

City: Hong Kong

Paper Title: Designing One-flat church as small scale community space in densely populated urban environment to perform both sacred and contemporary functions

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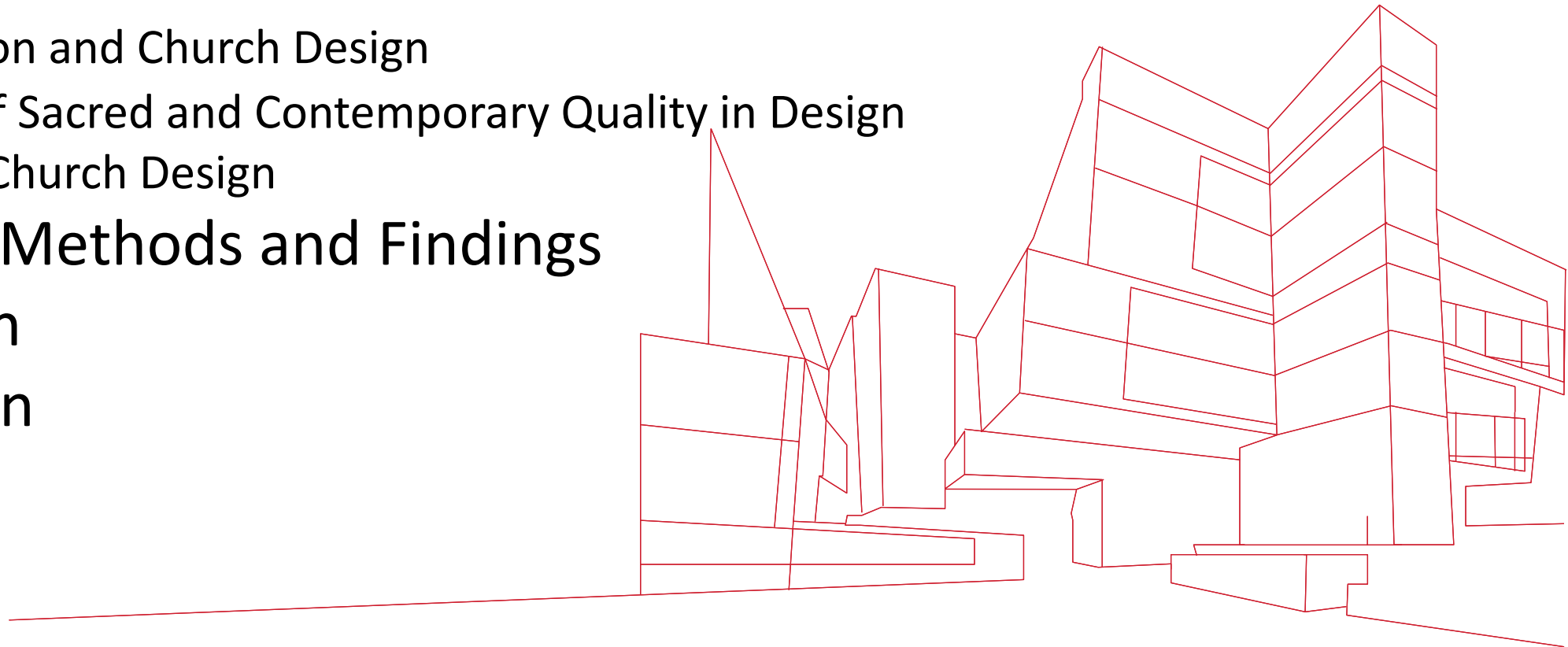
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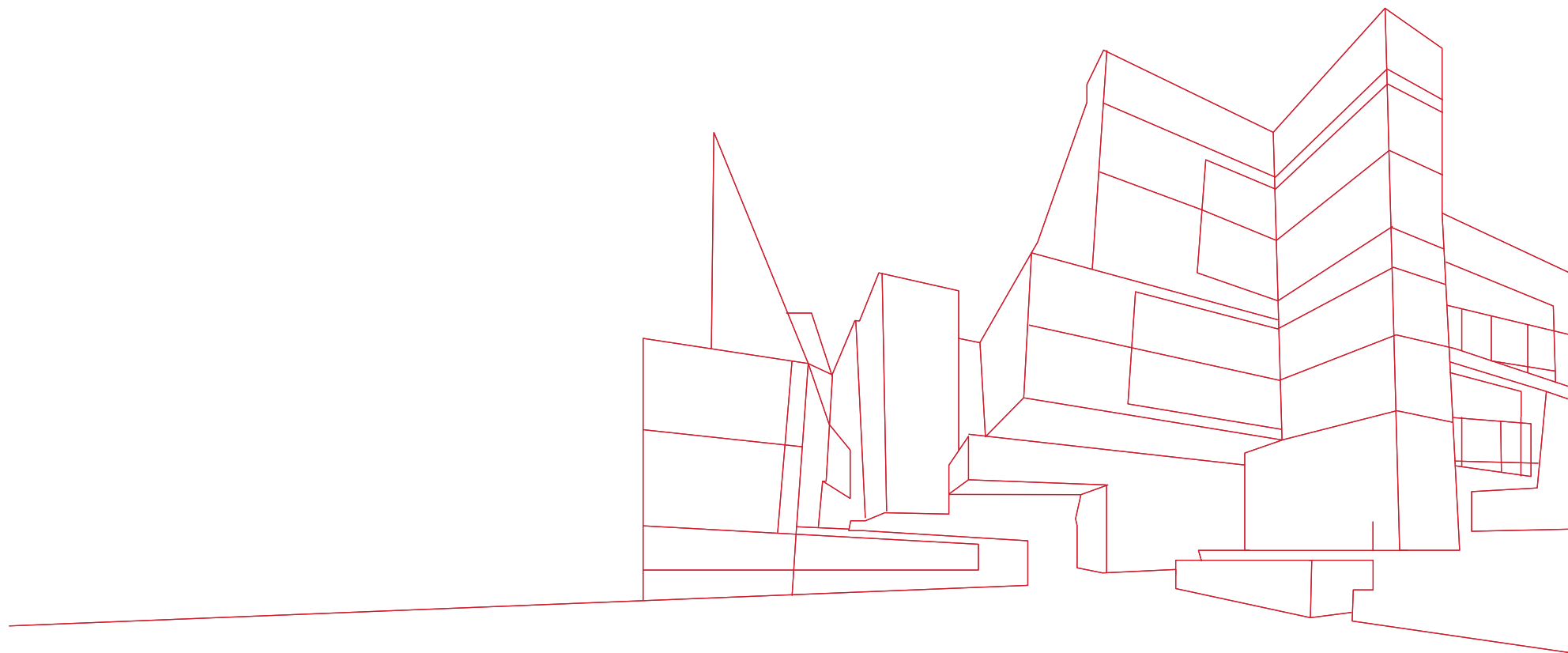
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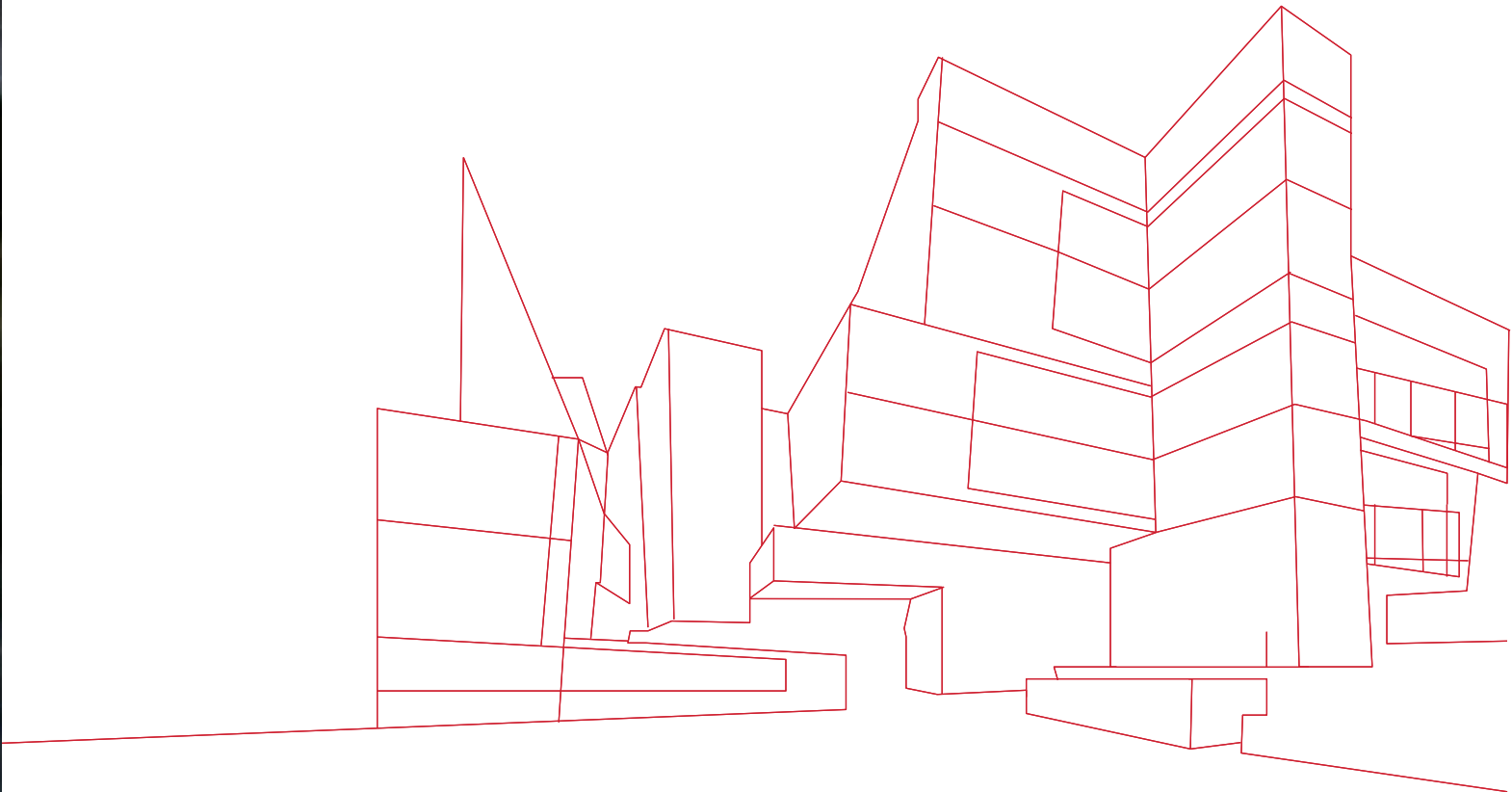
Introduction and Schema





To talk about church

What is your image of a church space?
What is the spatial identity of a church?



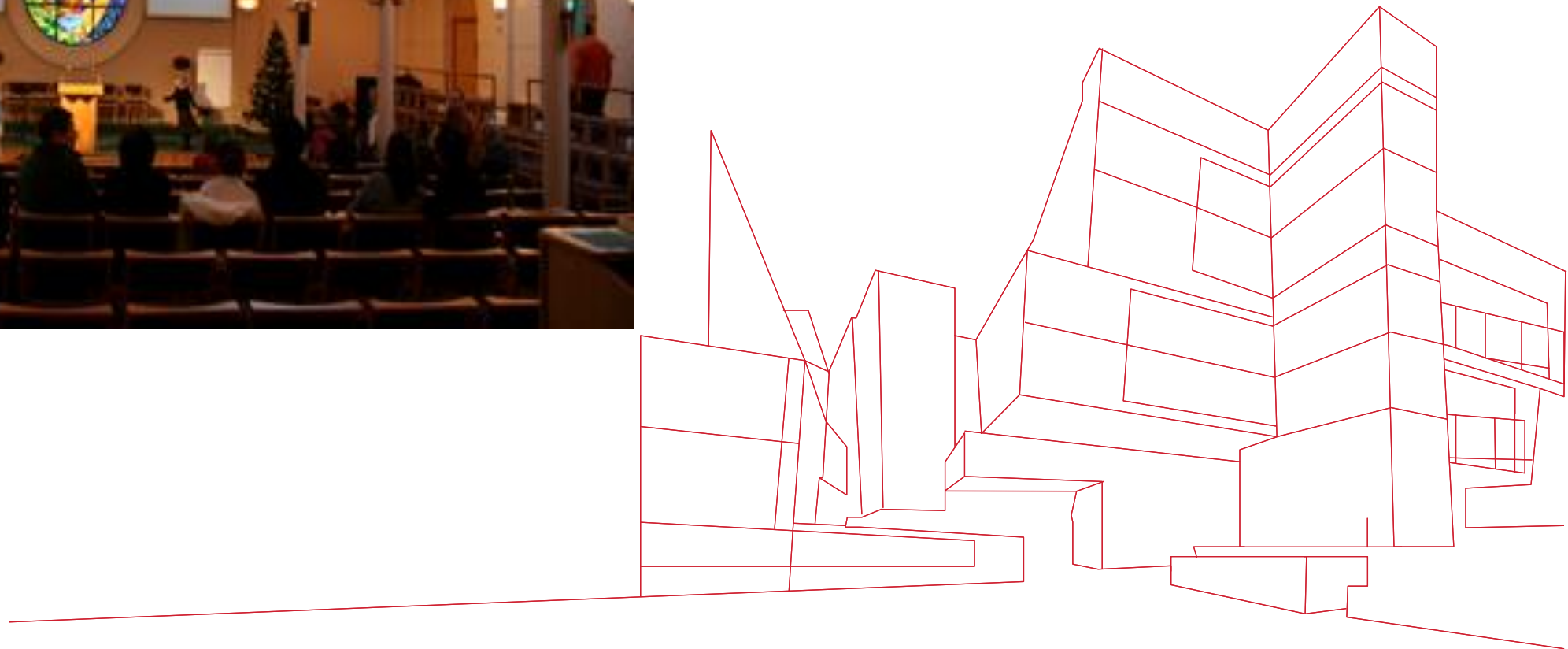


Transformation
from
traditional experience
into
a modern way of expression
with the application of spiritual
elements in a modern way





Traditional style in flat space

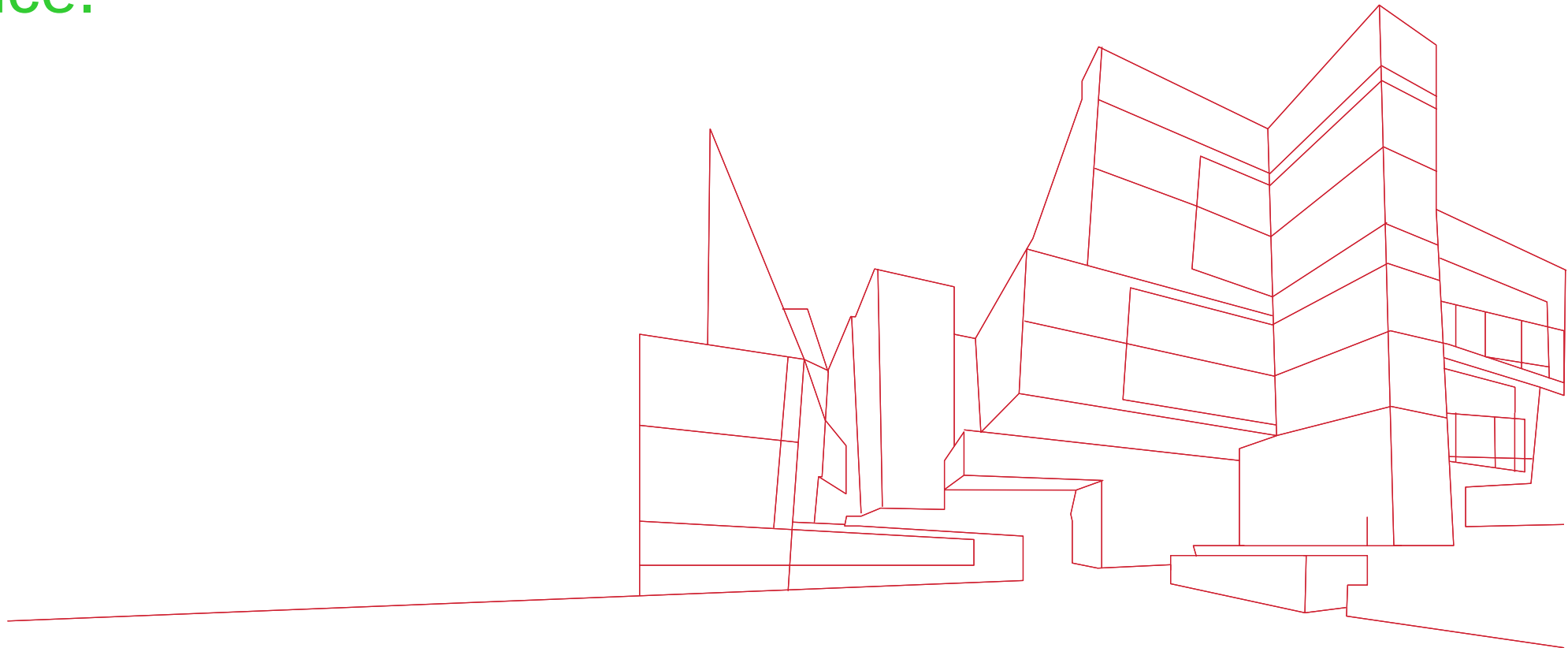




Contemporary representation of the sacred

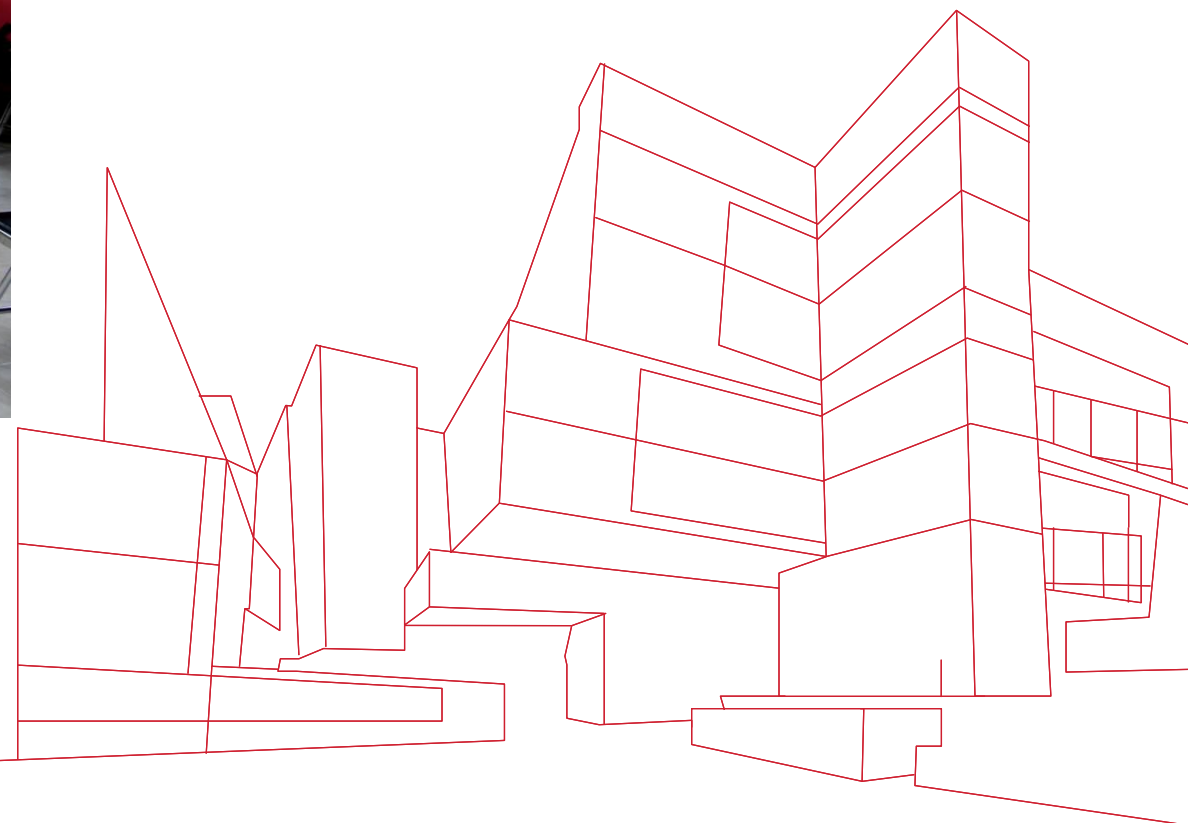


- Due to **secularisation**, in Hong Kong, the scenario of one-flat churches has been shifted to **unappealing and non-sacred appearance**.



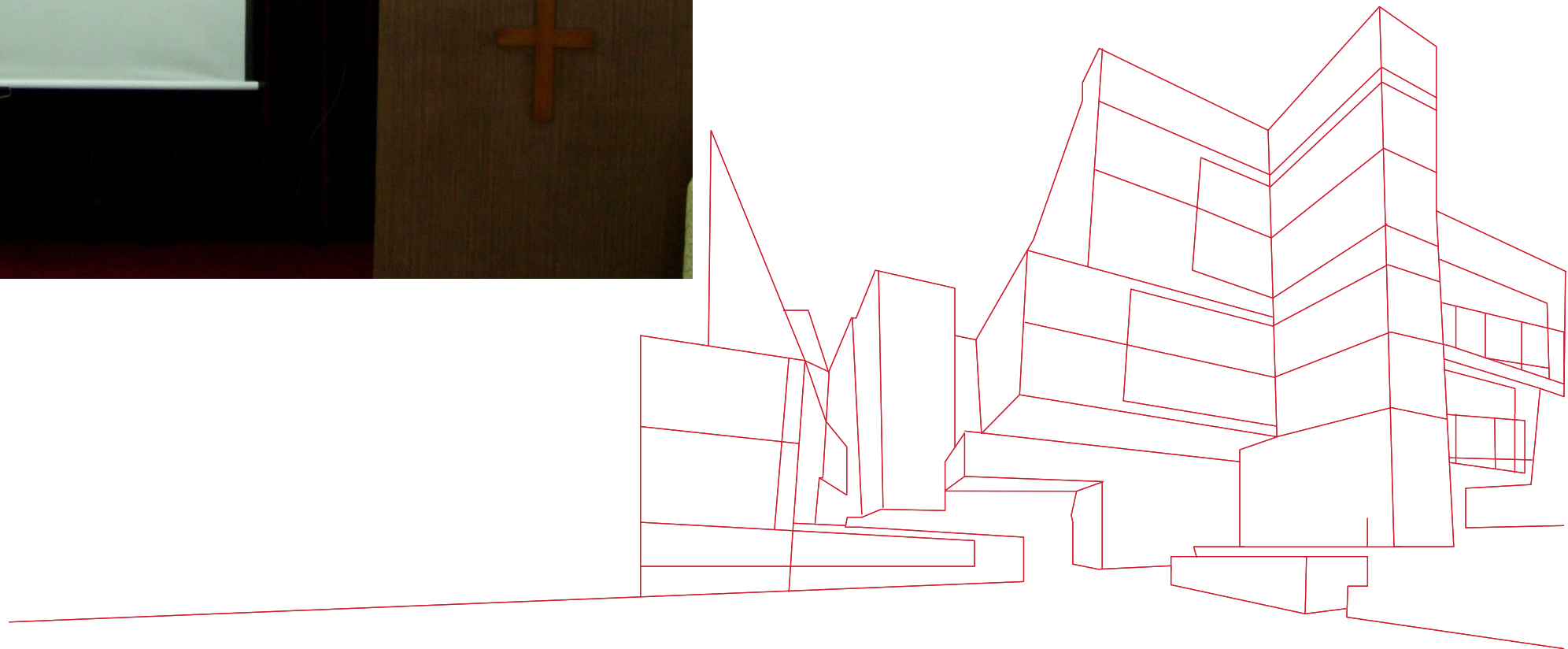


In HK, many churches with plain design or no design.
What's the theology?

