

*St Elizabeth of Portugal  
Renewal 2024*



# St Elizabeth's Restoration Project

Renewal  
2024







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## Our Key Objectives:

### Treasure the Past:

Repair & restore our listed building

### Open Doors:

Comply with the Equality Act and current Health & Safety Regulations

### Transform Lives:

To sustain and enhance current services to the parish and the wider community

## Project Teams

The project is being led by several different teams of volunteers from the parish. The team leaders are:

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# Two Hundred Years

As we prepare to celebrate the bi-centenary of the opening of our church Fr Stephen introduces our restoration project.

For nearly two hundred years St Elizabeth's has been home to a community of Catholics who have strived to fulfil a threefold mandate.

The church has been the place where countless children and adults have been received into the faith, a place of prayer and worship where the sacraments are available to those well-disposed to receive them; increasingly it has been a place where those in need have been able to find solace, support and sometimes refuge. Our building is also a fitting testimony to the beauty of God's presence among us.

As we approach our bi-centenary, however, there is a need to address some major problems with the fabric of our building. It is both a challenge and an opportunity. A challenge because there are strict regulations about what we can do to a listed building, even down to the material we use to make repairs. An opportunity because a major restoration gives us the possibility of ensuring our facilities are up to date and accessible to everyone so that we can be more effective in living out our mission.

In preparing for the project we have had three key themes in mind: Treasuring the Past, Opening Doors, and Transforming Lives. We have inherited a beautiful church from past generations and it is right that we treasure what has been handed down to us as we prepare to hand it on to the next generation. Despite our best efforts, some people



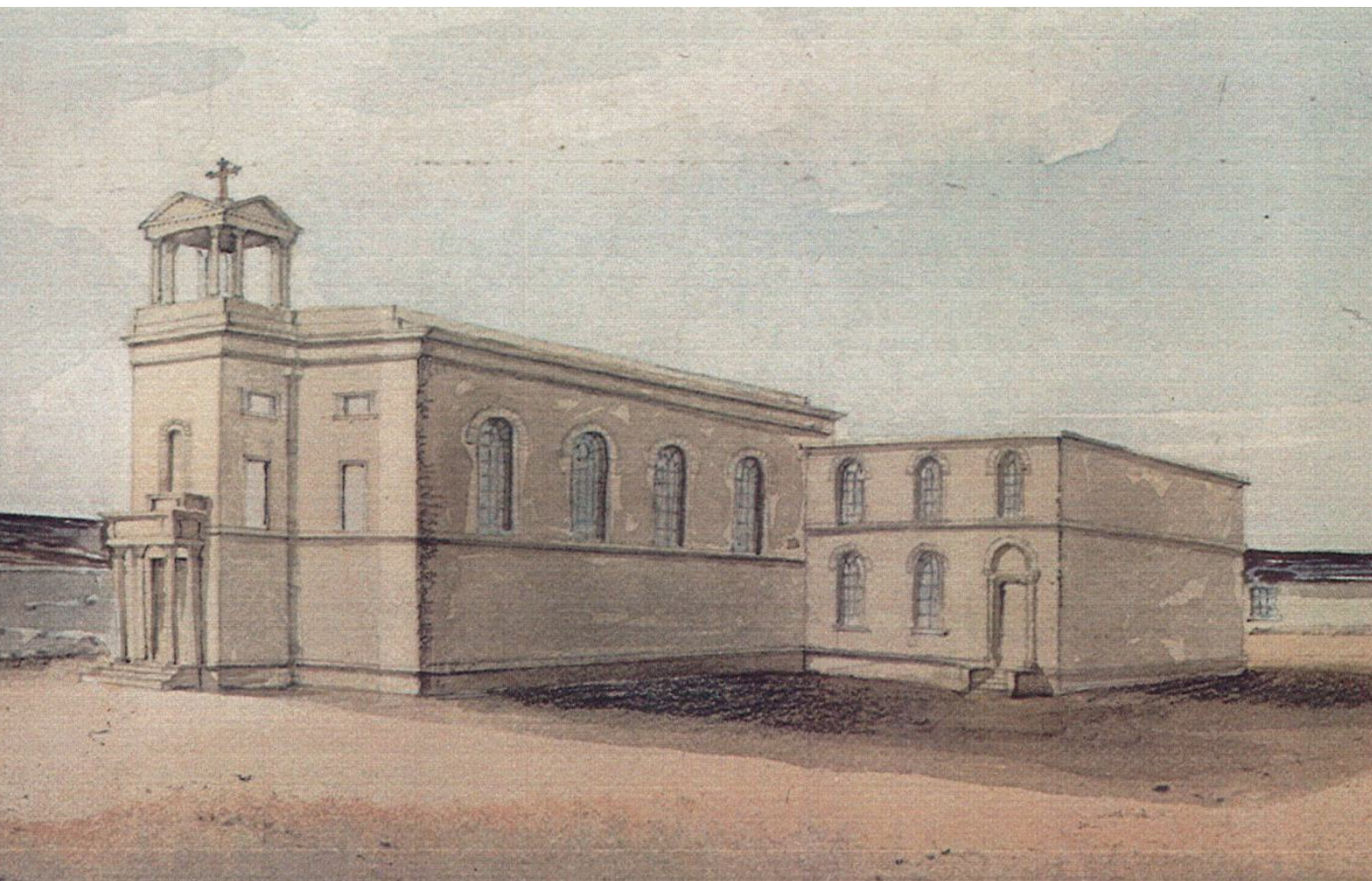
**"I remember walking into St Elizabeth's for the very first time and someone looked at me and said, 'It's so lovely to see you again'... they say it to me every week and it's honestly the loveliest thing, it just makes me feel so welcome".**

**Jayne**

find it difficult to access our building and there is also the concern that we do not have an adequate fire-escape route. By "Opening Doors" we mean ensuring that there is access for everyone as well as safe escape routes from the church and crypt. In this way we want to continue our mission of 'transforming lives' by being a place where people can encounter God's love through the love and care they receive from the community here.

