

## SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

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Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with s14(1)(a) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

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**NAME:** Strait Gate Lutheran Church

**PLACE NO.:** 26621

**ADDRESS:** Peramangk Country

412 Light Pass Road

Light Pass SA 5355

CT 5832/907 A496 FP172757; CT 5738/143 A497 FP172758

Hundred of Moorooroo

Draft for Consultation

## COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

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### Heritage significance in accordance with s17(2) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

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#### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Strait Gate Lutheran Church, opened in 1961, is an outstanding, highly innovative example of late twentieth-century ecclesiastical Modern Movement architecture in South Australia, drawing on symbolism as the primary generator of form, with the plan and elevation of the church directly inspired by a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew. Strait Gate Lutheran Church articulates many key attributes of late-twentieth century ecclesiastical architecture, including a radical plan shape; a distinctive roof in the form of a double-butterfly gable; and the adoption of commonplace materials such as cream face brick, tile and clear-finished timber. Strait Gate Lutheran Church also has a special association with its designer, South Australian architect Eric von Schramek, who made an important contribution to South Australian history through his role in the development of innovative ecclesiastical architecture. Strait Gate Lutheran Church exemplifies von Schramek's instinct-driven, self-expressive design philosophy and was considered by the architect to be his own most radical church design.

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**Relevant criteria in accordance with s16(1) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993***

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***(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics***

Strait Gate Lutheran Church is an outstanding, highly innovative example of late twentieth-century ecclesiastical Modern Movement architecture in South Australia. Strait Gate Lutheran Church was designed by South Australian architect Eric von Schramek and completed in 1961. Unusually for a postwar South Australian church, at Strait Gate, direct symbolism was the primary generator of form, with the plan and elevation of the church directly inspired by a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew, from which the church also took its name. Strait Gate Lutheran Church was one of the first postwar South Australian churches to depart from a traditional rectangular plan, and the first to employ a radical roof shape outside of the established gable, A-frame and flat roof types. As one of the more radical church designs of the early 1960s, Strait Gate helped establish a precedent for places of worship with more complicated plans and forms.

Strait Gate Lutheran Church articulates many key attributes of late-twentieth century ecclesiastical architecture, namely:

- a radical plan-shape, in this instance, a triangular overall plan with a rhomboid worship space,
- new structural materials facilitating dramatic shapes, achieved through the use of a welded steel structural frame incorporating lightweight web trusses, to create a unique roofline,
- architectural 'distinctiveness' employed to set the church apart from secular buildings and connote a religious function through its gabled double-butterfly roof, and deliberate integration of an existing 1887 church belltower as an architectural statement,
- coloured glass, incorporated into the large reredos designed by Stan Ostojka-Kotkowski,
- windows with vertically proportioned openings, notably in the sawtooth-profile side walls of the nave and front elevation rebates,
- a clerestory window,
- plain wall surfaces achieved through the use of cream face brick,
- play of light through the clerestory window through a coloured glass reredos screen, designed to create a special mood,
- unbroken straight lines emphasising verticality, notably in the sawtooth side walls and reredos studwork,

- inverted V shapes reminiscent of Gothic pointed arches, notably in the shallow gables of the main roof,
- a prefabricated welded-steel spire reminiscent of a Gothic flèche or spire, pointing 'heavenward',
- adoption of commonplace materials with domestic connotations employed to integrate the church into community, such as cream face brick, tile, and clear-finished oak and pine.

While a number of minor changes have occurred to the church, such as the addition of air-conditioning units to the northern side and the removal of one pew, these are considered to be either inconsequential or reversible. These changes have not diminished the place's architectural integrity to the point that its values can no longer be understood and appreciated.

***(g) it has special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance***

Strait Gate Lutheran Church has a special association with South Australian architect Eric von Schramek, who made a notable contribution to South Australian history through his role in the development of innovative ecclesiastical architecture in South Australia, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Von Schramek was knighted in 1982 for service to architecture. His early ecclesiastical architectural commissions, such as Immanuel Lutheran Church, North Adelaide, Trinity Methodist Church, Glenelg and Strait Gate Lutheran Church, Light Pass are considered to have been important influences on the development of post-war ecclesiastical architecture in South Australia and were widely emulated.

Strait Gate Lutheran Church is a preeminent example of von Schramek's instinct-driven, self-expressive approach to church design, placing him at odds with orthodox Modernist thinking on church architecture, which discouraged symbolism and creative expression. Unusually for a South Australian postwar church, von Schramek's design drew upon direct symbolism as the primary generator of form, with the plan and elevation of the church directly inspired by a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew, from which the church also took its name. Reflecting on his career in 2007, Eric von Schramek considered Strait Gate Lutheran Church to be his most radical church design. For these reasons, Strait Gate Lutheran Church is considered to satisfy criterion (g) for its special association with Eric von Schramek.

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The South Australian Heritage Council provides the following information as a part of public consultation.

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## SITE DETAILS

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**

**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

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<b>DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:</b>	Single-storey brick church with mezzanine and stone belltower.	
<b>HISTORIC THEME/S</b>	<p>4. Building Settlements, Towns and Cities</p> <p>4.5 Living in country towns</p> <p>6. Developing Social and Cultural Life (supporting and building communities)</p> <p>6.1 Supporting diverse religions and maintaining spiritual life</p> <p>6.7 Continuing cultural traditions</p>	
<b>DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1887 (belltower); 1960 – 1961 (church)	
<b>REGISTER STATUS:</b>	<p>Identified: 13 August 2020</p> <p>Provisionally entered 30 April 2026</p>	
<b>LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS:</b>	Authorised 25 March 2004 (1887 belltower only)	
<b>CURRENT USE:</b>	<p>Lutheran place of worship</p> <p>1960 – present</p>	
<b>ARCHITECT:</b>	<p>Eric von Schramek</p> <p>1960 – 1961</p>	
<b>BUILDER:</b>	<p>Hausler &amp; Post in assoc. with C. O. Junken Pty Ltd</p> <p>1960 – 1961</p>	
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:</b>	Barossa Council	
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Street</b>	412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass 5355
	<b>Address:</b>	
<b>LAND DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>Title</b>	CT 5832/907 A496 FP172757;
	<b>Reference:</b>	CT 5738/143 A497 FP172758
	<b>Hundred:</b>	Moorooroo

## Site Plan

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**

**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church (CT 5832/907 A496 FP172757; CT 5738/143 A497 FP172758 Hundred of Moorooroo).\***

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Church building,
- Timber and glass reredos by Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski,
- Original exterior and interior materials and material finishes, including brick, tile, marble, copper, bronze and clear-finished timber,
- Plain internal and external wall surfaces,
- Original fittings including façade lettering, fixed pews, original light fittings and original speakers,
- Semi-detached stone and brick tower.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- Cemetery, adjoining manse, and adjacent hall,
- SHP 16344 Pastor Rechner's Cottage (noting it remains a separately listed State Heritage Place),
- Tanks and sheds,
- Vineyard, trees, shrubs and landscaping.

