

# REPURPOSED CHURCH BUILDINGS AND ITS CHANGING PUBLIC PERCEPTION THROUGH THE COURSE OF HISTORY IN THE NETHERLANDS



*Clemenskerk, Hilversum (van den Brink, n.d.)  
Edited by R. Versloot*

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# HISTORY THESIS

## REPURPOSED CHURCH BUILDINGS AND ITS CHANGING PUBLIC PERCEPTION THROUGH THE COURSE OF HISTORY IN THE NETHERLANDS

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# PREFACE

This architectural history thesis is about 'Repurposed church buildings and its changing public perception through the course of history in the Netherlands.' The research was done as part of the Master of Architecture at the TU Delft.

I have always found it fascinating how the existing and the new are dealt with by means of design. Therefore I have set up this research topic to get a more critical thinking attitude towards repurposing and get more insight on how people experience these heritage objects, especially the repurposing of them. I find it especially interesting to research buildings with a sensitive function, such as church buildings.

I would like to thank my tutor, Catja Edens, for the enthusiastic guidance and support during the process of this architectural history thesis.

Reinder Versloot

Delft, 15 April 2021

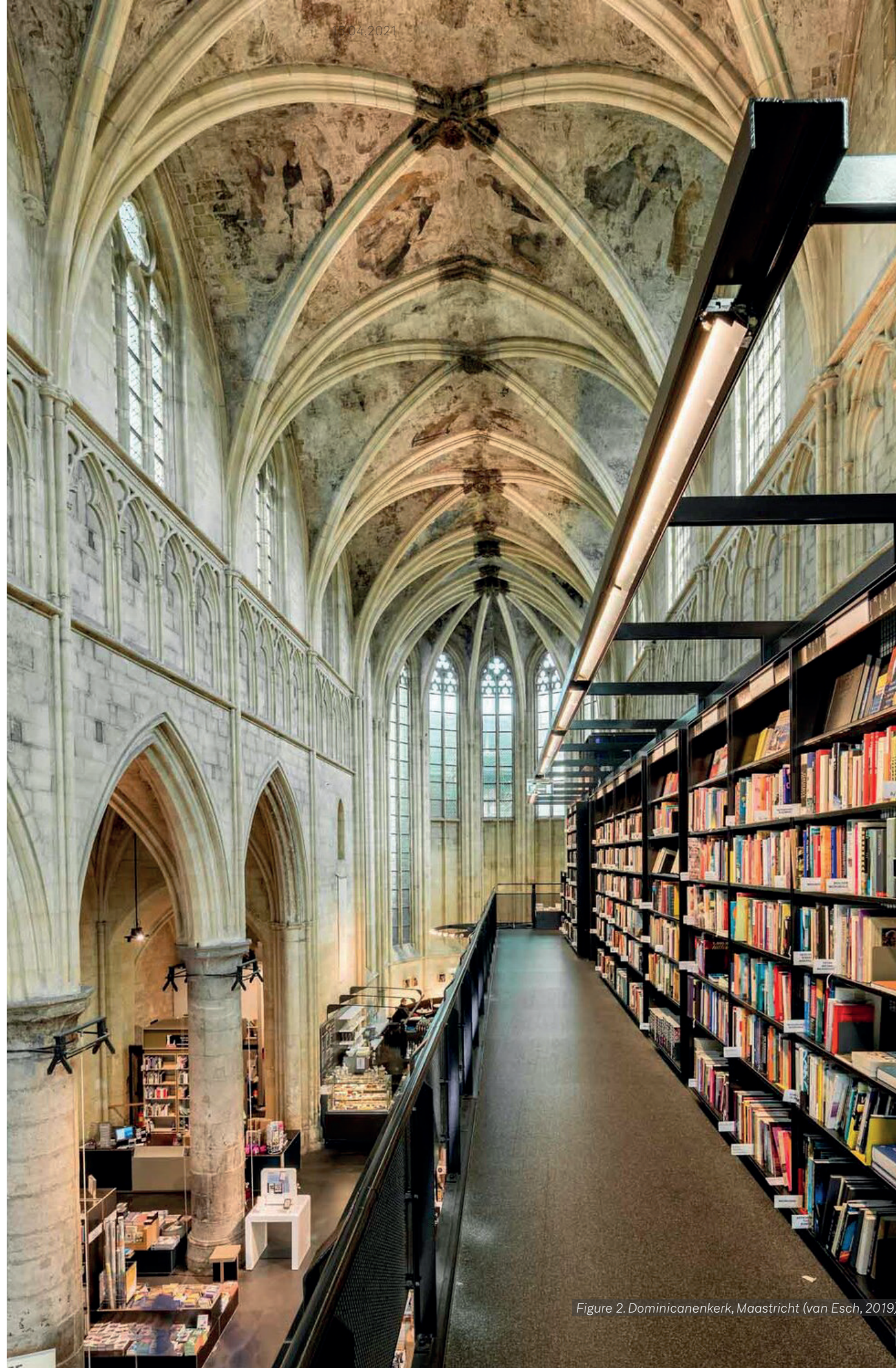


Figure 2. Dominicanenkerk, Maastricht (van Esch, 2019)

# ABSTRACT

The church is seen as a symbol, a bearer of faith, art and culture, in a world that is increasingly globalized. Church buildings are like anchors in time, they tell us who we are and where we come from. Nevertheless, the number of church visitors is decreasing because the number of faith bearers in the Netherlands continues to decline. This means that fewer churches are needed which results in more vacant churches in the future. A way of preserving church buildings is repurposing. In the Netherlands, 1500 church buildings have already been transformed into new functions and differ from apartments to supermarkets. But how does the public perceive these buildings, and how does it differ from the past? Do these repurposed church buildings contribute to the preservation of the history of the Netherlands? This is investigated on the basis of the following research question: *“What is the value of repurposed church buildings through the course of history in the Netherlands?”*

This question is answered by dividing the research into three chapters, starting with the historical context of religion and church buildings in the Netherlands. The historical context of church buildings in the Netherlands was first mapped out by means of various literature studies. It can be said that throughout history, there have been multiple periods of change in the importance of faith and thus church buildings in the Netherlands. The so to say all-time low of this notion was during the de-pillarization period in which the Netherlands became one of the most secular countries in the world. In the second chapter, the church buildings that can be found in the Netherlands today are examined. It can be said that the value of the church building is still seen as added value in society today. However, its notion of value has changed over time. Where the church was first seen as a place of faith and closed communities, the church is now experienced as a place of culture and heritage, a place for the community that must be accessible to the outside world. The historical added value, along with the value as a connecting element in society, makes the church worth preserving. Repurposing has been happening in the Netherlands for centuries, but especially since 1970 repurposing has played an increasingly important role. When a church is repurposed, people believe that it should be treated with respect. The people also like it when a public function comes in return. This is often the case, both due to the demand of the community and the urban location make churches extremely suitable for public functions. Despite this, there is often criticism of the repurposing of churches, just like the church buildings discussed in this thesis. Initially there is often indignation and opposition. But it appears that in the longer term acceptance is there, it is often a matter of getting used to. This has resulted in the fact that these repurposed church buildings are increasingly becoming part of the society. The value and perception of church buildings may change over time but the appreciation for these buildings remain.



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Figure 3. Ice Rink in Franciscuskerk, Weert, 2014

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Repurposing buildings is something we increasingly have to deal with as architects nowadays. Especially the active repurposing of churches is something of the last few decades. There are about 7100 church buildings in the Netherlands and many of them are monuments that tell stories of the past. "They are part of our history and at the same time determine the identity of a region" (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2012). The church is seen as a symbol, a bearer of faith, art and culture, in a world that is increasingly globalized. Church buildings are like anchors in time, they tell us who we are and where we come from. (Reinstra et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the number of church visitors is decreasing because the number of faith bearers in the Netherlands continues to decline. "Recent research in the Netherlands shows that the number of people who occasionally go to church halved since 1970" (De Hart, 2014, pp. 38). This number will decrease even further by 30 percent in 2030 compared to 2010 (Colliers, 2019), this means that fewer churches are needed which results in more vacant churches in the future. Could this vacancy be the end of the churches as we know it?

Although the meaning of church buildings may change over time, the appreciation for these buildings remain. After all, church buildings are more than just a physical enclosure (Reinstra et al., 2020). This appreciation is one of the reasons why many church buildings are being repurposed. In the Netherlands, 1500 church buildings have already been transformed into new functions and differ from apartments to supermarkets. These interventions can have a significant impact on the church buildings and could change the way we experience and look at them.

In the recent years there have been several studies into secularization in the Netherlands and the reuse of church buildings. The studies into repurposing are mainly focused on the adaptive reuse, which differs per situation and church. This thesis is intended as a further deepening of the existing research. For example, there will be investigated how people experience church buildings nowadays, and what people think of repurposing these buildings. Do these repurposes contribute to the preservation of the history of the Netherlands, or do they contribute to the globalization and change of it. This will be investigated on the basis of the following research question:

***"What is the value of repurposed church buildings through the course of history in the Netherlands?"***

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the value that church buildings have on through the course of history in the Netherlands, and how this value differs nowadays from the past. This thesis will further investigate repurposed church buildings to find out how we experience these church buildings nowadays in our shifting globalizing notion of Dutch culture. This will be answered by means of various literature, books, webinars, case studies and other sources that will be explained in more detail per chapter below.

## **1.1 Structure**

This thesis will start by explaining the historical context of this topic in the first Chapter. The history of religion and its main events in the Netherlands will be investigated through various literature studies and books. The findings will be both textually as graphically by using a timeline. By means of this timeline the shifting notion of the Dutch culture can be observed along with the influence it has on church buildings. The history of church buildings itself in the Netherlands will also be investigated and linked to the wider development of churches in Europe. The last paragraph of this chapter is about the speculation of the future of church buildings in the Netherlands. This will be investigated by combining speculations from experts, official data and other findings by means of literature and books.

The second chapter goes in more depth about church buildings in the Netherlands. The characteristics will be analysed in depth to get a clear understanding of the type of churches that are present in the Netherlands. In addition, insight will be given into the public perception on church buildings, how were these church buildings experienced in the past, and how does it differ from the perception nowadays? This will be done by looking into the archives of old churches, and analysing the public opinion on how they perceive church buildings, based on writings and literature.

