

"More Than Just Windows"

ONE YEAR LATER

It's hard to believe it has been one year since we moved to our new church home. Much has happened in the past year. And it has all been good. Today we have one more thing to be thankful for - our new windows.

A year ago when we first moved into this building, there were two large window openings on the wall behind the altar where there used to be stained glass windows. What would we put in their place? I prayed about it and thought that whatever windows we placed there should not only be bright and colorful but represent who we are as Christians and Anglicans. I also thought that there should be some continuity with the altar and sanctuary we left behind at 1064 Brighton. So guided by the Holy Spirit, I envisioned an "Alpha and an Omega" which were on our previous altar, a lamb with the English flag (cross of St. George) also from the previous altar, the tablets of the Decalogue (10 Commandments), a dove, and a chalice with the priest's host.

Around the same time one of our members, Susan Osberg, approached me about her ability to paint windows, and I also talked to our sexton Ned Wood, who is also an artist to get his input. Ned designed life size drawings as a template, Susan added the rays and colors, and the result is breathtaking.

THE MEANING BEHIND THE SYMBOLS

In fact, I believe that just as the Lord has moved our congregation both physically and spiritually to this new place, He has also worked to make our new sanctuary a reflection of Himself. You see there will be times when you will be in this house of the Lord and you will be able to look and reflect on the various icons you see before you - to bring into remembrance the truths of God's Word and the great love He has for us.

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

In the upper section of the left window there is the Greek letter alpha and at the top of the right window there is the Greek letter, omega. These are the first and last letters, respectively of the Greek alphabet. Some of you may recall we had these two letters in gold on the marble altar in the old sanctuary. Why the Alpha and the Omega? It reveals the deity of Christ. We find them only mentioned in the book of Revelation. Why?

The Lord God declares to the Apostle John that He is outside of time and space as we know it. **Rev. 1:8:** *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty?"* Now look at **Rev, 1:17-18.** John has just seen this incredible supernatural man like figure stand before him - *"one like a son of man,"* (v.13) who in fact turns out to be Christ! For John writes in **verses 17 & 18,** *"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."*

We find this expression once more at the end of Revelation when the One who sits on the Throne declares after bringing forth the new heaven and the new earth, *"And He who sits on the throne said, Behold I am making all things new...It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who*

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thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son." (Rev. 21:5-7)

Who is the One who sits on the throne? The Lord Jesus Christ. Recall **Jn. 5:22** *"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son."*

But here is the clincher! **Rev. 22:12-13, 15:** *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end...I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."*

You see when we see the Alpha and the Omega it is a reminder of Christ's deity - that He in fact is God in human flesh. It also testifies to His return. He is coming back to finish what He has begun. That is His promise! And who can forget the other I am statements of Jesus found in John's Gospel? *"I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "I am the door," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the way the truth and the life," "I am the vine," and "Before Abraham was, I am!"*

THE LAMB OF GOD

Next let me draw your attention to that wonderful white lamb. Before God led the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt He called on each family to sacrifice a lamb and to put the lamb's blood on the door posts and mantels of where they lived (cf. **Ex. 12**). They also were to eat the remains of the lamb. This was the first Passover meal. In response to their obedience, God passed over the households of the Israelites as He inflicted the judgment of death to Egypt's firstborn. Later, God gave Moses and the Israelites laws concerning sin and guilt offerings to be made on behalf of the people. Whether it be the sacrifice of bulls, goats or sheep the animals were sacrificed to show that sin leads to death and that someone has to be held accountable. The High Priest would take his hands and representing the guilt of the people he would then place them on the animals to be sacrificed thereby symbolically transferring the sin guilt of the people to the animal being sacrificed. The truth remains, however, that animals cannot take away sin or guilt. Ultimately, only the Lord can remove sin, for He is the only One who is without sin. Moreover, to be a true replacement offering, the sacrifice would have to be of the flesh of man. Jesus is that one true sacrifice - born of the flesh, but eternal and sinless as the Son of God.

That's why when John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ, He said, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."* He knew the prophecies of **Isaiah 53:7** which speak of God's suffering servant being led to the slaughter as a lamb. It is why on the night before He died, Jesus celebrated a Passover meal. But instead of simply remembering how God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, Jesus took the bread and said it was His body, He took the wine and said it was His blood. He was to be the Passover Lamb sacrificed for the sins of not just the people of Israel but for the whole world. It is why we have a lamb so prominent in our sanctuary and so beautiful on the center of the left window. Jesus is the Lamb of God upon whom God places our sin. And throughout the book of Revelation, St. John sees time after time the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne of Almighty God! Christ's sacrificial work has been completed!

ST. GEORGE'S FLAG

You will also see that the lamb is carrying a white flag with the red cross of St. George. This flag eventually became the official flag of England in the early 1600's. We are an Anglican Church, rooted in the traditions of the

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Church of England. God has used the English speaking peoples in a mighty way over the last four hundred years. Not only did parliamentary and republican style democracy take root in the English speaking world along with the development of human rights and liberties grounded upon the Word of God, but it was the English speaking peoples who stood against the dictatorships of France and Central Europe, of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, of Nazism and Fascism, of Communism and now fundamentalist Islam. I mean think about it for a moment? If it was not for the United States and Great Britain, we could very well be speaking German or Russian today, or even having to bow down toward Mecca and say our prayers in Arabic! Praise God for the English speaking peoples of the world, praise God for true Anglicanism which retains the catholic traditions and upholds the Word of God!

