

PARISH PROFILE

Blackhall St. Columba's Church Edinburgh



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



The Church of Scotland

INTRODUCTION

Blackhall is a suburban church (single charge with an unrestricted call) situated in the north west of Edinburgh. Our mission statement is: "To glorify God ... to proclaim Christ ... to serve others"

The congregation, which is very active, is in vacancy as a result of our minister, after a ministry of only three years, accepting a call from another parish.

Founded in 1900, we have a large and active membership, although younger adults and children are under-represented. We are preparing for and adapting to the challenges of the future and have recently embarked on an ambitious programme to modernise our facilities. We envisage a preaching and pastoral ministry to sustain and grow the life of the church and to develop new links with the parish and all ages in the community.

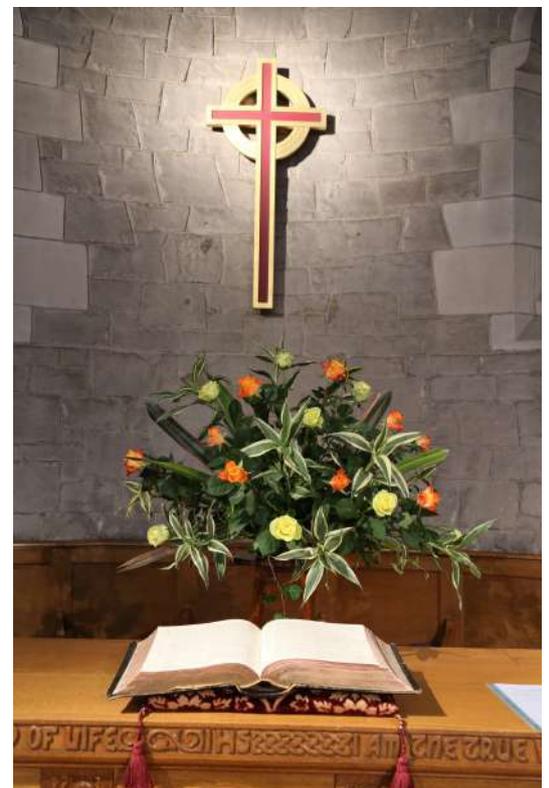
As is now required in a vacancy, the Kirk Session held a vote in relation to human sexuality and voted to depart from the Church's traditional practice.

We look forward to receiving guidance and leadership from our new minister as we work together to face the challenges ahead and to fulfill our mission.



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HISTORY

Blackhall St Columba's church was founded in 1900, a daughter church of Cramond, to serve the village and farming area of Blackhall and the growing population as Edinburgh expanded westward. The area has developed and changed enormously over the past 119 years when it was a rural area on the outskirts of Edinburgh, where quarrymen lived alongside farm workers and the residents of Craigcrook castle.

Today it is a busy suburb, minutes from the city centre and convenient for commuting to Fife and west Edinburgh. We worship in a beautiful Romanesque church, reminiscent of Iona Abbey and designed by Peter McGregor Chalmers. St Columba's was adopted as the local parish Church by the Church of Scotland in 1929.



THE PARISH

The parish of Blackhall St Columba's lies just to the north west of the city centre in the shade of Corstorphine Hill and astride the A90 Queensferry Road. Much of the parish was developed during the inter-war years with bungalows and with flats in the Ravelston area. The main centre of economic activity is the Craigleith Retail Park built on the former quarry, the source of much of the stone used in building Edinburgh's New Town. Schooling by the local authority in the area is provided by Blackhall Primary School for those living south of Telford Road and by Davidson's Mains Primary from those living to the north.

Secondary education is provided by the Royal High School. Only Blackhall Primary School is located within the parish. The parish also hosts the Mary Erskine School, an independent school. Recreational facilities include a bowling club, a tennis club, two golf courses and a public park with play area. However, there are few community meeting places and the church halls serve a large number of community groups as a result. The parish comprises approximately 2,500 households.



