

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

AN ENQUIRY FOR  
THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK  
INTO THE USE OF ST ALPHEGE AS  
A CENTRE FOR URBAN SPIRITUALITY

[CATRIONA ROBERTSON](#) MARCH 2012



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



“Christian faith has its beginnings in an experience of profound contradictoriness, an experience which so questioned the religious categories of its time that the resulting reorganization of religious language was a centuries-long task.

At one level, indeed, it is a task which every generation has to undertake again.

And if ‘spirituality’ can be given any coherent meaning, perhaps it is to be understood in terms of this task: each believer making his or her own that engagement with the questioning at the heart of the faith which is so evident in the classical documents of Christian belief.

This is *not*, it must be said, to recommend any of the currently fashionable varieties of relativism or to romanticize a wistful ‘half-belief.’

The questioning involved here is not our interrogation of the data, but its interrogation of us.

It is the intractable strangeness of the ground of belief that must constantly be allowed to challenge the fixed assumptions of religiosity; it is a given, whose question to each succeeding age is fundamentally one and the same.

And the greatness of the great Christian saints lies in their readiness to be questioned, judged, stripped naked and left speechless by that which lies at the centre of their faith.”

Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge, Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to Saint John of the Cross*, 1991.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
HISTORICAL THREADS	6
LOCATION & SETTING	9
ST ALPHEGE - USABLE SPACE	11
POTENTIAL USE AS URBAN SPIRITUALITY CENTRE	15
PLACES AND COMMUNITIES	15
OPPORTUNITIES, MISSION, WIDER CONTEXT	21
MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY	26
IMPROVEMENTS TO FABRIC & CONCLUSIONS	27
RECOMMENDATIONS	28
APPENDICES: PARTICIPANTS, SANCTUARY, SOPHIA HUBS	29

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2012 is the millennium of the martyrdom in Greenwich of St Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury.

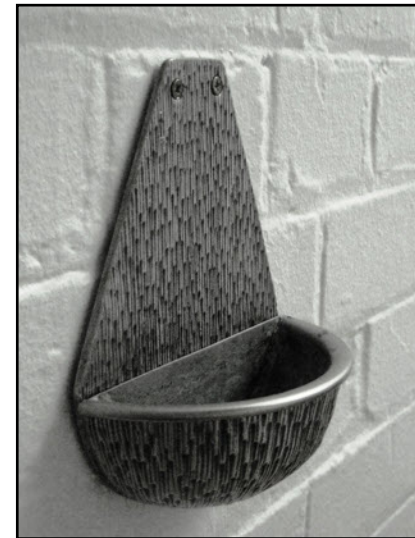
Churches dedicated to St Alphege across the country will be marking the anniversary on 19th April.

A church dedicated in 1882 to St Alphege in Southwark was demolished in 1991. The congregation moved to the old church's hall nearby in King's Bench Street, where there is also a shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham. They later joined the local parish congregation of St George the Martyr.

The hall has been refurbished and is used for quiet days, opportunities to explore different aspects of spirituality and for a wider range of activities as bookable space.

The parish has been looking for a sustainable future for the ground floor of the building and the Shrine. As it sits within the inner urban area of the Diocese of Southwark, the possibility of St Alphege becoming a Diocesan space (or shared Diocesan-parish space) where spirituality can be explored within an urban context has been considered.

This piece of work, commissioned by the Diocese of Southwark, explores its suitability as a centre for urban spirituality, looking at demand, similar provision, any distinctive role, or potential partner organisations, possible patterns of use, along with management and accountability structures which would lead to a fruitful and sustainable future for the site.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



*Statue of St Alphege at the King's Bench Street building.*



*St Alphege, Southwark, demolished in 1991.*

## HISTORICAL THREADS

### ST ALPHEGE THE MARTYR

St Alphege was born near Bath in 954 at a time when England was politically and linguistically fragmented; plurality was the norm.

He became a monk at Deerhurst Priory, then left to live as a hermit before returning to be Abbot of Bath and later Bishop of Winchester. Large parts of the country were under Scandinavian control (much of present-day Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Sussex, Surrey, Kent and East Anglia) and kidnapping for ransom was common. St Alphege was something of a foreign secretary figure, negotiating a peace settlement with Norway on behalf of King Ethelred. He became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1006.

The Danes raided Canterbury in 1011 and took St Alphege to their base at Greenwich as hostage, demanding a ransom for his release. He refused to allow this, knowing his people were already impoverished by previous raids and fearing that if they paid the money, they would be forced to beg to stay alive.

The following year, in a drunken state while feasting, the Danes summoned their prisoner and threw ox bones at him. Already dying, St Alphege was killed by an axe-blow to the head. Some of the Danish forces, distancing themselves from the murder of a good man, changed their allegiance to England.

When Cnut, Prince of Denmark, took the English throne in 1016 he showed his respect by moving St Alphege's remains to Canterbury with great ceremony.

St Alphege is remembered for his devotion to God, his asceticism and his concern for economic justice and human dignity. He spoke out and took action to protect the vulnerable, even though it cost him his life. He was revered by his own people and, after his death, by former enemies, too.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## ST ALPHEGE CHURCH, SOUTHWARK

The pioneering work of the church of St Alphege was started in the skittle alley of a local pub by the Revd A B Goulden, then an assistant priest at St Peter, Vauxhall. The area south of Nelson Square, off Blackfriars Road, was one of the poorest in London when Fr Goulden arrived in 1871.

Fr Goulden quoted a description of his parish as it was in 1871 at a meeting of the Christian Conferences at Sion College in the summer of 1891. He paints a picture of a shifting population which was very poor, living in overcrowded, unhealthy conditions, where knife crime and violence were common.

"It is a poor parish in the middle of poor parishes only to be distinguished by surpassing all others in poverty . . . The wretched ruinous houses with battered doors, dingy broken windows and blackened walls, cluster thickly together in murky courts and alleys. Foul sewers pour out disagreeable smells. Rotten refuse lies in every direction . . .

"Hunger and vice are no strangers in these parts. Even the children and mere infants sprawling in the gutter look up at the passers by with pinched and ugly faces . . . Down these narrow and dirty streets costermongers, tramps, labourers and thieves are huddled together. A small low room suffices for a whole family . . . Drunken street fights are of frequent occurrence. Sometimes the whole adult population of one street will engage in pitched battles with the inhabitants of another, when brickbats, bottles, pokers and even knives will be freely used. The parish itself was exceptionally of a migratory character, and there existed a continual flowing in and out of the inhabitants."

Fr Goulden and his colleagues worked with the poorest of the parish, body and soul.

"They began with the Cross. Not with the outside but with the inside. 'When a man's heart is aflame with God, all things that are wrong will be thrown out of the window' . . . the teaching being that the Church was the mother of the soul, and that she is to nurse and feed saved souls with the Bread of Heaven and sustain souls with the Life of Christ received.

*Charles Booth's Poverty Map of 1899, showing (added in bright blue) the old parish boundary, the old St Alphege Church, the position of the later church hall on King's Bench Street and the current parish church of St George the Martyr. The parish was very poor.*

*The colour code to show the condition of the inhabitants was:*

<i>Black - Lowest class, Vicious, semi-criminal</i>	<i>Pink - Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings</i>
<i>Dark blue - Very poor, casual. Chronic want.</i>	<i>Red - Middle-class. Well-to-do.</i>
<i>Pale blue - Poor. 18-21s pw for moderate family</i>	<i>Gold - Upper-middle class. Wealthy.</i>
<i>Beige - Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor</i>	



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



*The Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham at St Alphege, which is awaiting renovation by the parish.*



“Side by side with this spiritual teaching the human side of man was not forgotten, and while the free Gospel was on the lips the quartern loaf was under the arm.”

A large church was built on the south-east corner of the junction of Lancaster Street and King James Street. The intense spirituality of the worship and teaching at St Alphege was combined with social action for the vulnerable and the poor - education, finding employment and direct support with food and other necessities.

