

# Leiden Pieterskerk

---

**Denomination:** Originally Roman Catholic, Reformed from 1572 to 1971.

**Status:** Deconsecrated 1971. Now used as an event venue.

**Visited by:** Lorna Macpherson.

**Date of visit;** 30 May 2018.

---

On a work trip to the Netherlands at the end of May, I was taken by my host on an evening walk around the historic centre of the city of Leiden.



Leiden is home to the oldest university in the country and is located south of Amsterdam and a short distance from The Hague. The picturesque city has many canals and interesting attractions including a variety of churches, museums and art galleries.

During my stroll round the centre, the late evening sun illuminated the Pieterskerk Church, founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and constructed mainly in late-Gothic style. My eye was drawn to a plaque on a wall referring to the Pilgrim Fathers.

On returning to Glasgow I was interested to find out more about the church and its association with the American settlers. In the early 17th century, a group of English Puritan Protestants broke their ties with the Church of England and founded their own religious community. To escape persecution, they fled to Holland. In 1609 the group, led by the Rev John Robinson, moved to Leiden and were granted leave to settle in the city. They bought land, built houses and worshiped near the Pieterskerk.

The years spent in Holland are described as a time of poverty and hardship for many of the separatist congregation. Therefore, after living and working in Leiden for around eleven years, some decided to cross the Atlantic to America, where they hoped to set up a religious community in the 'New World'.

Only a minority of the Leiden congregation actually sailed to America. They first travelled to England and there transferred to the "Mayflower" for the famous voyage to New England in 1620. Their pastor John Robinson was planning to join them at a later date, but died in Leiden in 1625. He is buried in the Pieterskerk, together with several other Pilgrims.