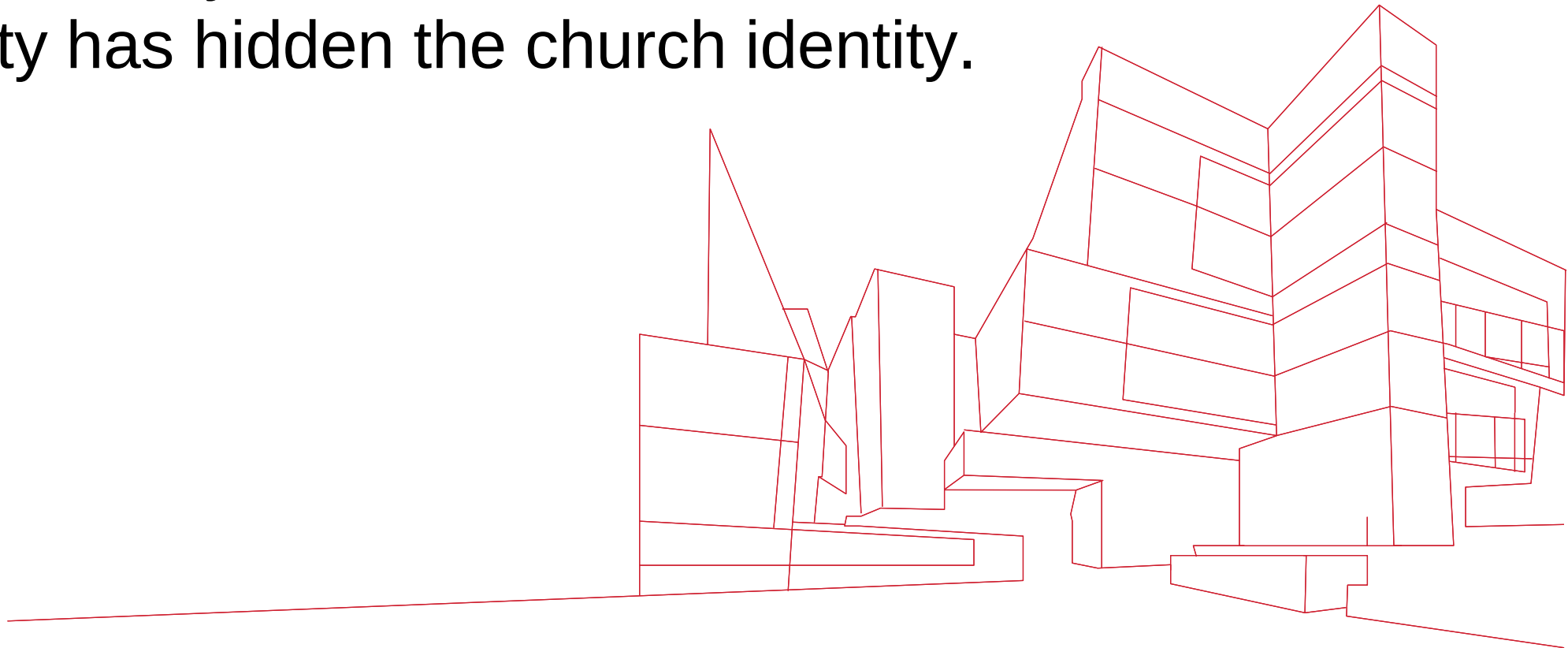




- What are the elements to identify the nature of church space?
- Is it solely rely on the symbol of the Cross?



- The phenomenon has become worse when **churches operating social services** in the same venue; the domination of the social community towards the *sacred* community has hidden the church identity.



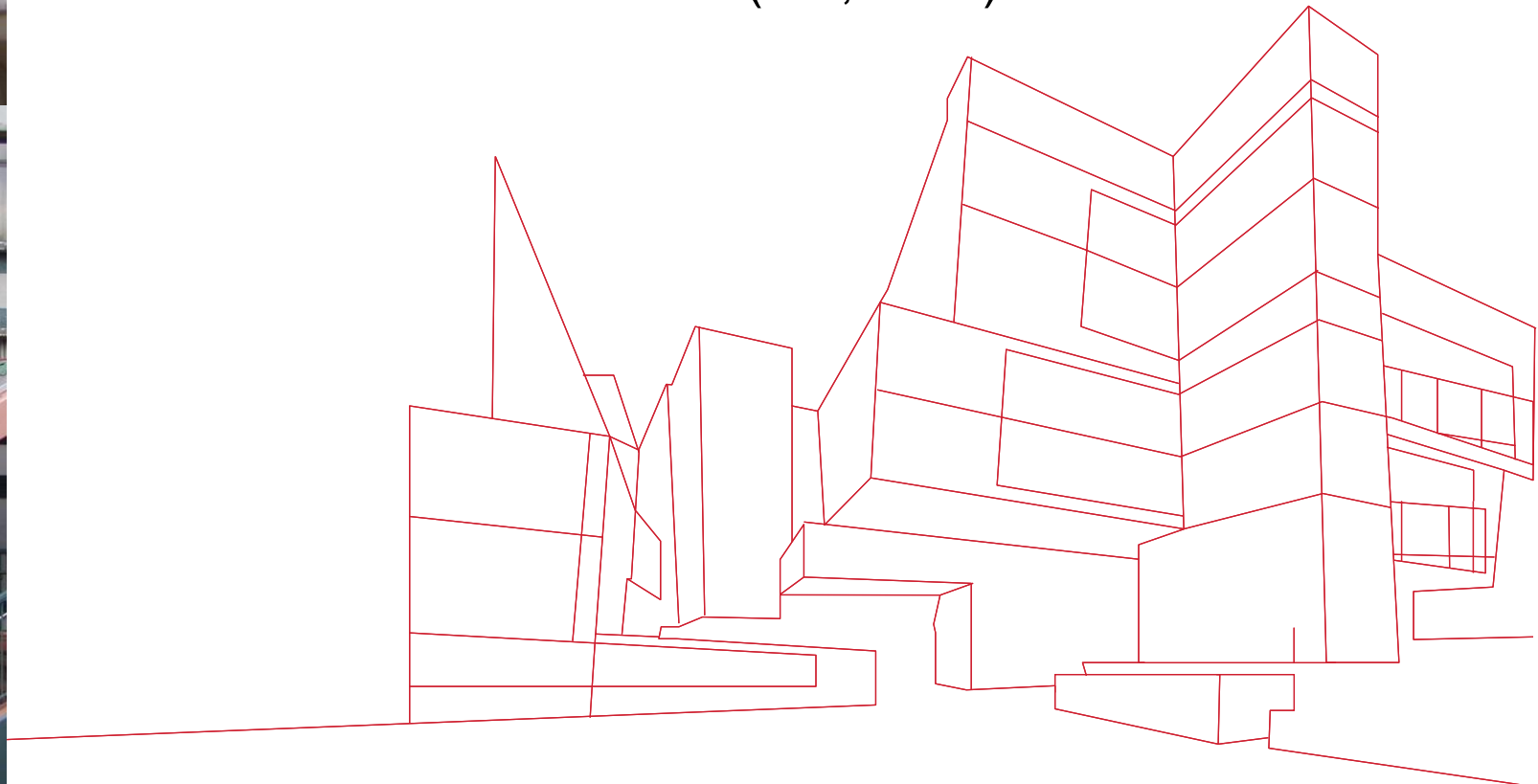


Identity crisis –
One flat churches hidden inside buildings!



- Churches are located in different layers of vertical space in a vertical city.

“In Hong Kong, in 2014, there were 687 churches (53.3%) located in residential and commercial buildings, 100 churches in church operated social services centres and 303 churches in schools.” (Wu, 2014).



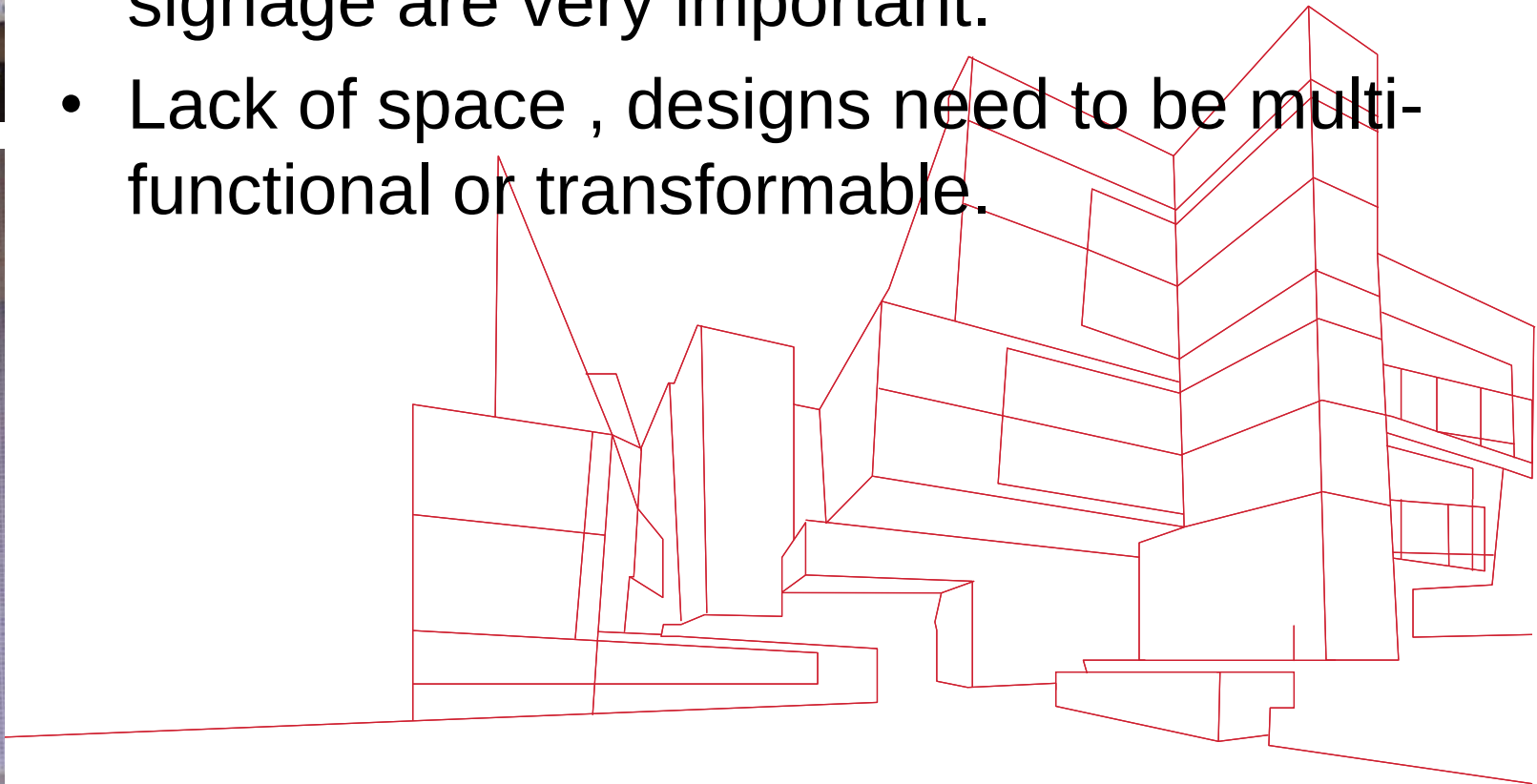


Restrictions of one flat church

- No proper and prominent facade
- Not so accessible as compared to individual churches situated on streets.

Therefore, the front door design and exterior signage are very important.

- Lack of space , designs need to be multi-functional or transformable.



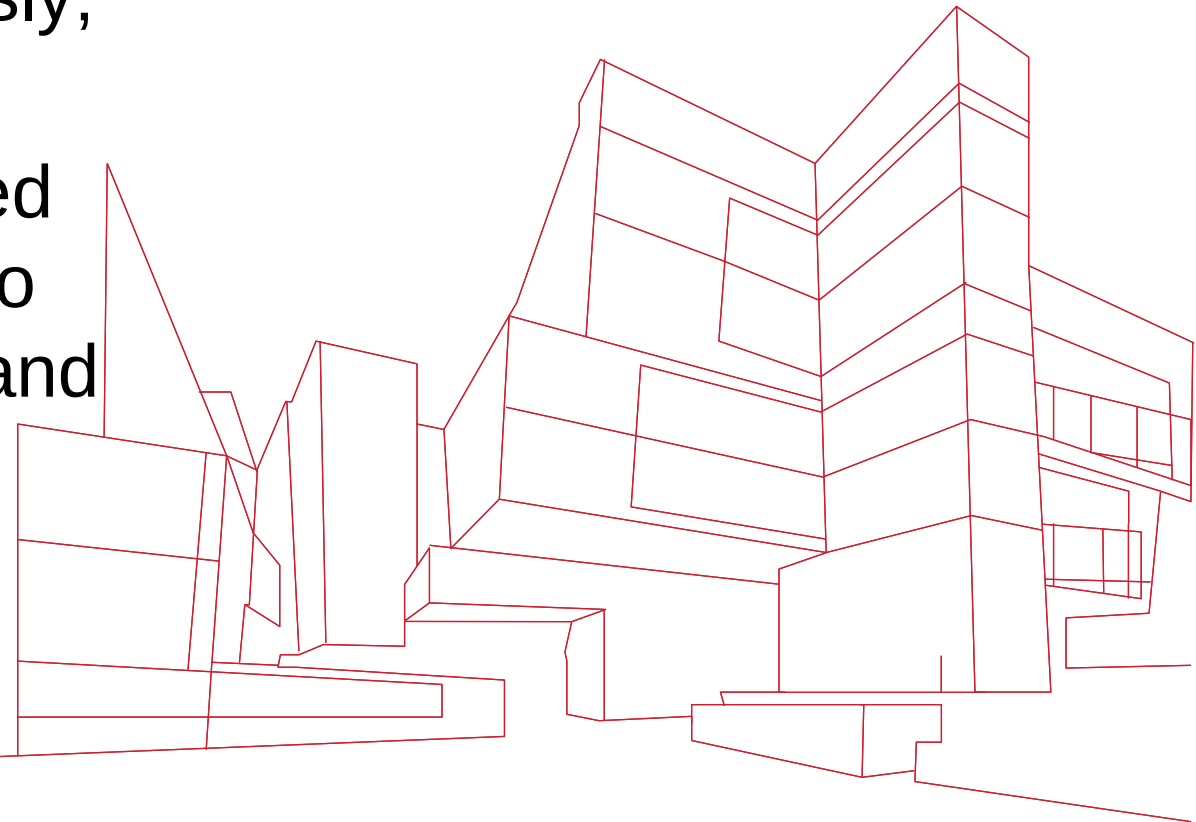


Inspite implementation of church design has been adopted progressively, the sacred identity is forfeited because of their focus on attracting newcomers with a contemporary looking church.



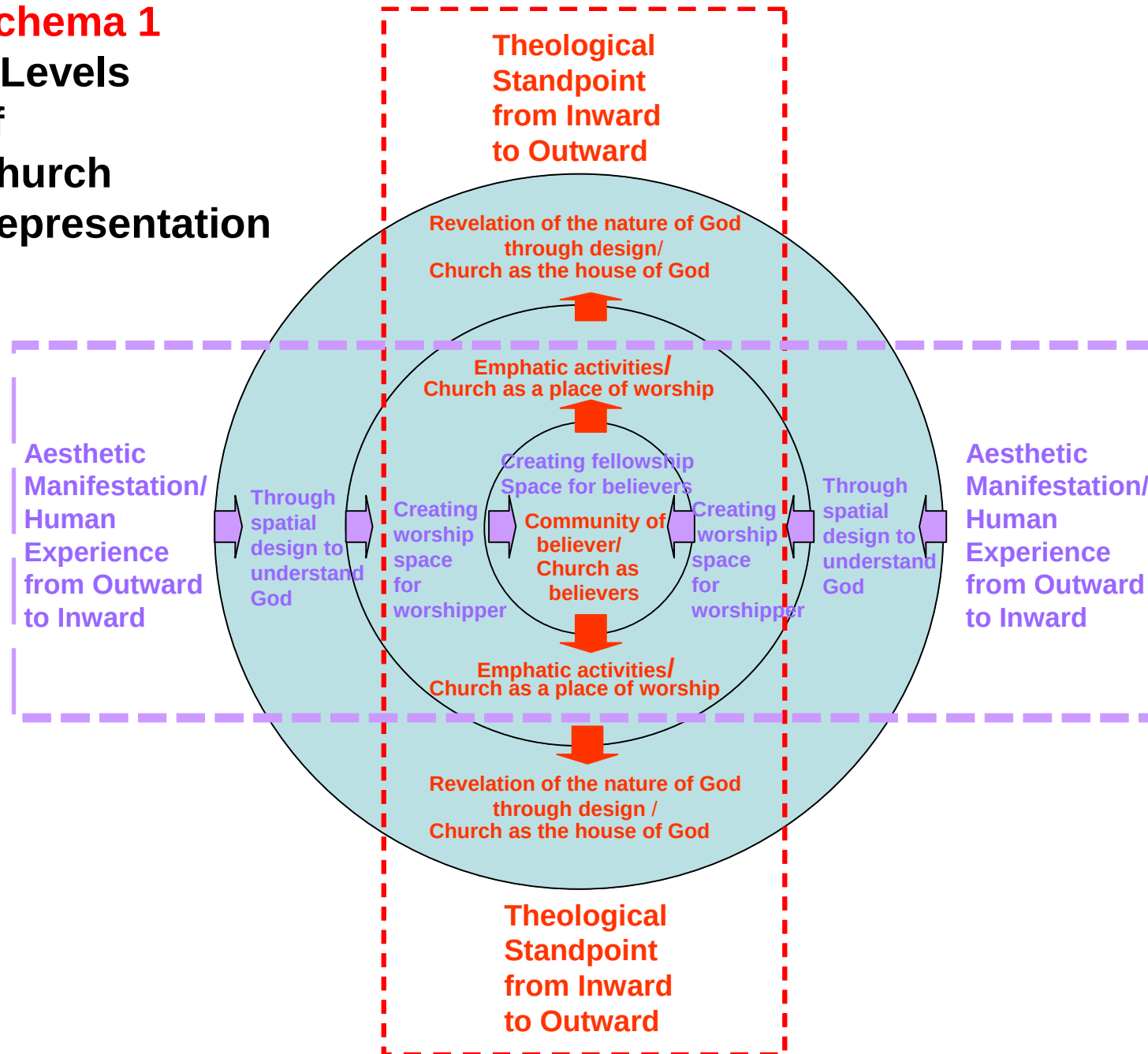
The contributions of this research to the academic circle were:

- Firstly, searching for the **representation** of church in densely populated urban environment with **sacred** and **contemporary** qualities simultaneously;
- Secondly, establishing the **design guidelines** for church design in limited space with a theoretical standpoint to balance between **practical** function and **symbolic** function; communal or **contemporary** representation and **sacred** representation.

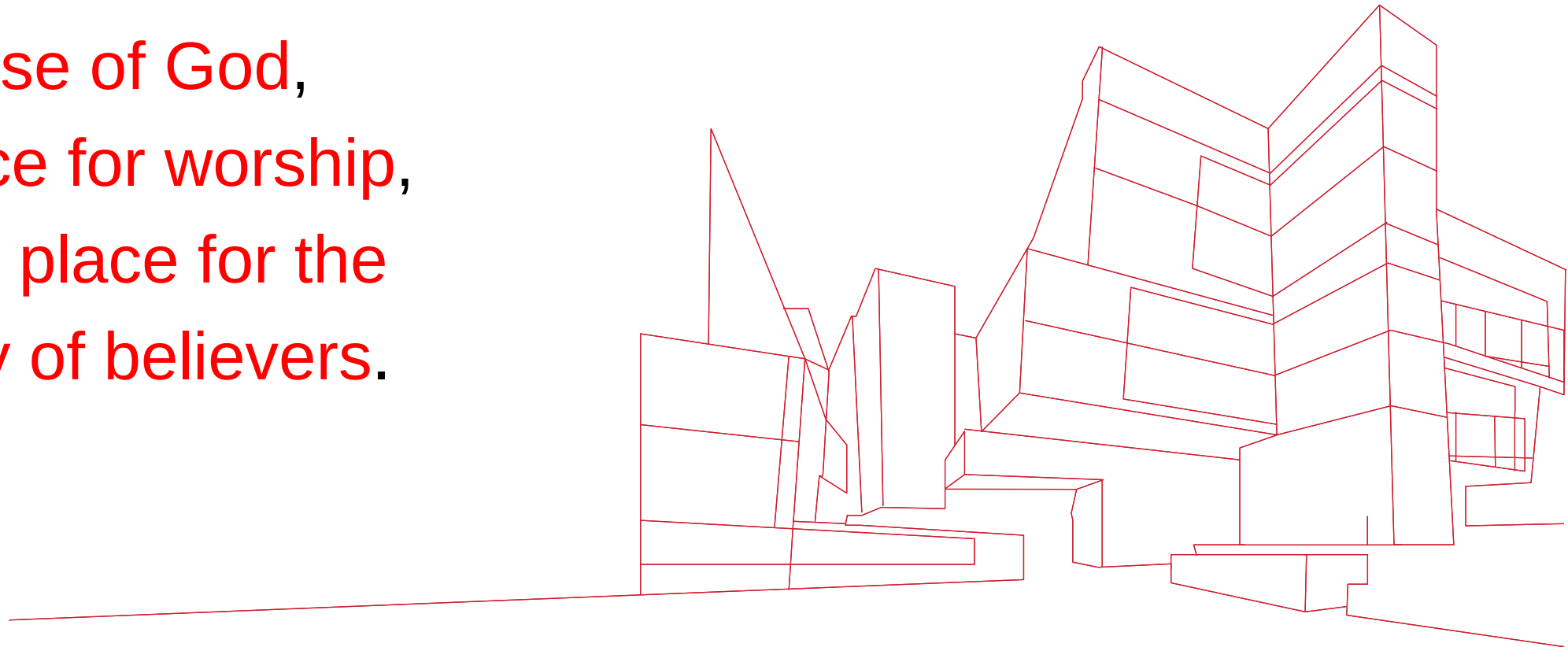


Schema 1

3 Levels of Church Representation



- In schema one, the researcher would like to explain the relationship of the **three levels of representation of church** or the **three attributes of church**
 - as the house of God,
 - as the place for worship,
 - and as the place for the community of believers.



