

HISTORY WALK

Celebrating 100 years
1923-2023



Our historic church, affectionately known as “the chapel on the hill” from the day we opened our doors, is turning 100! We will be celebrating our centennial anniversary in a variety of ways through June of 2023, and we invite you to participate in all the festivities.



IN THE BEGINNING

The cornerstone of St. Elizabeth’s Chapel was laid on October 22, 1922. The original chapel was constructed on land donated by Mr. Albert Leonhard, an Upper Ridgewood resident and also Senior Warden of St. Bartholomew’s Church in Ho-Ho-Kus, where many residents of Upper Ridgewood attended services despite the long and difficult trek up and down the steep hill. To accommodate the growing number of Upper Ridgewood residents attending St. Bartholomew’s, church leadership voted to build a simple frame parish house up on the hill to serve the expanding church school and provide for meeting space and social functions.



The 1922 cornerstone, located to the right of the front entrance, serves as a reminder of the chapel era.



St. Elizabeth’s

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF RIDGEWOOD

welcome home

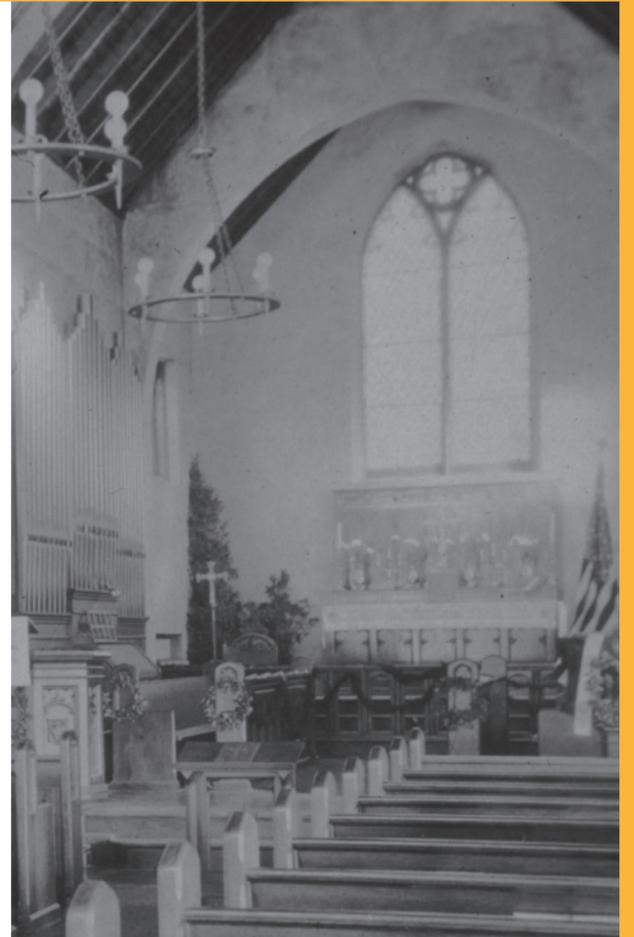
Source: An Enduring Witness: The First Seventy-five Years of St. Elizabeth’s Church by Myles Williamson

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STONE BY STONE

A significant change was made to the construction plan after a trove of field stones was unearthed during the excavation. This discovery promptly led to a decision to build a stone chapel instead of the wood-frame parish house. Along with the excavated stones, many more were contributed from neighboring properties. The result was a beautiful building that became affectionately known as “the chapel on the hill.” St. Elizabeth’s Chapel remains the core of the church today.

St. Elizabeth’s Chapel was dedicated on June 24, 1923 following a procession from the Underhill home at 127 Fairmount Road, where the idea for a building had first been presented. The reenactment of the procession from 127 Fairmount Road was to become a favorite anniversary tradition on the Sunday closest to June 24.



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COMING OF AGE

St. Elizabeth’s remained a chapel of St. Bartholomew’s Church in Ho-Ho-Kus through the end of 1926. During that period St. Bartholomew’s rector, the Rev. Robert Thomson, would come up the hill each Sunday to conduct services after leading worship in Ho-Ho-Kus. The chapel thrived from the beginning and quickly established its ability to function independently. With the blessing of St. Bartholomew’s, on January 1, 1927 the chapel was separately incorporated as a parish and was renamed St. Elizabeth’s Church.

