

## Art and Artifacts February 2025

### Sanctuary

Advent Wreath and Candle Holder – Harley Refsal (1944-2024), congregation member, noted woodcarver, and Luther College Professor of Scandinavian Folk Art, designed and built the Advent wreath frame with four candle holders. It is placed on a stand near the baptismal font and decorated with evergreen boughs and blue candles during the Advent season.

Alleluia Banner – The banner was dedicated on All Saints Sunday, November 4, 2018. It was designed and woven by congregation member and professional weaver, Barbara Berg. It is a gift to the congregation made possible by generous gifts from members and friends in memory of Edward Kaschins (1939-2017). When used at Good Shepherd during various times during the church year, it is carried in procession and placed in a stand near the baptismal font. The banner, 24” by 42”, is woven using wool, cotton, and linen fibers in the colors of the festival seasons – white (background), gold (border and ‘Alleluia’), and red (diagonal design). The Alleluia Banner is a reminder of Christ’s risen presence. It is used throughout the Easter season and on Sundays when the church focuses on the resurrection, including All Saints Sunday and Transfiguration Sunday.

Altar - The table-like altar is the one used in the original sanctuary. In the fall of 1988, it was moved into the new sanctuary in a congregational procession.

Altar Candle Holders - These candle holders were made by George Knudson (1915-1977). He and his wife Shirley (1919-1977) were charter members; their children, Ralph, Nancy, and Karl, are charter members as well. The candle holders have been in continuous use since the early days of Good Shepherd Church.

Altar Rail - At the request of Pastor Hasvold (1933-2015), it was designed for the new sanctuary by Orville M. Running (1910-2012), Professor of Art at Luther College. It was given by Maxine Swiggum (1925-2017) in memory of her parents, Ida and Palmer Swiggum, and installed in 1988.

Baptismal Font - The six-sided font was designed and built in 1988 by John Kjome in memory of his brother, Michael (1936-1968), also a Charter Member. It is made of pieces of oak rafters salvaged from a nearby pig shed. The front panel features a shepherd’s cross with nimbus rays carved by Nils Kjome, a charter member and brother of John and Michael. John hand-crafted the bowl’s ceramic tiles from clay found on the Luther College campus and fired them in a kiln at the College. One of the six tiles in the center of the bowl features a baptismal shell with three ‘drops’ of water. Kaija Kjome, daughter of Gail and John, was the first child baptized in the new font, January 15, 1989.

Ceramic Communion Vessels - The ceramic communion vessels were designed and created by member and professional potter George Lowe. They were dedicated as a gift to the congregation by the family in memory of longtime member Paul Solberg (1938-2017).

Funeral Palls - Good Shepherd’s two palls, one for a full-size casket and one for an urn, were designed and woven by congregation member Barbara Berg. As symbols of Christ’s robe, both are white with a gold cross woven into the center. The white portions of each pall have a ‘window pane’ pattern - woven squares that symbolize the words of this passage “... *in my Father’s House are many rooms; I go to prepare a place for you*”. Fibers used are wool, silk, cotton, and linen. The casket pall was commissioned by the Altar Guild; the urn pall was a gift from the Kjome and Ronning families and first used for the funeral service of charter member Agnes Kjome in 2004 (1911-2004).

Paraments - The original altar and pulpit paraments were designed in 1978-79 by Elizabeth Lorentzen, a Decorah Schools art teacher and congregation member, in collaboration with Pastor Hasvold†. She was assisted in the construction and sewing process by congregation members Jeri Laursen and Marie Freerking. After 35 years of faithful service, the original sewn paraments were replaced by woven paraments created by congregation member Barbara Berg between 2010-2013. The purple set was dedicated on February 17, 2013, in memory of charter member Angeline Jacobson (1910-2011) whose bequest made them possible. The red paraments were dedicated on May 19, 2013 in memory of congregation member Don Kemp (1940-2003) with funding provided by the Kemp/Norris family.

Paschal Candle Holder – Harley Refsal† designed, built, and carved the Paschal Candle stand and holder. Refsal carved the holder from butternut; the stand is constructed from oak – both match the other furnishings. Exemplifying the theme “*God’s Work. Our Hands*”, it features upraised children’s and adult’s hands in a variety of sizes, shapes, and conditions lifting or holding up the candle. Completed in 1990, the candle holder was created at the request of former pastor, Paul Hasvold†, as a memorial for Ada Marie Roberts given by her family. The Paschal Candle remains in the chancel area throughout the year, although it is removed from Maundy Thursday to the Easter Vigil; it is placed between the altar and baptismal font.

Processional Cross – David Faldet and Harley Refsal†, in collaboration with the Ad Hoc Art Subcommittee, designed and created the cross and presented it as a gift to the congregation. The design elements use a variety of local materials that link us to our environment. Wood from several tree varieties, a fossil, clay, and repurposed items - an old hoe handle and iron bar - are used on the two-sided cross. The prominent design element on the front side is a cross-on-a-cross, a visual reminder of the body on the original cross. On the backside, the clay shell medallion mounted in the center on blue carved wood connects us to our font and baptism. It was first used at the 2017 Good Friday and Easter Vigil services.

