
St. George's church plans Kirkin' o' the Tartan ceremony

By JAN HOGAN
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It's a ceremony steeped in tradition, based on history. St. George's Anglican Church, 7676 W. Gilmore Ave., plans to host a Kirkin' o' the Tartan on Sunday at its facility.

The recognition ceremony will be incorporated into the traditional Anglican Mass, which will begin promptly at 10:30 a.m. The Kirkin' o' the Tartan will take place during the time usually reserved for announcements, the homily and the offertory. It will begin with the singing of the five verses of "Amazing Grace," and at the end of the fifth verse, the hymn will continue as a pipe solo by Stuart Wishart.

Then the Rev. Gordon Hines will give a short explanation of the tradition, which will see swatches of tartan patterns being formally blessed.

The service will be followed by sweetbread, tea and coffee, as well as a demonstration of Highland dancing outside.

Marsden MacRae plans four dances with nine other dancers. The steps will be relatively intricate.

"And we'll be doing reels," she said. "They make a dance look fancier when you're doing a demonstration."

A reel is a dance, but also movement within a dance, that uses a figure eight, with people weaving in and out.

A kirkin' traditionally is offered around St. Andrew's Day. St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. This year, St. Andrew's Day falls on Monday, so recognizing him also will be incorporated into the service.

"Each deserves their due," Hines said, adding that honoring the past is important, and that the history of the Scottish Highlands is relevant even today.

St. George's sanctuary can hold 150 people. Hines said he had no idea how many people to expect as this is the first time St. George's has hosted a kirkin'.

A kirkin' may have its roots in history, but a kirkin' actually is an American invention.

"If we keep these traditions alive, it helps us know who we are," Hines said.

A kirkin' can be held any time, but usually is observed in the fall or spring. The service at St. George's will include original music played by Wishart, who was born in Scotland. He will be accompanied by the organist, but he will be the sole pipe player.

"You only have one bagpipe playing when you're in a building, because they're so loud," said Heather Palmer, president of the St. Andrew's Society of Southern Nevada.

The St. Andrew's Society promotes the art, culture, dance, history and music of Scotland and celebrates all things Scottish. The history is only alluded to these days.

Well before cell phones and Internet access, it was the far-reaching sound of the bagpipes that rallied troops. The choice of tunes being played alerted fighters whether to advance or retreat.

In 1745, the bagpipes were outlawed. The Scots also could not wear their tribal tartan garb. Speaking Gaelic was outlawed, as well, according to the society.

The church also has an 8 a.m. service, which will not include a kirkin' element.

For more information, call 395-4576.

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