



THE CLOSED CHURCH





**THE REVELATION** - The icy wind whips my face as I ride my bike through the countryside. It's autumn, and the fog lies as a carpet over the rural landscape. As I look up I can see it. Placed at the top of a small hilltop, unpretentious, but even though it stands out. The land church has been there for hundreds of years. Lived through thousands of lives and deaths.

The church isn't imposing, but still fascinating.

I park my bike against the wall and head towards the entrance of the cemetery. The surroundings are quiet, but at the same time intense.

My hand touches the wall. The white lime surface is rough, and indicates the different layers of construction and history. It's almost as if I can feel the different generations in my hand.

«Welcome!», he says, and reach out his hand. The priest wears a black cassock and a white clerical collar. With great enthusiasm he takes me for a tour around the churchyard. He knows the church well, and explains how and when the different parts were built.

As entering the church I take a deep breath. The moist and old smell of the whitewashed walls hits me, and brings me back to when I was a little boy, when Sundays meant going to church with my grandmother.

The ceiling is formed with gothic vaults. The large windows have pointed arch openings, and fill the church with the clear morning light. In the walls I see traces of the former small roman windows that have been sealed.

«It's not as it used to be. The church», the priest says. He tells about life in church before and now, and how the church now suffers from a decreasing audience.

The church visit made me think. What if we can use these historical buildings for other purposes. Can we use the churches differently than what we do today?





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**PRAELUDIUM** - For centuries, religion has had a central position in western societies. It has built our cities, dictated our beliefs and told us our way of living. But now the times are changing, and we see a decrease of religious practice in Western Europe. This decrease is a consequence of several factors, such as the evolution of modern society and economical issues. Because of this we now have to start questioning the future of our religious heritage.

With a particular focus on country churches, where the situation seem more critical due to the last centuries urbanization, this research aim to highlight the challenges the Church is facing because of "de-Christianization". The current situation of the Church set in contrast with the high qualities and values of land church buildings, pose the question of the future of unused churches in the countryside. So how should the Church prepare it selves for the challenges of the modern age?

Despite being aware of the problem, many people believe that under-exploited worship places should stay untouched. They usually have a personal affection to their local church or a conservative point of view, which include that they can't imagine any activities in sacred places other than the worship of God.

From an economical and environmental point of view un-usage of churches is quite unsustainable. Comparing church buildings with other types of buildings, it predominantly seems more expensive to operate church buildings. In average, village churches cost 89 euros per m<sup>2</sup> a year to drift. In comparison, it costs 113 euros per m<sup>2</sup> a year to operate a hotel and 94 euros per m<sup>2</sup> to operate a museum, which also are expected to have a higher level of activities than church buildings. Schools and sports halls costs 74 euros per m<sup>2</sup> a year and warehouses costs 51 euros per m<sup>2</sup> and are are even cheaper to run than churches.<sup>1</sup> Un-exploited churches are in other words a huge waste of money.

From an urbanistic point of view, we found this incomprehensible. Most country churches have a central position in towns, and their placement give them a high importance compared to other collective buildings. With such a particular position, keeping it as a disused building seems quite absurd.

In other words, we can either crystallise the country churches or include them into our modern life. We believe something should be done to preserve their qualities by promoting their future.

Although the desertion of churches has been widely approached by researchers in human and social sciences, there is not much exploration made from an architectural point of view.

Therefore this Master Thesis, with particular attention on architectural features, aims to start a dialogue about what should and could be done with the underexploited churches. Through an analyse of the Church's current situation and the church buildings, and through studies of some contemporary examples, this thesis has the ambition to give some answers in the favour of conservation the churches rather than demolishing them. These answers will introduce us to a concrete case, which will lead to our Architecture Master Project.





SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE IN CHARVONNEX, FRANCE - personal picture



**DENMARK vs FRANCE** - Denmark (DK) and France (FR) are both on a list of European countries that has the lowest percentage in Europe when it comes to church attendance.<sup>2</sup>

Denmark and France are contrary when it comes to religion; Denmark is a Parliamentary Monarchy with a state run Church, while France is a secular Republic. Denmark's main religion is represent by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark, while France it is the Roman Catholic Church of France. Their history and culture are different because of their geographical situation, but still they face the same problems.

Therefore, we believe that these two countries represent an overall picture of the struggle European Churches now are facing.

In the following pages we will analyse the religious status in both countries, and what threats their churches are facing.

The second part is a study of country churches in Denmark and France. It is defined by a corpus that outlines the characteristics of Danish and French country churches. It is both documents and personal analysis that has led us to this corpus.

As the Church in France is not owned by the state, their data are not always 100 % reliable. That is because they are mostly made by associations and private people.

To define a country church, our research is based on geographers definitions of a village. In Denmark geographical areas with less than 200 inhabitants<sup>3</sup> are defined as a village, while in France a village is define with less than 2000 inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> In both countries most churches are built before XX<sup>th</sup> century.



**THE CHURCH'S THREE THREATS** - Denmark (DK) and France (FR) are both at the beginning of a scenario where the future of their churches doesn't seem bright.

Because Denmark and France have different religious and political systems, the dilemma appears to be significantly different in the two countries, but their challenges are the same.

There are three major threats that make the Church's future look darker.

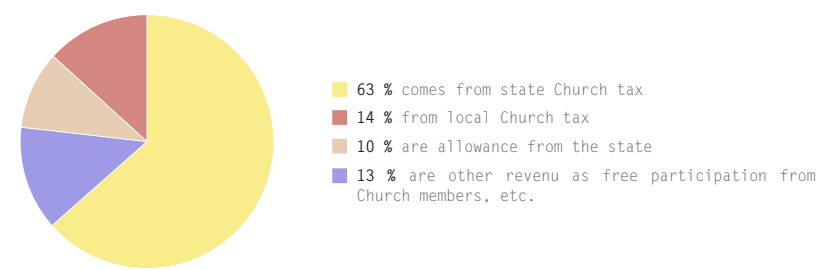
We have to take into consideration the different political systems in Denmark and France, and how religion is financed differently in the two countries.

We also have to look at how the society has changed in the past centuries, and how that has influenced Christianity and the practice of religion.

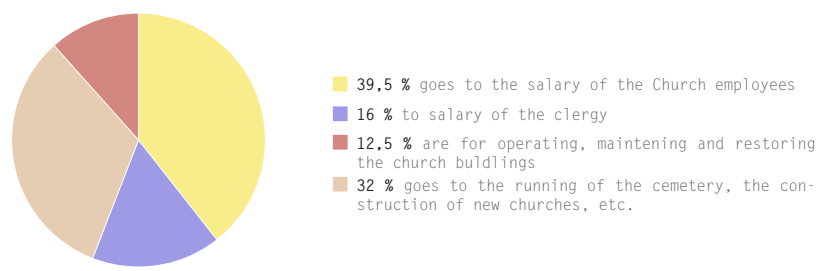
Finally, we are facing a period where the churches experiences low attendance rates, which is a consequence of changing in society.

By taking a deeper look at these threats and challenges we will enable us to understand the issues at stake, the reason why the Church need to change.

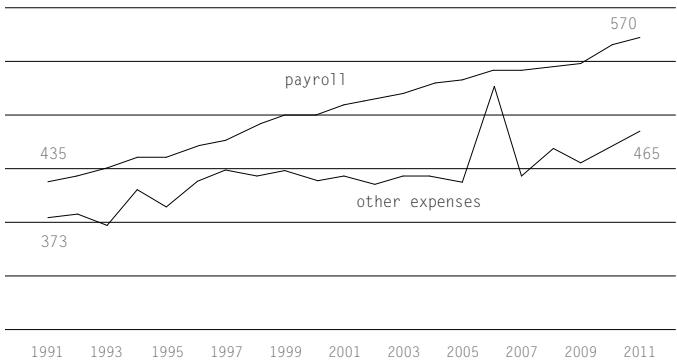
CHURCH OF DENMARK'S INCOMES - 1 044 million euros in 2011



CHURCH OF DENMARK'S EXPENSES - 1 035 million euros in 2011



EVOLUTION OF THE CHURCH OF DENMARK'S EXPENSES - in millions euros



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH - DK** - The Kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy. Since the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1849, when the Constitution of Denmark or “Grundloven” were instituted, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark or “Folkekirken” has been established.

The Constitution of Denmark establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark as the state-supported Church of Denmark, and requires the Danish monarch as a member and the supreme authority of the state Church.<sup>5</sup>

The Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs or “Kirkeministeriet” was created to take care of the functioning of the Church, and it still does today. The State is the owner of the churches, ensures their maintenance, and guarantees the proper functioning of the various celebrations in the churches.<sup>6</sup>

According to the constitution, when you get baptized in the Church of Denmark, you automatically become member of the Church. Infants, older children and adults can be baptized in the Church. But you can also choose whenever you want to leave the Church.<sup>7</sup> This has put the Church of Denmark in a position that they have to attract people to maintain their membership and to stay up to date.

As a member of the Church of Denmark, you have to pay a Church tax. Church tax is a membership fee, which is calculated from church members taxable income. In Denmark, the average church tax in 2016 was about 0,93 % of your taxable income, depending on where you’re living and how much it cost to run the local churches. The highest church tax was 1,30 % while the lowest was 0,43 % in 2016.<sup>8</sup>

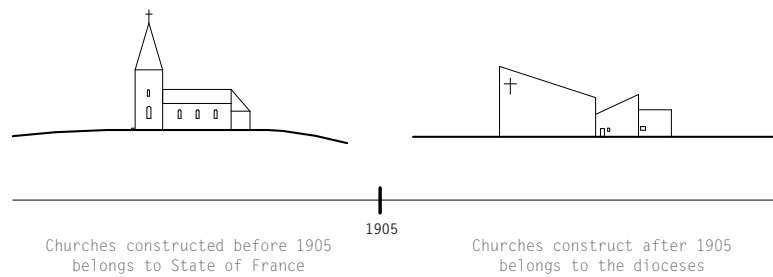
In 2011, the Church of Denmark had incomes of 1 044 million euros (7 758 million Danish kroner). The Church tax amounted 77 % of it, 63 % from state Church tax and 14 % from local Church tax. 10 % of the total incomes are extra allowance from the state. The 13 % resting are other revenue like free participations of Church members, legacy from private practitioners, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The Church of Denmark had total expenses of 1035 million euros (7 695 million Danish kroner) in 2011. The salary of employees represents the biggest part of the cake, 55,5 %. 39,5 % is the salary of the Church employees (minister and church employees, tomb digger, gardeners, etc.) and 16 % goes for the salary of the clergy employees (priests, bishops, etc.). 12,5 % was used for operating, maintenance and restoring the churches, as well as their furnishings. The resting 32 % was used for the running of the cemetery, construction of new churches, etc.<sup>10</sup>

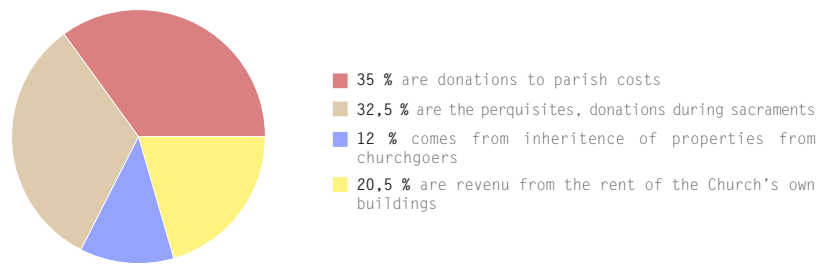
As the Church’s membership rates decreases, so does the income from the church taxes. At the same time the church’s expenses are increasing. From 1991 to 2011 the church’s expenses has grown from 808 million euros to 1 035 million euros. It’s an augmentation of 28 %.<sup>11</sup>



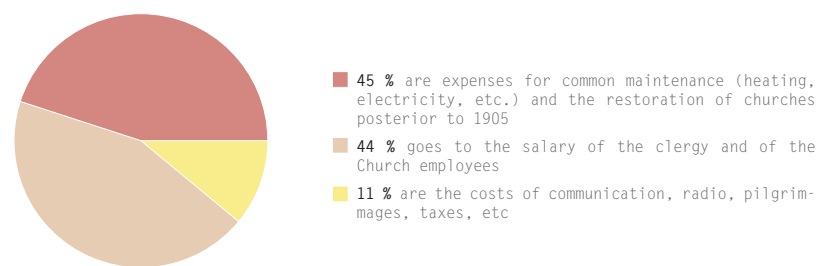
BELONGING OF THE FRANCE CHURCHES - according to the law of separation of State and Church



CHURCH OF FRANCE’S INCOMES - around 600 million euros in 2004



CHURCH OF FRANCE’S EXPENSES - around 600 million euros in 2004



**A SECULAR NATION - FR** - On the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1905, the French Chamber of Deputies passed a resolution about separation of the Church and the State. Enacted under the French Third Republic, it settled the state secularism in France. The law was based on three principles: detachment of the state, religious freedom, and the powers related to the Church was given free. Since this law enacted, «the Republic neither admit, pay or subsidises no worship».<sup>12</sup>

The law from 1905 also mention the role of the State and the Church in the management of religious property. Since 1907, the churches constructed before 1905, who had belonged to the Catholic community, became properties of the State and de facto to the local authorities. From now on the authorities had to finance the maintenance of these churches.<sup>13</sup> This means, due to the law of 1905, that there are two types of churches in French; Parish churches, which are built before 1905 and therefore State owned, and diocesan churches which were built after the law of separation and are in the property of the dioceses.<sup>14</sup>

This means that since 1905, the Catholic Church of France does not get any financial support from the state anymore. Their income does therefore mainly consist of payments, gifts and donations from the churchgoers.

