

THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB OF REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Meeting No. 1916



*Colors of Heaven:
Discovering the Hidden Stained Glass Treasures of Redlands*

Jim Hendon

A.K. Smiley Public Library, Redlands, California

January 18, 2018

SLIDE 1: Title

“I sing a song of the saints of God, patient and brave and true . . . and there’s not any reason – no, not the least – why I shouldn’t be one too.”

Many of us know this compelling hymn, written in 1929.

But how many of us know that not far from here, a stained-glass gallery of saints -- the 12 apostles of Jesus – graces the walls of our city’s main Catholic church?

SLIDE 2: Saints gallery

Twin galleries, six saints on each side.

Philip, Simon, Peter, Paul, Andrew and the others.

For their preaching and ministry, nearly all these heroes of Christianity were executed and martyred.

SLIDE 3: Saint closeups

We see them represented here in a modern design – some members like it, some prefer a more traditional style.

But of course, most Redlanders have no opinion.

And the reason is they don’t know the apostle windows are there.

* * *

Let me say up front that this paper does not pretend to catalog all the fine works of stained glass in private homes, mansions, Smiley Library and other spaces.

Instead, I’m focusing on churches, because most of us have never seen these windows.

And except for the really big one at the U of R Chapel, only a small percentage ever will.

This is unfortunate -- I would argue -- because the greatest works of fine art in our community are rendered in stained glass.

* * *

SLIDE 4: Detail

Of course, the city's church windows are not a "collection."

They're meant to inspire the members . . . not the public.

They're private property.

It is possible to visit them if you ask.

And here I'd like to thank those who welcomed me and my camera.

The churches do host musical performances and other events.

But this isn't Europe, where you can walk right in to the cathedrals as a tourist and ponder the beauty of hundreds of magnificent windows.

* * *

SLIDE 5: More detail

So I can't help but feel that Redlanders are missing out.

Our important stained glass windows are -- as we will see -- hidden treasures . . .

Hard to catch in their full glory . . .

Tucked away in a mix of locations.

Four of our most beautiful churches are within a few blocks of each other.

But understandably, access is a bit sensitive.

Good visiting times, limited.

Not even the intrepid Tom Atchley has organized a tour.

Stained glass is designed to be seen from inside, during the day.

SLIDE 6: Drab exterior views

A few windows shine at night -- or when something's going on.
But not in the way they were meant to be seen.
Looking for them after dark is a bit like birdwatching.
And this probably won't change.
Even where their windows are protected by plexiglass shields, the churches have little incentive to light them up and invite the attention of vandals.

* * *

There's another reason to try to bring our church windows out of the shadows.
Because they are more than artworks and decor.
They are communication devices.

SLIDE 7: Good Samaritan

Consider this gem from Trinity Episcopal on Fern Avenue.
The parable of the Good Samaritan recounts an act of kindness for a stranger -- and discourages prejudice.
Fine art with a fine lesson for our times.
But being high on the south wall above the altar, the message here is received mostly by the church choir.

* * *

We can't expect Trinity or any other church to manage its windows as a community asset.

But hold on.

Religious windows have a serious job to do: Endorsing and celebrating Judeo-Christian values.

These illuminated mosaics showcase a Who's Who of Christian movers and shakers, and provide us with visions of the hereafter, imagining the colors of Heaven.

Embedded here are the founding principles of our nation . . . the basis, many would argue, for civil society . . .

The motivation behind countless nonprofits . . . generous individuals . . . and much of the charitable spirit that distinguishes Redlands.

* * *

In fact, these are our own examples of a long-established recruit-and-retain strategy from the Middle Ages known as the "*Poor Man's Bible*."

SLIDE 8: Canterbury

Because so many people were illiterate back then, the churches reached out to them with symbols, statues, carvings and images, stained glass in particular, like giant, Medieval comic books.

At the Canterbury Cathedral, where stained glass dates to the 12th Century, the Poor Man's Bible window packs 21 different stories into one enormous panel.

