

What buildings are there?

Before you as a congregation start looking at this option, I would advise you to first look at what you need as a church. On our page 'Vision on a building', you can take a step-by-step approach to describing what your vision is, who you are as a church, and how that translates to a church building.

In the search for a building for your denomination, it is very important to know what to look for. In this way you can realistically look at the available options and adjust your wishes and requirements where necessary.

Below we will briefly explain what options there are. We will also go into the pros and cons, average price indication etc. Our goal is to explain what the possibilities are for each route, purchase and rental.

Broadly speaking, there are 4 main "flavors" in terms of buildings for churches:

1. **The traditional church building**
2. **Social property**
3. **Commercial property**
4. **Other/Hospitality: Theatre halls, concert halls, former hotels, conference halls.**

1. The traditional church building.

The most logical building to use as a church is a church building. This building is specially constructed and equipped to serve a denomination. In contrast to most European countries, church buildings are not owned by the state. The (local) church communities own the buildings. Often these buildings are financed with the donations of the church members.

Definition of traditional church building:

"A building that looks like the church building drawn by a child or a random person. A building appears with a tower, a nave, a cross or cock on the tower, a bell, tall windows. " ¹

There are different types of church buildings, each with their own form and layout. The most important aspect of traditional church buildings in the Netherlands is that they are almost always located in a residential area. This has to do with the vision to be a church in the middle of society.

Most church buildings are broadly owned by the Catholic Church or the PKN (Protestant Church). With emphasis on 'most buildings', there are of course exceptions. Because of this, each church movement has a different view on selling or renting their building.

Catholic Church:

- a) **Rentals:** the general rule is that the building is rented only to Catholics, because this is a holy place. Some buildings however have separate spaces that they do rent to non-catholic churches. However, locally this is handled differently by priests and bishops.



1 Living stones. A theology of church property. Petra Stassen, page 158

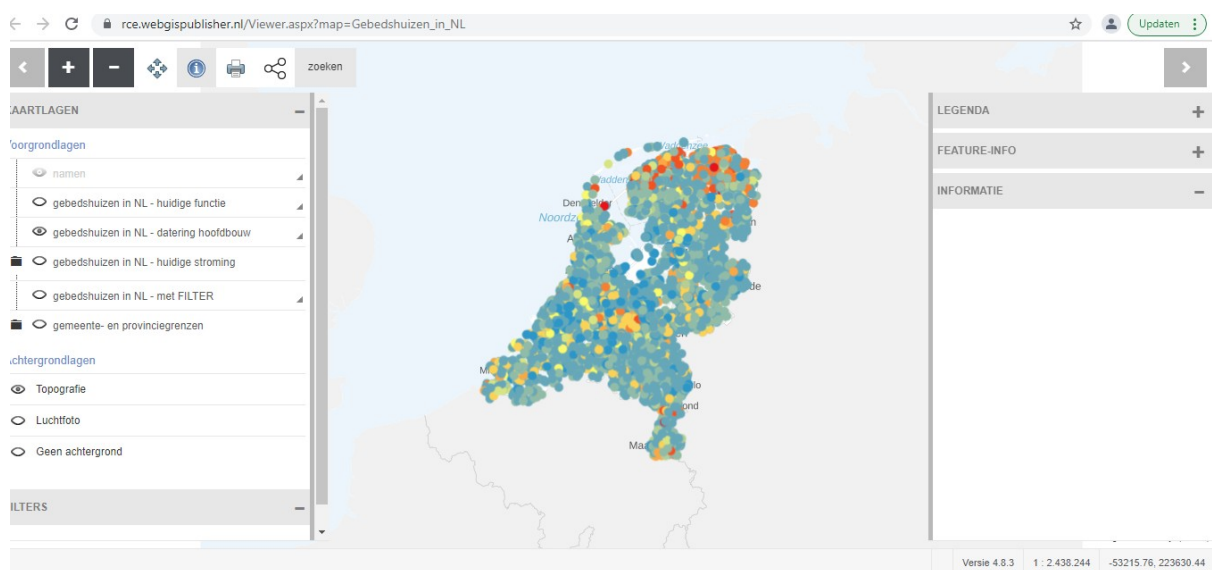
- b) **Sale/Redevelopment:** officially the Catholic Church is open for sale to another denomination, but preferably a denomination affiliated with the Council of Churches. ²
- c) **Characteristics of buildings:** Catholic buildings have elements that are not accepted by other movements. Think of statues, icons etc.



Protestant Church:

- d) **Rentals:** Many local PKN churches are open to renting out to other denominations. Please note that this rental is based on time slots. In simple terms this means that you, as a church community, determine in advance the hours when you can make use of the church building.
- e) **Sale/Redevelopment:** Within the PKN, local church boards, or local stewards, are responsible for the actual sale of their buildings. In general, the vision is to preferably sell a church building to a church. However, it can also be the case that they prefer to sell it to a project developer for a high return. The background is often that a financial impulse is needed to maintain other church buildings.

