



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 8.5.2 Helping other people
- 8.6.1 Worshipping together
- 8.6.4 Making places for worship

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 406 Religion

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam has aesthetic significance as a fine demonstration of Federation Gothic style architecture. The Church is a significant exuberant example of the style, while the Hall is more vernacular. Together, the Church and Hall form a picturesque setting. (Criterion 1.1)

The Church has a landmark quality within the town with its prominent church gable and pinnacles, and the design form and detail. (Criterion 1.3)

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam forms a significant religious cultural environment that demonstrates the historic associations with the Methodist Church and development of the site. (Criterion 1.3)

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam makes a significant contribution to the historic streetscape, townscape and character of Northam, in complementing and enhancing the historic fabric of the town. (Criterion 1.4)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The development of *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* is associated with the rapid population growth in the Northam district following the extension of the Eastern Railway and the discovery of gold. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

The establishment of *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* signified the strong Wesleyan Methodist presence in Northam, which included an association with the Temperance movement that was prominent in the town. (Criterion 2.3)

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam has been closely associated with Northam's Wesleyan Methodist congregation since 1892, and continues to be a venue for worship for the congregation of Northam Uniting Church. (Criterion 2.3)

The Church is the most exuberant of the ecclesiastical designs of Perth architect James Hine, of Hine & Selby, who was responsible for several Methodist and Presbyterian churches in the State. (Criterion 2.3)

The Hall and Church reflect the stylistic changes occurring between their construction dates. The Hall (1892) is a distinctive but modest structure typical of the late colonial period, while the Church (1901) belongs to the gold boom period when church structures became prominent landmarks. (Criterion 2.4)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam has social significance as an important and ongoing focus for religious and social life in Northam since 1892. It reflects the popularity of the Wesleyan Church in the 1890s and the influential role of religious groups in Northam in the late 19th century and early 20th century. (Criterion 4.1)

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam contributes to a sense of place for the local and wider community for its landmark quality and its occupation of the site since 1892. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam is an uncommon example of an ecclesiastical group that includes two churches of the Federation period, in differing examples of Federation Gothic style, in immediate association on the same site. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The Church is a fine representative example of an ecclesiastical building in Federation Gothic style. (Criterion 6.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam is generally in fair condition. The Church is in fair to good condition, while the Hall is structurally inadequate, rendering the place unusable, partly due to earthquake damage. The Hall shows extensive evidence of works requiring urgent attention, including significant structural cracking, rising

damp damage, disintegration of the stone and mortar fabric, and the deterioration of the 1954 concrete block kitchen.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam retains a moderate degree of integrity. Minimal changes have taken place to the Church over the years to facilitate the continued use of the place as the focus of the Uniting Church community in Northam. However, the Hall has fallen into disrepair.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam retains much of the original form and fabric and, overall, the church buildings have a moderate to high degree of authenticity. *Uniting Church & Hall* has had some alterations, specifically the brick and fibre-cement 1924 Sunday School extension at the rear of the Church; and, the 1954 concrete block kitchen at the rear of the Hall, replacing the original corrugated iron kitchen.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Irene Sauman, Historian and Laura Gray, Heritage and Conservation Consultant, in February 2006, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam comprises the stone and iron Hall (1892) in Federation Gothic style as Northam's first Methodist church; and the red brick and iron Church (1901) in Federation Gothic style in front of the Hall.

The town of Northam developed as a service centre for the pastoral district in the Avon Valley and as an important railway junction on the Eastern Goldfield line.¹

In the mid-19th century, Northam was part of the York circuit of the Wesleyan church and the first Methodist services in the town were held by visiting ministers from York. Rev William Traylen and Rev Thomas Bird were stationed in York at various times in the 1870s and both preached at Northam. Rev Bird held services in the home of farmer John Henry Gregory.² Rev Traylen was a temperance lecturer and in the mid 1870s he had some success in Northam, where George Throssell is credited with signing the pledge to encourage the young men of the town to do the same. Many leading and influential figures of the district, among them J. H. Gregory and mill owner James Byfield, who were active members of the Wesleyan Methodist congregation, supported the temperance movement, which saw the establishment in the town of the Good Templar Lodge, the Rechabite Lodge and the Temperance Hotel.³