SLIDE 9: Catholic window inside and out

Here in Redlands, we can find storytelling windows all around – here, the baptism of Christ by John.

But you can't really tell what's happening from the outside.

* * *

Again, I realize there is probably nothing to be done about this.

Whizzing past in our cars on Olive and Fern and Cajon, we take these artworks for granted, if we notice them at all.

But let's pause today and have a closer look.

* * *

It's only fair to start with one of the exceptions to what I've been complaining about: The Holy Grail Chapel at the Congregational Church.

Unlike most, these windows are visible at night.

SLIDE 10: Grail window at night

Meet Sir Lancelot, King Arthur and Sir Galahad.

They've been here almost 70 years . . .

But one long-time Redlander confessed that he simply assumed they were Biblical characters.

And we can be sure he's not alone.

SLIDE 11: Grail windows from inside

Here's how the artist intended us to experience these mythical figures, whose story dates back to the 11th Century.

Sir Galahad, son of Sir Lancelot, pulled the sword from the stone, so King Arthur sent Galahad and the other Knights of the Round Table off to find the Holy Grail, the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper. Shortly after Galahad found it, the angels took him to Heaven. So you can see a case for celebrating these guys in a church. Each bold rendering even offers us some words to live by. But Rev. Steve Davis still feels the windows are a bit of an oddity. Like any responsible shepherd would, he notes that they don't do much to promote Christ or his teachings.

SLIDE 12: Tiffany Christ

To remedy that, we need only to enter the Congregational sanctuary. High on the Cajon side wall, we have the risen Christ with decorative panels left and right, in Tiffany glass. But it's the south wall that dominates the scene.

SLIDE 13: South wall

It's visible from outside, but you need to be inside during daytime, up close, for the maximum effect. In panels gifted by members, we see Christ:

SLIDE 14: Christ panels

As the good shepherd . . .
Knocking at the door . . .
And in the attitude of saying, "Come unto me."
On a sunny morning, they testify more vividly than any other windows in town.

SLIDE 15: Cross with lilies

Elegant, detailed panels flank the images of the savior – grapes, lilies, palms, flowers.

Visit the Congregational at the right time and you just might have a religious experience, as I learned during one of their free, Lenten Organ Concerts last March.

* * *

The wall of color, the music, the sense of grace, lifted me, and carried me back to my childhood, as a boy attending the First Baptist Church just across Olive.

My dad's strong faith rang out as my family sang the hymns together on Sunday mornings.

The hymnal was heavy in my hands.

SLIDE 16: Messenger

Church was a serious place.

But when the minister said, "Let us pray," and I closed my eyes and tried, no messenger responded.

I was Baptized by Dr. Ivan Bell.

And I sang in the choir for the wonderful Ed Tritt.

Nonetheless, I drifted away from the church when I reached my teens. I should have known – lost lamb with a camera – that while preparing this paper, I'd be touched by my colorful subjects and haunted by bittersweet memories.

* * *

SLIDE 17: Baptism window

Let's stay with the First Baptist, since we are already there.

Two very large windows and 12 small ones decorate the 66 year-old sanctuary – one them depicting the immersion ritual that distinguishes the faith

No saints . . . or Knights of the Round Table here.

Every window in the church is about the life of Jesus.

SLIDE 18: Jesus with children

Here's one of the best known lessons from Christ – embracing the children -- but this treatment has some spin on it.

The fantasy gathering could never have happened, for one of the children is Caucasian, another African, while a Chinese boy and a girl who is perhaps Hispanic hold hands.

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.*

So goes the song written by a Baptist minister in the late 19th Century.

*Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in his sight.*

Along with its diversity message, I believe the window recognizes the international missionary work of the church.

It's an empowering vision for sure.

But it's the window on the opposite wall -- *Christ Over Redlands* – that I like the best.

