

Case for Development of St Mary's Church, Twickenham

- **Our Vision**

Our Vision is to give our beautiful building a stronger focus for both Christian worship and community use by making the wonderful space we have more flexible and welcoming. Both the church family and the local community will benefit; worship will be enhanced and the historic building will be well used throughout the week. The church's and the local community's rich heritage will be made more accessible and we will create opportunities for learning about, and being actively involved in informing others about, this heritage.

- **St Mary's Church: who we are**

St Mary's is a vibrant and thriving community set at the heart of Twickenham on the banks of the Thames. Standing at the head of the main street in Twickenham and next to the Civic Buildings of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, it is a focal point of the historic heart of Twickenham.

As a church, St Mary's seeks to meet the needs of all those who live or work in the local community. It particularly attracts and supports young families as well as being a spiritual home and point of reference for those who have been living or working in Twickenham for many years.

- **History: 300th anniversary**

On 10 May 2015, St Mary's marked the 300th anniversary of the rebuilding of the nave following its collapse in 1713. Founded over 700 years ago, the church incorporates a 15th century medieval tower and a neo-classical 18th century nave. The church has been altered and added to on many occasions, most notably in Victorian times with the installation of the fixed pews and in the mid 20th century with the addition of the vestry wing.

Opening up the interior and the other proposed changes will enable the church to be used more flexibly, both for worship and for use by the local community, and will make the church 'fit for purpose' for the 21st century. The first phase, the removal of the choir stalls from the chancel area in 2014, has worked well and spurred enthusiasm for creating more space in the rest of the church.

- **A rich heritage to be opened up**

The church has a rich heritage, much of which is recorded in the various stained glass windows, 58 memorials, 23 ledgerstones and archives of church records and documents, which date back to 1443. It is part of the Vision to make these more accessible to the local community. The body of poet Alexander Pope lies in the church under a stone slab engraved simply with the letter P, and a memorial to his parents (and himself) can be found on the north east wall.

Court painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller, was a churchwarden at St Mary's and active in the rebuilding of the nave under architect, John James. Thomas Twining, the founder of Twinings Tea, moved to Dial House next door to the church in about 1722, and his body was buried at the church. There is a memorial to him on the outside of the north east corner of the church.

The church walls and windows contain a wealth of memorials, behind each of which will be a story and a link with St Mary's. Amongst the church's local connections is its link with Syon Monastery in Old Isleworth founded by Henry V in 1415.

Of international importance is the association with Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia from 1660-1677, whose body was laid to rest in the crypt of the church, and the tombstone in the churchyard from 1788 of General William Tryon, who served as governor of North Carolina and New York.

The church archives are a significant collection offering important documentation of the church and parish of Twickenham and the surrounding area. The origins of the church records are two deeds with the seals of Abbess Matilda of Syon Monastery and King Henry VI each dated 1443. The records reflect the church's various activities and relationships and consist principally of records relating to the incumbent and services, churchwardens' material, records of church fabric and endowments, and vestry and PCC records; records of the wider parish such as tithes, property documents from the 17th century onwards and local activities; Syon Abbey archives; photographs; and reel-to-reel films of church events from the 1960s.

- **A building for the 21st century**

Reconfiguring the interior of the church will allow the building to be used more flexibly both for worship and by the local community. Currently, the fixed pews and narrow aisles limit the number of different activities that can take place in the church and restrict accessibility. Sight lines are poor. The interior feels neglected.

What we are endeavouring to achieve

- A building where there is a feeling of welcome, that is well lit and whose beauty is enhanced.
- A building with easy access and with space to move around.
- A building where the configuration of seating can be varied to suit the occasion and with good sight lines.
- A clear open space for community events and the display of local heritage.
- A historic building with easy access to the heritage in the church and which builds on the strong links between the church and the people and history of Twickenham.

Meeting the needs of the church family

Better sight lines will greatly enhance people's involvement in and experience of worship, and with more space it will be much better when groups of children and young people help to lead services. There will be more space and better visibility for visitors to Baptisms, better accessibility and mobility around the church for all, particularly those in wheelchairs or mobility buggies. There will also be a range of places to lead music from.

Weekday children's activities will be enhanced, especially Messy Church, an after school craft and activities event for young children attracting around 30 children from the local area. An unencumbered space will be much more welcoming for Little Heaven, a monthly service for children with special needs and/or in wheelchairs. There will be the potential for other children's services and activities and it will be possible to fit the whole of the enlarged church school (and other schools) in the church.

