

No. 13 FRANCIS THOMAS DRIVE

Rejuvenating The Spirit



Owner:
The Diocese of Singapore

Architect:
DP Architects Pte Ltd

Engineer:
Maunsell Consultants (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Contractor:
SEF Construction Pte Ltd

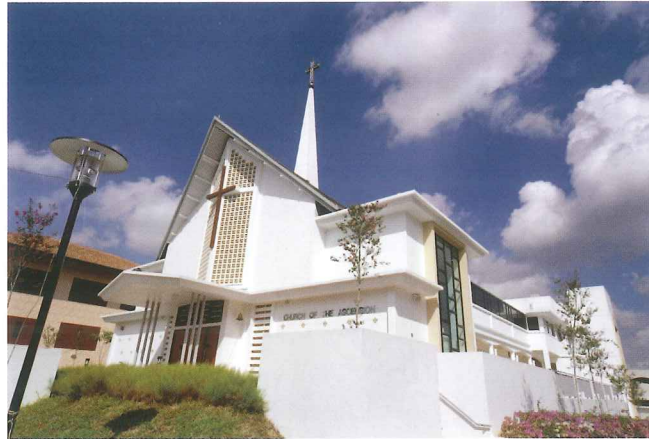
Situated within the St Andrew's School grounds, the two-storey Church has served as a place of worship for over 40 years. Conservation work was aimed at preserving the original architectural context of the building while extending its capacity.

Designed by Ho Kwong Yew & Sons in 1959, the Church building features a post-colonial style with localised architectural elements which clearly indicated the architect's attempt to localise the "international style". Despite this, the building is surprisingly modern with a bold, symmetrical front façade that sports clean and simple lines.

Strengthening The Core

Extensive documentation and photographic archival records of the building were collated into a compact reference handbook for use as the restoration works progressed. During restoration, measures were taken to protect the building from natural elements while the façades were carefully buttressed in places when surrounding earthworks were underway.

As the building was well-maintained and the roof was in good condition, replacement work was kept to a minimum. Two pairs of new doors in matching stained timber were added to the front. The iron grille gates, main foyer chandelier and stained glass windows were cleaned up and reinstated



Post-war Church building restored with sensitive additions

or kept. Structurally, the second storey supporting slabs were upgraded to increase load-bearing capacity. Beams and columns were strengthened with fibre wrap, and general repairs and reinforcement were carried out for the rest of the structure.

Ascending To New Heights

To serve a growing congregation, clear glass skylights were innovatively and sensitively added to

the two verandahs flanking the main sanctuary at the second storey to increase the seating capacity and provide an air-conditioned environment. The existing timber louvred doors were restored but permanently kept open to enlarge the sanctuary. As a finishing touch, an inspiring stained glass window was added to the west wall.

Great care was also taken to retain many of the memorabilia of the building like the iron grille gates with crosses, the folding accordion doors, memorial plaques and lamps. A new three-storey annex was added to west side of the building and a bridge connects both the old and new buildings.

Rising Anew

The results are commendable. The immense passion and care to rejuvenate the Church coupled with the sensitive additions are rich rewards that many generations can enjoy.



Original main foyer staircases with mosaic floor tiles transformed to a reception area



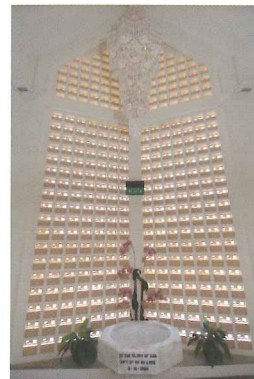
New annex block sensitively added to west side of building



Folding accordion doors kept



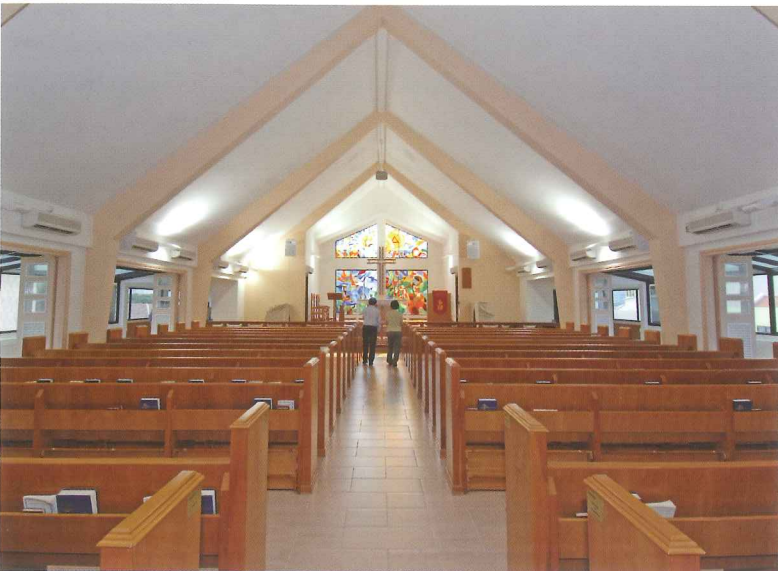
New stained glass window



Pre-cast concrete breeze blocks retained



Clear glass skylight sensitively added to verandah flanking main sanctuary



Main sanctuary with new stained glass panel at west wall to enhance light quality



