St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/ Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School, 362-380 High Street, Windsor

Heritage Place: St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School
Address: 362-380 High Street, Windsor

HO Reference: HO772
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1889 (reconsecrated as a Greek Orthodox Church in 1963)



Photograph of St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church.



Location map and extent of St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church.

Heritage Group: Religion
Heritage Type: Church

Key Theme: Settling the land / Community and culture
Key Sub-theme: Migrating to seek opportunity: Creating a cosmopolitan society – twentieth century immigration / Worshipping: Churches as a reflection of changing demographics

Significance Level: Local

Controls:					
	■	External paint controls	☐ Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐ Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐ Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy system controls

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 362-380 High Street, Windsor (otherwise known as the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School), is significant. Specifically, the façade arrangement, scale, siting, form, detailing and fenestration of the Romanesque style Church building and former Sunday School, along with early twentieth century alterations and the late twentieth century the Eastern Orthodox church style alterations, including the rear masonry extension to the former Sunday School and white render to the façade of the primary Romanesque style Church building, are of local Heritage significance.

Other alterations and additions, including the connecting gabled glass link, porch steps and awning to the entrance door of the primary church building, are not significant.

How is it significant?

The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School is of local historical and social significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School is of historical significance as a former nineteenth century Methodist Church and Sunday School that was later converted into a Greek Orthodox Church in the post-war period. Its evolution and changing uses, as embodied in its post-war Eastern Orthodox church style alterations, as applied to a Romanesque style Methodist church building designed by architects Crouch and Wilson, clearly demonstrates the growth and decline of Methodism in the former City of Prahran, and the subsequent emergence of Greek Orthodoxy as a result of post-war Greek migration to the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor. Greek settlement in these areas formed one of the largest post-war European groups in the municipality, which played a key role in diversifying its predominantly Anglo-Celtic demographic and contributing to Prahran's distinct cosmopolitan character by the 1960s (Criterion A).

The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School is of social significance due to its association with the Greek community in Stonnington. As the first Greek Orthodox church established in the municipality during the post-war period, the site not only serves a religious function, but also forms an important focal point and gathering place for the Greek community in Prahran and Windsor (Criterion G).

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School is of historical significance as a former nineteenth century Methodist Church and Sunday School that was later converted into a Greek Orthodox Church in the post-war period. Its evolution and changing uses, as embodied in its post-war Eastern Orthodox church style alterations, as applied to a Romanesque style Methodist

		church building designed by architects Crouch and Wilson, clearly demonstrates the growth and decline of Methodism in the former City of Prahran, and the subsequent emergence of Greek Orthodoxy as a result of post-war Greek migration to the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor. Greek settlement in these areas formed one of the largest post-war European groups in the municipality, which played a key role in diversifying its predominantly Anglo-Celtic demographic and contributing to Prahran's distinct cosmopolitan character by the 1960s.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	This place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School is of social significance due to its association with the Greek community in Stonnington. As the first Greek Orthodox church established in the municipality during the post-war period, the site not only serves a religious function, but also forms an important focal point and gathering place for the Greek community in Prahran and Windsor.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/Former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School, located at 362-380 High Street, Windsor, consists of two masonry gable structures with a slate roof connected by a glass link with a gabled parapet. The two structures are primarily distinguished by their broad, gable fronted forms derived from the Romanesque idiom, lancet arched windows, masonry construction and buttresses. While the former Sunday School building situated to the west retains its face brick finish, the façade of the Church to the east has been finished with white render.

The Church building to the east has a stepped setback, and presents a broad, symmetrical gable fronted form with an entrance porch composed of twin gables. The façade of the primary gable structure is distinguished by its central arched leadlight window topped with a porthole window, and two flanking lancet leadlight windows with curved hood moulds resting on small ballflowers. The twin gabled porch features lancet windows with curved hood moulds resting on small ballflowers, arched entrance doors to the side elevations and a central arched entrance door for the façade topped with an awning.

