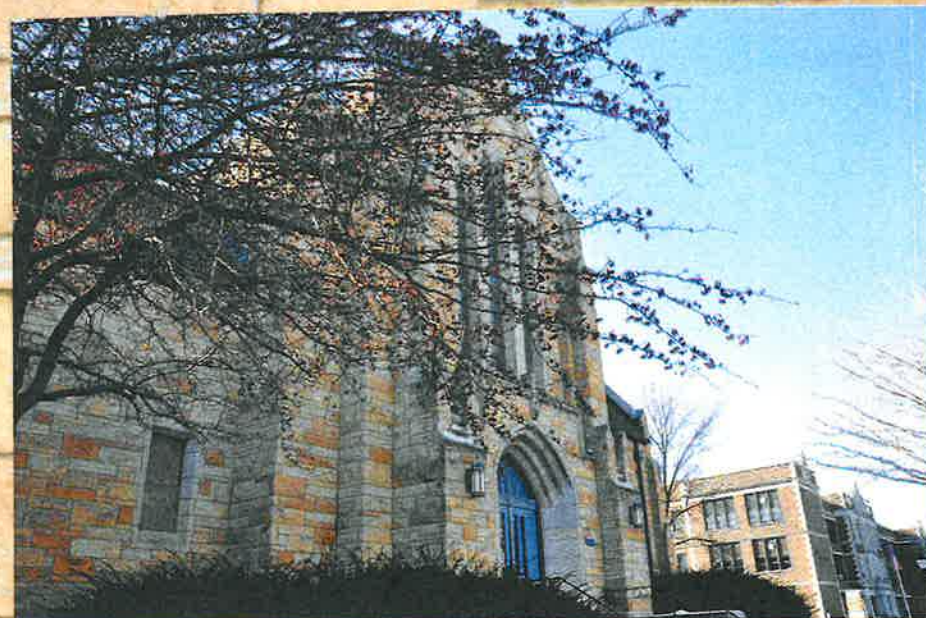


One finds them everywhere, from the pyramid and eye which appear on our nation's currency to the golden arches which much of our world identifies with hamburgers. Symbols pervade our lives. Symbols also play an important role in our religious lives: teaching and reinforcing certain values or beliefs, inspiring a sense of reverence and bringing artistic beauty into religious settings.

The First Presbyterian Church of Fort Dodge has a wealth of symbolism within its walls, far more than might be expected in a church with a Calvinist tradition. Its sanctuary with its carved wood and stained glass is recognized as one of the most beautiful in the community. *SERMONS IN WOOD, GLASS AND STONE* identifies the symbols found in the church and seeks to aid the reader in developing a greater understanding and appreciation for those symbols. The book, however, is more than just a guide book to the local church. It addresses Christian symbols in a broader sense and can be helpful to anyone interested in church architecture and symbolism.

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SERMONS IN WOOD, GLASS AND STONE



Symbolism
in the Fort Dodge
First Presbyterian
Church



Roger Natte
illustrations by
Douglas E. Breyfogle



SERMONS
IN WOOD, GLASS AND STONE
Symbolism in the Fort Dodge First Presbyterian Church

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illustrations by Douglas E. Breyfogle

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One finds them everywhere, from the pyramid with an eye which appears on the dollar bill to the golden arches which everyone identifies with a hamburger: symbols truly pervade our daily lives. Symbols are a visual or audio shorthand reflecting teachings or concepts that ordinarily would require many words to explain but a knowledgeable observer can, at a glance, grasp the meanings. To the uninformed the symbol may convey nothing. A lamb may to an outsider, non-Christian or non-Jew, convey nothing but one familiar with the two religions recognizes it as representing a sacrifice in atonement for the sins of the believer. Symbols are often seen as synonymous with signs although in reality there is a significant difference. Simply put, a sign points to something specific while a symbol expresses deeper meaning and elicits a multitude of ideas and feelings.

A word of Greek origin, meaning “something that pulls things together,” a symbol is communal, it tends to bind believers together, and it provides a method of communication. Christians around the world may be divided ethnically or linguistically but they all accept some common beliefs which are represented by symbols with which all may identify: the cross, the lamb, bread and the cup of wine. From the very beginning symbols have been part of the Christian faith. Christ himself frequently used symbols to teach and illustrate his truths. This is not only seen in his parables but also in his references to himself such as his use of “the light of the world,” “the word” or “the lamb.” Symbols were especially useful for times and societies in which there was much illiteracy and where an alternative to the written word was desired.

Symbols frequently depict common or secular images which have recognizable attributes associated with religious beliefs. A lamb, for example, is recognized in the secular world as innocent, gentle, and pure and often used as a sacrifice in ancient times, traits Christians associate with Christ. A sword brings images of power and authority, characteristics Christians identify with God, the Father. Symbols may evoke strong emotional responses, as in the depiction of the crucified Christ or Mary and the Christ child. Some symbols may be simple,

limited to a single basic element, as in the case of the lamb, or they may be compound, where two or more elements are combined, such as with the bread and wine in communion, to express a more complex religious truth.

Symbols are mortal and over time some may lose their effectiveness. To be effective, they must make sense to the viewer or the hearer and must reflect realities of compelling importance for the lives of those experiencing them. Some symbols used in First Presbyterian may no longer be part of the experience of people today and as a result may no longer be effective as a religious tool. How many people can today recognize the religious significance of the pelican which appears in the chancel window, or how many see the pomegranate as a symbol of resurrection, much less can imagine what relationship the fruit might have to it?

Historically, in the Reformed tradition, there has been resistance to the extensive use of visual symbols. Even today one will seldom see three dimensional images in a Presbyterian setting. Partly this has been a reaction to the practices of the Roman Catholic Church with its use of icons, artifacts associated with the saints, and great cathedrals. There was a fear that these symbols, often with their great beauty and appeal to one's physical senses, would detract from the proper focus on God. Today, however, it is generally recognized in the Presbyterian denomination that symbols do have an appropriate place in the Church and may serve to glorify and praise God. Beauty can produce a sense of reverence and inspiration, great churches can inspire a sense of the awesome power and presence of God, church furnishings can produce a sense of warmth and the physical action involved in the church services can contribute to a sense of community.

Increasingly in Protestant churches there seems to be a recognition that worship is not just an intellectual exercise but encompasses our entire being: the intellect, the emotions and physical activity. Protestant churches are more and more adopting the practice of marking one with ashes on Ash Wednesday. Baptism now may include a very visible and audible pouring of the water and is celebrated, not in some far corner, but on the floor, close to the congregation, with the infant carried down the aisle and presented to the worshippers. The "Passing of the Peace"

and even embracing is increasingly being used in some churches. It is essential, however, for us to realize the true role of the symbols, not to please our senses, but to instruct and remind the worshipper of spiritual truths. This, then, requires knowledge of the meaning behind and reason for each symbol.

In the Presbyterian Reformed tradition the church is the place where the word of God is preached, the power of God is felt and the spirit of God is manifested, the love of God is revealed and the unity of believers is understood. In planning and constructing a church edifice these concepts play a primary role. Consideration is given to the beliefs, traditions, and methods of the worship of the congregation, as well as the technology and materials available. Our local church fathers and the architects responsible for the construction of the current church building were concerned with three things; creating a structure which was functional, one which was beautiful, and one which reflected the basic concepts of their faith. It is believed that in First Presbyterian they were successful in achieving all three.

