



Chapter 2

The Church

Hypothesis & Research Methodology

What is the Church?

History of the Church Building

Church in Africa

The Church Based Service Centre

The Golden Rule

Conclusions

Resulting Architecture

The Church

Problem Statement

How should the structure of the church building be better adapted to address the social role of the Church?

The Church

Hypothesis & Research Methodology

The traditional, purpose built church typology, in South Africa, in terms of a single worship space or facilities catering for this single function, has become acontextual.

The church has begun to diversify their functions provided in order to maintain a connection with the communities that they serve, however the existing religious architecture is restrictive of function and thus limits the potential that a church could have.

The first step towards a church architecture for our time is to recognise that a Christian church is essentially a house for a community and that has no independent meaning apart from that community, (Hammond 1962:28).

Church is not a structure, it is the Christian people. Church may happen anywhere that Christian people gather and the basic function of the church building is to facilitate this congregation and its associated rituals. These rituals extend to all functions that foster community and are thus also to be considered as a sacred extension of Church.

Whilst probably all Christians would now agree that it is the people rather than the building which is the temple of God, debate still attaches itself to the meaning of sacred space and the sacramental attributes of objects and places, (Purdy 1991:11).

Furthermore Ephesians 2:20-22 reads

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

This Hypothesis will be explored under the following research questions:

- The Church:
 - What is the Church?
 - The history of the church building
 - Church in Africa
- The Church based service centre
- The golden rule of morality
- Conclusions about the resulting Architecture

What more could a Church be?

What should a Church be?

The resulting Church as a nodal Public Service Centre has the potential to begin to unify a fragmented community through its catalytic ability to promote an urban community that is socially and economically inclusive and based on sound moral guidance and communal strength.

Those who want Africa to walk tall amid 21st-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the knowhow that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted. And I'm afraid it has to be supplanted by another. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete.

PARRIS M. 2008, accessed 18 July 2010.

The Church

What is the Church?

The Church as defined by the Encyclopædia Britannica as the Christian doctrine, the Christian religious community as a whole, or a body or organization of Christian believers. The word 'Church' comes from the Latin word "ecclesia", which in turn is from the Greek "qahal", and was translated as an assembly of citizens. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (3rd–2nd century B.C.), the term ecclesia is used for the assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for religious purposes, while in the New Testament it came to be used to describe the whole body of Christians. Today, the word Church has also extended to describing the building in which the Christian people worship.

Encyclopædia Britannica, Accessed 22 April 2010

To cities filled with homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for solidarity. To cities faced with epidemics, fire and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing service." He concludes, "No wonder the early Christian missionaries were so warmly received in [Antioch]. For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable, (Stark 1996:34).

Today these functions are more commonly carried out by a community centre; the churches are left with their preaching, their worship and their liturgy.

... aspects of spirituality no longer commonly form a shared experience in most communities as they did in centuries past, (Whitman 1995:24).

Historically the Church was at an important location in a town, shown in Fig.1, often one of the first landmarks to be laid out, terminating an axis; the contemporary Church finds its place in society increasingly marginalised, and its functions restricted.

The attitude of love displayed by Christians is why, what is described above cannot be a community centre; it is a church which should be at the functional centre of the Christian community.

The Church can assist here in a way which the local council cannot, (Cochrane 2008:20).

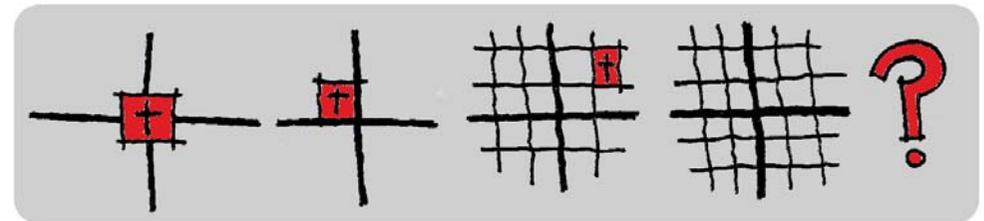


Fig.1. (by Author) Conceptual diagram showing the changes in the positioning of the church over time

The Church

History of the Church Building

The history of church building starts with the early Christian churches, the Western Roman (Catholic), Eastern Roman (Byzantine) and African (Coptic) orthodoxies, the first later opposed by the Protestant movements. This investigation will focus on the origins of church and the subsequent archetypal design that emerged.