Cross-detailing at front facade



Original grille kept



New front doors in matching stained timber

Church of the Ascension

Introduction

The Church of the Ascension has its beginnings as St Andrew's School Chapel. Historical records reveal that the birth of the Church of the Ascension was very much related to the staff, teachers and pupils of St Andrew's School and St Andrew's House. Thus, in order to chart its birth, the historical development of St Andrew's School and St Andrew's House will inexplicably be mentioned as well.



Site Plan (1959)

Site Plan showing the new location of the Church of the Ascension after the demolition of the R C Woods house. The new church building was designed by the eminent architect and artist Ho Kwong Yew in 1959. The latter who often hosted foreign Chinese artists in his Tanjong Pagar house during the 1920s - 1930s, was the vice-president of the Society of Chinese Artists in 1942, before Singapore fell to the Japanese.

The Church of the Ascension was formally completed in 1962.

History of The Church of the Ascension

1850 - 1912

In 1909, long before the present Ascension building was erected, the Diocese of Singapore was established as a separate unit from the joint diocese known as "Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak". It continued to oversee St Andrew's School, especially in the area of school siting and building. The Diocese also appointed principals to the school, one of whom was Rev. Canon R K S Adams. Appointed on 1st October 1934, Canon Adams played a key role in the birth of Ascension.



Canon Adams

(Note: Canon Adams retired as Principal of the School. He moved to Adelaide in 1956 after 29 years of service. He was held in captivity during the Japanese Occupation.)

Shortly after Canon Adams took over as principal, plans were made to rebuild the aging school, boarding house and chapel buildings on a 4 acre piece of land on the then Government Hill, with a frontage facing Stamford Road. This site had been in use since 14 February 1875 (the school has started in the 1850s in Chin Chew Street before moving to Upper Hokkien Street on 10 September 1863. Later it relocated to Victoria before settling at the Government Hill site.



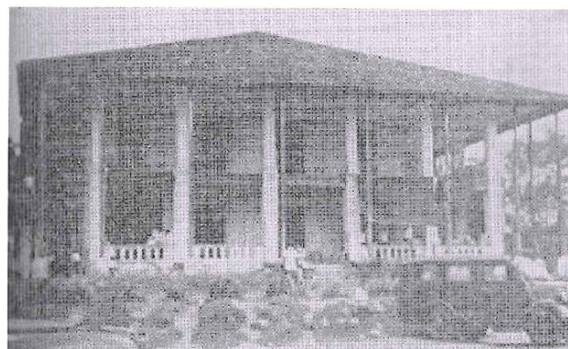
Archdeacon Graham White

Through personal ties between Archdeacon Graham White and the then Chief Secretary of the Government, Sir Andrew Caldecott, the school was offered the choice of 2 new sites for relocation: one along Tanjong Katong Road and the other at Serangoon Road, next to the then Serangoon Post Office. However, engineering investigations revealed that the favoured 12-acre Serangoon site could not sustain buildings without enormous expense.

History of The Church of the Ascension

1913 - 1940

By Archdeacon White's perseverance, the school was offered a third site, the 18.5 acre Woodsville Estate, in December 1937. In early 1938, the site was bought at the cost of \$60,000. On 8 April 1938, the Bishop and Archdeacon led the entire school in a ceremony of thanksgiving at the site. The new school building was officially opened on 29 July 1940. When the school shifted from the Stamford Road campus, its boarding house (St Andrew's House) also relocated to an old house at Woodsville, built by R C Woods in 1866. This old house was used as a cane factory and storehouse until St Andrew's House occupied it.



The old house built by R C Woods in 1866

1940 - 1962

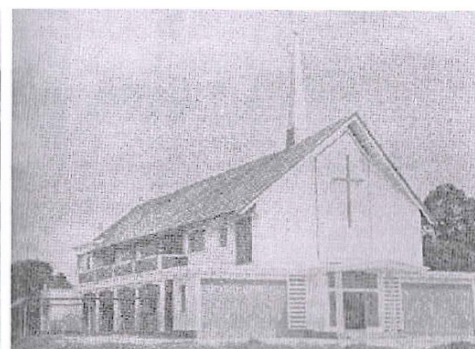
After the Japanese Occupation, St Andrew's House was reopened on 13 January 1947, as Canon Adams was released from captivity to continue being the school principal again. Mr Francis Thomas was the Housemaster. In 1955, St Andrew's House moved out of the R C Woods House into its present building and R C Woods house was demolished soon after. On its site, a brand new Church of the Ascension was built, with the primary purpose of serving as a place of worship for both the school and the boarding house. This was the result of a period around 1950/51 when the church leaders (Canon Adams, Rev. (Dr) D D Chelliah, Mr Francis Thomas) as well as the growing congregation of the St Andrew's School Chapel felt time was ripe for the congregation to grow from chapel to church. Before the birth of the Ascension building, the congregation occupied the School Chapel on the 2nd level of the North Wing of the school (from 1946 to 1952) and from 1953 to 1962, the congregation now formally named Church of the Ascension, occupied the 3rd level. The Church of the Ascension was dedicated on 31 May 1962 and stands there till this day.