Ideally a church is designed, built, and furnished with the idea of teaching the truths of Christianity. This teaching often is done through the use of the symbolic and, indeed, symbols are an important part of the language of faith, along with the written word. A symbol may be defined as a representation, visual or conceptual, of what is unseen or invisible. Used to compress a religious belief into a simple, meaningful representation which can readily be grasped and easily retained, symbols can take a variety of forms: words, colors, graphic designs, works of art, music, furniture placement, architectural style, and certain actions or rituals.

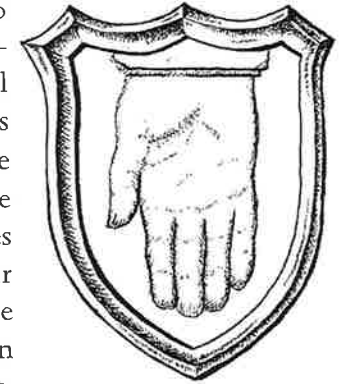
First Presbyterian Church has a wealth of symbols, far more than one might expect in a church of the Calvinist tradition, all of which should seek to lead the worshipper to meditation and prayer. Symbolism can be seen in the exterior style of the building. In the late 1940s when plans were being made for the current church building, local church leaders were encouraged by the architect to consider a modernistic architectural style. The style was rejected. Instead, an English Gothic design which dates back to the 1700s was chosen. This style reinforced a sense of tradition, ties with Christians who have come before us, sug-



gesting the eternal nature of the Christian faith. The Gothic style can be identified by certain characteristics: the use of brick or stone, exterior wall supports called buttresses, lancet shaped or pointed arched windows and entries, and, frequently, roofs with slate shingles. Each of these is designed to elicit a certain emotional or mental response which relates to Christian beliefs. The use of stone in the walls and slate on the roof, and the wall buttresses create feelings of the strength and the permanence of God and God's church. A conscious effort was made to build the church of natural materials such as wood and stone and with a minimal use of manufactured material such as steel. The architect and builders prided themselves on the fact that steel was used only for a single beam supporting the balcony and for beams supporting the floor of the sanctuary. The pointed Gothic arches, which are repeated again and again, not only on the exterior, but also in the interior and in the furnishings, are intended to represent what is commonly called the "prayer point," the lines of the traditional position of two hands in prayer. Unconcerned about handicapped accessibility, the architects designed the church so that its sanctuary would be above ground level, unlike most public buildings being constructed at the time and churches of today. Steps lead up to the entry of the present church. From a doctrinal standpoint the steps take us to a place higher than the secular world, a temporary separation from the world outside. The outside entry is topped by a stone cross and the door frame itself has a shield and a cross mounted upon it.

One enters First Presbyterian through the narthex or vestibule which is separated from the main part of the church by a wall with stained

glass windows designed to be opened to allow overflow seating. The floor of natural slate is meant to show beauty as well as permanence. The ceiling light fixtures are of the same style as used in the nave or sanctuary. Their design includes the "prayer point" as seen in the other arches in the church and a quatrefoil or four lobed clover-like design representing the four gospels. The oak frame of the bulletin board next to the entry doors is highlighted by a hand with an open palm extending downward through clouds, a symbol suggesting God reaching out or down to this world.



The furniture in the narthex is a variety of types from a variety of sources and represents the historic roots of the local church. The table on the right side of the doors as one enters is a communion table on which is carved "I am the Bread of Life." and comes from the previous church building on First Avenue South. Mounted on the east pillar holding several stones is a small shelf upon which is carved the inscription, "He who is without sin..." It originally was part of the furnishings for Westminster Presbyterian Church and was acquired by First Church when Westminster closed. Next to the west pillar is a table and case which displays the written record of memorials and, on the north wall, is a board which lists those who contributed to the fund for the purchase of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary. Above the memorial table is a plaque commemorating the Mariners, an adult group which in past years was very active. The other two tables are of unknown origin or significance.

The sanctuary, referred to in many churches as the nave, is rich with symbolism in structural forms, in furnishings and in the stained glass windows. All are intended to turn the thoughts of the worshipper to God and God's teachings. The word "nave" comes from the Latin word meaning "ship." A church sanctuary was given the name because its shape with its pews and because the concept of the people of the church pulling together were reminiscent of ancient galley ships. The church itself in the broad sense was also symbolized by a ship.



Ships were traditionally seen as places of refuge from the storms of the seas and were commonly used to symbolize a missionary journey or a journey through life.

Upon entering the sanctuary or nave of First Presbyterian the initial impression is one of reverential awe created by the beauty and spaciousness. One's spirit is drawn upward to God by the lofty arching ceilings and the tall narrow windows. The ceiling is supported by massive but simple trusses with each truss weighing six tons. The trusses support fifty-three pulins, horizontal cross pieces, which, in turn, support the roof. All are meant to give the feeling of strength and stability.

Windows themselves symbolize Christian life in that they allow light to penetrate the darkness of the edifice. As windows open to let in warmth and light so Christians can open their hearts to receive the Spirit and good thoughts and ideas and lives can be protected from harm as windows can be closed to protect from wind and rain. As windows may be beautiful when sunlight shines through them, so a human life may be radiant and rich when the light of Christ shines through.

Most of the furnishings in the church are of Gothic style light oak wood recognized for its richness and strength. The oak tree is



Grapes and Vines



Ivy Vine



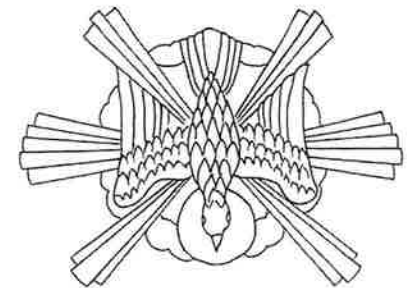
Wheat



Oak Leaf and Acorns

mentioned frequently in the Bible and in other ancient literature and almost universally symbolizes great strength and endurance. Most of the furniture is trimmed with carvings of the grape vine as a reminder of the centrality of Christ. ("I am the vine and you are the branches" John 15: 5.) Immediately above the center aisle door, inside the nave, are carvings of vine and grapes and a cross on a shield. The ends of the pews on the center aisle are carved with four images: grapes and vines, the ivy vine, sheaves of wheat, and an oak leaf and acorns. Ivy, because it is forever green, is a symbol of eternal life and since it clings to its support it is a symbol of commitment and affection. Wheat suggests the bounty which God has given to us and the acorn suggests that mighty things can come from small beginnings

The center aisle, leading to chancel, is, in some churches, meant to signify the "way of life," the way to Christ and the cross (John 14: 6). To the left of the chancel is a false entry created to balance the actual doorway on the right. In this space is the only painted symbol in the church, the descending white dove,

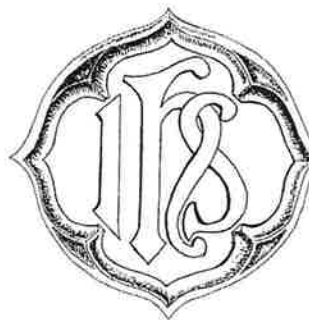


the form taken by the Holy Spirit at the time of Jesus' baptism (Luke 3: 21-22). Divine inspiration is depicted by the descending dove. The dove, with a blue nimbus or halo and backed by a red shield, is superimposed on a large cross. This compound symbol has three colors; blue, white and red. Light blue, generally associated with water and sky, symbolizes

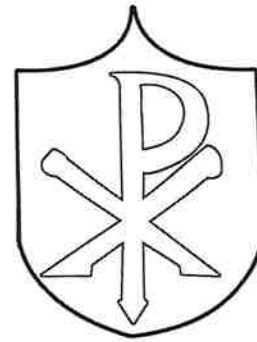
purity and truth; white symbolizes purity and joy; and the red, the sacrifice of Christ and the fire of Pentecost. In some churches this symbol is associated with the baptismal font and it may, in this church, have marked the intended location of the font.