All gable ends of the Church building are topped with roof finials in the form of a crux quadrata (Greek Orthodox cross). The side elevation retains its masonry face red brick finish and is characterised by buttresses and consistently spaced double lancet arched windows with leadlight glass. A later nave-like addition has also been added to the side elevation in a style consistent with the original building with the addition of a crenelated parapet. The white render finish of the façade, being reminiscent of traditional whitewash derived from Mediterranean sources, is of particular note, and comprises a later alteration associated with the building's conversion to a Greek Orthodox Church.

The former Sunday School to the west similarly presents a broad, symmetrical gable fronted form distinguished by a central arched leadlight window flanked with lancet leadlight windows with curved hood moulds resting on small ballflowers, and a central timber arched entrance door with a curved hoof mould. The central arched window is topped with a rose window. As with the neighbouring Church building, the gable end is topped with a roof finial in the form of a crux quadrata (Greek Orthodox cross). The side elevation similarly features buttresses and consistently spaced double lancet arched windows with leadlight glass. The rear of this building also features an earlier masonry extension with intersecting terracotta tiled gabled roofs.

The two buildings are joined by a gabled glass link topped with a gabled, masonry parapet. Both buildings sit on red brick paving that terminates at the pedestrian footpath. The buildings front High Street to the north and are located to the south of Victoria Gardens. It is currently in use as the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, with the building to the west comprising the main church building. Both buildings are in good condition and are of moderate integrity overall.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Main wing of the Sunday School Hall re-built in brick (1924).
- Rear masonry extension to the former Sunday School added (c.1920s/30s).
- Church building re-roofed (1924).
- Connecting gabled glass link added (after 1963).

- Façade of church building rendered (after 1963).
- Rose window of church building removed (after 1963).
- Awning to entrance door of church building added (after 1963).
- New porch steps added to church building (after 1963).
- Additional timber framed (painted blue) leadlight panes added to double lancet arched windows to side elevation of church building (after 1963).

History

• Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural Heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

The first Crown Land Sales in what would become the suburb of Windsor took place in 1849-50, including the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). The land encompassing present-day Windsor, being bound by High Street, Kooyong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road, comprised twenty-two of these allotments. Formerly known as Prahran South, the area was later re-named Windsor in 1891. While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite from the 1840 Crown Land Sales, Windsor, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands further to the south, was primarily set aside for farming and housing for the working and lower middle classes.

By 1856, the land encompassing Windsor was primarily characterised by a mixture of undeveloped land and small timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). An early suburban railway station also opened in Windsor in 1859 as part of the Hobsons Bay line, which encouraged further housing development in the vicinity. The area was distinguished by its strong market garden character during its early period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom. This spurred residential development on farming land and the replacement of modest mid-nineteenth century wooden dwellings with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style brick and timber cottages, some joined as terraces, that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing manufacturing industries (Malone 2000, 20). Meanwhile, the formerly undeveloped area in the suburb's eastern portion became the site of medium-sized Victorian residences for upper-middle class professionals due to its level and well drained land (Malone 2003, 22-23).

While both post-war 'slum' clearance and gentrification from the 1970s saw the loss of many of these Victorian- and Edwardian-era cottages, a significant number have survived intact. Beyond the small group of modest c.1920 factories concentrated around the intersection of Frederick and James Street, Windsor's working-class history can primarily be found in the form of several surviving 1850s and 1860s cottages, as well as in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century single-fronted cottages and dwellings concentrated on streets between Chapel Street and Punt Road. Meanwhile, ornate freestanding Victorian residences illustrative of the suburb's upper-middle class demographic formerly concentrated around the suburb's south-eastern portion can be seen scattered to the east along The Avenue.