On the website https://rce.webgispublisher.nl/Viewer.aspx?map=Gebedshuizen_in_NL, the Rijksdienst voor het Culturele Erfgoed has set up a database containing all 7,100 places of worship in the Netherlands. This way you have a good overview of where the church buildings are in your town or village. Please note; this does not state which buildings are for sale or rent.



2 Living stones, a theology of church property. Petra Sassen, page 107

Benefits:

- No hassle with the destination plan.
- When renting; the owner understands the needs of a church. Also, not too many changes are needed.
- Upon purchase; the building is retained for worship.

Disadvantages:

- The building is always in a residential area. For churches with fully amplified bands, it could well cause a problem.
- When buying; research well what the maintenance costs will be.
- For rent. You're bound by time locks and on a Sunday you share the building with other churches.

2. Social property

Social real estate is a collective name for a building or area with a public function in the field of:

- Education
- Sport
- Culture
- Welfare
- Social Care
- And/or (medical) care



Secondary school Poplar The Hague

Examples of social property:

- Schools
- Neighbourhood houses
- Reception centres
- Sports facilities
- Churches
- Cultural centres
- Libraries



There are various definitions of Social Real Estate. For some, social real estate means a building with a public function, financed from public funds.³ The other defines social real estate as a business property with added value for society.⁴ As far as we are concerned, both definitions apply. Think of the school building or community centre that is financed by public funds. But on the other hand church buildings and medical care buildings which are not financed by public funds but are of social importance.

The most important thing you need to know about social property as a church body is that it is primarily owned by local civic councils. That goes without saying because it is funded from public monies.

Social real estate is interesting for churches because it fits the purpose well. A church can move in without much hassle. In general, these buildings are only rented out on the basis of time slots. This

3 <https://www.bouwstenen.nl/maatschappelijkvastgoed>, 29-07-2021

4 <https://www.bouwstenen.nl/maatschappelijkvastgoed>, 29-07-2021

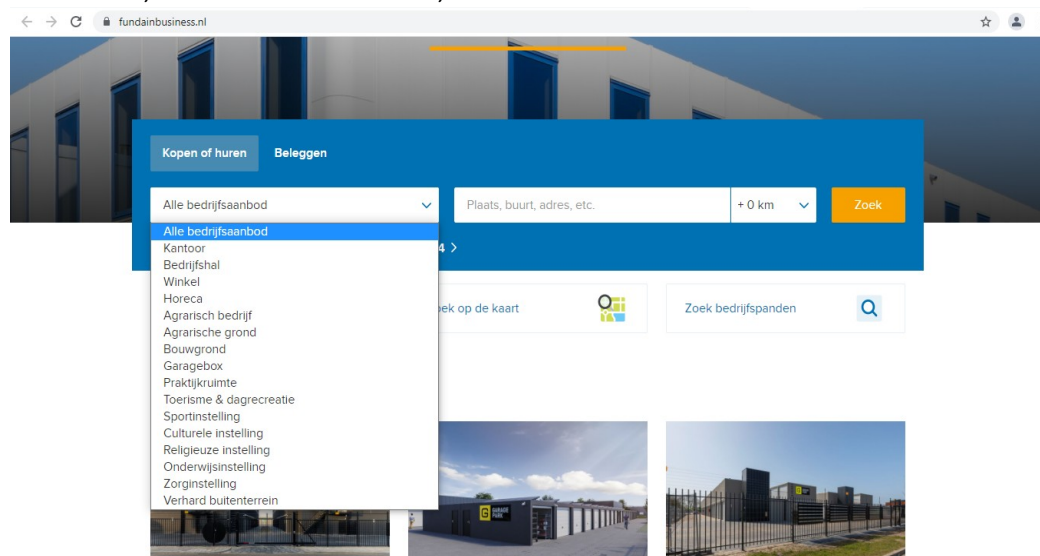
means that a fixed time is agreed upon, during which the church can use the hall or building. Think of a sports canteen in a swimming pool, for example.

There are also examples of an office building being converted into a social space. In Capelle aan den IJssel there are "Houses of the district".⁵ In this building there are several welfare organisations but also a church denomination that has its own space. This is an example of how a church can have its own space in consultation with the municipality.

Another common solution is to rent the auditorium of a school building. Many churches have started this way because the costs are relative. However, even there you are limited to time slots.

The most important starting point is to get in touch with the local (civil) municipality. They often have on their website all information of all social real estate in their city or village. On the other hand, you can always get in touch with school boards to look at possibilities to rent.

Social real estate is also coming onto the buyers market. local (civic) councils often put these up for sale via local brokers. It is therefore important to keep a close eye on it. The easiest way to do this is to consult the website www.fundainbusiness.nl. You can select cultural institutions, religious institutions, educational institutions, etc.



Benefits:

- Fits perfectly in the destination plan. In some municipalities there can be an additional requirement that there must be a religious destination.
- Great for starting churches who want to rent
- Accessible

Disadvantage:

- When hiring; limited in hours.
- When renting; sometimes the municipality can be difficult with extra rules.

⁵ <https://www.welzijncapelle.nu/huis-van-de-wijk>, 29-07-2021

- On purchase; doesn't come on the market that often. And if it comes on the market, then the prices are quite high. However, stay in contact with brokers and the government as much as possible.

