

## WHAT IS THE KIRKIN'O'TH'TARTAN?

The Kirkin' O'Th'Tartan Worship Service is an opportunity for all Christians to rededicate themselves to the God of their heritage, the Lord Jesus Christ, and renew their commitments to His service.

The Kirkin' O'Th'Tartan Worship Service seems so ancient that many assume it was brought to America by our Scottish forefathers. However, the first Kirkin' Service was probably held in Washington's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, April 27, 1941. Its minister was the Rev. Dr. Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate and the Washington St. Andrew's Society. Since that time, Kirkin' ceremonies have been held throughout America. There is evidence that the American Kirkin' does have its roots in Scotland. It is said that when the English conquerors banned the wearing of the Tartan in 1745 that some Scottish clansmen began to carry swatches of the material concealed under their clothing into their church services. At some point in the service, when the clergyman would give a blessing, the clansmen would touch their bits of Tartan, and with no outward signals, an underground Kirkin' occurred.

## WHAT IS REFORMATION SUNDAY?

The last Sunday in October is celebrates the reformation that began in the 16th century, remembering a rediscovery by the Church of God's extravagant love for us—his unstoppable, never giving up love that rescues us and redeems us even though we are unable to do anything to help ourselves. This is the idea that we are saved from sin and death as a free gift from God, and saved for lives infused with purpose, meaning, love and creativity. Reformation Sunday is celebrated in late October because the beginning of the Reformation is traced to when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on All Saints Eve, October 31, 1517, 504 years ago.

The Reformation was largely a reaction against certain practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic church of the time. Interestingly, most of those issues are no longer sources of conflict. Over time God has drawn his Church back towards his complete revelation in Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the Bible. Today the universal (catholic) Church is made up of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Charismatic churches around the world—totaling more than 2.5 billion people, about 1/3 of the population of the earth, the largest and second fastest growing religion in the world.

## WHAT IS A PRESBYTERIAN?

Presbyterians are Christians—we worship the Triune God and believe that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth God himself came to us and risked everything for our sake. The heart of our beliefs can be summed up in two words: **Grace and Gratitude**. We receive God's free gifts of life and salvation and we live lives of gratitude in response.

Presbyterians grew out of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century. We affirm the truths emphasized in the Reformation—We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in the Bible alone. The name Presbyterian means ruled by elders (presbuteros). Elders are called by God through the voice of our congregation. Our form of government influenced the founding fathers in setting up our U.S. Constitution.

We believe that God calls to himself a church, which is the body of Christ in the world. That church is made up of all people who trust Jesus as Lord and Savior (Master and Rescuer) and who seek to follow him (be a disciple), regardless of denomination or sect. We recognize other Christian congregations and denominations as brothers and sisters in Christ as they affirm the faith declared in the Bible and summarized in the ancient Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

## **PSALM SINGING**

Perhaps the most traditional Scottish custom, still preserved in some Presbyterian churches today, is the tradition of Psalm singing. Originally, Scottish Presbyterians believed that only scriptural material should be used in praise of God. From this tradition developed a long series of “metrical versions” of the Psalms. It is important to know that the metrical versions of the Psalms were never intended to be Bible translations – words and phrases were frequently moved around in order to arrange for proper meters.

## **WHY WE DISPLAY THE CROSS**

Presbyterians, with all Christians throughout the ages and across the world, see the pivotal point of human history in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God became a human being! Jesus is “Emmanuel” (God with us). All of Jesus’ life led up to his surprising “being lifted up” on the cross, where he defeated sin and death and opened the way for us to be part of God’s family and to live at peace with God and other people.

We display the cross in our church as a reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice for us. Christians do not worship the cross, but do worship Jesus who died on a cross for our salvation. The empty cross reminds us of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on the third day. The cross is the ultimate symbol of God’s self-giving love, of Jesus’ victory over death, and the sole means of our salvation.

## **PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY**

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, ancient Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire with amazing speed. By the fifth century, Christians increasingly looked to the Bishop of Rome—the seat of Roman Government and the city where Peter and Paul had been martyred—as the leader of the world-wide church. Christianity continued to spread.

In the early 1500s, Martin Luther passed through a deep spiritual crisis in which he experienced a profound conversion to Christ. He came to see that it is through God’s mercy alone, given through Christ and received by faith alone—not through human good works—that men and women are put right with God.

Luther believed that many abuses in the Church hindered his coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. In 1517 he posted a notice in Latin on a church door in the university town of Wittenberg, Germany. He invited scholars to debate his concerns about ecclesiastical abuse. To his astonishment, these “95 Theses” (or statements) were translated into German (without his knowledge or permission) and circulated to the masses. Soon a popular Reformation was on, and Luther was a leader.

News of Luther’s teaching quickly spread through Europe, and others joined the cause. A young Frenchman in Paris by the name of Jean (John) Calvin heard Luther’s message and was convinced.

He soon discovered that his new-found faith was not welcome in France, and he made a hasty retreat for Switzerland. While passing through Geneva, Calvin was challenged by another Reformer to stay. Calvin reluctantly agreed, and he ended up spending the rest of his life there.

Calvin began to teach the message of the Bible to the Swiss as well as to the thousands of other people who also had sought refuge in Geneva from elsewhere around Europe. His students included those who took the Protestant faith back to Poland, Holland (William of Orange), Scotland (John Knox), and England. John Knox introduced Presbyterianism to Scotland.

Many early European immigrants to America were Scottish Presbyterians. The first Presbytery (a collection of Presbyterian churches) was established in Philadelphia in 1706. Since then, Presbyterians in several denominations spread across the land, having a combined membership of about 2 million members in the United States. "Presbyterian" describes and defines not a person but a particular way of organizing a church, where leadership is shared by lay people and pastors.