

UDC 5-72.05  
DOI: 10.56318/as/3.2025.35

**Ihor Gnes**

Doctor of Architecture, Associate Professor  
Lviv Polytechnic National University  
79013, 12 Stepan Bandera Str., Lviv, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0810-7681>

**Ostap Zaiats\***

Postgraduate Student  
Lviv Polytechnic National University  
79013, 12 Stepan Bandera Str., Lviv, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0026-2812>

## **Modern trends in the evolution of the functions of Christian temples in world design practice**

**Abstract.** The relevance of the research was to study the transformation role of religious buildings in modern society, in their multifunctionality. The aim of the article was to identify the nomenclature of secular functions that have appeared in the structure of modern world temples. The article considered examples of modern world Christian churches in terms of their multifunctionality development for performing, not only religious, but also public functions. Attention was paid to the architectural and planning features of combining different functions in one complex: religious, cultural, educational, commercial, office. There were presented the results of the analysis of the balances of the areas of different groups of premises in the objects, which may be useful for Ukrainian architects, when designing modern Ukrainian churches. The article emphasised the need for introducing new methods of disseminating spiritual knowledge, which required modern approaches to the design of sacral buildings. It was focused particular attention on the topic of integrating public functions into temple architecture, revealed that the building of a spiritual and retreat centre, which combined various social functions, should be designed for visitors comfortable bidding as well as effective internal space organisation. It was proposed an approach to designing temples as multifunctional structures that also served as public spaces. Examples of modern sacral architecture in Europe (Italy, United Kingdom, Norway), the USA and China were given, their functional properties were analysed. The practical significance of this study is based on the application of a comprehensive approach to church design in the context of modern global architectural and social trends

**Keywords:** modern architecture; church; sacrality; multifunctionality; planning; premises; area

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sacral architecture had always played an important role in the life of the city. Temples were not only a place of prayer, but also a centre of cultural, educational and social life of the community. In areas, where the sacral tradition had deep historical roots, temples had always remained symbols of spirituality, culture and social unity. At the same

time, the functions of sacral architecture have evolved, responding to changing social needs and challenges of the time. Modern sacral architecture was developing in the conditions of globalisation, secularisation and new social challenges. Modern temples, in addition to fulfilling traditional religious tasks, integrate new functions into their

**Suggested Citation:**

Gnes, I., & Zaiats, O. (2025). Modern trends in the evolution of the functions of Christian temples in world design practice. *Architectural Studies*, 11(3), 35-47. doi: 10.56318/as/3.2025.35.

Journal homepage: <https://arch-studies.com.ua/en>

*Architectural Studies*, 11(3), 35-47

Received: 01.05.2025 Revised: 06.08.2025 Accepted: 05.09.2025

\*Corresponding author



Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



structure that respond to the needs of the modern society. The changes indicated the desire of temples to remain relevant centres of social life.

Scientists O. Sleptsov & Y. Dunaevskiy (2020) focused on the problem of the emergence of the first church complexes, the functional and spatial-planning organisation of churches and their complexes. The authors also analysed the compositional and architectural-artistic solutions of Christian spiritual centres. Researchers O. Vodotyka & L. Savenok (2017) typified the experience of construction of churches in Ukraine within the framework of historical evolution. The authors drawn attention to the modernisation of the architectural typology of Orthodox churches, and to the methodology for calculating the capacity and area of the main premises of the parish church. The scientists made proposals for the formation of the spatial solution of sacral buildings. O. Druzdiev (2021) analysed sources on the history of the Garrison church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (former Jesuit church), discovered in the fund collections of the Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library. The author M. Khokhon (2020) collected, systematised and revealed new insights into the operation and historical development of the defensive structures of Bernardine Order monasteries in Western Ukraine. Researcher also identified the location, dimensions, and architectural and planning characteristics of the monasteries' fortifications. Researcher O. Diachok (2021) analysed the volumetric and spatial compositions of some sacral buildings, showed that the search for modern symbols that would reflect the national character in church building to create new modern images of the Ukrainian Church continues. For the first time, data on some modern churches in the territory of Western Ukraine were introduced into scientific circulation. Scientist O. Diachok (2020) investigated the architecture of sacral complexes in the territory of modern Ternopil region, which was shaped by a combination of complex socio-political factors.

The author O. Sleptsov *et al.* (2021) analysed and formulated the characteristic features of traditional Ukrainian landscape design, which had authentic roots and was based on minimal interference in the existing natural environment and its maximum use to enhance the properties of architecture. Researcher identified traditional and innovative elements in the landscaping of modern Ukrainian Orthodox churches. Scientists H. Shevtsova & H. Ponomarenko (2020) demonstrated the importance of preserving ancient Ukrainian churches, which carried the genetic memory of the nation, supplement data on the development of sacral architecture, and opened the way for further research. Researchers concentrated on the contribution of the artistic and creative elite to the formation of national identity; highlighted challenges in developing Ukrainian identity linked to historical heritage; examined the impact of social and political factors on Ukrainian sacred architecture, and explored how architecture can visually represent the image of the national church.

K. Holubchak (2021) focused on the architectural and urban planning aspects of spiritual retreat centres, particularly in the context of religious tourism in Europe. The author analysed the modern state of religious tourism in Ukraine and proposed a model for its development by establishing a network of spiritual retreat centres. Researchers B. Cherkes & O. Dyachok (2019) analysed the preservation of sacral buildings in small towns and villages on the lands of Galitsky Podillya. Scientists showed the state of a large number of churches and synagogues in an abandoned state. Although there were many studies and publications devoted to sacral architecture, most of them focused on either historical temples, or only on one specific type of temples public functions. The peculiarities of the development of functions related to religious ones, especially implemented in modern foreign temples, during 1991-2025 not given enough attention. The purpose of the article was to identify the nomenclature of non-religious functions that had appeared in the structure of modern world temples, to determine the relative parameters of premises groups that ensured the implementation of these functions, and the approximated ratio of the areas of these premises.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the aim of this study, a systematic approach was applied to the analysis of scientific literature, architectural and conceptual frameworks, plans related to sacral architecture and its socio-cultural significance. Graphical method was used to visualise the functional zoning of temples, schemes of interaction of sacred and secular space, analysis of visitor flows. This allowed to clearly present the complexity and flexibility of spatial organisation. To study the main architectural structures, the source ArchDaily (n.d.) was used in the research. In addition, the main material for the study was the works of K. Holubchak (2017; 2021). Particular attention was paid to minimising environmental impact and applying the latest technologies for monitoring and desing planning. Correlation methods was used to identify connections between the functional structure of temples and such factors as the size of the community, location, denominational affiliation, year of construction. This allowed to draw reasonable conclusions about the patterns of development of temples in the urban context. Analysis allowed for an objective assessment of the multifunctionality of temple structures, their degree of openness, and their ability to adapt to the various needs of the community. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of methodical planning, design, and construction of sacral spaces (like temples, churches, mosques, or synagogues) based on coherent principles – spiritual, symbolic, cultural, and functional. It helped to ensure that the architecture not only served religious functions, but also reflected theological, cosmological, and ritualistic significance.

