Church of Christ Church, 220-236 High Street, Windsor

2Heritage Place: Church of Christ Church
Address: 220-236 High Street, Windsor

HO Reference: HO55
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1883



Photograph of Church of Christ Church.
Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Location map and extent of HO55.

Heritage Group: Religion
Heritage Type: Church

Key Theme: Community and Culture
Key Sub-theme: Worshipping – Independent or Congregational Church

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 220-236 High Street, Windsor (otherwise known as Church of Christ Church), is significant. Specifically, the façade arrangement, form, detailing and fenestration of the Classical Revival style Victorian era church building is of local heritage significance. The late nineteenth century school room situated at the rear of the property, is of contributory value to the heritage place. Later alterations and additions to the property, including the street front boundary wall, are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Church of Christ Church is of local historical, representative, and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Church of Christ Church is of historical significance as an 1883 Nonconformist church building that illustrates the growth of Nonconformist Protestant religious groups in the municipality towards the late nineteenth century. It typically comprised working-class and lower middle-class English people. Its relatively modest scale and incorporation of Classical Revival style elements is also typical of Nonconformist groups, whose deviation from the Church of England and strong lay participation tended to result in less costly church buildings. The extant late nineteenth century schoolroom building located at the rear of the property contributes to the significance of the place as a structure that was erected as a church education facility in relation to the 1883 church building. (Criterion A)

The Church of Christ Church is of representative significance as a Victorian-era church building that encompasses the principal elements associated with the Classical Revival style. These include its front facing gable, pedimented Classical Revival arrangement, formal symmetrical form, Tuscan pilasters, arched openings and windows with expressed sills and keystones, and central main entrance bay with an arched opening. (Criterion D)

The Church of Christ Church is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact and articulated example of a Classical Revival style. Its formal symmetry is of particular note and provides a strong visual anchor along the busy thoroughfare setting. Key features contributing to this aesthetic appeal include its pedimented arrangement, form, fenestration, and incorporation of Classical Revival style detailing such as expressed sills and key stones, Tuscan pilasters, and flanking console brackets. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	***Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history***	The Church of Christ Church is of historical significance as an 1883 Nonconformist church building that illustrates the growth of Nonconformist Protestant religious groups in the municipality towards the late nineteenth century. It typically comprised working-class and lower middle-class English people. Its relatively modest scale and incorporation of Classical Revival style

		elements is also typical of Nonconformist groups, whose deviation from the Church of England and strong lay participation tended to result in less costly church buildings. The extant late nineteenth century schoolroom building located at the rear of the property contributes to the significance of the place as a structure that was erected as a church education facility in relation to the 1883 church building.
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*	The Church of Christ Church is of representative significance as a Victorian-era church building that encompasses the principal elements associated with the Classical Revival style. These include its front facing gable, pedimented Classical Revival arrangement, formal symmetrical form, Tuscan pilasters, arched openings and windows with expressed sills and keystones, and central main entrance bay with an arched opening.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The Church of Christ Church is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact and articulated example of a Classical Revival style. Its formal symmetry is of particular note and provides a strong visual anchor along the busy thoroughfare setting. Key features contributing to this aesthetic appeal include its pedimented arrangement, form, fenestration, and incorporation of Classical Revival style detailing such as expressed sills and key stones, Tuscan pilasters, and flanking console brackets.
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,*	This place does not meet this criterion.

	cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions	
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

Church of Christ Church, located at 220-230 High Street, Prahran consists of a double-height masonry building. The structure presents a pedimented Classical Revival arrangement with a form typical of Nonconformist churches in Melbourne. The face red brick structure is laid with an English bond and the front façade is finished with a concrete render. The main hipped roof is clad with slate tiles.

The front façade presents a symmetrical open gable form, visually split into three distinct bays with four square-fronted expressed Tuscan pilasters. The centre bay slightly projects forward and consists of the arched main entrance. The main doors consist of double timber doors with raised panels. The entrance is flanked by square Tuscan pilasters and a moulded arch with keystone. Incised patterning above the keystone further emphasises the arched fenestration form.

