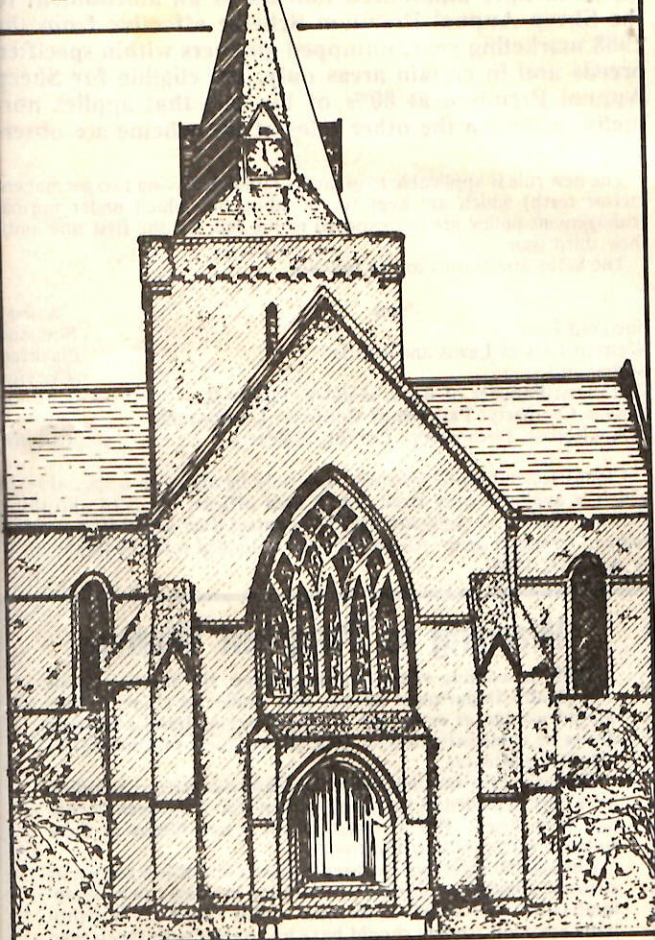


# Celebrating 750 Years of Worship

by James Simpson  
Minister of Dornoch Cathedral

## DORNOCH CATHEDRAL



750 YEARS  
of  
WORSHIP & SERVICE  
1239-1989.

**N**EXT YEAR in Dornoch we are taking our heritage NOT for granted, but for gratitude.

In June and July of 1989 we are going to celebrate the fact that the Cathedral will be 750 years old. Although the building was started around 1224, the first service was not held until 1239. That year the Cathedral, which had been in the womb, or in the making for 15 years, became a living thing. It came alive with the praise of God. What we are in fact celebrating are 750 years of worship in the Cathedral, and 750 years of service by the church to the community.

Dornoch and not just the church will celebrate this historic occasion, for our town literally grew up round the Cathedral. The Cathedral does not dominate the town like Durham Cathedral. It does not soar above it like Salisbury, but it is nonetheless the heart of our town, and I hope also the soul of our town.

It is my hope that these celebrations, which will include special services, pageants, music festivals, floral festivals and outdoor activities like a medieval fair and dancing in the town square, will not attract many visitors, but will unlock the doors behind which some local people hide their potential and capacity for participating.

We hope these celebrations will call forth the many talents that there are in people, the talent to sing or act or paint or sew, the talent to make beautiful things. I hope that as a community we will have a happy time together. It is surely significant that in the new Testament there are almost three hundred references to joy, gladness, merriment, rejoicing, delighting, laughing. To celebrate and have a town party is to be in the Biblical tradition.

Has it ever struck you how many of Jesus's parables were about parties? Think of the party given for the returning prodigal. Think of the party which the wedding guests missed because they refused to wear the right clothes. Think of the party which the foolish virgins missed because they had no oil in their lamps.

Let me share with you a little of the thinking of our committee with regard to these 1989 celebrations. Let me, in other words, try and put these celebrations into a bigger context.

In November each year the American people give thanks for the coming of the Pilgrim Fathers. They have not always done this. In fact Abraham Lincoln in his day was concerned that for two hundred years the Pilgrim Fathers had been almost forgotten. This was why there was initiated a National Day of Thanksgiving, a day in which the American nation might stop and recall God's goodness in sending the Pilgrim Fathers to their shores.

I feel we in Dornoch have for too long neglected part of our heritage, the coming of Gilbert Murray in the 13th Century to this part of the world. Within this church which Gilbert designed and built and paid for, there is scant tribute to him. He is essentially without honour in his own church.

The stained glass windows which we have commemorate many others who have worshipped or lived in this area, but not Gilbert the builder, the founder.

We intend therefore as part of our celebrations to rectify this, to instal in Bishop Gilbert's honour a window in which he will figure prominently. What a debt we in Dornoch, and the Church in Scotland, owes to Gilbert. He not only built this church but was involved in building the great Elgin Cathedral — now unfortunately a ruin — and a lovely church in Thurso, now also a ruin.

