

**Interpretation of the Spiritual Symbolism of the
Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church Sanctuary
Bethesda, Maryland**



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Preface

This documentation of the Sanctuary's spiritual and religious symbolism, and its history at Bradley Hills, emanated from related interpretative efforts by Bradley Hills members Clarence Hickey and Steve Fox. They led Bradley Hills members, church visitors, and Friends Club members on interpretative guided tours of the Sanctuary, explaining the subtle Christian symbolism of the church's mid-20th-century design, that is reminiscent of Gothic cathedrals and temples. As part of an annual Worship Workshop, Bradley Hills members Rosanna Morrison and Corinne Silva share some of the spiritual design elements, their links to early church practices, and the history of the Sanctuary with the second graders of the Church School and their parents. Rosanna also contributed her writing and editing skills to this history. Beth Beisel, Bradley Hills Coordinator of External Communications, assisted with editing and document layout and presentation. This document, therefore, brings together those interpretative efforts and offers them as a part of the continuing and living history of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church.

Other people knowledgeable in the church's design and history also were consulted, and have assisted this effort, including: Farid Beltran, Bradley Hills Facilities Manager; Nancy Hall, former church member and daughter of Rev. Dr. Arthur Hall, Bradley Hills Pastor Emeritus; Donald Sutherland, Bradley Hills Music Director Emeritus; and Bradley Hills member Richard Tustian, architect and city planner.

This expose of the spiritual and historical Christian religious symbolism of the Bradley Hills Sanctuary is meant to be an additional historical interpretation to accompany the church histories written by Rev. Dr. Arthur Hall and Joseph Fouchard as part of the church's 40th year celebration in 1995, and other related church history writings. These history documents are included in the "Sources, References, and End Notes" at the end of this writing. We also consulted several sources, in hard copy and on the internet, regarding the design of cathedrals and churches for comparison and understanding. Architect Richard Tustian helped us interpret those sources, which are listed at the end.

This written interpretation focuses on the Bradley Hills Sanctuary, its architectural features and the stained glass windows that were part of the original design of the building in 1964 and 1965. Also briefly discussed are the more recent additions of the Sanctuary's Resurrection Window, Pentecost Window, Columbarium, Baptismal Font, Apostles cushions in the Chancel, and the liturgical banners that adorn the Sanctuary and help explain and interpret the Presbyterian Church's

liturgical calendar. The Rose Window in Memorial Hall also is discussed briefly as an historical element of Bradley Hills.

In order to understand the design features and Christian symbolism of the Sanctuary's stained glass, we corresponded with the Willet Hauser Architectural Glass company in Winona, Minnesota. That occurred during the period of March through July 2023. Willet Hauser's predecessor company, the Willet Stained Glass Studios of Philadelphia, was the original stained glass designer and installer. On March 31, 2023, Clarence spoke by phone with Mr. John McCurry, the Willet Hauser Studio Consultant. Willet Hauser had retained and preserved all of the original stained glass design documents and correspondence, from 1965, between the company and Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church. Mr. McCurry and his associates compiled all of the original documents into a Willet Hauser Legacy Box. On June 27, 2023, Mr. McCurry visited Bradley Hills and presented the Legacy Box of documents to Farid Beltran. While visiting Bradley Hills, Mr. McCurry made an inspection of all of the stained glass windows in the Sanctuary. The inspection included documenting the condition of the windows through photographs and notes, and an appraisal of the replacement value of the windows. The appraisal and replacement value report was provided to Farid on July 6, 2023.

In order to better understand the symbolic design features of the Sanctuary itself, we also attempted to contact the architectural firm of Duane & Lawrence, the original church architects. Several emails and telephone calls were exchanged with the company that succeeded Duane & Lawrence. It is the company of Duane, Cahill, Mullineaux & Mullineaux P.A. Architects (DCMM) in Gaithersburg, Maryland. We were unable to obtain any documentation of information from DCMM regarding the original Duane & Lawrence architectural work or any explanation of the design features of the church building. The Legacy Box documentation provided by Willet Hauser did offer some explanations based on correspondence between the Willet Studios and Duane & Lawrence.

Introduction

Much of the modern 1960s design and spiritual symbolism of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church is steeped in the designs of old Gothic cathedrals, medieval churches, and temples. Those spiritual design aspects are not immediately visible, but with some observation, and a little imagination, they become visible. The Gothic-influenced spiritual symbolism seems rather like a classic painting in an art gallery that has symbolic religious overtones not understood by all viewers, until explained by an interpreter.