This project is about much more than adapting our facilities to bring them in line with modern legislation. It is about enabling us to reach more people in need, to serve better the local community, and to bear witness more effectively to the joy of the Gospel.

We have prepared this booklet to give you some insight into what we are planning and why it is important. We hope to be able to count on your encouragement and prayers and also on your support as we try to become the parish we believe God wants us to be.



*The church in 1824 as designed by Thomas Hardwick.*

# Architectural History

St Elizabeth of Portugal is the tangible symbol of the a long-standing Catholic community that has lived in Richmond since Georgian times.

Richmond was the nearest place to London where it was possible for religious families to live in peace if they were not members of the established religion. Hence it soon became a favourite place for Catholics and other nonconformists to live.

The parish itself dates from the 1790s having been established by Robert Wheble in his house on the Vineyard. Later in 1821 Elizabeth Doughty, a summer resident of Richmond, bought the plot of land next to Clarence House, then a Catholic school, and paid for the construction of the Church.

The present building was opened in 1824 and as such is the oldest Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It was most likely designed by a combination of Thomas and Philip Hardwick. Thomas Hardwick was the architect of numerous well-known Anglican classical churches in London. Philip, his son, was the designer of the

Euston Arch. He took over the family business in 1825.

The original church consisted of a simple Georgian room with an apse at the east end and a small belfry tower above the entrance. A two story residence for priests was built to the side of the church with direct internal access to the nave.

In 1851 the capacity of the church was increased with the addition of a new choir gallery but it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the building was significantly altered.

By the turn of the century the capacity of the church was insufficient for its



expanding congregation. An initial plan to demolish and replace the 1824 building was vetoed by Archbishop Bourne who had been baptised in the church. Instead, Frederick Walters, a well-known architect of Catholic churches, was commissioned to enlarge and considerably embellish the original building. Walters was the architect of over thirty Catholic institutions including Buckfast Abbey, St John's Seminary, Wonersh, and St Peter's in Winchester.

Following Walters' design, the church was substantially extended in 1903. He was able to effectively double the existing floor space by adding an additional bay to create new larger sanctuary thereby enabling the nave to be extended. The priests' house was replaced with a building towards the back of the church and the original house was modified by removing the upper floor, incorporating part into the new Lady Chapel and transforming the rest into the sacristy. He also added two side chapels as well as two lobbies at the southeast façade, either side of the bell tower. The tower itself was increased in height. A new spire was also added.

The current sanctuary still contains the original altar from 1903 along with the post First World War addition of wooden baldacchino painted blue and gold above the altar. These architectural devices were an integral part of the early 20th century renewed interest in the Liturgy and the liturgical design at St Elizabeth's has echoes of Ninian Comper's writings on the sub-

ject. The aim of the Liturgical Movement at that time was to provide a visual focus on the actions of the priest in celebrating Mass and thus encourage the active participation of the laity.

Other post First World War additions, completing the 1903 extension, were the multi-coloured marble reredos with the statue of Our Lady and Child, which was erected as a War Memorial. Beyond lies the altar to St Joseph which was also executed in the Renaissance style. Despite these changes the Church maintains its Georgian character.

Later in 1950, Goodhart-Rendel, who was designing the Church of Our Lady of Peace at East Sheen, was asked by the parish priest to restore the church and bring some visual unity between the nave, sanctuary and adjoining chapels. This was achieved through adding a partially rusticated arch between nave and sanctuary, adding Jacobean style pilasters in the apse, a frieze around the of nave of the Stations of the Cross on one side and mysteries of the Rosary on the other, and painting the chapel and apse with banded colours (now painted over).

St Elizabeth's Church has grown organically as the needs of the Parish have developed, creating an architecture of inclusion that still maintains the Georgian atmosphere from 1824. Its demonstrates Ninian Comper's architecture of inclusion and imaginative recreation of historical forms over time.





# Treasuring the Past

After nearly two hundred years of continuous use our church is in need of some repair and sensitive adaptation to comply with modern legislation.

We want to carry out necessary internal and external works, with a view to preserving the buildings in the best possible manner, while adapting them to present needs and standards and providing a legacy for future generations.

The aim of the project is to preserve and enhance the historic building by adapting it to the present needs of the parish while complying with the best possible standards of health and safety.

The repairs will address all areas needing immediate attention and all major issues. The intention is to repair damaged areas and to rectify latent defects such as water and damp penetration locally. We also intend to carry out less urgent repairs in those areas where scaffolding will be erected to undertake the bulk of the works, such as the cleaning and repair to stone surrounds, the repair of stained glass windows, and the repointing and replacement of damaged bricks (in matching brick).

Walter's famous spire (left) is one of the items requiring urgent attention: a section of the copper covering has been lost and the woodwork is in a very bad condition. The copper roof will be repaired, and the woodwork will be restored by a specialist. The decorative metal cross to the spire will be cleaned, treated and gilded, and a bird mesh will be installed in all openings.





## Water Damage

As you can see from the photograph there is ample evidence of damp penetration at high level in the Lady Chapel, and also in Sacred Heart Chapel and at the nave ceiling. Although the source of the leak has now been addressed we still have to repair the damage it has caused.



