



# A protestant view on the church building - September 2008

A protestant view on the church building  
a practical theological approach  
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This discussion paper was drafted on request of the synod board of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands by:

- Dr. A. van der Lingen, minister of the Wallonian Reformed Church in The Hague
  - Rev. J.H. Uytendogaardt who is former secretary Worship of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands
- and discussed and completed by a broad commission church buildings, formed by:

- Ir. M. Baauw, National Taskforce Churchbuilding
- Mr. J. Broekhuizen, lawyer of Church Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and secretary CIO-K,
- Dr.Ir. C. Doevendans, chairman National Taskforce Churchbuilding and member CIO-K, on behalf of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- H. Feenstra, general director of the Church Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- Rev. G. de Fijter, moderator of the general synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- Ir. D. Hoogendoorn, member CIO-K, on behalf of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- Mr. P.A. de Lange, chairman VKB,
- Dr. B. Plaisier, secretary general of the general synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- H.L. Roth, director VKB,
- Drs. J.B. Val, member board of SKNN, on behalf of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands,
- Rev. J.H. Uytendogaardt, former secretary Worship of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and former member of the Building and restoring committee of the Dutch Reformed Church
- J.H. Zwart, member CIO-K, on behalf of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Annotations and foot notes have been used as little as possible in this paper in order to enhance the readability.

## Preface

Before you is the discussion paper "*A protestant vision on church building, a practical theological approach*". It is satisfying that there is much attention for the preservation of our religious heritage during this year of Religious Heritage 2008. Many congregations in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands make use of a monumental church building for worship. They take care of it "as a good housefather", but sometimes suffer from the burden. Because maintenance of these monumental buildings asks a substantial financial effort, aside from time and attention of the church stewards and many volunteers.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands considers it inevitable that the additional costs connected with the preservation of a monumental church building – compared to the costs of a monumental functional church building – are the responsibility of the whole of society.

The preservation of monumental church buildings is best guaranteed by maintenance of the original purpose. Only then building and interior fulfil their objective.

I hope this year will produce broad social support.

Unfortunately it is sometimes necessary to give church buildings a completely or partly different purpose. In that case it is good to know what the protestant view is on the church building. I notice that some instigate the impression that any function is acceptable for a re-consigned protestant church building. As far as I am concerned that is unjust!

This paper, accepted by the synodal board of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands as a discussion paper, offers starting points and leads for a protestant view on church building. This is more necessary than ever before. We can not suffice with a rigid conception of the church building as if this is of no consequence. The paper provides important material for this purpose.

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Ton van der Lingen and Rev. Hans Uytenbogaardt, the authors, for writing the paper; as well as to the broad commission for their critical thinking and reading of the paper.

I am aware that with this first attempt not everything has been said, but it helps us along considerably. We plan to discuss this paper as well in the general synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, because we aim for a broadly shared view.

Dr. Bas Plaisier, secretary general of the general synod

June 2, 2008

Because at present a substantial amount of protestant church buildings is being withdrawn from worship purposes for a number of reasons, the question of the religious meaning of the protestant church building arises more often. This question is called up even more when a church building is in consideration for reuse. Once this reuse is very close to the original purpose of the building, and it is taken over by another denomination, than again reuse by a non-Christian religious community is the case. Aside from that we are familiar with profane reuse by enterprises, as homes, as offices of social organizations, as libraries, various forms of theatre or even television studios.

Another important aspect of the church building which should get attention in maintenance, preservation and eventual abandonment, is the movable property of a church building (this can vary from a pulpit to a pew Bible). Most church buildings contain a lot of movables which are part of the inventory of the building. These can or can not be considered as historically valuable artefacts and are at risk to get lost in case of estrangement of the building of the original religious use (and owner). These movables are indissolubly linked to the functioning of the church building as a special place in our society. Attached to this paper at hand is an appendix (Appendix 2) which in particular addresses the care for these movables which are part of making the church building a religious building, where worship and encounters can be celebrated in Gods presence.

In the Year of the Religious Heritage 2008 movable property and real estate come together. And we may establish that especially the discussion on reuse of church buildings is directed broadly, in particular outside church circles. On top of that it turns out that the Protestants in the Netherlands, and to be precise the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, has no elaborate view on the practical-theological meaning of the church building and the movable religious heritage within it. In the past the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands has been developing a view in the area of buildings (based on the fact that their church buildings are consecrated), but this church community as well has reached the conclusion that an actualized point of view of the bishops on this topic is necessary. Starting from the principle that the congregations belonging to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands own<sup>2</sup> and use many church buildings, the general synod tries to illustrate the meaning of the church building and its inventory for and on behalf of the protestant community, presuming that these buildings will also mean something to the 21<sup>st</sup> century-human being. The existence of the monumental and non-monumental church buildings with their inventory and sometimes with their exterior factors (the 'ensemble') is central. For a long time now volunteers and professionals have maintained the church buildings and their inventory with great care, expertise and attention. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands now wants to strengthen and substantially found these activities in her policy. After all, major changes are occurring in society and in the congregations, which ask for clearness in this aspect of being-church. First of all this affects present and future use of church buildings and their inventory and only in the second place this concerns reuse. After all, removing and abandoning of church buildings is the ultimate action of a congregation; the main accent is therefore on religious functioning and maintenance of religious heritage. This is not self-evident, because the relation between reformation and church building is ambivalent and obstinate and therefore the protestant view is not easily put into words. This ambivalence is mainly expressed in the fundamental hesitation to choose a solid place for worship as the encounter of God with His congregation, and the necessary accommodation for this encounter. In building accommodations man organizes the world. In measure and number man calculates his world and tries to get grip on it. In this perspective the specifically designed church buildings could be as many attempts to model God according to human size and to the size of the congregation. Precisely the protestant churches have always been aware of this dilemma and are therefore hesitant about any design in wood and stone of their faith in God, although they subsequently have never been able or willing to retract from this.

In addition to this discussion paper an elaboration of practical-theological nature is given, which could later serve as basis for a broader protestant theological view to be developed by the Protestant Church in the Netherlands on the church building and its movable content. Attention could be given to a scale of corresponding themes like architecture and composition, spatial framework, the corresponding buildings and graveyards, the meaning of the historic church building in modern society, etceteras.

We can establish in advance that when the church reflects on her association with religious heritage, biblical-theological, theological-liturgical and cultural-anthropologic points of view turn out to be entangled with each other. In this discussion paper these aspects are not explained separately, but considered together. Other aspects of being-church, like the (international) diaconal mission and the (internal and external) pastoral tasks, will be left out of consideration in this connection, but should, where it concerns church buildings, be included in a theological view which has to be elaborated further.