Greek Migration to the Former City of Prahran

Although settlement in the present-day municipality of Stonnington was dominated by Anglo-Celtic immigrants throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, post-war European migration to Australia saw demographic diversification as various ethnic groups from Southern Europe, the majority of whom comprised Greeks, settled in the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 46). Greek settlement in this area was in part fuelled by the area's then thriving industrial sector, which provided an avenue of work for newly arrived non-English speaking migrant groups. As sociologist Jock Collins notes, post-war non-English speaking migrants existed in an economic domain that consigned them to manufacturing work (Collins 1988). Many of these migrants would come to occupy old working-class houses and newly built Housing Commission flats, which presented affordable housing options as they sought to establish new lives for themselves in the municipality (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 46).

Beyond the industrial sector, the Greek population also contributed to the everyday social, cultural and commercial life of Prahran as they introduced their cultural practices and traditions. This was not only evidenced in the Greek Cypriot run restaurants and cafés along Chapel Street, but also via the establishment of various cultural and religious institutions, such as the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church along High Street in Windsor (Jupp 1988, 510; Malone 1984, 25). While much of the Greek population in the Former City of Prahran moved to the adjacent municipality of Malvern by the 1980s, a number of them remained and continue to frequent the longstanding Greek institutions that were initially established in the post-war period (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 46).

• Place History

The area encompassing present day 362-380 High Street originally comprised a modest Mt Erica Wesleyan Methodist Church building erected in 1871 to designs by notable architects Crouch and Wilson, and a weatherboard Sunday School Hall dating to 1884 (The Telegraph 1871, 7; The Age 1884, 6; The Argus 1871, 3; Mt. Erica Methodist Church 1955). As with other Nonconformist

Protestant groups, the congregation primarily comprised working-class and lower middle-class English people, and its location within Windsor reflected the demographic makeup of the local area (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 178).

In response to the growing denomination, the original 1870 Mt Erica Methodist Church building to the east was pulled down in 1889 and rebuilt as a larger masonry Romanesque style gable building that currently occupies the site (Mt. Erica Methodist Church 1955) (see Figure *1*). Meanwhile, a masonry gable façade addition was added to the more modest 1884 weatherboard Sunday School Hall to the west in 1890 (Mt. Erica Methodist Church 1955). These changes are depicted in a 1905 photograph and on the 1898 MMBW map, which shows two large scale structures, the 'Sunday School' and 'Wesleyan Church', following the footprint of the extant buildings occupying the site today (MMBW 1898) (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The extant brick portion of the main wing of the Sunday School is not depicted on this Plan nor the photograph and was erected several decades later in 1924 (Mt. Erica Methodist Church 1955). A rear terracotta tiled brick gabled extension was also added to the Sunday School around this period.