The design of the Bradley Hills Sanctuary appears to be reminiscent of both a “*hall church*” and a “*centrally planned church*.” According to the 2004 book ***The Art of Gothic: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting*** (edited by Rolf Toman), a “hall church” has aisles that are as high, or nearly as high, as the nave, with the nave receiving its light indirectly from windows in the aisle walls. The Bradley Hills Sanctuary has two side aisles, one on each side of the nave, with narrow slit windows high up on the aisle walls.

A “centrally planned church” is designed around a single central point, being either round or polygonal. While the Bradley Hills Sanctuary has aisles and a nave, it does have a circular chancel area and upward extending lantern that is round-ish. On the outside above the lantern, rises a spire resembling a ridge turret of a cathedral.

Sanctuary Architecture and Stained Glass

The Sanctuary architecture was designed by the firm of Duane & Lawrence of Washington, DC, in 1964. Mr. Frank James Duane was the principal architect. The firm is still in business today under the leadership of associates of Mr. Duane’s son Franklin James Duane, in Gaithersburg, Maryland. It is believed that the actual spiritual symbolic design features and themes of the Sanctuary are attributed to Mr. Duane and the founding Pastor of Bradley Hills, the Reverend Dr. Lloyd Brown.

The stained glass of the lantern or dome, the Great Commission window facade, and the 40 slit windows were designed and installed by the Willet Stained Glass Studios of Philadelphia during 1964 and 1965. The company is still in business today as Willet Hauser Architectural Glass in Winona, Minnesota. From documents provided by Willet Hauser it appears that the themes, or “lumiere designs” of the windows were developed by Mr. Henry Lee Willet working with the Bradley Hills Special

Committee on Worship Appointments and Stained Glass, and the architects of Duane & Lawrence. The original cost of the entire stained glass design and installation was \$32,500 in 1964. The insurance and replacement value for the stained glass have been reassessed over time to be: \$167,000 in 1986, and \$1,373,700 in 2023.

Outside West Front Entrance to the Sanctuary

Some cathedrals have **two high towers** at the front entrance. The Bradley Hills building has no towers but does have two pillar-like brick structures resembling two columns, with the center entry doors between the “towers.” These two columns might be reminiscent of a cathedral’s north and south towers. The Bradley Hills building faces easterly, but not directly due-east, so the two brick columns are indeed one to the north and one to the south. The two columns, plus the stained glass section in the middle, a grouping of three, may reflect belief in the Holy Trinity. With the two towers or columns, “two” has to do with “witness.” The church is the earthly witness of/for God, as seen from the outside. The church is the mirror that reflects the heavenly world. Two (2) also can signify division, conflict, or tension, all of which are experienced in some sense within the larger catholic (small “c”) church over time.



The front of the church is located at the west end of the facility, the foot of the cross-shaped or person-shaped edifice. There are three sets of outside entry doors at the front entrance, leading into the Narthex. The center set is two doors, flanked by single doors on each side. Three (3) reflects the Trinity, the Third Day and the Resurrection, as well as the concepts of completeness, or a direction or progression towards something.



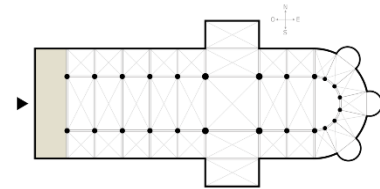
Narthex

One definition of “Narthex” in Toman’s 2004 book *The Art of Gothic* is “*the large porch or vestibule across the main (west) entrance to a medieval church.*” Also, it is a “*long, narrow, enclosed porch, usually colonnaded or arcaded, crossing the entire width of a church at its entrance... the narthex is a*

porch or lobby that connects the outside to the main worship area.” This seems to describe the Narthex at Bradley Hills, even though it is inside the building proper, and not an outside entrance. The Bradley Hills Narthex does cross the entire width of the church entrance. Continuing the definition and explanation: “The narthex is a place of welcome - the gathering space at the main entrance to the church building, just outside the nave. The area aids the transition from the outside environment of daily life to the celebration of the liturgy in the worship space.”

