'No choice' but to bowl historic church  CAROLINE KING

The words "save" are spray-painted around the foundation stone at Christchurch's iconic Chinese Methodist Church. Soon that stone will be all that remains. Demolition of the historic church on Papanui Rd, Merivale, started on Tuesday - to the shock of heritage advocates - after the church decided against raising funds to save it.

The church says it could not afford the estimated $1.25 million insurance shortfall to salvage the 1894 church and had "no choice" but to demolish it. Even the spire, expected to cost $100,000 to restore, has been destroyed. Canterbury Earthquake Heritage Buildings Fund chairwoman Anna Crighton said she was disappointed they were never asked for a potentially church-saving grant. "This is why the trust was set up, to incentivise heritage building owners to look to retain their heritage buildings." She said the trust received applications "all the time" and estimated 30 to 40 heritage and character buildings had been saved as a result. The biggest grants were $5m to restore the Arts Centre, and more than $1m to retain the McKenzie & Willis facade. Crighton said in cases where a grant was not enough to cover the entire salvage project, it was a good starting point for fundraising. She could not say if the church could have been spared had the owners approached the trust, as that was a "collective decision". However, she was concerned the city would be left with only "boxes" after losing so many heritage buildings.

Church building committee chairman John Lim said the church was insured for about $2.75m, and to salvage it would have cost more than $4m. "It costs so much. For us it would be a shortfall of almost $2m, which we can't afford. Of course we'd like to retain it but... we had no choice." The committee considered applying for funding to save the church but were advised a grant would likely be "very small" - in the range of $100,000, Lim said. The church had hoped to turn the spire into a memorial but could not afford the $100,000 restoration cost, Lim said. A further $50,000 would also have been required to move it further from the pavement, where it was considered a safety hazard to pedestrians if another quake struck, he said. Crighton said it was heartbreaking the "special" church was being demolished and destroying the spire was "incomprehensible. There's no need for that," she said. As for saving the foundation stone, Crighton felt it was a "very small abysmal token. The heritage that we're losing... it's just getting beyond the pale."

Residents spoken to yesterday were also saddened to see the church being torn down. Barbara Cozens said it was another landmark lost. "I can't help but feel a bit sad ... We need a little bit of history." Others saw the demolition as a sign of the city's recovery. Lim said the congregation was committed to rebuilding on the site and hoped they could be in a new church before Christmas next year.

**- The Press (**<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/christchurch-earthquake/8993304/No-choice-but-to-bowl-historic-church>**)**

# New church almost under way *By ARIELLE MONK 17 Jul 2014 Christchurch Mail*

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MEMORIES OF a hotly debated demolition will finally give way to new beginnings on the historic Merivale site the Chinese Methodist Church calls home. Consent came through for the church to rebuild on Papanui Rd two weeks ago, and construction is almost under way, according to church pastor Simon Goh.

The church came under fire last year for the demolition of the historical buildings, but Goh defends the decision, saying there were more factors at play than were presented to the public at the time. He said financial pressure was the obvious problem church administrators met after initially investigating repair costs, but safety and a lingering fear of quakes among his parishioners were also influences. ‘‘We really just wanted a place we could call home and that was safe. A lot of people don’t understand those factors.’’ He says the previous owners wanted the land to be retained as a religious site in future, and he feels his congregation has carried the spirit of the request.

Salvaged items from the 1894 church have been incorporated into designs for the new buildings, including two foundation stones laid alongside a third, four stained glass windows miraculously undamaged, and brass plaques commemorating former congregations and benefactors. Repairs would have left the church more than $ 2 million in deficit.

The Chinese Methodist Church originally purchased the site, with it’s beautiful 19th century buildings, ‘‘to keep the heritage going’’. The 180-strong Chinese church congregation had rented buildings in Christchurch since forming in 1995, and were happy to finally take ownership of their own site. That was in February 2010, months before the ‘‘devastating’’ quakes left them without a home and dwindling in numbers. Since the quakes, they have returned to their former rental building in Upper Riccarton while negotiating insurance, red- zoned land, and the argument for repairs versus a rebuild. ‘‘We could easily have sold it for a profit, but we think it’s important to have a church there,’’ Goh said.

Opus, the project management company, has given assurances the two new buildings will be in use by Easter next year. Goh is keen to communicate with locals during construction.

Canterbury Methodist Churches A Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives research project November 2011 Updated August 2014 Jo Smith (Archivist)

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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** |  |  | | **Brief history of church buildings, address and other names** | **Other sources of information**  (Book titles in italics) |
| **St Albans Methodist Church**  http://www.virtualoceania.net/newzealand/photos/cities/christchurch/earthquake/nz1955.jpg | 1854 St Albans Lane section donated for church  1859 church opened  1868 church enlarged  16 October 1868 new site at corner of Kerrs Lane given and church stonelaying  11 April 1869 church opened  1880s church enlarged  1 November 1894 new church stonelaying on corner of Rugby Street and Papanui Road  5 May 1895 Rugby Street Methodist Church opened  1902 old Sunday School in St Albans Lane destroyed by fire  1902 stonelaying for new Sunday School in Rugby Street  1871 first parsonage built  1926 second parsonage bought in Repton Street  7 February 1954 third parsonage bought  1906 pipe organ installed  [unknown] new organ  Wesleyan Day School 1859-1972  2009 church complex sold to Chinese Methodist Church and congregation moves to Aldred Church  February 2011 damaged by Christchurch earthquake and demolished  **Address**: corner Papanui Road and Rugby Street, Merivale, Christchurch  **Other names**: Rugby Street Church, Merivale Church, St Alban’s Church | *St Albans Methodist Church and its work*  Paine, Frank, comp. *Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Celebrating 100 years of witness from the present St Alban's Methodist Church 1895-1995*  Paine, Frank. *Beginnings [of Methodism in St Albans*  Church archives are held in the Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives, Christchurch  Photos http://www.virtualoceania.net/  http://www.virtualoceania.net/newzealand/photos/cities/christchurch/earthquake/nz1954.jpg |





Photos https://www.google.co.nz/maps