St Andrew's School Chapel at 2nd level (1946-1952) & Church of the Ascension at 3rd level (1953-1962)



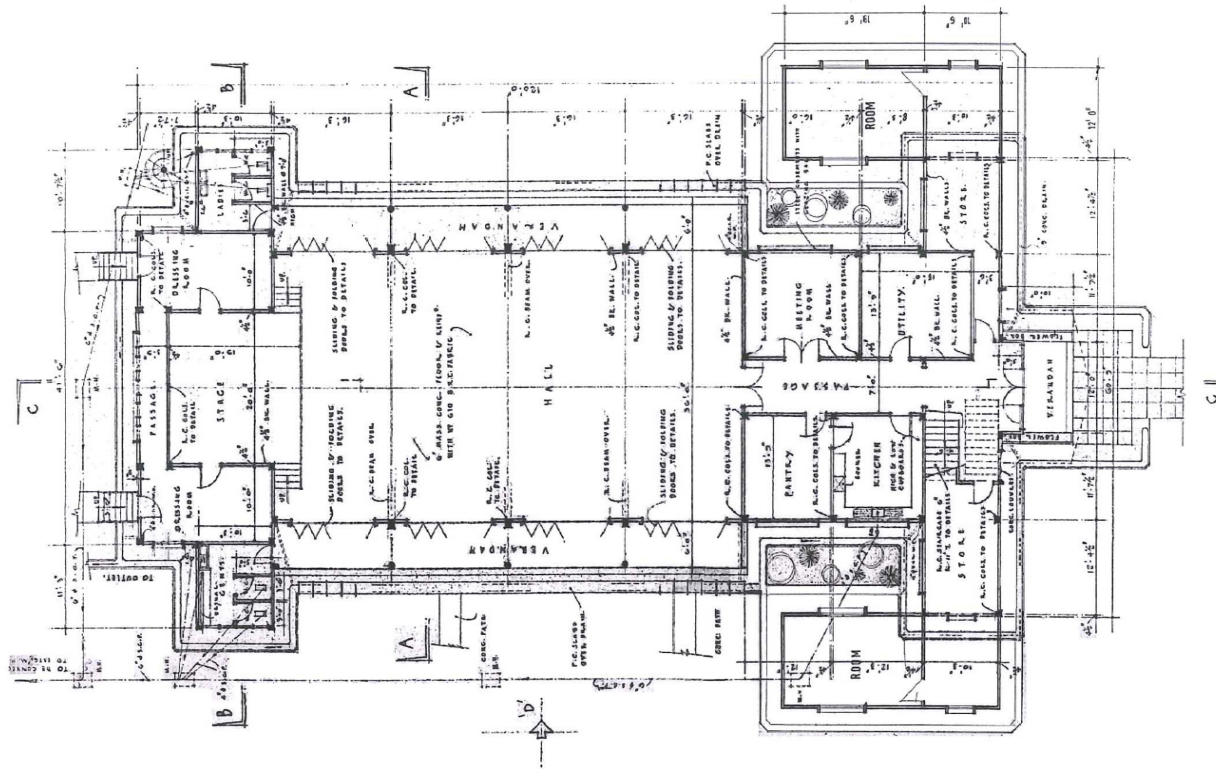
The church building under construction



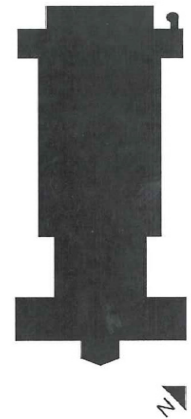
The newly completed church in 1962