SLIDE 19: Christ Over Redlands

Jesus stands atop the world, Christianity's super hero.
Beneath his outstretched hand, the First Baptist Church.
Beneath the other, the UofR Chapel.
And look here: Three grads in mortar boards and gowns.
The window reminds us that back at the turn of the last century, Baptists and the town's leading citizens founded the University of Redlands.
And here I'm grateful to Larry Burgess for his history of that institution, *With Unbounded Confidence*.
The church and the university have long since moved on from an early vision of harmonious integration.
But they haven't forgotten their roots.
Indeed, UofR President Ralph Kuncel and the university choir participated in the church's 125th anniversary celebration in 2012.
And the daughter of a former UofR president was the featured speaker.

* * *

SLIDE 20: UofR Chapel

Let's stop over to the Memorial Chapel now, where the Christ Window depicts 52 different characters in 3,500 individual pieces of glass.
During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus recounted the Ten Commandments, taught the Golden Rule and the Lord's Prayer and unveiled the eight Beatitudes.

SLIDE 21: Beatitudes

You won't find a more powerful affirmation of Christianity anywhere in Redlands.

Completed in 1927, the Chapel probably hosts more kinds of events than any other venue in town.

But there is more than one way for a treasure to be hidden.

SLIDE 22: Jesus detail

And I couldn't shake the feeling that this window is out of step . . . that time . . . an increasingly secular world . . . and the university . . . have passed it by.

One study by an outfit called Campus Renewal found that some 70 percent of Christian students entering college walk away from their faith within the first year.

Frozen in Biblical time, it seemed to me that the master didn't get the memo.

* * *

It was a perfect conundrum to raise one morning with the UofR Chaplain, John Walsh.

SLIDE 23: Message windows

We entered the perfectly still, empty Chapel.

I took a moment to photograph the delightful message windows up high on the walls.

Then we mounted the stage and approached the Christ Window.

SLIDE 24: Window wide angle

This masterpiece is visible from every seat in the house, but you really haven't seen it until you see it up close.

To do it right, you'd need a chair, binoculars, a tour guide and about half an hour.

I pointed my wide-angle lens at the huge, multicolored testament, beloved by thousands of alumni.

An impertinent mortal . . . bent on journalistic duty . . . I asked the High Priest of the Bulldogs if the most important stained glass window in Redlands had become a relic.

As it turned out, the chaplain was well familiar with the issue and happy to engage.

And there was much for a Doubting Thomas to learn.

* * *

We know that the university's approach to student spirituality has evolved to embrace diversity, inclusion, a changing customer base and the wider world.

Mandatory Chapel attendance ended in 1972.

John told me some have questioned having such a large Christian symbol on campus in these secular times.

On its web site, the UofR promises "opportunities for all University-recognized religious groups" and "to encourage and enable these faith communities to express and nurture their beliefs. . . "

So there you have it, but this isn't new.

The school never required students or faculty to be Baptists.

And early on, the founders endorsed interfaith harmony, although in those days, John noted, that probably meant Protestant harmony.

Importantly, he added, the UofR remains voluntarily affiliated with the American Baptists, and honors its heritage partly by retaining an Office of the Chaplain.

Today, the foreign faiths that professors once talked about in *World Religions 101* are now part of the spiritual fabric of America.

Student groups practice Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and other denominations.

And John's official job description assigns him to support one and all.

But the chaplain also believes the Christ Window will always belong:

- as a reminder of the university's beginnings . . . because, as John told me, "In education, we must help students know the world they came from . . ."
- as a spectacular work of art . . .
- and as a touchstone for Redlanders who affirm its messages during Evensong, the Feast of Lights and other Christian events at the Chapel.

SLIDE 25: Students in window

Interesting to note, the university's summary of the window identifies five students at the feet of Christ with different expressions, and I quote: "some believing, some doubting. . ."

Faith and skepticism . . . coexisting . . . endorsed 91 years ago in the permanence of stained glass.

John often sees students enter the Chapel, just to sit quietly.

"I can't tell you what the window says to them," he said. "But I can tell you they come back."

* * *

While the UofR window beats all others for scale, the Trinity Episcopal Church harbors the best collection of religious stained glass in our community.

SLIDE 26: Joseph, wise men

I spent an hour inside this treasure trove, with only the light from the 21 different windows.

