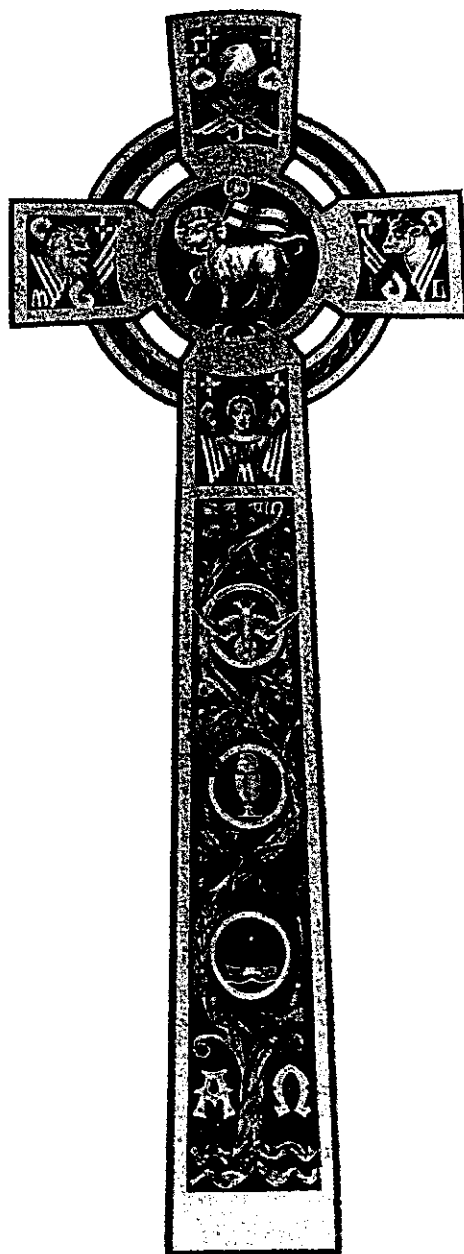


Mosaic Celtic Cross

First Presbyterian Church
Watertown, New York

Installed in 1951



MOSAIC CELTIC CROSS

First Presbyterian Church
Watertown, New York

The beautiful Mosaic Celtic Cross was installed in 1951, the 100th Anniversary of our brick church building. This was made possible by the generosity of Miss Nellie B. Wilmot, who provided funds in memory of her two sisters and their husbands, Mr. and Mrs. John Sterling and Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Griffith. At the same time, Miss Emma S. Lansing gave money to redecorate the entire interior of the sanctuary as a memorial to her sister, Katharine TenEyck Lansing, and the Lansing family, who had been active in the church for more than 130 years.

Keen interest was exhibited by members of the congregation as the 15 foot mosaic cross was carefully placed on the back wall of the chancel. Architecturally, a mosaic was ideal, for it belonged on a solid wall which cannot have outside illumination. It gave the brilliance, majesty and permanence which the 100th Anniversary church committee wanted for the chancel wall.

The cross, installed with over 30,000 small stones of Venetian mosaic, was designed by Katharine Lamb Tait. She was well known for design in stained glass and mosaic in churches throughout the United States. She was a great student of the Bible and Ecclesiastical symbolism. The minister in 1951, The Reverend Mr. David Watermulder, preached a series of sermons on the symbols contained in the cross, explaining thoroughly their meaning and special significance.

For 50 years, this impressive Venetian Mosaic Celtic Cross has truly been the focal point of our sanctuary. With mosaic, every change in lighting and every change in position of the observer throughout the sanctuary will bring out different beauties and contrasting impressions of colors.

~ Historic Note ~

Brochure presented in celebration of
The 150th Anniversary of the Brick Church Building
and
The 50th Anniversary of the Mosaic Celtic Cross

as

A gift to the members of
First Presbyterian Church

In Memory of Elder David C. Knowlton
A member of the Interior Decorating Committee in 1951
(1910-1999)

From Dr. Douglas M. and Mary P. Sanford

“SERMON IN STONE and SYMBOL”

The Celtic Cross in Mosaic

installed 1951

First Presbyterian Church

Watertown, New York

The **CROSS** is the most precious symbol of the Christian faith, standing as an everlasting sign of the compassionate love and sacrifice of God which brings redemption to mankind.

The **CELTIC CROSS**, with its circle and slightly tapering arms, is an ancient cross of western Scotland. It is particularly appropriate for a Presbyterian Church with its strong Scottish heritage, and is increasingly used by our churches. It usually has elaborate detail, and through the use of mosaic, our Celtic Cross includes most of the important symbols which are found in abundance in the Bible.

The **CIRCLE**, having no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God and our faith in everlasting life. Within the circle is the crown of thorns, symbolizing the crucifixion.

The **LAMB OF GOD** (Agnus Dei) in the center of the cross is symbolical of the sacrifice of God in Jesus Christ Our Lord. (Isaiah 53:5-7, John 1:29, Revelation 5:12-13). The head is surrounded with rays of light, signifying divinity.

The **RESURRECTION BANNER** carried by the lamb symbolizes Christ's victory over death and his ultimate triumph in the world, as suggested in Revelation 14 and in Revelation 11: "The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord."

The **SIX-POINTED STAR** behind the Lamb is symbolical of God, the creator of the universe (Genesis 1:31). As an emblem of God the Father, the six points refer to his attributes: wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

The **WINGED BEASTS** in the four arms of the cross symbolize the Four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), whose message radiates to all parts of the earth. These ancient symbols are taken from Revelation 4:7 and Ezekiel 10:14.