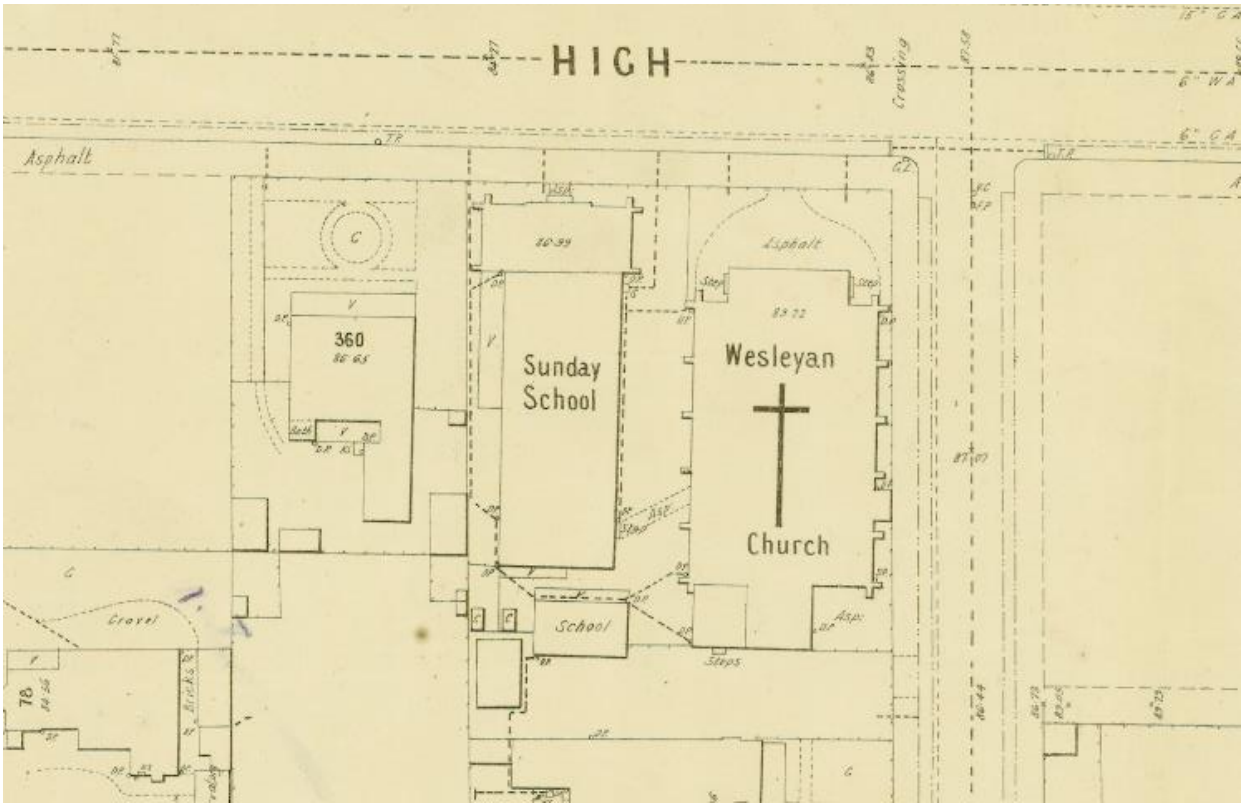


Figure 1. 1898 MMBW Plan showing the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, then the Wesleyan Church and Sunday School, fronting High Street. *Source:* State Library of Victoria.

