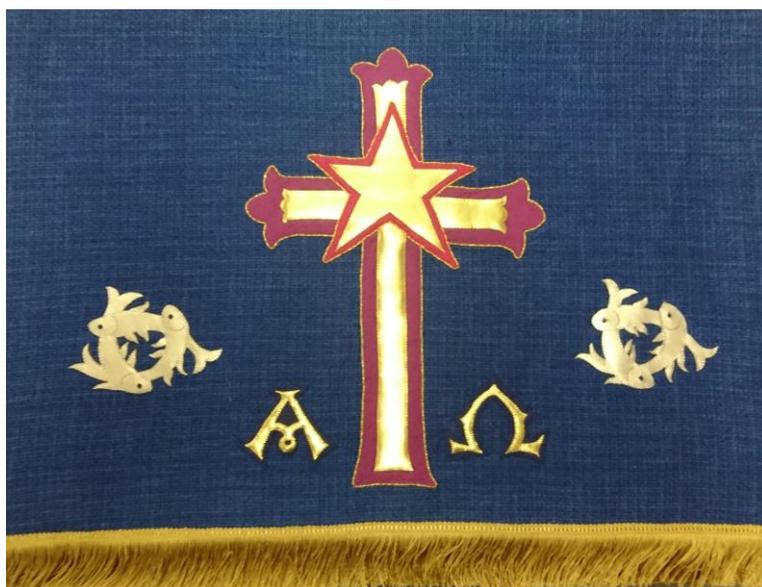


meadowside st. paul's – pulpit falls

Our pulpit falls were dedicated on Sunday 25 November 1973. The ladies who worked on them were the Misses Barnet, Dempster, Horsburgh, Reid and Shaw. This text, written by the then minister, the Rev. Basil Hardy appeared in the Church Magazines of 1973.

The first of our pulpit falls to be displayed at the beginning of the Christian year is the blue one. This remains in position during Advent, which consists of the four Sundays before Christmas. The second occasion when it appears is Septuagesima Sunday and it stays there throughout the seven Sundays of the Lenten period before Passion Sunday.



So we can see that this blue fall is a composite one in that it has to contain symbolism appropriate to both Advent and Lent. Notice first the colour blue. This is used because it is a serious, thoughtful colour appropriate to both seasons. Advent means 'coming' and it is the time when we think about the coming of Christ to earth.

Though Christmas is usually regarded as a happy time, the implications of Christ's coming can give us good cause to think, and also to ponder on our degree of spiritual preparedness to receive our Lord into our lives.

Lent is obviously a serious, thoughtful time because we are meditating on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and why it was necessary. So again blue is an appropriate colour to appear on Septuagesima Sunday, which means the 'seventh' Sunday, that is, before we begin to ponder on the actual events of Jesus' Passion.

The material used for this fall is Old Glamis Glendale and on it is worked a cross in applied gold kid and purple felt. At the heart of the cross is a five-pointed star in gold kid edged with felt. On either side of the Cross appear the Greek letters 'Alpha' and 'Omega' in gold kid stitched to blue felt and applied to the material. Finally, in the bottom corners we see two wreaths, each of three intertwined fish on silver kid. The whole is finished with a gold silk fringe.

Now just a word about these symbols. The star is the Star of Bethlehem that heralds Jesus' birth. As the star speaks to us of our Lord's coming to earth, the cross tells of his death caused by our sin. So do the Greek letters Alpha and Omega point to the beginning and the end of Jesus' earthly life. They also remind us of His own Word about Himself, and how in all things He is ultimately 'the First and the Last'. Then the silver fish, which in a way suggests a life belt, speaks of our congregation's beginnings as a Mission to Seamen in Dock Street, eventually becoming, for a while, the Mariners' Kirk.

All the falls are fairly composite in their design that they may be able to cover all the seasons of the Christian Year through which we pass. The white fall is the one which has to refer to the greatest number of the phases of Christian thought and emphasis we encounter in the course of a year. It first appears on Christmas Day, if that is a Sunday, or on the first Sunday after Christmas, and remains in position till the second Sunday after Epiphany. It is employed again on Easter Day and stays with us for the seven Sundays of the Easter period till the Sunday after Ascension. The white fall comes out on Trinity Sunday, on Harvest Festival Sunday and on All Saints' Day, if that is a Sunday. It is also used on Communion Sundays and for weddings.



