

NEW CHURCH BUILDING*

In the past quarter of a century since the end of the Second World War, almost all new church building within the Church of Scotland has been undertaken by the National Church Extension Committee of the Home Board. One of that Committee's problems has been to balance theological and functional requirements with the economic pressures to which it has been subject. How could the beauty and dignity of the traditional Church Service be maintained on Sunday morning when the same space, which had been used by the Youth Club for its Saturday night dance, had to serve for worship next day?

In the first decade of the period when large new housing areas were being added to every large town and city throughout the land, a building of some kind, and indeed more than one in some areas, was required. The limited resources of the Church, in terms of money, had to be widely spread, and so to begin with the buildings were little more than halls where worship was held on Sundays. Pressure mounted, however, from what is commonly called 'the grass roots', for buildings more oriented towards dignified worship and so the 'hall-church' came to be distinguished from the church hall. Whereas in the latter, worship and other activities had been led from a common platform at one end of a rectangular building, in the former a 'chancel' was constructed at the opposite end from the platform. By changing the direction of their looking as between weekdays and Sundays, and seeing on the Sunday an area clearly recognizable as ecclesiastical, and associated with worship, an improved 'atmosphere' was created.

Nevertheless, there was still a widespread desire for a separate place of worship, and this, together with the obvious inadequacy of the 'hall-church' accommodation provided for parishes of 10,000 to 20,000 people, led the Committee back to the traditional church suite pattern of church and halls when the financial situation permitted. At the same time, the opportunity was taken of re-examining, from fundamental principles, the shape and function of a building designed specifically for Reformed worship. The doctrine of the 'Priesthood of all Believers' was important. The congregation should be able to ask the question 'What are *we* doing round this Table and pulpit(?)' rather than 'What are *they* doing away down there in the chancel(?)' So there came to be developed the open type of plan where the congregation were seated round and in close proximity

* See also plates.

to the Word and Sacrament as represented by the Pulpit and Communion Table, as opposed to the long nave type of church with a chancel at the end. The first of these was St. Columba's, Glenrothes (Architects: Messrs. Wheeler & Sproson), not so very far from Scotland's earlier contribution to Reformed Church Architecture at Burntisland. (See *C.S.S. Annual*, vol. 38 (1968), pp. 14-16.)

The 'fifties' had been the decade of the hall-church, and the 'sixties' had been the decade of the open-plan church and halls suite. As the 'seventies' approached, the Committee was again under heavy economic pressure, partly from inflation with escalating building costs, and partly from the necessity of repaying the large debt of £750,000 which, with the consent of the General Assembly, it had accumulated in carrying out the building programme. Questions were being raised both by itself and others as to whether large under-used buildings were justified. The halls were being used to maximum capacity, but the churches themselves were under-used. The Committee had undertaken a major research project among the users of the earlier buildings to ascertain, *inter alia*, whether there would be support for a compromise type of building, which would preserve space for dignified worship and yet allow a fuller use of available space. It was found that there was widespread support for this plan, provided that some space, however small, was reserved for worship only. So there came about the concept of the multi-purpose church which provides a small permanent worship area (100 to 150 seats), but which can open out into a larger area beyond a movable partition which provides additional space for worship, when necessary, and which is the main hall space through the week.

One of the problems in designing these multi-purpose churches was to retain what had been recovered in the 'sixties', i.e. the open plan with the people gathered round the Word and Sacrament. To succeed in this has usually meant placing the sanctuary area close to the partition so that it will be central both in the 'small church' and in the 'large church'. One of the most successful of these has been St. Kentigern's Church, Kilmarnock (Architects: Messrs. Hay Steel MacFarlane & Partners), which has influenced some later plans in various stages of development.