As usual in protestant circles this paper starts with a short inventory of the biblical-theological heritage. It is obvious that the biblical background of a modern view on church buildings is in the old-testamentary view on places where people had an encounter with God; these are the so called holy places or places where sacred acts were

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<sup>1</sup> It is certainly not the first time that there is discussion about church buildings (in the Reformed Church this was a topic as early as in 1955). The Protestant Church even has its own ministry for church building, the Team 'Kerkbouw' (= Church building), with a specific Lutheran 'branch'. The paper at hand could not have been developed without the conceptive notions of all of these organizations and their predecessors in the 3 different parts of the PCN.

<sup>2</sup> For the present we presume a number of 2319 church buildings, of which about 1200 are monumental. One may presume that within the next 10 years 25-35% of the total number will be re-determined.

performed. Based on this a first start can be made with the formulation of the theological meaning of church buildings in our time.

Further we will use information from the church history, which contribution we deliberately limited in this paper, in order to finish in the present, where the modern sense of life plays a role and we will take the heritage aspect into account to which many protestants are sensitive as well.

## 2. Biblical-theological background and its practical-theological consequences

- an initial global exploration –

### 2.1. Biblical-theological background: introduction

The biblical-theological information is limited, although in the Bible many special locations occur which partly point to a non-specific experience of a 'holy place' (in nature, places of revelation on the mountain) and sometimes indeed are related to a sanctuary – a building like an altar or a temple. It has to be understood that it is possible that the originally much greater diversity in experiencing the 'being-different' of certain places and buildings by the subsequent cult-centralization has been suppressed or modified. The Old Testament offers us some kind of final image of what was available in the area of cult-appointed buildings in the times before the exile. Through that final image we can make some observations which are of interest for a theological view on religious buildings. It is also evident that there is no systematic view on special buildings.

At the basis of each special place is an encounter with God, in whatever form. And these places are numerous in the Old Testament: the earth – as creation -; the places where the patriarchs erected their altars; the oak of Mamre; the burning bush; mountain Sinai/Horeb; tabernacle; the ark; the temple; the various sanctuaries and heights in the land. Some call this consecration of nature, but to us this seems too much of a modern concept for the old-testamentary experience. Moreover: in the biblical texts we often see a 'reverse-construction' of this kind of information regarding sanctity and the value for preservation of the many temples, altars and sanctuaries in the Promised Land, so that we have but little insight on the actual functioning of special buildings or places in the further removed old-testamentary times. We establish that a place can be 'holy', therefore one should remove his/her shoes, as in the times of the burning bush, but above all the encounter with God is the essential, this demands a special conduct from man. What later happened to such a place remains unclear. We can only observe that the place (of the burning bush) later never was worshiped, the same goes for Mount Sinai's peak.

Perhaps more important for this discussion paper are the altars that were built here and there in the old Israel and Judea, because they were distinctive marks of some sort of direct connecting-place with God. The special meaning of these places reveals itself in the fact that the altar was also the place where right of asylum applied. Already in the times of the early kings people in mortal danger took refuge to the altar. This altar however, was not so inviolable and safe, that man refrained from slaughtering one and other there (1 Kings 1: 30 and 2: 28, 34). Surrounding such an altar in Jerusalem king Salomon (961-922 b C) builds a temple, which was later regarded to be the residence par excellence of Israel's God. With the construction of this temple a theological perception of this building and the surrounding city of Jerusalem develops.

Some decades before the Babylonian deportation the more or less successful cult-centralization follows, which means that all 'special' experience of places (with altars, stones, temples etceteras) was concentrated in one place. This resulted in an immense gap in the possibilities of religious experience, both in theological and liturgical manner after the destruction of that same temple in 587 b C.

A possible simultaneous, but in any case later development is the coming into existence of synagogues. It is unclear when the first synagogues came about, this could for example have been during the time of king Josiah of Judea (around 600 b C) or they originated during the exile in Babel, or they were first used under Ezra and/or Nehemiah. The first external statement of synagogues is from the time of Ptolemaic in Egypt (end of 3<sup>rd</sup> century b C) which concerns a house of prayer, in a certain way more of a useful 'space' than a liturgical sanctuary. Possibly the synagogues were places where there was room for prayer, studying and explaining existing documents, processing of oral heritage and theological explanation of the daily reality. In times of the New Testament synagogues are known as house of prayer and house of reading of the institutions and law interpretation. The synagogues probably also functioned as schools and were led by 'uninitiated people' (schoolmaster/sacristan). After the destruction of the temple in 70 a C they got a more elaborated liturgical function (with elements derived from the temple liturgy).

In the time of the (re)construction of the second temple (this is the 5<sup>th</sup> century b C) the encounter with God turned into stone was probably much influenced by the theological-literary construction of mainly Leviticus. This means that the model of the building and the acts which took place there were based on the literary sediments of what had been formulated about the tabernacle and the offering-cult. In addition the temple got the role of religious and secular (in the sense of not-religion related) central building and the temple servants got the role of government, since the inherent royal authority had vanished. The political independence was destroyed in favour of foreign political authorities. But the religious independence was maintained from the temple as best as it may.

In the new-testamentary time the temple in Jerusalem and the associated priesthood had the lead on the spiritual life and a firm grip on the daily legal and social organization. The offering-cult and pilgrimages concentrated on the temple in Jerusalem and the synagogues had the role of house of teaching, school and place of assembly for the local communities.

The position Jesus took with respect to the temple as religious building is not entirely unambiguous. It can be established that part of His preaching was made to be heard in Jerusalem in the temple and, in line with the prophetic tradition, He was not shying away from confrontation with ruling opinions. At the same time Jesus does His 'work' also in other not specifically religious or consecrated places at home and abroad. One could argue that Jesus had His own, somewhat ambivalent view on the meaning of the temple, because He emphasized house of God in which peace and adoration should reign on the one hand, but on the other hand He indicated the relativity and instability of the building and the surrounding city. Of course the ongoing confrontation with groups as priests

and scribes, who concentrated round and in the temple, plays a complicating role, which is enhanced by the reference, put in Jesus' mouth, as being the one able to demolish and reconstruct the temple within three days (Matthew 26: 61 and par.). If these words are authentically coming from Jesus, the meaning of the temple as a building is being minimized in favour of incarnation: the Man as 'place of encounter' with God.