N ↑

### LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries
-  Pastor Rechner's Cottage SHP 16344
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

\*Red outline is indicative of elements of significance, noting imperfect alignment of aerial imagery with parcel cadastre.

Summary of State Heritage Place: 26621 6 of 31

Provisionally entered by the South Australian Heritage Council on 30 April 2026

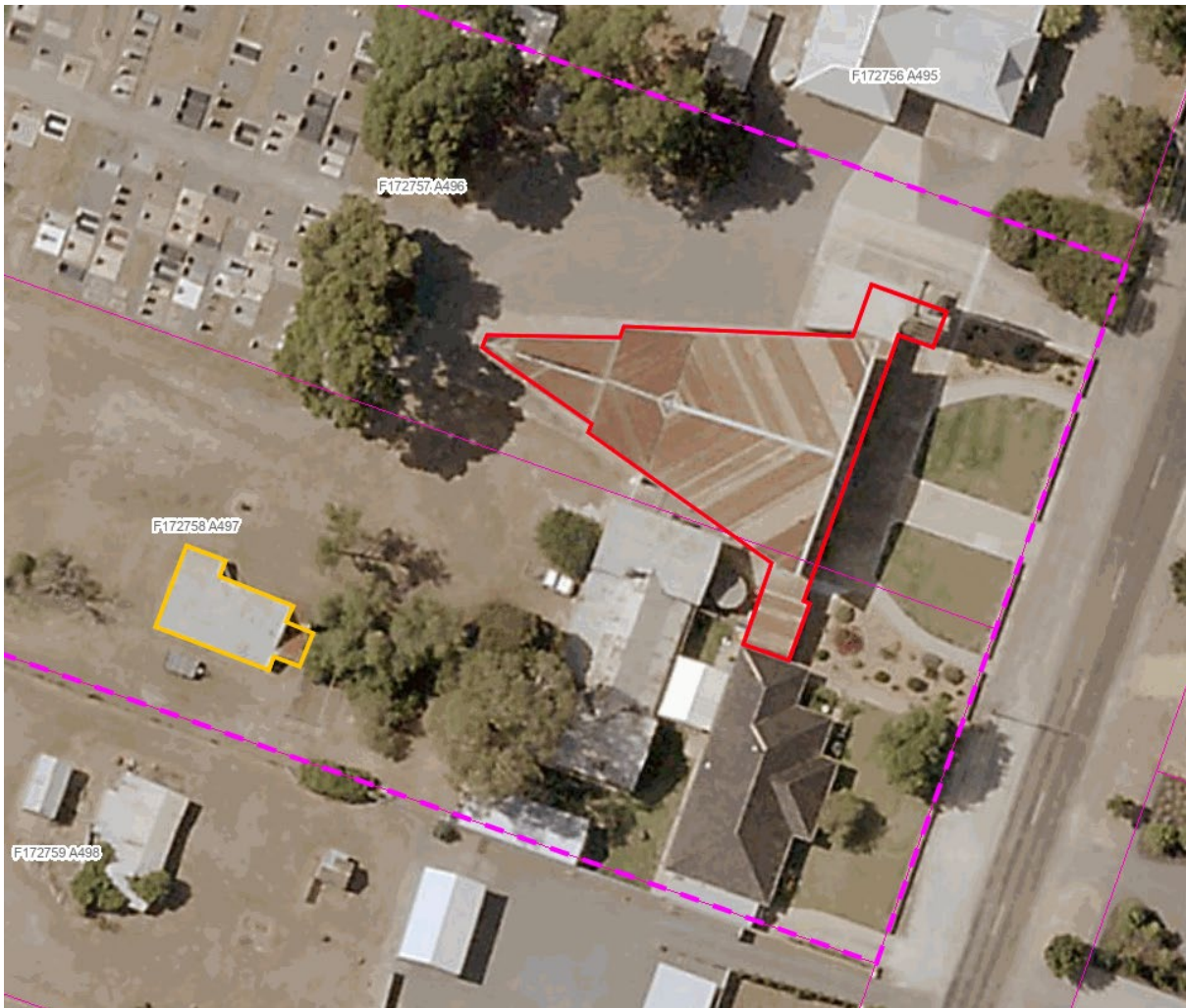
Open for Public Consultation from 7 May 2026 to 7 August 2026

## Site Plan

Strait Gate Lutheran Church

PLACE NO.: 26621

412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass



Strait Gate Lutheran Church (detail).\*

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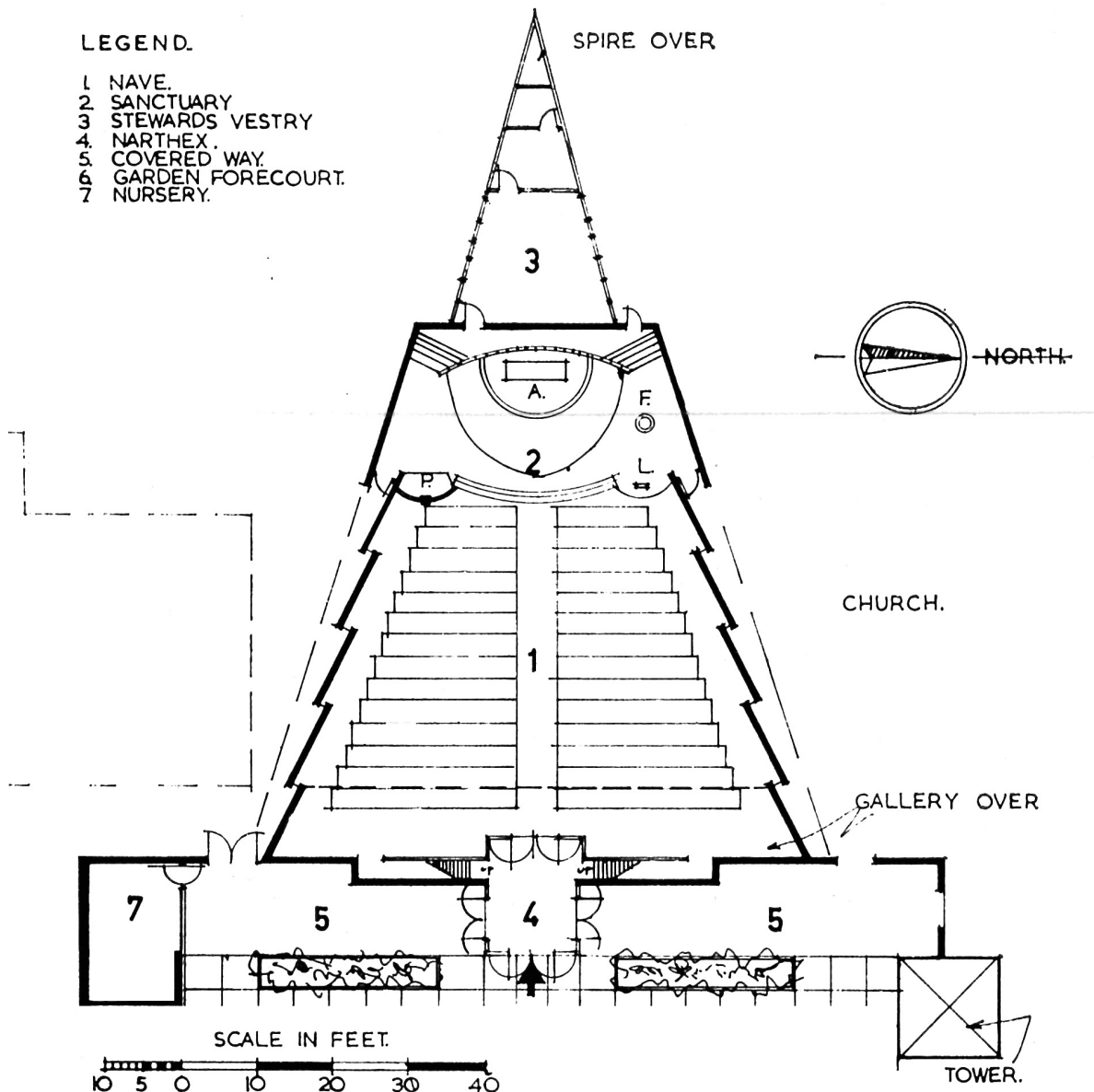
### LEGEND

