



Eastcote, north-west London, could not worship in their building.

Jon Wyand | St Lawrence, Eastcote

In February 2020 the parish began a new period of intensive ministry, renewing its mission to the local community, with the arrival of its interim minister Fr John Seymour.

But, only a few weeks later, the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, prompting St Lawrence, like churches across the country, to meet first online and later with restrictions on numbers.

Then, just as the congregation was preparing to return to full in-person worship, the church's aged electric heating system was condemned and services had to be moved to the nearby hall.

It prompted a major reappraisal. Now through donations and fundraising activities, the community raised half a million pounds for a complete renovation that has taken place over the past six months.

As well as installing a modern, energy-efficient heating system, the building's electrics have been upgraded, and bespoke lighting and redecoration has transformed the space. New audio-visual equipment provides for community use of the space, as well as supporting worship.

The works have paved the way for the parish to realise its commitment to use its resources to serve the wider community and renew its mission.

St Lawrence, the patron saint of the church, has provided inspiration to understand the people of the areas as "the treasure of God".



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St Lawrence recently welcomed the newly elected Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana, and community leaders as the Bishop of Willesden, Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, came to bless renovation works.

Fr John said: "Worshippers have had a disrupted and disorientating time with Covid and then the failure of the church heating.

"However, this hasn't all been about loss: the time has allowed the parish to re-imagine its ministry.

"The church now looks smart, attractive, and welcoming. It communicates the new start the worshipping community has made.

"This is an exciting moment for us all and the fruit of reflection and hard work.

"The church doors are now open – literally and symbolically."

Bishop Lusa said: "It was a delight to join the people of St Lawrence for a service of blessing and re-dedication following extensive renovation work done in the church building.

"I first visited St Lawrence last autumn as the place was a busy work site covered in dust. The church is now a bright and inviting place, clearly an echo to St Lawrence's ambition to be a beacon of life and hope at the heart of Eastcote."

Among the congregation was the Mayor of Hillingdon, on his first day of public engagements since his election.

"I was impressed at how this faith group is seeking to live out their Christian belief by seeking partnership with their local community to enrich everyone's lives and build deeper connections between people in Eastcote," he said.

"This work is much needed: I hope and trust that they will be deeply blessed in their endeavours."