The study was focused on the analysis 7 architectural objects: Community church Knarvik, Presbyterian church (USA), Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama, The parish complex of San Martino parish in Bergamo, Mei



Li Zhou church in China, Korean Presbyterian church, Stanbruck Abbey. It was analysed ritual functionality of these buildings, their spiritual and theological foundations, stylistic elements and symbolic content. This foundation was enriched by contemporary research on the sociocultural function of religious buildings, which allowed for a deeper interpretation of the role of temples in the formation of the community identity. The criteria for selecting sources gave preference to materials that highlighted modern world Christian churches, with a focus on the analysis of their multifunctionality development and the influence of regional factors on architectural creativity. Priority was given to publications from the 2010-2025

period, taking into account fundamental research in the field of modern sacral architecture.

## RESULTS

The church strives to be a universal space for the children and youth safe upbringing, a local centre for believers meetings, as well as to promote the development of art, music and cultural enrichment of parishioners. Sacral architecture had deep historical roots, reflecting the multifaceted nature of its tasks in the life of the community. Traditionally, temples served not only as sites of spiritual worship, but also as key hubs for social and cultural activities (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Traditional functions of the church architecture

Church function	Description	Historical examples
The church as a religious building	The main purpose of the church had always been and remained to provide a place for prayer, worship and religious ceremonies. The church building acted as a symbol of faith and the unity of the community around common spiritual values	Any religious building
The church as an educational centre	Historically, churches had served as educational centres. It had schools, where literacy, the basics of religion and moral principles were taught	Roman College, Italy; Saints Peter and Paul Garrison church, Ukraine; Chartres Cathedral, France
The church as a shelter for the needy	Churches often took on a social role – it operated orphanages, hospitals, and soup kitchens for the poor	Saint Lazarus church, Ukraine
The church as a community	Meeting Place Temples were places where the community gathered, where important social issues were discussed, agreements were made, and celebrations were organised. The temple square often became the centre of social life	Any parish churches
The church as a place of archives	Important documents and archives were stored within the walls of churches, which emphasised their role in preserving cultural memory	Admont Abbey Library, Austria; Abbey of Saint Gall, Switzerland
The church as a defensive structure	In certain periods, temples also performed defensive functions, serving as protection for the community in case of danger	Holy Intercession church, Sutkivtsi, Ukraine; Bernardine church, Ukraine; St. Peter's Cathedral, Germany

**Source:** S. Rzhnevsky (2024), Abbey of Saint Gall (n.d.), Bernardine Monastery and St. Andrew's church (n.d.), Our Lady of Chartres Cathedral (n.d.), Palazzo del Collegio Romano (n.d.), Parish group Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Martin worms (n.d.), I. Zhuk (n.d.), Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church (n.d.), The Admont Monastery Library – a masterpiece of the late Baroque period (n.d.)

Thus, the traditional functions of world sacral architecture went far beyond the limits of purely religious significance. It was integrated into all aspects of the life of the city community, ensuring its spiritual, cultural and social development. During 1991-2025, the architecture of religious and educational institutions in Europe was distinguished by a variety of new architectural approaches that corresponded to modern trends. These solutions have become a kind of reaction to the fact that among the main reasons for the decrease in the frequency or complete refusal of people to attend liturgies was the lack of time or reluctance to visit the temple, which was associated with priorities in other areas of life. The reaction to this situation has been the simplification of traditional church canons and the desire of the Vicars of the churches to get closer to society. Therefore, the clergy actively took into account the latest architectural trends and supports modern innovative projects, which contributed to the adaptation of church traditions and rituals to modern conditions. The democratisation of the role of the church had led to the fact that

the church had turned into a multifunctional space that performed not only a religious, but also a social role (a retreat centre, a place of prayer and worship, as well as a space for parish meetings, events, excursions and concerts).

One of the examples was the church design in China. Architects from Tsushima Design Studio (Fig. 1) have developed a church project that would be not only a place for religious ceremonies, but also a space for spiritual rest in the hustle and bustle of the city. During the design process, special attention was paid not only to the functionality of the building, but also to the eco-friendliness of the used building elements and minimising the effect on the surrounding landscape. The architectural complex consisted of three main structures that were autonomous, but at the same time interconnected: the church, a garden chapel with parish offices in the courtyard, and a campanile. In addition, two smaller premises were provided for the parishioners' needs. This project demonstrated a harmonious combination of sacral function with openness and ecological sensitivity.

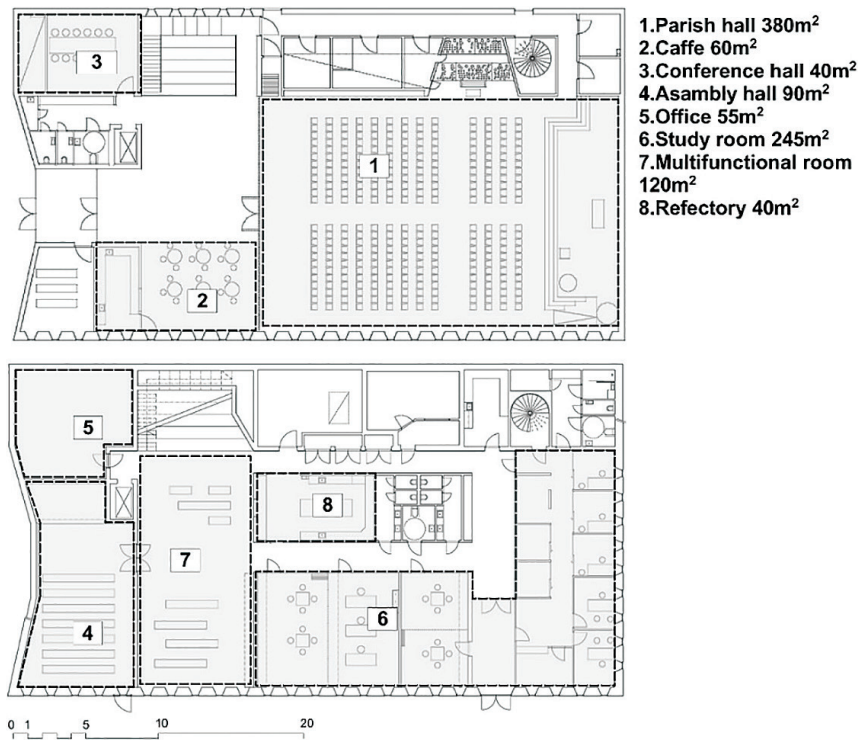




**Figure 1.** Mei Li Zhou church. Tsushima Design Studio  
**Source:** based on Mei Li Zhou Church/Tsushima Design Studio (2010)

