war and modern world. It was increasingly seen to be insular and out of touch with a rapidly changing world.

From Vatican II came many important recommendations and changes to many of the Catholic Church's traditions. One of the main changes implemented was a move to bring the liturgy and ceremonies closer to the congregation. This included steps such as delivering the Mass in the vernacular language rather than in Latin, thereby sharing the teachings of the church with the congregation rather than the clergy holding exclusive understanding of the meaning of the rituals and teachings from the Mass. Additionally, before the changes were made the priest saying Mass did so with his back to the congregation; after the changes the priest faced the congregation. The positioning of the altar and other liturgical furniture was also shifted to accommodate the new philosophy of transparency of the liturgy and greater inclusion of the congregation. It was hoped it would encourage a greater sense of community within the congregation.

Following this philosophy, several of the new churches constructed in Brisbane in 1960s and the 1970s were designed with the altar positioned in the centre of the church and the pews surrounding it; this was a move away from the traditional cruciform layout of a Catholic church. In light of the changes resulting from Vatican II, the design of St Joachim's Catholic Church was quite progressive in Brisbane for the time. The fan-shape of the building meant the altar was positioned in the centre of the congregation and surrounded by the pews. This design pre-dated Vatican II by one year, suggesting that the philosophies adopted by Vatican II about church layout had been discussed widely previously. As only one of two churches built with seating arched around the altar in Brisbane in 1961, the other being Our Lady Help of Christians in Hendra, it is important from both an architectural and historical perspective.

The church had been completed by August 1961 and once again Archbishop Duhig officiated the blessing and opening of St Joachim's. He made comment on the progressive design of the church:

Today we have the completed building in a new style of architecture, which I cannot say is entirely ecclesiastical but which has its advantages particularly in distributing the congregation so as to bring it closer to the altar and

participation in the Divine Mysteries.<sup>2</sup>

The article featured in the Catholic Leader highlighted the modern design of the church, “the new church is one of the most unusual to be erected in Queensland. Costing about £40 000 furnished and accommodating 540 in the nave and gallery, it is built of structural steel, cavity brick glass in the shape of an “irregular hexagon””.<sup>3</sup> The design of the newly built church successfully met the specifications from Father Slyney as well as making a striking contribution to Brisbane’s ecclesiastic architecture, particularly for the Catholic Church.

The innovatively designed church was featured in Cross Section, a publication by the Department of Architecture in the University of Melbourne, in February 1962. Described as ‘revolutionary’, the article highlighted the new form of layout which allowed the congregation to be no further than fifty feet from the altar. It went on to state that “one of the many revolutionary designs in the fan-shaped building is the umbrella roof which slopes from the external walls to a point from mid-way along the rear wall”.<sup>4</sup>

The primary school behind the church has expanded in the early 2000s with several new buildings being constructed. The subject church building facing Yuletide Street, however, retains its prominence in the street as one of Brisbane’s finest examples of Modernist ecclesiastic architecture. It continues to be an important centre for worship for the Holland Park district’s Catholic community.

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## Description

St. Joachim’s is a masonry church built in the Postwar Modernist style, located within school grounds on the otherwise residential hilltop street of Yuletide Street in Holland Park West. The church features a distinctive roofline, encircling clerestory windows, porte-cochere and slender steel steeple.

This area of Holland Park West has an elevated position and developed at various periods between the early twentieth century and now. This is demonstrated in the variety of styles and buildings types that Yuletide Street displays, including early high-set houses, modern flats up to three-storeys and contemporary school buildings. The buildings along the street have consistent setbacks and vegetated front yards. All residential properties have narrow frontages.

St. Joachim’s is located on the north-west side of the street. It has a strong presence on the street due to a much wider frontage and smaller setback than most other properties. Recent school buildings are located close to the church to the north-west and south-west. The elevated position of the site allows it’s steeple to be seen at some distance. The front yard contains three statues, one at the street boundary and two flanking the church. Hedges are the main vegetation on site with two trees shading the yard. A semicircular concrete drive provides pedestrian and vehicular access to the church under the large porte-cochere.

The subject building has a fan shaped layout, which opens toward the street. This is further emphasised through the roofline, which is a repetition of butterfly roofs radiating from a central point. Brick walls enclose the church with feature clerestory windows above and exposed structural columns support the ridges and valleys of the roof. The steel steeple is centred in the roof and tapers toward the top with a feature white crucifix.

The front elevation is oriented south-east. The large porte-cochere covers the timber entry doors and secondary opening with timber doors and shelf. The front façade contains six narrow aluminium framed windows, three

either side of the porte-cochere.

The north-east and south-west elevations of the building are mirrored repetitions. Both feature a large section of glass louvres contained behind a concrete screen. The screens consist of concrete masonry units laid on their sides within a concrete frame. The north-west face or rear of the church is dominated by a full height face brick wall.

The interior of the church has carpeted concrete floors throughout, including on the predella where the concrete altar resides. Timber pews are arranged around the altar in a semi-circle. Circular steel columns are the only structural elements in the interior space and the other columns are expressed in the surrounding walls. All of the interior walls are face brick with the exception of a feature wall behind the altar with stone wall tiles.

Plasterboard ceilings are noted throughout the church with exposed structural beams painted white to match the ceilings.

Saint Joachim's appears largely intact. The only apparent change is the removal of the early chain fence. The church building is in excellent condition.

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## 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:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

St Joachim's Catholic Church is representative of Holland Park's post-war expansion and the growth of the Catholic congregation in this era.

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#### 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.

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## Aesthetic

### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a striking intact example of an early 1960s innovative Modernist church.

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## 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

St Joachim's Church is important to the Holland Park and Mt Gravatt Catholic community as a major symbol of faith and as an ongoing place of worship from 1936.

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## References

1. *Catholic Leader*, 16 February 1961
2. *Catholic Leader*, 31 August 1961
3. *Ibid*
4. Cross Section, Department of Architecture, University of Melbourne, Issue No. 112, February 1, 1962
5. Post Office Directories.
6. Certificates of Titles, Department of Natural Resources and Mines
7. Queensland Electoral Rolls
8. St Joachim's School History, St Joachim's Primary School Website
9. *Telegraph*, Monday 3 June 1935, p18
10. *Courier Mail*, 15 March 1937, p19
11. *Courier Mail*, 2 November 1936, p19
12. *Courier Mail*, 10 December 1936, p7
13. *Courier Mail*, 9 May 1949, p3
14. Lisa Anderson, *Responses in Ecclesiology, Examples of Brisbane Church Building Design in the 1960s*, Thesis, University of Queensland

15. Catholic Archives, Entry on File, "The New Church"
  16. *Opening Mass*, St Joachim's Primary School Website
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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.

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



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