Church of the Ascension

OLD DRAWINGS

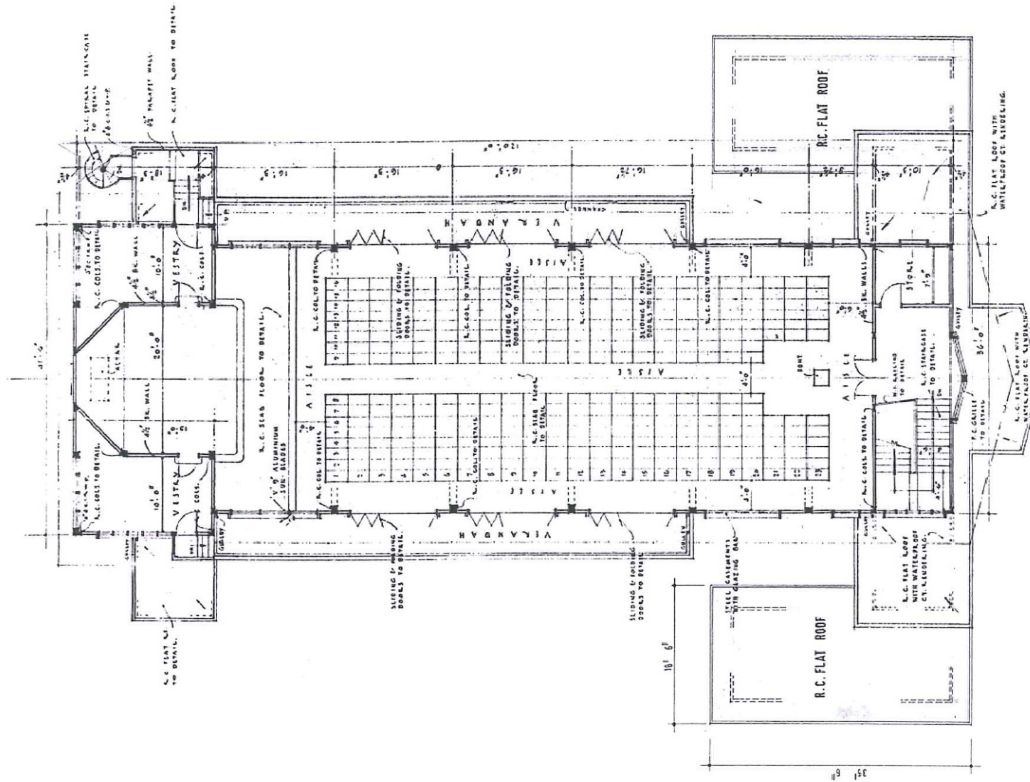


Ground Floor Plan
(Ho Kwong Yew & Sons, 8 Jan 1959)



Church of the Ascension

OLD DRAWINGS



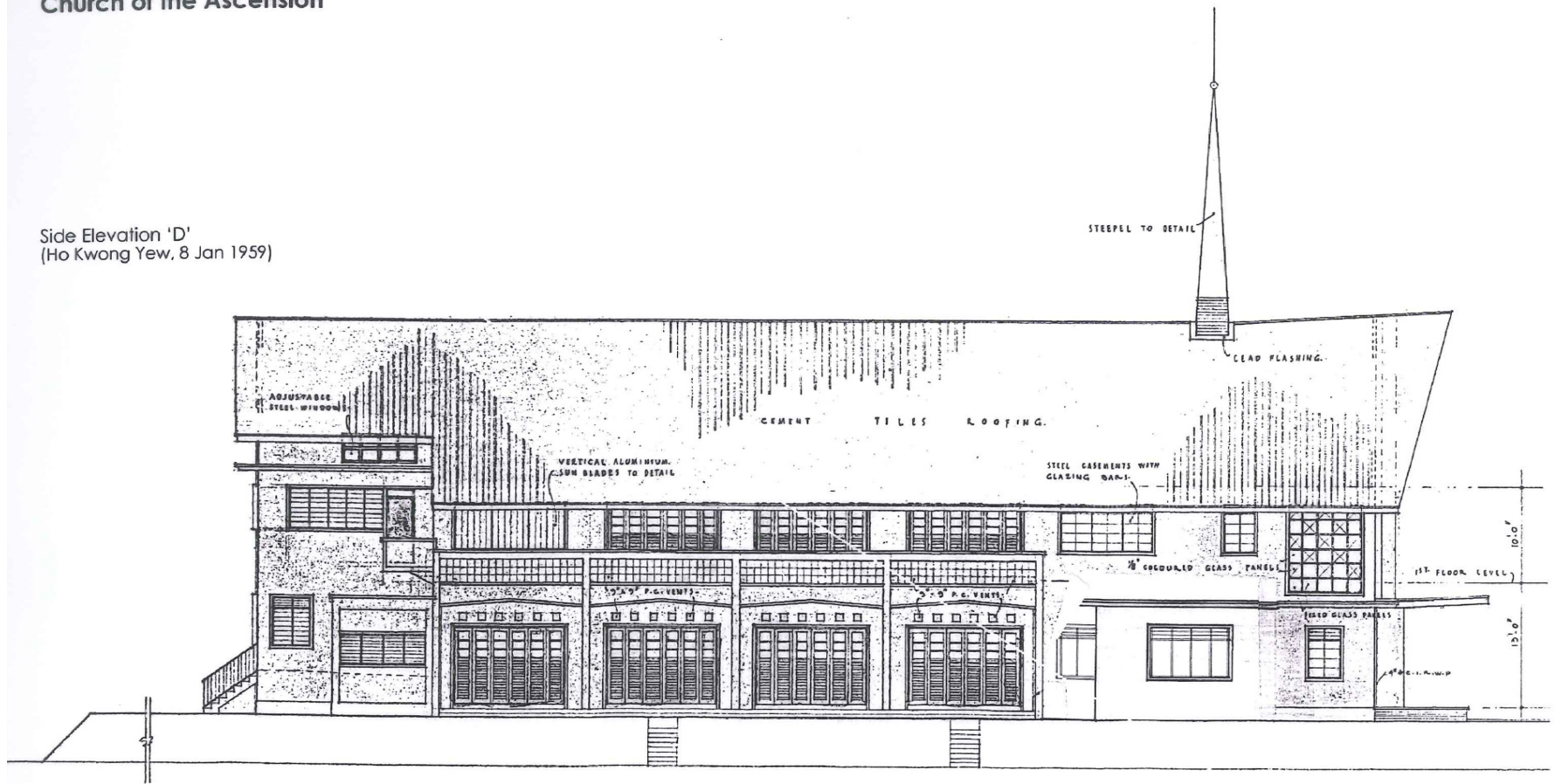
First Floor Plan
(Ho Kwong Yew & Sons, 8 Jan 1959)