In the beginning, the Christian believers were persecuted by, what they considered to be the pagan Roman Empire, they met in small groups in private homes, where they were forced to adapt worship to the space available to them. They would collect donations to help those in need and share a meal together to commemorate the Last Supper that Christ had shared with His disciples. The oldest known Church was found in Dura-Europus, Fig.2, which is today found on the Syrian-Iraqi border. This house was built in about 230 AD and was converted be used as a Church between 231 and 232 AD, Fig.2. In converting the house two rooms were combined by removing a wall, while a baptistery was made by supporting a canopy on four columns, covering a small pool. (Roth 1998:242)

A century later the focus of the Roman Empire began to change, from the emphasis being on secular issues to those of religion.

Roman life focused on temporal comforts and pleasure, as the Roman bath illustrates well. The bath was designed to serve the needs of the body in its pools and exercise gardens, to feed the mind in its libraries, and to reward the eyes in its vast moulded spaces lined in multicoloured marble brought from the far corners of the Roman Empire. This emphasis of Roman life on the here and now, however was gradually replaced with a new concern for the hereafter through the influence of a new religion that reshaped the way Romans began to think about the world and themselves,(Roth 1998:239).

In 313 the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan embracing the Christian faith, giving it full equality with other religions of the Roman Empire. New building typologies were suddenly needed and the architectural innovations were focused on housing large groups of Christian worshippers indoors in a building typology that would work both functionally and symbolically for worship, facilitating the chanting of psalms and the spoken word (Roth 1998:243). Christianity differed from older pagan religions, where they predominantly practiced solitary worship and of-

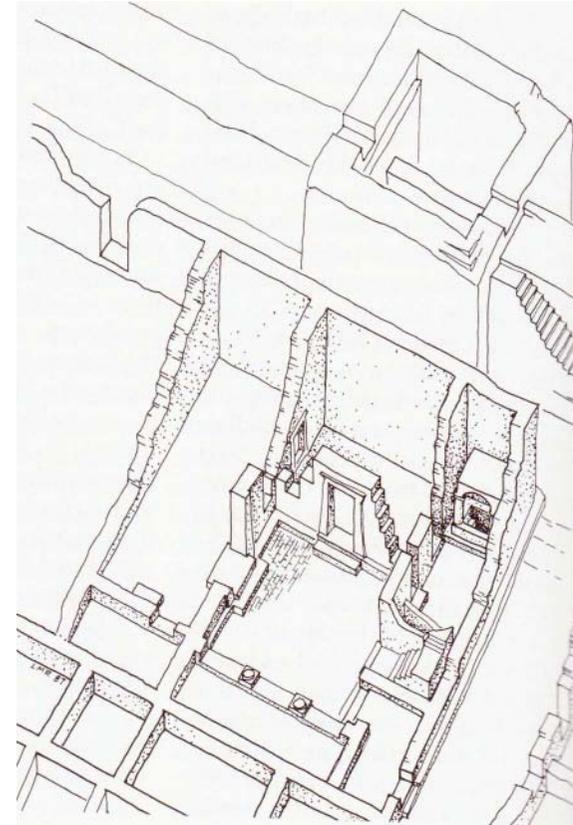


Fig.2. (Roth 1998:242) Christian Church, Dura-Europus , Syrian-Iraqi border 230-232 AD

ferings. Christianity is a congregational religion, involving a public service or liturgy, where the believers would come together as a body and share gifts and a meal.

As the Roman Empire was transformed into a Christian Empire, churches and other religious buildings emerged as the preeminent architecture, (Roth 1998:262).

To embody this new building typology Constantine and his officials looked to secular public buildings, specifically the basilica as it had originally been designed to house public gatherings. It also had a fitting positive symbolic connotation with fair administration of justice on earth. In order to convert a basilica into a church the small altar dedicated to the emperor would be replaced with one which could facilitate the ritual communal meal, or Eucharist, furthermore the basilica's axial plan would also serve to add focus to the altar,(Roth 1998:243).