The third and last chapter is about the actual repurposing of church buildings. Starting with one of the earliest repurposed churches to be found and working towards the present. Only a handful will be given a more detailed description, but a larger amount will be processed in a timeline to give more insight. Most of the information will be taken from city archives and writings of the architects themselves and others who have written about the church buildings. The findings of these case studies, in combination with the perception of the Dutch public will be used to answer the main question about the value of repurposed church buildings through the course of history in the Netherlands.



# 2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This first chapter serves to give context to religion and its influence on church buildings throughout the course of history in the Netherlands. By portraying the history, it can be understood how important religion has been over the years and why the Netherlands is one of the most secularized countries in the Western world today. The secularisation will be analysed from both a historical and geographic view.

## 2.1 History of religion in the Netherlands

When looking back in time, the first information about religion in the Netherlands dates back to Roman times. The Roman religion did not resemble belief as we practice it nowadays, it is more like that of the ancient Greeks, who believed in multiple gods instead of one. This form of religion is called Polytheism. The religion of the Roman Empire was a so-called state religion, meaning that everyone was forced to practice a certain religion. For this reason, faith spread very fast within the empire. Within this Roman Empire, Christianity arose during the 1st century. However, this form of religion was strictly forbidden until the 4th century, when it was finally accepted as a state religion (Tijdvakken.nl, 2020).

Christianity reached the Netherlands a few centuries later in the 4th century, and was mostly the Roman Catholic movement. Later on in the 8th century the first diocese was founded in Utrecht as part of the Franconian Empire “*Christianity flourished in the Middle Ages, but was forced to go underground in the course of the Dutch Revolt*” (Sengers, 2005, p. 23). Which dates back from 1566 till 1648. The reason for this forced underground movement was the result of a new founded movement against the Roman Catholic Church, called the ‘Reformation.’ The name of this movement comes from the Latin word ‘Reformatio’ which translates to ‘reshape.’ The purpose of this movement is already recognizable in the name, its intention was not to found a new church, but to reshape and improve the existing Roman Catholic Church (Koops, 2018). The Reformation led to multiple faith streams, including one of the most known ones called Calvinism. This stream of faith had major consequences for the course of religion in the Netherlands. The majority of the population became Protestant, which resulted in the decline of the Roman Catholic believers to a percentage of 40 percent in 1648. This majority of Dutch Reformed in the Netherlands persisted until about the 19th century. The first official census from the CBS (CBS, 2015) was in 1849, which shows that more than half of the Dutch population practices the Dutch Reformed church. It is also interesting to notice that in 1889 the first non-religious dominations are visible in the census of Statistics Netherlands. (CBS, 2015). An overall oversight of important aspects in the course of religion in the Netherlands from the 16th till now can be seen in the timetable in figure 7. It is noticeable that the more we move into the 20th century, the more shifts in faith are visible. The Dutch reformed is declining rapidly, while the percentage of Roman Catholics is only slightly flattening. In addition, secularisation is growing more and more rapidly.

## 2.2 The shifting notion in religion and its influence on church buildings

The Netherlands changed from a very religious country to one of the most secularized countries in the Western world. (Becker & Vink, 1994) To find out what caused this change in belief we have to look back in time again. The first official note of church denomination in the Netherlands by the CBS (2015) was around the 19th century, but this denomination starts increasing more rapidly around the mid-20th century. Secularization can be split into different types to get a more clear view of the topic. According to Dobbelaere (1981), professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, these types are societal secularization, organisational secularization and the individual secularization. When talking about societal secularization we have to enlarge our scope a bit, and look further than just within the Netherlands. In 1991 the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) held a survey about the belief in God and their church attendance, see figure 4.

	Belief in God	Church member
Philippines	94	100
Poland	92	97
Ireland	92	98
United States	89	93
Northern Ireland	88	91
Italy	81	94
Great Britain	61	67
New Zealand	59	70
Slovenia	58	89
Western Germany	58	89
Hungary	57	95
Norway	53	94
Netherlands	50	44
Eastern Germany	20	35

Figure 4. Church attendance in Europe (Becker & Vink, 1994)

According to this survey, The Netherlands have the second lowest percentage of people that believe in God, and only forty-four percent of the participants is member of a church. This is comparable with Norway, which has roughly the same amount of religious people. However, the amount of church members is significantly higher, up to almost a hundred percent. A reason for this could be the difference in tradition of church registration. In the Netherlands, a deliberate choice has to be made whether someone wants to become a member of the church or not. While in Norway when a member of the Lutheran state church conceives a child, this child will automatically be registered as a church member. (Knippenberg, 1998, pp. 209-210) One of the reasons why this is not the case in the Netherlands is because of the many different types of religion that were practiced in the Netherlands during the course of history. This diversity in religion has led to the fact that

the individual himself chooses his own belief instead of the state religion. Furthermore, King Willem II issued 'reglementen' in the 1848, which was a revision of the constitution. This revision laid the foundation for the current system of parliamentary democracy in the Netherlands as we know it today. Since the revision, it is no longer the king, but the ministers who are responsible for policy. This revision also gave complete freedom from religious concepts, which meant that religion was free to regulate their affairs and that the state was officially disestablished from any sort of religion. (Garstka, 2012, pp. 34). "Religion has no longer the central place in society, which it had for so many centuries, but has been banned to the private sphere at most" (Knippenberg, 1998, pp. 211). As a result, different institutions could determine for themselves which faith they practice. Partly because of this, and the political parties founded in this period ensured a division in society before the end of the 19th century. This period is also called the 'verzuiling' which is translated to pillarization. In this period of pillarization, the growth of the number of non-believers stagnated and society was divided between the different pillars of beliefs: Protestant, Catholic, liberal and socialist (Koops, 2018). Living in this pillarized society meant that you had to do everything within your own pillar. For example, a Protestant had to marry another Protestant, had to go to a Protestant school, was allowed to listen only to Protestant news

sources and was eventually also buried at a Protestant cemetery. During this period, the number of Catholic and Protestant grew significantly, and so did the number of Catholic and Protestant schools and churches. (Knippenberg, 1998, pp. 211) This was due to the fact that every religion wanted to express its faith in its own pillar. The pillarization period is therefore the period in which most of the church buildings that are still standing in the Netherlands today were built. However, the pillarization period lasted only a short period of time. From the 1960s onwards, a period of 'ontzuiling' (de-pillarization) took place, this was mainly due to technological developments, such as the invention of television, the growing prosperity that allowed people to go on holiday, and thus discovering other areas and views. The latter is the reason for a lot of individual secularization, because people took their own stand based on their findings. This is the moment when secularization increased enormously in the Netherlands with the result that many church buildings became vacant. This vacancy led to a lack of money to finance and maintain the church buildings, which then led to the demolition of many church buildings in the Netherlands.

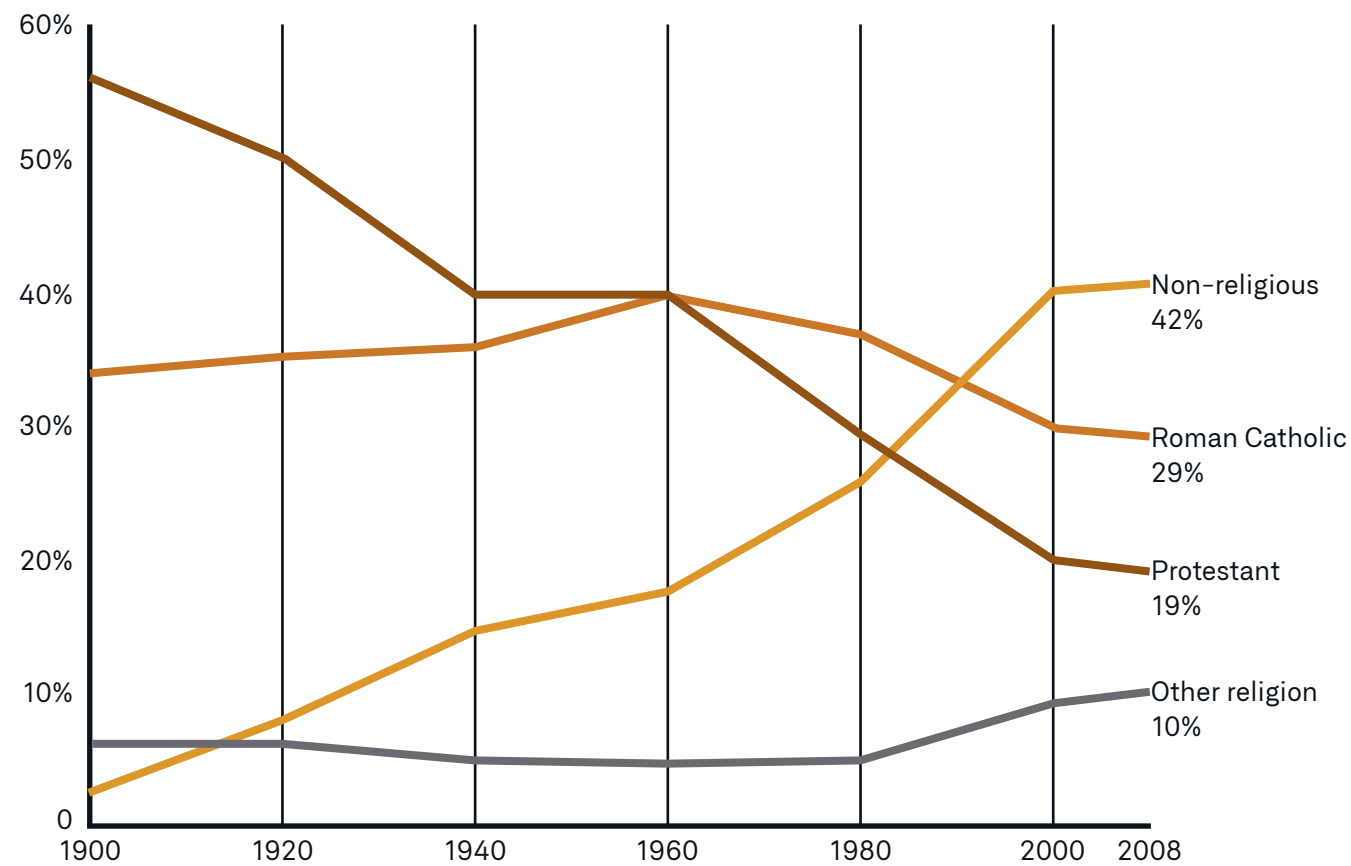


Figure 5. Secularization in the Netherlands (CBS, 2020)



