

Ring the bells for Doors Open Day



Visitors to St Cuthbert's Parish Church in Edinburgh's West End have a rare opportunity to try their hand at bell ringing this weekend.

The church in Lothian Road is one of several Church of Scotland buildings to feature in Edinburgh's Doors Open Weekend on both Saturday and Sunday.

St Cuthbert's Church as it stands now was built in 1892-94 and features a modified version of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper made from alabaster. Agatha Christie, the creator of Hercule Poirot was married in the church's vestibule in 1930.

Usually only Church of Scotland ministers and commissioners attending the General Assembly at New College in May each year or students at the University of Edinburgh or fringe show audiences get to see inside the building on Mound Place. This weekend people will be able to see the home of the General Assembly and the historic black and white tiled corridor and halls.

The Assembly Hall was designed by David Bryce and built in 1858-59. The rear of the Hall facing Castlehill was extended east by J.M. Dick Peddle in 1886 with more work in 1902 and 1903. In 1900, the United Presbyterian Church and the majority of the Free Church of Scotland joined to form the United Free Church of Scotland. From that time on, Assembly Hall was used by the newly united church.

In 1929 the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland reconciled their differences and united once more. The Assembly Hall then became the home of the re-united

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The General Assembly, the highest court of the Church of Scotland, sits in Assembly Hall every May and it is there Church of Scotland policy and legislation is set out. Council and Committee conveners also present their reports to be discussed at the General Assembly and debated.

Until 1929 the General Assemblies of the old Church of Scotland were held in the St John's Highland Tollbooth Church (now the Hub). The Assembly Hall was used by the Scottish Parliament from 1999 to 2004 and the Church of Scotland temporarily relocated its General Assembly for that time.

Other Church of Scotland related buildings open to the public include: Cramond Kirk; Greenbank Parish Church; Barclay Viewforth Church of Scotland; Polwarth Parish Church; Canongate Kirk; Canongate Graveyard; Palmerston Place Church and John Knox House.

Entry to Open Doors events is free.