



To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach

December 24, 2024

RE: Historical Significance of the Neighborhood Congregational Church

Village Laguna asked architectural historian Francesca Smith to evaluate the Neighborhood Congregational Church property at 340 St. Ann's Dr. In the attached evaluation she finds the three related, contributing buildings eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 3 and for the Laguna Beach Historic Register under Criteria 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

Village Laguna's mission is to preserve and enhance the unique "village character" of Laguna Beach. Like many Lagunans, we lament the possible loss of this historic property, noting that it is beautiful, well-designed, and important to the community. We wanted to learn as much as possible about its history and significance. Our goal is to foster appreciation of the historic buildings by the community, city leaders, the developer and church members.

The buildings on the site were constructed between 1948 and 1963 and include a parsonage (now the Montessori School), Bridge Hall and the Sanctuary. The buildings on the property embody the distinctive characteristics of three architecture types—Minimal Traditional, Tudor Revival and Mid-Century Modern with Organic/Expressionist-influences—and represent the work of two important creative individuals: Aubrey St. Clair and Bill Blurock. Both were local architects whose substantial bodies of work influenced the built environment of Laguna Beach and southern California. Extraordinary artistic values are expressed as well in the Mogens Abel and Harold Eckman wood carvings. The property is directly associated with the spiritual, communal, collaborative educational and historical development of Laguna Beach.

Francesca Smith is an architectural historian with decades of experience successfully nominating properties for local, state, and national designations. The State of California has recognized her as "professionally qualified staff" at its highest level, as a Principal Architectural Historian. Her Professional Qualifications are in both History and Architectural History (see <https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec-standards-prof-quals.htm>).

In addition to Smith's report we attach photographs by Greg O'Loughlin and Hunter Fuentes, and a 1984 brochure by the Memorial Committee describing the Symbols and Memorials of the Church in detail. Of special note is the summary of items and features and their donors on the second to last page. Many items memorialize donor's loved ones. For example, the large blue glass panels in the Narthex, a prominent feature of the church, were donated by Bette Davis in memory of Ruth Favor Davis, her mother.

Neighborhood Congregational Church is not a collection of generic buildings primed for demolition to make way for the next development. They are an expression of the values and aspirations of the congregation over decades. Members' commitment to design, quality and treasured embellishments achieved an inspiring spiritual complex. The entire community has come together there on important occasions. Memories of weddings, memorial services, musical performances and other cultural events are treasured by thousands of Lagunans.

We hope this report will contribute to a church, community and developer discussion and decision to retain buildings while accommodating other beneficial uses on the property.

Anne Caenn, President

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Resource name(s) or number (assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

**P1. Other Identifier:** 340-344 St. Ann's Drive

**\*P2. Location:** Not for Publication  Unrestricted

**\*a. County** Orange

**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad** Laguna Beach **Date:** 2015

**\*c. Address** 340-344 St. Ann's Drive

**City** Laguna Beach

**Zip** 92651

**\*d. Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:** Latitude: 33.53798, Longitude: -117.77774

**\*e. Other Locational Data:** Orange County Tax Assessor's Property Number 644-034-05

**\*P3a. Description:** The subject property is an irregularly configured parcel that contains three buildings related to the Neighborhood Congregational Church, the Parsonage, Parish Hall and Church (refer to Photographs 1-3 on page 3 and 4). The main portion of the Parish Hall and Church buildings are each rectangular in plan, roughly equal in sizes and feature very different incarnations of front-facing, gabled roofs. The two are joined at the street front and back by an open, side gabled breezeway in the front, creating a central, open courtyard. The back of the paved, rectangular courtyard is a connecting, two-story "leg" of the Parish Hall. The Parsonage is setback from the street at the approximate center of the lot, toward the rear of the Parish Hall, and has a front-facing, gabled roof as well. The complex is set on a slope, with the Church at the uppermost corner of St. Ann's and Glenneyre. The graceful modernist church is the newest but is arguably the most prominent building in the complex.

The rectangular Parsonage is a one story, Minimal Traditional style building with a medium sloped roof and a shed-roofed extension on the west side at the recessed entrance. The building is not plainly visible from St Ann's Drive, because of the deep setback and a high, wood fence that surrounds the L-shaped play area that wraps around the Parsonage to the front of the Parish Hall. Its Minimal Traditional character-defining features are its single-story height, the medium-pitched gabled roof, its overhanging eaves, the three-part wood sash window on the recessed entrance porch, the porch, which is supported by plain, painted wood posts, the simple stucco exterior wall finish and the brick end-wall chimney and restrained ornamentation. Also characteristic of the style, there is a small, abutting garage with a low sloping roof. The simple style was popular between the late 1930s and approximately 1950, concurrent with and terminating during southern California's exponential Post-War population growth. The Parsonage is primarily accessed from the paved parking lot via a curved concrete exterior stair with a square, extruded railing that leads to an entrance porch. **See Continuation Sheet, page 3**

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** (list attributes and codes) HP16. Religious building; HP13. Community center/social hall; HP15. Educational building

**\*P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other

**P5a. Photo or Drawing** (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



**\*P5b. Photo:** (view and date)

View northwest, January 2023.

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** historic

Church- 1963, newspaper article; Parish Hall- 1950 building permit (BP);

Parsonage and garage- 1948, BP

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**

Neighborhood Congregational Church

340 St. Ann's Drive

Laguna Beach, CA 92651

**\*P8. Recorded by:**

Francesca Smith for Village Laguna  
 PO Box 1309

Laguna Beach, CA 92652

**\*P9. Date Recorded:**

November 28, 2024

**\*P10. Survey Type:** Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:**

Village Laguna. Local Landmark Nomination for Neighborhood Congregational Church, Laguna Beach, 2024.

**\*Attachments:**  None  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (list)

## BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 2 of 12

\*NRHP Status Code 3CS; 5S2

\*Resource Name or # Neighborhood Congregational Church

B1. Historic name: Neighborhood Congregational Church

B2. Common name: NCC

B3. Original Use: parsonage and garage, parish hall and church B4. Present use: school, parish hall and church

\*B5. **Architectural Style:** Minimal Traditional, English and Tudor Revival Mid-Century Modern, Expressionist/Organic subtypes

\*B6. **Construction History:** Parsonage (726 Glenneyre) completed in 1948 (BP #10609, February 25, 1948); Parish Hall built 1950 (BP #12024, May 25, 1950); Church built 1963 ("Church Dedication Ceremonies Feb. 3" *South Coast News*. January 29, 1963). Backlit wood cross added to Church c. 1982 (Robert Hench, AIA. rev. March 15, 1982: 1). Fire-damaged roof of church repaired in 1995. Tile art work added to retaining wall (Mike Tauber, artist, BP Application, 2018). Garage door replaced, various signs, fence added (dates unknown).