Those external qualities of architecture that had appealed to a cultivated visual sensibility gradually were replaced by an architecture of simpler elements, fostering a sense of mysticism. The new architecture, with its shimmering interiors lined with mosaic and encrusted with gold, served to direct the mind away from its concerns with the here and now to life in the hereafter, (Roth 1998:239).

Thus the physical representation of Church began to shift from being a Church of people to an earthly representation of the House of God.

In its most simple form the argument revolves around the understanding of the buildings as the house of God (Domus Dei), in which a certain aura of sanctity should be established, or the more down to earth Domus Ecclesiae, the home of the Christian people, (Purdy 1991:11).

Conclusion:

Any space may be perceived as sacred through its use for sacred ritual and religious gatherings, furthermore the spiritual symbolism of horizontal and vertical elements are of great importance. As the Church is a gathering of a group of people and the church is a place to house this gathering in all the ways it requires- it is deemed that the horizontal elements gain greater relevance for the exploration of a contemporary South African church architecture.

Church in Africa

The discovery of the new world and the emergence of the slave trade meant that people native to the new lands were brought into contact with new belief systems that were enforced by the ruling peoples.

In Latin America, for instance, elements of Roman Catholicism were integrated with a number of slave cultures; religions such as Candomble, Voodoo and Santeria are examples of what emerged. (Ayodele 2008, accessed 18 October 2010)

This religious syncretism may be defined as:

The fusion of disparate religious principles and practices to create new, evolved religious philosophies. (Religiously Remapped. 2008. Accessed 18 October 2010)

Many African people might say that they follow a particular religion, it is well known that large numbers of these people also partake in the religious rites of multiple faiths, this may extend as far as religious syncretism. (Religiously Remapped. 2008. Accessed 18 October 2010)

These syncretic churches include the Coptic Church, St Johns, African Congregational and the Zion Christian Church (The ZCC), which has grown to large numbers and in many parts of South Africa has more followers than the Western Churches. Syncretic Churches speak to the people of Africa and have often diversified from 'Western Church' practices by absorbing elements of the local culture and traditions.

Before we became Christians, we were Africans, (Matsane 2004:4).

The graph, Fig.3 shows the total number recorded people that follow each major religion, derived from Census 2001 for the Tshwane Metropolitan Region.

The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is South Africa's single biggest African Christian denomination. Today it is thought to number between two and six million people, who belong to over 4000 parishes. The ZCC followers can be identified all over South Africa by their badges that they wear on hats, lapels, shirt pockets or caps; the five-pointed silver star of David with a green and black ribbon, based on the design that the founder of the ZCC, Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane had developed in 1928. (Prominent People. Accessed 27 April 2010)