Continuing the description of Narthex: *“In early Christian churches the narthex was often divided...between the west wall and the body of the church proper, separated from the nave and aisles by a wall, arcade, colonnade, screen, or rail...”* The west wall of Bradley Hills is the front entrance with the three sets of entry doors. The colonnade or screen appears to be the wood and glass wall at the entrance to the Sanctuary. The Bradley Hills Narthex is located at the west end of the building and Sanctuary, with the entire building facing easterly. There are three sets of entry doors from the Narthex into the Sanctuary. Again, “three,” suggesting the trinity, the third Day, and “completeness.” Upon passing through the doors, a person transitions from the world of the mundane into the sacred of the Sanctuary.

In the old Gothic cathedrals, the people often entered the Sanctuary through the two side doors and down the side aisles, so as not to interrupt any rituals underway. Some churches have side aisles with pillars separating the worshippers in the nave. High and important people entered through the center pair of doors – people like the emperor, priests, and magistrates – or for ceremonial purposes. This figure shows a basic plan of a Western cathedral, with the Narthex in the shaded area to the left.



Standing in the Narthex, looking upwards, the ceiling appears to be low, above which is the free-standing balcony. The low Narthex ceiling resembles the roof of an outdoor porch, angling upward, although it is inside the larger building itself. The Narthex is the “outside” entrance, and some sources suggest that it was the place where Jesus overturned the tables and chased away the merchants, those doing business there, at the

temple. Other sources suggest that Jesus did that in a courtyard area in front of the temple. While standing in the Narthex, under the “porch roof,” imagine seeing Jesus appear and turn over the tables of the money changers. It was a unique story of when Jesus was angry and took action.

The PCUSA ***Book of Order*** speaks to the gathering of the people in two ways, which is a function of our Narthex:

- “Worship begins as the people gather. One or more of the following actions are appropriate: People may greet one another...” (W-3.3301);
- “When a place is set aside for worship it should facilitate accessibility and ease of gathering, should open people to reverence before God.” (W-1.3024).

Sanctuary

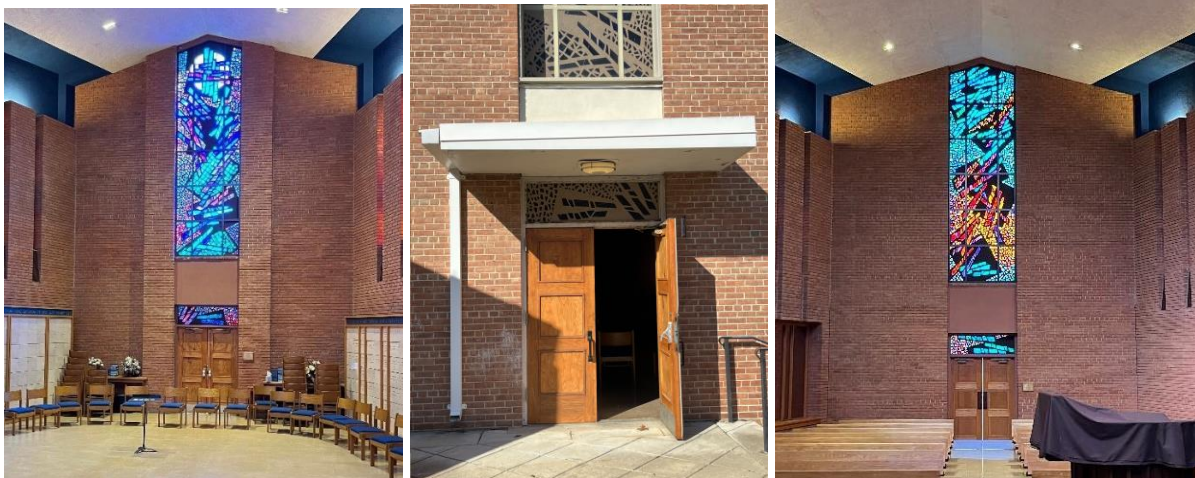
The Sanctuary design and architecture date to 1964, which is reflected on the cornerstone at the front entrance. The 1974 ***Guide to Washington Cathedral*** explains that in Gothic architecture a “sanctuary” is “*the eastern part of a church immediately surrounding the altar.*” Bradley Hills considers the entire worship space from the Narthex to the Choir Loft to be its sanctuary. The concept of a ***Sanctuary*** is a place set aside for something special, a safe place. A **wildlife sanctuary**, for example, is a place, or a landscape, park, or habitat where the environment is set aside and protected, a safe place for wildlife and nature. ***The ultimate sanctuary was Noah’s Ark.*** It had no sail, rudder, oars, or motor. It had no defense. It floated totally at the mercy of God, whom Noah trusted, and thus was totally safe. Similarly, the Bradley Hills Sanctuary is our community’s safe gathering and worship environment.