A large clergy house and living quarters for vergers and other church workers was built in 1910. The current King's Bench Street property was built next to it in 1931. The ministry of St Alphege, Southwark, continued through the turn of the century and into the post-WWII era. The church was famous and drew a Sunday congregation from all over London and beyond, continuing to work with and for the local people.

Only in the post-War period did St Alphege experience decline. In 1986, after it was closed, the interior of the church was used to film a TV episode of *Only Fools and Horses*. The building was demolished a few years later.

The congregation was devoted to its clergy. When Fr Goulden died, his body lay in the church for five days as people paid their respects. The Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham was created by parishioners to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Fr Eric Matteson.

\* \* \*

The building in King's Bench Street now lies within the parish of St George the Martyr. The Rector, the Revd Ray Andrews, ministers to a parish which still has a very diverse population and a vibrant congregation. St George's is an historic and beautiful church which is increasingly becoming known as a centre of art and music. There are spacious and attractive rooms in the crypt which are used by community groups and organisations.



*Memorial to Fr Goulden, the much-loved first vicar of St Alphege.*



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

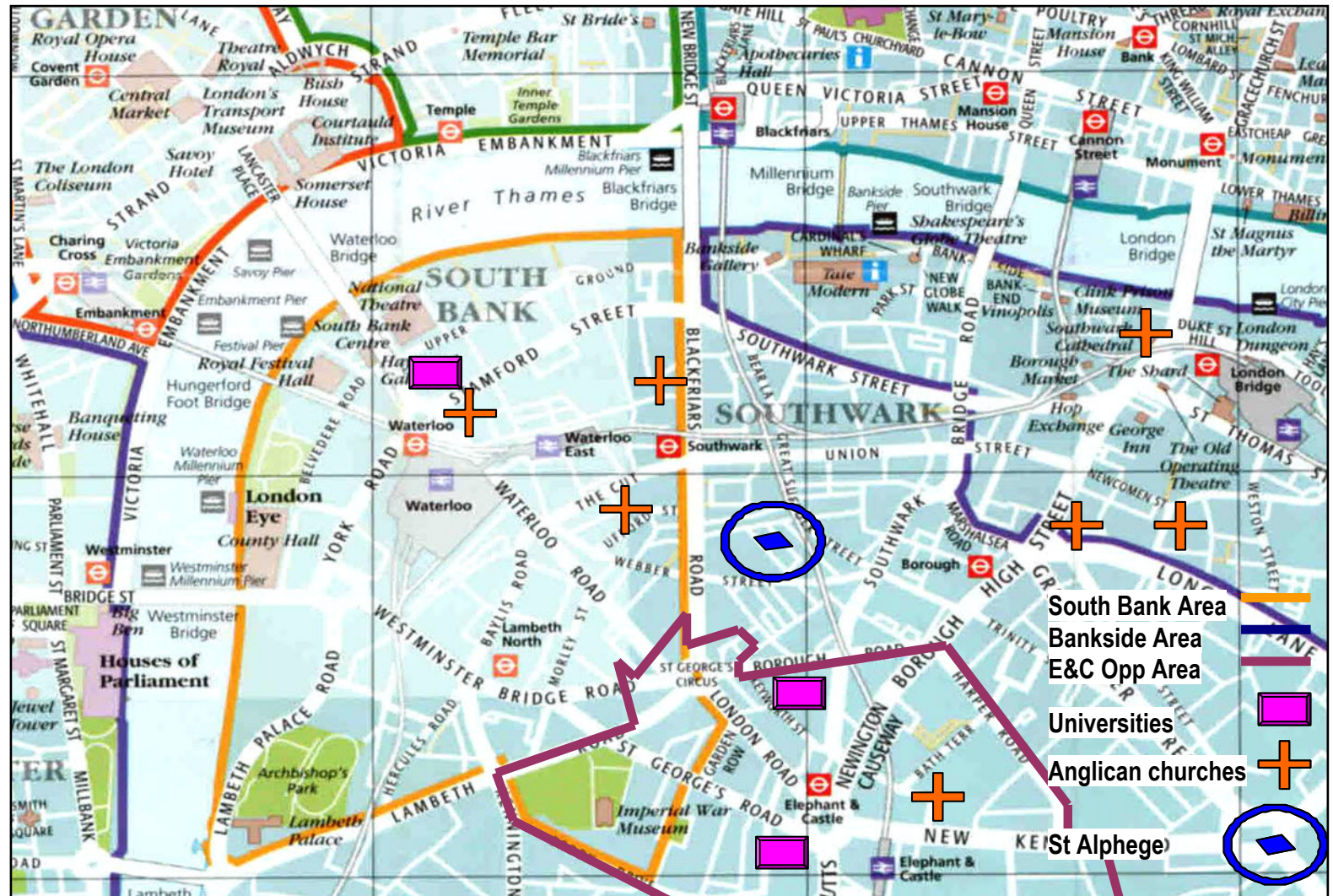
## LOCATION AND SETTING

The building on King's Bench Street is in a quiet area nestling between the lively Bankside Cultural Quarter, the equally buzzy South Bank and the new Elephant & Castle Opportunity Area.

Although located in central London and within easy reach of Tate Modern and the lively riverside area, St Alphege is tucked away and, according to the London-SE1 website, 'easily missed'. Several interviewees remarked - you can never find it. This is one of its strengths as a venue.

London South Bank University is the nearest landmark and two more universities are not far away: King's College at Waterloo and the University of the Arts at Elephant and Castle.

The 'artistic corridor' of Union Street and the ribbon development (new media start-ups, smart offices and flats) along Great Suffolk Street come close, but do not



*St Alphege is on King's Bench Street, SE1, not far from Waterloo station, Tate Modern and the River Thames. It is in a quiet street, hidden away from the bustle of three nearby commercial and cultural areas - South Bank, Bankside and the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area. St Alphege is within easy reach of public transport, riverside arts venues and the universities.*



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



*St Alphege's entrance on King's Bench Street. The Oratory of St Alphege is at the junction with Pocock Street (painted white and black).*

extend into Pocock Street beyond the elevated railway line. St Alphege is just out of zone.

King's Bench Street itself is L-shaped, creating a secondary link between Pocock Street and Rushworth Street. It is described in a planning document by Southwark Council,

*"Notwithstanding its grand-sounding name, King's Bench Street is essentially a back lane, being narrow and tightly enclosed."*

There is no reason to walk, cycle or drive down the street except to gain access, making it an exceptionally quiet street with minimal footfall.

A small row of privately owned ex-almshouses, black cab repair yards, newspaper distribution centres, light industrial and storage facilities are in the immediate vicinity. St Mungo's offices and hostels for the homeless occupy Chadwick House (the former home of the Community of Reparation to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament) and much of the rest of the premises between Rushworth St and King's Bench Street. Social housing predominates in the area nearby. London South Bank University, Blackfriars Law Courts, CAN Mezzanine (office space for 50 third sector organisations) and the London Fire Brigade HQ are all within five minutes' walk.

St Alphege adjoins the former clergy house of St Alphege's parish (which now belongs to the Diocese) and the parish's self-contained flats which are rented out. The former clergy house is home to the Oratory of St Alphege, an Anglican residential religious community which includes First Order Franciscans. The community has close links with the Diocese, the parish and the Chaplain of London South Bank University.

There are thousands of young people studying in the area around St Alphege. Some of them live at home and others stay in student accommodation. London South Bank University alone has over 25,000 students.

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

Public transport links are good. There are buses along Blackfriars Road and the nearest tube station, Southwark, is reached within five minutes' walk. Borough underground is not very much further away. Waterloo and London Bridge station are a short bus ride away. Street parking is available for a maximum of four hours during weekdays and free at other times. There are no cycle racks near St Alphege. There is very little open green space in the area, the nearest being a tiny park at Mint Street.