## Georgian Windows

The existing windows, many of which are Georgian, also need attention. They will be taken to an offsite workshop for the repair and general overhaul of frames and glass. A temporary protection will be installed in the openings while the windows are being repaired.

have been carried out in an unsatisfactory manner and often using unsuitable materials.

## Bell Tower

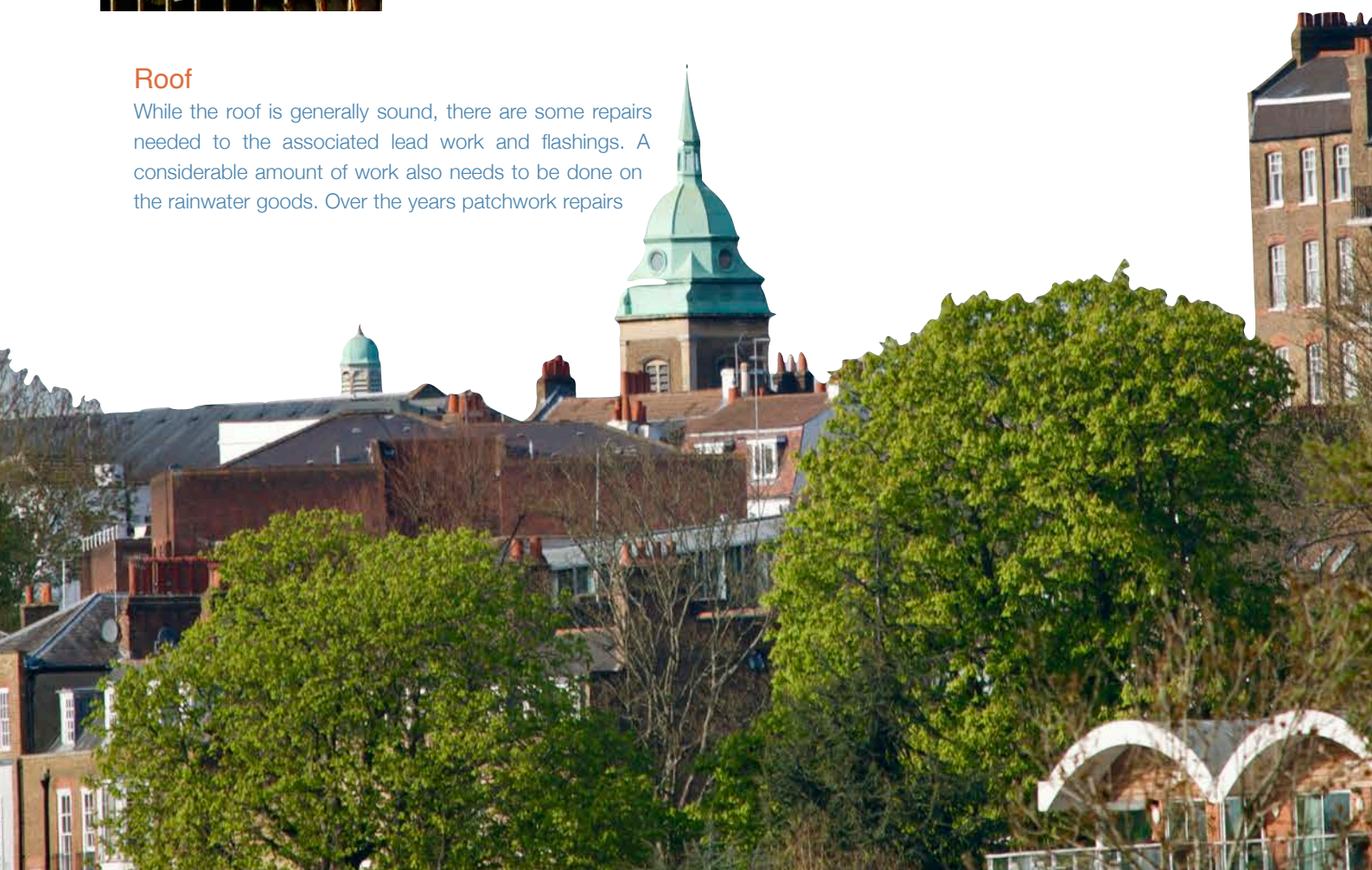
In addition to the spire, we plan to carry out important repairs to the bell-tower which is showing considerable signs of decay. The slate louvres are disintegrating and the stone surround holding them in place is perishing in several places. There is also work to be done on the copper covering of the bell tower.



You can see from the photograph below why St Elizabeth's is regarded as making a "notable contribution" to the Richmond skyline.

## Roof

While the roof is generally sound, there are some repairs needed to the associated lead work and flashings. A considerable amount of work also needs to be done on the rainwater goods. Over the years patchwork repairs





Making St Elizabeth's  
safe and accessible





# Opening Doors

When we did a survey of parishioners many of them said they do not attend activities in the crypt because they feel unsafe on the spiral staircase. The fire escape is also not fit for purpose.

One of the biggest issues we need to address is safe access. St Elizabeth's is a Christian community with a strong ethos of serving those in need and so access to the building should match the mission of the Church as being open to all. The decrepit external stairs and the awkward spiral staircase are the sole means to reach the basement. They do not match the mission of the Church nor the requirements of government legislation on access.

