



MUSEA
CONSULTANCY

PIETERSBURG DUTCH
REFORMED CHURCH
(MOEDERGEMEENTE)



National Heritage Site Nomination | Pietersburg DRC building
April 2013

NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION:
DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (MOEDERGEMEENTE – “MOTHER” CHURCH)
POLOKWANE, POLOKWANE DISTRICT
- LIMPOPO PROVINCE -

09 April 2013

Prepared for:
South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)
Head Office
111 Harrington Street
CAPE TOWN, 8001

Compiled by:
Musea Consultancy cc
PO Box 3
BENDOR PARK, 0713
POLOKWANE

Site: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente)
66 Biccard Street
POLOKWANE, 0699

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SoS

For nearly 100 years, the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has stood solidly, stately and dignified as a salient landmark for many residents in Polokwane. Its exterior is a masterpiece of architectural design.

This building owes its historical significance, foremost, to its monumental architectural value, magnificent stone masonry and almost perfect workmanship, building practises that are not in use today. This building reflects the determination, love and respect that the Pietersburg DRC Congregation has for this building and this is significant in that this church was built during very difficult and austere times.

To appreciate and preserve the architectural heritage of Polokwane there is a need for public buildings of unique value to be given heritage status. With this mind, the building deserves to be proclaimed as a National Heritage Resource due to its architectural significance and historical interest, this to ensure that the unique and divers aspects of the architectural heritage of Polokwane can be preserved and appreciated by future generations.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SoS	p.1
1. NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION FORM	p.4
2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	p.8
CULTURAL, SOCIAL, HISTORIC AND AESTHETICS VALUE	p.8
2.1. ARCHITECT, ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANCE	p.9
2.1.1 WYNAND HENDRIK LOUW	p.9
2.1.2 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN	p.9
EXTERIOR DESIGN	p.10
INTERIOR SPACE	p.11
2.1.3 INFLUENCE OF OTHER CHURCH DESIGNS	p.14
2.1.4 ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE	p.15
2.2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER SIMILAR SITES	p.15
2.2.1 FIRST DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, POLOKWANE	p.15
2.2.2 PAUL KRUGER CHURCH, PRETORIA	p.16
2.3 CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE AS A NATIONAL MONUMENT	p.17
3. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND STRUCTURES AND INTERIOR SPACES OF THE PIETERSBURG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (MOEDERGEMEENTE)	p.18
3.1 LOCALITY OF BUILDING, CORNER OF BICCARD- AND GROBLER STREETS, POLOKWANE INNER CITY	p.20
3.2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION, ARCHITECTURAL PLANS AND ELEVATIONS OF THE CHURCH BUILDING	p.21
3.3 DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR DESIGN AND WORKMANSHIP	p.23


3.3.1 BUILDING MATERIAL AND WORKMANSHIP	p.23
BRICKWORK AND BUILDING METHOD	p.24
USAGE OF GRANITE AND STONEMASONRY TECHNIQUES	p.24
FOUNDATIONS	p.29
ROOF CONSTRUCTION	p.31
3.3.2 INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING	p.32
PULPIT AS SYMBOL	p.34
FURNITURE AND OTHER FEATURES	p.35
3.4 CONDITIONS ON SITE	p.36
4. A CONDENSED HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	p.37
4.1 EARLY HISTORY AND BUILDING OF A NEW CHURCH	p.37
4.2 CONGREGATION MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE	p.40
5. CONCLUSIONS	p.40
6. REFERENCES USED FOR THIS STUDY	p.41

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POLOKWANE, POLOKWANE DISTRICT
- LIMPOPO PROVINCE -

1. NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION FORM¹

Form 601 /v2
June 2003

Official Use
File Ref:.....
Site Ref:.....
Grade I:.....
Committee Date:.....



**SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE
RESOURCES AGENCY**

111 Harrington Street
Cape Town, 8001
Tel: 021 4624502 Fax: 021 4624509 E-mail: info@sahra.org.za
Web Page: www.SAHRA.org.za

National Heritage Site Nomination Form

This form precedes the submission of the 'Nomination Document' and is designed to assist with the grading of heritage resources in terms Section 3(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, as part of the process of declaration as a National Heritage Site (Section 27). Nominated heritage resources that are of special national significance will be graded as Grade 1 and considered for National Heritage Site status.

Proposed National Heritage Site: Petersburg Dutch Reformed Church (moedergemeente)

Brief Statement of Significance: *(A full statement of significance is required as an attachment)*

This building owe its historical significance foremost to its monumental architectural value, magnificent stone masonry and almost perfect workmanship; building practices that are not in use today. This building reflects the determination, love and respect that the Petersburg DRC Congregation has for this building and this is significant in that this church was built during very difficult and austere times.

Proposed By: Rev. G.G. Haumann **Date Proposed:** 09 April 2013
Contact Details: 015 291 9156/7/8 or 083 441 3595
Name of Property: Petersburg Dutch Reformed church - moedergemeente
Street Number and Street: 66 Biccard Street
Suburb:
Town: Potokwane, 0519 **District:** Petersburg District Municipality

Cadastral Information
Erf / Farm Number: 5b99
Registration Division: LS compilation nr. LS7D-10A
Longitude: 29° 27' 23.5" E
Latitude: 28° 54' 29.1" S
Map Reference: 1:50 000 2329 **Recording Method:** Handheld GPS

¹ SAHRA document, original available on request

Type of Resource

- Place
- Structure
- Archaeological Site
- Palaeontological Site
- Geological Feature
- Grave

Do moveable objects relating to the site form part of the Nomination?

Serial nomination (Is more than one site being nominated as part of a 'Joint Nomination')

(For serial nominations, complete one form for each site, supply additional details about the information relating to the relation of the sites, and the management and phasing of proposed nomination be attached).

Sphere of Significance	High	Med	Low
International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provincial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist group or community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What other similar sites may be compared to the site? How does the site compare to these sites?

① FIRST DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH - Polokwane ② PAUL KRUGER CHURCH, Pretoria

(Please expand on separate sheet)

both sites have architectural value

Owner: Gaudmeyer (Eiendoms) Beperk

(If state-owned; responsible department and official position of contact)

Postal Address: PO Box 151, Polokwane, 0700

Telephone: 015-291 9160 Fax: 015-291 9143 Cell:

E-Mail: nakerk@pietersburg.mweb.co.za Web Page: /

Contact Person: *(If different from above. Please supply contact details)*

① H. Potgieter - Museda Consultancy - 082 587 2599 ② Rev. G. H. Huisman - 083 441 3595

- * Expanded statement of significance; *(Refer specifically to significance criteria listed below)*
- * Motivation for declaration as a National Heritage Site, including potential heritage value, threats and vulnerabilities;
- * Short history of the place;
- * Physical description of the heritage resource;
- * Locality plan (map) and Site Plan;
- * Photographs and plans;
- N.A. ** List of moveable objects relating to site that are proposed as part of nomination, or for archaeological or palaeontological site ;list of repositories where these are housed;
- ** Bibliography of documentation relating to the heritage resource;
- ** Statement of current protections and restrictions (e.g. previous national monument; register of immovable property; conservation area; current zoning; servitudes);
- ** List any heritage organizations consulted and their comments on the proposed nomination.
- *** Site plan (with proposed site boundaries);
- *** Conservation or management plans (send immediately if any exist);
- *** Heritage Agreement (if required).

(Please supply those marked () with this nomination form, as well as any others that are already available. Those marked (**) will be requested when the proposal first goes to SAHRA Council for endorsement (Tentative List of National Heritage Sites). Those marked (***) will be required when the Nomination goes to the following Council Meeting for approval as a National Heritage Site). All information submitted to SAHRA will remain with SAHRA.*

Type of Significance

Indicate with a tick

Comment where appropriate.
Indicate sphere of significance:
i.e. National, Provincial, Local
and degree of significance: i.e.
High, Medium or Low.

1. Historical Value

a. It is important in the community, or pattern of history

- i. Importance in the evolution of cultural landscapes and settlement patterns
- ii. Importance in exhibiting density, richness or diversity of cultural features illustrating the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or locality.
- iii. Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases that have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or community.
- iv. Importance as an example for technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement in a particular period

National: Medium
Provincial: High
Local: High
.....
National: medium
Provincial: High
Local: High
.....
National: Medium
Provincial: High
Local: High
.....
National: High
Provincial: High
Local: High

b. It has strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in history

- i. Importance for close associations with individuals, groups or organisations whose life, works or activities have been significant within the history of the nation, Province, region or community.

National: low
Provincial: Medium/High
Local: High
.....

c. It has significance relating to the history of slavery

- i. Importance for a direct link to the history of slavery in South Africa.

N.A.
.....

2. Aesthetic Value

a. It is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

- i. Importance to a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.
- ii. Importance for its creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.
- iii. Importance for its contribution to the aesthetic values of the setting demonstrated by a landmark quality or having impact on important vistas or otherwise contributing to the identified aesthetic qualities of the cultural environs or the natural landscape within which it is located.
- iv. In the case of an historic precinct, importance for the aesthetic character created by the individual components which collectively form a significant streetscape, townscape or cultural environment.

