

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (Catholic)

197 Broadway Avenue, Palmerston North

NZHPT Registration Number: 195
NZHPT Registration Type: Historic Place – Category I
NZHPT Registration Date: 28/06/90
City/District Council: Palmerston North City Council
District Plan Status: Category 1

Other Names: St Patrick’s Church (1925-1980), St Patrick’s Cathedral (1980-1988)



Brief History

Construction of this ‘magnificent building’, as it was described by the local newspaper after its completion in 1925, took almost two years at a cost of £43,845. Contract drawings (1922) name Clere and Williams of Wellington as architects jointly with J T Mannix of New Plymouth. Eminent New Zealand architect Frederick de Jersey Clere (see All Saints’ Church) was a pioneer of reinforced concrete construction, and this Church is outstanding example of his skill with this material.

In 1923 he formed with his son Herbert a new company, Clere & Clere which supervised the construction of the building by the local firm, Trevor Brothers. The new St Patrick's Church was opened and dedicated by Archbishop Frances William Redwood (1839-1935) on March 22nd, 1925.

The Gothic Revival style building is constructed almost entirely of reinforced concrete and as a result many of the Gothic elements of the design are purely ornamental and relatively abstracted. Elements used include the lancet window, the pointed arch, and the pinnacle. On the northeast wall of the nave are four stained glass windows designed in the Harry Clarke studios in Dublin. The remaining windows were designed by F X Zettler, Munich. With dimensions of 175 feet by 62 feet, the church was designed to seat between 1050 to 1100 persons. The tower, which incorporates a painted metal statue of St Patrick, rises 159 feet above the pavement and is a landmark in the flat, urban area of Palmerston North.

When Palmerston North became a diocese on 23 April 1980 the church's status was elevated to that of cathedral. Following a reordering and renovation of the interior in 1988, undertaken by Brian Elliott of the firm Dickson, Elliott, Lonerghan, the building was rededicated as the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. A major feature of the alteration was the moving of the marble altar well forward, a screen separating the main body of the cathedral from the former sanctuary. The architect and Elizabeth Auton, local fabric artist, designed the screens on either side of the altar. The building has strong spiritual and religious significance as the centre of Roman Catholic worship in the Diocese of Palmerston North and is of architectural and technological importance as an example of the skill of noted architect Frederick de Jersey Clere in reinforced concrete design and of the structural engineering skills of the firm Clere & Clere.

Principal Sources:

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Church brochure, n.d.

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, NZHPT Register no. 195, 1/5/2003, Rebecca O'Brien, NZHPT.

NZHPT, *Proposal for Classification: Cathedral of the Holy Spirit*, 1990.

O'Brien, Rebecca, *Upgrade Report: Cathedral of the Holy Spirit*, NZHPT, n.d.

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