HISTORY

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Church of the Ascension

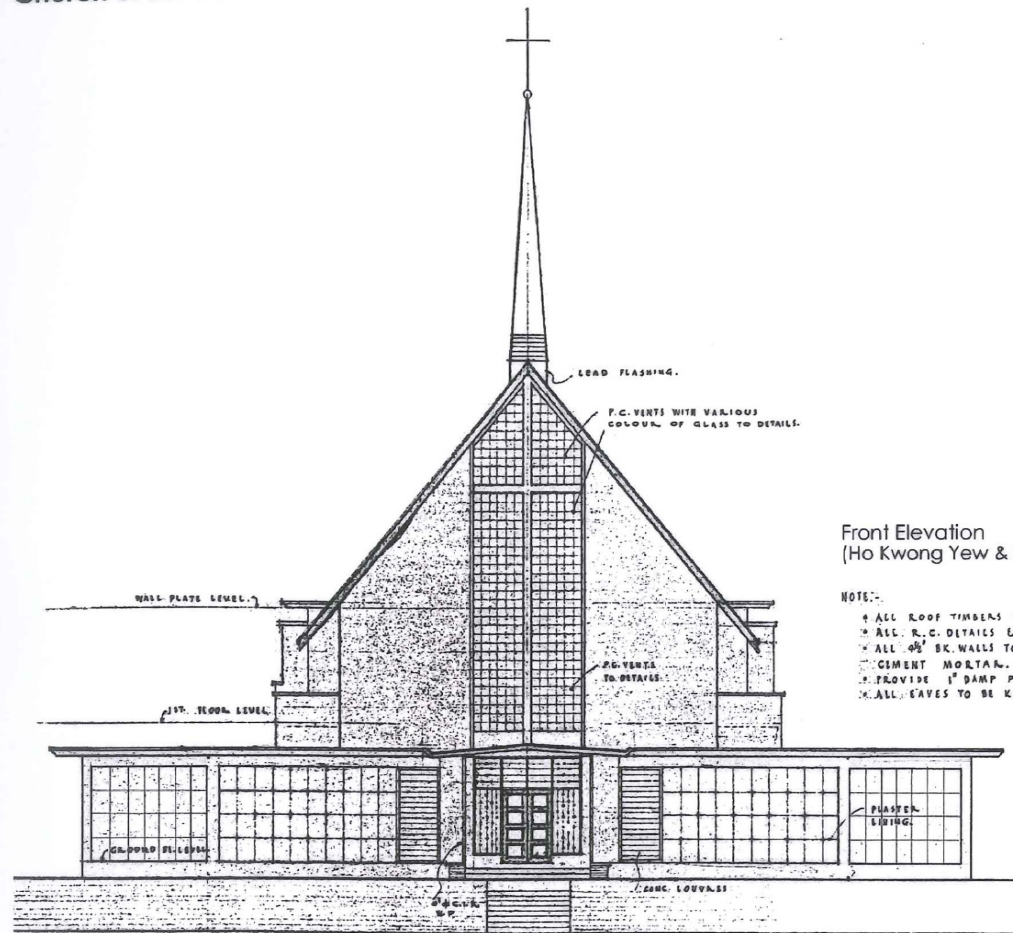
Side Elevation 'D'
(Ho Kwong Yew, 8 Jan 1959)



SIDE ELEVATION 'D'

