

PROJECT PROFILE

Riverside Church New York, NY

VERTICAL
access

Since 2002, Vertical Access performed multiple interior and exterior conditions assessments to support mandated façade inspection and safety program filings as well as capital improvement projects for The Riverside Church. In addition to overall conditions assessments at the exterior, we have gained a unique in-depth understanding of the conditions of the stained glass windows. Our ongoing relationship with The Riverside Church and various architects and engineers has provided the Church with continuity and a clear picture of conditions as they have changed over the years. This has allowed the Church to make informed decisions over time regarding not only capital projects, but also how to maintain a safe structure.



Building description

Charles Collens and Henry C. Pelton designed Riverside Church after the Chartres and Laon Cathedrals in France. Built in 1927, it remains the tallest church in the United States due to its steel frame. Limestone buttresses, grotesques, gargoyles, statues and other ornament cover the gothic revival church's 392-foot tower, which houses a 74-piece carillon. In May of 2000, it was designated a landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and in 2012 The Riverside Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Scope of work

- A hands-on public safety inspection was performed on six out of the eight elevations of the tower and at three other locations. Project deliverables included annotated elevations and associated still photographs (2002).
- Exterior conditions of the limestone masonry roofs and drainage conditions were documented after hammersounding and a close visual inspection (2002).
- VA conducted a mandated façade inspection at representative areas of the tower and the adjacent Martin Luther King Building in 2017 and again in 2021.

- We returned in 2018 to perform an evaluation and documentation of existing conditions of a total of 20 stained glass windows in the clerestory and aisles of the church as well as two rose windows at the upper balcony, capturing video with a drone.
- During field work at Riverside Church in 2021 undertaken to acquire and confirm measurements for restoration work on the stained glass windows, VA took the opportunity to test the accuracy of photogrammetry for acquiring measurements remotely with a drone. The actual field work was completed on rope and then a drone flight was made for comparison.

Building owner

The Riverside Church of New York City

In collaboration with

- Li/Saltzman Architects (2002)
- Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (2002)
- Henson Architecture (2017)
- Julie Sloan (2018, 2021)
- Westerman Construction (2021)
- Walter B. Melvin Architects (2021)

Photo: Vertical Access