It is conceivable that the temple was already no longer of importance to the Christians, who lived outside the direct surrounding of Jerusalem and had no direct link with this city and the building in the days the Gospels were written and went into the world. Other rooms for worship had to be found in towns and villages where they resided. From the fact that the Gospels tell us that Jesus celebrated Passover in a random room, may we take that other places, houses and spaces, were deemed appropriate for aspects of worship as well by Him and especially by His followers. Here as well the space shall be sanctified by the encounter with God, but only on the moment of actual worship. The report of Jesus speaking in the hills of Galilee or at the shores of the lake, does not initially give these places a special meaning. What has been said and done is of importance, but the place is not adored.

Striking enough the special attention for these places is of a later date, when Christianity starts to develop, so some ages later. Aside from 'church houses' where people assemble, certain places become sanctuaries; like the house of Peter in Capernaum, the place where Jesus fed the five thousand at the Lake of Galilee and the mountain of the beatitudes. The same happens with the place of the crucifixion and the grave of Jesus, up until today they belong to the most adored places of Christianity.

Finally we can observe that we can only speak of a holy place with regard to the temple and within that we distinguish some degrees (the 'Holy Place' and the "Most Holy Place"). Until its destruction the temple was considered by Judaism as the place of continuous revelation of God and in that a place one could not enter right away. And still, in the year 2008, Jews are not allowed on the present temple court in fear of treading on the Most Holy Place. For Christians this place does not have that significance.

## 2.2. Biblical-theological background: Analysis

In the biblical information one may observe a number of ambiguities:

- On the one side is the Holy Place (the fenced off space), the place where God speaks to men. And because God is the initiator to this dialogue, He determines the locations. On the other side it is men who provides certain locations with a mark, and others not.
- On the one side the whole earth is place of revelation and therefore sacred; on the other hand some places are 'more' sacred than others: special sanctuaries.

One could indicate that certain places, *pars pro toto*, became holy places on the face of the earth; the Promised Land as *pars pro toto* for the world; the temple as *pars pro toto* for the area of the Israelites, the Most Holy Place as *pars pro toto* for the temple. From these ongoing narrowing circles of holiness one could establish, that the theologians were afraid of idolizing nature. Although nature, especially by the prophets, is over and over implied in the disaster that comes over the world as a result of the behaviour of God's people.

- On the one side it is ideological about a tent (tabernacle), which leads the people on its tour through the desert and where the tabernacle stops, the people makes a stop; which means that God decides where He wants to be encountered (there where the sanctuary is, is the people). On the other side in practise one chooses for a standing building in Jerusalem with abundance and splendour. This place for encounter has been determined by men.
- On the one side it is about the encounter with and the proclamation of God regardless the building; and on the other side the temple as a building obtained its own theological meaning; as 'monument' of God's presence and involvement with His people. Indeed this is provided with a question mark in times of the pre-exilic prophets, but as far as in Jesus' time the temple seems to have significant meaning in religious life.
- The temple is a building on the border of Gods presence and His concealment, according to prophetic literature teaching and from historic evidence. But as soon as in the old times we have had problems with the second notion. So the temple became a building of abundance and splendour and the special 'holy' status was emphasized in theology and daily liturgical practise.

Further we may establish:

- That worship of various sanctuaries as a holy place has not taken place everywhere in the same way. Now an altar was erected after a special encounter with God, then again a tree is defined as meeting place, then again a sanctuary is built with attached priests performing certain tasks (for example consultation of God, giving advice and guidance to the people etceteras). This shows that there are special places indicated in the bible where the encounter with God became reality once, but after that remained to be a place of consultation or worship of God.
- That the construction of a stone building, as the various sanctuaries spread in the area and the temple in Jerusalem, were part of the pre-Israelite culture and that in the reconstruction of Israel's history ark and tabernacle were given as ideal for the people and its future.
- That in the Old Testament a number of names is used in connection with buildings and places that are of interest here: *Makom* (place) and *Mikdash* (holy place). There are places for which tradition has a special interest: the place of encounter with God (theophanie). *Makom* also occurs in priestly scripts and connects certain religious acts to certain places: inside and outside the temple, the Tent, the (army) camp and the town. This regards the temple as well as the tabernacle: a holy place with lamp stand or menorah, the table of showbread and the golden altar of incense. Gradually the use of the word *makom* concentrates on the

temple in Jerusalem (and from there on the city itself and the surrounding land): the 'place' is holy, because it belongs to the temple. And in there the notion moves and broadens itself from the place of the altar, through revelation, to wherever God manifests Himself. [And ultimately other 'good places' for Jews are named *makom*, like the city of Amsterdam: Mokum.]

*Mikdash* is found regularly in the Old Testament for holy place or the temple (and in plural it regards the various buildings that form the sanctuary together).

*Mikdash* is the place dedicated to divinity. The space or the building is given to God as location: so it was set aside, a sacred place only to be entered with respect. The stem of this word '*kdsh*' means 'consecrate', 'set aside'; but - based on Akkadian - it could also mean 'shine', like 'saints' in iconography get a halo (aureole). In modern language one could speak of 'charisma'. This last meaning can help us formulate the practical theological meaning of the church building.

## **2.3. Practical-theological consequences**

### **2.3.1. Sanctification on account of use**

Although it is obvious that a church building is not 'sacred' of its own accord, the building can be sanctified by its use. This is in agreement with the Old Testamentary use of the term 'consecrated' = 'set apart', set in God's service; or the possible meaning of 'shining'. A place with a specific charisma; so to speak visited and touched by God Himself.

This is probably what most modern people experience. Administration of Word and sacraments, standing before God's face in a specially arranged place, makes that this place, the church building, receives a special character; and with that takes a 'separate' place in the surrounding buildings.

A church building is often meant to be 'House of God', the place where God and man meet with each other and it is therefore furnished for worship of God, with the result that the building is almost exclusively useful for liturgy. Because a church building is considered to be a place for the encounter with God and God's House amidst the houses of people, history has demanded special requirements to decoration and construction and to the way the building can be entered by people. With the result that the 'daily' use of such a church building brings a special 'quality' of that building with it.

### **2.3.2. The church building as 'the' place**

With this formulation we finally approach the biblical phenomenon of 'setting aside' and 'charisma' (= consecration) of a building for God and for worship of God. After all, the church building is the place of open, public practising of Christian faith; that has been 'set aside' from the neighbouring buildings for worship. Very often it is by its architectonic design and spatial dimension the building with a certain 'charisma', which stands out in the neighbourhood. This is where the religious community publicly proclaims its faith and this is where the community engages in the encounter with God. The visibility also has meaning for the entire environment as expression of the missionary aspect of Jesus' command

*'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...'* (Matthew 28: 19). With that the building has a place of its own amongst the buildings of town or village in architectural and social significance. In its design the building is, both in- and outside, exponent of a religious community's worship of God.