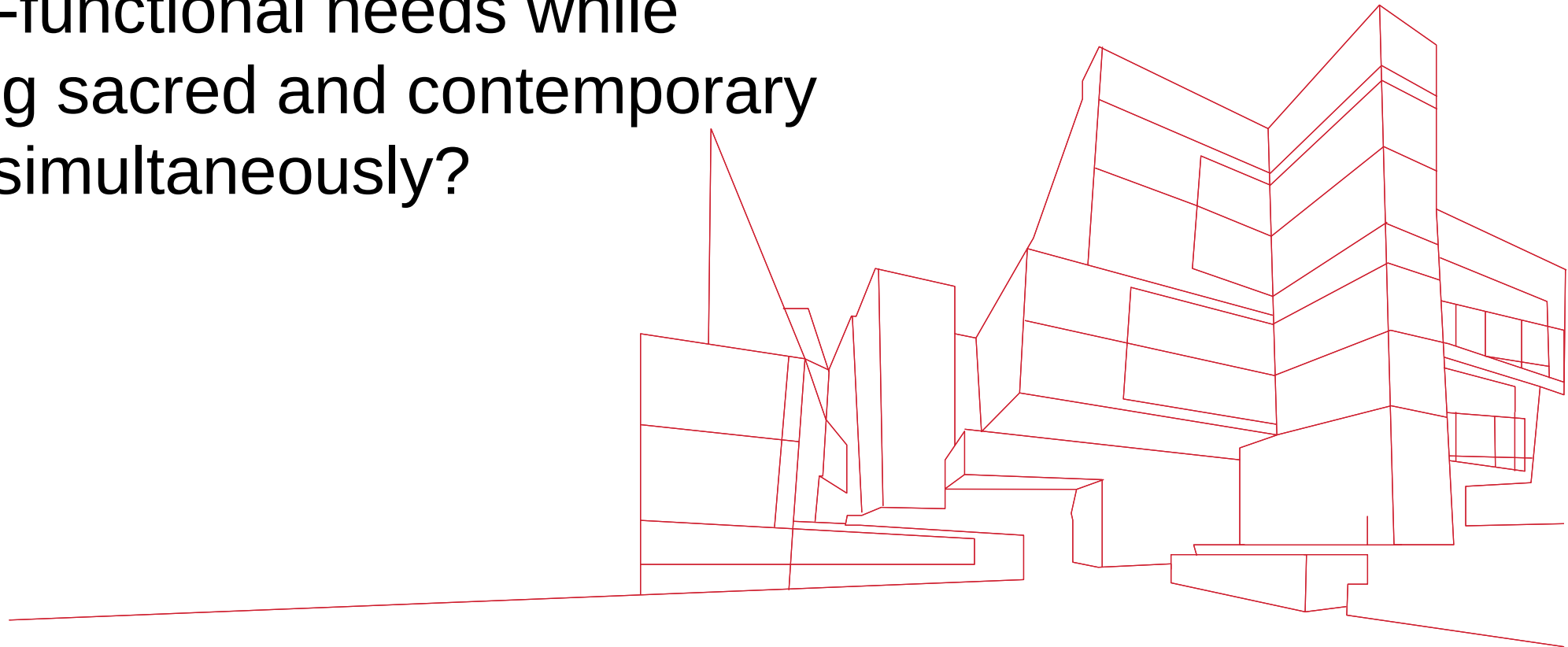
Hypothesis

- It was hypothesised that designing church as a small scale community space in densely populated urban environment needs to put a **balance between community need and sacred identity with the application of contemporary design.**



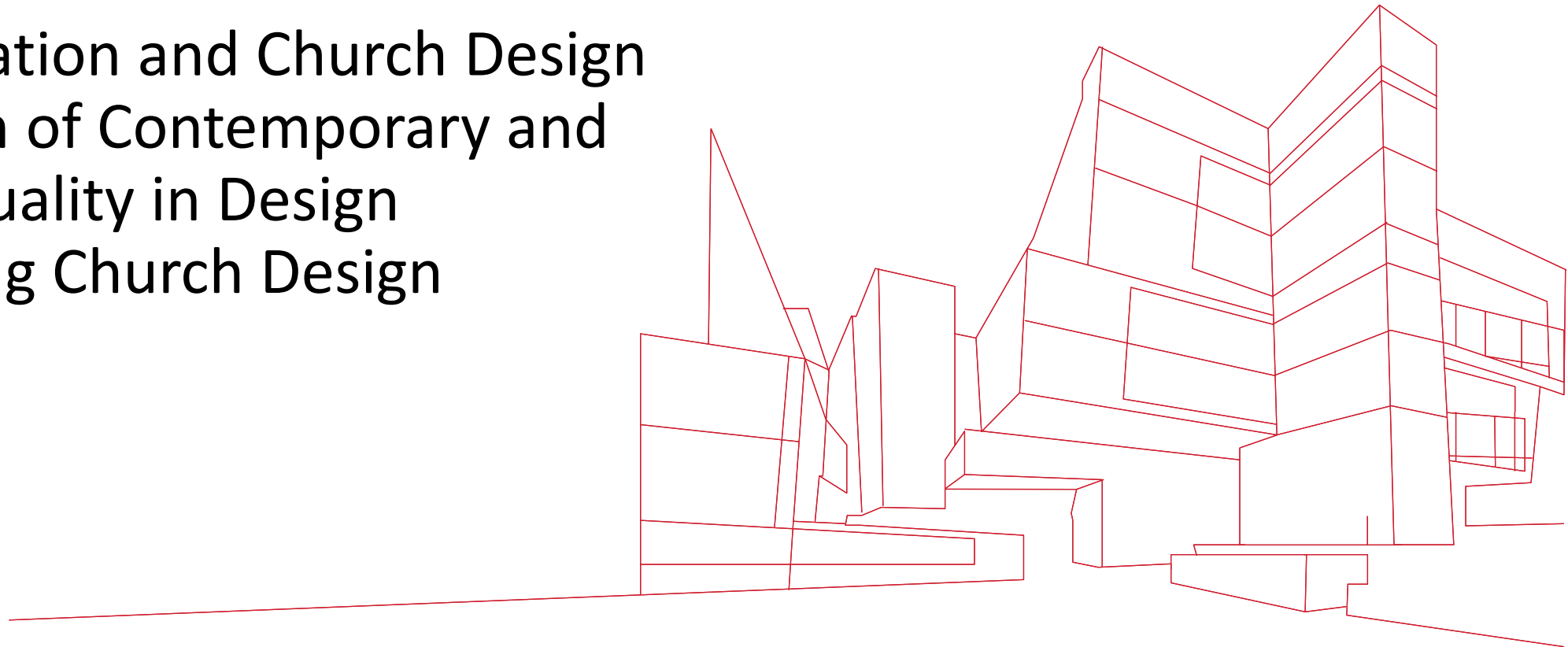
Research questions

- Main research question: How to design one-flat churches with physical constraints and multi-functional needs while preserving sacred and contemporary qualities simultaneously?



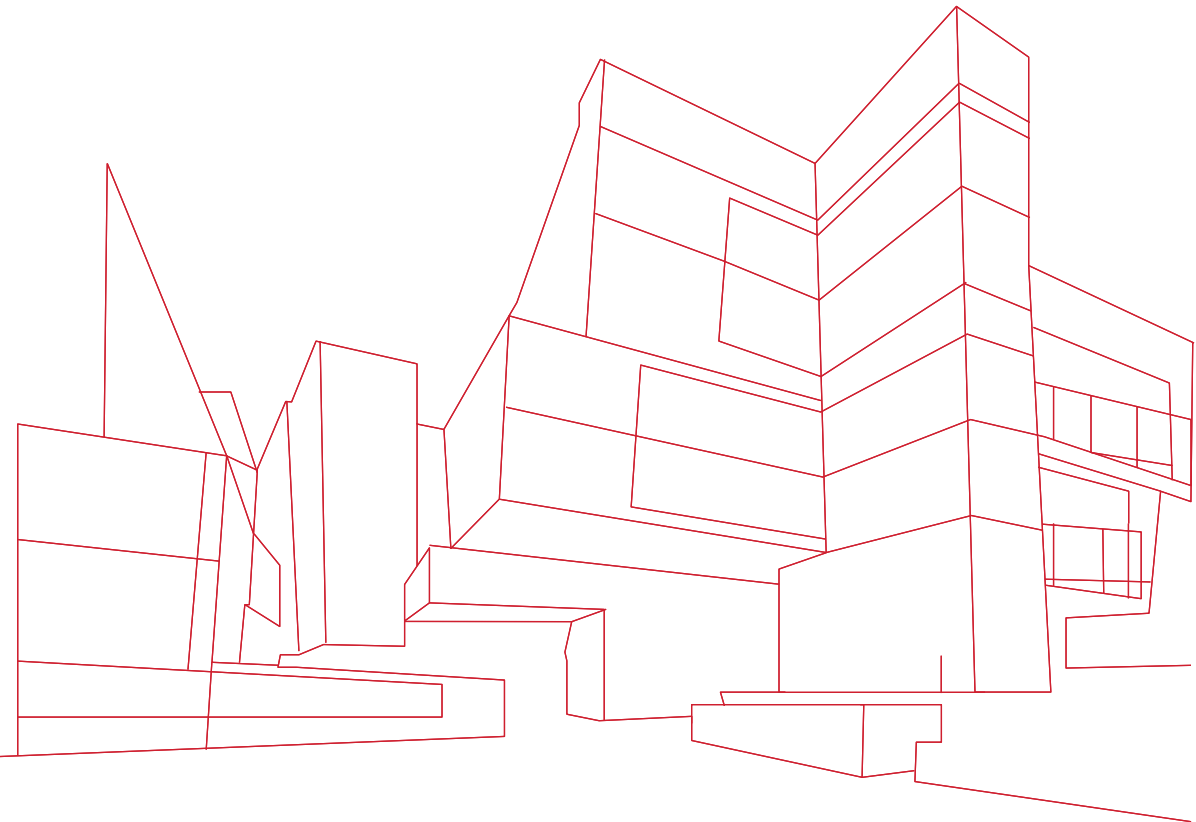
Literature Review

- Secularisation and Church Design
- Definition of Contemporary and Sacred Quality in Design
- Hong Kong Church Design

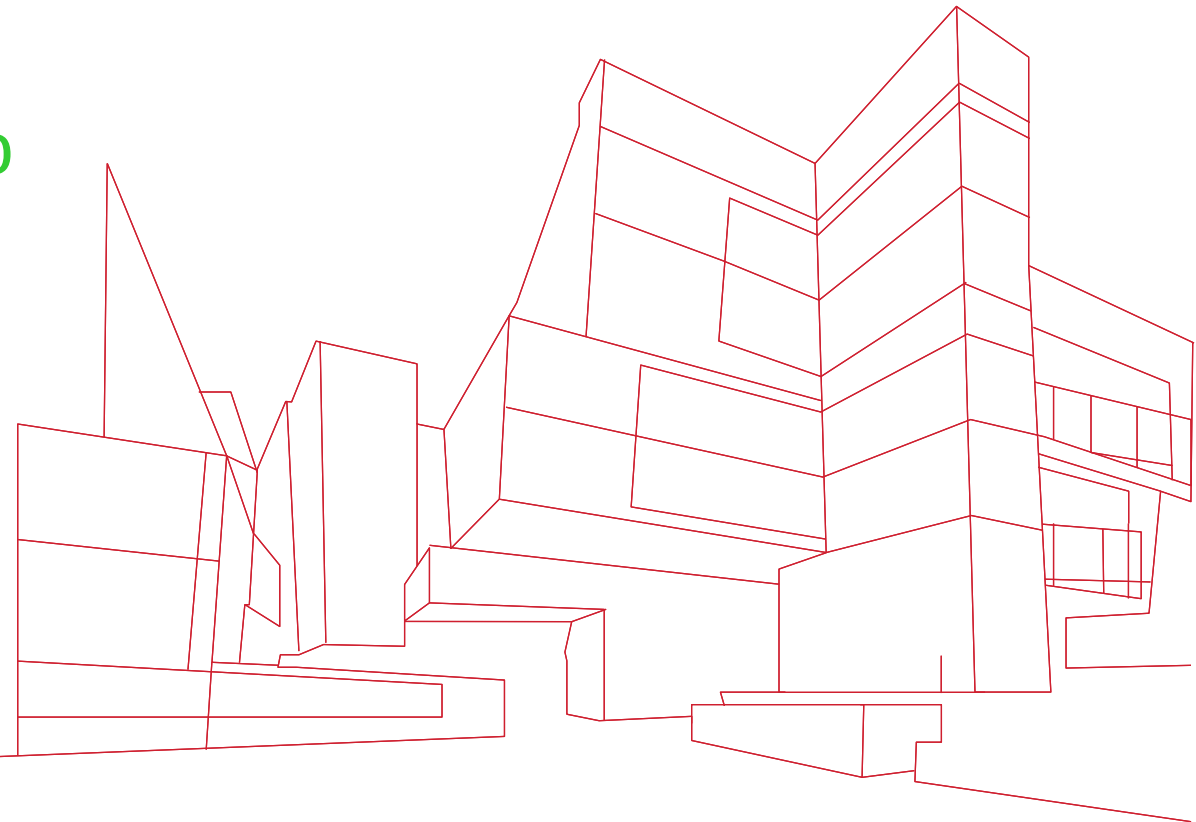


Secularisation and Church Design

It is vital that, in Western church history, church design was always associated with **theology and aesthetic manifestation** for the representation of the Deity. The scenario after secularisation with the merge of the separation of the sacred and the profane into a continuum which resulted in **the loss of sacred identity**. And churches rather put their focus on contemporary quality indeed.



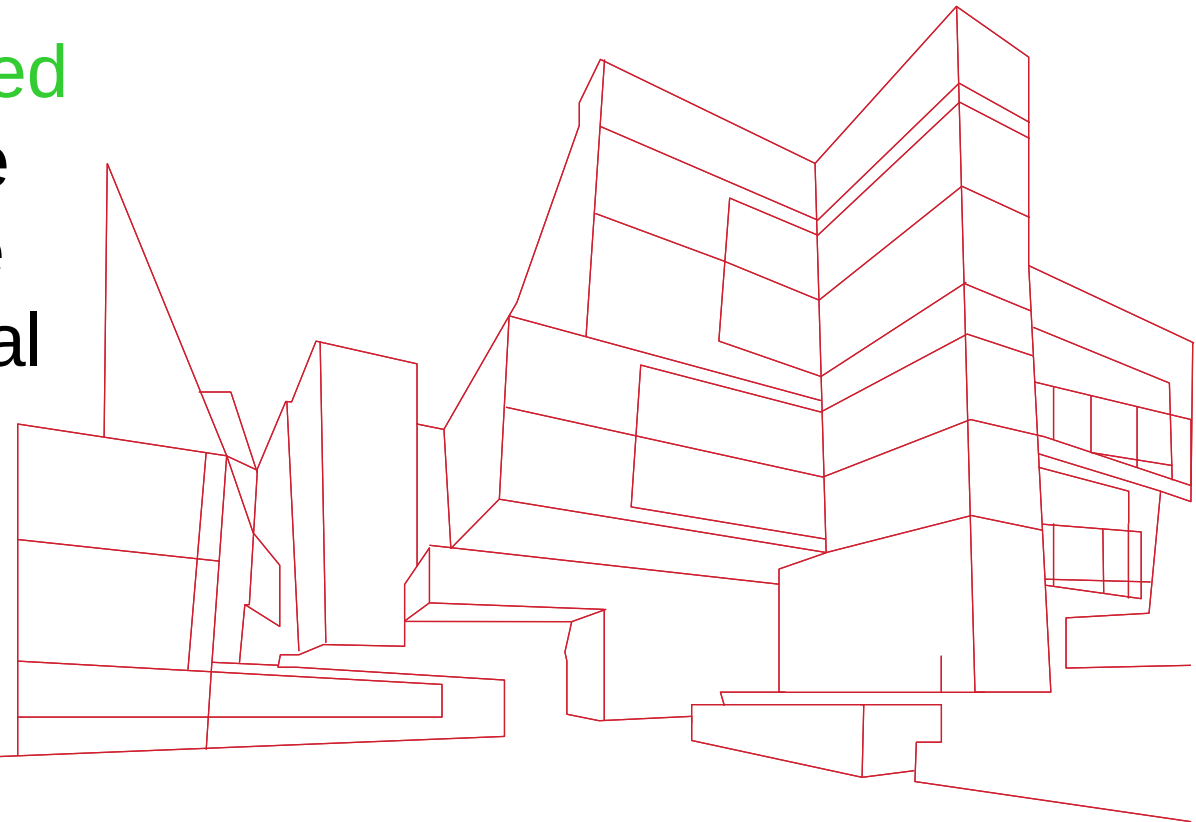
- Hence, a contextualised attitude was essential and Bonhoeffer stated that “we can now let go and immerse ourselves in the new world of the secular city” (as cited in Cox, 1966, p.18). In their modern context under all the challenges, their perspective was that secularisation did not necessarily pose a negative impact to Christianity.
- From Modernism to Post-modernism, evangelical churches went through different transformations under different challenges from secularisation.



Definition of Contemporary Design

Material:

When they described contemporary church design, they reinforced that design must be **created and addressed for the people of our time**. Hence, the **use of current materials** to fit the time and spirit of people we live in was vital (Pichard, 1960; Hammond, 1960; Bruggink & Droppers, 1965).



Style:

- Apart from materials, the concept of contemporary is also closely related to **styles**.
- Fiddes (1961) indicated that “**Contemporary in the sense that church design must admit the contemporary challenge under secular culture**” (p.69)



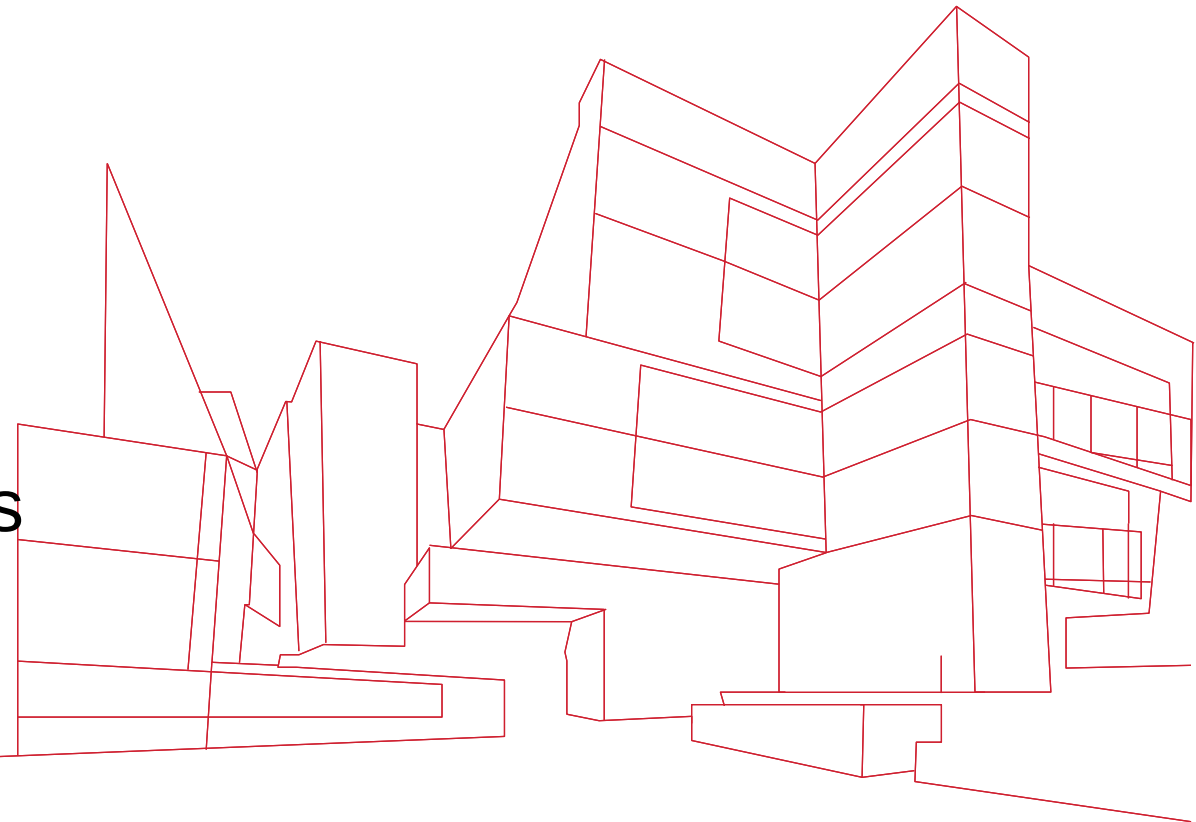
Ambience or mood

- In church design, contemporary ambience is related to **hospitality and warmth**, which is associated with the **immanence** instead of transcendence of God (White & White, 1988; Christopherson, 2004; Torgerson, 2007)