\*B7. **Moved?**  No  Yes  Unknown **Date:** **Original Location:**

\*B8. **Related Features:** surface parking lot

B9a. Architect: NA; Aubrey St. Clair; Blurock, Ellerbroek Associates Builder: John H. Rudesill; E.F. Grandy; Alvin Clemence

\*B10. **Significance: Theme:** design

**Area:** Laguna Beach

**Period of Significance:** 1947-1963 **Property Type:** church **Applicable Criteria:** CR 3, LBHR 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity)

The Neighborhood Congregational Church complex was built between 1948 and 1963. Its three main built components are the Parsonage, Parish Hall and Church. The Parsonage was built in 1948 as "six rooms and a garage," by John Rudesill, a Santa Ana-based contractor (BP #10609, February 25, 1948). The estimated cost was \$13,000 (ibid). The Parish Hall (now Bridge Hall) was designed by local architect, Aubrey St. Clair and built by Laguna-based E.F. Grandy (BP #12024). It was completed in 1950 for a reported \$77,000 (ibid). The final contributing resource, the Church was built in 1963 for an estimated \$210,000 ("Church Dedication Ceremonies Feb. 3"). The project architects, Blurock, Ellerbroek Associates and general contractor, Alvin Clemence were based in nearby Corona del Mar.

Under its first pastor, Richard R. Morgan, the congregation was established in the spring of 1943, during the second World War. The Los Angeles Congregational Association recognized a handful of founding members who gathered "above the Sandpiper bar" on South Coast Highway ("Church Members to Attend Fire: Burning of Mortgage Set" *South Coast News*. July 8, 1960 and Bradley Zint. "Progressive Laguna Beach Church Celebrates 75 Years" *Los Angeles Times*. March 7, 2018). In 1947, the subject property, 340-344 St. Ann's Drive was acquired for a reported \$25,000 (Zint). The Parsonage and garage were technically located at 726 Glenneyre and were sometimes referred to as "the manse," but those references may have been in jest (Figure 1 on page 6).

After the simple pastor's residence was completed in 1948, a Building Committee was appointed to develop a vision for the growing organization's future.

See Continuation Sheet, page 6

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes)

\*B12. **References:**

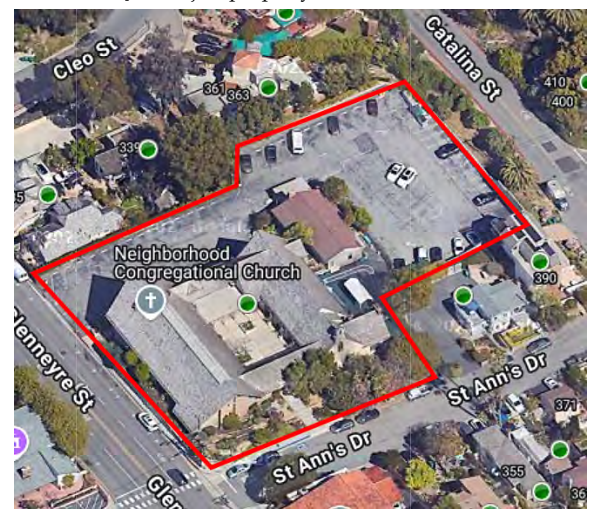
See pages 11 and 12.

B13. Remarks: none

\*B14. **Evaluator**

\***Date of Evaluation:**

Sketch Map subject property in red, no scale ↑ N



CONTINUATION SHEET

Trinomial#

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

\*P3a. Description: Continued from page 1 The building is oriented facing Glenneyre, and the terrain is sloped, so steps are flanked by moderate height retaining walls finished in plaster (Photograph 1). The front door is located on the return wall of the porch. Wood sash windows are punched and have screens.

The windows are hung, with two lights over four, configured as 2-2-2 (two panes of glass, over two, over two). There is a flagpole adjacent to the front porch and a carved, painted wood school sign is affixed to the porch rail. There is a four-sided metal and glass carriage lamp set atop a post at the foot of the stairs. Known exterior alterations include the addition of the painted wood, decorative porch railing and gate (with wood lattice), the likely addition of continuous rain gutters, replacement of the original garage door and the enclosure of the large play yard in a painted wood, dog ear fence (estimated post-2007, other dates unknown). Like the other buildings in the complex, the Parsonage and garage retain integrity to their original location, their setting, which evolved since 1950 but remains as it was by 1963, the prim original Minimal Traditional design remains recognizable, as does the late 1940s workmanship, its original building materials, as well as the village feeling and its association with the Neighborhood Congregational Church for which it was built.



Sketch Map 2: Neighborhood Congregational Church, aerial view. Contributing buildings and courtyard as noted. North is oriented to top of page. Bing.com 2024.

Photograph 1: Parsonage and garage, view northeast of entry stair from subject property parking lot. All photographs by F. Smith, November 2024 unless otherwise noted.

The Parish Hall is one-and-a-half stories from the front and two stories on the east and northwest sides. It has a high-ceilinged main floor with a partially subterranean basement. The building design is a late example of English and Tudor Revival styles. For Laguna Beach, however, it is not a particularly late instance of the combined architectural styles. Its English Revival characteristics are the various steeply pitched and cross-gabled roofs, decorative half-timbering at the gables (intended to look like wattle-and-daub exposed framing), a shared indicator of Tudor Revival style, the prominent, endwall brick chimney with stepped chimney pots and a collar, narrow multi-light windows, its entry porch, and the overhanging gables and second story. The front gable, in the tradition of English churches terminates at the roof ridge in a bellcote (Photograph 2). The bellcote contains an arched opening with a church bell. It is set on low, sloped shoulders and is capped by a diminutive, front gabled roof. The main gable has a narrow, central window. The Parish ( Bridge) Hall has a main, narrow, pointed, arched, leaded glass window at the center of the main façade bay. That lancet window features a quatrefoil in bar tracery at the head, with two pointed leaves below. The simple lozenge (diamond paned), leaded glass lancet window is executed in various shades of purple, blue and green glass. Below the central window, unequal lower-level windows serve the lower level. Those windows are all steel sashed with multi-lights, but the paired casement is tall and narrow (3-3-3-3-3) and the other window is shorter and wide, with four operable leaves, each three wide and four high. Fitting the English-inspired style, the windows are all deeply inset with stepped-out, tapered classical lintels (only on façade and back side of building) and deep, angled sills.

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

\*P3a. Description: Continued from page 3



**Photograph 2:** Parish Hall, view northwest from subject property front yard. Bell tower is obscured by mature trees.



**Photograph 3:** Parish Hall, view northwest from driveway on St Ann's. Brick chimney is centered on half-timbered bay.

The front gable roof intersects with stepped-out bays on the northeast side and extended, gabled wings at each end (Photograph 3). The front, side main gable is finished in decorative half-timbering and has simple side louvres. Windows on the south side are irregularly placed, according to interior uses. The fenestration consists of paired steel-sashed, two-wide, five-light-high casement windows.



**Photograph 4:** Parish Hall at left, view southeast from parking lot. Note the half-timbered gable with lancet window the far left. It also features has a cantilevered, half-timbered main floor rear wall and complex intersecting roof forms. The asymmetrical Mid-Century Modern Church is at right side, its central, full-length windows jut outboard conjuring the bow of a ship. Photograph by Aaron Schrank for KCRW, permission pending. Not for publication.