The in- and outside of the church building are therefore both expression of the public practise of Christian religion; many times the architectonic design is the exponent of experiencing this religion in a certain period. The decoration and the movables in the building as well are an expression of that same experience. This decoration and design can not be considered separate from the entity, the ensemble of in- and outside including the objects attached and within are of importance.

Moreover we may conclude that there is no difference in experience of a classic, historic, monumental or modern building, because this concerns always the expression of the public experience of religion by the building or residing congregation.

### 3. From past to presence – a general concept

#### 3.1. The sixteenth to nineteenth century

Both the Lutheran and reformed reformation give signals about the vision on and the use of the church building. Luther gives three basic principles for the construction of a church: assembly of the Christians, hearing the Word of God and receiving the sacraments. Only Word and sacraments mediate salvation and sanctify the faithful; the church building is not a so called *'medium salutis'*, no 'remedy to fabricate salvation'. This functional approach comes down, according to Luther, that a church can be destroyed if these three elements are lacking. The *'Confessio Helvetica Posterior'* expresses itself somewhat more differentiated: *'And as we believe that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, so we know that on account of God's Word and sacred use places dedicated to God and his worship are not profane, but holy, and that those who are present in them are to conduct themselves reverently and modestly, seeing that they are in a sacred place, in the presence of God and his holy angels.'* (The Second Helvetic Confession in English translation). To Calvin the church building is fundamentally a place of common prayer. What distracts from the honour of God and seduces to idol-worship, images for example, should be removed. Calvin also makes the connection between the costs spent for a church building and the means for the poor-relief board, one thing shall not be at the cost of another. We may conclude that in reformation the church building loses its sacred image, along with desecration of liturgy and clergy. It is and remains however a place of encounter between God and His congregation in proclamation and prayer, a house for the Word. Following that track reformation in the Netherlands had no use for their own type of church building. She did not experience it as a necessity to give a new architectonic-spatial impulse. How else could she have kept on living in the old rooms, if she did not have a feeling for their eloquence? What sort of churches were built after 1600 originated sooner from cultural erudition than from a religious disposition. If in the reformed church in the northern Netherlands the necessity for new church construction develops, one tries to connect to the architecture of the renaissance as it had developed in Italy and freely copies Italian examples.

As far as we could speak of a protestant view on the church building in reformation, we can distinguish two aspects.

The one concerns the decoration of the church space. The only question therein is that for an adequate range around the proclamation of the Word in the sermon. Pulpit with pew bible and baptistery-screen, also with bible, are literary and figuratively central. In that sense the church building is 'merely' an auditorium. But since the sermon is more than a lecture and the administration of the sacraments has an impact of more than passing nature, the church building is perceived as 'more than the ordinary'. That results from sayings that speak of 'climbing to the house of the Lord'. Also the great interest that is given to design and quality of the pulpit, reading-desks, baptismal fonts and the valuable communion tools is a clear signal.

The second aspect concerns the architecture of the church building in the total of town and village. There is no breach with the pre-reformation time. The self-evident participation of the reformed church in the total social and cultural complex translates into buildings in the latest architectonic style, which by their size and setting give a clear signal of the unbreakable link between the ruling church and government.

The appearance of the church building was in that sense above all a symbol of the mental force with which the church wanted to penetrate the social and the spiritual life. She was empowered to this purpose because the church buildings were, without exception, founded by the City Fathers or in feudal areas by the landowner. This situation changed when in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ownership and management were transferred to the church congregations, which were practically and financially unequipped for this end. The principal ambivalence of the protestant tradition is also illustrated by the self-evident manner of retracting medieval church buildings from their destiny and determining them for all sorts of purposes by the authorities.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands we have to look for appreciation of the church building mainly in the direction of the churches of the Afscheiding (Separation) and the Doleantie (Grieving). It will not come as a surprise that even for the simplest design in relation to the decoration is looked for a link with the reformed tradition. If at all possible there is a baptismal garden around the pulpit with benches for the consistory. Sometimes even the wall, against which the pulpit is located, is named "choir". Or in a barn church, built behind a house, the far end where the pulpit is is being finished by a three sided conclusion: an unintentional reference to the medieval chapel. The nature of worship was an impulse to build churches where no pain or expense was spared. When the Christian Reformed Church in Middelstum was put into service the minister defended the ambition for a beautiful building. He pointed out "that it should not surprise anyone, that there are still Christians who build a more beautiful house for the adoration of their Saviour than the one they inhabit themselves, and who open minded and with a mild heart, even without having being asked to do so, bring sacrifices of love; who do not ask in pettiness: 'what is cheapest?' or 'what would suffice?', but who in holy abundance even place a spire, with which they, even from far, proclaim to the world: 'here stands a house of God, a gate of heaven!'"

The many newly built churches from the Afscheiding (Separation), Doleantie (Grieving) and later (with town-development) also of the Reformed Church are all based on the concept of the Reformation in which the congregation is ranged around the pulpit. The Lutheran, Mennonites and Remonstrant churches in principle did not have another concept.

#### 3.2. The twentieth century

The view on the church building is modified for the first time in the Liturgische Beweging (Liturgical Movement). The notion 'adoration' determines the worship. The church building breathes a spirit of sacredness. The proposed ideal decoration of the church is that of a procession road which leads to the communion table: "We should know: here is

Worship, here God comes towards us, here we must encounter Him, here it is not just about the sermon of one or another minister, but it is about the administration of Gods Word in the true sacramental sense... And we should with deeper reverence sing: God is present, God is in our midst. We should sit in a space that is truly church”<sup>3</sup>.

The thinking on the church building in a to be newly created architectural structure in the town-development originates from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the law on public housing became operative. After the Second World War the church faces the task to build a large number of new churches. The discussion on the nature of the church building is picked up again. In 1954 the general synod of the Dutch Reformed Church accepted the report ‘Beginselen van Kerkbouw’ (Principles of Church-building). In the questions around the decoration of the church building the report takes a stand in the middle between the desires of the Liturgische Beweging (Liturgical Movement) for a church with a strong accent on the length-axis and a strict reformed conception of the congregation in a crosswise arrangement of the congregation around the pulpit. The report is characterized by a certain struggle between sacredness and functionality. In both cases the report chooses in decoration however for a coordination of pulpit, table and baptismal font in a permanent arrangement. K.L. Sijmons, one of the ground-breaking protestant architects, formulates the architectonic approach as a search ‘for new spatial forms which meet the needs of our space sense’.