What of the 'eighties'? Where do we go next? Will the continuing inflation allow us to build even on the multi-purpose scale for much longer? Fortunately, there are not so many new buildings required as in the 'fifties' and 'sixties', but they all cost so much more. One alternative has been opened up by the willingness of some Local Authorities to combine church accommodation in community centre buildings. The imaginative 'Lanthorn' project for the new town of Livingston, where there is an ecumenical experiment, is one such example. Here the Local Authorities, the Development Corporation

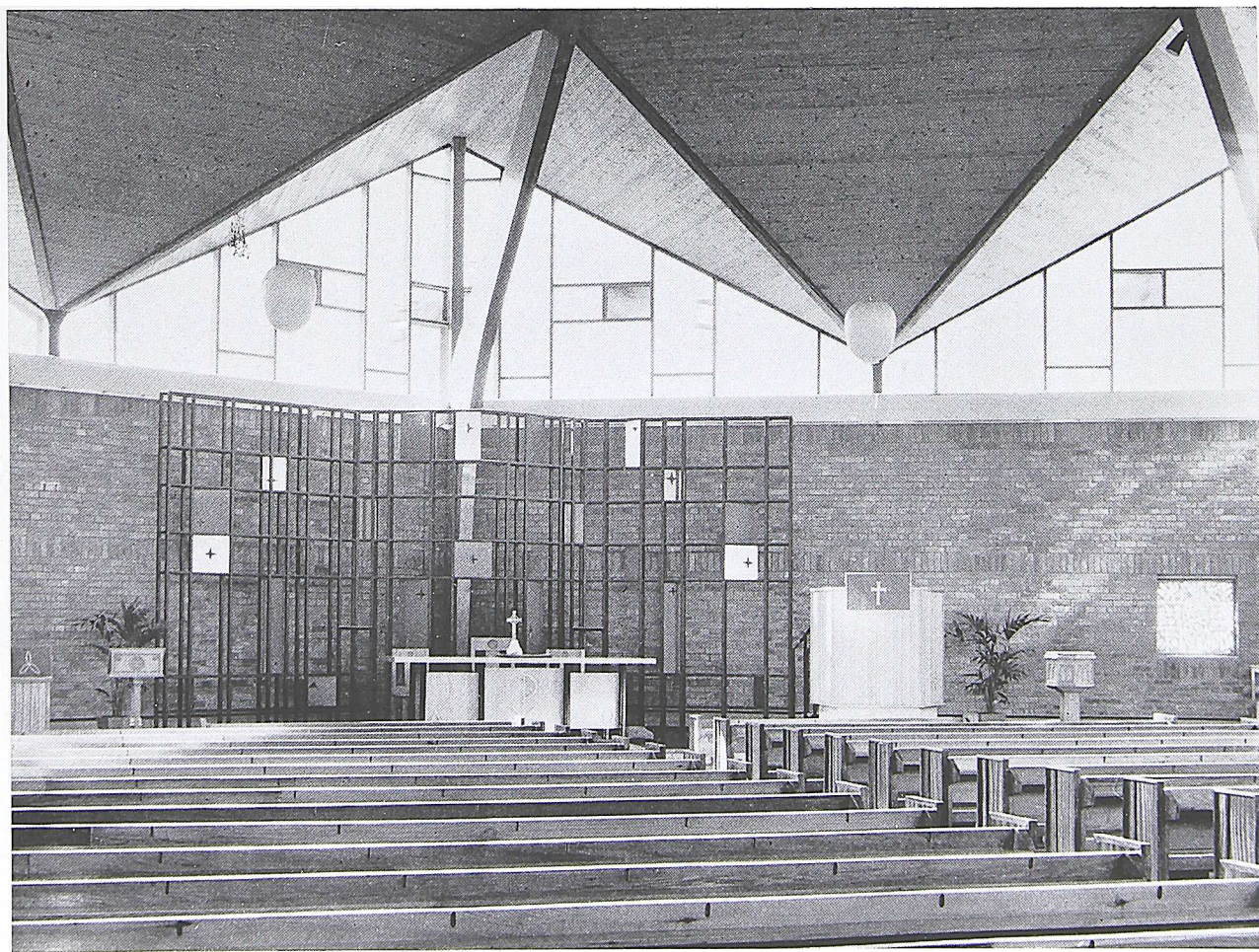


PLATE 1 East Kilbride - South Church - Interior

(With acknowledgement to Church of Scotland Home Board)