The entire Bradley Hills church building, and thus the Sanctuary, faces easterly. An east/west orientation represents man’s progress toward God. The ***longitudinal axis***, or solar axis, is facing toward the rising sun. The ***vertical axis*** orients the church upward toward the heavens. The Sanctuary is cross-shaped, with ***transepts*** as the arms of the room, a ***North Transept*** and a ***South Transept***. Where the ***Transepts*** and the ***Nave*** intersect is called the ***Crossing***. Towers and domes often were built in cathedrals over and above the Crossing. Bradley Hills has a ***Lantern***, or dome, over and above the Crossing.

The ***North Transept*** functions as a nave-to-the-side, where the people can sit and worship. It is serviced by a hallway along the north side of the building. In Gothic

cathedrals, a Transept, especially the *South Transept*, sometimes was a place for tombs and crypts, either in the transept or below it. Our Bradley Hills South Transept was transformed into the *Bradley Hills Memorial Transept* in 1985 and houses the *Columbarium*, our sacred final resting place for church family members who choose to be there. The columbarium was not part of the original building design. A brochure titled “Bradley Hills Memorial Transept” explains: “*Located in the South Transept, the columbarium walls provide the resting place for the ashes of those whose pilgrimage is completed and who now are at one with God. The large window between the walls blesses the space with its resurrection theme-color and light traveling upwards toward God’s perfect circle of love.*”

The *Guide to Washington Cathedral* defines “columbarium” as “A structure of vaults lined with recesses for urns and caskets.” Interestingly enough, *Webster’s Dictionary* explains that the word “columbarium” is derived from the Latin meaning “dovecote,” originally solely referring to compartmentalized housing for doves and pigeons. Some cathedral south transepts were places of entry into the Sanctuary by people on pilgrimages to the church, or to the tombs there. South transepts also often had outside porches, as does the Bradley Hills South Transept, the porch of which now connects with Covenant Hall.



These three images show some of the symbolic design features of the Transepts. The image at left is the South Transept. Since south transepts often were entrances into the building, the Bradley Hills South Transept has two “tower-like” columns (much like the front entrance to the church building) containing an entry door plus a stained glass façade. The outside “pilgrim’s entry door” and porch are in the middle image.

The image to right shows the North Transept with no tower-like columns, since its doors do not open to the outside.

Rood Screen and Choir Loft

The *Guide to Washington Cathedral* states “In the Middle Ages a cathedral was used for many things beside public worship and it was necessary to set apart that sacred section where the alter stands. A choir screen of finely carved oak in the chancel arch separates the choir and chancel from the nave.” Originally, the Bradley Hills *Nave* was separated from the choir loft by a tall ornate set of wooden columns reminiscent of a **rood screen**, as in old cathedrals. Toman’s 2004 book *The Art of Gothic* defines “roodscreen” in a church as “a screen dividing the chancel (for the clergy) and the nave (for the laity); surmounted by a cross (rood), it was often richly decorated with carvings and paintings and sometimes used as a singers’ gallery.” A **rood** is defined as a cross or crucifix, especially one positioned above the rood screen or on a beam over the entrance to a chapel in a cathedral. Bradley Hills has a large crucifix positioned in the center among the four columns of the lantern. The crucifix thus was located in front of the original wooden rood screen before the screen was removed when the Holtkamp organ was installed in the early 1970s. The screen blocked the view of a portion of the chancel and choir space and thus focused the peoples’ attention on worship.

In Gothic cathedrals, the rood screen was a divider between the choir and the nave, to separate the clergy in the choir space from the laity in the nave. In the old cathedrals, the **choir** was that physical part of the church where services were sung, and not the actual people who were the singers there. At Bradley Hills, the space for the singing choir members today is referred to as the **choir loft**. The remaining railing in front of the choir is part of the original **choir screen**. This photo of the Bradley Hills Sanctuary dates to pre-1972, before the organ was installed. There was a wooden rood screen then, with the rood or crucifix hanging high in front of it. That cross now is central to the spiritual ambiance of the chancel and worship space.