Church of the Ascension

OLD DRAWINGS



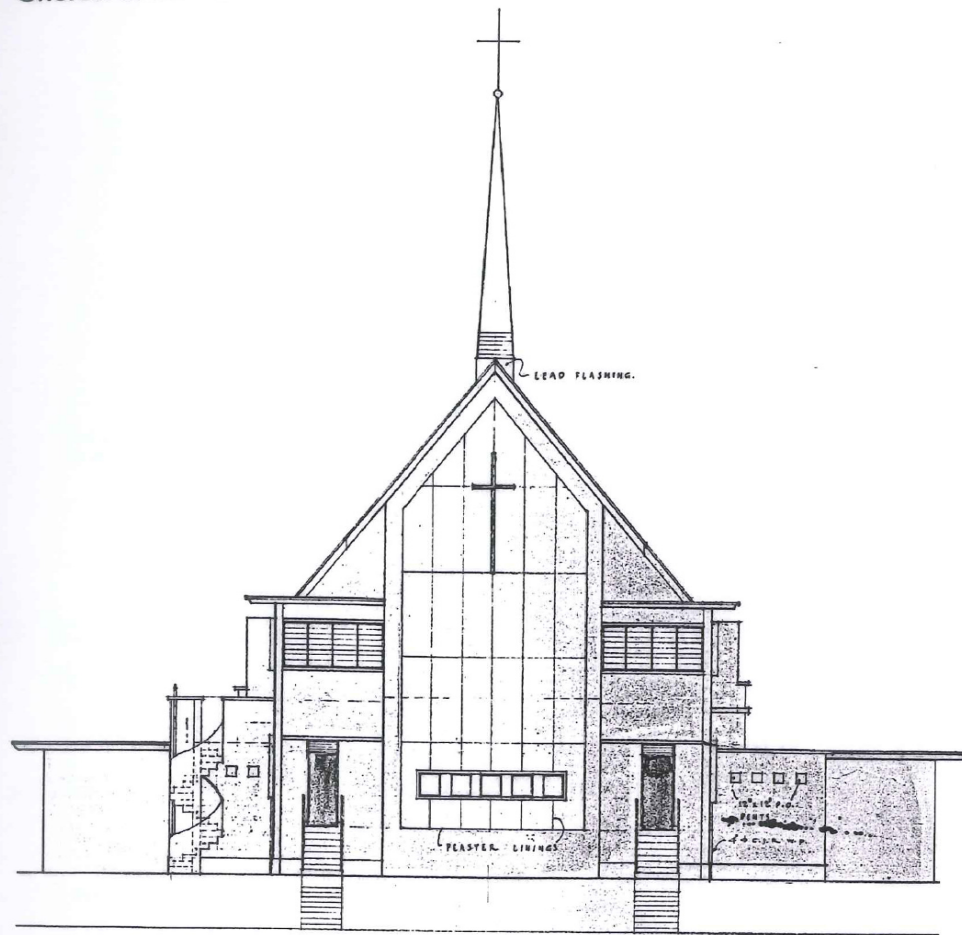
Front Elevation
(Ho Kwong Yew & Sons, 8 Jan 1959)

- NOTE:-
- * ALL ROOF TIMBERS TO BE TWICE COATED WITH APPROVED WOOD PRESERVATIVE.
 - * ALL R.C. DETAILS & CALCULATIONS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL BEFORE WORK COMMENCES.
 - * ALL BK. WALLS TO BE REINF. WITH ISMET AT EVERY 6TH COURSE BONDED IN 1:3 CEMENT MORTAR.
 - * PROVIDE 1ST DAMP PROOF COURSE TO ALL BK. WALLS AS SHOWN IN THE ABOVE SECTIONS.
 - * ALL EAVES TO BE KEPT AT LEAST 1'-0" CLEAR FROM ALL BOUNDARIES.

FRONT ELEVATION

Church of the Ascension

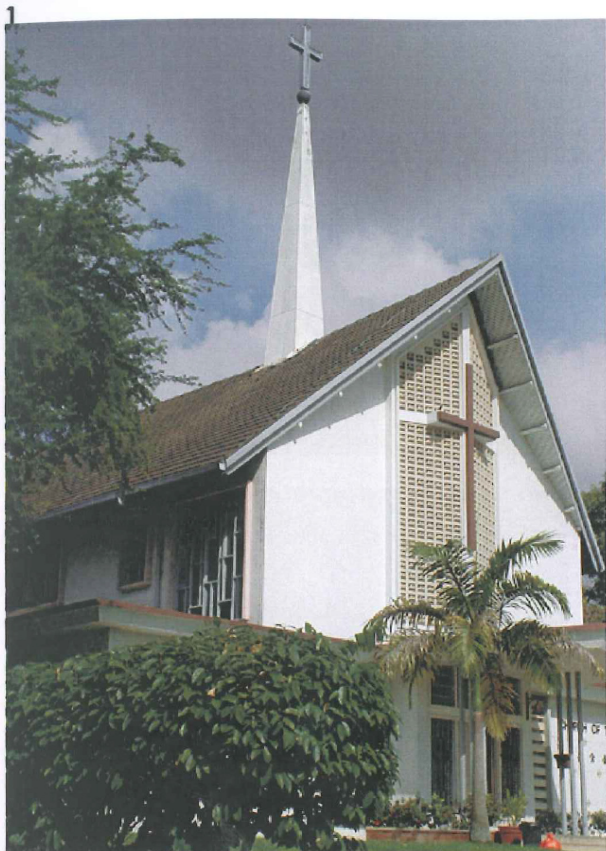
OLD DRAWINGS



Rear Elevation
(Ho Kwong Yew & Sons, 8 Jan 1959)