The flanking bays each consist of a single arched window with detailing that mirrors the front entrance. The windows include an expressed sill with flanking pre-cast semi-circle flower motifs. The entablature above the four Tuscan pilasters includes expressed metal lettering reading ‘MEETING HOUSE’ across the centre bay. The pediment rests above the cornice. The pediment includes a centered expressed projecting cornice supported by flanking console brackets. A second flat parapet with cornice sits behind the main pointed pediment.

The east and west elevations include simple arched windows. The mostly freestanding structure is set back from the street with a narrow front yard space. A stone laid path and steps lead to the main entrance. The street front boundary is demarcated by a low rendered masonry garden bed with metal panel fencing and a low hedge wall. Side rendered masonry walls with a precast bouquet finial encloses the east and west laneway spaces.

A gable-roofed structure extends to the south of the main church building fronting Victoria Street and appears to be the school room structure indicated on the 1896 MMBW plan. It consists of a white weatherboard clad structure with rectangular and pointed arched white timber sash windows. The weatherboard structure presents simple detailing including a scalloped bargeboard on the Victoria Street facing gable. A concrete laid driveway and parking space extends north from Victoria Street, demarcated with steel gates.

The Church of Christ Church fronts High Street to the north, adjacent to the junction with Mount Street. It is located within the main commercial precinct of High Street. It is currently used as a commercial building. The front concrete render shows cracks throughout the façade. However,

the building is generally in overall good condition. The structure appears to have retained its original form and detailing and is of high integrity.

- Alterations and Additions

- Street front boundary wall and fence added.
- Front yard stone path added.
- Balustrade added to the front steps.
- Rear extension comprising gable roofed weatherboard structure connecting 1883 church building with school room.
- Pre-cast finial added to the side walls (after 2017).
- Wall-mounted iron lanterns flanking the main entrance added (after 2017).
- Expressed metal lettering added to the centre bay cornice (by 2017).
- Concrete laid parking space with steel gates added along the south weatherboard structure.

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 1849-1850, 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). 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.

• Place History

The land on which the Church of Christ Church currently sits comprised Crown Portion 56 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor General's Department 1849). Consisting of approximately thirty acres of land roughly bounded by present day Chapel Street, High Street, and the lines of Gertrude Street and York Street, the portion was purchased by land speculators H. Glass and T. B. Payne in 1850 (Malone 2001, 29). The allotment not only benefitted from good quality land with few drainage problems, but also from its proximity to the already established important thoroughfares of Dandenong Road and Chapel Street (Malone 2001, 39). Over two-thirds of portion 56 was sold and subdivided shortly after 1850, resulting in the establishment of workers' cottages on small blocks along narrow streets. By 1856, the allotment was characterised by a scattering of cottages set on small allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856, see Figure 1). The site of the Church of Christ Church, however, remained vacant.



Figure 1. 1856 map showing the approximate location of present day Church of Christ Church (then a vacant block) in red, and scattered workers cottages and buildings on adjacent streets. *Source:* Public Record Office Victoria.

Erected several decades later in 1883 for the Christian Congregation known as the Church of Christ, the building comprised a Classical Revival derived structure defined by a pediment, symmetrical form, and Tuscan pilasters (The Herald 1883, 2). Other key features also included arched windows with expressed sills and keystones along the façade and side elevations. Its form is depicted in an 1896 MMBW plan (MMBW 1896, see Figure 2). By this period, a separate school room structure that is still extant on the site today was also erected at the rear fronting Victoria Street (MMBW 1896, see Figure 2).

