

Heritage (Decision about Registration of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 482

made under the

Heritage Act 2004 section 34 Notice of decision about registration

1. Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2008 – 304

2. Name of instrument

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Registration of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner) Notice 2008 (No 1).

3. Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Register entry for: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner.

4. Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the Heritage Act 2004. The register entry is at Attachment A.

5. Date of Registration

14 October 2008.

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2602

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Gerhard Zatschler
Secretary ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602

14 October 2008



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HERITAGE REGISTER
(Provisional Registration Details)**

Place No:

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH at Turner**

DATE OF REGISTRATION

Notified: 17 October 2008 Notifiable Instrument: NI2008–482

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 132281 Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 22 Watson Street, Section 38 Block 10, Suburb of Turner, ACT
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STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is significant for its strong associations with the Lutheran church and particularly the Finnish community who migrated to Australia after WWII when the eastern part of Finland was annexed by the then USSR.

The church is also significant as a rare and well-preserved and early example of the 1960s Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style of architecture. Its setting and design have produced a building of integrity, representing the ideal of innovative modern architecture and planning; clean, functional, uncluttered and well sited. The church is of importance as the earliest and most accomplished in Canberra reflecting this modern ideal and because it is the work of one of Australia's important architects Frederick Romberg. This significance is widely recognised by professional bodies and architecture critics in listings and publications on significant architecture. The church design still fulfils its original purpose, remaining sound yet innovative.

FEATURES INTRINSIC TO HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The physical features of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner, that particularly reflect its heritage significance are:

- The original scale, form and fabric of the place including the roof form and central spire reminiscent of a Gothic fleche or tower with its aluminium cross; unpainted horizontal boarded fascia; timber lined eaves; face concrete blockwork and blockwork screens; full height timber framed glazing with regular spaced timber mullions; internal fixed glazing over the southern folding partition; gutters with overflows to rectangular ponds; open planning; aureole; expressed steel frame structure; raked timber lined ceiling, and original detail and finishes.
 - Site planning including the open form of the street setting where the church is located on the corner equi-distant from the two streets and its setting that enables its scale and form to be appreciated from all sides.
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REASON FOR REGISTRATION

The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner, *has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance against 6 of the heritage criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.*

APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act 2004* are applicable to the conservation of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner.

The guiding conservation objective is that the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. A conservation management plan (CMP) would help to guide conservation and future use. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and/or other heritage values) which are necessary prior to the development of a CMP shall be guided by a professionally documented interim assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects - SHE).

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

A high degree of technical innovation was utilised and is demonstrated in the construction of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in the use of full height timber framed glazing with regular spaced timber mullions. This was a particular feature developed by the firm and in particular Robin Boyd, and was incorporated into much of their domestic architecture. The system was developed further by Boyd and became the basis of the "Stegbar" timber framed glazing system. The church is a very early example of the system using timber framed glazing in a non-residential building and is likely to be the first example in Canberra.

The incorporation of a square plan was a new and innovative architectural response to the need of the Lutheran liturgy for a preaching space where the congregation needed to be close to the pulpit. The design of the church reflected a swing away from the heavily symbolic rituals of the past towards a focus on the preacher space and 'the minister of the word'. The innovative design solution provides a church that uses natural light in an inspirational way enhanced by the architectural detailing and scale. Rombergs' use of elevations, which were carefully composed to give balanced patterns under a sheltering roof form, and the innovative treatment of familiar materials related to domestic architecture (in particular the timber framed glazing and the three blockwork screen walls) illustrate aspects of excellence in creative design.

The innovative design qualities of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church have been acknowledged in national publications including J M Freeland, *Architecture in Australia*, 1972, Apperly Irving Reynolds, *Identifying Australian Architecture*, 1995, and *Architecture Australia* March 1962. Soon after its completion it received international acclaim from the British poet and architectural critic John Betjeman.

