

St. Margaret's Parish Church, Knightswood

KNIGHTSWOOD lies to the north of the River Clyde and is one of the large developments in housing in the city of Glasgow of the period, 1925-1930. It straddles the Great Western Road, the main line of access from the city to Dumbarton, Loch Lomond and the West Highlands. It is sheltered to the north and west by the Kilpatrick hills; and it is interesting to remember that Kilpatrick means the "cell" or "church" of Patrick. At the foot of these hills, at a point between Knightswood and Dumbarton, where the road is narrowly wedged between the Kilpatrick Hills and the River Clyde, lies the parish of Kilpatrick, now known as Old Kilpatrick, and, until the Reformation, under the supervision of the Abbot of Paisley. It extended from Dumbuck to the Kelvin and covered forty square miles.

At Drumry, nearer Knightswood, and now in the heart of the new township of Drumchapel, a chapel had been founded in the fifteenth century and endowed with Jordanhill land in the following century. The lands of Knightswood and Cloberhill formed part of the ancient Barony of Drumry, this last name meaning "The King's Ridge". Rev. Dr. James McCardel, in his "History of the Parish of New Kilpatrick" (1949), to which the writer is indebted for most of these historical details, recorded that "an Act in Favour of the Ministers of Drumry and Kilpatrick", was passed by the Scots Parliament on 16th February, 1649, and the Parish of Kilpatrick was divided into Wester, West or Old Kilpatrick, and Easter, East or New Kilpatrick. The divisions of Scottish Church history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries caused the rise of other churches in the original parish of New Kilpatrick, but the Established Church concerned itself with mission work in both Temple and Drumchapel, and in due course churches were built in each place and new parishes created. It was from these two last-named parishes that the parish of St Margaret's, Knightswood, was, by Act of the General Assembly of 1931, carved out, and it is interesting that it was Rev. J. H. Dickie, Minister of New Kilpatrick Parish (1907-1926), who took a prominent part in securing Presbyterian and other aid in the building, first of a hall and then of a church. It will thus be seen that there are strong historical as well as other

reasons for the parish of St Margaret's, Knightswood, being in, and being anxious to remain in, the Presbytery of Dumbarton, even although the parish is now entirely within the bounds of the vastly extended city of Glasgow.

It would appear likely that the proximity of places with such names as Knightswood, Jordanhill and Temple, indicates an ancient connection with the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, or with the Knights of the Temple. Such a probable connection must have been in the minds of those in Glasgow Corporation who were responsible for the naming of streets in the new community: Crusader Avenue, Warden Road, Kestrel Road, Rowena Avenue, Ivanhoe Road, Talisman Road, Templar Avenue, Athelstane Road. These now stand where formerly were green fields, farm houses and, latterly, the mines, where coal and iron-stone were worked.

In 1923 the Presbytery of Dumbarton of the Church of Scotland recorded that "the matter of a proposed large building scheme by the Corporation of Glasgow affecting the parishes of Temple, Scotstoun and Drumchapel was remitted to the Presbytery's committee on Church Extension for their consideration and report, the ministers interested to be consulted". Without delay, application was made for a site and in due course the present excellent position, central and commanding, was secured. A hall was built and opened on 3rd December, 1925, the first minister having already been appointed, and work among the new arrivals in the parish having commenced.

It is sometimes complained that the buildings which financial stringency and structural costs have obliged the National Church Extension Committee of the Church of Scotland to erect in recent years in the new areas of Scotland's population are inadequate in size and quality for their purpose as places of worship. This accusation can never with justice be brought against the buildings of St Margaret's Parish, Knightswood. This is one of the few parishes in the Glasgow area which were privileged, in the decades between the Wars, to secure a good solidly built stone hall and thereafter a church building of abiding dignity and beauty in which only the best was offered. The Rev. George and Mrs Hamilton, and the congregation under their leadership, strove continually to gather in the new residents and to provide a church of which they and the generations to follow could rightly be proud. In both endeavours they were conspicuously successful. Mr Hamilton possessed and

conveyed to others a strong artistic and devotional sense, which is seen in the choices made at many points in the church.