The urban part of the Diocese of Southwark is mixed. It includes organisations with national and international profiles - such as leading FTSE 100 Index corporations, City Hall, world class music, theatre and art venues, public sector HQs and exclusive housing - along with some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. There is a fast-changing multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-faith population. Twenty-two urban parishes in the Diocese are identified under the Near Neighbours Programme.

## [London's Poverty Profile](#) notes

- The poorest 50% of Londoners have less than 5% of financial or property wealth. The richest 10% have 40% of income wealth, 45% of property wealth and 65% of financial wealth
- child poverty has fallen, but working-age poverty has risen
- overcrowding in accommodation is increasing
- unemployment amongst young people is the highest for nearly 20 years (23%) and rising
- One in seven jobs in London is low paid; nearly 50% of young adults are paid less than the London Living Wage
- Infant mortality and life expectancy varies widely between the rich and the poor areas of London. Babies born in Southwark are twice as likely to die before their 1st birthday than those born in Bromley, Kingston and Richmond.



*The entrance to King's Bench Street, to the right of the photo, is easily missed. Behind the elevated railway line are two new developments: open market offices and flats (left) and student accommodation (right).*

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



St Alphege is close to some of the wealthiest and some of the poorest areas in the Diocese.

The urban part of the Diocese has a strong international dimension. It is home to people from all over the world and has a very rich cultural life. There are strong links between families and communities living in London and those in many overseas countries. The Diocese itself has relationships across the globe through the Anglican Communion and with Zimbabwe in particular. The national headquarters for Christian Aid, Cafod and Save the Children Fund are in the urban part of the Diocese, two of them close to St Alphege.

Change is afoot in the area immediately around St Alphege.

In early 2013, Blackfriars Settlement will be moving into a large new building on Rushworth Street, which will include a café, a suite of bookable rooms, hot-desk facilities for small organisations and thirty-six shared-ownership flats. The Settlement has offered, for a reasonable fee, to add St Alphege to its system of bookings, payments, opening/closing and cleaning.

A very large new block of Unite student accommodation is nearing completion on Pocock Street, opposite Blackfriars Law Courts.

There are likely to be many more visitors, workers and residents - single people, couples, families and students - in the area.

Although St Alphege is centrally located (a short walk across the Millennium Bridge takes you straight into the City of London), it is a place you are unlikely to come across by accident; you go there intentionally. It is ideal for use by those with a purpose, those who value quiet and silence, groups which prefer not to be interrupted, and for those who do not want to flaunt their activities or attract attention from passers-by.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## ST ALPHEGE - USABLE SPACE

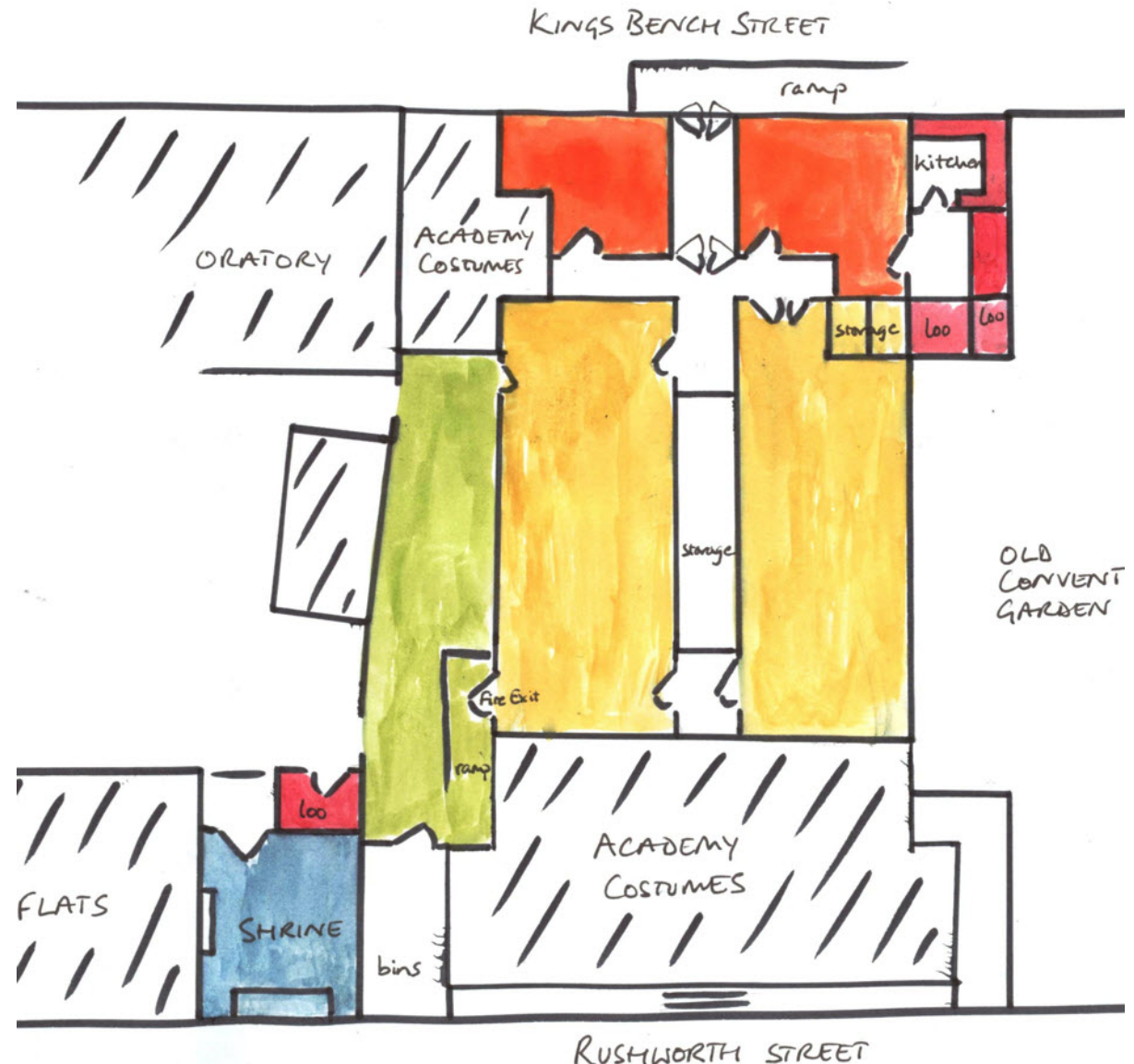
The ground floor of St Alphege has been renovated by the parish and now provides a set of rooms with painted white walls and wood or laminate flooring. The rooms are light and airy, accessible, clean and lit from the ceiling. The upper floors are used by Academy Costumes. Sound from above is very rarely audible.

Entering via a ramp from King's Bench Street, there are two sets of double doors leading to a lobby area which in turn leads to the four main spaces.

There are two large, high-ceilinged rooms (facing south-east and north-west - yellow on floor plan), both with high-level windows. They are separated by a long, narrow walk-in storage area which insulates each room against sound from the other. Two smaller rooms with lower ceilings (orange) look out onto the street: one is suitable for office space and the other, adjoining a small kitchen and two lavatories, is perfect for hospitality and social purposes.

The fire exit from the ground floor leads from the north-west facing room (currently arranged as a small church for worship) into a courtyard (green). There is a second door leading out from this room. The Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham (blue) is across the corner of the courtyard and up one step, next to an additional lavatory.

The courtyard has a variety of potted plants and is used both by the Oratory and by the residents of the parish flats. The Oratory





# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



also has a roof garden. The courtyard area onto which St Alphege leads has not been used by the church and hall for some time and is in need of attention. There are no plants and at the moment it is used as an overflow play area for the flats.

The two large spaces inside are plain and versatile, if a little echoey. The kitchen is tiny but has all the essentials. It needs a new fridge and replacement drawer fronts and cupboard doors. The crockery, cutlery and utensils need updating. The heating works well. Lighting in all the main rooms would benefit from some variety, including some low-level sources of light and some adjustable spot-lights and halogen downlighters. The two inside lavatories are designated Gents and Ladies (the latter doubles as a wheelchair accessible WC). The outside lavatory is not used.

