

GLEN WAVERLEY UNITING CHURCH

SANCTUARY WINDOWS

**DESIGNED AND
MADE BY**

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December 1st, 1991

INTRODUCTION:

When I was first asked to write to explain and illustrate the full meaning and intent of the three main stained glass windows in your new church I thought it would be a fairly simple task. After all they are now designed, made, and in place. However, I soon realised from what I sensed and many others have said, that in their finished wholeness they had collectively a special presence and power which expresses "more than meets the eye". So I have made an effort to choose my words carefully in going into detail about the whole design and construction process and the reasoning behind it. I hope you find it valuable in your *voyage around the windows*.

The designing, creating, and making of three major stained glass windows at the central focus of a new church building represents a great opportunity, a unique challenge, and a profound responsibility. For universal and intrinsic symbolism to serve and manifest THE FAITH to the Church and its people, it must first be sensitive to and express artistically the relevant and essentially christian spiritual message of our

time and show how it fits into the timeless all encompassing meaning and fact of the divine plan and Gospel and our place in it.

To create such comprehensive symbolism is a immense task of creative design. Also to add to the aesthetic complexities it has to be done in such a way as to enhance the environment of Worship and not detract from it.

Such a message of our time is expressed in the call by the World Council of Churches saying 'Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation'. This call coming as it does from the ecumenical commitment to Justice, Peace, and the integrity of Creation.

So to project this visually it became an imperative to capture the import of this focus on Justice, Healing and Restoration with universal symbols relating to Life, Hope and Regeneration. The Symbols of EARTH, AIR, FIRE & WATER represent God's providence and power both factually and sacramentally - so in terms of composition and use of materials these four powerful elements were made to pervade all three windows.

CENTRAL WINDOW

The central window is divided into two main sections. The lower lighter section belongs to the Sanctuary proper and is separated from the upper part by a triangular top the sides of which when extended [in imagination] reaches out and down to the base extremities of the Sanctuary floor. This is the heart of the window dealing with first and last things.

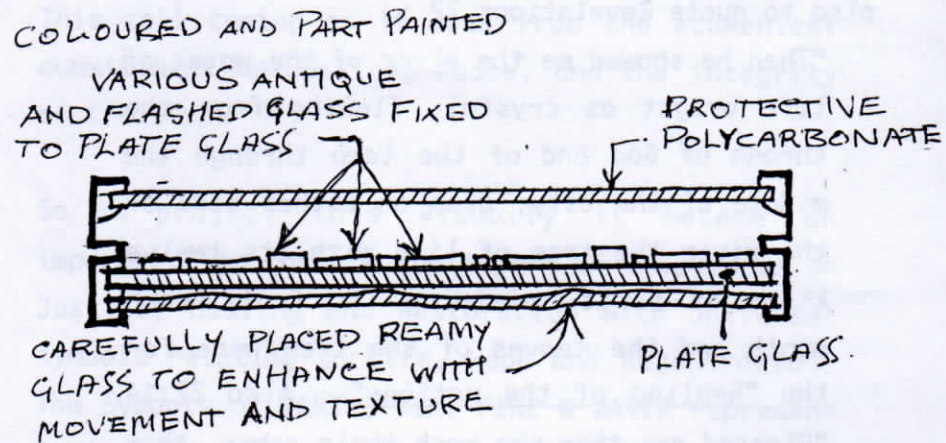
The tree of life as in Genesis 2: 9 and 3: 22, also to quote Revelations 22 :

"Then he showed me the river of the water of life bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb through the middle of the city; also on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month and the leaves of the tree were for the "healing of the nations". Also 22:14 "Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life."

To do justice to this wonderful imagery of the divine fruitful tree and living crystal water I

felt it was necessary to compose with the glass in a new way not in the traditional formal more static method with the use of lead for design and structure. What you now see is the end product of much experimentation both with composition and varied materials. The effort was worth it having achieved a striking visual sense of revelation and strong symbolic image. So this method was adopted for the rest of the central window and from that to the two succeeding side windows.

Here is the plan section view of the glass.



The water as you can see is a highly figured glass and sustains the crystal character. The blue and grey reamy glass represents AIR - movement of the Spirit [on the waters] and the breath of God. Because this breath is an ever present grace and enlivener, this particular glass is made to cover and energise all the windows. The WATER also represents our Baptism and regeneration. The fish was the main symbol of the early church and related to Mark 1:17 "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men". The lower segment with the crystal water and fish is covered by the Communion table but can be seen from within the Sanctuary.

Above the tree is the flame FIRE of Pentecost. This is created with the use of flashed and acid etched ruby on yellow antique glass together with yellow streaky. For the flame the blue Reamy glass changed to grey - a curved connecting line just under the flame shows the very subtle join and transition.

The placing of this flame with the other symbols calls to mind Mark 1:8 and the words of John the Baptist "I have baptised you with water but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

The upper part of the centre window is two tones darker on average than the lower sanctuary central area. This difference was created in part to prevent the windows extreme verticality from being intrusive and self conscious. In reference to the parable of the sower the lower area shows a stylised representation of an open flower with its seeds jumping out and upwards in response to God's creative providence prior to being sown and falling on varied ground - the good EARTH regenerates.

Above the open flower and seeds we continue up into cosmic creation with mixed deep blue glass manifesting much surface energy and power culminating at the very top with images of moon, stars and planets.

The dove is coming out of this upper energy. This symbol of the Holy Spirit illustrates that the spirit is dynamically involved with the whole creation - God the creator of Heaven and Earth - and all things visible and invisible.