The Church Service Society has rendered great service to the Church of Scotland in emphasizing that the place of worship, as well as its furnishings and the ordering of the worship, can, and do, contribute greatly to the worshipper's participation and response. At the same time, it is necessary to avoid the "pretty-pretty", and to have buildings that are meaningful in their setting forth of the theology of our worship. St Margaret's is one of the embodiments and fulfilments of this Society's emphasis over the years.

It could hardly but be so with an architect of the calibre of Sir Robert Lorimer, who was originally suggested to the Building Committee as assessor for what was intended to be an open competition in church architecture. When approached, Sir Robert indicated that he was himself interested in designing a church for Knightswood, and the committee thereafter resolved to proceed no further with a competition. "The one who had been selected as the best judge was to be their architect."

Sir Robert Lorimer, unfortunately, was not to see his work completed before his death in 1929; but the plans were completed and passed, and St Margaret's stands today as one of the last examples of his distinguished work, and one of the few in the field of church architecture of the period. The work was completed under the direction of Sir Robert's partner, Mr John F. Matthew, F.R.I.B.A. The foundation stone was laid on 14th February, 1931, by the Lord High Commissioner, Rt. Hon. James Brown, M.P., and the church was opened and dedicated on 2nd April, 1932, by the Very Rev. Dr. John White, who, in 1925, during his first term of office as Moderator of the General Assembly, had dedicated the Church Hall. Appropriately for the day, the Saturday after Easter, and for the occasion, Dr. White preached on "The Risen and Victorious Lord".

The church, as previously indicated, occupies a very commanding site at Knightswood Cross, where several roads meet. From outside of the front door of the church a great view is commanded on the one hand, of the road stretching right into the city of Glasgow, and, on the other, of the valley of the River Clyde westwards. The tower at the east end of the building is sixty-five feet high, with crow-stepped gables front and back, and is a landmark which can be seen from a considerable distance away in more than

one direction. Appropriately, it houses the bell, which was the gift, in 1932, of the Boys' Brigade Company and the Life Boy Team. A flight of steps on the southern side leads up to the main entrance porch in the tower.

The church is built of Doddington stone and the roof is covered with slates from Aberfoyle quarry. The nave is seventy-eight feet six inches long by thirty-one feet wide, with a wide aisle on the north side. This aisle, and the pillars separating it from the nave, give a spaciousness and dignity to the interior, whether viewed from the chancel or from the inner entrance door. On the exterior, the three arches of the roof of the aisle stand at right angles to the main line of the roof, and are at a lower level. With a turret on the north-east corner, housing another entrance porch and stairway, there is, on the northern side, a richness of style and diversity of line which is very pleasing to the eye.

At the east end of the interior is a gallery, which materially adds to the number that can be seated in the church (seven hundred and forty in all) without obtruding itself upon the eye because of its size. The floor is of wood, though the porches and chancel are paved in stone. As the worshipper enters from each of the porches he is met with a text inscribed in the stone of the lintel: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise"; and, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The objection sometimes felt to the use of stone throughout a church is that it often gives an impression of being grey and cold and hard. One of the delightful features of the stone used here is its warmth of colour, whether in natural or in artificial light. While, naturally, on the outside, the grime of an industrial area has greatly darkened the stone-work, inside the pinkish hue with richer red veins running through is still warm and pleasing at all times. The stone-work is exposed to wall-head level, above which the roof is panelled in Columbian pine, partly on the slope and partly on the flat, the ceiling of the chancel being enriched by carved and decorated bosses on the intersection and ribs.