Here are Joseph, the three wise men and the star they followed.

Here are Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Margaret, Saint John and Saint Francis . . . and some of them look you right in the eye.

SLIDE 27: St. Francis

Alone among the glowing spirits, I felt the hairs on my neck rise a bit -- or was it a passing breeze?

SLIDE 28: Mary Chapel

In the tiny Mary Chapel, we see the solitary Madonna in one window, and with her sister-in-law Elizabeth in another.

SLIDE 29: Ascension

Above the altar is the dramatic Ascension Window, moved here in 1907 after gracing the first two churches of Trinity Parish.

And on the west wall, a stunning tribute to the Christian imagination.

SLIDE 30: Te Deum window

Built in Germany, dating to 1931, the window was described at the church's 100th anniversary, and I quote, as: "the concept of prayer, made visible."

It's known as Trinity's "te deum" window, after the Latin term meaning *an expression of thanksgiving or exultation*.

SLIDE 31: Christ, God, angel

Christ sits across from God above the stern Archangel Michael, dressed in armor.

A telephoto lens helps us discover some 38 other characters, their faces earnest with adoration and reverence.

I thought I'd only be able to tell you about Moses – the guy with the tablets.

SLIDE 32: Faces

But in the nick of time this morning, my friends at Trinity called to report that a plaque identifying everyone in this window had just been put back in place.

So I rushed down to capture the information.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John appear up top, and the other apostles are woven in with the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel and Moses. Joseph, Mary and Elizabeth also appear in the window, along with seraphim, cherubim, Saint Francis and Saint Augustine.

As with the UofR window, you really need to spend some time with this amazing work of art to appreciate it.

* * *

I want to single out another, extraordinary large window which combines history with message.

Installed in 1966, you'll find it above the entrance to the Holy Name of Jesus Parish church on Olive Avenue – formerly Sacred Heart.

SLIDE 33: Ecumenical window

Here is Christ cradling the world, but also a star of David, an open Bible representing Protestantism, an Eastern Orthodox cross and other symbols.

This is the city's "ecumenical" window, marking a surge in interfaith unity during the '60s, promoted by the Vatican and led in Redlands by Father Henry Keane.

Father Keane endorsed strong relations with Jewish and Protestant churches, and he told the *Daily Facts* that the window was intended to underscore that mission.

The article made no reference to the crescent moon.

Notably, this one has no star, as the Islamic crescent usually does.

And to my surprise, I learned that since the 15th Century, the crescent moon has been incorporated in images of the Virgin Mary, traceable to the Roman goddess Diana, and other origins.

Research time ran out before I could chase down an official description of all the window's elements.

But considering the timeliness of its message – put in place more than 50 years ago -- I can live with the ambiguity.

* * *

SLIDE 34: River and details

Across town, at Highland and Redlands Boulevard, I enjoyed an important work from what we might call the younger generation of major stained glass windows.

This soaring composition at The River Christian Reformed church, completed in 1999, features a flowing river, grapevine and other fine details.

Five Dutch tulips represent the Canons of Dort and the church's 16th Century roots in the Netherlands.

A gift from Alice Dangermond, it combines real-world scenes below . . . with a trinity symbol and heavenly swirls and clouds above.

SLIDE 35: Three windows

My visit to The River also led me to this installation at the Redlands Christian Home.

They were moved here from the First Christian Reformed building on Church Street.

And I particularly enjoyed seeing this tiny Ark of the Covenant, which held the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed, and inspired the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

* * *

SLIDE 36: Presbyterian shepherd

That same day, I visited the First Presbyterian to photograph this massive, shepherd window, salvaged from the original church, which burned in 1967.

There, I also found this large, modern skylight in the rebuilt church, opened in 1970.

SLIDE 37: Skylight and others

Certainly one of the most dazzling, newer works in town, it represents John 15, Verse 5: “I am the vine, ye are the branches.”

And brightening the sanctuary’s corners are four tall windows, with abstract imagery celebrating light, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, worshippers singing praise, Heaven and other Biblical themes.