At the “back” of the Parish Hall, the northwest elevation is visible from Glenneyre and contains the most Tudor-style detail that imparts animation to what could have been a nearly blank wall (Photograph 4). The northeast bay has a simplified colored, lozenge, leaded glass, lancet window. The cantilevered, side-gabled, main floor back wall runs across part of the building length and is supported on painted wood corbels. Its windows are primarily paired sets, with a balanced, smaller set of one casement on each side, quaintly bisected by the half-timbered finish. The partially below-grade first floor has wider sets of four casement windows each, which visually establish the base of the composition. There are two inset, flat arched wood doors and a deeply recessed stairwell that leads to the courtyard.

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

\*P3a. Description: Continued from page 4

Although the Church is an entirely different design style, the architecture of the Church and Parish Hall visually coalesce and materially connect seamlessly (Photograph 4).



**Photograph 5:** Church, view northeast from Glenneyre. Note the soaring, asymmetrical roof form and nearly full-length skylight at the ridge of the roof. The front roof plane extends to nearly meet finished grade. The roof has rain diverters near the eaves to avoid the necessity for gutters, which would change the simplicity of the design. Narrow front and side windows are inset behind "floating" brick walls. Tiled retaining wall is in foreground. Google Maps September 2019.

The dramatic Mid-Century Modern style Church building displays integral elements of Organic and Expressionist styles as well. Its Mid-Century and Expressionist/Organic features include its soaring shape, the simple massing, use of geometric forms, irregularly shaped, steeply angled roof with overhanging eaves and angled "widows' peaks" at each end. Character-defining features include the simple wall finishes, brick, painted wood and plaster that also serve as subtle accent materials, the predominantly hidden windows and doors, and the overall restrained exterior decorative detailing. The Expressionist subtype is expressed in its sculptural form, limited front and street side fenestration, and deeply recessed entrance at the courtyard. Organic elements are its deceptive simplicity; the limited use of few materials (painted wood, plaster, brick and roof); the exceptionally bold, surprisingly asymmetric shape; and the sense of privacy afforded to worshippers and celebrants inside the sanctuary.

The concealed front and side windows offer a controlled appearance to the street, which strongly contrasts with the open orientation at the narthex end of the Church that is expressed in an expansive full-height window bay (Photograph 5). An open, interior stairwell leads to the sanctuary from concealed doors on either side.

The front elevation is dominated by the remarkable, asymmetrical, front-facing, gabled roof (Photograph 6). The shingled roof front and back of the building overhangs deeply at the center, forming chevrons or widows' peaks at the ridges. The wide fascia and stucco-finished eaves that increase toward the top enhance the effects of those deep peaks. The central bay facing St. Ann's is a "floating" Roman brick-finished wall. Set outboard of the stucco main wall, the full-height buff, velour brick alludes to a steeple but further serves as a barrier to the concealed vertical windows inset behind the panel on each side. The recessed windows are behind the masonry wall, arranged five to a group, as 1-1-1-1-1.



**Photograph 6:** Church, view northeast from Glenneyre. Note the soaring, asymmetric roof form and nearly full-length skylight at the ridge of the roof. The front roof plane extends on the left side to nearly meet finished grade. Narrow front and side windows are inset behind a "floating" brick wall. The simple shaped wood crucifix designed by a Blurock partner and was added in 1982. Note the seamless connection between the breezeway roof and the church roof. Google Maps September 2012.

At the foot of the masonry wall, "1962" is inscribed in a natural stone, inset on the inland side. Centered and set high on the brick, a deceptively simple, shaped, stepped wood crucifix is affixed on standouts. During daylight hours, the stepped cross forms deep shadows. At night, the slim form is backlit, imparting the subtle but nonetheless evident message of Christianity (Photograph 6).

The open breezeway connecting the Parish Hall has a low, gable-on-hip roof that intersects with the tall Church roof and connects the different forms effortlessly. The main roof return intersects in a side-facing, with a stucco-finished wall embellished simply with metal letters spelling out the name of the congregation and partially encloses the courtyard. The breezeway is supported the Church and the Parish House on each side with slim, painted wood, multi-sided posts only where necessary.

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

**\*P3a. Description:** Continued from page 5 At the Church, an unexpected angled, stucco “box” transept subtly reminds users that the sanctuary is entered through paired doors facing the parking lot. The side-facing Glenneyre elevation is visually dominated by the full-width, sloped, nearly full-length roof plane. The apparent mass of the vast roof is reduced by shorter eave length that terminates just beyond the front bay. Toward the front, a wide roof extension nearly reaches finished grade, protecting a blind stucco wall that forms the other side of the transept. The use of rain diverters avoids the necessity for rain gutters, which would impair the tightly controlled, spare design aesthetic.

Past the understated transept bay, four slim, brick floating buttress forms step outboard of the wall, protecting lower vertical windows neatly hidden in the returns, in stacked, single light sets. The simple brick buttress shapes correspond to the masonry on the main bay as well as the courtyard side of the Parish Hall. That masonry is elegantly finished on the ends, reinforcing the painstaking attention to detail demonstrated in the Church design.

The clever pedestrian entrance bay from the sidewalk is raised on a plain, low, retaining walls with a planted strip and terminates at Roman brick planters that mark the modest entrance. A plain, internally illuminated box sign with a white Plexiglas face set into the north planter quietly announces the property’s use. The deceptively simple rear elevation has central full-height, wood-framed windows, with deep blue, purple and green, colored, rectangular glass set in deep, vertical, continuous mullions

(Photograph 6). That enormous two-story window forms a wide V in plan and establishes the striking visual statement made by the north side of the church. Painted, routed, vertical wood siding flanks the large window in deep recesses. On each side, metal panels mounted on standouts in simple, bisected shield forms, function as custom door handles, which only allude to the double doors’ presence on each side. The doors almost disappear, set into the continuous, finished vertical panels, in plane. The doors are quietly announced by vertical sets of smaller sculpted panels, in the same pointed shapes that form vertical courses to the roof eave. Each of the panels contain *bas relief*, contemporary symbols of Christianity: stylized anchors (representing hope, security, safety) and olive leaves at the doors and the 12 apostles, scallop shells (pilgrimage, journey), a sailing ship, three bags of gold, a crucifix, a saw and three trowels. Across the back of the complex, the walkway is paved in both brick and concrete. There are equally spaced, four-sided carriage lamps on posts that correspond to the Parsonage lamps along the parking lot retaining wall. The simple courtyard or cloister (Philip E. Gregory Patio) that is formed by the Parish Hall back offices and Church arcade is paved in scored concrete. It has small tree wells with low scale trees and bushes, and beds planted in flowering shrubs and bushes that parallel the sides of the buildings. The Parish Hall side has paired, single-light French doors with transoms, alternating with stepped plaster buttresses. A Tudor-arched, painted wood, set of paneled entrance doors with nine colored glass lights (3-3-3) are set deeply into the wall beneath the stucco-ceilinged breezeway. The breezeway is paved in quarry tile. At the back of the courtyard, a deeply recessed painted wood truss is set on a turned wood post which leads to stairs that connect the rear of the buildings and parking lot. The Church side of the courtyard has full- and partial height windows and doors.