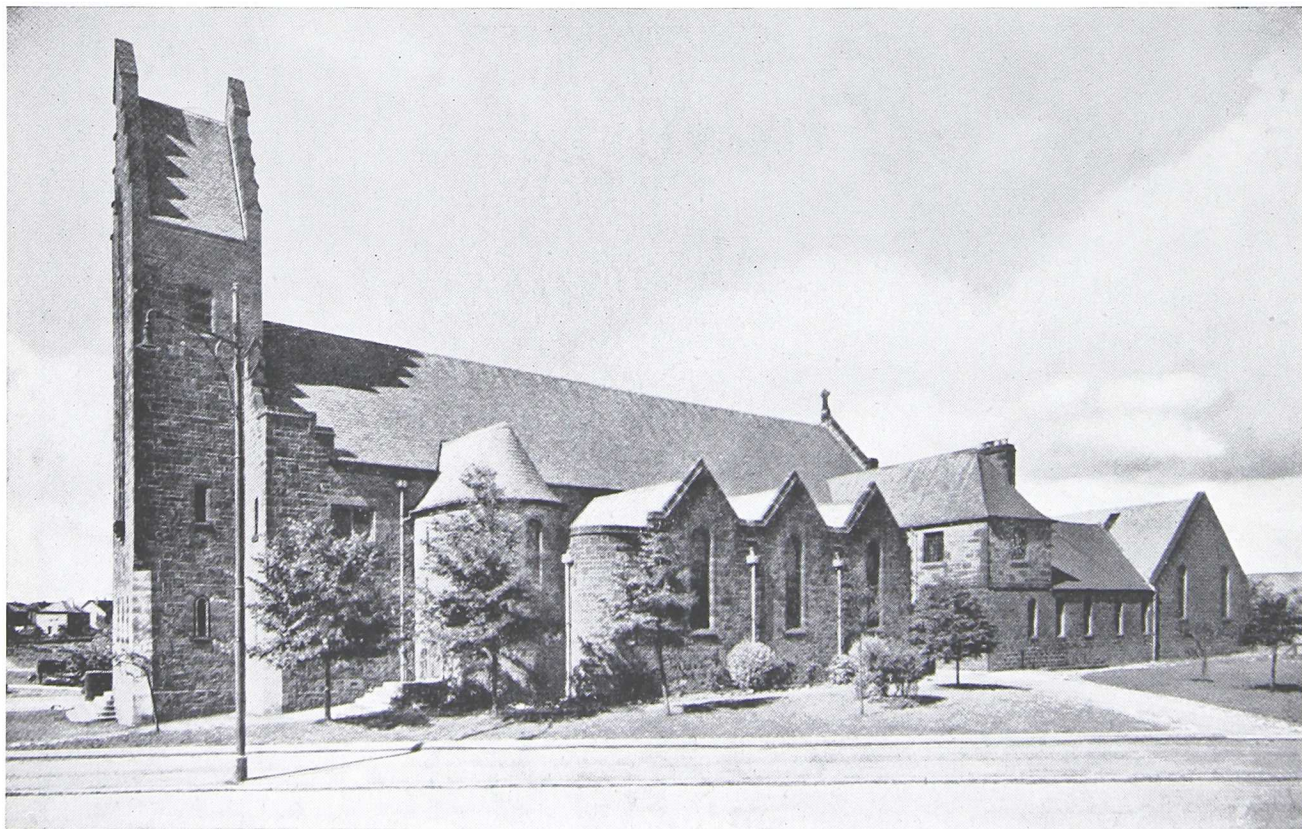
Looking from the gallery end along the length of the church—the chairs (rush-bottomed) are arranged on both sides of the central passageway—three steps lead up to the chancel, where the Communion Table is set in the centre. On the right of the Minister as he officiates at the Holy Table, is the Pulpit, at the base of the chancel arch; on his left, just within the arch, is the Lectern. The Font is built into the wall further to the left of the chancel arch, the

shaft of the Font, which is made of Iona marble, standing free on the first step of the chancel. Thus baptism (both of infants and of adults) usually takes place "in face of the congregation"; and the architect has thus contrived clearly to conjoin Word and Sacrament in his arrangement of the furnishings before the worshippers. The Font is also close to an arch leading to a doorway, thus reminding the worshipper also that baptism is the service of admission to Christ's Church at his command. On the wall at the back of the font has been set a moulded stone shelf above which is a carved Dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit; and, below, a little bird feeding, symbol of the human soul, with the text carved: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me". The font was gifted by the children of the Sunday School, at the time of the dedication of the church.