Figure 6. Secularisation resulted in the demolition of many churches (Sengers, 2005)

# HISTORY OF RELIGION IN THE NETHERLANDS

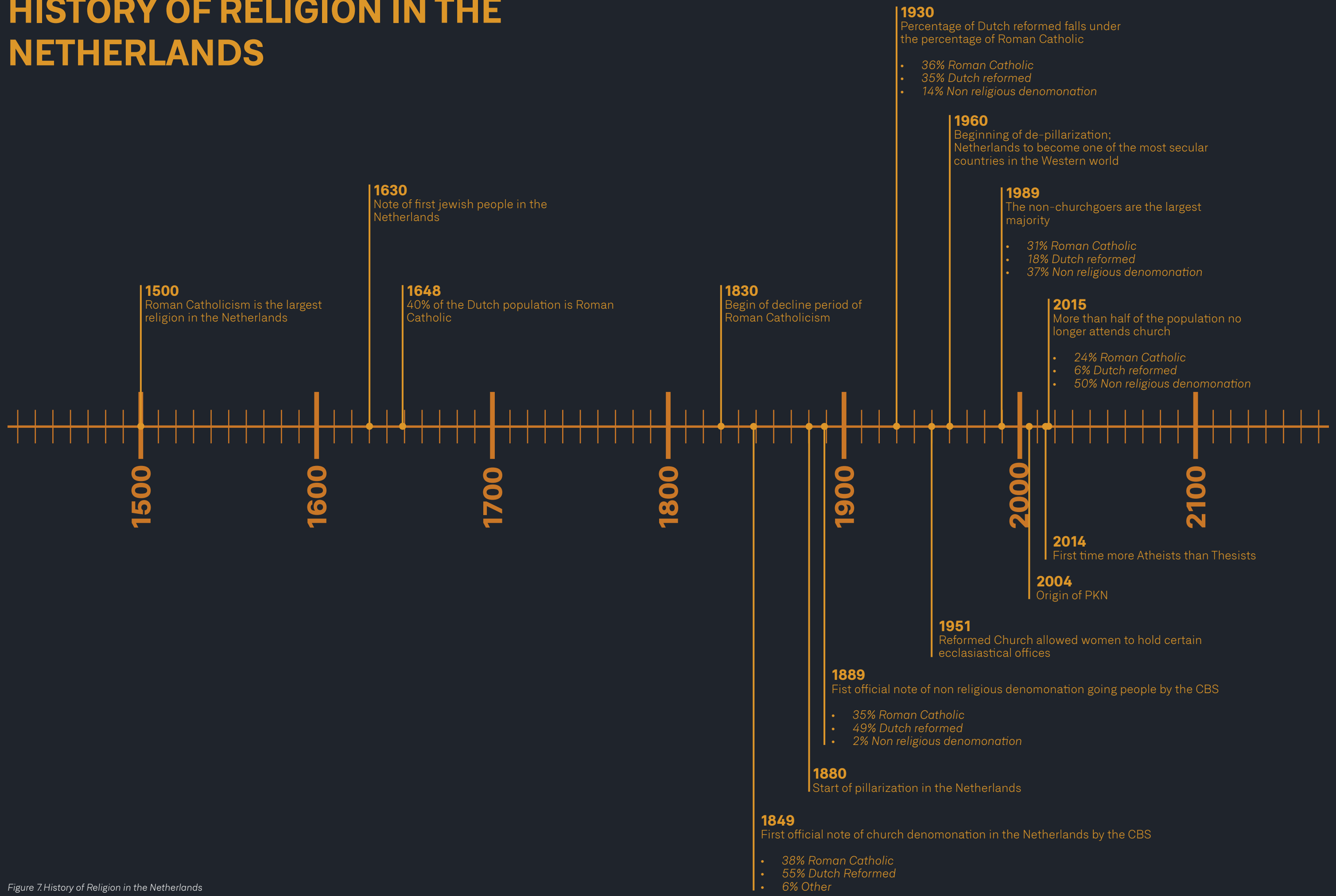


Figure 7. History of Religion in the Netherlands



### 2.3 History of church buildings in the Netherlands

In order to understand the value of church buildings, it is important to look at the church building itself first. What makes a church building a church building? It is crucial to know this before even thinking about repurposing, because after all, how can one treat it with respect if one doesn't know the basics.

At first, it seems obvious what a church building is because of its spatial layout and the structuring of space. A church building has so-called naves, aisles, colonnades and apses. (Sailer, 2011) Many people recognize this typology in a floor plan. When we think of a traditional Gothic church, for example, we often already have a certain image in mind of what this floor plan looks like. A random example of such a recognizable church floorplan can be seen in figure 8, the 'Eusebius church' in Arnhem, built in 1452 (Rijkdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2020).

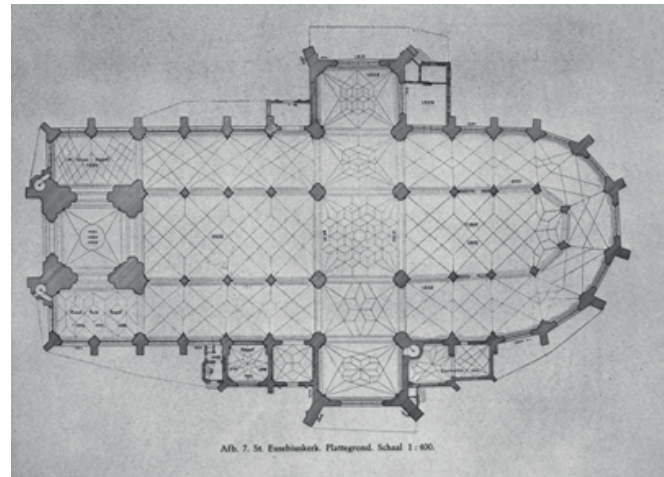


Figure 8. Floorplan of Eusebius church, Arnhem (Rozema, 1958)

However, this does not have to be so self-evident at all. When zooming out a bit, and going back to the different typologies of church buildings in general, recognizing church buildings out of a floor plan becomes more difficult. The typology and characteristics of church buildings have also taken different forms throughout the course of history. The construction period of a church is not necessarily bound to a particular style, but churches built in a particular period can be categorized under a particular movement (Bisdrom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al., 2008, pp. 21).

When we look at the history of church buildings in the Netherlands, very little is actually known about the first church buildings. At best, in some cases excavations have found old foundation pile holes that refer to a wooden predecessor (Den Hartog, 2002, pp. 34). One of the oldest church buildings still standing today is the Basilica of Saint Servatius in Maastricht, Limburg. This church was founded by Bishop Monulfus in around 570 and was used as a burial church at the time. (Panhuysen, 1991, pp. 15) It was not until a few decades later in 1039 that the church was officially consecrated and used for church services (Panhuysen, 1991, pp. 16).

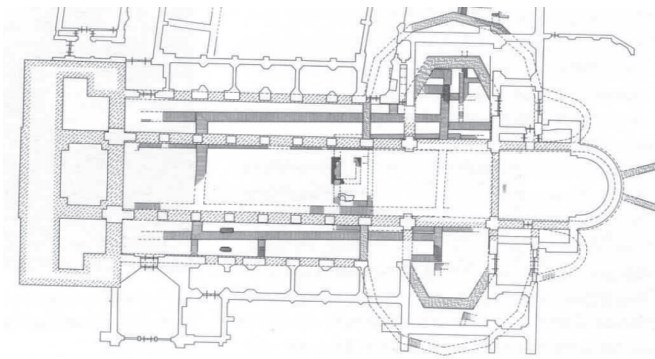


Figure 9. Floorplan of Saint Servatius (Veldman, 1991, pp. 16)

This church already has the characteristic floor plan of a church how we know it today, this is due to the cruciform floor plan. Most church buildings and cathedrals in western Europe, and thus in the Netherlands have this cruciform floor plan (Tronzo, 2008, pp. 275). In this case and most other cases, the vertical arm of the cross is longer than the horizontal arm, this cross is also known as the Latin cross and is a symbol of Christianity. (McGrath, 2006, pp. 321-323) In contrast to the West, the orthodox church flourished in the eastern of Europe. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica & Jain, 1998). These church buildings also had a cruciform floorplan, However, this was namely a Greek cross. Unlike the Latin cross, this one has four arms of equal length. This Greek-cross floorplan was widely used in the Byzantine architecture and symbolizes the Protestant and Catholic Church (Fletcher & Cordingley, 1967, pp. 251-253). This church floorplan can be found in the Netherlands to a lesser extent than the Latin cross.

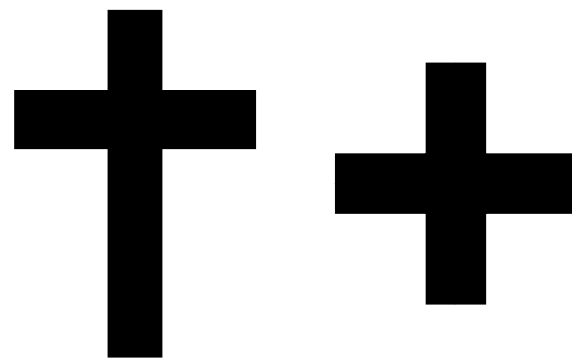


Figure 10. Latin cross on the left, Greek cross on the right

The second oldest church building known can also be found in Limburg, which is the Sint-Pancratiuskerk in Mesch. The oldest part of this church, the nave, dates back from the 9th century (Seetal, 2020). The building was later constructed with a new choir around 1400, which means that the main building dates from the 15th century (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2021). Unlike the Basilica of Saint Servatius, this church does not have aisles but it is rectangular shaped with a steeple on the short side. This shape can be related back to one of the first designs for the Christian church; the basilica.

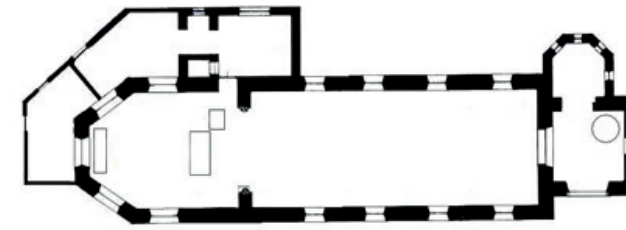


Figure 11. Floorplan of Sint-Pancratiuskerk (Heuts, 2010), edited by R. Versloot

A basilica was not only a church or chapel but it was a multifunctional building which was mainly used by the Romans as an administrative function for trade and justice (Sailer, 2011). This basilica had a rectangular shape and consisted of an atrium, narthex, aisle, nave, bema and an altar as can be seen in the figure 12. A basilica usually has a high naïve with low lower side aisles, that could also be at perpendicular to the nave. (Bisdrom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al., 2008, pp. 21) These basilica were often on places which marked important places from the Christian biblical story (Balderstone, 2007).