In a March 25, 2023, email memo, Donald Sutherland, Bradley Hills' Director of Music Emeritus, corresponded with us about the original rood screen, the choir loft, and the organ. Donald was Bradley Hills' Director of Music when the organ was installed in the early 1970s. Donald explained: *"When I first went to Bradley Hills to interview for the job as Music Director, I first met with the committee in the north transept. After the question and answer portion of the interview I went up to the choir loft to play the organ portion of the audition. Imagine my surprise to find that I could no longer see the committee. The screen formed a barrier to the north and south transepts, as well as a portion of the nave. The choir was totally cut off from a large portion of the congregation. Also, the sound of the choir was cut off to the point that microphones were needed to get the sound out from behind the wooden screen with its random blocks of wood. When the contract was signed for the Holtkamp organ, it was clear that it was not only time, but necessary to correct the problem. I agreed with Mr. Holtkamp that the screen had to go. To our great relief, Dr. Hall researched and found out that the screen had not been a memorial gift and could be removed. So, with me seated at the organ and Art in the chancel, we decided on the optimum height for what was going to be left. After it was removed, the remaining wood was stored in the undercroft, where it was later used for the columbarium."*

Some Symbolic Gothic Design Features of the Sanctuary

Gothic cathedrals are very high inside, and the height is there partially to draw one's eyes heavenwards, to lift the gaze up, and to turn one's sights away from the earthbound. The height of the Bradley Hills ceiling and the **lantern** draw the gaze upward, perhaps through the white clouds, toward the heavens and to God. And found there, in the lantern's "four" panels of stained glass, is the life of Christ. The lantern brings much light into the **chancel**, the **choir**, and the **crossing**. Light is symbolic of Christ, the Light of the World. At night when the lantern is lit from inside, Christ's light shines out into the neighborhood.

In a typical cathedral, at its eastern end, and located behind the rood screen, to separate it from the rest of the worship space, was the area of the facility called the **Apse**. Toman's *The Art of Gothic* defines apse as a *"semicircular or polygonal extension to a church building, usually at the east end of the choir."* Bradley Hills has a **Chancel** that is nearly circular, but in front of the choir loft and in front of what

would have been the rood screen. In cathedrals, the apse may have been a bit like the “holy-of-holies” in some temples.

The **Apse**, in architecture, is a semicircular or polygonal termination to the choir, chancel, or aisle of a secular or ecclesiastical building. It could be a domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building, especially the east end of a church, and in churches where appropriate, it usually contains the altar. The apse of some Christian churches contains the bishop's throne. First used in pre-Christian Roman architecture, the **apse** often functioned as an enlarged niche to hold the statue of a deity in a temple. The **apse** is the end, or easterly end, of the building opposite the main entrance. The Bradley Hills **apse** is in the shape of a circle or semi-circle.

The circular **Chancel** has three steps all the way around - three, again, signifying completeness etc. The Chancel is a place for religious rituals, the choir, the clergy and worship leaders, and the view upward to God. It is **circular**, representing Heaven, completeness, no ends, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The Bradley Hills **nearly-circular-Chancel** separates the nave from the choir, or choir loft, and is that part of the church where worship is led by the clergy and laity. The **Guide to Washington Cathedral** defines “*chancel...The part of the church which contains the choir and sanctuary.*” As noted above, the **Guide** defines “*sanctuary...The eastern part of a church immediately surrounding the altar.*” The Bradley Hills Chancel contains the pulpit, lectern, communion table, and thirteen Elder’s seats with embroidered cushions of the twelve Apostles, plus Paul whose cushion is in the middle. The wooden seats were original to the church in 1965, but the embroidered Apostles cushions were added in 1980.

Reference to these cushions is contained in the 1995 church history written by Hall and Fouchard. Cheryl Naulty’s 2015 **Deacon’s Corner** article describes “*The lovely needlepoint cushions that adorn the seats on the Chancel, where the lay worship leaders sit, were stitched by women in the church and dedicated on the Sunday after Easter in April 1980. There are thirteen seat cushions, one for each of the twelve apostles, and one for Paul...The symbols on each cushion are specific to the apostle, and many of the symbols depict the method of their death.*” Interestingly enough, Cheryl names the thirteen women who stitched each of the thirteen cushions. Our own Thirteen Apostles!



Cheryl's *Deacon's Corner* also describes the numerous banners that “*adorn the sanctuary, and the themes and colors...associated with the time in the church calendar...and they also match the color of the church season.*” The banners were designed and/or sewn by five women of the church, whom Cheryl names in the article. The banners followed the 1998 Celebrate the Light capital campaign.