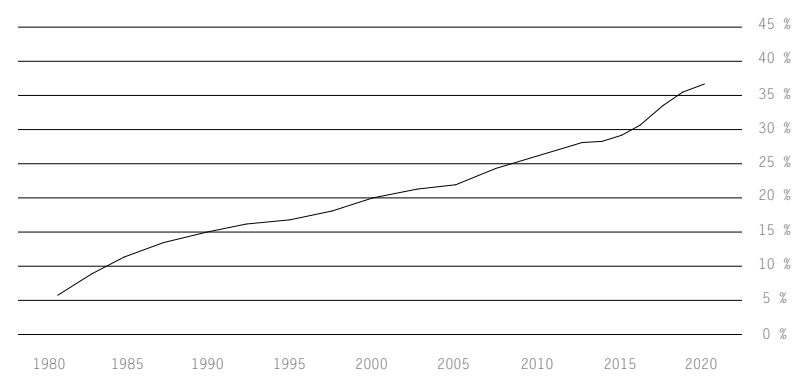
All in all the dioceses of France had an income of about 600 million euros in 2004. The most important contribution is the donation to parish costs, which is an annual voluntary participation from the Catholics. This contribution is exempted from taxation and made a total of about 35 % of the dioceses income.<sup>15</sup> The perquisites of ceremonies are amounted to 32,5 % of the churches incomes. Perquisites is a donation given to the Church during the sacraments such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.<sup>16</sup> 12 % of the churches income comes from properties that the Church inheritance from churchgoers.<sup>17</sup> In addition to this the Church also gets about 20,5 % of its income from renting out nearly 50 000 buildings that belongs to the Church of France, such as presbyteries, meeting rooms, places with cultural usage, etc.<sup>18</sup>

The French taxpayers are indirectly participating in the funding of the Church. For churches belonging to the Republic, the authorities are responsible for the maintenance. A part of the budget of the local villages is devoted to the restorations of its religious buildings. Each village determine their part of contribution for the maintenance of their churches. In some cases the Ministry of Culture gives financial support in the form of the regional help of the DRAC, Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs. In 2012, 75 million euros were given to churches through DRAC for maintenance work and restoration of religious heritage. That is about 41,6 % of the credit for historical monuments.<sup>19</sup>

Out of the incomes, 45 % goes to common maintenance including heating, electricity, as well as the restoration of churches posterior to 1905. 44 % of the expenses goes to the salary of the priests, and as well as the none members of the clergy, like pastoral animators, administration, etc. The rest of the incomes goes to communication, radio, pilgrimages, taxes, etc.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the dioceses' finances end up as a positive result or a break-even result. But lately the financial situation for the French churches has become more and more complicated. According to bishop Pascal Dalannoy of Saint-Denis, the Church of France got 10 500 donations in 2011, which at that time were a fall of 15 % compared to the donations given in 1996.<sup>21</sup>

RISE OF IRRELIGION - as a percentage of the total population



CHURCHES VS URBANISATION - 2016



**A MODERN SOCIETY - DK&FR** - For centuries, churches have had a high standing in small communities in Europe and played an important role in peoples daily lives. Social and parish life were linked closely together and religion regulated our lives for hundred of years.

The parish register kept track of the citizens date of births, marriages and burials. The church bells rang several times a day to point out the time, which regulated the job hours, leisure and worship. And Sunday service was a time for the community to meet. The priest, the mayor, the doctor and the teachers were considered the main personalities in the communities. Some places the priest even acted as a kind of instructor, physician and leader. Nowadays state institutions have overtaken the most of these roles.

The social and moral evolution has also had a predominant role in the change of people’s mentality, and the figure of the ”Christian practitioner” does not attract many people anymore.<sup>22</sup>

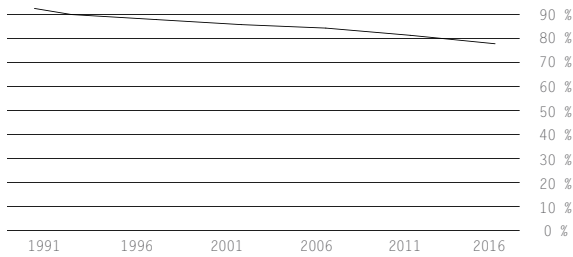
Nowadays people are getting more and more individualistic. And the idea of conforming a belief to something prescribed by an institution seems more and more unacceptable for the new generations.<sup>23</sup>

The younger generations are in the leading when it comes to making changings in our societies. The weak religious commitment of the young people is due the evolution of mentalities. It’s a consequence of individualization, globalisation, pragmatism, and spirituality.<sup>24</sup> Youths now feel freer to practice a kind of “mixing” different religions, and have replaced religion with spirituality, a less restrictive and much more free notion. According to Charles Suaud, a French sociologist, we assist a movement from practice to belief.<sup>25</sup> Religion is no longer something we have in common. Religion is an individual matter, and you decide for yourself what faith you want to have, if you want to go to church or which church you want to go to. Neither the state, nor the church or family, can determine what you should believe.<sup>26</sup>

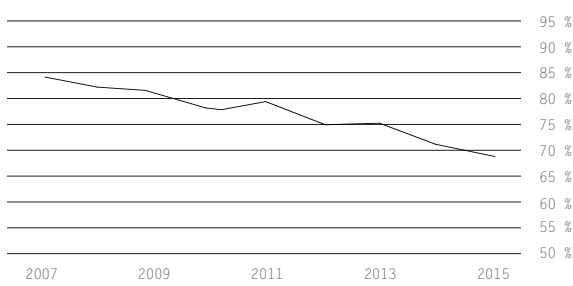
Moreover, the access of information and the role of science has caused a feeling of rejection for the ”inexplicable”. Two out of three think that «as the scientific knowledge advances, the more difficult it is to believe in God».<sup>27</sup> We can look at it as a kind of neo-rationalism.

One of the major challenges that the Church is facing, particularly in the countryside, is people moving from villages to live in the cities. Today, both in Denmark and France, more than 80% of churches are situated outside the cities,<sup>28</sup> whilst more than 80% of the population lives in cities.<sup>29</sup> The increase of mobility, mixture of cultures and urbanization are the essential reasons why the church has lost its high standing.

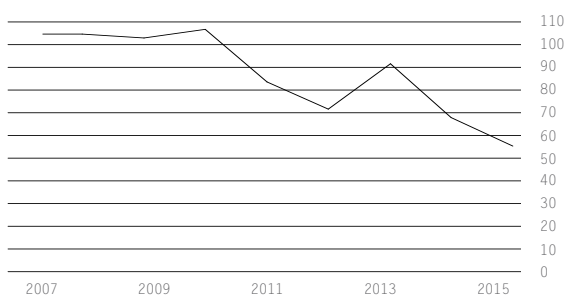
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF DENMARK - as a percentage of the total population



BAPTIZED DANES - as a percentage of the new-borns the same year



ADMISSIONS TO PASTORAL SEMINAR IN DENMARK - number per year



**LESS MEMBERS - DK** - The Danes have been Christian for nearly a thousand years, but the changes in the past centuries has left some scars.

The religious practise in Denmark is usually based on the number of people who adhere to the Church of Denmark. The 1<sup>st</sup> January 1984, out of 5 112 130 Danish ci-tizens, 4 684 060 persons or 91,6 % of the population were members of the Church of Denmark. Since then, this number has gradually decreased. In 2016 the amount of members counts 76,8 % of the population, 4 387 571 out of 5 707 251 Danish citizens.<sup>30</sup>

The decline of members can partly be related to the fact that almost 90 % of those who die are members of the Church, whilst the proportion of new-borns who are bap-tized, and thus new members of the church, gradually decrease. In 1990, 80,6 % of the new-born got baptised whilst in 2014, about 62,6 % got baptised.<sup>31</sup>

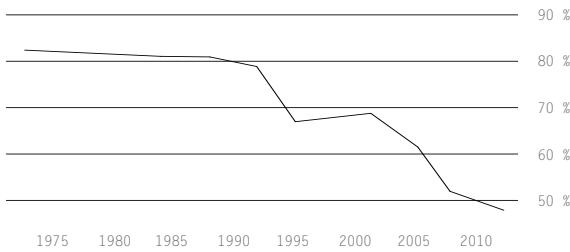
Furthermore, it seems to be more the younger generation that signs out of the Chu-rch of Denmark. In 2015, out of 9 976 that signed out, 4 100 were aged between 20 and 35.<sup>32</sup> According to Danmarks Statistik, it is particularly Danes in their early 30s who has the lowest proportion of church membership.<sup>33</sup>

The amount of people who marries in churches is also decreasing. In 2006 there were 15 212 church weddings, whilst it was 9 765 in 2015.<sup>34</sup> That is a fall of nearly 36 %.

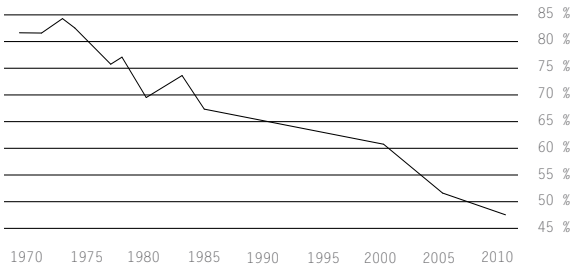
The number of new ordinations can also be an indicator of the interest in the pra-ctise. From 2007 to 2014, the number of candidate to become a priest has decreased with 47 %. This is quite a problem because out of 2 068 Danish priests, 389 are between the age 60 and 70, and will go to pension in the next 10 years.<sup>35</sup> There is still one priest for each church, but if the trend goes on it will not be the situation in the future.

Finally, a last indicator that should be taken in consideration is the number of people that actually goes to church. In 2016, only 2,4 % of the citizens went to church every week, whilst 77,3 % went rarely or never to church. The numbers have been nearly the same since the middle of the 70s.<sup>36</sup>

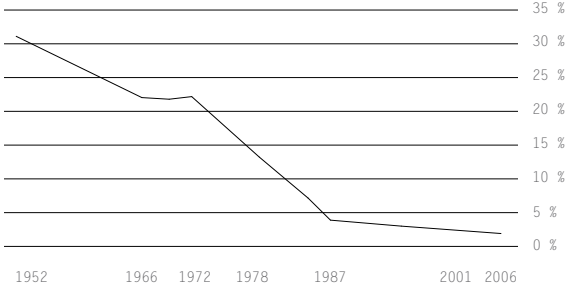
FRENCH DECLARING THEMSELVES CATHOLICS - as a percentage of the total population



BAPTIZED FRENCH - as a percentage of new-borns the same year



FRENCH ATTENDING SUNDAY SERVICE - as a percentage of the total population



**A DECREASING PRACTICE - FR** - France is considered one of the oldest Christian countries, and is the 6<sup>th</sup> most catholic country in the World.<sup>37</sup> But since the beginning of the «Les Trentes Glorieuses» («thirty glorious») from the year 1945 to 1975, the number of persons declaring themselves Catholics was drastically decreasing. In 1950, 87 % of the French population declared themselves Catholic, whilst today the number is approximately 64 %. That constitute two thirds of the population.<sup>38</sup>

Church weddings and baptisms are also declining. There were 184 540 church weddings in 1980, compared to 70 369 in 2012,<sup>39</sup> a diminution of more than 60 % in 30 years. And the number of baptisms went from 472 130 to 302 941 between year 1990 and 2010,<sup>40</sup> a decrease of more than 35 %. The newer generations seems to accentuate this decline because only 72 % of the baptised persons baptise their own children. A number which were 89 % in 1961.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, we can note an aging in the church audience. The retirees represent 44 % of the churchgoers, whilst they only constitute a quarter of the French population.<sup>42</sup> In fact, 16 % of the Catholics are less than 35 years old and 65 % are more than 50 years old.<sup>43</sup>

The number of ordinations is also a problem in France. In 2008, 19 640 priests of-ficiated in France, compared to 32 267 in 1990,<sup>44</sup> a fall of nearly 40 %. Between 80 to 90 priests get ordained each year, when the number needed is about eight times higher.<sup>45</sup> The age of the priests also reveals the deficit of priests, because, in 2012, less than 7 000 priests were younger than 75 years.<sup>46</sup> The lack of vocation result in the regroupment of parishes during the 1990s; a priest has several churches to take care of.

Furthermore, there is an developing of the way of practicing. In France, studies show that the way of praying becomes more and more individual. 48 % declared to pray "in group" in 2001, in 2007 the number was 38 %. Besides, 80 % of those who pray does it at home, against 38 % in churches.<sup>47</sup> The practise of Christianity is now moving from the places of worship to peoples home.

Finally, there is an increase of irreligious practise, such as agnosticism, atheism, deism or other free-thoughts. In 1987, the number of French declaring themselves without religion was 20 %, against 30 % in 2010.<sup>48</sup> Some predict that in 20 years, people considering themselves as irreligious could be majority in France.<sup>49</sup>

«we cannot hide to ourselves the worrying signs that indicate the decreasing of religious practice, the loss of some Christian mind... It is the place and the future of faith which are in questioning in our society»  
bishop Claude Dagens



SAINT-BERNARD IN LYON, FRANCE - personal picture





**CHURCHES ARCHITECTURE** - In Europe, each country has their own tradition for the construction of churches, based on their historical and cultural heritage.

The construction of the churches has been influenced by the different architectural styles and periods, yet the constructions were adjusted based on which materials that were available, local cultures, surroundings, etc.

Nevertheless, there are some general similarities in the construction of the churches in the different regions and countries. These similarities can be seen in for example the usage of materials, location in the territory, placement of the church, etc.

To be able to work with the usage of the churches in the future we have to know more about them. Therefore we have established a model, a corpus that shows the general country churches of Denmark and France.

Because of the large territory that France cover compared to Denmark, and because of the country's complex history, it is difficult to make generalities about the architecture of churches in France.

The Northern Alps, a non-administrative region of France, form a contrast with Denmark because of its geography and terrain. Therefore will the churches of this region be analysed.

By studying country churches architecture of both Denmark (DK) and France (FR), we will get an overview of the churches construction in a European context, and then be able to give a more accurate answer for the use of the churches in the future.



CHURCH OF SØNDER ASMINDRUP, DENMARK - personal picture

**TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS CHURCHES - DK** - During the Viking Age (800-1050) most of Europe was Christian. But in Scandinavia people were pleased with their own Norse mythology. Therefore the Christian missionaries that came to Denmark around year 700 and 800 had difficulties convincing the Norsemen to convert to Christianity.<sup>50</sup>

Some years later, since the Vikings did a lot of trading in Europe, converting to Christianity started to be essential to remain their trade relations. The first transmission to Christianity in Denmark is marked by King Harald "Blåtand" Gormsson's runestone in Jelling from around year 965. The runestone displays an inscription that declares that Harald "Blåtand" Gormsson made the Danes Christian.<sup>51</sup>

At the end of the Viking Age, most of the people in Scandinavia were Christians. They were baptized, went to church and got buried according to Christian traditions and rituals.<sup>52</sup> The Christian missionaries built the first churches in the south of Denmark around year 800, with permission from the king. These churches were constructed in wood, and none of them remain today.<sup>53</sup>

Even though the first churches in Denmark were built around year 800, the country churches main construction period was between 1175 and 1225. During this period of time, there were built more than 1600 stone churches that attended to spread Christianity rapidly.<sup>54</sup> The majority of these churches, about 92%, were built in a Roman style. Churches built in a Gothic style appeared later and were more likely to be built in towns.<sup>55</sup>

Today Denmark has a total of 2354 churches.<sup>56</sup> 1770 of them are dated from the Middle Ages and were built between the year 1100 and 1450.<sup>57</sup> Compared to Denmark's total of approximately 2.5 million buildings,<sup>58</sup> 2354 churches aren't a large number.

Still, the country churches play an important historical role because of their old age. These churches are among the oldest remaining buildings still being used in Denmark, the oldest assumed to be from 1075-85.<sup>59</sup> The expansion of the Danish country churches still remains as the most impressive and remarkable construction period in Denmark's history.