As one looks down the aisle to the chancel the focal point is the communion table with the open Bible and the cross. The chancel was, in Medieval churches, a special place for monks but in many American churches, as in this church, it has become the rostrum for the choir. The chancel space is defined by the Gothic stone arch and is raised above the floor of the sanctuary by three steps for theological reasons as well as a practical reason. Being placed above the sanctuary floor suggests a higher spiritual level and the three steps symbolize St. Paul's trilogy of "faith, hope, and love" (I Corinthians 13:13). From a more practical standpoint the raised platform simply increases visibility to the congregation. The rail, which separates the chancel from the main body of the nave, is open in the center symbolizing the free access that believers have to the throne of grace because Christ, through his death, fulfilled the law and atoned for the sins of all believers. The lower walls of the chancel are covered with oak wainscotting of twenty-two panels with each panel bearing a shield with a Biblical symbol. A shield itself symbolizes trust, faith and protection of God. The images carved on the shields were selected for their religious meaning and placed in an historic and teaching progression beginning with creation, going through major events of the Old Testament, the four Gospels, Christ's parables and ending with the symbol for Pentecost.

On the back wall of the chancel is a decorative carved screen called a "reredos" taken from the Latin word meaning "behind", in this case meaning behind the altar. The reredos is embellished with carvings of grapes and the vine, the monogram IHS and roses. A shield bearing the monogram



Greek letters IHS



PX crowns the piece. Here again is the vine with grapes which, in the New Testament, represents the gifts of grace through Holy Communion. In the Old Testament grape clusters were a sign of God's gracious providence. The monogram IHS also used on the communion table, consists of the first letters of Jesus' name in Greek. The rose is the symbol of the prophecy of a Messiah and the Nativity. The Greek letters Chi Rho, an X over a P, are the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ.

Attached to the reredos is a shelf called the "retable" upon which the symbols of the faith, the cross and candles, plus vases for flowers, are placed. Usually the altar cross is in the center of the retable. Some churches have the cross suspended high above the people but placing the cross at a lower level suggests that God is in the midst of the worshippers, not removed from them. The cross ordinarily used in a Presbyterian church is what is known as the Calvary Cross, a simple empty cross with a three step base, unembellished except for the monogram, INRI, the first letters of the four Latin words for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews (John 19:19), the title given to Jesus by Pontius Pilate and ordered placed on the cross above the crucified Christ. The three step base of the cross again refers to the trilogy of St. Paul; faith, hope, and love. Unlike the Catholic or Orthodox churches which use the cross with a crucified Christ, the Reformed tradition uses the empty cross to focus on the resurrection rather than the death of Christ. On either side of the cross is a seven candle candelabra which represents the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and speaking in tongues (I Corinthians 12:8-10, Acts 2:1-4).



In front of the retable is the "sedilia," a three seat bench or pew. Nineteenth century Protestant churches provided for three separate pulpit chairs: for the preacher, the song leader and the guest preacher. In the twentieth century many churches came to consider the clerical

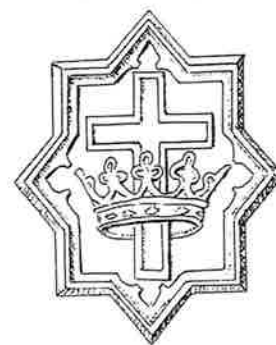
chairs as being suggestive of thrones, therefore objectionable, and often deleted them altogether. The clerical chairs tradition appears to have been carried over in the First Church in the form of the three place bench. Originally located directly behind the communion table, the three seat sedilia now reminds the worshippers of Christ's invitation to have fellowship with Him and with each other. The relatively recent change in the location of the communion table to the front of the chancel seems to weaken the symbolic relationship between the table and the seats. Now the sedilia is generally unused but probably remains in place because of tradition. Clergy seating is now inconspicuous, hidden behind the pulpit and the lectern, allowing the visual attention to be placed on the furnishings: the pulpit, the lectern, the baptismal font and the communion table.

In the Reformed tradition these four pieces of furniture, representing the key components of worship, are located in the chancel or close by, in order to be clearly visible to the worshippers. All four are trimmed with carved vines which refer to Christ. Unlike some churches in which there is only the pulpit, the lectern and the pulpit in First Presbyterian are kept separate in order to draw attention to the separate aspects of worship: the reading of the word at the lectern and the preaching or expounding upon it at the pulpit. The ever present communion table reminds one of Christ's continuing invitation to have fellowship with Him. The always present baptismal font is a continuing invitation to become one of the Christian community.

The focal point of the chancel is the Communion table, referred to by some denominations as the altar. Originally the table was located in this church at the rear of the chancel, a practice more common in denominations which view communion as a sacrament celebrated by a priest who traditionally faced away from the congregation. In most Presbyterian churches the table has been placed on the level of the congregation, serving to emphasize the invitation to participate and increasing the sense of involvement by the people. In First Presbyterian the table has been moved to the front of the chancel but remains elevated above the congregation. When the table is not being used for Communion an open Bible on a missal stand is displayed as a visual reminder of the centrality of the Scriptures. The two candles, one on

each side of the Bible, signify the two natures of Christ, divine and human. Lighted candles refer to Christ, the light of the world. The altar or communion table is also the place upon which the congregation's offerings are placed, signifying sacrificial giving.

The front of the Communion table is divided into three panels, representing the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Carved on the outside panels are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega, symbolizing the eternal nature of Christ, the beginning and the end (Revelation 1: 8). On the center panel are the Greek letters IHS, the first three letters in the name Christ. Roses, sheaves of wheat, vines and grapes trim the table reminding us of Christ, the Nativity, God's gifts and Christ's suffering and death.

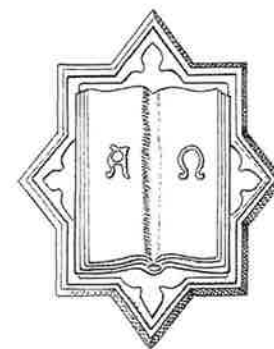


Cross and Crown

In First Presbyterian the Scriptures are generally read from the lectern and an open Bible always rests on it. The cross and the crown superimposed upon an eight pointed star embellish the front of the lectern. Separately the cross represents suffering and death and the crown, victory, authority and kingly office. As a compound symbol it stands for victory over death and promises the reward of eternal life to those who believe in the crucified Savior. "Be thou faithful unto death,

and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). The eight pointed star symbolizes regeneration or baptism.

