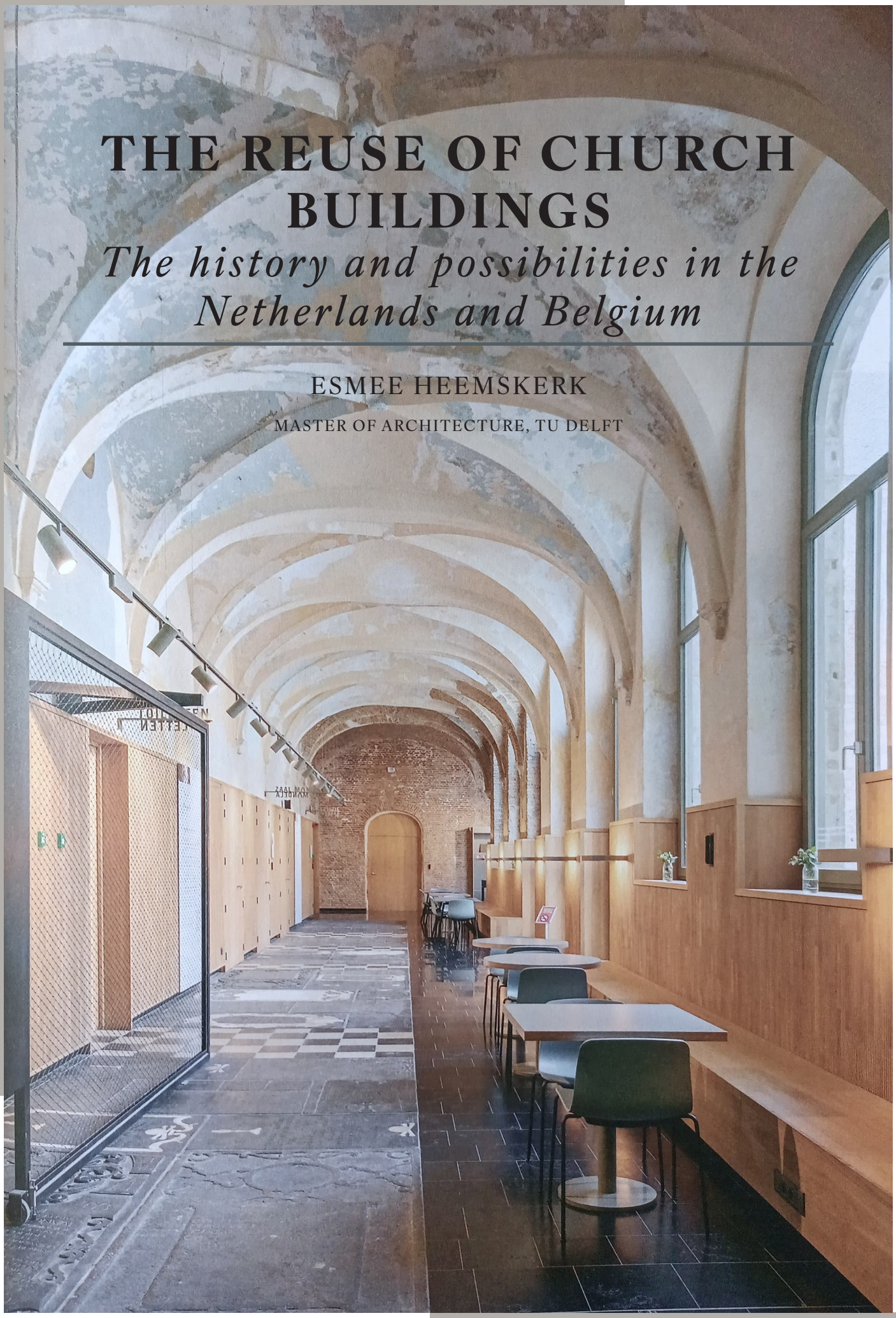

# THE REUSE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

## *The history and possibilities in the Netherlands and Belgium*

ESMEE HEEMSKERK

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE, TU DELFT

**COVER FIGURE** |
Library hallway of
Predikheren
(Grafe et al., 2019, p. 199)

# THE REUSE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

## *The history and possibilities in the Netherlands and Belgium*

*AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis*

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# ABSTRACT

Churches are one of the most important features of the Dutch townscape. They were the cultural hub of the town for a long time. The 20th century marked the start of a societal change: ontkerkelijking. More and more churches are becoming vacant in the Netherlands and Belgium. These buildings can be reused, and the past can help us. The research question is as follows: *"How have churches been reused in the past 30 years in the Netherlands and Belgium?"*.

This question will be answered by analysing five case studies in the Netherlands and Belgium. First, the history and the new design of the churches will be introduced. Then, a short history of restoration and conservation will be given. The five adaptive reuse approaches, as composed by Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019), will be discussed. These approaches will be linked to the case studies. Lastly, a spatial analysis of the case studies will be done. These analyses show that churches with a new social function tend to be designed with a circular approach and have kept more of the spatial qualities of the original church building. However, all case studies have been designed with the history of the building in mind.

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**FIGURE 1** |
Stairway of De Zande
(Grubret, 2014)

# CHAPTER 1
## *Introduction*

Churches are one of the most important features of the Dutch townscape. They often mark the centre of a city, town, or village. The belltower was the highest point of the place, making sure that everyone knew where to go (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2021). The church and its square were ever since the Middle Ages the cultural hub of the town (Van de Donk & Janssen, 2012).

However, the 20th century marked the start of a societal change. People started to leave the church societies and stopped going to the masses. In the Dutch language, they call it "ontkerkelijking" [un-churching].

The process of ontkerkelijking has not stopped. Research from the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) shows that in 2021 58% of the people from the ages 15 and up don't call themselves religious. This was 55% in 2020, and 45% in 2010 (NOS, 2022). This, along with the rise of the online masses during the pandemic, lead to an increase of unused churches in the Netherlands (Hannema, 2021). The Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed (RCE) [National Department for Cultural Heritage] state that since the 1970's about 1340 churches in the Netherlands have become vacant. Of those 1340 churches, about a thousand have been repurposed, the others have been demolished. They estimate that there were about 8300 churches still in use in 2008, and that since then an average of two churches per week have become vacant (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2021).

This research looks at the history of church reuse to explore if past strategies can help with the current vacancy of church buildings. The main research question is: "*How have church buildings been reused in the past 30 years in the Netherlands and Belgium?*"

The aim of this research is to broaden the knowledge of the repurposing of churches in the Netherlands and Belgium, and how the approaches have changed over the years. With this research, I hope to inspire architects and municipalities to act and reuse the vacant church buildings. This will be done by understanding the history of reuse and restauration and by showcasing these approaches through case studies as examples of the possibilities of reuse.

The thesis will start with introducing the case studies. Five case studies have been selected in the Netherlands and Belgium. Some of these have a history which composes of multiple instances of reuse, others only have been repurposed once. All of these will have a description of the history of the building and the process of the reuse. All information will be composed from various literature, project books, articles and (online) archives.

The third chapter will be explaining the history of the restoration and reuse theories. This will be explored with the use of various literature studies. The aim is to create a textual and graphical timeline of the theories of reuse. This will provide a historical framework on which to base the future analysis.

The fourth chapter will be the analysis of the reused churches. First, the approach of the reuse will be discussed and linked to one of the theories of reuse discussed in chapter 3. Then, the new design of the church will be spatially analysed. The impact of a design inside an existing structure can either highlight the original architecture or destroy the harmony of it.

**FIGURE 2** |
Doorway of study room in Predikheren (Grafe et al., 2019, p. 324)

# CHAPTER 2
## *The case studies*

To start the thesis, it is important to introduce the main protagonists of the thesis: the case studies. All theory of reuse and restoration will then be directly connected to the case studies.

When searching for case studies, it is important to set up parameters. For this thesis, the main parameter would be reused churches. To narrow the search field down, the parameters of age, location and function would be added as well. The parameters thus became "churches that have been reused in the past 30 years in the Netherlands and Belgium, of which they all should have a different resulting function". These parameters were used when searching in the *Databank herbestemming kerken* [Database reused churches] of the Belgian museum for religious art and culture PARCUM. This database consists of most reused churches in The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, England, France, and Canada. This database only consists, however, of churches that have been reused for public functions. To search for churches that have been reused for private functions, such as houses, the Dutch website for property listings *funda* can be used. The full list of the considered case studies can be found in the appendix.

