

# LEDA

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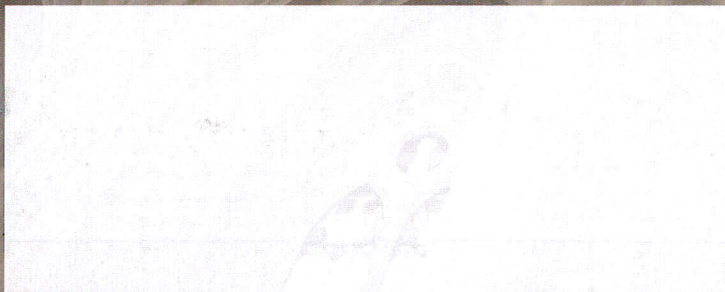
## Divine Inspiration

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# A Sign From Above

BY PAUL TARRICONE

The architecture overhead—not to mention the worshippers below—bask in the glow of ring-mounted light at this historic German church



The *halo effect* is as much literal as spiritual at the St. Mary and Bartholomew Church in Harsefeld, Germany. Halos in this case take the form of 8-meter high “luminaire rings” that encircle the pillars throughout the space.

Constructed in the first millennium, the church had last been remodeled in the 1960s. The latest interior renovation, completed in 2014, required a new lighting concept for the stone and plaster cross-vault ceiling, individual elements such as the church organ, and for churchgoers. Lighting designer Jürgen Klensang of lucente Lichtplanung, Sittensen, Germany, explains that the space demanded a “subtle solution” that would require only minimal changes to the church structure. The luminaire rings are the centerpiece of the design, and are complemented by restored chandeliers and new track lighting.

Apropos of a church, the design team first directed its gaze upward. “We decided to illuminate the vault to get a high and bright ceiling,” says Klensang. “Ceiling light is very important because it makes the room seem higher. A bright ceiling is friendlier than a dark ceiling; we think that is very important in a church.”

The illumination of the cross-vault above rains down below. “The reflection of the light on the ceiling indirectly lights the whole church. We also wanted to emphasize the cross, the altar, the figures, tables of stone and the organ,” but the luminaires had to be “inconspicuous,” says Klensang.

The solution: a series of discreet luminaire rings. All told, the church has eight pillars with full rings and two half-pillars with half-rings. Constructed of wood, the rings are equipped with LED downlights and spotlights (ERCO). “The luminaire rings fit the style of the church but are



Luminaire rings surrounding each pillar proved to be a minimally invasive design solution for the first millennium church. Restored chandeliers add to the ambient light.



Photos: Frieder Bickler



Lighting the cross-vault ceiling made the room seem higher and more welcoming.

clearly new objects,” says Klensang. In addition to ambient and accent light, the rings also provide task light for reading of the prayer books at the benches and for the hymn books used by the choir. “We used oval lenses to distribute the light along the benches,” he adds.

Aside from the ambience and energy savings, LEDs offered a third advantage. “Maintenance is very important. With a height of 8 meters, it is very difficult to repair a lamp or change a bulb. LED is the best light source for this challenge,” says Klensang.

#### ADDING TO THE ATMOSPHERE

While the ring lights are subtle—“light, not luminaires” was the design philosophy—the chandeliers stand out. The ornate fixtures were refurbished and still use halogen lamps to provide additional ambient light. Finally, track lighting

with LED spots was added to illuminate the organ and the space behind the cross. Says Klensang: “These were areas we could not reach from the luminaires in the rings.” □

#### THE DESIGNER



**Jürgen Klensang**, Dipl. Ing., is the founder of lucente Lichtplanung.

#### FAST FACTS

- Brightness and an emphasis on the height of the room were design drivers.
- LED downlights and spotlights provide direct/indirect lighting.
- Maintenance was critical given the 8-meter height of the luminaire rings.

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