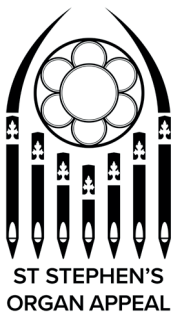




Camille Pissarro, 'St Stephen's Church, Lower Norwood', 1870. Oil on canvas, 43 × 53 cm. Private collection.



ST STEPHEN'S ORGAN APPEAL

**“Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding”
— a new pipe organ for St Stephen's**

- Nurturing musical excellence within the liturgy
- Giving focus to community performances
- Encouraging young people to learn
- Accompanying choirs and congregation
- Providing a world-class concert instrument

THE ROLE OF THE ORGAN IN MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Music plays a central role in the life of St Stephen's Church, South Dulwich. The organ supports the liturgy in the worship of God for the main Sunday Eucharist and numerous special services throughout the church year, including evensongs, baptisms, weddings, funerals and memorials. Since its consecration in 1868 the church has continued to play a central role in the community of South London, with many local schools using St Stephen's for seasonal and occasional festive services. As well as leading enthusiastic congregational singing, the organ is called upon to play music from all genres, regularly accompanying soloists and dedicated amateur and professional choirs. As a concert and solo instrument, it also supports an array of instrumental music, notably solo recitals and performances by ensembles large and small.

In addition to the traditional organ repertoire, with its principal focus on supporting worship with integrity and purpose, the organ is used to play transcriptions of classical and popular music and impromptu improvisations – key components of the skills learned by every organist.

The existing pipe organ – visually pleasing, and a blessing when it was originally installed – was built to a strictly limited budget, using parts from several redundant instruments. Although it served its purpose in the short term, it was always underpowered for the needs of the church, and it has now reached the end of its serviceable life. The music team is currently making use of a basic Viscount digital organ, which will see the church through the fundraising period for a proposed new organ and enable the music at St Stephen's to continue to flourish in the meantime.

The church is now presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to acquire a legacy instrument that will continue to attract, inspire and train top musical talent long into the future. Thanks to the church's location with respect to local schools, St Stephen's is in a unique position to be able to connect with and nurture young musical talent, irrespective of background and financial means. We pride ourselves on the diversity of our young choristers, and the planned new instrument will allow the church to develop its role as a training centre for young organists, aided by its proximity to the Royal College of Organists' exam centre in Dulwich Village.

THE ORIGINAL ORGAN OF ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH

J. W. Walker & Sons completed the original two-manual organ in 1876, and it was then rebuilt in 1905 by William Hill & Son. It contained some fine pipework but was never really capable of filling the church with sound. Indeed, thanks to its setting in the north chancel, it was described by experts who heard it as being 'like a bee in a bottle'. In the late 1980s it was eventually declared unplayable, and the console was removed.

THE PULHAM ORGAN

The small, now-decommissioned organ at the west end of the church was constructed in 2006 by Roger Pulham. Its carved oak case was fitted with five ranks of 18th-century pipes from an instrument by Holditch, together with some even older second-hand material.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL

For the last two years the Organ Committee, with our Patron, Sir Andrew Parmley, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Organists, has laid the groundwork for an appeal that will be officially launched soon. Following detailed discussions with a range of manufacturers, tenders

were submitted and, after much painstaking and prayerful consideration, Nicholson & Co. of Malvern has been chosen to build the new instrument. It is an established firm with an excellent reputation and a strong order book that currently includes the new organ for Gloucester Cathedral. As such, their current pedigree singles them out as a titan of British organ building.

Their design stood out in several ways: the proposed organ will be a truly flexible instrument that will not only fulfil every possible liturgical need, but will also provide a world-class teaching and performing instrument that will encourage and inspire all who play and hear it.

The Nicholson concept is based on a new instrument housed predominantly within casework at the west end of the church. Fitted with three manuals (a combined Choir/Solo and the standard Great and Swell) and a pedal section, it will also boast a small secondary division, housed in the existing chancel case, that will incorporate parts of the original 1876 Walker organ (later rebuilt by Hill), enabling history to speak again! The placement of the instrument will provide optimal accompaniment for singers (including vocalists at the east end of the church), while surrounding and supporting congregational singing without having to rely on an overwhelming volume from the west end. This ‘wrapping around’ of tone will be of significant liturgical and musical benefit. Furthermore, the console will be detached and mobile to allow for the flexible placement of choirs, orchestras and congregations.

The new organ will be both historically informed and forward-looking. Employing the best of Victorian scaling in its warm yet characterful choruses, it will also feature continental elements to ensure colour and excitement. A new west-end case will be designed to elevate and exalt the church, liberating the stunning west window and visually complementing the original Walker organ case in the chancel.

THE WEST WINDOW

The west window is currently obscured by the Pulham organ. The original glass, lost during the war, was replaced in 1952 with a memorial window created by Moira Forsyth, financed by a War Damage compensation claim. The replacement window features depictions of St Stephen and St Paul, with St Stephen shown at the moment of his martyrdom, complete with some of the stones that were used to put him to death. St Paul is portrayed in his later years as a preacher and teacher, rather than as the young man (known as Saul) who observed Stephen’s execution. Additionally, the window showcases the coats of arms of the three dioceses historically associated with the parish of St Stephen’s, along with the arms of Alleyn’s College of God’s Gift in Dulwich. A notable feature of the design is the depiction of the pelican in her piety, a symbol of self-sacrifice that mirrors Christ’s sacrifice of his own blood on the Cross.

BUDGET AND TIMING

We are asking you if you would like to be part of this vision by helping to fund this legacy project, with the goal of raising £1.5 million to secure this wonderful instrument for the future of St Stephen’s. The aim is to have the new organ installed by the end of 2028. The lead time for the construction of new organs is such that any contract with Nicholson will need to be signed as soon as possible, following the granting of a Faculty by the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

CONTACT

Please get in touch informally with Fr Bernhard Schunemann (vicar@ststephensdulwich.org), and spread the word amongst friends, family and potential supporters of this wonderful project.



ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, DULWICH
PROPOSED NEW ORGAN
NICHOLSON & Co.