

A self-guided tour



St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow
open, inclusive, welcoming

Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral

A snapshot of our history

This church was built in 1871 in the mediaeval “Gothic” style by one of the great architects of the Victorian Gothic revival, Sir George Gilbert Scott, who also designed the ‘new’ Glasgow University buildings nearby on Gilmorehill. He was the architect of our sister Cathedrals, St Paul’s, Dundee (1853) and St Mary’s, Edinburgh (1873-9), as well as many other churches throughout the UK and the Albert Memorial and St Pancras Station Hotel in London.

For the external walls he chose red whinstone from Lanark, otherwise little used in Glasgow. The internal stonework is mainly of limestone brought here from the famous quarries near Bath, over 300 miles distant. He died before the work was completed and many of the features inside were added to the design of his son Oldrid Scott.

St Mary’s was erected as a Parish Church to serve the rapidly growing well-to-do residential area of the West End, succeeding a series of earlier congregations. St Mary’s Lane, off Renfield Street, commemorates the last of these and the earlier Gothic Revival church of 1825 where it worshipped.

The new church had no provision for meetings and social events. These were provided at its four dependent Mission Churches, now vanished, built in the densely populated parts of north-west Glasgow to serve less privileged workers and their families.

When St Mary’s became the cathedral of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway in 1908, its Synod Hall was built on the very limited site still remaining for development.

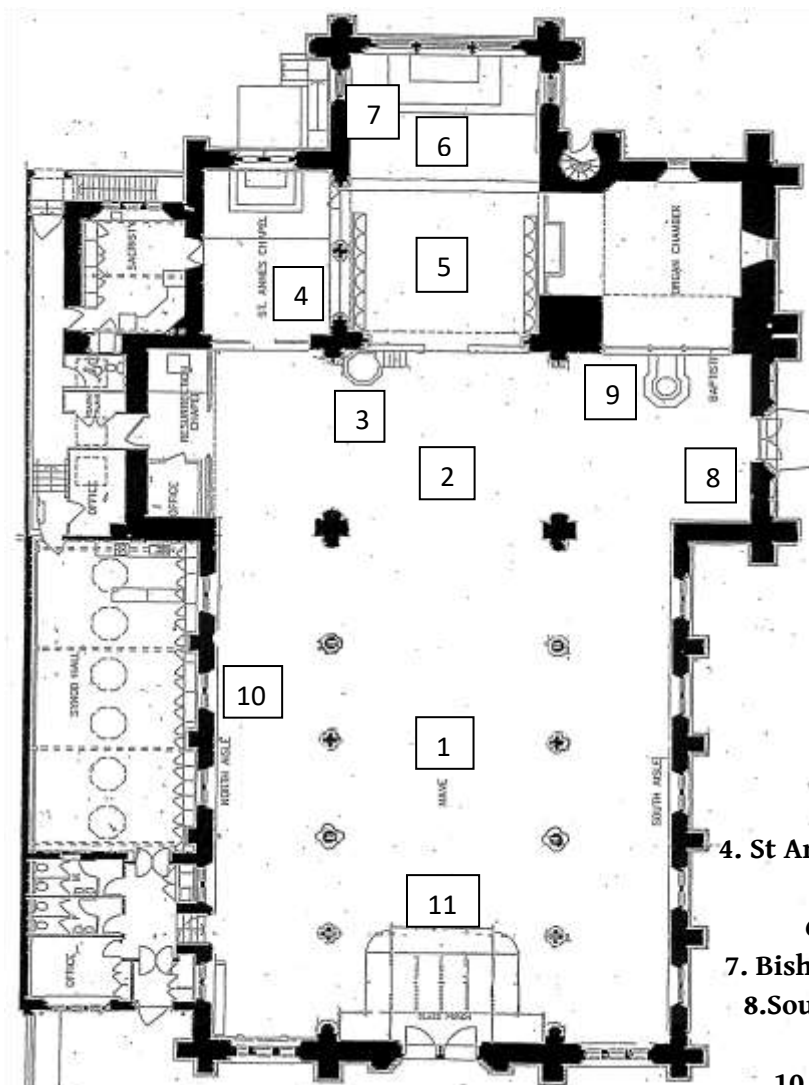
Like so many buildings of its age, St Mary’s has seen much change internally, notably in the early years of the 20th Century and after the First World War.

A major restoration programme to ensure that its mission and ministry carried into the 21st century was completed in 2002. The project included

renewing the entire roof, rebuilding the organ, refurbishing the chancel and crossing, cleaning and repairing the stained glass and commissioning the remarkable scheme of mural painting at the east end of the church.

The Cathedral is now able to offer a magnificent space for artists and musicians to perform and exhibit, while still maintaining its prime function as a place of worship.

Please refer to this diagram as you walk round the Cathedral. The numbers in the text refer to the numbers below.



1. Nave
2. Crossing
3. Pulpit
4. St Anne's Chapel
5. Chancel
6. Sanctuary
7. Bishop's Throne
8. South Transept
9. Font
10. North Aisle
11. Glass Panels

The Tour

This guide will take you round the Cathedral and point out some of its more interesting features. If you would like to know more about the stained glass, the mural paintings, the organ and the monuments and fittings, companion leaflets are available.

(1) The nave of 5 bays is flanked by Bath stone arcades with alternating octagonal and clustered pillars. Notice the heads representing various British saints which are carved above the pillars.