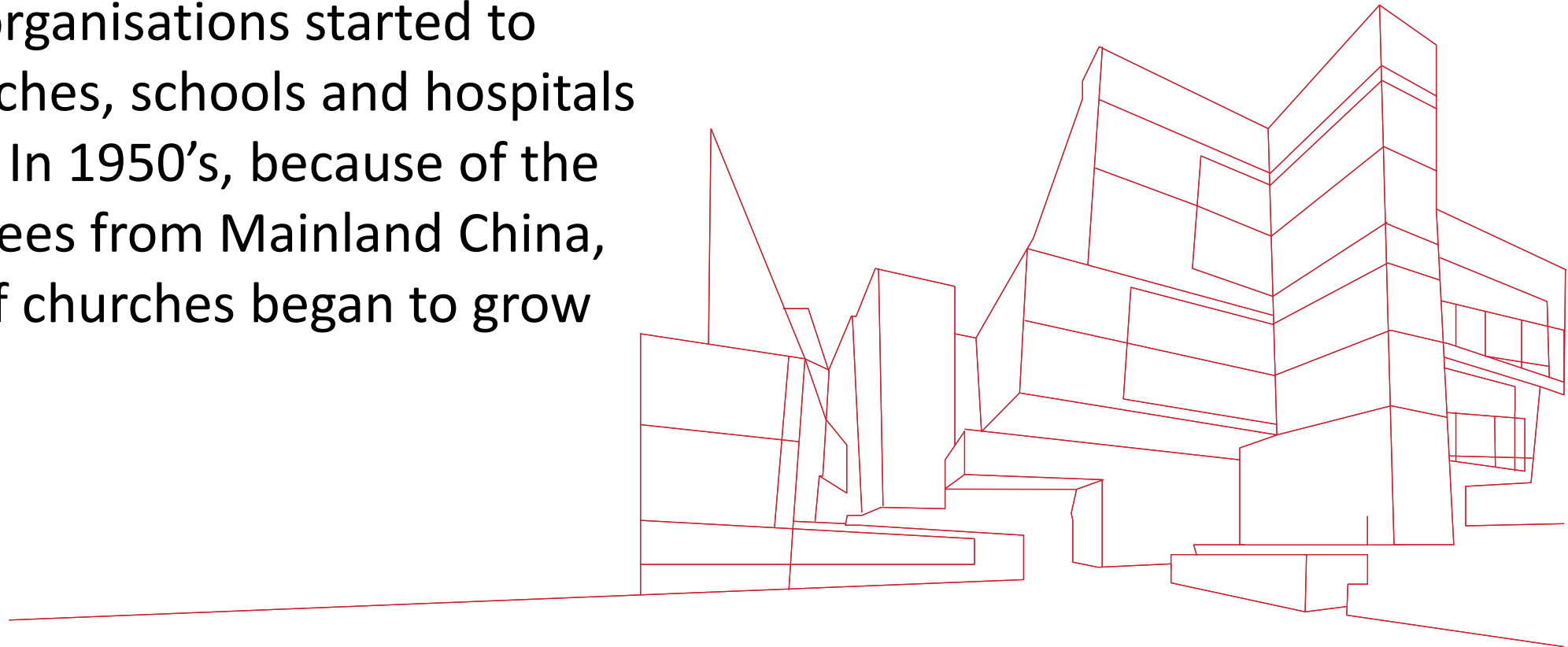
Definition of Sacred Quality in Design

- Could contemporary quality co-exist with sacred quality?
- Another vivid association is the use of symbols. Seasoltz (2005) stated that “sacred building and sacred art are above all symbolic” (p.345).
- Loveland & Wheeler (2003) also described sacred church as “beautiful, symbol-filled, worship-orientated sanctuaries” (p.239).
- If contemporary representation wants to integrate with symbols, a transformation of new symbolic form is the key.



Hong Kong Church Design

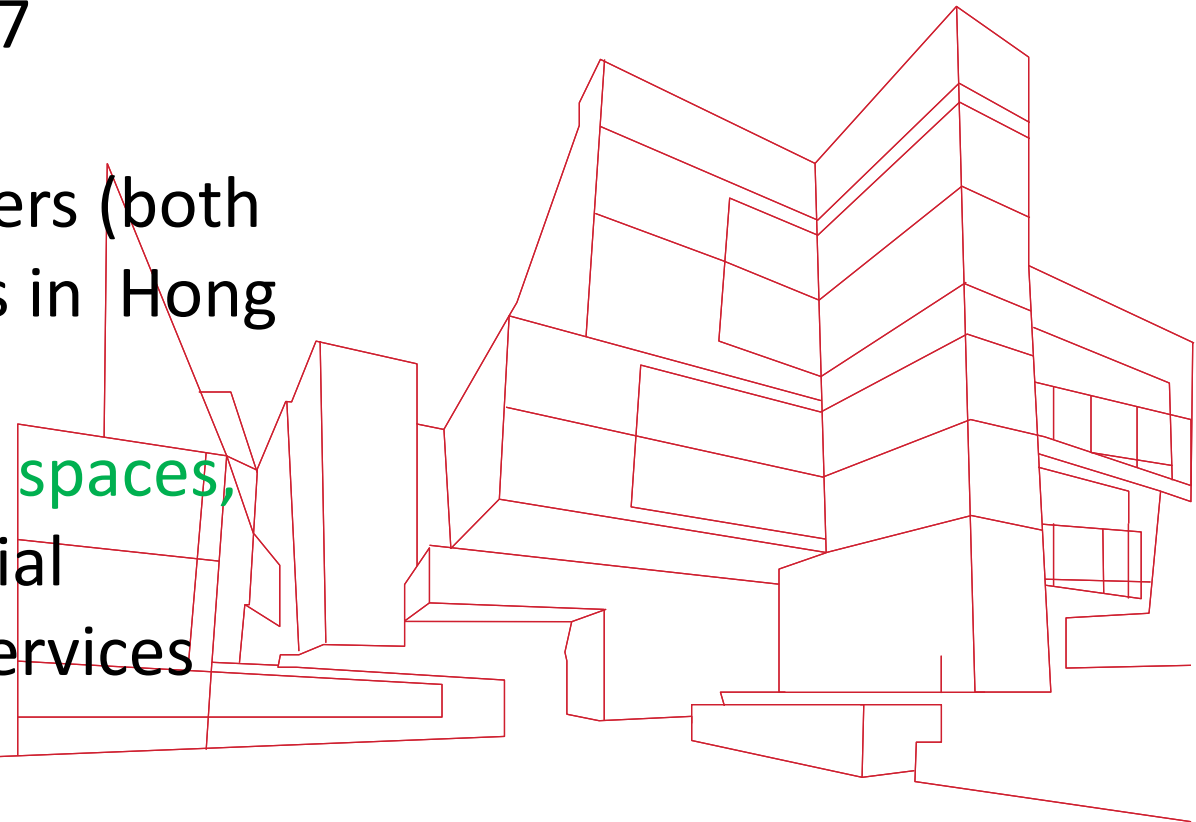
From 1842 onwards, Protestant Church of different denominations and missionaries organisations started to establish churches, schools and hospitals in Hong Kong. In 1950's, because of the influx of refugees from Mainland China, the number of churches began to grow steadily.



Statistics of Hong Kong Churches Surveyed in 2014

The statistic is extracted from the book 2014 Hong Kong Church Survey – The collection of statistical Data edited by Wu, C.W. & Lau T.H. A total of 1,287 Chinese-speaking churches in 2014.

- There was a weekly average of 305,097 Christians attending services.
- There were 560,547 registered members (both overseas and local); 327,112 members in Hong Kong.
- 62.4 % of churches were located in flat spaces, such as residential buildings, commercial buildings and church operated social services centres.



There were 803 churches located in different levels of high rise building, such as commercial buildings, residential buildings and public housing complex.

There was a rising number of churches situate in school due to the opportunity of evangelising in church operated school which could reduce cost in church planting as well. There was a drop in number for churches in social services centre but the number of churches provide social services is 849 which was 66 percent.

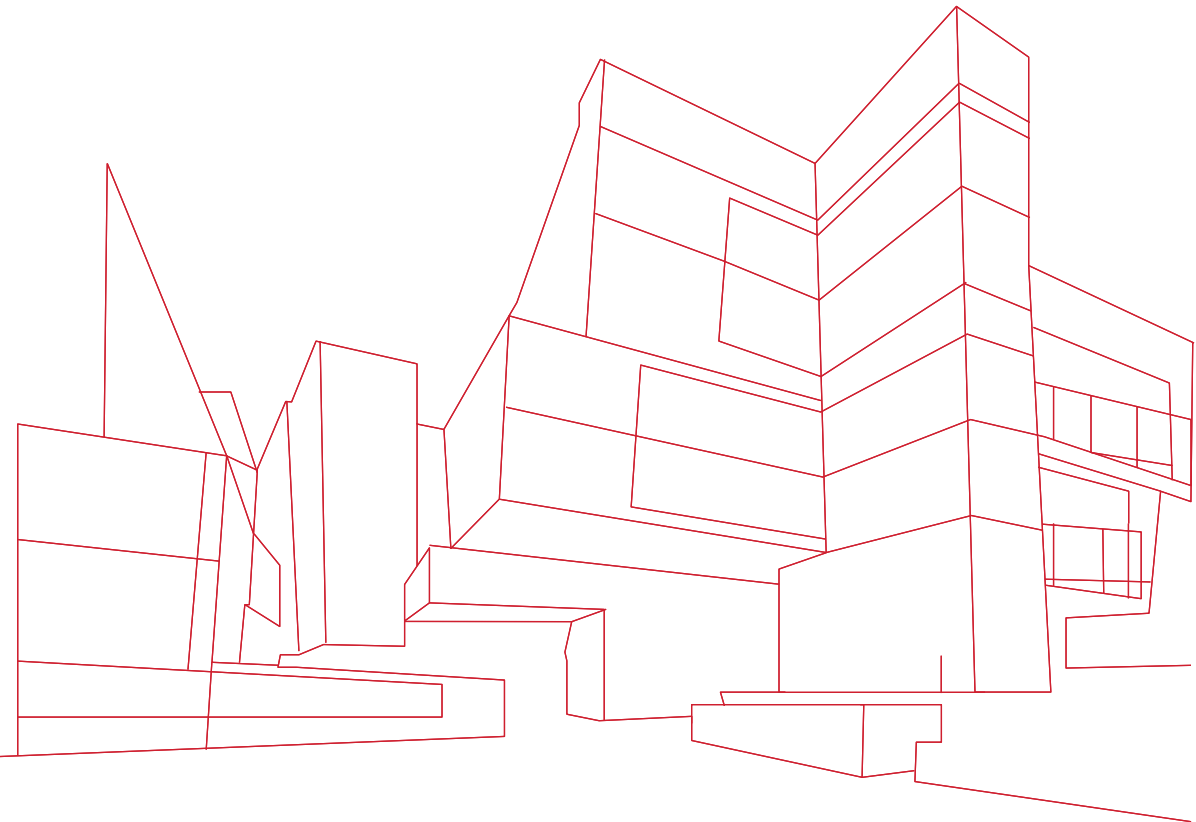
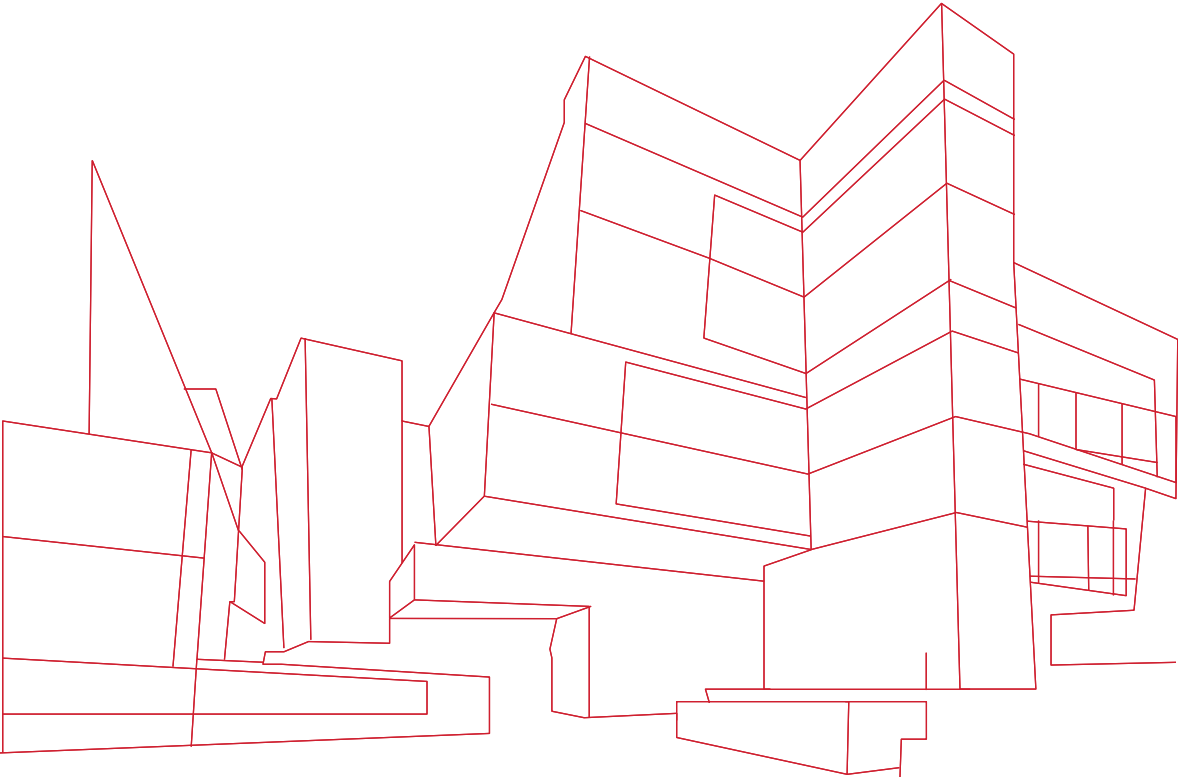
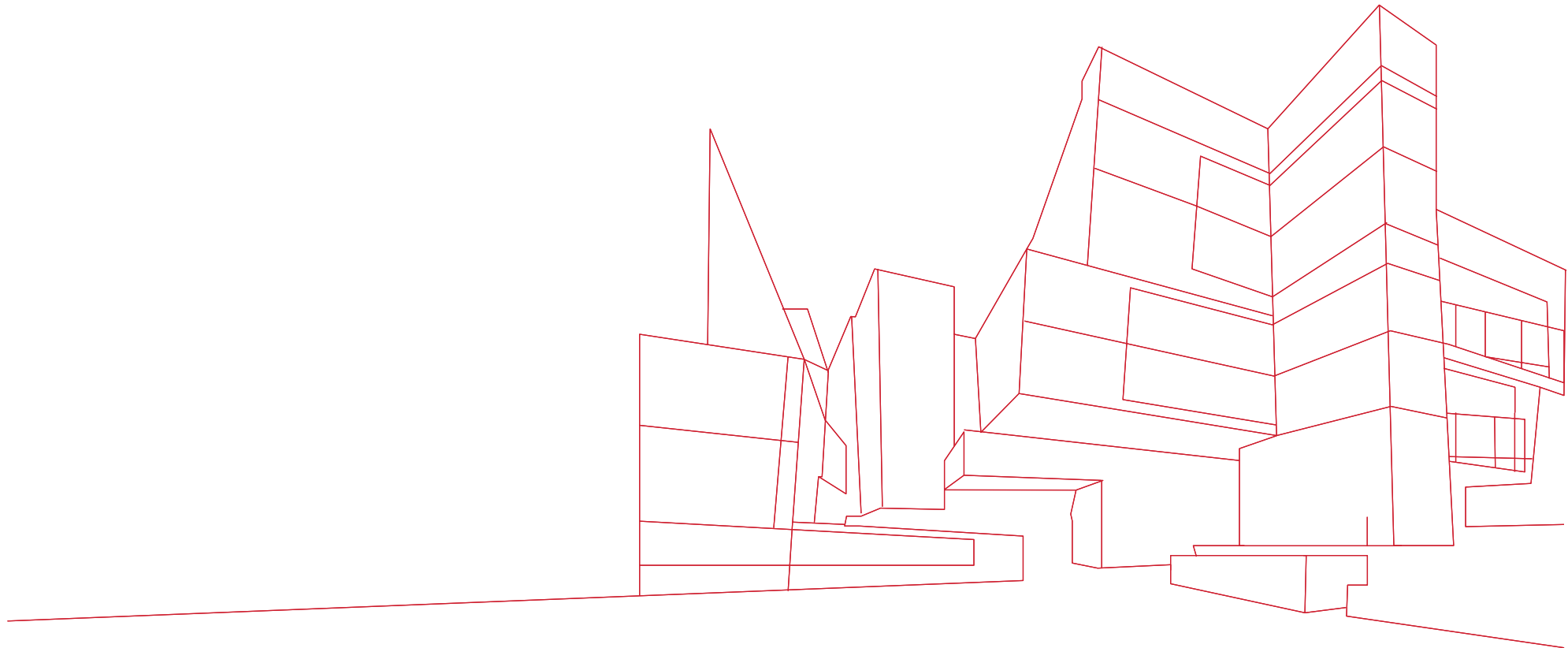


Table 1: Distribution of Churches in Different Kinds of Worship Places:

Kinds of Worship Places	No. of Churches			
	1994	1999	2004	2014
Individual Church Building	163	147	161	161
Commercial Building	311	292	338	289
Residential Building	211	341	321	398
School	143	179	231	303
Social Services Centre	132	158	116	100
Industrial Building or Centre				16
Others	96	12	14	20
Total	1056	1129	1181	1287



Research Methods and Findings



- **Site observation** – Locate the phenomenon in Hong Kong church design through the visit of 171 churches.
- **Site observation of selected churches with long term participation**– Seven churches are selected based on different criteria such as types of buildings: commercial building, private residential building, public housing estate.

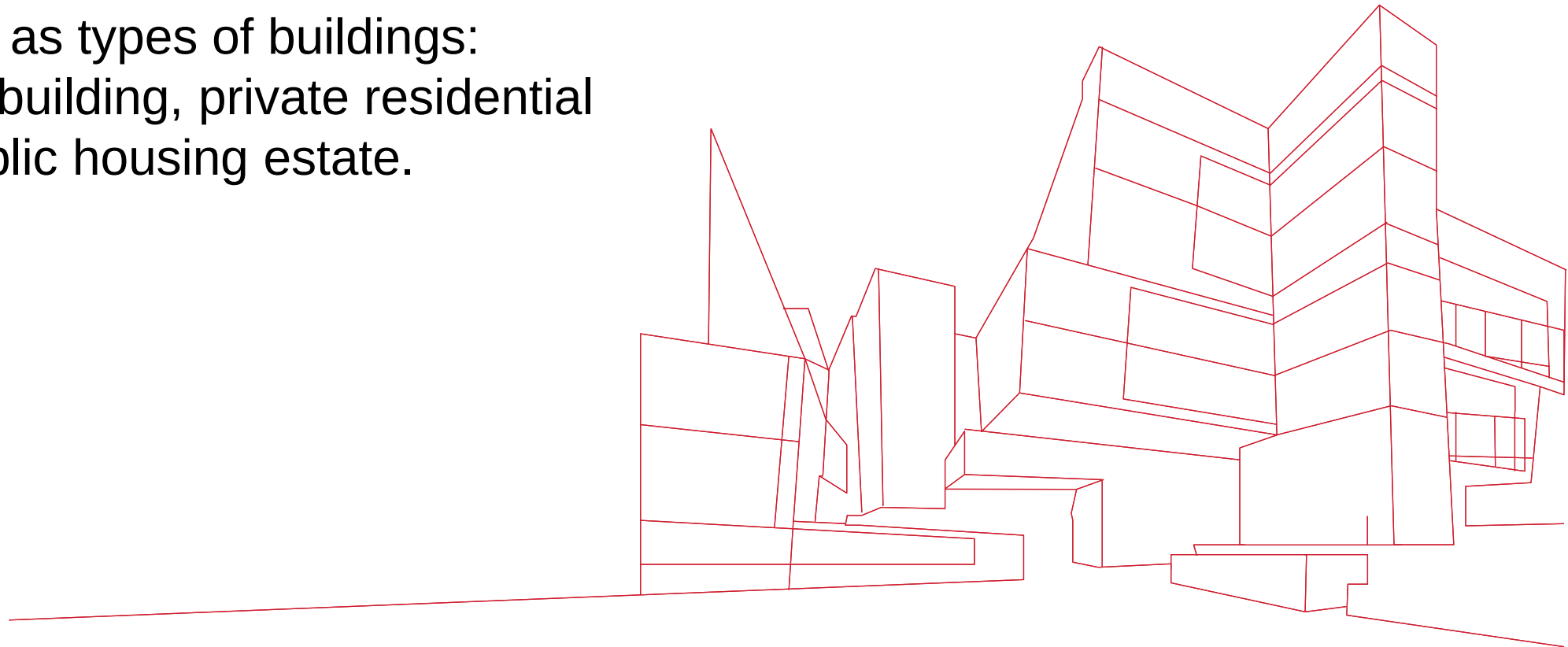


Table 4.1: Scenario of Church in Terms of the Representation of Sacred Quality and

Contemporary Quality

Sacred
quality
Strongly
expressed

Contemporary
quality
Weakly
expressed

Scenario of Hong Kong Church

1. Churches adopting Western traditional church design methods, especially those with individual buildings. Theology and design were related but retained in a traditional manner. (see figure 2)



