



Our New Fence

The two erven, 45338 and 45326, on which the St Thomas campus is located is privately owned by the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town.

For more than 150 years, the Parish has granted free access to the public, but it must be noted that St Thomas Lane is not a Municipal Road Reserve.

Over the years and on legal advice, the gate onto the Glebe near the Rectory on the Sandown boundary has been locked at regular intervals, in order to keep the public aware and to declare the private ownership of the property.

Unfortunately, due to social change over the more recent years and the increasing number of incidents of vandalism, desecration of our buildings and intimidation of members of our clergy, staff, learners and visitors by apparently homeless vagrants, the Parish Council decided that something needed to be done.

For the record, we have had extremely valuable articles stolen from the church, human excrement smeared on the windows, lead framed windows smashed, fires built on the porches close to the church's wooden doors, motor cars vandalised, our revered Garden of Remembrance abused as a toilet in the presence of parishioners seeking solace, and we have had members of staff and visitors subjected to obscene language, indecent exposure and physical threats in broad daylight.

We owe a duty of care for the safety to all who use the church and its facilities.

The Parish Council and a Special Vestry meeting prayerfully considered various options to protect our buildings and people.

We reckoned the cost in perpetuity of a permanent security presence would be unsustainable, and in any case not reliable.

We considered building security cages around the many porches, but rejected this as they would really scream at the heritage architecture of the church.

We considered building an overnight shelter but reckoned that this would not be at all popular with the public.

We believe that the practically transparent fencing that is set back from the church building is a reasonable compromise on providing security while maintaining the public amenity of the parking area and the hall.

The spiked fence on the street boundaries of the Garden of Remembrance will also be extended in height.

The fences and gates will effectively control access and are consistent with how most properties are protected these days.

The Special Vestry resolution to install the fencing was considered as the best way to protect our sacred buildings and to ensure the future safety and security of all members of the Church, the Pre-School and our Visitors. The resolution was endorsed by the Diocesan Trust Board.

Unfortunately, one of the consequences of this fencing will be that the pedestrians who currently use St Thomas Lane as a short cut between Sillwood Shopping Centre and the Sandown Road Glebe will have to walk around the church on the Campground Road sidewalk.

We had no doubt that there will be some public reaction, but trust that the public will recognise the reality of our challenges and hopefully accept the measures that we have taken.

K de Vos
Rector

H Nourse
Church Warden

I Paul
Church Warden