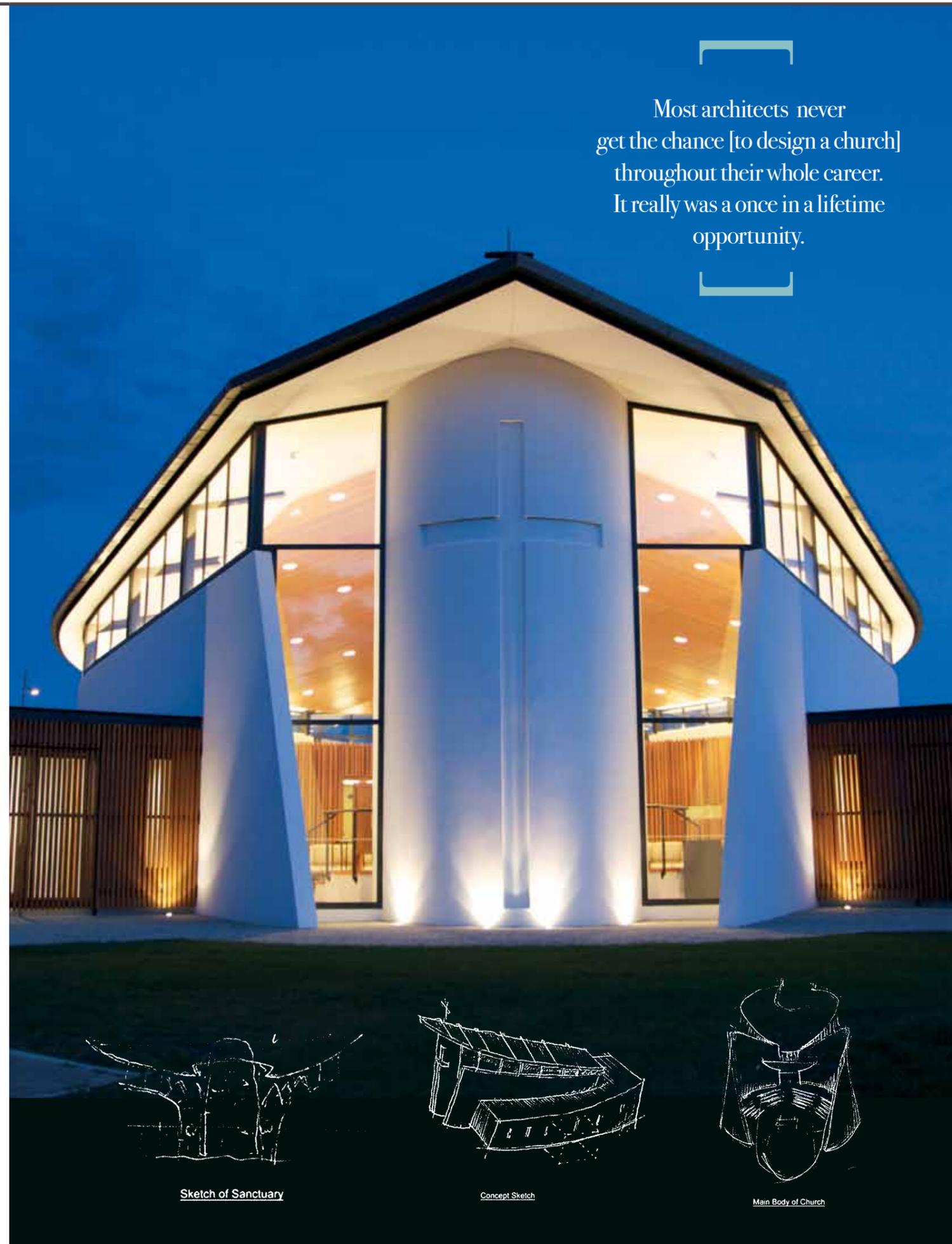


A leap of faith

What do you get when you combine the architectural skills of an Irish born Catholic and a self-confessed lapsed Presbyterian Kiwi? The answer is an award winning Catholic Church in Wanaka.



Most architects never get the chance [to design a church] throughout their whole career. It really was a once in a lifetime opportunity.



Back left to right: Jen Nelson, Barry Condon, Lesley Davies, Dylan Thomson. Front Sarah Scott and office mascot Zac the dog.