The tall semi-circular headed windows throughout the church are glazed with mildly tinted cathedral glass in square, leaded panes. For artificial lighting, flood lighting flush with the ceiling has been adopted, with special reflector lights in the chancel.

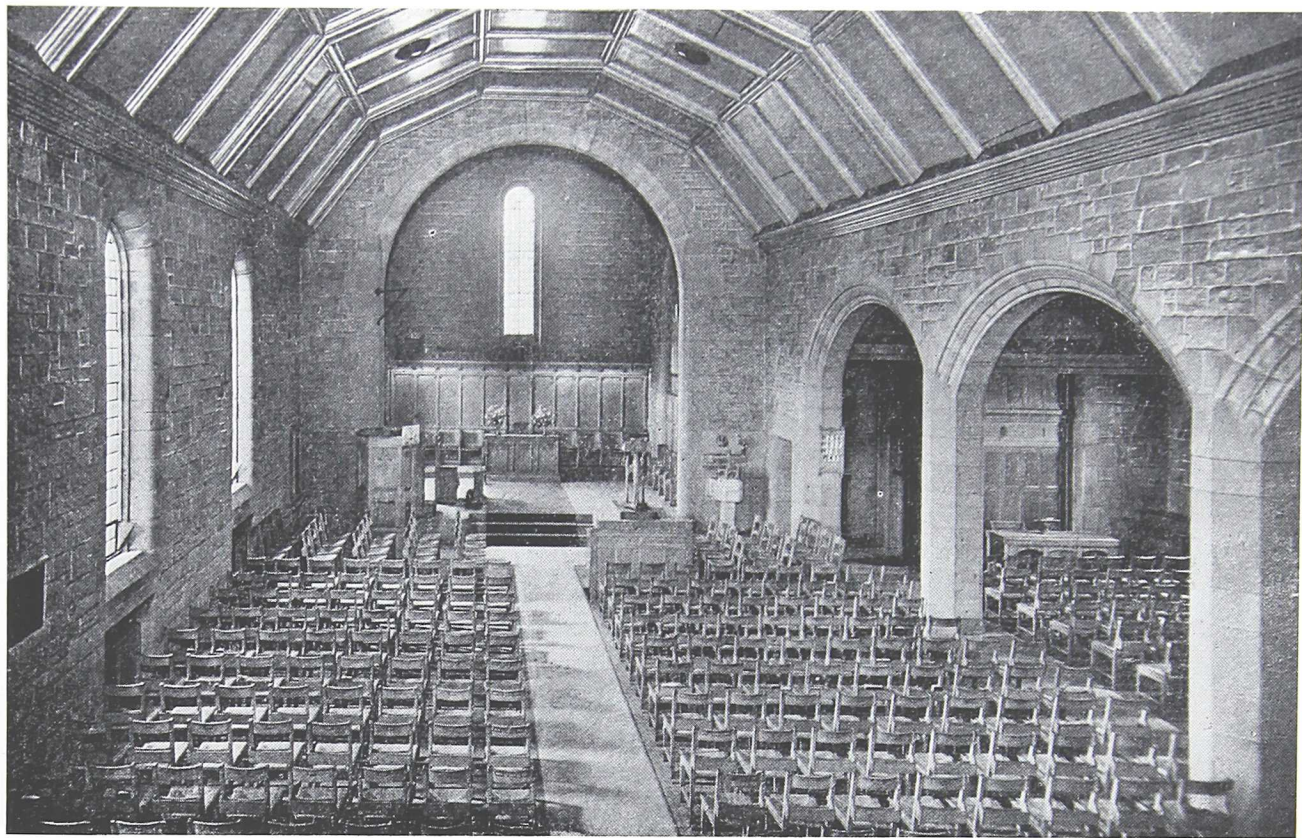
In the front porch there is to be found a delightful example of the work of the late Herbert Hendrie, a stained glass window representing St Margaret of Scotland. The window was the gift of the Girl Guide Company. St Margaret is depicted with a Bible in her hand, in allusion to her encouragement of the writing of the Scriptures in her day, and to her training of the young in the service of Christ; in the lower part of the window she is shown caring for the poor. Recently the chancel windows have been filled with stained glass, in memory of Rev. George W. Hamilton, first minister of the parish. A three-light window on the south wall of the chancel contains representations (almost miniatures in stained glass) of the Nativity, The Crucifixion and The Resurrection, while the large single-light window behind the Holy Table is devoted to the theme: "The Risen and Ascending Christ." The windows are all the work of Mr Alexander Russell, of Dundee, and they have not only added beauty and colour to the church but have, on the testimony of many worshippers, helped them to worship more reverently and feelingly. Mr Russell very generously gave glass bearing the IHS and Chi Rho symbols, for the two small windows flanking the main door from the nave.