The country churches were built with an average distance of only 5 kilometers between each other so that no one should live more than 30 minutes away from a church. The Danish country churches connect the country from one side to another. In Skåne (South Sweden) and Schleswig-Holstein (North Germany) remains around 200 churches from Danish colonial period.<sup>60</sup>

Danish churches can be classified into four groups, based on construction year and where they are situated:

- Country churches: built before the Reformation in 1536. 73 % of the Danish churches were built in this period.
- Magnificent churches: built between 1536 and 1849. 3 % of the Danish churches were built in this period.
- City churches: built between 1849 and 1930. 15 % of the Danish churches were built in this period.
- Suburban churches: built after 1930. 9 % of the Danish churches were built in this period.<sup>61</sup>



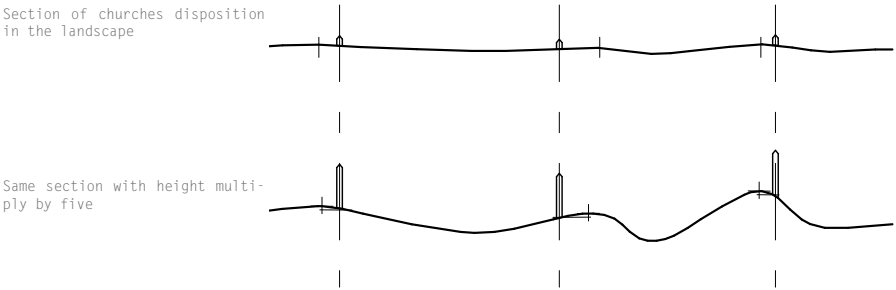


CHURCHES IN DENMARK HAVE AN AVERAGE DISTANCE OF 5 KM - data GIS from Styrelsen for Dataforsyning of Effektivisering

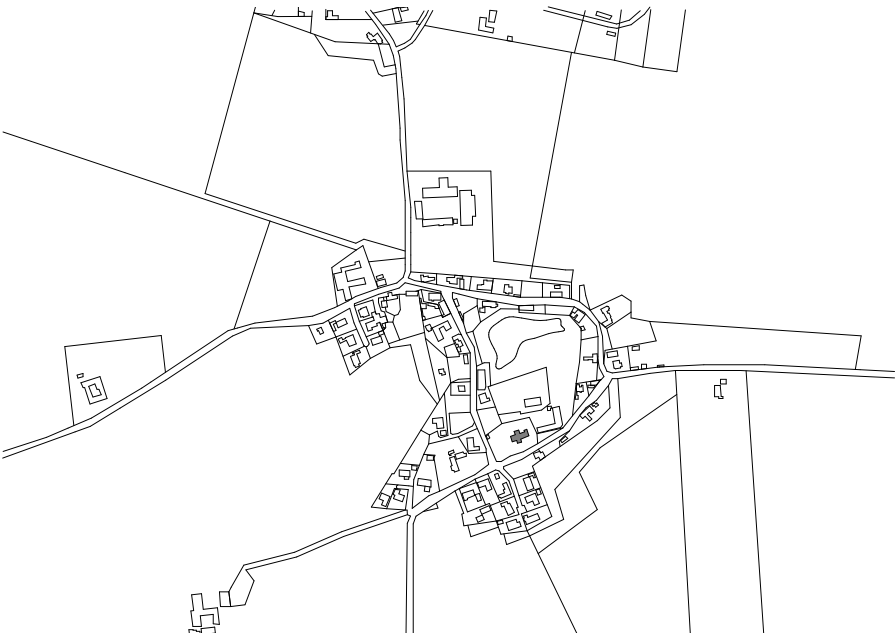
0 10 30 km



PLACEMENT OF DANISH COUNTRY CHURCHES IN THE LANDSCAPE - sections from Steen Høyer showing the location principle of churches next to hilltops



PLACEMENT OF DANISH COUNTRY CHURCHES IN VILLAGES - landscape plan around Vørslev in Denmark, 1:10 000. The church is constructed next to the center of the village surrounded by the churchyard



**SCENIC CHURCHES - DK** - During the pre-Christian Norse mythology, sacrifices were practiced on hilltops. People believed that there was a particularly strong connection to the Gods there.<sup>62</sup> To make the transition to Christianity easier, churches were built on these previous pagan places of oblations.

The land churches in Denmark are therefore often built on hilltops. Even though Denmark is really flat - the highest peak is 172 m a.s.l - there are many hilltops all around the countryside. Nevertheless, they were not placed directly on top of the hills, but just next to it, because it often already existed a larger building with political purpose on the hilltops: a manor or a stately home.<sup>63</sup>

The hilltops were chosen for their scenic qualities, and still today the disposition of the churches works as markers in the landscape. Historically, they have been connected to a village.<sup>64</sup> But today, since some of these villages have gradually disappeared, some churches stands without any connection to a village.

Village churches are surrounded by cemeteries. Originally, tombs stood quite close and in a mess around the church, and the graves didn't have any markings.<sup>65</sup> Today, the cemeteries are much more orderly, roads and rows of graves define the courtyards.

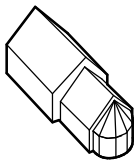
In the early years, churchyards were open places with no delimitation and structure. As animals started to dig in the ground in the cemeteries, they started to build walls around them to keep animals out. Archaeological studies show traces of low stonewalls or ditches surrounding the churchyard.<sup>66</sup> The walls as we know them today, on nearly 1,2 m high, were built later.

With their disposition, village churches work as landmarks, and they are closely connected to the surrounding landscape. The placement of the church proves the churches central role and position in society. For many centuries the churches have been functioning as collective houses for the surrounding societies.

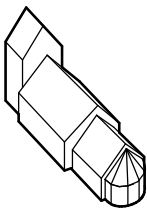
EVOLUTION OF DANISH COUNTRY CHURCHES VOLUMETRIE - the Danish country church is a basic volume that throughout history has been added with new parts



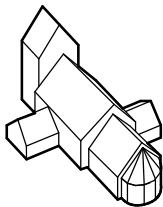
AROUND YEAR 1100 - ROMANESQUE - the choir were first built as the church's most sacred place, and maybe stood people originally in a circle in the choir where they practiced their worship



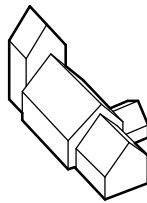
FROM 1100 TO 1350 - ROMANESQUE - a nave were added to house the congregation with benches bricked along the long sides, and sometimes with an apse to incorporate the altar



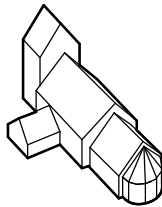
AROUND YEAR 1350 - GOTHIC - Romanesque churches were rebuilt in Gothic style and towers were added. If the nave was too small, it could be expanded



FROM 1350 TO 1450 - GOTHIC - the churches were often completed with a porch, a sacristy or a small chapel depending on the needs and resources of the local community



YEAR 1450 AND LATER - after the reformation some village churches were demolished and the stones were used on other churches or other buildings



TODAY - the churches stands with addition and subtraction that have undergone during centuries, but remains with Romanesque characteristics

PLUG-IN CHURCHES - DK - Today, the Romanesque Danish land church does not appear in their original form. They have been formed, both indoor and outdoor, by 850 years of Denmark's history.

The first stone churches had similar construction layout as the wood churches that were built earlier. The choir was the first to be built. It was quite small, as in Roman temples, and the congregation usually had to stand outside.<sup>67</sup> As the number of the congregation increased, a nave was added to the church. The nave and choir served as initial building blocks, and the churches looked like a simple stone barn. The churches worked as community buildings and were a place where the locals met.<sup>68</sup> Since that time, the churches has adapted and extended based on the needs of the surrounding community.

As the priests gradually managed to convert people to Christianity, it became necessary to expand the churches. This happened during the Gothic period. The churches were renewed and elevated. They got a tower, porch and eventually a sacristy and a chapel. And the first church bells were installed.<sup>69</sup> Still, the churches remain quite small: three-quarters of them have a building area of 100 to 350 m<sup>2</sup>, and half of them are between 200 and 350 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>70</sup>

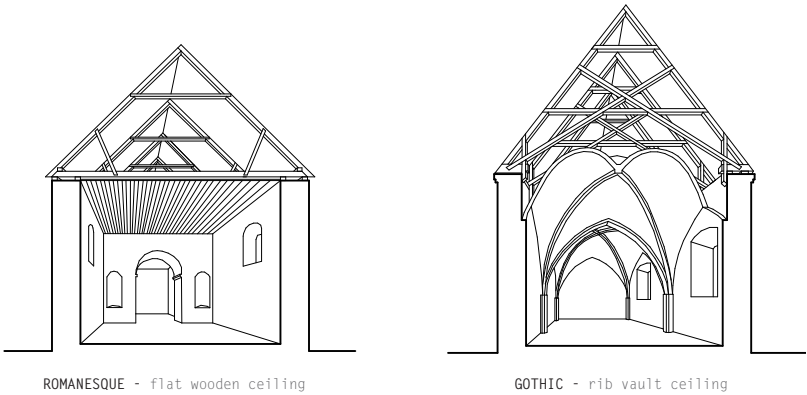
Because of the influence from Roman basilicas, Danish country churches have invariably the same direction; the altar look west, while the nave is oriented east. The congregation were always that way facing the rising sun. The apse, choir, nave, and tower are arranged in a line, with the tower situated at the opposite side of the choir. They form the main part of the building. The other volumes, like the porch, sacristy and chapel are mostly placed against the side of the building, north and south facades.

A particularity of Danish country churches is that you enter the building from the side of the nave, generally from the south façade. That means you were not entering the church in the axis of the choir like it is common in European churches. A porch has often been added later to mark the entrance of the church. The Danish word for porch is 'våbenhus' and means 'weapons house'. During the middle age, soldiers had to leave their weapons in the porch, before entering churches.

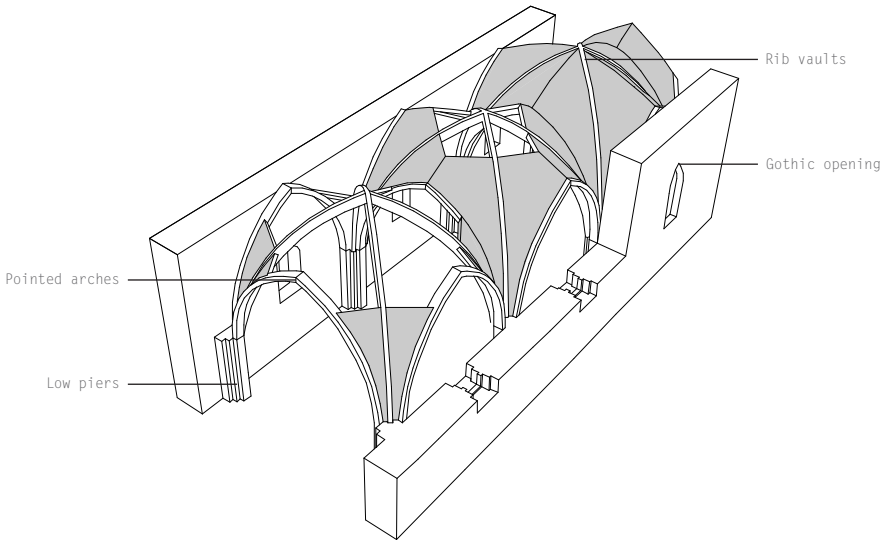
When entering the church you can easily access the different rooms. Walking from the porch, through the nave and choir you will usually climb some steps each time you get into a new room, making the altar the highest level in the church.

The Danish country churches are modest, unpretentious and rational. Throughout history they have been added up with new buildings that gives them flexibility.

ROMANESQUE FLAT CEILINGS TO GOTHIC VAULTS - during Gothic period, flat wooden ceilings were replaced with rib vaults because the old construction often burned



PRINCIPLE OF GOTHIC VAULTS IN DANISH ROMANESQUE COUNTRY CHURCHES - the rib vaults were constructed against the existing walls by using bricks



ROMANESQUE TO GOTHIC CHURCHES - DK - In the middle of the XIII<sup>th</sup> century, Denmark started to be influenced by the Gothic style. The style originated in France and spread throughout Europe from around year 1100, and came to Denmark some years later. Rib vault ceilings, pointed arches, and buttresses, characterize the gothic style. Corbie-step gable (step-like designed gables) were frequently used on church towers. This is a distinctive feature of Gothic in Denmark.<sup>71</sup>

There are relatively few churches in Denmark that are originally built in the gothic style, only about 125.<sup>72</sup> The Danish Gothic style is more likely an extension or a transformation from the Romanesque churches.

The Romanesque churches, from about 1075 to 1240, had a flat wooden ceiling. But because the construction often burned, the Gothic builders introduced the rib vault in the Romanesque churches. This new construction technique required a number of initiatives to create a substructure to support the new vaults. Low piers were therefore built against the existing walls.<sup>73</sup> If a church were built during the Gothic period and planned with vaults from the start, the piers were integrated into the facade walls. But that concerns only a few churches.<sup>74</sup>

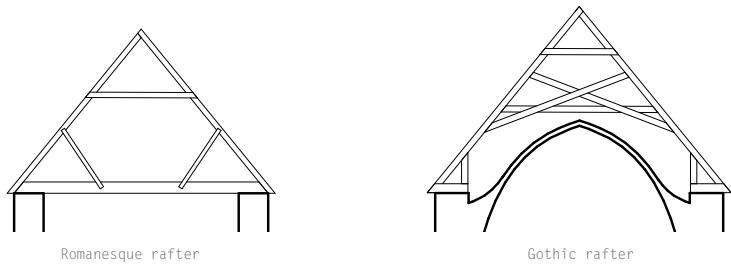
The typical Romanesque roof frame construction is relatively simple. It consists of two rafters connected with a tie beam. Two truss brace and a collar tie complete the construction. The planks that form the ceiling were fixed under the frame construction.<sup>75</sup>

When churches flat ceilings were replaced with rib vaults, the wood frames were recycled. The new rib vault constructions protruded in the existing loft room, therefore a new wood frame construction was imagined. The wood frames were rebuilt mostly without tie beams, and cross rafters were used. This cross-belt locking type, without tie beams, is typical Danish gothic rafter.<sup>76</sup> The roof inclination remained more or less the same, about 50°, to get rain and snow effectively off the roof. Most of the Romanesque church roofs were covered with wood shingle, typical in Vikings wood construction. They were replaced with red tiles or lead, during the Gothic period. Because of the shortage of lead during World War I, many lead roofs were replaced with slate, which explains why some church roofs are covered with slate.<sup>77</sup>

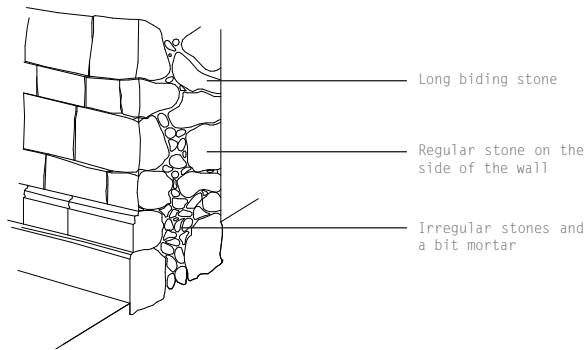
During the Gothic period, people started to decorate churches. When the churches of the late Middle Age were enlarged and equipped with vaults, they got new decorations. Many churches were decorated with frescoes in both the choir and nave between year 1100 and 1600.<sup>78</sup> As frescoes in other northern European countries were destroyed during the iconoclasm, they survived the Reformation in Denmark. But over time they became unpopular and people started to whitewash them.<sup>79</sup> In the late 1800s, there was a renewed interest in the frescos, and they were brought to light again by removing the overlying lime.<sup>80</sup> The paintings showed typical Christian events and motives.<sup>81</sup>