The retaining wall along Glenneyre is clad in an elaborate tile installation. The retaining wall is tallest at the lowest point on the slope, and the tiles are color-blocked in various color groups and patterns that develop between different shades of the same colors that overlap into other colors.

Alterations have been minimal since the complex was completed in 1963. Electronic carillon bells were added in the 1970s. The compatible, back-lit, natural wood cross was added to the church façade on St. Ann’s in 1982. In 1995 the roof of the Church was repaired following a fire. The tile was added to the retaining wall in 2018. A dog-eared fence was built to enclose the school play areas and various signs were added (years unknown). The Neighborhood Congregational Church complex retains remarkably high integrity to its appearance when it was completed in 1963.

**\*B10. Significance:** Continued from page 2 The street that became St. Ann’s Drive was known as Euterpe Street until about

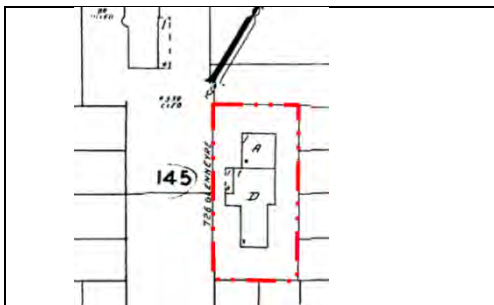


Figure 1: Original Parsonage property annotated in red. North as indicated. Excerpted Sanborn

1945 (*Sanborn Fire Insurance Co Map of Laguna Beach, CA. 1925, updated to 1949*). Neighborhood Congregational Church ministers used the Glenneyre address until the Church was completed in 1963. The year after the Minimal Traditional style parsonage was completed, the congregation’s then-new pastor, Dr. Philip Gregory commissioned Aubrey St. Clair to design a significant complex... for his growing flock. St. Clair drew plans for a large, two-story structure that included a spacious parish hall with a unique beamed ceiling, a wood-paneled library centered on a fireplace, Sunday School classrooms, a full-sized kitchen, offices and storage space. This building is very English in both appearance and ambience. The *South Coast News* reported that the cornerstone was laid ... [in] 1950. The parish hall served as both a social gathering place and the primary worship space for the next dozen years

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Primary #  
HRI#

## CONTINUATION SHEET

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

**B10. Significance:** Continued from page 6 (Ann Christoph. "Setting the Scene for Art and Architecture" *Laguna Beach Independent*. Mar 9, 2007).

The Parish Hall was designed in 1950, which is comparatively late for the Tudor Revival style, but its small-scale and level of building detail is exceptionally compatible with the established village character of Laguna Beach. Aubrey St. Clair was a southern California and local architect who commenced his busy practice in the 1920s ("Granted Certificates" *The Architect and Engineer*. January 1929: 112).

An expert described the design portfolio of Aubrey St. Clair as having "set the tone and style for what... [became] the best qualities of Laguna Beach's village character" (Foster J. Eubank and Gene Felder. *Laguna Beach Then & Now*. (Charleston: Arcadia Books) 2013: 19). St. Clair (1889-1968) was the notably the son of artist Norman St. Clair. The elder St. Clair was a Pasadena-based "early California impressionist painter whose 1904 watercolors of Laguna Beach scenes are credited with helping establish the town as an art colony" (Christoph 2007). The family lived in Pasadena, but like many in their social group, maintained a summer cottage in Laguna Beach after 1903. In 1924 Aubrey St. Clair helped his film producer brother, Malcolm St. Clair with the Cotswold-inspired, Storybook style Laguna Beach home at 489 Pearl Street. By 1962 Aubrey St. Clair and his wife owned 424 Jasmine Street, which he designed in 1929 ("Wedding Jubilees" *Los Angeles Times*. July 21, 1963: 182). He also designed 432 Jasmine in 1929, but that building has been altered (date unknown). 424 Jasmine and the other St. Clair home on Pearl Street each contribute to local historic districts (California, State of. "Built Environment Resource Directory, Laguna Beach" or BERD 2024). Like his parents, St. Clair made his home in Pasadena (and Altadena after 1931) but retained a residence in Laguna Beach during his adult life.

His varied body of work included at least 27 buildings, 57 residences and 13 remodels in Laguna Beach. Among St Clair's local projects, there were numerous public commissions of note, including Laguna Beach Water District Building (1927, 306 Third Street), Laguna Beach Fire Department (1931, 501 Forest Avenue) Laguna Beach City Hall (1951, 505 Forest Avenue, with Wilfred Verity), Laguna Beach Library (1938, 363 Glenneyre Avenue, no longer extant) and Pump House on Temple Hills (pre-1934, 329 S. Pacific Coast Highway). The Laguna Water District, the Fire Department and City Hall buildings were each included in the Laguna Beach Historic Survey in the Historic Resources Inventory Index (1982) and are contributors to a local historic district.

During his practice, which included periods working in construction trades, there were more than ten known properties St. Clair designed elsewhere in southern California. One was Woodbury Well in Pasadena (1930, 1879 East Walnut Street), designated a local landmark in 2007. St. Clair designed residences at 1049 and 1250 N. Holliston Ave., also in Pasadena (1925 and 1924). Those properties each contribute to the significance of the Bungalow Heaven Landmark District, which was designated in 1989. All three of the referenced Pasadena St. Clair buildings are considered "presumptive" historical resources for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) based on their local designation. One other Pasadena property, 787 S. Euclid Avenue, was designed by St. Clair and completed in 1926. That property contributes to the significance of the identified but undesignated Madison Heights Landmark District (Pasadena, City of. <https://www.mhnapasadena.org/landmarkmap>, accessed on November 22, 2024). The four known properties in Pasadena are considered significant for their architecture, which further bolsters St. Clair's reputation for architectural expertise in design beyond Laguna Beach.

St. Clair's body of work was not limited to public and commercial buildings or to upscale homes. He developed plans for an affordable modern housing model which were displayed at the Architects' Building Material Exhibit in Los Angeles in 1931 as well as at least two multi-family buildings in Laguna and another in Belmont Shore (Long Beach). He notably designed an Amphitheater for the Laguna Beach Festival of the Arts at 650 Laguna Canyon Road in 1939 according to the *Los Angeles Times* (March 29, 1938).

Aubrey St. Clair designed in a wide range of idioms ranging from Art Deco to Streamline Moderne and Minimal Traditional styles. He was best known, however, for his Eclectic Period Revival style work, which encompassed Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Tudor and English Revival. Those Eclectic Period Revival styles were in vogue in the region primarily between the two World Wars, and differed among a wide variety of European influences, including Dutch Colonial, French Eclectic, Chateausque, Italian, Mediterranean and Spanish. There were American subtypes in the genre as well: Neoclassical, Colonial, Mission and Monterey Revivals and other inspirations including Moorish and Egyptian Revival.