National: low
Provincial: Medium/High
Local: High
.....
Local: High
.....
National: Medium
Provincial: High
Local: High
.....
National: Medium
Provincial: High
Local: High

3. Scientific Value

a. It has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of natural or cultural heritage

- i. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or

National: low
Provincial: High
Local: High
.....

benchmark site.

- ii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of the universe or of the development of the earth.
- iii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of life; the development of plant or animal species, or the biological or cultural development of hominid or human species.
- iv. Importance for its potential to yield information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of the nation, Province, region or locality.

N.A.
 N.A.
 National: High
 Provincial: High
 Local: High

b. It is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

- i. Importance for its technical innovation or achievement.

National: low/medium
 Provincial: Medium/High
 Local: High

4. Social Value

a. It has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

- i. Importance as a place highly valued by a community or cultural group for reasons of social, cultural, religious, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic or educational associations.
- ii. Importance in contributing to a community's sense of place.

National: low
 Provincial: Medium/High
 Local: High
 National: low
 Provincial: Medium
 Local: High

Degrees of Significance

5. Rarity:

a. It possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of natural or cultural heritage

- i. Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon structures, landscapes or phenomena.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced in, or in danger of being lost from, or of exceptional interest to the nation, Province, region or locality.


National: Medium
 Provincial: High
 Local: High
 National: Medium
 Provincial: High
 Local: High

6. Representivity:

a. It is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of natural or cultural places or objects

- i. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a range of landscapes or environments, the attributes of which identify it as being characteristic of its class.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of human activities (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique) in the environment of the nation, Province, region or locality.

National: Medium
 Provincial: Medium/High
 Local: High
 National: low
 Provincial: Medium
 Local: High

Signature:  _____

Date: 09 April 2013

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (SoS) CULTURAL, SOCIAL, HISTORIC AND AESTHETICS VALUE

For nearly 100 years, the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has stood as a salient landmark for many residents in Polokwane. The 1917/8 Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) known as “Moedergemeente” (“Mother” Church) owes its historical significance to its monumental architectural features as a prominent public building.

Its social value lies in the spiritual connectedness of the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church, between the church and its members, manifest in the extraordinary building of the church. The DRC is one of the largest religious churches in South Africa, and so also in Polokwane. It is called the “Mother Church”, as this was the Congregation from which all other satellite DR churches were established in Polokwane and the rest of Limpopo. Throughout its history it served various wards in Polokwane itself, as well as various wards in the Province, which later became independent from the main church due to development and growth of the Province.

Divine worship has always played a significant role in man’s development and culture, and this was no less pertinent to the history of Polokwane. The red brick church with its prominent clock tower has always symbolised the strong connection between church and its people. Even today, this church is by far the most popular for special family events such as weddings and baptisms.

Its aesthetics value lies in the thoughtful attention to the construction of the building which can be seen from the almost perfect workmanship of the stonemasons and brick layers. These practises are of historical interest due to the fact that these building techniques are not anymore used in modern construction. The durability of the building materials emanate the solid and stately character of the building. The granite blocks, carefully carved and planed, the near perfect mortar joints, still speak of the love and care with which the building was completed nearly 100 years ago. These aspects give it the unique quality and ambiance which is unparalleled in Polokwane.



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Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church, Polokwane in circa 1922 (left) and today, 2013 (right).

2.1. ARCHITECT, ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANCE

2.1.1 WYNAND HENDRIK LOUW

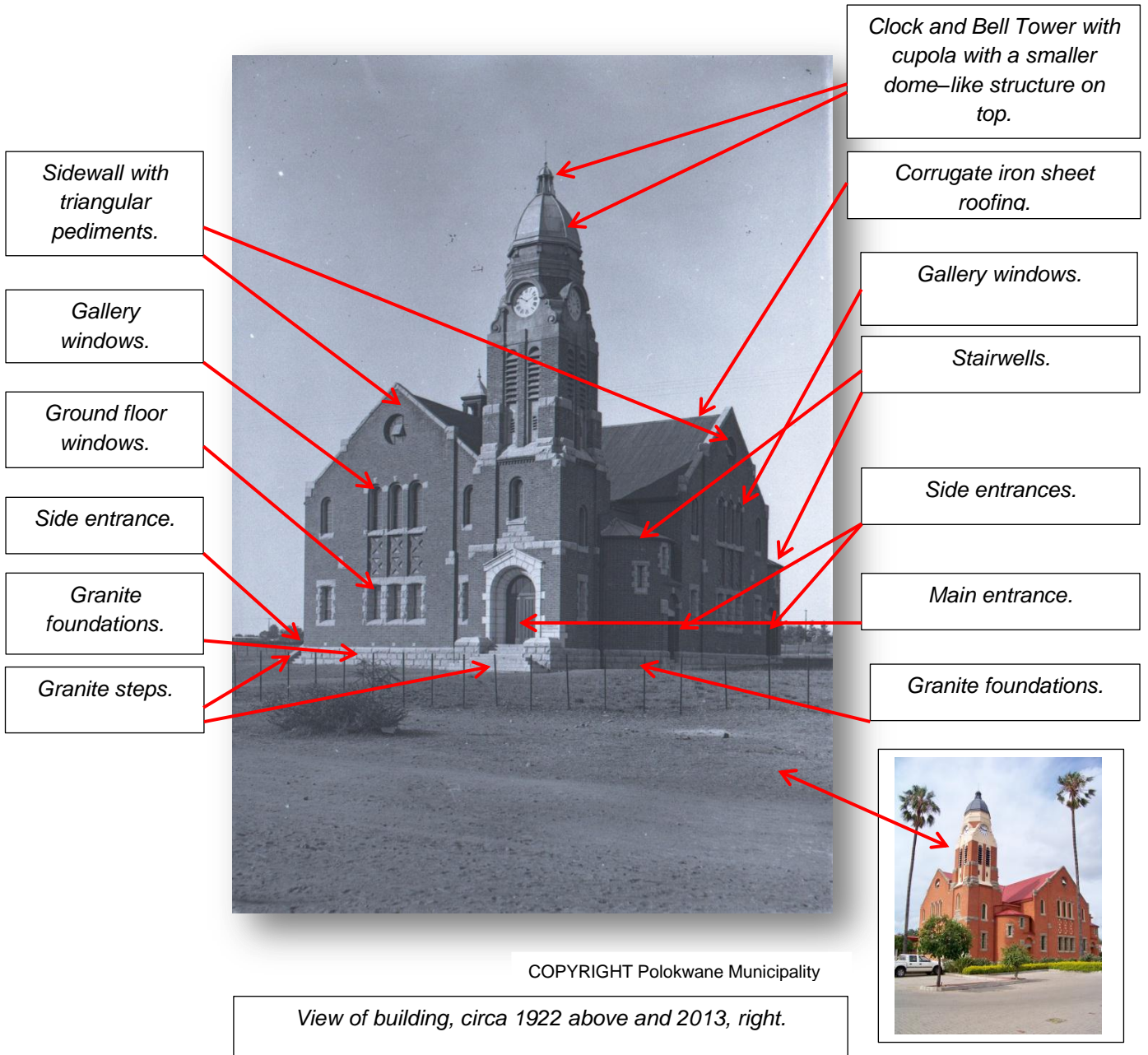
The architect, Wynand Hendrik Louw (1883-1967), is generally identified as being one of the first prominent Afrikaans architects and was instrumental together with Gerard Moerdyk, in establishing an identity for Afrikaners in architecture. He was responsible for the design of at least 120 church buildings as well as other public buildings in all of the provinces of South Africa, in Namibia and Zimbabwe and in as far as Angola and Kenya.

2.1.2 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The architectural style of this church building does not typify a specific style or genre, but is rather a reflection of the architect's interpretation of the norms and characteristics of his time.

In the year 1914, just before the outbreak of the Great War in Europe (1914-1918) Mr LLH Mentz, member of the Pietersburg DRC and later Colonel and Minister of Defence of South Africa, proposed that a new church should be built on one of the stands already owned by the DRC (erf 574, 1897). During this time of austerity, difficult economic environment and bleak outlook for the future, the Church Congregation still decided to go ahead with the building project. According to the Church Council Minutes dating 11 April 1914, a building commission comprising amongst others of Reverend Swart and LLH Mentz a decision was made to visit one of the churches designed by WH Louw in Boksburg (1911). Finding the designs of Louw acceptable, he was appointed as architect. The challenging times that related in scarcity of available cash, building materials, labour etc. may have had a sobering effect on the design of the church. The firm Adams and Mason was appointed in 1916 to construct the building and the cornerstone was laid on 31 March 1917.

EXTERIOR DESIGN



The exterior of the building reflects a sober and an almost austere image, reflecting the time and character during which it was built. The years between 1914 and 1918 were turbulent years resulting in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Rebellion in South Africa (1914-1915), with the result that building materials and labour were in short supply. Despite these dire circumstances that faced the Congregation this building stands testament to the perseverance, love and determination of the Congregation to overcome these challenges by constructing a visual pleasing, substantial and monumental building.

The thoughtful attention to the construction of the building can be seen from the almost perfect workmanship of the stonemasons and brick layers. These practises are of historical interest due to the fact that these building techniques are used in modern construction. The durability of the building materials emanate the solid and stately character of the building. The granite blocks, carefully carved and planed, the near perfect mortar joints, still speak of the love and care with which the building was completed nearly 100

years ago. These aspects give it the unique quality and ambiance which is unparalleled in Polokwane.

