

Our Stained Glass



The stained glass windows of St. Aidan's are designed for contemplation and meditation and offer Christians in worship the opportunity to both read "from" and "into" the windows. They are so rich in symbols that many hours are needed to discover them all.

As you enter the nave, the eight windows on the left represent major biblical motifs from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. The five windows on the right side of the nave depict the work of the church, its history, its sacraments and its ministry. A unifying theme is found in the "veils and clouds" depicted with varying intensities at the top of each window. It is a constant reminder that while we know our Lord intimately through Jesus the Christ, there remains a great mystery which we cannot comprehend in even the most profound artistic expressions.

The completed stained glass windows were dedicated on March 28, 1992. Each is a memorial as recorded on the plaques at the Nave's entrance.



The Artist

Ray Gregory is an extraordinary artist. He is not only a renowned maker of resplendent stained glass windows, but a devout Christian steeped in the history of the Church, its symbols and its mystery. His depictions offer an intrinsic blend of highly-stylized theological symbols, as well as some pictorial representations in primitive art form, which allow both young and old to experience delight in instant recognition or contemplative meditation.

Our Kneelers

Working constantly for almost three years, over two dozen members of the St. Aidan's Needlework Guild completed eight magnificent kneelers that are three different sizes to accommodate the church's 16-foot communion rail space, plus six hassocks for the sanctuary.

To fully appreciate the kneelers inviting you to receive Christ's body and blood, you must view them individually, as well as a set. Each cushion features a different cross at its center, the universally accepted symbol of the Christian Church, stitched in two shades of regal gold thread rising from a field of red. Red was chosen to harmonize with the sanctuary's carpet.



~The Kneelers~ of St. Aidan's



In 1994, the Needlework Guild of St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, Virginia Beach, VA began a project to complete eight needlepoint kneelers to accommodate its 16-foot communion rail. The kneelers were completed and dedicated on Easter Sunday.

Each cushion features a different cross medallion at its center. Stitched in two shades of regal gold thread, the crosses rise from a field of rich red shades. A variety of stitches create the texture of a plowed field behind the sheaf of wheat. The theme is unified by a stylized cluster of grapes and golden wheat pattern placed in such a way that the cushions are reversible. The boxing section bordering the cushions feature an uneven series of tiny Latin crosses using the rice stitch and three color values.

Fleur-de-lis Cross

The four arms of the Fleur-de-lis cross end in a threefold design suggesting the Holy Trinity. This cross is also a symbol of the Virgin Mary and heraldic device representing an Iris or Lily.

Chi Rho Cross

The Chi Rho Cross is the earliest monogram of Christ in both Eastern and Western churches after the 6th century. This cross is often combined with other symbols inside a circle—the emblem of eternity.

St. Andrew's Cross

St. Andrew's Cross commemorates the apostle and patron saint of Russia, Scotland and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Other names are Cross Sallire or crux Decussata—from the Latin decussis, meaning to divide crosswise in the shape of an X.

Greek Cross

First letter of Greek word Theos meaning God formed into cross has arms of equal length.

Cross-Cross let

This cross consists of four Latin crosses. The center mixture of their lower arms suggests the spread of the Christian faith into the four corners of the earth.

Jerusalem Cross

The five fold Greek cross (with Byzantine influence) symbolizes the five wounds of Christ's crucifixion; the large cross represents the original church in Jerusalem with the four smaller crosses representing the four corners of the earth and the spread of Christianity.

Crusader Cross

This cross was used extensively by the Crusaders and was said to symbolize Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Sometimes an emblem of missionary work, it was worn by Godfrey de Bouillon, first ruler of Jerusalem after the liberation from the Moslems.

Budded Cross

Known also as the Cross Botone, this is a very beautiful cross often used on top of the Christian flag.



Creation

"From the primal element you brought forth the human race and blessed us with memory, reason and skill" (BCP). The book of Genesis and this window depict not how God created the world, but why. The primal elements of water and vegetation, even the celestial bodies, all surround the beginning of our salvation story. Note that the water motif will be carried through many other windows in Christ's path, Christian ministry and the River of Life in Revelation.

Artist's Notes: "Original man and woman, forbidden fruit and snake plotted against primal creation, the celestial bodies, day and night parted by the Tree of Knowledge, poignantly mirrored in the fig leaf and sensual waters."



Law and Covenant

Most of the windows move thematically from bottom to top or top to bottom. As you look at this window remember the major activities in the books of Genesis and Exodus: covenant with Noah (rainbow), the altar of sacrifice, Abraham's covenant with God and the rainbow in the thick which saved his son Isaac; Moses' encounter with the Lord on Mount Sinai, the Law becoming the principle covenant between God and his people and the scrolls acting as the vessels which contained the sacred laws.

Artist's Notes: "Rainbows, tablets and stars rise over majestic mountains beyond the burning bush and sacred scrolls, the mysterious head of the sacrificial beast peers through the altar smoke."

Prophets, Priests and Kings
Just as Israel's history from the Exodus to Jesus was chaotic and fractured, this window does not create one great movement, but is offered in distinct sections. The altar from the Covenant window is here joined with images of offerings of burnt sacrifices as the smoke envelops the



wrath of God. The people's praise surrounds this in the harp and ram's horn. Above that rises the menorah, lighting the Jerusalem Temple erected for the final resting place of the ark, which is protected by the cherubim. For a brief moment God pushes back the clouds and the veil as God anoints his chosen people to be prophets, priests and kings. This symbol of anointing was the symbol of God's call and chosenness.

"Messiah" literally means "anointed" which in Greek is Christ.

Artist's Notes: "The anointing hand from Heaven over the Kingly Crown, the temple protected by the Cherubim of the ark, the seven-branched candelstick of the temple, altar flames, the harp and horn of Old Testament praise and worship, the wrath of God in lightning and smoke."



