

KNOX CHURCH

STRATFORD, ONTARIO

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

A SHORT HISTORY
AND
GUIDE BOOK

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STRATFORD, ONTARIO

This booklet is prepared in the hope that members and visitors may have available information which will enable them to enjoy more fully the time spent in viewing the many decorative symbols and windows in Knox Church.

Much of the information is already contained in a larger work, published in 1931 and prepared by Mr. A. W. Fisher, who was Vice-President of the Stratford and Perth County Historical Society. It was the Chairman of that Society, the late Mr. R. Thomas Orr who encouraged Mr. Fisher, with the assistance of a committee representative of the various organizations in Knox, to undertake the writing of the history.

A SHORT HISTORY

Knox congregation owes its origins to the "Great Disruption" which took place in Scotland in 1843, when about 40% of the ministers of the Church of Scotland left the mother Church to form the Free Church. The division arose mainly over the right of the people, rather than the landowners, to elect the minister of a congregation. Though similar conditions did not prevail in Canada, divisions arose here also. In Stratford, in 1844, a large number of families withdrew from what is now St. Andrew's Church to form the Free Church. Worship services were held in the old log school house on the site of Central School. The Rev. Daniel Allan, a native of Scotland, was minister of the Free Church, 1844-46. For the next two years, occasional supply preachers

kept the congregation together until in 1849 the Rev. Thomas MacPherson came as a "missionary", sent out by the Colonial Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It was under his leadership that the first permanent church of this congregation was built on the southeast corner of St. Vincent and Norman Streets.

Later, when the congregation had outgrown the Norman Street building, plans were made to build on the present site; the church was consecrated on January 1873. This was a fine building with a steeple 211 feet high. Former President Taft of the United States of America spoke in Knox Church and is reported to have said that the steeple was the "most graceful and pleasing" he had seen in all his travels.

Unfortunately, it was this spire that was struck by lightning May 13, 1913, about 1:00 a.m.. The resulting fire not only destroyed the sanctuary, but Fire Chief Hugh Durkin, Chief of Police John A. McCarthy and Constable Matthew Hamilton were killed as they helped fight the flames. A civic funeral was given the dead and it was estimated 16,000 people lined the streets. Speaking to the press at the time, the Rev. Robert Martin, the minister of Knox, said "What we grieve most is the fact that there was loss of life. We are a sad lot of men, but hopeful; and we face the question of rebuilding with fortitude."

The present building was dedicated by the Rev. Dr. Herridge, Moderator of the General Assembly, on Sunday, March 21, 1915. The total cost, including the organ, was about \$95,000. The basic style of the building is perpendicular Gothic.

The Sunday School area at the north end of the church had been added in 1907 and escaped the 1913 fire. Renovations were carried out in this area in 1956.

During the 1950's extensive renovations were necessary in the sanctuary as it was discovered that part of the building was in an unsafe condition, due to the use of poor mortar in the original construction. The tower on the southeast corner was removed and much repointing work was done outside and the interior was redecorated. The total cost of the repairs and painting carried out from 1952-59 was \$120,000; also, the chapel was created in the east transept.

A TOUR OF THE SANCTUARY

The floor design is in the form of a cross (cruciform). The length is 121 feet and the height is 57 feet. To help you locate various items, you should note that, as you face the Choir, you are looking north.

THE COATS OF ARMS

There are many reminders of our rich heritage. At the ends of the beams supporting the roof are a number of shields emphasizing our heritage in Canada and our ancestral heritage.

Continuing along this wall are the coats of arms of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, the rose for the English tradition, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the fleur-de-lis for the French tradition.

On the east side from south to north are: Newfoundland, Alberta, British Columbia, the thistle for the Scottish tradition, Nova Scotia, Quebec and the shamrock for the Irish tradition.

The coat of arms of Ontario is a larger one painted on the east wall under the thistle.