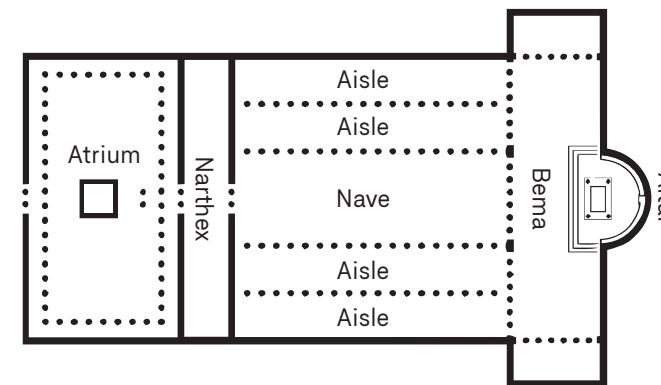


Figure 12. Old St. Peters Basilica (Borg, 2006), edited by R. Versloot

Not only the above shape can be traced back to the basilica, but also the Latin cross has evolved from the basilica church. The difference is that this latin cross adds two lateral extensions to the basilica's original shape. Another example of a type of church that can be found in the Netherlands, which has also evolved from the ancient basilica, is the central plan (Essential Humanities, n.d.). This central plan is essentially a compressed version of the basilica into a square or other rotational symmetry shape (Bisdrom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al., 2008, pp. 21), like the earlier mentioned Greek cross or the well-known Pantheon in Rome. An example in the Netherlands of such a central plan church is also one of the oldest remaining churches that still exists in the Netherlands today. The Sint-Nicolaaskapel, also known as the Valkhofkapel is located in Nijmegen, Gelderland. As can be seen in figure 13, this church consists of an eight-sided core surrounded by a lower, sixteen-sided circle. This church was built in tuff in 1030 and partly renovated in brick in the Gothic period, at which the central part was raised and the corridor was given rib and bone vaults (Rijkdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2020b).

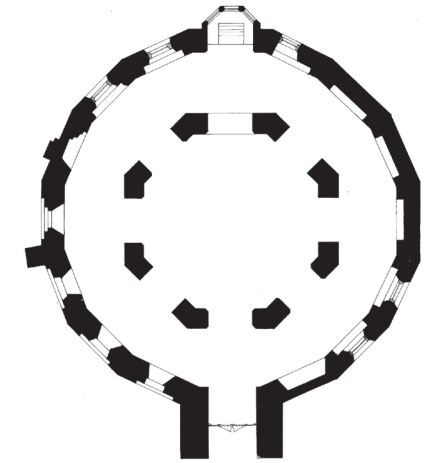


Figure 13. Floorplan of Sint-Nicolaaskapel (Sloet van de Beele, 1871), edited by R. Versloot

In addition to these three examples, thousands of other examples of church buildings in the Netherlands can be mentioned. These differ in both shape and construction period. In terms of shape, we can categorize them under the aforementioned basilica, central construction and cross shape, but also under the box shape and other construction forms. According to the Bisdrom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al. (2008, pp. 22) the construction date can be divided into seven periods in time.

#### < 1560

This period includes church buildings from the Middle Ages, which are characterized by their Romanesque and Gothic architecture as main styles. Around 1560, the Gothic, "characterised by large windows, regularity of ornate detailing, and grids of panelling that extend over walls, windows and vaults" (Fraser, 2018), was supplanted by the advent of the Renaissance.

#### 1560 – 1799

This period is characterized as classical architecture, such as the Renaissance and Dutch Classicism. This is also the period of the 'beeldenstorm' (Iconoclastic Fury), after which catholic churches were no longer allowed to be built (Brouwer, 2016, pp. 215).

#### 1800-1849

With the beginning of the industrial revolution came the neo styles. These Neostyles were a revival of the many styles of the classic antiquity inspired directly from the classical period (Irwin, 1997).

#### 1850-1899

During this period the pillarization in the Netherlands took place in which many new churches were built, mainly in the Neo-Gothic style. This is partly because it was again allowed for Catholics to build churches due the restoration of the Episcopal hierarchy in 1853 (Koops, 2020).

1900-1940

Around the 20th century there were on the one hand the innovative movement such as Jugendstil, Expressionism, Functionalism, but on the other hand there was also the traditional movement with rationalism and traditionalism (Ibelings, 2003, pp. 66).

1941-1969

This period is characterized by post-war architectural styles such as functionalism, known for the famous quote by Louis H. Sullivan "Form ever follows function" (1896, pp. 407).

> 1970

These are all relatively new churches that were built around the time when the first churches were extensively demolished in the de-pillarization period. The churches built in this period were mostly built in the post-modern styles, such as deconstructivism which is characterised by an absence of obvious symmetry and harmony (Taschen, 2021, pp. 148).

**2.4 The future of church buildings in the Netherlands**

As mentioned, during the de-pillarization period, many churches were demolished instead of repurposed. The exact reason of this can't be backed up with scientific evidence but an assumption can be made. The church is seen as a symbol, a bearer of faith, art and culture. Church buildings are like anchors in time, they tell us who we are and where we come from. (Damme et al., 2020). Repurposing these buildings could be seen as sacrilege, and inappropriate. However, faith plays an increasingly less important role in our society. So even though the meaning of church buildings may change over time, the appreciation for these buildings remain. After all, church buildings are more than just a physical enclosure (Damme et al., 2020). But even though the appreciation remains, the number of church visitors is decreasing because the number of faith bearers in the Netherlands continues to decline. "Recent research in the Netherlands shows that the number of people who occasionally go to church halved since 1970" (De Hart, 2014, pp. 38). This number will decrease even further by 30 percent in 2030 compared to 2010 (CBS, 2017) as can be seen in figure 14.

**2.5 Conclusion**

It can be said that the church buildings that can be found in the Netherlands descend from the earlier church buildings from the ancient greek and roman times. Throughout history, there have been multiple periods of change in the importance of faith. The trough of this was during the depillarization period. The Netherlands became one of the most secular countries in the world. Secularization is something that cannot be ignored, it will have to be accepted and acted upon if we want to preserve the church buildings in the Netherlands.

**Amount of church visitors a week**

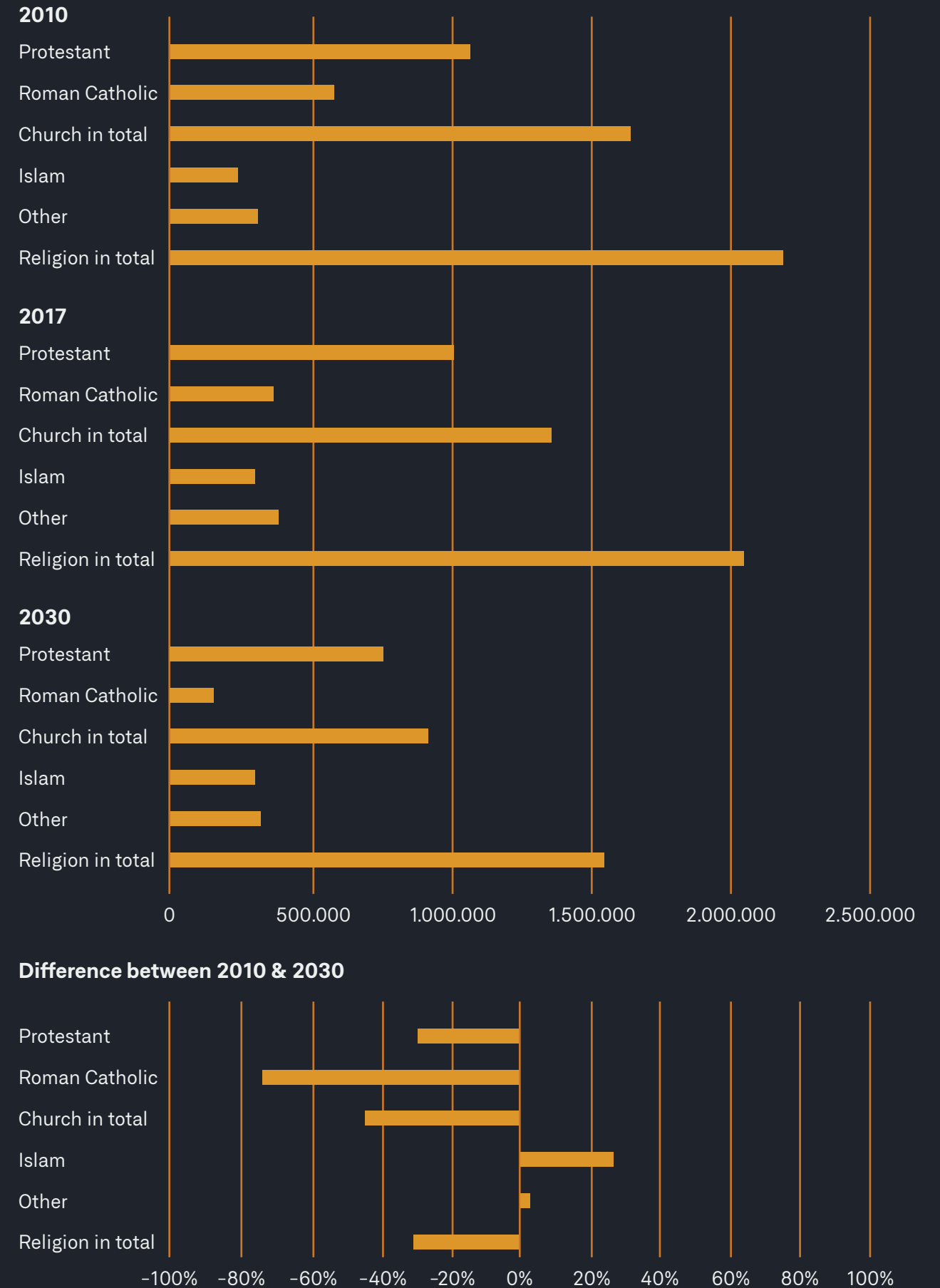


Figure 14. Church visitors in the Netherlands, Source: Colliers (2020), edited by R. Versloot



## 3

# CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Repurposing church buildings is an increasingly common solution to preserve church buildings. But what makes these church buildings so special that they must be preserved? What characterizes these church buildings? And how do we perceive these buildings? This chapter is intended to provide insight into the development and characteristics of church buildings in the Netherlands and in addition, the value of these church buildings will be analysed and compared with their value in the past.