Sermons are given from the pulpit. One change in divine worship resulting from the Reformation was an increase in the importance of the sermon with its exposition of the Word, as opposed to the Catholic tradition in which the Mass itself was the essence of worship. Several symbols are carved into the pulpit. On the front is an open Bible, superimposed on an eight pointed star and carved on the Bible are the monograms, Alpha and Omega. The other symbols are



Alpha and Omega



Oak Leaf and Acorns



Christmas Rose



Pomegranate



Laurel

oak leaves and acorns, the four petal or Christmas rose, a pomegranate, and the laurel with its berries. The oak leaves and acorns symbolize strength and virtue. The white rose, which bloomed at Christmas, signifies love and beauty, the nativity and prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. The pomegranate is the symbol of the Resurrection. In the Old Testament the pomegranate, an orange sized fruit filled with many kernels of red pulp, appeared as a pillar decoration in Solomon's temple and an ornament on the robes of the high priests. It was

symbolic of the fertile power of God's word and the blessings which God had bestowed upon the Jewish people. In the New Testament additional meanings have come to be associated with the fruit. Its redness suggested the blood of Christ and as the pomegranate ripened it burst its shell, exposing and releasing its seeds suggesting the truth of Christ's bursting from the grave on Easter morning. It also suggested the unity of the Church with its many seeds in unity with the whole. Laurel was used for wreaths, often worn by winning athletes or victorious generals, the symbol of triumph and, because the foliage does not wilt, suggestive of eternity.

A cloth, called an *antependium*, usually hangs from the pulpit and the lectern. (If it is on the communion table it is called a *frontal*)

Its color changes according to the season of the Church year. Green, which represents growth and hope, is used most of the year, starting the day after the celebration of Christ's baptism, first Sunday after Epiphany (January 6) and continuing to the day before the beginning of Lent, and again after Pentecost until Advent. During Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, and during Lent purple is used since it represents royalty and penitence. During the Christmas season and at Easter, the major events of salvation, the color is white, symbolizing purity, joy, celebration and the eternal presence of God. Red, the color related to sacrifice, energy, love and commitment, is used at Pentecost and on Good Friday. In the Presbyterian Church the cloth is embroidered with the symbol of the Presbyterian Church.

The baptismal font is located on the congregational level. The readily visible font, not placed in a remote corner, emphasizes that baptism, the initiation into the family of God, is not a second class sacrament but of great importance to the community of God's worshipping people and, if the table is also on the congregational level, equal in significance to Holy Communion. The act of baptism is an act of the whole Christian community, not just because it initiates the person into the community but because it witnesses to the congregation's commitment to support the baptized in their Christian life. There are three symbols on the six sided font; an oak leaf and acorns, a Christmas rose, and a fleur de lis. The acorn and oak leaf are most closely related to Baptism in that acorns are seen as symbolizing how great things grow out of small seeds. The fleur de lis, a stylized lily, in the Protestant tradition symbolizes the Trinity, three in one, three petals banded together into one flower. In a Catholic or Orthodox setting it is the Madonna lily, symbol of the Virgin Mary.



Fleur-de-lis

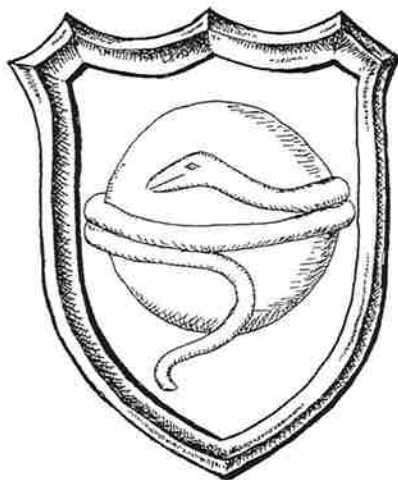
CHANCEL SHIELDS

Twenty-two shields bearing Biblical symbols are carved on the wainscoting panels of the chancel. Beginning on the right they symbolize significant events and teachings of the Church from Creation to Pentecost.

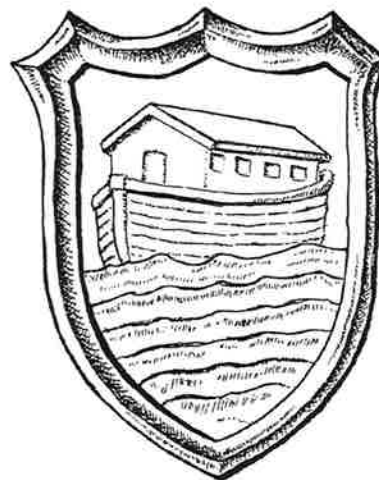


1. The Star of Creation is a six pointed star representing the six days that God used to create the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1-31



2. The Spread of Sin is symbolized by the serpent coiled around the world. This symbol denotes the sinful nature of humankind everywhere as a result of Adam's Fall.

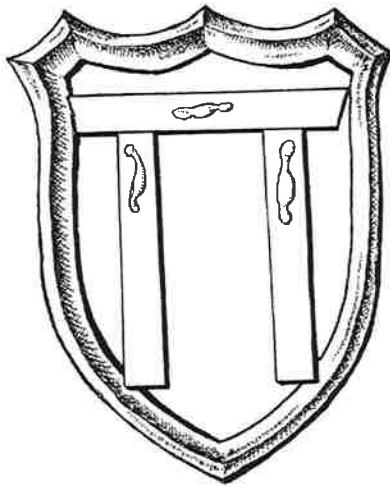


3. The Ark in the Deluge refers to the flood in which God punishes human kind for their evil and only Noah and his family are saved. An ark in the Scriptures is seen as a refuge provided by God for his people.



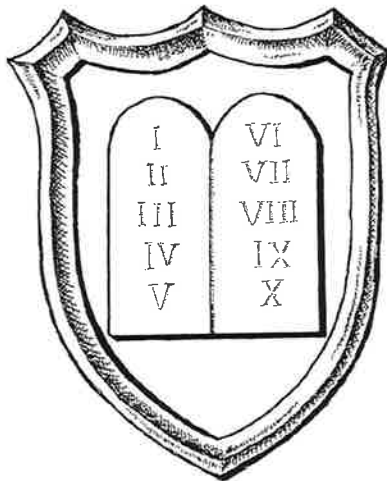
4. The Burning Bush represents God's call to Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and bondage. In a broader context fire and flames refer to the pervading presence of God as at Mount Sinai in the Wilderness and at Pentecost.

Exodus 3:2-6



5. The blood sprinkled Door Posts and Lintel is the symbol of God's protection of the Israelites in Egypt at the passage of the destroying angel. It is central to the Passover festival commemorating the beginning of the Exodus from Egypt.

Exodus 12:1-30



6. The Ten Commandments or the moral law given to Moses at Mount Sinai in the Wilderness.

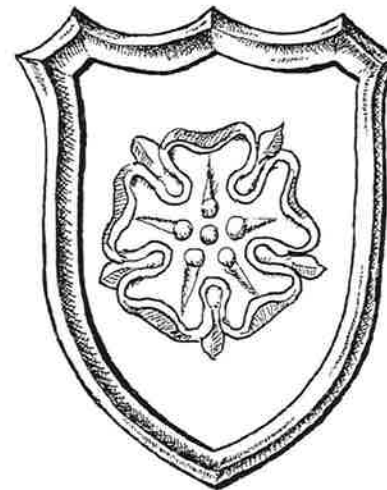
Exodus 20



7. The Ark of the Covenant was the shrine created at Mount Sinai and carried by the Israelites through the Wilderness and into the Promised Land. The Ark was considered to be the embodiment of the presence of Yahweh and a reminder of God's covenant with the Israelites as the chosen people. The covenant was the promise that God made to Abraham that He would bless Abraham's descendants if they followed him.

