

MINUTE FOR GRACE: **THE MOSAICS IN GRACE CHURCH**

When the Church was built in 1928, stained glass gothic windows were installed on three walls to provide natural lighting. The fourth wall (on the east side) was not an exterior wall, so mosaics designed to resemble stained glass windows were created to decorate the wall instead.

In his article, “A Study of Saskatoon’s First Church”, Wilber Lepp wrote: “Enamel mosaics done in muted colours and set in recessed gothic frames, imitate the stained glass windows of the three outer walls”.

You can see that portions of these mosaics were made with gold and silver leaf. Thin plates of gold or silver were sandwiched between two slabs of molten glass, one thicker than the other, to produce a mirror-like piece that was then cut into *tesserae* (tiles or pieces). These gold and silver tesserae were used in Roman and the earliest Christian mosaics simply to depict gold and silver objects; in later mosaics of the Early Christian period and Byzantine mosaics, solid fields of gold tesserae formed the gold background that appeared in almost every decoration.

In the first of our gothic-framed sections here at Grace-Westminster is a Biblical quotation from John 10:14: “I am the Good Shepherd and know my sheep.” Below it, are the combined three letters “IHS”, a symbol called a “Christogram”, which is a monogram symbolizing Jesus Christ. Despite popular opinion, this does not mean “In His Service” but variously either:

- 1) “Iejus Hominum Salvator” (the first word of which is a contraction of a Greek word for “Jesus”) means “Jesus, Saviour of Mankind” ... or...
- 2) “In Hoc Signo”, which can be translated as “In this sign, thou shalt conquer” ... or...
- 3) “In Hac (Cruce) Salus”, meaning “In this (Cross) salvation”... or...
- 4) “Iejus Humilis Societas”, which means “Humble Society of Jesus”.

In the central, gothic-framed section, there is a depiction of Jesus as Shepherd carrying a lamb. Below it, is a mosaic of another lamb, this time with a halo. The lamb of God as a visual motif has, since the Middle Ages, been most often represented as a standing haloed lamb with a foreleg cocked holding a pennant with a red cross on a white background -- the St. George’s Cross, an emblem of England since the Middle Ages and the symbol of the Methodist church.

The third and final gothic-framed section contains a quote from John 10:11: “The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Below this, is a mosaic of two intertwined Greek letters: Alpha and Omega. Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, means “first” and can be interpreted as “Christ”, while Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet, which can be taken to mean God in Revelations.

The north panel is in memory of George and Isabelle Turner.

The centre panel is in memory of Archibald L. Vickers, 1873-1927, “our first and beloved president, the Insinger Club”.

The south panel is a memorial to Elizabeth Ann Hewgill.

On a final, secular note:

In 1928, these mosaic panels cost a total of \$725.00, which doesn't seem prohibitive until one converts that amount to current dollars: the cost today would be \$21,670!

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-- Spiritual Nurture
Pamela Haig Bartley