When Gothic style came to Denmark, the original small Romanesque windows were replaced with pointed arch openings, and lighten up the room. Sometimes, the some ancient Romanesque windows were sealed.<sup>82</sup>

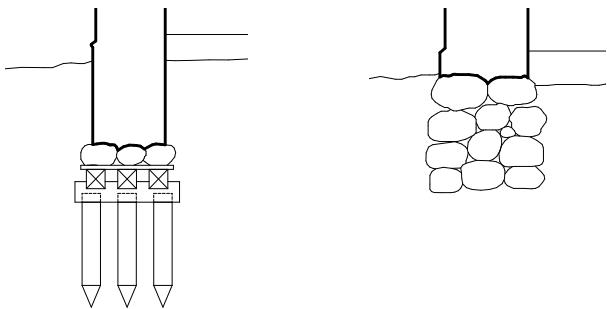
DANISH ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC RAFTERS CONSTRUCTION - after Gothic were introduced the existing rafters had to be recycled because the new vaults construction protrude in the attic



WALL CONSTRUCTION IN DANISH COUNTRY CHURCHES - the natural stone walls were built using box walls filled with boulders



FOUNDATIONS IN DANISH COUNTRY CHURCHES - foundations were made by settling woodpiles into hard ground or by filling trenches with boulders



STONE AND BRICK CHURCHES - DK - During middle age, there was two way of making foundations. A typical medieval foundation is designed as a trench, excavated to a solid base. The trench was filled with boulders, and mortar between the stones. The boulders were set straight on the upper side so that the wall construction could be added.<sup>83</sup>

Foundations could also be made using woodpiles. An ideal piling foundation consists of piles in rows and columns. On top of the piles, the so-called hammer attached the pillars to each other. Over the pillars was a layer of longitudinal timbers and planks forming a platform. At the top, non-absorbent stones were used, which formed the base of the wall construction. Blue clay often surrounded the wood elements to retain water in periods of low groundwater level.<sup>84</sup>

In Denmark, 70 % of the churches were built in natural stone, using box walls filled with boulders. The boulders were easily accessible as they came to Scandinavia with the glaciers during the ice age. The side of the walls were built with big, regular stones, while the middle part were filled with irregular stones and a bit mortar in-between. Long bind stones were also inserted into the walls to bind the construction together.<sup>85</sup>

As bricks were introduced, around year 1150, they rapidly became the preferred material.<sup>86</sup> The introduction of bricks resulted in thinner walls, usually built with buttresses. When an existing church, made with natural stones were extended with a tower or a porch, the extension were built with bricks.<sup>87</sup> The usage of bricks varies according to different regions; Jutland has few remaining medieval churches that were built with bricks (26 of nearly 900), while in Lolland-Falster nearly all the churches are built using bricks.<sup>88</sup> This has something to do with the fact that churches were built later in Lolland-Falster.

The most available building stone material was limestone (both tufa and travertine), granite, sandstone, and tuff.<sup>89</sup> Over half of the land churches in North West Denmark are constructed in granite (which were the primary building material in Denmark from 1050 to 1150). South West Denmark has a majority of tuff churches from the northern Germany, while South East Denmark has a predominance of brick churches, which began to be built in the 1150s.<sup>90</sup> The stones were used locally, as a result of which materials were available in the area.<sup>91</sup>



**WHITE LIMED CHURCHES - DK** - For barely 900 years, since the spread of Christianity in Denmark, small white churches begun to cover the Danish Landscape. Danish land churches were covered with white lime both inside and outside. In colloquial language, the term “lime” includes a wide range of products in a varying form and which may have different chemical compositions, but they are all manufactured from limestone as the starting material.<sup>92</sup>

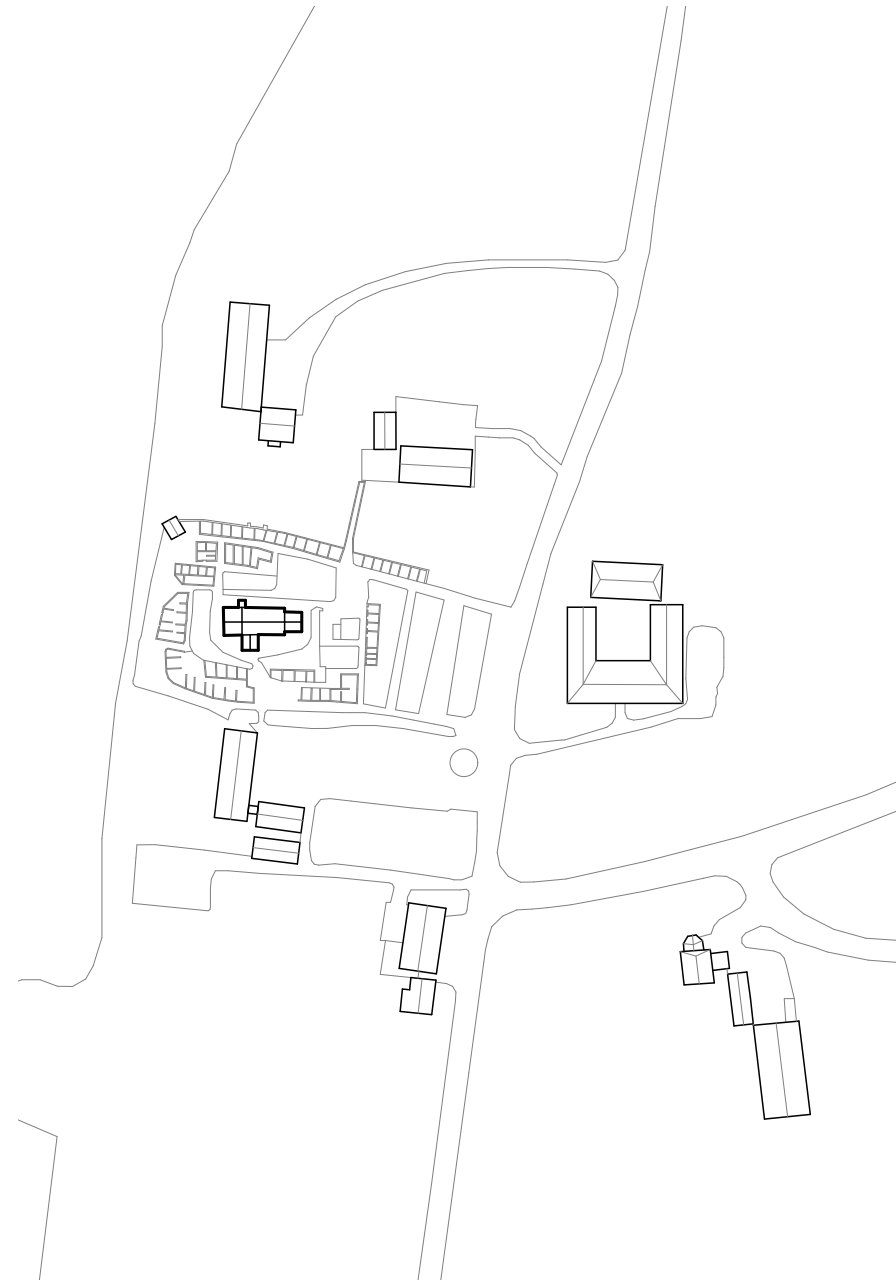
The liming of houses had two purposes; give the building a weather protective surface, and to smooth out unevenness of the underlying construction material. It was cheaper to lime the churches white, and still offer the building a good resistance against weather, but in some places red or yellow limed churches can be found.<sup>93</sup> The part of the churches built in granite were usually not white limed, because granite is non-porous.

The churches were also externally decorated; the older Romanesque buildings were graced with cornices on the facades of the nave and the choir, and tower gables were often decorated with corbie-steps.<sup>94</sup>

Churches are furnished with very characteristic furniture. They are made of timber, and the ones we know today are from year 1500 and later. The pulpit, altarpiece, and pews (church benches), are built in wood. An exception is the baptistery, which is made of stone and therefore the only piece of furniture that is from the origin of the church.<sup>95</sup> The pulpit and the altar are the most decorated pieces, using sometimes golden leafs and painting.

In Danish churches, there is a tradition to put candles on each pew along the nave. During important celebrations, like Christmas, Easter, etc. the nave is illuminated with candles that are put on the side of the pews.

Another tradition is to decorate churches with a model ship. About half of the Danish churches has one or more model ships hanging from the ceiling or standing.<sup>96</sup> Denmark has a long naval tradition, and the model ships might have appeared because people wanted to protect the ships and their crews against marine hazards.



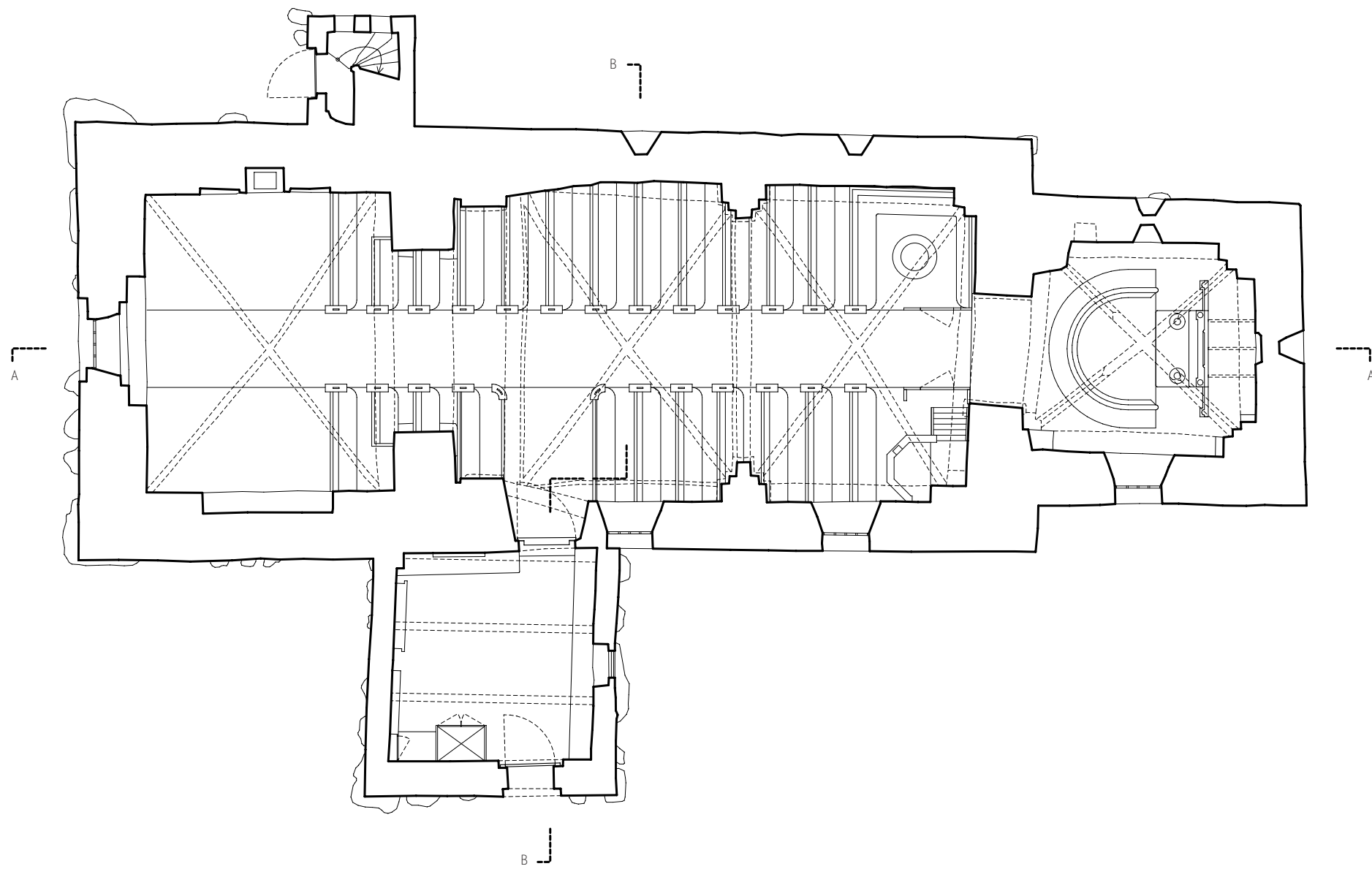
**A LIVING EXAMPLE - DK -** The church of Sønder Asmindrup, which dates from the middle age, belongs to the diocese of Roskilde on Sjælland.

The church is built in the western outskirts of the small village. Constructed in a hilltop southwest from the cemetery, the site of the church is relatively high in altitude.

A cemetery surrounds the church, and a small chapel in the northwest corner of the graveyard completes the enclosing wall.

During the Gothic period pointed ribbed vaults and pointed arch windows has been added to the interior.

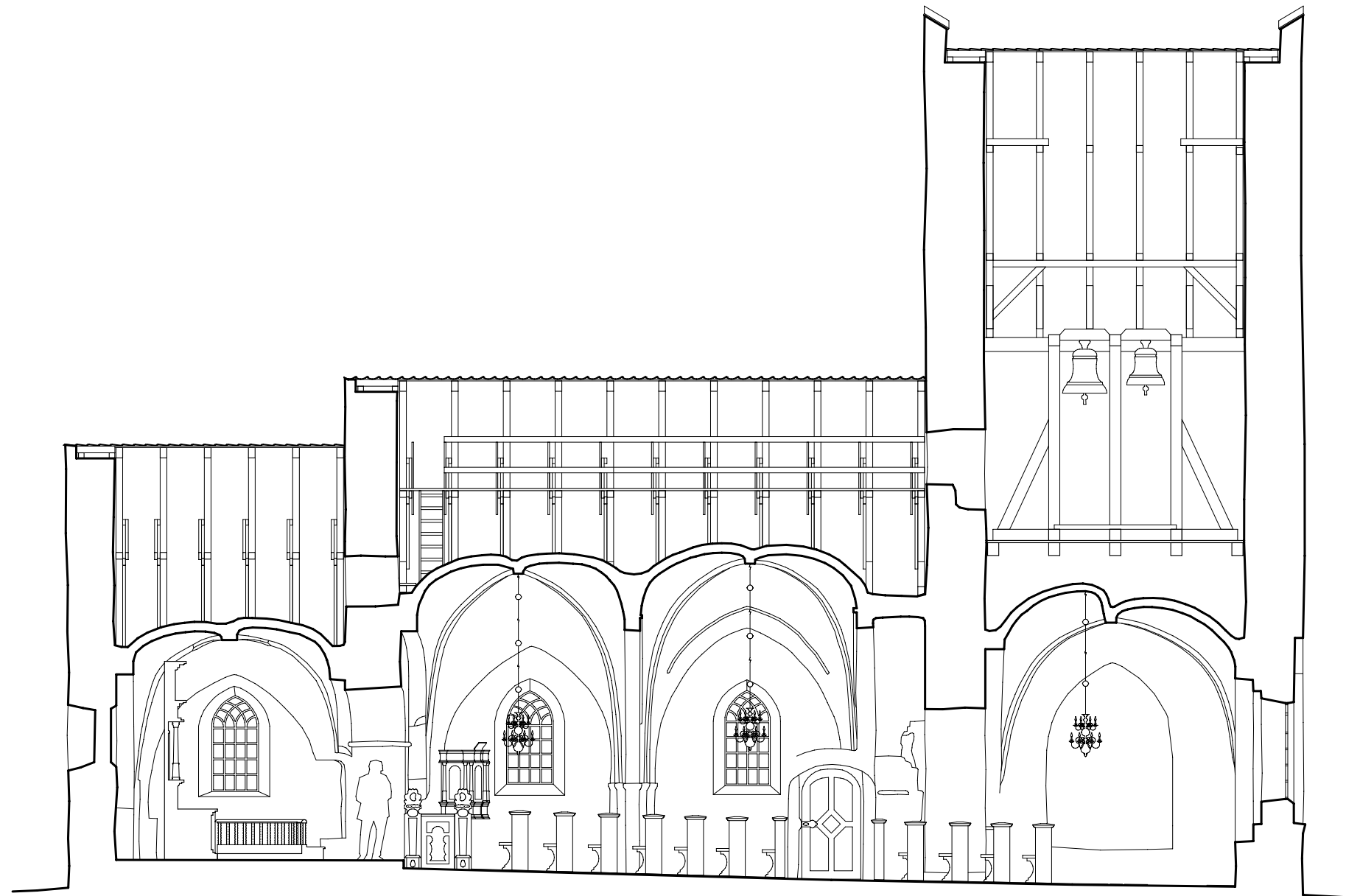
Sønder Asmindrup church is a good example of a characteristic Danish countryside church.