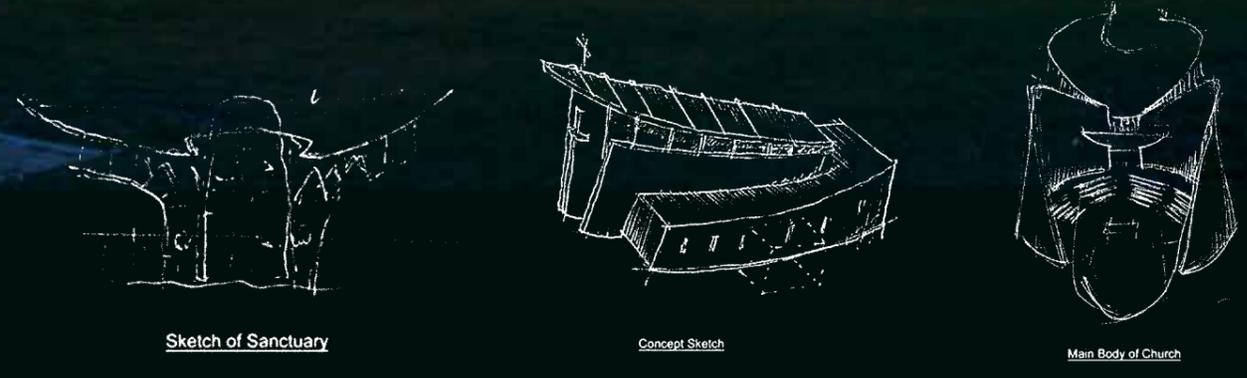
PHOTO: COURTESY www.alpinemages.co.nz

THE HOLY FAMILY Catholic Church, designed by Wanaka firm Sarah Scott Architects, has won a New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) Award for Southern Region Public Architecture.

Wanaka architect Sarah Scott and business partner Barry Condon are the inspired team behind the winning design. Their submission was selected from invited architecture firms throughout the country to design a new Catholic Church on Aubrey Road.

Sarah, whose firm has been based in Wanaka for twenty years, was incredibly excited when the opportunity arose. "It is not every day that you're invited to design a new church. Most architects never get that chance throughout their whole career. It really was a once in a lifetime opportunity."

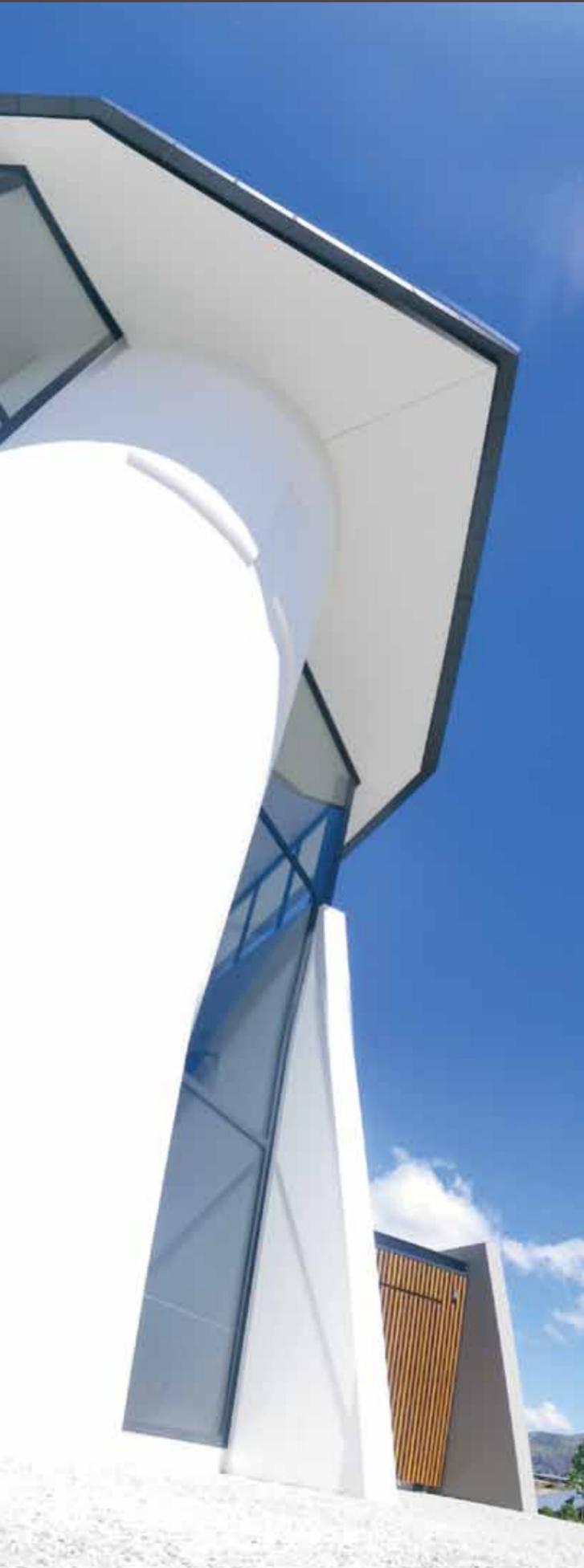
The Catholic Church building committee had a very specific list of needs in their brief to the architectural firms. Critically the church needed to be multi-functional as it was going to sit right next to the Holy Family Catholic School and would be used as a gathering space for the children as well as its primary function as a church. Wanaka is a seasonal town and the design needed to be able to adapt to the large numbers of churchgoers during the busy times of the year and yet not feel cavernous during a smaller intimate mid-week service.



