

## Come and See

Saint Paul's Church was built to replace the previous building destroyed by bombing during the Second World War. The architects Robert Maguire and Keith Murray were both in their 20s, and worked with the Vicar at that time to create the first church in this country built with the altar in its central space.

The feeling in London after the Second World War was one of reconstruction and hope, and the church needed to be forward-looking, and daring.

The inspiration for the building came from the local parishioners here in Bow Common, who responded to the new vision of Eucharistic worship, inclusive of the whole people of God.

Robert Maguire, the architect, said in 2010 'You are doing wonderful things in this building . . . being centred on flexibility for worship it turns out, to my great joy, to be flexibility for many other things that build trust and grow true communities'.



St Paul's, Bow Common is a Church of England parish church in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Find us at the corner of Burdett Rd. and St. Paul's Way, London E3 4AR

We are a welcoming friendly church of all ages.  
Fully Accessible  
Visitors welcome, especially Sundays.

See our website for service times  
[www.stpaulsbowcommon.org.uk](http://www.stpaulsbowcommon.org.uk)



## St Paul's, Bow Common Tour



**A GUIDE TO ST PAUL'S,  
BOW COMMON**  
Winner of 'The UK's  
Best Modern Church'  
Award



**A Tour of St Paul's Bow Common** Standing just inside the big front door, you can see the whole church – the central altar, the mosaics, two discrete chapels and the light coming into the building directly above the altar.

**The architecture** sometimes called *New Brutalism*, from the french word for 'raw' industrial materials are used in the design: concrete slabs on the floor, woodwool tiles in the lantern ceiling and bare brickwork. The emphasis is on expressing the main functions and people-flows of the building, creating an architectural image that communicates strength, functionality, and frank expression of materiality

**Revolutionary shape and layout** of the church for worship: In the 1950s people came to believe that the altar should be in the centre of the worshippers, so that everyone, including the clergy, are around it – putting God at the centre. This church is held to be the first that truly put these principles into practice, leading the way churches would come to be designed in the UK.

- See how placing of the font near the door, with light reflecting from the lantern, is showing the Baptism is the way to enter the church.

- See the minimum of division between the clergy and the people at the altar– the two steps are enough to make the priest visible.



FOLLOW THE BRICK PATH ALONG TO THE LEFT HAND SIDE.

The **Lady Chapel** is on your left, and if you wish, say a prayer and light a candle. You can also see the main altar on your right.

As you continue along the brick path around behind the altar you see the **Blessed Sacrament chapel**, on your left, and the early Christian symbol of a large anchor, carved by Ralph Beyer who also carved the porch lettering.

When you turn the corner again, you will see the bell ropes, and the organ console, and will then arrive at the back of the church.

Look up and see the Mosaics.

**The Angels of the Heavenly Host Mosaic by Charles Lutyens 1963-1968**

Haloed, wings and clad in white, the angels raise their hands in worship. The mosaic forms a continuous image around the central space of the church. It is made of 'smalti tesseri' imported from Murano near Venice, where the colours have been manufactured to secret recipes for hundreds of years and covers 800 square feet.

Charles Lutyens, the artist, chose colours from the half-light of early morning or evening. The corner panels represent the elements, Earth, Air, Fire and Water which reach back into the Creation. Closest to the font is Fire, and the other three corner panels recall Bird, Fish and Beast.



**The lettering** over the octagonal porch is by Ralph Beyer and quotes from Genesis 28:17, the biblical image of Jacob's Ladder, with Angels ascending and descending a link between Heaven and Earth. Beyer, recognised for developing lettering from a craft tradition into an art form, handcrafted each letter and imprinted each in the wet concrete