Another example of the understanding of modern sacral architecture was the Norwegian project. The architects of the Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter office in the village of Knarvik in Norway, choosing the style of the temple, were

influenced by regional customs of Norwegian wooden temples, using clear geometric shapes, natural materials and modern constructive solutions (Fig. 2). The compact volume of the building was divided into two levels: the first floor was intended for religious services, while the ground performed cultural and administrative functions. Thanks to its innovative approach and central location, the church had become a key centre of religious and cultural life for the village residents, as well as an attractive place for tourists. When creating the style of the church, the architects were influenced by regional customs of Norwegian wooden religious buildings, using distinct, simple geometric shapes, natural materials and reliable structures (Community church Knarvik..., 2014). The compact volume of the building was divided into two floors: the first floor houses the premises for worship, while the ground floor was for cultural and administrative needs, there was also a lift there. This church was an example of a harmonious combination of educational functions with modern sacral architecture. As well as it embodied a modern interpretation of traditional architecture with an emphasis on simplicity and multifunctionality (Holubchak, 2021).



**Figure 2.** Parish complex in the village of Knarvik, Norway

**Source:** based on K. Holubchak (2021)

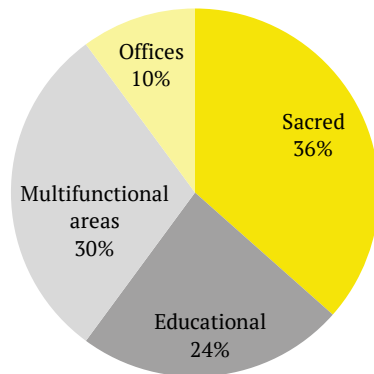
Successful experience of the operation of such buildings in European countries confirmed their relevance for modern society. Spiritual and retreat centres, along with other sacral institutions, unite communities around spiritual centres, contributing to the strengthening of national faith and the spiritual upliftment of the nation. The defining feature of modern sacral buildings was their versatility and

multifunctionality, which was manifested in the addition of sacral core spaces for various spheres of social activity – from leisure and recreation to creativity, education and health improvement. This ensured the comprehensive spiritual development of the individual. The church aimed to become a universal platform for children and youth education, a meeting place for local residents, and to promote



the development of art, music and culture of parishioners. The architecture of the temple shown a strong emphasis on educational and public functions – classrooms, children’s rooms, and a multifunctional hall occupy more than half of the area of the temple complex (Holubchak, 2021). In this temple, approximately half of the space was dedicated to educational and community functions, emphasising its role as a centre of communal life. Adjacent to the worship hall were rooms for catechesis, a café, and a refectory. Figure 3 showed the ratio of the area of the premises of this parish complex to their functional characteristics.

**Parish complex in the village of Knarvik**



**Figure 3.** Ratio of the premises area of the parish complex in the village of Knarvik due to their functional characteristics

**Source:** developed by the authors

The areas of the premises were determined based on the architectural plans of the studied churches. All spaces were grouped into functional categories: sacred (main sanctuary, baptistery, confessionals), educational (classrooms, rooms for children’s activities), public/entertainment (multi-purpose halls, sports facilities, dining areas), and administrative (offices). The areas of the respective spaces were totaled for each category. The total area of the church was taken as 100%, after which the areas of individual functional categories were converted into percentages relative to this total. The floor areas of corridors, storage rooms, and ancillary spaces were excluded. Modern European monasteries offer visitors a wide range of opportunities for spiritual rest. Therefore, in their planning solutions, in addition to traditional premises for everyday life of monks and nuns, areas for pilgrims, tourists or those, who want to spend time in the monastery in search of spiritual enrichment increasingly appear. Such areas included living rooms, classrooms, a conference room, rooms for retreats and a dining room. The laconic architecture of the Stanbruck Abbey complex harmoniously complements the picturesque landscapes from the south side, where the closed part of the monastery was located. This part contained 26 cells, a kitchen, a refectory and workshops, illuminated by maximum natural light (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Stanbruck Abbey complex in United Kingdom  
**Source:** based on Stanbrook Abbey/Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (2015)

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the monastery had a church, a chapel, a chapterhouse and various guest rooms, including a conference room and a bookstore. Modern architecture of institutions of a spiritual and educational direction in Europe was distinguished by the variety of new architectural approaches and the simplification of traditional church canons. The main feature of this trend was the multifunctionality of sacral buildings, which involved the arrangement of additional public spaces with a wide range of functions – from educational to recreational, contributing to the harmonious development of the individual. An example of integrating modern functions into the architecture of a historic temple was the parish complex of San Martino parish in Bergamo. This building was connected to the historic centre through a network of pathways that served not only as circulation routes, but also as spatial elements in their own right (Fig. 5).

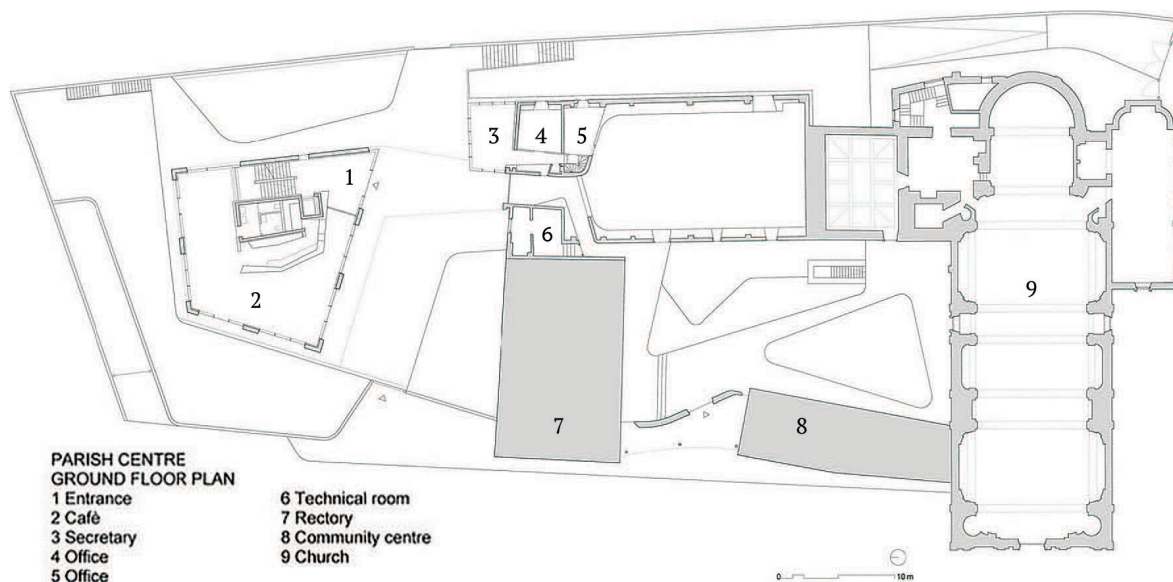


**Figure 5.** The parish complex of San Martino parish in Bergamo, Italy  
**Note:** designed by architect Gianluca Gelmini, 2011  
**Source:** based on Parish Centre/Gianluca Gelmini (2011)