THE PARISH

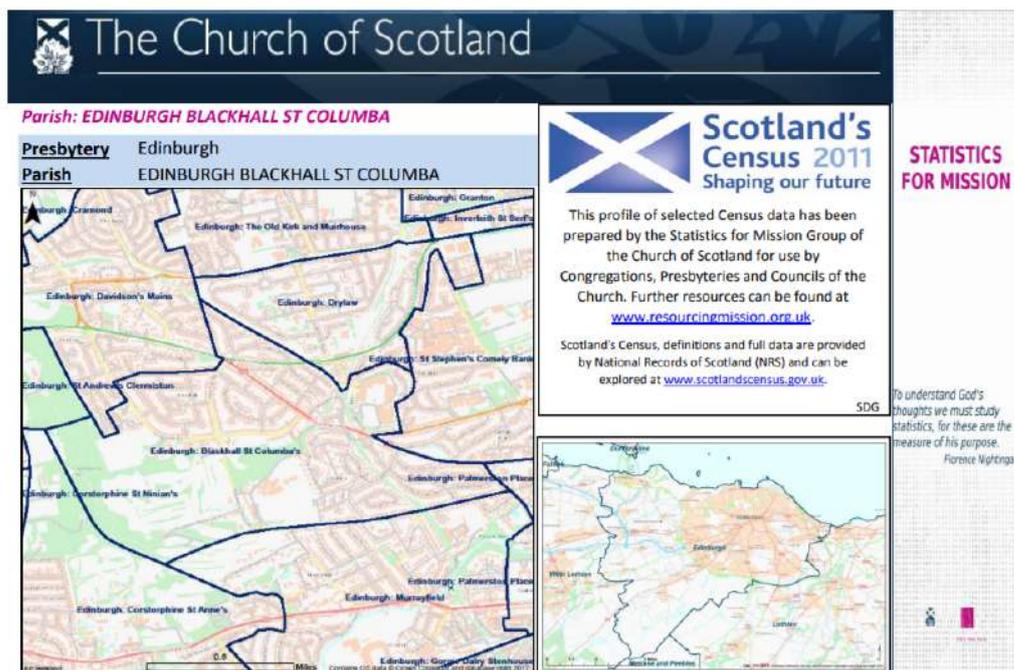
In 2017 the neighbouring Dean Church closed and its parish was redistributed across five neighbouring parishes.

The population structure of this parish varies considerably from the average for the Edinburgh Presbytery area and for the country as a whole.

It is a more mature population with more children, fewer students and young adults (16 to 44 years), but significantly higher numbers in the older (45+ years) age groups. More than half the population is over 45 years of age.

Parish Details are available in the attached link to

https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church_finder/data/parish_profiles/010007.pdf



MISSION STATEMENT

‘To glorify God ... to proclaim Christ ... to serve others’

We regard our positioning as a congregation as essentially mainstream in Church of Scotland terms. This means that among our members a range of theological views may be held but we respect such differences in the knowledge that much more unites us than divides us.

In practice, our vision and ambition is to fulfil God’s purpose and to help us achieve this we seek:

- To be a living community of prayer.
- To provide meaningful worship for all.
- To grow in learning about Christ and Christianity.
- To provide Christian education for all.
- To develop pastoral care.
- To make the building a living focus for all who live in the Parish.
- To maximise the talents of all our members in pursuit of these aims.

WORSHIP

We have 638 members so it's not surprising that their daily circumstances and preferred style of worship can be very different. Accordingly, we offer different opportunities for worship, and in different locations.

Having been traditional in previous generations, our "normal" style of worship is now a blend of the traditional and the more informal. This approach is reinforced by the variety of music within the services. We have a very good organ which was rebuilt this century (at a cost of over £180,000 raised by an appeal to the congregation). We also have an excellent piano and a recently formed Praise Band. There is a choir usually numbering about 20, who contribute an Introit and Anthem to the more traditional services, and Junior Singers and Sing Aloud groups who contribute praise music at some of the others. Our Director of Music is a busy person.



WORSHIP

Our current pattern of worship is:

10.30am - Traditional formal Services every Sunday with organist and choir contributing an Introit, Anthem and Voluntaries. Members take an active part by reading the lessons (normally using the Good News Bible), leading prayers and giving occasional children's addresses. Most of our hymns are from CH4, occasionally using Song's of God's People and our own songbook of more modern praise. During our building work these services are held in the Large Hall. Around 215 people attend these services of morning worship.