PLATE 2 - Cumbernauld: St. Mungo's - Exterior

(With acknowledgment to Church of Scotland Home Board)



PLATE 3 Cumbernauld: St Mungo's – Interior

(With acknowledgement to Church of Scotland Home Board)

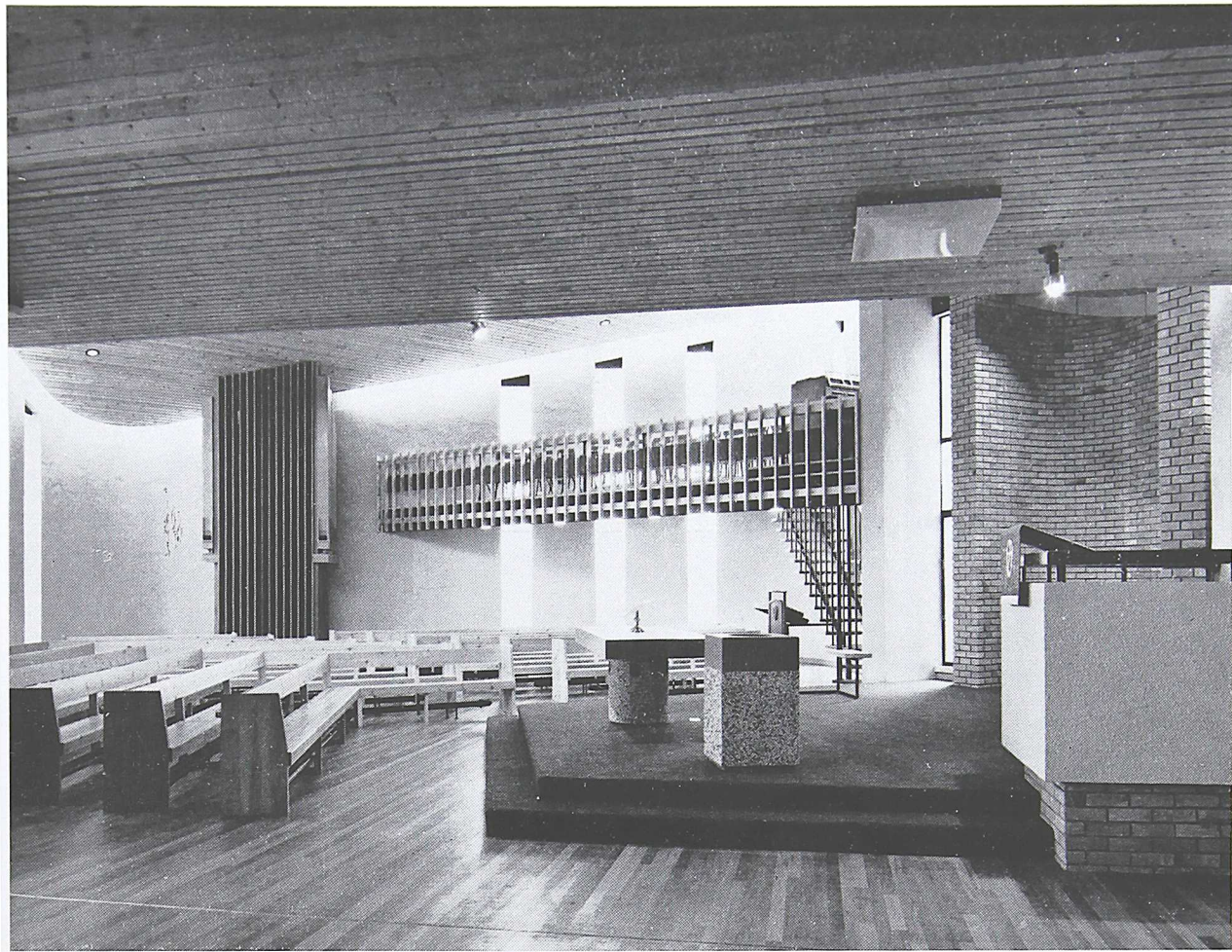


PLATE 4 Kilmarnock: St Kentigern's – Interior

(With acknowledgement to Walker Organs)