GROUND FLOOR - 1:100

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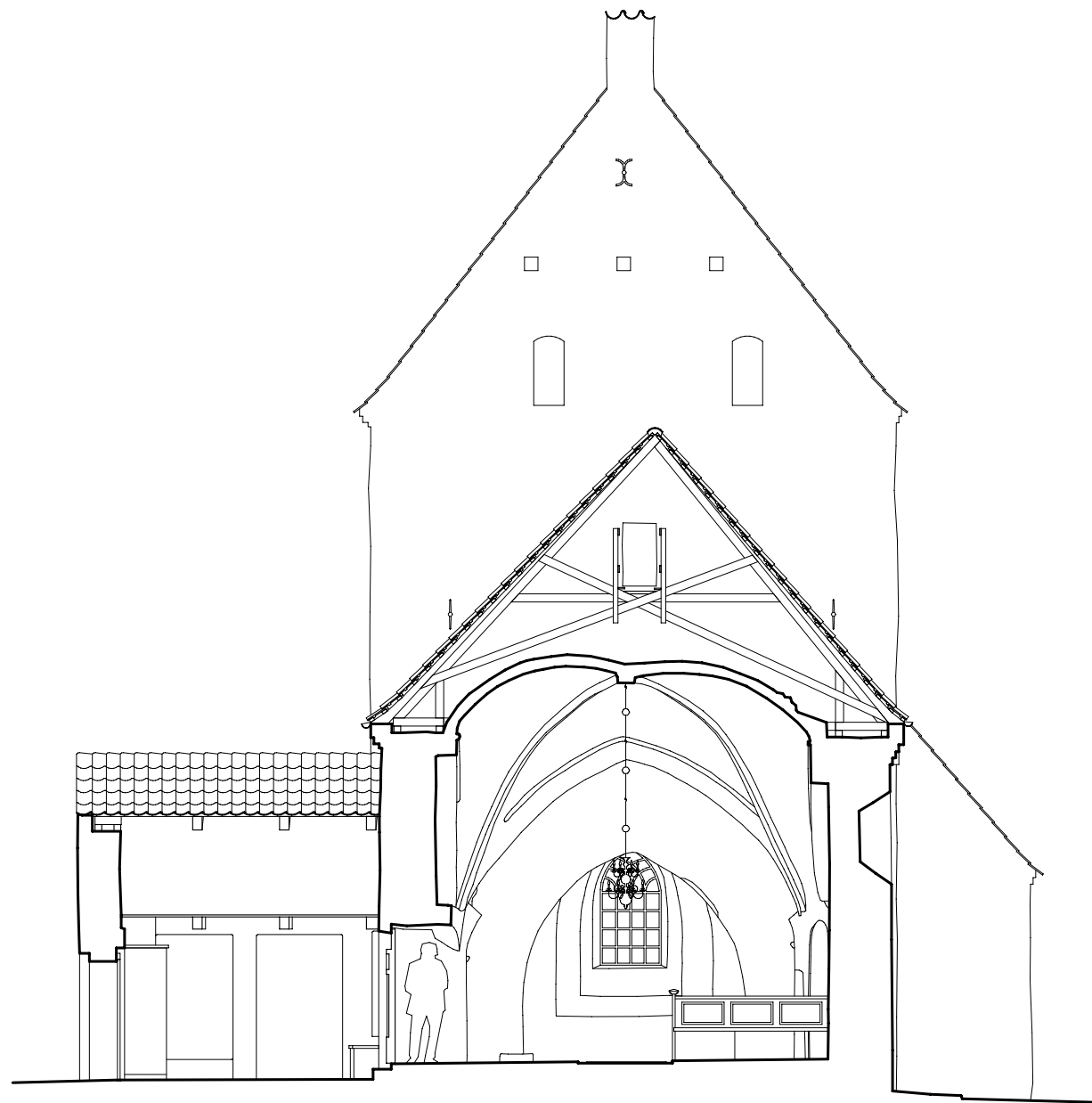




SECTION A - 1:100

0 1 3 m





SECTION B - 1:100

0 1 3 m



SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE IN CHARVONNEX, FRANCE - personal picture

**NOVEL CHURCHES - FR** - From the end of the Middle Age to the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the Northern Alps were under the authority of the Duchy of Savoy and later the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, which extend from Geneva to Nice. It was first in 1860, after a referendum, that this area became French. Because of its history, the region has been influenced by Switzerland and Italy for centuries. Therefore we can find many similarities with churches in Switzerland and Italian Alps.<sup>97</sup>

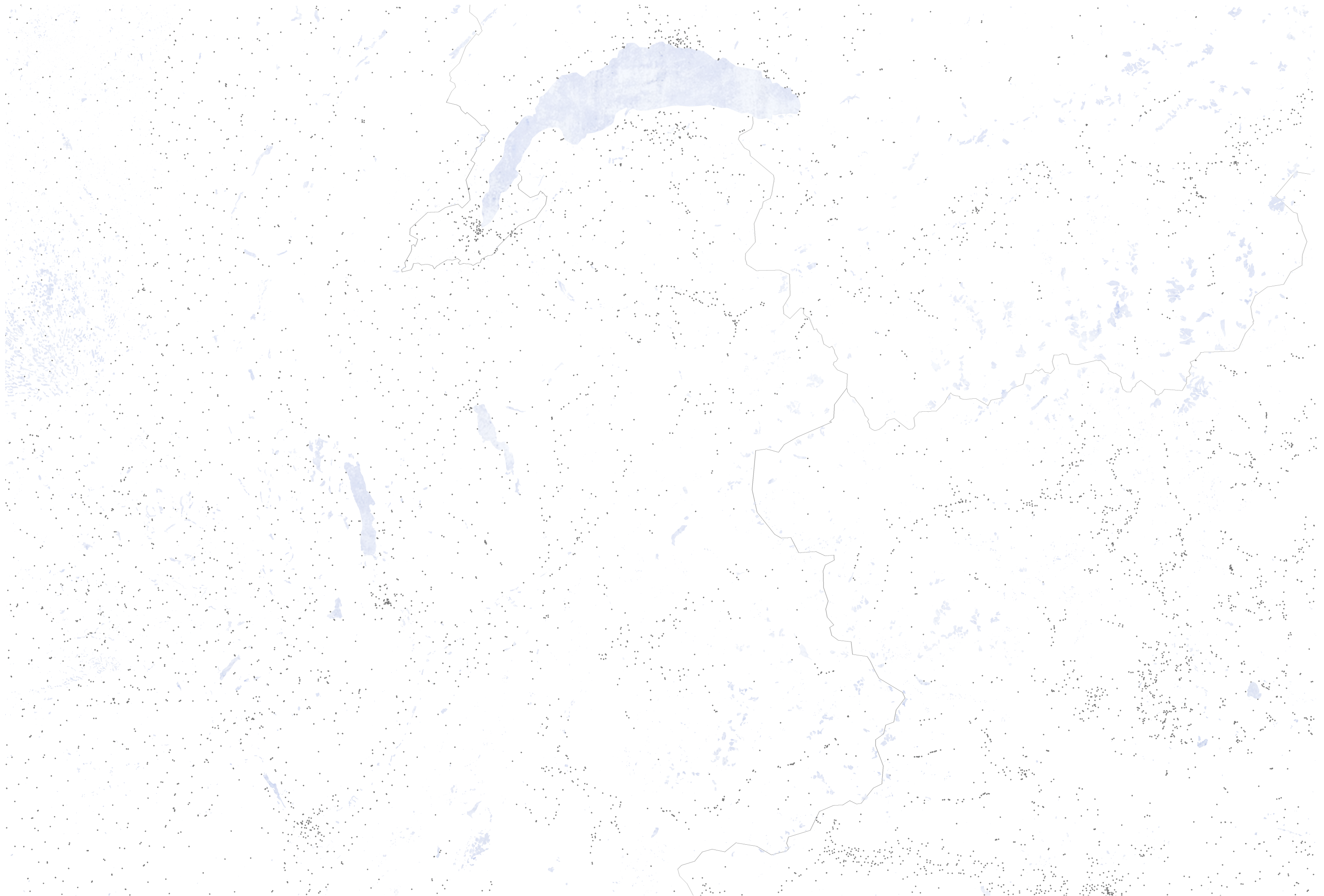
The area of the Northern Alps is a rural region, shaped by mountains. It is organized in three dioceses, the diocese of Annecy, the diocese of Chambéry, and the diocese of Grenoble/Vienne. According to the inventory of French religious heritage, there is about 1 110 churches remaining today, 294 in Annecy, 298 in Chambéry and 518 in Grenoble/Vienne.<sup>98</sup> Because the density of small villages is important, there is a more or less a homogeneous concentration of churches in the area, with an average distance of 3 to 4 km between the churches in the inhabited valleys.

The churches in the Northern Alps that remains today were mainly built during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence of the French revolution and the different governments that ruled in the Northern Alps, many churches were destroyed or partly destroyed in the region and in France in general.<sup>99</sup>

Because of the poor conditions of the remaining church buildings, the local communities often preferred to demolish the existing churches in order to build new ones.<sup>100</sup> Even tough the churches were demolished or partly demolished, renovated, reconstructed and often enlarged; still they attempted to keep the architectural style of the original church.

During reconstruction, several elements were systematically transformed; the enlargement of the apse, the extension of the nave, often of two spans to maintain an even number, the distension of the openings and the bell tower that were often rebuilt higher. Some churches sometimes installed heating systems in the sacristy. The reconstruction of the churches was made step-by-step, in order to maintain continuity of the religious services. Because of this step-by-step construction, the elements of the ancient church were often blended in the new one.<sup>101</sup>

During the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the Northern Alps were influenced by three architectural styles, neo-Gothic, neo-Classicism and neo-Romanesque. In the countryside, nearly all the new churches were built using neo-Romanesque style, because they were built on the place of a previous Romanesque church,<sup>102</sup> but also maybe because of the impulsion of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France. Neo-Gothic and neo-Classical churches were more likely built in towns. However, in some cases, churches in neo-Romanesque style include elements of other architectural styles. It is possible to find country churches built in a neo-Romanesque style with pointed arch windows and ribbed vaults, or even with a neo-Classic front façade.



CHURCHES IN THE NORTHERN ALPS HAVE AN AVERAGE DISTANCE OF 3 TO 4 KM - data GIS from Open Street Map

0 5 15 km

PLACEMENT OF NORTHERN ALPS COUNTRY CHURCHES IN VILLAGES - landscape plan of Desingy in France, 1:10 000. The church is disposed in the center of the village surrounded by the parvis



**VILLAGE CHURCHES - FR** - The country churches of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century were reconstructed on the same spot as the old churches.<sup>103</sup> Normally the churches were situated in the center of the village, in a relative urban context already established around the ancient churches.

Centered in the village, they benefitted from a space in front of the entrance called the church parvis. During the Middle Age, this square represented paradise. The parvis was kept, and even extended, during the reconstruction period of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>104</sup> The church often neighbored other public buildings, like city councils, schools, etc. This placement signalizes that the church played a central role for the local communities.<sup>105</sup>

According to Christian theology, the church is a prefiguration of Heavenly Jerusalem, which will unite the sky and the earth. Therefore the churches are often built on a hill, with the village situated around it.<sup>106</sup> Their position, as well as the bell towers, reinforces their visibilities. In the Alps, because of the hilly landscape, churches were normally constructed on one of the dominant points in the village.

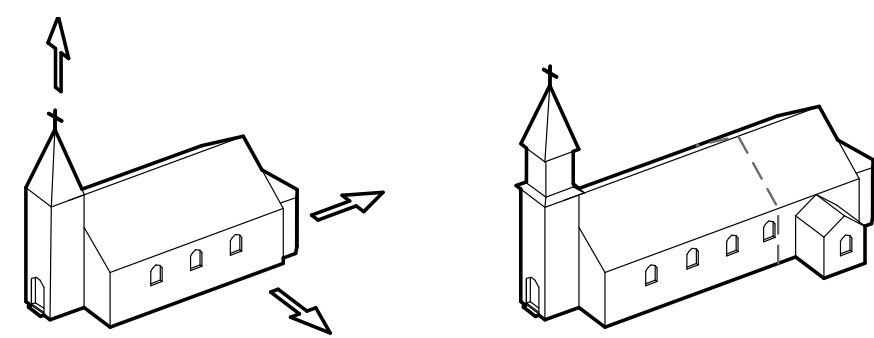
Influenced by the Roman basilicas, nearly all French churches have the same orientation with the nave pointing towards east. The congregation is facing the rising sun whilst praying, a symbol of the revived Christ which is an essential feature of the Christian religion.<sup>107</sup> The churches are usually oriented differently than the surrounding buildings, which reinforce their status and give them a unique and special character in the village.

During the Middle Age, the link between the church and the churchyard was important. And the churches were surrounded with fences, which marked the area of the churchyard.<sup>108</sup> But, as a cholera epidemic started to spread out in Europe during the 19th century, new hygienic measures were taken. The churchyards were therefore progressively disused and new ones were rebuilt outside the villages.<sup>109</sup>

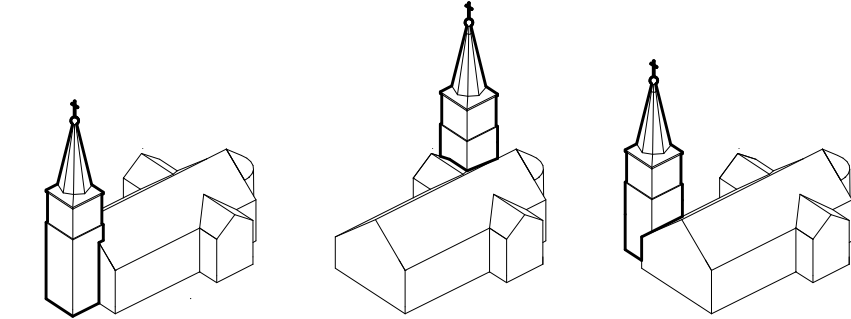
The newer churchyards are encircled with low walls, which separate the dead from the living. From being a place of memory among the community of the living, the cemeteries now became a place of prayer and visit of the dead.