- (b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is a significant and early example of the Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style. The building exhibits many of the particular architectural elements specific to that style, including its unbroken straight lines emphasizing verticality, glazing with vertically proportioned panes and plain wall surface. The style marked a shift in architecture 'away from the heavily symbolic rituals of the past towards a focus on the preacher space and 'the minister of the word' (Freeland 1968;

Apperley et al. 1989). Emphasis was placed on a church architecture that 'still aimed to be distinctive and at the same time (to be) an integral part of the community it served'.

The church design illustrates the geometric planning and use of modest natural materials that were at the foundation of Romberg's later architectural philosophy and the expectations of the congregation. The scale and materials utilised in the construction of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church promoted its integration into the community, whilst the roof fleche gave the building architectural distinction. In order to maintain connections with the community Romberg utilised stylistic elements and everyday materials, with a square plan, wide overhanging eaves, blockwork walls, glazing at a domestic scale and clear finished Australian timbers. The open plan and folding rear wall enabled the church to double as a hall for a variety of parish functions. The church is carefully planned to create a distinctive building in the suburb streetscape that at first glance is simple and sheltering with a benign human scale, yet soaring and of a distinctive contemporary form.

The design of the Holy Trinity demonstrates an important development in architectural style after WWII, by contrast with traditional architectural styles. Only a relatively small number of churches were built in this style in Australia. Modern architecture was the most important architecture of the 20th Century. Canberra is one of the few 20th Century designed cities in the world and the combination of modern architecture and urban design evidenced here is of exceptional interest.

The church's excellence in exhibiting the design qualities of this architectural style by a leading nationally renowned architect is recognised by RAI ACT Chapter Register in its Significant Twentieth Century Architecture. The aesthetic appeal of the building has also been acknowledged, with compliments by Australian architect Osborne McCutcheon, acclaimed architecture critic and poet John Betjeman, photographer Wolfgang Sievers and eminent architectural photographer Max Dupain who photographed the church c1962 for an article in the magazine Architecture in Australia.

(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;

The construction of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church marks an important time in the history of Canberra and Australia more generally. The 1950's marked a period of great expansion for Canberra following the government's decision to relocate all department headquarters to Canberra resulting in a boom in the construction of civic and public buildings as well as housing. In Australia more generally, the post-war period saw an influx of migrants escaping the devastation in Europe, resulting in an increase in the construction of churches to cater for the religious needs of new migrants – of which the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is one.

(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;

The church is greatly valued by the Lutheran church community and in particular the Finnish community. Since, the amalgamation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia in 1976, the Finnish speaking Lutherans have held services at Turner in their own language, strongly reinforcing the spiritual association with this building.

The high average age of the congregation is of concern to the parish; in the near future their congregation may be too small to sustain the church.

(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind

It is the earliest and most accomplished Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style building in Canberra.

The complex contains the key elements of the style in an economic form, as required for a Lutheran Church in a relatively small immigrant community at a time of unprecedented urban expansion in Canberra. The following design features are particular significance; the central spire reminiscent of Gothic fleche or tower with its aluminium cross; unpainted horizontal boarding; the timber lined eaves; face concrete blockwork and blockwork screens; clear timber finish; open planning; aureole; raked timber lined ceiling, fixed glazing over the folding partition and original detailing and finishes.

The strong geometric form of the church is characteristic of the work of the architectural firm Grounds Romberg and Boyd.

(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history

The church is important for its special association with the religious and community needs of migrants who moved to Australia from Europe, especially after the devastation of WWII, and in particular the Finnish migrants who left the eastern part of Finland that was annexed by the USSR.

The church is important for its special association with Professor Frederick Romberg. Romberg was one of the most important architects to practise in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s and played a major role in introducing modern architecture to Australia. The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is believed to have been one of Romberg's favourite works.

The following criteria were found not to be applicable: (e), (f), (i), (j), (k), (l).

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 21 July 2008 and period for public comment closes on 18 August 2008.