Almost more important than our questions about space, decoration and atmosphere of the church building are the questions around nature of the church building and the architecture. The report ‘Beginselen van Kerkbouw’ (Principles of Church-building) describes the church building as *‘the house of the congregation, where she assembles for worship, house of prayer, and where she believes to encounter her Lord, house of the Lord. The church building should be a token in the world of the Church, as described in article 27 of the Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis (Dutch Confession).’* So shall this church building *‘by exalted dignity and serenity give shape to this confession’*. This does not mean that liturgy in the strictest sense determines the church building, but that the *“church building should be the architectonic praise, as liturgy should be the constant renewed praise of the congregation. Liturgy and architecture are parallel here, both are a testimony and tribute and each proclaim Gods honour, in their own way and with the means available to them.”*

The report takes position in a broad discussion that was going during the post-war years about the nature of the church building and the autonomy of the architecture and the developments therein. Initially the discussion moves around the notion ‘monumentality’ as it is presumed in (amongst others) the report ‘Beginselen van Kerkbouw’ (Principles of Church-building). Sijmons establishes that modern architecture is definitely anti-monumental, and he concludes that the lines of tradition should be continued. *‘Religious architecture never loses a preserving element in her development’*. This however, did not stop Sijmons, with many others, to look for new spatial forms. In a survey, published under the auspices of the prof.dr. G. van der Leeuw-stichting (Professor Dr. G. van der Leeuw-foundation), on 10 years of post-war church-building architect Westerhuis describes that this search for the proper form led to the conclusion: *‘that each architectonic space can be theologically justified and that introduction of the form problem in itself did not offer an escape route to the renewal of church building. When church building reconciles to functionality like it does all the go in the world of architecture and art, space for a new impulse in church building develops.’*

The Adventkerk (Advent Church) Sijmons built in Loosduinen is proof of the change-over in the thinking of the architect in this point. A sober and clear building in which the starting point of the one undivided space around the liturgical centre was abandoned. The form is here a result and not a preconceived aim. A remembrance of the ‘token’-character of the church building is the immense bell-cage functioning as tower. Here is an evolution from church building as a functional building, distinguishing itself little from other buildings with a special objective. In the Netherlands this movement commenced with architect Oud. In following for example F. Wright he looks from an autonomous disposition of architecture for integration of the church building in the environment. The church for the Hersteld Apostolische Kerk (Restored Apostolic Church), designed by Oud in 1928 for the Kiefhoekwijk (Kiefhoek-district) he built in Rotterdam, inserts itself totally in the architecture of the district. The church is here an element of living and not the other way around. Intriguing however, is that in this insertion within the buildings the church building gets a very characteristic accent.

Herewith we raise a subject the post-war reformed church building can not hide from: what is the relation between church and town. How does the church find her place in that entirety and how will church building be an expression of this. Architecture poses questions, not just to the church building, but in that to being-congregation and the expression of that.

Architecture and liturgy are explicitly in dialogue with one and other on the proper place of the church building in town, village or neighbourhood. In particular the Prof.dr. G. van der Leeuw-stichting (Professor Dr. G. van der Leeuw-foundation), may be named here as a stimulator, resulting in architectonic important church buildings. As an ultimate example of autonomic architecture creating space for worship is the reformed church ‘De Hoeksteen’ (the Cornerstone) (1965) in Uithoorn. This was designed by Rietveld, situating in the tradition of Oud and removing himself from the at that time actual evolution towards expressive and figurative architecture. To Rietveld architecture is objective space definition, revealing life conditions and not binding. To him each program is a reason for architecture, that is to say: creating space. The theological interpretation of the architectonic creation remains an open point of discussion. These qualitative first rate buildings are autonomous and do not engage in

<sup>3</sup> B. ter Haar Romeneij, Het Kerkgebouw (The Church Building), in: Handboek voor den Eredienst (Manual for Worship), Rotterdam 1934, page 19-37, through Regn. Steensma, Opat de ruimten meevieren (So that the spaces may worship along), Baarn 1982, page 13.

conversation with the built environment. Where this conversation is explicitly going on is the reformed church of Nagele (1958) of the architects Van den Broek and Bakema. They write that *'religious space was developed from the architectural structure of the village'*. With the spatial determination of the church is meant a gradual transition from the public to the religious space. This space is held as simple as possible in order to 'merely ask attention and respect of man for the total space in which all is and becomes'. Here a clear position on the connection between village-community and religious congregation is on the basis of architecture, decoration and insertion of the total of the building.

Another approach in church building can be described as a search for the relation between church and world in which each form of monumentality is abandoned and religion and life are connected as closely as possible. The church seeks, without emphasis, to integrate in society as one of its components. This optic finds expression in the 'agora', the in the larger community-centres inserted church space which can be used for other purposes as well. In Lelystad en Dronten are two examples. It is also the time of double usage: the congregation does not separate herself, but is in her worship in the middle of the world. A pregnant signal of this is the design of Aldo van Eyck for a church building on the site of Kerk en Wereld (Church and World). This design, 'Wheels of Heaven' was the awarded contribution to a contest written out by the Van der Leeuw-stichting (Van der Leeuw-foundation). Here the contesters had opportunity to formulate the assignment themselves for a church that might as well not be a church, but a chapel or maybe a house. *'A space in which the faith and disbelieve, sin and mercy, doubt and hope available at that moment in that space takes shape – a shape in which Immanuel (God-with-us) is confirmed, because He is the truth, and the way, and the life'*. Van Eyck designed a multiple space, based on circles that were linked mutually. In its very simplified form this concept continues in places where congregations must or want to give up their manifest church buildings and are looking for a church space, infolded in the environment, fit for multiple objectives, with its focus on worship.

In all cases the church building provides an image of the way the congregation concerned understands her place in society and how she wants to give a public signal of that. The question for the theological value of the substitute existence of the Christian congregation in worship and the way she shapes this remains relevant. At present a remarkable dimension is, that from the congregations as well as from the designers of church buildings there seems to be a need for spatial clarity, autonomy, charisma. Liturgy appears to be formulated and understood in very general and individual terms by many designers. Terms like serenity and silence, pause or counterpoint are often used in the hectic rhythm of modern society. The challenge that the church faces in her relation with the church building is the question in which way she accepts architecture and art as autonomous discussion-partners in order and as part of her own discussion with the world in whose midst she is congregation.

The conclusion of the preface is, that the discussion theme in relation to what the church building wants to personify and of which it is a signal, is the relation between the church building and the built environment. Time and time again it shows that the congregation invests her self-understanding in her church building and is therefore existentially linked with that.

