

Step into 140 years of history at St Michael's anniversary weekend

Edinburgh west's St Michael's Parish Church is opening its doors not only to the regular congregation, but also the wider community this weekend, as it marks its 140-year anniversary.

A special exhibition will begin at the Slateford Road church featuring the kirk's history, and more notably its 140 years of community service and worship, serving the local community and also further afield.

Visitors will be able to attend the church's usual coffee morning from 10.30am to 12pm on Saturday 2 December at which Sight Scotland and the Scouts will also have stalls. St Michael's minister will then hold a special service of celebration, coinciding with the first advent, on Sunday 3 December at 11am, followed by a catered buffet in the adjacent hall.

Praising the church community in putting together this weekend's events, the minister, Reverend Andrea Price, said: "140 years is maybe not a normal type of celebration, but because of the presbytery planning that's happening all around us, I thought, and the elders agreed, that we had to celebrate the anniversary."

Church of Scotland's presbytery reform began in 2021 with a planned reduction of the overall number of regional presbyteries, with Edinburgh also dramatically impacted by the shake-up.

Reverend Price also said that after the period of Covid in which the church could not conduct its business in a normal way, the anniversary preparations had also been "a great bonus for me to get to know my congregation".

A glance back at St Michael's past

St Michael's was built in 1883 to cater for the expanding population to the west of the city, brought to the neighbourhood with the growth of industry.

"It's been wonderful to look back on the work of over 140 years and to realise how much things have changed. How much fun everybody had. How active they were. It was a great place for music and drama, for community and supporting each other," Rev. Price added.

St Michael's community support has continued, however, actively supporting the homeless in cooperation with charities Bethany Trust and Edinburgh's Fresh Start, which provides starter kits to those of have recently been homed. The church has also supported prisoners at Saughton for a number of years by delivering gifts and messages to their children at Christmas to keep their relationships going, among many other community activities.

Reverend Price expressed concern at the ageing, and declining, congregation – a phenomenon to be found across many of Scotland's faith communities.

"It's been a great time of change"

But despite the worrying numbers, she said that the

celebration would offer church-goers and visitors a moment to reflect on the place's history and how it had helped many along the way.

"I think the exhibition does teach about how people have coped with difficult times (...) the first world war, emancipation, the role of women, the role of men. It's been a great time of change. Faith can give us a song to sing through the darkness," she added.

The special exhibition will be open on Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 October until 4pm each day at St Michael's Parish Church, 1 Slateford Road.



Credit: M J Richardson/Geograph