**ENLARGEMENT OF THE CHURCHES** - the churches were usually reconstructed and at the same time enlarged during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century because of their poor conditions



**PLACEMENT OF THE TOWERS** - during the reconstruction the towers were often placed differently in one village to another to give them more visibility



**REBUILT CHURCHES - FR** - During the churches reconstruction period in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the new enlarged neo-Romanesque churches were added with several elements.

The majority of the churches in the Northern Alps were rebuilt with groin vaults for the ceilings, and buttresses to support the internal pressure of the vaults.<sup>110</sup>

The first bell towers were built during the XI<sup>th</sup> and XII<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the beginning, the towers were built apart from the church buildings. It was first later that they were built against the churches, disposed over the entrance or against the side of the churches. When it was constructed over the entrance, the tower room served as a porch. If the tower was placed against the side of the building, the tower room could function as chapel or baptistery. During the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, when the majority of the churches were rebuilt, the towers original position was sometimes re-changed, and the tower was built higher.<sup>111</sup> On the tower, the placement of the bells are marked by a horizontal cornice and openings just above. There is one or two non-glazed openings on each side to let the sound from the bells go through. A pointed roof giving it the impression of being higher crowned the towers.<sup>112</sup>

Apart from the tower, the roofs of each volume were always made of two slopes of around 45°. A lower hip at the east end defines the altar roof. A characteristic of the French High Alps is the use of flat tiles for the covering.<sup>113</sup>

For the construction of country churches in France, the choice of materials often depends on what was available in the region. In the Alps, un-calibrated natural stones are easily found. The walls were built using box walls filled with boulders. The sides of the walls were executed using regular stone, whilst the middle of the walls was filled up with irregular stones. Sandstone and limestone were the most used stones.<sup>114</sup>

The facades are usually plastered, and the angles of the building marked with tooth quoins made of limestones that raise the aesthetic of the building. The buttresses and the columns were also performed in limestone. In some case, the tower isn't plastered; all the stones are visible and show the stonework. In churches, the soil constructions are also in stones. The surface is often covered with different sized stone tiles that can generate different graphic patterns.



**WANDERED CHURCHES - FR** - For the Catholics, entering the church, “the House of God”, is something really special, as it represents the passage from the secular world to the sacred world.<sup>115</sup>

The entrance is always to the axis of the nave. The west facade is therefore the most decorated part of the exterior, sometimes with sculptures. Two columns nested in the wall frames the front doors and mark the entrance. The two columns support a triangular or semi-circular tympanum, which is a vertical surface above the entrance often decorated with sculptures representing the Judgment Day. On the ground, a few steps also mark the entrance.<sup>116</sup>

In French rural churches, there is an opposition between the inside and the outside. Apart from the entrance, the external facades are denuded of any ornamentation, whilst inside there is an abundance of decoration. There are sculptures, wall paintings, stained glass windows, etc.<sup>117</sup> Usually the windows were filled with stained glass, which was considered a colourful support, like a comic strip. In a time where almost everyone was illiterate, the glass paintings taught the congregation stories of Jesus.<sup>118</sup> On the walls it was painted frescos with biblical events.

Stoups for purification, often integrated into the walls, were placed by the entrance of the church. When entering and exiting the church, the practitioners drenched their fingertips in the stoups' holy water and made the sign of the cross.

The nave is furnished with two rows of pews, church bench, that defines a corridor in the middle. The pews are generally a long wooden bench, often complete with a kneeler and a desk to place the bible or hymnbook. Sometimes, the pews were replaced with standard chairs.

It is interesting to notice that in the Middle Ages, men and women were separated during church services. Men were sitting on the right side and women on the left.<sup>119</sup>

The eastern part of the church, where the ceremony takes place, is the most illuminated part of the building. The choir is furnished with the altar, which is usually a fixed furnishing in the middle of the choir, most of the time made out of white stone.<sup>120</sup> Always linked to the altar, is the lectern which is a desk where the Bible is read. The tabernacle is also near the altar. The tabernacle is a piece of furniture where the Hosts are stored. The baptistery is placed near the altar.

During renovation or reconstruction, the churches were often completed with a wooden balcony above the entrance, to host a choir or even raise the capacity of the church.<sup>121</sup> Today, because of their really narrow staircase and difficulties of access, they are usually not used and sometimes it even serves as a storage place.

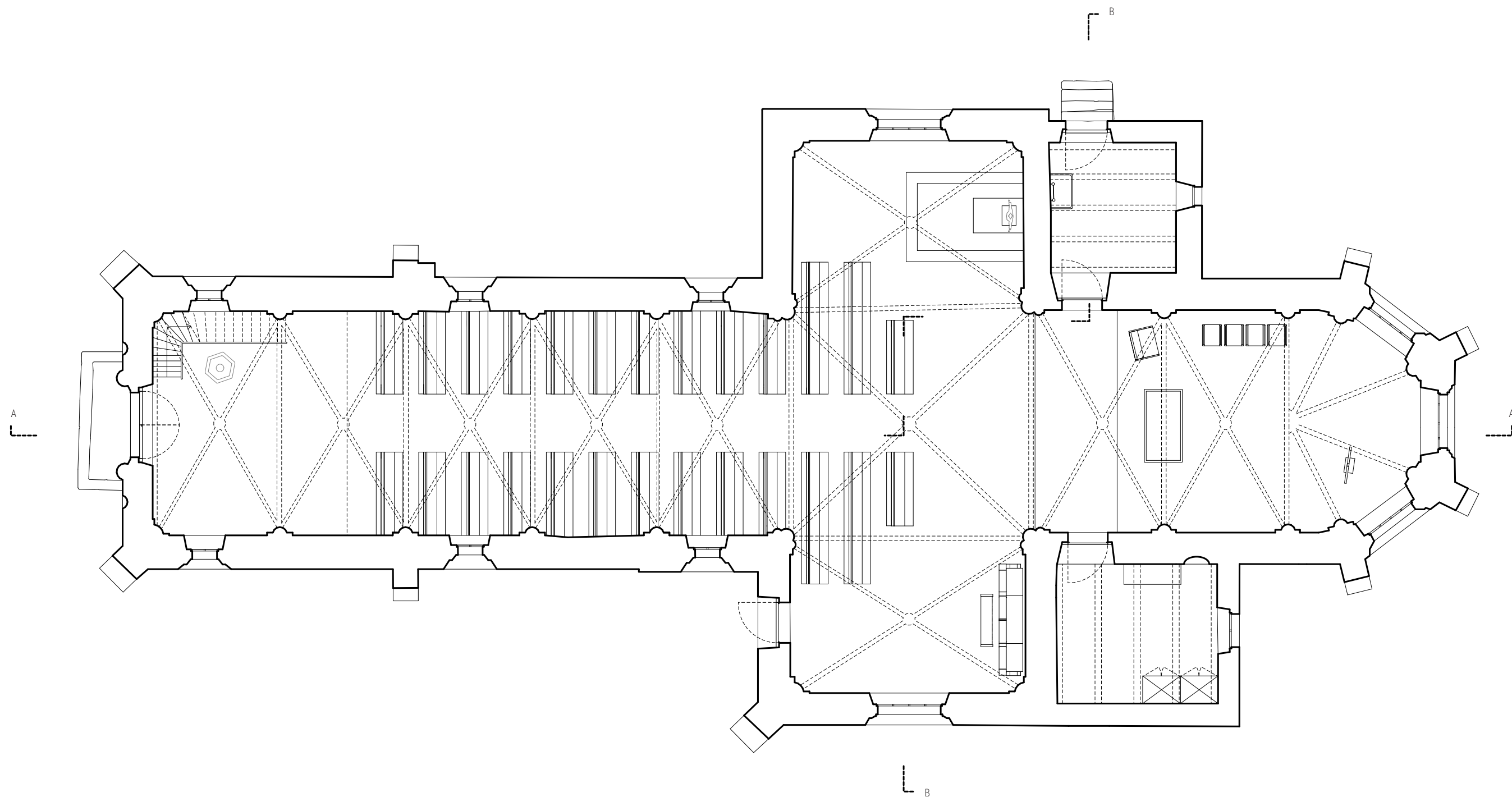


**A LIVING EXAMPLE - FR -** Saint Jean-Baptist of Charvonnex, as we know it today, has been constructed on the site of a former church established in 1646. Located just outside the city of Annecy, the church of Charvonnex is under authority of the diocese of Annecy.

Between 1854 and 1898 massive renovations were made, such as moving the bell tower, renovating the framework, extend the nave, prolonged the choir and adding a technical room.<sup>122</sup>

The church is built in a neo-Romanesque style but has several Gothic elements like some thin and pointed arch windows, a ribbed vault ceiling and buttresses.

This example is a typical land church in the French Alps, which has been renovated and rebuilt during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.

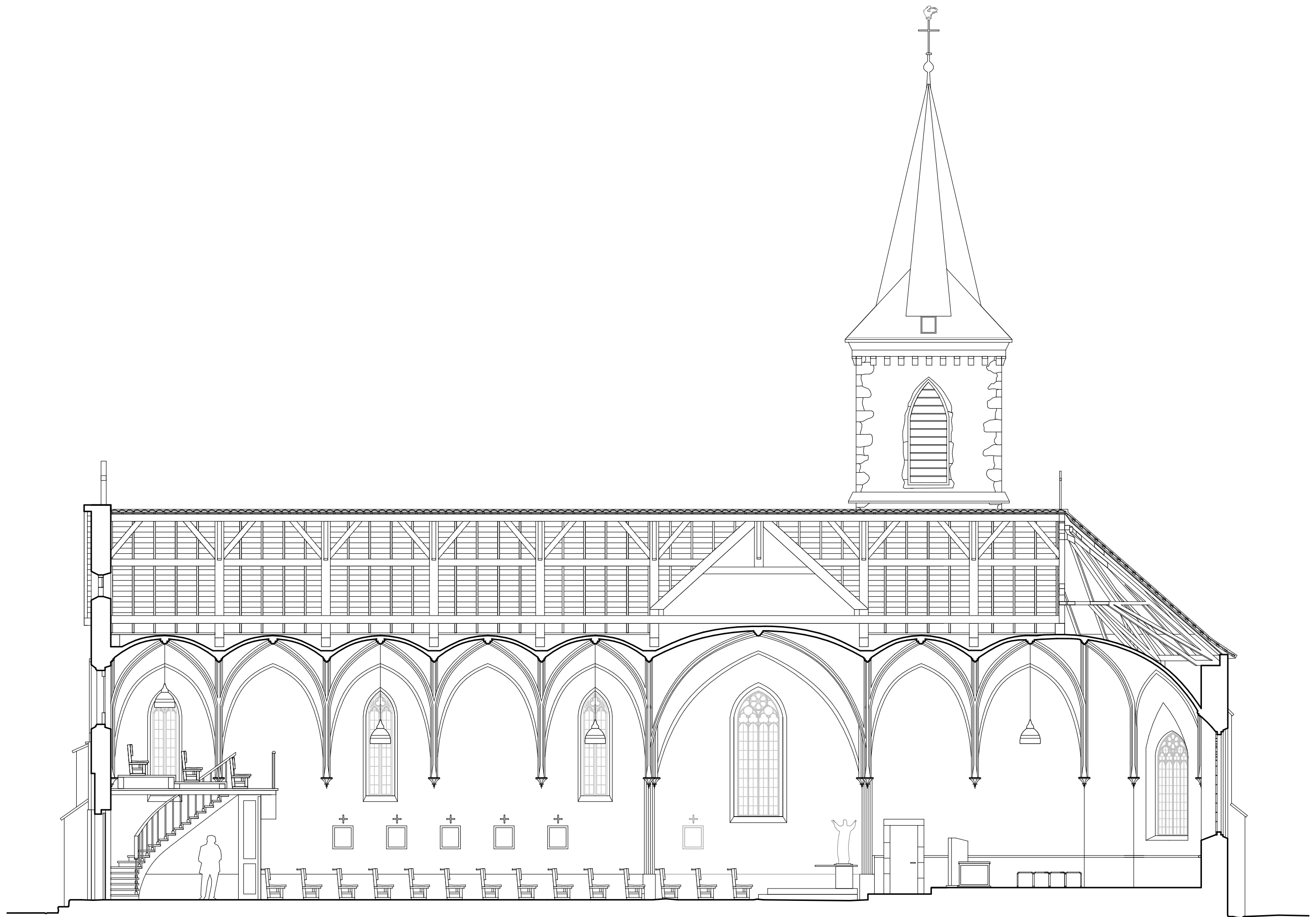


GROUND FLOOR - 1:100

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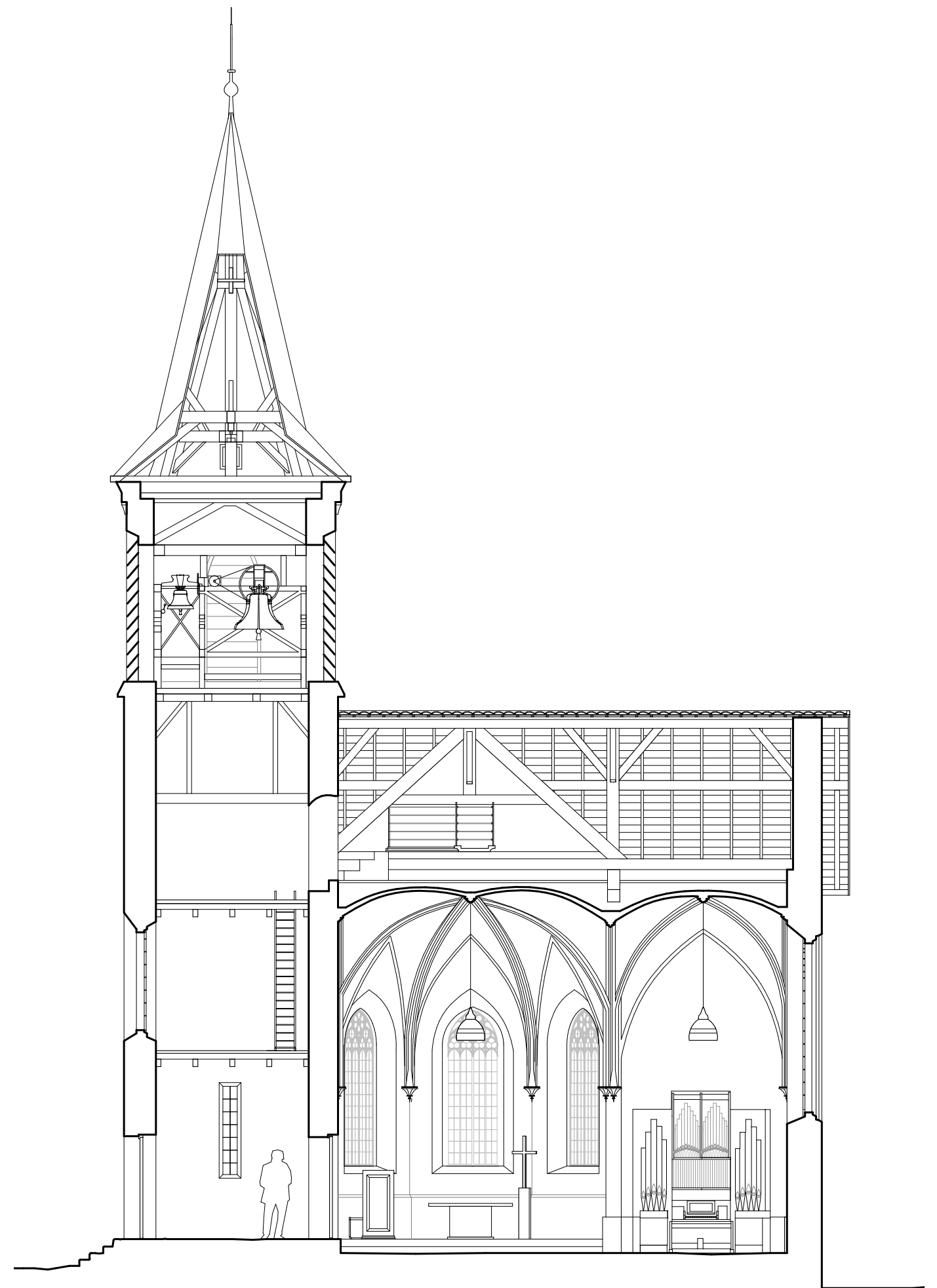






SECTION A - 1:100

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SECTION B - 1:100

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**THE OPEN CHURCH** - As the numbers of people who attend to church services are decreasing, many churches now lose their original purpose of existence. Therefore we must start to reconsider what to do with these churches.

