

OUR CHURCH



Our church was built in 1779 and it is one of the finest examples in Ulster of what is termed a 'barn church'. A large rectangular building with a hipped roof, it is solid and imposing with attractive details. Originally a barn church was just what the name implies, a church that looked like a barn and, indeed, the original meeting place of the congregation back in 1676 was quite probably a barn on a local farm. In 1714 the congregation built a new meeting-house, a small portion of which still exists incorporating the vestry at the back of the church, complete with its date stone. But by 1779 the congregation had grown sufficiently to build a large, new church which we have used ever since for our worship.

ARCHITECT

The front of the meeting-house is approached by a row of six long steps leading up to the entrance through two large pedimented doors. These doors and the windows in the church are in the style of the Scottish architect James Gibbs (1682-1754) who placed alternate wide and narrow blocks of stone around such openings. The name of the architect of our church is not known, although it is often suggested that this may have been the Belfast architect Roger Mulholland (1740-1818) who designed the First Presbyterian Church on Rosemary Street in Belfast in 1783.



STAINED GLASS WINDOW



Almost all the windows in the church are clear glass, as they would have been in the eighteenth century when the church was built. The only exception to this is the central window in the wall opposite the pulpit where there is a striking stained glass window designed by Tiffany of New York in memory of John Wellington Stoupe McCance (1816-1863) and Henry Jones McCance (1829-1900). The McCance family had a long association with the congregation and were involved in the linen business. The image in the window is said to depict the journey from their home at Woodburn House in nearby Suffolk to the church. Sadly the window was badly damaged during the Troubles but has since been restored.

ORGAN AND PULPIT

The organ pipes directly behind the pulpit were the front part of a hand-pumped, Jacobean organ that was built around 1745. The date it was installed in the church is not known but it was still being used at special services up until 1950.

Unfortunately, the interior workings were destroyed by a hidden water leak some ten years later. The pipes have been retained purely for their decorative function with the modern organ situated behind them in the organ loft.



The pulpit itself was restored in the 1970s in memory of Miss E.L.B. Andrews (1910-1973), the daughter of Thomas Andrews, the designer of RMS Titanic. This is recorded on a brass plaque to the left of the pulpit.

BOX PEWS

Inside the church the focus of attention is the carved, panelled pulpit in the centre of the long wall situated in front of the organ pipes. When the church was built in 1779 worship was centred entirely around the preaching of the Word and at that time the church would have been filled with box pews, arranged to maximise seating space so people could hear the preacher, even if some did not directly face the pulpit. They are not all the same size or shape and when first built families paid an annual pew rent to use them, bringing their own furnishings such as cushions. Most of these pews are still in use today although some have been removed to create space for the choir seats situated directly in front of the pulpit. The small seat at the base of the pulpit was originally designed for a precentor or clerk to sit on but the larger seat backed by a curved rail is a choir stall added in Victorian times.



MONUMENTS



In memory of Mary A. Hyndman who died in 1863 aged 22 years.



In memory of First Lieutenant Henry Montgomery, a son of the minister, who went to India at the age of just 16, established a successful career but died of fever at Calcutta on his first visit home after fifteen years in 1856 aged 31.



In memory of Rev T.H.M. Scott minister of the church for 29 years, who died in 1895 aged 61.

MONUMENTS CONTINUED



In memory of Rev Dr Henry Montgomery, the famous minister of the church, who was 56 years pastor to the congregation and who died in 1865 aged 77.

His family tomb can be found behind the church. In 2015 he was commemorated by a blue plaque which can be seen on the front of the church which describes him as: 'Minister, Teacher, Reformer. Founder of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster.'

STAY IN TOUCH



Services

Sunday Worship

Weekly, 11.30am – 12.30pm

Sunday School & Youth Group

Weekly from September to June, 11.30am – 12.30pm

www.firstchurchdunmurry.com