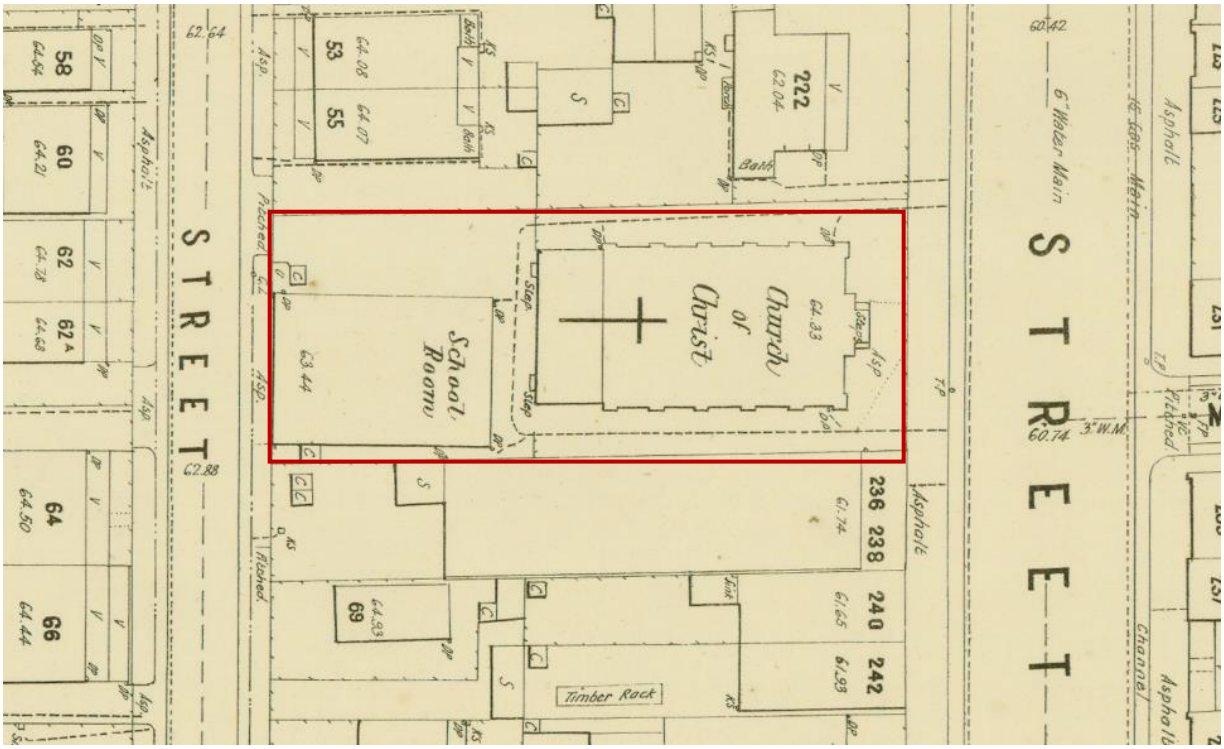


Figure 2. 1896 MMBW map showing Church of Christ building and rear school room building fronting Victoria Street. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

An autonomous Christian congregation with roots in England and Scotland, the Church of Christ promoted the restoration of New Testament Christianity (The Age 1953, 6). As with other Nonconformist Protestant groups, its following primarily comprised working-class and lower middle-class English people (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 178). The first Church of Christ in Victoria met in Prahran in 1853 when John Ingram pitched a tent on the corner of High Street and Chapel Street (Malone 2001, 39; The Age 1953, 16). Their growing membership numbers by the turn of the century would eventually result in the erection of the 1883 building.

Noted events at the Church of Christ building include a riot between the church's factions in 1905, resulting in the expulsion of the oldest members of the church, as well as centenary celebrations in 1953 (The Age 1905, 5; The Argus 1953, 4). Lettering reading 'Church of Christ' was established on the entablature by at least 1949, and this appears to have been retained until at least the 1960s (Caldwell c.1948; Collins 1962, see Figure 3 and Figure 4).