## Access Audit

Recently an Access Audit was carried out by Jennifer Teagle, NRAC Access Auditor. In her report she acknowledges our "high level of commitment to access for all users, volunteers, and congregation" and goes on to highlight the following concerns:

## Entrance to the Church

"The entrance, listed in the Heritage Summary, is hazardous by today's standards. Urgent re-ordering of the entrance is necessary" ([Audit](#) p.13); "To access the landing from the top of the ramp, a 90 degree turn around the door swing is involved. For a wheelchair user, anyone with a visual impairment, and/or people with physical or balance limitations, this manoeuvre is highly dangerous, potentially unsafe and places people at high risk. In an emergency, with the doors open, escape using the ramp, is potentially life-threatening" ([Audit](#) p.13);

## Spiral Staircase

"The lower ground floor and choir loft are currently not accessible for people with mobility difficulties" ([Audit](#) p.7); "Visually impaired people may be at risk ascending or descending the spiral staircase" ([Audit](#) p.7); "The spiral staircase is potentially lethal. Urgent re-construction is needed to create safe emergency egress\* for all" ([Audit](#) p.23);

\* exit or escape route



## Fire Escape

"Emergency egress is through the Sacristy, down three steps, to the passage that leads to the external door in the car parking space at the side of the Church. In an emergency this route will be hazardous" ([Audit](#) p.26); "Level emergency egress routes must be identified AS AN URGENT PRIORITY" ([Audit](#) p. 28).

## Our Response:

### Entrance

Although there is a ramp leading up to the entrance to the church, it is partially blocked when the doors are open. The internal doors (from the narthex to the nave) cannot be opened by someone in a wheelchair. The plan is to recess the existing doors and replace the spiral staircase with a regular one opening an access door from the narthex. The internal doors to the nave will have an opening mechanism and also be fitted with glass panels. The broken lift will be removed allowing for the restoration of an office or information space.

### Fire Escape Routes

The lack of an appropriate fire escape from the church has been highlighted continuously in annual health and safety inspections. There is an alternative route through the sacristy, along a galley way and out through the front door of the old presbytery. As you can see from the photograph above, this is currently impeded by internal steps, the narrow doorway, and suitable fire-resistant cupboards in the sacristy to enable the route to be kept free.

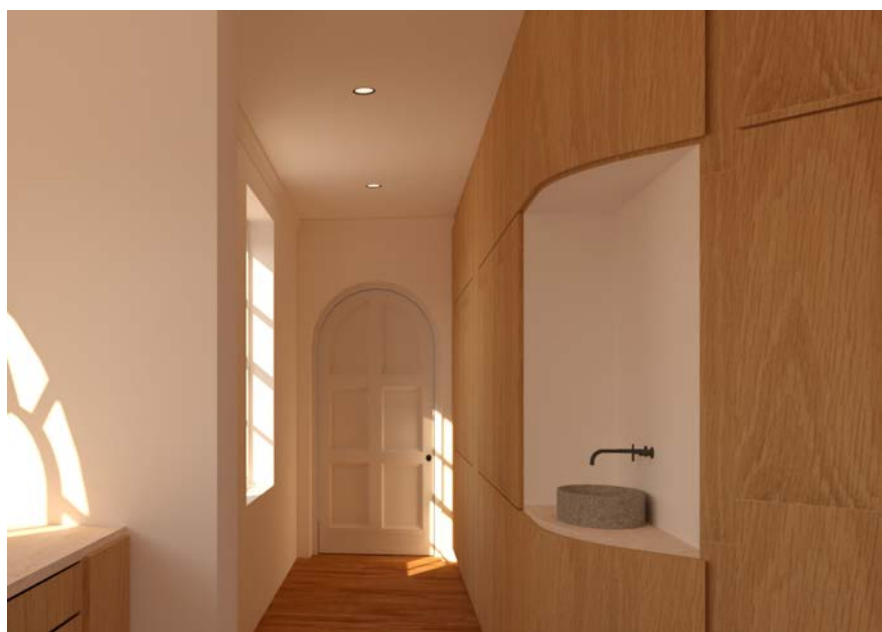
The plan is to improve this route by raising the floor levels to remove all internal steps. Where necessary, doorways will be widened to provide safer egress for wheelchair

users. New cupboards will rationalise the area and ensure that sacristy equipment can be put away without impeding the passage ways.

### Access to the Crypt & Choir Loft

Access to the crypt is via a narrow and steep external stone staircase open to the elements. An internal metal spiral staircase also gives access to the choir loft, having replaced the original wooden staircase.

The external staircase is unsafe especially during wet weather and for taking items up and down the staircase. The spiral staircase is unsuitable for the ambulant disabled and for anyone with a pushchair. One of the unfortunate consequences of installing







The lack of a fire escape from the church and safe access to the crypt is an issue not just for those taking part in activities, but also for those running them. This project addresses these issues in a holistic manner, recognising that other groups need methods of access suitable for them, whether it be the ambulant disabled or parents with buggies. Currently floor levels are different, passageways are narrow, and staircases unsafe and difficult to use. Over recent years the Parish community has run different outreach programmes for the vulnerable, the dispossessed and the homeless and ease of access will allow for greater participation than is currently possible.

the spiral staircase was the unsightly modification to a doorway from the nave of the church.

In 2005 an additional attempt was made to provide access to the crypt. The parish installed a specially adapted wheelchair lift in the former baptistery, but the specification for the lift could not cope with the volume of use, and has been abandoned. This installation necessitated an incongruous and now redundant external door to be punched through the facade of the church, to the left of the front entrance.

A new lift is to be installed by the parish office for full disabled access to the crypt, and a new stone staircase is to be installed where the spiral staircase is located.

## Impact

The proposed interventions will ensure greater accessibility for all with minimum visual impact from either the church or the street. The removal of the redundant disabled lift will allow the church to recover the space occupied by the former baptistery and also restore the original facade of the church.

