

Notes and Comments

THE CHURCH SERVICE SOCIETY will celebrate its centenary in 1965. It was on 31st January, 1865, that fifteen Ministers met in the Religious Institution Rooms, in Glasgow, and agreed to found a Society for the study of the Ancient and Reformed Liturgies, and the preparation of prayers and other services adapted for the worship of the Church of Scotland. The names of twenty-six others, not present, were read in support of the new movement.

It will, we are sure, be the desire of all our members, and those associated with us in other lands, that this centenary should be worthily commemorated, and the vision, the courage, the faith and perseverance of the founders of this Society be gratefully remembered.

The Council have already in recent months been giving consideration to the form which this celebration might fittingly take; and in due course intimation will be made of the arrangements for this historic occasion.

THIS is a suitable time for new members to join the Society. If you, who should chance to read these pages, would care to become a member, you may do so by getting in touch with the Presbytery Correspondent in your area (noted on the last page of this issue). Failing that, you are invited to write direct to the Secretary, the Revd. W. J. Ross, M.A., Manse of Dunbarney, Bridge of Earn, Perth, U.K., who will gladly attend to your request.

IN the Holy Week services now held in many towns and parishes, one observes each year an increasing tendency to have a celebration of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday. It is to be hoped that in every case this is followed by Holy Communion on Easter Day. Since the Sacrament is, alas, celebrated infrequently in most of the congregations of the Church of Scotland, this singling out of Maundy Thursday alone, for Communion, tends to accentuate the memorialist view of the Sacrament. If the Church repudiates Zwinglianism—as our theologians themselves declare—then it should insist on Easter celebrations as well, for the Lord's Supper is not simply an act of remembrance

of a revered Teacher who died two thousand years ago, but Communion with a Risen and Living Lord.

Again the celebration of Holy Communion on Good Friday—which one notes here and there in isolated cases—is in complete contradiction of the practice of the Early Church, and is both un-catholic and unhistorical. It does seem odd that Good Friday should be chosen, in these rare instances, for one of the three or four annual Communion, the day of the year on which traditionally in both East and West the Eucharist was not, and is not celebrated, since it is the anniversary of the day on which our Lord remained under the power of death.

In the welcome return throughout the Church to the observance of the Christian Year, in worship, we must at all costs inhibit modern innovations and customs based on individual fancies, which manifestly put us out of step with the rest of Christendom. There are, indeed, proprieties to be observed, especially in the ecumenical climate of our time, and it is desirable that the General Assembly should give clear direction in this regard to ministers.

RECENTLY an enquiry was received by the General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion regarding the widely prevailing practice, in our churches, of placing flowers in vases or bowls upon the Holy Table, and requesting some guidance in this matter. We are indebted to the Committee, through its Secretary, for permission to record its considered finding.

The Liturgical sub-committee, to which the question had been remitted for examination, in its report noted that the use of a fixed Communion Table in most churches in Scotland dated from the middle of the nineteenth century. There were no historical precedents to guide the Committee in reaching a decision. Previously the normal practice in the Church had been to use a "long table" at Communion, which was brought into the Church for the actual service.

The Committee considered that the Communion Table should be used only for its primary purpose, namely, for the celebration of Holy Communion, and accordingly no ornaments should be placed on it except those to be used at a Communion Service. Flowers, which are a traditional decoration for a church, should therefore, as far as possible, not be placed on a Communion Table. Flower vases might conveniently be put on the east wall of the Sanctuary or Chancel, or on a ledge behind the Communion Table; or in

any part of the Chancel or Sanctuary, or entrance thereto, where their decorative effect is often very pleasing. It was noted that in a large number of churches the practice was for the vases to be placed on the Communion Table, but the Committee agreed that this practice should not be encouraged so that the Table remained free from any unnecessary decoration.

It followed from this that Communion vessels should be placed on the Communion Table only for use, and not for show or exhibition purposes. Where a church had historical Communion vessels which it wished to display, these might be placed in a show cabinet which should stand in a convenient part of the church, outside the Sanctuary or Chancel.

It was further recommended that when a church was decorated for the Harvest Thanksgiving, bread and grapes might then be placed on the Holy Table as symbols of the Communion, but that any other gifts should be placed around the Table. The Committee also recommended that flowers might on occasions such as Harvest Festival be used to decorate the Font; but that normally the Font should not be decorated and that on all occasions the bowl of the Font should be clear of decoration so as to be available for Baptism.

The Committee recognized as a guiding practice that no decoration should be placed on any of the furnishings of the church used in public worship, namely, the Communion Table, the Pulpit, the Font or the Lectern, so that these were always available, as they stood, for the purpose for which they had been provided.

READERS may be interested to learn of the local arrangements for the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in Aberdeen. Services were held, by agreement, in the Cowan Chapel of the West Church of St Nicholas. To suit the convenience of morning shoppers the first of the three daily services was held at 11 a.m. At 1.15 p.m. business people were asked to spare fifteen minutes of their lunch hour; and at 7 p.m. men and women coming into town were invited to join together in prayers for Christian Unity, before proceeding on their ways.

The numbers attending varied from half a dozen to thirty-seven. Small beginnings, perhaps, some would think, but at the same time very encouraging in many ways. Those of us who were present were deeply conscious of being

one in prayer with other Christians in cities, towns and villages in this land, and with fellow believers in many countries throughout the world.

Every denomination in Aberdeen represented in the World Council of Churches was invited and took part. An encouraging and striking feature was the presence of members of the Roman Catholic Church, who had been officially encouraged to be with us.

Those conducting the services varied greatly. A Bishop, a Provost and a Priest represented the Episcopal Church in Scotland. United Free, Baptist, Methodist and Congregational Ministers took part, as did also lay representatives of the Church of Christ, and the Society of Friends. The Church of Scotland was represented successively by a Professor of Divinity at the University, the Clerk to the Presbytery of Aberdeen and its Moderator, and ex-Moderator. In the nature of things the forms of worship were many and varied. Some used the official leaflet provided for the occasion ; some amended it at their individual discretion, whilst others again discarded it altogether.

These united services will be continued from year to year, in fulfilment of our Lord's own petition " that they all may be one."