The furnishing of the church provides many fine examples of the wood-worker's art. The Communion Table, Pulpit, Lectern and Font cover were made by Grieve of



ST. MARGARET'S PARISH CHURCH, KNIGHTSWOOD

Photograph by T. & R. Annan & Sons, Ltd.



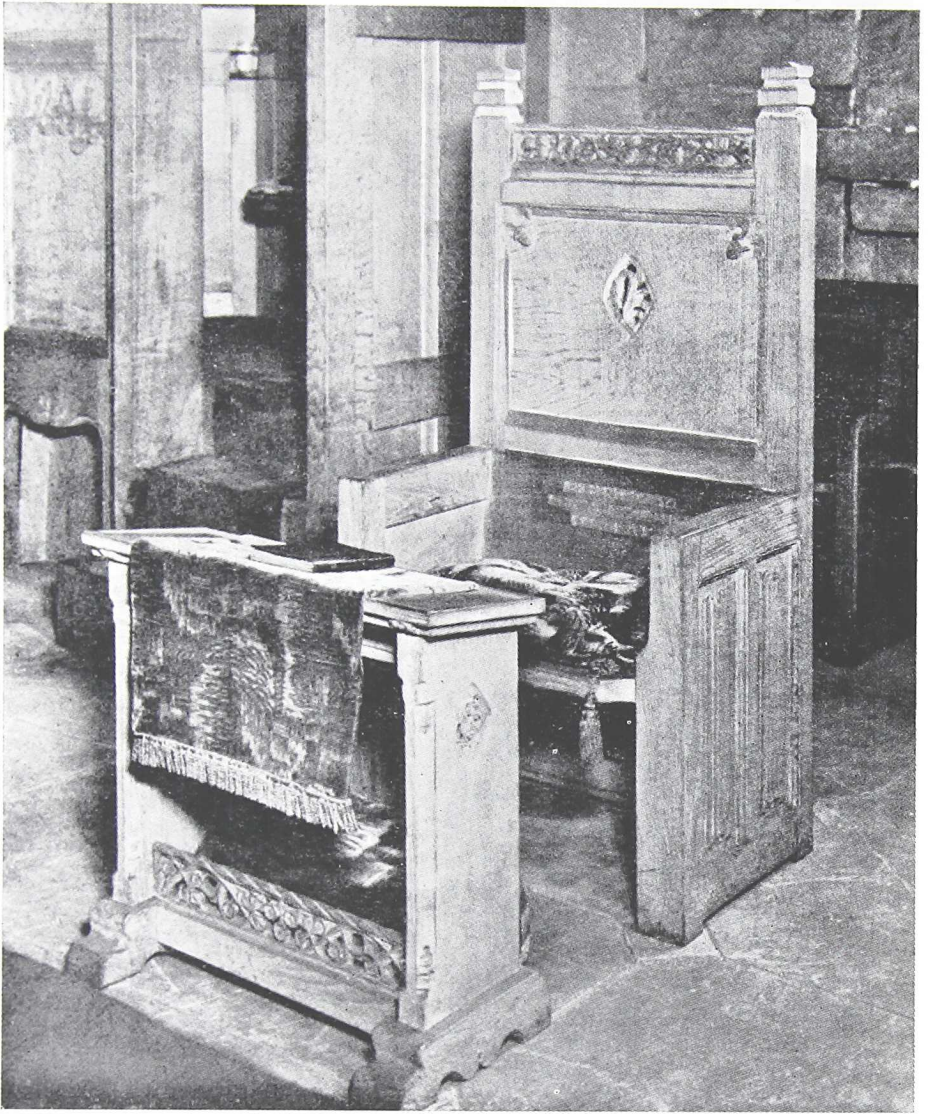
ST. MARGARET'S PARISH CHURCH, KNIGHTSWOOD: NAVE AND CHANCEL

Photograph by T. & R. Annan & Sons, Ltd,



ST. MARGARET'S PARISH CHURCH, KNIGHTSWOOD: THE CHANCEL.

Photograph by T. & R. Annan & Sons, Ltd.



ST. MARGARET'S PARISH CHURCH, KNIGHTSWOOD:
MINISTER'S STALL AND PRAYER DESK

Photograph by T. & R. Annan & Sons, Ltd.

Edinburgh, the carving being by the brothers Clow, who worked in regular co-operation with Sir Robert Lorimer. The Elders' Stalls and Chancel panelling, the Minister's Stall and Prayer Desk, and the Ambry and other work in oak in the church, were by Messrs Cochrane, of Glasgow. The craftsmanship of these two firms leaves nothing to be desired and has added beauty and dignity to the interior of the church. The Pulpit and Elders' Seats were the gift of the Woman's Guild, and the Minister's Stall and Prayer Desk were given by the Bible Classes. An oak cupboard in the front vestibule of the church was gifted by the Choir. Thus all the organizations of the church, at the time of its building and dedication, had a part in its furnishing and beautifying, for the seemly worship of Almighty God.