As well as commemorating this anniversary in stained glass, we plan also to commemorate it in tapestry. Those interested in tapestry are making cushions for the elders' seats, the communion chairs and the choir stalls. The tapestries will bear the dates 1239-1989, but more than that they will celebrate the wonder of the world around us here in Sutherland. The cushions for the elders' seats will, for example, portray the awesome wonder of the wild flowers which God has scattered in such profusion in the fields, the hills and river banks.

As a committee we thought we were striking new ground in choosing the theme "Consider the Lilies of the Fields", but I recently learned that the kneelers in York Minster also celebrate in tapestry the wonder of wild flowers. It must be a case of great minds!

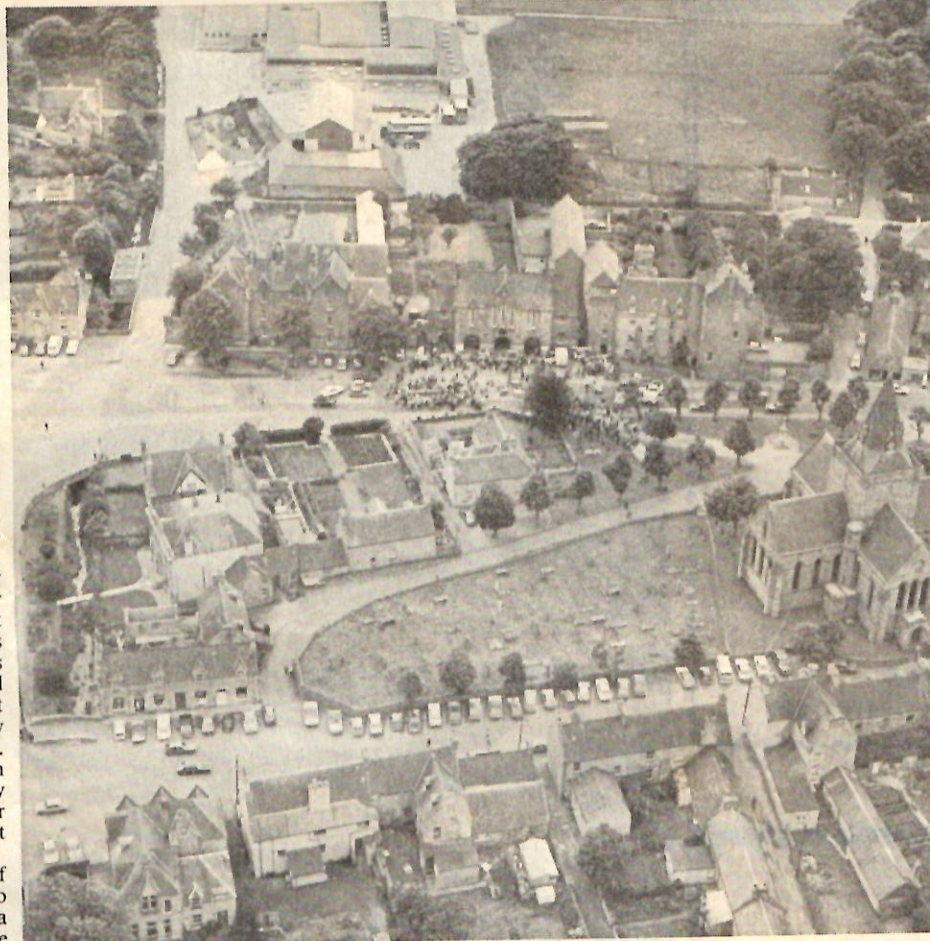
We are also planning a pageant in the Cathedral. The script is by Ian MacKay of the Highland Region Libraries Department. This pageant will involve people of all ages — a pageant which will remind us not only of the peak moments in the history of our Cathedral, like the coming of Bishop Gilbert, but a pageant which will also remind us of the patience of God and His amazing willingness to forgive his church and go on believing in her despite her many shortcomings, for there have been very inglorious chapters in the Cathedral's history, as well as glorious chapters.

Alan Barclay, the deputy rector of Golspie High School, who has produced several fine musicals, has kindly agreed to produce the pageant.

The consecration service in 1239 seems to have been a very moving occasion. During that first service the bones of Gilbert's predecessor, Bishop Adam, who had been murdered in 1222, were brought from Caithness and reverently interred in the Cathedral.

Bernard Levin is surely right when he says, "It would be as surprising to find an era or a culture that did not surround death with elaborate and profound beliefs and rituals as it would be to find a race of men with three legs. The dignity shown to human remains is a mark of true civilisation."

It is surely therefore strangely



Truly the heart of the Royal Burgh, the Cathedral sits

appropriate that 750 years after Bishop Adam's remains were brought here, we should as part of our celebrations be planning to build within the North Transept, behind the organ, a little room, which among other things can be used as a resting place for our loved ones from the time of their death until the time of the funeral. This little room should enable us to treat with greater respect and reverence mortal remains that once bore the hallmark of the divine image.