Opposite the Ontario shield on the west wall is the Cross of St. Andrew; at the same height and to the north is the Cross of St. Patrick, opposite which is the Cross of St. George, the three crosses which together form the Union Jack.

THE GOSPEL WRITERS

The Gospel writers are sometimes referred to as the Four Evangelists, "euaggellion" being the Greek word for "Gospel". Four circular panels in the spandrels (the roughly triangular spaces to the left and right of the curved part of an arch) over the transept arches enclose quatrefoils (four leaves) showing the symbols of the four Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

William Barclay has pointed out that the symbols vary, "but the commonest allocations of them is this. The emblem of Mark is a man. Mark is the simplest and most straightforward of the Gospels. It is the nearest to being a report of Jesus' life. The emblem of Matthew is a lion. Matthew was a Jew writing for Jews and he saw in Jesus, the Messiah, the lion of the tribe of Judah. The emblem of Luke is the calf. The calf is the animal of sacrifice; and Luke saw in Jesus the sacrifice for the world. The emblem of John is the eagle. The eagle can fly higher than any other bird. John is the theological

gospel; its flights of thought are higher than those of any of the others.”

In some other traditions, it is Matthew who is depicted as the man because of his detailed account of the Incarnation of Christ. Mark is represented by the lion because his Gospel presents Christ as the King and the lion is the king of the beasts. You choose whichever tradition appeals more to you.

Even the animals are shown as having wings; wings are generally symbols of those who are the messengers of God.

Included in each representation in red is the traditional sign of the Trinity, the three-fold leaf. St. Patrick used the three-fold leaf of the shamrock to teach the doctrine of the Trinity.

OTHER WALL DECORATIONS

THE NAVE

West side: above the side aisle arches:

“The Pillar of Cloud”: Exodus 14:19

“The Ark of the Covenant”: Exodus 25:10

Both are symbols of God’s presence and protection.

The free-hand art work surrounding these symbols depicts the entwined rose, thistle and shamrock – reminders of the original settlers who brought the Presbyterian faith to Canada.

East side: above the side aisle arches:

“The anchor of the Soul”: Hebrews 6:19

The symbol of hope and steadfastness:

“The Crown and Palms”: St. John 12: 12-13

Revelation: 2:10; 7:9

The symbols of the King of Kings and of victory.

Surrounding these symbols are the wheat and grapes, representing the bread and wine of the Sacrament of the Lord’s supper.

There are numerous representations of the vine and branches in the nave, side aisle arches and in the Choir. They represent Christ and his followers. “I am the vine, ye are the branches”. (John 15:5)

MEMORIAL PLAQUES

On the west wall is a plaque commemorating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of Knox Church in 1844, carved in oak and donated by the Board of Trustees. It was unveiled, May 7, 1944 by Mr. Fred G. Scrimgeour, the oldest member of the Kirk Session.

In the west tower two bronze plaques record those who paid the supreme sacrifice in both World Wars. The one memorial was unveiled September 28, 1947 by Mrs. Grant S. Hall, the widow of one of those killed in the war.

THE TRANSEPTS

Stencil work on the arches shows the Easter lily, the sign of the Resurrection. Above the wooden dado are oak leaves and shields, the signs of

strength and defence against evil. Oak is also used as a symbol of the Cross.

The east transept was made into a chapel in 1959.

The west transept contains the Union Jack and the former official Canadian Ensign, the gift of Miss Sarah E. Orr and the new Canadian flag, donated in 1965 by Mr. John Chalmers.

THE CHOIR

Mr. A.W. Fisher's History states: "The central point of interest and most prominent feature is the specially designed and exquisitely carved reredos in oak, with buttresses and pinnacles, which are erected in the chancel behind the choir."

The mural in the centre depicts three panels (triptych) the "Spirit of Easter", showing our Lord with the two Marys in the Resurrection garden, amid Easter lilies. The painting is by Peter Charles Browne, who also designed the woodwork.