Figure 3. c.1949 photograph of Church of Christ Church. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

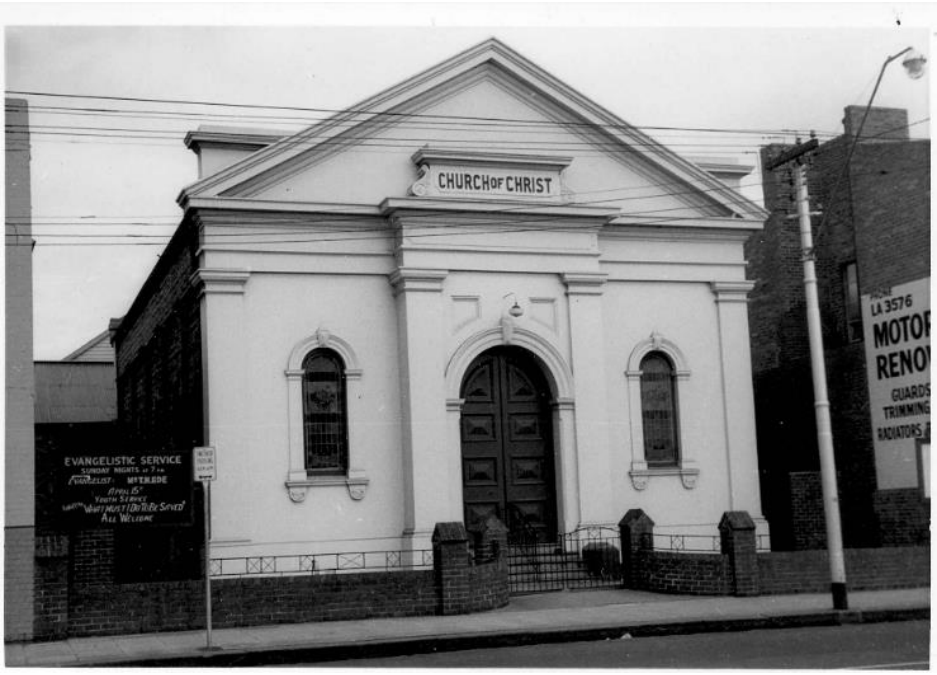


Figure 4. 1962 photograph of Church of Christ Church. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

The building ceased operations as a meeting place for the Church of Christ in around 1974, at which point it was in use by the German Baptist Church (Sands & McDougall 1974). It is unknown as to precisely how long the German Baptist Church occupied the building, nor when

the ‘Meeting House’ lettering was established on the façade. The building is currently privately owned and has been in use as a commercial office space since around 2017.

Comparative Analysis

Designed in the Free Classical Revival style, the late nineteenth century Church of Christ Church is primarily defined by its symmetrical gabled form, pediment, square Tuscan pilasters and arched fenestration form. While its formal style is typical of Nonconformist churches developed in Melbourne during this period, only two of them can be found within the City of Stonnington:

- **Former Baptist Church, 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra (HO17).** Erected in 1866, the Former Baptist Church building is directly comparable to the Church of Christ Church building in terms of style, form, fenestration, and detailing. Synonymous features include its symmetrical gabled form, pedimented Classical Revival arrangement, Tuscan pilasters, arched windows with keystones, raised entrance portico with an arched opening, and leadlight windows. Unlike the Church of Christ Church however, the Former Baptist Church is particularly imposing due to its larger scale and sitting on a prominent corner lot. It is more articulated in terms of its incorporation of dentils and stone masonry construction, the latter of which differs from the Church of Christ Church’s face red brick structure and concrete render façade.
- **Former Congregational Church, 66-72 Peel Street, Windsor (HO93).** Erected in 1858, the Former Congregational Church is comparable to the Church of Christ Church in terms of style, composition and detailing. Although it differs in terms of its stepped form, distinct Greek Revival style parapet and former projecting entrance porch, it nevertheless compares to the Church of Christ Church in terms of its formal symmetrical composition, expressed Tuscan pilasters and arched windows. The Former Congregational Church is ultimately less intact than the Church of Christ Church, having undergone alterations to its gable porch entrance and windows.

