



# GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

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# Summary

This dissertation encompasses a study on the Christian Faith and its resulting Architecture, as well as a design exploration and development of Church design.

The Moreleta Protestant Congregation situated in Pretoria East, represents the realistic client in this academic project. Where possible, the research and design exploration centered around the needs of the client. For the purpose of this academic project, some adaptations to their program have been made.



# Summary

The chapters in this document have been placed in a specific order. When dealing with matters such as religion, it is essential to inform anyone reading the document on various important aspects concerning the faith, before a proper design discussion can commence. Therefore, it is essential for the reader to approach this document as a normal book where one reads it from cover to cover. Cross referencing is made throughout the document and will enhance the reader's understanding if adhered to.

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# God is in The House



# Introduction

## Religious Architecture

The human consists of body, mind, soul and spirit. It is the soul and spirit that facilitate religious experience. The nature of religious architecture will further assist in the measure of involvement. There is a certain enchantment and unspoken excitement when one visits certain religious structures. In this document the realm of Christian architecture will be explored

My Diary: Saturday November 30th 2002

'To design a building or structure with direct or indirect **religious** connotations, is almost an impossible task. We, as humans, can only portray and represent in a humanly fashion through human minds, that which we perceive as **supernatural**

and **Godly**. It could almost be seen as an act of arrogance to even remotely try to manifest the glory of the Almighty in an earthly and decaying structure. But yet, this is the beauty of **grace**. We are permitted to represent, though grossly imperfect, our experience and connection to that. which is **beyond our understanding.**'



# A Journey of the Soul

## Introduction

### The Christian Faith

Before anyone can reach an understanding of Christian architecture, one must grasp the Christian Faith. There are many religions on this earth, each with unique selling propositions. Many people see Christianity merely as one of the many faiths. There is however a unique facet, not found in any other religion. Christians believe in eternal life and that the prospect of heaven is a free gift for whoever believes in God. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV, 1998:1598) So many people wrongly think that one should earn one's way into heaven, by being a good person and doing good deeds to one's neighbour. Yes, these are Christ-like qualities, but will never be good enough to open the doors into heaven. The Word says in Romans 3:23 " . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (NIV, 1998:1710) Thus, no matter how few sins one commit, one will never be good enough to saves one's soul from hell. Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast." (NIV, 1998:1793) Jesus becomes the perfect offer for the sins of the world. He led a sinless life and died for each human being that has dwelt or will dwell on this planet. Refer to 'The Story of Jesus' p17. Another misinterpretation is that Christianity is another set of rules to be obeyed in order to keep an angry God happy. In so many other religions, people are motivated to follow the decrees of the religion out of fear. They fear the wrath of their gods when they do not obey. Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship. God longs to have a relationship with His children. He is a loving God full of mercy. Jonah 4: 2 " . . . I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." (NIV, 1998:1368) In the Bible we find the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament comprises the time before the Savior Jesus Christ came to earth, and the New Testament when Jesus came as God in human form. Refer to 'Christianity and the Christian Church' p12. In the Old Testament people brought animal sacrifices at the Tabernacle and the Temple, in order for their sins to be forgiven. In the New Testament Jesus becomes the perfect final sacrifice and people need not bring animal sacrifices any more, hence the change in Christian architecture.

### Christian Architecture

In the Old Testament we have the Tabernacle and Temple as examples of Christian architecture. Both these structures serve as meeting place between God and man. It is only the high priest that can enter the Most holy of Holies. People experienced the presence of God upon entering the premises of these buildings. All elements in these buildings were carefully chosen and crafted. God, himself, gave instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and Temple. He equipped men and women to do the specific tasks. All the elements, whether in the material or the colour, had symbolic meaning. Refer to the description of the Tabernacle and Temple p48. This was God's House, the place where He interacted with His children. Note that God was not confined to the actual Tabernacle or Temple building, it only served as meeting place. In the New Testament Jesus comes to earth and changes the role of religious structures. The House of God is now found in the hearts of His children. Jesus repairs the broken relationship between man and God. The building serves as gathering space for believers. It is in the gathering of believers that the 'Church' comes together. 2 Corinthians 6:16 " . . . For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people." (NIV, 1998:1770) After the ascension of Christ into heaven, the first Churches are established in the form of House-Churches. From here the architecture develops into the Basilicas up to the Baroque Church buildings. Refer to 'Early Christian Architecture' p56 up to 'Baroque Church Architecture' p.



# Introduction

## The House of God

The Bible expounds extensively about the House of God and its character. God chooses to have a dwelling place on earth to meet with His people. But one realizes that God cannot be localized in a man-made temple, magnificent though it may be. Isaiah 66:1,2 "This is what the Lord says: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be? Has not My hand made all these things, and so they came into being?' declares the Lord." (NIV, 1998:11,12)

God wants His house to have specific qualities.

- God wants it to be a refuge. Psalm 84:10,11 "Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere, I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless." (NIV, 1998:876)
- It should be a house of prayer. Isaiah 56:7 " . . . I will bring them to My holy mountain and give them joy in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (NIV, 1998:1099)
- It is a joyous activity. Psalm 42:4 " . . . I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng." (NIV, 1998:828)
- God wants His children to experience abundance. Psalm 36:7,8 "How priceless is Your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights." (NIV, 1998:821)
- God's House must be magnificent. 1 Chronicles 22:5" . . . the house to be built for the Lord should be of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations." (NIV, 1998:613)
- God's children should find strength and flourish. Psalm 92:12,13 "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God." (NIV, 1998:885)

It took 46 years to build the temple. 1 Chronicles 28:20 "David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished." (NIV, 1998:622)

God wants His children to experience something of His almighty power and wonderful love when they come together in His house. The Church today must serve the same purpose. Today the building itself is not as important as the individuals visiting. The people become the temple and therefore the mandate to live holy lives. But this is no reason to neglect the appearance and nuance of Christian architecture.

Joy  
Strength  
Refuge  
Magnificent  
Abundance  
Prayer



## Reality v Christianity: the Church today

The Church in South Africa has undergone various forms of change over the past few decades. The building shape has transformed from the traditional to the modern shape. Refer to 'The Church today' p70. The challenge is to maintain the religious character while implementing modern technology and using modern materials.

But how real is the Christian Faith? Is it not true that congregations are dying and churches are becoming empty? Reality is that some churches are bursting with all the new members arriving each year. There is a desperate hunger for the truth and for a relationship with God. Churches are filled to the brim and sometimes people have to turn away because there is no space for them. There is an extraordinary revival and Mega Churches are born, growing each year. Moreleta Dutch Reformed Church is an admirable example of when God blesses a congregation to grow and grow. This congregation is then also the client for this thesis study. Their number of members has reached the 15 000 mark with an annual addition of a 1000 people. For a detailed discussion on the Client please refer to 'Client Profile' p72.

In this document, various aspects concerning Christian Church Design are touched. A Church is not an ordinary building! Therefore a thorough understanding of the amazing richness of this topic is essential. This requires a study of some of the most important aspects of the Christian faith. The author has included the most important aspects that will aid in proper understanding in order to guide the design. One can however, continue forever in researching the broad field of Christianity. Thus, the object of the research is to introduce thoughts on the Christian faith and Church design and then finally produce a design.