The new addition consisted of three levels: a basement housing the service areas, a ground floor with the main entrance, reception, and a café, and a first floor that included three new classrooms and a direct link to the existing classrooms in the centre. The new block on the ground floor houses the lobby, administrative offices, and a café, and on the first floor there were catechetical classrooms with a passage to the old block and the church. The layout of access routes and connections ensured flexibility, in

how both the entire structure and its individual parts can be used. Wide windows on the ground floor offered wide views of the gardens and the street, giving the structure an open, outward-looking feature that connected it to the village. This created a transitional space between the dynamic atmosphere of the street and the more sheltered environment of the gardens. On the upper floor, the walls turn more solid and enclosed, encouraging an inward-focused atmosphere suitable for catechetical activities (Fig. 6).



**Figure 6.** The ground floor of the parish complex of San Martino parish in Bergamo

**Source:** based on Parish Centre/Gianluca Gelmini (2011)

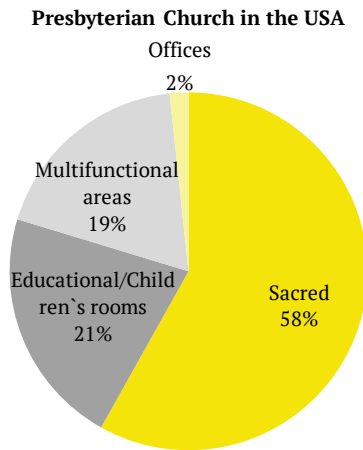
An interesting object was also Korean Presbyterian church made by the architects of the studio “Arcari + Iovino Architects” in 2013. The church served as a spatial and programmatic platform for artistic self-realisation and intergenerational dialogue, particularly among families. This role was not incidental, but embedded in how space was conceived, organised, and activated within the church complex. Contemporary ecclesiastical architecture increasingly moved beyond monofunctional liturgical spaces toward multifunctional, inclusive environments that respond to evolving social, cultural, and intergenerational needs. Enabling artistic self-realisation required spaces that were flexible, accessible, and open to reinterpretation. Multi-purpose halls, open atriums, and modular classrooms within the parish complex can serve as venues for choir practice, iconography workshops, religious theatre, or intergenerational craft-making events. These spaces must support both formal and informal activities, with acoustic, lighting, and material qualities conducive to artistic production and performance (Fig. 7). The worship hall seated 380 believers and was engineered for sound quality to hold musical concerts and events, along with its traditional purpose. Due to its multifunctionality, the space accommodated parishioners before and after the service. This two-story building had an art gallery-mezzanine, where the works of

parishioners were displayed. Cozy seating areas were illuminated by natural light coming through a large dormer window above. The lower level houses children’s chapels for three different age groups, which were used during the adult liturgy (Holubchak, 2021). The area of educational premises and children’s rooms occupied more than a third of the temple area (Fig. 8).



**Figure 7.** Korean Presbyterian church

**Source:** based on Korean Presbyterian Church/Arcari + Iovino Architects (2013)

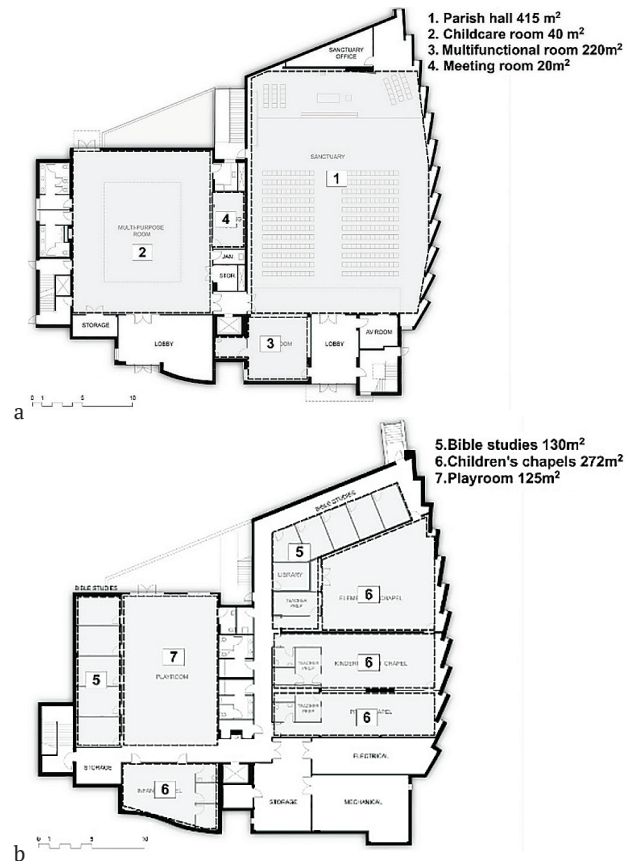


**Figure 8.** Ratio of the premises area of the parish complex in the village of Knarvik due to their functional characteristics

**Source:** developed by the authors

The areas of the premises were calculated based on the architectural plans of the analysed churches. All spaces were classified into functional categories: sacred (main sanctuary, baptistery, confessionals), educational (classrooms, children's activity rooms), public/entertainment (multi-purpose halls, sports facilities, dining areas), and administrative (offices). The total area for each category was then summed. Considering the overall church area as 100%, the proportions of the individual functional categories were expressed as percentages of this total. Floor areas of corridors, storage, and auxiliary spaces were excluded from the calculations. In this way, the church was revealed as a space that fosters artistic self-expression and intergenerational dialogue within the parish community, particularly among families. The areas of the premises were determined based on the architectural plans of the studied church. Beyond its primary liturgical function, the contemporary parish church increasingly operated as a cultural and communal space that nurtured creativity and facilitated meaningful social exchange. Artistic expression – whether through music, visual arts, liturgical performance, or craftsmanship – provided parishioners with opportunities to engage in the life of the church in deeply personal and participatory ways. These creative activities were not merely supplementary, but were integral to the church's broader mission of spiritual formation and community building (Fig. 9). Another object worthy of attention was Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama, Italy. The premises comprised sports and leisure facilities, learning areas, and gathering spaces, forming an urban network that fostered community engagement. The church was built by Studio Contini in Castel di Lama, Italy, in 2019. The architecture of this church emphasised the public life of the parish; entertainment, sports facilities, and meeting places occupied more than a third of the church's area. In this church, the primary community function was centred around sports activities. A significant part of the complex

(about 31% of the church's area) was occupied by sports halls and sport grounds, which served as spaces for the parishioners' active recreation. Such an organisation of space fosters community building through shared sports activities and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle (Fig. 10).