To the left is the Triumphal Lamb, holding a Cross with waving banner and standing upon the Book of Seven Seals (Revelation 5), a sign of the final victory of the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) over evil. Some equate the seven seals with the seven deadly sins.

To the right is a dove descending, symbolic of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Both symbols are set in quatrefoils (four leaves). The scroll work around them contains

several symbols, all reminders of Christ, the Easter lily, the grapes and vine and the rose. Song of Solomon 2:1 has been interpreted as referring to Christ as the Rose of Sharon. This symbol occurs again in the side aisles.

THE WINDOWS

The church is well endowed with beautiful stained glass windows. As with the wall symbols in the nave, Old Testament subjects are depicted on the west side and the east side is reserved for New Testament themes.

The general style of the windows is perpendicular Gothic, so called as the main mullions (the stone dividers between the panels of glass) rise perpendicularly to meet the curve of the arch, the line continuing through the more intricate tracery work at the top of the windows.

THE CHOIR

Beginning in the Choir, there are three windows, the central one being a beautiful representation of "The Sermon on the Mount" with the quotation, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.". (Matthew 5:6) This window of five panels is inscribed, "In loving memory of Verna, elder daughter of John and Isabella Brown.". Barely visible to the naked eye at the top of the window are the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.". (Matthew 5:8)

To the left is a three-panel window, each panel containing two Old Testament figures. They are, from the left; Elijah, above and Isaiah below, in

memory of Wm. Turnbull and Mary Hyslop, his wife; Moses and Hosea, in memory of Wm. Jeffrey and Jane McLeod, his wife; Daniel and Amos, in memory of Robt. Moderwell and Ann Hossie, his wife.

To the right of the central window are New Testament figures as follows: James and Andrew, in memory of David Hislop and Mary Hislop, his wife; Peter and Paul, in memory of Thos. Orr and Francis Noble, his wife; John and Luke, in memory of Joseph Rankin and Katherine Armstrong, his wife. These windows were donated in 1915 at the opening of the new church.

THE TRANSEPTS

In the east transept, the first three panels of the window represent Jesus as a boy in the Temple (Luke 2:46) and is in loving memory of Pte. Alvin Spencer Trow, P.P.C.L.I., killed in action at Vimy Ridge, April 19, 1917; and of Pte. Arthur James Trow, 214 Ch. Batt., C.E.F., who made the supreme sacrifice at Aix Naulette, March 12, 1918. Above are the words: "Praise ye the Lord" and "All that heard him were astonished" (Luke 2:47).

The design in the other half represents "The Last Supper" (Matthew 26:26), with the text "This do in remembrance of me" (1Corinthians 11:24) and is inscribed, "In honoured and loving memory of Capt. Henry Noble Orr, 2nd. Batt., 1st Div. C.E.F., buried at Bruay.". The text at the bottom reads, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). This window was the gift of Mr. Thomas Trow and family and Miss S.E. Orr.

In the west transept is another war memorial window erected by the congregation and Ladies Aid, "To the glory of God in loving memory of former members and adherents who made the supreme sacrifice and in honour of those who served in the Great War, 1914-1919." "We live in deeds, not years.". The first half shows Joseph being sold by his brothers with the text at the top, "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." (Acts 7:9 cf. Genesis 37) and the three panels to the right show the famous recognition scene with the text, "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt." (Genesis 45:4)

Beneath this window is a plaque containing the names of eighteen men and one woman who gave their lives in World War I.

These War Memorial windows, together with one in the east aisle, were dedicated on the first anniversary of Armistice Day, November 11, 1919.

THE NAVE

Completing the War Memorial windows is one in the east aisle, representing the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21), the gift of the brothers and sister of George Leslie Rankin, killed in action at St. Eloi, Belgium, April 7, 1916. Window unveiled November 11, 1919.

Also in the east aisle is a memorial window "To the glory of God and in living memory of Christina Mason, beloved wife of James Dickson, died May 1st, 1923.". The picture shows Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. (Luke 10:39) Unveiled in 1926.

