

Bow Valley Baptist Church

The Four Stained Glass Windows

Iconography of the Designs

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Window 1



WINDOW ONE

"I set My rainbow in the cloud . . . and I will remember My covenant" Genesis 9:13

The considerations and concepts worked out for this window were based upon Scriptural references to the faith of Noah with whom we share, by faith, in the everlasting covenant between God and His people. It was essential that water - the element most mentioned in Scripture - must be the most evident metaphor of the design in order to honour the awesome paradox of simultaneous Divine destruction and deliverance, whilst giving close attention to the counterpointed message that the solitary *cri de coeur* is ever discernible above the noise of tumult: Peter, "beginning to sink, cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).

The waters of the deluge *prevailed exceedingly*, but in due time, God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the waters subsided. The intent of the design is to suggest the effect of this purposeful wind. So, the surface of the waters took on a flattened curve as waves of water are superseded by 'waves of light'. The glass shapes delineate white, wing-like curves symbolic of the Dove of the Holy Spirit, who, in Creation, "moved upon the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2). "*Over the bent/world broods with warm breast, and ah! bright wings.*" (Gerard Manley Hopkins).

Light from the sun is perceived as clear, even 'white', but the rainbow discloses to us the component colours which exist in 'invisible' light, each colour corresponding to a particular wavelength of light. The delicate rainbow is in fact a triumphant sign of God's power. When we look upwards at a rainbow, first we see the tint of purple - symbolic colour of royalty and a holy reminder of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. However, red is the first colour beheld by God the Father when He looks upon the bow in the cloud - symbolic of Christ's redeeming blood.

At a rainbow's sudden, thrilling appearance, drops of water act as tiny prisms refracting sunlight, curving a bridge between heaven and earth, a many-coloured banner over us, as God "*writes in the sky that every grace is love.*" (John Keble).

In this design, the prismatic colours of the rainbow are displayed in a heraldic sequence along the top edge of the window and continuing down the right side. This sequence, somewhat akin to the 'key' used in colour printing, is the visual result of a deep concern to recognize and to celebrate the profound significance that sunlight, which appears to be colour-less, is marvelously *multi-coloured*. The medium of stained glass displays a remarkable, indeed unique, affinity with the "manifold (lit. Gk. *multi-coloured*) wisdom of God." (Ephesians 3:10; Psalm 104:24).

By the purposeful addition of one piece of rich ruby, the basic prismatic colours have become eight, as deliberate, particular reference to the eight people in the Ark. The number 'eight' also refers to "new beginnings."

Green presents the central colour of the rainbow, and often in ecclesiastical symbolism 'green' has been chosen to denote "the gladness of the faithful." So here, the square of green glass which represents the Ark, (and the gladness of faithful Noah), has come to rest "*upon the mountains of Ararat*" - in design terms, the top, right corner of the window.

The colour green is reminder of the freshly-picked olive leaf - the assurance of hope - which a dove brought back to Noah, and is illustrative also of our blessed assurance of "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." (Colossians 1:5). The Ark has been regarded as a model for Christ-in-His-Church; His church is saved by wood, i.e. the Cross of Christ.

Long ago, the writer of Ecclesiasticus declared: "Look upon the rainbow and praise Him that made it. It compasseth the heavens about with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it."

The 'treasure at the end of the rainbow' is something "much more precious than gold which perishes" (1 Peter 1:7).

The rainbow speaks to us of the manifold wisdom of God: faith is the prism.