The symbolism of the woodcarving is rich and meaningful and deserves some more detailed attention. The Pulpit shows on its central panel representations of our Lord : the Good Shepherd, and the Lamb sitting on the Book with Seven Seals, with, below, a pelican feeding her young, a type of the sacrifice of Christ. On the side panels of the Pulpit are the symbols of the four Evangelists : a Man (St Matthew), a Lion (St Mark), an Ox (St Luke), and an Eagle (St John). Around the top is a wreath of passion-flowers, this flower being taken to symbolize the Passion of our Lord. Its strong central stem represents the column of scourging ; its ovary the hammer with which the nails were driven ; the three styles, with rounded heads, the nails themselves ; the five stamens the five wounds of Christ ; the rays within the flower, the nimbus of His glory ; and the ten petals the ten apostles, excepting Judas who betrayed Him, and Peter who denied Him. (Sometimes the exceptions are taken to be Judas, the betrayer, and John, who remained steadfast, right to the foot of the Cross).

The Holy Table shows, on one side, stalks of wheat ; and, on the other, vine leaves and grapes, reminding us of the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ. The front of the Table is in three panels, the left-hand panel showing the passion-flower again, the right-hand panel showing lilies, emblems of purity ; and, since they bloom at Easter, of the Resurrection. In the centre panel are stalks of wheat with little birds feeding, these last being symbols of the human soul obtaining its necessary nourishment from the Sacrament ; and also, in the wider sense, being daily dependent upon the bounty of God. Below is a Cross, the arms of which end in trefoils, used to denote the

Holy Trinity, and also the kingly office of Christ. The Cross is set within a circle of everlasting life.

