

WHAT IS THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The Scottish Episcopal Church is a self-governing Province of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Its forms of worship, Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayer, are recognisably similar to those of other provinces, notably the Church of England, but have their own characteristics. They are to be found in the Scottish Prayer Book of 1929, in a conservative revision of the Liturgy in 1970 and in the radically new and original Scottish Liturgy 1982, now widely used among us. We also have our own revised ordination rites of 1984 which have been highly acclaimed among international scholars and in 1998 new rites of Initiation were published.

As with other churches in the Anglican Communion we have revised our Calendar so as to include memorials of significant Christians from the Reformation to the present day, and two lectionaries are now in general use: they are derived from two sources; the Ecumenical Consultation on Common Texts and the Anglican Church in Canada.

Communicant members of the Anglican Communion and of other trinitarian churches who are visiting us are warmly invited to receive communion in our churches. Longer-stay residents who are not Anglicans would normally be encouraged to be confirmed after a period of preparation, though it is now agreed that baptism constitutes full sacramental initiation into the Church and chrismation (anointing with oil) is becoming increasingly an integral part of the baptismal rite.

We maintain the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons which have existed since the early centuries of the Church. In 1994 women were, for the first time in the Scottish Episcopal Church, ordained to the priesthood. We celebrate the two Gospel Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the Prayer Book makes provision for Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick.

It is our policy, wherever possible, to work in conjunction with other Christian bodies and, where appropriate, with other faiths in Scotland. To this end we belong to 'Action of Churches Together in Scotland' (ACTS) which has among its membership The Church of Scotland, The Roman Catholic Church, The Congregational Union of Salvation Army and several other Christian bodies. We have played a significant role in launching, in 1998, the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union (SCIFU) which envisages a network of 'maxi-parishes' covering a natural community area within which diverse patterns of worship will be found. It will be normal for mission initiatives and acts of witness and service to be co-ordinated. Fundamental to this development is the mutual recognition of one another's ministries before the act of union and the incorporation of episcopacy in a form acceptable to all involved. The Churches involved are the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), the Methodist, Congregational and United Reformed Churches and ourselves. The Roman Catholic and the United Presbyterian Churches have Observer status. Much work lies before us but hopes run high.

We are also involved in searching talks with a number of these churches in the common pursuit of Christian unity.

We are seriously engaged in the work of Christian education involving all age groups, of caring for people in their daily lives as well as when they are in trouble, need or sickness, of reaching out to those who have little or no link with the Church.

In 1995 our Church's Theological College was sold. It was felt that that kind of residential training was no longer appropriate and therefore the cost of maintaining the building and of funding the students, many of whom were married, could no longer be justified. The Theological Institute is responsible for the training of men and women for ministry, ordained and lay, and has implemented a radically altered scheme of 'distance learning'. It moved its base to the former site of St. Mary's Music School in Old Coates House, to the north of St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. Though we are a small Church with, for example 51,353 members in 1998 of whom 32,047 were communicant members, we are actively involved in the life of the nation at many levels and see to be able to exercise quite a substantial role in that field.

We have links with the Church in many parts of the world. We receive from, and share with, them a variety of gifts both spiritual and material. In the ordering of our church life at each level we are represented by clergy and laity. We try to ensure that men and women are equally involved in all our affairs and that our youth have a voice which is listened to. Each congregation has an elected vestry; congregations are grouped in areas in each of the dioceses. Each diocese has its own synod presided over by the Bishop. In the Province there are seven dioceses made up of amalgamations of the fourteen Pre-Reformation dioceses. They are: Aberdeen and Orkney; Argyll and the Isles; Moray, Ross and Caithness; Brechin; St. Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane; Edinburgh; Glasgow and Galloway. The General Synod is responsible for the ordering of the life of the Province as a whole. It is presided over by that bishop who is elected by his fellow bishops to the office of Primus (from the Latin 'primus inter pares' meaning 'first among equals'). We have not revived the late-medieval office of archbishop but adhere to a more ancient Scottish practice. The General Synod normally meets annually and oversees the life of the Church in all its aspects.

If you would like to know more about the life, worship and witness of the Scottish Episcopal Church, please speak to the local rector or priest-in-charge, or write to the Information Officer, The General Synod Office, 21 Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 SEE.

Many of our churches can be identified by the sign illustrated below.



SOMETHING OF OUR HISTORY

The first known active Christian witness was Ninian who operated from Whithorn in the late 4th century. He worked mainly among the Pictish people and is thought to have travelled widely in the centre and the east of Scotland. Whithorn is in the south-west of Scotland and the settlement there is now being excavated and is revealing much fascinating material. You can obtain more information from The Secretary, The Whithorn Trust, Whithorn, Wigtownshire, DG8 8PE.