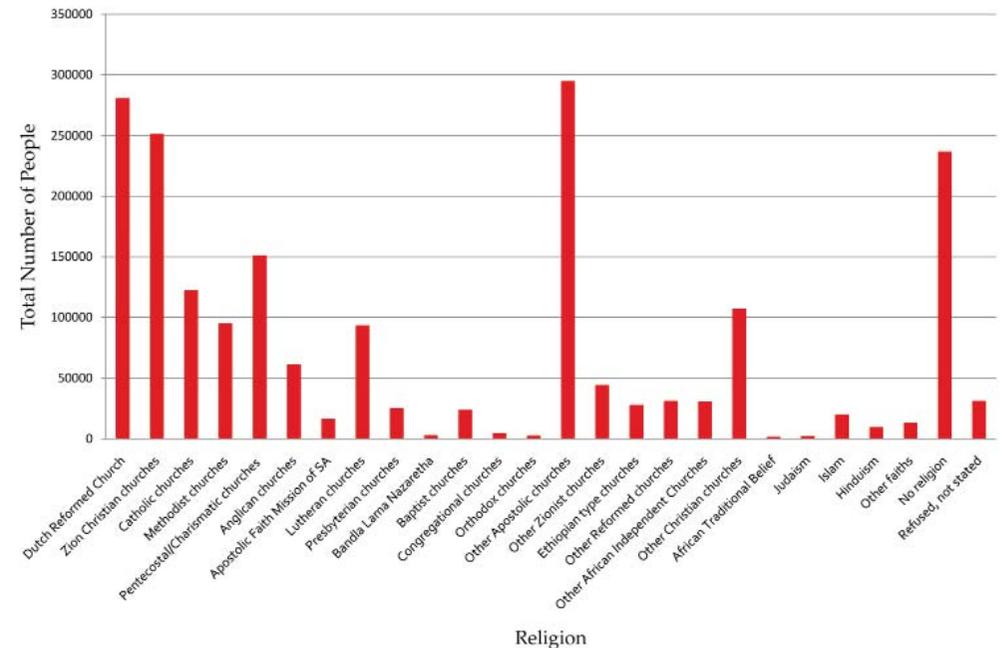


Fig.3. (Statistics South Africa 2001) total number recorded people that follow each major religion, derived from Census 2001 for the Tshwane Metropolitan Region

Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane had been diagnosed with an incurable eye disease and in 1912 he had a vision that told him to go to Johannesburg to join a Church. He was baptized by a threefold immersion into the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa (ZAC) which healed his disease. When he returned to his home, in the tribal area of Mamabolo, he acted as a missionary for the ZAC. He was ordained into the ZAC in 1918. In 1924 he went to pray about a dispute at the mountain, 'Thabakgone' where he was told by God to found a new church. According to the Old Testament, Lekganyane called this church the Zion Christian Church. In this new Church, he was not only the head, on whom all activities depended and revolved around, but he was also the main prophet. (Prominent People. Accessed 27 April 2010)

Lekganyane is seen by his followers as the Black Messiah who has the gifts of healing, prophesy, contact with the ancestors, and to purify body and soul by the use of water. ("Therismon Kairos" Mission. Accessed 27 April 2010)

After his death in 1948 the Church split between two of his sons: Edward Engenas Lekganyane won the support in the cities and Joseph Engenas Matlhakanje Lekganyane whose support came from rural areas. Edward added the five-pointed Star of David and the letters ZCC to the badge his father created, while Joseph adopted the dove. Joseph Lekganyane was proclaimed the leader of a divided ZCC on 15 September 1949. (S.A. History. Accessed 28 April 2010)

The practices & characteristics of the ZCC:

("Therismon Kairos" Mission. Accessed 27 April 2010)

- Members wear a silver badge described above
- The basic principles include those practices similar to other Christian denominations and aim to spread the Word of God, however African cultural traditions and practices have an significant influence on the church.
- During religious services prophetic staffs are used and ritual garments are worn, these are often white.
- Faith-healing remains the main reason that people joined the ZCC especially in the first few years, this requires confession of sins and faith in God.

Almost half (44%) of ZCC members were second or third generation members of the church, and another 10% had married into the church. Healing still accounted for 15% of the ZCC members joining the church.

- Revelations through dreams



Fig.4. (Internet Image) Aerial view of Zion City, Moria. <http://www.conference-venues.co.za/images/zion.jpg>, accessed 27 April 2010

- Riverine baptism (threefold immersion in the river)
- Obedience to the instructions of the ancestors
- Abstinence from alcohol, smoking, eating pork, sexual promiscuity and violence.
- Members of some denominations are able to practice polygamy
This is seen as a God-created mode of life and a more acceptable principle compared to divorce.

The fact that their church is founded and led by Africans is for some people very important. ZCC members would refer to the African liturgy of the church, especially the ways of singing and dancing. Several of the ZCC respondents said that they preferred this church most of all because it was an 'African' church. The church is specifically geared to fulfil African aspirations and meet African needs.

The ZCC holds the largest Christian gatherings in South Africa twice a year at Moria, Fig.4, which lies 25km east of Polokwane and houses the seat of the Zion Christian Church. These gatherings happen at Easter and again during a September festival. For the 3 day Easter celebrations followers worship outdoors as the building at Moria simply cannot hold the vast numbers of people that attend.

Conclusion

At the outset of this brief investigation into syncretic Churches in Africa it was intended for the intervention to be able to house both Christian and African syncretic denominations. The main focus is to create a space to house Christian Church and thus the spatial organisation will be structured around Christian liturgy but must also be flexible enough to allow for varying rituals or events to take place, such as those practiced by syncretic denominations.

