

Introduction:

Because Grace Episcopal will be celebrating its 100-year anniversary in 2012, your Centennial Committee is researching all facets of the history of our beautiful church. As we do so, we would like to publish articles in the Communicator highlighting the fascinating facts we have uncovered.

The Rubel Chapel Window of Grace Episcopal Church

By Mary Ann Burkhalter

Grace has been blessed with many magnificent works of art given to the Glory of God for the beautification of our building and the inspiration of all who observe them. The donors of these creations gave of their time, talents and treasure to express their faith in our Heavenly Father and their dedication to His Church.

Such a masterpiece is the “Last Supper” window in the Rubel Chapel. In 1967, Mrs. Maude Baxter, widow of Dr. George Baxter, began her plans to leave a unique and beautiful memorial to her husband. The Baxters, of course, had already been incredibly generous benefactors, having provided the very property upon which our Church stands. This artwork would be yet another remarkable statement of generosity and faith.



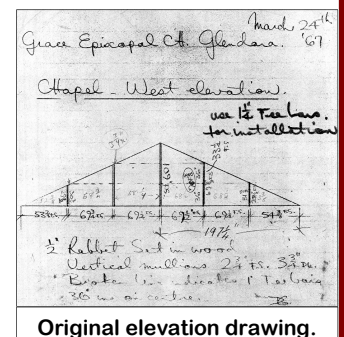
Next Sunday morning take a moment to lift your eyes and study this creation. Thick chunks of colored glass, smooth, but with sculptured and faceted edges, are assembled to form the figures of Jesus and His disciples. Unlike more traditional leaded windows, the glass components are held in place by strong, thick mortar. As the light shines through, each piece of glass becomes a jewel: ruby red, emerald green, deep topaz brown, citrine yellow, amethyst purple, sapphire blue, jet black. The composition is bold and contemporary, rich in symbolism and exquisite in its symmetry.

Mrs. Baxter, aided by Grace’s Rector, The Rev. John Colburn, went to Judson Studios in Highland Park to pursue her dream of “The Last Supper.” Judson is the oldest stained glass studio in the country that is still owned and operated by its founding family. Situated in the historic Garvanza district of Los Angeles, about a mile south of the Church of the Angels (the Bishop’s Chapel) and Hillside Home, it has a unique and colorful history all its own.

The site of the studio is the edge of the Arroyo Seco, a region which was a cradle of the Arts & Crafts movement that flourished in the Pasadena area in the early days of the 20th Century. The building, constructed in 1901, was originally the School of Fine Arts of the University of Southern California. Artist William Lees Judson served as a professor there. When USC relocated in 1920, William retired from teaching, and the building became Judson Studios. Over the years, the company has produced stained glass windows for religious, private, municipal, military, commercial, and educational buildings throughout the world.

The research conducted at Judson by your Centennial Committee revealed a historic treasure trove! Meticulous records had been kept of the entire transaction, which involved Mrs. Baxter, Father Colburn, and the artists. The notes are a diary of the project’s progress. Sketches were reviewed and discussed, amended and approved. Time was of the essence. A poignant message from a Judson executive, probably to one of the key artists, reads: “Donor [Mrs. Baxter] is in middle 80s, in bad health and Fr. Colburn is most anxious to wrap up contract. So move on this!!!”

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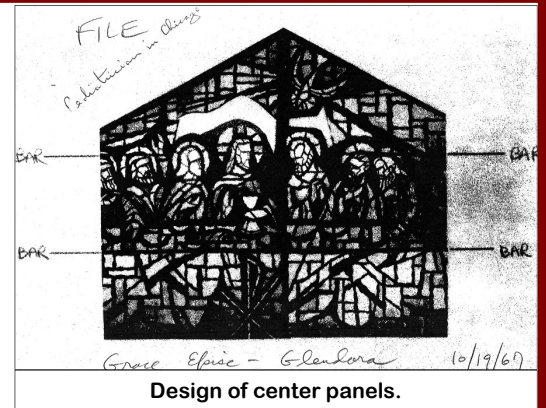


Original elevation drawing.

(The Rubel Chapel Window, continued from page 4)

At last the design was approved. An early sketch, done on tracing vellum, survives (see illustration). The "Last Supper" would replace the original chapel window, the inspiration for which had been the stylized leaded stained glass windows flanking the grand choir window above the narthex. In 1968, the project was completed. The cost was \$4,950.00, including taxes.

Happily, Mrs. Baxter was very much alive to celebrate its installation, which took place during Holy Week, 1968. Here is her letter to Judson Studios, dated March 30, 1968:



Dear Mr. Judson:

This is a letter that although enjoyable to write, is extremely difficult to put into words. A few days ago, I attended an afternoon Confirmation Service in my church, Grace Episcopal... the service was enhanced by rays of sunlight playing on the sculptured glass chapel window of the "Last Supper."

The work in the window is truly exquisite and I feel certain Dr. Baxter would be as thrilled as I am with the wonderful scene.

Dedication of the window as a memorial to Dr. Baxter will be on Easter Sunday. I wanted to express my deep pleasure in your beautiful work of art and I know others over the years will be richly inspired when viewing the window.

*Sincerely,
Mrs. George E. Baxter.*

Yes, Mrs. Baxter. We are richly inspired, indeed. Thank you.