## 3.1 Characteristics of church buildings in the Netherlands

Three examples of different typologies of church buildings have been mentioned in the previous chapter. In addition to this cruciform, basilica and central floor plan, we can also divide churches under the box shape and the other church buildings that deviate from these ones (Bisdrom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al., 2008, pp. 21). Of these four types, the cross shape is the most common in the Netherlands (Tronzo, 2008, pp. 275). This is of course based on the different characteristics of the churches from ancient Greek and roman history. One of those characteristics is the bema, which is a standard fixture in Christian churches (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998), and thus characteristic for many church buildings in the Netherlands. The bema is a raised platform for public speaking, in Christian churches it is the open space between the end of the nave; the hall, arcade and the apse (Dictionary, n.d.). In some cases, the bema extended to the sides of the church, creating a T-shape, which developed in the earlier mentioned Latin-cross. The arms of this cross are called the transept. (Fletcher et al., 1996). Altars often stood at the ends of these transepts to honour certain saints. An example of what a medieval church or cathedral looked like can be seen in figure 15. In addition to the different floorplans and shapes and built date, we can also divide church buildings in two broad types in terms of size and style: simple and ornate (Douglas, 2006). The former is usually associated with the Reformed Church, whose churches are considerably simpler and more domestic in character and size. The 'ornate'

churches, on the other hand, are often of a much larger scale. In general, churches in the Netherlands have walls that are made of thick and solid stone – in some cases brick, and built in lime/cement mortar with regular masonry buttresses. The flagstones on the ground floor are laid directly onto the bare, especially in the pre-1850s church buildings. Church buildings after the 1850s often have a suspended timber ground floors. The roof consists of a heavy wooden beam construction and is a slate-lined steep gable roof. The free height above the floor is generally higher than 5 meters and finally there are tall, narrow stained glass windows in the facades (Douglas, 2006).

Besides these rather specific characteristics mentioned above, there are two more general, more obvious characteristics of the traditional church that should nevertheless be mentioned. Starting with the steeple, which due to its height, leads your gaze up towards the sky. Due to its height, it was the first point that sun ray hits as it ascended from the sky, pagans believed that this symbolized the link between heaven and earth (Taylor, n.d). The steeple was often the highest architectural feature in its area, allowing people to find the church from any part of the town or village (Carter, 2015). Another characteristic, located in the steeple, are the church bells. The primary purpose of those bells was to signal the time for worshipers to gather for a church service. However, the bells could also be used to warn people from danger, such as an approaching enemy army or the outbreak of fire (Carter, 2015).

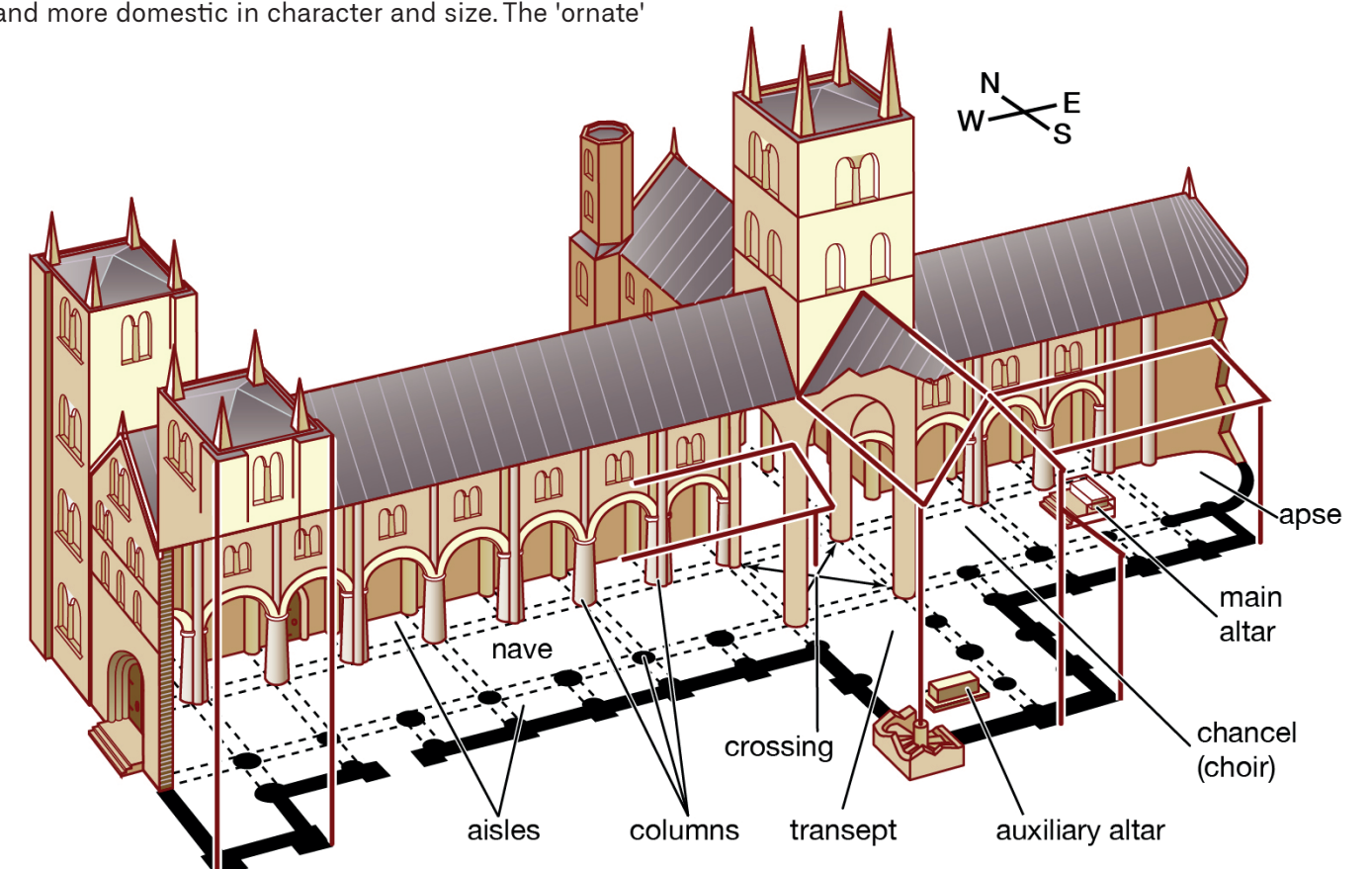


Figure 15. Medieval cathedral arranged on a cruciform plan (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013)

To conclude, we can subdivide the shape of the church buildings into 5 categories; the cruciform church where the nave and the transept intersect with approximately equal arms and the basilica church consisting of a high nave with low side aisles. In addition, the main shape of a central building is round or a polygonal volume, and there is also the box-shaped church where the floor plan and the elevation have a rectangular shape. However, there are also churches that do not fit within these categories, these can be marked as others.

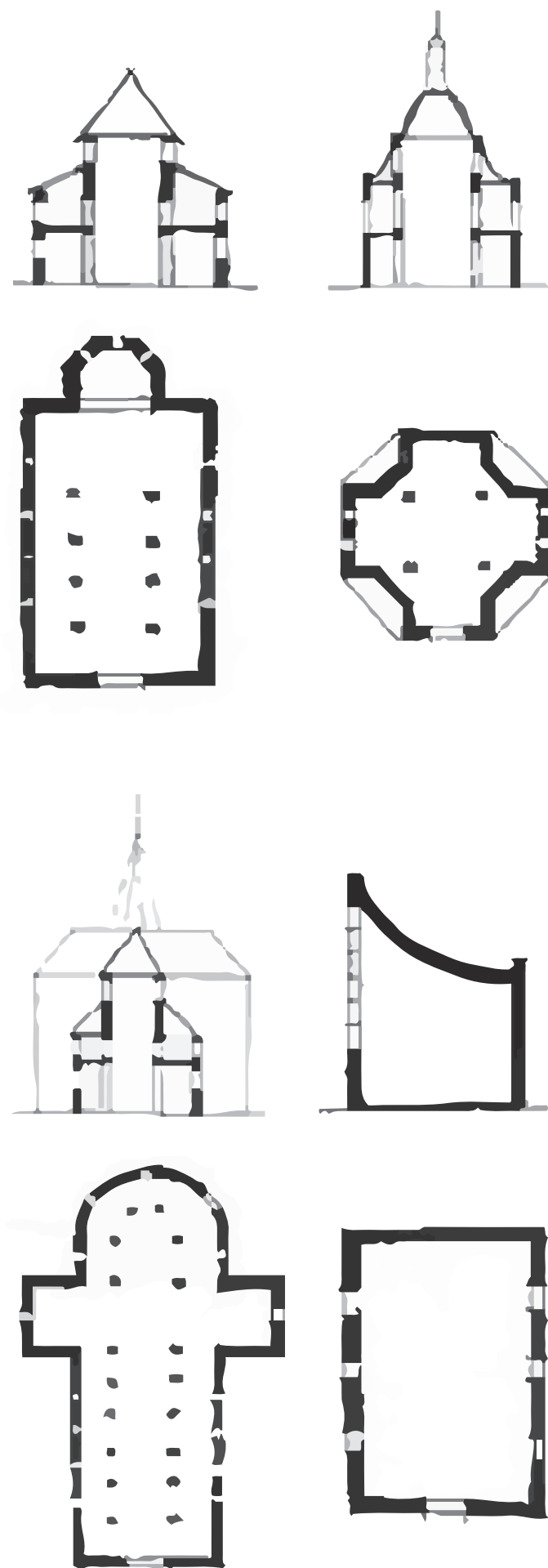


Figure 16. Shapes of church buildings (Bisdom van Haarlem-Amsterdam et al., 2008, pp. 22), edited by R. Versloot

### 3.2 Church buildings and the public perception

The church has played an important part in life for many, it is a place where for some of us special life events are marked or celebrated, such as funerals and weddings. K.M. Van Velsen (2020), head of construction Diocese of Rotterdam, mentions that according to the Roman Catholic, the church is primarily a consecrated object, exclusively a house of god. It is therefore not surprising that the church building is seen as a repository of personal memories (Clark, 2007, pp. 66). The church is still seen by many as a community place where people can meet and where events are held. "Hence, they play key roles in building local community and identity" (Netsch & Gugerell, 2019, pp. 50). The church building is considered a prominent part of the community's understanding of itself, it is the face that presents itself to the outside world of the values and culture that have influenced its history. Church buildings are of great social importance, have a high amenity value and fulfil an important neighbourhood function (Van Damme, 2013). They are very valuable in terms of urban development and landscape due their location and dominant presence in the profile of a city or village (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2012, pp. 11). Most church buildings are very centrally located within a city or town and are in many cases the central meeting point. The presence of a church building is self-evident for everyone, even for non-believers. Without these church buildings, the landscape and city profile would look less varied and recognizable (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2012, pp. 19). They are seen as an important characteristic in the landscape, and therefore play a crucial part of the community's identity (Clark, 2007, pp. 69). This makes the public perception an important factor in the preservation of historic church buildings (Ahn, 2007, pp. 19).