The walk-in storage space is capacious. There are two smaller storage areas, made from stud walls, in the south-east facing room and two press cupboards in the area between the two sets of entrance doors.

The shrine has seen better days and has suffered from water damage through the roof. It is a well-proportioned space with high-level windows and a skylight. If renovated, re-ordered and re-carpeted, it would happily seat up to 15 people around a deep, comfortable wall ledge (with space for more, seated on the floor) whilst remaining small enough to invite individual worship, prayer and reflection. A short ramp would allow wheelchair and pushchair access.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## POTENTIAL USE OF ST ALPHEGE AS A CENTRE FOR URBAN SPIRITUALITY

The message from early conversations was that an empty space with no rhythm of worship or practice, no core community to make it their own and nobody there to offer hospitality and a sense of purpose was not likely to become anything more than a collection of bookable rooms - of which there is no shortage.

Some were clear that there was no use in being romantic about past associations or in flogging a dead horse - the space should be sold or freed up for commercial use, thereby securing the future of St George the Martyr parish as a whole.

Others wondered whether the unique history and setting of St Alphege, combined with an approach to spirituality which embraced the reality of modern urban life in all its complexity, might still have something worthwhile to offer.

During the course of the study, opportunities for this opened up.



## PLACES AND COMMUNITIES

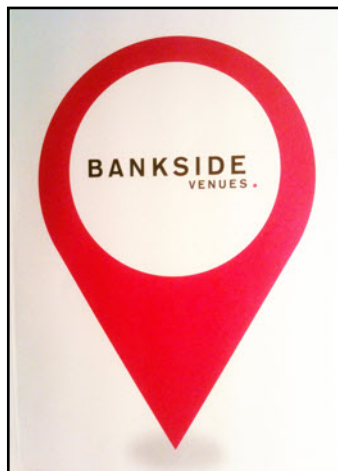
Centres of spirituality, as was remarked frequently throughout the study, are - or can be - everywhere and anywhere, but there are some places and communities in London which encourage spiritual awareness as part of their purpose. The study looked at those which offer space - and those which do not, but may be looking for it.

### Bookable space

Reasonably priced bookable space of a general nature is not hard to find: there are several places near St Alphege which are regularly used for meetings, teaching, training, self-help groups and other gatherings.

[Better Bankside's space](#) is near the river, light and spacious, well-equipped with IT and refreshments and available to community groups from 8am to 10pm for £20 per hour. [Blackfriars Settlement](#) operates a sliding scale of rates for commercial and community use and will have a further range of rooms from 2013. Fully serviced [CAN office space](#) in Loman Street (which includes reception, security, use of meeting rooms, telecoms and IT, tea & coffee, photocopiers) costs around £100 per week. Faiths Forum for London and several social action NGOs are based at CAN.

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



St Mungo's (next to St Alphege) lets out its training spaces to other organisations. There are plenty of upmarket venues in the area, listed in [Bankside Venues](#).

St Alphege currently offers its space as a whole for around £27 per hour, with a reduction for whole or part-day rentals.

## Spaces which include a focus on urban spirituality

### DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK SPACES

There are several parish churches, halls, meeting spaces and a cathedral near St Alphege:

- St George the Martyr, Southwark + halls
- Christ Church, Southwark + halls
- St Andrew, Waterloo - multi-use space
- St John, Waterloo - multi-use spaces
- Trinity House, SE1 - several rooms
- Southwark Cathedral + halls
- St Hugh, Bermondsey (to be rebuilt)
- St Matthew at the Elephant + halls

The Cathedral hosted a very well attended (300+) Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Day in November 2011 which included a wide variety of workshops and opportunities. Many individuals and groups from within and from outside the Diocese contributed to the success of the day, including Chris Chapman, Diocesan Spiritual Formation Adviser, and Revd Paul Ansell, who chairs the Spiritual Formation Group. Chris offers a [wide range of quiet days and opportunities to explore prayer and spirituality](#) throughout the Diocese, including St Alphege. He also produces a very helpful newsletter, [Formed by the Spirit](#).

Local interviewees confirmed that current demand for parish churches, halls and regular meeting space is not rising. Most premises have times when they are not used. St Alphege bookings have increased in the early part of 2012, but amongst those with space to let, a struggling economy coupled with local authority cuts to community groups and third sector organisations has resulted in falling demand.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

Nearby organisations (USPG, Blackfriars Law Courts, St Mungo's and Blackfriars Settlement are close by) did not indicate a need for further meeting space or for opportunities to focus on urban spirituality, although the occasional awayday or time together in a place apart was a possibility.

[Wychcroft](#) is a large country house in rural Surrey and is the Diocesan training, retreat and conference centre.

## OTHER SPACES

There are other places which invite or gather people to use their premises for spiritual accompaniment or direction, urban retreats and quiet days and where resources on spirituality are available.

### [London Centre for Spirituality](#)

The Centre has been open for 10 years and is well established on a busy City street. People come off the street to the bookshop and café. These are set inside an impressive and historic church dedicated to St Edmund the King - who was also martyred by the Danes. LCS has a programme of talks, events and training as well as offering its rooms for spiritual accompaniment/direction and supervision. LCS has conducted a survey of City workers and spirituality. The Centre is much admired and well used, but a sustainable income is hard to come by. The focus is mainly on individuals, including ordinands, rather than parish groups or intentional communities. Joint events have been held with St Ethelburga's and Moot.

### [Moot](#)

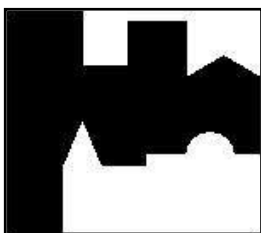
Originally based in the Diocese of Southwark as Epicentre, Moot is a new-monastic community that 'seeks to respond to the need for justice, equity and ethics in the city'. Moot has found a (non-residential) home at St Mary Aldermary in the City.

The members take an entrepreneurial approach to being sustainable; they have something valuable to offer and to share and they go out and market it. They also have a creative arts social enterprise arm, Moot Enterprises.





# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



Moot is in an area of the City with high footfall. The Bishop of London's Mission Fund supports the leadership. Moot uses both its networked links and its rootedness in place to build and sustain the community.

## [St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace](#)

Bombed by the IRA in 1993, St Ethelburga's was restored and in 2002 was re-consecrated and opened as a place for reconciliation and peace. Thousands cross the threshold each year, participating in a rich mix of activity, art, training and reflection - including listening, dialogue and the exploration of current issues of conflict. The Tent has become a very popular location for interfaith encounter and discussion. St Ethelburga's offers space for reflection, stillness and spiritual renewal and also takes its activities to other venues.

## [Royal Foundation for St Katharine](#)

St Katharine's offers space to several non-profit organisations and provides meeting spaces for people and groups from different religious traditions and backgrounds. It also supports the work of local action groups and public sector bodies. There is a chapel at St Katharine's. One of the non-profit organisations there is the [Contextual Theology Centre](#), which recently published [Call to Change](#), a series of resources for Lent on the 'yawning gap between the richest and poorest in our society'. It includes [An Urgent Patience - Christian Spirituality and Social Action](#). The CTC is the host organisation for the London branches of the [Near Neighbours](#) programme and the [Presence and Engagement Network](#).

## [Oratory of St Alphege](#)

As mentioned previously, the Oratory of St Alphege is an Anglican residential religious community which includes First Order Franciscans and others who share their communal life. The life of the Oratory is centred on prayer, with ministries of spiritual accompaniment, hospitality and outside paid and voluntary work. The Oratory offers a homely, comfortable and hospitable meeting place for up to 20 people and some overnight accommodation. Contemplative Fire and the Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group have used the Oratory for their gatherings.

The [London Inter Faith Centre](#) (NW10) is widely used and is also home to Anglican and URC congregations. [St Michael's Convent](#) in Ham is also used by many individuals, groups and parishes and, like Wychcroft, is not located in an urban setting.





# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## University Chaplaincies

Students at [King's College](#) have a Prayer & Quiet Room and Muslim prayer facilities at the Waterloo campus and a Chapel and Muslim prayer facilities at Guy's. One of the chaplains at King's, Revd Anna Macham, is Succentor at Southwark Cathedral.

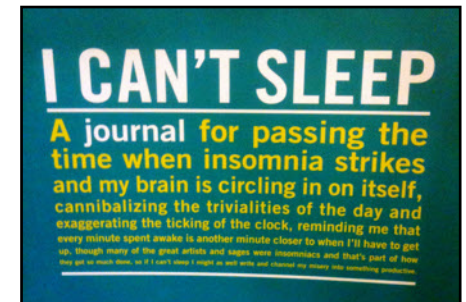
[London South Bank University](#) is the largest university campus in the area and is close to St Alphege. Students are able to use two rooms, small and medium-sized, for prayer and reflection from any tradition. Muslim prayer facilities are also available in another building, separately for men and for women. The rooms are not purpose built and are not always suitable for building community, exploring spirituality, encountering students from different traditions or for discussing issues of interest and concern. The Chaplaincy works as part of Student Services, has a wide range of activities and is part-funded by the Diocese of Southwark.

Students at the [London College of Communication](#) (University of the Arts London) at Elephant & Castle have a Quiet Space (entry code available from reception) which can accommodate 8-10 students. It is used mainly by Islamic Society members. The Chaplain covers more than one campus of the University and his office is not at LCC. A space where students could gather together would be welcome.

## Who may be looking for space to explore urban spirituality?

### [SPIDIR](#)

The SPIDIR network connects people offering or seeking spiritual accompaniment/direction in south London while the London Centre for Spirituality does the same north of the river, although there is some overlap and some differences in approach. SPIDIR, for example, offers services free of charge. There may be a need for further space for SPIDIR activities, particularly for those with mobility restrictions, but not a pressing need. Those offering spiritual direction and those receiving it are, according to SPIDIR, from a wider demographic profile than those often seen at quiet days and prayer and spirituality events - the active retired, often female, often white.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



## New-monastic movements

The Revd John Ansell recently completed a study of new-monastic communities, which typically work at two levels: as a dispersed community, meeting in cells whenever possible, and as a gathered (core) community, meeting daily. The core community can share accommodation. In an urban setting with high housing costs, this can be a challenge. John is gathering support for one such new-monastic community which may find St Alphege a good location for part of its communal life.

### [Isaiah Community](#)

A group of around 25-30 people meet in St John's Church, Waterloo, once a week to pray for love and justice. The members of the Isaiah Community are involved in a wide range of work on social justice themes. They have evolved a pattern of prayer and meeting together which is supportive and enriching.

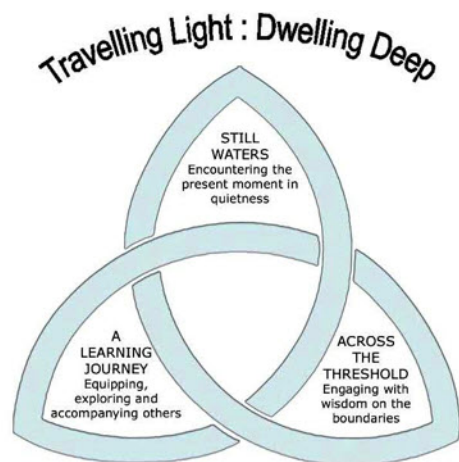
### [Contemplative Fire](#)

This is a movement and a network of 'small communities of Christ at the edge' which meets in smaller and larger groups across the country. They have met at the Oratory of St Alphege when gathering in London, although congregating a regular London group has proved to be difficult - as is often the case (the [Iona Community](#) has only recently established a London group for associates). London is a large city and travel time is a deterrent.

Contemplative Fire noted that spaces for intentional spiritual practice are on the decline but felt that they shouldn't all be jettisoned - when they are needed in future it will be very hard (and expensive) to reclaim them. For this reason, ideas around a future for St Alphege as a centre for urban spirituality were supported.

The ancient skete model of dispersed community is making a come-back in urban areas: people intentionally living alone (often with a rule of life), recognising the value of solitude, distinguishing it from loneliness, and coming together from time to time.

There are several other groups, such as the [Art and Spirituality Network](#), which meet in different places around London.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

Interviewees from parish and other walks of life were not aware of other intentional communities in central London looking for a home or a place to gather.

Most of these organisations and networks run very effectively on a shoestring with volunteers. Their priorities currently don't include investing in a home, a hub or a regular gathering place. They are supported in kind by parish churches and sympathetic organisations.

## OPPORTUNITIES, MISSION, WIDER CONTEXT

[The Archbishop of Canterbury said recently](#) that he had a "long-standing interest in what we rather unhelpfully call spirituality - that is, how Christians pray and understand their praying." Some key words - spirituality, religion, prayer - mean different things to different people and have positive and negative tags accordingly.

When discussing whether people might appreciate a time and a place for reflection, contemplation - an opportunity to take a step back, to hold themselves open to enquiry, to be rather than to do, to pray, to focus, to de-stress, to experience and to be in the presence of God - one interviewee (from one of the non-church organisations) said that people probably do need it, but they're not looking for it. St Alphege was therefore likely to end up empty - there is no 'demand'.

Other interviewees said that people are often unwilling to pay (much) for quiet days, spirituality evenings and similar events. Others reckoned St Alphege would not get off the starting blocks without an entrepreneurial approach and putting some energy into making something worthwhile happen. This is not very far away from a missional approach.

It became clear that while looking for uses for St Alphege which would both support spiritual awareness and also generate a sustained income, there may be more than one way to go about it.

In the meantime, a couple of welcome opportunities materialised.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



## London South Bank University

The Multi-faith Chaplaincy at LSBU is able to offer more services to students than the present accommodation is able to support. With the involvement of the Multi-faith Chaplain, the Revd Dr Howard Worsley, a new building is being planned, which will incorporate Student Services. It was hoped that sufficient Chaplaincy space would be possible, but although the Multi-faith Chaplain's office will be housed in the new building, it now looks unlikely that spaces for the students will be found, so LSBU is looking elsewhere for space for a Muslim prayer room and for a multi-faith space which can be used by all students for prayer, reflection and other activities. St Alphege is close to the campus and has two large rooms and most of the necessary facilities to host the student services which the University wants to provide. Discussions are underway for St Alphege to be used on a regular basis.

If this goes ahead, the south-east facing room would be suitable for Muslim students to use for regular prayer (fives times daily) and the north-west facing room would be ideal for a multi-faith space for students from all religious traditions and none. The renovated Shrine would provide a focus for Christian prayer and worship. The University is unlikely to be using St Alphege exclusively; the space could be shared, carefully and intentionally, with local, parish and Diocesan users. There is a similar arrangement at the [University of Derby](#) (see photo, left).

There is currently no Diocesan home for inter faith or multi-faith activities, although the Peninsula Chaplaincy at Greenwich and NHS, university and prison chaplaincy services have premises in the Diocese for their own work. Inter faith encounter and multi-faith activities have been on the increase in London in past years. It complements and extends a long tradition of ecumenical work, and responds to a greater diversity of religious identity within the population, to world events and to changes in government policy on engaging and working in partnership with religious and multi-religious groups. The Diocese has an [Inter Faith Projects Officer, Siriol Davies](#), who chairs the Inter Faith Relations Group. The [Christian Muslim Forum](#) is also based in the Diocese and is increasingly active at local level. South London tends to punch above its weight in inter faith and multifaith groups.



## Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham

A second significant opportunity arose when the Oratory of St Alphege indicated an interest in using the restored Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham as their chapel. The community currently uses one of the rooms in the Oratory as a chapel, but would like to free up its use. The parish has an estimate for restoring the Shrine and it is hoped, with an appeal for funds setting out the contribution to mission of a Christian rhythm of prayer at the heart of St



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPEGE

Alpege, that the work will be completed during 2012. Members of the Oratory pray at regular times through the day and would welcome people using St Alpege to join them either in worship or in attendance. The Shrine would be open for individual prayer and contemplation at other times.