The building constitutes a near square design, 24,7m x 30,0m, with a bell/clock tower (25,5m in height) on the south-western corner. The building materials used were red bricks, imported from Pretoria; granite, from a quarry near Polokwane and yellow wood from the Wolkberg area further east from Polokwane. Oregon wood and corrugated iron sheets were used for roof construction.

INTERIOR SPACE

The significance of Louw's church designs can be found in that he "re-designed" the strict Gothic cruciform shape of traditional church design into a fitting and more sober design to conform to the Protestant Calvinistic character of the Calvinistic Church of the early 20th century. After a visit to the United States of America in 1913, he perfected his design for the interior spaces of churches into a spacious, light filled unobstructed interior. These design aspects are found in the Pietersburg DRC which resulted in a spacious interior with adequate daylight reflecting from the high, painted walls and ceiling. The wooden benches and floor reflects a warm and welcoming atmosphere. (See photos below).

Ground floor windows (west).

Entrance into church from northern entrance.

Gallery (west).

Side entrance (west).

Pulpit (north).

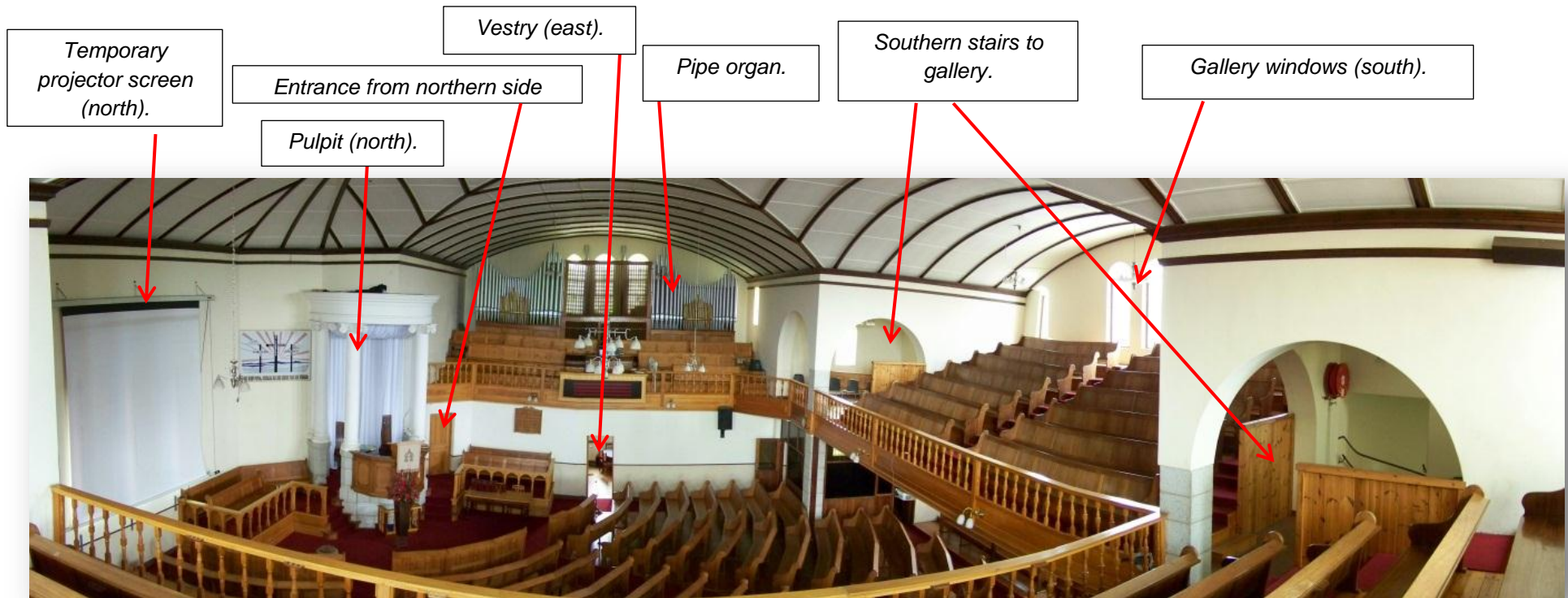
Pipe organ (east).

Vestry.

South entrance hall.



View towards pulpit, showing the spacious interior; also showing the reflection of day light from windows set in the southern and western walls.



View from balcony, looking towards pipe organ along the eastern wall; also showing the reflection of day light from windows set in the southern and western walls.

2.1.3 INFLUENCE OF OTHER CHURCH DESIGNS

Two other churches, also designed by WH Louw that show great similarities in design and construction to the Pietersburg DR Church are the 1911 Dutch Reformed Church (Klipkerk) in Boksburg and the 1912 Dutch Reformed Church in Ventersdorp, (see photographs below).



COPYRIGHT BHA NEWS, FEBR. 2008 NR 153

1911 Boksburg DRC (Klipkerk), Boksburg, in Gauteng Province.

In 1914 this church was visited by the building committee of the DRC in Pietersburg after which it was decided to appoint WH Louw as architect. Strong similarities between this church and the Pietersburg DRC can be seen. Note the triangular side walls and position of the tower that reflects in the design of the Pietersburg DRC.



1912 Ventersdorp DRC in North West Province.

This church has many features that are the same in the Pietersburg DRC building: noticeably the bell tower with cupola and the triangular shape of the side walls.



PHOTO BY ROGER FISHER

2.1.4 ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente) is one of the few public buildings still in use in its original form in Polokwane, which enforces the need that this building has to be protected as a national heritage site to ensure that this type of architecture and its symbolic significance can be preserved for future generations.

Although the political landscape has changed dramatically since 1994, the importance of this link to our shared history and the liberation of the South African people cannot be ignored. For future generations to clearly understand and appreciate their liberation history, cultural resources of the past (correct or incorrect in its history) needs to be preserved and conserved.

Polokwane, as the capital of Limpopo Province, has a very limited list of National Monuments, only those that were declared in the pre-1994 era and are listed as Provincial Heritage Sites: namely Irish House (today it houses the Polokwane Museum), First DR Church (1890) (today it houses the Photographic Museum) and First National Bank (previously Barclays Bank; still in use as a banking institution). It is important for any town or city to preserve its architectural heritage and to give acknowledgement to the achievements made during its historical development. If these structures are not preserved under the National flagship ownership, these structures will deteriorate and eventually be lost for future generations to appreciate.

2.2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER SIMILAR SITES

2.2.1 FIRST DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, POLOKWANE

The First Dutch Reformed Church, located on the Town Square, Polokwane, was declared a National Monument in 1986 after extensive restorations. This was the first church to be built in the newly proclaimed town, Pietersburg, and was inaugurated in 1890 and was used until 1918 when the “new” church was inaugurated. Today this building is the oldest building in Polokwane and houses the Hugh Exton Photographic Museum, and is listed as a National Monument, Provincial Heritage site.



COPYRIGHT POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY

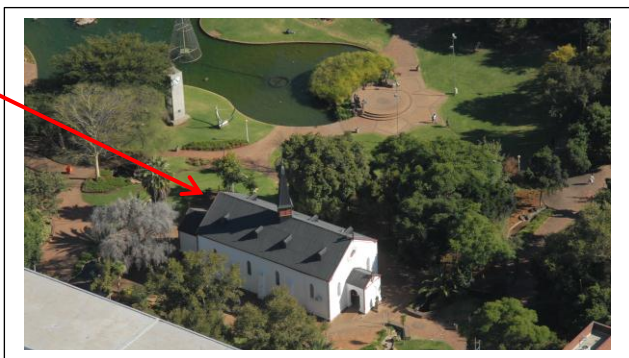


PHOTO BY ROBBY SANDROCK

First DRC in Polokwane, circa 1890 (left), restored building, 2012 (right).

The awarding of heritage status was based on the facts that this was the first church in Polokwane and on its architectural value. This building is a typical example of a simplified neo-gothic design, oblong in shape, with strong vertical lines, support by buttresses on each long side and pointed windows with the steeple adding height to the building. No other building in Polokwane has these same characteristics, and is therefore an important link in the architectural history of the development of Polokwane.