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3. Commercial property

By far the largest selection of real estate for legal entities and companies exists of business real estate. Description of business real estate: 'real estate not being a residence, generally office, shop or business premises'. This description also includes social property, however, we will look now to the commercial purpose of the use of the property.

There are different types of business real estate:

- Office buildings
- Shops
- Industrial buildings

Office buildings

Definition of office building: *'An office building is a building, or part of a building, which contains exclusively one or more office functions and related functions.'* It is important to pay close attention to this definition. In fact, it already clearly indicates that it cannot be used primarily as a church or to host people in the form of an event.

There are different types of offices, namely collective buildings, where different legal entities rent a piece of a building. There are also detached office buildings which are used by a single tenant. In general, most offices can be found close to public transport, close to the motorway or at a central location in a town or village.

Benefits office building for churches:

- Working hours of traditional office users fall outside the church services. As a result, there is limited noise pollution.
- The spaces are often more practical especially for start-up churches.
- The entry fee is relatively small but a church gets its own space in return. This allows the church to engage in more activities.
- Mostly there is free parking.

Disadvantages office building for churches:

- Offices are never built with the intention of receiving many visitors at the same time. As a result, the building regulations do not match the use for a church. Think of escape routes, air ventilation systems, kitchens etc. This makes it a high investment to make it suitable.
- The biggest problem is the destination plan, which does not fit with the use as a church. Therefore, before the lease is signed, an application must be submitted to change the destination plan.
- Depending on the location of the office building, parking can be an issue. When constructing any building, a parking standard is used. The parking norm for a church is often higher, which can cause a problem. In that case, pay close attention to whether there is a parking garage nearby that the church can use.



Example of a detached office building in Amersfoort

Industrial buildings

Definition of industrial buildings: 'All real estate intended for the hospitality, retail, or craft industries in which there is a publicly accessible area intended for the direct delivery of movable property or the provision of services.'⁶

There are various types of industrial buildings. Below is a brief overview of the main types:

- Hospitality
- Retail trade
- Craftsmen's business

Hospitality

'Hospitality is the industry that includes all eating, drinking and lodging establishments.'⁷

There are a number of hospitality properties that can be very interesting for a church. The options below will work out best if your denomination rents or purchases the entire building. Renting based on time slots does not align well with all options.

Party Hall. There is always a large main hall, plenty of toilets and a large (company) kitchen. Party halls must adhere to a parking standard, so this can be used well for Sunday services. Also, the halls are often perfectly arranged to hold church services. Think of a stage and soundproof isolation.

⁶ <https://www.amsadvocaten.nl/woordenboek/huurrecht/bedrijfsruimte-230a/>

⁷ <https://www.khn.nl/veelgestelde-vragen/doelgroepen/wat-staat-de-afkorting-horeca-voor>

Advantage: One can have a dual use for the building. On Sundays as a church and the rest of the week rented out as a party all or conference center. This gives the church a stable business case.

Disadvantage: There is little supply of this type of building. And the destination plan needs to be changed before buying or renting the place.



Theater or cinema.



Theater or cinema halls are ideally suited for conversion to church. This is because it is built to receive many visitors seated. Often a large stage is built for this purpose.

A nice example is the Capitol building in The Hague. Currently in use by The Blessing Church (Johan Maasbach, World Mission).

Advantage: Building is often ready to use for a church (depending on the state of maintenance)

Disadvantage: Little supply of this type of building. And the destination plan must be changed before a denomination can proceed to purchase the building.

Retail/Craft Business.

The largest supply of business real estate, aside from offices, is retail/craft businesses. Colloquially, these types of properties are called business halls.

A business hall is a building where there is a workspace, and elsewhere in the building an office space. Companies use the workspace for storage, for example, and the office space for their computers/laptops. These types of buildings can be of interest to churches. The work space can be used as a church hall and the office space can be divided into a children's area and an office for meetings.



It does pay to look at the destination of the area where you are looking for a building. In practice, it is not always clear what destination applies to a building. Some municipalities choose to link a religious / social function to the main function of the industrial hall. However, this is not always known to the selling / leasing broker or owner. A good example is the Muziekwijk in Almere. The municipality there has determined that an entire industrial area has been given the additional destination 'religion'.

Advantages: Especially for smaller/starting churches, this is the first step towards having your own space. And this at a relatively soft price. Both as a purchase and as a rent this is a good option.

Disadvantages: Generally there is a strict destination regime from local governments. Always consult an external advisor (architect/broker) first.

fundainbusiness.nl/religieus/verkocht/almere/object-41244836-operetteweg-45/	
Openen	
Advertentie	
Kenmerken	
Overdracht	
Laatste vraagprijs	€ 595.000 kosten koper
Aangeboden sinds	14 maart 2021
Status	Verkocht
Eigendomssituatie	Volle eigendom
Bouw	
Hoofdfunctie	Bedrijfshal
Mogelijke functie(s)	Religieuze instelling
Soort bouw	Bestaande bouw
Bouwjaar	2001
Oppervlakten	
Oppervlakte	587 m ²
Perceel	995 m ²