### **3.3. The present situation**

A theological and historical thinking over place and function of the church building can not suffice by reflecting on traditional approaches. The time we live in and in which we look for shapes of being-church is complex. Religiousness and rituality form an integrating and intriguing part of the image-forming and functioning of the church building. The church should adapt to this, because in the present multiform society the church building is to be described as a 'safety zone' between other safety zones (like museums and theatres), which are as many 'celebration zones' of various lifestyles. The church should realize that nowadays she is just one of the 'suppliers' of such a safety zone. Indeed the church does have her own ritual repertoire and in the self built expression of this she has a challenging offer, which gives her, amongst others, a place of her own on the market of lifestyle-shapes. Herewith it is of particular interest to establish that outside the church circle – and therefore outside the groups who think the liturgical function of a church building of importance – an increasing private experience of the church building can be observed. Currently, while over a quarter of the Dutch population calls itself religious, but has no religious bond, it turns out that – especially old – churches may rejoice in an increasing interest. And this interest has various aspects: for tourist visit, to enter into as place of quiet 'aiming for' of a moment of meditation and to perform *'rites de passage'* (*'passage rites'*) without a specific religious context. All of this results in the willingness to engage in and contribute to the support and conservation. This state of re-religiousness of a part of society is, according to many surveys, in an expanding phase. It is for the church to decide her position in this. With regard to the church building a view was developed in this context on the space of the church building and the arrangement of this as aspect of the way both individual and society realize and express themselves. We are indissoluble linked with the space that surrounds us and our gathering is in a fundamental way also a being-gathered-there. These places can be characterized as *'lieu de mémoire'*: memorials of an occurring that should be preserved. The internal and external shape of the church building where worship takes place is therefore no accidental circumstance.

At present two movements can be distinguished, which are both of importance for how we handle our old and new church buildings. The first movement is the one observing that on the one side community-rituals are no longer manifest parts of both the public secular as the public religious establishment. Research shows that continuing less time, energy, money and space is intended for rituals. In modern town centres, care-organizations, hospitals and houses are hardly places for rituals. In the design of many new large-scale new-housing districts often churches are absent. On the other hand is established that, where churches withdraw from the public or semi-public domain,

museums, theatres, shopping-centres, amusement parks, nature and 'home and garden' offer a new sacred space and ritual appearance. All of these forms are in their own way expression of (an aspect of) the inspiration that we are looking for. These very diverse and unequal places of inspiration clarify that individual and community relate to one and other in a very complex manner. But it clarifies as well that our fragmented society obviously can not do without manifest places of inspiration. The second movement perhaps joins up with these tendencies. One of the backgrounds of the shortage of ritual spaces is that ritual and therefore ritual space is of another category, the category of the not-efficient, not-useful, not-economic domain. A church building is the prototype of an economically inefficient building. But this 'weakness' of the liturgical space, this elaborate state of 'being outside of the economical order', is from another perspective for that very reason a strength. We could join up with the tendency to value the private nature of the liturgical space once more as a 'holy' place, a space in contrast with the average. Additionally we also have to speak of the quality of 'holiness'. Herewith we aim at the general longing for qualitatively sublime expression of and places for rituals, i.e. the Christian worship.

The time for multi-functional spaces has past, which means to say that men more and more are creating spaces which are primarily, or sometimes exclusively, usable for worship. From the approach on church building architecture one could now join up with the search in our culture for 'meaningful, sacred zones', for oases in the ruling order of economics, calculation, value and necessity. 'The distinguishing character' of the church building comes up for discussion now and with that the question if the church should not be the one par excellence offering space for the 'more than the ordinary'.

#### 4. Summary: principles and recommendations

The preface is summarized in a number of substantial recommendations for the association with the church building (4.1.) and some practical recommendations for short-term measures (4.2.).

##### 4.1. Principles

- The church building in protestant sense is a public exponent of religious experience of the religious community. The public function of the building is a token of the Christian faith in God in society. The church building and its inventory are aspects of the public proclamation.
- The church building in protestant sense is a space put aside with a specific faith-witnessing charisma aimed for the proclamation of God's presence in Christ in this world. The religious congregation takes care of this apostolic aspect of the building. If the religious congregation withdraws from such a church building for whatever reason, this can only be done with the utmost care for the future of the building and its inventory, in order not to impair her own proclamation. If the only possible re-destination presenting itself is in conflict with this proclamation, this could lead to choose for demolition of the building.
- The specific Christian approach of the church building as 'special place' in society is related to a specialisation of the modern-religious search for the 'sacred'. Because of this religious signal-function of the church building the church takes care of public accessible church buildings inviting to reflect by decoration, objects and charisma. Within the framework of Christian symbolism they offer room to both community- as well as individual rites.
- Important is the relation between church building and built environment (*'ensemble'*). The liturgy-practitioner views the inside of the church space with its movable objects as place of sanctification. In the contemporary multiform society this inside of the church building can be described as a 'refuge zone' (beside and the midst of other refuge zones, like museums, theatres, meditation centres, etceteras; these 'places of experience' are as many exponents of different lifestyles).
- For the protestant church buildings as well the modern religious conception in Dutch society applies more and more as being secular-sacred spaces (*'lieu de mémoire'*). For local religious management and trustees of church buildings this notion could have meaning in the use and management of both the building as well as the decoration of the building.
- The biblical information regarding buildings are ambivalent: they indicate that in any case one building with specific objects – the temple – had a special place in the encounter with God, but they also indicate that believing in God without building is possible, especially when it concerns the faith in the person of Christ and living out of the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup>.

##### 4.2. Recommendations

It is clear that in the daily praxis of management and maintenance of the religious moving and real estate there is still a lot to be improved and to be deepened. Partly we are talking about cultural heritage, owned by the church and managed also on behalf of the entire society. In Appendix 2 is therefore spoken about an active policy for movable property, in which themes are addressed like inventory, documentation, maintenance and schooling of volunteers involved. Actually these are facts that need to be executed at a local level (religious congregations), but for which the national organization (Synod and Church Ministries) will have to provide impulses and support. That the synod has a responsibility here shows from the rules provided by the Church Order, the ordinances and the general arrangements. Moreover it is important for preservation of specific objects (built or movable) that there is central guidance in choice and appreciation so that justice can be done to the diversity of the constitutive parts of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

Of course we should start from the principle of independence of the religious congregations that are part of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, but because the instructions on heritage are being sharpened more and more and are therefore regularly changing, because the religious congregations often lack expertise in this area, because there is a declining number of volunteers willing and capable of studying this specialism adequately, sufficient supportive and expertise manpower will have to be available in the national organisation (accommodated at the Church Ministries or at the Regional Colleges for Handling Management) in order to help the about 1700 protestant congregations shaping policy and management.