Sketch of Sanctuary

Concept Sketch

Main Body of Church



The first challenge facing Barry and Sarah was how to approach the design, as Barry explains: “The issue for us was how to create a sacred space that would sit comfortably in the 21st century. We had 2000 years of history that we could refer back to, but we still needed a space that was progressive and met the specifics of the brief. We also wanted to build a solid structure that was going to be here in a hundred years’ time.”

For Catholic-raised Barry, the understanding of the church’s requirements was not difficult to grasp. However, Sarah did admit to heading to the library to brush up on her understanding of Christian terminology!

From the very start of the design process, Sarah and Barry independently came up with very similar concepts.

“We started with a cruciform plan, the very traditional Christian cross. At the head of the cross we had the altar and at the base we had the entry. On the other two arms of the cross are the children’s liturgy room and the chapel. We then in-filled between these features with the other functions; the bathrooms, an apartment for the priest, an office and flower arranging room. The major gathering space is contained in the middle of the building.”

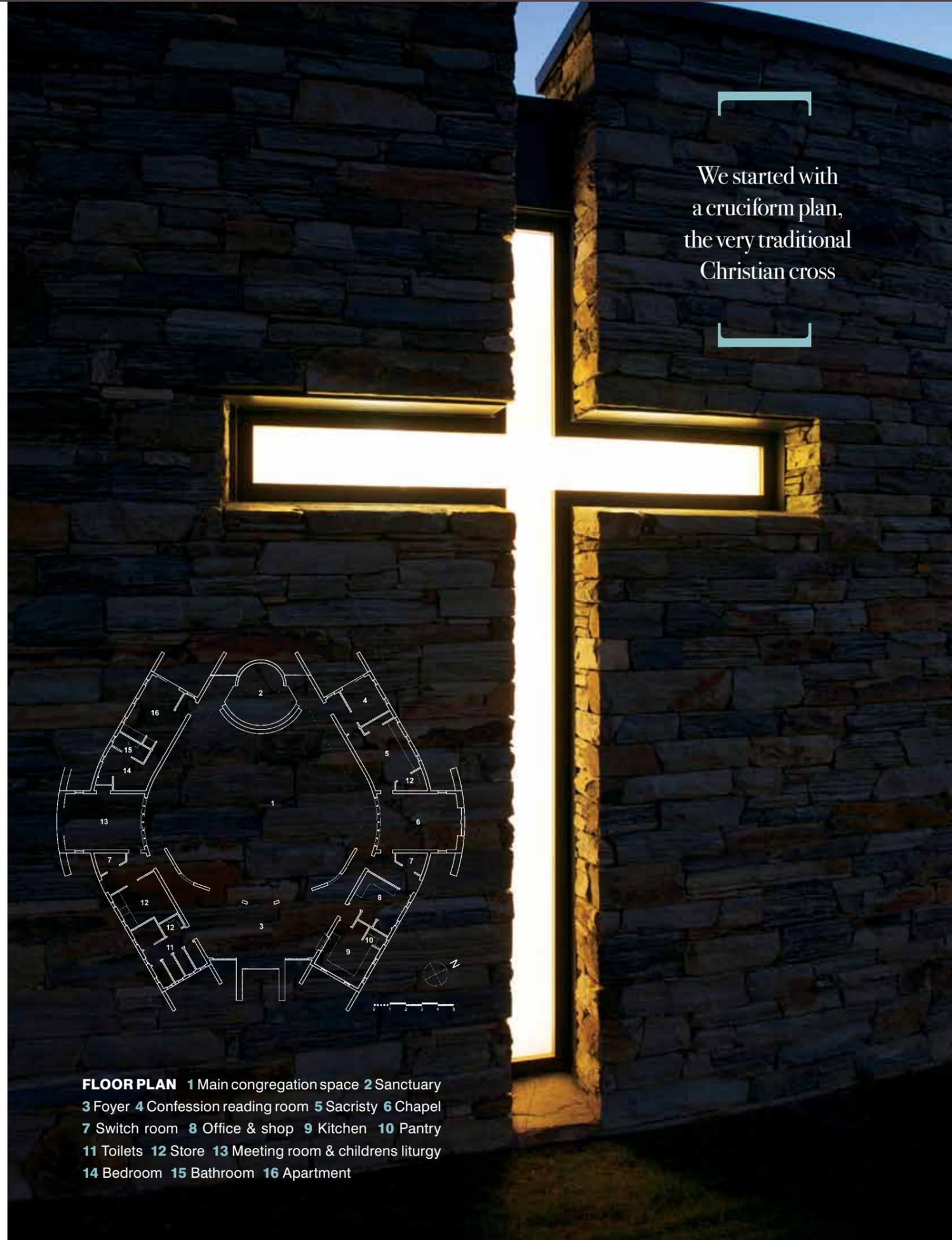
The church was carefully designed on the Aubrey Road site to maximise the views from the congregation area. When inside the church the views of the peaks surrounding Lake Wanaka can be seen through elevated glass windows.