The committee are also very much aware that the church must be more than simply a history book in stone and glass, and more than simply a resting place for the dead. The committee were unanimously of the mind that this historic occasion should be a time when we not only love ourselves and enjoy ourselves, and do things for ourselves, but a time also when we do something for others.

It is our intention therefore to undertake several projects for others, some at home and one abroad. We have already initiated discussions concerning what we might do for the Sutherland Society for the Mentally Handicapped, and for Oversteps, our local eventide home.

The overseas project involves supporting a children's hospital in Malawi in Africa. The hospital at Mulanje was started by the Church of Scotland many years ago. More and more the staff there are having to deal with problems stemming from malnutrition.

We have written to the various organisations in the town asking for their practical help with these celebrations. We are also soon going to be writing to people throughout the length and breadth of Britain for whom Dornoch is still home, or perhaps "a second home", and those in other lands who have warm memories of Dornoch and the Cathedral. With the letter we will enclose a printed pamphlet listing a few of the special events we are planning and the projects we would like to undertake.

We hope that as a result of this advance notice many of the people will make arrangements to visit us next year, to come and holiday in Dornoch and join in our celebrations. We hope they will also respond to our appeal to raise £50,000 so that as well as making these celebrations memorable and joyful, we might once again be seen as a church to be "loving our neighbours as ourselves".

Should any readers who have



had links with Dornoch wish further information about these celebrations, or be willing to contribute to our appeal, we would love to hear from them. All donations large or small will be gratefully received.

These celebrations in June/July next year may well boost the Sutherland tourist trade. I hope they will also be the means whereby the life of our church, community and world will be enriched — and God's name glorified.

This was how The Bul Cathedral at the 700th a by the Right Rev Dr Scotland, and the Right

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Tweeds, rugs, knit weaving yarns, and blankets can be su



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## Worldwide Appeal for Assistance

To finance these celebrations and projects the committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Strathnaver, are launching an international appeal for £50,000.

With all the goodwill that already exists for the Cathedral, the committee feel certain this target can be reached, and that these celebrations will be truly worthy of this very special anniversary.

Correspondence and contributions should be sent to: Rev James Simpson, Cathedral Manse, DORNOCH IV25 3HN, Scotland, UK. Cheques should be made payable to "Dornoch Cathedral 750th".

ANNUAL  
CALL

## Report from Moscow

(Continued from Page 2)

wish that the false and corrupt should be unmasked through discussion. However, Westerners will remember that intellectuals had quite a good innings under Nikita Khrushchev in the 'fifties and early 'sixties. There is as yet no guarantee that such freedom will be respected as a principle in the Soviet Union. Glasnost means "publicity", not freedom of expression.

It is believed in Moscow that Gorbachov got his job as General Secretary by only one vote in the Central Committee. That his ascendancy is, so far, limited was revealed dramatically by the sudden fall of his No 1 nominee Boris Yeltsin, who went too hard at cleaning up Moscow's immense

professors were very proud indeed. Unfortunately the dog-man turned out to be a nasty minor civil servant with no table manners. He was so awful that the Soviet authorities instructed the professors to reconvert him to dog status. The play has been so popular (small wonder, given the marvellous acting) that it is running in two theatres at once. Yet while this deadly satire enjoys its run, the accredited foreign journalist still has not only every room in his flat bugged, but also his car.

Nowadays, apparently, it is the easiest thing in the world to bug a car and change the cassette in the middle of the night.

This strangely ambiguous atmosphere also pervaded the Press conference which I attended

Gorbachov in the United States, Centigrade.

Gorbachov would win hands down.

Not all classes and conditions of men are miserable under Sovietism, even when they don't belong to the Party. I spoke to a literary man whose main livelihood came from translation. He was capable of translating almost any poetry in any language into Russian verse. His speciality however was Soviet Moslem poetry, eg from the Uzbek. The rule in the Soviet Union was that all minority-races must have distinguished poets whose work must be brought to the notice of all the other member-nations of the Soviet Union. Given, therefore, a Russian prose-translation of, say a Bashkir poem, my friend would be asked to Russian-verse it. The circulation? Two hundred thousand copies, which, he added, nobody read. They were simply for every library in the land.

thermometer fell to minus 16° Centigrade.

When I first went to Russia in 1947, just two years had passed since the tremendous Soviet victory in what is now called the Great Patriotic War. I was struck then by Russia's inert grandeur. This old-fashioned quality still impresses. The nation has stayed put. But something different, one feels, is going to happen soon.

Through a quirk of history the first World War led in Russia not only to a change of régime but to a consolidation of empire. Whereas the royal empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia all became republics, Russia alone remained in possession, more or less, of its original territory. This new Russian empire became the terrain of ideological experiment. Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were bent on creating a New Man, collective man, *Homo Sovieticus*. Like all really powerful national movements (Napoleon's was the