

222 FURBY STREET – YOUNG UNITED CHURCH
J. Chisholm and Son, 1907, 1911



Situated on the corner of Broadway and Furby Street, this large brick church is an important landmark in the West End of Winnipeg. The church is named after Reverend George Young, an energetic missionary who first brought Methodism to the prairies in 1868. As the first of the Methodist circuit preachers, Reverend Young saw the mother church, Grace Methodist, established in Winnipeg. He was also involved in the founding of Wesley College (now The University of Winnipeg).

Young Methodist Church began as a Sunday School in the home of Richard Breen, serving his seven children and six others in the neighborhood. The Breens found the trip from their home, near the corner of Furby Street and Broadway, too far from Grace Church on Ellice Avenue.

Services were initiated in the Breen home in 1891, with a minister coming weekly from Grace Church. Later that year a small frame church, located on the site of the present sanctuary, was dedicated. The new church became independent from Grace Church in 1894. With the increasing residential development of the west end, plans were undertaken in 1906 to build a large brick church in two phases on the site.

Local architects James and C.C. Chisholm were commissioned to design the new church. James Chisholm came to Winnipeg from Ontario in 1877 and built up his practice to later include his son, C.C. Chisholm, who eventually took over the senior Chisholm's practice. The firm designed numerous buildings across western Canada. In Winnipeg their notable works include the Hochman Building, the original section of the Marlborough Hotel, and the Odd Fellows Temple.

The first portion of the church was built facing Broadway and was dedicated on 21 April 1907. The west wing, 77 feet by 72 feet, has a deep red brick exterior contrasted with light Bedford stone. It contained the sanctuary, Sunday School rooms, offices and clubrooms.

In 1910, construction started on the east wing of the church facing Furby Street. Based on Chisholm's plans, the three storey, 101 by 103 foot addition contained the new sanctuary. The older portion was divided into two floors: the main floor contained classrooms; a ladies parlour and boardroom were installed on the second floor.

The new addition followed the material and stylistic motifs that were established in the older section. A tall tower and expansive triple-arched entranceway dominate the main façade of the Church. Romanesque Revival semi-circular compound arches ornament the doorways. The semi-circular shape is repeated in the main windows, that are decorated with elaborate tracery, and in the bell tower. Bedford stone accents provide a polychromatic exterior finish.

The centralized plan of the church, based on Roman temple layouts, was commonly used throughout North America for Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian churches between 1840 and 1900. Constructed beneath a soaring groin vault, the room is an assembly hall where the pews

form a semi-circle around the pulpit. The semi-circular vaulting springs from the ground level to form a dome, detailed in plasterwork, thirty feet in diameter from which a large chandelier is suspended. A gallery, supported by four cast iron columns wraps around the sides and rear of the auditorium with five rows of seating. Magnificent stained glass windows admit light along three walls. The sanctuary, fundamentally unchanged from 1911 is a grand and inspiring space, featuring excellent acoustics.

In recent years, despite a declining church membership, Young United Church is particularly active with its community outreach programs in meeting the social needs of the surrounding neighborhood. This has resulted in the adaptive re-use of the administration section of the complex, and alternative uses for the sanctuary are being examined to meet the needs of the local community and the church.