'Carded' Communion Services are held on the last Sundays in February, June and October. There is a short Communion Service after Morning Worship on the last Sunday of the Month in the other months.

9.30 am - In previous years, Informal Family Services with songs and hymns, usually accompanied by someone playing the piano or by the Praise Band took place on the first Sunday of the month and every week in July and August. These have been discontinued during the vacancy and because of the building work this year.

An informal service is held in the Church Halls every second Wednesday from October to April led by various members of the congregation and some visitors. This is particularly popular with more elderly members – 20 or more attend - and it is followed by a light lunch.



WORSHIP



Annual Services - Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, Youth Organisations' Service, Welcoming New Members Service, Christian Aid Service, Promotion Service for children moving up in the Sunday School, Charity Service linked to the Charity the WATCH (Working All Together Caring & Helping through the Cross) committee supports, Choir Service of Lessons and Carols at Christmas, Family Christmas Eve service, Watchnight Christmas Eve Service, Brass band Service of Carols. Easter services are held on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and on Easter Sunday we start with an Open Air 8.00 service followed by a Communion Service at 10.30am.



The weekly flowers are donated by members of the congregation and arranged either by them or by one of the Flower Team. After the services they are donated to those who are unwell, bereaved or celebrating a particular major occasion, by teams who work on a rota basis. Services also take place in the local Care Homes (sometimes with Communion) and the local primary school as well as in members' houses. There are driving rotas to help less mobile worshippers to attend the Sunday Service and the midweek service.

PASTORAL CARE & OUTREACH

Visits to the bereaved, sick and elderly of the parish are made by the Minister and Assistant Minister working closely with the Elders and the Pastoral Team and those who an Elder may mention as needing a visit. The members are very appreciative of this service and value it very highly.

A year after the death of a loved one, we contact the bereaved family to offer further support,

Elders are expected to visit or at least make direct contact with every member in their district before each communion, ie three times a year. They would also be expected to visit those in their district who are in hospital or in extra need of care.

The Pastoral Care Group also has a system of visiting the people who cannot get out and about any more and expect Elders to nominate people in their Districts who need this care.

There is an active Prayer Chain which prays for those in the parish who request it either directly or through their Elder.



PRAYER
Chain

PASTORAL CARE & OUTREACH

FreshStart
helping people make a home for themselves

Blackhall supports Fresh Start (a local charity providing essential items for people setting up a new home) with a weekly collection of goods and a retiring collection annually. Some members also do practical work for Fresh Start.

Coffee/tea, juice and biscuits are served in the halls after the Sunday service weekly except in July and August when they are served between services.

This is very popular, as it gives people an opportunity to meet and talk after worship. Teams are organised to welcome people to services in the Church. The teams are responsible for dispensing the Orders of Service and where necessary helping people to their seats. They take care that people do not feel isolated.

Helping Others and Enjoying Ourselves

The Cameo Club (Come and Meet Each Other) meets every 2nd Friday Morning. It is an organisation which brings together people who are not independently mobile for a coffee morning with some form of happening or entertainment. People are brought to the Church halls by volunteer drivers and then taken home again afterwards.

There is an Annual Christmas Fair in aid of the charity or charities which we have chosen for the year, and a relationship with these charities builds throughout the year. Various organisations which use the Church take responsibility for manning the stalls.

It raises a substantial sum every year.



Carol Singing in Sainsbury's

PASTORAL CARE & OUTREACH



Musical events are held for pleasure and to raise funds. For example, we held a series of concerts in 2018 to raise funds towards our Building For The Future project. Christian Aid is actively supported with a service held during Christian Aid Week, distribution of envelopes to members twice yearly and a fund-raising coffee morning. Articles describing the work of Christian Aid are published in the magazines distributed to members and to the parish. Coffee mornings are held on Saturdays throughout the year in aid of various church organisations and charities. There is a Church picnic most years and annual events include a Burns Supper and a Golf Outing.