In the 6th century Columba came from Ireland with a few fellow monks in their coracles. Driven from his native land by tribal feuds in which he had been involved, he landed among the people of Irish race who had colonised Argyll and he settled on the island of Iona, off the west coast of Mull. From there, he and his companions carried the Gospel to the tribes of the North and laid the foundations of the Celtic Church here. There are many stories of their gentle courage and missionary zeal. Little settlements of monks were established in many parts of the North and West and, in due course, farther south. Most notable among these was the Community at Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumbria, where Germanic settlers called Angles had established themselves. It was founded by Aidan from Iona and its most famous son is Cuthbert.

This Celtic-Pictish growth of the Church in Scotland and Northern England, allied with that in Wales, in south-west England and in Ireland, was the cradle from which, at the close of the Dark Ages, a remarkable missionary thrust reached the Rhineland and thence spread through Europe east of the Rhine in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Book of Kells in Ireland and the Lindisfarne Gospels represent the flowering of Celtic art, as do many beautifully carved stones and crosses.

Meanwhile in Northumbria changes were taking place which were to have a lasting effect on the life of the Church in Scotland. The kings of Northumbria ruled up to the River Forth and for a time had influence even farther north. Their kingdom was affected by a mission directly from Rome and disputes arose between Roman and Celtic usage which raised the question of the authority of the Pope. At the Synod of Whitby (c.663) a decision was given in favour of Rome, the Celtic monks had to withdraw and forms of church life and practice in line with those of western Christendom soon spread even to Iona.

The Viking raids upon the mainland of Scotland further eroded the influence of the little Celtic settlements and when Malcolm II, at the beginning of the 11th century, finally established his sovereignty over most of the area comprising modern Scotland, the scene was set for a leap for stability to the nation. His great-grandson, Malcolm Canmore (Malcolm III) carried the process further by marrying the saintly Margaret, sister of Edgar Atheling, the Anglo-Saxon prince who had been dispossessed by William the Conqueror.

Margaret had spent some of her early years exiled in Hungary and had learnt much at that court about education and other civilising ways which she proceeded to put into effect at the Scottish Court. Some fifty years later her son, David, consolidated her work by founding many new monasteries throughout the land. The process of westernising was now well advanced and the Pope's authority became stronger in Scotland.

During the 12th and 13th centuries there was steady growth in the life of the Church, especially in the development of the parish system. Until the founding of the universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen in the 15th century, theological studies were pursued for the most part in the monasteries and, later, the friaries. The most notable of the theologians of the period was the Franciscan scholar Duns Scotus. In the middle of the 13th century he became as well known as the great Thomas Aquinas himself. Though his teaching was eclipsed by that of Thomas it is now coming back into its own. Among other things he affirmed the unity of matter in all creation and that it has real being. Thereby he laid the foundations for the development of the sciences 300 years later.

Scotland's ties with Rome were not, however, without their tensions. There were disputes between crown and papacy over the right to make appointments in the Church and over political interference. For example, after his victory at the battle of Bannockburn (1314) Robert the Bruce was affirmed as King, but the Pope, John XXII, refused to acknowledge this nor would he support Scotland's claim to independence from England. He excommunicated Bruce and absolved the people from obedience to him. In response the Scottish barons, with the full support of the Church, drew up the famous Declaration of Arbroath (1320). It is directed to the Pope and affirms their determination to resist all interference by him, or anyone else, in the internal affairs of the nation. It contains the famous words - "It is not for glory, riches or

honours that we fight; it is for liberty alone, the liberty which no good man relinquishes but with his life." Similar troubles arose after the Battle of Flodden (1513) when James IV died excommunicate.

The period of the high Middle Ages saw the development of education and learning, architecture, music and art. Craftsmanship in wood and stone flourished in the monasteries, churches, palaces, castles and fortified houses. The system of justice, based on Roman law, was greatly improved and trade with mainland Europe grew.

Scottish society differed from that of England in one important respect. From the middle of the 14th century serfdom was virtually unknown. One reason for this is thought to be the decline in the population by as much as a third through the ravages of the Black Death. Landowners who survived were desperate for labour and the peasant farmer became a tenant rather than a serf. The relationship between laird and tenant was often one of mutual trust and devotion, with the result that there was much less tension between various ranks of society than was experienced in England or Germany with their recurrent peasant revolts. This may account in part for the course which the Reformation took in Scotland.

