

Trinity United Church

SITE #070501

GC1TTXZ

Written & Researched by Steve Thornton

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Merritt, V1K 1B8
 Geocache Location: N 50°06.667'
 W 120°47.502'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0657891;
 North 5553321 10U
 Geocache altitude: 599 m./1,964 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1.5
 Terrain difficulty: 1
(1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: 1910
 Ownership: Trinity United Church
 Access: • Public Road
 • Year-round
 • Vehicle accessible
 • *Detailed access information on next page.*



The Trinity United Church in Merritt is old enough to have its affiliation with history run back into the dramas of time.

as trustees: G.B. Armstrong, Isaac Eastwood, Alexander J. Gordon, Phillip McLean, and the seller, William Voght.

There was a small but vigorous population of Presbyterian worshippers in Merritt at the dawn of the 20th century, but they did not have a church and so their services were conducted in a hodge-podge of locations: Hyland's Hall, the old Merritt Herald building, the Methodist Church, the home of pioneer William Voght. Rev. W.J. Kidd and his wife had been in Merritt only a short time when he determined that a church must be built. While Mrs. Kidd helped organize a Ladies' Aid, which would supply a fund for a church organ; he began doggedly to pursue the construction of a real church, with wooden pews, for the area's Presbyterians.

A contract for the building was let to Phillip McLean in 1910, and by November of that year,



Photo: Nicola Valley Museum & Archives Association

William Voght, "The Father of Merritt." He is buried in the Pineridge Cemetery, overlooking Merritt.

In 1908, Kidd saw that land for a church was purchased from William Voght, for the sum of \$400. A deed was then made out to five gentlemen who would act

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Headstone of William Voght, the father of Presbyterianism in Merritt, located in the Pineridge Cemetery in Merritt.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was erect and habitable. Opening services were held on the first Sunday of December, with the Rev. George Murray of Nicola and the resident pastor, Rev. Kidd, conducting services. In 1921 the last payment was made on the mortgage and the property was clear of debt.

Around that time, William Voght, who has been called the father of Presbyterianism in Merritt, presented the church with a stained glass window, in memory of his wife, which was placed in the south end of the church overlooking Voght's farm residence a block south.

Soon, a Sunday school room was added to the church, and then a manse on the adjoining lot. The church was left with a debt of \$1,500 when the manse was finished, and by 1922, that debt had grown to \$1,800. Church organizations worked hard thereafter to pay off the bills, and soon they were able to paint the church and manse, and fit the church with a badly-needed furnace.

In 1925, an event occurred across Canada that would profoundly affect the Merritt Presbyterian church. Four Protestant denominations, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Congregational Union, and from Saskatchewan the Association of Local Union Churches, were merged and the United Church of Canada was formed.

Therefore, on June 5, 1927, the former Presbyterian Church of Merritt became Trinity United Church, and some 80 years later, this historic building and congregation continues to thrive.

In 1923, Rev. W.R. Brown published a booklet describing the earliest years of the Presbyterian Church in Merritt; fifty cents from the sale of each booklet went to pay the church's debt. Near the end of this short publication are these words about the church. "*Its bond of union is not organization, but sympathy, and it knows no law, but the law of love.*" Today, Rev. Brown's heartfelt words continue to define the community and spiritual response of this important Merritt church.

Detailed access information:

- Trinity United is located within the City of Merritt.
- Parking is available on the street.
- Please be respectful of neighbouring residences' and private property.
- Keep gate closed, visiting church dogs to remain in the yard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Brown, Rev. W.R. (1923). *St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Souvenir Book, marking the thirteenth anniversary of the opening of the church.* Merritt, BC: Self.