The issue for us was how to create a sacred space that would sit comfortably in the 21st century

Once the initial plans were finalised Sarah and Barry created two models of the church and the immediate surroundings, including the school, and presented their concept to the selection committee. Four finalists were invited to present from an initial group of 13 and, satisfied they had put their best effort forward, Sarah and Barry waited anxiously for a decision.

It didn’t take long. At the end of June 2010, the decision came through that their design had been selected. Sarah recalls the day the news came through.

“We found out at 2 o’clock in the afternoon so we immediately called Barry’s parents in Ireland at 2 o’clock in the morning and got them out of bed to tell them: ‘We got it. We got it.’”



We started with a cruciform plan, the very traditional Christian cross



FLOOR PLAN 1 Main congregation space 2 Sanctuary 3 Foyer 4 Confession reading room 5 Sacristy 6 Chapel 7 Switch room 8 Office & shop 9 Kitchen 10 Pantry 11 Toilets 12 Store 13 Meeting room & childrens liturgy 14 Bedroom 15 Bathroom 16 Apartment



Above: Sarah designed the lectern and chair which were built by parishioners. Right: The processional aisle. Below: Students of the Holy Family Catholic School hold assemblies in the congregation area of the church.



“They were pretty chuffed,” admits Barry. Yeverley McCarthy, chairperson of the building committee for the Catholic Church, remembers when she first saw Sarah and Barry’s design. “They brought a model of the building with them to the presentation (they were the only firm to create one) and when Sarah took the roof off to look inside the structure, I was gone for all money. I knew we had our church.” Construction began in February 2010 and was finished eleven months later in December 2010, two months ahead of schedule and on budget! The building committee and Sarah and her team were full of praise for the teamwork and communication between builders, architect and client. For Yeverley building the church was ‘a great walk in faith’. “There will be times when things go wrong on any project, but this was an amazing experience.” “I can’t speak highly enough of Sarah and her team. They were very passionate and professional and paid attention to the smallest details. Even down to the design of the chairs.”

For Sarah and Barry, the Holy Family Catholic Church was a dream client. “To be honest, we were a little anxious about working with a committee and how that would affect the decision making process, but they were great to work with. We had regular meetings and any issues were managed quickly and efficiently. They didn’t muck around,” according to Sarah.