The Pietersburg DRC building (Moedergemeente) is a natural follower in this chain of architectural design. This building together with others already declared, forms a historic coherent whole, giving an overview on the architectural development of the inner city of Polokwane, see photo below:

- (1) First Dutch Reformed Church, 1890, National Monument, Provincial Heritage Site
- (2) Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente), 1918
- (3) The Irish House, circa 1920, National Monument, Provincial Heritage Site
- (4) First National Bank, circa 1930, National Monument, Provincial Heritage Site
- (5) Catholic Cathedral, 1934

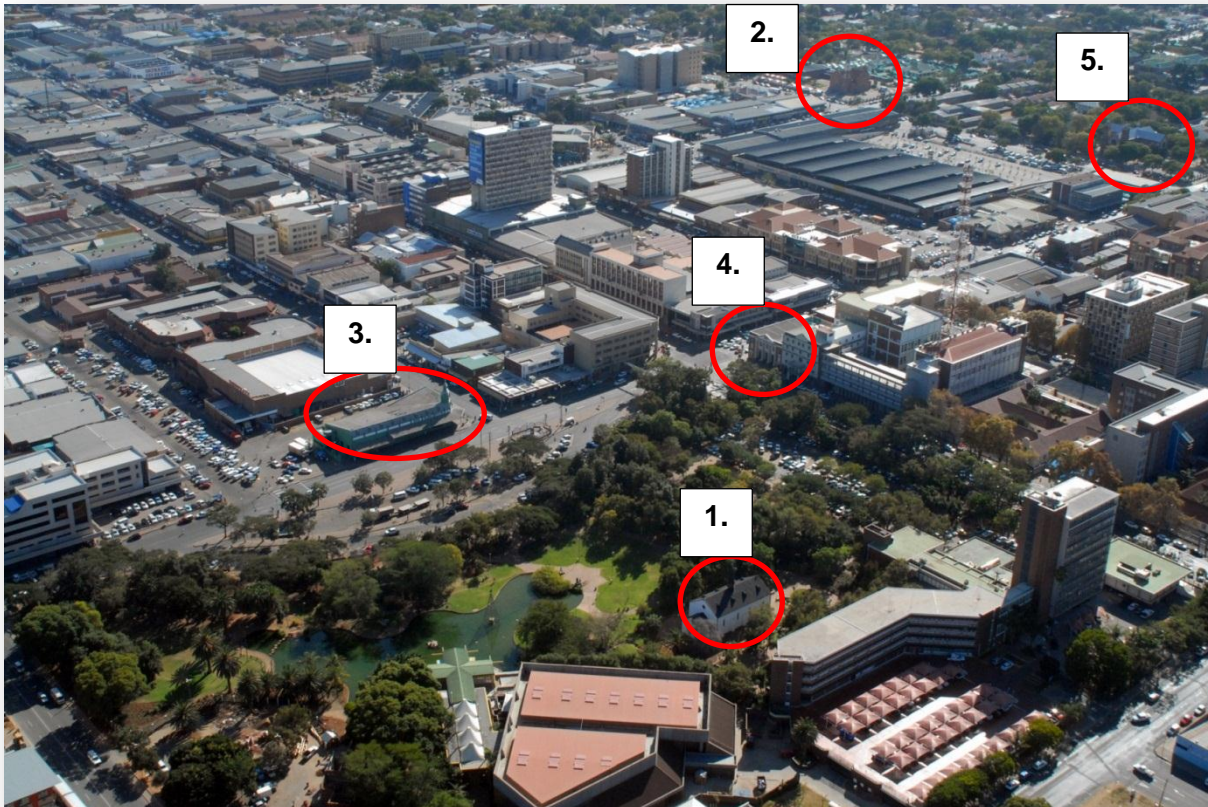


PHOTO BY ROBBY SANDROCK

Aerial view of the inner city of Polokwane, 2013.

2.2.2 PAUL KRUGER CHURCH, PRETORIA

The Paul Kruger Church, Reformed Church Pretoria, originates from 1896/7 and the architect was Klaas van Rijnse. It was declared as National Monument in 1979. This building as a good representative of the type of public buildings constructed during the late 1900' and early 20th century. Together with the Paul Kruger House, located near the church, and other public buildings in the vicinity, it forms a cohesive unity with the history and people of Pretoria during the early 20th century.

“The typology of the Kruger Church building’s design shows a strong influence of the Dutch and Belgium Neo-Renaissance, the Flemish Renaissance, as well as influences of Art Nouveau and late Victorian styles. This is to which the building owes its mixed character

which is expressed in the large variety of form. These mixed stylistic influences are particularly visible in the tower peak, rectangular-, round- and arch windows, pediment like gables, broken roof line and towers. This simple (*sic*) church building consists of face brick walls and a stone plinth as well as horizontal strips, inlays and quoining of sandstone”.²

Judging from the above the architectural value as well as the cultural historical significance of its association with Paul Kruger played a significant role in the declaring of this building as a national monument.



PHOTO BY R. BROMM

Paul Kruger Church, Pretoria.

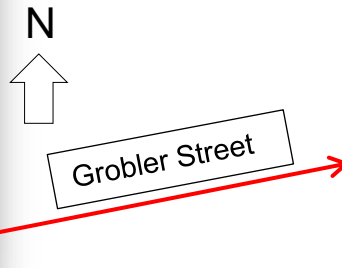
2.3 CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE AS A NATIONAL MONUMENT

By declaring the Pietersburg DRC as a National Monument, Provincial Heritage Site (Grade II), will encourage the preservation of the architectural landscape of Polokwane and the Limpopo Province. Too many buildings of note have sadly disappeared throughout the years, and if a strong alliance can be formed between SAHRA, LIHRA and heritage consultants, the few remaining buildings can still be saved for our future generations.

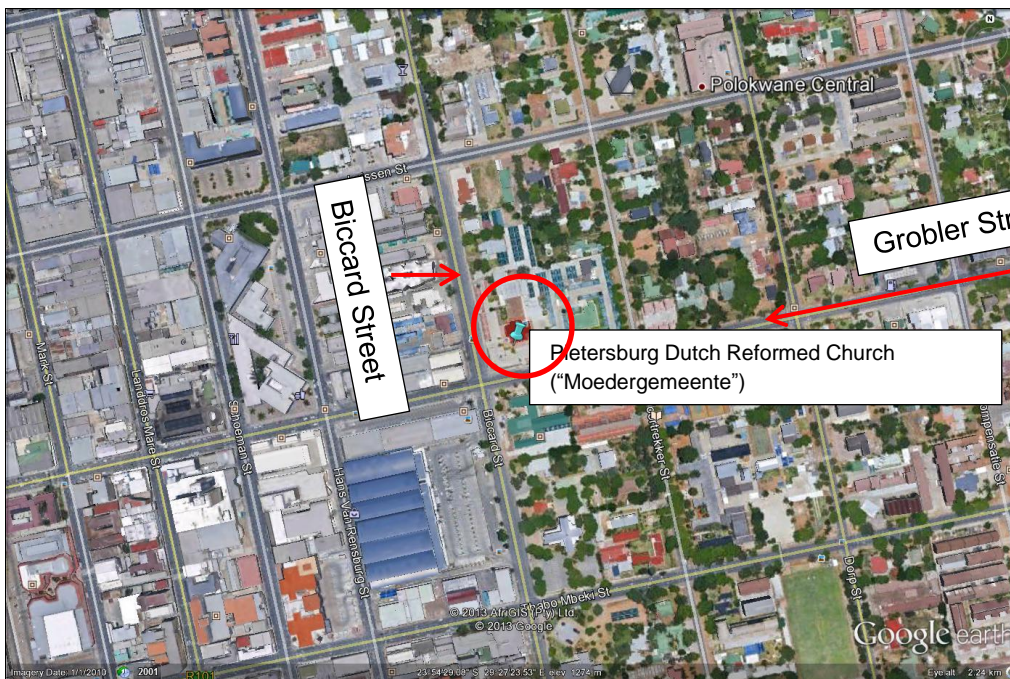
The Pietersburg DRC is prepared to undertake the maintenance and other costs for its own budget regarding this building. Therefore the responsibility for the building will be undertaken by the Church. In return, a positive review on this application for nomination will greatly improve the future existence for this great building in Polokwane and the Limpopo Province. A Heritage Management Plan will also be provided once a positive review on this application has been received.

² From *Wiki.up.ac.za*

3. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND STRUCTURES AND INTERIOR SPACES OF THE PIETERSBURG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (MOEDERGEMEENTE)



- Address: 66 Biccard Street, c/o Biccard- and Grobler Streets, Polokwane, 0699
- GPS co-ordinates: lat. S23° 54' 29.1" and long. E29° 27' 23.5"



KAART VIR
GEKONSOLIDEERDE TITEL

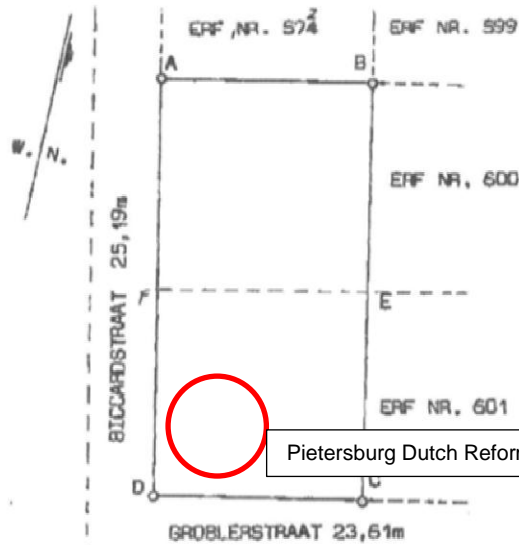
SYE	Meter	HOËFTE/AF- HOEKKE	KOORDINATE	
			Y	X
AB	75,57	A 90.00.00		
BC	151,13	B 90.00.00		
CD	75,57	C 90.00.00		
DA	151,13	D 90.00.00		

L.G. No. A
2188/73

Goedgekeur

J. MEYER
Landmeter-
generaal.

17-3-1973



Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church ("Moedergemeente")

en bestaan uit:-

SKAAL 1:2 000.