Grote Kerk, Veere 1

Predikheren, Mechelen 2

De Zande, Ruiselede 3

Baptistenkerk, Apeldoorn 4

Sint-Jozefkerk, Eeklo 5

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CHURCHES

**FIGURE 3** |
Grote Kerk Veere
(Stichting Exploitatie Grote Kerk Veere, 2019)

**FIGURE 4** |
Interior of the Grote Kerk
(De Wit, 2005)

**FIGURE 5** |
Interior of the Grote Kerk
(Bollack et al., 2010, p. 87)

**FIGURE 6** |
Interior of the Grote Kerk
(Bollack et al., 2010, p. 86)

# GROTE KERK
## *Veere, The Netherlands*

The Grote Kerk in Veere has a tragic past. It was constructed as the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk around 1348. The church was inaugurated in 1543, but the tower was never finished. Most of the treasures that the church kept, were stolen at that point. It burned down partly in 1686, got bombed by the English in 1809 and was transformed in 1811 by the French. They used the church as a military hospital until 1813. This transformation included the construction of nine wooden floors inside the church and the replacement of the original gothic windows with French school windows. When they left the building, it got used as shelter for beggars, storage, shelter after the Watersnoodramp in 1953 and market hall (*Geschiedenis – Grote Kerk Veere*, 2022; Rijksdienst voor het Cultereel Erfgoed, n.d.).

In 1881, the state bought the church to prevent the demolition of the building. The Grote Kerk became the first listed monument of the Netherlands (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, n.d.).

Around the 1990's was when the church would get a new function. Eventually, in 1997 the architectural firm Marx&Steketee would be selected to make the design for the new cultural function of the church. The church would need to stay intact, and the history of the building was important to show, but the cultural function would also need a flexible design for the multiple sorts of events that would be hosted, such as concerts and exhibits.

The entrance of the church has been placed back to the foot of the tower. From here, the visitors could go up the tower to the exhibition of the history of the Grote Kerk or they could go into the church. The west ends of the north

and south aisles contain workspaces, such as a coffee bar, a little shop, and the ticket booth for the events. The facilities, like the bathrooms, technical spaces, and dressing rooms, are placed at the ends of the transepts, as seen in figures 4 to 6. To make sure that these facilities are both functional and flexible, two floors in the same place the 1880 transformation are brought back. This not only creates more spaces, but it also ensures the reflection of the history of the building in the design (Bollack et al., 2010).

**FIGURE 7** |
Exterior of Predikheren (Kramer, 2019c)

**FIGURE 8** |
The courtyard of Predikheren in 2013 (Kramer, 2013)

**FIGURE 9** |
The courtyard of Predikheren in 2019 (Kramer, 2019e)

**FIGURE 10** |
Hallway of Predikheren (Kramer, 2019d)

# PREDIKHEREN

## *Mechelen, Belgium*

Around the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Spanish canon Dominicus Guzmán founded the Order of the Preachers. They would, throughout history, combat the heresy they came across. One example would be the Spanish Inquisition. The order had many friars and monasteries in the south and the west of Europe by 1228. One group of friars from Leuven settled down in 's-Hertogenbosch. They were forced to leave the city in 1629 by the Prince of Orange, Frederick Henry, and found refuge in Gemert in 1640. However, they were yet again forced to leave in 1648 with the Treaty of Münster. That is when they stumbled upon Mechelen. There were many competitors in the city: Friars Minor, Augustinians, and Carmelites. The Spanish monarch ensured their settlement by paying for the construction of the monastery.

In 1796, the French revolutionaries, called the sans-culottes, drove the priests away and took over the monastery. The church was used as an armoury and storage room, while the monastery itself was used as a military hospital. It wasn't until 1975 that the last soldiers left the building, and it became vacant (Grafe et al., 2019, pp. 153-165).

The municipality of Mechelen decided to hold a design contest to restore and reuse the building as a library. Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten won the competition with their design in 2011. Their design is about preserving the decay and restoring in the same style. The aim is to show the history of the building and showcase the scars that time has left on the building. All the flaking of the paint and plaster on the walls has been preserved, figure 10, and the exterior has been restored, as seen in figures 8 and 9. The library

furnishing has been harmoniously designed to create a contrast with the existing (Grafe et al., 2019). This contrast of the old and weathered ceiling and walls and the new library bookcases and seating is captured well in figure 10.

**FIGURE 11** |
Exterior of the chapel of De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013d)

**FIGURE 12** |
Room on upper floor of De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013g)

**FIGURE 13** |
Hallway of De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013e)

**FIGURE 14** |
Hallway with lockers of De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013f)

# DE ZANDE
## *Ruiselede, Belgium*

The Belgian town of Ruiselede is host to the Gemeenschapsinstellingen voor Bijzondere Jeugdbijstand [Community Institutions for Special Youth Assistance]. This institution moved into the former sugar factory in 1849. Around this time there was an internal chapel that was used for its intended function. This chapel was replaced with a neo gothic chapel at the backmost wing of the institution in 1860, figure 11. It wasn't until the first World War that the chapel was used as storage for bombs for the nearby German airfield. Records show that the chapel was vacant after 1975 (*De Zande*, n.d.).

In 2013, Hootsmans Architectenbureau won the design competition for the reuse of the chapel. The chapel was to be reused as a school building for the institution. The design consists of partition walls that divide the chapel in the separate classrooms and administrative spaces. The created spaces are mostly open to the surrounding hallway to keep the new spaces connected to the original building. One of the main design ideas was to make the design reversible. This way the building can be reused in the future when the school is not needed anymore.

Another important feature of the design is the inflow of daylight. The design features multiple holes in the walls and floors/ceilings to accommodate the daylight, as seen in figure 12. These holes have been designed to have sunbeams protruding during a certain hour of the day (Geerts, 2014).

**FIGURE 15** |
Exterior of the Baptistenkerk (Buurman Makerlaardij, 2022a)

**FIGURE 16** |
Interior of the former office in the Baptistenkerk (Polman, 2017a)

**FIGURE 17** |
Living room of the Baptistenkerk (Buurman Makerlaardij, 2022b)

# BAPTISTENKERK

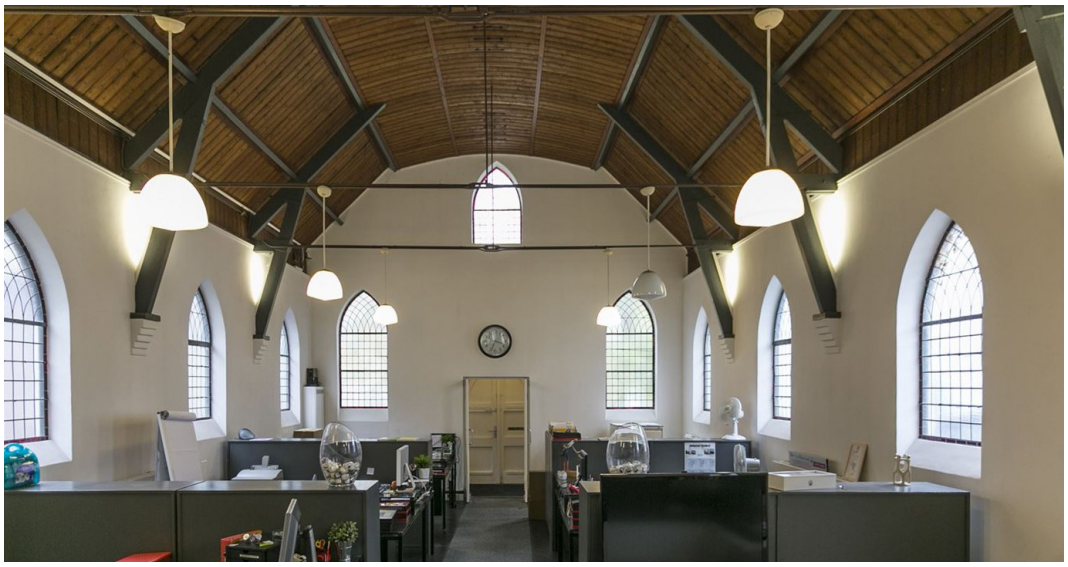
## *Apeldoorn, The Netherlands*

In 1920 in Apeldoorn, the Baptistenkerk, figure 8, was built. This small church was used up until 1972. It became vacant for a few years until it was sold and made into an office in 1986, figure 16. This was the function of the building until it was sold again in 2017 to a married couple, Irma and Erik Groot Wesseldijk.

