

Welcome to St George's

A brief history

From 1814 onwards Anglican services were held at the British Embassy in the Hôtel de Charost, at 39 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Lack of space prompted the Reverend Lewis Way to open the first St George's Church in 1824 at the bottom of the Champs Elysées, moving several times you now stand in the fifth church! In the 1960s, the dilapidated state of the rectory and church led to a major redevelopment of the site to free up financial and human resources. The congregation appointed the eminent French architect André Guitton (1904-2002), who as a Roman Catholic was married to a Protestant and regarded this work as an ecumenical gift and privilege. The brief was to create a space conducive to contemplation in the heart of the city and the rounded shapes of the interior walls, (created in part by the entrance to the car park located under the church), and the warmth of the brick, welcomes strangers and pilgrims to pray. The plan was to flood the space with light from a huge stained-glass window and optimise the acoustics by covering the walls with *briques de Vaugirard*. The austerity of the plain brick contrasts with more ornate ceilings in the stairwells and chapel, to draw visitors into the low-roofed worship space where a black ceiling raises visually the sense of height and the use of small bricks enlarges the space. Worshippers are gathered in a gentle arc around the altar, with the clergy and servers, in a non-hierarchical liturgical space. Originally, the choir was to occupy the gallery, but was unsuccessful acoustically. The church can accommodate 250 people.

Descending the stairs to your left are a library and Club Room. In front you will find the chapel.

The Chapel

A 15th-century Bavarian crucifix hangs beneath steel tubes - representing the towers of Jerusalem - Jesus is crucified outside the city (Hebrews 13:12). It was donated by a parishioner, Dale, Vicomtesse de Bonchamps.

This is where Morning Prayer, Evensong and the daily Eucharist are celebrated. In the corner hangs a modern tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament. Opposite is an icon of the Transfiguration.

The icon of Saint Anne.

The icon of Saint Anne, Our Lady and the Christ Child was designed by the contemporary French iconographer Nicole Seuvic in a traditional style and donated in 2022.

As you move into the church take a moment to enjoy the warmth and gentle welcome.

The baptismal font and altar

The font was donated by the Sisters of the Assumption, Rue de Lübeck, in whose chapel the congregation worshipped during the reconstruction of the church. The oak altar slab was donated by the Bishop of Versailles. The translucent pillars were originally designed to be filled with light to give the impression of a floating altar, but this idea was abandoned because it also illuminated the people gathered around the altar.

Move to the middle of the church to enjoy the windows.

The stained-glass windows (1978)

Designed by Jacques Loire (1932-2021) and made of thick, coloured, glass slabs, they were made at the Boussois *Halle à Pots* workshops, and were glued together on-site with a translucent mastic (instead of cement). The largest of the stained-glass windows weighs 600 kg and the total weight of the 19 m² of stained glass is 4 tonnes. Loire suggested that stained glass is a quest for the *irréel*, an atmosphere that is both *nul part et partout* nowhere and everywhere, a search for another world, another dimension.

The motif depicted is the Tree of Life. Three trees are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures (Genesis 2:8-9, Revelation 22:1-2, 1 Peter 2:24 ESV). In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, fall into sin, and are cast out before eating the fruit of the tree of life, thus making evil permanent. In the book of Revelation, the tree produces twelve kinds of fruit each month and its leaves are used to heal the nations. It is a symbol of paradise regained and of our communion with our Creator. The third tree is the Cross; Saint Peter says, 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness.'

The chairs in the main body of the church are in 3 colours to represent the leaves of the Tree of Life that bring healing. Pope Francis, in 2019, urged his listeners to

'strive to make the churches like a field hospital, advancing these three principles... announcing Christ, repairing inequalities, and sowing hope.'

Move towards the statue of Mary, the Mother of God where you can see the organ and back of church.

Our Lady

The carved statue of Our Lady dates from the 18th century and probably comes from Burgundy. It was donated by Mr & Mrs Laws Johnson. The metal votive candle stands were designed for the church.

The organ

The organ was built by Belgian organ builder Patrick Collon (born 1942), born in 1942 to an English mother and a Belgian-Russian father he established his own organ building company in Laeken, Belgium, under the name *Manufacture d'orgues de Bruxelles*. His instruments are often based on the classical Italian, French, or Spanish styles of the 18th century, without copying specific historical models. The organ was inaugurated by Jos van Immerseel on 23 April 1980.

The coat of arms

Donated to St George's after its reconstruction, you can see the coat of arms of King George IV (1762-1820-1830), during whose reign St George's was inaugurated. It was following a direct personal appeal from George that Louis XVIII allowed the opening of an Anglican church outside the British Embassy.

Between the organ and the piano is a short corridor that leads to the sacristy.

The sacristy

Here you will find photographs of the clergy of St George's, as well as pictures and prints illustrating different parts of the history of St George's.

Above the plaque commemorating the consecration of the new church in 1978 you will find more modern art.

The statue of the risen Christ

Created by the contemporary artist Guy Reid (born 1963) and donated in memory of Philip

Parks by his family. Born in South Africa and raised in the United Kingdom Reid draws inspiration from the body itself, clothed or naked, evoking the complex nature of human beings. His works sometimes exude an irresistible contemplative force. Critics have described some pieces as beautiful and ugly almost in the same breath. The nakedness of Christ is perceived by many as shocking, perhaps because we are still subject to the original shame that overwhelmed Adam and Eve when they found themselves naked (Genesis 3:7-8)?

What is Anglicanism?

The reforms of the Church undertaken by King Henry VIII between 1529 and 1536 were as a direct consequence of Spanish domination of the papacy. Relying on the support of protestants, the conservative king abolished only the legal links with the papacy, monasteries and the economic system of Prayers for the Dead. Further upheavals followed under Protestant and Catholic monarchs until Elizabeth established the Via Media between the extremes of Presbyterianism and Catholicism.

Anglicanism declares that only doctrines plainly contained in Scripture are required to be believed for salvation; that only two Sacraments are found in the Bible, but that the five others are commonly accepted; that bishops, priests and deacons are necessary for the Church - they may marry and today they may be men or women.

The Eucharist is the central act of worship on Sunday. Anglican worship may include music, incense and acolytes, or be simple with a long sermon. It almost always includes enthusiastic hymn singing, which has been a feature of Anglican services since the 18th century.

Anglicanism spread with English speakers throughout the world from the 17th century onwards. There are 42 dioceses in the Church of England and St George's is part of the Diocese of Europe. Today the diocese has 300 chaplaincies, from Norway to Morocco, and our bishop lives in Brussels.

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