

## Statement of Significance: St John's Anglican Church, 624 Centre Road, Bentleigh East

Date of Statement: August 2020

<b>Address:</b> 624 Centre Road, Bentleigh East	<b>Name:</b> St John's Anglican Church
<b>Place Type:</b> Church	<b>Grading:</b> Significant
<b>PS ref no:</b> HO223	<b>Constructed:</b> 1960-62



*Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019*

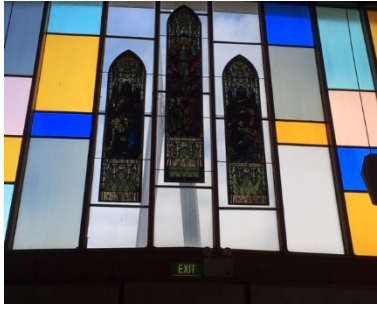
### What is significant?

St John's Anglican Church at 624 Centre Road, Bentleigh East, is a post-WW2 modernist cream brick church with a truncated A-framed nave, spiky metal steeple, and facade with false arched windows, pebbled wall finish and mosaic tiled spandrels. Erected in 1961-62 to replace an existing church on the site dating back to 1873, the building was designed by architects Gawler, Churcher & Boardman (who had previously designed a new church hall for the same site)

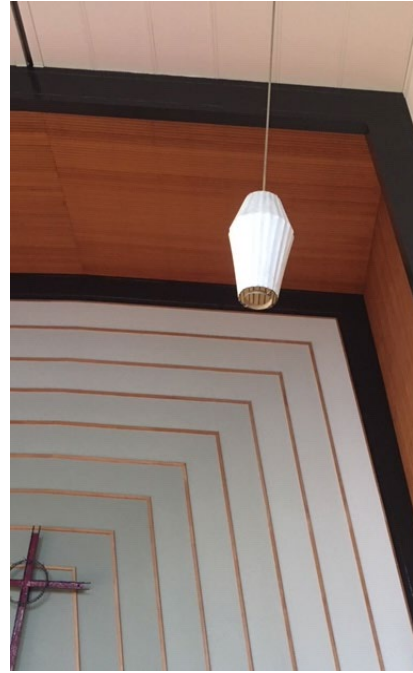
The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the 1961-62 church building, and interior fittings as follows: the three stained glass windows from the old church, full immersion baptismal font, decorative iron grille between Pioneers' Chapel and choir stall, decorative iron altar rail, timber panelled wall behind the altar, and pendant light fittings in the nave. The other buildings on the site, namely the adjacent hall (by the same architects, but of little architectural interest), vicarage, kindergarten and toilet block, are not considered to be significant.



*Full immersion baptismal font*



*Stained glass windows (1932)*



*Panelled wall and light fitting*



*Altar, showing altar rail*



*Decorative grille screen*

### **How is it significant?**

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The church satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

### **Why is it significant?**

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St John's Anglican Church is aesthetically significant as an exceptional example of ecclesiastical architecture in a lively sub-style of post-WW2 modernism characterised by a playful expression of non-structural elements, applied ornamental and decorative finishes. Famously dismissed by Robin Boyd as "Featurism", this sub-style was mostly associated with commercially-oriented buildings (eg shops, showrooms, motels, etc) and houses, and was rarely adopted for ecclesiastical buildings. St John's Church, with its truncated A-framed nave, false-arched arcade (with pebbled finish and mosaic tiled spandrels) and spiky metal-framed steeple evocative of the American 'Googie' style, is a notable (and notably intact) example of the Featurist approach, as atypically applied to a church. With its deliberately eye-catching design and prominent siting at the corner of two major roads, the building remains a distinctive element in the streetscape. The nave interior is notable for retention of original finishes and fittings including panelled nave wall, decorative ironwork, pendant light fittings and a cruciform full-immersion baptismal font (an element seldom found in Anglican churches). (*Criterion E*)

**Primary sources**

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Heritage Citation PW08, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.