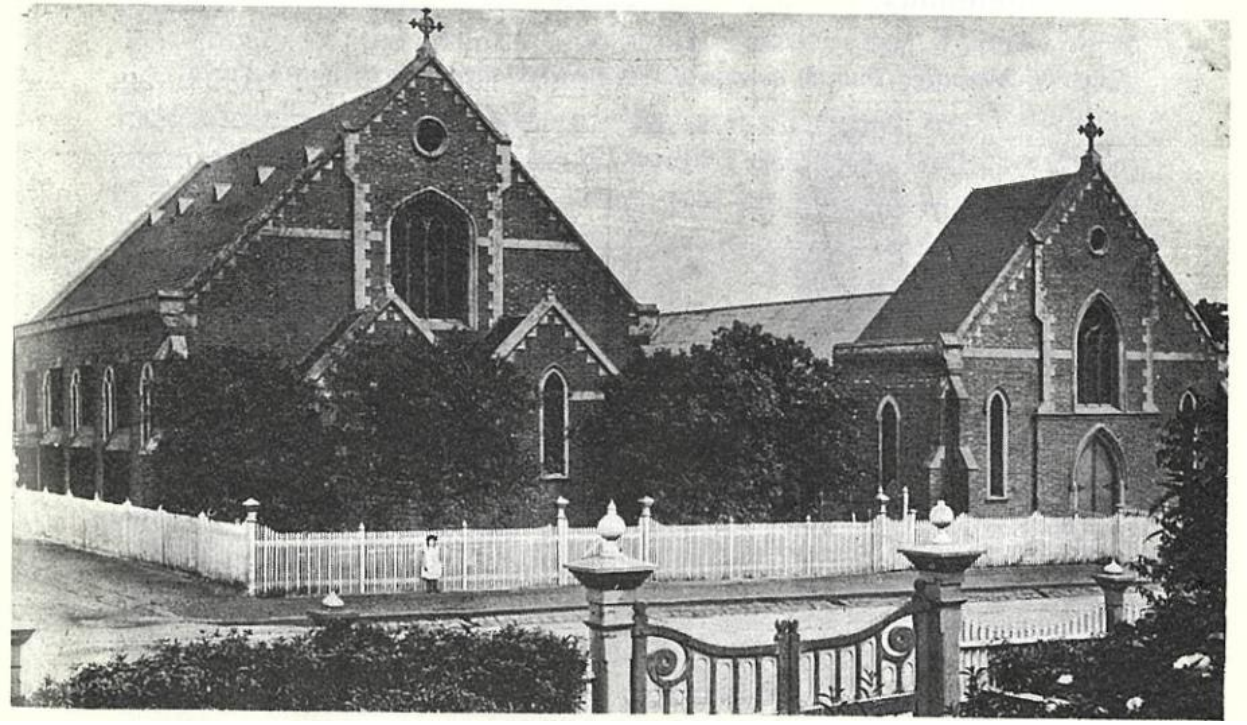


Figure 2. 1905 photograph of the two buildings, note the masonry gable façade to the Sunday School building. *Source:* Jill McDougall.

As noted in the 1955 Mt. Erica Methodist Church Centenary Services booklet, further internal and external alterations were carried out to both the Church and Sunday School buildings throughout the early twentieth century, including the re-roofing to the Church in 1924, re-flooring works to the Sunday School in 1932, and internal repairs to the church porch and vestries in 1954 (Mt. Erica Methodist Church).



Figure 3. 1938 view of what was then the Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School from Victoria Gardens. *Source:* Stonnington History Centre.

In 1963, the Methodists sold the Mt Erica property to the Greek Orthodox Church, and it became the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (GOCMV 1963). At the time of purchase, the block consisted of a seventy-year-old church, a hall, kindergarten and an adjoining house, and was described as the following:

> "With a capacity to seat 500 in the church and 200 and 250 respectively the hall which was divided into two rooms. The church's roof is constructed of slate and the adjoining house consisted of seven rooms to the value of 7000 Pounds; the property also had two flats to the value of 8000 Pounds and kitchen facilities" (GOCMV in Markos and Messinis 2021)

The church was subsequently reconsecrated in the Greek Orthodox tradition. External alterations undertaken following this transfer of ownership include the rendering of the 1889 church building in a white colouyr scheme, and the erection of a connecting structure between the 1889 church and Sunday School. Importantly, this transfer of ownership reflected the area's changing demographics in the post-war period (refer to Historical Context: Greek Migration to the Former City of Prahran above). Specifically, it spoke to the growing prevalence of the Greek migrant community in this area of Melbourne in the post-war period, as well as the wider decline in the Methodist denomination in Australia towards the late twentieth century, which would eventually see them merge with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches to form Uniting Church in 1977 (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 185).

While the growing Greek population in the nearby suburb of Malvern by the 1980s, combined with the subsequent opening of the St Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Malvern East in 1982, saw a drop in attendance. Despite these demographic changes, the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church nevertheless continued to serve as a place of worship and gathering place for much of the Greek community residing in Prahran and Windsor into the twenty-first century. As of 2024, the buildings continue to remain in use as the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church.

Comparative Analysis

The St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School comprises a pair of ecclesiastical buildings distinguished by their broad gabled fronts and siting on a major thoroughfare. While they are simply detailed and not particularly impressive from an architectural perspective (see comparative examples below), its evolution from a nineteenth century Methodist Church to a mid-twentieth century Greek Orthodox Church, as embodied in its late twentieth century alterations, clearly demonstrates the growth and decline of Methodism in the former City of Prahran, and the subsequent emergence of Greek Orthodoxy as a result of post-war Greek migration to the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 46).