Figure 2: Church adopting Western traditional design

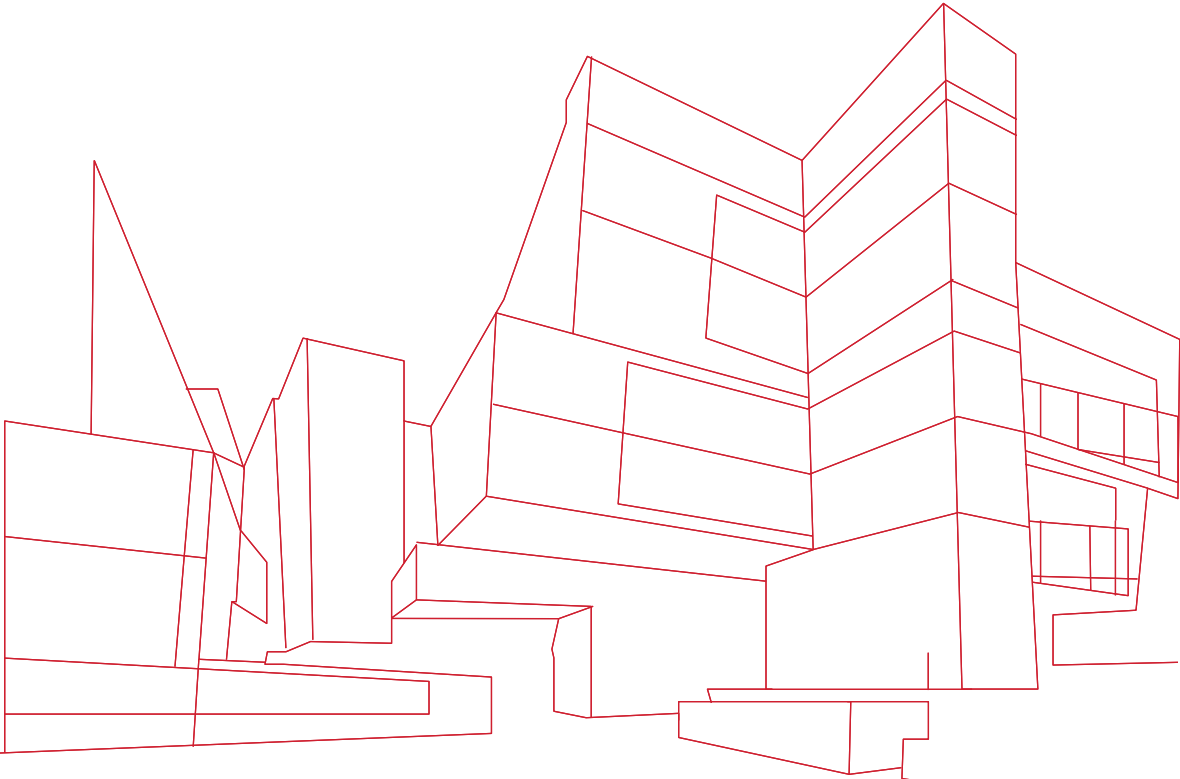
Weakly
expressed

Weakly
expressed

2. Most of the churches in Hong Kong lacked resources to incorporate design; together with a theological position that church was a community of believers, not a building, made design a minor issue and the concept of creating a sacred space minimal. Design was detached from theology. (see figure 3)



Figure 3 Church incorporated with no design



Weakly
expressed

Strongly
expressed

3. Most of the churches incorporated with design was within this category. Churches sensitive to newcomers delivered a space with contemporary touch and warmth. Those with social services also focused more on contemporary design. They were not aware of sacred representation in the churches even relative budget was spent on design. Theology was related to design in the sense of creating a contemporary design to attract newcomers. Theology and sacred representation was detached. (see figure 4)



Figure 4 Church incorporated with contemporary design

Strongly
expressed

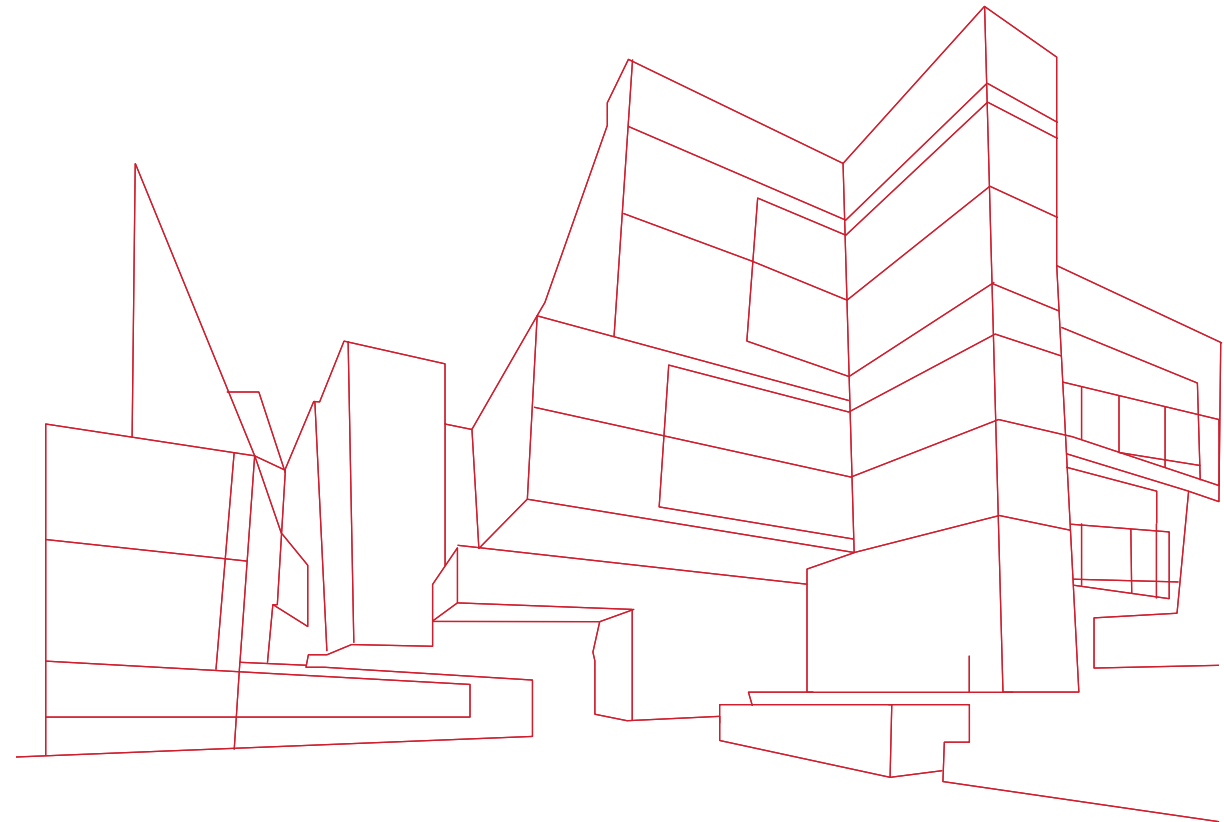
Strongly
expressed

4. Rarely seen churches with this approach but this was the most significant direction from the literature review to revitalise the essential sacred quality with contemporary manner under substantial theological standpoints. (see figure 5)



Figure 5 Church with sacred and contemporary quality

□



Plan in a square shape

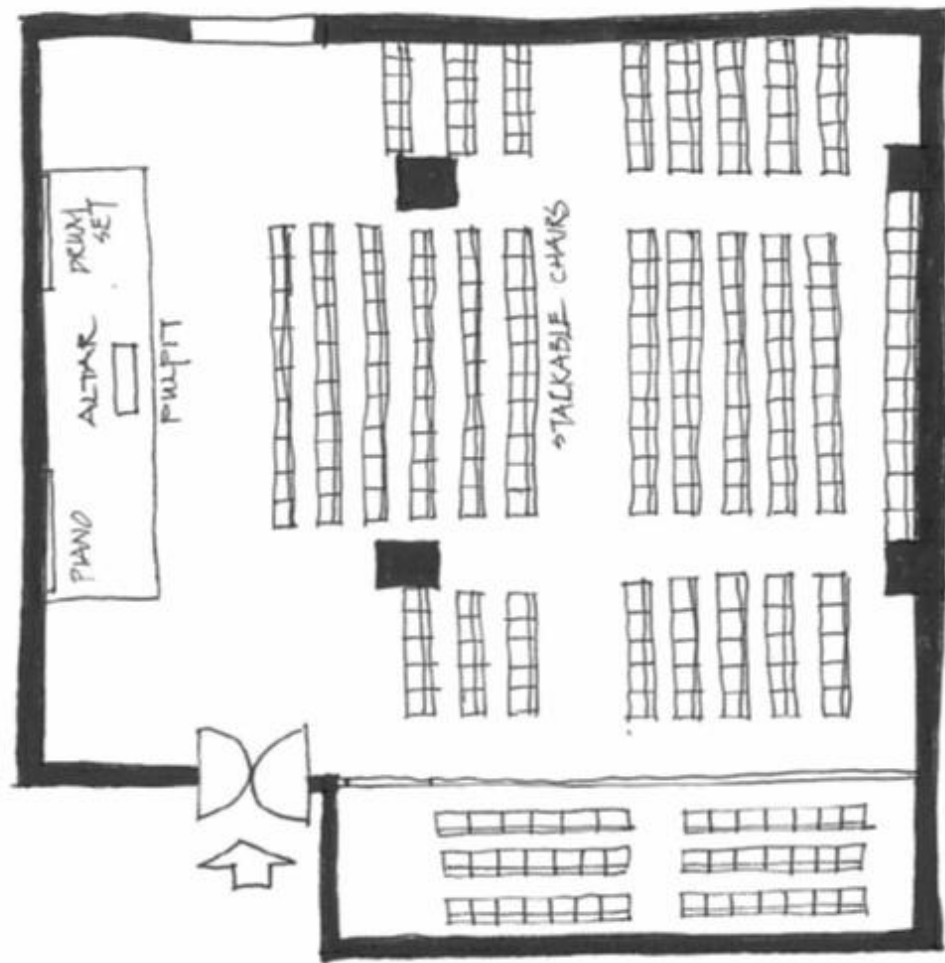
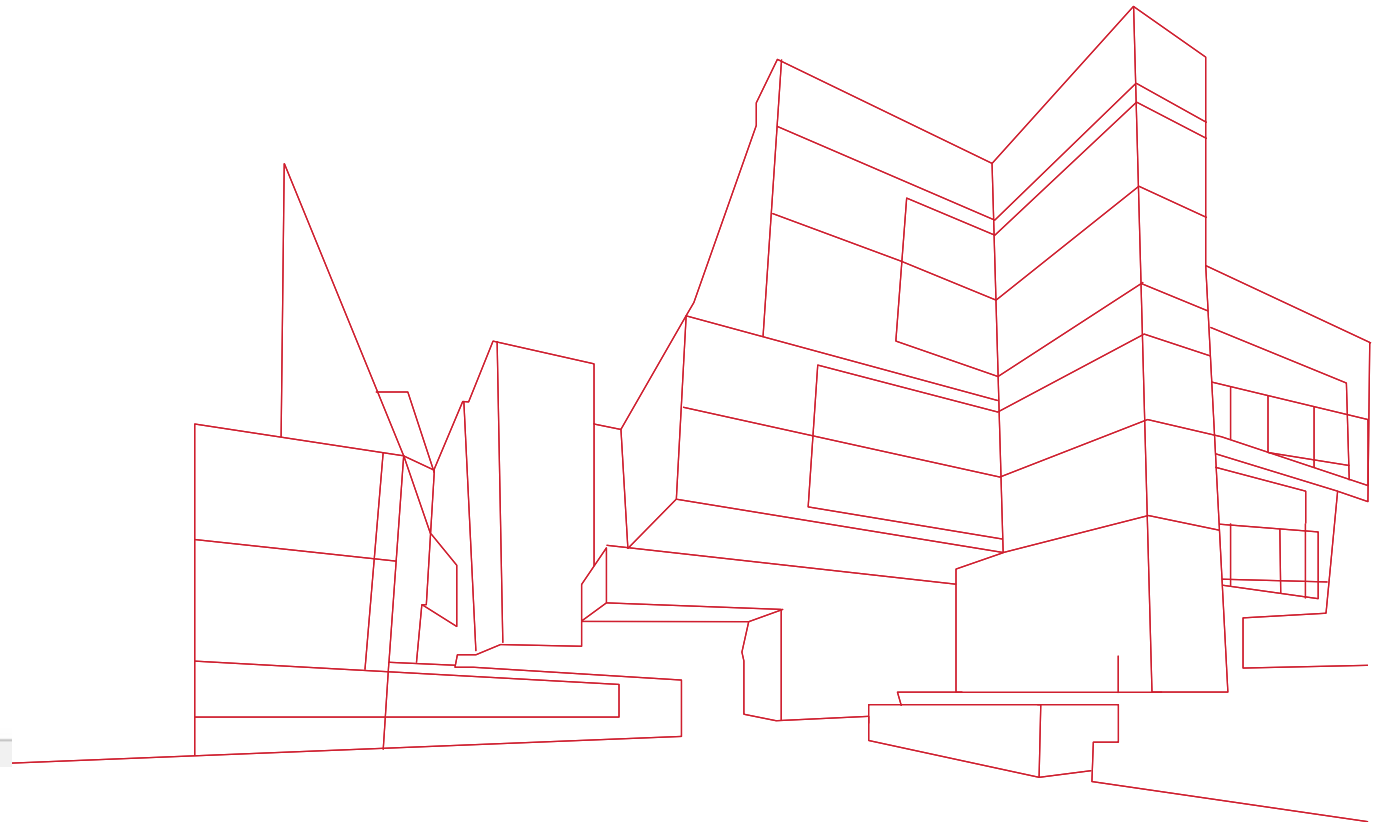


Figure 6 Shatin Alliance Church



Plan in a Rectangular Shape

Longitudinal Layout

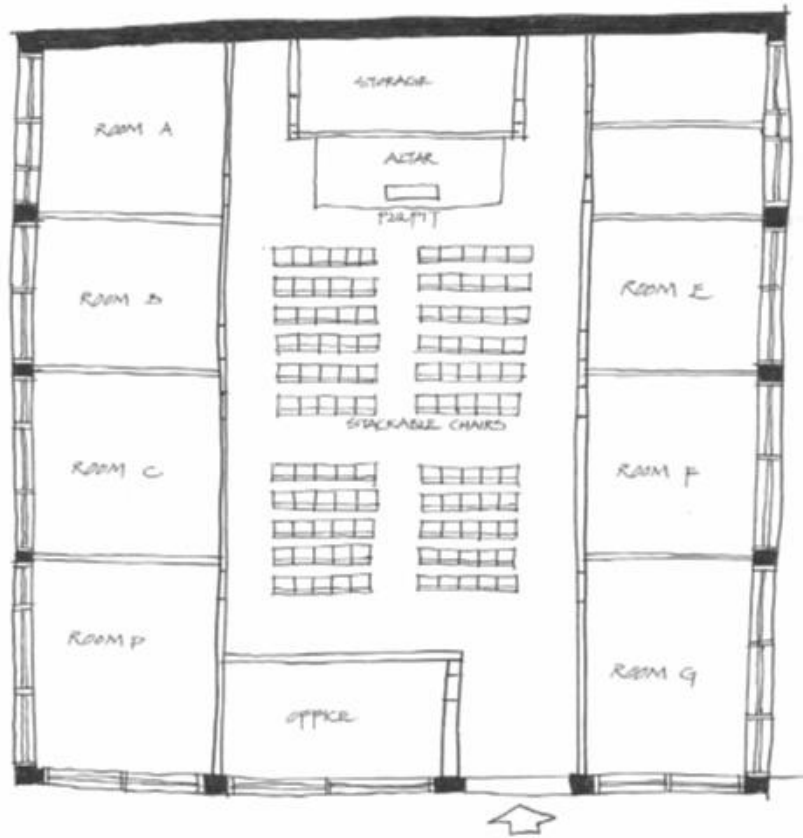
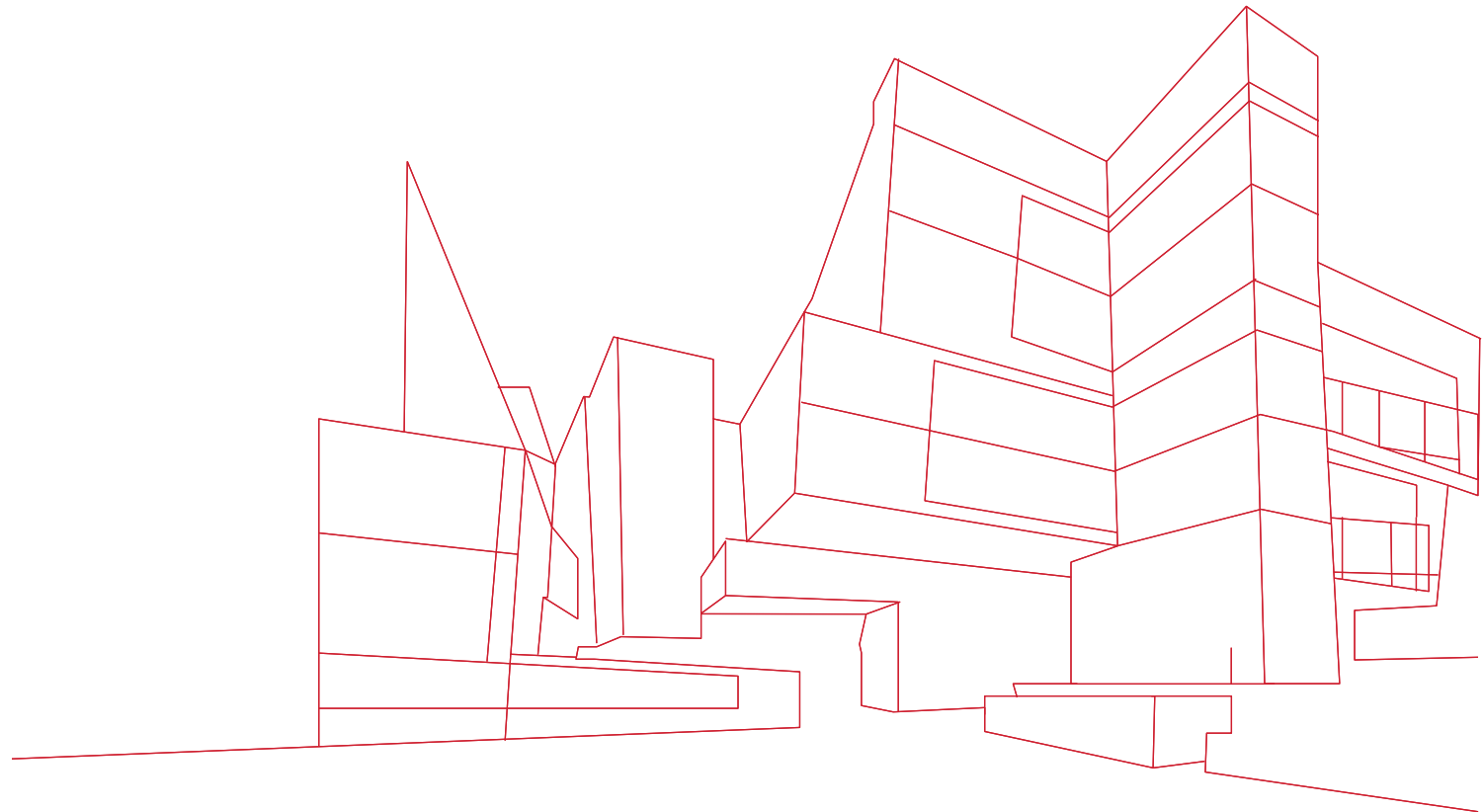


Figure 7 Grace Methodist Church



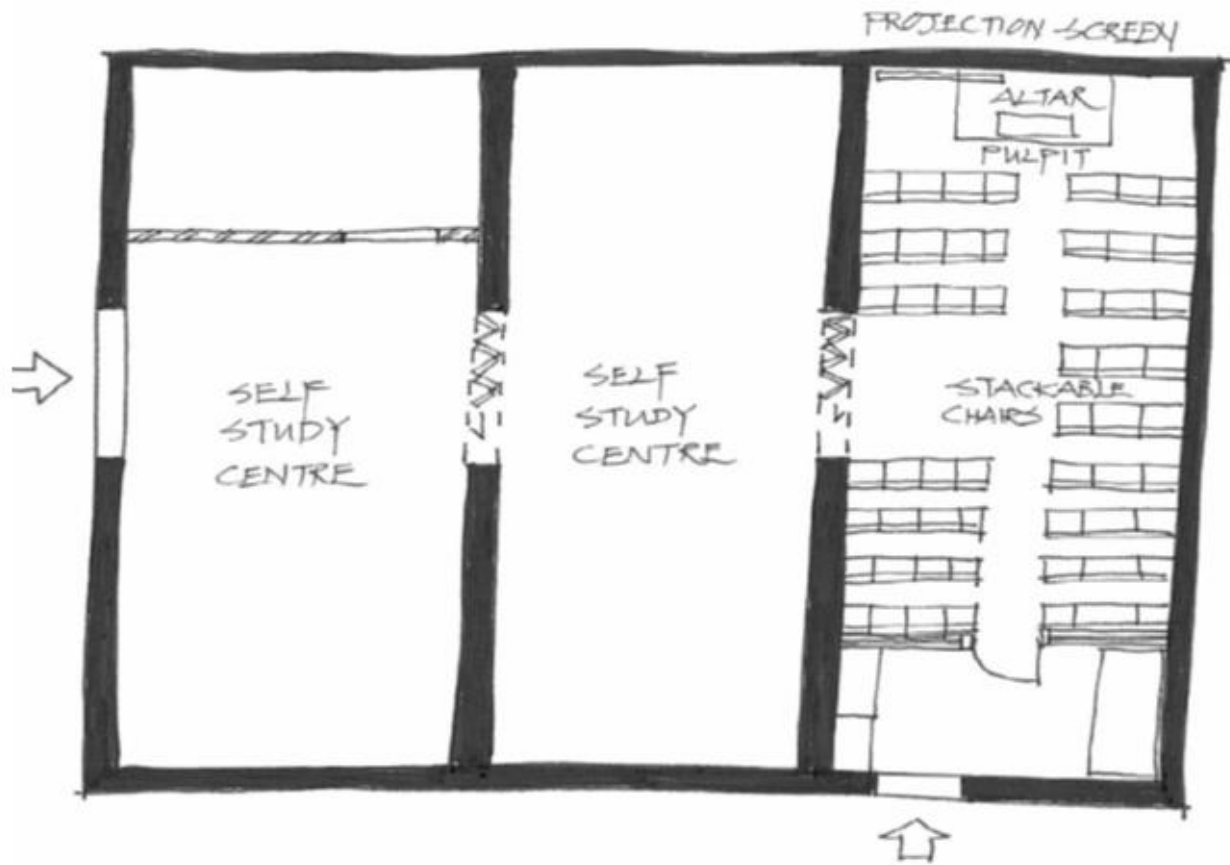
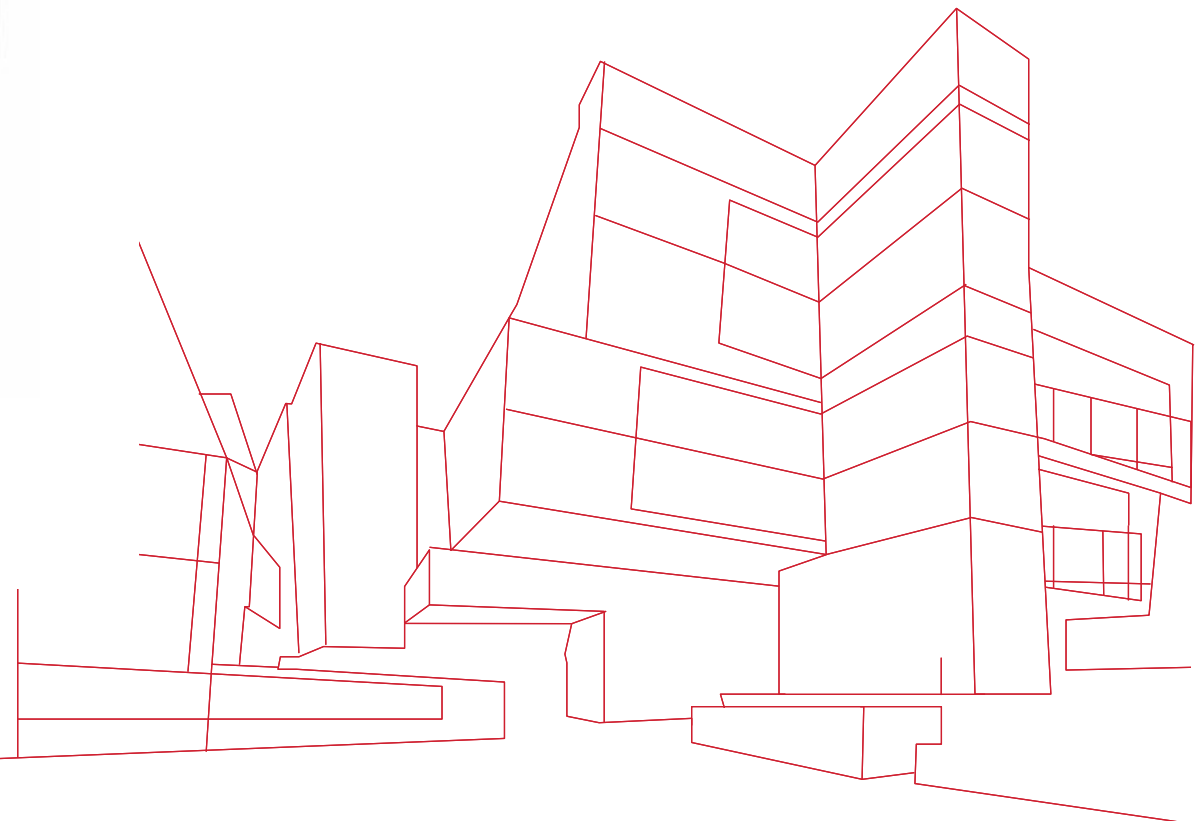