Irma and Erik used to have a dairy farm, where Erik worked until 2010. However, they kept living there until this church caught their eye. They bought the church and planned to repurpose the building themselves. They claim that this would be the fourth time that they completely renovate a house in an interview (Polman, 2017).

Natalie Polman returned to interview the couple again in 2018, when the renovation was done. They told her about the interventions that were made in the design of the church. Firstly, the front door is mentioned. The church, originally, had two curved wooden doors with a small hallway. Similarly shaped glass doors were placed behind the doors, the original doors now function as shutters. The door in the hallway leading to the main body of the church has been transformed into a portal with the same shape as the doors, as seen in figures 16 and 17. They wanted these interventions to keep the interaction with the street and at the same time the door also functions as a window to let in the light.

Speaking of windows, all the original stained-glass windows have been kept. They have placed an additional glass pane on the inside as insulation.



Lastly, the added loft is discussed. This loft is made with a steel construction and is anchored to the foundation of the church and to the structural walls. This makes the loft a more permanent addition to the building (*Baptistenkerkje Apeldoorn*, 2022).

**FIGURE 18** |
Exterior of Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-b)

**FIGURE 19** |
Original interior of Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-g)

**FIGURE 20** |
New interior of Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-e)

# SINT-JOZEFKERK
## *Eeklo, Belgium*

The Sint-Jozefkerk in Eeklo was designed by the architects Paul Bekaert, Edgard De Decker and Bertrand De Muynck in 1971. The design of the church was to be modernist. The white square building with a separate tower was going to be light and open on the inside. However, around 2017 the municipality chose to reuse the church as a day care (*Kinderopvang @bij*, n.d.).

DENC!-studio won the design competition with their circular design for the church. The original plan for the church was a round floorplan in the square shape of the building. For the new design, the raised altar platform and the ceiling window were kept, figures 19 and 20. As they see it, the building was inherited from the former inhabitant, and they will pass the building on to the next generation as well. To accommodate the possible future redesign, the design needs to be reversible.

The sloped church pews have been partially covered with a wooden floor. These floors create extra play space for the children. A wooden barrier closes the floor off from the drop to the existing floor, both for safety and sectioning of the plan (*BKO Sint-Jozef*, n.d.)

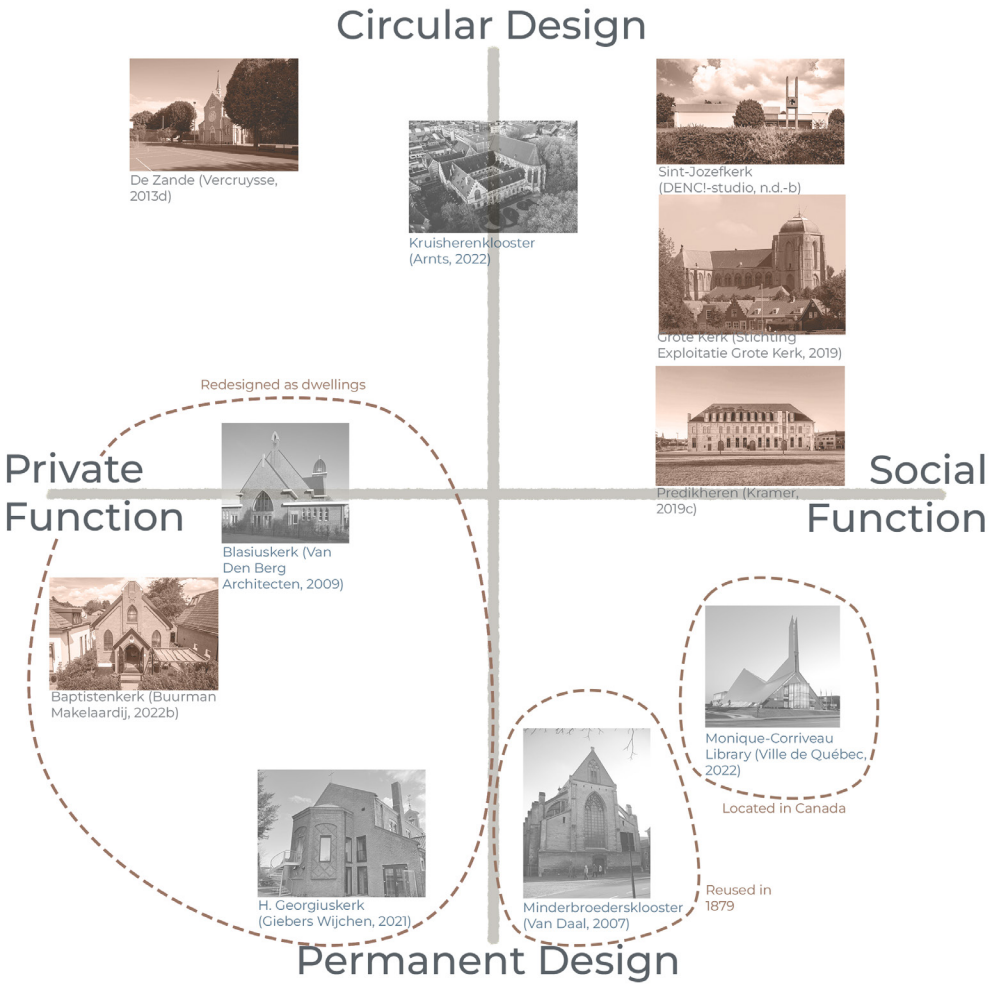



**FIGURE 21 |** Scheme showing the relation between reuse function and design strategy

# CONCLUSION

All the chosen case studies, shown in brown, along with the reuse cases that did not match all of the research parameters, shown as grey, are placed in a graph. This graph, figure 21, shows the alignment on two spectrums: private vs social functions and circular vs permanent designs. Combined they can show interesting conclusions.

When a church is being reused for a social function, such as a library or cultural centre, the design is more likely to be circular. The opposite can also be stated: when a church is being redesigned for one or multiple dwellings, the design is more likely to be permanent.

The explanation can be found in the need for the particular functions. A town is always in need of houses for the inhabitants. The chance that a house needs to be reused as another function is significantly smaller than the chance that, for instance, a library needs to be redesigned.

However, these findings cannot be fully taken as the truth. The selection consists of ten cases, when there most likely exist about a thousand more reuse cases of churches in the Netherlands and Belgium alone.

**FIGURE 22** | The castle of Pierrefonds (Author, 2016)

# CHAPTER 3
## *The history of reuse and restoration*

The reuse of existing buildings is far from a new concept. Historically, structurally secured buildings were frequently adapted to meet a different need or function. Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2019) note that during the Renaissance period, even the ancient monuments would be repurposed for new uses. However, these changes were purely done from a pragmatic perspective, heritage preservation was not the purpose. The driving arguments behind the repurpose were functional and financial. It wasn't until the 19th century that legislation based around the notion of protecting the old buildings began to emerge (Powell, 1999).

### 3.1 Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin

The concept of heritage became important in the beginning of the 19th century. Quite early on, two contradicting ideologies sprouted from the architectural discipline. On the one side of the debate, you had Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc with the restoration movement, on the other side you had John Ruskin's anti-restoration/ conservation movement with William Morris.

Voillet-le-Duc has restored many buildings in his lifetime, many of them Gothic, such as the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and the castle of Pierrefonds, figure 22. His approach to restoration came from the nationalist zeitgeist. Historic buildings were seen as national monuments and were to be repaired in order to show off the nation's achievements (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019; Yazdani Mehr, 2019). He himself described his views on reuse as follows:

> "[T]he best of all ways of preserving a building is to find a use for it, and then to satisfy so well the needs dictated by that use that there will never be any further need to make any changes in the building... In such circumstances, the best thing to do is to try put oneself in the place of the original architect and try to imagine what he would do if he returned to earth and was handed the same kind of programs as have been given to us." (1854/1990, pp. 222-223).

Yazdani Mehr (2019) states that no one today can fully imagine themselves in the shoes of the original architect. "This imagined position may result in falsification and threaten intangible values of the building." (p. 923). Even in his own time, Voillet-le-Duc received critique on his ideology. The Englishman John Ruskin described the ideology as "a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed" (1849, p. 148) and said that "it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture... Take proper care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them." (1849, pp. 184-186). Ruskin was a big advocate for the conservation or anti-restoration movement in the 19th century (Jokilehto, 1999).