As such, the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School not only illustrates to key cultures of worshipping in the municipality, but also exemplifies the key phases of change to the area's demographic between the late nineteenth century to the post-war period. The only other comparable example on the Heritage Overlay that illustrates post-war Greek migration to the municipality is the **St Catherines (Greek Orthodox) Church (former Peace Memorial Church) at 3 Epping Street, Malvern East (HO37).** While

this building, originally dating to 1921-22, differs from the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church in terms of architectural style and provenance, it draws similarities as a former Methodist church that was reconsecrated in the Greek Orthodox tradition in 1982. However, its later reconsecration date, combined with its location in Malvern, effectively illustrates the re-settlement of Prahran's Greek population to Malvern by the 1980s, as opposed to the initial wave of Greek migration to the Prahran and Windsor area between the late 1950s and early 1970s (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 46; Vlahogiannis 2008).

From an architectural perspective, the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School can be compared to the following:

- **Former Armadale Methodist/Presbyterian Church & Hall, 69 Denbigh Road, Malvern (HO406).** The Former Armadale Methodist/Presbyterian Church and Hall generally compares to the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School in terms of form, materials and style. It features an associated Sunday School, although as this is to the rear of the church building so it does not read as a complex of church buildings in the same way as St Demetrius. Designed by noted architects Sydney Smith & Ogg, it is evidently more architecturally distinguished owing to its expressive gable ends and distinct articulation of both Romanesque and Gothic style influences. It differs from the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church in terms of historical development, having been converted into flats in the 1990s.
- **Salvation Army Citadel, 24-26 Victoria Street, Prahran (HO113).** Although not ecclesiastical buildings, the Salvation Army Citadel and associated J. S. Hall at 24-26 Victoria Street, Prahran draws similarities with the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church and Sunday School as a pair of gable masonry buildings that are moderately intact. The citadel itself compares in terms of its composition, broad gabled front and restrained application of elements derived from the Romanesque idiom.
- **Armadale Baptist Church and Hall, 88 Kooyong Road, Armadale (HO66).** The Armadale Baptist Church of 1898 and the 1899 Hall is comparable to the subject site as a pair of masonry gable buildings designed in the Romanesque style. Key similarities of note include the composition, siting, broad gabled front, restrained application of ornamentation and contrasting cement dressings against face brick. As with the Former Armadale Methodist/Presbyterian Church & Hall however, it differs from the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church in terms of historical development, and the hall has since been converted into private residential flats.

Considering the above, the St Demetrius Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church and Sunday School not only retains its legibility as a nineteenth century Methodist church building but is also of particular interest due to its capacity to illustrate post-war Greek migration to the Prahran/Windsor area. It should be noted that the history of post-war European migration in Stonnington's history is in general underrepresented on the Heritage Overlay, and there are currently no other Heritage Overlay sites that illustrate Greek settlement in Prahran and Windsor specifically, which formed one the largest post-war European migrant groups in the municipality.

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Limitations

1. Access to all Heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this Heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Images



Overview from High Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Detail view of glass link addition. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



View of the main St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church building façade. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Detail view of gable end and roof finial of the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church building. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Oblique view of side elevation of the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church building. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



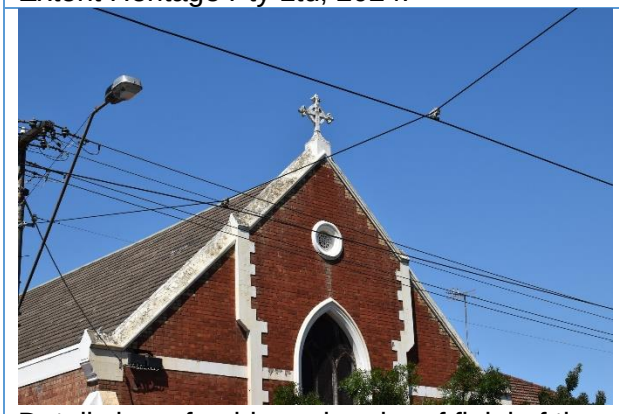
Fenestration along of the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church building from Newry Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Detail view of twin gabled porch to the St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church/former Mt Erica Methodist Church building. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



View of the former Sunday School building. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Detail view of gable end and roof finial of the Sunday School. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Detail view of central entrance door to Sunday School. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.

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