* * *

Along with major works, I did find a number of smaller, truly hidden treasures.

SLIDE 38: Arch plus Mendlicott

This 1896 arch window from the old Sacred Heart church, hangs in the school auditorium at Sacred Heart Academy . . . which also holds a Tom Mendlicott window depicting the Catholics’ earliest days here.

And in a nearby hallway, we find this delicately rendered portrait, also from the original church.

SLIDE 39: Female saint

As you may know, the Catholics have more than 10,000 saints.

This could be the Carmelite nun, Saint Teresa of Avila.

But others suggested it is the Benedictine, Hildegard of Bingen.

I stopped by the El Carmelo Retreat, where Teresa is much revered.

The two Carmelite priests were a bit surprised to be ambushed by a perky, camera-toting Fortnighter.

But they politely took a look at the photo.

One suggested it might be Saint Catherine of Siena, but probably not Teresa.

Sensing an opportunity to lighten up the exchange, I remarked, “I thought all you guys had your saints memorized.”

I’m not sure they appreciated the jest.

The elder brother smiled and suggested Google.

Back at my computer, I learned that this probably isn’t Catherine.

And while both Teresa and Hildegard are often depicted holding the quill pen, the habit strongly suggests this is Hildegard.

So I didn’t get the positive I.D.

SLIDE 40: El Carmelo window

But my quest was not entirely in vain, because up on the hilltop that morning, I found this sweet scene inside El Carmelo’s tiny Chapel of the Madonna.

* * *

And there were still more, small treasures to discover.

SLIDE 41: Lutheran rose

The First Evangelical Lutheran church, built in 1966, shelters this “Luther Rose” window bearing Martin’s official seal, dating to 1520. The window graced the old church at Myrtle and Olive, built in 1904 and later moved to become the Orange Tree wedding chapel at the Edwards Mansion.

In 1989, the rose was relocated to a new space in the present church at Cypress and San Mateo.

And I'm told they have other antique windows in storage, yet to be restored and displayed.

SLIDE 42: Wedding at Cana

Elsewhere, high above the altar in the Holy Grail Chapel at the Congregational, I found this jewel: Christ blessing the wedding at Cana, where he turned the water into wine.

The small lunette, ringed by symbols, features the happy couple on the left, a stern rabbi on the right.

But when you flick off the artificial backlight, the tiny foursome all but disappears in the shadows.

* * *

Clearly, our city has a rich legacy of religious stained glass.

I know I missed seeing some important works, including the Tom Mendlicott windows at the 7th Day Adventist on Brookside – and the big mystery window at the former State Street Christian Church, now the Filipino Adventist.

But I made sure to visit the small, 90-year-old mausoleum at Hillside Cemetery.

SLIDE 43: Sunset and Brook

Hidden here are two large, fantasy nature scenes – one titled *The Sunset*, the other *The Brook*.

As well as a third window titled, *I am the Resurrection and the Life*.

Defying the grim reaper, the big windows cast rainbows of color across the polished marble.

SLIDE 44: Resurrection, reflect

And you have to wonder: For whom?

Tom Atchley has included the mausoleum in his cemetery tours.

Now and then, visitors pay respects.

Those resting here may be cheered by this bright celebration of life and afterlife.

But the fact is, almost no one sees these publicly owned treasures.

Relocating antique jigsaw puzzles of glass and metal, weighing hundreds of pounds, I'm told, is a risky job.

But it's not impossible – so perhaps this fine and private place doesn't have to be their permanent home.

* * *

SLIDE 45: Mountain

The cemetery shelters other notable works of stained glass in its newer mausoleum, opened in 1958.

The first window you see replicates our local mountains.

Then, down at the end of the main gallery, we find this.

SLIDE 46: Rock and details

I wondered if my footsteps disturbed this chilly place, so full of souls, yet so empty.

I parked my tripod and regarded the large window, beautifully lit by the afternoon sun, with a single chair beneath, where a beloved spirit or a visitor might pause.