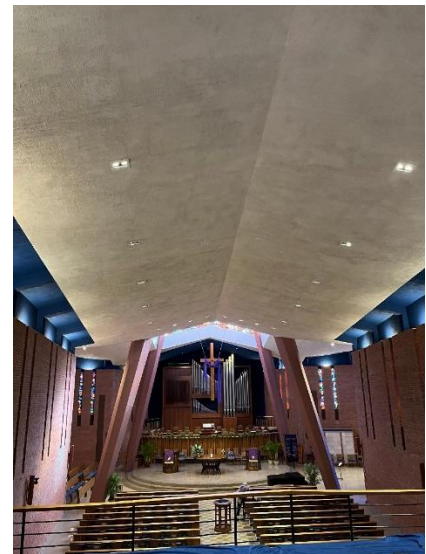
Another more recent addition to the Sanctuary is the Baptismal Font, which was donated by several church members. The mosaic lining of the bowl was designed and created by a Bradley Hills member. The font's history is contained in Hall and Fouchard's 1995 *40 Years of Faith* and in Cheryl Naulty's 2015 *Deacon's Corner*. Cheryl describes and interprets the font, stating: “*Our baptismal font...is currently placed in the middle of the main aisle close to the chancel...the font...is positioned in such a way that a visual connection is made with the table of the Lord's supper, demonstrating the relationship between these two sacraments...*” In the center of the mosaic is a cross and the rest of the pattern, including shades of blue and aqua, evokes feelings of waves on the water with splashes of coral 'fish'.”



An aisle surrounds or runs behind the apse and behind the organ. This aisle is called the **ambulatory**. Toman's *The Art of Gothic* states that an ambulatory is "*a passage that runs around the apse of a church; in French Gothic, the ambulatories are round or polygonal, in English Gothic, they are often rectangular....*" In some cathedrals, there often are small chapels, rooms, and windows off the ambulatory. Often, there is a room behind the altar called the **sacristy**, also called **vestry**, in architecture, a room in a Christian church in which vestments and other objects used in the services are stored and in which the clergy and sometimes the choir members put on their robes. The Bradley Hills **ambulatory** is more rectangular than circular as it winds behind and below the organ and choir loft. It does lead to the Choir room and to the Sacristy where the communion silver and other worship-related objects are stored by the Bradley Hills Chancel Guild. Also, there are two Choir robing rooms off of the ambulatory and beneath the choir loft, plus a storage area and two lavatories. One of the robing rooms is where the Sanctuary banners are stored.



The **nave** is the place where worshippers sit in the main section of the Sanctuary. Toman's *The Art of Gothic* describes "nave" as "*the central space of a church that extends from the west portal to the choir or chancel usually flanked by aisles.*" The Bradley Hills nave is divided into two sections, **nave left** and **nave right**. There are three aisles in the nave, a large center aisle and two narrower aisles along the walls. Three aisles lead from the three sets of doors opening into the Sanctuary, and lead to the three steps onto the chancel. The *Guide to Washington Cathedral* defines "nave" as "*The body of the church building in which the congregation sits; derived from the Latin word 'navis' meaning ship, because of the resemblance between the roof inside and an inverted hull.*" In some churches, the vaulted ceiling is very arched and steep, with the supporting ribs plainly showing. Looking up into the vaulted area with ribs suggests a view inside Noah's Ark, looking down into the hull of the ship, or up toward the roof or ceiling. Cathedrals often have this design and view, with the supporting ribs clearly visible. The Bradley Hills ceiling is less vaulted. When thinking about



“*nave*,” think about naval or navy, water, the sea and ocean, with Noah’s Ark as the ultimate sanctuary.

The *Sanctuary* flairs or fans larger toward the Crossing, from both the Nave and the Transepts, leading the people to the place to meet God. The Nave in the old cathedrals was a more *rectangular* shape representing the terrestrial condition. The entry doors from the Narthex into the Sanctuary also are rectangular.

The brick walls of the Sanctuary end at the top before meeting the ceiling. There is a space between the walls and the ceiling, where the supporting ribs can be seen. The 1974 *Guide to Washington Cathedral* explains that “*In Gothic architecture, ribs emphasize upward movement...*” serving “*...both an aesthetic and structural function.*” That space may be analogous to the *Gallery* or the *Bays* of cathedrals where there were a series of small windows, very high up in the sanctuary. Some cathedrals had bands of windows near the ceiling called the *clerestory*. Toman’s *The Art of Gothic* describes clerestory as “*the topmost story of a nave wall, pierced by windows.*” In the Bradley Hills Sanctuary, at the top of the brick walls where the narrow slit windows terminate, there is indirect lighting that may be reminiscent of natural light coming into the cathedral through the clerestory windows. The bands of narrow stained-glass slit windows in our Sanctuary also may be designed to look a bit like side aisle columns.