In November 1873, Rev Traylen wrote to the Commissioner of Crown Lands for a grant of Lots 93 and 94 in Northam, where the congregation was reported to be 'anxious to take preliminary steps for building' a church.⁴ The lots were granted in 1878, but no church was built and in 1880, the land was leased out.⁵

Following completion of the Eastern Railway line from Spencer's Brook to Northam in 1886, the town of Northam grew rapidly, and in 1887 the population had increased to the point where a separate circuit for Northam and Newcastle was established. The first minister of the new circuit was Horace Faull of South Australia. J. H. Gregory and William James Stewart were appointed circuit stewards. Stewart was the manager of the Newcastle branch of Throssell, Son & Stewart, while Gregory had been steward of the York circuit before taking up farmland at Northam.⁶ Methodist services were held in the schoolroom, but it proved 'far too small to accommodate the growing congregation', and the Temperance Hall was used on occasion.⁷

In 1891, the original grant of church land was exchanged for Northam Town lots 152, 153 and 154. This land was gazetted Reserve 2032 for church site and glebe for the Northam Wesleyan Methodist Church. The trustees of the Church,

¹ For the early development of Northam see Heritage Council documentation: 01871 Commonwealth Bank; 01880 The Residency, and 01898 Railway Institute Northam.

² Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., *The Northam Methodist Story*, Northam, A. L. & R. M. Milhinch, 1978, p. 6. This publication draws on archives of the Northam Methodist Church 1878-1964.

³ Garden, Donald S., *Northam: An Avon Valley History*, OUP, Melb., 1979, pp. 84-87.

⁴ Letter, 6 November 1873, reproduced in Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 6.

⁵ Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 3-7.

⁶ Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 6-8.

⁷ *Eastern Districts Chronicle*, 20 September 1892; Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 7.

whose names appear on the grant, included J. H. Gregory, James Byfield, Elliot Agett Lockyer, William Woods, Francis John Baseby, Frederick Albert Gregory and W. J. Stewart.⁸ While Northam was noted for its strong Temperance movement and the influence of the prominent residents, including Wesleyans, who supported it, this influence may have been overrated at times. Church trustee Elliott Lockyer was a town councillor and JP, but also the owner and licensee of the Avon Bridge Hotel, which operated in opposition to the Temperance Hotel supported by fellow trustees Byfield and Gregory.⁹

The foundation stone of the Hall was laid in May 1892 by George Shenton, Colonial Secretary and a trustee of the Wesleyan Church.¹⁰ The place was opened for worship on 20 September 1892 at a ceremony attended by Rev J. Y. Simpson, Chairman of the District, Rev Faull, Rev H. C. George and Rev T. E. Dunstan. The ceremony of 'unlocking of the door' was performed by Rev Simpson, after accepting the key from J. H. Gregory.¹¹

A neat, substantial place of worship has been erected capable of holding from 150 to 200 persons having a nice porch in front. It is built of stone with brick facings and is semi-Gothic in style. Its dimensions are 35 by 25ft. The walls are 18ft high, but the ceiling has been raised making 22 feet clear from ceiling to floor. It has cost in construction and furnishing £468 11s, towards which amount over £300 has been given and promised, leaving a debt of about £150. On Tuesday afternoon September 20, the new church was formally opened for worship... The choir strengthened for the time by visitors and members of other churches rendered valuable help in making the service a time of blessing to all....