Tudor Revival style examples in the U.S. are generally influenced by the Elizabethan period. They commonly have plaster (stucco) exterior walls and often incorporate masonry details, such as ornamental stonework or brick work. The style evokes images of small communities in the British Isles, or in the English countryside and can artfully be used to reduce the scale of large buildings. While not every Tudor Revival style building has the distinctive half-timbering feature exhibited in the Parish Hall, most examples have similar massing and feature Medieval English-inspired, decorative details. These features are characterized by overhanging gables and second stories, decorative chimneys, lozenge, leaded glass, casement windows, round-arched and Tudor-arched exterior doors and steep roofs. The Tudor Revival style's popularity waned by approximately 1940 as Modernist principles took form, but the style remains in use and is widely considered to be picturesque and charming.



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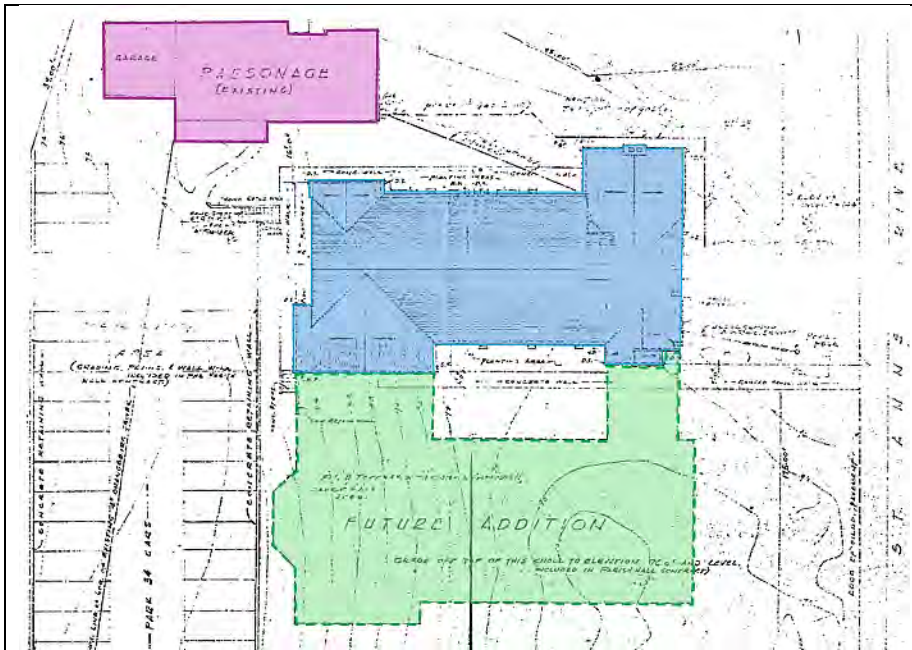
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\*Date: November 28, 2024

Continuation  Update

**B10. Significance: Continued from page 7** When St. Clair designed the Parish Hall for the Neighborhood Congregational Church, he had the foresight, combined with the benefit of an educated clientele, to make accommodations for and to design the future church and breezeway addition (Figure 2). With the future addition, he created a central courtyard, as well as the connecting wings. The land designated for the church was graded at that time, to the correct level for its future use.



**Figure 2:** Annotated plan view of subject property with Parsonage roofline outlined in purple and the Parish Hall in blue. The “future [Church] addition” is at the bottom of the image in a dashed green line and highlight. North is oriented to about 11 o’clock. Aubrey St. Clair, 1951.

The interior space that would be contained between the Parish Hall and the future Church was to be a reasonably narrow rectangle, but as built, the courtyard was somewhat wider than originally planned.

Despite the fact that St. Clair prepared a traditional design for the future church, when the time came, the Building Committee chose William E. Blurock as its designer. “Bill” Blurock was born in Oregon in 1922 but grew up in Los Angeles and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1947. By 1950, he was married, worked as a draftsman and lived in Laguna Beach. Three years later he joined what became Pleger, Blurock Hougan & Ellerbroek in Corona del Mar, becoming a partner in 1958.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the firm was responsible for the designs for at least three schools in the growing community of Tustin. They were Tustin Union High School in 1958, Tustin Middle School 1959 and Sycamore School 1962. In 1961, Blurock, Ellerbroek & Associates received an award for the design of the Corona del Mar High School (“Architect Here Cited for Design of High School” *South Coast News*. March 31, 1961: 11). It was completed in 1962. They designed Estancia High School in Costa Mesa in 1965. In the mid-1960s they teamed with a Houston-based architecture and engineering giant for the Cypress College campus. That work led to later collaborations on Pacific Amphitheater, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Shoreline Amphitheater (Mountain View) and numerous smaller theaters.

The firm designed numerous other churches, including First Presbyterian Church of Upland, 1952, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, 1964 (also in Tustin) and Community Presbyterian Church 1967 (Cathedral City). The firm joined with Richard Neutra, Robert Alexander and Garrett Eckbo in the 1950s to design the evolving campus for Orange Coast College, eventually taking over the commission in the 1970s. They did work at Stanford University and later were part of the team responsible for planning the University of California, Irvine, designing the Student Center (Susan Berkman. “Architects See More Theaters in the Future” *Los Angeles Times*. September 14, 1986). With his firm, by the close of his career, Blurock had worked all over the world, making his name in varied specialties, but was known primarily for campus designs. He died in 2012, but his firm, The Blurock Partnership, which later became tBP/Architecture, currently maintains three offices in California (Therese Bissell. “Architecture News- William E. Blurock: 1922-2012” *Architectural Record*. 2012).

Expressionist concepts of the Church are embodied in its bold sculptural form, its radical angled geometrical orientation of and controlled interior volumes. The hidden main church entrances clearly impart the concept of privacy. Some of the Organic features coincide with those of other identified styles, but include the bold design intent of the Church, use of natural wood and masonry materials and the studied absence of applied ornamentation. The careful design including its intentional natural siting

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\*Recorded by: F. Smith

\*Date: November 28, 2024

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**B10. Significance:** Continued from page 8 make the Church seem to have emerged from the ground.

The citation received from the American School Administrators described the future high school campus in Corona del Mar using words that closely corresponded to the new Neighborhood Congregational Church design and the reasons for the architect’s success. They called it “a realistic approach to flexible design... [with] good relationships between units” (ibid). The unquestionably Modern Church design is unusually compatible with the otherwise traditional campus design. The rectangular, front-gabled Church parallels the established orientation of the Parish Hall, and its seemingly blind façade matches that of the other building.

Both Blurock and Aubrey St. Clair designed facilities for the locally and regionally significant Festival of the Arts, although their work was separated by decades, between 1939 and 1963. Their shared commitment to the community is embodied in that work.

The new sanctuary was built to accommodate 400 worshippers, but its enormous interior volume was concealed in the sloping hillside, terminating at the backside, facing the parking lot. Both buildings notably feature exposed interior trusses, but their materials, architectural language and ultimate expressions are varied. The use of trusses enables large, interrupted interior spaces and high ceilings. The interior of Bridge Hall features exposed, decorative scissors trusses, with central queen posts. That truss type is not surprisingly, considered traditional and has generally a maximum span of less than 80 feet (Photograph 7). The ceiling of the earthy, English-inspired room is dark, stained wood and walls are painted plaster.

