

The Windows of Kinross Parish Church

Some people might feel that our church is not very 'religious' because there is so little stained glass. Often, visitors think that we must have taken out stained glass when we renovated the church in 2005 because the big clear-glass windows seem so modern.

However, the flooding of the building with light was a deliberate part of the original intention of those who designed this church. The Church of Scotland says that church buildings like ours are making a religious statement (to quote) '*about light, about clarity, about the fact that our worship takes place within, and not apart from, the natural or the human world framed through clear windows*'.

These ideas were once so strong that the Church of Scotland did not allow stained glass and the skills died out. But with time, attitudes changed and so we now have some coloured glass here - enough to add some additional interest, without spoiling the architect's original vision for our place of worship.

The first stained glass in the Church of Scotland was put in at Greyfriars in Edinburgh when it was rebuilt after a fire in 1845. These first windows are very like those on either side of the pulpit here. People now felt that they did want to show the light of Christ in their churches in a more colourful way, but only through beautiful patterns, rather than showing people. They worried that showing people might be against the second Commandment - to make no graven images.

Also, the methods for making these windows was only being slowly rediscovered. It was easiest to have most of it painted on clear glass, which was made in just a couple of different stages, and only to make small pieces of true stained glass, which is coloured all the way through and takes up to 12 different stages. In Scotland, it was a James Ballantyne who re-discovered how to make stained glass and he wrote a book about this in 1845.

But stained glass in Scottish churches moved on and we have in our church a beautiful stained glass window in the north window donated by a JB MacIntosh in 1926 in memory of his parents. It is designed by James Ballantyne the second, the grandson of that original pioneer. It is much more colourful, varied and complicated than our earlier windows. Of particular quality is the colouring of the section high up on the right hand side showing vines and two doves.

By this time, congregations were happier about showing people, although they might still not want to show real people or Saints. Our window is of that type, showing a man and a woman who symbolise the light of Christ through Christian virtues, and known as the Faithful Man and the Virtuous Woman.

So we have three different ways in which the light of Christ is illustrated in our windows.