SUMMARY OF THE PLACE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

History

The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church was designed in 1959 by Frederick Romberg of Grounds Romberg and Boyd with Fritz Suendermann as project architect, and construction was completed in Turner in August 1961 (Romberg, recorded conversation with Gordon Temme). The migration of Lutherans to Canberra, including Lutherans from Finland was stimulated by two important historic events. The first was the aftermath of WWII during which the eastern part of Finland was annexed by the USSR. The second was the large number of skilled tradesman required for the expansion of Canberra in the 1950s and 1960s following the government's decision (1948) to relocate all department headquarters to Canberra. As such, a large proportion of the Lutheran congregation and Finnish community in Canberra during the 1950s and 1960s were builders and building tradesman who came specifically to work on the major housing developments being undertaken in Canberra to stem housing shortages.

One of two Lutheran churches in Canberra, the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church was assigned (1976) to the Finnish community to hold services in their own language.

Description

The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church -Canberra Finnish, is located at 22 Watson Street, Turner, at the corner of Watson and Gould Streets. The church site is open to the west overlooking Sullivans Creek and the ANU North Oval sports field. To the east it is neighboured by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The form of the church is deceptively simple. The Church measures a total area of approximately 345sqm and it is dominated by a single symmetrical broken-back roof that slopes upward in three distinct pitches increasing in pitch towards the 'fleche' (central spire). The articulated external walls are very well detailed. The south, west and east walls have a central masonry patterned screen section constructed in specially moulded concrete blocks in a "C" shape laid in stack bonding. Behind these screen walls is extensive glazing, providing good natural lighting to the perimeter service rooms and privacy. There is timber framed glazing to the southwest and southeast corners, with timber panelled double entry doors. The corner glazing is inset slightly along the line of the masonry screen walls while the roof structure is supported at the external corner by a single isolated metal post (possibly brass) expressed forward of the glazing line, directly under the roof hip line. The timber lined sloping ceiling continues through to the soffit without a head to the glazing frame, expressing the non-load-bearing glazed corners and continuity of the ceiling. Suspended within the square recess of the fleche glazing at the high point of the timber-lined ceiling is an aureole with seven lights.

The symmetrical, fibre shingle clad roof (originally a very light grey white colour¹⁰) extends from a wide low-pitched 'verandah' perimeter form to a medium pitched section over the nave and up to the steeply pitched 'fleche'. The base of the 20.7m high 'fleche' is glazed with orange tinted glass to the four sides and is topped with a minimalist aluminium cross. The eaves and angled fascia are timber lined. The eaves box gutter is hidden behind the timber fascia and two central sculptured overflow spitters shoot storm-water out towards the two street elevations into low set rectangular collecting ponds.

The inner square of the plan that is the nave is constructed with off set square hollow section steel columns, two to each corner. Each column is set in approximately one metre from the 'intangible' corner. The columns support perimeter beams: to the south the beam is expressed and spans the width of the nave supporting a concertina folding wall below and frameless fixed glazing over; to the side's blockwork walls extend between the columns, and to the north the steel isolated columns provide a clear span over the sanctuary.

Condition

The church is generally in very good condition. Internally the division of the choir and baptistery from the nave has altered the character of the space, however, it has been constructed so that light can still enter the sanctuary.

Design Comments

The architectural value of the building is twofold: as the earliest and most accomplished Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style building in Canberra Late and as an innovative and practical solution to the needs of the Lutheran liturgy.

The Late Twentieth-Century Ecclesiastical style is exemplified in the Church with the element reminiscent of Gothic fleche or tower and use of unbroken straight lines and vertically proportioned glazed panes emphasising verticality. Widely projecting eaves, verandah and glass wall with regular spaced timber mullions also illustrate the Post-War Melbourne Regional style (1940-60) (Apperley et al. 1989). In keeping with the religious shift away from heavy symbolism and in keeping with the Lutheran taste for limited decoration, with the natural light on natural materials used as decoration. This can be seen with the play of light in the relatively small internal spaces; the warm glow filtered through the skylight under the spire and the light shining through the grille blockwork. The combination of geometric planning and natural materials left unpainted such as blockwork walls, timber lined eaves, extensive glazing with regular spaced mullions, and timber panelling internally was an aesthetic originated by Grounds Romberg & Boyd in Australian architecture. However the innovative design incorporating a square plan was controversial within the church.