In the evening a Sacred Concert was held in the Temperance Hall. ... A vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Faull to the friends who had helped make the day's proceedings such a success, special emphasis being laid upon the generosity of members of other denominations in rendering financial help.¹²

The discovery of gold at Coolgardie and the subsequent gold rush and construction of the Eastern Goldfields railway line from Northam was a period of unprecedented growth for the town and district. In 1897, the Northam-Newcastle Methodist circuit was divided in two, with the Northam circuit taking in Seabrook, Meckering and Kellerberrin. Methodist ministers at Northam during this period were Rev F. S. Finch (1897) and A. J. Barclay (1900).¹³

Within a decade, the Hall had been outgrown and a second church was commissioned, to be located immediately in front of the Hall. The Church was designed by architect James Hine of Perth. Hine served his articles under John Grosvenor of Ludlow, England. He established his own practice in 1873, and later worked in Cape Town (1881-83) and Bathurst, NSW (1883-95) where he served as diocesan architect for the Anglican Church. He moved to Western Australia during the gold boom period and immediately established links with the Methodist Church in Perth.¹⁴ James Hine was a partner in the architectural firm Hine and Selby. The firm designed a range of domestic and commercial buildings in Perth, as well as a number of churches.

8 Reserves Index, Reserve 2032; Certificate of Title, Vol. 24 Fol. 226.

9 Battye J. S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1912-13, Vol. 2, p. 529; Garden, Donald S., op cit, pp. 84-87.

10 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 9.

11 *Eastern Districts Chronicle*, 1 October 1892, p. 2.

12 *Eastern Districts Chronicle*, 1 October 1892, p. 2.

13 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 9-11.

14 *The Western Methodist*, 1928, obituary, p. 4.

On 25 September 1901, the foundation stones were laid for the Church in the presence of a large gathering. The official party included Rev A. J. Barclay, Rev Thomas Bird (Secretary of the Conference), Revs A. C. Plane (York), F. Weir (Newcastle) and Stanley Jarvis (Kellerberrin), and Messrs J. H. Gregory, W. J. Stewart and J. Byfield, senior circuit stewards. Rev Barclay stated that when the Hall had been built:

... they thought it a grand thing if they had between 40 and 50 present at public worship. Methodism had, however, progressed with the material advancement of the town, with the result that for some time past they had found the old church far too small to accommodate all who wished to worship with them.¹⁵

Three foundation stones were laid for the Church; one each being laid by the three circuit stewards, who were each presented with an inscribed jam-wood mallet to mark the occasion. Afternoon tea was provided by the ladies of the church and a social gathering was held in the evening. An amount of £40 was gathered on the day, to add to the £530 already collected or promised for the construction. Construction of the Church was overseen by clerk of works C. H. Whiford of Northam. There is no mention of a builder so it is likely the clerk of works oversaw various subcontractors.¹⁶

The Church was opened for worship on 18 December 1901. At the opening ceremony, Rev Barclay handed the key to the President of the Conference Rev T. A. James, to perform the unlocking, after which the Church quickly filled for the first service. The ministers who had been present at the laying of the foundation stone were again in attendance, as was Rev G. E. Wheatley of Fremantle. Rev James conducted the service, after which a 'largely-attended tea was held in the old building', where the tables were presided over by the ladies of the church. A public meeting was held in the Church in the evening, where Rev Barclay presented the financial statement for the building and several speeches were made, including a vote of thanks for the 'admirable singing' during the opening service.¹⁷

A description of the Church was added to the report of the opening ceremony:

The building has been erected immediately in front of the old church, and is designed in the early Gothic style of architecture. A part of the plan only has been erected, that of nave, front and lobby. The size of the nave is 45ft by 36ft wide, with an entrance lobby 6ft wide, stretching the whole length of the building, and having side and centre entrances. The height to the wall-plate is 17ft and to the ceiling 26ft 6in in centre. The ceiling is barrel-shaped, and lined with kauri boarding in narrow widths with moulded angles and ornamental-pierced fascia boards at wall-plate level. The building is lighted by electricity. Special attention has been given to the ventilation, the fresh air being admitted through large casuists (sic) in windows, and at wall-plate level, and the vitiated air is carried away by iron shafts, which pass through the ridge and are finished with proper ventil cowl.

The windows are glazed, with cathedral glass in soft tints. The façade of the building is well broken up, and presents a bold and effective appearance and is relieved by cement mouldings, diapers, finials, etc. The central feature of the facade is a large rose window, deeply recessed with mouldings, having bold pinnacles on each side, finished with foliated finials.¹⁸

The back wall of the Church was described as being of a 'temporary character' to allow for the addition of the transepts so that 500 to 600 people could be

15 *Northam Advertiser*, 28 September 1901, p. 3.