### 3.2 The Athens Charter (1931)

The Athens Charter was the first international document that boosted the modern conservation policies in 1931. It was a document written by the International Museum Office, an institution founded after the First World War whose goal was to document the conservation and restoration of the damaged or destroyed buildings and towns. The restoration of buildings was not to be a "stylistic restoration". They valued the styles of the periods of the buildings (Yazdani Mehr, 2019). They stated that "the Conference recommends that the occupation of buildings, which ensures the continuity of their life, should be encouraged but that these buildings should be used for a purpose which respects their historic or artistic character." (International Council on Monuments and Sites, 2011). Historic buildings, according to their ideas, must be maintained only under specific conditions and viewed as "isolated monuments" in the modernist urban fabric. This resulted in a sharp division between conservation/restoration and modern architecture (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019).

## 3.3 Scarpa and Döllgast

About a decade after the Athens Charter, the Second World War started. Another period in time of destruction and economic depression. Again, the architects were faced with the question of restoration or conservation of the damaged buildings. One of these architects was Carlo Scarpa. Scarpa always preferred to add to existing structures rather than designing new ones, which his peers thought odd, if not perverse. He said to have taken his inspiration from great architects of the past, such as Brunelleschi's additional dome to the Duomo in Florence. Scarpa, like Brunelleschi, refused to design in previous styles, and his work was an ongoing dialogue with history. This is evident in his design of the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, figure 23, in Venice. Scarpa took advantage of a water-logged ground floor to create a new level through the historic palazzo, allowing the canal to pierce the structure and create an internal moat (Powell, 1999).

Parallel to Scarpa was the German architect Hans Döllgast. One of his most famous projects was the reconstruction of the, during the Second World War heavily damaged, Alte Pinakothek in Munich, figure 24. He opted for the daring but historically rooted reconstruction instead of the replication of the ruined historic fabric of the building. He used both "traditional" and modern materials to merge the old and the new to show the scars of the history with pride. The ending of the Second World War was the catalyst for the emergence of the honest approach to reconstructing the destroyed buildings and the rejection of "false" rebuilding (Powell, 1999).

## 3.4 The Venice Charter (1964) and adaptive reuse

In 1964, the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments was held in the city of Venice, following the end of the Second World War. As a document, the Venice Charter played a significant role in conservational history. Article 5 of the Charter states:

> "The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted." (International Council of Monuments and Sites, 1965).

With this theory, they introduced the theory of adaptive reuse. Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019) pinpoint the 70's as the "historical moment in which the discipline of 'adaptive reuse' was established as a creative discipline" (p.16). They claim that the discipline has five different approaches that have been used parallel of each other.

The first is the "Typological approach". This approach focuses on the study of the typology of the building and the way the new programme is adapted or fitted inside the building.

The second mentioned approach is the "Architectural approach". It investigates the various design methods for intervening within or upon an existing structure.

As third approach the "Technical approach" is mentioned. Unlike the architectural approach, which focuses on a conceptual interaction between the old and new form, some writers have regarded building adaptation as purely a technical issue and have grown less theoretical in their opinion.

Fourthly, the "Programmatic approach" is described. This method entails starting with a certain function or programme and then looking for an existing (historic) structure that can accommodate it.

The fifth and last specified is the "Interior approach". The last decade showed an interest in the adaptive reuse of interior design and architecture. The focus with this approach can be found in the "soft values" of the building, such as the immaterial aspects, atmosphere, and narratives. In short, the approach is more poetic towards building adaptation (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019).

**FIGURE 23** |
Fondazione Querini Stampalia, ground floor (Corbetta, 2021)

**FIGURE 24** |
Alte Pinakothek, Northside (Gras-Ober, 2012)

**FIGURE 25** | Interior of Monique-Corriveau Library (PARCUM, n.d.)

# CHAPTER 4
## *The analysis*

The history of building restoration/conservation is a detailed account which started before Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin first wrote their opinions and theories. This led to national and international guidelines for the contemporary dos and don'ts of restoration/conservation projects in architecture. Eventually, the terms and descriptions were defined, and adaptive reuse emerged as a discipline. Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019) recognise five different approaches of adaptive reuse: typological, architectural, technical, programmatic, and interior. Most of the historical and new approaches can be found in the chosen case studies. This was not a part of the selection process of the case studies.

After the case studies have been categorised by their used approaches, the spatial qualities of the redesign of the church buildings will be evaluated. Amongst these qualities are the use of the openness of the church space, the inflow of daylight and the integration of the new design elements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Grote Kerk, Veere | 1 |
| Predikheren, Mechelen | 2 |
| De Zande, Ruiselede | 3 |
| Baptistenkerk, Apeldoorn | 4 |
| Sint-Jozefkerk, Eeklo | 5 |

5
CHURCHES

# GROTE KERK
## *Veere, The Netherlands*

Marx&Steketee chose to reuse the Grote Kerk in Veere, while not changing the building permanently. They restored the main entrance of the building to its original design, from before the French took over. However, they have not completely erased that part of the history, as they have reintroduced the concept of the floors that were built in the 19th century. Their approach can be placed under the architectural approach as described by Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019). Marx&Steketee focus in their new design on the interaction of the old architecture with their new and circular additions.

The design of the new additions is, as said before, mostly placed in the transepts of the church, as seen in figure 30. The new construction of the added floors in the transepts consists of two floors in the transepts, which is only a small part of the earlier addition of floors by the French in the 19th century. This ensures that the construction does not take up too much space both physically and feeling-wise. The facilities are placed in boxes on the wooden structures, figures 26 and 27. These boxes don't touch the walls of the church, again not taking up much space while also having insulation benefits.

Other than the new entrance hall, the central axis of the church, with the nave, has been kept as original, figure 29. By doing so, the visitor still has the initial view and feeling of entering a church. The awe of the spatiality of the church has not been obstructed. Only when there are exhibitions or events which need the space, will it be obstructed. This can be seen in figure 28.

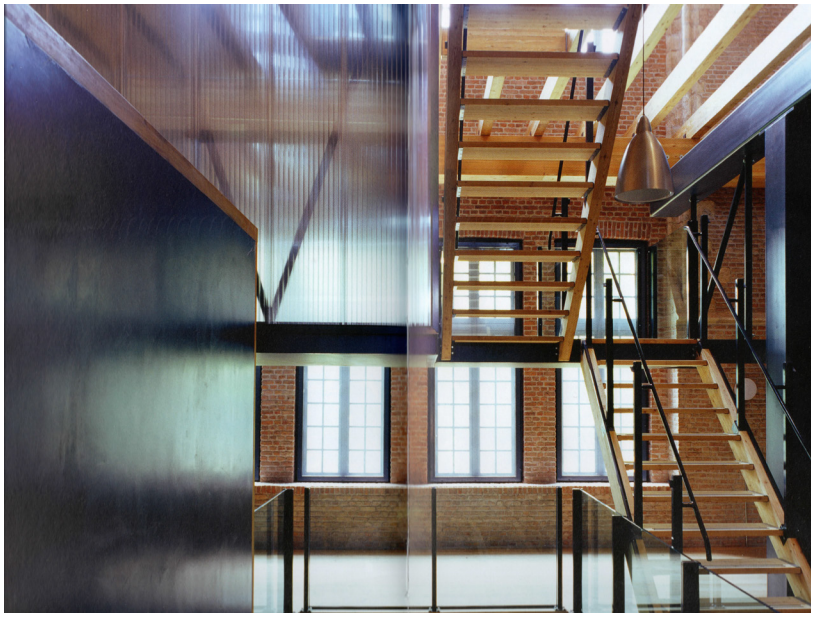
**FIGURE 26** |
Stairway of the Grote Kerk
(Bollack et al., 2010, pp. 56-57)

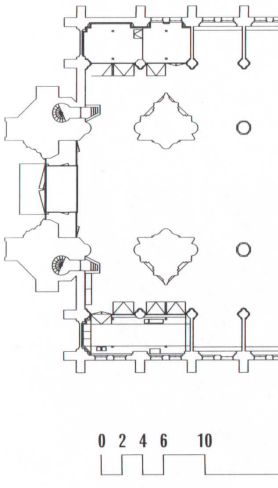
**FIGURE 27** |
Transept of the Grote Kerk
(Bollack et al., 2010, p. 86)