The state of the Church in Scotland at the beginning of the 16th century was dire. The monastic life had lost its way. Many of the bishops had become little more than secular lords and some were evil. Parish churches were in a state of decay.

Attempts at reform however were not unknown. James I, in the early 1400s, certainly strove for improvement and a little later Franciscans of the strict Observance came to Scotland. Some of the bishops, such as George Brown of Dunkeld in the latter part of the 15th century, cared deeply for the religious life of their people. Brown created rural deaneries and employed Gaelic-speaking friars to preach to the people in the northern part of his diocese. He exercised a strong discipline over the moral life of the diocese and was active in building new parish churches in areas of population growth. He visited the sick in time of plague without regard to his own safety. Reforming influences began to enter Scotland from the Continent during the early years of the 16th century. Merchants brought Lutheran books into the Scottish ports from the Low Countries and from Scandinavia. Such imports were banned but could not be stopped. Patrick Hamilton began to teach these new ideas at St Andrews and became an early Scottish martyr in 1528. Such teaching

spread and further martyrdoms followed, most notably that of George Wishart also at St. Andrews. Riots occurred in various places and, under the leadership of John Knox, a Calvinist, the old order was overthrown and the Reformation era began. This was 1560.

Pockets of resistance remained, especially in the North, and went underground'. There were many tragic battles between warring factions in Scotland, though the number of individual victims of religious intolerance was mercifully much fewer than in England or on the Continent.

Lutheran and Calvinist influences informed the Reformed Church of Scotland for the next 130 years, now one and now the other being dominant. Like its sister Church in England, the Church in Scotland has a high doctrine of Church and Sacrament; it continued, with some modification and occasional lapses, the Episcopal form of Church Government (i.e. bishops) and pastoral oversight; and used reformed service books and new translations of the Bible in the vernacular.

When in 1689, William of Orange came to the throne of the United Kingdom the Scottish bishops (like some of the Scottish bishops- the non-jurors) refused to give him their oath of allegiance on the grounds that their oath to King James could not be revoked. The king therefore turned to the Presbyterian party within the Church of Scotland and by Act of parliament declared the Church of Scotland Presbyterian. The Episcopal element was evicted, though in the remote areas this took some time to achieve. The Toleration Act of 1712 gave the Scottish non-jurors a measure of religious freedom provided they use the English Prayer Book. This event it was that, to some extent, earned us the erroneous title "The English Church". Nevertheless many joined the Jacobite cause with the result that, after the '45 Rising, the Episcopal Church, outside these 'Qualified Chapels' was outlawed, and all but disappeared until the partial repeal of the Penal Laws in 1792.

It was during this period of suppression that three Bishops, Kilgour, Petrie and Skinner, in 1784, secretly consecrated Samuel Seabury from Connecticut to the episcopate. Thereby the Church in the newly independent 'colonies' in America received their first bishop and from this event there springs the particular links that we have with the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

The 18th century, however, must not be left behind without an all too brief mention of the Enlightenment. The contribution which Scotland made to the

remarkable output of scholarship and culture brought her into the mainstream of European life. David Hume and Adam Smith in philosophy; Black and Watt in the sciences; Ramsay and Raeburn in art; Adam in architecture; and Telford in civil engineering - all these were, and are, household names. One consequence of this outpouring of genius was that many chose to send their sons to English schools and universities. Not a few thereby discovered the riches of the worship of the Church of England and on their return swelled the ranks of the Episcopal Church where they found familiar forms of worship.

Throughout the 19th century the Episcopal Church grew steadily and an ambitious programme of church building developed.

A number of the 'Qualified Chapels' accepted the jurisdiction of the Scottish bishops, revisions of the Scottish Prayer Book were undertaken, canon law was encoded and the work of Home Mission was pursued into new centres of population.

The evangelical revival and, later, the tractarian movement in England both had their effect in Scotland. The latter reinforced the Episcopal Church's conviction that it was the guardian of the true faith in Scotland. Missionary activity was directed therefore not only at the many who had no church links, especially among the working classes and immigrant labour force, but also at members of the other churches. Such activity met with considerable success and the Episcopal Church grew in numbers and resources. Our own Theological College was established and some notable scholars, especially in the fields of liturgy and history, enriched our life.

The process of church extension continued up to and even beyond the Second World War. The second half of the 20th century has seen, however, some striking changes. Synodical government has developed rapidly, liturgies have not only been revised but radically rewritten, the ministry of women has been advanced (though not into the episcopate), the ministry of the laity has been developed and relationships with other churches have grown in depth and in warmth.

Philip Crosfield
May 1991
Revised May 1999