16 *Northam Advertiser*, 28 September 1901, p. 3.

17 *Northam Advertiser*, 21 December 1901, p. 3.

18 *Northam Advertiser*, 21 December 1901, p. 3.

seated.¹⁹ The Hall was retained for use as a church hall, and the Sunday School classes were held in a room attached at the rear, where seats were arranged in tiers, as in a school classroom of the period. The room was built of corrugated iron lined with matchboard and filled in between with sawdust.²⁰

At first, Methodist ministers lived in a rented house in Gordon Street, but in 1907 a decision was made to build a Manse on the church land. Perth architects Hine and Selby designed the building. A contract was awarded in December 1907 to Jesse Millington, together with other members of his family, including Robert, who was a contractor and Simon, who was a contractor and brick maker.²¹ The brick and stone Manse was at the rear of the church site, fronting Chidlow Street. Rev J. G. Jenkin was the first minister to occupy the place.²²

In 1912, the debt on *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* was £2,120 and droughts in 1914-15 and the onset of war created problems for debt reduction as well as staffing. A district convention of the Young People's Department had to be cancelled in 1914 and the Methodist Synod agreed to waive taxation (church levies) on money raised for liabilities incurred prior to 1912. The minister for the Toodyay circuit accepted a chaplaincy to the troops and that circuit was reclassified as a Home Mission Station to be maintained from Northam. Clackline and Bakers Hill also came under the supervision of Northam at this time, further adding to the financial constraints despite the £20 a year allowance provided by the Home Mission Committee.²³

Part of the problem in the early years was transport for the minister to visit outlying areas. A stable was located at the rear boundary of the Manse site, but early records indicate that this was only used for the intended purpose if the minister was able to provide his own horse. Various accounts show that on occasion a horse and vehicle were hired for the minister to visit country locations, while in 1912 a farmer was thanked for a donation of chaff, indicating that the stables were likely in use at that time.²⁴

The upturn in agricultural prices in the 1920s brought relief to the Northam Church Trust and allowed for further construction work. The Sunday School had 160 children on the roll, which were too many to house comfortably in the room at the rear of the Hall. In 1924 the 'kindergarten room' was built between the Hall and the Church. It was constructed by C. Edmondson at a cost of £220.²⁵ As part of the construction, the side walls of the Church were extended to form parapet walls to the addition, each side wall with two windows matching the existing. The rear wall of the addition was timber-framed and the roof was a skillion. That these parapet walls were added at the time is clear from the cost of the work.²⁶ The former Sunday School room at the rear of the Hall was altered to serve as a kitchen.²⁷

19 *Northam Advertiser*, 28 September 1901, p. 3.

20 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 19 & 34.

21 Garden, Donald S., *Northam: An Avon Valley History*, OUP, Melb., 1979, p. 153; *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1915, pp. 995 & 1011.

22 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 16.

23 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 15-16.

24 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 15.

25 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 15.

26 Physical evidence; early photo reproduced in Milhinch, op cit, showing the building without the parapet walls at the rear.

27 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 15.

The Toodyay Home Mission Station had been managed from Perth for some time, but had been neglected, with many adherents attending the Church of England. In 1928, Toodyay was again placed under the control of Northam, which may have been what prompted the Church committee to purchase a motor vehicle for the minister at this time. A timber framed and clad garage costing £25 was built on the Manse site to house the vehicle.²⁸

During the Depression years, Rev A. Schroeder ran a soup kitchen in the Hall for the unemployed. Toodyay continued to require maintenance from Northam intermittently and in 1938, the Northam minister Rev. N. Hollands undertook services for tuberculosis patients at Wooroloo sanatorium; a service which was continued for a number of years. The debt on *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* was cleared by 1933-34 due to much hard work in fundraising by parishioners, particularly the Ladies Guild. Fundraising generally took the form of concerts and teas and numerous fetes, often run over several days with entertainment and competitions in the evenings.²⁹

