



Health

Edinburgh church reopens for worship after £1.1m renovation

An Edinburgh church will reopen for services this weekend following a £1.1 million renovation which has taken two years to complete.

By Ian Swanson

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Pews have been removed from inside the church to create a more flexible space

The ambitious upgrade of Blackhall St Columba's on Queensferry Road has included the removal of pews to create a more flexible space and an entirely refurbished sanctuary.

Members of the congregation will be returning to the space for the first time since 2018. Glass doors provide a welcoming, well-lit entrance, with new underfloor heating added to ensure the building is efficiently heated.

A sophisticated audio-visual system now allows for varied lighting, screens and livestreaming, with elegant and efficient LED lighting added to the nave.



The Rev Fergus Cook praised the foresight and generosity of the congregation

More space has been created for meetings and the church office and vestry has been upgraded.

Despite the scale of the project, the changes were funded entirely by the congregation, with just under half of the cost coming from the sale of a church property and the rest from donations and fundraising.

The Rev Fergus Cook, who was ordained and inducted as the parish minister just before lockdown began, said: "The Church of Scotland is looking for church buildings to be well equipped spaces in the right places.

"Blackhall St Columba's Parish Church is well located and I firmly believe that due to foresight and the generosity of the congregation in managing this refurbishment of its sanctuary it is now well equipped to fulfil its mission statement: to glorify God, to proclaim Christ, to serve others."

He also paid tribute to the hard work of those involved including the Building For the Future Group, Alan Thomson of Lee Boyd Architects and the project manager Fay Stirling.

The church dates back to 1900 but the current building, which is B-listed, was opened in 1904.

Ms Stirling said despite coronavirus throwing the church's plans into disarray and inevitably delaying work, the final results were "transformational".

She said: "There were a few important principles which we wanted to adhere to. Firstly we had to be good stewards of the money which had been so generously given and spend it wisely. We also wanted to maintain the character of the building."



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