The colour white is a happy colour that speaks of purity and joy, of purity and rejoicing, so. We can see at once how appropriate it is for all the occasions just mentioned. When the thoughtful Advent season ends, white heralds the joy of the Christmas message. Epiphany means 'showing forth' and commemorates the revealing of the infant Christ to the Wise Men who arrived some time after Jesus was born. This also was, and still is, a time for

rejoicing. The joy of Easter and the message of the Resurrection is surely self-evident, so white is naturally the colour for that period. Other happy occasions when the white fall is appropriate are Trinity Sunday when the knowledge of God's threefold revelation is graded afresh, Harvest Festival when we give thanks for the fruits of the earth and All Saints' Day when the blessed departed are remembered with thanksgiving. As for Communion time and weddings, both have joy at their hearts – the joy of the love of man and woman, and the love of man and God.

The material used for this fall is pure silk brocade (Chelmsford), and on it appears at the top a crown made of padded gold kid mounted on white felt edged with gold thread. Beneath are three stars also of padded gold kid. Rays of glory, formed of couched gold thread, reach outwards and upwards. At the bottom is a symbol of St. Paul, which consists of an open bible with a sword – the 'Sword of the Spirit' upright behind it. The bible is made of white felt edged with gold, the edges being padded gold kid, while the sword is of applied gold kid. At either corner are the two wreaths of intertwined fish in silver kid, and the whole is finished with a gold silk fringe.

Just a word about these symbols. The crown is a sign of Christ's victory over sin and death, which we specially remember at Easter. The three stars remind us of the three persons of the Trinity and the rays speak of the glory and power of the triune God. St. Paul's symbol is particularly suitable as an indication of that first great Christian missionary and patron saint of our Church, for his message was the Word of God based

on the Scriptures, and it was by the Sword of the Spirit that he went on his way conquering and winning souls for Christ. On this fall, the symbolism of the fish points again to the Trinity, and the intertwining of the fish to the unity of the three persons in the Godhead. Permeating all is the colour white, highlighting the joyful elements in each of the happy seasons it portrays.

We change to the green fall on the second Sunday after Epiphany, and we keep it up, except for Communion Sunday, until the end of the Epiphany season. It is not seen again until the first Sunday after Trinity, and there it remains for the rest of the Christian Year until the Sunday before Advent, though during this period it has to give way to the white and the red falls as they reappear now and again on certain special Sundays. The composite nature of this fall is thus not so pronounced as in the case of the others.



The use of the colour green for the two seasons of Epiphany and Trinity is interesting. Green is the symbol of growth in nature. It reminds us, for example, of the green shoots and leaves developing in the Spring. Now it is the idea of growth that is presented to us by this particular pulpit fall, the growth of the knowledge of Jesus during Epiphany, and the growth and spread of the Gospel during Trinity.

The material used for this fall is Old Glamis Glendale, and on it there is one central motif which consists of a monogram of the letter I.H.S. with the cross through the middle. The letters are in padded gold kid appliqué and dark blue felt. At the bottom corners we find the common symbol that appears on all four falls, the two wreaths, each of three intertwined fish in silver kid. The whole is finished with a gold silk fringe.

As for the symbolism of this fall, we should notice that the letters I.H.S. constitute a well known Christian device that appears on many pulpit falls. Its interpretation, however, varies. It can represent the first three letters in capitals of the Greek word for Jesus, the "H" being the capital letter "E" in Greek. Another explanation is that they are the initial letters of the Latin words "*Jesus Hominem Salvator*" – "Jesus, Saviour of Men". A third interpretation makes I.H.S. stand for the initial letters of the first three words of "*In Hoc Signo (Vincis)*", which is Latin for "In This Sign (thou shalt conquer)". These words were supposed to have been seen by the Christian Roman Emperor Constantine emblazoned on a Cross in the sky before he fought an important battle against his pagan enemies.

During Epiphany we are thinking of the spread of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Men, and thus, bearing in mind the threefold interpretation of this monogram, the letters I.H.S. remind us of Jesus' name and His mission in coming to earth to be our Saviour.

They also recall Constantine's vision of the cross by the power of which he was to conquer in battle, and indeed through the monogram there has been worked a Cross which reminds us of the cost in suffering and death that Christ had eventually to pay to be our Saviour.

