

Kirkin' o' the Tartan

Jackson United Methodist Church

Rev. John Bosch, Pastor

April 13, 2008 9:30 A.M.

Sponsored by - *Mother Lode Scots*

Carl McDanel, Chief

The Presider:

The Scots celebrate a thanksgiving for their heritage and the Tartan; their link with their Scottish roots and with the land of their forefathers:

“Look to the rock from which ye were hewn.”

“ From the lone shieling of the Misty Islands, Mountains
divide us, and the waste of seas divide us.
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland.
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides!”

Our service of the blessing of the Tartan today is particularly significant as the day occurs 7 days after “Tartan Day” ...the 6th of April, and the 688th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. This was the Scottish Declaration of Independence, which includes these lines:

“For we fight not for glory nor riches, nor honours, but for freedom alone, which no good man gives up except with his life.”

If there is a familiar ring to those words, remember that the American Declaration of Independence was written by Thomas Jefferson, who was one of the many Scots who were numbered among the “founding fathers” of our nation. Thomas Jefferson also patterned the American Declaration of Independence after the Scottish Declaration of Arbroath. But this date is also close to another date in Scottish history: the disastrous Battle of Culloden, on the 19th of April 1746. That date marks the loss of the freedom so hardly won by Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn in 1314 and confirmed six years later at Arbroath Abbey.

However, nine years ago in May 1999, we saw the election of the first Scottish Parliament in nearly three hundred years; and June 1999 witnessed the convening of that historic Parliament. (It is reported that in Scotland, at that time, there was a shortage of Kilts to be had!)

Truly, “the times they are a-changing”.

THE CALLING OF THE CLANS

**Ye hielands and ye lowlands, come gather your clans before the lord.
Of yore, ye met for bloody war; now come with neither dirk nor sword.**

**A cross of fire was once your call; another Cross bids you today
To lay aside your targe and spear, Your axe and claymore put away!**

**Ye bairns of Alba, come at once! Proud Edward’s power cannot delay
Your meeting here, nor even will Cumberland’s cruelty bar your way.**

**Your tartans bright with colors gay, ye need not hide, nor shun to show;
For in this kirk ye now may place your clan’s own sett for all to know.**

**We come to do obeisance true, And, as our own Saint Andrew showed
With rev’rence and humility, Honor the Cross of Christ, our Lord!**

(Norman L. MacLeod, Jr. {1985})

THE TARTAN

**Here's to it!
The fighting sheen of it,
The yellow, the green of it,
The white, the blue of it,
The swing, the hue of it,
The dark, the red of it,
Every thread of it!**

**The fair have sighed for it,
The brave have died for it,
Foeman sought for it,
Heroes fought for it,
Honor the name of it,
Drink to the fame of it,
THE TARTAN!**

(Murdoch MacLean)

THE SCOTTISH SERVICE

The Clergy:

Today we come to worship by recognizing God's wonderful way of bringing us together here because of our common heritage; for all of us in this place are immigrants.

The Prayer Reader:

"Gratitude For Our Heritage", by Peter Marshall.

We give thee thanks, our Father, that Thou has guided us safely over land and ocean, that in Thy kindly Providence Thou hast permitted our lot to be cast in this pleasant place, that we are privileged to live in a land founded under God.

We give Thee thanks that this land was settled by men and women that came here, as we did, in order that they might worship Thee according to the dictates of their consciences.

Help us never to forget, our Father, that all the rights and privileges we enjoy here have blood on them, that every good gift was bought and paid for in human sacrifice. This goodly heritage is ours by choice and by adoption. May we never lightly regard it! May we ever be grateful to those, who in years past, have labored and loved in order that we might have something to inherit.

This we pray in humbleness and thanksgiving. AMEN.

The Chief:

The time has come for us to recall our Scottish Heritage by our Kirkin' o' the Tartan in this place; the House of the Lord.

We ask that everyone with a Tartan to be blessed prepare to bring them forward and present them to the Receiver. As you do so please tell the Receiver the clan name of the Tartan you present. The Receiver will proclaim it to all assembled.

If there are any present that did not bring their Tartan, please stand and proclaim the name of your clan for recognition.

BRING FORRIT THE TARTAN!

(The Tartans are brought forward.)

And now, let us honor the Clann Dia – The Family of God, which includes all of God's people. Will you please rise so that we may truly be One People.

(Congregation rises)

On behalf of all Scots, we present these Tartans before Almighty God and ask His blessing on these and His servants.

The Clergy:

(Standing before the Tartans, pronounces the Prayer of Dedication and Blessing.)

Almighty God, You have promised that in all places where You record Your name, You will meet with Your servants and bless them. Fulfill now Your promise and make us joyful in our praying, so that our reverence being offered may be acceptable to You, and of inspiration to ourselves.