Pulpit – The pulpit was designed and built for the new sanctuary by John Kjome in memory of his father, George Kjome (1908-1989), and Rev. Virgil Hougen (1926-2012). All three were charter members of the congregation. It is constructed from oak rafters rescued from farm buildings. Ceramic tiles made by John are set into the top of the pulpit. The heavy piece of glass set into its Bible stand is recycled from a skylight from a farm building on the Eric Weiss farm, north of Decorah. The pulpit Bible was given in memory of Vivian Kalsow (1905-1998), a charter member, by family and friends, September 1998.

Shepherd’s Cross - Installed in 1989, this unique piece is an artistic combination of a cross and a shepherd’s crook. It was conceived of, designed, constructed, and finished by members of the congregation. Harley Refsal† had the original idea, Reg Laursen created several life-size models from which the Congregation Council selected one, Southeast Asian refugee Hung Van Pham constructed the cross, and Stanley ‘Slim’ Maroushek purposely roughened and finished the wood. It hangs at the front of the sanctuary between the weavings. Maroushek also made many small replicas of the shepherd’s cross that were distributed to the congregation and given to new members for many years.

Weavings - Three weavings, in shades of beige and brown, were created by well-known weaver John Skare of Bricelyn, MN, and installed on the south wall (front) of the sanctuary in the late 1980s. Each has a ‘gate’ – an open section for hanging a woven piece that varies in color and design with the seasons of the church year. Skare was inspired by John 10:7 and 9, “... *I am the gate for the sheep ... Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture*”. Substantial contributions given in memory of charter members Rev. N. Astrup Larsen (1878-1961) and Martha Hoslett (1935-2014) and Margaret Fenneman, Judy Schoel’s mother, by family and many friends in the congregation made their acquisition possible.

## **Gathering Space**

**Figure of the Good Shepherd** - Completed in 1988, this piece was carved by Nils Kjome from a walnut tree. The log was sawed by Amish sawyers from the Prosper, Minnesota, area. In addition to the carved figure, the words “*The Lord Is My Shepherd*” are inscribed on the piece. This work, dedicated to the memory of his brother, Michael (1936-1968), was one of the several projects carried out in connection with the congregation’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and dedication of the new addition. It hangs on the east wall of the Gathering Space.

**Woodcut Print** - Hanging above the guest book stand near the main entrance is a woodcut titled *Flagellation*. It was donated to Good Shepherd by Douglas Eckheart in 1970. He completed it while a student in Professor of Art Cyrus Running’s class at Concordia College, 1963-64. The assignment was to create a work based on a biblical term. Eckheart won a Lutheran Brotherhood competition award for his work.

## **Fellowship Hall**

**Baptismal Font** - The original pine baptismal font at Good Shepherd was built for the new church when it was dedicated in 1958. A metal sign of the Trinity forms the finial for the lid. The removable bowl is made from stainless steel. The font was refinished in 2016 by Mike Cornelius after being stored in the Annex for many years. The name of the maker is unknown.

**Barn Board Cross** - Luther student Ruth Frost (LC1969) made the rustic barn board cross in a class taught by Luther College Art Professor, Orville M. Running. Carved symbols and inscribed words are found in the center and on each arm of the cross. Ruth is the daughter of Rev. Gerhard Frost (1909-1987) who assisted with the early planning for Good Shepherd congregation. It was hung first in the original sanctuary and remains on the west wall of the Fellowship Hall.

**Birds** – In 2022, Harley Refsal† carved a series of life-size birds painted in pastels for use as part of the décor in the Fellowship Hall. Perched on carved sticks, the birds have been used as centerpieces throughout the spring season.

**Branches** – White branches with red cardinals were created by Norma Refsal in the early 2000’s. The lilac branches were sprayed with white paint and secured in cut wooden rounds. The feathered cardinals were purchased from Michaels. The branches are used in the Fellowship Hall between the seasons of Christmas and Lent.

**Christmas Trees** – In the 1990’s, Norma and Harley Refsal† created wooden Christmas trees for use in the Fellowship Hall. Topped with gold stars and secured on birch bases, the trees are used during Advent in the Fellowship Hall. The trees were cut out from a wooden ironing board. The trees, stars and bases were painted and assembled by Norma’s Sunday School class.

**Creches** – In the 1990’s, Barry Helseth and his daughter, Kayla, from Minot, ND, created and donated the wooden creches used in the Fellowship Hall during the season of Christmas. The Helseths were friends of Norma and Harley Refsal†. Also in the 1990’s woodworker Dennis Green (1942-2022) of Decorah copied the design and made additional versions so there are 15 total creches.

**Crosses** – Wooden crosses, created at an unknown date, are used in the Fellowship Hall during Lent and at the time of Ordinations and other special events. There are no marks on the crosses to indicate the name of the maker.