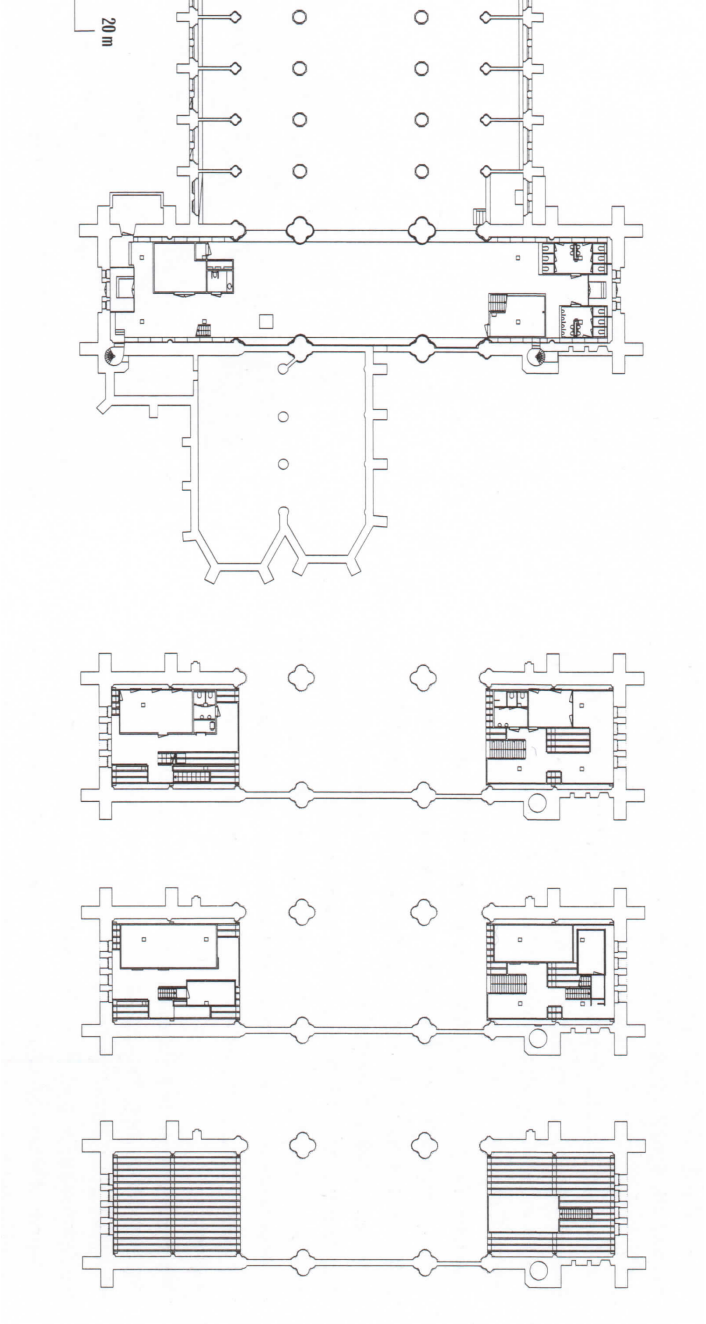
**FIGURE 28** |
Exhibition "*Schepen in de Schermering*" in the Grote Kerk
(Grote Kerk Veere, 2020)

**FIGURE 29** |
Nave of the Grote Kerk
(NAP Ingenieurs, 2020)

**FIGURE 30** |
Plans of the Grote Kerk
(Bollack et al., 2010, p. 177)



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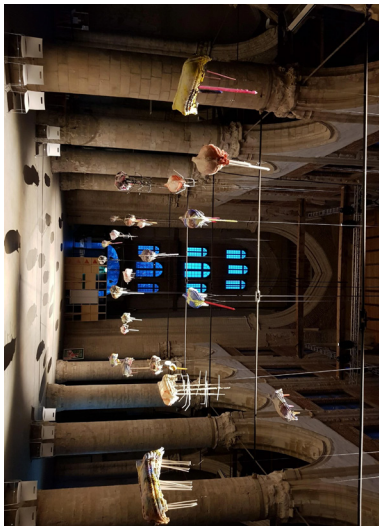


# PREDIKHEREN
## *Mechelen, Belgium*

In the book *Het Predikheren Mechelen: Herbestemming van kloosterruïne tot stadsbibliotheek* (2019) Mechtild Stuhlmacher mentions that "many conservation and renovation projects today aim to restore an often fictious 'original' condition" (p. 48). In these projects, the architecture and the conservation are seen as separate fields. For the Predikheren, they decided to do things differently. They opted to treat each historical period in the building's rich history equally, rather than restoring to a particular historical layer of the building. She mentions that they were heavily inspired by the term 'Weiterbauen', a term that Döllgast used to describe his approach. They name his design for the Alte Pinakothek as the leading reference for the design of the Predikheren (p. 59). With the design, they intent to make architects reconsider the approaches to conservation and restoration. They believe that architects have been too reliant on the one-sided reading of the Venice Charter of 1964 (p.49). Their inclusion of the architecture within the conservation process of the building makes their approach fit in with the architectural approach.

The design of the library has a big impact on the spatiality of the monastery of the complex, as it houses most of the programme. The hallways and the adjacent rooms have been redesigned as library and study rooms. The added furniture takes up their needed space in the rooms. However, the furniture does not reach higher then about 2,5 m. This allows for the chipped paint and plaster of the walls and ceilings to be seen.

Even though the roof had to be replaced due to current regulations, the choice was made to retain the original wooden structure under the new steel structure. The removal of the wooden structure would have had an immense impact on the spatiality of the attic. It also would have been erasure of the history of the building and therefore clashed with the ideology of Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten.

**FIGURE 31** | Study room of Predikheren (Kramer, 2019f)

**FIGURE 32** | Chipped ceiling (Kramer, 2019b)

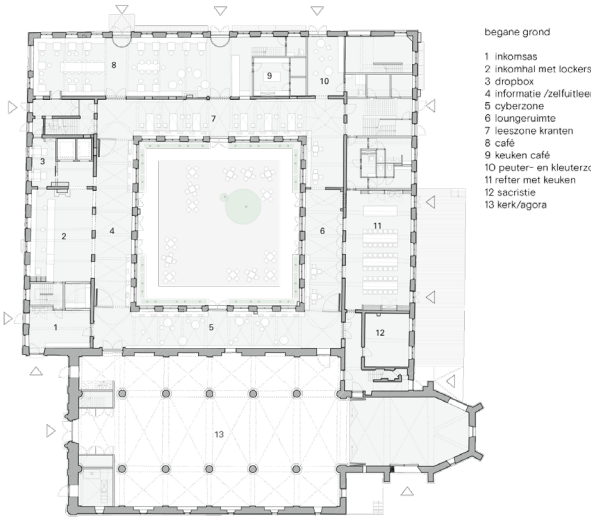
**FIGURE 33** | Weathered painted wall (Kramer, 2019g)

**FIGURE 34** | The attic of Predikheren (Kramer, 2019a)

**FIGURE 35** | Plans of the ground floor of Predikheren (Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, 2019)

**FIGURE 36** | Plans of the first floor of Predikheren (Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, 2019)

**FIGURE 37** | Plans of the attic of Predikheren (Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, 2019)




n / aanwinsten

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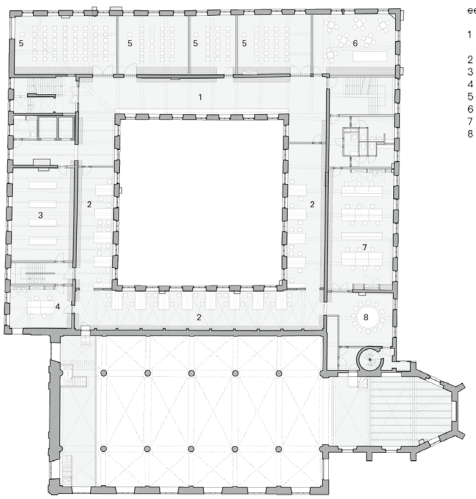
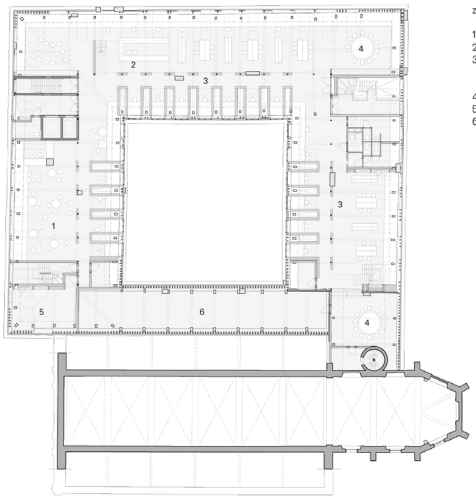



eerste verdieping

1 zone 'Midden' circulatie / aanwinsten / tentoonstellingen
2 zone 'Diep' lees- en studeeruimte
3 sorteerruimte
4 atelier mediaverzorging
5 worshop / leslokaal
6 refter personeel
7 afsluitbaar landschapskantoor
8 spreekkamer / afsluitbar kantoor




zolderverdieping

1 bibliotheek kinderen
2 infobalie
3 zone 'Midden' bibliotheek volwassenen: circulatie /aanwinsten / open magazijn leestafels / studeerplekken
4 workshop / leslokaal
5 multifunctionele ruimte
6 installaties

