

# WHAT DOES 'EPISCOPAL' MEAN?



## The Three-fold Ministry

The word comes from the Greek 'episkopos,' meaning 'overseer.' The term was adopted into Latin with the specific meaning of the overseer of a Diocese (a collection of churches). The modern English word for this is a 'Bishop.'

- A Bishop is not only the overseer of a Diocese, but the highest rank in the 'three-fold ministry'. Bishops are recognised by the staff they carry, known as a crozier, and the hat they wear called a mitre, and a pectoral cross and a ring.
- Priests are authorised to consecrate and bless objects and people and pronounce absolution. Most clergy are Priests.
- Deacons are ministers of service who assist a Priest both in the running of a Parish, and at the altar during Communion, but are not permitted to consecrate the communion elements.

## Why do we have it in our name?

During the Reformation, most Scots reformers wished to remove the three-fold ministry, and replace it with a system where instead of Priests and Deacons would exist an office simply known as a 'Minister'. Instead of Bishops there would be a council of 'elders' (the Kirk Session) in each Parish. This system is known as 'Presbyterianism'. This is the system used by the Church of Scotland today. Those who did not wish to remove the three-fold ministry founded the Episcopal Church after the 1688 Glorious Revolution.

This also marked the beginning of our long association with the Church of England, formalised today with the worldwide Anglican Communion, as a united body, the third largest Christian denomination in the world.

The Scottish Episcopal Church is a Province within the Anglican Communion, a partner with the two Church of England Provinces (Canterbury and York) and many others worldwide. So, we are Anglicans globally, but Episcopalians nationally.

## Who appoints Bishops?

The Scottish Bishops are elected by the clergy and people of their Diocese, whereas in the Church of England, they are ultimately appointed by the Queen.

## Why the "Episcopal Church", and not the "Scottish Anglican Church"?

The Anglican and Episcopalian systems are more or less the same, bar one key difference; Anglican Churches have Archbishops. By contrast, Episcopal Churches (in their Anglican context) have a Primus Bishop, who is elected from amongst the Bishops. The Primus has no special authority other than chairing meetings of Bishops, and the only other difference being a ceremonial status.



More information can be found by visiting our website [www.stjames-stonehaven.org.uk](http://www.stjames-stonehaven.org.uk)