REAR ELEVATION

Church of the Ascension

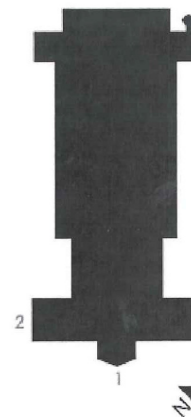


Front Facade: View of the front facade of the Church as one approaches from Francis Thomas Drive



Exterior View of the staircase wing connecting the first storey with the second storey

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS



Church of the Ascension

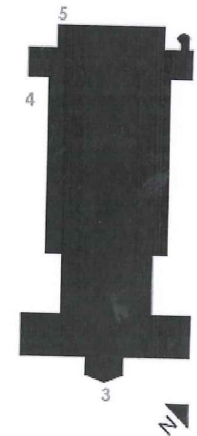


3 Entrance Porch: View of the main entrance of the church. Also visible are the main iron grille gates with the cross design.

4 Linkway: View of the flight of stairs leading to the Old Boys' Drive

5 Rear view of the church

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDSS



Church of the Ascension

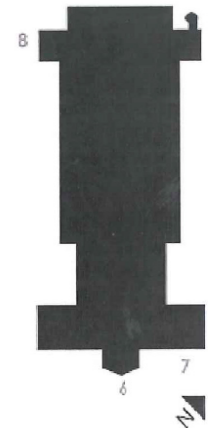


6 Entrance Porch: Close-up view of the concrete louvers behind the main cross at the front facade.

7 Front Facade: View showing the 'cross' plaster details on the side wall at the front facade.

8 View of the north-western balcony at the 2nd storey

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Church of the Ascension

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9 Spiral staircase at the rear of the church

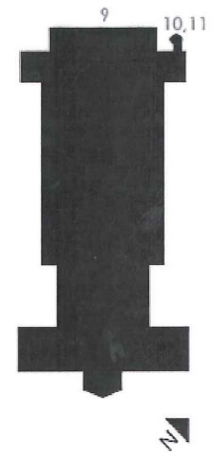


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11 **Fenestration Detail:** Square concrete lattice windows below the spiral staircase

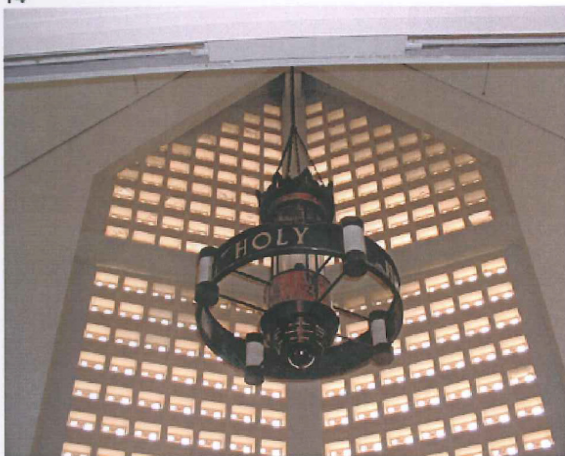


Church of the Ascension

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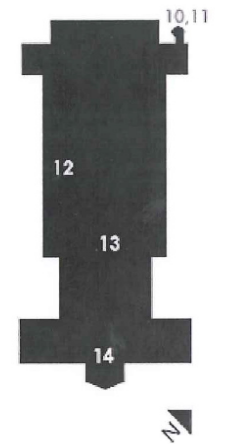


12 1st Storey: Verandah connecting to the 1st storey hall

13 1st Storey: Interior View of the 1st storey hall

14 2nd Storey: View of the chandelier hanging from the high ceiling at the entrance foyer

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS



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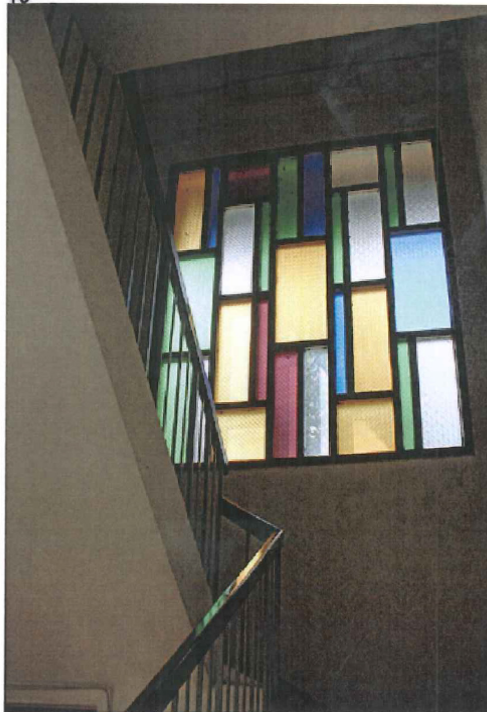
Church of the Ascension

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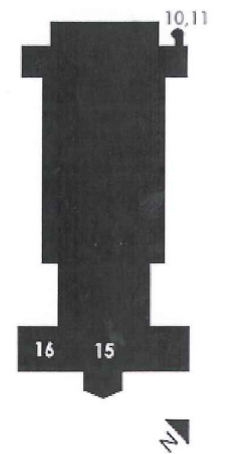
15 2nd Storey: View of the high ceiling from the 2nd storey ceiling.

