



The Banners

Trinity Memorial Church

44 Main Street

Binghamton, NY

Introduction: Ecclesiastical Handwork

Ecclesiastical sewing has a long and fascinating history. In the Old Testament (Exodus 35:10, 19 and 25), Moses calls upon those who are skilled to spin and weave sacred garments for the priests. Consequently, “every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun—blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen.”

Specifically Christian vestments can be traced to the time of the fourth century Roman emperor Constantine. Christianity was an illicit religion then, and church officials hid their priestly garments under a cloak called a *casula*, origin of the modern word *chausable*. The priestly stole, considered to represent the yoke of Christ, also dates back to Roman times, when it was called the *orarium*, from the Latin word *oro* meaning “to pray.” In the ninth century, the word changed to the more Germanic *stola*, later evolving into the English *stole*.

Vestment colors are also part of an ancient tradition. Medieval church authorities established a color code that had antecedents in pre-Christian times when the Romans wore different colors to signify their social rank. Today’s colors retain their ancient ecclesiastical meanings: white for purity and joy; red for blood and fire; purple or violet for penitence and mourning; green for life, hope and peace, and so on. It is interesting to reflect that a priest wearing contemporary vestments is dressed as he or she might have been dressed in early Christian times.

During the high medieval period, the embroidery used in the ornamentation of priestly robes became more elaborate, reflecting the wealth and power of the clergy of the time. The custom waned with the advent of the Black Death- Bubonic Plague - in the mid 1300s, which decimated the population of Europe and profoundly affected many aspects of life.

Even patchwork has a very long history, dating back to the English House of Tudor. When King Henry VIII broke with Rome, Catholic priests were forced underground and many disguised themselves as peddlers, hiding their priestly robes under patchwork garments. One patchwork *chausable* dating from 1540 was deliberately made to resemble a domestic quilt so that if the priest were challenged, the garment would not attract attention.

Other antecedents of today’s patchwork vestments include the recycling of early embroidered vestments, the practice by nobles of donating clothing and wall hangings to the church. Interestingly, the practice of making vestments from clothing continued into our own time; in wartime Britain, fine fabrics were unobtainable and many old dresses were cut up and made into liturgical hangings.

As for banners, many believe that they date back to Constantine and the year 312, when, as governor of the Roman Empire’s northern provinces, he marched with an army against Italy. Acting on commands received in a dream, he replaced the Roman Imperial Eagle on all military standards with the monogram of Christ - the Greek letters X and P, the cipher *chi rho*. Constantine won the battle, became emperor, and adopted Christianity as the official religion of the empire. In a sense, then, his military standard was the first Christian banners.

Our Artist: Sheila Morrison

And so we see that the banners hanging in Trinity Memorial Church today are a product of many ancient traditions coming together. They were created by **Sheila Morrison**, the Scottish-born daughter of a graphic artist father and a mother who taught her to knit and sew by the age of eight. As a young woman, Sheila Morrison studied the history of architecture and architectural drafting and design, and then put her artistic talents to work for IBM. She spent 27 years with the company, first as an engineering draftsman and later in various other engineering-related positions. Later, she worked in the Virgin Islands and then returned to New York City. But it was only in retirement that she became seriously involved in quilting, finding that it satisfied her love of color and design. Her interest in creating stoles came about when a priest friend, Fr. Barrett, suggested she have a look at the ones at the local Catholic Shop. She did so, and was inspired to start designing stoles herself.

Everything Sheila Morrison creates has its beginning on graph paper, where the pattern and colors are decided. Only then does she begin to work with fabric, searching quilt shops as far away as Elmira or Franklin for exactly the colors she wants. Her stoles have been pictured in *Piecework Magazine* and *Quilting Today*.

While the artistry, colors and designs of her banners can be enjoyed on a purely artistic level, their symbolism and meaning make them far more significant for us.

Sheila Morrison has graciously and generously hand worked these magnificent examples of ecclesiastical hangings. Trinity Memorial Church is honored to have received these precious gifts and they will hang in the Nave for many years to come.

The Rev. Noreen P. Suriner, Rector
Easter 2003

Our Banners

These ten banners in Trinity Memorial Church's nave may be best seen standing at the Main Street entrance. View the banners left to right, progressing to the front of the church.