Figure 8 Shatin Free Methodist Church



Auditorium and Communal Layout

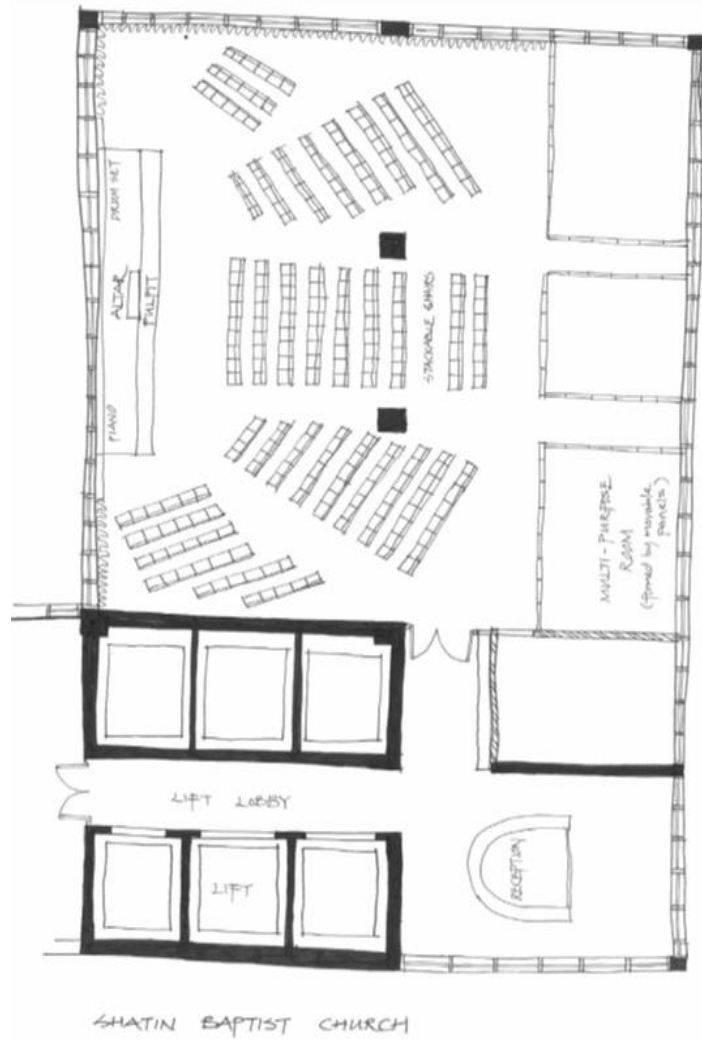
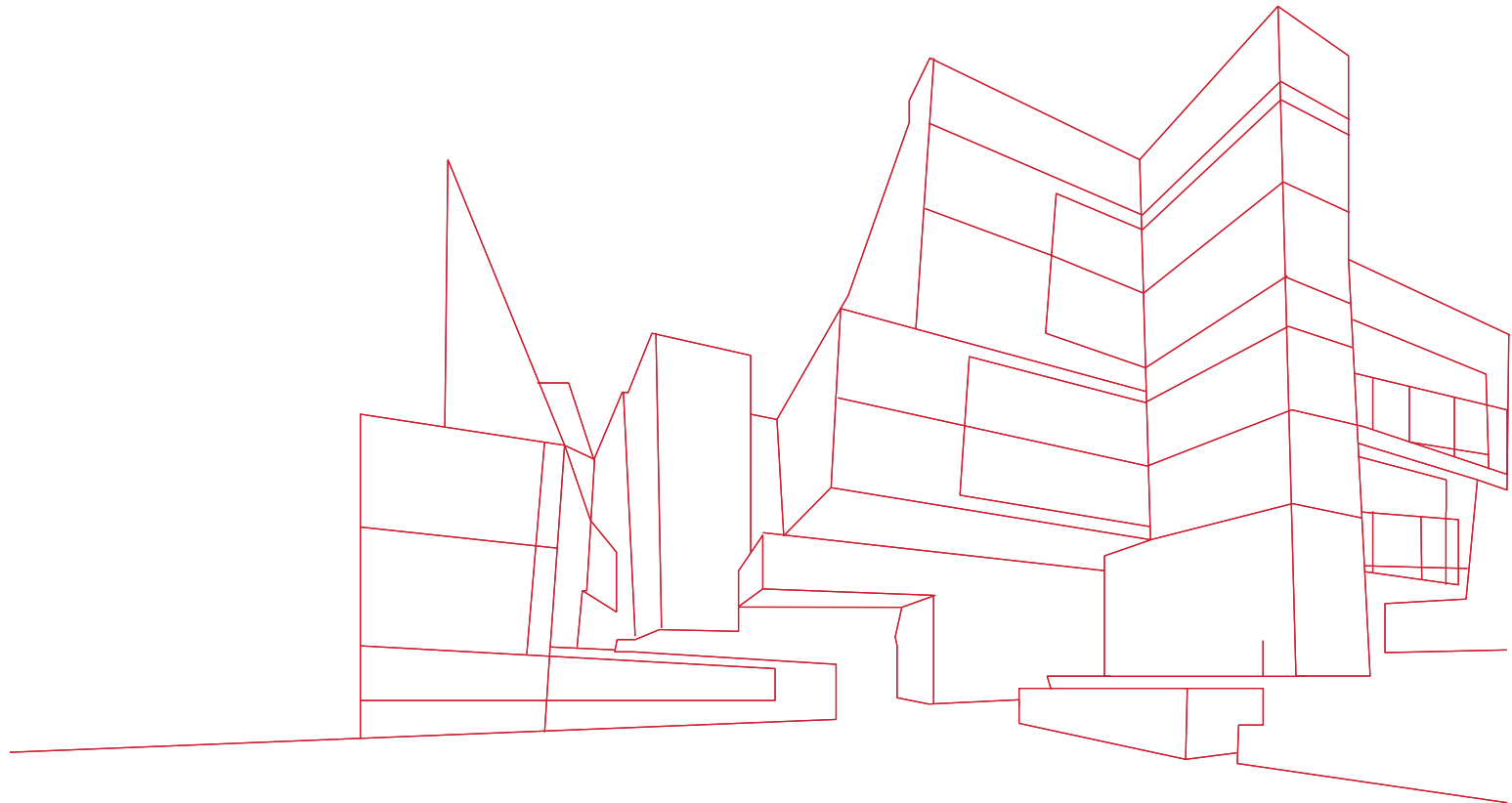


Figure 13 Shatin Baptist Church



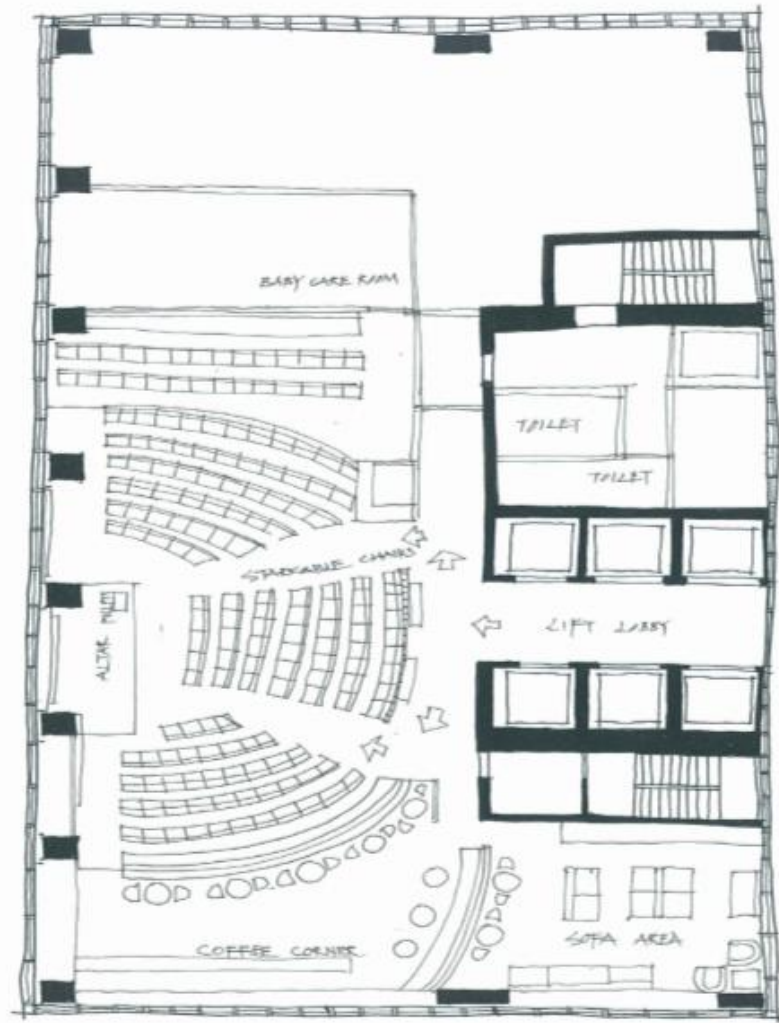
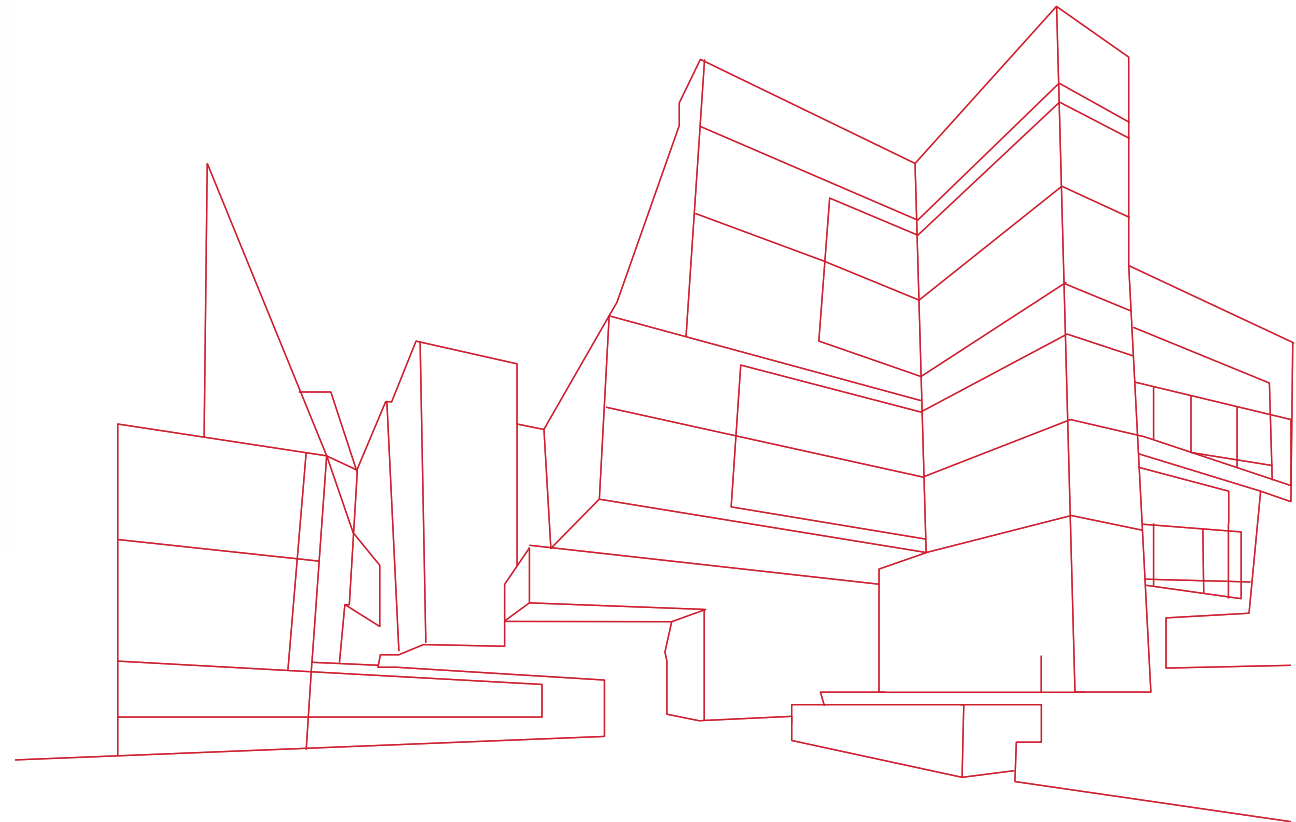
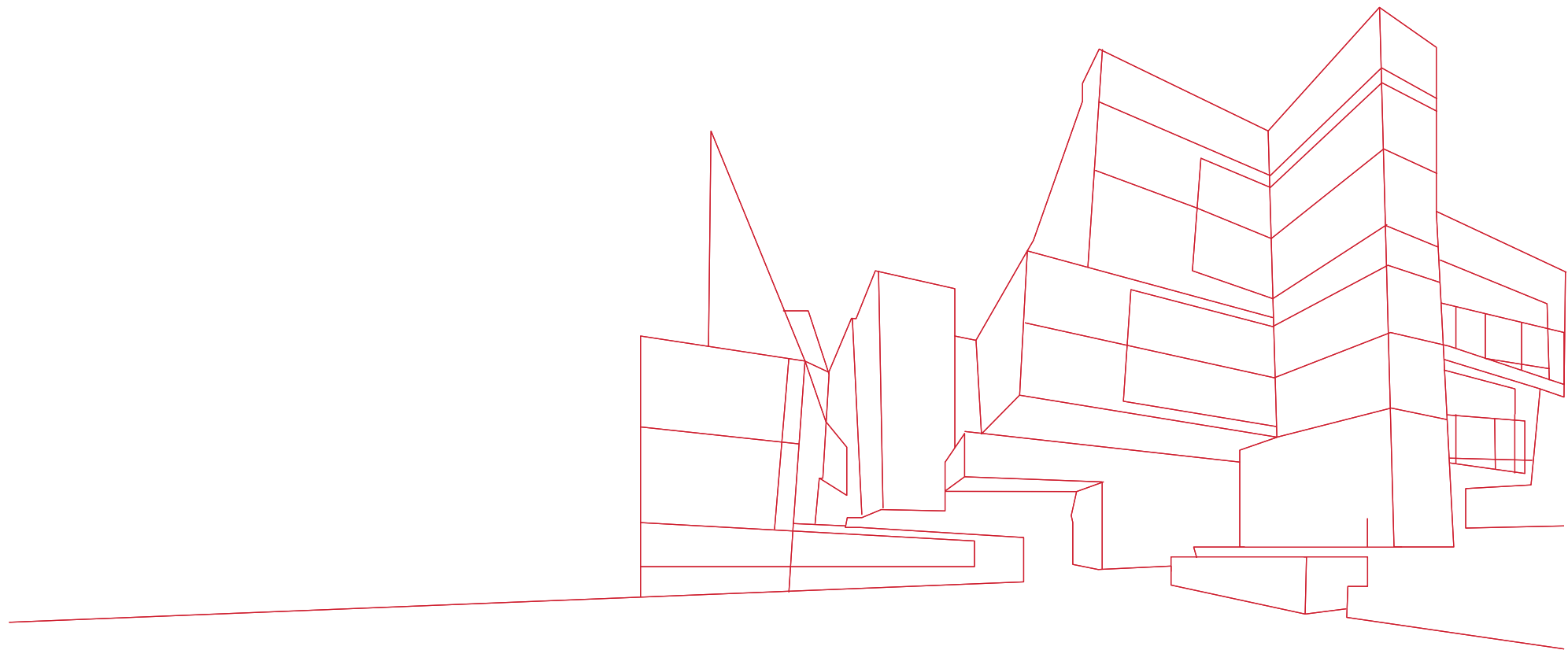


Figure 15 2/F, Island Evangelical Community Church



Discussion

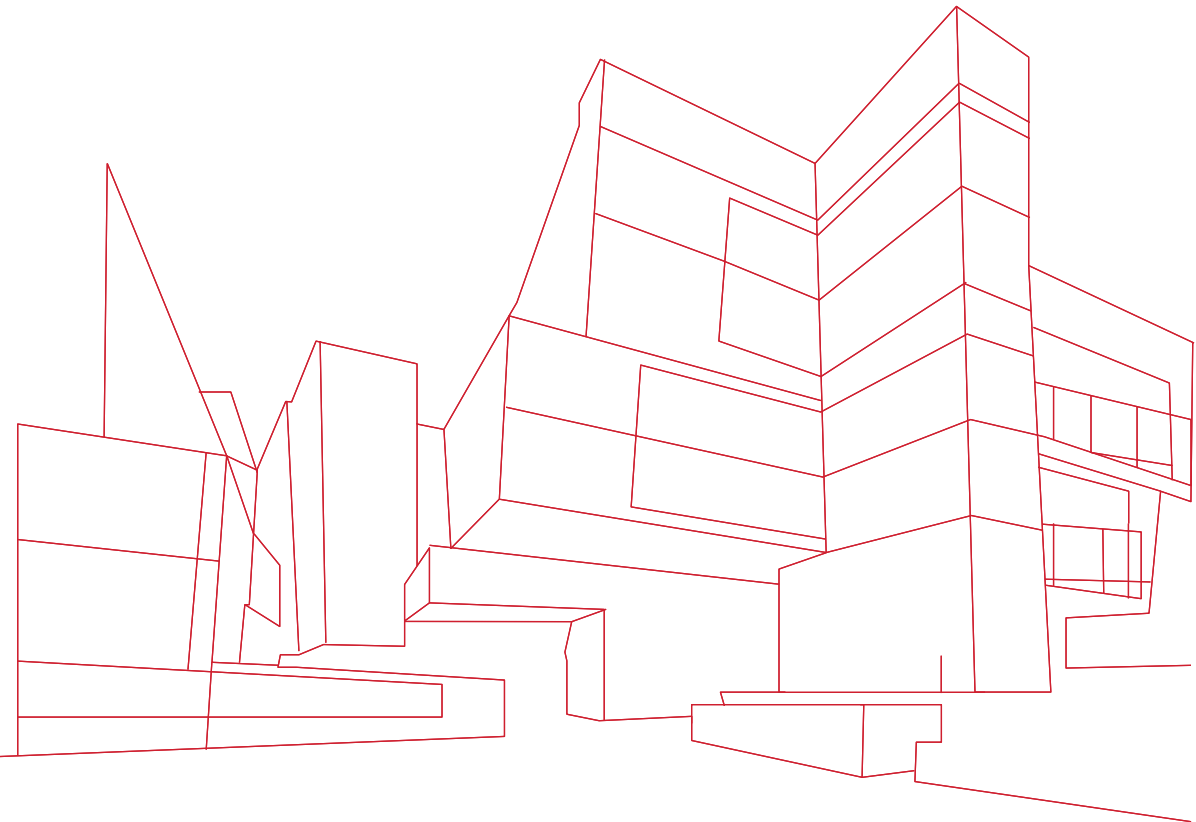


Secular social need and contemporary sacred quality of God

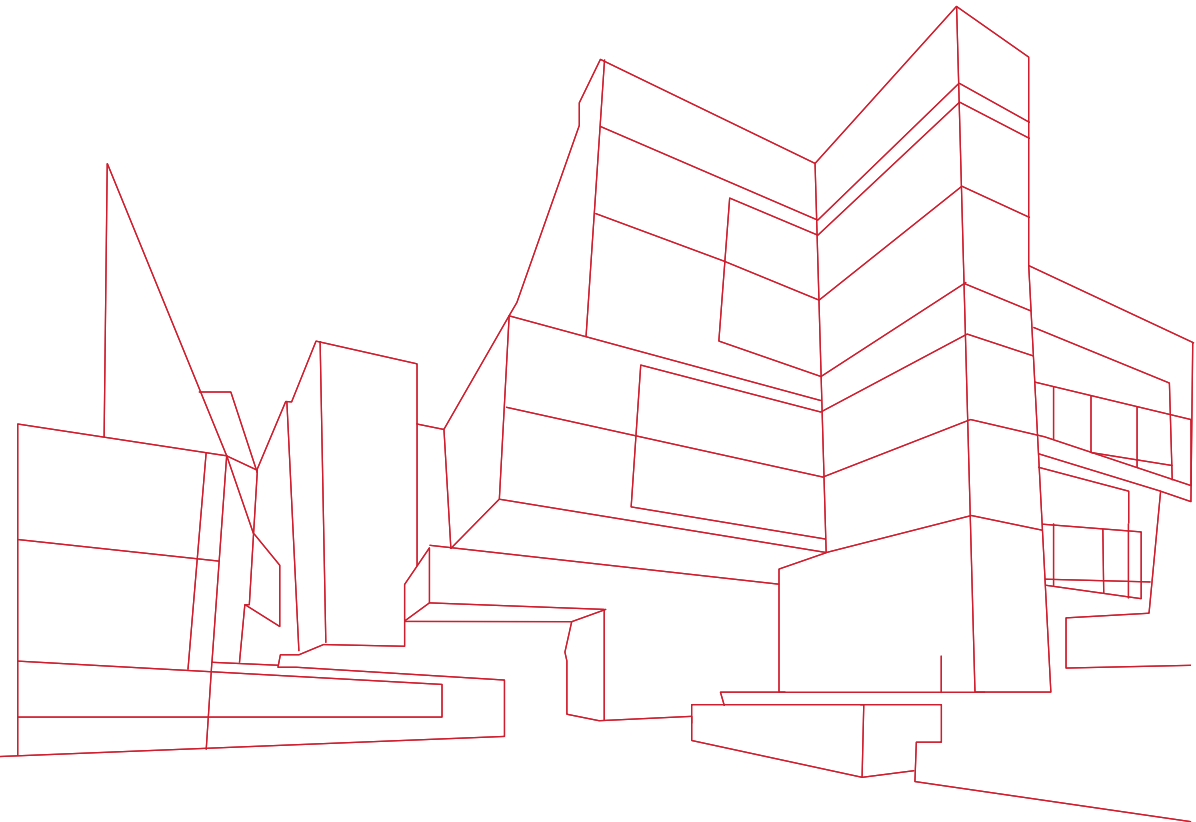
In modern church design, one could discover that a number of churches were designed to **house as many people as possible**.