Eckheart Paintings - In 1972, a series of three large altar paintings based on John 15:5, "*I am the vine; you are the branches...*", was completed and installed on the north wall of what was the original sanctuary. The work was a collaboration between Pastor Berg and congregation member Douglas Eckheart, a faculty member in the Luther College Art Department. Eckheart executed the oil on canvas pieces and donated them to the church. Each panel depicts a Christian subject: Left panel – Creation; center panel – Crucifixion; and right panel – Reconciliation. Three major elements appear on each of the panels: Vines and branches, large circles containing figures and symbols, and horizontal and vertical rainbows. The words of the verse spread across the panels, as well – *I am the* on the first panel (left); *vine you are* on the center panel; *the branches* on the third (right). The artist's detailed description and a critique of the work by Marion Nelson (1924-2000), director of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, are framed and hung next to the panels on the north wall of the Hall.

Sanctuary Cross - The walnut and metal cross (8'6" l x 4' w) was originally hung at the front of the sanctuary in what is now the Fellowship Hall. It was replaced in 1972 by the three Doug Eckheart paintings which now hang in the front of the Fellowship Hall. After being stored in the Annex for many years, it was refinished by Mike Cornelius in 2015. There is no record of the name of the maker.

Slate Remnants – Single sized pieces of slate used in the Fellowship Hall as liners under centerpieces on the tables were discovered by Norma Refsal around 2000-2001. These minimalist pieces of design were found on the hillside below the Luther College farm. The roof of the second Old Main was composed of slate and after fire burned the building in 1942 the remnants were disposed of at the farm.

Advent – Christmas Panels – In Storage - Five large panels depicting the Nativity of our Lord in words and pictures were created and painted by congregation member Laura Hoeg (1904-1994). They were first hung on the east wall of the original sanctuary for the Advent – Christmas season, 1959, where they served as a background to the altar. Grapevines with leaves and flowers are integrated into the designs and used as border elements on each panel. On the first, third, and fifth panels are drawings that depict shepherds tending sheep, listening to an angel; the Holy Family in the stable with angels above; and the Wise Men bearing gifts with the star overhead. The second and fourth panels provide accounts of Jesus' birth from the King James Version of Luke and Matthew. Laura Hoeg† also painted a set of Nisse owned by Good Shepherd. Known as Decorah's 'Nisse Lady', she and her husband Victor (1896-1973) and children, Carol and Robert, were charter members of Good Shepherd.

## Exterior

Benches - Three chocolate brown benches with backs have replaced the wooden benches located on the sidewalk leading into the main entrance and the sidewalk facing the street. Paid for from a 2016 Depot grant, the new "Garden Benches" are built by Berlin Gardens of poly lumber, also known as high-density polyethylene or HDPE and are constructed of 95% recycled content, with the majority coming from milk bottles collected in community recycling programs. In 2019, an additional bench was purchased with funds provided by the Bahr family in memory of Vernon "Bud" Bahr. In 2021, two "backless" benches were given in memory of Suzanne Pilgrim Kittelson by her family. Memorial plaques were installed to the sides of the benches.

Church Bell - Good Shepherd's bronze bell is a gift from charter members Rev. Paul (1925-1910) and Justine Lionberger (1928-2018). Originally it was in use at a Norwegian Lutheran church on the north edge of Castalia, Iowa. By the late 1950s, the church had become inactive and Paul was granted permission to tear it down and salvage the lumber. He brought the bell to Decorah for use at Good Shepherd. It was installed in early 1959 outside the original south-side entrance. The bell's platform and brick housing were a gift from Anna Lionberger (1891-1976), also a charter member and Paul's mother.

In the fall of 1988, the bell and its housing were moved to their present location outside the south entrance to the new addition.

Garden Sculpture - *Star Dancer*, a copper wind sculpture designed and made by Lyman Whitaker, was given by congregation member Bob Wilson in memory of his wife, Lynette (1955-2006), Good Shepherd's long-time choir director. It was installed in Lynette's Garden during the summer of 2007 by Bob and friend and fellow congregation member, Jim Fritz. This perennial memorial garden is located as an addition to the lawn on the south side of the sanctuary where it can be viewed from sanctuary windows.

Nativity Scene – A white plywood Nativity Scene created by Decorah native, Mark Rima, was donated to Good Shepherd in 2024. The pieces are silhouettes crafted with hinges for easy storage. They consist of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus lying in a manger, three wise men, two standing camels and one resting camel.

Sign - Good Shepherd's painted wood sign, mounted on a brick base, and adjacent garden were given by the Sunde Family in memory of their son and brother, David (1955-1997). A memorial plaque is mounted on the west side of the sign's base. This sign replaced the original, tall wood cross and sign which had deteriorated beyond repair.

Stars and Cardinals: Harley Refsal† carved yellow stars and red cardinals which decorate the Christmas trees placed in the outdoor planters at Good Shepherd during the Advent season.

Compiled by Good Shepherd Archivists, Elizabeth Kaschins and Jane Kemp, February 2025.