

WALDENSIAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

109 Main Street East  
Valdese, North Carolina 28690

2007 Revised

HISTORY OF CHURCH EDIFICE

Although no record of a formal organization exists, the church began May 29, 1893. Twenty-nine individuals from several communities and churches of the Waldensian Valleys, Italy, came together under the umbrella of their faith, the Waldensian Church, and called themselves a church. With additional migrations, the number grew to two hundred by the end of the year.

On July 9, 1895 the Evangelical Waldensian Church of Valdese was accepted into Concord Presbytery and became the Waldensian Presbyterian Church. There were 80 communicant members and 220 persons in the church family. The synod of North Carolina assumed the support of the minister in the amount of \$50 per month.

For a period of years, worship services were held in a make-shift building while funds were being sought for a permanent structure.

Plans were drawn for a Romanesque structure similar to the churches in the Waldensian Valleys. On March 28, 1895 the group voted to begin building a church, and the edifice was dedicated on July 4, 1899 with a building cost of between \$4,000-\$5,000. Many of the individuals of the community played a part in the building, with the women and children collecting field stones, the men cutting timbers, working in the rock quarry, and serving as stone masons.

January 1, 1920, the church became self-supporting. April 22, 1922 all members were given the right to vote. Prior to this only male members over 21, who contributed, were permitted to vote.

June 4, 1922 the church voted to begin using English one Sunday per month. This was gradually increased over the years until French was discontinued in early 1940's. French hymns are used today on Festival occasions during the months of February and August.

The original structure continues in use today, but it has seen various improvements, with the most extensive renovation being made in 1946-1947. That year new pews, pulpit furniture and stained glass windows were placed in the sanctuary.

In the renovation program, P.J. Reeves and Company of Philadelphia was chosen to design and execute stained glass windows. After much discussion, it was decided that the windows should symbolize some of the reformed churches around the world. A book was sent from Philadelphia, and the seals were chosen. When the designs had been executed at the Reeves studios, they were shipped to Valdese and installed. The windows are appreciated by all worshippers because of their beautiful colors, their stately design, and the meaningful symbols. They have continued to appreciate in value because of their workmanship and scarcity of some of the glass. In May of 1975, Lexan, a protective covering, was added to the outside of the windows.

On November 2, 1947 a service of Thanksgiving was held in the renovated sanctuary. On January 1, 1949 the canceled bank note was burned and a rededication of the sanctuary and its new furnishings was held.

In 1985 funds were solicited for the first pipe organ of the church. Built by the Hitchcock Organ Company of Virginia, it was installed the following year. A beautiful organ concert and service of dedication was held September 21, 1986.

When the church was again renovated and extended in 1990-91, five new windows were needed. Statesville Stained Glass of Statesville, North Carolina, was chosen to match the older windows in color and style. Five seals from unrepresented Reformed churches were chosen. These descriptions are incorporated in this pamphlet.

The church windows are uniform in design and contain much Christian symbolism. At the upper center of each window is a seal of one of the Reformed Churches; in the bottom center is the seal of an apostle, and several Christian symbols are placed at random in the central and lower portions. At the top of each window is the Cross Trefflie, a decorative cross with ends formed in trefoils.

Two time capsules were placed in the cornerstone of the sanctuary extension on February 17, 1991. The intention is that the items in the capsules relate to the history and organization of the church. Capsule #1 contained general information on church and time. Capsule #2 referred to church organizations.

The service of rededication of the sanctuary was October 6, 1991.

It is hoped that the following explanations will bring each worshipper to a deeper appreciation of the windows, enabling the congregation to integrate their significance into the total worship experience.

SYMBOLISM  
OF  
SANCTUARY WINDOWS

West Side

1. Brazil
2. Korea
3. Scotland
4. France
5. Waldenses
6. England
7. Ireland

East Side

8. Mexico
9. Hungary
10. Holland
11. Bohemia
12. Switzerland
13. Germany

Information researched and prepared by Miss Kathy Newton, The Reverend Dr. Paul H. Felker, Hilda Ogle Jones, Betty Bowles Garrou, and John Bleyntat.