The Church sanctuary roof and linear skylight are dramatically supported on massive, stained wood “glulam” (glued, laminated timber) arches that create a modern, loadbearing, exposed frame (Photograph 8). The widely spaced, shaped ribs form the enormous open interior of the sanctuary in giant spans. The glulam arches are straight-sided on the exterior, forming wide, fixed angles where they connect to the exterior walls, roof and skylight (Photograph 9). The “inside” of the arches are gracefully curved shapes which taper to delicate points where they touch at the central, continuous roof apex. The effect is dramatic and produces the collective consequence of that construction method and design technique turning the focus of its audience toward the heavens.



**Photograph 7:** Decorative scissors trusses with stained, tongue-and-groove ceiling in interior of Parish Hall. Photo by Hunter Fuentes, Historic Laguna. Not for publication.



**Photograph 8:** Church sanctuary, view toward narthex. Note the darker glulam arches as well as the natural wood ceiling finish and the glass endwall. Photo by Hunter Fuentes, Historic Laguna. Not for publication.



**Photograph 9:** Church under construction. Glulam arches were carefully wrapped during building process and positioned in the concrete foundation, unknown date. “Building Structures to Serve a Higher Purpose” *Laguna Beach Independent*. March 1, 2018.

The glulam arches are stained, dark wood, which contrast sharply with the natural wood, tongue-and-groove ceiling that wraps to the upper walls in wide, continuous curves. The overall impression is warm, inviting and organic. The glass endwall at the narthex features a wide, opaque, central bay, that is the same width as the impressive, nearly full-length skylight. That bay is set on glass double doors and is pierced by quatrefoil-shaped openings set in a random arrangement evoking bright bursts of stars in the night sky. The scale of the wall of glass is reduced visually by a pattern of rectangular, amber glass that reinforces human scale to the vast interior space.

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Neighborhood Congregational Church

\*Recorded by: F. Smith

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Continuation  Update

**B10. Significance: Continued from page 9** In both the Parish Hall and the Church, suspended pendants provide additional lighting. The lamps in the Parish Hall are contemporary and seem to float in the space. Conversely, the more traditional, Gothic-influenced light fixtures in the Church are stepped and multi-sided, with ivory lenses which provide diffused light to the sanctuary (Photographs 7 and 8). Throughout the complex and in keeping with the practical values of the larger Congregational church, simple glass window "lights" (panes of glass) are single colors even in the leaded glass, rather than the representational stained glass window subject matter found in more traditional ecclesiastical buildings.

The Church cornerstone was laid in the summer of 1962 ("Neighborhood Congregational Church to Hold Cornerstone Ceremonies" *The Laguna Beach Post*. July 5, 1962). When it opened in early 1963, Pastor Emeritus Gregory (1886-1974) who had originally chosen St. Clair to design the complex, offered the opening prayer. Wood panels over the double doors representing the 12 apostles and symbols in the interior were gifts from the Woman's Fellowship. The panels were carved by Mogens Abel (1915-1990), part of a Laguna Beach multi-generational family that was, and continue to be, branches of the local fine art and architectural communities (since the late 1930s). Mr. Abel immigrated from Denmark, arriving in Laguna Beach in 1937. He was commissioned to craft wood "welcome" signs for the community that became arrival symbols of the artistic community. He not only exhibited his work but served on the Board of Directors and as a grounds manager for the Festival of the Arts and the Pageant of the Masters (Edan Hughes. *Artists in California, 1786-1940*. (Raleigh: Hughes Publishing Co.) 1986 and 1989). Additional interior panels were carved by Harold Eckman, who was a member of the Board of Trustees at the time. The original landscape, including the courtyard was implemented by George Carpenter. The parking lot was expanded, probably toward the northeast, to accommodate 100 additional parking spaces. The total cost for the Church and other improvements increased by 40 percent from the original estimate including the art and furnishings (ibid and "Church Dedication Ceremonies Feb. 3" *South Coast News*. January 29, 1963).

The Montessori School of Laguna Beach was established at the subject property in 1975. Its enrollment began with just five children, but it has expanded to more than 75 students at present (Deepa Somasundaram. "A Heartfelt Note From Deepa Somasundaram, Director of the Montessori School of Laguna Beach" no date). The school occupies the Parsonage and may encompass other areas of the Parish House. The Montessori Method is "a child-centered approach that encourages self-directed learning through hands-on activities and collaborative play" (Charlotte Ruhl. "Montessori Theory of Education" at "Simply Psychology" February 2, 2024). The painted, dog-eared fence that surrounds the school's play areas was added at an unknown date, but does not reduce the integrity of the property's significance, partly because the walls are additive and can be removed without damaging the buildings.

Like most congregational churches, the Neighborhood Congregational Church has been outspoken on political and civil rights issues. Laguna Beach notably adopted a domestic partnership ordinance in 1992. It is said that the Reverend Tari Lennon (1934-2011) may have conducted the first gay marriage ceremony in Laguna Beach at NCC. Significant fire damage to the Church roof and interior occurred in 1995, which some believe may have been a political statement, but an absolute connection between gay marriage and the fire has not been made (Chin-Ching Ni. "Laguna Church Roof Damaged in Fire" *Los Angeles Times*. April 24, 1995). The first such legal marriage in the nation was in Massachusetts 2004 (Andrew Glass. "First Same-Sex Marriage in U.S." *Politico*. May 17, 2018). The first legal marriage licenses issued to same sex couples in California took place during a brief period in 2008. That significant right to marriage was not legally confirmed until 2013.

A non-contributing feature to the Neighborhood Congregational Church property is the "Coast to Canyon" artist tile installation on the retaining wall facing Glenneyre. It was designed in 2018 and installed under supervision of Mike Tauber with support from LOCA Arts Education, Mark Porterfield and Steve Chadima. The embellished art wall was completed long after the Church, which was the last contributing feature to the property was completed in 1963.

The subject property retains sufficient integrity of its original distinctive Minimal Traditional, Tudor Revival and Mid-Century Modern, Expressionist/Organic designs. Its location has not been changed. The immediate setting is as it was designed, although the parking lot was enlarged to include additional parking more single-family homes have been built in its surrounding area since early 1960s. The distinctive exterior materials for each of the three building remain intact. The original workmanship in those materials remains tangible and evident. One minor compatible addition was the installation of the custom-designed, stepped cross that faces St. Ann's on the central Church bay (1982). The aesthetic or historic sense of the late 1940s through the early 1960s remains clear in the each of the distinctive buildings and in the collective complex. The presence of those original physical features, including the bold shape, canted walls, and materials of the Church, which taken together, clearly convey the property's historic character or feeling. Likewise, in the visible design, the subject property retains its direct connections between the Parsonage, Parish Hall and the Church with the property. The complex retains the direct associations because the buildings and the immediate setting, which are sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to observers. Like feeling, its association requires the presence of the physical features that convey the property's historic character.

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**B10. Significance: Continued from page 10** The property's boundaries are those historically associated with Orange County Tax Assessor's Property Number 644-034-05 since at least 1963.

The Neighborhood Congregational Church property has not been previously evaluated for historic significance. The Laguna Beach Historic Survey was limited to properties completed before 1940 (1981). The Neighborhood Congregational Church property is eligible for listing in both the California Register of Historical Resources and in the Laguna Beach Historic Register.