However, despite the fact that the church building has played such a major role according to many, a trend can be observed in which this role is decreasing (Colliers, 2019). In the first chapter it was already clear that the number of church visitors per week is decreasing considerably, and will probably continue to decrease in the future. It can be said that less value is given to the church building itself in the sense of the expression of faith. During an online Webinar, 'De Kerk van alle kanten: Kerk in functie' (2020), several questions were asked about the meaning and role of the church, see figure 17. About two hundred and fifty people answered this question. The respondents were all connected to the church in some way, from churchgoers to developers and architects. It is surprising to see in the results that only a small percentage of the respondent thinks the church building is a place for prayer, and the vast majority considers it a place of culture and heritage. This confirms that the value of the church as an expression of faith is diminishing. In addition, more than half of the respondents think that the church belongs to the community and "the preservation of these buildings is a way of preserving the collective memory of the community" (Ahn, 2007, pp. 18). Yet, according to the believers, there is still a need for meaning and spirituality, and the church should still play a role in this (Van Velsen, 2020). According to many believers, it is not necessarily about the church building itself but about connecting with the community. The church is considered a place where people meet and where community events take place.

(Netsch & Gugerell, 2019, pp. 50) They are often located at the centre of a community (Ahn, 2007, pp. 18). In the Netherlands, these places of worship are of the people themselves in the ecclesiastical communities, the church does not belong to the national community as in Denmark or Spain. However, this gives a sense of ownership, a disadvantage of this is that there is often the feeling that the church building belongs to someone else, which results in people not feeling welcome to visit and enter a church building as an outsider (Van Zwieten, 2021). Which is actually quite strange, because as a tourist in another city, you often want to visit the historic church and admire it from the inside. During the third webinar (Open kerken, 2021) the question was asked about the understanding by an open church, see figure 17. The answers showed that slightly more than half of the respondents think that an open church puts everything in place to inspire visitors, which is especially important now in corona time. Just under half think that an open church is a place for prayer and other visitors. The church is about gathering people, the name 'church' itself also comes from the Greek word "Ekklesia", which comes from the Greek verb "kaleo" which means to assemble (Deissmann & Strachan, 1995, pp. 112). People often think religiously when thinking of a church, but it is actually very humanistic instead (Van Zwieten, 2021).

### 3.3 Conclusion

All in all, it can be said that the value of the church is still seen as added value in society today. However, its notion of value has changed over time. Where the church was first seen as a place of faith and closed communities, the church is now experienced as a place of culture and heritage, a place for the community that must be accessible to the outside world. The historical added value, along with the value as a connecting element in society, makes the church worth preserving. As mentioned, the preservation of these buildings is a way of preserving the communities collective memory. For these reasons, the public perception should be considered as an important value of the church building. But in what degree has this been taken into account with the repurposing of churches in the Netherlands?

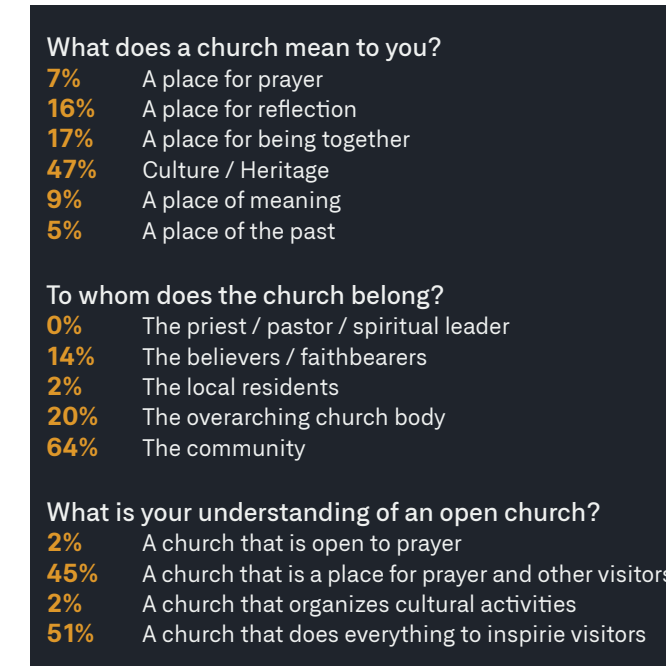


Figure 17. Results of webinar (Kerk van alle kanten, 2020 & 2021)



# 4 REPURPOSED CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Vacant church buildings as a result of secularization are increasingly common in the Netherlands. Because the church is considered an added value in society, something must be done to preserve it. Repurposing is one of the options to preserve a church building. This chapter will discuss this in more detail by conducting case-studies into two repurposed well-known church buildings. How are these church buildings repurposed, and why did they do it in this way? Subsequently, it will be examined how people experience these repurposed churches. Do these churches still have the same added value in society?

The repurposing of church buildings is a trending topic of the last few decades. In the Netherlands, 1500 out of approximately 7100 church buildings have already been transformed into new functions (Reinstra et al., 2020) and differ from apartments to supermarkets. "Maintaining public access is an important factor for social and public acceptance as far as reuse designs are concerned" (Netsch & Gugerell, 2019, pp. 51). So when a church disappears, it is very much appreciated by the congregations and society, when something public comes in return (Kerk in beeld, 2020). The repurposing of churches is not necessarily a new concept, many examples can be found throughout history.

## 4.1. Minderbroederskerk, Maastricht

One of the earliest known examples of a repurposed church in the Netherlands is the Minderbroederskerk in Maastricht. The Gothic church dates back to the 13th century and was built against the city wall that was built a few years earlier (Dingemans, 1983, pp. 9-11). The church can be categorized under the basilica form. The building has been repurposed twice, the first time being in 1639 when the Franciscans were expelled from Maastricht because they did not want to show allegiance to the States General (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 224). The building was then repurposed into a weapons arsenal, which it remained until 1867 (Ubachs & Evers, 2005, pp. 39). Around 1881 the church was restored and converted into a city archive and library, which it still is today. The building has been restored several times over the years. For example, between 1991 and 1996 a 'crack' was made on purpose in the façade where the city wall used to run, as a reminder of the past. Not everyone was fond of this, some considered this sacrilege and responded by sticking a pamphlet to this crack that read: 'legalized vandalism' (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 224) and a second one with 'monument abuse' (Sijbers, n.d). It is a crack that Maastricht has to get used to (Huisman, 1995). The old construction phases and the various new interventions are still clearly visible in the church.

## 4.2. Sint-Matthiaskerk, Warmond

Another early example of a repurposed church building in the Netherlands is the former Protestant church Sint-Matthiaskerk in Warmond. The building was built in the 15th century and had a three-aisled nave with a transept and choir (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2020b). The church was partly destroyed during the battle with the Spaniards in 1573, but they rebuilt the church to its former glory in 1591 (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 261). For reasons unknown, the community decided in 1874 to build a new church, and to demolish the old church to a ruin, after which it was used as a cemetery. Apart from the tower, little remains of the original church, yet the original floor plan is still clearly visible. The 'church' is still used as a burial site to this day.



Figure 18. Crack with pamphlet of 'monument abuse' (RHCL, 1994)



Figure 19. Sint-Matthiaskerk, Warmond (Delemarre, 1960)



### 4.3. Martinuskerk, Utrecht

The aforementioned churches both date from the Romanesque and Gothic Middle Ages, but there is also a relatively well-known example of a repurposed Neo-Gothic church. The Martinuskerk in Utrecht was one of the first repurposed neo-Gothic churches in a long series (Van Damme, 2013). The church was originally built in 1901 as a cruciform basilica and has an extended baptistery and transept arms that end on three sides like the choir (Stenvert et al., 1996, pp. 238). Around the 1970s this church also had to deal with too little income and too many expenses, which meant that something had to be done about this (Heisterkamp, 2004). In 1972 the demolition of a nearby church led to huge protests, so the parish board decided to put this church up for sale, which then led to the church being bought after several years by architect Dolf de Maar (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 44). The architect decided to live there himself and moved here with his family in 1978 and rented it out for cultural activities (Heisterkamp, 2004). For example "in the sketches by Van Kooten and De Bie, the building figured as the church of Juinen, for, among other things like the 'Holy cross', an indoor motocross." (Van Damme, 2013). Not everyone liked this and there were many complaints about blasphemy. Due to the fuss and the enormous maintenance costs, De Maar was forced to repurpose the already radically changed interior into about 40 apartments in 1987 (Stenvert et al., 1996, pp. 238). Some of the monument committee had great difficulty with this repurposing, as did the then national commission for the preservation of monuments, despite the fact that on the outside little could be seen of the interventions. Nevertheless, this plan has been implemented and this change of function has been an important step in the development of church repurposes in the Netherlands (Reinstra et al., 2020,

pp. 44). The following years have shown that churches are not always easy to repurpose and that they actually always need custom solutions. Churches are not exactly flexible, they have high and / or unusual floor to ceiling heights, which make cleaning and heating the space difficult. Also the close column spacings make it hard to suit certain services for new use (Douglas, 2006, pp. 137).

