

**Heritage Appraisal of Kowloon Union Church**  
**No. 4 Jordan Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon**

Kowloon Union Church (the “Church”) (九龍佑寧堂), one of the earliest inter-denominational churches in Hong Kong, was built by the London Missionary Society with financial support from Sir Paul Chater. The foundation stone was laid on 27 May 1930 by the then Colonial Secretary, The Hon. W.T. Southorn C.M.G., and the Church was officially opened on 10 April 1931 by the then Governor Sir William Peel. *Historical Interest*

The Church was the sister church of Union Church (佑寧堂) which was founded in 1844 by Rev. Dr. James Legge (1815-1897), a Scottish member of the London Missionary Society. At the beginning, their missionary works mainly concentrated on Hong Kong Island. The Union Church expanded their religious services to the Kowloon Peninsula in 1902, when Rev. C.H. Hickling (克寧牧師) commenced religious gatherings at the then Kowloon British School (the building now houses the Antiquities and Monuments Office) on Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

In 1922, a petition was made by about 200 Kowloon residents calling on the Government to allocate land for an inter-denominational church. The first congregation met at the then Kowloon British School on the first Sunday of January 1924 and the first church building originally situated at the present site of the Fellowship Hall<sup>1</sup> was opened for public worship in September 1924. The Church has been conducting services in English to serve an international congregation since its establishment. After overcoming many hurdles, donation was obtained from Sir Paul Chater and the foundation stone of the present Church was laid in 1930. The Church was opened for services the following year.

During the Japanese Occupation, the Church ceased to function and the property was converted into a horse stable by the Japanese army and suffered severe looting and damage. Soon after

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<sup>1</sup> The Fellowship Hall is adjoining the present Kowloon Union Church.

the Second World War, the Church underwent a large-scale renovation. The Church was opened again for public worship with a rededication service held on 19 October 1947 and continues to serve the community since then.

The Church was built in basic “Perpendicular Gothic” style, with pitched Chinese-tiled roof, red load-bearing brick walls and contrasting grey granite steps and window surrounds. The floor plan is based on a standard Christian church design of a simple cross, with a semi-circular apse at the east end of the building and an attached three-storey battlemented tower at the west end. *Architectural Merit*

The square battlemented tower with pointed arch doorway surround and foundation stone at the base is designed to serve as the main entrance to the Church. It is of fair-face red brickwork with carved granite ornaments and trimmings. There is also a concrete flat roof topped with a crenelated low parapet wall.

The windows of the Church are set in decorative granite framing in the form of trefoil-headed tracery. The window frames are of wrought-iron and there are angular carved hoods above the windows. The windows of top floor of the battlemented tower are with stone louvers.

The elegant double hammer-beam timber roof trusses with carved granite corbel supports are a dominant feature of the spacious interior of the main hall of the Church. The floors of the common areas and main hall are of green and white terrazzo finishes. The floor pattern also demarcates the original spatial arrangement of the main hall. An arched alcove with gilt cross is at the east end of the main hall. There are also two opposite circular windows at the two ends of the main hall respectively. The mezzanine floor which was originally designed to be open as gallery seating is blocked off by a later-added partition in the late 1980s.

There are few oak pews dating from the 1930s located in the main hall. They were once lost during the Japanese Occupation and were found in a second hand shop in the late 1940s.

Although the Church suffered severe damage when it was used as a horse stable during the Japanese Occupation, the main structure is still of solid construction and remains intact. There have also been other minor additions and alterations to the Church over the years such as the mezzanine floor of the main hall has been blocked off to form a small office. Nevertheless, the significant architectural heritage assets and decorative masonry features still exist in good condition. ***Authenticity***

There are only a few “Perpendicular Gothic” churches in Hong Kong and the Church is a fine example of a compact traditional design completed with its battlemented tower and a rounded apse. The double hammer-beam timber roof trusses are a very rare architectural feature in Hong Kong. ***Rarity***

The Church has long been recognised as a well-known landmark in the area. From its earliest years, the premises have been made available to a variety of Christian groups to have gatherings for evangelism, study, worship or counselling. The Church fulfils religious and educational needs for the local community, providing religious services, Sunday school classes, scholarships and social welfare programmes, etc. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

The Church and its conjunct Manse building are situated next to the Kowloon Cricket Club (九龍木球會) (Grade 2) and Kowloon Bowling Green Club (九龍草地滾球會) (Grade 3). It is also situated very close to the Former Kowloon British School (前九龍英童學校) (Declared Monument), St. Andrew Church Compound (聖安德烈堂) (Proposed Grade 1), St. Mary’s Canossian College (嘉諾撒聖瑪利書院) (Grade 1) and Rosary Church (玫瑰堂) (Grade 1). All these historic buildings depict the historical and socio-cultural development of the Jordan area. ***Group Value***

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