Additional design features of significance include; the timber lined eaves, gutters with overflow into rectangular ponds, face concrete blockwork and blockwork screens, internal fixed glazing over the southern folding partition, clear timber finish and timber pews, open planning, aureole, steel frame; raked timber lined ceiling, and original detail and finishes. The setting of the church is also important located on

the corner equi-distant from the two streets and enabling its scale and form to be appreciated from all sides.

References

1982 Conversation with Gordon Temme, chairman of the congregation committee at the time of the design and construction of the church, and documents in his possession including slides, letters from Grounds, newspaper clippings, a postcard and the official fund raising brochure, and Embassy of Finland; and *Architecture in Australia*, March 1962 'Lutheran National Memorial Church', Conversation with Suendermann.

Apperly, R, Irving, R and P. Reynolds, 1989 *Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson.

3. PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS



Figure 1. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, S façade (Truscott 2008)



Figure 2. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, S façade (Truscott 2008)



Figure 3. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, W façade (Truscott 2008)



Figure 4. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, NE corner (Truscott 2008)

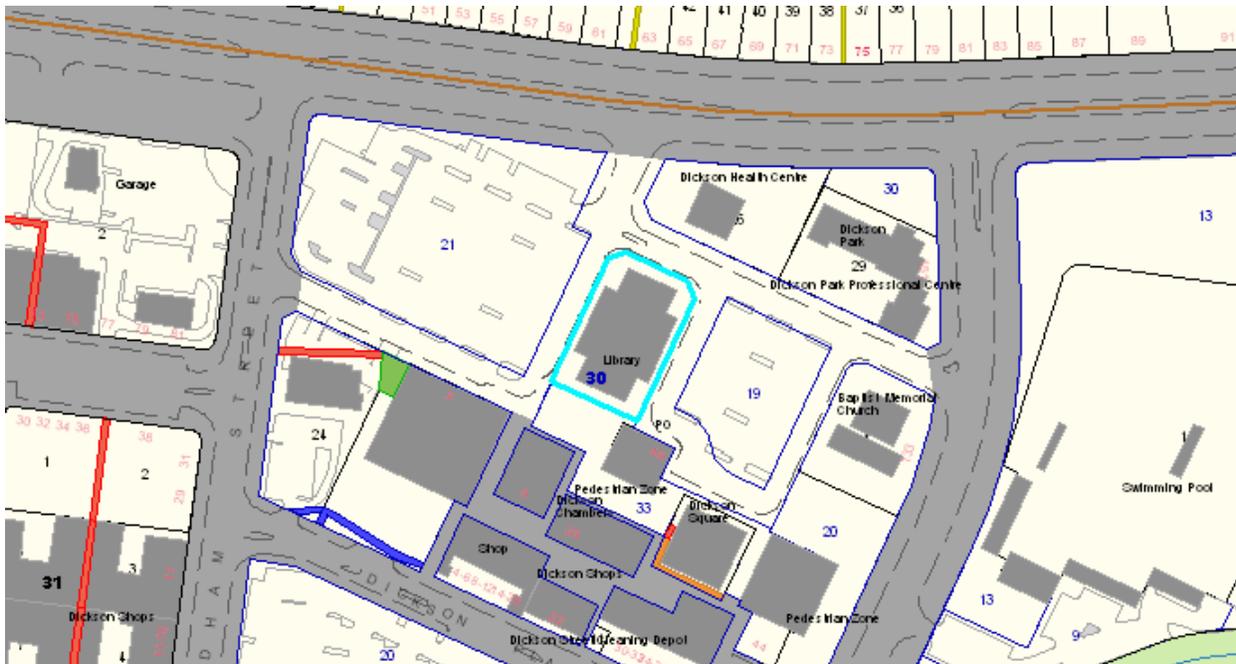


Figure 5. Location of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Turner.