

Knox United Church and Performance Centre

Address: 1448 – 5th Avenue

Date of Construction: 1922

Other Names: Knox Church

Approved by the Heritage Commission: September 11, 2025

Last Updated: June 28, 2025

Added to the Prince George Heritage Register:
March 9, 2026



*Courtesy of the Exploration Place
(Knox Church in 1935)*

Description

On November 5, 1922, a new Knox Church, with basement, vestry, balcony, entrance lobby, and office was officially opened on five lots at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Brunswick Street in downtown Prince George. This site was chosen to serve as a focal point due to population shifts from the earlier communities of South Fort George and Central Fort George into the City of Prince George. Knox Presbyterian was first built in South Fort George in 1911 at a cost of \$1500; it moved to the Millar Addition in 1916. It became Knox United Church in 1925 when the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist churches joined together.

In 1956, a sanctuary was added on the west side of the church, designed by Architect Trelle Morrow. After the Knox congregation merged with the former St. Andrew's congregation in 2018, the sanctuary was renovated and converted into a full-time performance and live arts venue that seats 300 persons and has the most up-to-date lighting and sound system in northern BC.

Heritage Value

The heritage value of this building rests in part in being the only surviving example of early 20th century Gothic Revival design in the City of Prince George. Numerous features of Gothic Revival Church architecture have survived unaltered, making this a notable example of the style. Built in 1922, it featured a 40-foot tower, seating for 280, a choir space for 25 and a large main entrance. The pipe organ was installed in 1965, cost \$9,000 and featured 350 pipes (it was removed during renovations after the fire, as the old wiring and electronics could not be repaired).

Heritage value also exists with the building being only one of two known structures remaining in the city which was designed by the early 20th century architect, Henry Wilson, who had established an office in South Fort George in 1913. He also designed the first city hall, the first hospital, the Bank of Montreal (1919), Sacred Heart Church (1924) and the Pitman house (in 1926 at 2387 McBride). He was also Prince George's fourth mayor in 1921.

The mid-20th century Sanctuary addition to the Church is an iconic example of West Coast Modernism and the work of Architect Trelle Morrow. Its design and use of local wood and introduction of modern

heating and other systems reflect an important transformation of architectural design that was consciously adopted by the growing and modernizing city of Prince George at the time. The 44-inch 1,000 pound bell of Knox Church and its story form an important part of the heritage value of the place. It was manufactured by the C.S. Bell Co in Hillsboro, Ohio, in 1911. It came by CPR to Ashcroft, BX wagon freight to Soda Creek and the BX paddle wheeler to South Fort George. It was hauled by horse and wagon to Central Fort's First Presbyterian Church, where it was first rung on June 14, 1914. It was so heavy that the rope was removed and it was not rung for the next 7 years. While the congregation moved to Knox in 1922, the bell wasn't removed from Central Fort until 1929 when it was moved to the alley behind Knox Church and stayed there for 40 years. The bell was mounted on the ground next to the church in 1956, where it was rung before church services for many years.

Continuity of use is another heritage value reflected by Knox United Church. Over the past 100+ years, the downtown location has been a focal point, both for worship services and community functions. Today, the building is still used for congregational services and a child day-care operation, and with the Knox Performance Centre, it hosts many community activities and concerts.

The setting of the church has landscape value with trees still existing on the perimeter of the site from a 1933 landscaping upgrading of the site. The value of evergreen trees in the city core is appreciated by not only parishioners, but by the community at large.

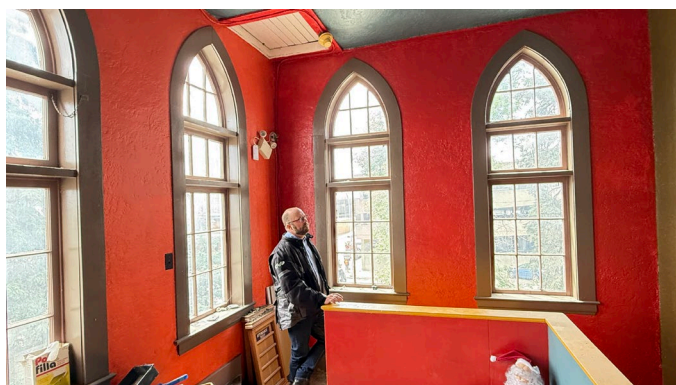
Character-Defining Elements

- The floor plan of the building which demonstrates a tower/nave relationship originating with early protestant churches
- The traditional main entrance to the church which was through the tower. The plan reveals an entrance lobby, coat room and stairs leading to the balcony and the basement.
- The form of the original building which has not been compromised in any way since the date of construction, although modest interior changes have been made throughout.
- The preserved inscription [God is Our Refuge and Strength] above the former church choir dates from the original construction of the building
- The crenellated bell tower and Gothic Revival window patterns.
- The pointed arch incorporated into the window design which is likely the most readily recognized Gothic Revival motif in Canada from the early 19th century into the 20th century.
- The church bell and its story that hold meaning for the local community and are an integral part of the Church's character
- The modernist design and use of local wood materials in the 1955 Sanctuary addition to the earlier Church

Images 2025 Photo of Knox United Church



Gothic Revival





Interior, old Knox Church (left)
 Exterior, Knox addition & bell (below left)
 Interior, Knox addition, now Knox Performance Centre (below left)
 Photos courtesy of George Davison



Sources

Researched and prepared by Trelle Morrow (Prince George Heritage Commission), 2016, and George Davison, 2025, with an interview of the Reverend Dr. Bob K. Fillier.

“Final service for longest-running church in Prince George being held Dec. 31”, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/knox-united-prince-george-closing-1.4466989>

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