Several studies all converge to the same conclusion: in a few years, hundreds of Western European churches will be closed or converted for other programs. This phenomenon has already experienced an exponential growth, in particular in Great Britain and the Netherlands.

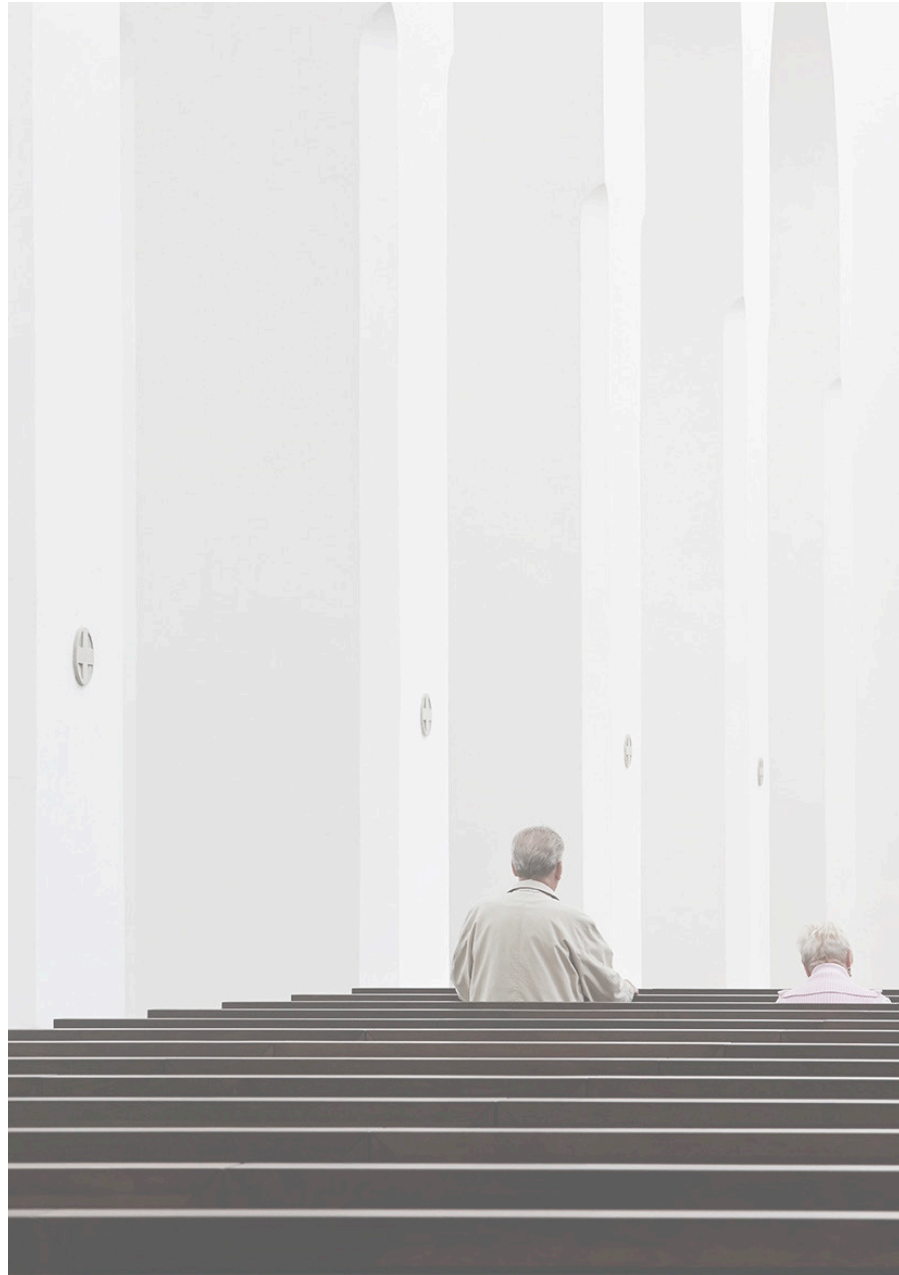
In Great Britain, churches have been closed or recycled since 1969. A total of 1 872 churches have been taken out of their original usage. 20 % of these were demolished.<sup>123</sup>

In the Netherlands the situation is comparable; churches have been closed or re-used since the 70s as a consequence of declining membership rates in both the Protestant and Catholic Church.<sup>124</sup>

Churches in other European countries have also been confronted with the needs for revitalization. By “revitalisation” we mean to make interventions that give new life to under-utilized churches.

The revitalization can be made in different ways, more or less visible. The goal is to give the buildings new dynamics and new ways of usage.





**CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES** - In the following pages, eight projects will be presented that shows examples on what already has been done to under-utilized churches. We have divided them into four groups (two examples per group), based on the level of intervention, from the most discreet intervention to the most visible.

#### NEW INSERTION

The first level of a revitalisation of churches is a promotion of the existing building. It can be by improving the existing architectural and artistic elements, adding new elements, or to integrate modern architecture and materials, etc. All with the aim of raising the interest in church buildings by giving it a more contemporary character.

#### NEW NEIGHBOUR

Because of a bad financial position, some religious communities decided to share their churches to find new financial supports. A new flexible architecture, with respect for church, allows multiple usage of the church at times when the local Christians doesn't use it.

#### NEW AFFECTATION

When a church is in poor conditions because of decreasingly religious practice and financial issues, the Church or the local authorities can choose to sell it or reinvest their heritage for new usage. New programs are then established and leave behind a church that doesn't intend for activities of worship any more. The church keeps its external appearance, while the interior is transformed to welcome new activities.

#### NEW USAGE

Sometimes, when a church has reached such a degree of degradation that it cannot properly be restored, the local authorities often decide to integrate the remaining parts in new projects. This kind of circumstances generates radical interventions that leave visible fragments of churches and create an unexpected architecture in the townscape. It can be compared to a sort of extreme version of Giambattista Nolli's plan of Rome, where the church is not just accessible by every pedestrian, but part of the public space.





**CHURCH OF SCHWARZENBERG, LINGENAU (AUT)- NEW INSERTION** - The small Gothic church of Schwarzenberg, renovated by the Ernst Bneneder and Anja Fischer Architects in 2010, was built in the XV<sup>th</sup> century. The church got rebuilt in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>125</sup>

In this project, the architects wanted to revitalize the church by re-interpret liturgical and sacred art. Furniture and works of art have therefore been added to give a reminder of passages of the Bible.

The new altar consists of twelve types of rocks, which refers to the twelve apostles. In the nave, the Way of the Cross is symbolised on the floor using flags embroidered with Roman numbers.<sup>126</sup>

Using discreet artistic elements, the architects have given the local citizens a new interest in visiting the church expect for the usual Sunday service.



**CHURCH OF SAINT HILAIRE, MELL (FR) - NEW INSERTION** - In the church of Saint Hilaire, from the XII<sup>th</sup> century, the revitalisation concerns an insertion of new liturgical furniture anchored in the architecture of the church.<sup>127</sup>

In 2011, Designer Mathieu Lehanneur redesigned the choir in the church. The new choir is made out of two materials; white marble and alabaster. The materials were used to set off the choir from the rest of the church.<sup>128</sup>

The white marble forms the pedestal of the choir. It is made of successive strata that define the steps and different levels on the pedestal. The baptistery is dug into the pedestal. The liturgical furniture, altar, and lectern, are made of amber coloured alabaster. They are disposed on the new choir's pedestal.<sup>129</sup> This contemporary organic architecture stands in contrast with the original Romanesque style of the church, which generates a natural hierarchy between the congregation and the priest.

By this architectural act, Lehanneur has revitalized the church by giving a new and contemporary image to religious ceremonies.









**CHAPEL OF CORNEILLE, ROUEN (FR) - NEW NEIGHBOUR** - The Corneille Chapel was built at the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, and is the chapel of the Corneille High School in Rouen. The church is a synthesis of Gothic and Classical architecture.<sup>130</sup>

In 2014 the church was renovated by King-Kong Architects. The gentle intervention by the architects in the church resulted in the conservation of the liturgical furniture, internal decors, sculpted stones, and monochrome stained glass windows.<sup>131</sup>

The only elements that was added is a seven meter in diameter shimmering sphere placed at the intersection of the nave and the transept, and the removable wooden chairs in the nave.

In this project, the architects has, just by replacing the existing pews with removable chairs, allowed coexistence between religious activities and different none religious activities.



**CHURCH OF LEEGKERK, GRONINGEN (NL) - NEW NEIGHBOUR** - The church of Leegkerk origins from the XIII<sup>th</sup> century and were rebuilt in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. In 2013, with the help of AWG architects, the local community decided to undertake a project of revitalization of the church.<sup>132</sup>

The architects proposed the introduction of two volumes or boxes detached from the church walls and placed in the nave near the choir. They contain a kitchen and toilets, and a staircase that allows you to go above the box construction, creating a pedestal.

The new gold coloured box defines a multipurpose room where the Mass can be celebrated, but also with the possibility to host other community activities. The installation of a stage at the top of this volume accentuates the different possible indoors functions.<sup>133</sup>

The architects proposed an architectural addition that complete the liturgical space and at the same time offer a numerous of functionalities that meets the new requirements of the community.









**CHURCH OF SAINT LOUIS, TOURCOING (FR) - NEW AFFECTATION** - The church of Saint Louis in Tourcoing is today housing a carpenter workshop. Because of a lack of fundings to maintain the church, the local municipalities decided to sell it. A framing company bought the church, and installed a warehouse, workshops and offices in the Romanesque church.<sup>134</sup>

Because the roof was falling apart when they bought it, the workers built a new one using plexiglas as covering to illuminate the church room. The interior structure is still recognizable, but there has been added several floors on the right low side of the nave to host storage rooms and offices. The choir were adjusted to host cultural activities, and the nave is used for storage of bigger machines, a forklift is even used inside the church to carry materials.<sup>135</sup>

Because of the size of the church and the local popularity of the place, the owners are planning to open it to a larger public. The bell tower will host an apartment with a panoramic view. For the left low side of the nave, two floors are envisaged as a co-working room, including local shops and small businesses. They are also planning to produce their own beer, stamped Saint-Louis.<sup>136</sup>

The church was in an advanced state of decay, and therefore sold to a private owner. Today, the church is no more a place of worship, but life has been brought back into it by offering the local community a gathering place for common activities.



**CHURCH OF SÃO JULIÃO, LISBON (PO) - NEW AFFECTATION** - Situated in the city centre of Lisbon, in the Baixa district, the church of São Julião is part of a town block consisting of an ancient bank. Today the church work as a reception for Banco de Portugal's headquarter and Museum of Currency.

Built during the XVII<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt after the earthquake of Lisbon in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, the church was transformed by the architects Gonçalo Byrne and João Pedro Falcão de Campos in 2013.<sup>137</sup>

Because of the bad condition, the inside of the church were partly recovered and the too damaged part of it were rebuilt in a modern way, devoid of any ornamentation. The offices of the bank are in a building built against the church and are separated from the church with huge curtains. The museum's exhibition rooms encircle the nave.<sup>138</sup>

A church aspire a certain idea of continuity, which a bank will absolutely undertake. Even if Masses are no longer arranged in the church, the building still gives an unexpected feeling of sacred life.









**CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA, CARZOLA (ESP) - NEW USAGE** - Dating from the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, the church of Santa María in Cazorla has suffered from inundations damages, independence war and being abandoned by successive generations leaving the church in an advanced state of ruin.<sup>139</sup>

In 2010, the project of Pedro Salmerón Escobar architects proposed to maintain the ruins and create a multi-usage space for the community. In what remained of the bell-tower it is now a tourist information office and a projection room. The rest of the building, because of the high degree of degradation, serves as a public open space, a square where the locals can meet.<sup>140</sup>

In this project, the church is not dead. The subtly remaining ruins redefined a new public space in the city. Despite there are no religious celebrations there now, the church still works as a place of gathering for the local community.



**BENEDETTINI GALLERY, BELLINZONA (CH) - NEW USAGE** - The church in Bellinzona dates from the beginning of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. During the Swiss Revolution, from the XVII<sup>th</sup> to XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, the building suffered from several none religious allocations like assembly room or military armoury.<sup>141</sup>

Disused, the building felled rapidly in the public domain, and the idea of creating a covered walkway through the church came to life. Inspired by other European examples, the church now links two main streets together by making a passage through the nave, demolishing the existing entrance, the choir and apses.<sup>142</sup>

Today, the only part of the church remaining is the nave and its characteristic groin vaults. Nothing remains from the original front facade, neither the tower bell. Shops, small restaurants and cafes now occupy the previous nave's low sides.

Because it became a covered passage, the nave has left traces of the church. In the nave's low sides new life has reappeared, and the church is again a place where life is celebrated.