- (1) Figuur A B E F A synde ERF NR. 573 ;
Kaart LG Nr. A 2932/05 ; Transport No. 1016/1905 ;
- (2) Figuur F E C D F synde ERF NR. 574 ;
Kaart LG Nr. A 1480/97 ; Transport No. 129/1877 ;

Die figuur A B C D A

stel voor 1,1420 Hektaar

grond synde

ERF NR. 5699 van die dorp PIETERSBURG

en bestaan uit bestanddele (1) en (2) soos hierbo gemeld

Provincie Transvaal
Opgemaak in
Sonnegestel

Februarie 1973

deur my *J. Meyer*
Landmeter.

Hierdie kaart is gegee aan

No. 18492/73.
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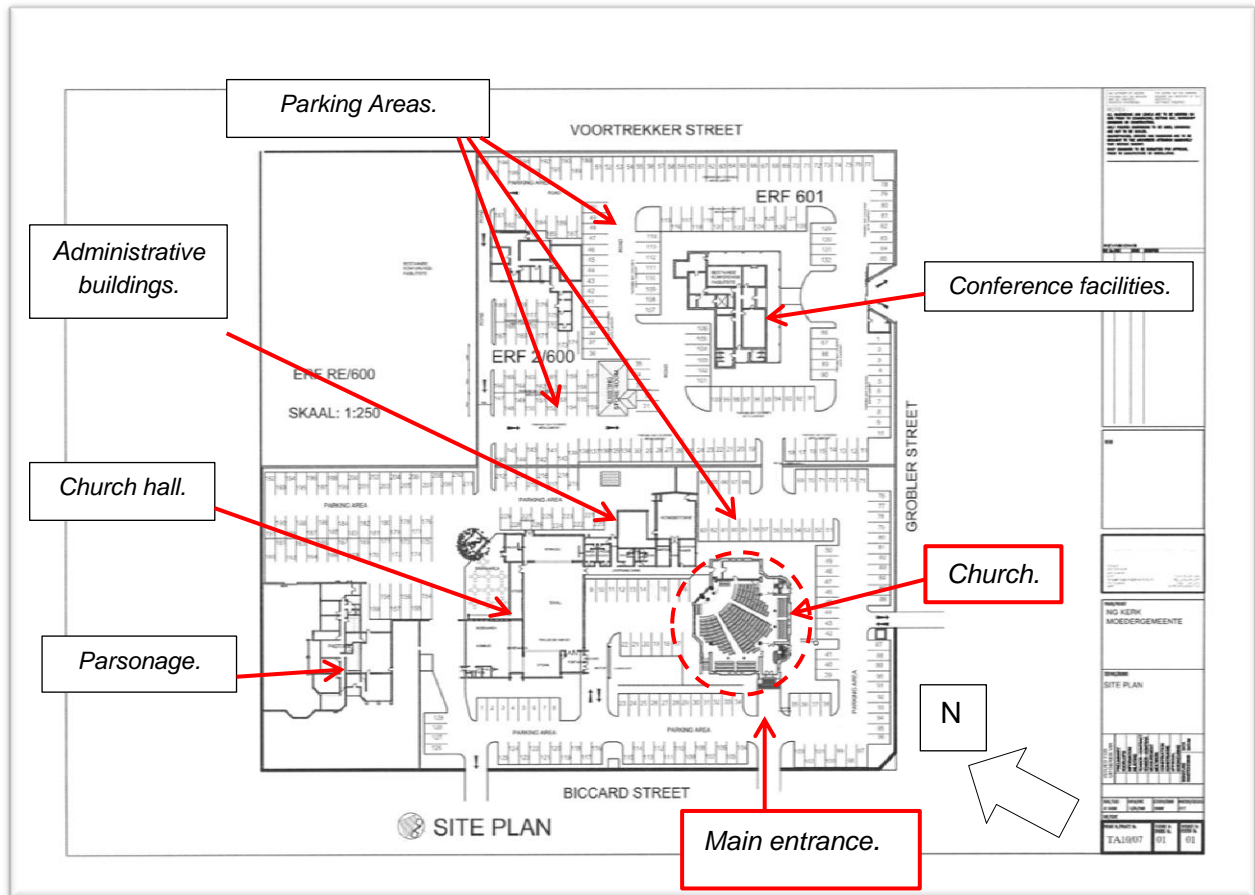
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3.1 LOCALITY OF BUILDING, CORNER OF BICCARD- AND GROBLER STREETS, POLOKWANE INNER CITY



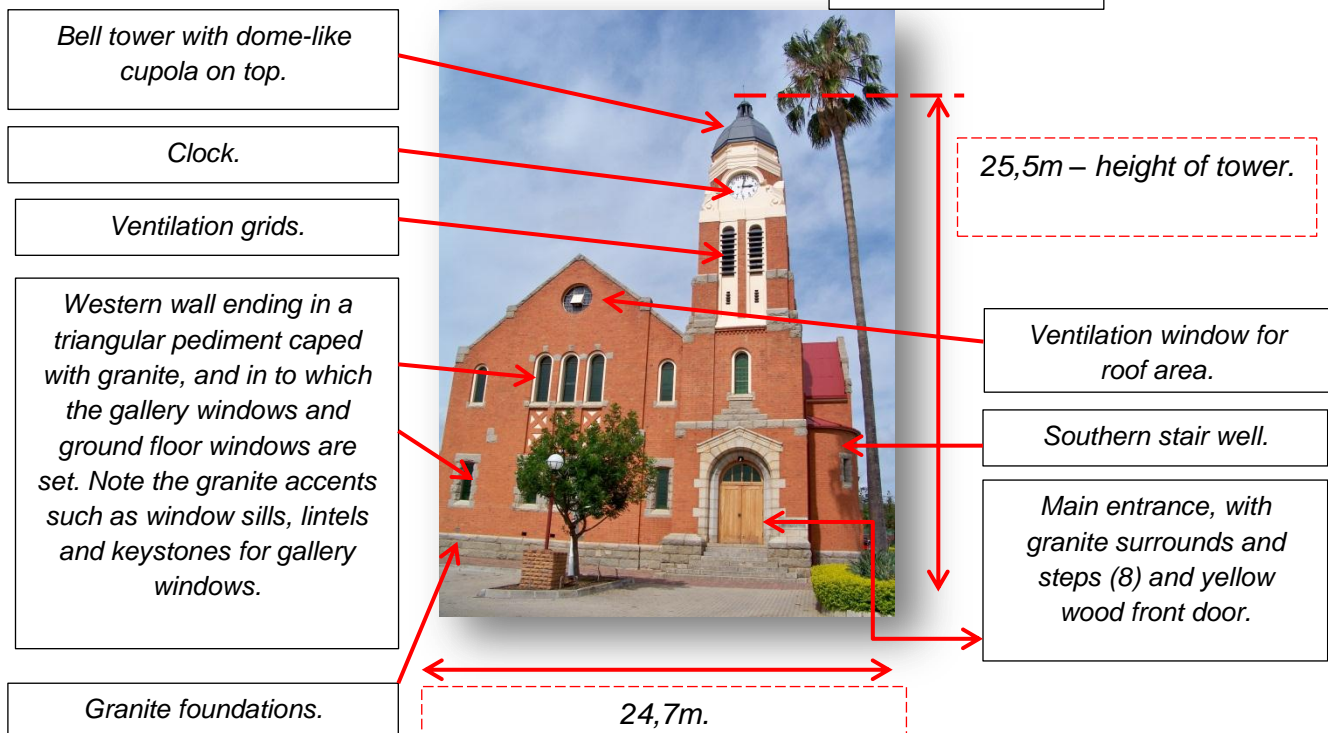
Locality of building in relation to the rest of the church complex.

The church stands on the south-western corner of consolidated Erf 5699 (erf 574, 1897 and erf 573, 1905), with the main entrance facing Biccard Street. The building lies in the heart of the inner city of Polokwane on the corner of Biccard and Grobler Streets. It is part of the Church complex, stretching from Biccard to Voortrekker Street and from Grobler Street to almost half of the street block. The complex consists of the church, church hall and administrative office and other buildings, conference facility housed in the circa 1925 parsonage (along Grobler Street) and parking areas and the parsonage of the current Reverend GG Haumann (Biccard Street 68). See cadastral and architects Site Plan above.

3.2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION, ARCHITECTURAL PLANS AND ELEVATIONS OF THE CHURCH BUILDING



West elevation.

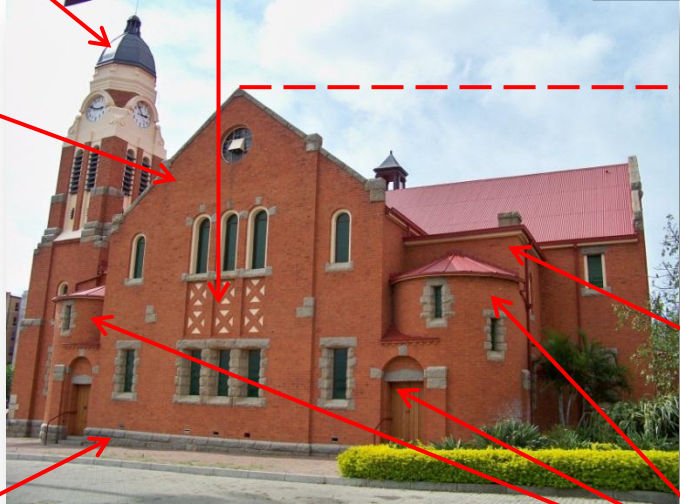


Bell tower with dome-like cupola on top.