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Summary of State Heritage Place: 26621 7 of 31  
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Physical Description



Indicative plan of Strait Gate Lutheran Church

Source: Strait Gate Lutheran Church, *Strait Gate Lutheran Church Light Pass, S.A. Centenary 1861–1961*

Strait Gate Lutheran Church is a single-storey, steel-framed, cavity-brick church with a symmetrical triangular plan and a double-butterfly gable roof. The church is oriented roughly east-west. The main roof is comprised of web trusses held aloft by paired steel columns. These columns in turn frame window openings which form a sawtooth profile to the nave side walls.

The building comprises three main sections: a butterfly gable-roofed main worship space with a trapezoidal plan; a butterfly gable-roofed vestry section with a triangular plan; and a semi-detached stone and brick tower retained from the earlier church (tower built 1887).

Exterior features include:

- cream face brick exterior walls,
- deck profile steel roof covering, positioned diagonally to follow the fall of the roof,
- overhanging eaves,
- three crosses to street (northern) elevation, two in glazed brick, one in boxed copper sheet,
- relief lettering to street elevation ““ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE” MATTH 7:13’ in boxed copper sheet,
- narrow timber-framed awning windows to rebates in street elevation,
- gable-roofed porch to centre of street elevation,
- semi-detached nursery block at southern end of street elevation,
- flat-roofed covered way on street elevation between nursery block and porch and porch and tower,
- toilet block at northwestern end of covered way (c.1970s, not significant fabric),
- pink Angaston marble foundation stone,
- pink Angaston marble porch steps,
- copper doors to porch street elevation with bronze detailing and door pulls,
- glazed doors to porch side elevations,
- concrete slab paving to covered way floor,
- double doors in covered way wall flanking front of church, with transom lights above,
- timber-framed hopper windows in nave side window openings,
- fixed clerestory window to western end of nave,
- timber-framed floor-to-ceiling window units forming part of external walls to vestry section), containing fixed and awning windows and Hardie’s Colorboard or similar spandrels (asbestos-bearing),
- flat-roofed awning to northern side of vestry,
- welded-steel spire to western end of vestry roof,
- low stone front fence.
- reverse-cycle air conditioning units (not significant fabric).

Internal features include:

- cream face brick interior walls,
- tiled narthex (porch) floor,
- glazed screen between narthex and nave,
- triple pendent light fitting in narthex (two of three shades damaged),
- Alpha and Omega motif sandblasted into glazed doors between narthex and nave,
- radiata pine matchboard narthex and nave ceiling and gallery soffit,
- flush-mount ceiling lights to gallery soffit,
- web trusses boxed-in with timber,

- fluorescent light fittings fixed to sanctuary side of boxed web trusses,
- fibrous plaster sanctuary ceiling,
- tiled chancel floor, raised two steps above nave level,
- carpeted sanctuary floor raised one step above chancel floor,
- curved oak communion rails to sanctuary,
- concave studwork reredos, glazed with green, yellow white and transparent rippled glass, behind sanctuary,
- black timber cross mounted on reredos,
- projection screen mounted on reredos (not significant fabric),
- pink Angaston marble altar with black granite top, standing two steps above sanctuary level,
- fixed coarse aggregate concrete pulpit, with curved wall and oak top,
- fixed coarse aggregate concrete font stand with oak top and pewter lid,
- fixed oak lectern,
- low jarrah platforms supporting two banks of pews, approximately 70mm above nave level,
- fixed oak pews with integrated folding oak kneelers,
- concrete steps behind and flanking reredos, leading down to vestry level,
- built-in speakers in nave walls,
- cross motif in projecting stretchers on nave walls,
- glazed crying room under gallery, with speaker in timber wall-mounted cabinet,
- organ cabinet in gallery (built 1925),
- oak studwork screen at rear of gallery with painted acoustic ply panels and frosted glazing,
- access and ventilation space above staircases with inclined board ladders providing access to hopper windows,
- two vestry rooms, divided by brick wall,
- sink and built-in cabinets in first vestry room,
- toilet at far western end.

### **Elements of Significance:**

Elements of heritage significance include:

- Church building,
- Timber and glass reredos by Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski,
- Original exterior and interior materials and material finishes, including brick, tile, marble, copper, bronze and clear-finished timber,
- Plain internal and external wall surfaces,
- Original fittings including façade lettering, fixed pews, original light fittings and original speakers,
- Semi-detached stone and brick tower.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include:

- Cemetery, adjoining manse, and adjacent hall,
- SHP 16344 Pastor Rechner's Cottage (remains a separate State Heritage Place),
- Tanks and sheds,
- Vineyard, trees, shrubs and landscaping.

Draft for Consultation

## History of the Place

### Lutheran settlement in South Australia

In 1817, Friedrich Wilhelm III attempted to gain control of the protestant church in the German State of Prussia. His plan was to merge the Lutheran and Calvinist confessions through the introduction of a common state liturgy and a Prussian Union of Churches.<sup>1</sup> Many Lutheran pastors resisted union by persisting with familiar 'old Lutheran' liturgies,<sup>2</sup> and so in 1834 Wilhelm III compelled all Prussian congregations to adopt his state liturgy. Those who did not comply were subjected to persecution.<sup>3</sup> Many Lutherans, who tended to be 'uncompromising'<sup>4</sup> in their beliefs, viewed emigration as their only recourse. The emigration of Lutherans exacerbated mass emigration already underway due to the difficult economic conditions of the time.<sup>5</sup>

August Ludwig Christian Kavel, Pastor of Klemzig (now Klępsk) in the parish of Züllichau (now Sulechów, in Poland) initially complied with Wilhelm III's edict, but subsequently reconsidered and resigned in 1835.<sup>6</sup> The following year he travelled to Hamburg to arrange emigration for his congregation. Through Hamburg contacts, Kavel was introduced to George Fife Angas, a founder of the South Australian Company.