The first parish house was built in 1927. This project was facilitated by a group of generous parishioners who purchased and donated the plot of land immediately behind the church on California Street. The new building accommodated the growing church school and served as the center of parish social life. A courtyard connected the original parish house with the church.



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EXPANDING THE FOOTPRINT

A major addition to St. Elizabeth’s campus was made in 1954 when the church acquired a new rectory and added a parking lot. For a total price of \$28,000, the church purchased the private home next door at 207 Fairmount Road, along with an empty plot of land on California Street abutting the parish house. The addition of these two properties established St. Elizabeth’s church grounds as they are known today.

Included in the expanded church property was a rough footpath that had long been a shortcut to and from Willard School. Over time, St. Elizabeth’s developed this dirt path and created a beautiful pedestrian walkway spanning Fairmount Road and California Street. Officially named Hartnett Way in 2018 to honor St. Elizabeth’s fifth rector, the Rev. Canon John Hartnett, this unique pathway continues to provide friendly access to the neighborhood families and pets. Planted along Hartnett Way are two kousa dogwood trees, gifted to St. Elizabeth’s by the Muslim Society of Ridgewood as a symbol of the friendship between the congregations. A stone water trough for thirsty pets also graces this special path.



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THE CHAPEL GETS A MAKEOVER

The period following the Second World War was one of suburban growth and expansion. St. Elizabeth’s flourished, with an active women’s guild, evening guild, altar guild, young people’s fellowship and church school.

Again, the growth of the congregation spurred the need for expansion. In 1956 the original 1923 chapel was enlarged and the parish house was renovated. St. Elizabeth’s bell tower was also added as part of this project. Great care was given to match the original stone walls with the new church addition.



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ONGOING EXPANSION

The 1956 expansion also called for the construction of a new two-story addition connecting the renovated parish house to the enlarged church.

This connector wing was designed to house the church office, choir room and much-needed classroom space for the overcrowded church school.



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KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

St. Elizabeth’s continued to refine and beautify its buildings and grounds over the last half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

In 1948 the first of several beautiful stained glass windows was installed. St. Elizabeth’s memorial windows convey a variety of themes, from the life and teachings of Christ to contemporary subjects.

In 1965 the first of five bells was installed in the bell tower. For over 30 years this bell rang hourly every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., before worship services and on special occasions. Four additional bells were added in 2004. Today, St. Elizabeth’s bells continue to be rung by hand every Sunday and on special liturgical and secular occasions throughout the year.

In the 1970s several alterations were made to the interior sanctuary to mirror changes in worship practices following a revision of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer.

In 1981 a most significant addition was made on the grounds of the church: the creation of St. Elizabeth’s Memorial Garden, a lovely and dignified sacred space located off the inner courtyard.



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FOR GOD'S CHILDREN

From 2002 to 2004 St. Elizabeth's once again undertook a major construction project to address its growing needs and aging buildings. Most notably, the original 1956 connector wing and parish house were replaced with a newly configured building containing state-of-the-art office and classrooms and a spacious, modern parish hall for social functions.

As part of the new parish house facility, a designated children's chapel was also added. The Children's Garden, a special outdoor space with a unique nod to Narnia, was also installed off the northern end of Hartnett Way during this period.



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100 YEARS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

St. Elizabeth's Church is itself a walk through time and history, from its walls of native glacial boulders, adorned with windows from English and American workshops added over the years, to its increasingly diverse congregation from northern New Jersey and the New York City area. One hundred years since St. Elizabeth's was founded as a neighborhood congregation and built in the middle of a residential street, it remains a thriving parish with clear and deep connections to its local surrounds and beyond. Throughout its history St. Elizabeth's has graciously offered its meeting space to a variety of community groups and assistance to those who are in need.

From its beginnings as a chapel of St. Bartholomew's parish, through its growth as an independent parish, to its status today as an outward and forward-looking community of Christian worship and action, the beauty and integrity of its buildings and grounds serve as a symbol of St. Elizabeth's mission.



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