The proposed slight recessing of the main doors will ensure nothing impedes wheelchair access to the church, and the mechanical opening system will allow wheelchair users to access the church from the narthex without relying on stewards. The replacement of the metal spiral staircase will give people safe access to the crypt and choir loft from the narthex and remove the need for the hazardous internal door from the nave.

The external wheelchair lift and a modification of the external staircase to the crypt will not be visible impact from the church and also be practically unnoticeable from the street.

The proposed fire escape route will be achieved by a reconciliation of floor levels and by the provision of new storage that will not be noticed once the work is complete.

## Assessment

The Church is a fine example of a building developed over time to meet changing needs while at the same time still remaining a coherent architectural creation. In considering the issues we need to address we have at all times considered how we might meet the needs of both an expanding congregation and a growing pastoral outreach at St Elizabeth's without destruction of the existing fabric. Where there are changes, these largely restore the church to its previous state before well-meaning attempts to provide access had a deleterious effect on the fabric.

When our plans were submitted to the Historic Churches Committee they were praised as being "an extremely elegant solution to a set of very difficult problems".







# Transforming Lives

Wherever possible St Elizabeth's seeks to increase its impact by developing partnerships with other organisations. Before lockdown we hosted a wide range of activities and events. The ambition of this project is to sustain and increase our service to both the parish and the wider community.

## Busy Lizzies

St Elizabeth's helps parents attend Mass by offering a term-time creche for pre-school children in the upper crypt called Busy Lizzies. Parents drop their children off before Mass and collect them afterwards. It was very popular and full most Sundays.

## Liturgy of the Word for Children

During Sunday Mass we offer an adapted Liturgy of the Word for Children who have not yet made their First Holy Communion. Children leave the church at the start of Mass and process down to the crypt via the spiral staircase. Many parents preferred to keep their children with them as they did not regard the spiral staircase as sufficiently safe. The difficulty of manoeuvring groups of children on the staircase added significantly to the length of Mass.

## Meetings, Conferences & Training

St Elizabeth's crypt is split into two levels and is ideal for meetings, small conferences and training events. It is regularly used by the Vineyard Community Centre for off-site planning and interviews. As an Alpha Hub we offer regular training in how to run Alpha in a Catholic context for local (and not so local) parishes. In 2018 we ran a training day for priests and lay people on parish renewal according to the Divine Renovation principles.

We have also hosted an introduction to the Called and Gifted programme, as well as student training with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). We are currently working

on a programme of Leadership Training days targeting particularly, but not exclusively, young adults.

## Heritage Hub

Richmond has a rich Catholic history and St Elizabeth's is very much part of that story. Opened in 1824, St Elizabeth's is the oldest Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Southwark and pre-dates Catholic Emancipation (the Roman Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1829) and the Restoration of the Hierarchy (1850). Architecturally it is a Grade II listed building and retains fine examples of its Georgian origins.

There are frequent requests for a tour of the church by local groups including schools, the Richmond Society, the Richmond Library summer schools and Catholic History Walks. Our ability to respond to these requests is frustrated by having to explain the access limitations. Addressing the access concerns (and meeting our statutory obligations) would allow us to offer a more developed welcome and presentation to visitors. In time, we would like to reach out proactively to schools offering activities tailored to the National Curriculum rather than simply responding to requests as they come in.

**"I frequently access the crypt to volunteer. The stairs are steep. I would feel safer if they were improved and well lit. I also feel that improving the access for the disabled and the elderly would benefit the community at large and make the functional space more inclusive for all"**

## A Parish Volunteer

## The Hanging Lamp and Cultural Use of the crypt

The Hanging Lamp is the name of a club that met in the crypt in the 1970s and attracted luminaries from the English music scene including Ralph McTell and Elvis Costello. Occasionally, up to two hundred people would crowd into the crypt and the Club is mentioned several times by Ian Shircore in [Loose Canon](#), his biography of Clive James and Pete Atkin, themselves frequent visitors to the Hanging Lamp.

The Church's plan is to reinstall the crypt and parish as a place to showcase local artistic talent. There are many talented local artists, musicians, photographers etc., both Catholic and non-Catholic and a number have approached us about the possibility of exhibiting their work in the crypt. We recognise that the crypt could be a perfect space for exhibitions and informal concerts serving the wider community. Several events are being planned in the coming two years to support fund-raising, with the intent to continue this tradition in the following years:

**Exhibitions:** We plan to hold one every half term showcasing local talent and attracting several hundred people. **Music**





**events:** The project will enable us to expand our music events for up to 250 people if a proper fire escape is installed. We are currently officially restricted to 68 people.

**Book & Giftshop:** the lower crypt already houses a small repository or gift shop. The plan is to expand this to include books and other items and to enable it to be open whenever the crypt is in use.

## Concerts

Before lockdown we piloted a series of Sunday afternoon concerts in the church which were a tremendous success and attracted people of all ages. They also enabled parishioners to invite their friends and neighbours. Our first concert attracted about fifty people but this steadily grew to just under 120 when the pandemic interrupted the series. We offered refreshments in the crypt during the interval or after the concert but found many older people preferred to stay in their places or go home immediately because they did not feel safe on the spiral staircase.

There is an existing choir that sings at key weekend Masses. Post Covid, there are plans in September 2021 to launch an amateur choir of approximately 12, supported by four choral scholars, providing high-quality liturgical music. This choir plans to put on 6-8 concerts in 2021-22 where each concert will have 100-200 attendees. As we improve and develop our music tradition at St Elizabeth's, we plan to offer six training days each for 20 attendees on the principles of Catholic liturgical music. In that way we

hope to help other parishes renew this important aspect of parish life and worship.