# DE ZANDE
## *Ruiselede, Belgium*

When Hootsmans Architectuurbureau was working on the design for the chapel of De Zande in Ruiselede, they used the philosophy of Alain de Botton's *Religie voor atheïsten* (2011). He mentions that the original function of a building is always going to be felt and that in the case of a religious building the 'naked' architecture is revealed when all negative connections to religion are broken without denying them. Hootsmans Architectuurbureau apply this philosophy by dividing the chapel with the partition walls. They drastically alter it, only to present it again in a fresh, new way (Geerts, 2014). This approach can be seen as a combination of the sentiments of Scarpa and the interior approach. Hootsmans Architecten add to the original structure to give it a new perspective, while also using the contrast in atmosphere of the former and new functions.

When speaking of spatiality, the additions designed by Hootsmans Architectuurbureau fill the whole church, as seen in the plans of figure 41. While every room still has some characteristics of the church building, such as the pillars and windows, the overall spatial qualities of the church have been covered up by the new structure, figures 38 to 40. This can be attributed to the need of the multitude of rooms in favour of the programme of the institute. This does not mean that the rooms feel claustrophobic. The rooms have closed off walls up till door-height, above that the walls are made of glass. Because of this, enough daylight can enter the rooms. Together with the white plaster and light-coloured wood the rooms feel spacious and airy.

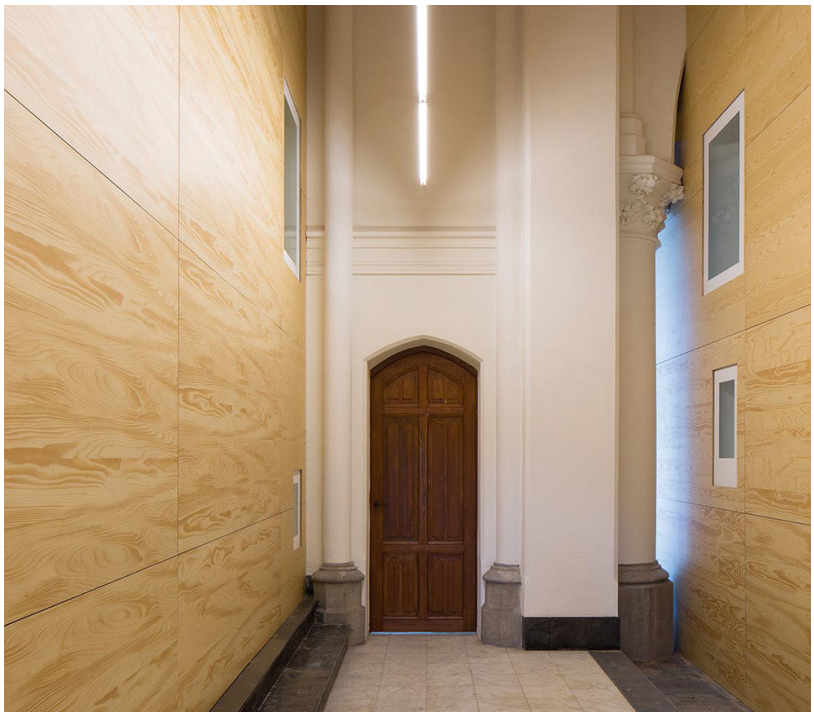
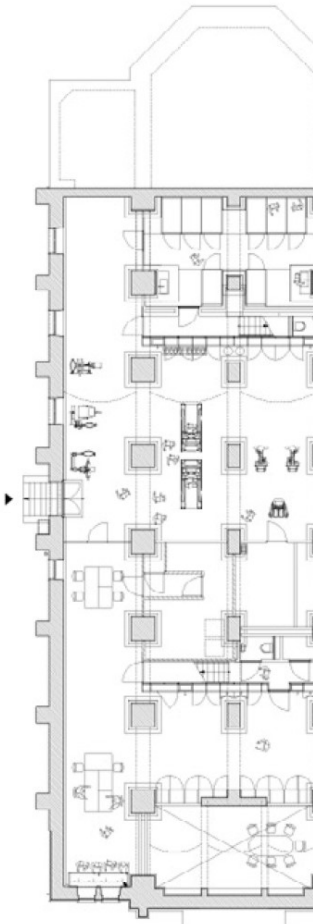


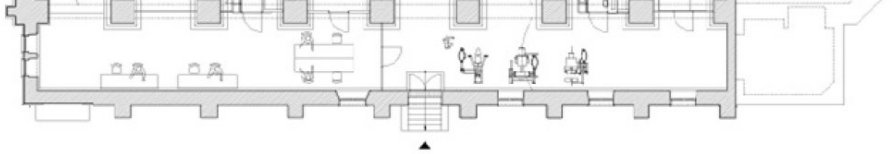
**FIGURE 38** | Connection of the old and the new in De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013b)

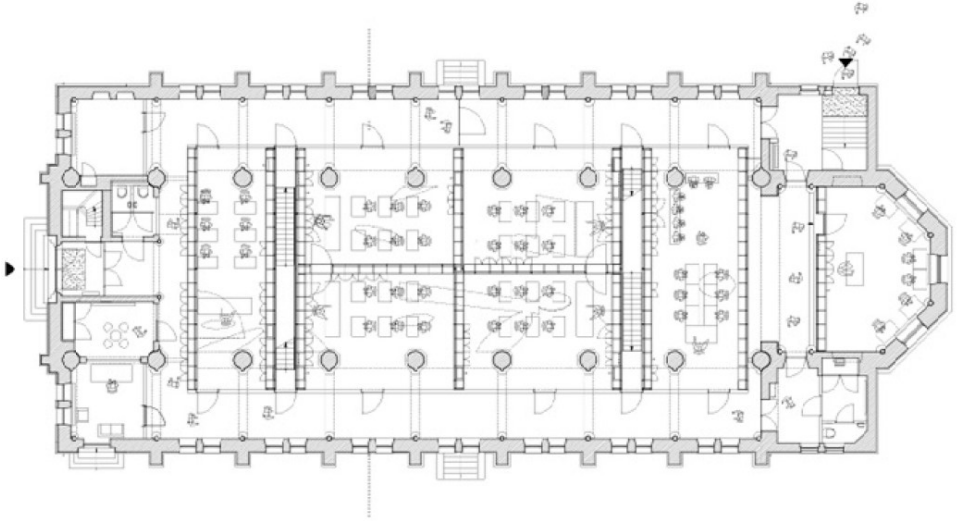
**FIGURE 39** | Connection of old and new windows in De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013a)

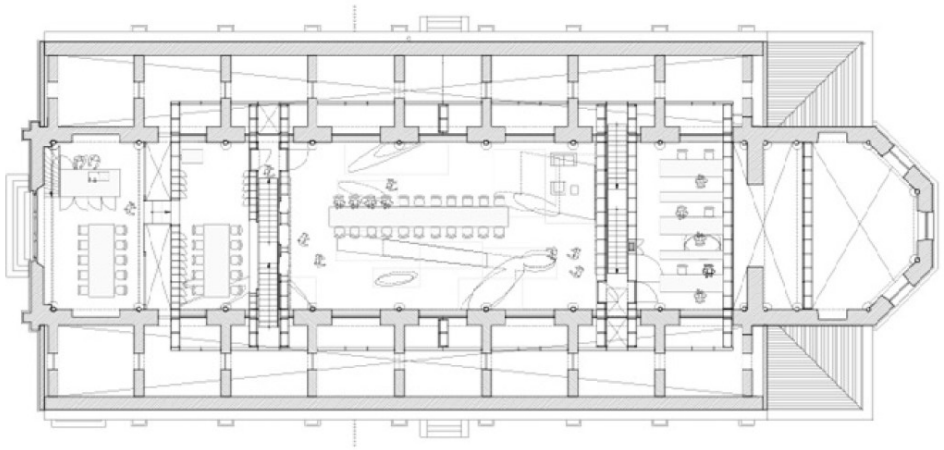
**FIGURE 40** | Connection of a pillar of De Zande (Vercruysse, 2013c)

**FIGURE 41** | Plans of the redesign of De Zande (Hootsmans Architectuurbureau, 2013)









# BAPTISTENKERK
## *Apeldoorn, The Netherlands*

The Baptistenkerk in Apeldoorn is the only case study that has been redesigned by a private party. The married couple had complete freedom in their decisions. In an interview in the Dutch tv programme *BinnensteBuiten* (2022) the couple revealed that they were looking for "something special" when they wanted to move houses. They were initially looking for an old school building to reuse when a friend of theirs found the Baptistenkerk and send the listing to them. The rest is history. This approach could be seen as a combination of the typological and the programmatic approaches. They knew that they were looking for a special building to design their house in, and they were searching for ways to fit their home in the existing church.