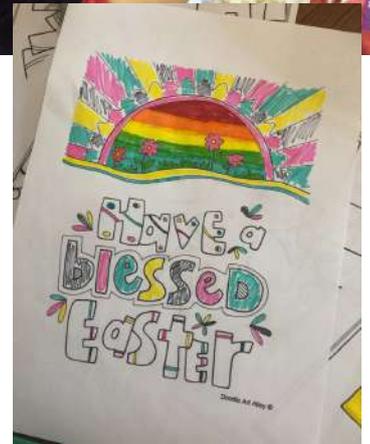
Church organisations include: the Cameo Club, Watch Committee, Tuesday Topics, the Curry Club, the Walking Group and "Knit and Natter". The Scout Troop, Cubs and Beavers, Guides, Brownies & Rainbows and Explorer Scouts meet in the Church Halls and have a strong relationship with the Church.

The Church halls are extensively used by community groups of all ages, from the Blackhall Toddler Group and a Playgroup to those enjoying Zumba, Pilates, Art, Badminton, Floral Art, Choral Singing and Dance Classes. The Kirk Session liaises with all user groups by appointing elders to visit each organisation annually.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- There are currently two Bible study groups
- New Communicants Classes are held when appropriate.
- Until we moved out of the Sanctuary, leaving it in the hands of our builders, there were 'Sunday School' groups – under various names – for different ages of children and teenagers.
- We hope to restart these as soon as possible after the work is completed.
- The running of an Alpha course, or an equivalent, is under active discussion by the Kirk Session.



Younger Children

The Cradle Roll Convener liaises with baptismal families for the Sacrament service of baptism.

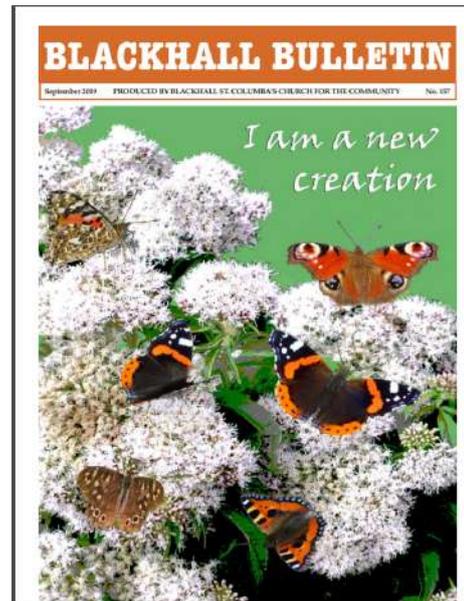
There is a Crèche for those parents who wish to attend the formal morning service but whose children are not old enough for Sunday School. But children are welcome to attend the service and small packs are provided to help to entertain them during the service.



COMMUNICATIONS

Publications

The Blackhall Bulletin, a 24 page magazine produced by the church, goes to every house in the Parish quarterly. We also produce Kirk News, a magazine for our members, in each of the other months of the year. The Bulletin is posted out to every household in the parish and Kirk News is delivered by Elders or District Visitors.



The church has a website www.blackhallstcolumbas.org.uk which gives details of the activities taking place within the church and its halls.



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

We are underway with an ambitious programme of modernising and refurbishment which will take place in two phases. The first phase addresses the problems presented by an inadequate and outdated Sanctuary infrastructure of electrics, heating, lighting and audio visual systems. These changes will make our main worship area more welcoming, and capable of supporting a wider range of services. The Sanctuary will also be used more effectively for other activities, sacred and secular.

The second phase will address similar problems in the hall complex in order to make it much more 'fit for purpose', both for the church and for community use. Each of the two phases is expected to cost in the region of £1.1m. The money needed for phase 1 has been raised partly by the sale of property but mostly through the generosity of the congregation. The contractors started work on site at the beginning of September 2019 and it is hoped that the work will be completed by about May 2020.

Fundraising towards phase 2 is expected to start when the first phase is completed and approaches will be made to grant-making bodies and to the wider Blackhall community. However, it is recognised that it may be some time before the money necessary for the whole project can be raised so the halls were extensively redecorated this summer and some modernisation was carried out in respect of toilets and facilities.