Other nineteenth century Protestant church buildings of this style lie outside of the municipality and include:

- **Wesleyan Methodist Church (Former), 53 Nicholson Street, Brunswick East (Merri-bek City HO128).** Constructed between 1877 and c.1880 to designs by Fox and Oakden, the Wesleyan Methodist Church comprises a Classical Revival derived simple bichrome brick building on a cruciform plan, with a gabled slate roof. While it makes use of brick detailing and lacks the central main entrance bay and expressed windowsills that typifies the Church of Christ Church, it shares a number of key similarities as a modest nineteenth century Protestant church with Classical Revival features. These include its symmetrical façade arrangement, front facing gable form, arched windows, and pilasters. Of the two, the Wesleyan Methodist Church is substantially less intact, having undergone significant alterations including the replacement of original windows, the conversion of the main entrance door into a window and the removal of a section of the red brick wall on the north elevation.
- **Baptist Church (Former Welsh Baptist Chapel), 17 Scallan Street, Stawell (Northern Grampians Shire HO17).** Designed by architect Robert Love and built in 1869-70, the Baptist Church is a Victorian Free Classical Revival style church building that is comparable

to the Church of Christ Church building in terms of style, scale, and form. Similar features of note include its centre main entrance bay with a slight projection, pedimented Classical Revival arrangement, arched windows and main entrance door, and stained-glass windows. Unlike the Church of Christ Church building however, the Baptist Church also incorporates dentils and quoining and lacks the Tuscan pilasters.

Other examples of the Victorian Classical Revival style in Stonnington include:

- **Prahran Town Hall, Chapel Street and Greville Street, Prahran (HO15).** The Prahran Town Hall was constructed over a period of time between 1860 and 1888 to designs by three important Melbourne architects – Crouch and Wilson, Charles D'Ebro and Sydney Smith and Ogg. The building's 1888 façade incorporates Classical Revival Revival elements, including a detailed pediment, dentils, Ionic pilasters and arched windows with expressed sills and keystones. Although noticeably more elaborate than the Church of Christ Church, the two share several key features, including a pilastecrered façade, fenestration and window detailing incorporating expressed sills and keystones.
- **Mandeville Hall, 10 Mandeville Crescent, Toorak (HO80/VHR H0676).** Constructed in 1869 and later extended in 1876 to designs by architect Charles Webb, Mandeville Hall comprises a lavish Italianate mansion defined by its impressive scale, highly ornate façade, grand colonnaded balconies, balustrade terrace and central pedimented entrance portico. While its 1876 alterations gave the mansion a boom style extravagance that contrasted against the more austere Classical Revival appearance of the initial 1869 design, several comparisons can nevertheless be drawn between the property and the Church of Christ Church building. These include the incorporation of a central pediment, a formal symmetrical façade arrangement, pilasters, and arched openings.

While the Church of Christ Church building is not as visually imposing as its municipal comparator at 462 Chapel Street, South Yarra, it nevertheless encompasses the key elements associated with the Classical Revival style that typified Nonconformist Protestant churches constructed towards the late nineteenth century, including a formal pedimented Classical Revival arrangement, arched entrance and windows, gabled form, and central main entrance bay. It is also more articulated than comparative examples outside of the municipality, owing to its incorporation of expressed windowsills, keystones, and Tuscan pilasters.

The other examples of Victorian Classical Revival architecture in the City of Stonnington are generally more elaborate. This is reflective of the more modest application of the style to the Church of Christ Church, which was influenced by the working-class character of the congregation and practical worldview of the Nonconformist Protestant church.

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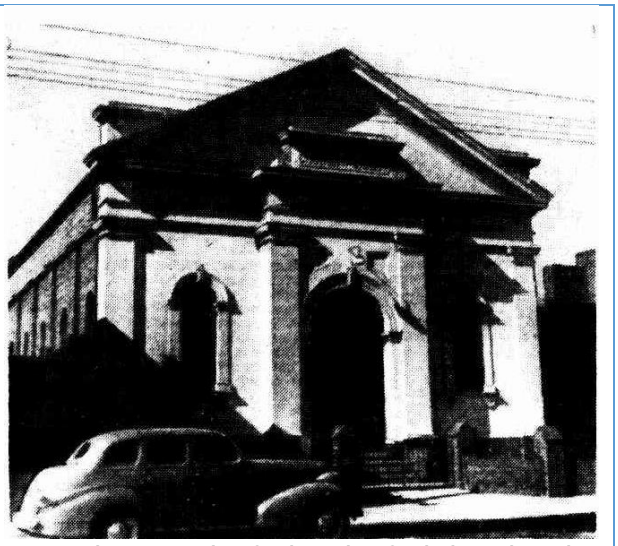
Limitations

