

Historic Building Appraisal
St. Joseph's Church
No. 5 Wo Tai Street, Luen Wo Hui, Fanling, N.T.

St. Joseph's Church (聖約瑟堂) was founded by **Rev. Fr. Ambrose Poletti** (賴法禹神父) in 1953 with the donation of land by a businessman named **Mr. Chu Yan-kit** (朱仁傑) in 1952. The Church is the only surviving building of its type in Luen Wo Hui (聯和墟). It is not only a religious hub of the locals but also a landmark of the area.

*Historical
Interest*

The Church is situated on a prominent island site in Luen Wo Hui (聯和墟). It comprises three blocks namely the Church (教堂) (and Bell Tower), the Activity Block (活動室) and the Father's Residence (神父宿舍). The architectural style of the buildings is best classified as **Modern Eclectic** as it is a modern design using traditional local materials as well as modern materials and shows influence of **Romanesque** and **Arts & Crafts** architecture.

*Architectural
Merit*

The **Church** is a simple rectangular building with squared rubble walls, a pitched roof entrance porch and an unusual pitched roof choir loft with clerestory windows at the southeast end. There are three small arched windows and a niche containing a statue in the southeast gable end wall. The side walls are strengthened with buttresses in-between coupled doors and windows which are linked by low pointed blind arches of projecting stone bands. Windows are simple aluminum framed casements, and doors are of wooden construction, panelled and glazed. The roof of the Church is modern profiled metal sheeting. Internally the Church is light and airy and colourful featuring exposed steel roof trusses, natural granite walls, wooden pews, a stone archway to the sanctuary flanked by niches, the altar, and a large mural which is the focal point of the church. The choir loft is reached by a quarter-turn staircase in the southwest corner.

The **Bell Tower** is a rectangular structure located between the Church and the Activity Block. It consists of a three-tiered bell cote of arched stonework surmounted by a decorative cross built on top of a gatehouse built of squared rubble to match the Church. The gateway has a pointed arch of reinforced concrete and a pair of finely crafted ornamental ironwork gates. The roof of the gatehouse appears to be a flat roof of reinforced concrete. The three bells in the bell cote were made in Italy and were an anonymous gift to the Church.

The **Activity Block** is a one storey pitched roof rectangular block with a lean-to toilet annex at one end and another single storey pitched roof annex and steel shelter structure built on at right angles. This second annex provides additional toilet accommodation and two small rooms probably used as an office and store. The architectural style of the Activity Block matches the

Church with the same squared rubble walls, coupled arched windows and profiled metal roof sheeting.

The **Father's Residence** is a small rectangular building located at the northwest corner of the church. It is a simple rectangular residential unit comprising a living room, kitchenette, bedroom and toilet cum shower cubicle. A door from the Sacristy in the Church gives access to the Father's Residence. The architectural style is presumed to be similar to the Church.

The church complex is set in its own compound with mature trees, lawns, shrubberies, and flower beds and features a grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes and a Niche of Jesus Christ. The main gateway is a stone arch with a pair of finely crafted ornamental ironwork gates.

This low-rise Modern Eclectic church complex is quite unique and should be regarded as having considerable built heritage value. Although it has undergone several renovations, the Church complex retains its original authentic appearance.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of St. Joseph's Church lies in the role it has played in the religious lives of the Catholic community in Fanling. With its distinctive architectural style and prominent site it is a local landmark in the Luen Wo Hui (聯和墟) area.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Although part of the land which originally belonged to the Church was resumed by the Government in the 1980s for a car park, as far as is known there are no further plans to resume church land. The question of adaptive re-use does not therefore arise.

*Adaptive
Re-use*