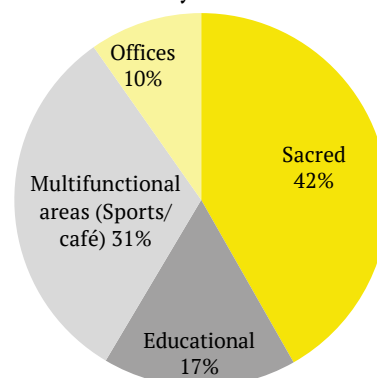


**Figure 9.** Presbyterian church (USA)

**Note:** a – architectural and planning organisation of the 1<sup>st</sup> level of church; b – architectural and planning organisation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of church

**Source:** based on Presbyterian Church in America (n.d.)

#### Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama



**Figure 10.** Percentage ratio of the area of the Church and Community Centre premises in Castel di Lama due to their functional characteristics

**Source:** developed by the authors



The connection with the surrounding settlement was strengthened by a pedestrian walkway that run through the courtyard and led to a large square garden. This space was bounded on the South by a simple wall and a closed portico oriented towards the main road. The spatial connection between the parish complex and the surrounding settlement was articulated through a pedestrian axis that traversed the courtyard and culminated in a large, square garden. This pathway functions as both a physical and symbolic connector, reinforcing the church's integration into the daily life of the community. By facilitating ease of access and visual continuity, the path invited movement and encouraged interaction between the sacred precinct and the broader urban or rural context. It became a transitional space that subtly guides individuals from the public realm into a more reflective and contemplative environment.

The square garden, situated at the heart of this spatial sequence, acts as an intermediary zone between the ecclesiastical architecture and its external surroundings. Its geometric regularity evokes order, clarity, and calm, providing a space conducive to reflection, informal gathering, or liturgical celebrations in an open-air setting. As a designed void within the built environment, the garden contributed to the modulation of the site's spatial rhythm and supported the notion of the church not merely as a destination, but as an integrated node within the community's spatial and social networks. This space was defined along its Southern edge by a modest wall and a closed portico, both oriented toward the main thoroughfare. The wall served as a protective boundary, introducing a degree of spatial enclosure that heightened the sense of entry and transition. Meanwhile, the closed portico – though visually restrained – asserts a subtle presence toward the public street, marking the threshold between the sacred interior and the civic exterior. Its orientation toward the main road reinforces the parish's openness to the wider community, while maintaining a degree of contemplative separation. Together, these architectural elements established a

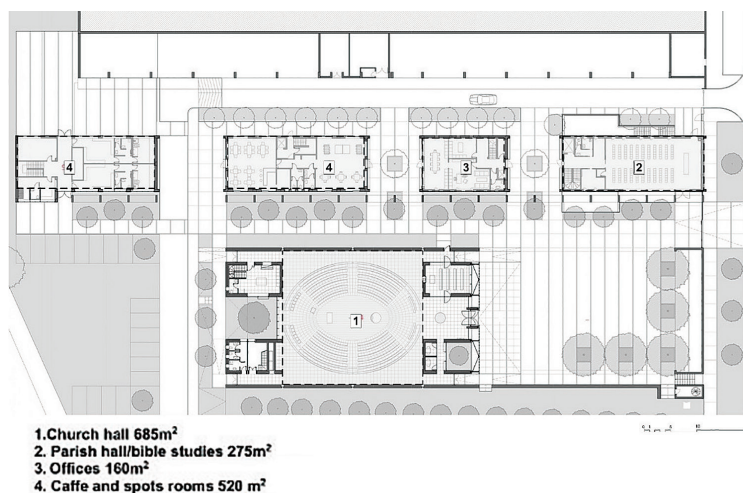
coherent spatial sequence – from the bustling life of the settlement, through a mediating landscape, and into the sacred interior of the church. This progression not only enhanced the legibility and accessibility of the site, but also reinforced its role as a spiritual, cultural, and social anchor within the community (Fig. 11).



**Figure 11.** Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama

**Source:** based on P. Pintos (2019)

Such boundaries created an atmosphere of unity and form an area that met the requirements of the community and group gatherings. A key feature of the project was the public pedestrian path that run through the complex, dividing the church and parish buildings, while also creating potential urban links with the surrounding public spaces. The bell tower, situated near the main street and the settlement, highlighted the parish centre's prominence through its height. The facade of the church, made of travertine slabs, served as a kind of filter that opened the view to the interior of the building. This temple primarily served a public function, focused on sports-related activities. Portions of the complex included gyms and sports facilities, providing a space for parishioners to engage in active leisure (Fig. 12).

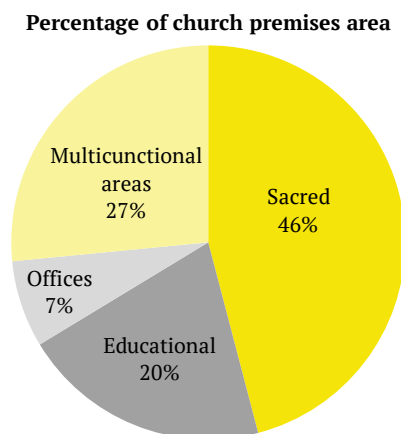


**Figure 12.** Architectural and outlay organisation of the Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama

**Source:** based on P. Pintos (2019)



Based on examined temple complexes, the following ratio of building blocks was compiled: Community church Knarvik, Presbyterian church (USA), and Church and Community Centre premises in Castel di Lama. The average value from each category was taken – “Sacred”, “Multifunctional areas”, “Entertainment (sports/cafe)”, “Offices”; the category “Educational” contained both educational and children’s rooms. Given the area of additional premises, modern churches placed greater emphasis on education and work with children and young families. Multifunctional areas used for entertainment, lectures, or meetings also occupied an important place in the architecture of modern churches (Fig. 13).