Decorative brick work.

South elevation.

Southern wall ending in a triangular pediment capped with granite and in to which the gallery windows and ground floor windows are set. Note the granite accents such as window sills, lintels and keystones for gallery windows.



13,9m – height of side wall.

Southern entrance hall.

Southern stair wells with entrance doors.

Granite foundations.

30,0m.

North elevation.

Corrugated roof.

North entrance.

Northern wall, with roof capped with a decorative cupola and ground floor windows. Note the granite accents such as window sills and keystones for windows. Design of northern side very austere and uncomplicated.



15,4m – height of wall.

Western entrance.

Granite foundations, note variations of the slope of the site measured by the variation in foundation line.

30,0m.

(South south) East elevation.

Southern entrance hall.



13,9m – height of side wall.

Southern stair well with entrance door.

24,7m

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR DESIGN AND WORKMANSHIP

3.3.1 BUILDING MATERIAL AND WORKMANSHIP

The red bricks were imported from a brick factory near Pretoria via rail, the granite blocks were quarried from an area near Silicon, south of Polokwane and the yellow wood and others for the interior of the church were harvested from plantations in the Wolkberg Area, east from Polokwane.

Yellow wood entrance door.

Granite foundations, note foundation line according to the slope of the site.



Southern stair well with entrance door. Note granite key stone, granite lintel, granite steps and windows sill and surrounds.

BRICKWORK AND BUILDING METHOD

The brickwork was done according to the traditional Flemish Bond with one stretcher between every header, with the headers centred over the stretchers in the course below. In all probability the cement used was Portland cement. The mortar joint profile was applied using the pointing method with a weather stuck profile using a square profile.

This profile also accentuates the bed joints and looks well with well-formed regular bricks. This neat, almost grey-white mortar together with the smooth, even colour of the red bricks, accentuated with well-placed granite features, gives the building its very even and unified look and accentuates the straight lines and linear format of the building.



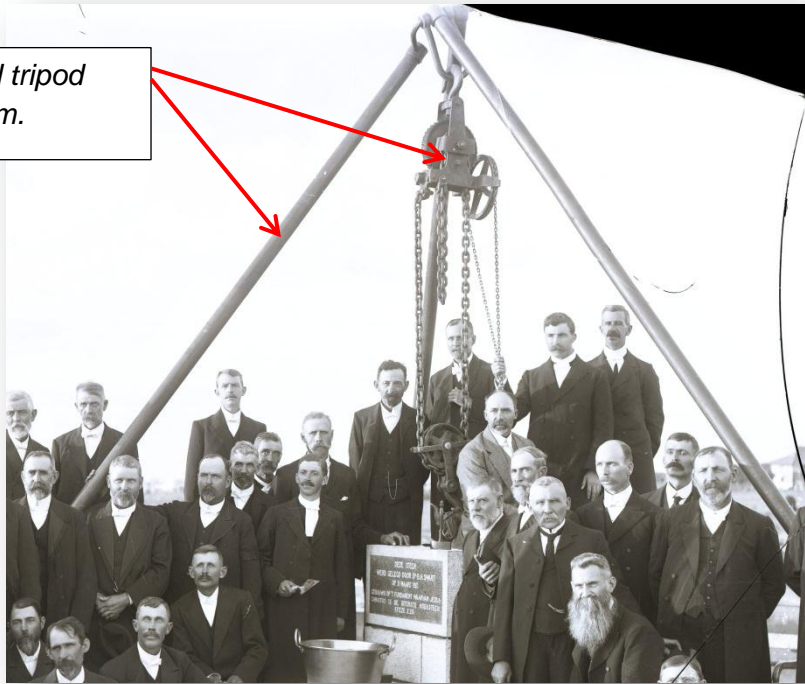
Mortar joints between bricks, with floor ventilation panel (grille) placed below wooden floor level for ventilation purposes.

USAGE OF GRANITE AND STONEMASONRY TECHNIQUES

The granite was quarried from a quarry near Silicon, south of Polokwane, informally called the "Pietersburg granite". This same granite was also used in the foundations of the First National Bank (today a Provincial Heritage site), located along Thabo Mbeki Street. In a United Transvaal Directory of 1910, a man called Mr Allan is listed as a "stone cutter", which enforces the probability that local stonemasons were hired to work on this building. The blocks were cut from the quarry into workable sizes and then transported to the building site.

The foundation stones were in all probability moved and elevated into position using a pulley system attached to a tripod, similar to the one on the photo below showing the cornerstone being placed on its base (1917). It is also probable that trolleys were used to move blocks and other materials around the site area.

Pulley and tripod system.



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The stonemasons split and planed the granite blocks most probably on site using various chisels, hammers or mallets and other tools of the trade (see photos below). The common size of the blocks are approximately 350-400mm in height and 1.0-1.2m in length. The blocks used for lintels and steps were longer and broader in size.

To split large blocks, holes were drilled into the granite and V-shaped wedges were placed into these holes. Using a 16 pound hammer, on the iron rods placed in the V-wedges, these blocks began to break along the line of drilled holes. It was then shaped into rough blocks (for foundations and window surrounds) or planed to smoother blocks used around the front door and for the entrance steps leading into the church and other uses.



An example of a flat chisel used for breaking the granite blocks. These rough blocks were used for the foundation of the building.



An example of a pointed chisel used to plane the granite blocks to give it a smoother look.



An example of a flat chisel used to plane and smooth the granite blocks to a very smooth surface.



The drill holes, used to help “cut” or break the granite blocks, are still clearly visible nearly 100 years later. On various other granite blocks the chisel marks, as well as planing marks, are also clearly visible, making it more tangible objects, as time has not yet erased the human contact from its surface.



The polished area on the granite cornerstone was obtained by using various polishing blocks of various grades (rough to smooth) onto which the wording was engraved.

Smooth planed granite blocks with clearly visible planing marks left by the chisel or plane.



Rustication: Rough stonework with regular incised joints, usually found at the base of a building.

Carved natural stone (granite) molding (also spelled mouldings) used for windows and door surrounds as well as sills and lintels. Notice how the sill was “cut-out” from the square block.



Decorative edging of granite.

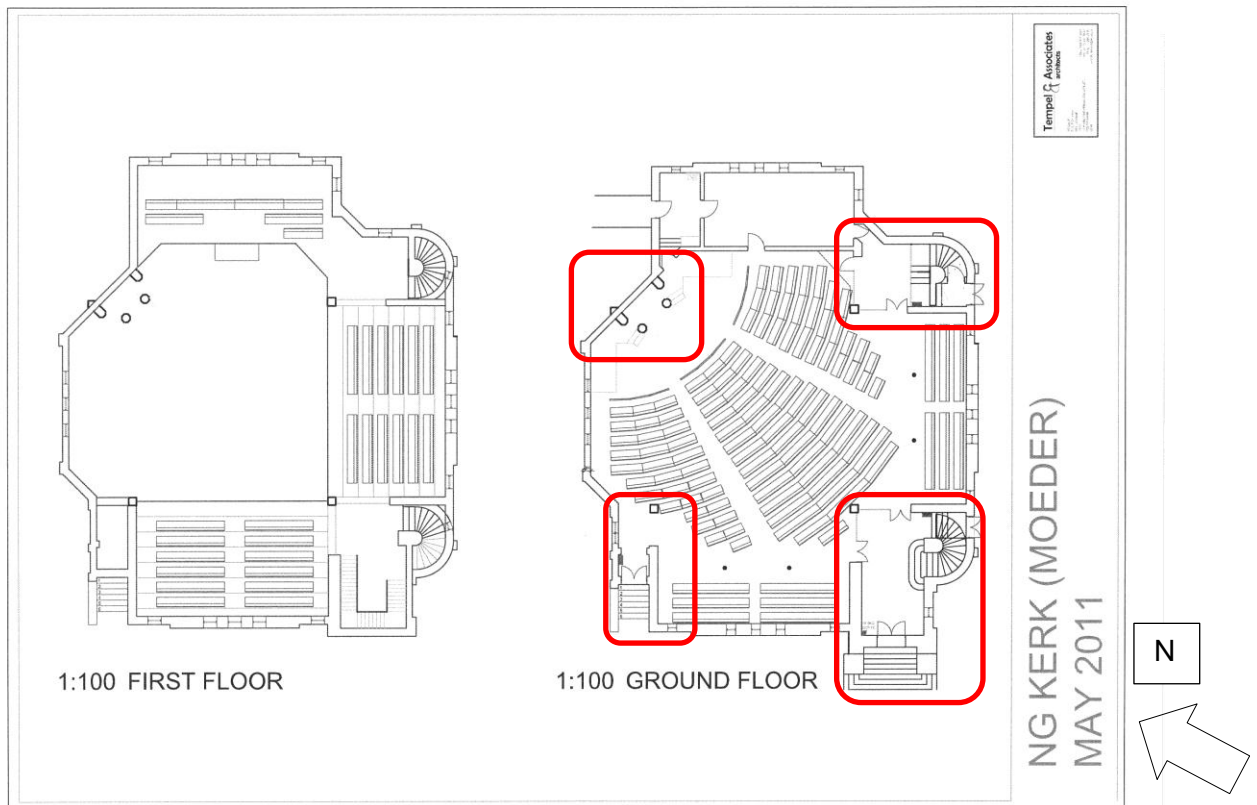
Clock and bell tower with clock that was installed and used from 25 March 1934. The clock was made by P.H Hörz, 1933 and Feldman Bros.

