

SS PHILIP & JAMES CHURCH

THE HEART OF CHRIST IN THE HEART OF WHITTON

Statement of Significance & Need

General information

Ss Philip & James Church was opened in 1862 to serve a small village on the outskirts of London, as a 'daughter church' to St Mary's, the parish church of Twickenham. The church is a small neo-gothic building, furnished with pine pews, a well-maintained Walker pipe-organ (rebuilt in 1935), and a Steinway grand piano (gifted to the Parish by Kneller Hall School of military Music in the 1960s). There is a large font (dated 1887) which is currently located in the central Nave, upon a stone plinth, approximately towards the back of the central aisle.

The layout of the church incorporates a nave, a north aisle, a chapel created after WW1 to locate the only serving Whitton war memorial [both wars], a chancel that is furnished for and used by a robed choir and rising to the sanctuary that houses the altar (orientated to allow west-facing presidency at the Eucharist), a sedilia and an Aumbry used for the Reservation of the Consecrated Sacraments and Oils. The font was moved many decades ago from its original (and proper) location adjacent to the main door which is on the north face of the north aisle, to its current (and improper) location in the central nave.

In line with a regular programme of quinquennial repairs, the church is in relatively good order with no impending or expected major re-construction works in plan.

The church is used, primarily, on Sundays for the various acts of corporate worship. There can be anything up to six services in the church on a Sunday, providing for distinct congregations that serve different constituencies of the community. The church remains open and lit daily (locked at dusk) and is visited regularly by those wishing to make private devotions. It is used periodically through the week for service such as funerals and weddings, and for the weekly Eucharist that is currently offered in the west end of the church beyond the font.

In terms of age range and numbers, our current age-range is 93 years between the youngest and eldest worshipping member. The church can seat approximately 120 adults, a number that is increasingly exceeded (most notably at Christmas with one service that regularly receives approximately 300 attendees). The age profile of the church has changed considerably in the last eight years (the duration of my incumbency) with a significant number of families with young children attending regular services each week.

Due to the diminutive scale of the church and the lack of ancillary spaces, worship is arranged to suit all ages being present in the same space at the same time, with the

potential for disruption that this implies. On a busy Sunday, the church can expect to receive anything up to 400 separate sittings throughout the offered services. In terms of physical ability, our worshippers represent all variants, with wheel-chair users, babies and toddlers in push-chairs, the walking 'infirm', deaf or visually impaired, and those with dementia attending with carers, together with the fit and active!

The worship mode of the parish is, in the majority of cases, Eucharistic - in the modern catholic tradition. The clergy are vested, the choir likewise. The church enjoys a choral heritage that is largely offered within a style of organ-supported hymnody. There is an appetite to broaden the musical offer within the established tradition, to one that can be more informal and/or experimental, but logistical constraints often prevent this appetite being met. There is a desire to broaden the styles of worship on offer across the life of the parish.

Lay-out

- The nave is subdivided into two notional portions by virtue of the presence of the font on its stone plinth. The font is unplumbed and for baptisms a bowl, which was presented to the church by a previous incumbent, is placed inside. The forward section of the nave is approximately two-thirds of its overall length from the font to the chancel arch and the rear the remaining one third. The font presents a physical blockage to progress up and down the aisle, with the stone plinth being a potential hazard to health where young children currently climb on it. There have been incidents of injury caused on the font plinth, and given the number of people that sit in the open space beyond the font, evacuation is likely to be impeded.
- The north aisle, aside from its standard furnishings, houses a grand piano that is used to support worship and the north wall houses a plaque commemorating the RAFA. The chapel, which was created to house Whitton's War Memorial, is unused as it is not possible to furnish it with seating in any meaningful volume. This is largely due to the organ manual and seat that is mounted between the chapel and chancel and whose footprint extends well into the floor-space of the chapel. The chapel still retains an Altar and altar-rails. As such, the Chapel is more often than not a 'storage' space for the odd chairs, kneelers, plants and remembrance articles. The War Memorial for Whitton is sited on the north wall of the chapel and is made from teak salvaged from the training ship HMS Britannia. It is placed across a window that would otherwise provide another source of natural light into the chapel and the north aisle. There is no internal access to this window which, when seen from the outside, is seen to be in very poor state (broken glass, failed leadwork etc). Aside from the lack of light by virtue of its placement, it is also possible that the Memorial is being damaged from behind as it is exposed in some small measure to the elements.
- Accessed through a single door on the south aspect of the Chancel (adjacent to the Sanctuary) is a vestigial vestry. This room houses a sink which is plumbed with mains water which is used within worship and consumed. The outlet drains to a standard

waste and not plumbed to ground for the appropriate and proper disposal of consecrated fluids. It houses a table (used for preparation for services) and the odd moveable chair that appears from time to time. The one iron key to the door connecting the church with the vestry is now secured in the lock so the door can be kept locked during the day when the church is open. Aside from its use for an hour or two a week ahead of services, this space remains largely unused and the potential of this space is currently un-realised.

- In the north-west corner of the church the organ pipes are sited in an elevated space. The area below the pipes is enclosed and accessible by a lockable door. Access to the tower, bell and clock are gained through this space that used to serve as the choir vestry. This use is now discontinued due to the requirements of safeguarding (the area is unglazed save for the bottom portion of the external leaded window which grants only a very limited view from outside in), and the area now serves for storage of books and music and houses the equipment rack for the PA system, floristry equipment (pedestals, vases, containers for flowers and other paraphernalia), and other redundant items of furniture. This space is not heated as a result of the advice given by the organ tuner who advised that the then existing central-heating radiator could cause damage to the organ housed above; hence the pipework and radiator have been removed.
- Beyond the Vestigial Vestry, there is an extension to the church building (completed in the 1990s). This extension comprises a toilet with hand-basin, a lower room and an upper room accessed by way of a stair-way and quarter-landings. The lower room is now the Clergy Vestry. It houses the safe and is furnished with cupboards where robes are hung and consumables stored. Its south wall is largely glazed with a stable-door leading outside but this has been panelled over and the space between the panelling and the glass has been insulated. The glazing and door are protected by a larger pair of external wooden doors which have been secured so they will no longer open and the intermediate space has also been insulated to keep in warmth and dispel damp. The upper room, originally purposed to house the choir robes and serve as a practicing space, never in the end served this intended purpose. It became an informal chapel used during the week (when the church was formerly locked all week). It is now a well-used and well-equipped Parish Office which serves as the working space for the Parish Administrator. A number of activities take place in the Parish Office from reprographics, the counting of monies, use by individual Officers for their own parish roles, and occasional meetings. The only residual issue with the Parish Office is the means of escape in the event of a fire as this remains unclear and current solution tentative.

What do you need?

The parish is very fond of its building and recognises the importance of maintaining the fabric of the building. Due to vandalism, one of the stained-glass windows was damaged and we need it to be repaired.

The proposals

The PCC have approved the minor repairs to glazing panel. The work will be carried out by Chapel Studio and will include the dismantling of the glazing panel and transportation to their studio. The broken fragments will be integrated and the missing area renewed with new glass, painted and stained to match the original. Areas of damage will be re-leaded with matching profiles.

Why do you need it and why do you need it now?

It is essential that we maintain the fabric of our lovely church building and need to get the window repaired without further delay.

Justification

This proposal is for the repair of an original stained-glass window and there will be no changes in the design or look of the window.

Author: Jane Lewis and PCC members, June 2020