A regular pattern of worship would provide a foundation not only to the communal life of the Oratory but to the diverse and transient life of St Alpege. How this happens would be a creative and a learning process.

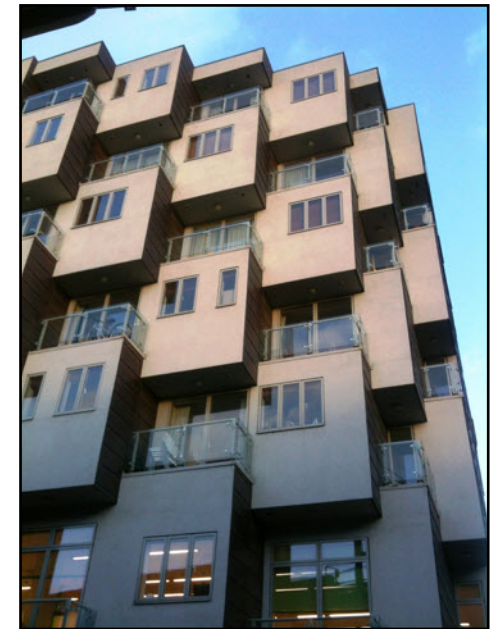
## Mission

If St Alpege is to become a focus for urban spirituality, it may need to be approached in different ways. One of these, which works well within the Diocese at the moment, is to organise and provide leadership and facilitation for day retreats, quiet days and opportunities to explore spirituality, different ways of praying, deepening the experience of prayer and incorporating it into the life of a parish, congregation or individual.

Another may be not only to invite people to come to St Alpege, but to listen to people where they are and to facilitate creative relationships - not only providing a service but encouraging people to provide for each other. Catalysing what is already available by bringing existing groups or individuals together may generate different kinds of activity and involve people beyond those who currently benefit. Some of those who rarely attend quiet days may find something of value. Making an explicit link between spiritual practice and social justice may also widen the circle of participation some way beyond those who already have an interest in spirituality.

Two words which emerged from the study in relation to St Alpege were *sanctuary* and *hospitality*, both being less ambiguous and both having a radical edge within a global urban context - sanctuary for whom and from what, hospitality for and from whom? To bring together urban individuals and groups who share the passion of St Alpege the martyr for economic justice and human dignity might be something which could involve, complement and contribute to the existing work of the Diocese. A Sanctuary thread, run mostly by the participants themselves, could run through the life of St Alpege - Activist Sanctuary, Parish Sanctuary (more examples are in the Appendices), following a simple format of gathering, a time of contemplation or other spiritual practice, a shared meal and prayer in the Shrine.

An active (and interactive) online presence could carry materials, images and responses to activities at St Alpege, rippling out to others, enlarging participation and networking with other centres and groups.





# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE



## Wider context

Several initiatives have emerged in 2011-12 which are relevant to the future role of St Alphege.

Bishop Christopher's Call to Mission - Faith, Hope, Love - is something which is generating responses from individuals, parishes, deaneries and the whole Diocese. A place for taking some of these responses further, in an experiential way, may be welcome. St Alphege may be one of the seedbeds for new initiatives.

The global economic crisis, including its banking and Eurozone components, is unlikely either to fade or be resolved satisfactorily over the next few years. [Occupy London Stock Exchange](#) (and [Occupy Faith](#)) may have been moved on, but the issues raised are likely to remain. Economic justice, or lack of it, is one of the hottest topics of the day. The Diocese of Southwark has a substantial history of involvement in these issues.

Several new senior appointments in the Diocese within a short time, coupled with Bishop Christopher's Call to Mission, heralds a fresh look at the role of the Church in south London. The Dean of Southwark's sermon at his installation at the Cathedral recognised the huge diversity of the urban population and was widely quoted, 'a church which welcomes each of you whoever you are, because of who you are; wherever you're from, because of where you're from; whatever your tradition, because of your tradition; whatever your views, because of your views.' There were echoes, in part, of [NIFCON's Generous Love](#), an Anglican theology of inter faith relations. A Canon Missioner for the Cathedral and with Diocesan responsibilities will be appointed later this year - the appointee, supported by the Diocesan Mission Group, may find in St Alphege an unusual and creative space for work outside the parish context.

The Diocese has a number of parishes within the [Near Neighbours Programme](#), which is bringing people together in communities that are diverse, so they can get to know each other better, build relationships as people and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. The two key objectives are social interaction and social action. [South London Inter Faith Group](#) was an early inter faith network and continues to thrive. Recent [research on multifaith spaces](#) by the University of Manchester has shown that they are attracting increasing interest and numbers of users, both as spaces which 'house difference' and as places of encounter.

[London Boroughs Faiths Network](#) brings together local multifaith groups across London and is one of several intercultural groups across Europe working to create a European Network on Religion and Belief, which will link European religious and multifaith groups to share expertise and experience, participate in exchange programmes and contribute to EU policy. LBFN is also working on an Olympic Truce and is looking for affordable office space with the occasional use of rooms suitable for people from different religious traditions.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

Southwark Cathedral has ecumenical links with [European Cathedrals in France and Sweden](#), recognising the unique position of Anglicanism within European church history and its understanding of both the Catholic and Reformed traditions.

South London Industrial Mission gave way to Mission in London's Economy and the people involved in this (and in Faiths in London's Economy) are now developing **Sophia Hubs**, which are 'a network of local, wisdom-based incubators for new businesses and social enterprises, harnessing the wisdom and resources of the faith traditions, leading to sustainable social and economic development and change. It will open doors for faith organizations which have access to a large number of under-used buildings, as well as powerful, well-established networks of social and spiritual capital. Sophia Hubs will harness these buildings and networks, encourage the development of relationships between different local faith communities in managing the hub and identifying the key projects which will benefit the community.' Sophia Hubs do not yet have a south London base. (More information in the appendices).

There is a small but significant flow of inquiry and exploratory practice, sometimes from outside the recognised religious structures, from people finding new ways to live in an urban environment: [Quiet London](#), [Quiet Garden Movement](#), [Slow movements](#), [Downtime - deep thinking and sacred space](#). There is also more involvement by church figures and others in raising the level of debate around atheism, humanism and the role of religion in public life. The Archbishop of Canterbury's recent public conversation with Richard Dawkins has been welcomed by many. There is an appetite, sometimes articulated in unusual ways, for looking deeper into how we live in urban London - to put it at its broadest.

Different ways of bringing people together and communicating are now common: [Secret Cinema](#) gathers film-watchers under unusual circumstances; [C21st Network](#) has virtual meetups on equality, poverty, race, trafficking; young people tend not to use email so much as SMS and social networking sites.

Harnessing contemporary ways of communicating, supporting and bringing people together, and encouraging people to create their own Sanctuary may add to what St Alphege is able to offer and increase the number of people benefiting from what takes place. An online presence and an interactive social networking capability would reach out to many more people than are able to visit in person.

Having a distinct focus would distinguish St Alphege from other spaces which promote spiritual awareness and practice (particularly the London Centre for Spirituality, St Ethelburga's, St Katharine's and London Interfaith Centre), and would allow those who use St Alphege to work in partnership with each of them.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The parish of St George the Martyr is currently legally responsible for St Alphege and for the safety of the people using it. If London South Bank University is interested in using the ground floor, a lease for exclusive use could be arranged (as is the case with the upper storeys). This would preclude others, including the parish, from using the building, but it is an option which the parish will need to consider. If the parish would like to see the building used by LSBU students and also more generally as an hospitable centre for urban spirituality and for inter faith encounter, a rental agreement with LSBU would need to reflect this. The parish could continue to let out the space when it was not being used by LSBU. With an increased income it would be possible to employ someone part time, accountable to the parish, to take care of bookings, opening and closing, cleaning and maintenance, bearing in mind that Blackfriars Settlement is prepared to do this for a fee.