The kitchen at the rear of the Hall had been damaged by termites over the years and the matchboard lining and sawdust had been removed, leaving only the corrugated iron outer walls. In the post World War II years, the church Ladies Guild raised funds for a new kitchen. Plans were drawn by J. Shaw and the men of the church made the cement bricks for the construction, which was undertaken by C. Edmondson and Son. The new kitchen cost £900 and was opened by R. Purslowe at a social evening on 23 April 1954. A 12ft x 18ft cement brick shed was also built to house equipment for the tennis club and other items that had been stored in the Hall.³⁰

Up until the 1960s, many people found their leisure time activities within the church. Activities organised by the Northam Methodists from the early 1900s included the Ladies Guild, Men's Society, Christian Endeavour Societies and various sporting clubs, including gymnastics, badminton, basketball, hockey, cricket, cycling and tennis, which was played on courts established on adjoining church land.³¹

In 1972, the Northam, York, Toodyay, Meckering, Cunderdin and Quairading congregations united to form the Central Avon circuit, with three resident ministers located at Northam, York and Cunderdin. Also in that year, St Paul's United Parish was created in Northam by the union of the Methodist congregation with the congregation of St Paul's Presbyterian Church. The Northam Presbyterians and Methodists had a history of co-operation and joint meetings of clubs and societies. Following the establishment of the United Parish, services continued to be held in the Church, while the Presbyterian's timber church building was used for some time for youth work. In 1976, the Presbyterian church and hall were sold.³²

In 1977, the Uniting Church was formed in Australia from an amalgamation of the Methodist Church and part of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational

28 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 15 & 34.

29 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 18-19 & 21-24.

30 *Contact*, Methodist Church of Australasia, Northam Circuit (WA Conference), May & September 1954, p. 4; Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, p. 19.

31 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 31-39.

32 Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., op cit, pp. 20-21.

Union.³³ The congregations of the Central Avon circuit, including St Paul's United Parish at Northam, became part of the wider Uniting Church.

Maintenance of *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* was an ongoing issue as the buildings aged. The Manse underwent extensive work in the 1970s, when the east wall was rebuilt and additions made to the rear. Architect John Jodrell of J. B. Jodrell & Associates oversaw the work, which was carried out by V. Renna at a cost of \$15,746. The work was completed by May 1977, but ongoing problems with cracking in the new east wall and sinking of the family room addition necessitated further repair work, including underpinning of the foundations, which was not completed until 1988.³⁴ After the additions, the Manse consisted of a large family room and kitchen, four bedrooms, a study, lounge, verandahs, carport and garage.³⁵

In 1980, Miss Greta Beverwyk was ministering at Northam. At this time the congregation comprised 90 confirmed and 15 adherents, with 60-70 attending services. A Ladies Guild, three bible study groups and an afternoon Christian Endeavour for children were operating. In 1992, *Uniting Church & Hall, Northam* celebrated its centenary and a Centenary weekend was held on 6-7 June that year. The Northam Senior High School Girl's Hostel, Adamson House, was booked for the occasion, providing accommodation for 90 visitors. The Northam minister during this period was Neville Threlfall.³⁶

In the 1996 Uniting Church Heritage Inventory, the Hall and the Church were recorded as having national level significance. The Hall and the Church were entered on the Town and Shire of Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory in 1998 with a management category B, which recommended a high level of protection and encouragement to conserve the significance of the place.³⁷ The 2004 review of the inventory reiterated that the Uniting Church and hall be included in the Town of Northam's Heritage List (TPS) as a category B.³⁸

The original church land grant has been increased in size and subdivided, creating Lot 62, the site of the Manse, Lot 611, the site of the Church and Hall, and Lot 610, the site of a Uniting Church aged care complex, 'Bethavon'.³⁹

In 2006, the Hall is no longer in use due to its generally poor condition; the Church continues to be used for worship by Northam Uniting Church.