The **functional task** was satisfied but the space lacked sacred quality.

Actually, when churches became dual-purposes, the sacred identity faced great challenges.



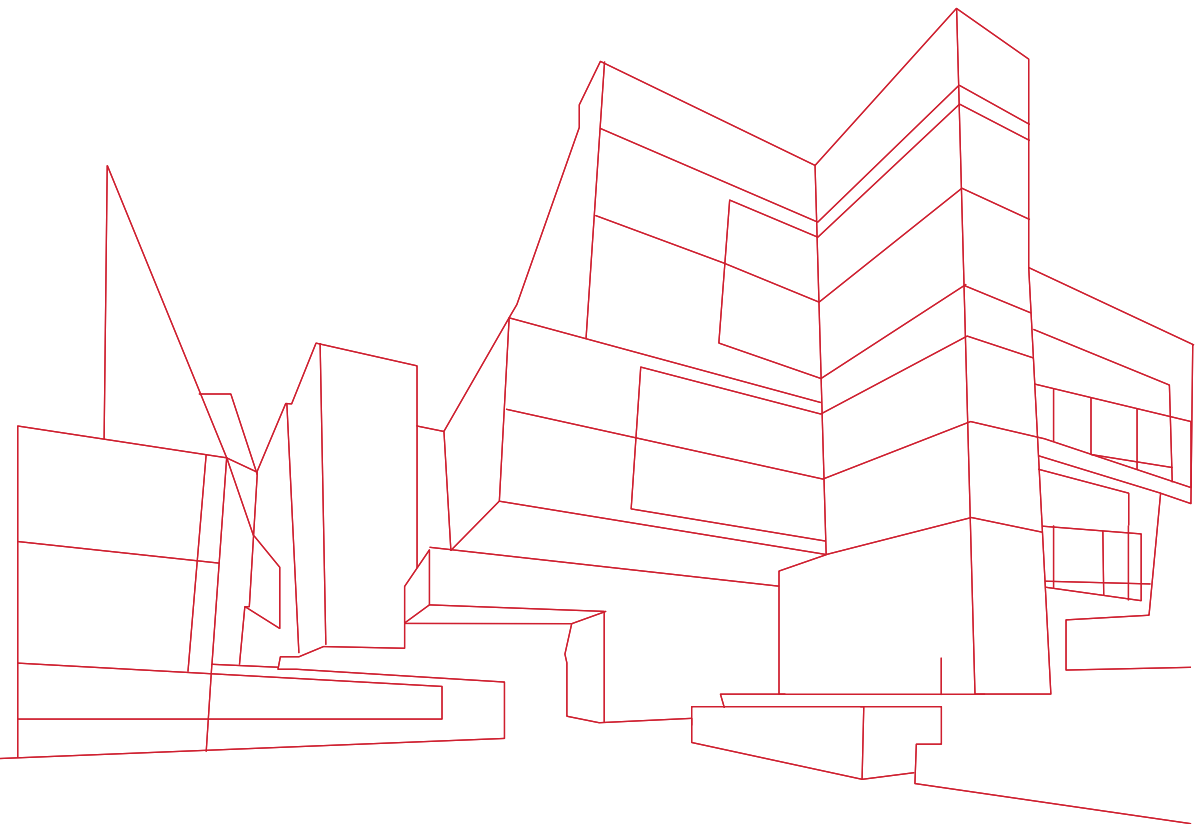
- Another book, “Church Architecture – Building for a Living Faith” by Frank Brannach / Walsh, Francis Edward (1932) included a chapter on **small church** which was dealing with small church building or chapel. He mentioned that **flat roof was more cost effective than pointed roof**. The focus of this chapter was about building low-priced church but **the atmosphere was still inviting, prayerful and worshipful**.



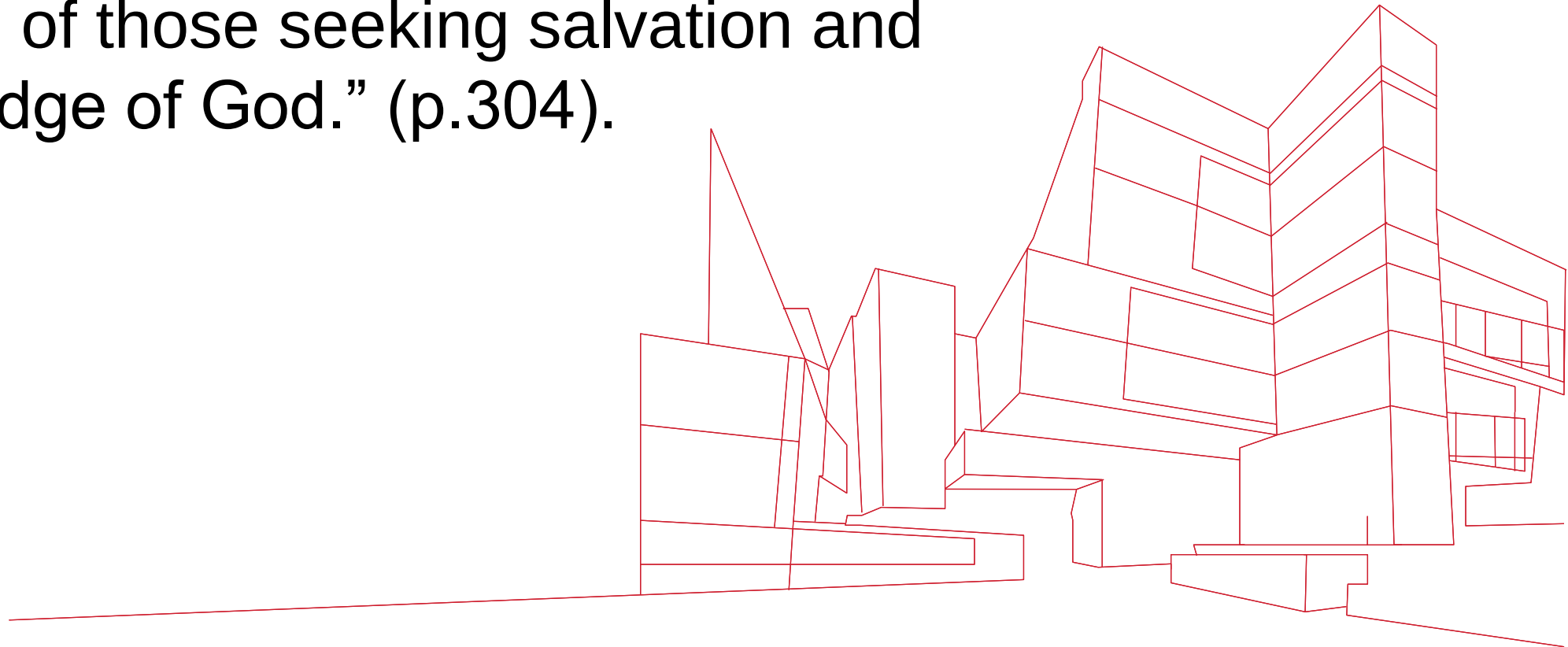


- One article by Bradford Grant reviewed on churches located in former warehouse which the author named “**storefront churches**” was the closest case to this thesis.

These churches had open interior space with a lack of windows, instead, it was replaced with large display windows. The design principle of this church is “God is not necessarily connected to the physical nature of the place of worship” (Grant Bradford, 2002, p.49).

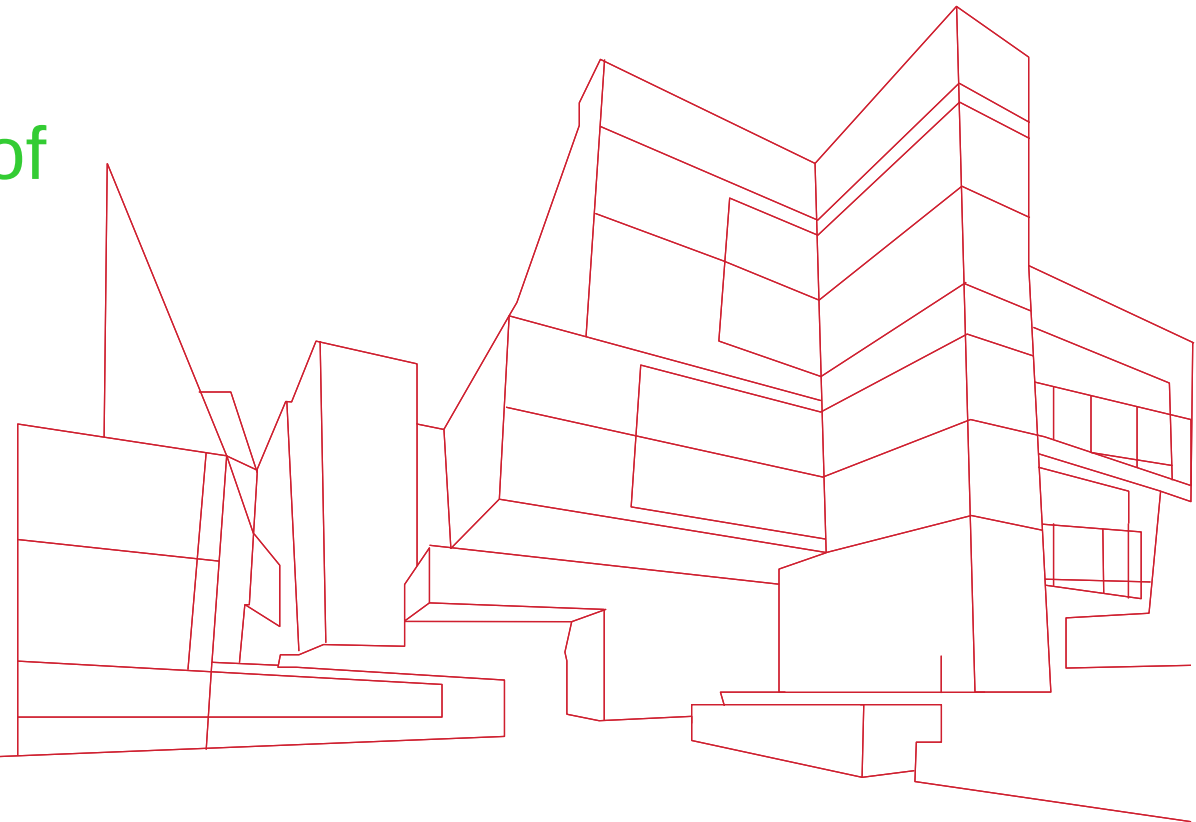


- Norman (1990) also concluded that “the emphasis seems to be returning from the large, centralised body to the small, less organised, more intimate group of believers, and above all to the communal experience of those seeking salvation and the knowledge of God.” (p.304).



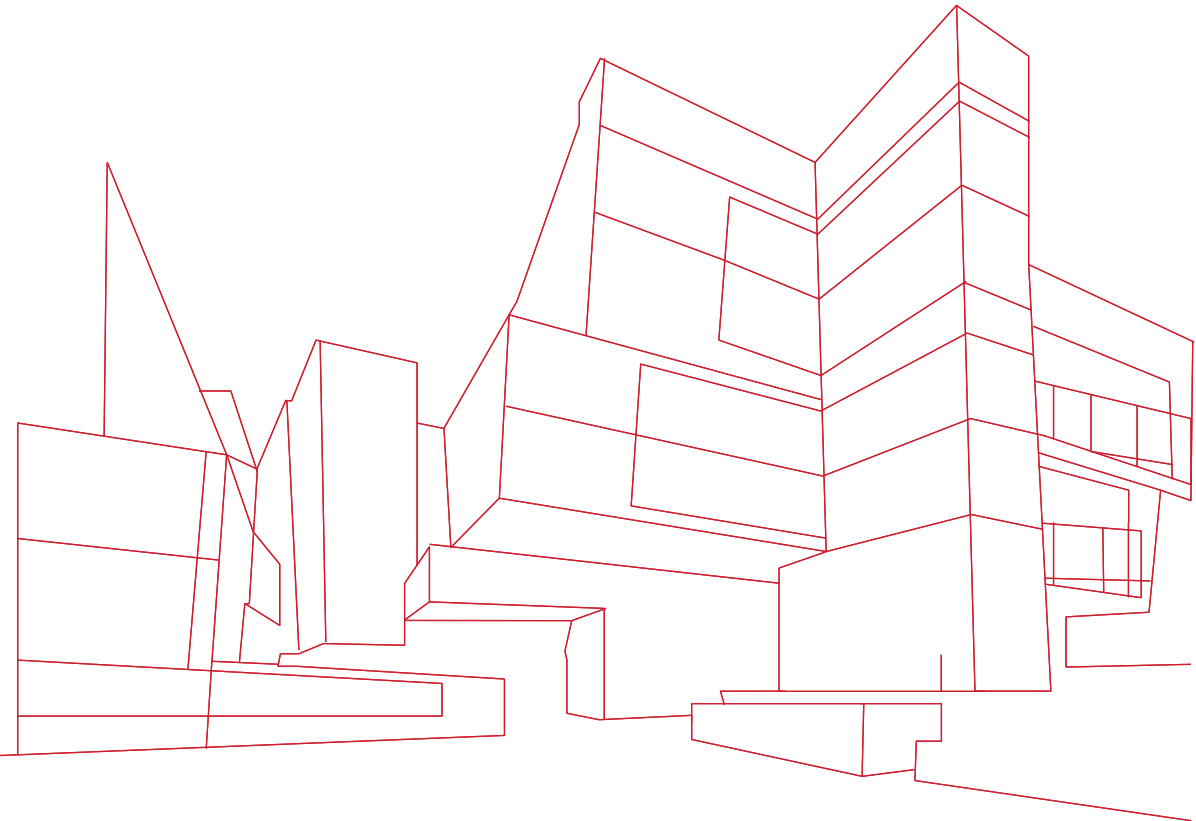
Then how to relate faith to the secular world?

In the book written by Torgerson, Mark Allen in 2007 named *An architecture of immanence: Architecture for worship and ministry today*, Torgerson (2007) commented that “the transcendence of God was on decline, and the immanence of God in people was highlighted” (p.12).



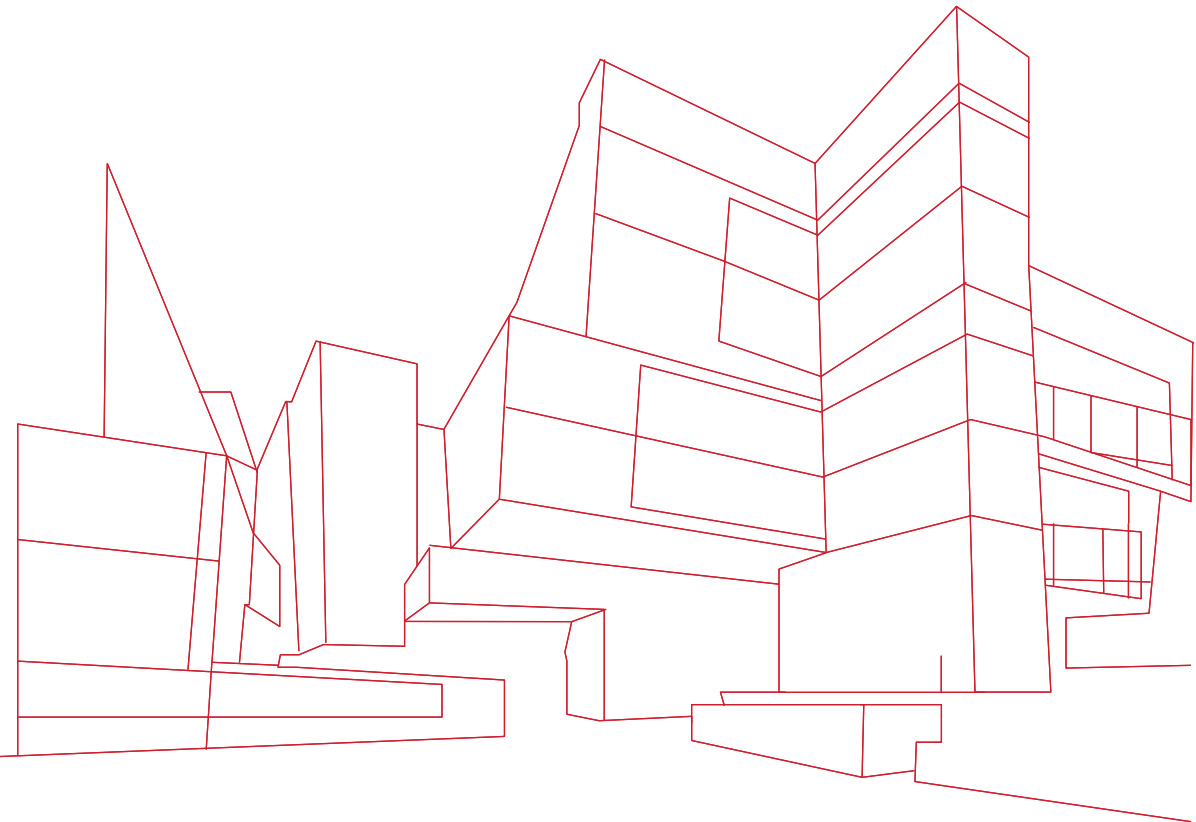
This approach is related to the theological idea of whether churches should present the **transcendence** or the **immanence** of God spatially.

When **churches are small in space**, the representation of the **immanence of God is more appropriate**. However, it is necessary to clarify here that the decision on representing the immanence of God is not based on physical or social constraints.



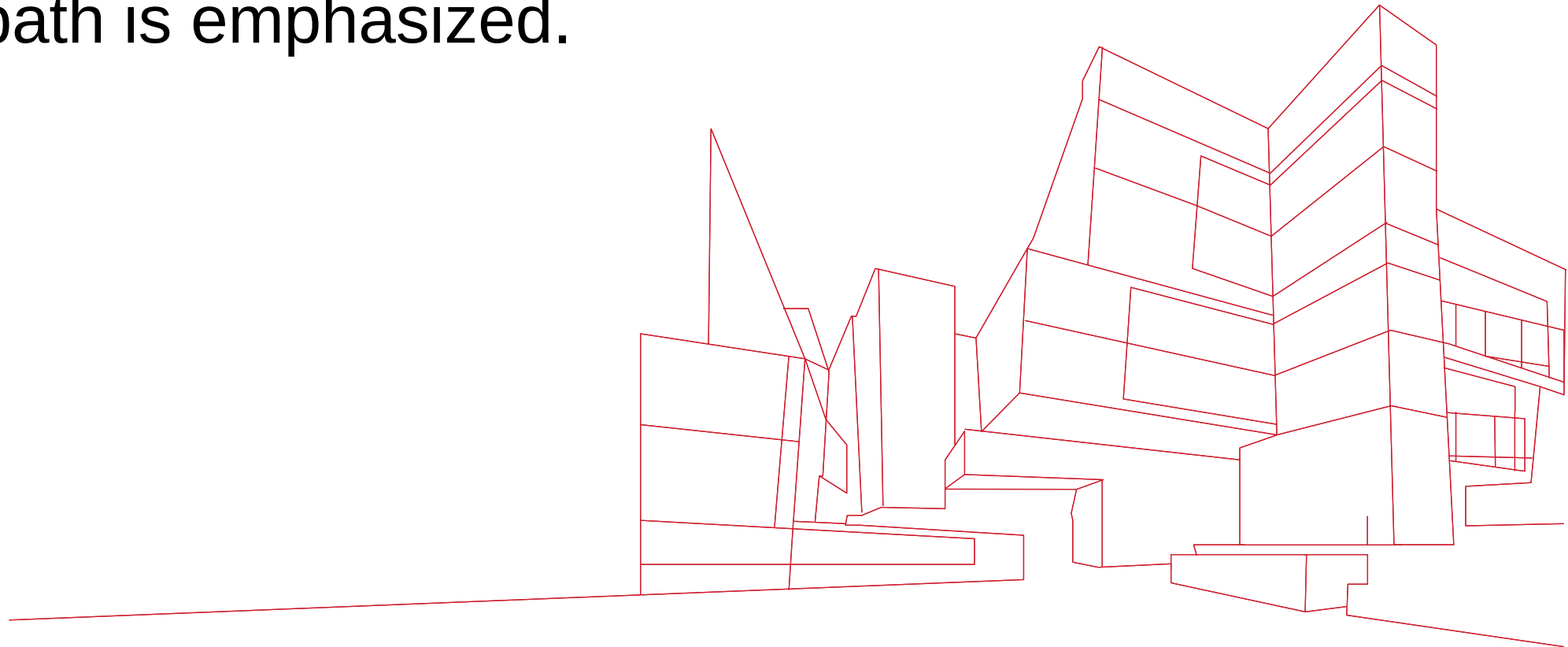
When referring to sacred quality, design must be created and addressed for the people of our time, instead of going for traditional approach.