Its California Register eligibility is based in its design significance, under Criterion 3. The Neighborhood Congregational Church property represents a window in time: a continuum that commenced in after World War II, when the congregation was established above the Sand Piper Bar (also designed by St. Clair as the Smith Construction Company/Builders Guild Building at 1183 South Coast Highway, 1937, locally designated). The period of significance ended in 1963 with the completion of the Mid-Century Modern, Organic/Expressionist style Church designed by Blurock *et al.* The three buildings on the Neighborhood Congregational Church property embody the distinctive characteristics of three architecture types: Minimal Traditional, Tudor Revival and Mid-Century Modern with Organic/Expressionist-influences, the Cold War period, the southern California region, the glulam material and engineering methods of Church construction, and represent the work of two important creative individuals: Aubrey St. Clair and Bill Blurock and possess extraordinary artistic values in the still-extant Mogens Abel and Harold Eckman wood carvings (Criterion 3).

The Neighborhood Congregational Church property is a group of related, contributing buildings which qualify under five of the local Historic Register criteria, (C)(3), (5), (6), (7) and (9). In the City of Laguna Beach Code of Ordinances, in Title 25 Zoning, Chapter 24.45 Historic Preservation, Section 25.45.006, under "Historic register designation, criteria, and procedures..." it directs that the property "exemplifies the cultural... social or historical heritage of the community" (Criterion 3). The subject property was directly associated with the spiritual, communal, collaborative educational and historical development of Laguna Beach. The Neighborhood Congregational Church property "is representative of the work of... [two] ...notable architects, [a pair of local] artist[s] including those of local importance" (Criterion 5). As former residents, both Aubrey St. Clair and Bill Blurock are considered to be local architects, whose substantial bodies of work influenced the built environment of Laguna Beach and the southern California region. In addition, Mogens Abels' fine art wood carving and signs were especially significant in establishing the character of Laguna Beach as an artist enclave. The Neighborhood Congregational Church complex "embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics of... [at least three design styles [Minimal Traditional, Tudor Revival and Mid-Century Modern with Expressionist/Organic-influences], [religious building] type[s], [the Cold War time] period... that exemplify [the] particular architectural style[s] that are] important to the [established village atmosphere of the] City" (Criterion 6). Under Criterion 7, the Church "embodies elements that represent a significant structural, engineering, or architectural achievement or innovation." The use of glulam technology enabled the implementation of the versatile "engineered wood" construction. It notably has interior exposed, in-wall structural application that was central to the structural engineering for the complex, open building. The glulam arches were purpose-designed for the Church project at a time when that technology was still reasonably experimental. The complex "is [a] ...remaining example... in the City [of Laguna Beach that possesses], distinguishing characteristics of [Period Revival with Mid-Century Modern] architectural importance" (Criterion 9).

**\*B12. References:** Continued from page 2

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*Neighborhood Congregational Church  
Greg O'Loughlin photos 12-14-24*



*William Blurock Mid-Century Modern Church on left,  
Aubrey St. Clair Bridge (Parish) Hall, Tudor Revival, on right with bellcote*



*Bellcote of Bridge Hall*



*Philip E. Gregory Patio, with breezeway beyond that joins the two major buildings.*



*East side of Bridge Hall with the exterior of the Library at left..*





*North side, with Parsonage (Montessori School) at left, Bridge Hall and Sanctuary*



*Tudor Revival detailing of Bridge Hall.*



Tudor Revival detailing of Bridge Hall.



Stained glass on the north side of the Sanctuary flanked by entrance doors and carvings of symbols of the twelve apostles. Glass panels donated by Bette Davis in memory of her mother.



Parish (Bridge) Hall rendering of St. Clair's design



Bridge Hall under construction circa 1949



Library at Bridge Hall, Hunter Fuentes photo



Truss detail of Bridge Hall ceiling, Hunter Fuentes photo

CHRISTIAN  


# SYMBOLS & MEMORIALS

Neighborhood Congregational Church  
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST  
Laguna Beach, California

Self-Tour of the Christian Symbols  
of  
Neighborhood Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
340 St. Ann's Drive  
Laguna Beach, California 92651

Welcome to our Church tour. If you've ever wished for a sermon in silence this is it, for out of silence every symbol conveys a special depth of thought for you. Symbols in the church through the centuries have been very inspiring, especially for those who could not read. Religion has been perpetuated through many centuries by the use of symbols.

The word "symbol" is derived from two Greek words: "syn" meaning "together" and "ballein" meaning "to throw" thus meaning "throw together". However, in later Greek the word becomes "symbolon" meaning a sign, mark or token implying the throwing together or joining an abstract idea and a visible sign of it. The sign serves to recall, not by exact resemblance, but by suggestion.

Symbols were often used as a secret language especially during periods of persecution. In our time symbols such as those you see in our church are used to remind us of God and God's work, of love and grace, of pardon and inspiration. Therefore, on your self-conducted tour you will find food for much meditation.



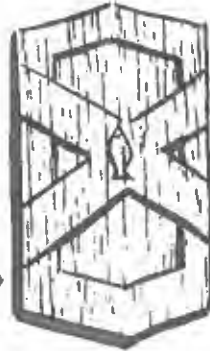
Your tour begins at the main doors of the church.

Notice the door handles display fish carved in bas relief. The fish is symbolic of the word for Christian during the early days of Christianity. The anchors of faith undergird the door handles. On the frontage above each door are symbols of the twelve Apostles in symbolic wood.

Above the left door we follow from top to bottom:



Thomas is symbolized by a carpenter's square and a vertical spear. The square symbolizes precision. The spear symbolizes his martyrdom. Often Thomas has been referred to as the Doubter because after the resurrection he said, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe" (John: 20:25). Tradition has it that Thomas built the first Christian church in India, and died a martyr in Persia or India.

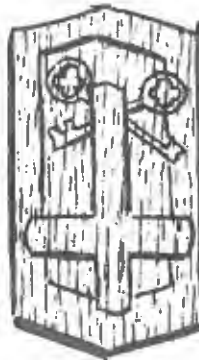


Andrew is symbolized by the cross shaped like an "X". Tradition has it that he died bound to a cross rather than nailed to a cross. Many people have identified with much of Andrew's spirit because he lived a quiet life going about the Lord's business with great effectiveness. He was the one who brought Peter to Jesus.

identified with much of Andrew's spirit because he lived a quiet life going about the Lord's business with great effectiveness. He was the one who brought Peter to Jesus.



Judas Iscariot is usually last on the list of Apostles, but he is third in this series. He was the treasurer of the Apostles' meager funds. Judas is symbolized by a money bag and a rope with which he committed suicide by hanging. Did he betray Jesus to the authorities for thirty pieces of silver to force Jesus to use the legions of heaven or because he believed in other ways rather than Jesus' ways?