The Church Based Service Centre

The church as a public building is able to perform many important services, this is especially so in underprivileged communities, thus the church begins to extend its definition from religious service to public service.

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good. (Parris. 2008. Accessed 18 July 2010.)

Churches in townships form a large part of a community structure and perform vital roles:

- They provide social anchors for many of the local residents
- They are a source of support and spiritual renewal
- They provide a positive force to counteract many of the challenges that the community faces.
- Ministers who are from the local community have a strong connection to their needs (Cochrane 2008:17)

The church as a Public Service Building, inviting and accepting to all who are in need, is integral to the fabric of a community where it is able to facilitate the feeding of this community on several levels, for a Church must be like a well, 'where everybody can drink and learn good morals' (Matsane 2004:11). The moment that a Church gathers there is a double layer to the space that facilitates the meeting:

The religious one, but even the social one, as a place where people meet together, discuss, interact. The church becomes the centre and the symbol of the community, not only from a religious but even from a social point of view; it is the centre of a lot of activities, political and economical too, a reference point around which the social structure develops. (Albatici & Frattari 2005:3)

The social dynamic within a township is that on the weekend people will either meet at the local tavern or the church, and the function of the church as a social anchor is fundamental. The church also becomes a place of entertainment. This is

where people meet, dance and sing and is a safe place for the youth to interact with others their age. The church is where the community comes together to participate in rituals and celebrations. It is also where new residents are able to introduce themselves and get involved in the community, (Cochrane 2008:20).

In the Bible the sharing of food becomes an important metaphor for providing for others. This is seen in the parable of the feeding of the five thousand, the sharing of meals with sinners such as Zaccheus, the tax collector, or breakfast with Jesus' disciples.

Come to me if you are hungry and I will give you something to eat... it seemed that we were feeding people at several levels... we were literally feeding them, but also feeding them in terms of spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. (Baker 2007:119) ...not only are the physical needs of people being met, but their spiritual needs as well in the positive regard and blessing they experience in the course of that sharing. (Baker 2007:139)

The provision of public social services cannot only serve the physical needs of a community, it is the spiritual food and guidance that feeds a man's soul. It is this relationship with the spiritual where man finds his purpose.

This sharing of food extends to the sharing of teachings and advice, the encouragement of good guidance and morals. James Rachels points out that in popular thinking morality and religion are inseparable. People generally believe that morality can only be understood within the context of religion (1994:46). He continues to say that

There are, of course, other world religions that have been equally important. However, in our society most people embrace some form of Christianity, and when "religion and morals" is discussed, it is Christianity that people most often have in mind. (1994:47)

The Golden Rule

Within a troubled or despondent community a Church is a beacon for moral guidance and provides a needed level of accountability.

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Matt 7:12 (NIV)

This verse has come to be known as the 'Golden Rule' is laid out in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which said to be the greatest teaching on morality (Cahill 1995:79). In her essay titled Ethical Implications of the Sermon on the Mount, Lisa S. Cahill (1995:80) points out that the acts which are seen as moral are simply the actions that show the compassionate attention to the needs of others as taught by Jesus. The love that Matthew writes about is in fact not an emotion as we know it today, but rather an attitude and a way of acting. She concludes that righteousness according to God is not purity and law-abidingness but rather to show mercy and compassion in our actions.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-49)

In attempting to remedy the effects of a legacy that resulted in a fragmented contemporary society, these solutions cannot come from a mechanical intervention... such a "something," though, can only work if inspired by love (Fathy 1973:2).

... it (the Church) has an epistemological bias towards seeing human history as a potential locus of salvation and transformation on the basis of human endeavour, albeit from a perspective of 'realism'. This makes it potentially well disposed to engaging with the complexity of postmodern plurality, rather than seeking to escape or ignore it. (Baker 2007:70)

Rick Warren (2002:32), author of The Purpose Driven Life says that without God there is no purpose to life, and without purpose, life will have no meaning and a life without meaning will have no significance or hope. Living according to God's laws provides both a sense of perspective and accountability, encouraging all to maintain their moral standards and not to simply obey their selfish wants. This is because on the final day of judgement, each of us will be held accountable for our thoughts and actions (Rachels 1994:47).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

According to this thinking, it is thus impossible to achieve the purpose of life by just focusing on oneself. One must start by focusing on God, because He is the creator and we only exist, because God willed it to be so (Warren 2002:11). Rachels sums up the essence of morality:

...thus if a community lives as we should live, as we were designed to live, we must follow God's laws. (1994:47)

Conclusion:

Both the services and facilities provided within the church and the Church themselves work together to contribute and uplift the local community. The Church is able to accomplish this alone, however this contribution is grounded and enforced by the functional strength of the church. This means that together Church and church are able to feed their community both physically and spiritually.