**Figure 13.** Approximate percentage of premises area of Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama, Presbyterian church, Parish complex in the village of Knarvik

**Source:** developed by the authors

So, the characteristic feature of modern sacral buildings as well as spiritual and retreat centres was their versatility and multifunctionality. In the addition of the sacral core it was manifested with premises for various spheres of social activity – leisure, recreation, creativity, education, health improvement, which contributed to the harmonious spiritual development of the individual (Sapozhnik, 2024). Among the main functional zones of such buildings, one can distinguish: entrance, sacral, recreational, educational, catering, residential, commercial, administrative and household, technical, economic, exhibition and a group of additional premises. Depending on the main direction of activity, a certain functional group of premises in temple communities acquired a dominant importance. The leading one remained the sacral function, which was key for all public centres at temples. It was concentrated in chapels or prayer halls (naves), which formed the core of the building, and covered the holding of services and spiritual guidance for believers. Along with this, housing provided conditions for overnight stays and short-term stays of pilgrims and participants in retreats; for this reasons cells, rooms or hotel blocks were used. These functions were joined by a retreatment, which was aimed at the visitors spiritual healing through communication with the clergy, prayers, spiritual practices, and participation in retreats. In this context, an important role was also played by the creativity, which was realised through the activities of craft and icon painting workshops, the organisation of creative circles for children and youth, choral studios, and publishing projects. Spiritual and retreat centres can become centres of sacral art, offering halls for listening to spiritual music, choral singing, and artistic meetings (Holubchak, 2017). Table 2 summarised the main functional blocks that were important for the existence of sacred buildings.

**Table 2.** Functional blocks in modern churches

No.	Functional block	Examples of activities
1	Religious	Participation in worshipping (masses, liturgies)
2	Educational (catechetical)	Catechetical schools, Sunday schools for children
3	Entertainment (cultural and educational)	Libraries, museums, exhibition centres, lecture halls
4	Production	Publishing of religious magazines and newspapers
5	Charity	Activities of social services, houses of mercy, rehabilitation institutions, soup kitchens, pilgrimage hotels
6	Recreation and leisure	Organisation of creative circles and studios (art, sports, music, theater), support for youth organisations, camps, activities of pilgrimage services

**Source:** developed by the authors

The spatial organisation of temples also found its expression in the museums, embodied in the work of exhibition halls of sacral art, which were aimed at cultural education, the development of aesthetic taste and spirituality of society. It should be noted that a significant part of visitors to community centres at temples may be inactive Christians, for whom faith was rather a symbol of national identity, history and culture. It was for such people that the museum function can become the first step towards a deeper understanding of faith. In addition, the

economic needs that have long been the basis for monastic life were met through gardening and growing vegetables and fruits – such activities still remain a way of expressing faith through work. In parallel, there was a commercial component that contributed to the temple financial support. The funds received from the organisation of fairs, the sale of spiritual literature, handicrafts and icons were used for the maintenance and development of the institution. Educational function was also important, which was aimed at the comprehensive development of the personality and





its spiritual growth through the study of the basics of religion and the Bible. It was implemented through the work of Sunday schools and can be effectively implemented in churches by organising conferences, courses, forums and seminars on religious topics. For this reason, it was necessary to provide premises such as classrooms, lecture halls, conference rooms, libraries, reading rooms, as well as specially equipped children's spaces for the catechisation of the youngest visitors (Holubchak, 2017).

Modern church life also included a recreational function, which was implemented through the organisation of Christian camps and festivals, conferences and concerts of spiritual music. At the same time, new youth organisations were emerging that popularise Christian values and education, involving like-minded people in interesting activities – watching religious films, master classes, foreign language courses, learning crafts, organising pilgrimage tours, excursions, youth balls, festivals and sports tournaments. All this required the presence of an appropriate spatial base: assembly halls, art studios, concert and exhibition spaces, sports halls. Finally, an important place was occupied by the missionary (charitable) function, aimed at rehabilitation and providing material and spiritual assistance to those in need. Charitable activities at churches included the creation of houses of mercy (such as the City of Mercy of St. Nicholas at the parish of Cyril and Methodius in the village of Krykhiivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk region), church boarding schools, medical centres, and free soup kitchens.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study have highlighted that Christian temples, traditionally understood as churches, cathedrals, and chapels, have undergone significant functional and design transformations throughout history. Modern Christian temples increasingly served multifunctional roles beyond purely religious ceremonies. It often acted as community centres, cultural hubs, and spaces for social services, including education, health outreach, and charity. By examining design implication modern architects prioritised flexible, adaptable interiors with movable seating and multi-use rooms. Facilities might include classrooms, meeting halls, galleries, and even cafes. Some churches incorporated community kitchens, art exhibitions, or youth centres. The discussion aimed to explore ecumenical and interfaith use of religious buildings. With rising interfaith dialogue and ecumenism, some Christian temples were designed or adapted for shared worship or interdenominational use. This trend reflected a global movement toward religious tolerance and cooperation.

Scientists Yu. Ivashko *et al.* (2019) pointed out technological integration – technology profoundly impacts modern church design, transforming worship and community engagement. From 2019 there appeared so called digital worship due to the pandemic. Incorporation of high-quality audiovisual systems enabled live streaming, virtual participation, and multimedia-enhanced sermons. The study highlighted that smart building technologies optimised

energy use, lighting, and acoustics, aligning with ecological stewardship values. So, the architects have to take into consideration the aspect of sustainability, while planning the religious building. Also, the research of the study shown that there was a new trend in integration of screens, sound systems, and digital infrastructure, while preserving sacred atmospheres. Besides, environmental consciousness was a dominant theme in contemporary sacral architecture. Scientist M. Mihaljević (2021) analysed this problem and suggested the ways of solving this problem. Christian temples increasingly adopted sustainable materials, green roofs, natural lighting, and energy-efficient systems. Moreover, the use of eco-friendly materials, passive solar design, and integration with natural surroundings can contribute to symbolising harmony between faith and creation.