THE DECALOGUE/THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

At the bottom of the left window we find two tablets with Hebrew letters. They represent the Decalogue or Ten Words, commonly referred to as the Ten Commandments: God's law given to Moses and Israel. They serve as the outward seal of what is also termed the Old Covenant. God's Law reflects His heart and character. It flows from His righteousness and reveals what is right and what is wrong in His eyes. The Decalogue, though not a complete expression of God's Law, still provides the foundation for the moral law of the Lord. Jesus said in **Mt. 5:17**, "*I did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill the law.*" Christ as God in the flesh is the only One who can truly follow God's law completely. The Law was given to us not only to show us what is right but to also show that no one can fulfill the law without the Lord. Thus, the Law cannot save, it can only point us to the One who truly saves. The beauty of Christ's redemptive work is that God not only takes away our sin through His death but He transfers His righteousness onto us. In other words, He not only forgives us but then gives us the ability to fulfill the Law. And He does this through the Holy Spirit. This leads us to our next icon - the beautiful descending white dove.

THE HOLY SPIRIT/DOVE

In the Bible, the dove is used to highlight the coming of the Holy Spirit. In all four gospels, we are told that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism like a dove. In Jewish tradition the voice of the turtledove in the **Song of Solomon** was interpreted as the voice of the Holy Spirit of redemption. And in one Jewish tradition **Gen. 1:2** is translated with the words, "*the Spirit hovered over the waters at creation like a dove.*" Noah sent a dove out three times after the flood to discover whether the waters had subsided. So a dove symbolizes life, peace and purity. Jesus told us in **Jn. 14:15-17, 26 & 16:5-11**, that He must go so that He can send another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, to be with us forever. The Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, guide us into truth, and we know from Acts 1-2 that He empowers us to live the Christian life, and blesses us with spiritual gifts. Simply put, we can't live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit! It's the Holy Spirit who gives us Jesus. It's the Holy Spirit who manifests the Father and the Son's presence in our world. And it's the Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and the wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord. Hence, a dove!

THE CHALICE AND THE HOST

If the Decalogue symbolizes the Old Covenant, the chalice and host that you see at the bottom of the right window reflect the New Covenant. Jesus established the New Covenant on the night before He died during the celebration of Passover (**Lk. 22:19-22**). We are now to celebrate this new Passover meal as the Lord's Supper, a time to remember His death, resurrection and the promise of His return. Christ poured out His life for us and we

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partake of His body and blood to remember the new life we *now* have in Him. We drink from a common cup because it is a reminder that we are all of the same family. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We eat the body and drink the blood as spiritual food highlighting the truth that God in Christ is the one who forgives and cleanses us spiritually and nourishes us supernaturally. We now can have intimate communion with God because of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ!

THE COLORS AND RAYS

When Susan took my concept she chose the background colors of different hues in blue and yellow. The various dark and light colors are produced in contrasting rays, and are meant to symbolize the bursting forth of the elements at the instant of creation,

In the alpha or first creation in **Genesis 1**: *"and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." ... "And God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."* The colors represent the darkness and the light, the firmament/sky separating waters from waters, the power of the creation of God.

And then the golden rays that shoot forth from the lamb and the dove symbolize the victory Christ and the Holy Spirit will have over Satan and the Antichrist at the end of the age when the new heavens and new earth are established in the omega or final creation mentioned in **Rev. 21:1**: *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."* **Rev. 21:5-6** *"Behold, I make all things new" ... "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."* After all the horrors and blackness of the tribulation are over and Satan's and the Antichrist's reign on earth is defeated, the darkness of sin which began at the fall in Eden is shattered, the golden light of the Holy Spirit and Son will illuminate the earth, and the water of life will be freely given.

THE US AND ISRAELI FLAGS

A final word needs to be said about the two flags (US and Israeli) we have on either side of the sanctuary. Yes, we are citizens of the United States of America. But our American flag in many respects represents the Gentile nations - peoples from every tribe, nation and tongue. And then we have the Israeli flag that represents modern day Israel, the place to which Jews have been returning from all over the world during the last century for the first time in 2000 years.

Now notice what ties everything together - *an empty wooden cross*. The Bible says Jesus will bring both Jew and Gentile together as One and that when Jesus returns many Jews will recognize Him as their Messiah. Through the cross, we are told in **Eph. 2:11-22** that the Lord has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, Moreover, Jesus has died but he is no longer on the cross or in the grave. He is alive and He is coming back.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, what God has wrought in our midst these last twelve months is nothing short of miraculous. Truly, how He has brought all of this together and what these windows represent, sum up who we are and what we are to be about. But this is only the beginning. We are destined for eternity but we have more work to do. We have a mission to complete. And that is to take what we have heard and seen and what we believe and know, and live it out so that others might be set free from the curse of sin and death and might know the only true God - forever the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, AMEN!