The stained glass, which contributes so much to the colour and character of the day-time interior was installed to an orderly scheme, devised from the start by the first Rector, the Rev Richard Oldham. The windows lighting the **north and south aisles** represent the Apostles, who accompanied Jesus during his ministry on earth. The large windows in the **north and south transepts** depict the Old Testament prophets. Those in the **chancel** including the great east window, show the story of Jesus from his birth to his resurrection. The west windows, facing you as you leave, illustrate the sacraments of the church, including baptism and marriage. They were commissioned from three of the English based firms best known at the time for religious stained glass, John Hardman, Ward & Hughes and Clayton & Bell. A companion leaflet describes all this work in greater detail.

(2) Moving to the front of the nave, you will see that the basic shape of the church is that of a cross, with the chancel in front of you, and transepts at either side. The painted ceiling above the crossing arch focuses attention on the nave altar table, part of the harmonious suite of furnishings introduced during the final stage of the recent restoration. The entire decorative scheme, including the **murals** which adorn the walls above these **majestic arches**, is the competition-winning work of the American-born artist, Gwyneth Leech, a former member of the Cathedral choir. The murals are described in detail in a companion leaflet.

Turn to your left, past G. G. Scott's pulpit **(3)** of Caen stone on granite pillars. On your right a wrought-iron screen (1903) leads into **(4) St Anne's Chapel**. The chapel was furnished to the designs of J. O. Scott, 1895-1904 – see the tablet in the panelling beside the doorway on the left. The paintings of the reredos were copied from the 'works of the great masters' by Miss Hale, and the saints depicted in the panels reflect the Christian names of those in whose memory the chapel was furnished. On the left hand wall, the mural by Gwyneth Leech depicts the Easter Passion story, as if it took place in the nearby Kelvingrove Park.

Enter the **Chancel (5)** through the delicate wrought-iron screen, another example of John Oldrid Scott's artistic skill. On the left-hand pillar notice the finely lettered memorial tablet, in the Arts and Crafts style, to John Spens, a noted benefactor to the church and city.

In the **chancel** floor is a brass commemorating Archibald Ean Campbell, Bishop 1904-21, in fine robes which the Cathedral still possesses. The choir stalls on either side are another excellent example of Gilbert Scott's design. Each seat has fixed to it a plaque bearing the name of a saint with Scottish connections. The **organ** occupies the space under the tower. Built by **William Hill** in 1871, it was at that time reckoned to be the largest three-manual organ in Britain. It has been rebuilt in 1909, 1967 and 1990. The organ is described in detail in a companion leaflet.

In the **Sanctuary (6)** stands the high altar, with a fine carved oak reredos (1921). With the panels on either side, it was designed by Sir Robert Lorimer (architect of the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle) as the congregation's own memorial to the dead of the First World War. The painted panels, by the Irish-born artist Phoebe Traquair, were extensively and faithfully restored by Gwyneth Leech after suffering previous damage, but can no longer be regarded as the work of the original artist. See on the left, the **Bishop's throne (7)** the practical sign that this church is a Cathedral, given in memory of Bishop Trower (1848-59), who encouraged the move of the congregation from the city centre.

(8) Move across to the **South Transept**, now the cathedral's baptistery. This is traditionally the place of welcome for new members of the

church, focussed on the **Font (9)**. It is a typically fine ornamental example of G. G. Scott's design originally placed at the west end of the **North Aisle (10)**, and moved here in and was until 1993 as part of the restoration scheme. The elaborately carved oak canopy, was added to his son's design in 1904.

Returning by the **North Aisle**, look at the wall panel which features an alabaster relief of Jesus. It formed part of the original stone 'reredos' behind the high altar, and was moved here to embellish the list of those members of the congregation who died in the First World War when the **sanctuary** was refurbished as the cathedral's main memorial tribute.

Please do not leave without spending a few moments in prayer to God, whose house this is. Give thanks for all God's blessings to you, and pray for your loved ones and anyone you know in special need. Please give thanks also for all who have worked and worshipped here and pray for the present people of St Mary's that we may be faithful stewards of this rich heritage of faith and devotion.

As you leave the Cathedral by the west door, notice **the glass panels (11)** in the main door screen, contributed by many of the congregations in this Diocese as their symbolic contribution to the restoration of the building.

Look back at the west front. The three little gables over the porch form a feature borrowed by Gilbert Scott from the mediaeval Cathedral at Elgin and used by him again at St Mary's, Edinburgh.

But the principal feature of the church is its fine spire, 206 feet high, surmounted by a cross of bell-metal. With the needle-like spire of the nearby Lansdowne Parish Church, the tallest in Glasgow, it punctuates the view along Great Western Road. The spire is rather later than the tower and the rest of the church, and was built by in 1893 by John Oldrid Scott, but to his father's design. The tall openings and the spirelets at the base of the spire make an effective transition from the square tower to the octagonal spire; and the trellis-work at the top of the tower gives it

a distinctive air. In niches in the spirelets stand statues of St Andrew (patron saint of Scotland), St Mungo (Kentigern – founder of the Church in Glasgow), St Margaret (Queen of Scotland) and St George. A peal of ten bells, the only peal in Glasgow, was hung in the tower in 1901, and the tenor bell weighs nearly 32.5 cwt. The bells are rung before Evensong on most Sundays of the year, as well as on Tuesday evenings, when the ringers practise.

At the base of the tower stand statues of Bishop Jocelyn (principal founder of Glasgow's mediaeval cathedral – one of the most important surviving churches of its age in Scotland), Bishop Turnbull (founder of Glasgow University), Archbishop Leighton (one of the great Christian leaders in the troubled days of King Charles II), and Bishop Trower, who holds a model of St Mary's.

Above the east window is a beautiful medallion of the Virgin and Child, signifying the dedication of the building in her name.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to St Mary's Cathedral.

Thank you for your prayers. May God bless and guide you on your journey.

The Cathedral Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Glasgow (St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral) is a charity registered with OSCR, number SCO06225.