##### 4.2.1. The relation Church and public authorities.

In the Year of Religious Heritage it is obvious to make a plea for support of religious congregations and regional and national institutions by the authorities. This concerns - schooling of professionals and volunteers in order to spread the knowledge of instructions and possibilities, - subsidizing staff members burdened with the management of movables and real state heritage, - making means available for inventories (like those of the SKKN). On top of that preservation-measurements, like the expansion of the maintenance- and restoration subventions, are as many possibilities for the authorities to come to the aid of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the other churches and religious organisations as well. Based on the conclusions of the report 'Authorities, Religion and Conviction' of the commission presided by prof.dr. E. Hirsch Ballin from 1988 it is conceivable that the authorities contribute financially to the maintenance and preservation (in the broadest meaning of the word) of buildings for Christian worship, in spite of the separation of church and state in the Netherlands. This could even mean giving

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<sup>4</sup> This aspect should be part of an extensive and profound study, in which attention is given to several aspects of the protestant church building. In this study should, next to theological and dogmatic themes, be attention for modern man and his religious emotion regarding the church building, this aside from those involved in church building for other reasons.

exploitation-subventions for especially precious church buildings, in order to prevent them from vanishing from the city scene.

In relation to this we refer to the study that CIO-K (Commissie Kerkelijke Gebouwen van het Interkerkelijk Contact in Overheidszaken – commission religious buildings of the inter-church contact in governmental affairs) had performed in 1999 by the Wetenschapswinkel (Science-shop) of the Economical Faculty of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (State University Groningen), investigating the financial effects of the government policy in the field of maintenance and preservation of monumental churches for the period until 2003<sup>5</sup>. This investigation showed that the government policy brought ongoing higher costs for the owners and managers of these church buildings and that the policy, which since hardly changed, sooner put more financial pressure on the churches than relief, in spite of all good intentions in the field of restoration- and maintenance-subventions.

An intensified contact with the authorities implies however that the local religious congregations should be prepared to enter into consultation with the civil communities and trade and industry on strengthening the position of view determining buildings for a tourist function, in which also other aspects of the church building can be realized like *'lieu de mémoire'* and *'refuge'*. It goes without saying that in the opening of churches has to be counted with the participation of local organisations regarding sponsoring and manpower.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands should come to an understanding about these matters with the national authorities, as much as possible in cooperation with other churches. For, as described in Appendix 1.: the government should participate in management of still functioning church buildings, before the religious congregations decide to abandon image defining church buildings; therefore the authorities should reserve determined subvention funds. And should a church building because of the monumentality of the in- and/or outside not be reusable in another way, the national, regional or local government will have to take the duty of ownership, management or maintenance of such a building upon herself. It seems to be self-evident that the authorities develop funding accordingly.

#### **4.2.2. The Church Order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands**

This discussion paper starts from the position of national responsibility for the movables and real estate heritage, which the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and her congregation have in their possession. One could speak of a shared responsibility for the religious heritage of the three levels of the church: the local congregation, the regional supervisors and the synod and its institutions, this in spite of the fact that the first responsibility lies with the local congregations. The to the Church Order belonging Ordinance 11, Article 8.3 speaks about the responsibility of the local congregation: *'The board of church stewards or the board of deacons is only authorized after preceding consent of the regional board to perform radical reconstruction, extension or restoration, sale or in any other manner expropriation and demolition of a church building or organ, which is mentioned on the list of buildings and organs of cultural-historic or architectonic value and the sale or in any other manner expropriation and encumbering of objects of archaeological, historic or artistic value'*. This has to be pointed out continuously to the consistories and they should be assisted in performing this task properly. The Ordinance would be reinforced if the inventory, the registration and the yearly measurements necessary for preservation would be added.

A church orderly provision has been made for regional monitoring. For ordinance 11, Article 22.1 mentions that task of a Regionaal College voor de Behandeling van Beheerszaken (RCBB – translation: Regional Board for Handling of Management Business) is *'supervision on matters relating to property rights of the congregations, the board of deacons and the classes within its jurisdiction'*; amongst which (in subsection 2.) *'the management of and control over real estate, valuable papers and objects of archaeological, historic or artistic value'*. If the RCBB is sufficiently equipped for this complicated task remains to be seen. Besides, this task is not only performed by the RCBB, as article 23 states: *'With regard to purchase, building, reconstruction, expansion, restoration, sale or destruction of a building or organ, as meant in article 8-3, the regional board only takes a stand after having received advice from the therefore by the synod appointed institutions.'*

However, the question is: which institutions? The team Kerkbouw (Church-building) is the institution appointed by the general synod with regard to the church buildings. For that purpose the team has made lists per region of the existing church buildings, indicated the monumental status and executed a pilot (pre) selection for a few regions. Additionally the team has made several publications on the topic, established a taskforce and organised seminars. This is an advantageous starting point on which can be built further. However, the movables and the ensemble of church building, accompanying buildings, green space (church yards) around the building, inventory (movables) of the church, as well as the organs (which have an approach of their own) have not yet been addressed here. Expertise in these various areas, as well as the liturgical aspects concerning the content with importance for congregation-life, ask for devotion and manpower. For an effective approach of the church buildings- and movable heritage problems is prioritizing in synodal devotion and support of the Protestant Church Ministries imperative. An important point of attention on regional and central level is capacity expansion of work force, volunteers and managers. The question of how the preservation of protestant religious heritage should be shaped will be answered in a practical way in Appendix 3.

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<sup>5</sup> R.J. Suhlmann, *'Financiering monumentale kerken'* (*'Financing monumental churches'*), Exploration of the effects of government policy. EC 112, Groningen 1999.

## Reuse and/or abandonment

### 1. Introductory remarks

In this appendix we address the question what should happen with a protestant church building when it is no longer essential for worship or for other reasons can no longer be used in the context of a congregation.

The discussion on the special meaning of a church building, aside from an eventual decision to give a multifunctional purpose to a church building, reveals itself acutely. Because at such a moment the church building is withdrawn from the regular ecclesiastical function (e.g. for worship), with the purpose to be sold, transferred or demolished.

At such a moment both personal and religious emotions play a big part and the greatest caution and restraint must be exercised to be able to complete a good decision making path, in order to avoid injury to groups of parishioners. After all, church buildings do something to (religious) people: they have an emotional connection with the buildings because all of the liturgical actions that have been taking place around a person like baptism, confession, wedding and funeral. And people are compelled to have a different view on other denominations, especially when their church building is abandoned by the own congregation and is being transferred to another denomination, to a group of another religion. To let alone the emotional questions which are the consequence of giving the building up for a completely different profane use.