Access to the choir loft is also cumbersome and for some too difficult. Improving the access with the renovations will enable people of all ages to take part.

In addition to the choir and music ministries, we also host an annual Czech inspired family music festival at Christmas where children of all ages from local schools can entertain their family and friends.

**“My husband has been unwell and I just needed to get out of the house. It’s lovely to feel so welcome and comfortable with people you’ve never met before. I might bring my daughter and granddaughter next time.”**

**Angela - local resident**

## Elderly and Isolated

The issue of isolated elderly is one of the unseen social problems in Richmond. Many of them are understandably resistant to the idea of activities for “old people”. Our response at St Elizabeth's has been to offer cross-generational activities, particularly ones where older people might feel they have something to offer

or receive. This is particularly important because there are no longer any day centres for the elderly in Richmond.







## Creative Group

This is a weekly midmorning gathering in the crypt to develop companionship as well as teach and learn new skills. It offers an opportunity for the elderly, vulnerable and socially isolated to engage with younger members of the community. Roughly 30 members of the community have attended in person and virtually throughout the pandemic and the age range is from 10 years to over 80. Around half of the group are from the parish, the other half made up of a mixed group from the local community. Improved access to the crypt would be beneficial to allow for greater diversity of age and ability.

## Monthly Lunch Club

The Lunch Club takes place in the crypt once a month. It is open to anyone and regulars are encouraged to invite friends and neighbours. The majority of participants are elderly although there is also a good number of parents from our local primary school. The Lunch Club offers a three course meal for £7.00 with all proceeds going to SPEAR (a local homeless charity). The food is prepared and donated by volunteers.

## Catholic Women's League (CWL)

CWL has existed in Richmond for over 60 years and is the local section of a national organisation. They meet once per month to pray together, share ideas and to organise fund-raising activities for CWL or other charities and projects including The Vineyard Project, the Cardinal Hume Centre, the Jesuit Refugee Centre, Aid to the Church in Need and the Medaille Trust. The CWL also coordinates coffee mornings after Sunday Masses and raises approximately £1,000 a year to support the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

## Mothers' Prayer Group

The mothers' prayer group prays for children and grandchildren of pre-school age up to university. It also supports the building of friendships and community and the exchange of tips and advice is most welcome. Typically, there are about 5 to 7 mothers per session, taking place once every two weeks in the crypt and online during lockdown. Most mothers are between 20 and 50 years old.

## Alpha

Alpha is an 11-week experience that creates a judgment-free, welcoming environment for anyone to explore their unique questions about life, faith and God. Each session usually has three key elements: connection, talk and discussion. The wider aim is to enlarge the community and inspire honest, friendly and open conversation. Alpha has been running at St Elizabeth's for over four years and has impacted many people. Currently there are both teenager and adult courses running led by an enthusiastic proactive team.

## Catholicism 101:

Catholicism 101 was launched at the end of 2020. It is a group for individuals aged 18-35 who are interested in learning more about Catholicism and/or who are thinking of becoming Catholic. The format is welcome/social time followed by a talk on a topic of the group's choice (agreed in advance), followed by Q&A. It usually lasts 2-2.5 hours.

## A Family of Faith -

This programme is a four-year rolling programme for families of children in school years 2-6, which incorporates catechesis and preparation for children to receive their First Holy Communion. The basic set up is two monthly meetings, one parents' evening and one community day in the crypt for the whole cohort (i.e. all the families and all family members attending). Currently there are approximately 40 families registered.

## Retreat Days

Each month the parish hosts two retreats which are open to parishioners and non-parishioners alike.

The evening retreat, which started as lockdown began to ease, currently attracts about twelve people. The morning retreat attracts up to twenty participants many of whom come with small children. We hope in the future to provide a creche and thereby make this more parent friendly.

## Adoration Nights

Our Friday evening "Adoration Nights". These were opportunities for prayer in the church animated by our young adults' music ministries. Each evening lasted three hours and people, mostly young people, come from all over London and as far away as Guildford.

*"I have been a member of the CWL for over 50 years. It is a very important part of my life as it has enabled me to engage in a wide range of spiritual, charitable and social activities inside and outside the parish".*

*"I consider CWL part of my life, both spiritually and socially since I joined many years ago. The problem I find is that it is hard to get down the stairs to the crypt. Some of my friends have stopped coming because of it".*

*"Better access to the crypt with pushchairs and prams would greatly support the continuation of the Mothers' Prayer Group. It would also help us be more welcoming to grandmothers some of whom joined us online but say they are worried about the steep steps to the crypt".*





## Marriage Courses

Our plan is to run three separate marriage courses with 10-12 couples per course:

**Date Nights:** those preparing for marriage based on the Alpha Marriage Course. The "night" includes a meal, presentation of a topic and couples having a discussion among themselves.

**Marriage Enrichment:** those already some years into their marriage; focusing on things like 'communication'. The course follows a similar format to Date Nights.

**Marital Love:** this is part of the Family Foundation Development. Courses run termly and are for couples of all ages.

## Family Development Courses

The Family Development Foundation has developed seven courses to support parents and young adults. The courses use 'case studies' to encourage people to reflect on different scenarios in a fun way, to discuss and learn from each other and to learn how to foster responsibility, freedom and love within their own specific context of family life. Each course is five sessions and usually meets monthly.

