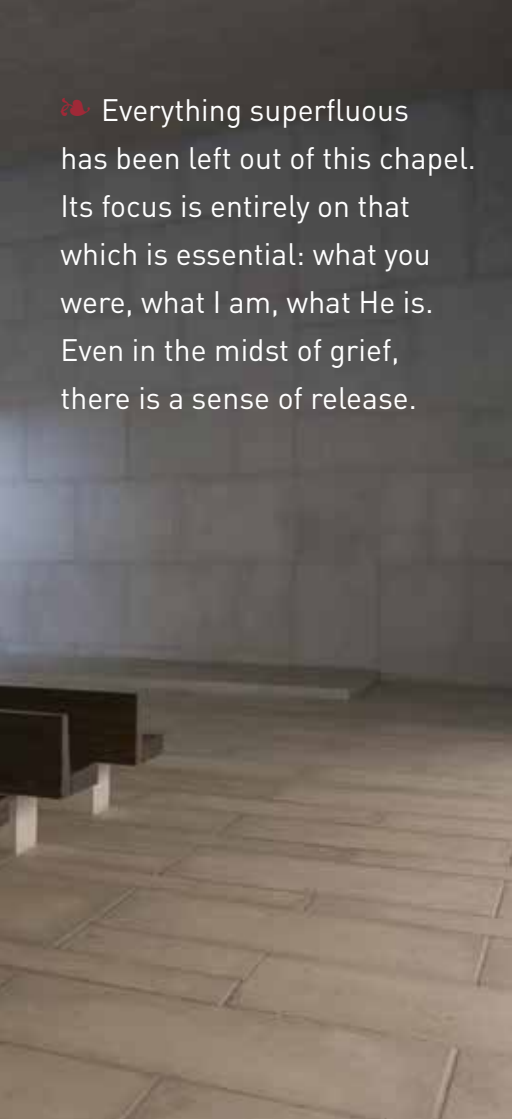


Holy Cross Chapel







Everything superfluous
has been left out of this chapel.
Its focus is entirely on that
which is essential: what you
were, what I am, what He is.
Even in the midst of grief,
there is a sense of release.

Resting Place in a Growing City

Established in 1807 outside the city limits in the Skanssin malmi area, the grounds of the Turku cemetery occupy 1.5 hectares (3¾ acres) of land. In 1877, a funeral chapel was built and served the people of Turku until 1941, when the Resurrection Chapel by architect Erik Bryggman was completed.

The city of Turku grew, and four times during the twentieth century more land was added to the cemetery grounds. The last of these additions, in 1965, increased the total area to 60 hectares (almost 150 acres). Another funeral chapel was needed in addition to the existing Resurrection Chapel.

The Holy Cross Chapel, designed by architect Pekka Pitkänen, was built in 1967 on the south side of the original cemetery, where the new plots began.

Concrete Rebellion

In the 1960s, Finland went through a period of urbanisation: people were moving into the cities from the countryside and suburbs were being built. In the 1950s there had been a reluctance to build houses out of concrete, but in the following decade precast elements of concrete were developed. However, the production of large numbers of box-like houses did not inspire architects to be creative.

Church architecture became an area for creative design. A generation of young designers tried to use concrete to move away from former ideals of style. There was a lot of testing of the material's potential in church buildings, which gave rise to conflict in a number of parishes: was a concrete church robust and festive or quotidian and ugly?



Surrounded by Evergreen

At the end of a large lawn, stands a simple cross. The top of the cross above the crossbar is short, while the outstretched arms seem open and all-embracing. At the other end of the lawn, a grey building with sharp corners is surrounded by gnarly mountain pine and rhododendron bushes. The slope on the north side has been terraced with low concrete walls.

The Holy Cross Chapel is built of concrete. The two-storey building houses three funeral chapels. Upstairs, a large chapel can seat 160 funeral guests, while the smaller one can seat 60 people. A separate urn chapel is where the urn of cremated remains is handed to mourners. On the ground floor there is a small lower chapel, as well as a crematorium and technical rooms.



A Pearl of the Depths

✦ The lobby outside the chapels is reached along walkways with concrete roofing supported on pillars. The lobby itself is simple. A cylinder-shaped clock is a reminder of the passage of time, but there are no numbers on the face of the clock; it is simply divided into 12 parts.

In the lobby a bronze work by sculptor Essi Renvall is called *De profundis*, 'Out of the depths'. The title comes from Psalm 130, a song of ascents, which opens with the words: 'Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.' By depicting a hand holding a clam in which a pearl rests, Renvall's sculpture encapsulates the confident words, 'Man rests in his Maker's hand at journey's end'.

Rough Beauty

✦ The chapel rooms are built of concrete and light. Natural light enters through great expanses of window glass and a row of windows at ceiling height. Yet more light filters in through skylights. The ever-changing daylight brings a sense of life to the concrete.

A rhythmic repetition of concrete rectangles on the floor and walls is varied occasionally by changes in the pattern. Each of the elements was made to measure for the Holy Cross Chapel.