## CHANCEL WINDOWS

These two small windows are found in the rear of the chancel area. On one side is pictured an open Bible with the Greek letter "Alpha" on one page and the Greek letter "Omega" on the other page. This symbolizes the everlasting nature of the Word of God. The second window contains a chalice to remind us of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

## OUTER NARTHEX WINDOWS

The two small stained glass windows may be found on either side of the outer narthex. One window contains the name of Henri Arnaud, a Waldensian pastor who was responsible for the leadership of the Waldensians from Switzerland back to the Valleys. This journey homeward known as "The Glorious Return," took place in 1689 AD. On the second window, we find edelweiss and the word "Emergo." Edelweiss is the first flower of spring in the Swiss Alps, and it peeks through the snow before any other foliage appears. This is very symbolic, since the Waldensians spent their exile in Switzerland, and they, too, emerged, even though the death of winter seemed inevitable. The Waldensian Seal is again depicted in the window over the door.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. (South)\*  
(On the stairs to Bride's Room (above Narthex))

The shield of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. has a blue background. On the left side of the shield is a burning bush which signifies the indestructibility of the Church; on the right is a lamp indicating the witness-bearing nature of the Church. At the head of the shield is the star representing Christ, the Lord of the Church. The star and the lighted lamp are both derived from the Waldensian Church of Italy. The burning bush is taken directly from the seal of the Church of Scotland.

The windmill is a symbol of James the Less. It is not known where this symbol originated, and it came into use much later after his death. A club or saw is most often used to represent him.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE USA (North)\*  
(Southeast corner opposite U.S. (South) outer wall)

The shield of the Presbyterian Church in the USA has a blue background. The seal itself is composed of an open Bible symbolic of the Word of God. Inscribed on the left page is "I Peter 1:23" The right page bears the inscription "John 3:14" and pictures a cross with a serpent. The verse referred to on the left reads, "You have been born anew, not perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God." The verse on the right, John 3:14, reads "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up." This open Bible is surrounded by palm branches, a symbol of victory; oak branches, a symbol of hope and glory. The legend around the seal reads, "Seal of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America."

The apostolic symbol on this window is that of James the Greater. The pilgrim's staff and wallet are used for James the Greater because of his support and travel to spread the gospel.

\*before unification in 1983

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH U.S.A.  
(In Narthex)

The colors used in the formal seal have both theological and traditional references. The use of blue provides a historical connection to earlier symbols including the seal of the Church of Scotland. Red suggests Christ's suffering, the presence of the spirit, revelation, and the ongoing mission of the church. Gold is a majestic, regal color symbolizing refinement, purity, celebration and light.

The symbol may be depicted in the various liturgical colors of the Christian year, in which violet is used for Advent and Lent, red for Good Friday and Pentecost and green for the Sundays after Pentecost.

The basic symbols in the seal are the cross, Scripture, the dove and flames. The cross represents the incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ and his passion and resurrection. Because of its association with Presbyterian history, the Celtic cross was chosen as a model for this contemporary rendering of the ancient symbol. The two center lines of the cross became the representation of an open book. This integration of the horizontal dimensions of the cross with the book motif highlights the emphasis which the Reformed tradition has placed on the role of Scripture as a means of knowing God's Word.

The Lily, the symbol of purity, represents the Virgin Mary.

## Entering Sanctuary from Narthex

### 1. INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL

The seal was approved by the General Assembly of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil in 1987. It includes some of the primary symbols of Christianity and of the Reformed Faith tradition: (1) the Celtic Cross in the background; (2) the Dove (the symbol of the Holy Spirit and the Fish (an ancient symbol of the Church); (3) the open Bible and the Burning Bush, at the foot of the cross representing the basis of the Church; (4) a Gothic border embracing all the symbols; and (5) the name of the church in Portuguese- IGREJA PRESBITERIANA INDEPENDENTE do BRAZIL.

The seal is presented in the following colors: blue, red and white. The person who created the seal was Mr. Roberto Almenara, an architect and member of the First Independent Presbyterian Church of Sao Paulo.

The apostolic symbol for Mark is a Winged Lion because his Gospel emphasizes the royal dignity of Christ, the Lion of Judah.

### 2. KOREA

The seal of the Korean Presbyterian Church is explained as follows:

Figure: (1) The cross portrays Christ's work of salvation, the universal symbol for Christians.

(2) The scroll represents God's word and suggests the form of the Korean peninsula.

Color: (1) The color red symbolizes Christ's blood and the grace of God's salvation.

(2) Green communicates the hope and trust of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

As a whole the symbol is based on the work of salvation through Christ's blood, witnessing to the evangelization of the world, not only of Korea, but beyond their borders; this is the basis of the Korean Presbyterian Church's hope and trust.

The apostolic symbol of a Book and Sword is for Paul. He is identified by the Sword with which he was beheaded and the book or Scroll of his epistles.

### 3. SCOTLAND

The shield of Scotland has a blue background covered with golden thistles, the floral emblem of Scotland. This is the seal of the Established and Free Churches of Scotland. It is a burning bush with the motto "Nec Tamen Consumebatur" -- "And yet it was not consumed." It is emblematic of the Church of Scotland which passed through the fire of persecution and yet was not destroyed. Above the burning bush is a descending dove, representing the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The seal is often seen with the word "Culdee" beneath. The word "Culdees" in this connection emphasized the belief that the simplicity of its forms and the peculiarity of its organization were characteristics of the primitive Christians.