For the building to be used as fully as the Sanctuary of St Alphege as has been suggested in this study, it will be necessary to involve others. To make the most of the involvement of the Oratory and the proximity of the Shrine, to keep an ear to the ground as to who might contribute to and benefit from using St Alphege, to develop a focus on social justice and human dignity and to consider its use as a Diocesan base for inter faith activities - for all these, it will be important to have an Advisory Group which includes the parish, the Diocese, the Woolwich Episcopal Area, the Oratory and the LSBU Multi-faith Chaplaincy (if using the building). Co-optees or invitees could include neighbouring clergy, the Cathedral, new-monastic communities and others. This group would hold the vision for a place of sanctuary and hospitality, rooted in spiritual practice and coupled with a concern for social justice and human dignity. The missional and entrepreneurial responsibility would lie with this group. Some human presence, to offer hospitality and to ensure safety and sanctuary, will be required during opening hours. Members of the Advisory Group would contribute to the spirit and the smooth running of St Alphege by providing regular volunteers (possibly supported in hospitality skills by the Cathedral's welcome team) who would play their part in the day to day life of St Alphege. Groups renting the office space, although accountable to the parish, could also be invited to contribute to St Alphege in this way. The intentional sharing of responsibilities, and the learning from this, would reflect the ethos of the Sanctuary of St Alphege.

If income allowed, a part-time Sanctuary networker or animateur (accountable to the Advisory Group and working closely with the Spiritual Formation Adviser and the Inter Faith Projects Officer) would facilitate new use of St Alphege and look after the social networking and interactive communications.

The money to be spent by the parish on renovating the Shrine is estimated at £25k. A further estimated £5k will be needed to upgrade the kitchen, improve lighting and ensure the spaces are fit for purpose. If the total is to be reclaimed from rental income at the first opportunity, it will leave no surplus for employing someone in a bookings/caretaking role nor in an outreach/networking role - this would mean that a new era for St Alphege was not given the support it would need until the money was reclaimed, maybe a few years' hence. A concerted effort to find charitable funds to reduce outlay by the parish would give St Alphege a more promising start.

All other things being equal, it should be the aim of the Advisory Group both to hold the vision and to support the flourishing of St Alphege in its new role, integrating it into the wider mission of the Diocese while ensuring the parish is not out of pocket. It will be important that the residents of the parish flats, through the parish and the Oratory, are kept abreast of developments and are consulted and included in any major events, such as the re-dedication of the Shrine. Child protection advice should be sought regarding the arrangement of the courtyard and its use by St Alphege visitors.

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FABRIC

The kitchen needs a new fridge, replacement drawer fronts and cupboard doors, some cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery for hospitality (in the form of meals) and some tablecloths and candlesticks. Lighting, as mentioned on p 14, needs diversifying. The storage space needs lockable cupboards.

A ceiling-mounted data projector would be an asset in the north-west facing room. Wi-fi would be useful and a landline will be necessary for security.

The Shrine needs the most attention and this is being considered by the parish. A commission for a new work of art representing Our Lady of Walsingham would enhance the Shrine. The repair of the WC next to the Shrine would be an asset - there is often a queue for the inside WCs during tea breaks. For this reason also, the WCs inside could be designated unisex.

The courtyard alongside St Alphege behind the ramp would benefit from a thorough clear-out and the addition of some architectural and flowering potted plants.

If LSBU uses St Alphege for Chaplaincy services, a carpet in the south-east facing room would make it more suitable for Muslim prayers and other activities. A place to leave shoes at the entrance of that room and washing facilities, also at the entrance to the room, would offer a good quality space for prayers. The lobby would remain a shared space for all users. LSBU would be expected to cover the cost of these alterations and any necessary security equipment. The multi-faith room would also need to be ordered and furnished in a flexible way. Advice from Siriol Davies, from St Ethelburga's, recent research and other multifaith spaces may be helpful.

For the vestry to be suitable for renting as an office, the room would need to be cleared (except for desks/chairs), and broadband installed.

Cycle racks near the entrance would encourage bicycle use, making St Alphege more accessible and adding to its green credentials.

## CONCLUSIONS

St Alphege has a unique history, leading back to the Victorian church and the martyr himself. Speaking out and taking action in troubled times on social justice and human dignity, strengthened and disciplined by spiritual practice, is something to which many urban Londoners may find they are able to relate.

To make the most of its hidden - almost secret - qualities, St Alphege needs to become a destination: a place where people are confident of finding something special - something valuable and life-affirming which they do not readily find elsewhere.

The interest shown by the Oratory, and the willingness to welcome visitors to worship at the restored Shrine, is important and will offer a rhythm of prayer and reflection which some will encounter for the first time. The interest from London South Bank University has opened up further possibilities for the ground floor as a place of spiritual practice for students and as a space for inter faith encounter. A student residence near St Alphege is nearing completion.

These developments, added to the parish's wish to see the centre better used, allow the establishment of The Sanctuary of St Alphege, a place of sanctuary and hospitality, rooted in spiritual practice and passionate in its mission for social justice and human dignity. The Woolwich Episcopal Area has indicated a wish to contribute to the upgrading of the space to meet its future needs.

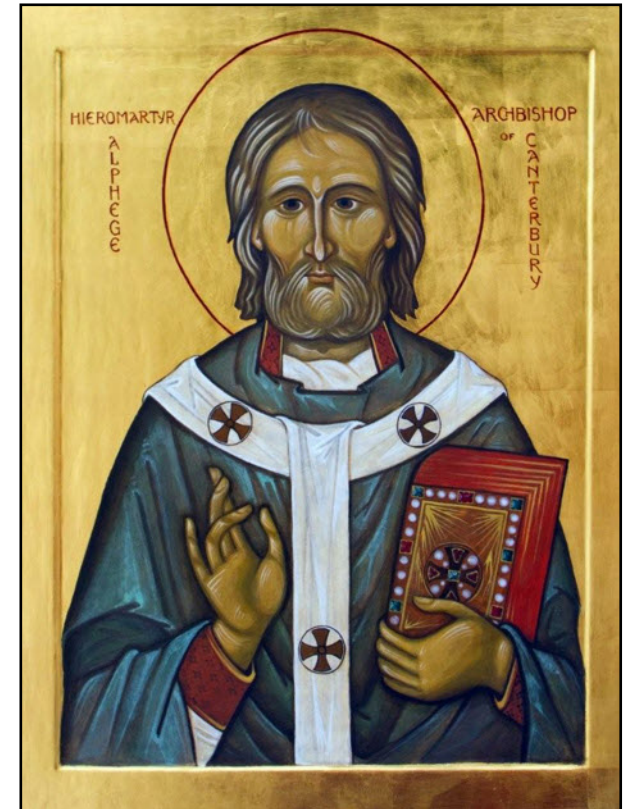
A catalytic, networked and missional approach to engaging individuals and existing groups, both within and outside the Church, will complement the work of the parishes and the Cathedral and the well-established and highly regarded pattern of Spiritual Formation work of the Diocese.

Rental of the office space will contribute to the hospitality offered. The Spiritual Formation Adviser and Inter Faith Projects Officer may also find it useful to be based at St Alphege for some of their time.