The planners of South Australia, of whom Angas was one, envisaged what historian Douglas Pike called a 'paradise of dissent,' meaning a society based on the principle of religious freedom. As part of that vision, they actively recruited Dissenters (members of denominations outside the established Church of England) for migration.<sup>7</sup> Angas personally sponsored the emigration of around six hundred Prussian Lutherans, including Kavel's congregation, on the understanding that they would work his land upon settlement in South Australia.<sup>8</sup>

Kavel and his followers arrived in November 1838 and settled on land owned by Angas on the Torrens, north-east of Adelaide, named 'Klemzig' after the village in Brandenburg.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, another group of Prussian families arrived in December. This second group settled on William Hampden Dutton's land on Peramangk country at Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1839 the first Lutheran convention on Australian soil was held at Glen Osmond. The convention resolved to invite Pastor Gotthard Daniel Fritzsche, an itinerant pastor and prominent Lutheran theologian,<sup>11</sup> to join the South Australian Lutheran community.<sup>12</sup> Fritzsche arrived in October 1841 with another group of Lutheran migrants and settled at Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills.<sup>13</sup>

Kavel and his followers later relocated to the Barossa Valley on land also owned by Angas.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, they established twelve villages there, notably Bethanien (Bethany, 1842), and Langmeil (now part of Tanunda, 1846).<sup>15</sup> The success of Lutheran communities in the Adelaide Hills and the Barossa Valley established a 'chain' of German migration to South Australia which endured to 1914,<sup>16</sup> and South Australian Lutheran settlements served as the nucleus from which Lutheran communities and missions throughout Australasia were established.

From settlement onwards, conflict arose within the South Australian Lutheran community on questions of orthodoxy. Kavel and Fritzsche sometimes disagreed, yet the pair deliberately put their theological differences aside to prioritise harmony and cohesiveness within the South Australian Lutheran community.<sup>17</sup>

Tensions between the followers of Kavel and Fritzsche finally boiled over at the Bethany convention in August 1846.<sup>18</sup> Kavel and his followers departed the meeting and defied Fritzsche's pleas for them to return.<sup>19</sup> This incident split the South Australian Lutheran Church, resulting in the creation of the Bethany-Lobethal Synod (subsequently known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia, and later the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, or ELCA) led by Fritzsche, and the Langmeil-Light Pass Synod (subsequently known as the Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Synod, and later the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, or UELCA) led by Kavel. As a result of this and subsequent rifts, many South Australian towns possessed two competing Lutheran congregations.

The schism that occurred in Bethany in 1846 was not fully resolved until 1966, when the UELCA and the ELCA merged to form the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). Following the creation of the LCA, many congregations merged, and their surplus churches were subsequently closed. Sometimes this required the construction of new church buildings to accommodate larger congregations. New, modern Lutheran Churches built during the period c.1970 – c.1990 are unusually numerous in country areas, compared to those built by other denominations.<sup>20</sup>

### **Light Pass and Zur Engen Pforte**

Silesian mineralogist Johannes Menge visited the area now known as the Barossa Valley, and praised the quality of the country in a letter written to George Fife Angas in April 1838.<sup>21</sup> On Menge's advice Angas claimed seven Special Surveys in the Barossa Valley through his agent Charles Flaxman, which were surveyed in 1840.<sup>22</sup> The Peramangk people, the traditional owners of the Barossa Valley, were rapidly dispossessed<sup>23</sup> through European land use practices that made it difficult for the Peramangk to survive, let alone carry on their complex cultural life.

The introduction of pastoralism from about 1838 resulted in widespread degradation of the land and pollution of the waterways with dung,<sup>24</sup> especially in the Barossa, where large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle were sometimes held for months to rest and fatten for sale.<sup>25</sup> Later, land selection by the claimants of Special Surveys restricted access to water, since claimants typically selected land along both sides of watercourses in an attempt to make the surrounding land less desirable to other selectors.<sup>26</sup> Within a few years the Peramangk people were displaced and restricted from their traditional lands, though First Nations people from around the River Murray continued to camp in the area.<sup>27</sup>

Light Pass was named for Colonel Light, who visited the area during 1839 while undertaking a Special Survey for Flaxman.<sup>28</sup> On 17 September 1845, the barque

*Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee Patel* arrived in Port Adelaide, carrying 262 migrants from Bremen,<sup>29</sup> many of whom subsequently settled at Light Pass.<sup>30</sup> In 1846, the year of the tumultuous Bethany convention, Pastor Kavel established a Lutheran congregation at Light Pass and subsequently oversaw construction of a *fachwerk* (timber-framed) schoolhouse and chapel,<sup>31</sup> the latter completed in 1850. From the time of its foundation, the congregation was served by Pastor Kavel, then based in Langmeil, with assistance from Pastor G. W. Staudenmeyer, who arrived from Germany at Christmas 1857 to become the first resident minister at Light Pass.<sup>32</sup>

Kavel died on 12 February 1860. In the absence of his leadership, 'simmering' tensions boiled over and split the Langmeil – Lights Pass Synod.<sup>33</sup> 25 families left the Light Pass congregation and established their own,<sup>34</sup> calling on district schoolteacher Gustav Julius Rechner to serve as their Pastor. The congregation built a new church approximately 200 metres west of the existing church, adjacent to Pastor Rechner's existing cottage (SHP 16344). They named the new church Zur Engen Pforte (To the Narrow Gate), in allusion to a scriptural passage in the New Testament's Book of Matthew (Matthew 7:13-14):

<sup>13</sup>*Gehet ein durch die enge Pforte. Denn die Pforte ist weit, und der Weg ist breit, der zur Verdammnis abführt; und ihrer sind viele, die darauf wandeln.*

<sup>14</sup>*Und die Pforte ist eng, und der Weg ist schmal, der zum Leben führt; und wenige sind ihrer, die ihn finden.*

<sup>13</sup>Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

<sup>14</sup>Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.<sup>35</sup>

This first church and an adjacent manse were both opened and dedicated on 4 August 1861.<sup>36</sup>

In c.1872, the congregation acquired a large 36-inch (915mm) diameter bronze bell from the Kleinwelka Foundry, Germany, with a tone of G#, which it temporarily suspended from a timber platform near the church.<sup>37</sup> In 1887, a stone belltower was added to the front of the church to house the bell. In 1914, a schoolhouse was built on the northern side of Zur Engen Pforte Church. In 1925, the Zur Engen Pforte congregation acquired a pipe organ, purpose-built for the church by Adelaide-based organ builder Josia Eustace Dodd (b. 1856 – d. 1952).<sup>38</sup> The tower spire was replaced and the new spire dedicated on 12 February 1939.<sup>39</sup> At some point, a church hall was built on the southern side of the church.