Resurrection
This window should be a child's delight! From caterpillar to butterfly the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the promise of our eternal life, just as the victorious paschal lamb stands before the anchor cross, another symbol of hope and promise.

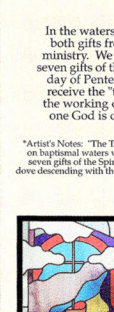
Artist's Notes: "Caterpillar to butterfly, the empty tomb, Easter lilies and sunrise, the lamb of God triumph over death, with banner and anchor-cross, symbol of hope."



Life of Christ

Aggus Dei "O Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." The path from Bethlehem to Jerusalem shows that the way of salvation is through the purifying love and suffering of the Son of God. The Lamb of the Passover of the Exodus event is no longer necessary for now the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world forever.

Artist's Notes: "The Way, from the star and Bethlehem to the cross and heavenly glory beyond, the Lamb of God, crown of thorns and drops of blood."



Holy Spirit

In the waters of baptism we receive both gifts from God and the call to ministry. We are empowered by the seven gifts of the Spirit, and as on that day of Pentecost, we too are able to receive the "tongue of fire" through the working of the Holy Spirit. Our one God is complete in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Artist's Notes: "The Triquetra, symbol of the Trinity, on baptismal waters with mystic tongues of fire, the seven gifts of the Spirit received by open hands; the dove descending with the creniform nimbus of divinity, the coming of the Spirit."

Early Church

"I will make you fishers of Men." The church was built on the blood of the martyrs. The chains of the martyrs are the seeds of life as this window depicts the fishing for souls in the teaching of the word (scrolls) and the light of the cross (scissors) and the feet of all mankind. The way is never easy, as Peter's inverted crucifixion cross reminds us. But the early church remained victorious, and its early symbol, the ship (from which we get the word "nave" in which you stand as you view the windows) remained triumphant as its sails were filled with the holy breath of God throughout the centuries.

Artist's Notes: "The inverted cross of St. Peter, Rock of the Church; the ship, early symbol of the church, plowing the waters, the lamp of knowledge by which the Gospels and epistles were written, fisher's nets, chains of persecution, the ancient monogram of Christ (Chi-Rho), the sign of the fish."



Revelation

This window should be contemplated as one reads the Book of Revelation, especially chapter 21 and 22. The glorious vision of the new Jerusalem—and the River of Life—and the promise of peace forevermore—so radically changing the world forever

in the apocalyptic event. So, read the book—then enjoy the window.

Artist's Notes: "The New Jerusalem, River of Life, lion and lamb together and Book of Seven Seals, the two-edged sword renting the world in a cataclysmic whirlwind."



Communion of Saints

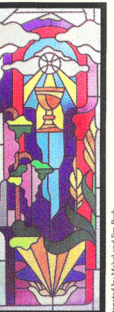
The Adam and Eve of the Creation window are now reaching out to touch not the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the host which issues forth from the tree of life as the blood of Christ gives it life. Yet, even this tree drops blood as a reminder that martyrdom leads to sainthood.

Our patron saint, Aidan of Lindisfarne (651 AD), was a monk and later bishop who never passed anyone along the way without asking them if they knew of Jesus the Christ. Aidan's symbol is depicted in the background. (Lindisfarne is the jewel) This window and the next four windows depict a downward movement as God's life is given to his church.

Holy Baptism

The miracle of baptism is the miracle of change that is brought about in one's life. The symbol of this miracle is seen in the pattern and the radical change that is brought about in one's life. The symbol of this miracle is seen in the pattern and the radical change that is brought about in one's life. The symbol of this miracle is seen in the pattern and the radical change that is brought about in one's life.

Artist's Notes: "The Holy Grail and host, vine and branches, sanctified man and woman, drops of blood of the martyrs; in tribute to St. Aidan, the British Isles and recumbent stag; a clear jewel marks the Holy Island, Lindisfarne."



Holy Eucharist

In this window all of the gifts of God are condensed into the sacramental image of bread and wine. The bread of the Passover and the blood of the Passover lamb now represent the body and blood of Jesus.

"All gifts are thine, no gifts have we." Even wheat and grapes are given to us by God so that we may turn them into bread and wine to use them as the sacramental expression of the life-giving spirit which we receive as we kneel at the altar in a beggar's posture.

Artist's Notes: "Hands receiving blessing, the grapes and wheat rising to the exalted chalice and hosts."



The Church Gathered

No longer does the altar support animal sacrifice nor a burnt offering, but the symbol of our Lord's ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Here the Celtic cross again reminds St. Aidan's of its heritage. Now Adam and Eve have been transmuted into man and woman worshipping God. Another symbol of our heritage, the bishop's crook, provides an ecclesiastical structure on which the vine of the church is built.

Christian Ministry

This window is appropriately nearest the door through which we leave the nave and enter the mission fields. "I am the vine and you are the branches." The Christian bears fruit in the world through ministry to others. The primal Adam and Eve have now attained their highest earthly function: fishing for others with the Good News of Christ and offering bread to a hungry world. The sevenfold gifts of the Spirit are now transformed into the seven fruits, which are borne from the vine. The hands of a hungry world ask for this fruit and are then able to offer back to God all that has been given. In the bowl rests an authentic copper coin of the time of Jesus. When the widow offered her mite, in all probability it was just such a coin as this. A small piece of white paper held diagonally in front of this coin will reflect the light back onto its face so that you see the mint of the coin.

Artist's Notes: "The vine and branches bearing fruit and growing into Heaven from Earth below in celestial perspective; the man and woman bear the abundant harvest the waiting hands of the needy."



The Christian Symbols of St. Aidan's

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Virginia Beach, VA