In January 2007, structural engineer Ian Maitland, prepared a structural report of the hall. This report indicated that the hall was structurally inadequate in its present form due to earthquake damage and the lack of effective connection between the walls and roof. The report also stated that the hall could be made

33 Emilsen, William & Susan (eds), *The Uniting Church in Australia: the first 25 years*, Armadale, Vic., c.2003, p. 226.

34 Uniting Church archives, St Paul's United Church Trust, minutes 1972-88, Battye Private Archives, MN 659 ACC 4428A/21.

35 Uniting Church archives, op cit, Parish profile, 1981, ACC 4191/7.

36 Uniting Church archives, op cit, Centenary May-June 1992, ACC 4428/13 & Minister's report, 29 March 1992 ACC 4428A/41.

37 Hocking Planning & Architecture Pty Ltd., *The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Western Australia: Heritage Inventory*, National Estate Study, October 1996, Vol. 1. p. 14; O'Brien Planning Consultants, *Town and Shire of Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory*, place T55.

38 *Town of Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory Review 2004*: L. Gray. Place Record No 8.

39 Certificates of Title, Vol. 2542 Fol. 675 (Lot 611) & Vol. 2542 Fol. 673 (Lot 62); Survey Diagram 93179.

structurally sound by installing beams at the top of the long walls and connecting them to the roof rafters.⁴⁰

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam comprises the stone and iron Hall (old church, 1892, 1901, 1954), the red brick and iron Church (1901, 1924), both in Federation Gothic style, which were built for the Methodist congregation in Northam. The c.1960s ablution block has no heritage significance.

Uniting Church & Hall, Northam is located between Duke and Chidlow Streets in Northam one lot west of Gordon Street. The Church fronts Duke Street. The Hall also fronts Duke Street, but is located directly behind the Church. The site slopes significantly down from Chidlow Street to the Duke Street frontage. Except for a small garden at the Duke Street frontage and a few Eucalypt trees, the site is undeveloped and the natural ground provides for informal vehicular parking. The site is fenced on the immediate south-west side of the Hall across the rear to align with an extension of the south-west boundary fence of the Manse.

The Church

The Church displays characteristics of Federation Gothic style. Typical of the style is the prominence of the building, the symmetry, bold details including pinnacles, the load bearing masonry form, steeply pitched gable roof, parapeted gable, tuckpointed brickwork with stucco contrasts and the rose window.

The Church is rectangular in plan, with a central entry into the lobby that extends across the entire frontage and has protruding wings each side, also with access. The nave is rectangular with an expansive raised area in front of the back wall. There is access on the rear wall to a 1924 extension, that consists of three rooms.

The Church is a face brick construction detailed in Flemish bond that is tuck pointed to the front and to the return lobby wings. The tuckpointing has subsequently been painted over. The gable roof is clad with short sheets of corrugated iron, and features ventilator cowls along the ridge. The majority of the roof plumbing is a recent installation. The side walls of the Church are supported and divided into structural bays by stepped buttress piers. The walls have two rows of horizontal banding, and the piers are sloped and topped with render.

The front façade features extensive render and stucco detailing. The symmetrical façade is dominated by the central parapeted gable and finial that is flanked by decorative spire-like pinnacles that top stepped the buttresses. Expansive concrete stairs and curved rendered edging lead up to the central entry.

The central element of the façade comprises a slightly recessed double entry with small Tuscan columns flanking the recess that is arched with decorative moulding and floral detail. The arch sits within a pediment that splays to each side with battlements. Above the pediment is a vertical element defined by two small stepped buttresses and finished with a rose window form, but with no window, just a decorative moulded perimeter. The entire façade is contrasted with horizontal rendered banding and quoining. The original timber framed ledge and brace tongue and groove timber doors are in place, although more recent

⁴⁰ Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam, Duke St Northam Structural Report prepared for HCWA, January 2007', unpublished report, p. 6.

hardware has been installed. Foundation plaques flank the front entry doors and are also located next to the north east entry.

Centrally located within each bay of the side walls are stained glass leadlight windows in arched frames with rendered reveals. The windows have a Perspex cover over the exterior. The side doors are also original timber framed ledge and brace tongue and groove timber doors.