The Presider:

“Ceann mor, beannachd sin dean urnuigh, so breacan sin iadsan faod bi do an cinne daonna, a comharra an creideamh de ar sinnsear is a comharra an dleasnas do Tu. AMEN”

(Phonetic translation: “Kyann Mor, byann-ache sheen jian oorny, sho bracken sheen ed’sun feud be doe an keena dunna, a cohuru an crejiv je ur sheenshur eesh a cohuru an dleasnas doe too. AMEN”

And for those few of you who do not have the Gaelic tongue, our Pastor will render the Gaelic into Sassenach – the English language.

The Clergy:

Great Chief, bless, we pray, these Tartans that they may be unto us and unto all men, a token of the Faith of our fathers, and a sign of our service to You. AMEN.

HYMN OF BLESSING

Amazing Grace: (Stand)

First Stanza – Played by solo Piper

First Verse:

**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I'm found,
Was blind but now I see.**

Third Verse:

**Through many dangers toils and snares,
I have already come.
'Tis Grace has brought me safe thus far,
And Grace will lead me home.**

Last Stanza – Played by solo Piper

The Clergy:

(Benediction)

May the Christ child light the road before you every night and day.
May God take the harm of the year away from you.
May His peace, mercy and grace descend upon you, and abide with
you; and may He bless you, and bless you kindly from this day forth
and forever more. AMEN

The Presider:

I invite all of you to the parish hall to partake of a wee bit of
refreshment with the Mother Lode Scots.

Recessional: Pipers – “Scotland the Brave” or “Flower of Scotland”.

HISTORY OF THE CEREMONY

“Kirk” is the Scottish name for church, and a “Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan” is a ceremony during which Scots may rededicate their families to God and ask Him to bless them by way of their tartans. At one part of the service, an invitation is extended to those bearing Clan or Family Tartans to bring them forward to the altar to be recognized and blessed.

This service is conducted in many places around the United States and strikes a deeply resonating chord in the hearts of many whose faith and ancestral roots grow deep in the land and culture of Scotland.

This ceremony seems so ancient that many assume our Scottish immigrant forefathers brought it to America. However, the first Kirkin’ service was held at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C. on April 2nd 1941 by its then minister, the late Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the Saint Andrew’s Society of the Nation’s Capital, and later, Chaplain of the United States Senate. He never forgot his Scottish homeland and frequently wore the kilt while conducting services. When asked for a title on the occasion of the first Kirkin’ service, Peter Marshall suggested the name “Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan”.

In this solemn and thoughtful ceremony, we Scots celebrate a thanksgiving for our heritage, and although we must never forget that stern land from which our forefathers came, and that we still have a spiritual tie to those glens and misty isles, our place now is in this pleasant land of freedom and opportunity. Whatever circumstance forced our forefathers – and mothers, from their beloved glen, they never forgot that homeland.

There is evidence that the American Kirkin' service does have roots in Scotland. Traditionally, the women weaving the breacan, the tartan cloth, would take the finished cloth to the kirk and ask the minister to bless her work so that "it would always be worn with honor and not be put to mean use".

Also, following the last Scottish uprising, for Bonnie Prince Charlie, culminating in defeat in 1746, the Scots were persecuted. The English embarked upon the destruction of the Scottish culture, bordering on genocide. The acts of Proscription in 1747 forbade the speaking of the Gaelic language, the weaving or wearing of anything made of tartan, the kilt, the philamore and the plaid. Also forbidden were the bearing of arms and the playing of the bagpipes. The penalty for violating these proscriptions was severe. There is a tradition that during the Proscription, some clansmen would conceal a piece of tartan when they went to the kirk and as the minister would pronounce the blessing, they would touch the tartan; thus a private or secret Kirkin' would take place known only to the bearer, the minister and to God.

THE TARTAN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

"Plaid" is the word most of us would use to describe the material that, to the Scot, is known as "Breacan" or "Tartan". The tartan is a very precisely designed interweaving of colors and lines into a fabric used in the making of kilts, skirts, banners and plaids. The Plaid, which is pronounced playd, is not a figure or design but a garment. It is a blanket-sized cloak of tartan material worn over the shoulder by drum majors, pipers, ladies and gentlemen who are very formally dressed.

In ancient times, Celts, of Ireland and the highland and islands of Scotland, wore a full saffron colored shirt that reached to about mid-thigh; over that was worn a woolen protective garment called the "Breacan-feile" (brekkan-feela), or "Feile-mor" (great plaid). This belted plaid was twelve yards long and five feet wide; it was draped about the body and fell just above the knee. A later

adaptation was the “Feile-beag” (feela-bek) or small plaid. This garment was 8 to 9 yards long and 30 inches wide. It was pleated and secured with straps around the waist, and extended to mid-thigh or the knee. This feile-beag evolved into our contemporary kilt.

The colors of the tartan depended upon natural materials locally available for use in dyeing; thus, regional designs became identifiable. Originally the tartan design, or “sett”, did not serve as a “uniform” to designate, in battle, its wearers to a clan. The outer garment, usually the plaid, was generally cast off before going into battle for the freedom of one’s loose-fitting shirt, or for nothing at all!

A sprig of the clan’s plant-badge worn on the bonnet established identification of friend or foe.