ADMINISTRATION & GOVERNANCE

Blackhall St Columba's has adopted the standard Unitary Constitution. Our Kirk Session, with 67 members, is responsible for the organisation and management of all aspects of the church apart from those reserved for the minister. Accordingly, there is efficient delegation of responsibilities to specific Committees of Session.

Most of our elders visit specific districts allocated to them, and they are helped by visitors in each district.



Secretary - responsible for administration, including hall letting, and is central to the production of our communications (including this one).

Assistant Minister/Pastoral Assistant - Retired minister, Rev Gordon Farquharson but currently very active as our Locum.

Director of Music - at the hub of our church music activities and has created new ones since his arrival

Church Officer - has responsibility for seeing the practical aspects work well in running our church buildings and that users of the premises are well looked after

Church Cleaner - maintaining high standards of housekeeping in our church and halls

FINANCES

St Columba's is a net contributor to the Church of Scotland. We have always been in a position to pay our Ministries and Mission obligation in full. In the last twenty years the Congregation has donated over £180k to rebuild our Organ and £300k for Roof and Stonework refurbishment. Through donations and fund-raising activities in the same period we have given more than £200k to a variety of charities.

Retiring collections at Communion, Christmas, Easter, and Remembrance services, for example to donate to current disaster appeals, are part of our annual routine. General income comes from collections, hall lettings and the occasional bequest. The church is taking part in the National Stewardship campaign. The church is, of course, a Registered Scottish Charity with OSCR.

In the year ending 31st December 2018 the audited accounts show income of over £264,000 from normal sources and over £377,000 for our Building For The Future Project. Our reported expenditure in 2018, not including the building for the future project, was £244,100.

Please see the Financial Appendix for further details.



PROPERTY

Church Building

The “Building For The Future” section of this profile describes the ambitious project currently taking place for interior of the Sanctuary. As well as the main Sanctuary space (which accommodates around 400 people using both the ground floor and the gallery) there is a generously sized Office, Choir Room and Vestry.

Halls

There are three halls in the complex linked to the main church building. These have recently been refurbished as they are our main accommodation while the Sanctuary work is in progress.

The Large Hall, which includes a stage, accommodates a badminton court and is bright and airy. It has been used for dramatic and musical productions and an adjoining projection room means that film shows have been successfully held in previous years.

The Small Hall, which is suitable for mid-week services and session meetings can accommodate 80 people.

The Upper Hall (not surprisingly on the first floor) has a similar floor space as the Small Hall but has a lower ceiling and smaller numbers can be housed due to its shape.

There is a recently modernised kitchen, and toilets which were also brought up to date this year. We have fitted out an office in the projection room for use during the period when the main church building is under the control of our building contractors.



THE MANSE

The manse for Blackhall St Columba's Church is in Blinkbonny Crescent, in a row of Edwardian terraced houses which are about five minutes walk from the church.

It has 3 public rooms on the ground floor and 4 bedrooms on the first floor.

The manse has a good garden at the rear which is sunny (south-facing) and on-street parking is free and straightforward, and there is a single garage at the rear of the garden. Shopping is convenient, the property is close to main bus routes and good schooling is available at the nearby Blackhall Primary School and at The Royal High School for secondary education.

More details (with floor plans) are set out in the Manse Appendix which is accessed through the main Parish Profile page



LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW

A local Church Review was conducted in October 2018. The concluding Report from the Presbytery of Edinburgh is available in the main Parish Profile page



OUR CALL

Our new minister will bring his or her own attributes and skills to the charge but we believe that Blackhall St Columba's provides a real challenge with considerable scope to spread the gospel and to serve all age groups in our community. We are therefore seeking to call someone who will be in tune with our aims and outlook but who will bring their own ideas and enthusiasms so that we (the congregation) and the minister can work and grow together.

If you feel that God may be calling you to serve as the minister of Blackhall St Columba's or for further information or to answer any questions you may have, please contact The Church Secretary by email at:

secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

**By phone on 0131 332 4431 or by post to:
Blackhall St Columba's
Columba Road
Edinburgh
EH4 3QU**

Or please contact the Interim Moderator

**The Very Rev Dr Russell Barr
GBarr@churchofscotland.org.uk
0131 336 2036**