A few more examples can be given of repurposed churches from earlier history. A small group of the repurposed churches in the Netherlands can be seen in the timeline in figure 25. The aim of this timeline is not to give a complete picture of history, but is intended to give a small impression of the different repurposed churches with their new functions. It does resemble the periods in which many church buildings have been repurposed. Active repurposing is something that only really started around 1970, many Protestant denominations were looking for solutions for controlling heating and maintenance costs (Van Damme, 2013). Most repurposed churches are therefore of Protestant origin, namely about seventy percent. Only 25 percent used to be a Roman Catholic church building. This had to do with the attitude of the diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, which often preferred to demolish a church rather than give it an unwanted repurposing (Van damme, 2013). The Catholic Church itself is also different from the Protestant Church. The reason for this, according to Frank Strolenberg, program manager of the future of religious heritage, is that the Roman Catholic Church itself considers the building sacred, while Protestants generally only consider the church sacred when believers congregate in it (Schreuder, 2020a). The next church to be discussed is therefore undoubtedly an example of undesirable use according to the Roman Catholic Church.



Figure 20. Martinuskerk (Kenniscentrum Vlaamse Steden, 2015)

### 4.4. Paradiso, Amsterdam

An example of such a repurposed church building during the 1970 period is the now worldwide known Association Building of the 'Vrije gemeente Amsterdam', better known as the pop venue Paradiso. The 'vrije gemeente' was a radical offshoot of the reformed church (Van Damme, 2013). They were seen as the rebels of their time and asked architect Gerlof Salm to design a new building for them, which was completed in 1880. (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 208). This new building should not really be called a church, because the radical group stood for an 'free religion' and they thought the term 'church' was old-fashioned. (Paradiso, n.d). Despite the fact that the design was not allowed to be church-like and not have a classical church tower (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 208), the shape still seems to relate back to the old basilica. The building's design is symmetrical and highly functional (Barendregt, 2018). Upon entering through the main entrance at the front you enter a central hall, after which you can go straight ahead into the main hall, and on the sides there are stairs to the balconies, as can be seen in figure 22. There are also separate entrances on the side of the building that provide direct access to the main hall. This main hall has stained-glass windows with images of both spiritual and roman figures (Mutsaers, 1993), in addition to this, skylights have been installed in the roof. The last service took place in 1965, after which a short period of squatting took place and then after which the "Cosmic Relaxation Center Paradiso" opened its doors to the public (van Damme, 2013). The liberal attitude that the free community brought with them remains linked to the building thanks to the arrival of the pop temple (Paradiso, n.d). It gave young people and their culture a permanent place in the city, which was a totally new concept at the time

(Reinstra et al., pp. 208). The hippie culture was a great success, but it was only short-lived. Around the 1970s it became grim in Paradiso, as in the rest of the city due to the many nuisance caused by hard drugs. In addition, there were plans to build hotels, parking spaces, shops and catering on the Paradiso site. Both of this made Paradiso's future uncertain (Barendregt, 2018). After various campaigns by the residents of Amsterdam and various hearings, it was decided not to demolish Paradiso and to move the building plans elsewhere. When a new management was appointed in 1977, the tide was turned and Paradiso was turned into the venue as it is known and famed for today (Barendregt, 2018).

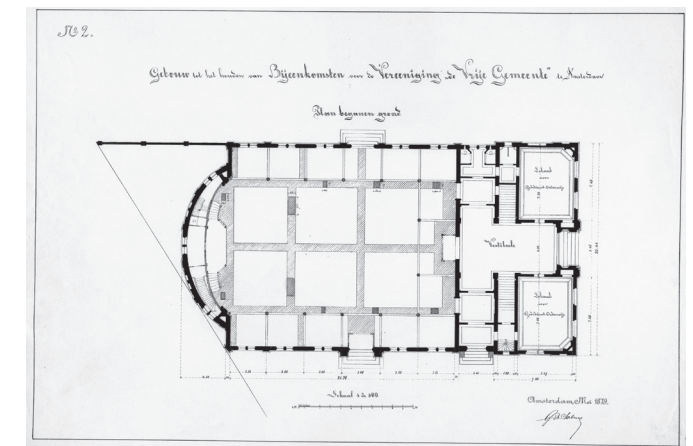


Figure 22. Paradiso - Floorplan of ground floor (Salm, 1879)

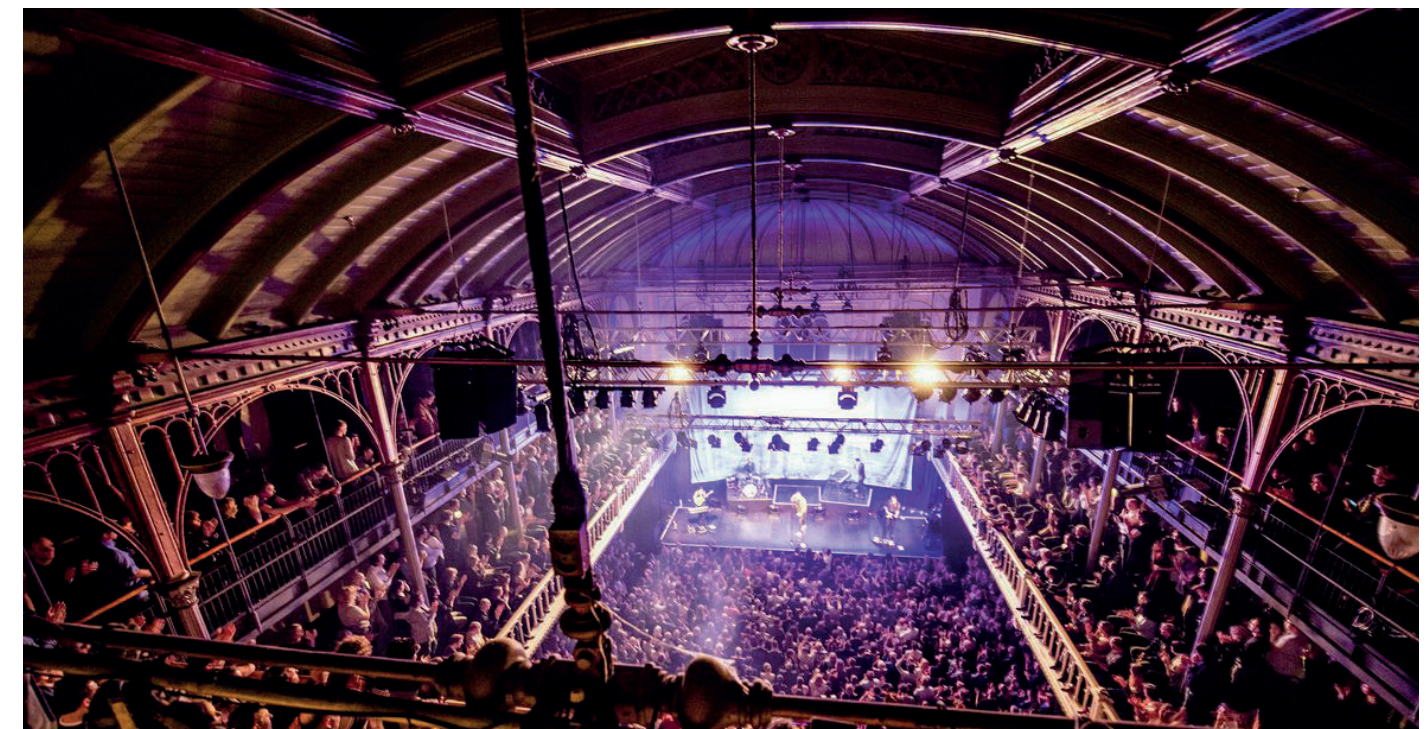


Figure 21. Concert of Tom Chaplin in Paradiso (Terlaak, 2017)



#### 4.5. Dominicanenkerk, Maastricht

A more recent example, which is also world famous, is the Dominican Bookstore Selexyz in Maastricht. This Gothic church with basilica nave and polygonal closed choir dates back from the 13th century and was in use by the Dominicans (Roman Catholic) and retained this function until 1805. (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2020a) After that, the church was used for all kinds of functions, from horse stable to bicycle cellar (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 62). In 2006 it got its last repurposing, the bookshop it still is today. The redevelopment could immediately count on the support of the residents of Maastricht, as became apparent when the owner at that time, Polare, threatened to go bankrupt in 2014. Crowdfunding campaigns were spontaneously set up by residents and the target amount was reached within a week (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 62). After this, the bookshop continued as an independent company. The success of the bookshop is still noticeable, as this church attracts the largest number of church visitors in the Netherlands, which is about seven hundred and fifty thousand a year (Open kerken, 2021). The success of the church is due to the total concept, the interior is a monumental walk-in bookcase with several floors, placed asymmetrically in the church. Leaving the full height of the church intact on the left, while on the right the people are led to the top floor of the steel 'book flat' (Merk-X, 2015). In addition to the special new interior, the success is also due to the catering inside and the various events that are held there. The combination of all this makes visiting this church accessible and attractive for all people, from day trippers to architecture enthusiasts (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 61).



Figure 23. Dominican Bookstore Selexyz (Aldershof, 2015)

#### 4.6. Clemenskerk, Hilversum

As mentioned before, the active repurposing of church buildings is something that has become more and more common in recent times. Today it is almost impossible to imagine a function that has not yet been used in a church in the Netherlands. Therefore there is a lot of surprise from abroad about the large number of different functions that are housed in the former churches (Schreuder, 2020b). The next and last example also caused a lot of surprise; the Clemenskerk in Hilversum, also known as "Flight Deck 53". The Roman Catholic Church from 1914 was repurposed into a trampoline park in 2018 (BOEi, 2021). The surprise came not only from abroad, but also from the local residents. The church was an anchor in the community, this was already apparent when the building lost its function in 1996 due to the merger with another religious community. This merger resulted in the building's vacancy which then led to a lot of protest, but this was not enough to keep the doors open. (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 156) The church remained vacant until it was bought in 2010 by BOEi, a social enterprise focused on the redevelopment of industrial, agricultural and religious heritage. After many discussions with the monument committee, a trampoline park was eventually built. This change of function led to a lot of protest from the community. The community sent a strong signal with 24 objections to the permit (Meijer, 2017, pp. 19). This was mainly due to fear of noise pollution and lack of parking spaces, but also because the function was considered inappropriate. Nevertheless, the repurposing continued. The repurposing was done in such a way that change of function doesn't cause any nuisance or lack of parking spaces. However, this



Figure 24. Trampolines inside the Clemenskerk (Miché, 2019)