### **Strait Gate Lutheran Church**

By the end of the Second World War, the UELCA Light Pass congregation's church was known as Strait Gate Church,<sup>40</sup> reflecting broader trends away from the use of the German language in Lutheran worship. By the late 1940s, the existing Zur Engen Pforte

Church could no longer support its growing congregation. This and the considerable financial expenditure necessary to repair the building encouraged the congregation to consider building a new church.<sup>41</sup>

On 21 November 1949, the Church Committee recommended the election of a Building Committee, originally intended only to oversee extensions to the Lutheran school, now known as the Strait Gate Church Hall. This Building Committee, comprised of Pastor Rudolph Berthold Reuther (b. 1897 – d. 1973) and 12 members of the congregation.<sup>42</sup>

On 25 January 1951, the annual Church Management Committee meeting began planning the congregation's centenary, then due to occur in ten years' time. At this meeting, the Committee resolved to establish a Jubilee Fund and a Jubilee Committee to oversee fundraising.<sup>43</sup> Three years later on 31 January 1954, the Jubilee Committee considered the future of the church building and determined that the most economical approach would be to demolish the existing church, leaving only the tower, and to build a brand-new church from the ground up. By 30 January 1955, the Jubilee Committee had raised £1,242/9/3.<sup>44</sup>

On 21 December 1958, the Church Management Committee called a special church conference meeting to consider the progress of the Jubilee Committee. This meeting resolved to engage Eric von Schramek to prepare plans and specifications for a new church and an adjacent manse.<sup>45</sup> The existing Building Committee was tasked with overseeing their construction.<sup>46</sup>

Unusually for a postwar South Australian church, von Schramek's proposed design drew upon direct symbolism as the primary generator of form.<sup>47</sup> Viewed from above, the plan formed a triangle, a shape associated with the Holy Trinity. The plan and elevation of the church was directly inspired by the quotation from which the name of the church was derived, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate', with a tall, broad, and plain cream brick façade serving to emphasise the narrowness of the main entry door. Inside, the ceiling was designed to slope downwards and the walls angled to converge towards the sanctuary, emphasising the altar.<sup>48</sup>

The phrase 'Enter ye in at the strait gate' was also spelled out on the façade in large copper letters. This idea was probably borrowed from Bundaberg's St John Lutheran Church, designed by notable Queensland-based émigré architect Karl Langer (b. 1903 – d. 1969), in which the front façade was designed to resemble an open Bible with prominent scriptural quotations. St John's Lutheran Church, which opened in April 1960, also formed part of the UELCA synod and photographs of the church under construction featured prominently in Lutheran publications of the time.<sup>49</sup>

The overall triangular plan of von Schramek's proposed new Strait Gate Church was covered by a pair of gabled, butterfly roofs, creating a highly unusual roofline which remains unique for a church in South Australia.<sup>50</sup> The proposed church was steel-framed, with non-loadbearing cavity brick walls. Notably, four pairs of steel columns, arrayed down either side of the nave, framed sawtooth window openings in the side

walls, while also carrying much of the weight of the main nave roof. The sawtooth windows admitted natural light into the nave while avoiding glare for the seated congregation.

The siting of the new church was constrained by the need to retain the old church, which was still required for worship throughout the construction of the new. The new church was built to the south of the old church and behind the existing manse. This resulted in an off-axis relationship between the church and what became a freestanding tower, connected only by a cloister, and a broad forecourt, which was paved and landscaped.

At the congregation's suggestion, von Schramek deliberately integrated the tower from Zur Engen Pforte Church into the new design.<sup>51</sup> The retention of the tower juxtaposed new and old and in von Schramek's words symbolised a congregation that was 'alive and aggressive, planning for the future whilst respecting and carrying on our traditions and heritage.'<sup>52</sup>

Inside the church, von Schramek hoped to provide 'a place for quiet meditation and undisturbed worship'.<sup>53</sup> He provided nominal seating for 450 in the nave and a gallery.<sup>54</sup> In the nave, he provided two banks of pews, each standing on a raised jarrah floating floor raised approximately two inches above the level of the main concrete slab floor. On the ceiling, he employed partly-concealed fluorescent lighting, mounted on the western side of boxed-in roof trusses, to illuminate the interior while also minimising glare for the congregation, an innovative approach at the time of its implementation.<sup>55</sup> At the back of the gallery, von Schramek provided a studwork screen fitted with perforated acoustic ply and frosted glass panels. The latter afforded borrowed natural light to the gallery, in turn admitted from brick-screened windows folded into the street elevation of the church. Strait Gate Lutheran Church also featured an enclosed, glass-fronted 'crying room' for parents with young children.

Von Schramek specified a palette of materials including cream face brick, manufactured by local Nuriootpa brickmaker O. J. Kreig, for the interior and exterior walls; copper front doors; tiles for the sanctuary and narthex floor; a pulpit and font base in coarse aggregate concrete; pink Angaston marble for the porch steps and freestanding altar; radiata pine matchboard ceilings and gallery soffit; and clear-finished Tasmanian oak pews.

The church was designed with a complete, integrated PA system, including permanent microphones on the altar, pulpit and lectern; loudspeakers built into the nave brickwork; headphone jacks in the first three pews for parishioners with hearing impairment; and another loudspeaker in the crying room.<sup>56</sup>

Probably on von Schramek's recommendation, South Australian émigré artist Josef Stanislaus (Stan) Ostojka-Kotkowski, a previous collaborator, was commissioned to design a reredos for the sanctuary of the church. Comprised of coloured glass mounted in a timber studwork frame, the reredos depicted the 'stormy sky' at Calvary or Golgotha,<sup>57</sup> the traditional site of Christ's crucifixion outside the walls of ancient

Jerusalem. The reredos was designed to be backlit, with natural light from clerestory windows in the wall at the sanctuary end of the nave.

In 1959, Eric von Schramek submitted his 'radical contemporary' proposal 'with trepidation' to a Church Committee meeting, considering it likely to be rejected. To his surprise, the Committee accepted his proposal 'without dissent.'<sup>58</sup> Pastor Reuther was pleased with the progressive design; that evening, as architect and pastor celebrated, Reuther explained that while a traditional design would have encouraged criticism and discussion, von Schramek's progressive design was accepted readily,<sup>59</sup> perhaps because of its unfamiliarity.

Final working drawings and specifications for both the new church and the manse were completed prior to Christmas 1959. These were shared with the congregation on 21 February 1960.<sup>60</sup> Tenders were called around this time, resulting in the receipt of five tenders. On 21 February 1960, at a special congregational meeting, the Church Committee accepted the lowest tender of £26,828 from Hausler & Post in conjunction with C. O. Junken Pty Ltd,<sup>61</sup> and voted to proceed with construction of the new Strait Gate Church.

