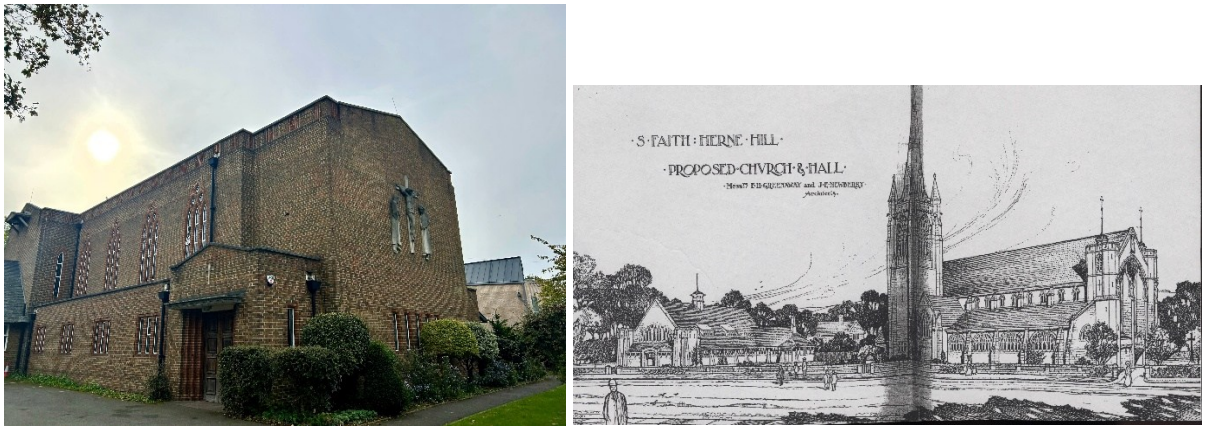
St Faith Church

Active
Church of England
62 Red Post Hill, SE24 9JQ



St Faith, exterior and architect's illustration

Historical summary
A very late Gothic revival building of 1958 by David Evelyn Nye. The structural frame and the roof are in reinforced concrete and it is clad externally in brickwork. The window jambs and sills and the door surrounds are decorated in red chamfered brickwork and the window frames are steel. Internally the Church consists of a wide nave covered by a slightly pitched roof supported off large concrete beams that span across the nave from wall to wall. Two narrow side aisles lead to slightly larger transepts and ultimately to the chapel at the east end via ambulatories around the sanctuary. Off the north transept is the choir vestry and sacristry. The nave is lit by tripartite pointed gothic arches with rubbed brick tracery. The side aisles are lit by small rectilinear tripartite windows. Eight simple lancet windows illuminate the chapel at the east end. The south transept and porch is lit by an extremely intricate quinpartite window of brick tracery, similar, though more elaborate, than the nave windows. The Lady Chapel at the east end contains a set of windows by Lawrence Lee, 1958. The exterior of the west end is decorated with a sculpture by Ivor Livi.

Across the car park is the hall which was used for services prior to the current church being built. It dates from 1907 and is by Greenaway & Newberry.

Historical background
St Faith's Church, Dulwich forms the northern wing of a three-sided, open-ended courtyard. The opposite wing, a handsome Edwardian Arts and Crafts-style church hall, was designed by architects Greenaway & Newberry and built in 1907. The two wings are linked by administrative rooms and vestries. The church itself was designed by David Nye (1906–1986). Its structural frame and roof are reinforced concrete, with solid external walls clad in multi-coloured stock bricks laid in Flemish bond. Window

jambs, sills, and door surrounds are highlighted with red chamfered brickwork, and the window frames are steel. Internally, the church consists of a wide nave covered by a slightly pitched roof supported by large concrete beams spanning from wall to wall. Two narrow side aisles flank the nave, leading to larger transepts and, via ambulatories around the sanctuary, to the chapel at the east end. The north transept provides access to the choir vestry and sacristry. The nave is lit by tripartite Gothic arches with rubbed brick tracery, while the side aisles have small rectilinear tripartite windows. Eight simple lancet windows illuminate the east-end chapel. The south transept and porch feature a highly intricate quinpartite window in brick tracery, more elaborate than those in the nave. Externally, the west end is decorated with a sculpture by Ivor Livi depicting Christ on the Cross with St John the Evangelist and St Mary Magdalene.

David Nye was born in 1906 and was articled to T.F.W. Grant. In 1930, he received the first SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) scholarship, which allowed him to travel and study ancient building crafts and restoration techniques. The Society praised him as “a man who could be fully trusted to carry out repair operations” and noted his deep sympathy for their principles.

Pre-World War II Nye was best known as a cinema architect. He set up practice in 1931 and, after serving as honorary architect to the Essex Rural Community Council, obtained his first cinema commission for the Shipman & King circuit. Over the next eight to nine years, he designed at least 40 cinemas, including the notable Rex in Berkhamsted, a 1938 Art Deco cinema whose interior featured decorations of sea waves and shells. The Rex was later converted into a bingo hall in 1988 and reopened as a cinema in 2004 after refurbishment. During the war, Nye served in the Navy. Afterward, he resumed his architectural practice, rebuilding bomb-damaged cinemas and gradually specializing in church design and historic building conservation, which he particularly loved. A committed Christian, abstainer, and vegetarian, Nye held several key positions: Architect to the Southwark Diocese, Surveyor to its Parsonage Board, and Architect and Surveyor to Guildford Cathedral. Within the Southwark Diocese his local church projects included St Mark, Bromley (1953–54), St Swithin’s, Purley (1954–55), Christ the King, Salfords (1958–67), in the mid-1950s.His broader work encompassed projects for the National Trust, the post-war reconstruction of All Hallows, London Wall, and the new Pewterer’s Hall in the City of London (1960).

Records: London Archives.