Colors of the Sanctuary and Ceiling

Donald Sutherland stated that the early colors of the sanctuary had the ceiling in a baby blue color and all the walls were white. In preparation for the new Holtkamp organ in 1972, the color scheme was changed to the current “Bradley Hills Blue” and white. Donald wrote “*The columns in the chancel had been as yellow as McDonald’s arches.*” Apparently, the yellow columns may have represented sunlight or the Light of God shining down on the people. Nancy Hall, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Arthur Hall, said that the original yellow columns represented rays of sunlight coming into the worship space. Perhaps the Light of God.

For the current color scheme, there may be a couple of interpretations of the Sanctuary’s ceiling shape and colors:

Blue Sky and White Clouds. Cheryl Naulty’s 2015 *Deacon’s Corner* article notes that “*our sanctuary ceiling is blue and white, representing the heavens and clouds.*”

The choir robes continue this same color theme.” The white ceiling may represent the clouds that open at the Crossing where the people look up to God, and where God looks down to the people. People are attracted to the mystery of the blue sky.

Blue Water/Sea and Ark in White. As you look upward, picture that you are standing in the Ark and looking downward into the hull of the Ark, seeing its ribs. The ribs are visible in the “Gallery” or “Bay” area space between the brick walls and the ceiling. The Ark is floating on the blue sea around it. The Ark is the ultimate sanctuary, without sail, oars, or rudder, relying entirely on the mercy of God for protection.

The Four Columns. In a Biblical sense, “four” has to do with anything that concerns the earth. The columns thus may represent the four corners of Earth, the compass directions of North, South, East, and West. The columns are slanted inward focusing attention upward seeking God. From the top of the lantern, the columns slant outward, perhaps, for God to see all the people.

In his 2023 book, *Spirit Wheel*, Native American spiritual leader Steven Charleston wrote of the assembly of the people in a way that is reminiscent of the symbolic design of Bradley Hills Sanctuary and its four columns at the Crossing: *“From four sacred directions, I saw elders assemble...From four sacred directions, the people came...From four sacred directions, the spirits gathered...Gathered by prayer, gathered by the Spirit.”*

Stained Glass Windows

During Medieval and Gothic times most people were illiterate. The stained glass windows helped to tell the Bible stories, and served as theological teachers, showing highlights of scripture. They brought light into the church. The way light goes through the stained glass windows has an enchanting effect on the people and the spaces inside and below, bathing worshippers in soothing light.

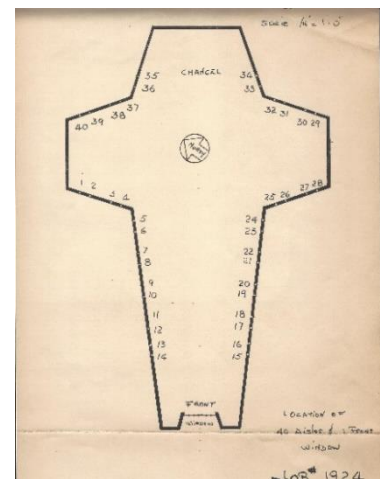
Upon completion of the stained glass windows in 1965, Bradley Hills Pastor Rev. Dr. Lloyd Brown wrote a letter dated June 16, 1965, to Mr. Murial Willet of the Willet company expressing his appreciation for their work. Dr. Brown wrote, *“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to you for the outstanding development of the themes of our Christian faith in the treatment of the stained glass. In the dome you have captured the essential elements of the Christian heritage as it is proclaimed in the Holy Bible from the Creation through the*

Ascension of Jesus Christ. You have elevated him as our Lord and Master and as the Divine Incarnate Son of God. Further in your treatment of the facade window which deals with the Great Commission, you have been inspired to elevate the worshipper to an awareness of the transcendent majesty and power of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the God-Head, and have coupled it with a vision of His Church moving out into the world to glorify Him in service.” An interpretation of these windows is contained in an undated descriptive booklet titled ***Stained Glass Windows at Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church.***

The Lantern. The Bradley Hills “tower” and dome over the Crossing is the **Lantern**. In Gothic cathedrals, the lantern is a windowed turret set on a dome or roof and used to provide light to the area below. The Bradley Hills Lantern contains the Bible messages and stories from Creation through Resurrection on its four panels. Consult the booklet on stained glass windows for more detail or for descriptions of the Bible stories contained in the stained glass panels.

