



St Andrew's Church, Rome

In the nineteenth century the Church of Scotland or Free Church of Scotland congregations in Italy at Livorno (Leghorn), Genoa, San Remo, Venice, Naples, and Firenze (Florence), as well as in Rome. Of these, only Rome now remains.

The campaign to establish a Scottish church in Rome started in 1846, but it was not until January 1862 that the Colonial Committee of the Free Church sent Revd William Laughton to Rome in response to an appeal by Dr William Stewart of Livorno, who was responsible for establishing the British and Foreign Bible Society in Italy as well as for encouraging the Waldensian Church to become a national Church in Italy.

The early years of the congregation in Rome were difficult; the congregation met clandestinely in rooms in the neighbourhood of the Spanish Steps and Piazza del Popolo. Those attending worship, like the minister, were subject to considerable harassment by the papal authorities. Ministers were provided by three main Presbyterian churches in Scotland at that time. From the very beginning there was a strong link with American Presbyterianism.

The first permanent minister, Dr James Lewis, was appointed in 1864; he narrowly escaped arrest and imprisonment for unlawful activities in holding religious meetings in his home. In the end, however, he was given permission to build a church outside the city walls in the Via Flaminia.

Among ministers of the Church of Scotland and the Free Church who served the church in Rome together were Dr Thomas Guthrie and Dr Robert Rainy, as well as others prominent in the history of these two Scottish Churches.

By the time the church was ready, in 1871, Rome had fallen to the Italian army and had been freed from Vatican con-

trol. Within ten years, however, it was clear that a new site would have to be found, as the Roman municipal authorities required the land on which the Church stood for road-widening.

In January 1881, Dr J. Gordon Gray, was appointed from Naples as permanent minister. He immediately started a search for a site and launched a successful appeal for funds.

In 1883 Dr Gordon Gray selected and bought the present site in Via XX Settembre (where the new Italian government was constructing its major administrative buildings). St Andrew's Church opened on 21 January 1885. By 1904 it was completely free from debt. The cost of the building was £15,000 (and even that was £3,000 over the initial estimate – some things never change!) and it has proved not only to be a very visible location, but also a valuable investment.

Dr Gordon Gray's ministry lasted until he died in 1920. Like Dr Lewis he is interred in the "Protestant" Cemetery at Testaccio.

From 1923 until 1935 the minister was Revd Dr Albert MacKinnon, who found time to write a number of books, on early and medieval Rome, as well as *Beyond the Alps*, a history of English-speaking Presbyterianism in Italy and Malta. Most of these are to be found in our Church library.

The next minister was Revd R.P.R. Anderson, who was appointed in 1938 after service in Genoa. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the building was taken over by the Italian government and Mr Anderson had to leave Rome in 1940. In October 1944 he returned as an Army chaplain and re-opened the Church.

This was a time of change for the Church. More and more tourists were coming to Rome, creating a need for the church to remain open all through the

year. In 1951, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) moved to Rome from Washington. In subsequent years many office-bearers were drawn from FAO and other UN staff in Rome. Mr Anderson retired at the age of 80 in Germany.

Revd A.J. MacLean also had a long and successful ministry at Rome, from 1956 until 1975. He is still remembered with great affection. Between 1975 and 1990 the congregation of St Andrew's saw several ministers for relatively short – sometimes very short – periods. All of these are remembered with gratitude for their services.

St Andrew's Church is a four storey building, owned by the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, set back from the busy Via XX Settembre in a garden (now more of a parking area!). The building was constructed in the style of a Florentine palazzo (town house rather than palace!) with the Church on the ground floor.

A simple Church, it can hold more than 100 comfortably. Major renovation works are almost complete, and the sanctuary was rededicated by the Very Rev Dr John Cairns on 20th April 2008. The first and second floors are let to the Italian Ministry of Defence and generate a useful sum in rent. The manse is on the fourth floor and has recently been considerably altered.

The basement of the building accommodates both a small Church Room and a Session Room, while, at least in the summer months, the roof terrace with panoramic views to the north and west provides a very pleasant spot for Church gatherings and manse entertainment.

Although the congregation is small – there are about 80 members on the "roll", it is keen. Few Sundays pass without there being visitors from

man countries present at our service.

While some of our members are now advanced in age, we have a good proportion of younger and more active people. Many of the latter are in Rome for periods of one to three years and it is difficult to have continuity of leadership in the congregation.

St Andrew's is (as it has been from its earliest days) a very international congregation; at present we have members from Cameroon, Canada, Ghana, Germany, the Netherlands, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Uganda, S Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, the UK and the USA.

Holy Communion is normally celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. In accordance with the practice of the Church of Scotland, members of any branch of the Church are invited to receive the sacrament.

St Andrew's is also much used by the large Korean Protestant community in Rome. The Korean Church Choir is of international standing and their occasional contributions to our worship are welcomed.

Groups using the Church premises include AA, self-help groups, Scottish Country dancers and choirs. Courses in domestic management, run by the SRM (a service for refugees and immigrants) are provided at times. Volunteers help at St Andrew's in the provision of lunch packs for refugees on Thursday and Friday mornings.

In Rome, even more than in other places, relationships with other Churches are very important. St Andrew's enjoys good relations with the Italian Protestant Churches - since November 2006 it has been a member of the FCEI (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy), which includes the Waldensian, Lutheran, Baptist and other smaller churches – and the other English-language Churches in Rome on the one hand, and with various Roman

Catholic groups on the other, including the Scots and Beda Colleges, the Centro pro Unione, the Community of St Egidio (St Giles), and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. It is considered very important that an English-speaking congregation of the reformed tradition is present in Rome and is known in the city.

The witness of St Andrew's in the eternal city is set to continue into the new millennium and the wide variety of needs of the expatriate community of Rome will continue to be met to the best of our ability.

How to find the Church

St Andrew's Church is located in the centre of Rome and is easily reached from most parts of the city by bus or Metro.

The nearest Metro stations (Linea A) are Repubblica or Barberini.

No buses actually pass the Church, but there are nearby stops for buses on Via del Tritone (Piazza Barberini), Via Nazionale, and Via XX Settembre. Suitable routes include: 6, 37, 40, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 115, 136, 170, 175, 492, 910.

Detailed directions to the Church, including a map, are available and will be sent to you by mail or by fax on request.

Minister: Rev W.B. McCulloch

Telephone: 064827627

Fax: 064874370

E-mail:

revwbmcculloch@hotmail.com

Website:

www.presbyterianchurchrome.org/