

**NON-STATUTORY BACKGROUND INFORMATION For
CANBERRA BAPTIST CHURCH, KINGSTON**

As of 14 July 2008

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- Canberra Baptist Church, 11 Currie Crescent, Block 1, Section 23, Suburb of Kingston, ACT
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HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The Canberra Baptist Church was the first Baptist Church constructed in the ACT and one of the first permanent churches in the Territory. The church and manse were constructed in 1929 on one of the designated 'Cathedral' sites offered by the Federal Capital Commission.

The driving force behind the establishment of a Baptist Church in the Territory was Reverend Dr A J Waldock who selected the site in 1926 in his capacity as Chairman of the Federal Home Mission board. When the proposal to establish a Baptist presence in the Territory was adopted by the Baptist Union, Dr Waldock was appointed to the task of a national fund raising campaign to finance the construction of an appropriate church building. Despite all of his energies, the campaign fell short of its target and the building budget was made up with a bank loan.

Sydney architect F W Peplow was commissioned to prepare plans. The contract for construction was let to R E Midson and the foundation stones for the church and manse were laid on 21 March 1928. The church was dedicated for public worship on 24 February 1929.

An early perspective of the Church, produced by the architect F W Peplow, shows a small spire on the southern side of the roof, adjacent to the gable. The spire has never been constructed.

Dr Waldock was appointed to the position of foundation minister. He and his wife fervently undertook the challenge of establishing a church in the infant Territory. It was their energies which saw the church grow significantly during their time of Ministry (1929-48). One of Dr Waldock's first initiatives was the preparation of a masterplan for the site in which he proposed a larger Cathedral be erected on the northern side of the site. This proposal was never implemented.

In 1952 a former Government hostel (hut) was purchased to accommodate needs of the church activities. The hut still remains west of the Church Hall. The hut provided only temporary relief to the accommodation problem and in 1959, Sydney architects, Booker and Wilson were engaged to design a new hall building with kitchen and stage facilities. The new building was opened on 14 April 1962, and cost £14,747. The hall was dedicated to the memory of Rev Dr Waldock. The hall was extended in 1974, the design prepared by local architect Anthony Cooper.

The Sunday School Ministry of Canberra Baptist was inaugurated by Dr Waldock on 3 March 1929. The first class of nine pupils included two, who were the niece and nephew of George Whitlam a deacon of the church. The Whitlams attended until their father was transferred to Melbourne.

The Canberra Baptist Church has played a significant role in the social and religious development of the Territory. It has been the foundation from which other Baptist churches and organisations have been established in the ACT.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

General

The Canberra Baptist Church is located on a large semi circular site in the suburb of Kingston. The site is bounded to the east by Currie Crescent and to the west by Telopea Park East.

The site has an overall impression of a mature landscape setting, which is created by the numerous mature pines and eucalypts which are present across the site. Four buildings are located on the site:

- A face red brick church and separate manse of a similar construction date.
- A 1970s face brick Church Hall, and
- A weatherboard clad former hostel building now used as offices.

The church building is prominent on the southern half of the site.

Exterior

The Kingston Baptist Church is designed in the Inter-War Gothic style. Construction is red-face brickwork. Horizontal bands of contrast in black-Brown bricks are a feature of the church exterior. The banding is two course high on the main church and single course on the entry.

The building is a basic cruciform shape in plan, with the functions of each area of the building being defined externally by its massing. The church entry is defined by a single level flat roofed projecting bay. The nave and sanctuary area of the church are expressed as a two-storey element in mass, the steeply pitched roof, and parapetted gable ends are strong elements of the façade.

Behind the nave section of the Church, the Baptistry and large meeting room are contained within a lower section of pitched roof which extends on the same axis of the main roof. To the north and south of these are located vestry and small service rooms, expressed as projecting wings to the sides of the main building axis. The wings have flat roofs concealed behind a castellated parapet similar to that of the vestry and small service rooms.

The top of the entry walls is a castellated parapet. The entry door location is reflected in the parapet by a steeply pitched gable element, highlighted by a white painted concrete moulding. The feature of the entry walls is the buttressing at the corners and either side of the main doorway. Buttressing is also featured in the side and front elevations of the nave of the church building. A key feature is the regular fenestration articulation and vertical emphasis of the façades, and symmetry of the east façade.

Behind the entry bay, the main building gable rises as a strong two-storey element. In the centre of the gable is a large arched window with moulded frame and tracery elements of concrete, framed arched windows. The mouldings have been painted white, highlighting the window within the façade. The stepped form of the gable parapet is defined with profiled bricks.

The main roof of the Church is steeply pitched and clad in Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles. Rainwater is collected in galvanised paint finished quadrant gutters.

The entry, side and rear wall windows consist of single pane, arched heads, are individual units by comparison with the church nave, where the windows are arranged in pairs. The windows are similarly distinguished in the shape of the head. The nave windows have

ecclesiastical arched heads. The heads of all other windows have a flatter arch. The arched heads of the entry windows are filled in with a solid white panel.

The church and entry windows are steel framed with stained glass in the side walls of the sanctuary area and diagonal wired glass on the front and entry wall windows. Mesh security grilles have been installed over all of the stained-glass windows.