At the top of the cross is the **EAGLE**, believed to soar higher than any other bird, representing **JOHN**, because his gospel emphasizes the divine nature of Christ.

The lower arm of the cross contains the **WINGED MAN** which represents **MATTHEW**, because his gospel speaks of the human genealogy of Christ and emphasizes the manhood of our Lord.

In the left arm of the cross is the **WINGED LION** representing **MARK**, alluding to Mark 1:3. His gospel starts with a roar, with hardly any introduction. It rushes hurriedly over the life of Christ, leaving you the impression of Christ's royal status.

The right arm of the cross contains the **WINGED CALF** which represents **LUKE**. His gospel is not only the most beautiful, from a literary stand point, but from the fact that the humble Christ, Son of God yet Servant of Man, is portrayed so winsomely. Here you read of the shepherds in the field, of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son. So the calf, suggestive of sacrifice and humility, becomes the symbol of Luke's gospel.

Thus, Christ's full nature is expressed in this arrangement of the gospels, with JOHN (divinity) and MATTHEW (humanity) standing above and below Christ the Lamb, and MARK (royalty) and LUKE (humility) standing at the two sides.

The STARS next to the winged beasts are symbolical of the seven angels (Revelation 1:16, 20) watching over the seven types of churches (Revelation 1:10 to 3:22). The seven stars also symbolize the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

LOVE	LONGSUFFERING	FAITH	PEACE
JOY	GENTLENESS	TEMPERANCE	

The DESCENDING DOVE, the first medallion in the staff of the cross, is the historic symbol of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16). This symbol completes the symbolism of the Trinity, with God the Father (STAR), Son (LAMB), and Holy Spirit (DOVE). When used with a baptismal font, the dove is also the common symbol of baptism.

The CHALICE AND THE BREAD, the second medallion in the staff of the cross, is the symbol of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28)

The SHIP ON THE WAVES, the third medallion, symbolizes the Christian Church making her true course through the tumult of the world. The mast is like a Cross. This symbol has been adopted by the World Council of Churches, symbolizing our world-wide unity in the faith.

The VINE, BRANCHES, AND FRUIT, entwining the entire staff of the cross and weaving the symbols together, represent the words of Christ in John 15: "Abide in me, and I in you. I am the VINE, ye are the BRANCHES: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much FRUIT." Here is the secret of the saints: they knew that if you want to produce FRUIT, you must cultivate the root.

The ALPHA AND OMEGA at the base of the cross on each side of the stem and roots of the vine, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, alluding to the verse in Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Jesus is A to Z to us - he is everything in bringing the reality of God and the Christian Life close to Home! It is also used in Revelation 1 in the message to the seven churches.

SUMMARY

The beauty of symbolism lies in the many messages it can teach to different people at different times. Apart from the predominant symbol of the Cross and the meaning of the individual symbols within the cross, is its total message:

God the Father, revealed to us in **Christ His Son** who conquered death, is proclaimed to us through the four gospels. From this foundation, we receive the **Holy Spirit**, unite in a common communion at **The Lord's Supper**, and proclaim the faith to a **storm-tossed world** through His Church. In all these efforts we are sustained through Christ who abides in us and nurtures us until we bear the **fruit** of Christian character. Thus we live and move and have our being in the presence of God, the beginning and the end, from whom we come and to whom we return in life everlasting.



KATHARINE LAMB TAIT
(1895-1981)

The designer of the beautiful 15-foot Mosaic Celtic Cross installed in the chancel of First Presbyterian Church was Katharine Lamb Tait. Her professional career as stained glass designer, artist in mosaic, painter and illustrator spanned about 60 years.

Katharine Lamb Tait was the daughter of artists Charles Rollinson Lamb and Ella Condie Lamb. After studying art and design in New York City and Paris, she taught design at the Cooper Union Art School in New York City (1922-1926) and worked at the J. & R. Lamb Studios, which her grandfather had founded in New York City in 1857.

Watertown's Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library, completed in 1904, has interior decorations and paintings by her parents and uncle.

She married Trevor S. Tait, had four children, then returned to the Lamb Studios as head designer from 1936 to 1979. Before her death in 1981, at the age of 86, she had probably created over 1000 windows.

Selected major commissioned works of art done by Mrs. Tait are:

- (1) Nave and rose windows at the Protestant and Roman Catholic Chapels at the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. The history of the Corps from the Revolutionary years to World War II is illustrated in the bottom panels of each of the 10 large nave windows. An impressive archangel is the dominating feature of each window.
- (2) 26 nave windows in the First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia include a series on the life of Christ.
- (3) Hugo B. Froehlich Memorial "Art Education" window in the Newark, New Jersey Museum. This is an example of a monumental, statuesque, and somewhat stylized "New-Romanesque" kind of figure work.
- (4) "Singing Window" in the chancel of the chapel of the all-black Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The window measures 12 feet by 17 1/2 feet and contains over 10,000 painted pieces to illustrate spirituals.
- (5) Mosaic figures of Christ and the evangelists in Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, New York City.
- (6) Chancel Mosaic Crosses designed for the Canaan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. and the First Presbyterian Church in Watertown, New York.



Compiled by Mary P. Sanford
Photographer: Gary Burns