



Beehive Chapel

Chilomoni, Blantyre



Location
Beehive Main Campus, Chilomoni, Blantyre, Malawi

Type
Spiritual Well Being

Year of Construction
2011 - 2012

Design Architect
Dawid Wiljoen

Design Engineers
Malcolm Savage, Sam Youdan and Zedi Nyirenda

Project Engineers
Hendrix Mgawana and Malcolm Savage

Total Development Area (Approx. GEA)
63m²

Number of Storeys
1

Construction Cost
49,810,262 MWK
(£49,910 GBP - rate correct as of 3rd September 2020)

Cost per m²
803,391 MWK/m²
(£805 GBP/m² - rate correct as of 3rd September 2020)

“There is no argument about the uniqueness of the building’s design. Beehive now feels complete as a Catholic institution because of the presence of the chapel.”

(Cecilia Chiyembekeza, Chapel Secretary)

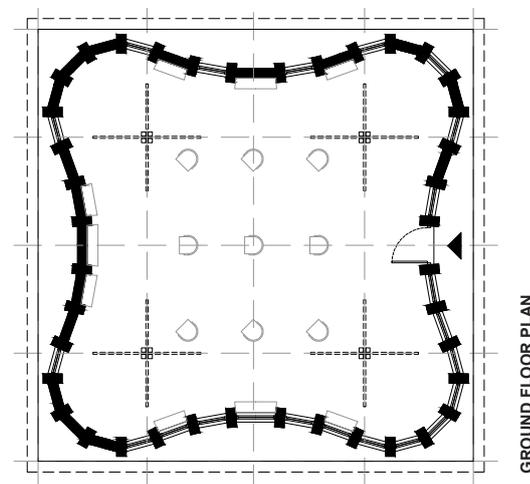
“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

(Matthew Chapter 18, Verse 20)

The Beehive Chapel is located on the Beehive Main Campus in Chilomoni. The need for a chapel on the campus arose during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, when managers and team leaders agreed that positive thought and prayer were important in overcoming the growing uncertainty and fear associated with the spread of the illness.

Previously used as the office for a former-computer rental company (now disbanded), the building sits on Level 02 of the site, adjacent to the St. John Paul II Leadership and IT Institute. Originally designed as a media centre, the scale and shape of the building nicely accommodates small groups for private, quiet reflection, and the high ceiling reflects the proportions of a more traditional worship space. The chapel’s floor plan is curved and undulating, and there are no straight lines in its outline, which softens the building and creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

During construction in 2011, excavation for the foundations of the building revealed an underground stream. To overcome this issue, the footings were required to be dug up to 5m below ground level, so that hard ground below the stream could be built-upon. The foundations therefore act like a ‘bridge’ around and over the stream. The roof structure and wall structure are completely separate; the external walls are formed from load-bearing site-made Hydraform



soil blocks, supported at regular intervals along the perimeter of the building by a series of blockwork piers, and the roof structure sits within the walls of the building, formed of four sculptural, tree-like timber columns. The columns are ‘lifted’ off the floor by steel feet, creating a light, filigree feel to the chapel’s interior.

All four elevations are populated by tall, closely-spaced louvered windows, creating beautiful natural lighting and successful natural cross ventilation. There are more windows on the half of the building close to the entrance, and fewer behind the ‘altar’ area, removing distractions for worshipers who may be focusing on the front of the room. Above each window, a series of mesh screens are placed just below the roof, encouraging effective high-level passive ventilation.