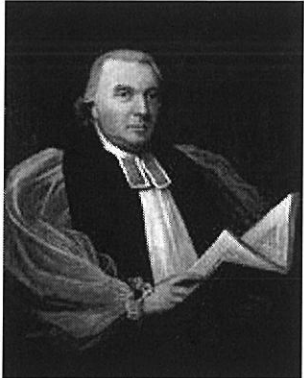


# Samuel Seabury (bishop)

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**Bishop Samuel Seabury**

*2nd Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church*



<b>Church</b>	Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America
<b>In Office</b>	1789-1792
<b>Predecessor</b>	Rt. Rev. William White
<b>Successor</b>	Rt. Rev. Samuel Provoost

**Orders**

<b>Ordination</b>	1753
<b>Consecration</b>	5 October 1789

**Personal details**

<b>Born</b>	30 November 1729 Groton, Connecticut, U.S.
<b>Died</b>	25 February 1796 New London, Connecticut
<b>Previous post</b>	Bishop of the Episcopal Dioceses of Connecticut and Rhode Island

**Samuel Seabury** (November 30, 1729 – February 25, 1796) was the first American Episcopal bishop, the second Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, USA, and the first Bishop of Connecticut. He had been a leading Loyalist in New York City during the American Revolution.

## History

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Samuel Seabury was born in Groton, Connecticut in 1729. His father, also Samuel Seabury (1706–1764), originally a Congregationalist minister in Groton, was ordained deacon and priest in the Church of England in 1731, and was a rector in New London, Connecticut, from 1732 to 1743, and in Hempstead, Long Island, from 1743 until his death.

Samuel Seabury (the son) graduated from Yale College in 1748, and studied theology with his father. He studied medicine in Edinburgh from 1752 to 1753 and was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Lincoln and priest by the Bishop of Carlisle in 1753. Seabury was rector of Christ Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey from 1754 to 1757, rector in Jamaica, New York from 1757 to 1766, and of St Peter's, Westchester (now annexed to The Bronx) from 1766 to 1775.

## Episcopacy

On March 25, 1783, a meeting of ten Episcopal clergy in Woodbury, Connecticut, elected Seabury bishop as their second choice (a favorite son was elected first, but declined for health reasons). There were no Anglican bishops in the Americas to consecrate him, so he sailed to London on July 7. In England, however, his consecration was rationalized as impossible because, as an American citizen, he could no longer take the oath of allegiance to the King. Seabury then turned to the Scottish Episcopal Church, whose bishops at that time refused to recognize the authority of King George III. He was consecrated in Aberdeen on November 14, 1784, with the one condition that in the matter of the Holy Communion he study the Scottish Rite and work for its adoption rather than the English rite of 1662. To the present day the American liturgy adheres to the main features of this Rite in one of its Holy Eucharist Liturgies. The anniversary of his consecration is now a lesser feast day on the calendars of both the Episcopal Church in the United States of America and the Anglican Church of Canada. The fact of Seabury's consecration

by the non-juring Scots caused alarm in the (Whig) British Government, who feared an entirely Jacobite church in the United States, and Parliament was persuaded to make provision for the ordination of foreign bishops. Seabury's tenacity in the matter had the effect of making a continued relationship between the American and English churches a possibility. The problem was revealed not to be one of liturgical restrictions (the oath) but of political plans.

Seabury returned to Connecticut in 1785 and made New London, Connecticut his home, becoming rector of St James Church there. A meeting of his Connecticut clergymen was held during the first week of August 1785 at Christ Church on the South Green in Middletown, Connecticut. At the August 2nd reception of the bishop his letters of Consecration were requested, read, and accepted. On August 3, 1785 the first ordinations on American soil took place there, at Christ Church in Middletown, Connecticut. Four men, Henry Van Dyke, Philo Shelton, Ashbel Baldwin, and Colin Ferguson, were ordained to the Holy Order of Deacons that day. On August 7, 1785 Collin Ferguson was advanced to the Priesthood, and Thomas Fitch Oliver was admitted to the Diaconate. Bishop Seabury said, prophetically, of Christ Church in Middletown, "Long may this birthplace be remembered, and may the number of faithful stewards who follow this succession increase and multiply till time shall be no more". Over the next 100 years there were 274 ordinations in Middletown. The validity of his consecration was at first questioned by some, but was recognized by the General Convention of his church in 1789. In 1790 Seabury took charge of the diocese of Rhode Island also. In 1792 he joined with Bishops William White and Samuel Provoost, who had received English consecration in 1787, and James Madison (1749–1812), who had received English consecration in 1790, in the consecration of Bishop Thomas J. Claggett of Maryland in 1792, thus uniting the Scottish and the English successions.