The courses are:

**First Steps** (for parents with children 0-3 or young couples planning to become parents)

**First Letters** (for parents with children from 4-7)

**First Decisions** (for parents with children from 8-10)

**Early Teens** (for parents with children from 11-13)

**Adolescence** (for parents with children 13-18)

**Marital Love** (for couples of all ages)

**Personal Project** (for young people facing their future)

The plan for the Family Development Courses is to run one course each term aiming for 10-12 couples per course. Previously, the team had run the first two courses on Saturday afternoons and attracted about twenty people. Feedback from the team was that access to the crypt was troublesome; there

was a creche for toddlers so parents could attend the course, but it was not possible to get prams or buggies down to the crypt.

## Sunday Lunch Scheme ('Vineyard Lunches')

The Vineyard Sunday Lunch Scheme was set up in 1981 to provide a meal and a safe place to socialise for those who are lonely, vulnerable or homeless. Several churches participate in the scheme. The weekly attendance varies between 25 and 50

guests with very little difference between the summer and winter months. Few of the guests are homeless as they live in hostel accommodation and several have mental health issues. Occasionally guests come with children who might not otherwise get a hot Sunday lunch. Many of the guests are regulars and food is donated by parishioners. Without the Sunday Lunch scheme, most of the guests would spend Sunday alone. The scheme provides a welcoming environment and is the only chance for many to

socialise. The lack of a lift to the crypt is a real issue as one regular has now stopped coming because he has to be carried down the steep flight of steps.

## Night Shelter

In January 2018, St Elizabeth's Church opened its doors for its first winter night shelter which ran for the following 22 weeks. This was part of a wider project initiated by the homeless charity, GlassDoor which approached seven churches in Richmond to provide shelter and food for one night per week to homeless people in Richmond.

St Elizabeth's accommodated up to 25 guests per night providing meals for up to 30 people. The supplies for the event were funded through parishioner donations as well as some local businesses. Sleeping accommodation was provided in the crypt. The night shelter provides safe physical, emotional and social support for homeless people and GlassDoor volunteers stay with the guests overnight. Following this initiative - together with

*"I have been in the Church choir for many years. We have two ladies in the choir, both of them elderly (one in her nineties and one in late eighties). They both find it extremely difficult to climb the spiral staircase to get to the choir area. The choir means so much to them (and to me - and I'm in my eighties as well!!)"*

*Choir Member*









the help of counselling services - many have taken steps to a more structured life, accessing secure accommodation and in some cases gaining paid work.

## Roots

Roots is a programme designed by the Vineyard Community Centre to help reintegrate the long term homeless and unemployed back into society. It is managed by the Vineyard Centre but takes place in St Elizabeth's crypt and garden with a mixture of volunteer helpers from the Community Centre, St Elizabeth's parish, and the wider community. Roots seeks to address a particular gap in social provision. There is help available for those in danger of becoming homeless, and for those recently in crisis. However, those who have been homeless for a long time, particularly those with mental health or substance abuse issues, find it very difficult to get sustainable help. Roots seeks to address the socialisation and confidence issues associated with long-term crisis. It does this by offering training in three areas of practical skills: cooking, DIY, and gardening. Along with the training sessions there are inputs on well-being, mindfulness, budgeting and finances. Each session includes a meal prepared by some of the participants and it is amazing to observe the change that takes place at this meal as each cohort progresses - even to the point of poetry sharing.

## Social Events

During non-Covid times, the Social Committee organises a range of events including the St Elizabeth's day party, new parishioners' welcome drinks, mulled wine and mince pies after the Carol service etc. Apart from organising events such as themed dinners, the Social Committee and Hospitality Teams are always available to help ensure all guests to the parish have a warm welcome and positive experience where they feel included and valued.

## Maintenance Group

A new initiative, Breakfast & Maintenance, is planned to be set up (similar to another one that existed before COVID) whereby on Saturdays a group of volunteers meet for breakfast followed by short prayers and then are allocated maintenance tasks. It is expected that around 8 – 10 volunteers will attend. Apart from ensuring we stay on top of regular maintenance, the group draws some inspirations from the Men's Shed movement which offers a place where people can come, use and develop their skills, giving them a sense of achievement while mixing and socialising with other people.

## Youth Activities

At St Elizabeth's we have been trying to see how we can make youth activities less 'institutional' and more 'relational'. This

involves identifying and training young adults who can act as mentors to our young people. We are conscious that we are piloting a new model and look forward to sharing it with other parishes. Overall the youth formation at St Elizabeth's is expanding and gaining momentum to ensure a lively community among the younger generation of Richmond.

## Youth Group

The Youth Group for teenagers started during the pandemic and so has only been online to date. It began by running Youth Alpha online and the plan was to transition to more in-person events after that. So far that transition has been very successful. The group is led by a team of eight young adults (one employee of the parish plus seven volunteers). The group meets weekly on a Monday evening for 1.5-2 hours and recently had its first retreat at Douai Abbey for those considering Confirmation. There are currently twenty young people in the group and we are already looking into the possibility of attending World Youth Day in Lisbon in 2023.

## Youth Film Club

In 2021, St Elizabeth's launched a fortnightly Film Club for anyone in secondary school. This is currently online. However, the hope is that this could move to be in person. There is a team of two running the Film Club (an employee of the Parish and one volunteer). There are approximately 8 attendees at each film club night. It lasts approximately 1 - 1.5 hours (19:00-20:30) on every other Wednesday evening. As the Youth Group grows, Film Club will grow, too.

## The Ascent

The ASCENT is an established youth formation programme run in three locations nationally (<https://www.theascentuk.co.uk>). They have been hoping to launch their programme within a parish and have decided to partner with St Elizabeth's after hearing about our vision to renew youth ministry in the parish and the wider church. St Elizabeth's is teaming up with their Worth Abbey location, so retreats will be run in conjunction with Worth Abbey retreats for the first three years.