The study shown that contemporary sacral design practices explored new architectural languages that respected tradition, but express modernity. Some churches moved away from grand, imposing Gothic or Baroque styles toward minimalism, transparency, and openness, symbolising inclusiveness and humility. Also, Yu. Ivashko *et al.* (2020) tried to use light, space, and materiality to create spiritual atmosphere rather than rely on elaborate ornamentation. The research emphasised that in densely populated urban areas, space constraints and changing demographics led to adaptive reuse of existing buildings as Christian temples or hybrid spaces. Researcher S. Pandya (2020) emphasised on this problem in their work. The author have to creatively remodel industrial, commercial, or historic buildings into worship spaces. This trend respected heritage, while responding to contemporary community needs. The evolution of Christian temples in world design practice highlighted a shift from exclusive sacred spaces to inclusive, multifunctional, and technologically integrated community hubs. The author N. Mišćević (2001) suggested the solution of this problem. Sustainability, interfaith openness, and adaptive reuse further characterised this transformation. Architects and church communities collaborated to balance tradition with innovation, creating spaces that served spiritual needs, while engaging meaningfully with modern society. The discussion emphasised that the modern churches were more than religious places; they were visual records of the historical, spiritual, and cultural identity of a community. It reflected the dynamic interplay of tradition, innovation, needs and resilience. This research had expanded knowledge of the function of a modern church and highlighted the importance of designing new religious places, which corresponded to the modern needs of the society.

Researcher A. French & K. Waldner (2024) considered that sacred space was not a static or purely religious phenomenon, but a cultural construct that evolved through design, aesthetics, belief systems, and social use, especially under the influence of modernity. The sacred became a site of negotiation between tradition and innovation, institutional religion and alternative spiritualities, architecture and ritual. F. Ciampa *et al.* (2024) explored the transformation



of sacred spaces (e.g., churches) in New York for new societal functions, with an emphasis on preserving cultural heritage. Scientist V. Miroshnichenko (2022) addressed the challenges of forming Ukrainian identity connected to the historical past; examined the impact of social and political factors on Ukrainian sacred architecture and the potential to represent the national church's image through architectural design; emphasised the significance of Ukrainian sacred architecture in affirming ethnical identity. So, the studies on contemporary sacred architecture highlighted a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, with a strong focus on shaping national identity through spiritual space. Researchers emphasised the symbolic and social significance of newly built churches, especially in the post-1990 period, where sacred architecture had become a medium for cultural revival. Scientists explored, how historical forms, such as domed temples and wooden churches, were reinterpreted using modern materials, technologies, and minimalist aesthetics. Scholars also addressed the revitalisation of sacred complexes as community centres, the emergence of neomodernism in religious architecture, and the search for a distinct national style that reflected both historical continuity and modern socio-political realities. These architectural developments served not only religious functions, but also reinforced collective memory, identity, and resilience in the face of modern challenges.

## CONCLUSIONS

Modern sacral architecture continued to perform traditional functions, but had undergone certain changes, adapting to the needs of modern society. These changes were due to secularisation, urbanisation and social challenges, which required churches to adopt new approaches to the organisation of space and functional purpose. The church remained a religious building and retain their main purpose – to be a place of prayer, worship and religious ceremonies, and at the same time, the church acted as a centre

of education. The Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama opened libraries and created multimedia educational spaces that made knowledge accessible to a wide audience. The temple also performed an important function of social service and charity. Churches had social services that helped internally displaced persons and veterans, held charity events, and organised fundraisers and food drives. Churches also had soup kitchens, rehabilitation centres, and support centres for people in crisis situations (for example, Presbyterian church (USA)). Modern churches were becoming places for public and cultural meetings, it hosted concerts of sacral music, theater performances, exhibitions, thematic meetings, and workshops. For example, Mei Li Zhou church were often equipped with multifunctional halls that were used for conferences, festivals, or film screenings. A new function of churches had also become the provision of psychological and emotional support. Group therapy, consultations with psychologists or spiritual mentors were organised in churches. Also, Parish complex in the village of Knarvik (Norway) served as recreation and leisure centres. Increasingly, spaces for recreational activities were being created at churches: gyms, multifunctional halls for dance and sports clubs, cafes, workshops and libraries. In further study, it is advisable to concentrate on modern trends in church architecture, in particular the use of new materials, technologies and structures, as well as studying the integration of ecological design principles into modern sacral buildings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

## FUNDING

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abbey of Saint Gall. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.stiftsbezirk.ch/en/abbey-of-st-gall>.
- [2] ArchDaily. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/>.
- [3] Bernardine Monastery and St. Andrew's church. (n.d.). *Lviv Travel*. Retrieved from <https://lviv.travel/en/places/attractions/monastir-bernardiniv-ta-tserkva-sv-andriia-280?srsId=AfmBOorvD3DxdZVtCWOGzbSCvaetxrPcytfkrmHBwzSSm-YcQdo808e>.
- [4] Cherkes, B., & Dyachok, O. (2019). Problems of maintenance of sacral buildings on an example in small cities and villages of Western Podillya. *Space and Form*, 37, 9-16. doi: 10.21005/pif.2019.37.B-01.
- [5] Ciampa, F., De Medici, S., & Pinto, M.R. (2024). Adaptive reuse of sacred architecture in New York City. In O. Niglio (Ed.), *Culture of the sacred space* (pp. 55-67). Cham: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-69634-3\_5.
- [6] Community church Knarvik/Reiulf Ramstad Architects. (2014). *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/574811/community-church-knarvik-reiulf-ramstad-arkitekter>.
- [7] Diachok, O. (2020). *Forming of the architecture of sacred complexes under the influence of social and political processes (on the example of Ternopil region)*. (Doctoral dissertation, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine).
- [8] Diachok, O. (2021). Architecture of Basilian monasteries in the process of forming the sacred image of the cities of Ternopil region. *Current Problems of Architecture and Urban Planning*, 60, 12-22. doi: 10.32347/2077-3455.2021.60.12-22
- [9] Druzdiev, O. (2021). Sources for the history of Saints Peter and Paul Garrison church (the former Jesuit church) discovered in the funds of Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv. *NaUKMA Research Papers. History*, 4, 91-95. doi: 10.18523/2617-3417.2021.4.91-95.