Meeting the needs of the local community

St Mary's has the opportunity to be more widely used by the community as a space for many different community activities:

A meeting space: More comfortable and flexible seating and better sight lines will make the church a more inviting venue for groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or for the Twickenham History Society.

A performance space: The ability to create an open space with better acoustics will allow it to play a leading role in the arts in Twickenham, whether for exhibitions (ARThouse or exhibitions in conjunction with the Orleans House Gallery), dramatic performances (such as by the Richmond Shakespeare Society and Richmond Youth Theatre), or for dance. The church hosted an evening to Alexander Pope put on by Poet in the City, a registered charity that seeks to bring poetry to the people and promote a love of poetry. Opening up the church will permit a broader range of musical events as well (in addition to

Twickenham Choral Society, Richmond Concert Society and the Marble Hill Singers) and school gatherings.

Community events: The annual flower festival during the Twickenham Festival and the 'Light Up Twickenham' event, when the Christmas lights are switched on, will be enhanced and made safer by the greater space for the 1,000 or so people who come into the church. St Mary's is looking to link up with local museums and galleries, such as Orleans House Gallery, to put on combined events or to link in with activities going on in central Twickenham. It is anticipated that the space will be used for further such events throughout the year.

Multi-media outlets will be available to enhance all these activities.

Heritage interpretation

We are looking to collaborate with the Twickenham Museum next door (and with other local places of interest) to put on exhibitions and displays of their artefacts and exhibits and to make the church's own heritage and that of the local community more available to the local community. The church has a very rich heritage and strong connections to the history of Twickenham. It is part of the Vision to explain these connections and make the church's and the local community's heritage more accessible to the people of this area (including through a programme of school visits) as well as to visitors to the area. We are looking at ways of being part of a heritage trail along the river from Turner's House, Marble Hill House, Orleans House Gallery to the church and Twickenham Museum and potentially on to Pope's Grotto and Strawberry Hill House.

The church has a considerable archive collection, with the earliest records and information going back to the 15th century. We are looking at how these could be made more accessible to the public and how we might be able to bring out the stories of lives and events contained in the archives.

Opportunities for volunteering

Running events and opening up the heritage to the community will provide opportunities for volunteering. This, together with the training of volunteers and working with volunteers at partner organisations such as the Twickenham Museum and Orleans House Gallery, is part of the Vision.

- **The reordering project**

Architect, Richard Griffiths, has drawn up initial plans giving expression to St Mary's Vision for its building. Following discussion and consultation, approval has been obtained to:

- Remove the fixed pews from the nave and replace them with high quality wooden benches and some stacking chairs.

- Relay the floor where the pews were and install under-floor heating, incorporating the ledgerstones from the existing floor.
- Make improvements to the lighting and install multi-media outlets while the floor is being re-laid.
- Create a children's area under the tower.
- Carry out works to the vestry to install catering facilities so that refreshments can be served in church.
- Provide for heritage interpretation and display space for our material relating to our archives and for material from Twickenham Museum.
- Redecorate the church.

We hope that the ongoing costs of running events in partnership with the Twickenham Museum and others will be met from grant funding and from income generated from letting out the reordered church.

- **Fundraising**

- *Where will the money come from?* While it is hoped that some of the money needed will come from grants and trusts, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, much will need to be raised locally.

- *When will fundraising begin?* Formal fundraising was launched on 10 May, on the day when St Mary's marked the 300th anniversary of the nave being rebuilt. The real fundraising will take place throughout 2016.

- *Donor recognition:* All donors will have the opportunity to have their name recorded in a special Donations Book. Depending on the size of donation, donors may be able to call themselves Friends, Benefactors or Patrons.

- *Fundraising events:* Building on the concert series put on during 2015, there will be a wide variety of fundraising events and activities to support and be involved in, from further musical events and talent shows to fresh bread, wine tasting to dinners.

For further information

Further information can be found on the reordering pages of the website: www.stmarytwick.org.uk

Or contact

Fundraising chairman Tony Dempsey email sandtony@btinternet.com or on 020 8898 2860

Fundraising events Judy Britton email chris.britton@blueyonder.co.uk or on 020 8891 2305