The pulpit is a monolith, a single piece of moulded concrete, as is the altar. The pews rest on concrete legs. In the large chapel, the railings of the organ loft retain a tactile imprint of wood grain from the planks that were used for the mould in which the railings were made.

Few other materials are used. The pews are made of oak. The decorations on the altar are sparse: a darkened bronze cross with a short top section, and silver candlesticks. The organ includes both wood and metal.

In front of the altar is the catafalque, or bier, for the coffin, which is raised into position on a hydraulic lift.





The chapel is ascetic in the extreme, harsh almost. It realises the grim aesthetics of the concrete block, the beauty of which is in its lack of adornment. The simplicity and emptiness allow room for contemplation and sanctity. The simplicity of this unadorned space is in stark contrast to elaborate rituals and material excess.

Art of the Sparse

• The architect Professor Pekka Pitkänen is a well-known modernist and minimalist whose buildings epitomise the oft-quoted minimalist motto, 'Less is more'. In the Holy Cross Chapel, as in other buildings by Pitkänen, geometric shapes and the relationships between them are key.

Other buildings in Turku designed by Pitkänen are the churches in Pallivaha and Hirvensalo, the Åbo Akademi University's Student Body dormitory building called Domus Aboensis, and the central housing estate of Suikkila.



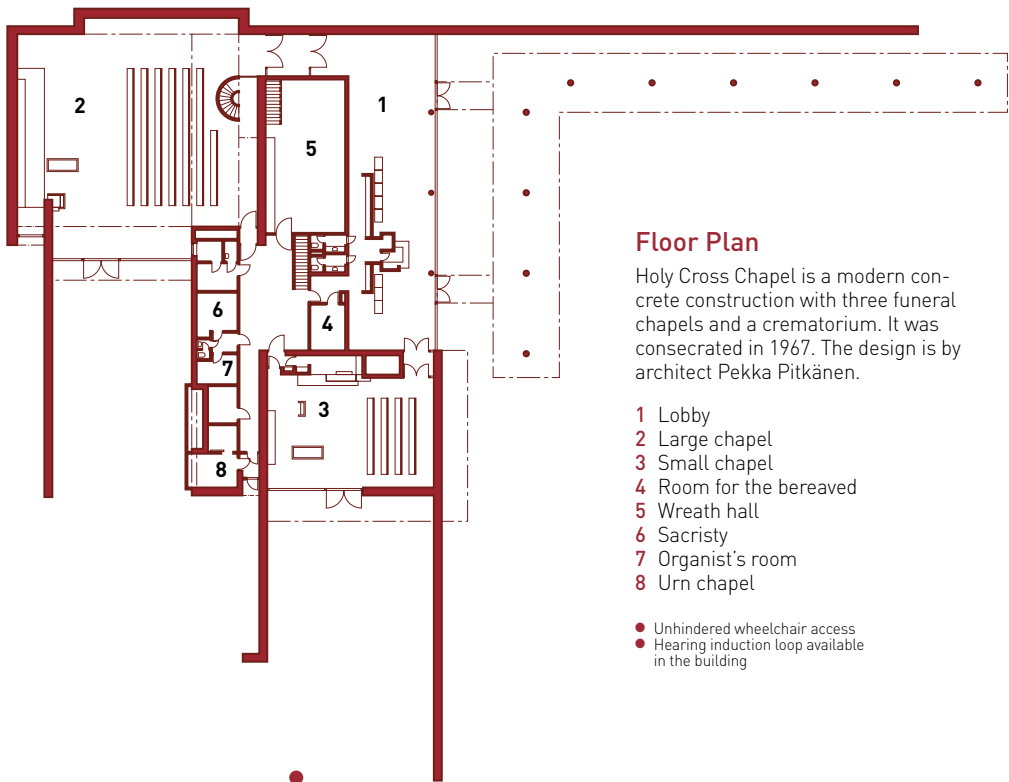
Four Instruments

✦ In the large chapel, the narrow rows of pipes visible on the organ loft were specifically designed by Pekka Pitkänen. The organ was manufactured by the company Kangasalan Urkutehdas in 1967, and retuned in 2010 by the Swedish company Krischer Intonation.

The organ pipes in the small chapel are positioned by the chapel wall. They too came from Kangasalan Urkutehdas in 1967. This organ was enlarged by Urkurakentamo Veikko Virtanen in 1989. The lower chapel has an electric organ from 1998.

The chapel's bell tower stands on a nearby hill, which allows the peal of bells to be heard throughout the large cemetery.





Floor Plan

Holy Cross Chapel is a modern concrete construction with three funeral chapels and a crematorium. It was consecrated in 1967. The design is by architect Pekka Pitkänen.

- 1 Lobby
- 2 Large chapel
- 3 Small chapel
- 4 Room for the bereaved
- 5 Wreath hall
- 6 Sacristy
- 7 Organist's room
- 8 Urn chapel

- Unhindered wheelchair access
- Hearing induction loop available in the building

Turku and Kaarina
Parish Union



Holy Cross Chapel

Skarppakullantie 2, 20720 Turku

For more information about the Chapel:

www.turunseurakunnat.fi