The large window in the nave on the east side illustrates Jesus blessing the children (Matthew 19: 13-15) and is in memory of Pearl Elizabeth, daughter of Dr. J.A. and Jennie Robertson. Subsequently, the names of John and Elizabeth Forbes, parents of Mrs. Robertson, Dr. J.A. Robertson, Mrs. J.A. Robertson, Jessie W. Robertson and Dr. L.F. Robertson have been added. Unveiled in 1919.

In the west aisle is the Preston window, erected in memory of William Preston who had a special interest in the service of praise; the design is that of David with a harp; the text is "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.". (Psalm 103:2) The window was unveiled in November 1930 by his son, James Preston.

Also in the west aisle is a tribute to Ralph Donaldson "In recognition of his long and faithful service as Church officer, covering a period of half a century.". The design is of Eleazar blessing Joshua; "And he laid his hands upon him and gave him a charge.". (Numbers 27:23) J.W. Brown unveiled the window on the same date as the Preston window. Beside the window is a bronze plaque also in memory of Mr. Donaldson.

The large clerestory windows on the west side illustrate Old Testament themes. The one to the right was unveiled in May 1936 and depicts Moses finding water in the wilderness; "And Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he smote the rock twice and the water came out abundantly." (Numbers 20:11) Miss Jessie Scott presented it "in memory of her parents, John A. Scott (1819-1879) and his wife Catherine M. Gowanlock (1828-1916) and their sons and daughters.". Also shown in this

window are the seven-branched candelabra or "Menorah" (Exodus 25:31) and the tablets containing the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32:15).

The window showing Solomon instructing the workmen at the building of the Temple was presented in September 1940 by Mrs. Joseph Orr in memory of her husband, Joseph Orr. Since then, the names of Edith Orr, John Orr, Agnes Orr and Sarah Orr have been added. The text reads, "If thou wilt walk in my statutes and keep my commandments, then will I perform my word with thee, and I will not forsake my people Israel." (I Kings 6:12-13) "So Solomon built the house and finished it." (I Kings 6:9) Near the top of the window are the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25: 10-22) and the altar for incense (Exodus 30: 1-10)

There remains in the nave the largest window in the church. Indeed, it is reported in Mr. Fisher's history as possibly, at the time of its installation in 1915, the largest leaded glass church window in Ontario. It measures twenty-one feet wide by thirty-six feet high. This "Ascension" window on the south side was the gift of the Ladies Aid when the church was built and cost then \$2,199.25. Estimates for its repair in 1979 were over ten times that amount! The texts are; "Praise ye the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever." (Psalm 106:1) and "And it came to pass while he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.". (Luke 25:51)

THE NARTHEX

There remain the two windows in the entrance vestibules. To the east is the Murray window, erected by the family "In memory of John P.

Murray and Eliza Gunn Murray, his wife.”. It was unveiled in November 1930 by John and Robert Murray and is a reproduction of Holman Hunt’s famous picture, with the text, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

To the west is the most recent addition to the stained glass work in Knox, the John Knox window, a continual reminder of the great Reformer after whom our church is named. The top part of the window declares John Knox to be “God’s man for God’s work in God’s time”. In the centre is the symbol and motto of the Presbyterian Church and the lower section depicts one of the meetings of Knox with Mary Queen of Scots and declares, “He feared neither State nor Church for the sake of spiritual freedom.”. The window, dedicated in December 1969, is “In grateful memory of Alexander Brock Manson (1883-1966) and his wife, Elizabeth Jane Manson (1881-1961), the gift of their family, Alex and Mary.”.

OTHER CHURCH FURNISHINGS

It is not the purpose of this booklet to be a complete catalogue of all the gifts made to Knox Church. It is hoped to have these recorded in the Memorial Book in the narthex. The main purpose is to show the origins of the various symbols and to explain the meaning of signs that some may find rather obscure.

Before the congregation each Sunday are reminders of our faith and historical foundations.