- [10] French, A., & Waldner, K. (Eds.). (2024). *Modernity and the construction of sacred space*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg. doi: 10.1515/9783111062624.
- [11] Holubchak, K. (2017). [Features of the architectural organisation of spiritual and retreat centres in Europe](#). *Urban Development and Spatial Planning*, 63, 77-87.
- [12] Holubchak, K. (2021). The design thinking methodology in architectural education as an innovative tool of creativity formation of future architects. *Urban Development and Spatial Planning*, 76, 63-70. doi: 10.32347/2076-815x.2021.76.63-70.
- [13] Ivashko, Yu., Kuzmenko, T., Shuan, L., & Peng, C. (2019). The influence of the natural environment on the transformation of architectural style. *Scientific Journal of Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies: Landscape Architecture and Art*, 15(15), 98-105. doi: 10.22616/J.LANDARCHART.2019.15.11.
- [14] Khokhon, M. (2020). Defense buildings of Bernardin's order monasteries of Western Ukraine in XVII-XVIII centuries. *Bulletin of Lviv Polytechnic National University. Series of Architecture*, 2(2), 212-220. doi: 10.23939/sa2020.02.212.
- [15] Korean Presbyterian Church/Arcari + Iovino Architects. (2013). *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/468595/korean-presbyterian-church-arcari-iovino-architects>.
- [16] Mei Li Zhou church/Tsushima Design Studio. (2010). *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/298147/mei-li-zhou-church-tsushima-design-studio>.
- [17] Mihaljević, M. (2021). Religious architecture. In E.C. Schwartz (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Byzantine art and architecture* (pp. 309-330). Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190277352.013.48.
- [18] Miroshnichenko, V. (2022). [Development of the Ukrainian identity of border guards in the context of national security of the state](#). In *Innovative scientific research in the field of pedagogy and psychology: Materials of the International scientific and practical conference* (pp. 120-123). Zaporizhzhia: Classical Private University.
- [19] Mišćević, N. (2001). Is national identity essential for the identity of persons? In *Nationalism and beyond: Introducing moral debate about values* (pp. 217-238). Budapest: Central European University Press. doi: 10.1515/9789633865286-015.
- [20] Our Lady of Chartres Cathedral. (n.d.). *The Cathedral*. Retrieved from <https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/>.
- [21] Palazzo del Collegio Romano. (n.d.). *Roma*. Retrieved from <https://www.turismoroma.it/en/places/palazzo-del-collegio-romano>.
- [22] Pandya, S. (2020). Architecture in National Identities: A critical review. *National Identities*, 22(4), 381-393. doi: 10.1080/14608944.2020.1812825.
- [23] Parish Centre/Gianluca Gelmini. (2011). *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from [https://www.archdaily.com/487164/parish-centre-gianluca-gelmini?ad\\_medium=gallery](https://www.archdaily.com/487164/parish-centre-gianluca-gelmini?ad_medium=gallery).
- [24] Parish group Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Martin worms. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://bistummainz.de/pfarrgruppe/worms-dom-st-peter/>.
- [25] Pintos, P. (2019). Church and Community Centre in Castel di Lama/Studio Contini. *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/940463/church-and-community-centre-in-castel-di-lama-studio-contini>.
- [26] Presbyterian Church in America. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://pcanet.org/>.
- [27] Rzhovsky, S. (2024). Unique fortress-church of the holy intercession in Sutkivtsi. *Ukraine Travel Blog*. Retrieved from <https://ukrainetrek.com/blog/architecture/holy-protection-fortress-church-in-sutkivtsi/>.
- [28] Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church. (n.d.). *Lviv Travel*. Retrieved from <https://surl.li/tfitmx>.
- [29] Sapozhnik, O. (2024). Church music of Kyivan Rus in the formation of religious-aesthetic ideals and mental-ideological attitudes of Orthodoxy. *Culture and Contemporaneity*, 26(1), 58-65. doi: 10.63009/cac/1.2024.58.
- [30] Shevtsova, H., & Ponomarenko, H. (2020). Romantic works of wooden sacral architecture of architect Oleg Sleptsov: World and national ideas of form creation. *Architectural Bulletin of KNUBA*, 20-21, 73-106. doi: 10.32347/2519-8661.2019.20.73-106.
- [31] Sleptsov, O., & Dunaevskiy, Y. (2020). Creation of modern Orthodox churches in Ukraine – “as languages of Ukrainian autochthony” in the context of urban development”. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 907, article number 012079. doi: 10.1088/1757-899X/907/1/012079.
- [32] Sleptsov, O., Ivashko, Yu., Dmytrenko, A., & Krupa, M. (2021). The contemporary churches in the natural environment: Modernization of landscape traditions. *Landscape Architecture and Art*, 19(19), 121-130. doi: 10.22616/j.landarchart.2021.19.12.
- [33] Stanbrook Abbey/Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios. (2015). *Arch Daily*. Retrieved from <https://www.archdaily.com/792317/stanbrook-abbey-feilden-clegg-bradley-studios>.
- [34] The Admont Monastery Library – a masterpiece of the late Baroque period. (n.d.). *Benedictine Abbey of Admont*. Retrieved from <https://stiftadmont.at/en/about-the-abbey-library/>.
- [35] Vodotyka, S., & Savenok, L. (2017). [Urban space, decommunisation and the problems of historical memory](#). *City: History, Culture, Society*, 1, 119-133.
- [36] Zhuk, I. (n.d.). Saint Lazarus church. *Lviv Interactive*. Retrieved from <https://lia.lvivcenter.org/en/objects/kopernyka-27-church/>.

**Ігор Гнесь**

Доктор архітектури, доцент  
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»  
79013, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Львів, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0810-7681>

**Остап Заяць**

Аспірант  
Національний університет «Львівська політехніка»  
79013, вул. Степана Бандери, 12, м. Львів, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0026-2812>

## Сучасні тенденції еволюції функцій християнських храмів у світовій практиці проєктування

**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження полягала у вивченні трансформаційної ролі релігійних споруд у сучасному суспільстві, їхньої багатофункціональності. Метою статті було визначення номенклатури світських функцій, що з'явилися у структурі сучасних храмів світу. У статті було розглянуто приклади сучасних християнських церков світу з точки зору розвитку їхньої багатофункціональності для виконання не лише релігійних, але й суспільних функцій. Було приділено увагу архітектурно-планувальним особливостям поєднання різних функцій в одному комплексі: релігійних, культурних, освітніх, комерційних, офісних. Наведено результати аналізу співвідношення площ приміщень різних груп у досліджуваних об'єктах, що може бути корисним для українських архітекторів при проєктуванні сучасних українських храмів. У статті наголошено на необхідності впровадження нових методів поширення духовних знань, що вимагало сучасних підходів до проєктування сакральних споруд. Особливу увагу було зосереджено на темі інтеграції суспільних функцій в архітектуру храмів; виявлено, що будівля духовно-реколекційного центру, яка поєднувала різні соціальні функції, має бути спроектована для забезпечення комфортного перебування відвідувачів і ефективної організації внутрішнього простору. Запропоновано підхід до проєктування храмів як багатофункціональних структур, що одночасно слугували громадськими просторами. Наведено приклади сучасної сакральної архітектури Європи (Італії, Великої Британії, Норвегії), США та Китаю, проаналізовано їхні функціональні особливості. Практичне значення дослідження ґрунтується на застосуванні комплексного підходу до проєктування церков у контексті сучасних світових архітектурних і соціальних тенденцій

**Ключові слова:** сучасна архітектура; церква; сакральність; багатофункціональність; планування; приміщення; площа

