

## *The First Presbyterian Church of Glens Falls*

### *The Building*

This building is the fifth to house the congregation of the first Presbyterian Church of Glens Falls. Organized as the "Union Church of Pearl Village" in 1803, its first building was available for use in 1808. It and subsequent buildings, two of which were destroyed by fire, occupied a site on Warren Street midway between Glen and Church Streets. When the last, dedicated in 1886, became inadequate for all the church's needs, the congregation sought another location and selected this site. Ralph Adams Cram, noted architect of Gothic structures, was engaged to design the building. In 1926, fund-raising began, group was broken and on June 9, 1929, the building was dedicated.

Built of granite and limestone, the building is dominated by a spire rising 148 feet from the ground. The spire is topped by a Celtic cross surrounded by grotesque gargoyles whose function is to ward off evil.

### *Chancel*

The magnificent carved organ screen contains four figures important in Christian musical history. On the upper right is St. Cecilia, regarded as the inventory of the organ. At the lower right is Gregory the Great, founder of the Gregorian Chant. On the upper left is King David with his harp, and below him is Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," Genesis 4:21. At Jubal's feet, though very difficult to see, is carved a tiny mouse.

On the walls are stone medallions, the north one is "Agnus Dei," the Lamb of God that "taketh away the sins of the world". On the south is a pelican plucking at its own breast and symbolizing Christ's self-sacrifice. Below them are stone carvings of our evangelists referred to in the books of Ezekiel and Revelation. On the south are St.

Matthew as “the face of man” and St. Mark as the “face of a lion”. On the north are St. Luke as the “face of an ox” and St. John as the “face of an eagle”. The carving of stone bosses at the bases of the columns shows palm branches representing the triumph of Christ, oak leaves signifying strength, and fruits representing abundance and the generous goodness of God.

The carvings on the chancel rail, pulpit, lectern, and communion table are vines symbolizing the Lord’s Supper. The vines are intertwined with the thistle, rose, and orange leaf signifying the Scottish, English and Scottish-Irish origins of the Presbyterian Church.

Behind the communion table are three carvings – IHS (Jesus Hominem Salvator, or Jesus, Savior of Men), a chalice and wafer, and Chi Rho (the first two letters of the Greek “Christos”).

The silver and gilt bronze cross on the communion table is a Florentine work attributed to the celebrated metal work of Federigo Roschetto and is dated 1507.

The antependia hanging from the pulpit and lectern vary in color with the different periods of the church year.

### Windows

At the west end of the sanctuary above the organ screen is the rose window. Round like a rose with opened petals, the central motif is the Communion Cup surrounded by six quatre-foil openings containing adoring Seraphic figures. The window forms a circle symbolizing the boundless and limitless love of God.

The twenty side windows are Grisalle glass, widely used in early Gothic churches. The glass, with its regularly recurring patterns, admits subdued light, achieving a serenity which encourages a worshipful spirit.

At the east end of the building above the gallery is the “Te Deum” window inspired by the hymn of praise and thanksgiving dating back to early Christianity. At the top of the central lancet is Christ in Majesty. The figures of the prophets, martyrs, apostles and others represent the Holy Church throughout the world.

### Nave

The bosses at the base of the small timber trusses show twelve symbols, six on each side. From the front to the rear of the nave they are:

South Side: Alpha and Omega; Star’ Chalice Cup; Crown of Thorns;  
Descending Dove; Open Book

North Side: Cross of Fishes; Burning Bush; Anchor & Rope; Chi  
Rho; IHS; Fleur-de-lis

### Iron Metalwork

In 1927, Louis F. Hyde in his capacity of chairman of the Building Committee, decided with the church’s architect, Ralph Cram, to include Samuel Yellin’s ironwork throughout the new church.

Samuel Yellin (1885-1940) has been called “the greatest known artist in wrought iron of all time” (Smithsonian, March 1982). The twelve hanging lanterns in the nave and chancel, the four radiator grilles in the narthex, and various lighting fixtures and ornamental hardware throughout the church are examples of his artistic creativity through the use of metal.

### Organs

Two organs provide music in the sanctuary. The older instrument, built in 1973 by Casvant Freres, Ltd., was designed with the North German concept of organ sound in mind. It consists of 40 stops, with 59 ranks of pipes, and is located in the gallery. It is a three-manual and pedal instrument. The pipes of the “Grand Orgue and

Pedale” surround the Te Deum window, while the Positif is situated on the gallery rail, and the Recit is located in the south side chamber. The organ case is made of solid oak, stained to match the woodwork of the church.

The newer organ, built in 1991 by Reuter Organ Co. of Lawrence, Kansas, is located in the chancel. It is comprised of five divisions: The great organ, choir organ, swell organ, solo organ and pedal organ. The combined chancel and gallery organs have a total of 120 ranks of pipes and three electronic pedal stops at 32 foot pitch.

When the newer organ was built, the Casavant organ in the gallery was re-worked. Now both organs and the Imperial trumpet over the east door may be played from the four-manual console in the chancel. The gallery organ console controls only the Casavant pipes. State-of-the-art electronic wizardry, however, makes it possible for the two organs to operate independently with two organists.

The organ is recognized nationally and internationally as one of the magnificent instruments in this country.

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