Interior Church walls are finished in plaster. Between the lobby and the nave there is an expansive plaster moulded arched opening, which has been partially enclosed with a timber framed and lined partition wall with sets of double doors providing access. The ceiling of the nave is a faceted coved detail, lined along the length of the space with Kauri tongue and groove boards. Central along the ceiling are decorative ventilator roses. Timber rafters are revealed and supported along the side walls by decorative corbelled plaster brackets.

The stained glass windows throughout the church are located centrally within each side wall bay and feature pastel coloured glazing in small diamond and square shapes. The lobby is detailed with a high flat ceiling, lined as per the Church. The floors are timber with carpet laid over. The ecclesiastical furnishings are minimal. The lighting is original per the 1920s, and similarly the wrought iron bracketed external light on the rear wall is of the 1920s period.

The 1924 rear extension, which is accessed from the rear wall of the church, is divided into three rooms by timber framed and fibre-cement lined partitions that extend up to the underside of the roof. It has a separate skillion roof that is concealed on the sides by the parapet wall that is a continuation of the side walls of the church. The rear wall of the 1924 extension is clad with fibre-cement panels, and has aluminium framed windows.

There is a large concrete ramp on the north front of the Church, and split-system air conditioners along the northeast side walls.

The Hall (old church)

The front porch of the hall (old church) is located 1.5 metres from the rear of the Church. It is positioned at a higher floor level than the Church to accommodate the slope of the site. The Hall shows some elements of the Federation Gothic style in a vernacular response to the function, economics and materials available at the time of construction.

The Hall is rectangular in form, with a porch on the front (north-west) and a 1954 kitchen extension across the rear. The Hall is a face stone construction with rendered quoins, and a concrete block extension. The high pitched gable roof is clad with short sheets of corrugated iron, and similarly the gable roof, at a different pitch over the extension, is also clad with short sheets of corrugated iron.

The frontage is symmetrical with a protruding porch and decorative gable detailing in ornamental pierced fascia boards with a finial. The porch and flanking front walls each have a single gothic arched window with decorative stucco moulding and rendered sill and reveals. A wrought iron framed bell sits on the gable apex of the porch. The windows are timber framed and multi-paned. The front and rear parapeted gable wall features a circular vented opening.

The entry doors are located on the northeast side of the porch. They are simple ledge and brace timber doors atop a set of concrete stairs with low rendered baluster details. Double doors on the north east side are similarly ledge and

brace, but are set into a gothic arched and rendered reveal opening, with a decorative tri-panel fanlight above.

The interior walls are rendered with an ashlar finish above painted tongue and groove dado wall. The original 0.15 metre tongue and groove boarded floor remains in place. The coved ceiling is lined lengthwise with Kauri tongue and groove boards as are still evidenced in the Church. The windows are evenly spaced along both sides of the Hall. They are vertical and gothic in form as for the front elevation.

The rear kitchen extension is a face concrete block structure with timber-framed casement windows in sets of two and three. The interior walls are painted face blocks except the rear wall of the original church that is painted face stone with evidence of considerable inappropriate repairs to the lower wall. The ceiling is battened Masonite lined on the flat. The chimney protrudes on the exterior wall and is finished flush on the interior where there is damage seemingly due to the removal of the stove. There is a basic cupboard fitout, and box seats on the north east wall. The rear doors are ledged vertical boards and both are in very weathered condition.

The Hall shows considerable evidence of disintegrated mortar cracking on the interior, some floor subsidence, and possible structural damage.

In January 2007, structural engineer Ian Maitland undertook a structural assessment of the hall and prepared a Structural Report following this visit. The report states in summary that,

in its present state the hall is structurally inadequate and unsafe. Of particular risk at the tops of the long side walls, which are unrestrained. These walls could collapse in an earthquake or under high wind, causing the roof to also collapse.⁴¹

The report noted that Northam is in a region of relatively high earthquake activity and that the damage to the hall is characteristic of earthquake damage. The pattern of cracking in the walls is the most apparent manifestation of earthquake damage. The cracks are predominantly vertical and it is inferred that the cracks extend the full width of the walls.