Genesis 15:18-19, 17:19-22

Exodus 37

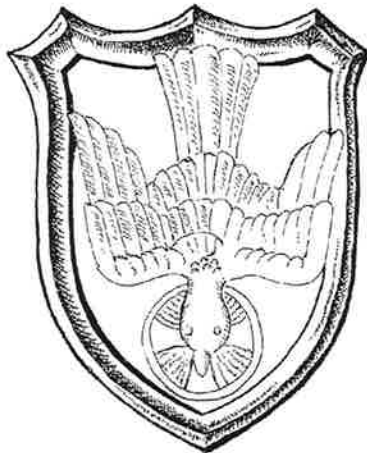


8. The Messianic Rose, also called the Christmas Rose, is the symbol for the promise of a messiah and Christ and of the Nativity. It is a white rose which blooms at Christmas. Early Christian legend taught that the rose grew in Paradise without thorns. After the fall of man the rose acquired thorns to remind man of the sins he had committed and his fall from grace. Nevertheless the beauty and fragrance remained to remind man of the splendors of paradise.



39. The Descending Dove represents the Holy Spirit which descended upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. The dove also expresses gentleness, innocence and purity.

Luke 3:21-22
Matthew 3:16
Mark 1:10
John 1:32



10. The Winged Man is associated with Matthew who, in his Gospel, tells the genealogy of Jesus and emphasizes the human nature of Christ. Wings in a symbol indicate a divine mission.



11. The Winged Lion is the symbol for Mark, possibly because he dwells more on Christ's resurrection in his Gospel than do the authors of the other Gospels and he places great emphasis on the royal dignity of Christ. The lion itself connotes kingly dignity, strength, and protection and ancient legend held that young lions were born dead but came to life three days after birth when breathed upon by their father. The association with Christ and his resurrection is obvious.



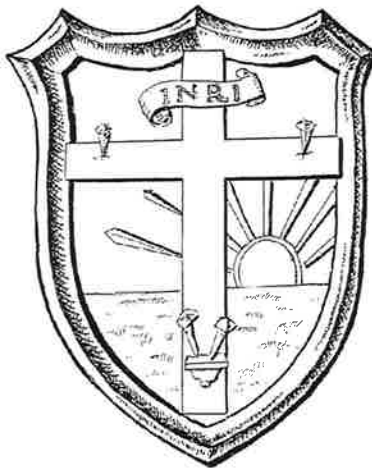
12. The Winged Ox has come to represent Luke because Luke's emphasis in his Gospel is on the sacrificial nature of Christ. The ox itself was used for sacrifices and symbolizes strength, patience, and service.

Matthew 11:30

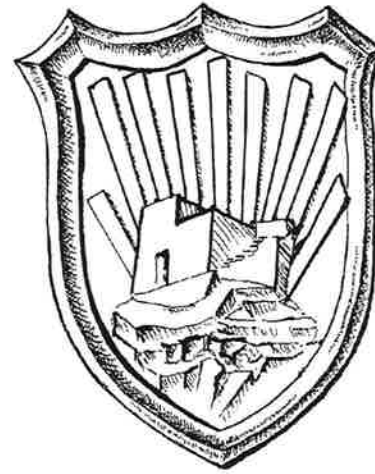


13. The Winged Eagle refers to John and his Gospel. John emphasized contemplation and discovery of the mystery and wisdom of God. The eagle was seen as flying to great heights and, therefore, achieving new levels of perception and understanding. It is also associated with Christ's ascension and man's rising to the heavens and finding a new life.

Psalm 103:5
Ezekiel 1:10

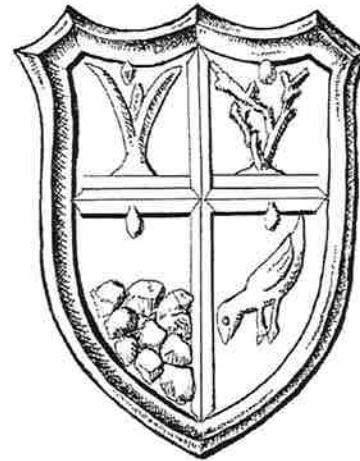


14. The Empty Cross and Sunset obviously refer to the Resurrection of Christ.



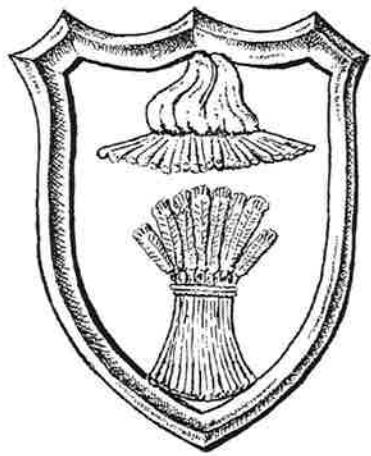
15. The parable of The House Built upon a Rock. Two men build houses, one takes the easy way and builds without thought and without a good foundation and the other builds on a rock with an eye for the future. The first meets with disaster. A man's character is like a house, some of us are earnest while others are content with a careless and unexamined life.

Matthew 7:24-27
Luke 6:47-49



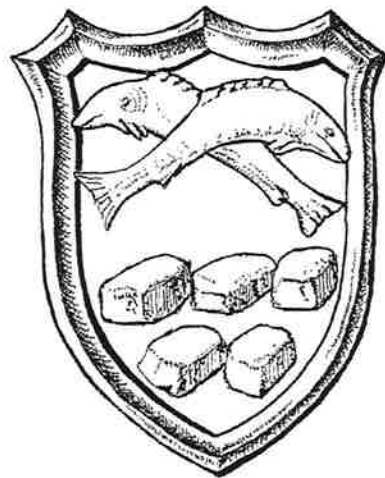
16. Jesus' parable of the Four Soils. A farmer sows his seed some falls on fertile ground and produces great harvest but much falls on infertile and shallow soil and is lost. So it is with Christ's followers who teach God's kingdom and do his deeds. Sometimes they will be successful but many times they will not. One should not be discouraged because God will bless them abundantly.

Matthew 13:3-9



17. The parable of the Wheat and the Tares. A farmer sows seed but finds weeds growing among the wheat but the weeds are not immediately removed lest the wheat be lost also. At harvest the weeds are cut first and burned and then the wheat is harvested. Likewise it is with people but one should not be quick to judge others. We should address the evil in ourselves but be cautious in our dealings with the evil in others.

Matthew 13:24-30



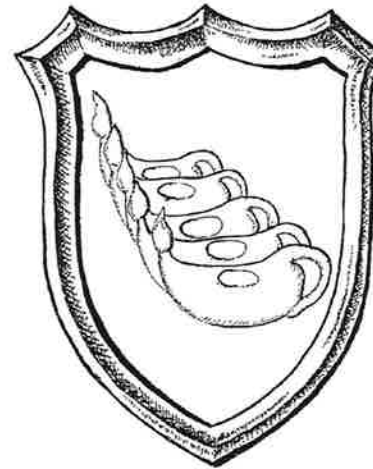
18. In the story of the Loaves and the Fishes Jesus feeds five thousand from five loaves and two fish. By calling upon apparently modest resources freely given enough can be had to meet the needs of all.

Mark 6: 30-44, and 8:1-9

Matthew 14:13-21

Luke 9:10-17

John 6:5-13 and 6:32-34



19. The Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins, a parable told by Jesus in which preparedness is emphasized. No one knows the day or hour of his/her death or the day of the return of Christ, and one should be prepared. Each of us should not live for the moment but should keep in mind the ultimate return.

