

Scripture:

Luke 5:1-11

Why Are We Here?

Why are we here? Why do we come to church? What is the purpose of organized churches? Why do you go to the United Church? I thought it might be fun to look at a bit of history of the United Church of Canada. When I watched this video the other day I was reminded of our history and strength. There is a reason I am a minister in the UCC and not in other denominations and this only begins to speak to this. Please enjoy a bit of history with me as we reflect on where we have come from and perhaps be inspired to discover where God is calling us to go.

DARE TO BE [-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66WctH5kE-M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66WctH5kE-M)

I thought perhaps at the same time that we shared our history we might take a moment to look at our logo. Kayla has a Godly play set up of it that she will create as we talk.

The crest is the official signature of The United Church of Canada, placed on legal documents, ordination and commissioning certificates, and licences to perform the sacraments. Designed by the Rev. Dr. Victor T. Mooney (a treasurer of the United Church), it was officially adopted in 1944 by the 11th General Council.

For our church members, this insignia is a spiritual and historic reminder. Its **oval shape** is derived from the outline of a **fish**, a symbol of identity by early Christians. The initials of the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" spell the Greek word for fish.

The crest is designed in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross with an insignia in each of the four corners. **The "X" at the centre**, the first letter of the Greek word for Christ, is a traditional symbol for Christ. In the four corners of the crest are symbols, three of which are particularly associated with the three communions—Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian—that united to form The United Church of Canada in 1925.

- The **open Bible** represents the Congregational Churches with their emphasis upon God's truth that makes people free. From this communion we have a heritage of liberty in prophesying, love of spiritual freedom, awareness of the creative power of the Holy Spirit, and clear witness for civic justice.
- The **dove** is emblematic of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10) whose transforming power has been a distinctive mark of Methodism. Here our heritage is one of evangelical zeal, concern for human redemption, warmth of Christian fellowship, the testimony of spiritual experience, and the ministry of sacred song.
- The **burning bush** is the symbol of Presbyterianism. It refers to the bush that burned and was not consumed (Exodus 3:2), and symbolizes the indestructibility of the church. From Presbyterianism we have received a heritage of high regard for the dignity in worship, the education of all people, the authority of scripture, and the church as the Body of Christ.

- The symbols **alpha** and **omega** in the lower quarter are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They symbolize the eternal living God, in the fullness of creation (Revelation 1:8).

The Latin words *ut omnes unum sint* that surround the symbols on the crest mean "That all may be one" and are taken from John 17:21. They are a reminder that we are both a "united" and "uniting" church.

In 1980, a French translation of The United Church of Canada—L'Église Unie du Canada—was authorized by General Council to be added to the crest.

In August of 2012, at the 41st General Council, The United Church of Canada acknowledged the presence and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples in the United Church by revising the church's crest. The crest changes include incorporating the colours often associated with the Aboriginal Medicine Wheel. **The Medicine Wheel**, which reflects respect for diversity and interdependence, is often represented in the four traditional colours of yellow, red, black, and white, which incorporate important teachings from the four directions, the four stages of life, and the four seasons. The placement of these colours will vary according to the traditions of the nation. The Medicine Wheel teaches us to seek balance in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the circle of life. The crest changes also include the addition of the Mohawk phrase "Akwe Nia" Tetewá:neren" [aw gway-- nyah day day waw-- nay renh], which means "All my relations."

I love the symbols of the church and the history it carries. I wonder how we might continue to be inspired by this history and crest in ways that will call us forward in justice, grace, truth and faith. I wonder what brings you here - to Squamish United Church within the United Church of Canada. I invite you to take some time to think about that this week. I hope your call to church reminds you of your hope and pride in our faith and denomination. Perhaps it might inspire you as we celebrate our coming back together after a holiday season next week. Perhaps you too might share with a friend or neighbour that hope, pride and faith and have them come and share this occasion with you next week.

I hope this service might help us "Action our dreams" together as we move into this season of Squamish United Church. Please remember to add to our kite this week because we will be taking those bows and using the suggestions on the for some of the work at our board leadership retreat next weekend. On the kite I invite you to add your dreams, hopes and visions - that we as a congregation might move with the spirit of faith and community together - That the wind of the spirit might blow us where it may.

Thank you God for our church and faith
 For history and new beginnings
 May we always journey in your truth and love
 as we dream and vision our future together.
 Amen.