As the owners of the church, the couple had all the reigns in hand with the design. Every room could be done to their hearts desire. They chose, however, to keep most of the central room open. This way, the spatial qualities of the church remain intact. The only real obstruction of the spatiality of the church is the added loft. Even then, the loft is constructed with a slender steel structure that blends in with the dark painted wooden beams of the roof structure. The overall spatiality of the Baptistenkerk is of a different calibre than the spatiality of the other case studies. The church is considerably smaller in plan and height, making it more difficult to maintain the spatial qualities when reusing.

**FIGURE 42** |
The steel construction of the loft
(Polman, 2018a)

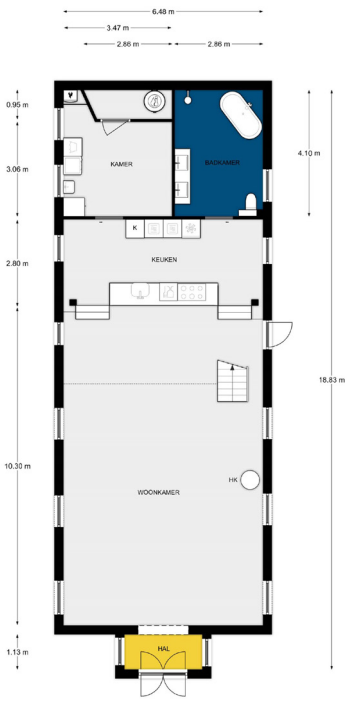
**FIGURE 43** |
Interior of the Baptistenkerk
(Buurman Makelaardij, 2022c)

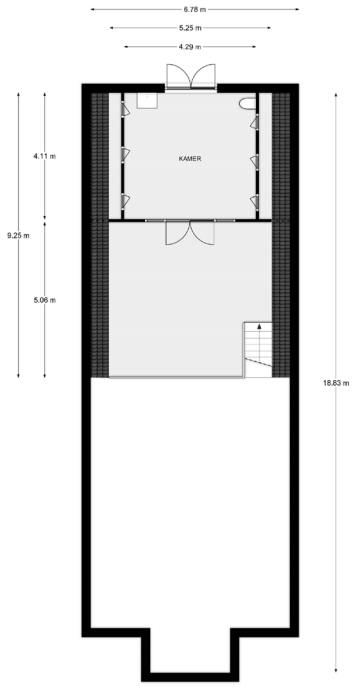
**FIGURE 44** |
Connection of the new structure to the existing
(Buurman Makelaardij, 2022a)

**FIGURE 45** |
The loft of the Baptistenkerk
(Buurman Makelaardij, 2022g)

**FIGURE 46** |
Plan of the ground floor of the Baptistenkerk
(Buurman Makelaardij, 2022f)

**FIGURE 47** |
Plan of the first floor of the Baptistenkerk
(Buurman Makelaardij, 2022e)


6.48 m
3.47 m
2.86 m
2.86 m
0.95 m
3.06 m
2.80 m
10.30 m
1.13 m
4.10 m
18.83 m
KAMER
BADKAMER
K
KEUKEN
HK
WOONKAMER
HAL


8.78 m
5.25 m
4.29 m
4.11 m
9.25 m
5.06 m
18.83 m
KAMER

# SINT-JOZEF
## *Eeklo, Belgium*

DENC!-studio won the design competition for the Sint-Jozefkerk in Eeklo with their circular approach. They chose to use the attributes of the church building to their fullest. The round floor plan would make up for great supervision of the children, and the original window in the roof ensures the space feels bright. This can be classified as the architectural approach. The architecture of the church was used as a base to build upon, both metaphorically and literally.

The Sint-Jozefkerk is the only case study that originally has been designed in modern times. The original church building is therefore different in typology and layout than the other case studies. Instead of the traditional cross shaped floorplan, the Sint-Jozefkerk is square with the programme of the building fit in in a circular shape with the altar in the middle. This results in a different spatiality of the church building. The overall space is lower, but more open due to the newer construction with wider spans.

The new design of the day care has been placed on top of the original church interior. The round layout of the church had been kept. The openness of the space is beneficial to the new function. The supervisors have a good overview of the room and the children from most points in the room. The reusable design of the day care required none of the structure and its permanent interior, like the concrete pews, to be removed and/ or altered. The added wooden floor on top of the pews can be seen as a smart way of working with the space you have.

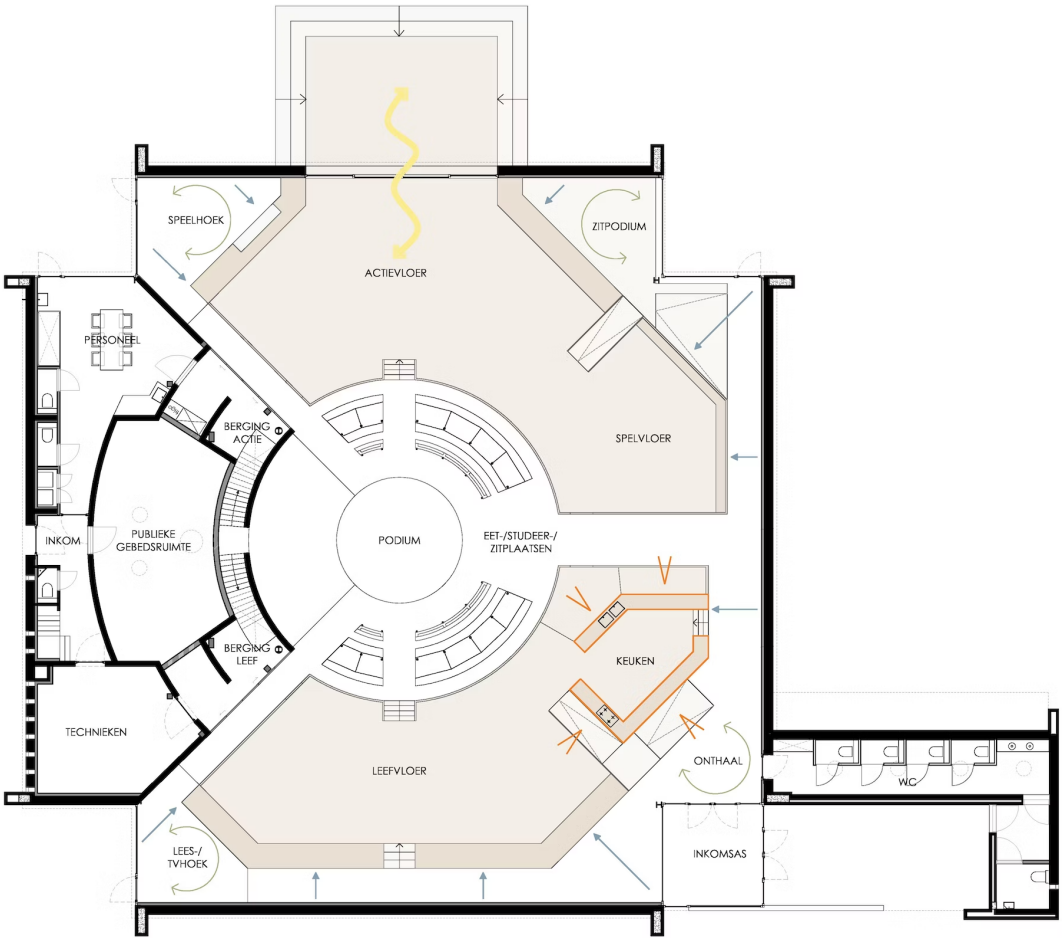
**FIGURE 48** |
Interior of BKO Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-c)