The still present religious community, presuming worship as the primary function for a church building, views many other – especially profane – activities in such a building as inappropriate and as a defamation of its initial purpose. In general concerts and meetings can take place in a protestant church building, but at a certain point one touches the limit of what the community that owns the building considers tolerable. This is with reference to the opinion that a certain activity is not in concurrence with the meaning and the objective of the building (or going against the consecration of the building). One can not consider “worldly” use apart from the worship/ religious function on Sunday (or for special religious occasions during the week).

Society is often interested in the town- or village-view defining characteristic of the church building, so the peel or the outside. Clearly outside and inside are separated in that case. The fact that a building has capacity for other activities less often plays a role in the involvement of society.

Here we should point out that already in 1999 the combined churches (in the alliance of CIO-K) have made a plea for an insertion of means by public authorities to maintain church buildings, of which the exploitation is getting too expensive for the local congregation or parish, exactly as place of worship (combined with or without other public functions). It is absolutely more attractive to all parties concerned to have church communities with their volunteers using and maintaining a building than having to abandon it<sup>6</sup>. In general abandoning costs much more public resources than the amount involved in maintenance-subsidies. Abandonment and reuse should be ultimo ratio.

At the same time we need to clear up a persistent misunderstanding, namely representatives of new Christian denominations or of other world religions would be willing to take over these, often large, buildings. For them as well the maintenance and preservation of such a building is financially speaking often almost impossible.

An aspect causing a lot of misunderstanding is the meaning of the market value of a church building. Many congregations have no sight on the value of their buildings. Some of these buildings can well be turned into money. This point should also come up in the recommendations.

Further should be mentioned that one should not commit to one project developer but also non-profit organizations should be approached. (This is further elaborated in appendix 3.)

### 2. Digestion

When we start from establishing that the church building in protestant sense is an exponent of the religious experience of the community that has built it and makes use of it, this clearly puts limits to the reuse of third parties (not the original builder or owner). The reuse should primary take orientation in this religious experience and the emanation of this religious experience by the worshipping community!

When we start from the public function of the church building as sign of the Christian belief in God in society this also means that in case of reuse outside of the specific religious (Christian) circle society (districts and civil authorities) should be involved. If the church publicly withdraws and abandons it's building to give it another function, this should be made known to society and society should be involved in reuse.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on the Conclusions of the Report of the committee under leadership of Prof.dr. E. Hirsch Ballin from 1988 (see especially chapter 5.2) this is very conceivable.

### 3. Considerations

A premise has to be made about the diversity of the church buildings and their origin. So short after the fusion of the three churches in 2004 forming the Protestant Church in the Netherlands it is of importance also to do justice in the for worship and religious use preserved church buildings to the architectural and liturgical diversity of the constitutional parts of the PCN.

In case of reuse the following considerations are of importance based on what has been stated in 1 and 2:

- 1.  
Reuse of a protestant church building by another Christian domination of ecumenism should be welcomed by a protestant congregation; eventual consequences for sale conditions and financial possibilities included. In this case the public function as representative of religious experience of the church building remains in tact. Part of the estate could stay behind in the church building reused in this way, in order to uphold the original purpose and connection with the building. Of course this recommendation is also applicable for Judaism.  
It means that church funds have to be established in order to generate means for this kind of reuse.
- 2.  
Reuse of a protestant church building by a community functioning within Christianity, with which there is no religious connection whatsoever, requires a thorough reflection by the local, regional and national church. Just because the 'religious' character of the building remains in tact, it brings up the question if oppositional or controversial movements will not endanger the original purpose of the building and its religious congregation.
- 3.  
Reuse of a protestant church building by groups originating from other religions (except Judaism) implies estrangement from the original purpose of the building. Here applies certainly that the public function is impaired in such a way that it is desirable to engage representatives of society in the reuse.  
Religiously speaking this form of reuse is largely dependable on the local relationships within a town or village, but for the present, in view of the present developments within Dutch society, it is not an obvious course of action. Also inter religious discussion does not offer so much of a perspective that a positive development will take place shortly. In case inter religious discussion leads to the conclusion that the world religions are equal, the reuse of church building by other religions than Christianity is easier to consider.  
Yet it is advisable to choose transfer to representatives of another world religion of a church building that has to be abandoned rather than to offer it for secular use.
- 4.  
Reuse of protestant church buildings by a social-cultural organization is negotiable, provided that the function is compatible with the fact that the building remains to have the appearance of a "church". Generally this reuse means that the inside is being changed and on the outside the church image is being preserved. In this case as well the question arises if this reuse is compatible with the religious experience of the present church community. This will have to be established from situation to situation.  
When monumental churches are involved, which can not be torn down (for which there is obviously no alternative) the approach should be to preserve the old decoration or to make it restorable. The government should make special funding available for the preservation of these monuments.
- 5.  
Mostly commercial and secular use has to be discouraged. In principle this form of reuse has to be examined compared to the original public religious function of the building and if the reuse is in proportion with the image of the church. If reuse of the building (which as a rule remains recognizable as church) damages the image of the Church this form of reuse has to be declined. Therefore it will be exceptional that a church building can be appropriately reused for commercial objectives. In decision-making about this reuse society and other institutes of the church should be involved.
- 6.  
In case of transfer of ownership of especially monumental church buildings to third parties (foundations and such) local congregations should dedicate themselves to give religious functions a place of their own in the new constellation.
- 7.  
If a church building is not reusable in another way because of its monumental interior or exterior, the national, regional or local authorities will have the duty to take upon themselves the ownership, management or maintenance of such a building. It is self-evident that the authorities will create funds for that purpose.
- 8.

In all circumstances it is recommendable for the Protestant Church, together with other denominations, to appeal to the government to participate in the management of still functioning church buildings, before the congregations decide to abandon defining and characteristic church buildings. It would be recommendable for governments to make certain subvention funds available.

-9.  
Transfer, abandoning, demolition of a church does not only concern the church building, but includes the inventory. In case of reuse or demolition it will be necessary to take stock and make a registration of the estate, to make clear appointments on how the estate subsequently will be handled. This is also of importance in view of the national religious heritage managed by the protestant churches.

The elements of the decoration for worship should be considered to form an 'ensemble'. This goes especially for: the baptismal font, the communion- or altar table, communion utensils, pulpit, lectern, Easter candlestick holder and/or candle holders, liturgical materials, clothing and the organ.

-10.  
In transfer, abandoning or demolition of a church building there has to be appropriate attention for the economic and/or market value of the building and the location. The congregation will seek advice from various experts from the profit and the non-profit sector in order to achieve a most suitable return.

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