RIGHT WINDOW

We start at the base of the window with the PROPHECY of the coming Messiah, his person and his Kingdom as shown forth from the good earth. The stump of Jesse that is rooted in it and which God nurtures and sustains - Isaiah 11 and Romans 15:12. "The root of Jesse shall come, He who rises to rule the Gentiles in him shall the Gentiles Hope".

I was able to procure some very rare deep brown antique glass with extreme quality of colour to set this bottom section off: some of the roots from the "stump" look quite golden against this rich earth. With a good light behind it, it is quite miraculous. From this stump there is new growth "and a branch shall grow out of his roots and the spirit of the lord shall rest upon him."

This Spirit endows with attributes such as wisdom, counsel etc., often quoted as the seven gifts or fruits of the Spirit. Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord [Awe - with a response of thanksgiving].

I felt that doves in different attitudes and against appropriate forms and colours would be a good way of displaying these attributes.

Viewing from the bottom up the two lowest doves are hovering and flying just above the extended Jesse branch in the environment of flame and fire; the spirit of dynamic power and a test, 1 Corinthians 3: 13-15. I felt that Piety [devotion to God, his nature and his work], and Understanding go together relating with devotion through compassion. So they are a pair in the Spirit and the FLAME.

Next is COUNSEL hovering and facing the viewer in a background of green for segregation and growth, and a sense of the fullness of life. This dove is looking straight at whomever wishes to listen.

Next Wisdom and Knowledge. The green of counsel turns to blue still with great surface movement - the breath of life sustainer, emancipator of these attributes. The fresh blue of purity and heavenliness points to the origin and authority of real wisdom and authentic knowledge which can only have value in a creative all embracing context. So they fly in that Spirit enlivened environment.

Fortitude - a patient courage. This dove is shown moving with effort through a background of black and grey - a very troubled stormy sky. One is reminded of Psalm 27: 14, "wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait I say on the Lord".

The final gift or Fruit of the Spirit is Fear of the Lord or [awe with a spirit of thanksgiving], "and His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11: 3 [RSV]. This bird is high to heaven, in a turquoise sky, which is a combination of blue and green, seeing a glory of heaven and earth, but just as capable of coming back to earth and finding there also the miracles of life in the heart of creation, and will respond in the now and "sing unto the Lord a new song".

From this rich turquoise background the form and colour moves up through textured blues and very ethereal linear greens then on up into delicate lime and citrus yellow/gold antique streaky glass. I tried to create a very luminous and uplifting quality here - from earth to heaven - anticipating the Ascension.

The very top warm light and lighter rays on a red background are radiating onto the golden letters of A and O - The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last: Revelations 22:13. The cosmic Christ - the first born of creation: Colossians 1:15-17, who is also that branch of Jesse that came into the world, who to all who received him and believed on his name, he gave power to become children of God. The rays also fall upon the incorruptible crown of witness and life for those who work and suffer for the faith: 1 Corinthians 9:25 and Revelations 2:10.

LEFT WINDOW

Continuing the theme of providence, growth, and regeneration this window begins from the bottom with a harmonic mixture of greens and soil colour of vital quality, symbolic of fertile and generous earth. From this fruitful bed the stems rise and the nutritious ears of wheat respond to the benign breeze and light. I deliberately used a plain reamy glass for the surface textural movement to enhance the open pure fresh air feeling of this segment.

This quality of colour continues on especially in the darker areas, one of which is between the lower section and the golden chalice. This is to emphasise by tonal contrast the shape and character of the exotic passion flower. A relevant and natural symbol for early Christians. They saw in the petals the ten apostles of the Crucifixion, in the five anthers the five wounds, in the three stigmas the nails and in the purple rays of the corolla the crown of thorns. It stands for the sacrifice of Calvary.

This leads onto the golden chalice which is receiving the abundant juice from the fruit of the true Vine: John 15:1. On the chalice is figured the emblem of the Lamb of God - "that takest away the sins of the world".

A spiritual symbol from bread [Wheat] and wine to body and blood and our commemoration of redemption. "Do this in remembrance of me".

To enhance this segment from the base of the chalice to the vine and grapes we return to the use and movement of blue reamy cover. Moving up from the chalice the rich blue base glasses change to varied turquoise to act as a compliment to the

purples of the grape and vine. Within this more wheat is intertwined at the base of the firey cross. I decided to make the cross orange - a glory colour as in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 2: 8-9, about crucifying the Lord of Glory.

This glory continues to move upward with sensitive subtle blues, pink, and pale green creating an atmosphere of peace and joy. This together with a light upward thrusting centre from the Cross is anticipating the Resurrection of the Lord.

Moving on from this area of peace the window culminates in a golden radiance emanating from the PX -Chi Rho [the initial letters of our Lord in Greek]. This sacred monogram unlike the Alpha and Omega of the Right Window is enfolded into an enclosed limited space to represent the fact of His coming into the world - "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus". Luke 1:42.

This is in contrast to the cosmic Christ, the Lord of heaven and limitless creation represented in the other window.

I would like to sum up the spirit of this total work with a quotation from Colossians 1: 15-17.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalties or authorities - all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

and also from Mark 3: 34-35

"and looking around on those who sat about him he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers, whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother".

I do hope I can share with you what is manifest and felt of God's love and glory in these windows of light - as a reminder and encouragement on the pilgrim's way.

Devek Pearce

F.R.S.A. M.G.P.