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16 Coloured acrylic panels of windows at the landing of the staircase leading to the sanctuary above

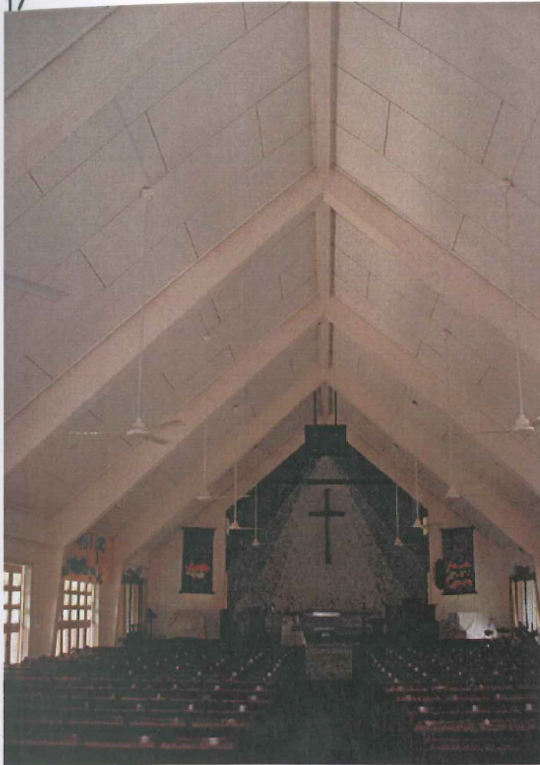
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Church of the Ascension

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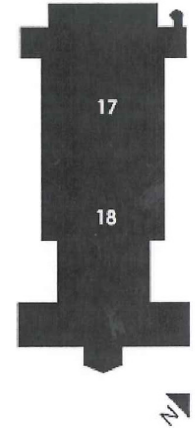


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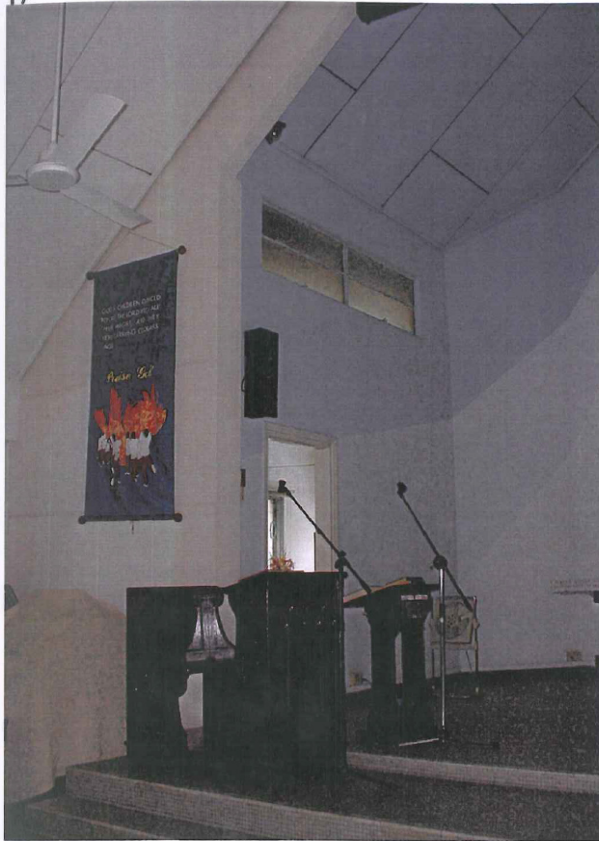
17 2nd Storey: View taken in the sanctuary towards the altar and the stage.

18 2nd Storey: View taken from the sanctuary towards the foyer.



Church of the Ascension

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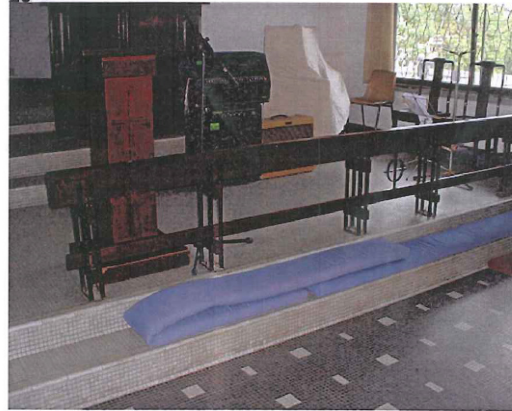


19 2nd Storey: View of the pulpit and speaker stand

20 2nd Storey: Communion rail and & kneel

21 2nd Storey: Close-up view of the floor tiles

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS

