

Once, when I was wearing my full-time meeting planner hat, a convention bureau's sales person sent me a survey. I was scheduled to do a site visit and he wanted to provide the hotels I was considering a little bit of information about me so that they could tailor their approach. One of his questions was "Do you collect anything?" I answered, "Dust." My answer established and sealed a friendship I hold dearly to this day!

Well, I do collect things other than dust. There are Wizard of Oz and Jiminy Cricket things all over my office. They, not I, are the dust collectors! But, my real joy is in collecting cathedrals. To date, I've been to three in the US; two in France; one in Germany; three in Italy and fourteen in England. Each one has its own personality. And each is graced with what I consider to be a wonder of the modern world – stained glass windows.

Stained glass tells us stories. In churches and cathedrals, they share the stories of the Bible such as our windows here at Redeemer. They share stories of the saints.

One of my favorite medieval windows is at Canterbury Cathedral, where the story of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket and the miracles attributed to him speak to pilgrims in hues of deep blues and greens and reds.

Sometimes, the glass shares church history, such as the windows dedicated to bishops, anchorites, musicians, and others in places like Oxford or Norwich. And, sometimes, they simply point to the amazing love and glory of God to the point they take your breath away, as the shimmering glass at San Chappelle, or the rose windows at the National Cathedral do.

There are windows that are messengers of theology. For instance, the etched glass of Coventry's modern replacement evokes a specter-like mood, as if those who lost their lives in the bombing of that city in World War II beg us not to forget their sacrifice as you gaze through to the ruins of the original Gothic cathedral.

In Winchester, the cathedral's glass was shattered in the 1600's during England's civil war. The people of that city, picked up all of the pieces and shards of glass and meticulously put them back together again.

However, they didn't worry about whether or not the images were reconstructed. The shattered glass was repurposed, all there but in different places. The new window speaks the message of God's love beyond what the original window may have provided. Love brings broken things together again.

But, love can be dangerous. It certainly was for Jesus. His love for all created anger and division. His example of servant ministry threatened those who sought only power or perfection. Jesus loved when love was messy, uncomfortable, awkward. No one was outside of it. Tax collectors, Samaritans, unclean women, even the dead. Everyone was invited into God's messy, uncomfortable, and awkward love. Love that expansive, that inclusive, met with fear and violence and death.

As a profession, making stained glass was dangerous also. Medieval artists often died young due to lead poisoning. There was no OSHA back then, reminding glass artisans to wear protective gloves as they soldered the lead between the panes of glass.

The artisans made the glass as well, so burns from sand turned molten in fire were common. Lacerations from scoring and cutting the glass meant that flesh and blood really did go into those magnificent windows.

Stained glass windows are wonderful prayer partners because of all these things. They link us to the past. They remind us of the stories in scripture. They allow light to filter into darkness with a kaleidoscope of color. They are windows into the soul of the artisans and, if we allow them, into our own souls as well.

It should be of little wonder as I was discerning God's call, and discovered Church of the Redeemer, that I fell in love with your beautiful stained glass window. I was struck by the vibrant primary colors and the use of straight edges. The curving lines do so subtly. Praying with it brought new insights. The primary colors took many hues, from darkness to light. And, secondary colors appear lightly at the bottom and then brightly toward the top.

All colors eventually appear, either in the glass or in the beautiful prisms of light that shine onto the white walls as the sun travels throughout the day or the lights shine upward to the ceiling in the night. We are all there. All colors of the rainbow.

We are all colors and we are made a new creation from the sharp edges of glass scored by cares or sorrows or broken by life circumstances, brought together by the Creator's loving hand into the corpus of light that is the Risen Christ. Each of us is bound to the other, forged together by the Spirit.

This is the day of Resurrection.

This is the day when we celebrate in song and prayer, wonder and praise that incredible event two centuries ago. A small group of people, who were in deep mourning, became filled with hope by the words of a woman who thought she had seen a gardener, but who touched her risen Lord.

This is the day when we, who may feel estranged or hurt by powers beyond our control, find healing and wholeness as the disciples did in that upper room.

This is the day, when liberated by the fear of sin and death, we are empowered to take risks and proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection and the all-encompassing love of God to our neighbors near and far.

It is the News of God's Love that brings wholeness, peace, and concord and can remedy the horrors among which we now live. The people who believe their religion tells them to wreak havoc in train stations, on subway lines, city streets or beaches, do not know this Love.

It is this Love that can turn the hearts of those who live maximally to share with those who cannot live minimally. Those who refuse to see the needy at their gates do not know this Love.

It is this Love that proclaims to those who see themselves as less than the image of God, in whom they were created, that they are valued and cherished beyond measure.

It is this Love that transforms us through service to others, through worship, through prayer to become children of Light. We know this Love. So, go forth and share the Good News.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.



Grace Cathedral San Francisco



Winchester Cathedral, UK



St John the Divine New York



Canterbury, UK



Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, Washington DC



Bishops window, Bath, UK



Coventry



San Chappelle, Paris

Grace, Winchester, and St. John the Divine photos are from their respective websites. The other photos are by the rector.