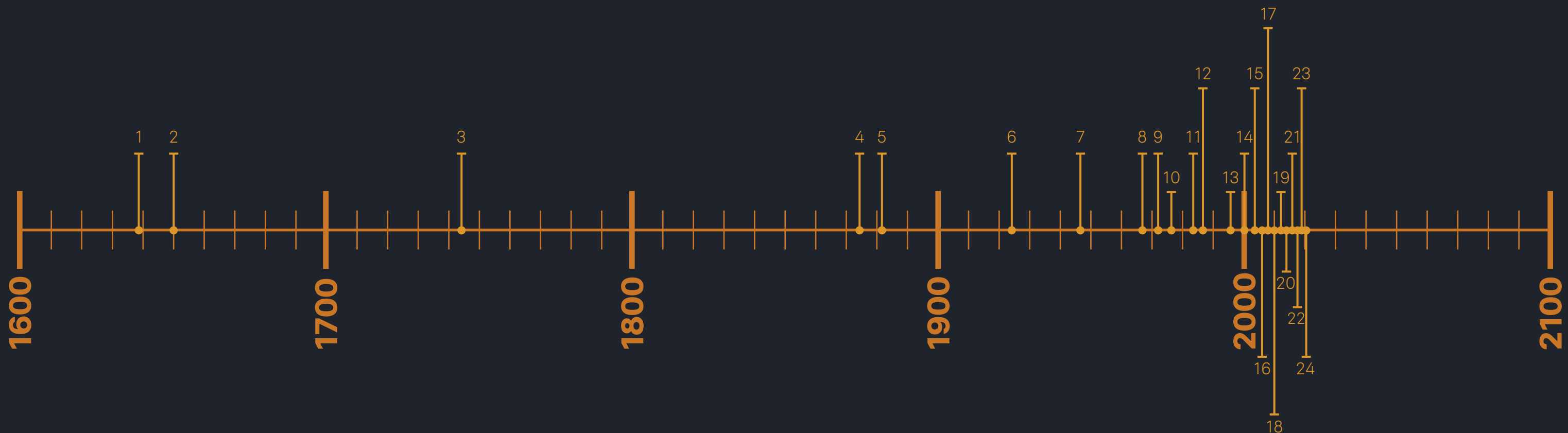
does not mean that not everyone is satisfied with its change. Despite this there is general acceptance, the church is now popularly referred to as the 'trampoline church' (Reinstra et al., 2020, pp. 156) and attracts visitors from all over the country and even abroad.

#### 4.7. Conclusion

An upcoming trend in preserving the church buildings is repurposing them. In the Netherlands, 1500 church buildings have already been transformed into new functions and differ from apartments to supermarkets. Church buildings are originally a meeting place. But over the years, faith has become less and less prominent, causing churches to struggle to pay for and maintain the church. Repurposing has been happening in the Netherlands for centuries, but especially since 1970, repurposing has played an increasingly important role. Repurposing takes place mainly in the Protestant community, and to a much lesser extent in the Roman Catholic community. This has to do with the fact that the Roman Catholic community consider the church itself holy, while the Protestants generally only consider a church holy if it is actually still used by believers. When a church is repurposed, people believe that it should be treated with respect. They also like it when a public function comes in return. The projects discussed have almost all been criticized for the way the repurposing has been handled. The interventions can have a significant impact on the church buildings and could change the way we experience and look at them. But it appears that in the longer term acceptance is there, which has resulted in that these repurposed buildings can no longer be ignored in society.



# HISTORY OF REPURPOSED CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE NETHERLANDS



**1. Minderbroederskerk, Maastricht**

- Repurposed in: 1639
- Original built date: 1234
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Arsenal of weapons (1st repurposing)

**2. St. Jacobskerk, 's Hertogenbosch**

- Repurposed in: 1650
- Original built date: 1234
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Carriage house & horse stables (1st repurposing)

**3. St. Jacobskerk, 's Hertogenbosch**

- Repurposed in: 1744
- Original built date: 1234
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Arsenal of weapons (2nd repurposing)

**4. Sint-Matthiaskerk, Warmond**

- Repurposed in: 1874
- Original built date: 15th century
- Denomination: Protestant
- Repurposed into: Cemetery

**5. Minderbroederskerk, Maastricht**

- Repurposed in: 1881
- Original built date: 1234
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Library & archive (2nd repurposing)

**6. St. Jacobskerk, 's Hertogenbosch**

- Repurposed in: 1924
- Original built date: 1234
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Museum (3rd repurposing)

**7. Enserkerk, Schokland**

- Repurposed in: 1947
- Original built date: 1834
- Denomination: Dutch Reformed
- Repurposed into: Museum

**8. Paradiso, Amsterdam**

- Repurposed in: 1968
- Original built date: 1880
- Denomination: Vrije Gemeente
- Repurposed into: Pop venue & youth culture center

**9. De Zaaier, Amsterdam**

- Repurposed in: 1971
- Original built date: 1928
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Stores

**10. Sint-Laurenskerk, Rotterdam**

- Repurposed in: 1976
- Original built date: 15th century
- Denomination: Protestant
- Repurposed into: Exhibition space

**11. Broederenkerk, Zutphen**

- Repurposed in: 1983
- Original built date: 14th century
- Denomination: Reformed church
- Repurposed into: Library

**12. Broerekerk, Bolsward**

- Repurposed in: 1986
- Original built date: ca. 1300
- Denomination: Dutch Reformed
- Repurposed into: Event location

**13. Sint-Josephkerk, Amsterdam**

- Repurposed in: 1996
- Original built date: 1950-1952
- Denomination: Roman-Catholic
- Repurposed into: Climbing hall

**14. Sint-Bernadettekerk, Helmond**

- Repurposed in: 2000
- Original built date: 1955
- Denomination: Baptist Broterhood
- Repurposed into: Supermarket

**15. Hervormde kerk, Klein Westinge**

- Repurposed in: 2004
- Original built date: 1846
- Denomination: Dutch Reformed
- Repurposed into: Restaurant & exhibition space

**16. Dominicanenkerk, Maastricht**

- Repurposed in: 2006
- Original built date: 13th century
- Denomination: Dominicanen
- Repurposed into: Bookstore & catering industry

**17. Doopsgezinde kerk, Arnhem**

- Repurposed in: 2008
- Original built date: 1889
- Denomination: Baptist Brotherhood
- Repurposed into: Clothing store

**18. Sint-Hubertuskerk**

- Repurposed in: 2010
- Original built date: 1924
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Fitness center

**19. Sint-Jozefkerk, Arnhem**

- Repurposed in: 2012
- Original built date: 1924
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Skate park

**20. Franciscuskerk, Weert**

- Repurposed in: 2014
- Original built date: 1963
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Ice rink

**21. Sint-Rochuskerk, Steyl**

- Repurposed in: 2016
- Original built date: 1930
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Museum

**22. Clemenskerk, Hilversum**

- Repurposed in: 2018
- Original built date: 1913
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Trampoline park

**23. Augustijnenkerk, Eindhoven**

- Repurposed in: 2019
- Original built date: 1898
- Denomination: Roman Catholic
- Repurposed into: Space for ceremonies, events & meetings

**24. Hervormde kerk, Garmerwolde**

- Repurposed in: 2020
- Original built date: 13th century
- Denomination: Dutch Reformed
- Repurposed into: Educational and recreational center

Figure 25. History of repurposed church buildings in the Netherlands (Based on data from Reinstra et al., 2020)



# CONCLUSION

The aim of this history thesis is to answer the research question “*What is the value of repurposed church buildings through the course of history in the Netherlands?*”. This is done by dividing the research into three chapters, starting with the historical context of religion and church buildings in the Netherlands. The historical context of church buildings in the Netherlands was first mapped out by means of various literature studies. It can be said that the church buildings that can be found in the Netherlands descend from the earlier church buildings from the ancient Greek and Roman era. Throughout history, there have been multiple periods of change in the importance of faith and thus church buildings. The so to say all-time low of this notion was during the de-pillarization period in which the Netherlands became one of the most secular countries in the world. Secularization is something that cannot be ignored, it will have to be accepted and acted upon if we want to preserve the church buildings in the Netherlands.

Subsequently, research was conducted into the characteristics of the church buildings in the Netherlands, it can be concluded that the shapes of church buildings in the Netherlands can be divided into five main categories: the cruciform church where the nave and the transept intersect with approximately equal arms and the basilica church consisting of a high nave with low side aisles. In addition there is the central building, which is shaped round or a polygonal volume, and there is also the box-shaped church where the floor plan and the elevation have a rectangular shape. However, there are also churches that do not fit within these categories, these can be marked as others.

After the history and characteristics of church buildings in the Netherlands have been portrayed, it was then investigated how these buildings are perceived by the public. This is mainly done on the basis of different literature that has been written over the years and linked to each other. It can be said that the value of the church building is still seen as added value in society today. However, its notion of value has changed over time. Where the church was first seen as a place of faith and closed communities, the church is now experienced as a place of culture and heritage, a place for the community that must be accessible to the outside world. The historical added value, along with the value as a connecting element in society, makes the church worth preserving. The preservation of these buildings is a way of preserving the communities collective memory. For these reasons, the public perception should be considered as an important value for the church building. But in what degree has this been taken into account with the repurposing of church buildings in the Netherlands? This has

been investigated in the last chapter of this thesis by investigating the development of repurposed church buildings in the Netherlands. Starting with one of the earliest examples to be known to the more recent ones that are widely known around the world. This had led to the final conclusion of answering the main question.

An upcoming trend in preserving the church buildings is repurposing them. In the Netherlands, 1500 church buildings have already been transformed into new functions and differ from apartments to supermarkets. Church buildings are originally a meeting place. But over the years, faith has become less and less prominent, causing communities to struggle to pay for and maintain the church. Repurposing has been happening in the Netherlands for centuries, but especially since 1970 repurposing has played an increasingly important role. Repurposing takes place mainly in the Protestant community, and to a much lesser extent in the Roman Catholic community. This has to do with the fact that the Roman Catholic community considers the church itself holy, while the Protestants generally only consider the church holy if it is actually still used by believers. When a church is repurposed, people believe that it should be treated with respect. They also like it when a public function comes in return. This is often the case, both due to the demand of the community and the urban location make churches extremely suitable for public functions. Despite this, there is often criticism of the repurposing of churches, just like the church buildings discussed in this thesis. Initially there is often indignation and opposition. But it appears that in the longer term acceptance is there, it is often a matter of getting used to. This has resulted in the fact that these repurposed church buildings are increasingly becoming part of the society. The value and perception of church buildings may change over time but the appreciation for these buildings remain.

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