Work began on site soon afterward. The footings and steel structure of the church were erected first. The existing manse, known as the Jacob house, which also housed the Light Pass Post Office, was demolished near the end of this process to make way for a forecourt in front of the new church. With the structural frame in position, bricklaying and roof construction proceeded concurrently.<sup>62</sup>

On 7 August 1960, J. J. Stolz, a former pastor of the Light Pass congregation and subsequent UELCA President General, laid the new church's foundation stone, in pink Angaston marble. About 800 people attended this ceremony. Exactly three months later, the last brick was laid. By this time, the steel roof covering was in position and the ceiling lining was almost completed.<sup>63</sup> The steel spire at the western end was prefabricated on the ground and then hoisted into position.<sup>64</sup> During construction of the new church, work by volunteers shed approximately £900 off the tender price.<sup>65</sup>

For a brief period in 1961, the old and nearly completed new churches stood side-by-side. The last service in Zur Engen Pforte Church was held on 7 May 1961 and services were thereafter held in the adjacent church hall until the opening of the new church. The old church was then demolished in June, leaving only the tower, which was subsequently integrated into the new church per von Schramek's design.<sup>66</sup> The Zur Engen Pforte organ, built in 1925, was reinstalled in the new organ gallery.<sup>67</sup>

Strait Gate Lutheran Church was opened and dedicated on 6 August 1961. An estimated 1,800 people attended the service, which also marked the centenary of the congregation.<sup>68</sup> Financial offerings received to the building fund during the opening service amounted to £1,755/3/-, allowing the new church, built at a total cost £34,858/16/5, to be declared open free of debt.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, financial constraints on the congregation meant that the manse, designed at the same time as the church, was not commenced during the 1960s.

Along with St Catherine of Sienna Anglican Church at Hallett (1957), designed by Lawson Cheesman Doley and Partners, and St Antony of Padua Catholic Church at Edwardstown (1959), designed by Sydney architect Kevin Curtin, the new Strait Gate Lutheran Church was one of the first South Australian postwar churches to depart from a traditional rectangular floorplan.<sup>70</sup> As one of the more radical church designs of the 1960s, Strait Gate helped establish a precedent for places of worship with more complicated plans and forms.<sup>71</sup> Echoing an idea first used at Strait Gate, Von Schramek also retained an earlier church tower in his design for the new St Petri Lutheran Church, Nuriootpa, completed in 1968.

A manse was added to the southern side of the church and completed in 1978, though not to von Schramek's original design. In 1987, the original stone tower was pressure-cleaned, the mortar was repaired and relined, new box gutters were installed, the weathervane was sandblasted and refixed, and the spire floodlit.<sup>72</sup> The tower was listed as a Local Heritage Place in March 2004. When reflecting on his career in 2007, Eric von Schramek regarded Strait Gate Lutheran Church as his most radical church design.<sup>73</sup> The Light Pass Strait Gate congregation celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011. One pew was removed from the nave during the early 2020s to accommodate parishioners with mobility difficulties.<sup>74</sup>



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church.**

Source: DEW Files, 1 October 2025

## Chronology

Year	Event
1817	In Prussia, monarch Friedrich Wilhelm III introduces a common state liturgy and union of churches.
1834	Friedrich Wilhelm III compels all Prussian congregations to adopt his state liturgy.
1835	August: Ludwig Christian Kavel, Pastor of Klemzig, resigns in protest.
c.1838	Pastoralism is introduced to the Barossa Valley, resulting in widespread land and water degradation, and beginning the displacement of the Peramangk people from their traditional lands.
1838	April: Johannes Menge writes to George Fife Angas, praising the quality of the country in the Barossa Valley.  November: Kavel and his followers, sponsored by George Fife Angas, arrive at Port Adelaide aboard the <i>Prince George</i> , and subsequently settle at Klemzig on the River Torrens.  28 December: another group of Lutheran families arrive in Port Adelaide aboard the <i>Zebra</i> , under command of Captain Dirk Meinerts Hahn.
1839	Colonel William Light visits the Barossa Valley while undertaking a Special Survey for Angas's agent, Charles Flaxman.
1839	March: the <i>Zebra</i> families settle in Hahndorf, named after Hahn. Some Klemzig families also relocate to Hahndorf, geographically splitting Kavel's congregation.
1839	May: the first Lutheran convention on Australian soil resolves to invite Pastor Gotthard Daniel Fritzsche, from Posen in Prussia, to join the South Australian Lutheran community.
1841	October: Fritzsche arrives in South Australia.
1842	Bethany becomes the first Lutheran township to be established in the Barossa Valley.
c.1844	Gottfried Scholz selects land at Light Pass. <sup>75</sup>
1845	17 September: the barque <i>Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee Patel</i> arrives in Port Adelaide, carrying 262 migrants from Bremen, many of whom subsequently settle at Light Pass.
1846	Kavel establishes and begins preaching to a Lutheran congregation at Light Pass.  16-18 August: a schism occurs at the Bethany convention, splitting the South Australian Lutheran Church.
1850	The first Light Pass Lutheran chapel is completed.

- 1857 Pastor G. W. Staudenmeyer arrives from Germany to assist Kavel, becoming the first resident minister at Light Pass.
- 1860 12 February: Kavel dies.  
25 families leave the Light Pass congregation and establish their own, building a new church a short distance west of the existing church.
- 1861 18 March: Zur Engen Pforte Church foundation stone laid by Pastors Rechner and Auricht.  
4 August: Zur Engen Pforte Church opened.
- c.1872 Zur Engen Pforte congregation acquires a bronze bell from Germany.
- 1887 A stone belltower is added to the front of Zur Engen Pforte Church to house the bell.
- 1925 The Zur Engen Pforte congregation acquires a pipe organ, purpose-built for the church by Adelaide-based organ builder Josia Eustace Dodd (b. 1856 – d. 1952).
- 1939 12 February: a new Zur Engen Pforte tower spire is dedicated.
- 1945 The United Evangelical Lutheran Light Pass congregation's church is widely known as Strait Gate Church, rather than Zur Engen Pforte.
- 1949 21 November: the Church Committee recommends election of a building committee.
- 1951 25 January: Church Management Committee meeting begins planning the Strait Gate congregation's centenary, due in ten years' time, and establishes a Jubilee Fund and a Jubilee Committee.
- 1954 31 January: the Jubilee Committee determines to demolish the existing church, leaving the tower, and to build a replacement church from the ground up.**
- 1957 25 July: the Strait Gate congregation becomes an incorporated body, known as Evangelical Lutheran Straight Gate Congregation Light Pass Inc.
- 1958 21 December: the Church Management Committee resolves to engage Eric von Schramek to prepare plans and specifications for a new church and adjacent manse.**
- 1959 Eric von Schramek submits his 'radical contemporary' proposal to the Church Committee; the committee accepts his proposal 'without dissent.'**  
**Christmas: final working drawings and specifications for both the new church and the manse are completed.**
- 1960 21 February: the Church Committee accepts a tender of £26,828 from Hausler & Post in conjunction with C. O. Junken Pty Ltd to build the new church.**  
3 April: St John's Lutheran Church, Bundaberg is opened and dedicated.