The open Bible on the Communion Table is a constant reminder that our Reformed faith is based on the scriptures.

The Fall on the Chair behind the Communion Table reminds us by the crown that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and Lord of our lives, that we are called to be subjects within the Kingdom of God. Beneath are three letters which appear in English to

be IHS; they can be seen again on the Cross above the Choir; actually IHS are the first three letters of “JESUS” in the Greek language. Greek was the language in which the New Testament was first written.

The Pulpit Fall and Communion Table Runner bring before us another part of our history. The Crosses here shown are Ionic Crosses. The circle around the centre indicates that it is of Celtic origin; those from Iona had the upright and arms of uniform width throughout, while the Irish Celtic Crosses were usually wide at the end of the arms and at the top and bottom. The ones in Knox are also “budded”, that is the ends of the arms are divided into three “buds”, another sign of the Trinity. It was in 563 A.D. that Columba sailed from Ireland and landed in Iona, which became the centre for the spread of the Christian faith to the mainland of Scotland to Northern England. The Ionic Cross reminds us of the distant historical associations we cherish.

The Cross above the Choir has three steps to the base; this is generally taken to refer to “faith, hope and charity”.
(I Corinthians 13:13)

In the chapel, the Cross on the end of the Table Runner and on the Lectern Fall in the chapel is the St. Andrew’s Cross. It is said that St. Andrew felt that he was not worthy to be like Jesus even in

martyrdom and so requested a Cross in the form of an "X". It was about the middle of the eighth century that St. Andrew became associated with Scotland and, subsequently, became the patron saint.

There remains the Lectern Fall which presents the emblem and motto of the Presbyterian Church. The motto, "Nec Tamen Consumeatur", Latin for "Nor yet was it consumed" reminds us of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2) seen by Moses. Here is a constant reminder that the power of God, despite all appearances to the contrary, cannot be overcome. It was an encouragement to Moses; it must continue to be so for us.

A NOTE ON PETER CHARLES BROWNE

The mural in the Choir is the work of Peter Charles Browne, who also planned the décor for the whole sanctuary in 1927.

He was born in West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, England, of Scottish parents, his father being a schoolmaster and a teacher of art, as was his father before him. Before immigrating to Canada in 1903, he taught at the Hamilton Academy in Scotland.

Peter C. Browne was a portrait painter, also, who painted, among others, such notables as Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Carnegie.

Other Churches which owe their décor to him are: St. George's Anglican Church, Goderich (1929) and St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Cobourg (1908-1914). St. George's was cleaned and restored in 1974 and St. Michael's in 1969 by

the same firm. Knox was restored in 1959 by the same company

MINISTERS OF KNOX CHURCH

1844-1846:	Rev. Daniel Allan
1846-1849:	Occasional Supply
1849-1877:	Rev. Thomas MacPherson
1878-1880:	Rev. Patrick Macfarlane MacLeod
1880-1889:	Rev. Peter Wright
1891-1904:	Rev. Malcolm Lachlan Leitch
1905-1925:	Rev. Robert Martin
1925-1932:	Rev. George Rowland
1933-1949:	Rev. Charles S. Oke
1950-1961:	Rev. Donald B. Mackay
1961-1970:	Rev. William Weir
1970-1982:	Rev. Frederick Neill
1983-2000:	Rev. Dr. David S. Thompson
2000-2003:	Rev. Karen Horst – Interim Minister
2003-2009:	Rev. Dr. Terry Hastings
2009-2012:	Rev. Dr. Bryan Lapier – Stated Supply
2012-2017:	Rev. Mark Gedcke
2018- :	Rev. Marlene Peck – Stated Supply

PLACES OF WORSHIP

1844-1851:	In log school house on the site of Central Secondary School
1851-1873:	Southeast corner of St. Vincent and Norman Streets
1873-1913:	The present location on Ontario and Waterloo Streets. Destroyed by fire, May 13, 1913.
1915- :	The present sanctuary