The main entrance decorated with various smoothed granite blocks and eight granite steps flanked by two granite pillars on both sides.



Decorative brickwork and granite around the windows, eastern side of church.

FOUNDATIONS



Areas indicated in red blocks on the above plan are the foundation structures constructed with granite blocks, filled up and capped with concrete onto which the staircases and first storey floor slabs were built, these also supported the wooden gallery. See photos below.



Floor boards on top of support pillars.

Left: brick support pillars below floor of building approximately 1,0m in height depending on the position and slope on site.

Below: granite foundation blocks with brick walls on top, as seen from below the floor of the building.





"Historical" damp proof layer used between the foundations and brick walls, as well as between the support pillars and floor construction.



Exterior of the granite foundations.

ROOF CONSTRUCTION



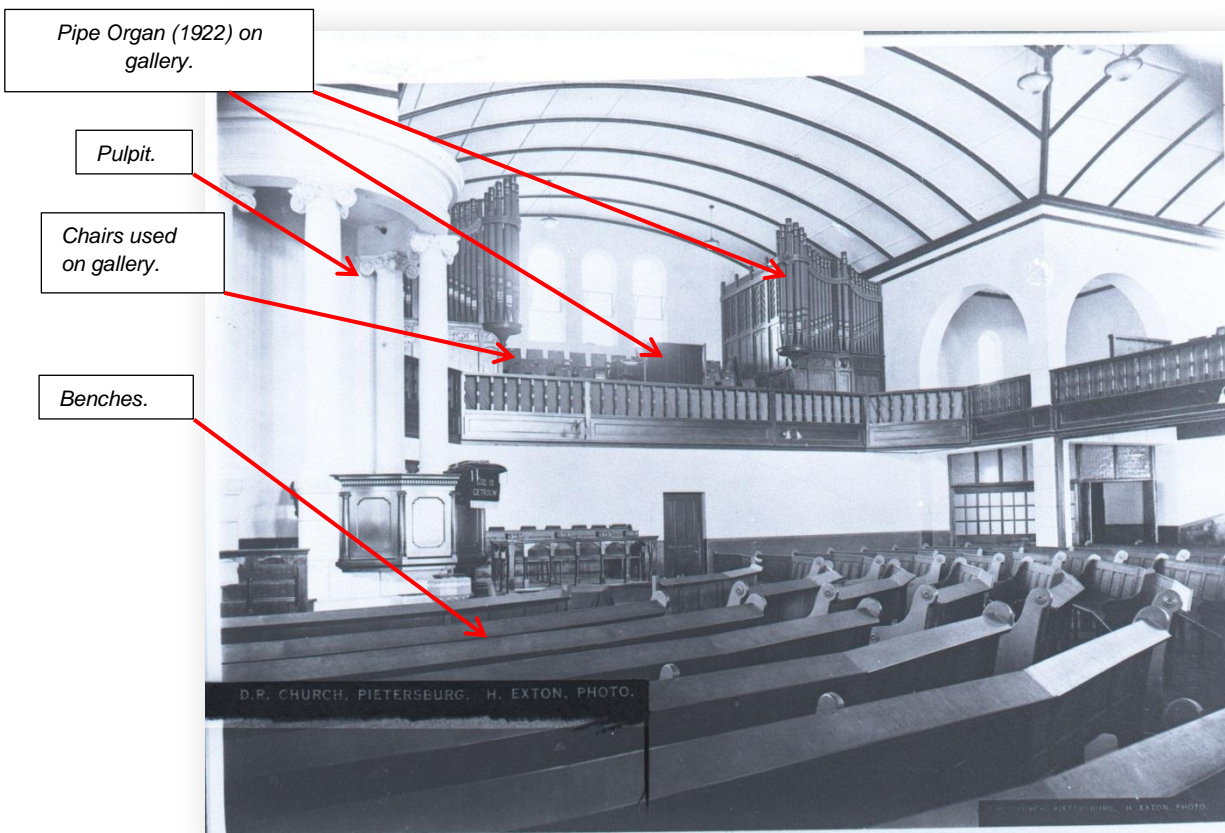
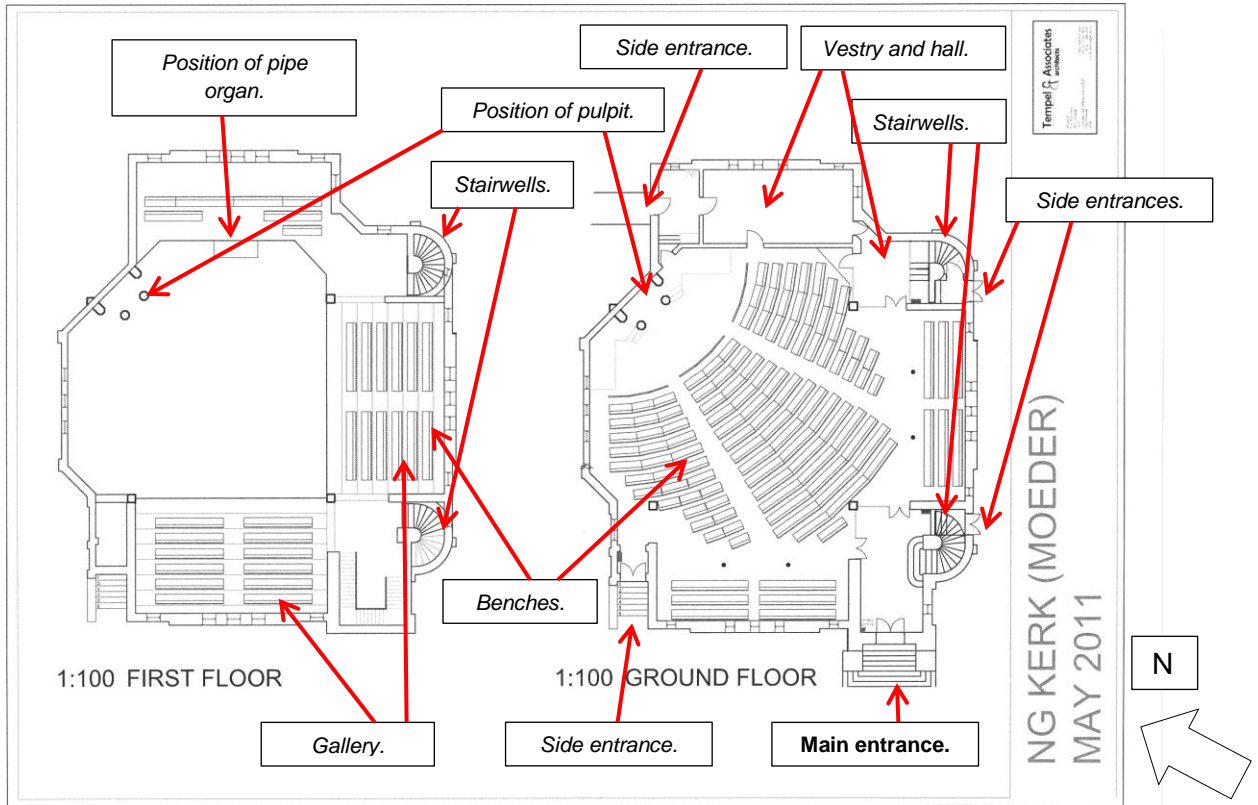
PHOTO BY TEMPEL & ASSOCIATES - ARCHITECTS

Roof construction of Oregon wood trusses and covered with corrugated iron sheets. Note the round window for ventilation purposes.