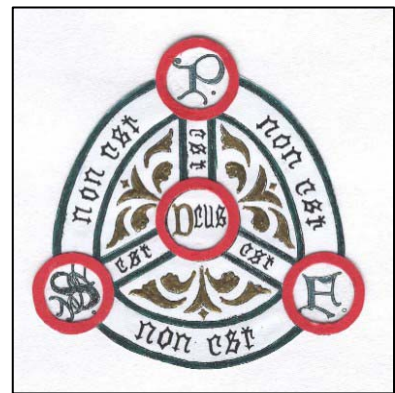
Palm Branches and a Cross represent Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem before his coming Passion and crucifixion.

John 12:12-13. The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!"

The Shield of the Trinity expresses in graphic form the doctrine of the unity and individuality of the Trinity.

In each outer circle are the Latin initials standing for the words *Pater*, *Filius* and *Spiritus Sanctus* (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In the middle is the initial for *Deus* (God).

The three curving sides, each exactly equal in length, carry the Latin words *non est* (is not). The three straight bands have the word *est* (is).



As the words are read in any direction, four groups of sentences are made:

The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God.

The Father is not the Son. The Father is not the Holy Spirit.
The Son is not the Father. The Son is not the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is not the Son.



Grapes are symbolic of Holy Communion and of the blood shed by Jesus on the cross for the forgiveness of sin. The **Grape Vine** also symbolizes the fruitfulness of the Christian life.

Matt. 26:27-28. Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

John 15:3. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me bears much fruit.”

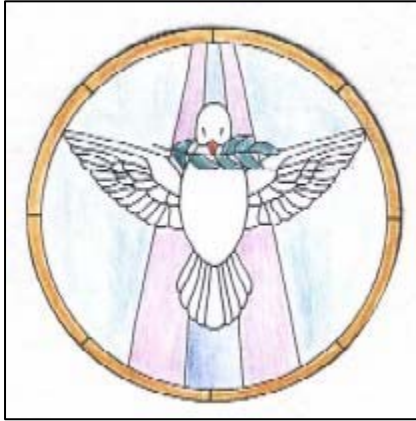
The **Crown of Thorns** is a symbol of Jesus’ Passion and reminds us of the soldiers’ mockery of Christ and their ironic ascription of His place as King of the Jews. Nails were an instrument of Jesus’ crucifixion, and are also symbolic of His Passion. Nails usually appear in sets of three to identify Christ as a member of the Trinity.



Matt. 27:27-29. Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said.



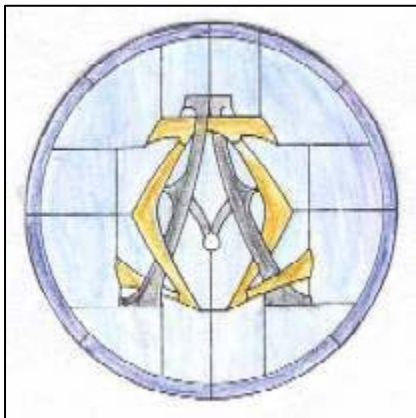
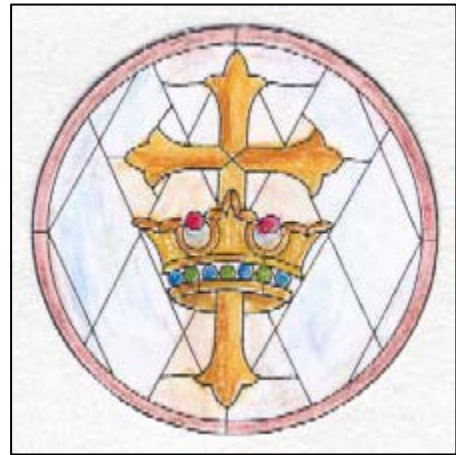
The **Chi Rho** is one of the most ancient of the sacred monograms of Christ that were developed by early Christians as a secret sign of their faith. It is the oldest known monogram of Jesus Christ. It is sometimes known as a *Christogram*. This monogram is composed of the first two Greek letters of the word “Christ” (XPICTOC).



