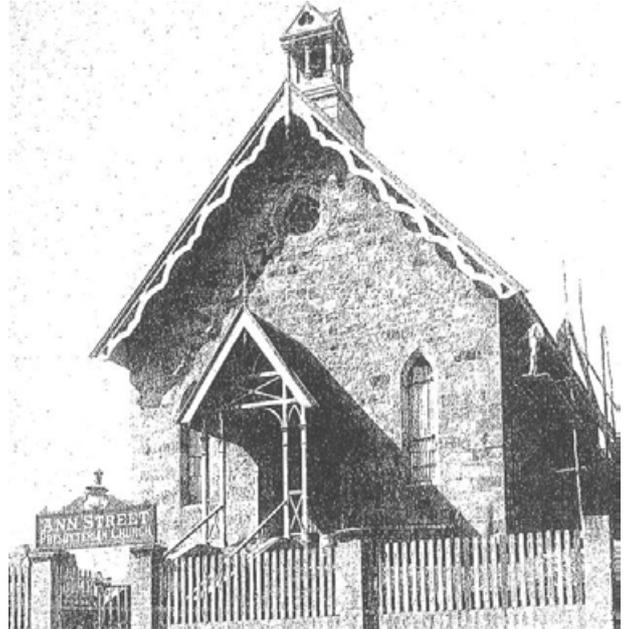


The Heritage-Listed Ann Street Presbyterian Church



The Congregation

The congregation at Ann Street was originally part of the first Presbyterian congregation founded in 1849 on the south side of the Brisbane River; but, as settlement and commercial activity moved north to the present site of the city, the Church minister was at first obliged to row himself across the unbridged river to perform Sunday services on the Ann Street land as well as tending his people on the south side.

Eventually in 1857 the two congregations separated, with those on the north side receiving as part of their share of the division of property the silver communion cup, still displayed at quarterly celebrations of the Lord's Supper, of which a photograph appears as the frontispiece to Richard Bardon's *Centenary History* of the Presbyterian Church in Queensland (1949).

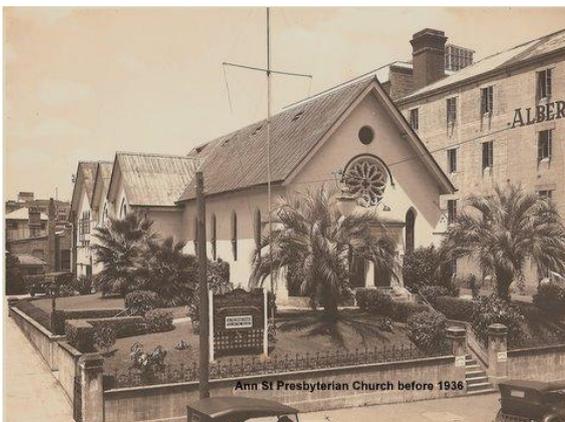
Current membership on the communicant roll is over 170 individuals, but Sunday quarterly communion services and other special services frequently attract much larger numbers, including many students from South-East Asia and visitors from many other parts of the world. The congregation currently has two Sunday worship services.

The Church Buildings

Standing on land purchased at auction in 1854 from the government of what was then New South Wales, the Ann Street Presbyterian Church has some claim to be considered the oldest surviving church building in continuous use in Queensland. Only the Mary McKillop Chapel in the grounds of St Stephen's Cathedral is known to be older.

In 1855 a manse was built on the second of the two allotments in Ann Street and after the prominent Brisbane architect and builder John Jeays, had completed the underground portion of the works, the foundation stone of the present church building was laid on 12 December 1857. A little over six months later, construction was complete, and on the evening of 25 July 1858 the church was dedicated to the Glory of God (opened for worship) by the resident minister Rev. Charles Ogg in a ceremony attended by leaders of the local Wesleyan and Congregational communities, accompanied by psalm-singing and lengthy speeches from those present.

At that time, the structure of the church consisted only of the stone walls of what is now the nave of the building, with a shingled roof surmounted at the front by a substantial bell tower (refer front photograph). The roof was partly destroyed by fire in 1871 and reopened for worship in 1872, but the structure remained substantially in its original form until the end of the 19th century. Then in 1897 the present transept, incorporating choir stalls,



high pulpit, and in 1902 the impressive Richardson pipe organ, was added during the ministry of Rev Dr W.S. Frackleton, an American-born and educated Presbyterian minister, who had previously occupied pulpits in places as far afield as Iowa, New York, Ireland, and Randwick in Sydney.

At about the same time the interior and exterior walls of the church were plastered with cement render and painted white, and the whole edifice was roofed with corrugated iron sheeting over the present high varnished timber ceiling. With this added weight, the walls were then seen to be bowing outwards. Exterior corner buttresses were added to maintain the stability of the structure and, on the architectural advice of Wilson and Partners, the bell tower was removed in order to reduce the weight load from above. Almost exactly a century later in 1997, when the roof was replaced with galvanised iron sheeting at a cost of \$120,000, the internal roof timbers of Queensland hoop pine were found to be in remarkably sound condition.

Described by *The Courier* in 1858 as "Gothic" in style, standing on a commanding site and 'an ornament to the town', the Ann Street Presbyterian Church, and especially now the interior, are fine examples of 19th century colonial architecture, which the Trustees and the congregation are dedicated to preserving as a continuing place of worship for those who love God.

Historic Ann Street, as the church is widely known, presents a number of architectural features traditionally associated with the Presbyterian faith. They include the pointed double entry doors and characteristic triple-tiered transept, rising through the Elders' Court with its high-backed chairs and communion table, to the high pulpit centrally placed to emphasise preaching of the Word of God fundamental to reformed church belief.



The absence of a centre aisle follows a tradition begun in Lutheran churches after formal processions ceased to be a feature of divine services, and is designed to stress the community dimension of reformed church congregations. The arrangement is perhaps less popular with brides for weddings now than it was in the late 19th century. Earlier, Presbyterian marriages were still being celebrated not in the church itself but in the adjoining manse, where Helen Mitchell, or Dame Nellie Melba as she came to be known, was married at Ann Street in 1882.

The church building, although not large when compared with the size of Brisbane's two cathedrals, is capable of accommodating 300 or more worshippers.

A building known as Interior House was erected during World War II by the government on what was formerly the Church tennis court. Following the war, an agreement between the Trustees and the Government permitted occupancy by Government offices with the final transfer of the building occurring in 1967. The premises were let commercially for a number of years with the main tenant being the Presbyterian Church of Queensland 1978 - 1990 who used most of the ground floor for administration offices.



The building was finally demolished on 16 January 2010 to make way for a new development consisting of a 27 storey office building with basement car parking. This project was completed in December 2012.

The Church Trust offices and new facilities are located in the tower building with a link to the rear of the Church building and Church reception area. These new facilities enhance the worship activities of the current Church.

*Hon Bruce H McPherson CBE
Chairman of Trustees
30 September 2011.*

Revised January 2013 on completion of the building.