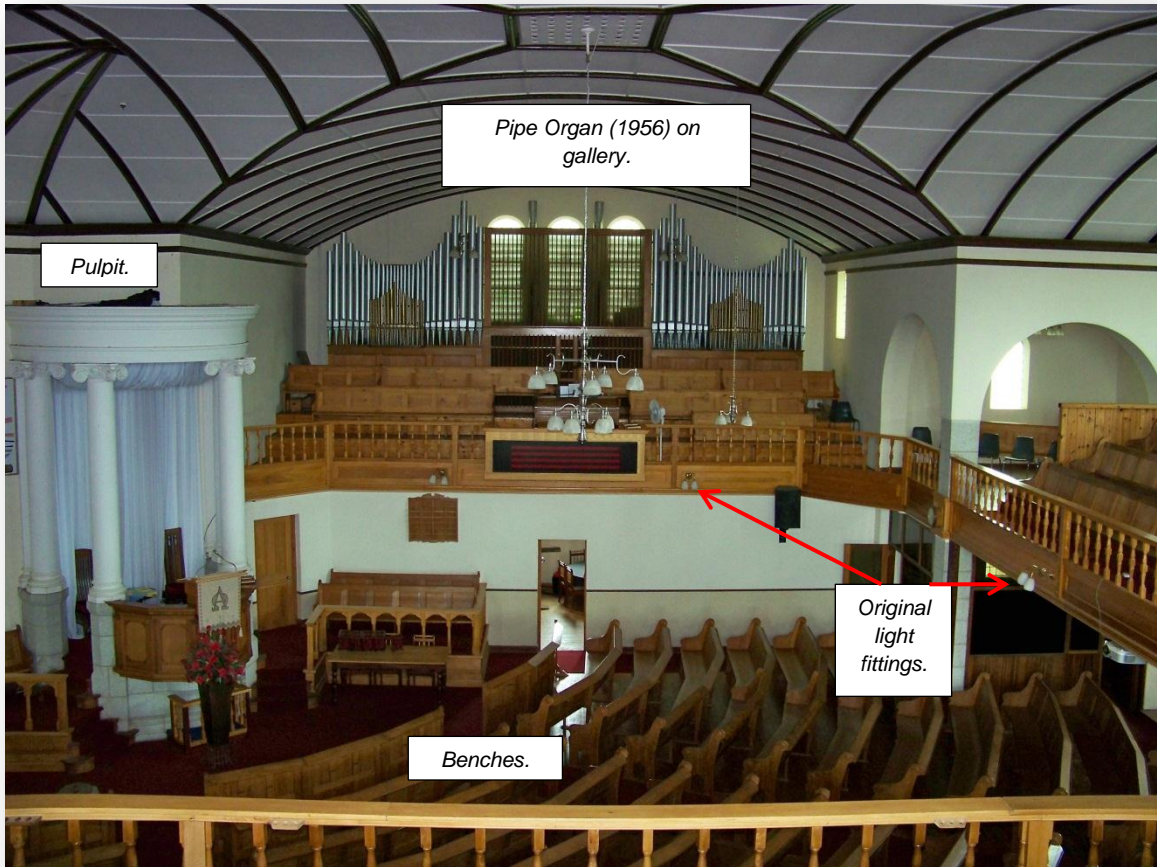
PHOTO BY TEMPEL & ASSOCIATES - ARCHITECTS

3.3.2 INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING



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Interior view, 1922, towards pulpit and pipe organ installed on gallery (855 pipes; Rohlfing bros. Osnabrück, Germany).



Interior view, 2013, showing the pulpit, renovated interior and re-build pipe organ (to 1514 pipes; 1956) on the gallery.

The interior of can accommodate up to 1000 people. The church was amongst the first public buildings to have electrical lights installed; these were donated by LLH. Mentz. Some of the original light fittings are still in use today along the gallery.

The pulpit is placed along the “short” (north-north-east) wall with the benches arranged in a semi-circle in front of the pulpit. The gallery was placed along the inside width of the three opposite walls of the building with the organ placed on the gallery towards the left hand side (looking outward from the pulpit). The height of the walls and high, painted ceilings reflect light from the windows set into the southern, eastern and western walls. Light from the windows set in the eastern wall are diffused by the pipes of the organ. At present, the windows set in the northern wall are (temporary) obscured by a projector’s screen. Although some natural light has been blocked, the overall “lightness” of the building has not been compromised.



Original collection/offertory plates (1918, left) used until mid 1980's and new collection/offertory holder on the right.

PULPIT AS SYMBOL

The pulpit epitaph: "God is Getrouw" ("God is faithful") has sustained the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church Congregation from its humble beginnings in the Zoutpansberg (1858) area to the first Church building inaugurated in 1890 on Market Square in the newly established Pietersburg, to the Church standing today on the corner of Biccard- and Grobler Streets, Polokwane. The original pulpit cloth is still used today. The granite blocks used as support/foundation for the pulpit symbolises the biblical comparison "to build your house on a solid foundation".



Pulpit cloth: "God is Faithfull".

Smoothed granite blocks used as foundation for the pulpit.

FURNITURE AND OTHER FEATURES



A



B



C



D

A and C: Detailing the wooden floors and renovated church benches, after renovations 1997-2001.

B and D: In 1982 it was decided to replace the loose chairs on the gallery with solid wooden benches that resemble the original church benches. The chairs (see an example - D) were originally used in the First DRC, dating from 1890 after which it was used on the gallery of the new church from 1918.



Examples of the original copper and brass door knobs and handles, cleaned during renovations, between 1997 and 2001.



The bell in the clock tower (installed 1935) and still in use today. Even today the half hourly chimes marks the daily rhythm for many people working in the inner city.

3.4 CONDITIONS ON SITE

The solid base provided by the shallow bed-rock in this area, together with the permanence of the granite blocks as foundation stones, the exceptional workmanship of the stonecutters and masons are most probably the reason for the almost perfect condition of the building today. No significant cracks or other structural defects were notes during the initial survey, the brick work and mortar seems to be in a very good condition, seeing that the

building is nearly 100 years old and is situated in the busy inner city with a high pollution potential.

The roof is constructed from wooden trusses and covered with corrugated iron sheets. According to Temple & Associate Architects, who undertook the task of drawing the site plans and elevations, the roof and materials used are also in a very good condition.

The Bros. Feldman German made clock and bell, 1934, is also still in an excellent working condition. The overall condition of the inside of the tower is also excellent. The ventilation grids are sealed off with chicken wire to prevent birds from nesting in the tower.

Some windows still has the original green glass-and-lead glazing, but some glazing has been replaced over the years with modern glass (green).

Inside, some modern modifications were made to accommodate legislative safety regulations e.g. fire extinguishers.

The RDC building is well maintained and preservation and maintenance is a big priority for the governing body of the church. Future maintenance and upkeep is part of the budgetary priorities of the Congregation.

4. A CONDENSED HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

4.1 EARLY HISTORY AND BUILDING OF A NEW CHURCH

The first official congregation in the historical Zoutpansberg area was established on 30 April 1852, and the first church was built in Schoemansdal in 1857. The town was abandoned in 1867 when the inhabitants of the town had to leave due to unrest with the local population. Already during this time there was a strong element of evangelising especially under Reverend SJG Hofmeyr who played a significant role in the spiritual life of the DRC congregants during the 1850's upto 1880's. The Church was also campaigning for better education for children overall.

A new town, with a site for a new church was promised to the people of Schoemansdal after the evacuation in 1867. This promise was fulfilled in 1886, when the town Pietersburg was officially established. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was allocated a stand in Market Street, opposite the Market square, and the first church was built here and was inaugurated in 1890. The congregation was made up not only of the local population of Pietersburg, but also served the wider community (wards) as far as Fort Klipdam; Malietsiesland, Chuenespoort, Haenertzberg and others around Pietersburg.

The church grew in size and the church could not accommodate the growing numbers of parishioners. A site already belonging to the RDC, since 1897) on the corner of Grobler- and Biccard Streets was earmarked for this development. Preparations for the building of the new and larger church started during April 1914 under the leadership of Clergyman BH Swart and Wynand H Louw was appointed as the architect. The building Commission was made up of prominent members of the church one of which was LLH Mentz (later Colonel and Member of Parliament for Pietersburg). The Great War (1914-1918) started in Europe as well as the South African Rebellion of 1914-1915 but this did not deter the congregation to move forward with the building program and a contactor Adams and Mason was appointed in 1916 and in 1917 the cornerstone was laid (*see photo below*). The cornerstone was laid on 31 March 1917, and it was the congregation's faith in God that sustained the congregation to complete the construction of the church building during this most difficult of times. The inauguration of the church building took place on 5th of April 1918.



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A



B

A - Dutch Reformed Church Council as seen at the cornerstone-laying ceremony on 31th March 1917; cornerstone was donated by PD du Preez (member of the building commission - B) and the inauguration of the Church in 1918 (next page - C). Note the empty space in the clock tower, as the church clock has not yet been installed.



C

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DRC, circa 1925/26 – view showing the southern side of building along Grobler Street.

4.2 CONGREGATION MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

In 1920, the Church officially had its name changed from Zoutpansberg Congregation to that of the Pietersburg Congregation.

The Pietersburg Congregation moved from strength to strength throughout the years despite dismal droughts, the depression of the 1930's, political changes during the 1940's etc. and despite these changes occurring all around the Church during its history, the building and its content stayed mainly the same. Small practical changes were made for instance in 1934 when the pipe organ was replaced with the current one in use; 1997-2001: a general renovation (started in 1997) of the interior of the church, renovations to the clock tower, woodwork (stripping old varnish and wood-stain from benches, floors, pulpit etc.) was completed in 2001. The essence of the building still symbolises the same strength and endurance of the past. The motto of the Church: "God is Faithfull" is still as relevant today as it was during the early years of the congregation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Divine worship has always played a significant role in man's development and culture, and this was no less pertinent to the history of Polokwane. The red brick church with its prominent clock tower has always symbolised the strong connection between church and its people. Even today, this church is by far the most popular for special family events such as weddings and baptisms.

"There is a growing awareness that our architectural heritage is constantly being eroded, with a great many buildings that are worthy of preservation either in a state of disrepair, or in danger of being bulldozed for modern development. On the other hand many people have made worthy contributions to the conservation of buildings of note, and as a result much of value remains to be appreciated"³.

This same sentiment is can be applied to the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente) building in Polokwane. The congregation has preserved this building for nearly 100 years, and is commit to continue to do so for future generations. This commitment to preservation and conservation needs to be encouraged and rewarded.

To proclaimed this building as a National Heritage Resource due to its architectural and historical interest will ensure that the unique and divers aspects of the architectural heritage of Polokwane is kept intact and will encourage other role players to join this race to protect the past for future generations.

Compiled by:
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Signature (digitally signed)

³ *Désirée Picton-Seymour, "Historical Buildings in South Africa"; 1989.*

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