In deep colors, the scene features a rocky place, not quite a mountain, but clearly a destination, as the path informs us.

In Psalms 61, a sorrowful David implores God: “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

Here is a place for us to go in the end, as a 19th Century hymn by Rachel Ann Searles tells us in the fourth verse:

*When nearing the shore of the river of death,
And the moments fly swiftly with each labored breath,
When losing my hold of each dear earthly tie,
Oh, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*

I stood a while among the departed and savored my predicament.
Colors of heaven in my sight . . . and butterflies in my stomach.
When I chose this topic, I wanted to experience moments like that.

* * *

I stopped through the mausoleum’s patio, where my folks are interred next to some of their Redlands friends.

I heard a mockingbird and smiled – my sisters always say that’s our mother greeting us.

And I thanked my dad, because his own membership in Fortnightly set the stage for me to join the club and present this paper.

I shouldered my tripod and headed for the door.

Then I heard a faint, flickering sound.

SLIDE 47: Gethsemane window

And down at the end of a long, dark, second gallery, I discovered this. Lit from behind, the hidden scene is brought to life by a motion detector. It is, of course, Jesus praying in the garden at Gethsemane after the Last Supper, the night before he was crucified.

SLIDE 48: Closeup Gethsemane window

The reverent posture . . . the earthly setting . . . the beam from above . . . You can't help but be moved by this moment of fear and suffering, rendered in deep colors, against a backdrop of billowing clouds.

* * *

So what are we to do with these hidden treasures of Redlands?
These miracles in glass, seen only by a few?
Again, probably nothing.
We can't round up the windows and put them in a gallery.
They belong where they are.

SLIDE 49: Angel detail

I should add here that no photo can really do justice to a real window. As my old friend, the Redlands stained glass artist Rick West, points out, photos are flat. Church windows are in fact, three-dimensional objects . . . often depicting three dimensional scenes.

SLIDE 50: Examples

These illuminated mosaics change constantly with light and shadow,
time of day, angle of view.

And especially up close, you don't just look *at* a window.

You look *into* it.

Still, if you can take a picture of something, you can share it.

In presentations . . . in prints and light boxes . . . in music videos . . . on
the internet in a cyber space museum . . . in social media . . .

With today's technology, it's easy to envision any or all of these . . .
documented by local photographers, curated by computer-savvy
historians.

And maybe even in 3-D.

* * *

SLIDE 51: Repeat title to close

In the meantime, the world may change around our church windows.

But these unique treasures won't change.

Indeed, they can't.

They re-broadcast their timeless messages with every sunrise.

The colors of Heaven are all around us.

And for that -- in the humble opinion of this non-believer -- we can all
be grateful.

Thank you.

#

Summary

The most impressive pieces of fine art in the city of Redlands are loved well by only a few hundred citizens, known to only a few thousand and generally invisible to everyone else -- or at least, overlooked. These hidden treasures are the stained-glass windows of our churches, some of them magnificent, others small, tucked into dark corners, yet quietly arresting or moving. Not just décor, the windows promote Christian and civic values like no other medium, modern-day versions of the “Poor Man’s Bible” windows, designed in the Middle Ages to teach Christian lessons to an illiterate public. Redlands has a wide variety of church windows, each with its own history, and many are truly hidden – they can only be seen if you hunt for them. This bright legacy of sacred art can’t be assembled in a gallery to share with the citizens of Redlands, but perhaps with photography and other communications technologies, these colors of Heaven can reach a wider audience.

Author Background

Redlands native Jim Hendon is a former newspaper reporter and editor who covered energy, business, technology other topics during a 10-year career, including four years at the Rocky Mountain News in Denver. He later worked 15 years in corporate communications for Chevron Corporation and served as the company’s head speechwriter. From 2004 to 2014, he worked as an independent business writer and speechwriter, primarily for Chevron. An amateur photographer, he presently serves as vice president, Programs, for the Redlands Camera Club. Son of former Fortnightly member Larry Hendon, he holds a degree in journalism from San Diego State University.