Matthew 25:1-13



20. A Lamp on a Stand. Christ shared with the people that a lamp is not meant to be hidden but it is displayed and in each individual the gospel is meant to be a shining light to the world.

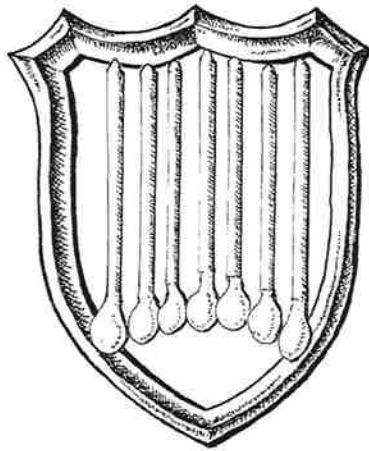
Mark 4:23

Luke 8:16-18



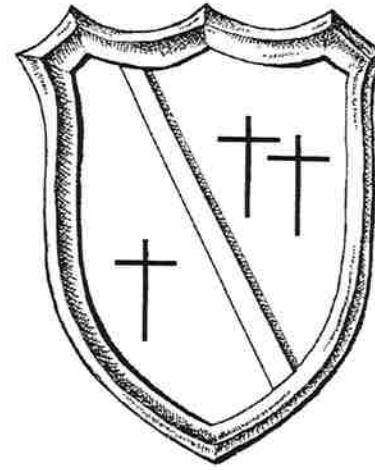
21. The Unforgiving Servant is a servant who has his great debts forgiven by his master only to go out and force his debtors to meet their obligations to him. God is willing to forgive us for all of our sins but we are unwilling to forgive even the smallest. God cannot enter into an unforgiving heart.

Matthew 18:23-35



22. The Seven Tongues of Flame of Pentecost symbolize the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples after Christ's ascension and the disciples experiencing the tremendous excitement and fervor of the occasion as they were filled with the Holy Spirit and drawn together in common devotion. The use of seven for the number of tongues may be because seven was considered a sacred number among Middle Eastern people and tended to denote completeness, perfection and consummation.

Acts 2:1-4



23. Shields have also been placed on each of the trusses overhead. All of these shields are the same, each displaying the three crosses of Calvary.

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The most striking and beautiful elements in the sanctuary are the stained glass windows. Constantly changing as the sunlight changes, they provide a splash of colored light on otherwise cold stone and plaster, adding an emotional factor to worship. Such art does not make God present but it opens our eyes to the unseen presence of God. The twenty windows in the nave trace events in the life of Christ from the announcement to the shepherds of His birth to Pentecost. The double windows reflect the dual nature of Christ, human and divine. The triple windows in the chancel and the balcony seek to remind us of the Trinity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

WINDOWS IN THE NAVE

Right side front to back.



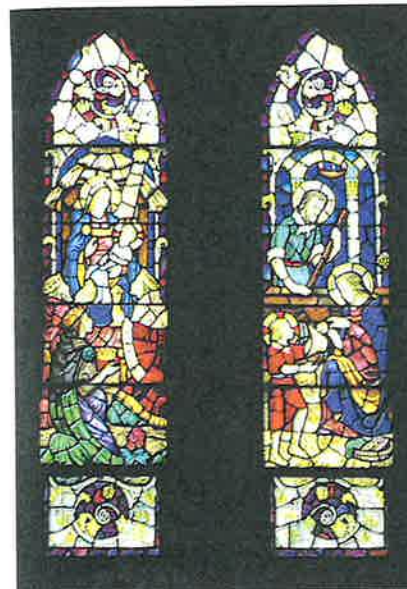
1. The angel's announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. The angel is surrounded by a full body halo or nimbus called an aureole.

Luke 2:8-14.

2 The Nativity with Joseph, Mary and the Christ child. All have halos or nimbuses. A nimbus has come to be emblematic of sanctity and denotes a person recognized for unusual piety, such as Joseph and Mary, the apostles, martyrs, and saints. Rays of light were ancient emblems of divine power and three

rays or tri-radiants are used only for a person of the Trinity and red rays represent Christ. Joseph carries a lantern sending a light out to the world.

Luke 2:6-7

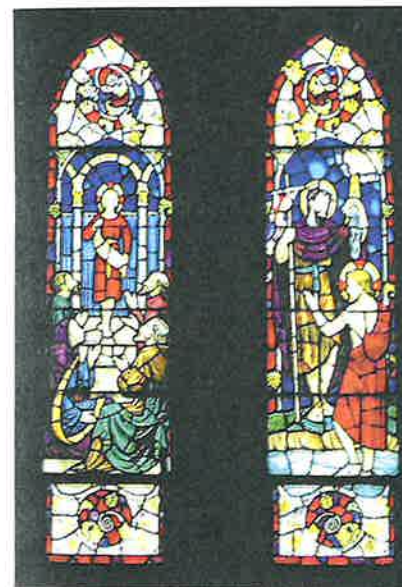


3. The three wise men or Magi from the East who followed the star visit Mary and Jesus and present gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gifts have symbolic meaning: gold to be given to a king, frankincense a gift for the divine, and myrrh emblematic of death to be given to someone who is suffering. Note the red Messianic rose, a symbol which appears at the feet of Christ in most of the windows in which He appears.

Matthew 2:1-12

Psalm 72:10-11

4. The boy, Jesus, at home with Joseph in his father's carpenter shop and Mary with her sewing. Jesus holds a toy ship, usually symbolic of the Church or a journey. Its masts suggest a cross.



5. Jesus in the Temple. Jesus with the Old Testament scrolls confronting four religious leaders in the temple with his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Luke 2:41-50

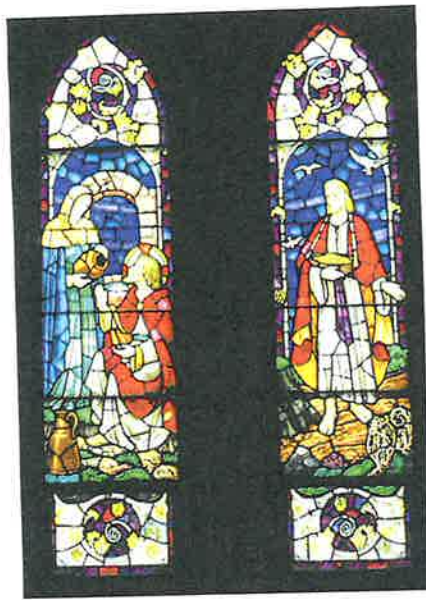
6. The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. John's staff is a pilgrim's staff, a cruciform, in the form of a cross with a white banner with the red cross symbolizing rejoicing and victory. Water, the symbol of cleansing and purifying, is being poured from a scallop seashell

or cockleshell which is the symbol for both a pilgrimage and immortality.

