

## Design of Stained Glass and Exterior Symbols

So there we were with nice concept renderings of Broadmoor United Methodist Church's Fellowship Hall including a new main entry complete with religiously symbolic stained glass and crosses. The concept renderings had been developed to raise the building funds so we actually had a real budget to work with, and to stay within. But now, some months later, we were in the final stages of design development and were in final design of the stained glass and crosses to be mounted on the exterior of the building.

The concept design showed the stained glass was to be above the entry doors with the major wall glass left clear in order for passersby's to see that there was activity in the church; however, someone had likened the artist's symbolic stained glass design in the rendering to a certain motel logo and there was not going to be any overcoming of that visual imagery and it was felt that the stained glass should be in the main glass wall with the cross.



The conceptual cross design had been a trilogity cross chosen partially in order to be large enough to fit the wall properly. The Church already had a unique cross, the design of which we had participated in 25 years ago, in its sanctuary and I thought that it would be good to repeat that unique identifying feature on the outside of the Fellowship Hall, perhaps we could get an enlarged copy of the original cross that we could mount on the outside of the glass window wall, which naturally turned out to be fraught with its own

difficulties, which will be discussed in a future article.

The expectations/needs of the two story curved glass wall were substantial and conflicting. We needed to obscure the exterior transclosure visible through the glass below the stair from the interior, provide visibility from the exterior to the interior so that passer-byers and visitors could see people and activity in the Fellowship Hall, structurally support the visually suspended curving interior grand stair, become the supporting "canvas" for stained glass, support the cross and be structurally sound, which I have found most owners want their buildings to be.

After some thought and sketching of different design concepts we came up with the idea that maybe the stained glass design could be done in such a way as to be transparent enough to allow people to see through it and thus could be used in the main glass wall behind the cross location and in front of the curving interior stair. I looked at a large number of stained glass designs and found two that had the transparency that I was looking for, and both by Lynchburg Stained Glass Co. I arranged for their designer to visit the church to talk with Reverend Ken Irby, Senior Pastor, and me. The three of us sat and discussed both the design setting and possible religious concepts for an hour and a half.



Several weeks later we received a design sketch which I opened not only with great hopes but also more than a little fear because some previous stained glass artists we have worked with had been given more definitive information and not even come close on the first attempt. Wow! They nailed it the first time! The design started down low under the staircase with a representation of the earth and its people reaching for the heavens. This blocked the view of the transclosure. The representation of the spirit rose from the people and

swirled around the cross and ultimately reached the heavens. In doing so, it left the lower part of the glass windows visually transparent so that the activity in the Church could be seen.