

## The Abbey's Life and Witness Today

Westminster Abbey enshrines a great deal of English history and cannot be fully appreciated without reference to its past. This leaflet provides a bare outline and a full range of guidebooks is available in the Abbey bookshops.

But this building also houses a living community today — men and women who, in many different ways, are seeking to employ their gifts to the glory of God and for the building of a better world.

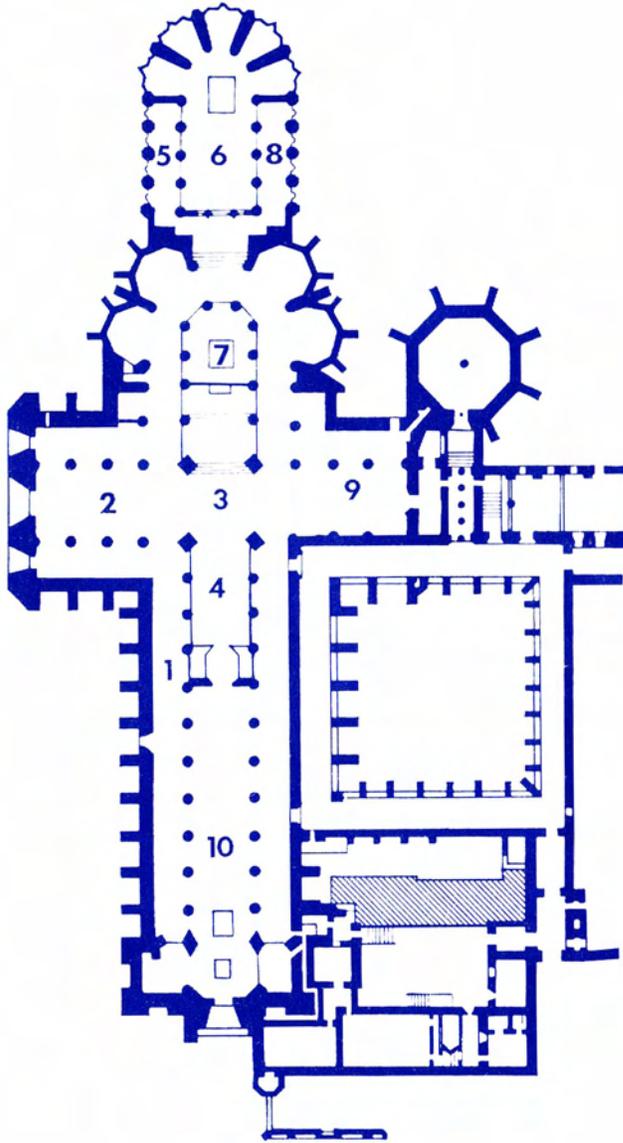
Worship and prayer remain the primary function of the Abbey community. An extensive ministry of preaching and teaching, within the Abbey itself and in the wider world, is centred here. Concern for society and for individuals has taken on a new importance in the complex world of the 20th century, and the welcoming of 3½ million visitors from all parts of the world every year presents a new challenge to the Abbey tradition of hospitality.

A priest is available to visitors and others in the Abbey for the greater part of every day and he is pleased to speak to those who approach him. Every hour he conducts a brief act of prayer for the world and its needs; you are invited to share in this.

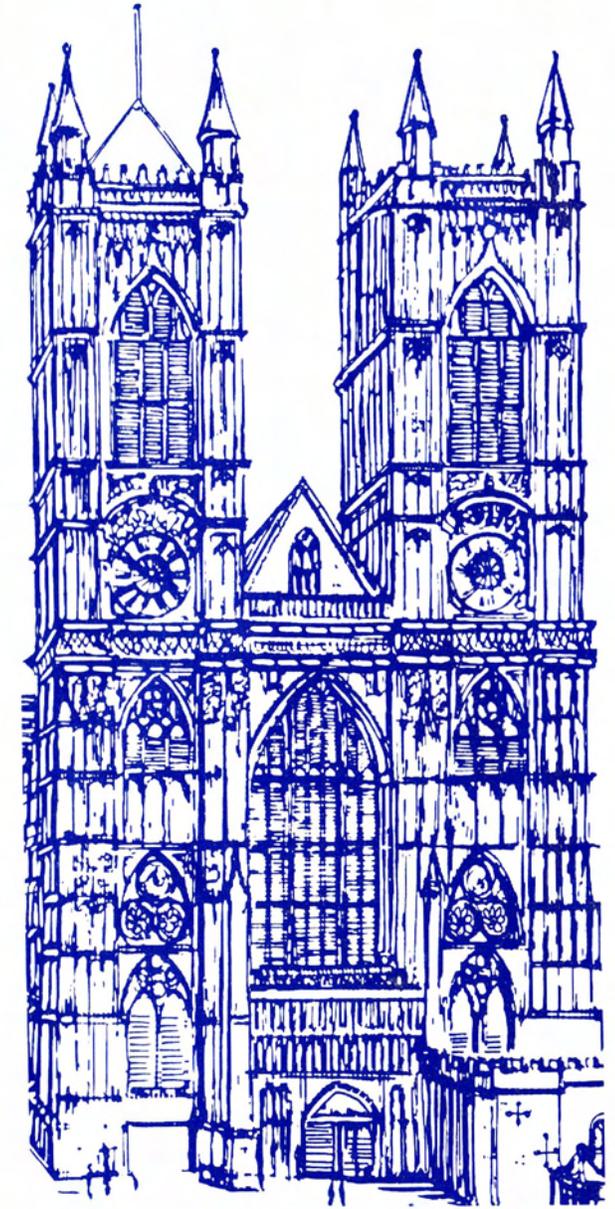
Westminster Abbey — perhaps the best known and most loved building in the English-speaking world — receives no financial assistance from the state and is, therefore, dependent upon admission fees and gifts for the expenses of its everyday work and the maintenance of its vast and ancient fabric.