Luke 3:21-22

Mark 1:9-11

Matthew 3:13-17



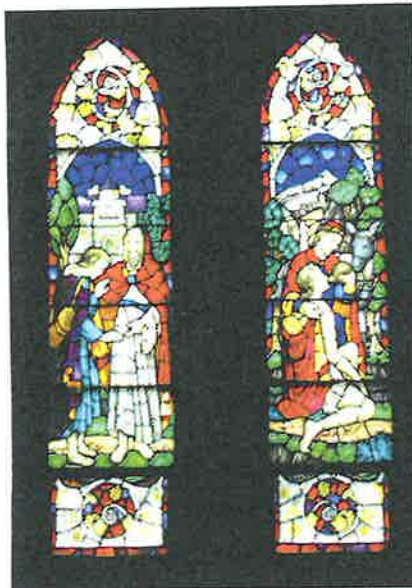
7. The Woman at the Well. Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman at the well who draws him a drink of water. In the Scriptures water has a very important symbolic meaning and is used repeatedly to illustrate essential truths. It is seen as cleansing, refreshing and essential for life. Christ refers to himself as the living water. When the windows show Jesus as an adult he is dressed in white and scarlet clothing, the white representing purity and the red the blood of Christ.

John 4:7-42

8. The Parable of the Sower who spread his seed on the shallow soil, the dry soil, the rocky soil and the good soil some of which died or was lost or was eaten by the birds but some of which flourished. The gospel is like the seed, preached to the world, sometimes falling on deaf ears and rejected, sometimes falling on receptive ears and flourishing.

Matthew 13:3-8, 13:18-23 *Luke 8:5-15*

Mark 4:3-8, 4:14-20

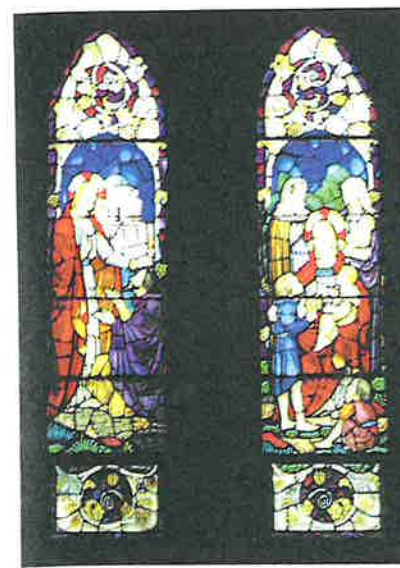


9. The Parable of the Prodigal Son. The father, with his fine home in the background, comes out to greet and welcome his contrite son back after the earlier estrangement as God is willing to reach out to us with His forgiveness.

Luke 15:11-32

10 The Parable of the Good Samaritan. A Samaritan ministers to an injured man after a priest and a Levite had passed him by on the other side. The Samaritan, a despised member of Jewish Society.

Luke 10:30-37



11. Jesus healing Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, on the road to Jerusalem.

Matthew 20:29-34

Mark 10:46-52

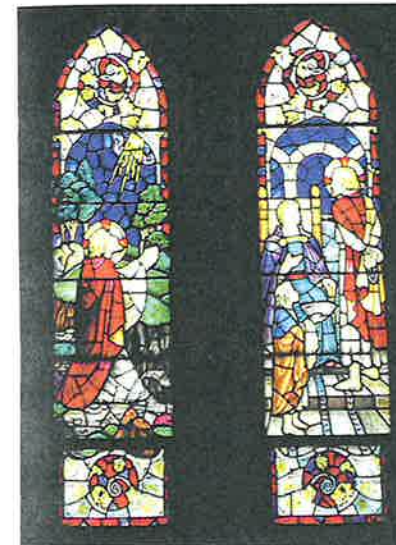
Luke 18:35-43

12 Blessing the Children. Christ is surrounded by children and their mothers and one child offers a bouquet of flowers, possibly daisies, symbolic of childlike innocence.

Matthew 19:13-15

Mark 10:10-16

Luke 18:15-18



13 Gethesemane. Christ, shortly before his trial and crucifixion, is sorrowful and troubled, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane while his disciples, Peter, James and John, were sleeping. Rays of light are streaming from heaven.

Matthew 26:36

Luke 22:39-46

Mark 14:32-42

14 Christ Before Pilate. Christ, in shackles, is being tried by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. A boy holds a basin of water in which

Pilate will wash his hand to absolve himself of any guilt for the crucifixion. Notice that Christ stands above the seated Pilate indicating superiority.

Matthew 27:11-26

Luke 23:1-25

John 18:28



15. Carrying the Cross. Christ carrying the cross under the whip of a Roman soldier.

Luke 23:33-43

John 19:17

16. The Crucifixion. Mary Magdalene and the Disciple John are at the cross during the final hours. The sign on the cross is I.N.R.I., "Jesus Christ, King of the Jews."

Matthew 27:33-44

Mark 15:22-32

Luke 23:33-43

John 19:25-27



17. The Deposition or Descent from the Cross. Christ, wearing a crown of thorns and with wounds in his hands, feet and side, is taken from the cross to be buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the event is observed by Mary Magdalene. The empty cross is draped with a white cloth symbolic of the resurrection.

Matthew 27:57-61 Luke 23:50-53

Mark 15:42-47 John 19:38-42

18. Easter Morning. The angel speaks to Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James

and announces that Christ is risen. The angel has two fingers raised representing a blessing or the two fold nature of Christ. In the back-

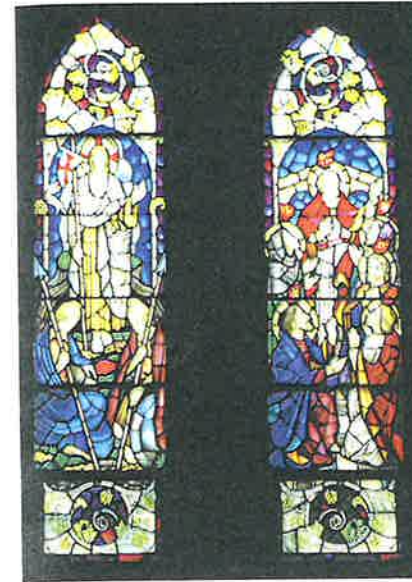
ground are three crosses against the rising sun, a symbol of rebirth or renewal.

Matthew 28:5-9

Mark 16:9-11

Luke 24:1-8

John 20:11-18



19. The Resurrection. The sleeping soldiers and Christ's victory over death. In the background is the banner of white with a red cross symbol of our Lord's joyful victory over death.

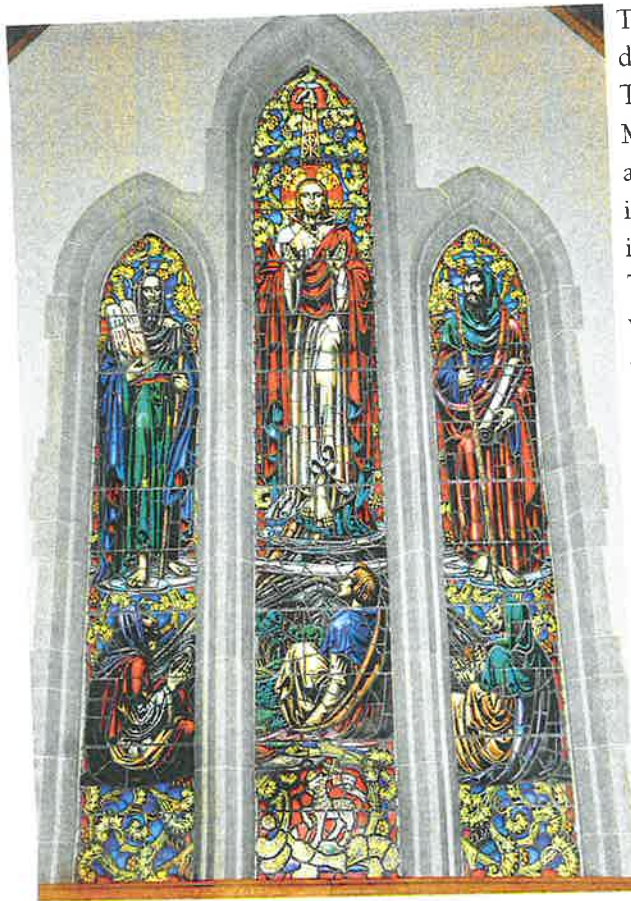
Matthew 28:2-4

Mark 15 and 16

20. Pentecost. Peter is shown as spokesman with five other disciples. Flames signifying the Holy Spirit are above each one's head.

