

OPERATION ANDREW

PUTTING ST ANDREW BACK INTO SCOTLAND



St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland and the Scottish flag is his symbol, the saltire or X shaped cross.

In today's increasingly secular society it is all too easy to forget that St Andrew, the person behind these Scottish symbols, was one of Jesus' first followers, and died because of his Christian faith. He was tortured to death by crucifixion in AD60 at Patros in Greece, and, according to tradition, asked that the cross be placed diagonally since he considered himself unworthy to die in the same way as Jesus on an upright cross. From this, the saltire became recognised as his symbol.

St Andrew is described in the biblical records as one of the first people to be called by Jesus to be his follower, to spend time with him, and to recognise him as the Christ, the Saviour promised by God. And the first person to invite someone else – his brother Simon Peter - to come and meet Jesus to find out the truth for himself.

This story of St Andrew has three challenges for us in the Scottish Church today.

First, do we spend the time necessary with Jesus in prayer to properly recognise who he is and to reflect him in our lives?

Secondly, do we have faith enough that we give up all to follow and, if necessary die for, Jesus?

Finally, will we take encouragement from St Andrew's example and ask those around us – family, friends and colleagues – to come and meet Jesus for themselves?

This year, the church at Barthol Chapel is marking the lead up to St Andrew's day by asking each of its members to consider these three challenges, to pray, to follow, and to ask those around us to find out more about Jesus.

We are all being asked to give at least one person we know a copy of John's Gospel so that they can read it to discover for themselves who Jesus is. Please pray and, in this one simple action, follow in St Andrew's footsteps by helping others to discover the reality of faith. We may feel worried or challenged by this, but take heart from St Andrew who, with only the very basic understanding of his early encounters with Jesus, just asked his brother to come and find out for himself.

To follow up, there will also be special service to celebrate the relevance of St Andrew's example to modern Scotland at Barthol Chapel Church on Sunday 28th November, and all those who receive the copies of John's Gospel can also be given an invitation to come along and join us as guests. The Rev Matt Canlis from Methlick leading the service, which will help us all to explore the truths about Jesus at the beginning of Advent and the Christmas season.

So please, let's all join in "Operation Andrew" by following his example.