Behind the Communion Table are oak-panelled walls surmounted by an enriched, pierced and carved cresting, below the canopy of which electric lighting is introduced. The canopy depicts a vine in one continuous branch, reminding us of the quality of this great tree to extend its branches far and wide, laden with fruit. In the centre of the canopy are two angels bearing a shield on which are represented the Chalice and Paten of Holy Communion, surmounted by a Crown to proclaim the Victorious and Glorified Christ, a proclamation repeated in the Crowned Cross of the hanging lamp above the Pulpit.

The Lectern has carved upon its front a lamp. The base is triangular and on the three elegant pillarettes which support the book-rest are beautiful angel figures, bearing scrolls with the text: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Elsewhere, on the Elders' Stalls, on the doors of the Ambry and on other furnishings, are to be found many designs of vines, wheat, lilies and other flowers, fruits, berries, fir-cones and different types of seed-vessels, all symbols of beauty, fruitfulness and fertility, to remind us of the bounty of God in the work of nature and in the work of grace.

Since the church was completed the stained-glass windows mentioned above were installed, Communion Silver—eight patens, eight chalices and two flagons, together with chalice spoons to supply all worshippers—have been provided by the congregation or by special donors. To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the church for worship, the congregation and its organizations made a thank-offering of a new Alms Dish in silver, with which were provided, by an anonymous donor, two exquisite flower vases. The silver is of excellent craftsmanship, most of it hand-beaten. All of it has worth and dignity befitting its sacred use and its beautiful surroundings.

Such, then, is a brief and very inadequate account of the Parish Church of St Margaret's, Knightswood. For much of the information given, the writer is indebted to Rev. George L. Heatley, B.D., Minister at Annan Old Parish, and formerly Minister of St Margaret's Parish, who has very kindly made available a little book which he compiled (and largely wrote) for the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the congregation in 1950. Words cannot

fully describe a place of worship. It has an atmosphere of reverence and memory and peace. This is supremely true of this building, in which almost every visitor finds that it is a joy to worship ; and in which also it is a privilege and joy to lead people's worship.

As a legacy of the training and influence of the first two ministers, and because of the beauty of the building, the congregation have learned to worship reverently, and to show a responsiveness of which a visiting minister is soon aware. There is nothing extraordinary about the ordering of worship. The Morning Service is based on the Communion Service. After the opening psalm and the Call to Prayer, comes a Prayer of Adoration, Confession, Pardon and Petition ending with an Ascription of Glory, to which as on all other occasions, the people say : " Amen." There are three readings at every Morning Service, and from time to time a psalm is read antiphonally, the people taking their part without any difficulty. At the Festivals, Communion Seasons, Baptism and Confirmation, the Apostles' Creed is said clearly and audibly. The second prayer is given wholly to intercession. During the singing of the next hymn or anthem the minister goes to the pulpit, makes the proclamations and intimations, offers a prayer for illumination, preaches, gives an Ascription of Praise, and moves to the Holy Table, while the Offering is uplifted. Thereafter it is received and dedicated during a prayer of Thanksgiving, Dedication, Remembrance of the Church on Earth and Remembrance of the Faithful Departed, concluding with the Lord's Prayer. After the Blessing, the elders carry the Offering from the church, followed by the Minister.

One feature of the worship for some six years past has been the use, month by month, of a " hymn of the month ", chosen to suit the Christian or natural year. This is often a new hymn or a hymn to a new tune. Concentration on a selected hymn by choir and congregation has widened our knowledge of the hymn book and enlarged the choice of praise.

A seemly building, an orderly offering of worship, a responsive people, a due emphasis on the reading and the preaching of the Word, and an encouragement of Sacramental observance in sincerity and seemliness—these are surely true marks of true worship, and these the Church must strive, as our Society has sought to help her to do, to make secure and accepted in all her parishes.

IAN G. FORBES