

Buildings

Maccreegor Lavington
Architects, Cullinan Studio,
Caswell Bank, Lee Boyd

Online

Visit architecturetoday.co.uk
to see new work, including
projects by Walters & Cohen,
Stephen Coates, Richard Keep
Architects and Jonathan Burrow

Church Service

Lee Boyd creates a welcoming
centre for religious worship and
public life in Monifieth

Photos

Keith Hunter

Monifieth Parish Church is a new building designed to bring together three existing congregations, and meet their varying needs. Each congregation gave up an existing 'traditional' but impractical or uncomfortable church building to fund a "new church for the twenty-first century" – an ambition that has taken more than a decade to realise.

Designed by Edinburgh-based Lee Boyd, the building occupies a prominent site on the High Street of Monifieth and is intended as a landmark for the town, which sits on the north bank of the Firth of Tay, about 10 kilometres east of Dundee. Having won a limited competition for the project, and following an initial options appraisal and user consultations, the architect made a proposal for a "bold, modern church... at the heart of the local community", which was agreed as the best way forward.

The new building replaces an under-used suite of halls associated with one of the original churches. "The location was vital in the understanding of what role the church should have in the coming years", says the architect. "While the design intent was always to create an impressive place of worship – a spiritual home for the congregation – the building and its spaces were also to feel inclusive, flexible and very accessible to the people of Monifieth". Consequently the plan places the sanctuary right on the street, with a glazed 'shop window' allowing views in from passers-by and reminding congregants of their connection to community life. "Breaking down the barriers between church and community is increasingly vital to ensure both the survival of church buildings and the sustainability of healthy congregations", says the architect.

Another principal idea of the brief was that the new building should not be overtly religious, either externally or internally. The architects were concerned to avoid "potentially intimidating" elements of church architecture (such as pews, stepped thresholds and high stained-glass windows), instead aiming for a building with some civic presence that "should be as comfortable accommodating a large church service as a community event".



Left, right, above

The sanctuary addresses the High Street while the divisible meeting hall is located to the rear of the site.

Top

Glazing opens the sanctuary to the street.



Key

1 Entrance/reception	8 Tea prep
2 Office	9 Flowers
3 Foyer	10 Chancel
4 Meeting room	11 Sanctuary
5 Kitchen	12 Store
6 Vestry	13 WC
7 Cloaks	14 Sanctuary lobby



Top
Long section and ground-floor plan; view of meeting hall. The programme for the project was to provide a flexible worship space for up to 250 people, a main hall that can be subdivided into smaller meeting spaces, a generous foyer and appropriate ancillary spaces.

Above, right
Views through the sanctuary towards the chancel and the sanctuary lobby; foyer space.



The building's street front follows an adjacent ground-floor plinth line, above which the more distinct volume of the sanctuary rises. The 'plinth' is faced in stone while textured brickwork enlivens the upper part, and the roofs are finished in standing seam zinc. Construction of the steel-framed building is "relatively traditional", says the architect, "however the levels of insulation are very generous and a photovoltaic array supports the sustainability strategy".

The project's long gestation is accounted for both by planning objections (successfully overturned by a Local Review Body) and by costs, with efficiencies being sought both before and after the project was tendered in order to deliver the £2.2m building within budget. Nevertheless, notes the architect, "the interiors, controlled with a consistent design language and use of natural materials, are flooded with daylight from all angles and are imbued with an attention to detail not always possible in new community buildings".

Construction commenced in early 2018 and completed in late 2019, and the building is now host to a diverse and busy schedule of public and church activities. ↗