A contributing factor to the present structural inadequacy was the construction technique used when the hall was built. It was common at the time for the roof to be placed on the walls without any form of tie. Therefore no effective restraint is present against outward or inward forces such as earthquake or high winds.⁴²

It was noted in the report that mortar and stone erosion was evident and contributed to the fragility of the walls.⁴³ Other elements of the building, such as the roof structure and floor structure were considered to be in good condition.⁴⁴

The report concluded that the hall could be made structurally sound to the required Australian standards. This could be achieved by installing beams on the inside tops of walls and connecting the beams to roof rafters. These structural additions could be disguised by encasing them in a bulkhead.⁴⁵

41 Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam', p. 6.

42 Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam', p. 12.

43 Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam', p. 12.

44 Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam', p. 11.

45 Maitland Consulting Structural Engineering, 'Uniting Church Hall Northam', p. 6.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Two churches in the Wheatbelt region are entered in the State Register of Heritage Places, although several in the Northam district have yet to be assessed.

The two registered churches are 01085 *St Luke's Church, Gingin* (1861), a simple rectangular building in Victorian Free Gothic style, and 03213 *Holy Trinity Church, Hall & Rectory, York* built for the Anglican parish in 1856-75 in Victorian Romanesque. The *Holy Trinity Church and Hall*, with square bell tower, present a solid rather than imposing presence. Both places are on the Register of the National Estate, classified by the National Trust and entered in their local Municipal Inventory.

Other church buildings located in the Northam district include:

St John's Anglican Church & Parish Hall is of stone construction in Gothic revival style. The hall (1897) is similar in style to the Uniting Church Hall and has a later addition at the rear in stone of domestic scale but with similar buttressing. The church (1889), has a distinctive stone belltower which also serves as the main entrance. The place is entered in the Register of the National Estate but has not yet been assessed for the State Register.⁴⁶

St James Anglican Church (1911) was the second church of that name in Northam, the earlier one being demolished in 1904. It has an unusual half-octagonal entrance structure, and is a simple Gothic style building.

St Joseph's Catholic Church (1902) is Gothic, buttressed, with white painted rendered features. The 1955 flat roofed brick additions are intrusive.

St Peter's Anglican Church, Jenapullin (1914), is a simple Gothic style stone hall.⁴⁷

James Hine designed several notable church buildings at the turn of the 20th century. 00489 *St Aidan's Uniting Church and Hall* (1903) in brick and iron, Federation Gothic style, has the 1911 church wing and hall designed by Hine (State Register, Register of the National Estate, Claremont Municipal Inventory, National Trust). 00210 *Queen's Methodist Church, Boulder* (1904) is a Federation Free Classical style brick building (State Register, National Trust). 02099 *St. Andrew's Church, St. Georges Terrace* (1906) is brick with a slate roof. It is in Federation Gothic style with a tower and spire (State Register, Register of the National Estate, Perth Municipal Inventory, National Trust). Bagot Road Church (fmr Congregational), Subiaco (1906) is entered on the Subiaco Municipal Inventory.

James Hine's design for Methodist Ladies' College Centenary Building, Claremont (1908) was chosen in a design competition. The two-storey brick and tile building, which has been enlarged over the years, is entered on the Register of the National Estate and classified by the National Trust.

The Uniting Church is a fine example of Federation Gothic in an ecclesiastical building and the most exuberant of James Hine's churches. None of the other churches in the Northam district have the exuberance and detailing of the Church. The Hall is a good example of a simple Federation Gothic building, similar to the smaller churches in the district and to those built several decades earlier.

⁴⁶ National Estate database; *Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory*.

⁴⁷ *Northam Municipal Heritage Inventory*, places T48-50 & S29.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

Milhinch, A. L. & R. M., *The Northam Methodist Story*, Northam, A. L. & R. M. Milhinch, 1978.

Uniting Church archives, Battye Library private archives collection.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