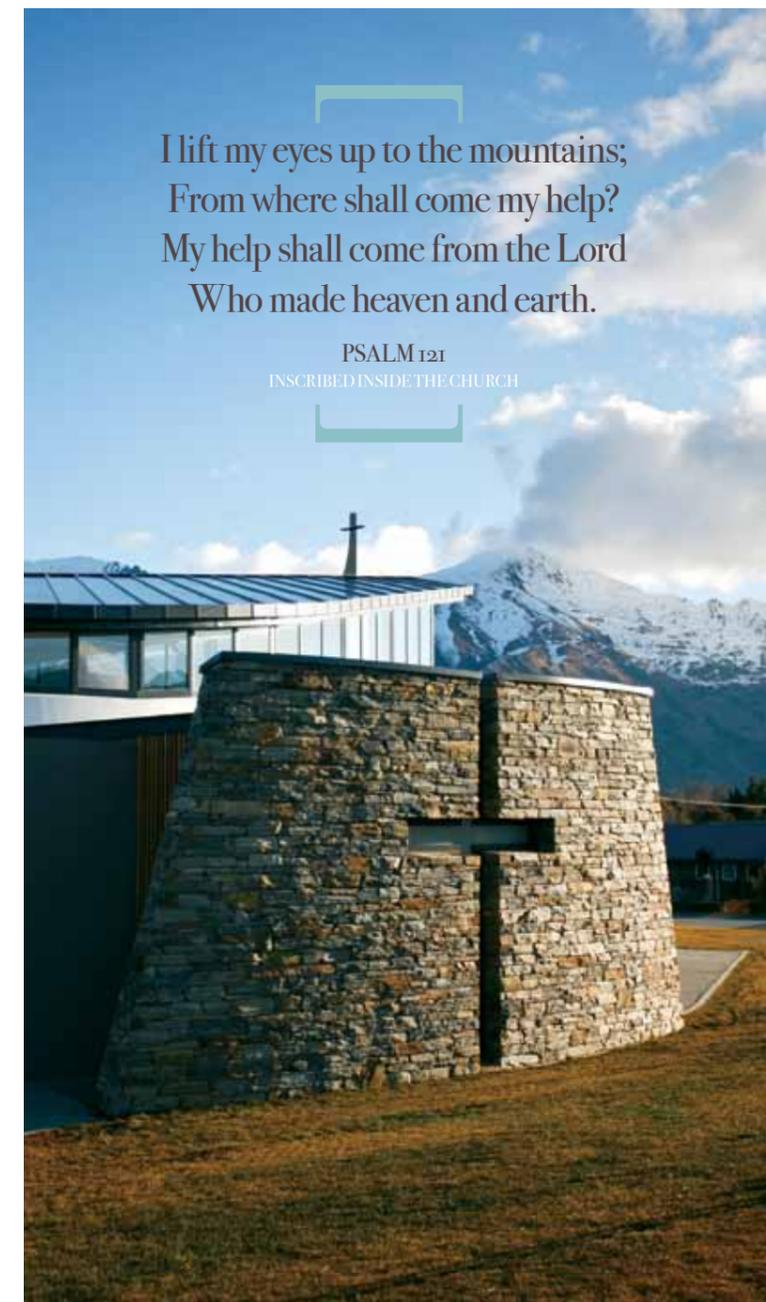
For Sarah, a highlight of the build was the incredible ownership shown by all the contractors involved; from the large building firm Naylor Love through to the local parishioners who built the timber altar.

The most complicated part of the build was the roof. It is designed in a ‘leaf form’ that sits on top of the solid masonry walls and angles up towards the mountains. The design of the roof meant that giant ‘birdcage’ scaffolding had to be constructed to support the weight of the roof during the nine-month build. It was only towards the end that it was removed and the team could fully appreciate the scale of the interior.

For all involved it was an emotional moment as Sarah recalls: “I remember Yeverley cried when we took the roof off the model at our presentation of the design. Then, when we took her inside the building after the scaffolding was removed, she burst into tears again!”

The project was nominated for and won an award for public architecture at the 2011 NZIA Southern Region Awards held in Invercargill. Sarah and Barry took a group of about 20 people, including members of the building committee, construction contractors and partners, to the awards evening and enjoyed a celebratory dinner after the event. It was a lovely way to celebrate the teamwork showed by all of the parties involved in the process.

“We were delighted to get that recognition at the NZIA awards. It really validated the trust that the client placed in us and they really did take ‘a leap of faith’ with us to deliver what they wanted.”



I lift my eyes up to the mountains;
From where shall come my help?
My help shall come from the Lord
Who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 121
INSCRIBED INSIDE THE CHURCH



SHOWHOME OPEN

Wednesday – Saturday 1– 3pm. 47 Infinity Drive Peninsula Bay, Wanaka **Contact Leigh-Anne Fox 021 443 129**