**FIGURE 49** |
Old pews of Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-f)

**FIGURE 50** |
New design of the pews in Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-d)

**FIGURE 51** |
Plan of BKO Sint-Jozef
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-h)

**FIGURE 52** |
Concept for a wooden floor over pews
(DENC!-studio, n.d.-a)


SPEELHOEK
ZITPODIUM
ACTIEVLOER
PERSONEEL
BERGING ACTIE
SPELVLOER
INKOM
PUBLIEKE GEBEDSRUIMTE
PODIUM
EET-/STUDEER-/ ZITPLAATSEN
BERGING LEEF
KEUKEN
TECHNIEKEN
LEEFVLOER
ONTHAAL
WC
LEES-/ TVHOEK
INKOMSAS

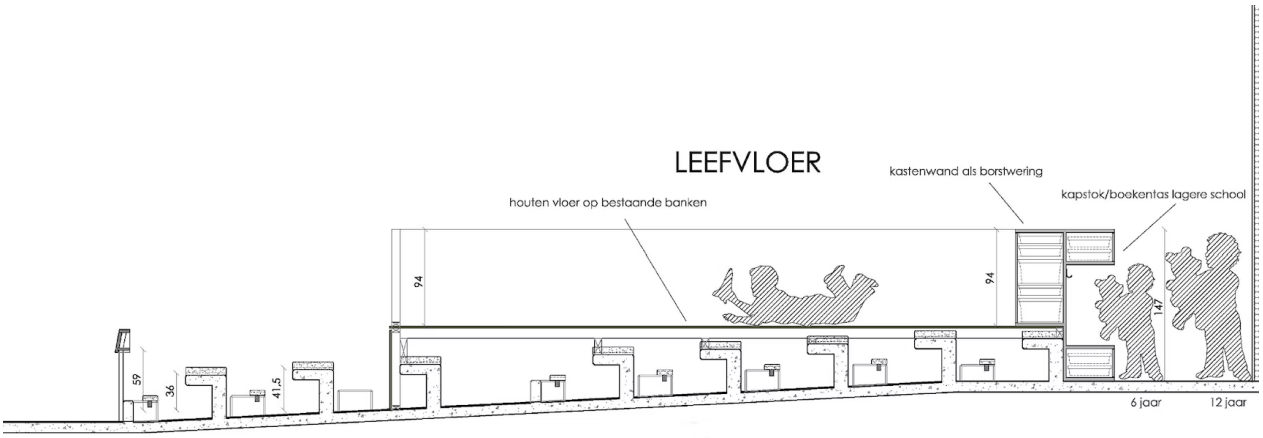

LEEFVLOER
kastenwand als borstwering
houten vloer op bestaande banken
kapstok/boekentas lagere school
94
94
147
59
36
41,5
6 jaar
12 jaar

**FIGURE 53** | Boekenhandel Dominicanen (Franganillo, n.d.)

# CHAPTER 5
## *The conclusion*

This research began with the introduction of the persistent problem of "ontkerkelijking" in the Netherlands. More and more churches are becoming vacant, and possibilities arise to reuse these buildings. The aim of this research is to broaden the knowledge of the possibilities of repurposing church buildings in the Netherlands and Belgium and answer the research question "*How have church building been reused in the past 30 years in the Netherlands and Belgium?*". To answer the question, the research has been divided in three chapters. These chapters are comprised of, respectively, the introduction of the five chosen case studies and their history, a short history of restoration and reuse theories, and lastly the theoretical and spatial analysis of the case studies.

The five chosen case studies in the Netherlands and Belgium all have their own histories with reuse leading from one recorded case to four different functions in their lifetime. For all of the cases, the most recent repurposement will be analysed. When put in a graph, together with five cases that almost made the selection, showing the alignment on two spectrums, private vs social functions and circular vs permanent designs, it became apparent that most reuses with a social function had been designed with a circular approach. The churches with a new private function, like housing, were more on the permanent side of the spectrum.

The history of reuse shows that before the 19th century, all recorded cases of reuse were purely pragmatic and not done out of preservation of heritage. Viollet-le-Duc was one of the first to write down his ideologies of restoration. John Ruskin counteracted with the conservation movement. The 20th century marked the start of international documents surrounding the theme. The Athens Charter in 1931 and later the Venice Charter in 1964 were leading in architecture and monument care. Until in the 1970's adaptive reuse emerges as discipline. Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019) recognise five different approaches in adaptive reuse: the typological, the architectural, the technical, the programmatic and the interior approach.

The afore mentioned approaches can be found in the five chosen case studies. Interestingly, almost every case study has a different approach as defined by Plevoets & Van Cleempoel. No conclusions can be derived from this analysis. The spatial analysis of the reuse cases provides a different outcome. Again, a distinction can be made based on the function type of the reuse. The churches with a new, private function have more required rooms in their programme that need to be fit in. The original spatiality of the church has been impacted more in those cases than with the churches that got reused for social functions. However, this does not mean that the churches with private functions have no spatial qualities of the original churches left. In all cases did the designing party ensure that the original purpose of the building stayed visible.

This research shows that there is no real right or wrong when reusing church buildings. All researched case studies had at least one common design principle: the preservation of the history of the church building. It could be said that in, at least, the last 30 years in the Netherlands and Belgium that principle has been leading in the practise of reuse. However, it must also be said that for this research, only five case studies have been examined. To get a more concrete result, more case studies must be investigated. This could not be done for this research, as the time limit would not allow it. As a designer myself, I learned much about the different, and yet sometimes similar, design approaches that have been used. I hope to use the gained knowledge in the future when I may get the chance to redesign a church building.

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**Figure 19** |
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**Figure 20** |
DENC!-studio. (n.d.-e). *New interior of Sint-Jozef*. https://dencstudio-website-uploads.imgix.net/projects/BKOSINTJOZEF-29b.jpg?auto=compress%2Cformat&fit=clip&q=80&w=1800&s=4b404076d1bccd7a9bacfd1a9a5f35d0

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**Figure 34** |
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DENC!-studio. (n.d.-d). *New design of the pews in Sint-Jozef*. https://dencstudio-website-uploads.imgix.net/projects/BKOSINTJOZEF-33b.jpg?auto=compress%2Cformat&fit=clip&q=80&w=1800&s=b-7b98c65345c3e0320a4c539c1008ab7

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# APPENDIX
## *List of possible case studies*

| NAME OF CHURCH | LOCATION | YEAR REUSED | FUNCTION | ARCHITECT | REASON OF (DIS) QUALIFICATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kruisheren-klooster** | Maastricht | 2005 | Hotel | SATIJNplus Architecten | Overused as example in media |
| **BKO Sint-Jozef** | Eeklo | 2017 | Day care | DENC!-studio | Church was built in modern times, as opposed to the other case studies |
| **Grote Kerk** | Veere | 2004 | Cultural centre | Marx&Steketee | Well documented approach and design process |
| **Plechelmus Daltonschool** | Hengelo | 2004 | School | LKSVDD | Little to no information available |
| **Fatih Moskee** | Amsterdam | 1981 | Mosque | Unknown | Little to no information available |
| **De Zande** | Ruiselede | 2013 | Schoolbuilding | Hootsmans Architecten-bureau | Interesting design of the programme |
| **Boekenhandel Dominicanen** | Maastricht | 2007 | Bookstore | SATIJNplus Architecten | Overused as example in media |
| **Bibliotèque Monique-Corriveau** | Quèbec | 2013 | Library | Dan Hanganu | Located in Canada |
| **Predikheren** | Mechelen | 2013 | Library | Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten | Different approach to restoration of original building than other case studies and very well documented |
| **Minderbroeders-klooster** | Maastricht | 1879 | Archive | Unknown | Does not fit within the 30-year frame |
| **Baptistenkerk** | Apeldoorn | 2017 | House | Private party | Intersting case of reuse by the owners instead of architects |

| NAME OF CHURCH | LOCATION | YEAR REUSED | FUNCTION | ARCHITECT | REASON OF (DIS) QUALIFICATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **H. Georius Kerk** | Heumen | 2021 | Apartments | Van Den Berg Architecten | Was less interesting than Baptistenkerk |
| **Blasiuskerk** | Breda | 2009 | Apartments | Van Den Berg Architecten | Was less interesting than Baptistenkerk |
| **Grote Kerk** | Halfweg | 2020 | Apartments | K+P Architecen | Almost no information, architects do not have project on their website and most of the church was demolished apart from the tower |