The Narthex Window. This Great Commission window is visible from outside and inside the front or west end of the church. It is between the two “towers” that signify “witness” and the earthly witness of God by the people. The window depicts the **Great Commission**, from Matthew 28: 18-20, “*And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.’*” This Great Commission window shows the people going out to carry the message to the four corners of the world, depicted by the four columns in the crossing.

Narrow Slit Sanctuary Windows. Documents in the Willet Hauser company Legacy Box describe the 40 slit windows this way: “*The slit windows contain abstract or non-representational patterns. Ideas and emotions are by their very nature abstract and cannot be drawn literally. Therefore abstract images are primarily appropriate for representing them. The colored glass has been used to provide a worshipful atmosphere without reference to natural forms. Hence, as the people enter the church they will provide a mood of quiet transition between the rush of the outside world and the religious concepts of the*



church itself.” An original Willet design document shows the 40 windows numbered around the Sanctuary, but no mention is made by Willet about the reason for the existence of 40 such windows. This may be a stretch, but the abstract nature of having 40 such windows, and the mood of quiet transition they enable, may be related to the transitions of Noah being on the sea for 40 days and nights, to the Israelites being in the wilderness for 40 years after leaving Egypt, and to Christ being in the wilderness for 40 days. As in the Biblical stories being told in the four panels of the Lantern, the 40 slit windows may offer a connection or transition from Old



Testament to New Testament, to help complete the story. The slit window nearest to the balcony, on the south wall (number 15 on the graphic), contains the nameplate of the Willet company, at the bottom of the window in the stained glass. Two additional nameplates are contained, one in slit window number 35 near the Choir Loft, as well as one in the lower right corner of the Great Commission window.

The Transept Windows. The undated brochure “Stained Glass Windows at Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church” describes and interprets the stained glass windows in the North and South Transepts, along with the artist’s vision. All of the Nave and Narthex windows were designed and fabricated by the Willet Studio of Philadelphia when the building was constructed in 1965. The Transept “Resurrection Window” and “Pentecost Window” were created separately and dedicated in 1994. The Bradley Hills history, *40 Years of Faith*, authored by Hall and Fouchard in 1995 briefly describes the creation and dedication of these two magnificent windows. Cheryl Naulty’s January 2015 *Deacon’s Corner* provides a detailed account of the windows, their sponsorship, the artist, and the fabricator.

South Transept Resurrection Window. The brochure states that “*The Resurrection window (I Corinthians 15: 50-57) invites worshippers to follow God’s Spirit up towards the promise of eternal life...And the image of death’s sadness evolving into Resurrection in Heaven suggested an upward moving pathway culminating in the perfection of a circle.*”

North Transept Pentecost Window. The brochure states that “*The Pentecost window (Acts 2: 1-17) represents the downward sweep of wind and fire that moved among the believers and inspired them to go forth into the world as the resurrected Body of Christ...the wind and flame of Pentecost resulted in restless abstraction in*

constant motion...the blazing hues in the Pentecost window symbolize tongues of flame, and the cool greens turbulent windows...They complement the quieter elegance of Resurrection's blues and purples. These colors harmonize with, but do not copy the earlier work in the church."

Rose Window in Memorial Hall. Memorial Hall was the original worship space for Bradley Hills before the Sanctuary was completed in 1965. The stained glass brochure explains that *"The Rose Window...came from the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church in Northwest Washington D.C. - the predecessor congregation to Bradley Hills."* The people of Washington Heights joined with the people of Bethesda to begin a new life at Bradley Hills in 1955. They brought the Rose Window with them. ***Rose windows of stained glass*** were a defining feature of Gothic cathedrals. Sometimes they were placed in the front wall of the church above the center entrance doors, between the two towers.



The Sanctuary and the physical building of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church is a spiritual place with a cathedral-like presence that is steeped in Christian history. So, thus lives the spiritual symbolism of cathedral design hidden in plain view in the Bradley Hills 20th century architecture and stained glass.

Blessings,
Corky Hickey, Steve Fox, Rosanna Morrison

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