This window also bears the Saltire Cross which is the apostolic symbol for Andrew. Tradition says he was put to death on this type of cross.

### 4. FRANCE

The shield of the French window has a blue background covered with gold fleur de lis, the floral emblem of France. The fleur de lis is considered to be a symbol of the Virgin Mary selected by French Kings as their symbol and later used on the banner of Joan of Arc. The Seal of the Reformed Church of France contains a burning bush with the Hebrew letters for Jehovah across the flame. The motto inscribed around the top of the seal is "Flagror Hon Consumor" -- "I am Burned but not Consumed." The legend at the bottom is "Synodi Ecclesiae in Gaulia Reformatae"- "Seal of the Synod of the Reformed Church in France."

This apostolic symbol is believed to be that of Philip. The cross and spear refer to his missionary journeys and the manner of his death.

## 5. WALDENSIAN (Italy)

The shield of the Waldensian church has a blue background symbolizing darkness. The seal contains a lighted candle meaning "The Word of God", and the seven stars arched above it represent the Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation. The inscription around the seal has the Latin motto "Lux Lucet in Tenebris" -- "The Light Shines in the Darkness." Below are two branches, one of green oak and one of green laurel, tied together at the bottom with a blue ribbon. The green oak symbolizes "hope and strength" and the green laurel symbolizes "hope and glory." (This seal is also found in the window over the church entrance.)

Matthew, the tax collector, is represented here by a battle ax, which symbolizes his martyrdom in Ethiopia where he was crucified and decapitated with a battle ax.

## 6. ENGLAND

The shield of England has a scarlet background sprinkled with gold roses, the floral emblem of England. The actual seal is a golden double circle. One circle is the seal of the Westminster General Assembly. The outer circle, the seal of the Scottish Kirk, contains a burning bush, a symbol of the indestructibility of the Church. Above the circles is a descending dove, symbolic of the Holy Spirit. All of these together symbolize that the present Church of England was formed by a union of the Scotch Presbyterians, United Presbyterians and the English Presbyterians.

On this window we see a book with a flaying knife across the center, representing Bartholomew, who was killed for preaching the gospel.

## 7. IRELAND

The shield of Ireland has a green background sprinkled with gold shamrocks, the floral emblem of Ireland. The bronze seal of the Church of Ireland contains the burning bush, a symbol of the indestructibility of the Church. Above the burning bush is the Latin motto, "Ardens Sed Virens" -- "Burning but Flourishing." The inscription surrounding the seal reads "General Assembly Presbyterian Church in Ireland."

The apostolic symbol on this window is representative of Simon the Zealot. The book upon which rests a fish symbolizes that through the power of the gospel, Simon became a great fisher of men.

## 8. MEXICO

The symbols of the Seal of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico are detailed as follows: (1) The Dove signifies the Holy Spirit; (2) The Book is the open Bible; (3) the Torch with Seven Stars represents the Church, (the torch represents Jesus Christ, the light of the world and of the Church); (4) The Staff signifies the governance of Christ as "The Good Shepherd" for his Church.

The alabaster box with tears symbolizes Mary Magdalene in reference to her anointing the feet of Jesus and washing his feet with her tears.

## 9. HUNGARY

The large shield atop bears the arms of Hungary, and in the center is the large circular seal of the Reformed Church of the Superintendency of Debreczen. The device upon the shield represents our Lord's baptism. Jesus is represented as standing in the stream, while John the Baptist, kneeling upon the bank above, baptizes him. On the opposite side is the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) and just above upon the bank is a lion in retreat representing the fleeing of Satan from the presence of the Lord. A dove descends from heaven. The scroll bears the words "A Helv Ilito Tissanturli Egyhazderulet Pecsete" which means "The Seal of the Helvetic Confession, Superintendency beyond the (river) Tizza."

The Winged Ox in the lower portion of the window is the symbol for Luke. It is used because Luke emphasizes in his Gospel the priesthood of Christ, and the ox is a symbol of sacrifice.

## 10. HOLLAND

The shield of Holland has a blue background bearing a medal commemorating the Synod of Dort. It depicts a temple on top of a rock with worshippers ascending to the temple by a highway. The four winds are blowing upon the rock, represented by the form of cherubs in the four corners. The inscription surrounding the figure reads, "Erunt Ut Mons Sion, MDCXIX" -- "They are as Mount Zion, AD 1619". The idea depicted is that the Church under all the winds of persecution, is as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

A carpenter's square and spear appear in this window symbolizing Thomas, who is said to have built churches with his own hands. The spear represents the manner of his death.