The long season of Trinity is usually devoted to a consideration of the working out of the implications of the Gospel in daily life, so that here again the various interpretations of the I.H.S. monogram with its cross point us to the struggles and the cost involved in living out and spreading our Faith, and also to the presences of our Lord, whose name we bear and who has promised to be with us as our Guide and Strengthened.

Finally, don't forget the two wreaths of fish. So far I have not mentioned that the fish was an early Christian symbol to remind ourselves of our early history as a congregation through our connection with seamen, but it can also link us to the very first beginnings of the Christian Church itself. The choice of a fish as a symbol of identification by Christians is said to be due to the fact that the Greek word for 'fish' is '*ichthus*'. Now the letters of '*ichthus*' can also be taken from the initial letters of the Greek phrase, 'Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour'. What better symbol could you find for a Christian than a fish? Though a fairly plain pulpit fall, this green one is certainly as rich in content and meaning as the others.

The last of our pulpit falls to be displayed is the red one. This goes up on Passion Sunday and remains for Palm Sunday also. It reappears on Whitsunday and again on Remembrance Sunday. Though this is the fall we see the least of, it is one of the most beautiful, and is considerably composite in its design.



The material used for this fall is Old Glamis Errol cloth, all wool and in a striped weave of blue and red. At the top we have a dove descending, made of padded gold kid. Below the dove is a cross, also of padded gold kid. An interesting feature of this cross is that at its heart there is a circle enclosing another device known as the *Chi Rho* cross.

On either side of the Cross there are 'tongues of fire', twelve in number, arranged symmetrically. These were constructed separately and then applied to the material. As with the other falls, the two wreaths of three intertwined fish appear in each of the bottom corners and are of silver kid. The whole is finished with a gold silk fringe. It is worthy of mention that in none of the four pulpit falls has any traditional ecclesiastical embroidery been used, in view of the fact that modern materials have been employed throughout.

Now a word about the symbols to be seen on this fall. First the colour red is used because it is indicative of blood and sacrifice, pain and suffering. Since this pulpit fall is used on Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday and Remembrance Sunday, this is obviously appropriate, for on Passion Sunday and Palm Sunday we are meditating on the sufferings and sacrifice of our Lord for the sins of the world, On Remembrance Sunday red is also suitable since it is then we are recalling the sacrifice of those who suffered and died in battle.

Why, however, should red be the colour for Whitsunday? Well, because it symbolises the 'tongues of fire' which, as we read in the Book of Acts, appear to rest on each of disciples when they were filled with God's Holy Spirit on that first day of Pentecost. There are twelve individual flames incorporated into the design because there were twelve disciples in that Upper Room who received that special gift of the Holy Spirit.

Another feature of this fall which is closely associated with Pentecost is the dove, for often in the Bible we find God's Spirit compared to a dove, for example at Jesus' Baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the likeness of a dove.

It is also natural that the Cross should appear on a pulpit fall of this kind with its emphasis on sacrifice and redemption. The small emblem at the centre of the Cross should not be missed. This is a special form of cross produced by a particular conjunction of the Greek letters *Chi* & *Rho*, hence its name, the *Chi Rho* cross. These are the first two letters (in capitals) of the Greek word for Christ - X (Ch) & P (r). Put together in a certain way, the form not only a kind of cross, but a sword or spear with a cross-piece at the top. This was the device which the Emperor Constantine saw in the sky before his battle with Maxentius in AD 312. He adopted it as his standard or *labarum*.

Finally, take another look at the now familiar silver fish at the bottom corners of the fall. We have seen the various items of symbolism, they contain, referring as they do to our congregation's early association with fishermen, to the threefold nature of God, and also to the early Christian sign of recognition. I mentioned this last specially when writing about the green fall. We should note that in the early days of the Church's history, persecutions were frequent and severe, and it was often very difficult for Christians to identify one another, let alone meet together. It was therefore very common to find that when two strangers met and began to talk, one would be idly 'doodling', as we say, with his staff in the dust and drawing, as if by accident, a fish. If the other were a Christian, he would recognise the symbol, and without having to speak a word he would identify himself to his companion by sketching a fish himself.

So on a pulpit fall that has predominantly to do with the suffering and sacrifice involved in our redemption and in the Christian life itself, it is fitting that the simple sign of the fish should remind us of what our early Christian ancestors had to endure, and what many still endure today in Communist lands, for Christ's sake.