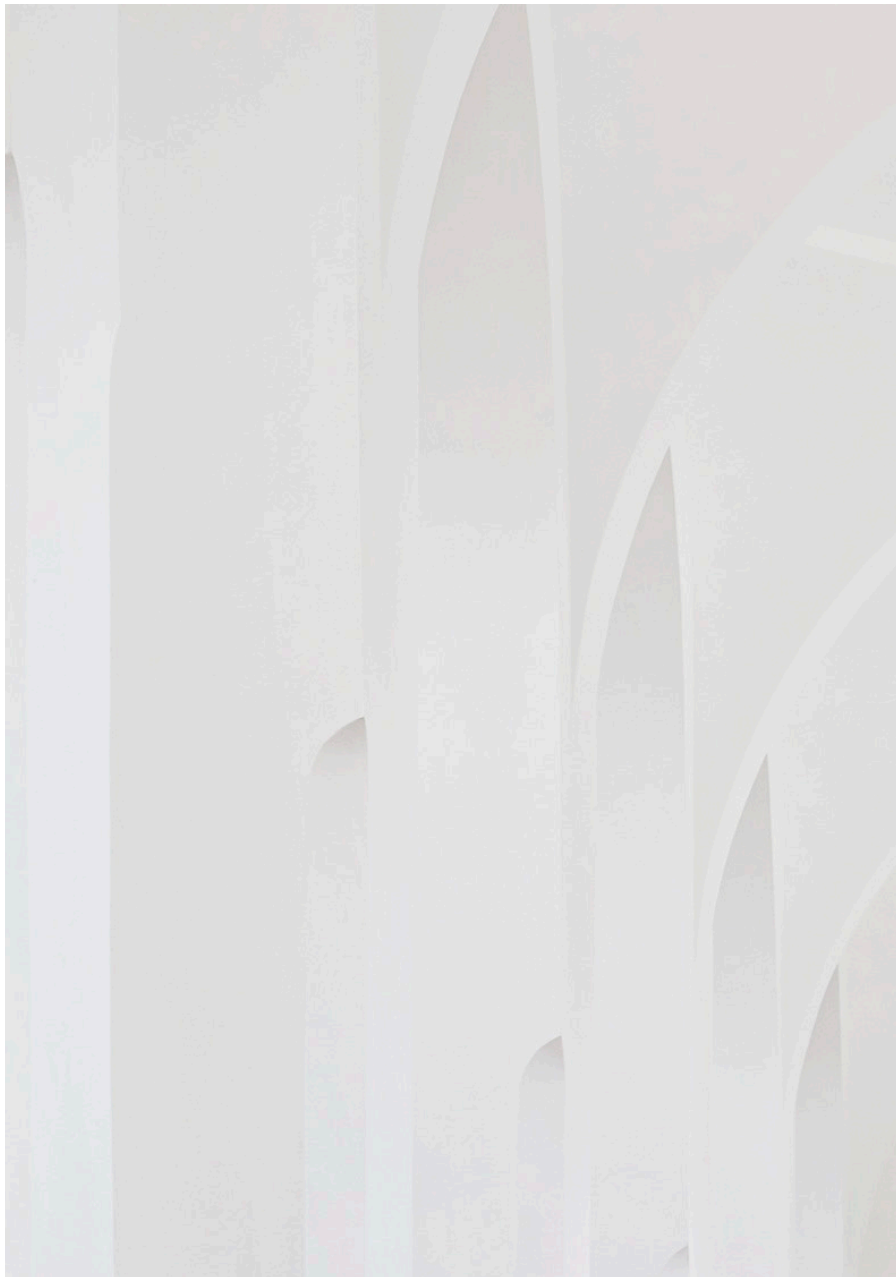




«the future belongs to the church with the broadest doors»  
Alphonse Karr







**STRATEGIES AND RECOMMANDATIONS** - The Church of both Denmark and France, as for the majority of the European countries are in poor conditions. They are facing financial problems, social changes and a drastic fall in their membership rates. At the same time they own a great amount of church buildings that has incredible historical, cultural, and architectural values.

Because of its high qualities, these building's heritage must be preserved. Therefore, it seems essential to promote a new life for them by proposing new activities and ways of usage of the churches.

Regarding this, some questions arise: how should we react when facing under-used churches? Which considerations should be taken into consideration?

Based on different existing projects, we have established a methodology for revitalization of country churches, in the form of a strategy and recommendations, which we believe plays an important role when projecting new usage for country churches.



**THREE-STEP STRATEGY** - Given the threats the Church is facing, we have developed a three-step strategy.

**VILLAGE COOPERATION**

Under-utilization concerns nearly all country churches, therefore we believe the solution for these churches is cooperation between villages on larger geographical areas. In other words, the project shall not only concern one village or municipality, but several neighboring villages bearing a common project for the revitalization of their churches.

**VILLAGE GROWTH**

During the last decades, many villages have experienced that their local bakery, grocery stores, bars, schools, etc. have been closed because of city urbanization. As a consequence, the villages are now more or less residential areas, causing the death of community life and lower economic growth.

The re-usage of the churches shall attend to promote the area, and therefore we think that the neighboring villages should work together to propose a common project for the building programs. It is important that these programs make sense for the local communities.

The re-usage can be public programs that revitalize the life in the villages (e.g. a communal room, a nursery or a library), touristic or cultural entertainment that gives the region a new and interesting perspective (e.g. a theatre, a house of culture or a concert room), leisure activities that promote new attraction to the area (e.g. restaurant, a yoga room or a relaxation center), etc.

Even though some building programs can be more polemical and controversial than others, we believe that it is important to think outside the box when it comes to finding these solutions.

The success factor lies in finding the essential demands and needs for the villages. This can play an important role in the local development and contribute to higher attractiveness, and lead to more newcomers, new establishments, and a positive economic growth.

**LOCAL SUPPORT**

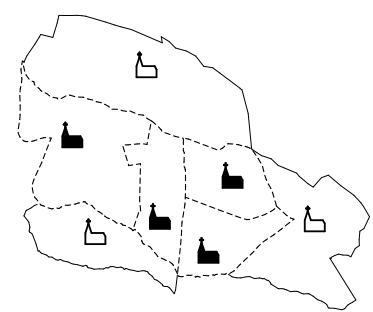
Many citizens often have a particular affection about their local buildings, and in particular with their church. They might be baptized there, married, or they have buried relatives there.

Therefore it is understandable that it can be difficult for them to imagine a new activity in the local church.

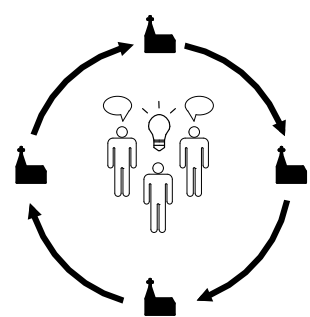
As for any project, and maybe in particular for the revitalization of churches, it is important to have a support from the public. To succeed, we recommend cooperating with the involved parties (e.g. local priests, mayors, or concerned citizens) early in the project process to make them understand the true necessity, which goes beyond architectural proposals. If the members of the community are engaged in the project, it will be easier to get support from the whole community.

This is a collective project, where the ones responsible for the project and the representatives of the community should be in constant dialogue. Because change the prior way of using a church can lead to debates, we suggest taking into consideration a certain adaption period before the project is fully accepted in the community.

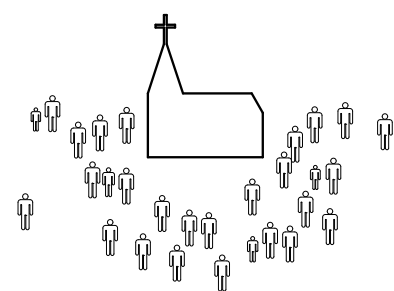
**VILLAGE COOPERATION** - out of seven village churches, three are now enough for the local Christians to practice their worship. The four others should serve other purposes



**VILLAGE GROWTH** - collaboration between the villages about a common project will lead to social and economic growth



**LOCAL SUPPORT** - to succeed it is important that the local citizens support the project. Proper parties from the communities should therefore be involved



**THREE-STEP STRATEGY** - The three-stepped strategy we propose can be illustrated with an example.

Envision an area with seven neighboring villages, each with one church. Because of the decrease of religious practice in the region, three churches are now enough for the local Christian community to celebrate their worship.

We believe the four resting churches should serve other purposes. A common and collective project for the four churches, with the proper parties involved and support from the public, will lead to social and economic growth in the village.



**RECOMMENDATIONS** - In our opinion, taking churches out of its initial use involves several factors that should be taken into consideration. We have divided these factors into four recommendations. The two first are practical aspects that should be taken into account before starting the project.

**REGULATIONS**  
Laws are different from one country to another, and therefore there are no unique rules and regulations concerning revitalization of churches. Different types of regulations can be a hindrance when it comes to projects like this.

Each country, or sometimes even each region, has its own legislation regarding the topic. In Denmark for example, it is the Church Minister who decides if a church should be taken out its existing way of usage, while in France it depends on the owner, the local authorities or the dioceses.<sup>143</sup>  
From a cultural point of view, nearly every Danish country churches figures on a protected inventory list for their scenic and artistic painting qualities. In France, this is more or less only concerning city cathedrals.

Therefore, we recommend establishing contact with relevant authorities as early as possible to figure out if the project is possible to accomplish, and not to waste time on projects that are unfeasible.

**ARCHITECTURE**  
Projecting in an existing building, and especially in one as characteristic as a church, requires knowledge in every areas concerning the building. The different interventions will have to fit in the best way possible to the atypical space qualities and therefore it is important to have a wide overview of the building.

A church's architecture can play an important role in choosing the new program. Churches have architectural styles that reflect their date of constructions. Romanesque, Gothic, Classicism, etc. have specificities that can be in favour or disadvantage for some revitalization programs.  
A Gothic church has broader openings that let more daylight in, which can be significant for certain activities. As a contrast, Romanesque churches have thick walls and small openings that doesn't let in that much light.

We recommend studying all documents concerning architectural, technical and historical elements. We also consider it important to make a personal and conscientious survey of the site. Going into the details will offer deeper understanding of the church, which we think will lead to a better project.





**RECOMMANDATIONS** - The two last recommendations are to be taken into account when the project is in progress.

#### EXISTING ITEMS

A country church is not an empty and isolated construction. It is an old building with long traditions with lots of side buildings and items. The church building was usually complete with cemetery, characteristic church furniture and sometimes small linked constructions on the church property.

Because a church has a historical value, they sometimes have a protected inventory that has to be preserved.

If the inventory is protected or of high value, we recommend to find solutions for their further use by for example making them a part of the new project, integrate them into another project or use them to complete another church.

#### TECHNICAL

The revitalization of a church is not only about the introduction of new programs, but also about new inner life, which can lead to the need of new technical features. The ancient churches had usually neither heating, nor system of aeration. Insulation and introduction of new technical equipment can have serious effects on the existing building.

A significant change of indoor temperature, too little air renewal, but also the adding of insulation, artificial light, soundproofing, universal design, etc. can have serious impacts on a medieval church's architecture and environment.

We recommend the projectors to have in mind that they are projecting in an existing building with a long and complex history, and therefore these factors should be taken under serious considerations.









CHURCH OF SØNDER ASMINDRUP, DENMARK - personal picture

**POSTLUDIUM** - For the past decades, the Church has tried to re-establish an interest in the religious practice.

The Church of Denmark now propose new activities to re-attract the practitioners, like children activities during the Sunday service, proposing young parents sing lesson with their new-borns, etc.

In France, with the council of Vatican II (1962 to 1965), the Church has taken measures to give a more modern image of the Church. Among other things, they have reduced the distance between the congregation and the altar, the Masses are now simplified and are no longer in Latin, etc.<sup>144</sup>

Despite these changes, it hasn't help increased the number of practitioners. And also because of economical issues, some countries has already taken action while others are seriously considering it.

In 2013 the Danish Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Manu Sareen, expressed that the Ministry were considering closing the churches in the country's 200 smallest parishes. This happened short time after the Culture Minister in 2012 closed eight churches in Copenhagen because of a lack of exploitation.<sup>145</sup>

At the same time in France, churches in some place are falling apart because of the lack of maintenance. Local authorities doesn't have the resources or just don't want to maintain their place of worship. According to French Observatory for Religious Heritage (OPR), the only uncertainty remaining is to know how many religious monuments will be destroyed or abandon by 20 years. They estimate that by 2013, 5 to 10 percent of the Church's patrimony could disappear.<sup>146</sup>

Because it seem difficult to appoint these patrimonial buildings to the exclusive usage of some church-goers, during a limited number of hours per week and sometimes even per month, the questions regarding the future of the country churches are starting to become urgent.

But, even though the buildings aren't useful as churches anymore, they can't be demolished. Their old age, their scenic and architectural qualities, historical and cultural values, their construction and material specificities are some of many reasons to preserve them.

Therefore, by looking on what has been done in other countries, we have tried to work out tracks of reflexion on the possible interventions in under-exploited land churches.

In our opinion, the churches conversion starts with dialogues. First it is important to establish a dialogue between neighboured communities to undertake a common project of revitalization of their churches. Then there should be a dialogue to find out what programs that suits the churches and the communities in the best possible way. And finally there should be a dialogue between all the involved parties to get fully support for the project.

Today, fortified castles do not act as bulwarks of defence anymore. They now serve other functions, which give them a safeguard against falling into decay. In our viewpoint, the same should be done for churches.





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VISITED CHURCHES - From June 2016 to January 2017.

Sønder Asmindrup, Denmark.  
Grandløse, Denmark.  
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Sankt Laurentii in Skagen, Denmark.  
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CONFERENCES - L’avenir des églises, Lyon School of Architecture, October 20 to 22, 2016

Agostiano, M. & Concas, D. - Lo spazio architettonico delle chiese ancora oggi/sempr  
luogo di aggregazione e punto di riferimento per la comunità.  
Bartolomei, L. & Tiloca, C. - Il riuso delle chiese come nuova armatura insediativa.  
Dahli, M. & Nessark, N. - La reconversion des églises : l’expérience algérienne.  
De Reymaecker, M. & Titeux, C. - La réaffectation des églises : réactiver - intensifier.  
Décaris, B. - Corps et âme.  
Dölle, H. - A church as a gallery for contemporary art?  
Gruson, F. - L’églises : histoire ou devenir du temple maçonnique?  
Klahr, G. & Werbick, A - Meet ! Encounter ! Demonstrate ! Transforming churches into  
new social spaces.  
Manenti, C. - Dalla morte alla vita.  
Maury, G. - Entre simplicité et innovation, la variété des reconversions d’églises dans  
le Nord.  
Meynier-Philip, M. - Eglise XX<sup>ème</sup>, un manifeste de flexibilité architecturale.  
Pievoets, B. & Van Cleempoel, K. - A church as a place for prayers, study, and encoun-  
ter: building on the concepts of Domus Studiorum.  
Prégent, E - Le plan églises de la vallée du Haut-Saint-Laurent.  
Proctor, F. - The conversion of churches in the mid-west of the USA.  
Radice, F. - Conoscere per riusare. Un metodo di analisi per l’approccio sistematico al  
patrimonio delle chiese dismesse.  
Regnault, C. - La nouvelle vie des cloches.  
Roger, C. - Une nouvelle vie sans désacralisation : un exemple wallon.  
Russo, V. - Conflicting values or enrichment of significances?  
Salvione, M-D. - L’architecture sacrée moderne, un chantier de (re)valorisation.  
Steinmetz, M. - Conversation et reconversion des églises.  
Suaud, C. - Entre tradition et sécularisation, les églises au défi du changement.



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SUBMITTED BY  
Niels Ange Fantini  
Cédric Gil

DIRECTOR  
Prof. Luca Ortelli

TUTORS  
Prof. Marco Bakker  
Prof. Jean-Louis Scartezzini

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