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



1905 photograph of Church of Christ Church showing members congregated outside. *Source*: *Punch*. 1905. 'REMEMBRANCE AT CHURCH OF CHRIST.' 14 September 1905.



1953 photograph of Church of Christ Church. *Source*: *The Age*. 1953. 'CHURCH OF CHRIST CHAPEL.' 4 April 1953.



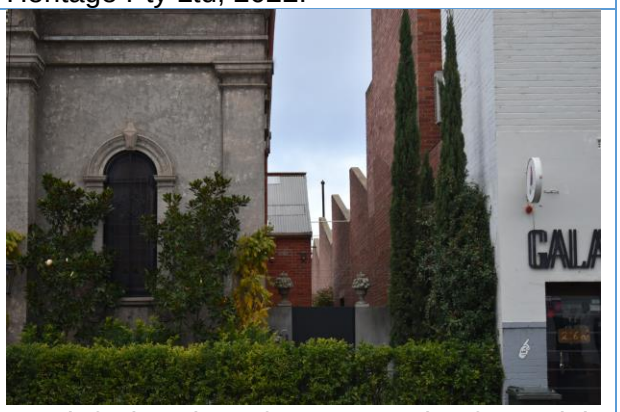
South-east facing view of Church of Christ Church building from High Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South-west facing view of Church of Christ Church from High Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



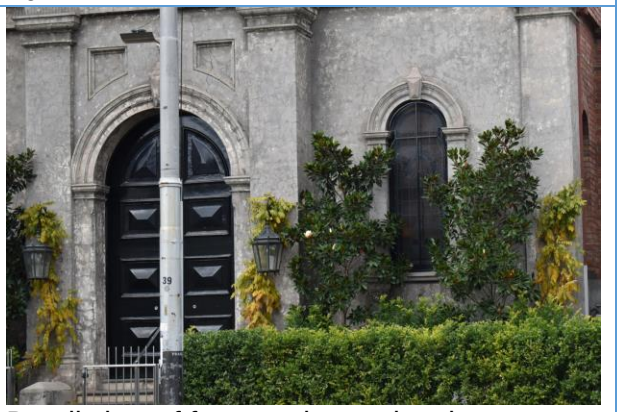
Detail view of pediment. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South facing view of rear extension from High Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



South facing view of rear extension from High Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



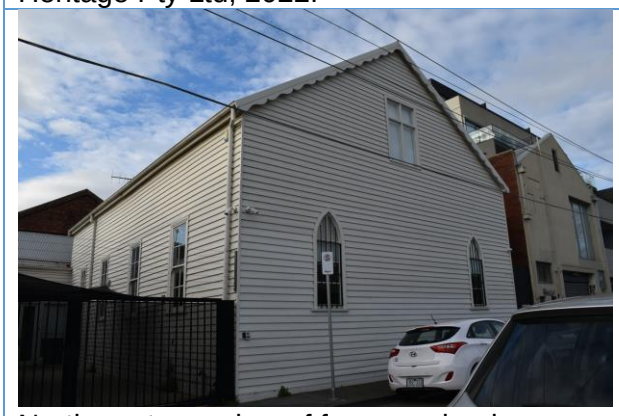
Detail view of fenestration and main entrance door. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of pilasters flanking main entrance doorway and 'Meeting House' lettering along façade cornice. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of arched windows along side elevations. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



North-east overview of former school room building fronting Victoria Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



North-west overview of former school room building fronting Victoria Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.

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