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18 NGK Welkom-Wes. The three pipe racks of the Schaffrath organ at the back of the choir stalls.

19 NGK Welkom-Wes. The rebuilt interior wall in an open stretcher bond.

was consecrated on the weekend of 4–5 December 1965.

Having achieved the milestone of an own place of worship, one would think that the focus would then fall on renewing the spirituality of the congregation, but the sustained pressure over the two years had taken its toll. We read that after bearing the brunt of carrying on construction, only two months later, on 13 February 1966, [het] ds. Minnaar *demissie ontvang* (was honourably discharged) (*Gedenkblad* [xi]). There was no other congregation; in fact he abandoned his pastoral calling altogether. Minnaar spent three months' sabbatical leave in USA^{xiii} before assuming the position of secretary for evangelisation in the NGK in *Suidwes-Afrika*^{xiv}, now Namibia (*Gedenkblad* [xi]), one of the furthest places he could have moved to within the reach of the denomination.

It took seven months before a successor could be installed on 25 September 1966 who inherited the incomplete development together with the debt then

standing at R84 000, but which escalated to R94 000 by April 1967 [*Gedenkblad* [xii]]. Things were made no easier when in the same year the Afrikaans weekly family magazine *Huisgenoot* (10 Feb, pp28–29) hurled brickbats such as 'atomic energy institute, abattoir, grain store, or perhaps a fire station' at its forbidding exterior but, despite the challenges, the *Schaffrath* organ, already ordered in October 1964, could be commissioned in June 1968 (Fig 18). It was built in Pretoria with three pipe racks fitted in series against the back wall of the gallery within the space designed for their purpose, which as Minnaar reminisced, presented the organ builders with a considerable challenge (*Die arme orrelbouers kry swaar met de afskeepruimte wat argitekte aan hulle bied om die orrel in te pas*) (*Gedenkblad* [vi]).

Amazingly, by the end of 1972 the full debt had been repaid (*Gedenksboek* [xiii]), but only a few years later in December 1976 the church was struck by an earthquake. While the superstructure remained unscathed, interior walls collapsed and services again had to be held at a nearby school hall. To boot, the insurance policy did not cover earthquake damage. The lowest quote was accepted incurring costs of a further R41 000 excluding the removal and rebuilding of the organ. However, by October 1977 the church was back in use [*Gedenkblad* [xv-xvi]]. In restoring the internal perforated wall, the pattern of stacked bricks on edge was rebuilt in an open stretcher bond, which while different, conserved the integrity of Uytendogaardt's design within the alternating header courses (Fig 19).

It must also have been during this time

that changes were made to the liturgical centre. Perhaps to better accommodate the communion table, the lectern which was in any case an unusual element in a church of the NGK as already pointed out, was demolished and the dais extended to the seating banks. Make-shift ramps for the disabled were added in the cloisters for access to the nave and in 1989–90 a community hall was built on Heide Laan to the south of the church (by architects Aitchison & Rossouw) presenting no challenge to the sculptural massing of the church.

THE PRESENT

Although key design features were anticipated by Wright's Unity Temple and Kahn's Unitarian church at Rochester, the metamorphosis by Uytendogaardt is an original and highly expressive resolution of many of the central challenges, both practical and aesthetic, still confronting church architecture today. What is more, Welkom-Wes is an advance on Unity Temple on at least three counts. Access from the cloisters to the nave is direct and not from the depth of a "corridor" in a semi-basement, the nave and the single level of galleries form a spatial continuum by way of the seating banks for *ouderlinge* and *diakens*, and the choice of overhead lighting by way of shafts based on Rochester excludes glare and blinding light associated with clerestory windows. But the environmental performance of the building remains its challenge.

Apart from ongoing waterproofing expenses and discomfort in summer and winter, fortunately the current congregation only has to read "*uit vertellings blyk dit dat die kerkraad met die hele bouprogram baie probleme ondervind het*" (stories are told about the many problems the *kerkraad* experienced during construction) (*Gedenksboek*[xi]). But, apart from the *kerkraad*, Welkom-Wes was a steep learning curve for Minnaar and Uytendogaardt and it is probably not unfair to say it represents a dark side in each of their careers.

For the 25th anniversary of the congregation in 1988, Minnaar contributed with facts to the *Gedenkblad*, but it was two years later before Uytendogaardt in his Sophia Gray Memorial Lecture delivered in Bloemfontein, felt obliged