

A Mark Known the World Over

Suppose you are vacationing far from home. You drive around, looking for a church in which to worship Sunday morning. Suddenly you see a familiar sight: a Cross and Flame insignia on a sign, pointing you to the nearest United Methodist Church. You've just proved how symbols and pictures provide instant recognition, meaning and a sense of belonging.

Indeed, the Cross and Flame emblem is a powerful reminder of who and whose we are as United Methodists. That's why protecting and preserving its use and integrity are just as important today as when the insignia was created and registered as No. 917,433 with the United States Patent and Trademark Office more than three decades ago.

History and Significance

The history and significance of the Cross and Flame emblem are as rich and diverse as The United Methodist Church. The insignia's birth quickly followed the union of two denominations in 1968: The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Following more than two dozen conceptualizations, a traditional symbol—the cross—was linked with a single flame with dual tongues of fire. The resulting insignia is rich in meaning. It relates The United Methodist church to God through Christ (cross) and the Holy Spirit (flame). The flame is a reminder of Pentecost when witnesses were unified by the power of the Holy Spirit and saw "tongues, as of fire" (Acts 2:3).

The elements of the emblem also remind us of a transforming moment in the life of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, when he sensed God's presence and felt his heart "strangely warmed." The two tongues of a single flame may also be understood to represent the union of two denominations.

The insignia, one with lettering and one without, was formally adopted by the General Conference in 1968 and registered in 1971 with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Since 1996, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of The United Methodist church has supervised the emblem's use.