In the book, Sixty post-war churches(1956), an inspiring statement was written with similar answer: “The ‘Truths’ are not contemporary, but that only the means of expressing them are” (p.7).

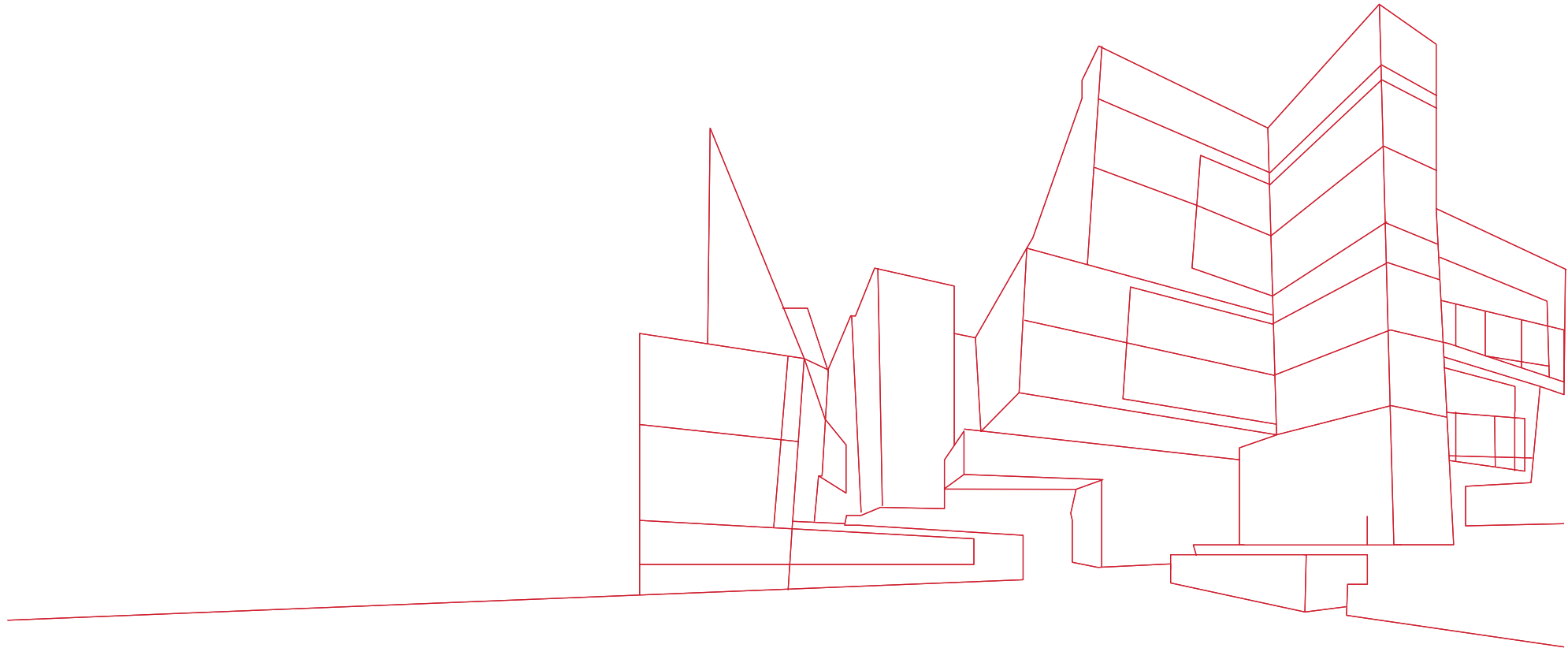


Hence, church builders need to consider all these 3 criteria:

- 1) Functional need
- 2) Contemporary quality
- 3) Sacred quality. In this research paper, the application of spiritual path is emphasized.

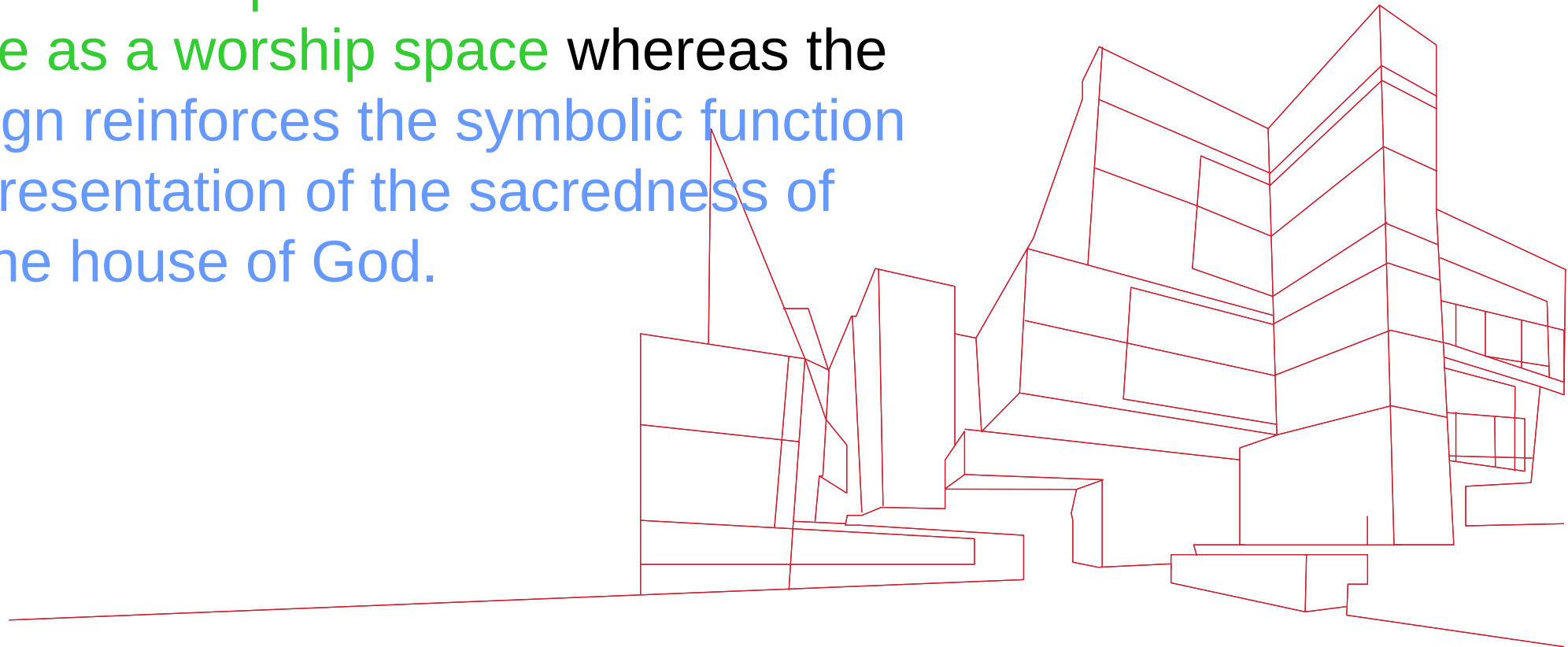


Conclusion

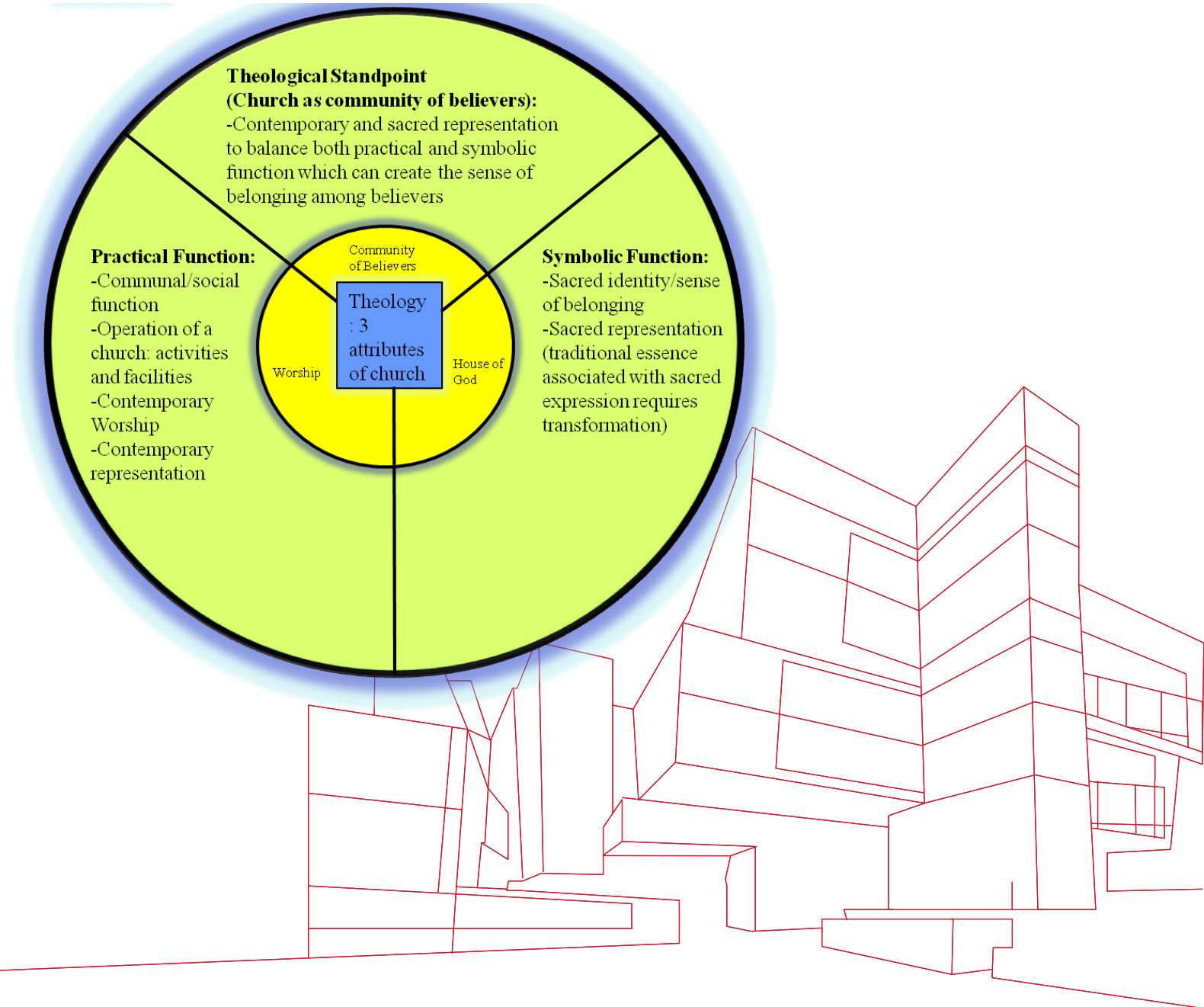


Function of Church in Relation to the Three Church Attributes

- While this thesis explores the dilemma between contemporary expression and sacred expression, it is known that contemporary design focuses more on the practical function and the performance as a worship space whereas the sacred design reinforces the symbolic function and the representation of the sacredness of church as the house of God.



- When a church is established in terms of design, the **practical function** and the **sacred function** are the two categories under consideration.
- These three concepts: theology, practical function and sacred function are related to the three attributes of church.



Design guidelines:

One of the elements is **spiritual path or progression of space**.

This one essence in church designs across history is being selected here because it is being neglected due to limited space.

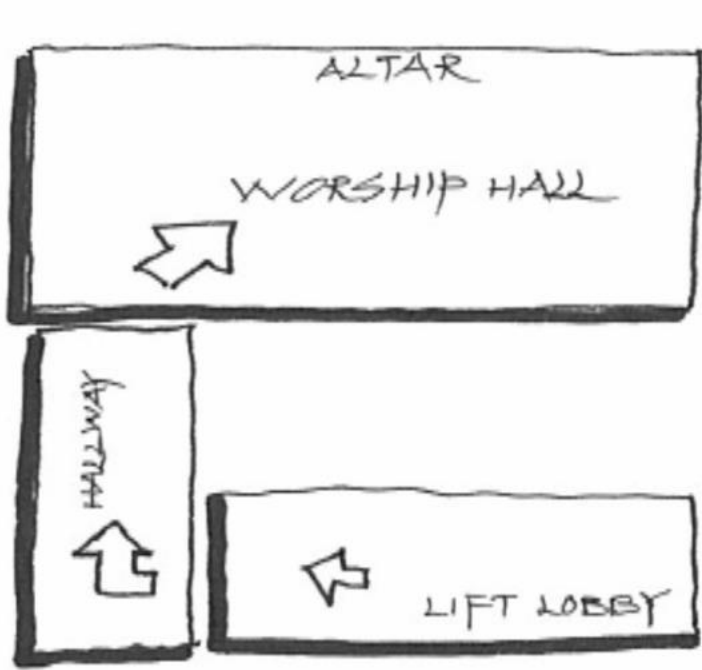


Figure 21: U Turn

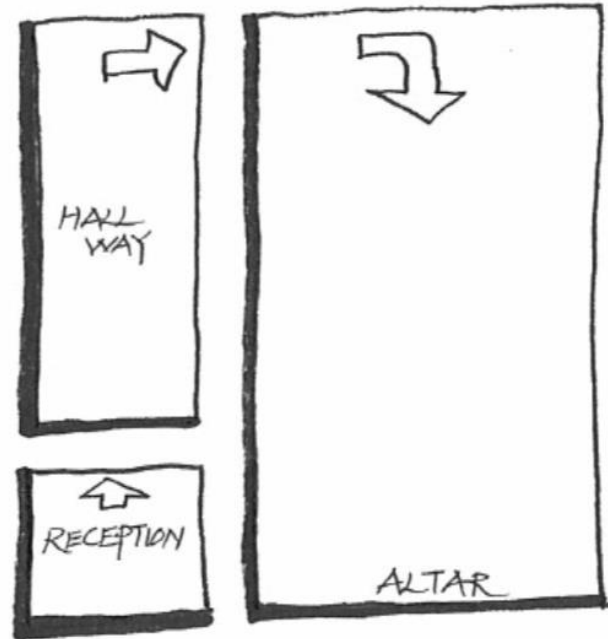
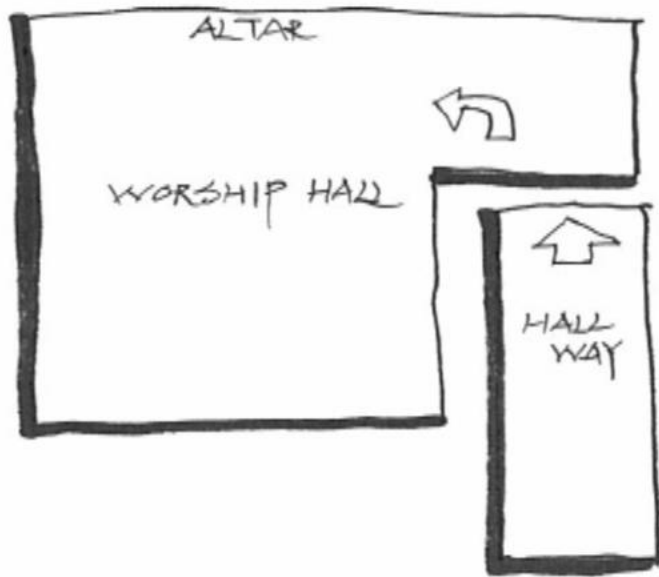
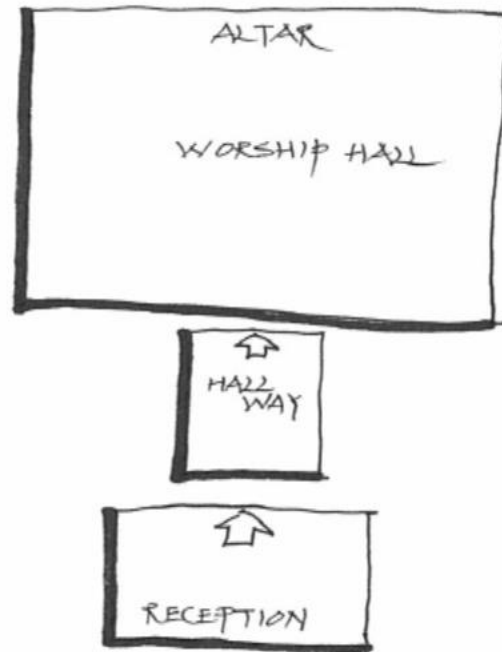


Figure 22: U Turn

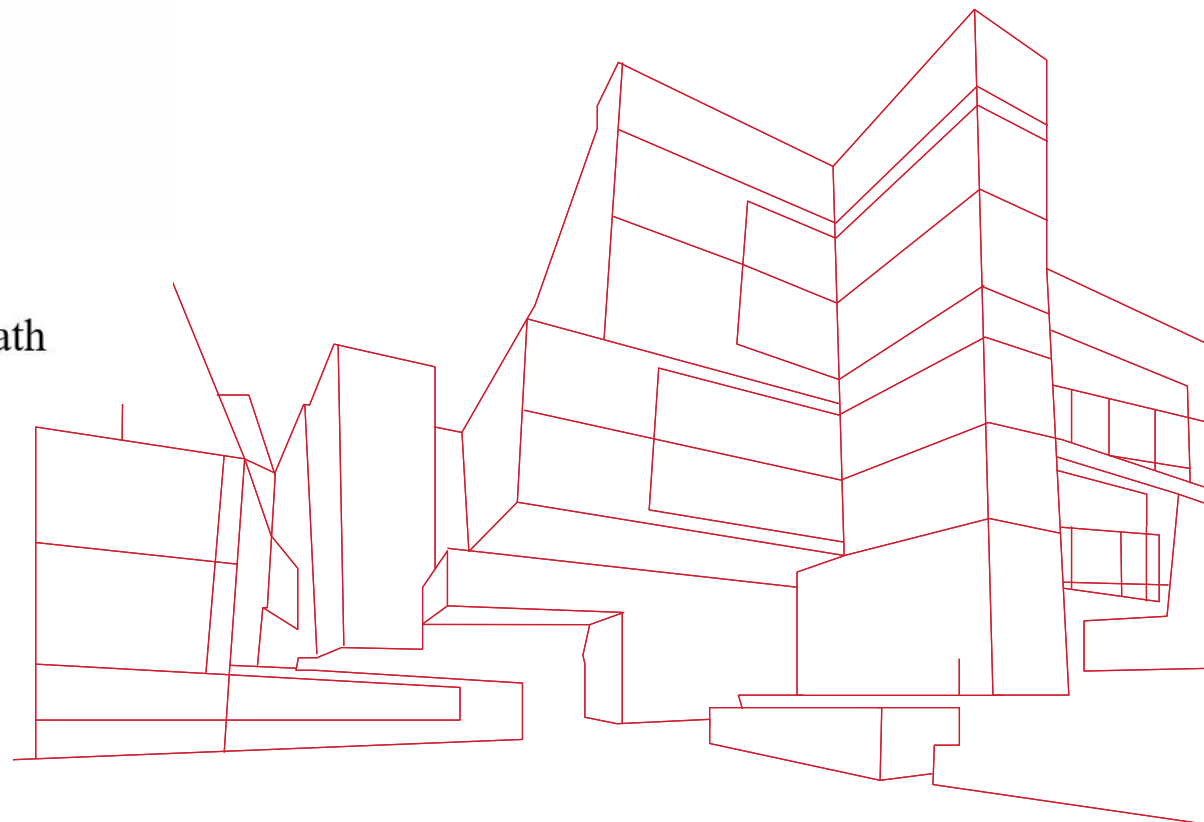




Figur23: L Turn



Figur24: Linear Path



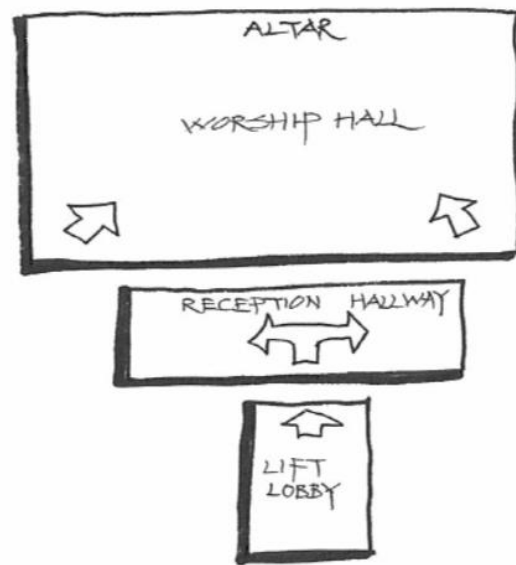
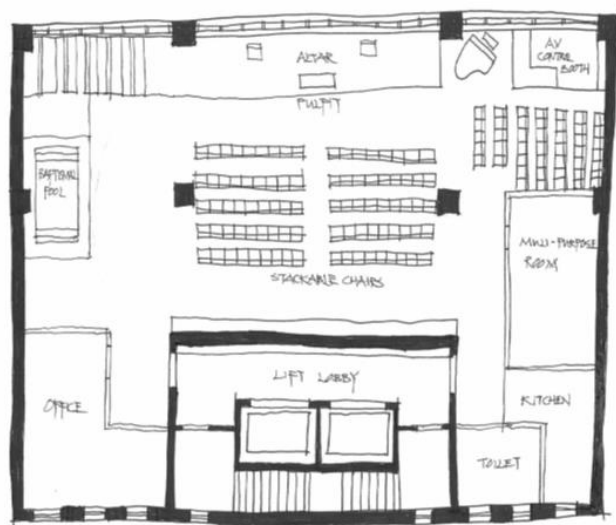


Figure 25: Spilt Path



Thank You for listening

Q
&A

May God bless you