## 11. BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

The shield of Bohemia has a background of blue and red. The seal is divided with the seal of Bohemia on one side and that of Moravia on the other side. The Bohemian is a silver rampant lion on scarlet background and the Moravian is an eagle, checkered in scarlet and silver on a blue background. In the center is an oval bearing the seal of the Church of Bohemia, which is the cup of the Last Supper standing upon a Bible, a symbol of the Word of God, with a palm branch of victory laid at the foot. The inscription around the seal reads, "Ev Ref Kolinske Pecet Kirkve"- "Seal of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Kolinske." The motto is "Veritas Omnia Vincet" -- "Truth Conquers All Things."

The apostle represented in this window is Matthias who filled the vacancy left by Judas. His symbol is an open Bible with a double bladed battle ax. He is said to have been beheaded for his missionary work.

## 12. SWITZERLAND

The shield of Switzerland has a scarlet background. The center is the seal of the Reformed Church of Geneva. This seal is divided in half. On one side is a golden key; on the other a crowned single eagle on a gold field. Above is a radiant sun, in the center of which is the monogram "I.H.S." - "Jesus Homium Salvator" -- "Jesus, the Savior of Mankind". Above is the motto "Post Tenebras Lux" -- "After Darkness, Light." A wreath of oak and olive, the cantonal and ecclesiastical symbol of Geneva is below the seal.

The inverted cross and two keys represent the apostle Peter. The keys recall Peter's confession and our Lord's gift to him of the keys of the kingdom, while the inverted cross represents the manner of his death. He felt unworthy to die in the same way as our Lord, and asked to be crucified upside down.

### 13. GERMANY

The shield is black and red, the colors of Germany and Switzerland, from which the German Reformed Church received its chief strength. A white bar is placed diagonally across the center of the shield. The seal of the German Reformed Church contains a clergyman on one side and an American Indian with his bow and feathers on the other side. They are represented as holding open a copy of the Holy Scriptures which rests upon an ark. Above the Bible is a golden emblem of the Holy Trinity, a triangle laid in the center of a sun. The inscription around the seal read, "Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States."

The apostolic symbol for John is a serpent in a chalice. Tradition says that John was offered a cup of poison; he drove the devil from it in the name of God, drank it, and was unharmed.

## GENERAL SYMBOLS

Alpha and Omega: The first letter of the Greek alphabet, alpha, used with the last letter, omega, is used to symbolize the everlasting nature of Christ's divinity.

Anchor Cross: A cross symbolizing Christ, our anchor, our hope. It was used by early Christians in the catacombs.

Tables of Stone with the Ten Commandments: A symbol of the tablets Moses received with the ten commandments.

Crown: Symbol of sovereignty, it represents Christ as Lord and King.

Balanced Scales and Cross: Used as a symbol of justice signifying the Final Judgment Day.

Herald Trumpets: Three trumpets symbolizing the trinity and the proclamation of the glad tidings of the birth of Jesus.

Orb and Triumphant Cross: Symbolic of the triumph of the gospel throughout the earth.

Descending Dove: Represents peace and purity and it a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Epiphany Star: Also known as the Star of Jacob, it symbolizes the birth of Christ.

Fleur de Lis: Conventional form of the lily, representing purity and therefore the symbol of the Virgin Mary.

Eagle: With out-stretched wings, represents the spread of the gospel. Also used as a symbol of the Resurrection.

Hand: In the early days of Christian art, Christians hesitated to depict the countenance of God, but by the hand issuing from a cloud that hid the awe-inspiring and glorious Majesty of God which humans could behold and live.

Grapes and Vine: The grape is the symbol of the blood of Christ. The grapevine or leaf is used as an emblem of the Savior, the "true vine."

Shell: Scallop shell, signifying pilgrimages to St. James Shrine at the Church of Compestella in Spain. The Shell is also a symbol for baptism.

Various Letters: Used from early Christian times to identify Christ, or to stress the identity of some individual or object with Christ.

Butterfly: Symbol of the Resurrection of Christ. Often it is seen in paintings of the Virgin and Child, usually in the Child's hand. The caterpillar represents life, the chrysalis is death and the butterfly is the Resurrection.

Crown of Thorns: Symbol of the passion and crucifixion of Christ. Christ is shown wearing the Crown of Thorns from the time the soldiers put it on Him and called Him "King of the Jews" until he was taken down from the cross.

Olive Branch: Regarded as a symbol of peace and appears as such in allegorical paintings of peace. Often it is carried by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin in the scenes of the annunciation.