

The Church of Scotland - Article 6

Worship

Anyone is welcome to worship in the Church of Scotland irrespective of belief, age, and nationality. Worship is led by a minister but may also be prepared and led by deacons, 'readers' and elders. Services are held every Sunday (and at other times during the week) and contain periods of preaching, prayer and singing. There are also weekday groups for prayer, study and spiritual exploration.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion is also known as the Lord's Supper. Along with the reading and preaching of the Word, Communion is central to the worship and life of the Church. Along with Baptism, Communion is seen as a 'sacrament'. Clergy in the Church of Scotland are known as 'Ministers of Word and Sacrament'. A Church of Scotland Communion is open to any member of any branch of the world-wide church. Its own members are generally welcomed to Communion after a ceremony of public declaration of faith and admission but, increasingly, children who are baptised are taking a full part. It has been the custom that Communion is celebrated with great ceremony only infrequently, but now more Communion services are held, especially at special festivals. At one time, people sat round a table to share the bread and the wine. More commonly today, people remain in their pews (with cloths to show that they are 'part of a table') while elders serve them. Communion is often a very dignified occasion, with processions and the singing of Psalm 24, 'Ye gates, lift up your heads on high', to the ceremonious tune of 'St. George's, Edinburgh'.

Baptism

Baptism is regarded as sacrament by the Church of Scotland in common with other mainstream churches. Baptism is the point at which adults or children become members of the Church. In the case of children, it is expected that close members of the family will be attached to the church and able to involve the child in the life of the church. They take a vow to do this. The ceremony usually takes place as part of the Sunday service, in front of the congregation. Where parents who have no connection with the church wish a ceremony to celebrate the birth of their baby, a service of thanksgiving can be performed.

Marriage

Church of Scotland ministers are authorised to conduct legal marriages, under Scots law, and in any location. Marriage is not perceived as a sacrament. Non-members of the church are free to be married within the Church of Scotland if the minister agrees. Divorced people may be married in the Church of Scotland if the minister agrees.

Death

Ministers of the Church of Scotland carry out funerals of people in their parish, whether or not they are members of the church.

This is the sixth, and final part, of a series of articles sourced from the BBC on the Church of Scotland and have appeared in The Parishioner over the past six months. The previous five editions can be read on the web site www.kiltarclityandkirkhill.org.uk