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Form an Advisory Group, as described on page 26, to work with the parish of St George the Martyr as discussions with London South Bank University and any further partners develop. This group will hold the vision for The Sanctuary of St Alphege, a place of sanctuary and hospitality, rooted in spiritual practice and a daily rhythm of prayer and coupled with a concern for social justice and human dignity.
2. Endeavour to raise charitable and other funds to upgrade the spaces and equip them for their renewed purpose. *The Woolwich Episcopal Area has committed in principle to providing up to £10,000 towards the costs of renovating the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.*
3. Arrange a rededication service by the end of the millennial year of 2012 by the Bishop of Woolwich, establishing The Sanctuary of St Alphege, including the Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham, and inviting those with connections to St Alphege, Our Lady of Walsingham, the Society of Saint Francis and those whose responsibilities within the Diocese include spiritual formation, mission and social justice, partner organisations and centres of spirituality across London.
4. Engage two part-time workers to support the work of the Sanctuary:
  - i) a bookings and caretaking role to be accountable to the parish (unless the offer from Blackfriars Settlement, when rebuilding on Rushworth Street is complete, is taken up)
  - ii) a networking/catalysing/ animator role to facilitate new uses for the Sanctuary (for example, a Sanctuary series) and to create an interactive online resource, linking St Alphege with interested individuals and groups, working closely with the Diocesan Mission Group, Spiritual Formation Adviser and the Inter Faith Projects Officer.



A [new icon of St Alphege](#) was blessed at St Alphege, Bath, in October 2011.





# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## Possibilities for St Alphege were discussed with:

1. Rt Rev Dr Michael Ipgrave, [Bishop of Woolwich](#).
2. Revd Ray Andrews, Rector, [St George the Martyr, Southwark](#).
3. Chris Chapman, [Diocesan Spiritual Formation Adviser](#)
4. Sue CSF, [Oratory of St Alphege](#), Southwark.
5. Revd Tim Scott, [Christ Church](#), Southwark.
6. Chandra Dwarka, Witness Service, [Blackfriars Law Courts](#).
7. Revd Dr Howard Worsley, Multi-faith Chaplain, [London South Bank University](#).
8. Michael Hart, Company Secretary, [United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel](#).
9. Revd John Ansell, Chair of Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group, & researcher into new monastic communities.
10. Anne Pinkney, resident of Drapers' Almshouses opposite St Alphege.
11. Jackie Wray, Deputy Director, [Blackfriars Settlement](#).
12. Revd Andrew Norwood, Chaplain, [University of the Arts](#).
13. Canon Giles Goddard, Rector, [St John's + St Andrew's Churches](#), Waterloo and [Isaiah Community](#)
14. Giles Semper, Deputy CEO, [Better Bankside](#).
15. Revd Jonathan Osborne, [Chaplain, Metropolitan Police Service](#) & resident of St Alphege flats.
16. Tanya Paton, [Occupy Faith](#) & Inter Faith Alliance UK.
17. Kenneth Browne, Interim Director, [London Centre for Spirituality](#), EC3.
18. Justine Huxley, [St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace](#), EC2.
19. Revd Dr Andrew Davey, Vicar, Holy Trinity & St Augustine, Tooting
20. [St Mungo's](#), SE1
21. Joyce CSF, [Oratory of St Alphege](#), Southwark.
22. Aaron Kennedy, [Moot](#), St Mary Aldermary, EC4.
23. Revd Richard Craig, retired from parish ministry, active locally in spiritual adventures, SE1
24. Revd Philip Roderick, [Contemplative Fire](#)
25. Sirol Davies, [Inter Faith Projects Officer](#), Diocese of Southwark.
26. Revd Tony Lucas, [SPIDR](#) Spiritual Direction.
27. Sr Teresa Mary, [St Michael's Convent](#), Ham.
28. Revd Rosy Fairhurst, Grubb Institute & Sophia Hubs.
29. Diocese of Southwark [Spiritual Formation Group](#).
30. Revd Ruth Worsley, [Parish Development Adviser](#).

## Places visited:

1. [London Centre for Spirituality](#), EC3.
2. [St Botolph without Aldgate](#), EC3.
3. [All Saints Church](#), Margaret Street, W1.
4. [St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace](#), EC2.
5. [London Interfaith Centre](#), NW6.
6. [St Alphege, Greenwich](#), SE10.

## Attended:

1. [Multi-Faith Spaces Conference](#), 21-22nd March, University of Manchester.



# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

## SANCTUARY AT ST ALPHEGE

**Activist Sanctuary:** busy social activists who rarely afford themselves the time to take a break from the issues, to de-stress, or find sources of strength through silent contemplation and prayer may benefit from an evening with the **Isaiah Community** which could offer something refreshing and sustaining. Similar 'pairings' may be possible.

**Parish Sanctuary:** urban parish leadership teams, who are almost always on call and in positions of responsibility for arranging worship, might find a couple of hours participating in a structured time of relaxation, prayer and contemplation, followed by a simple meal together and joining the Oratory in their regular office - all of which someone else has organised - sustaining. At a later date, they can take their turn in offering hospitality to other parish teams - a ratio of 1:3 or 1:4 would work well.

**Benefits Sanctuary:** for those on working benefits/JSA, a break from juggling finances and worrying about the future - a time of safety, quiet sufficiency, a chance to look again at value, verses from scripture, prayer and healing to strengthen and sustain.

**Girls and Boys Sanctuary:** Godly Play, Messy Church or the practice of meditation, ending with a time of prayer in the Shrine, may introduce children (and their carers &/or church leaders) to some different approaches to children's spirituality.

**Skete Sanctuary:** as mentioned previously, a time for those who live alone intentionally, and with a rule of life, to come together.

**Male Sanctuary:** a different time together than when men participate in a mixed group - there are specialists in men's spirituality within the Diocese.

**New Parent Sanctuary:** a break from the chaos, mixed emotions and fast-changing relationships, a time to relax, enjoy some stillness, remember who you are, where you came from. Facilitated by parents.

**Secondary Transfer Sanctuary:** for pupils leaving primary education in urban London - facilitated exploration of newness, change, size and transition, in a reflective and supportive environment.

*Also suggested:* **Student Sanctuary, LGBT Sanctuary, City Sanctuary** for City workers, **Black Sanctuary** for people of African and African Caribbean heritage, **Homeless Sanctuary, Homeless Worker Sanctuary** for St Mungo's.

# THE SANCTUARY OF ST ALPHEGE

**Sophia Hubs** are a network of local, wisdom-based incubators for new businesses and social enterprises, harnessing the wisdom and resources of the faith traditions, leading to sustainable social and economic development and change.

It will open doors for faith organizations which have access to a large number of under-used buildings, as well as powerful, well-established networks of social and spiritual capital. Sophia Hubs will harness these buildings and networks, encourage the development of relationships between different local faith communities in managing the hub and identifying the key projects which will benefit the community.

There are five strands envisaged to the incubation support offered through the wider Hubs network:

## ENTREPRENEUR TRAINING & COACHING

This would be through free coaching offered from business schools as well as entrepreneur training courses which could be scalable.

## INVESTOR CONNECTION

There is a real need for sustainable businesses and social enterprises to find investment capital to support growth. One core function of Sophia Hubs is to connect investors with new enterprises. This can be by setting up “pitch sessions” where several new enterprises pitch their needs to several prospective investors, or by arranging one-to-one meetings between enterprises and investors.

## MENTORING BY ‘WISDOM PEOPLE’

People with specific forms of wisdom – eg leadership development and organisational consultancy which can work with the faith dimension, useful to the development of social enterprises/businesses offer their time at an affordable rate. The aim is to support sustainable enterprise which benefits community and workers on many levels, not just financial sustainability

## SOPHIA IDEAS EXCHANGE

Ideas exchange may happen through an online community, and through organising seminars and workshops exploring the connections between wisdom and work: invited speakers on these regular seminars and workshops will come from various belief systems and with a range of entrepreneurial approaches.

## SOPHIA COURSE

This reflective and applied developmental course will help young people in particular develop the wisdom perspectives and frameworks which help form the conditions for developing new projects. Topics might include leadership and mentoring, healthy living, compassion, collaboration, self-discipline, personal responsibility, humility, listening, creativity, personal transformation and sustainability.

Work has started on a pilot Hub in Seven Kings, Essex, and interest has been expressed from Hackney to Sophiatown in South Africa. The work is led by a Development Group including Rev Rosy Fairhurst, Rev Jonathan Evens, Clive Sheldon and Francis Davis, who has worked as a Government Advisor and who is giving time from his work for the Catholic Church to develop the project.