**7 August: J. J. Stolz lays the foundation stone of the new Strait Gate Lutheran Church.**

**7 November: the last brick of the new Strait Gate Lutheran Church is laid.**

**1961** 7 May: the last service is held in the old church.

June: the old Zur Engen Pforte Church and the adjacent Jacob house are both demolished.

**6 August: the new Strait Gate Lutheran Church is opened and dedicated at a service which also marked the centenary of the congregation.**

1966 Amalgamation of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (UELCA) with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) to form the Lutheran Church of Australia.

1978 16 April: the manse adjacent to Strait Gate Lutheran Church is dedicated.

**1987 The surviving Zur Engen Pforte tower is cleaned, repaired and floodlit.**

**2004 The surviving Zur Engen Pforte tower is Local Heritage listed.**

2011 The Strait Gate Light Pass congregation celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**c.2022 One pew is removed from the nave to accommodate people with reduced mobility.**

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PHOTOS

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**

*All images in this section were taken by DEW staff on 4 October 2024, unless otherwise indicated.*



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church, exterior, street elevation.**



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church, exterior, street elevation, note quotation in copper letters.**

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**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**

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**Strait Gate Lutheran Church, part of western elevation, note spire on right.**



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church, northern and western elevations, note butterfly roof form.**

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**



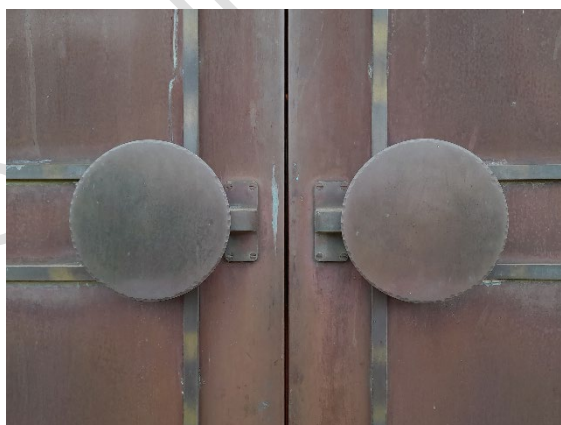
**Southern and western elevations.**



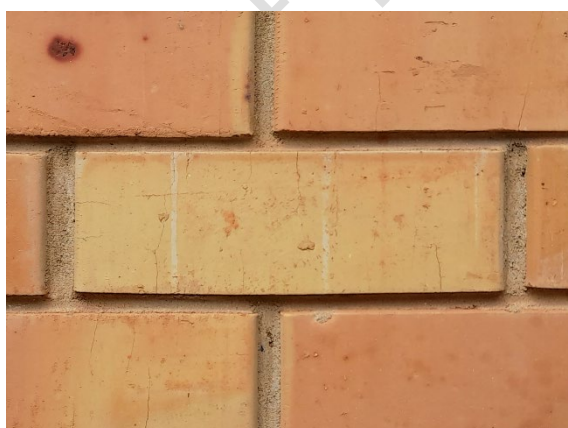
**Porch.**



**Foundation stone dated 7 August 1960.**



**Detail of front door.**



**Detail of cream brick, note rounded ends.**



**Covered way to street elevation.**

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**



**Interior nave looking towards sanctuary.**



**Strait Gate Lutheran Church, interior viewed from gallery.**

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

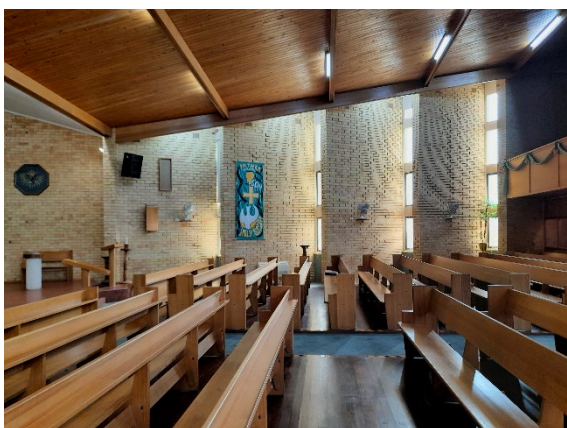
**PLACE NO.: 26621**



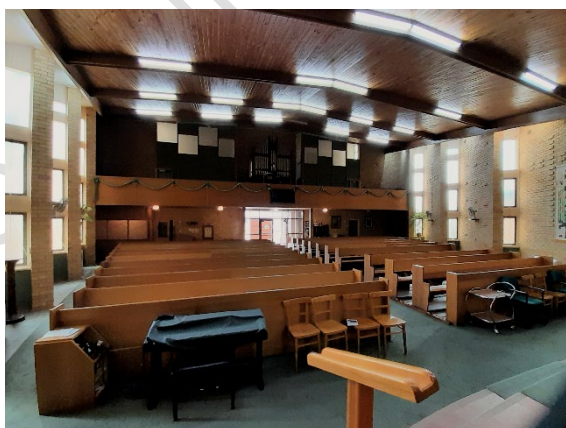
**Nave looking towards sanctuary.**



**Reredos screen in coloured glass.**



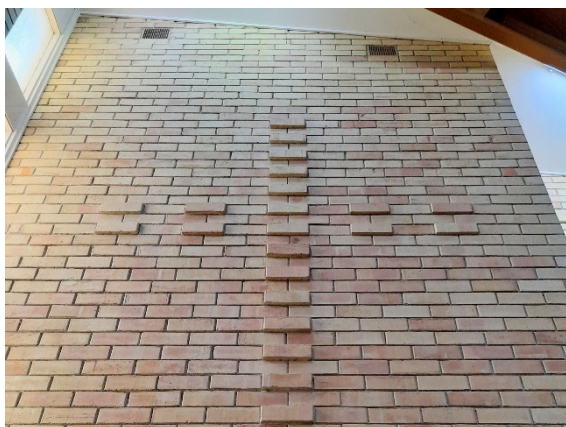
**Nave showing sawtooth windows in side wall.**