Conclusion: Resulting Architecture

This thesis proposes a return to the functional Church of service described in biblical times. The resulting church as a nodal public service centre has the potential to begin to unify a fragmented community through its catalytic ability to promote an urban community that is socially and economically inclusive, based on sound moral guidance and communal strength.

The intervention proposed will take the form of a church building, liberated from its walls: without a liberated church, society cannot be liberated and without reform of the Church, social revolution cannot occur. (Moltman 1999:64) This intervention will return to the Church as a home for the Christian people.

A growing awareness prevails in the Church today that the enclosed, isolated monastic way of life must be done away with. The religious orders must once more become closely involved with their secular counterparts. (Burdzik 1978:5)

It would suit me to believe that their honesty, diligence and optimism in their work was unconnected with personal faith. Their work was secular, but surely affected by what they were. What they were was, in turn, influenced by a conception of man's place in the Universe that Christianity had taught. (Parris. 2008. Accessed 18 July 2010)

In proposing a return to the Church of service, the intervention will facilitate Christian ritual and community strengthening to take place. The church building encompasses all spaces that facilitate Church to happen, especially spaces that facilitate community ritual.

Once again the Church has become a house for the people of God: an instrument for forming a human community, which is itself an instrument for the restoration of all things in Christ. (Hammond 1962:19)

The church building; is open to all and must engage and serve all for a Church grows through a spirit of service- thus the church building is also inherently a public service building, providing needed social, spiritual service to a community.

...buildings serve functions, functions derived from social need and hence buildings evolve as social objects (Nice 2008:24)

This engagement is not just the outward flow of energy through social services; Howard and Butcher (2008:4) define this engagement as a reciprocal process whereby communication and interaction effectively lead to a shared perception of social issues and concerns. This energy becomes a cyclical process where the outward energy flow is returned and sustained by an inward energy flow from the community supporting the development.

... Christians black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it. I would allow that if faith was needed to motivate missionaries to help, then, fine: but what counted was the help, not the faith. But this doesn't fit the facts. Faith does more than support the missionary; it is also transferred to his flock. This is the effect that matters so immensely, and which I cannot help observing. (Parris. 2008. Accessed 18 July 2010)

The architecture that emerges must grow from programmes that serve the needs of the community. It must nurture community, unity and friendship, it must create places for relationships, and ultimately: *Architecture that is freed from destructive ego, and enslaved to selfless life-giving service to peoples activities.* (Nkambule 2008:36.)

Holden (1995:14) notes that architecture is of great importance as it is a physical representation of perceptions, possibilities, values and aspirations for a community where because of the lifespan of a building, it will contribute significantly to the community's present and future self-perception. This built form must speak to those who would use it, it must be locally relevant, both in programmatic function and architectural language.

The church as a public nodal building must incorporate a strong public interface which is able to define the intervention as a node, this must be identified through scale and architectural language.

Elements such as axis and paths are strong design generators as they give focus to space and ritual. Paths and axis should be defined in space and be clearly identified. One must be aware that detail and spatial elements give rise to vertical and horizontal lines, within a church, these will communicate symbolically.

'Relevant' architecture is firmly rooted in this search for a genuinely South African architectural language, of which the core concept mentioned above serves as a solid foundation. But a 'Relevant' architecture exceeds the commitment to these principles by taking into account the specific conditions – economic, social, environmental, cultural, technological- currently prevailing in the new, post-apartheid South Africa. It holds that architecture, particularly public architecture, should be socially relevant and empowering by generating employment, providing training opportunities, building capacity by engaging and involving people in various ways, and creating structures that serve the community's needs more than the architects image.

(Marschall & Kearney 2000:2)