Most of our visitors can spend only a short time in the Abbey, but those who are able to share in our worship and prayer make a most valuable contribution to the historic witness of this great church.

We hope that you will leave the Abbey refreshed and inspired and one day return.



# Westminster Abbey



# WELCOME



## Introduction

Welcome to Westminster Abbey — a building of great beauty, a place of worship and prayer, a church whose life has been closely identified with the British nation for more than 900 years.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and that this leaflet may help you to appreciate the Abbey's history and life.

### 1. Musicians' Aisle

Here are the graves and memorials of famous musicians, notably those of the three greatest organists of the Abbey — Orlando Gibbons, John Blow and Henry Purcell. In more recent years memorials to Vaughan Williams, Elgar and Britten have been added. The Abbey's great musical tradition is still maintained under the direction of the Organist and Master of the Choristers: the choir consists of 22 Choristers and 12 Lay Vicars who sing at the daily services and at many special services throughout the year.

### 2. Statesmen's Aisle

The graves and memorials of many famous British statesmen, including William Wilberforce and Prime Ministers William Pitt, Palmerston, Benjamin Disraeli, W. E. Gladstone, Robert Peel, and H. H. Asquith. There are memorials to other statesmen in the Nave. Services marking national leaders are often held in the Abbey, and St. Margaret's Church in the precincts has special links with the House of Commons.

### 3. The Lantern

Coronations and Royal Weddings take place before the High Altar, which is also used for the main celebration of the Holy Communion every Sunday. All but two of the English kings and queens have been crowned in Westminster Abbey since 1066.

Now look upwards and westwards at the magnificent vaulted roof, begun during the 13th century and completed soon after 1500.

### 4. The Choir

Until the middle of the 16th century Westminster Abbey was a Benedictine monastery, and the monks sang their daily services in the enclosed choir. This tradition continues in the present collegiate church, and visitors are welcome to share in the worship. (Details of the daily services will be found at the Great West Door).

### 5. Tomb of Queen Elizabeth I

After the dissolution of the monastery in 1560, Elizabeth I reorganised the church under a Dean and Canons. Her tomb was erected by King James I in 1606. Buried with her is her half-sister Queen Mary Tudor and the Latin inscription reads: "Consorts both in throne and grave, here sleep we two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, in the hope of one resurrection."

### 6. Chapel of King Henry VII

Built in the early part of the 16th century, this is the Lady Chapel of the Abbey and is used regularly for worship. Notice the beautiful vaulted roof and the stalls of the Knights of the Bath, whose banners hang above them. Henry VII and his Queen are buried behind the altar in company with King James I. Two other kings, Edward VI and George II, are buried before the altar, and at the east end is the Royal Air Force Chapel and the Battle of Britain memorial window.

### 7. Chapel of St. Edward the Confessor

The most sacred place in the Abbey. Edward, a Saxon king (1042-1066), was the founder of Westminster Abbey and the original building was consecrated a few days before his death. He is buried here and in mediaeval times his shrine attracted many pilgrims. Around are the royal tombs of Henry III, Edward I, Edward III, Richard II, Henry V and some of their Queens. The

Coronation Chair was made for Edward I and encloses the Stone of Scone on which Scottish kings were crowned and which was brought to England in 1296.

### 8. Tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots

Mary, a claimant to the English throne, was beheaded in 1587. Nearby is the beautiful tomb of Lady Margaret Beaufort — mother of Henry VII — and before the altar is the burial place of Queen Anne, King Charles II, King William III and Queen Mary II.

### 9. Poets' Corner

Here are the graves and memorials of most of the major English poets and some writers and musicians. Notice especially the tomb of Geoffrey Chaucer and the memorial to William Shakespeare. Among the 20th century poets are T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens and George Frederick Handel are also buried here. The two wall paintings date from the late 13th century.

### 10. The Nave

Just inside the Great West Door is a memorial to Winston Churchill and nearby is the grave of the Unknown Warrior, commemorating those who were killed in the Great War 1914-18. The Chapel of St. George is also dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives in the same war. Near the entrance to this chapel is a portrait of King Richard II dated from the late 14th century. Among the graves and memorials in the Nave, notice David Livingstone, David Lloyd George, Clement Attlee, Ramsey MacDonald, Isaac Newton, Lord and Lady Baden-Powell and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

### 11. Private Prayer

Two chapels are reserved for this: St. George's (by the Great West Door) and St. Faith's (which can be reached from the Cloisters).