**Interior nave looking towards gallery.**



**Gallery showing organ.**



**Cross motif in projecting stretchers on nave walls.**

**Strait Gate Lutheran Church**  
**412 Light Pass Road, Light Pass**

**PLACE NO.: 26621**



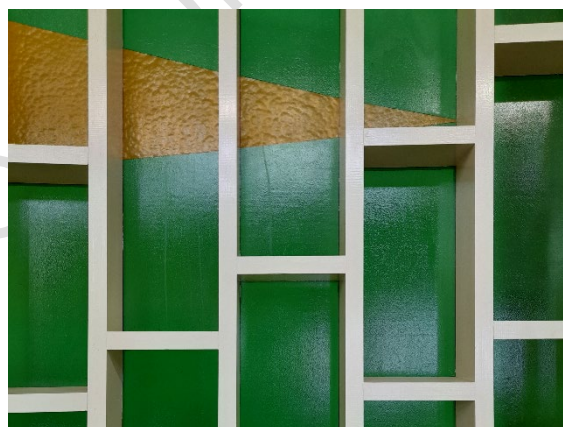
**Pulpit in coarse aggregate concrete.**



**Lectern; note tiled sanctuary floor.**



**Font; note base in coarse aggregate concrete.**



**Detail of reredos screen.**



**Vestry.**



**Vestry.**

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- <sup>1</sup> Christopher Clark, 'Confessional policy and the limits of state action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Church Union 1817-40' in *The Historical Journal* (1996) 39, 4 p. 985
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- <sup>3</sup> Harmstorf, 'German Settlement in South Australia', p. 18
- <sup>4</sup> David Schubert, 'Lutheran Church' in Wilfred Prest (ed) *The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History* (2001) Kent Town SA: Wakefield Press p. 323
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- <sup>9</sup> D. Van Abbè, 'Kavel, August Ludwig Christian (1798–1860)'
- <sup>10</sup> Lothar Brasse, 'The First Special Survey' in Young et al p. 57
- <sup>11</sup> Everard Leske, *For Faith and Freedom* p. 35
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- <sup>14</sup> Ian Harmstorf, 'Some common misconceptions about South Australia's Germans' in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* (1979) No. 1 p. 43
- <sup>15</sup> Harmstorf, 'German Settlement in South Australia to 1914', p. 18
- <sup>16</sup> Harmstorf, 'The history of German migration' in Young et al p. 51
- <sup>17</sup> Leske, *For Faith and Freedom* p. 45
- <sup>18</sup> Leske, *For Faith and Freedom* p. 51
- <sup>19</sup> Leske, *For Faith and Freedom* p. 51
- <sup>20</sup> Burns, 'Postwar Places of Worship' Appendix 1
- <sup>21</sup> J. K. Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey: Pilot Study*, a report to Aboriginal Heritage Branch South Australian Department of Environment and Planning (1990) p. 2
- <sup>22</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*, p. 19
- <sup>23</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*,
- <sup>24</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*, pp. 23-24
- <sup>25</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*, p. 23
- <sup>26</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*, p. 17
- <sup>27</sup> Chilman, *Barossa Valley Aboriginal Heritage Survey*, p. 5
- <sup>28</sup> 'Light Pass' in the Manning Index of South Australian History <https://manning.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/pn/l/13.htm#lightP>
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- <sup>32</sup> Nain Lutheran Church, *The Centenary of the Lutheran Church Nain; Immanuel Lutheran Church Light Pass, The Centenary of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lights Pass, Nov. 1950* (1950) Light Pass SA: Immanuel Lutheran Church p. 4
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- <sup>35</sup> Luther Bible; King James Version
- <sup>36</sup> 'Angaston.' in *South Australian Register* 12 August 1861 p. 3
- <sup>37</sup> Organ Historical Trust of Australia, Immanuel Lutheran Church (web)
- <sup>38</sup> Organ Historical Trust of Australia, Immanuel Lutheran Church (web)
- Summary of State Heritage Place: 26621 30 of 31  
Provisionally entered by the South Australian Heritage Council on 30 April 2026  
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- <sup>39</sup> Greg Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years: Strait Gate Church, Light Pass, 1861-2011* (2011) Light Pass, SA: Evangelical Lutheran Strait Gate Congregation p. 131
- <sup>40</sup> For example, 'Miss Valma Linke and Cpl. F. R. Klix Married at Light Pass' in *Leader* (Angaston) 1 March 1945 p. 3 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article166391792>
- <sup>41</sup> Strait Gate Lutheran Church, *Strait Gate Lutheran Church Light Pass, S.A. Centenary 1861–1961* (1961) Light Pass SA: Strait Gate Lutheran Church
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- <sup>43</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years*, p. 43
- <sup>44</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years*, pp. 44-45
- <sup>45</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years*, p. 46
- <sup>46</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years*, p. 43
- <sup>47</sup> Burns, 'Postwar Places of Worship', p. 158
- <sup>48</sup> Burns, 'Postwar Places of Worship', p. 158
- <sup>49</sup> For example, 'A New Church at Bundaberg' in *Lutheran Herald* 13 February 1960 p. 45
- <sup>50</sup> One other butterfly-roofed church is known in South Australia, namely Hawthorn Church of Christ, attributed to South Australian architect Lance Brune and opened in 1965.
- <sup>51</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 49
- <sup>52</sup> Strait Gate Lutheran Church, *Strait Gate Lutheran Church* p. 15
- <sup>53</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 60
- <sup>54</sup> Burns, 'Postwar Places of Worship' p. 158
- <sup>55</sup> 'South Australia, Foundation Stone Laying, Strait Gate, Light Pass, Sunday August 7th' in *Lutheran Herald* 27 August 1960 p. 257
- <sup>56</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 59
- <sup>57</sup> Von Schramek and Helen Gordon, *Reminiscences* p. 73
- <sup>58</sup> Von Schramek and Helen Gordon, *Reminiscences* p. 73
- <sup>59</sup> Von Schramek and Helen Gordon, *Reminiscences* p. 73
- <sup>60</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 46
- <sup>61</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* pp. 46, 50
- <sup>62</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* pp. 49-53
- <sup>63</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 49
- <sup>64</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 53
- <sup>65</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 57
- <sup>66</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 50. The tower stonework was cleaned and the spire refurbished at this time.
- <sup>67</sup> Organ Historical Trust of Australia, Immanuel Lutheran Church (web)
- <sup>68</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 55
- <sup>69</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years* p. 57
- <sup>70</sup> St Catherine's and St Antony's Churches both deployed square floorplans with atypical seating arrangements oriented around a corner altar; Strait Gate Lutheran Church was the first known church with a triangular floorplan to be built in South Australia.
- <sup>71</sup> Burns, 'Postwar Places of Worship' p. 159
- <sup>72</sup> Kretschmer, *Celebrating 150 Years*
- <sup>73</sup> Von Schramek and Helen Gordon, *Reminiscences* p. 72; von Schramek uses the word 'contemporary' which is implied to be synonymous with radical.
- <sup>74</sup> Rev Wally Schiller, Pers. Comm. 1 October 2025
- <sup>75</sup> Immanuel Lutheran Church Light Pass, *The Centenary of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lights Pass, Nov. 1950* (1950) Light Pass SA: Immanuel Lutheran Church p. 3