The image of the **Dove** has several meanings, including a harbinger of peace, a symbol of innocence, and a representation of the Holy Spirit. In the story of the flood, (*Genesis 8*) the dove sent out from the ark by Noah brought back an olive branch to show that the waters had receded and that God had made peace with man.

The **Cross and Crown** symbolize the reward of the faithful in the life after death to those who believe in the crucified and risen Savior.

Rev. 2:10. "... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

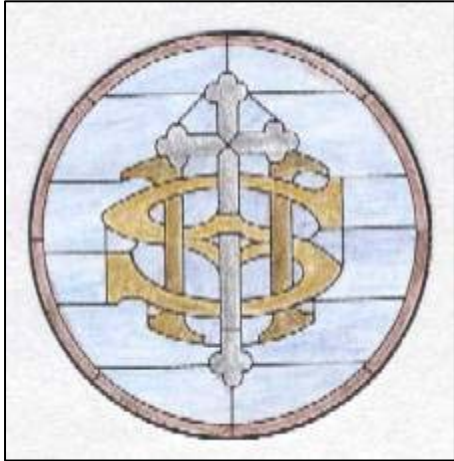


Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and thus refer to the eternal nature of Christ.

Rev. 1:8. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

The **Poinsettia** is a Mexican plant which has come to symbolize the Christmas season. Legend has it that a poor brother and sister were on their way to attend a local Christmas festival but had no gift for the Baby Jesus. On the way to the church, they picked some roadside weeds, and, at the service, placed these green plants around the manger. Miraculously, the green top leaves turned red and soon the beautiful star-like petals of the poinsettia encircled the manger.





IHS is the sacred monogram formed of the first three letters of the Greek word for “Jesus@ (IHCOYC). The “S” uses the Roman alphabet for the third letter

Banner Background Colors



White is a symbol of purity, innocence and holiness.
It is the liturgical color for the Christmas and Easter seasons.



Purple is the color for preparation and penitence.
It is the liturgical color for the seasons of Advent and Lent.



Red is the color of fire and blood.
It is used in the church as the liturgical color for the commemoration of martyred saints.
As the color of fire, red is used as the liturgical color for Pentecost.
It is also the color for Palm Sunday.



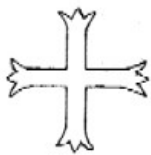
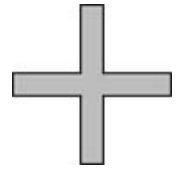
Green is the color of plant life, abundant in spring.
It is used to represent the triumph of life over death.
It is the liturgical color for the Trinity season and Epiphany.

Crosses

The sides of the banners facing the altar decorated with various types of crosses. There are over 400 forms of the cross. Of these, about 50 have been used in Christian symbolism. Many of them undoubtedly had their origin in heraldry. The cross is usually thought to be an early church symbol but is a predominately 3rd century symbol. It was then that the cross became a symbol of conquering death.



The Latin Cross is the most common of all cruciforms and reminds us of the supreme sacrifice offered by Jesus for the sins of the world. The vertical is longer than the horizontal arm. The Greek Cross is an ancient cruciform with four equilateral arms. This cross is used more as a representation of the Christian church than it is to represent the suffering and death of Jesus.



This cross, with its ends in the form of a fleur-de-lis (flower of the lily), is called a Cross Fleurée. This widely used cross calls to mind the Trinity because of its trefoil end caps.



Looking from the chancel, the first cross is a Greek Cross Fleurée and the third cross is a Latin Cross Fleurée.



The Crown and Cross combined refer to the faithful who shall be rewarded with the crown of life after death. It is on the second banners as one faces the Main Street entrance.



The Celtic Cross is one of the most ancient of cruciforms, used by the Celtic Christians in Great Britain and Ireland. Here we find the cross with a circle signifying eternity around the middle part of the cross. This form of the cross was brought by St. Columba to the isle of Iona. It is sometimes referred to as an Iona Cross. It is the fourth in our series.



The Maltese Cross consists of four spearheads with points together. This eight-pointed cross is said to symbolize the eight Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew. This form of the cross was used originally during the Crusades by the Knights of the Hospitallers of St. John. Later this order made their headquarters on the island of Malta, whence the name.