Acts 2:1-41

BALCONY WINDOWS



This triple window depicts the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah are seen speaking with Jesus in a cloud. The Transfiguration was the revelation of the true and divine nature of Jesus who appears with shining white robes with heavenly radiance. The hand of God with two fingers extended, indicating the two fold nature of Christ, divine and human, points down from the heavens. Moses, holding a rod and

the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, and Elijah, holding scrolls, signify that the law and the prophets support Jesus and his mission. The event is observed by the three disciples, Peter, James and John. Also shown is a standing lamb with a red tri-radiant nimbus, indicating that it represents a risen Christ, and a white flag with a red cross, the symbol of joyous victory over death.

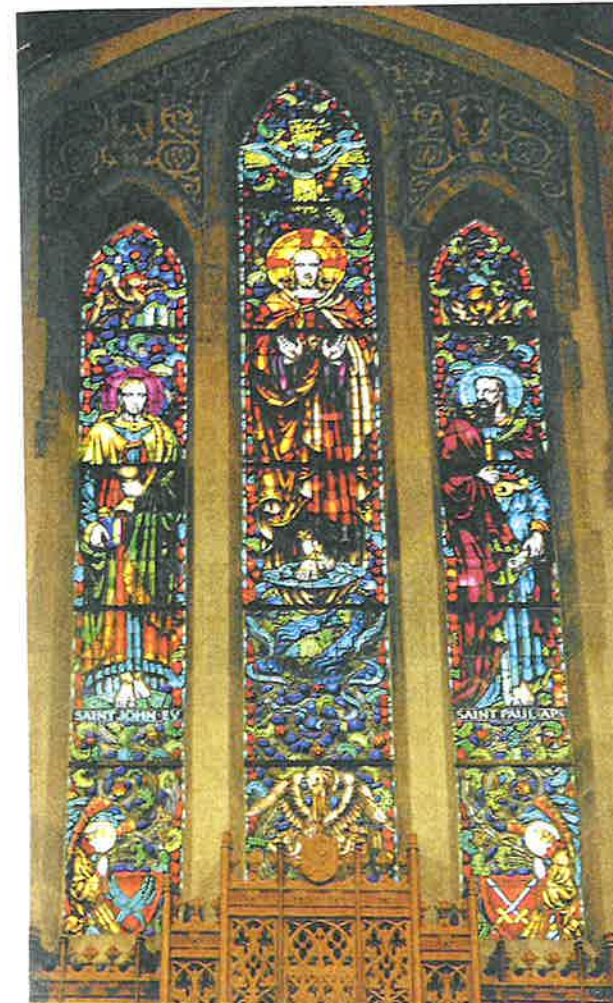
Matthew 17:1-13

Luke 9:28-36

Mark 9:2-10

II Peter 1:16-21

CHANCEL WINDOWS



The three windows in the chancel remind the viewer of the Trinity. The left window shows an eagle and an open Bible above St. John and, at the bottom, a praying angel, with a shield displaying two palm branches. The eagle represents a variety of religious ideas. The eagle is the specific symbol for St. John since his gospel, like the eagle, soared upward to the heavens, emphasizing the divine nature of the Savior. The eagle has come to stand for resurrection since legend

held that an eagle as it aged would fly to the sun, lose its feathers, would drop into the sea and then would return, regenerated with new plumage (Psalm 103:5). The eagle also represented generosity since it always left half of its prey for other birds which followed. Other virtues of the eagle include justice, courage, faith, and contemplation.

John holds a chalice which symbolizes the blood of Christ and Holy Communion and a book, which, when held by a disciple or

apostle, is recognized as the New Testament. At the bottom is a praying angel with a shield upon which there are palm branches symbolizing triumph and rejoicing.

The center window shows the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove in a four rayed nimbus or halo and rays shining down upon Christ. Christ's hands are raised with the palms facing outward as an invitation to all who would come. Beneath Christ is the symbol called the "piety of the pelican." Mythology taught that the mother pelican had greater love for its young than any other creature and would draw blood from its own breast to feed its young (Psalm 102:6). It was a symbol of atonement and Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

On the right window is a Roman soldier's helmet and sandals located above the Apostle Paul. Paul holds a sword and a scroll and was called to take the helmet of salvation and wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Sandals represent a journey and empty sandals have come to mean leaving behind worldly concerns (Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12). At the bottom is a praying angel with a shield on which there are crossed swords symbolic of the protection of God.

The area on the stone on each side of the windows is decorated with Gothic style branching lines and scroll work with the monograms Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, superimposed on crosses.

THE PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATIONAL SEAL

The most complex symbol in the church sanctuary is the denominational symbol or seal of the Presbyterian Church, USA. It can be found on the antependia, the cloth coverings on the pulpit and the lectern. It is a statement of the church's heritage, identity and mission expressed in graphic form. As Paul described the church as a single body with many members illustrating the pluralism of the church so the seal also has individual parts which taken together produce a symbolic unity. It incorporates separate and basic symbols of the faith: two flames, a fish, an open Bible, the communion cup, the baptismal font, a descending dove, and the pulpit. The denomination has made no official or definitive interpretation of the meaning of the seal leaving it open to the richness of individual interpretation.



Cross

The universal symbol of the Christian Church, the cross, is the dominant symbol and is most readily apparent when one considers the symbol in its entirety. The cross above all signifies the incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ and Christ's death and resurrection for our salvation.

Matthew 27



Flames

Remind us of the burning bush and God's revelation of Himself and the call to Moses to lead his people.

Exodus 3:1-15



The flames may also be seen as symbolizing the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life and the beginning of the Church at Pentecost with its charge to spread the news of God's love to all people.

Romans 8:1-17



Fish

Reminds us of the call to evangelize or be "fishers of men" and of Christ's ministry to all who hunger as key tenets of Presbyterian faith.

Luke 5:1-11



Open Bible

Represents the centrality in the Reformed tradition of the Scriptures as the means of knowing God.

Psalm:119:1-11



Pulpit

Highlights the role of preaching in Presbyterian worship

Matthew 28:16-20



Communion Cup

Commemorates Christ's death for our salvation through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

John 6:32-40



Descending Dove

Affirms the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring and interpreting the Scriptures and in the continuing life of the Church and the individual. The dove also symbolizes the peace and wholeness the Christ's death and resurrection brings to a broken world.

John 16:4-15



Baptismal Font

Signifies the washing away of sin and the Presbyterian acceptance of rebirth into a new life in Christ.

Romans 6:1-11

Triangle

The lower part of the design can be seen as an implied triangle, the traditional symbol of the Trinity. It may also suggest the nature of Presbyterian church government with its concern for balance and order.