

Cross of Christ Chronicles

Lift High the Cross? – Part 4 – Conclusion

We will now continue with crosses added to our church interiors after 1930: O.S. Houge of Aberdeen, S.D. made and presented to the Stone Church in 1935 a well-crafted pulpit chair and hymn boards of oak, in honor of his parents, Simon (Sommon) and Hattie (Hæge) Houge, who lived on top of the ridge next to the Catacombs of Yucatan. (Initials of various family members can be seen at the back end of the cave.) Each hymn board is surmounted by a cross, and if you look closely you will see a similar size cross design on the decorative panel at the top of the pulpit chair. —See photo on page 64 of the 1980 Church History Book.

At some time between 1930 and 1955 an impressive brass altar cross was donated to the Stone Church by the children of Mr. & Mrs. T.T. Lee of Crystal Valley, which is serving its purpose to this day (photo on p. 27 in 1980 Book). It would appear that a similar cross was added to the altar appointments at St. Peter's during the same period, which is most likely the one that now stands in front of the altar painting (from St. Peter's) in the Fellowship Hall. So, we have seen that the crosses were slow to come in our two original churches, but that changed dramatically with the dawn of a decade marked by incredible changes.

Completed in 1960, our impressive new church made good use of the cross motif throughout the ground floor. We enter the church through doors bearing large cross designs — both the original wood veneer doors and their current glass replacements. Inside the church crosses could be seen decorating the ceiling light fixtures in the narthex and hallway (all of which have since been replaced); and in the nave on the ends of the pews, the hanging light fixtures, and of course the stained-glass windows (which were added gradually after the church was open for use).

In the chancel area a gold cross tops the Christian flag and openings in the shape of a Greek Cross can be seen on the backs of both pulpit chairs. Of course, no one can miss the exceptionally striking and monumental 25-foot walnut-stained cross which hangs above the altar. Cora & Nina Peterson provided this focal point of our church proper in memory of their parents Peter S. and Annie Peterson. Is it any wonder that the congregation chose *Cross of Christ* to be the new name of our new church?

In the Fellowship Hall a brass cross stands on the substitute altar, which also features a cross on its front. Smooth wood paneling, complete with 14 flat wooden crosses, was installed on the west wall in the 1970s by Clifford Norskog, longtime carpenter with the Iverson Lumberyard. We also have two processional crosses, one made by Art Houge in 1985 and the other by Roger Meyer in 2005 which incorporates stained glass and a miniature version of the large cross above the altar. Outside, a dark metal cross adds to the natural beauty of the stone bulletin board constructed in April 1963.

In recent years the kitchen has become “Cross Central” with its upper walls covered by a wide variety of crosses. Surely by now everyone must have seen the latest addition to this central theme on the wall right next to the lift. At four feet tall it’s hard to miss this brilliant blue conglomeration of small smooth stones, made by the Bible School children in August of 2018.

And only a few feet away are the much smaller, yet still prominent crosses made of black walnut that adorn the upper portions of each of the two new display cases in the entrance hall.

We cannot conclude this engaging topic without mention of the distinctively designed cross that rises above the peak of the roof on the north end. Formed of laminated wood it's bigger than it looks and serves as the crowning touch to the impressive stone façade — the most expansive wall on our church. This is the second cross to hold that position, constructed to match the original, but with more attention paid to protection from the elements it should endure quite a bit longer.

Whether made of wood, stone, metal, or glass the presence of a cross has a very profound and spiritual effect on a great many people. But no matter how high the crosses are placed on our churches we will lift far higher *the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim till all the world adore his sacred name.**

Shelley and Jim, Cross of Christ Archives, March 2019

* *Lift High the Cross* – No. 660 in our newest Hymnal

P.S.-Referring back to the fifth paragraph in Part 1, how ironic it was that when it came time to replace the large cross on the Stone Church from 1925 with a reproduction of the original finial, there were many who lamented *the loss* of a cross on the steeple. (Roger Jore was one I remember expressing his dismay.) It had been there all of their lives, and to them it just wouldn't seem right without it, and they were right. I must confess that I for one had not given that aspect of the steeple restoration project the thought it deserved. Sometimes when restoring a building *still in use*, you have to compromise.

When Vince Poppe, Chm. of the Steeple Restoration Committee, and I presented these concerns to our major benefactor he agreed and quickly sketched out a design which melded both. It worked out wonderfully and I must say I've never looked up at that beautiful copper cross without being very glad it's there. Affixed to the peak of the steeple in May of 1998 as the culmination of the restoration project, it truly serves as a beacon for the new millennium and will continue to inspire as long as the steeple is preserved and the congregation perseveres.



y, I gained my first access to the long-awaited and much anticipated history of titled *Telemarks historie* (3 Volumes-2015). Skimming through the first volume, and reading the captions, I noticed almost immediately material relating to what was Part 2 of this series, specifically on page 1, paragraphs 2, 3, & 5. All of the capsule history of Christianity in Norway (except for the parts in quotes) was gleaned over the years from a great many sources. It always feels good to have some reports, as found in the following quotes:

a Medieval crucifix from the Lårdal parsonage. “The Telemarkings were long held Lutheran Reformation. All the way up to the 1700s, they held onto much of theiricism.” — Vol. 1 -p. 19

“The practice of retaining their house-gods lasted in many districts in Telemark throughout the Middle Ages and up to modern times.” — Vol. 1 -p. 86

◆ The Flotubu-god from Vinje is from the period 940 – 1090 A.D. (the late Viking Age). *Photo: Telemark Museum.* (Homemade and quite primitive, the *husgud* (house-god) was nonetheless very important to those who revered them. – *JAS*)



Interior. Vrådal kyrkje 1986. Foto: Svein Straumsnes.

◆ In this picture of the new Vrådal Church, taken a year before its 100th Anniversary, can be seen the “altar foot” (or altar table) and altar piece which were moved over from the old 8-sided church built in 1686, as were the pulpit (not shown), the 1719 crucifix on the wall to the left, and the white-painted *døypefont* (baptismal font) in the lower corner.

Isn't it remarkable how much it resembles the one out at the Stone Church?! Its creator John Homme (who lived on Roger and Marilyn Jore's farm) would have seen this font when it stood in the old church.

Please refer back to Part 2 of this series, page 1, paragraph 4 for more info. — *JAS*