Windows in the rear wings, Greening and basement rooms of the building are double hung sash timber framed units, generally larger than the sanctuary. All windows in these areas are clear glazed.

All external doors are vertical v-joint tongue and grooved boards, ledged and braced internally. Only the doors to the basement garage have been changed, with a modern, colorbond roller door replacing the original timber doors.

The rear wings of the buildings have four external entries, two on each of the east and west elevations. Each of the entries is a single doorway and is accessed via concrete stairs. The stairways are enclosed by brick balustrades. The north-eastern entry stair has been upgraded with new concrete stairs and galvanised pipe handrails installed.

Garden beds have been planted adjacent to the north and south faces of the church nave.

Interior

Entry to the Church was originally only through the central front entry. Redevelopment of the courtyard in the late 1990s has moved the main entry to the northern doors. The original entry was a central vestry with two side vestries. This has now been opened up into a single space to provide additional seating.

The walls of the entry area are face brick to dado level and rendered and painted above the brick dado sill. The entry ceiling is fibrous plaster with decorative mouldings in the centre of the former 3 rooms. Timber doors and architraves are finished in black Japan.

The room contains 3 windows with diagonal wired glass. The windows have a cord drawn pivoting sash in the top third.

From the entry, doors lead directly into the nave of the Church. The nave walls are finished in a similar detail to the entry.

Gothic styled stained glass windows are grouped in pairs on the south and north wall of the nave. The windows are highlighted with a plaster label mould, which runs continuously along the wall near the head of the windows. The windows are dedicated to former ministers and members. At the base of each window is an inward opening sash.

The floor of the nave is stained tongue and grooved timber. The aisles, front section before the sanctuary and the sanctuary and choir areas have been carpeted in a red carpet.

The nave ceiling is fibrous plaster and is divided into structural bays by the large section finely detailed roof trusses. The ceiling bays are further defined by ornate plaster mouldings. The roof trusses are buttressed off the side walls and sit on a rendered plinth.

Original pendant lights illuminate the nave. The lamping of the lights has been upgraded since construction. Additional task spotlights have been introduced on two trusses. Ceiling fans have also been introduced and are suspended from the roof trusses.

The sanctuary sits below a large arched opening in the western wall. The sanctuary layout is a 1989 design but retains original pulpit, ministers' chairs and communion table. A baptistry with ceramic tiled pool is located behind the sanctuary.

Either side of the sanctuary, timber panelled doors lead to corridors serving rooms at the rear of the Church.

Behind the sanctuary are located five ancillary rooms.

On the south side of the southern passage are located two vestry rooms. Both rooms are similarly finished and detailed with rendered and painted walls, timber dado rail, fibrous plaster ceiling and carpeted floor finish. Each room has timber framed double hung sash windows.

The southern passage is finished in similar detail to the vestries. From the passage, a door in the west wall provides access to an external staircase. Internal timber stairways on the north wall of the passage provide access to the sanctuary and baptistery.

A doorway in the north wall of the south passage opens into the James Greening room, a large meeting room located directly behind the sanctuary. The Greening room is detailed and finished similar to the vestries. The principle variance is that a suspended ceiling has been installed below the original moulded and panelled plaster ceiling. The room contains a large face brick fireplace on the east wall. A heater has been installed into the hearth.

From the Greening room access is gained to the north passage which is almost identical to the south passage. North of this passage is a kitchenette and large meeting room. These rooms are finished similarly to the vestry rooms.

Below the rear rooms is a basement comprising three rooms, a large Sunday School room, garage and store room. Walls are typically rendered and painted. The ceiling is the painted soffit of the floor above.

The floor in the Sunday School is timber, the two other rooms are bare concrete.

Each room except the garage has timber framed windows. The garage windows have been replaced with a roller door. The Sunday School room has French doors to the outside.

Small toilet cubicle rooms are located in the north west and south west corners of the building (two on each level). Walls are rendered and painted, floor painted concrete with a plaster ceiling. Fixtures are probably original.

Landscape

The overall impression of the landscape is one of mature trees in keeping with the period of the suburb's development. Dominant species of trees include Radiata Pines and Eucalypts. The pines appear to be the oldest plantings on the site and is estimated that they were planted c1930. Quite a large number of these have been removed in recent times and several of the remaining trees are showing signs of decline.

Blue gums have been used near the manse and to a lesser extent at the northern end of the site.

Eucalypt Grove near the tennis court contains three species of tree (*Eucalyptus mannifera*, *Eucalyptus bridgesiana* and *Eucalyptus cinerea*).

There are two pin oaks located between the church and the hall, which are considered to be the most important trees on the site. They are excellent specimens in good condition. They have significance from the social viewpoint as they provide a canopy when morning teas are served in this space.

Of the remainder of the trees on site several species are now classified as weed species. (Refer CMP).

There are shrub beds associated with the buildings. There is a memorial pink rose is planted in the front planter bed to the memory of Professor Gordon Reid AG.

Remnants of the native grassland landscape which existed before Canberra was developed, remains along the Telopea Park edge of the site near the tennis court. This native grassland comprises of kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*) and redleg grass (*Bothriochloa macra*) and was once the habitat of the Golden Sun Moth (recent evidence of its presence is lacking). Similar grasslands can be found throughout old Canberra on areas where the land has never been disturbed.

REFERENCES

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