The ASCENT is for young people in years 10-13 and is a three-year programme preparing them for the transition to university and greater responsibility for their Christian lives. There are weekly meetings and mentoring sessions. The plan is to launch in September 2021 with at least one 'pod' (= "Pocket of Disciples"). Every pod has a maximum of 6 participants. Each year, we will add at least one more Pod so that after three years, there should be not less than eighteen participants and at least nine team members.

*"Having small children, it can be difficult to get all the paraphernalia (buggy etc) down the spiral stairs to the crypt. This has sometimes discouraged me from attending after-Mass activities or meet ups. There are lots of young mothers in the parish and I'd love to have more community around that".*

*Local Mum*

*"The stairs down to the crypt are very steep and not ideal for toddlers or those carrying babies. This lack of access limits the ability of the church to host events for mothers of babies that are common in most other churches, and are a source of great support for new mothers especially"*

*Event Organiser*

# The Project Phases

Our plan is to complete the restoration project in time for the two hundredth anniversary of the opening to the church and to achieve this by completing the work in several distinct phases.

## Phase One

The first phase will enable us to meet our legal obligations by complying with both health and safety requirements, and equality legislation. It will also involve some urgent repairs to the Walter's Spire at the back of the church.

In this phase we will establish a safe exit route from the church through the sacristy and provide wheelchair access to the crypt. The external staircase will be changed to make it safe and suitable for all users. Essential repairs to the Walters Spire will also be carried out in this phase.

## Phase Two

We need to be able to continue using the church so the second phase will not begin until the first has been completed. In this phase we will address the issues surrounding the entrance to

the church, we will take out the spiral staircase, replacing it with a regular one and thereby providing better internal access to both the crypt and the choir loft.

## Phase Three

The remaining external repair work will be carried out in Phase Three, including stone and brickwork repairs, rainwater goods and restoring all the windows.

Once the critical work has been completed there will be an additional spend to redecorate the church internally. This aspect of the project will depend upon the success of our fundraising programme.

*Recessing the entrance doors onto the landing will enable safe egress from the church via the ramp and steps.*

*This will provide a safe emergency route from the Nave for wheelchair users and anyone unable to climb steps.*

*Replacing the spiral staircase will provide a safer route to the Nave from the choir loft and the lower ground floor.*

*An external platform lift to the lower ground floor provides an accessible alternative to the staircase. The proposed longer more gradual staircase to the lower ground floor, provides a safer alternative for ambulant people.*

*Access Audit Report*





# Capital Campaign

In order to meet the cost of the project, the parish is launching a Capital Campaign to raise approximately £1,800,000 from a variety of sources including parish fundraising.

### Existing Funds

Thanks to the generosity of benefactors, legacies, and carefully budgeting, the parish Finance Committee has been able to ring-fence a sizeable Building Fund. Currently we have £750,000 to be allocated proportionately to each phase.

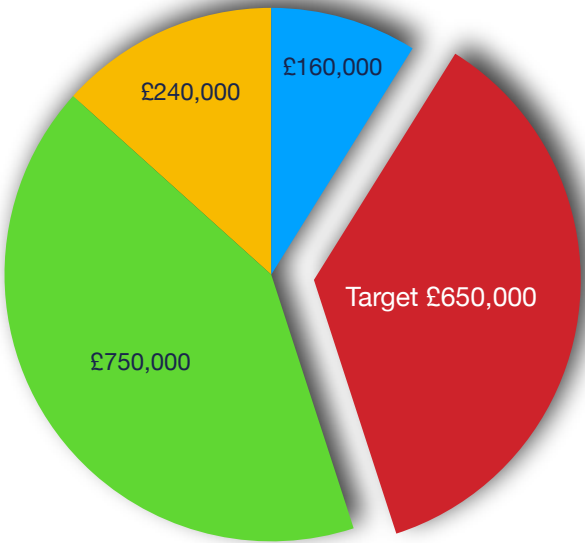
The project's Fundraising Team has secured a further £160,000 in grants and is currently investigating other possibilities.

### VAT Recovery

As a listed building we may be eligible to recover VAT on the project. This will potentially reduce the overall cost by some £240,000.

### Outstanding Amount

That leaves us needing to raise £650,000 in order to complete all three phases of the project.



### Outstanding for each phase

Some grants are ring-fenced for particular phases of the project. Other amounts we have raised or saved are allocated proportionately to each phase.

The figures below represent the total cost of each phase and the outstanding amount yet to be raised:

#### Phase One

Total cost: £650k      Amount Needed: **£ 198k**

#### Phase Two

Total cost: £450k      Amount Needed: **£ 177k**

#### Phase Three

Total cost: £700k      Amount Needed: **£ 275k**

Total amount yet to be raised:      **£ 650,000**

### Help us Reach our Target

To make a donation to help us treasure the past, open doors, and transform lives, please use the following dedicated account:

Account Name:      RCAS Richmond No.2  
Account Number:      10436774  
Sort Code:      60-17-31  
Optional Reference:      Renewal 2024

### Gift Aid

All personal donations to the project are eligible for Gift Aid which has the potential to increase their value by 25%. There are also significant tax advantages for Higher and Additional Rate tax payers. Please contact us for more information:

[richmond@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:richmond@rcaos.org.uk)



**St Elizabeth of Portugal Catholic Church**

The Vineyard

Richmond upon Thames

TW10 6AQ

[catholicrichmond.org](http://catholicrichmond.org)

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark - A Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
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