Peter is symbolized by a cross planted upside down. Observe that the horizontal bar is towards the bottom. Tradition has it that Peter died in such a manner at his own request for he could not be equal to Christ even in the manner

of death. Likely the order for his execution was given by the Roman emperor, Nero. Notice the two keys at the top of the cross in the form of the letter "X". The two keys symbolize the Keys of the Kingdom and the authority of the church for Jesus said, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church." (Matthew: 16:18)



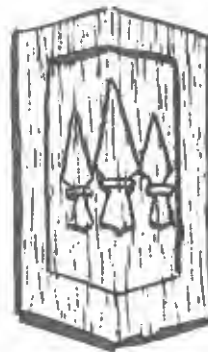
Simon, the Zealot. The fish on a hook is a symbol for Simon. He was called from the group of Zealots to follow Jesus, and subsequently he became very successful in fishing for men.



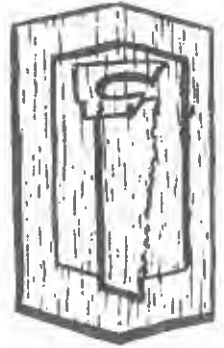
John is symbolized by a serpent emerging from the common cup. This comes from the event in the Gospel when John along with his brother James asked Jesus

if he might sit on the right side of Jesus in glory, and Jesus replied, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" (Matthew: 20:22)

Look now to the right main door, and start from the top of the column of plaques downward



Bartholomew is also known as Nathaniel. He is symbolized by three flaying knives referring to his martyrdom after he won the King of Armenia to Christ for which he was killed by the king's brother. Little is known about Bartholomew except from John's gospel when Jesus called him to be a Disciple. Jesus said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." (John: 1:47)

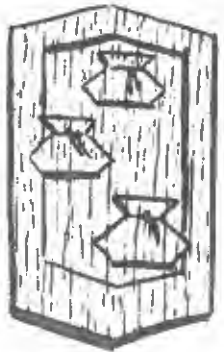


James the Less, had this name "the Less", because he was short of stature. He is symbolized by a saw with the handle uppermost. Tradition has it when he was ninety-six years old he was thrown out of the temple by the Pharisees, and a mob stoned him as he prayed for God to forgive them. But his death resulted from the blow of a club.

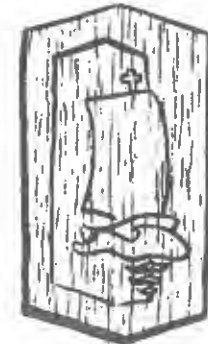
But his death resulted from the blow of a club.



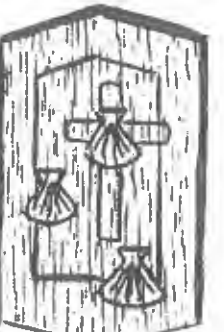
Philip. A staff surmounted by a cross and two loaves of bread, symbolizes the Apostle Philip. The staff and cross refer to his successful missionary journeys among the barbarians of the ancient world. The cross also refers to the power of Christ through Philip over the idols of the day. The loaves of bread recall Jesus' question of Philip, at the end of the day when five thousand people were needing nourishment, "How are we to buy bread so that these people might eat?" (John: 6:5). Philip is one of the few Apostles who did not experience martyrdom.



Matthew. The three money bags refer to the Apostle Matthew who was originally a tax collector. His original name was Levi until he was called to be Jesus' follower. Tradition has it that he was martyred in Ethiopia where he was crucified on a Tau Cross.



Judas, not Iscariot, was also known as Thaddeus and Lebbaeus. This Apostle is always symbolized by a sail boat with a cross on the mast. They refer to his missionary journeys with Simon. He was a martyr, and is often symbolized bearing a club. The gospel of John records Judas' only question of Jesus before the Lord's death, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?" (John: 14:22)



James the Greater. The last symbolic artwork consists of three scallops and a cross, a reminder that James the Greater, like Peter, was once a fisherman. Scallops were plentiful for food in Palestine. James, the brother of John, was often called James the Elder. He was one of the closest friends of Jesus.



Come now, enter the church and stand facing the garden. One of the beautiful symbols in the garden is the figure of Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscans. Francis of Assisi was a distinguished and learned man. But after several experiences of life including being a prisoner of war, he began to dispose of his property for the purpose of repairing dilapidated churches. His father was irritated by his giving so much to this cause that he abandoned Francis. Francis gave up all his worldly apparel except the dress of a common laborer. He labored at constructing buildings with his own hands. He begged, if necessary, to get the funds to do his own work. His affection was lavished on the poor and the ill, especially the lepers. He lived in extreme poverty. He practiced all the austerities. Although he was called the "madman," he has become a symbol of brotherly and sisterly love and an inspiration to the Universal Church since his time.

Also observe in the garden the beautiful fiddle-leaf fig tree. It is symbolic of many biblical stories. Notice how it seems to caress the stained glass window as it grows.



The next mosaic to the right displays "courage in the struggle for justice and peace." See the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit and Peace, the sign of life of creation, because the twig is in the dove's mouth recalling the story of Noah. Notice the triangle — the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — enclosing the dove. Here again, give attention to the beautiful leaves and evergreen, suggesting everlasting life, and the flower proclaiming the resurrection.



The third mosaic reminds us of "Christ's presence in trial and rejoicing." Notice the emphasis is on the cup and the grape symbolizing the communion of the blood of Christ.

Now, turn and face the mosaics hanging on the wall. A well-known former Laguna Beach artist created the four lovely mosaics at her studios on "Top of the World". Each panel, illustrated by vivid symbolism made manifest by the artist's serene mastery of shape and clear color, bears a legend taken from the 1959 "statement of faith" of the United Church of Christ.

Looking from left to right, you see in the first mosaic the promise of Christ "to all who trust him, forgiveness of sin and fullness of grace". Notice the United Church of Christ symbol, the cross of victory which signifies the kingship of Christ over the kingdoms of this world. The bottom circle is divided into three parts and recalls the words of Christ in Acts 1:8, "you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria unto the end of the earth." Notice, too,



the grapes, symbolic of many of the stories of the vineyards. In the top right-hand corner is the symbol of the Trinity represented by three circles: Father or Creator; Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit sustainer at work in the world today. God is revealed in these three beautiful ways.



In the fourth mosaic, you see "eternal life in God's kingdom which has no end". The lamb, all aglow on this mosaic, symbolizes not only a light for the darkness but also intelligence and learning for light is the symbol of enlightenment and religious fervor. Usually in this connection, Psalm 119:105 comes to mind: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The wheat you see is always a symbol of God's bounty for God makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.



Walk up the stairs and stand in the upper narthex now. Look towards the glass wall, and view the interesting plaques. The plaques hang on what we call the "narthex screen." The screen consists of six panels that tell the history of the United Church of Christ back to the Congregational wing.



To your left, the first panel speaks of the Mayflower, 1620, and the words of the pastor John Robinson: "The Lord has more light to break forth out of his Holy word."



The second plaque illustrates the Cambridge Platform of 1648. This edict was the first ecclesiastical constitution to be produced in America, which guided the churches of New England for almost two hundred years



The third plaque depicts John Eliot, a Congregational minister. In 1663 he translated the Old Testament into the Algonquin Indian language. The language is Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd."



The fifth plaque is a symbol of the 1948 World Council of Churches with the inscription "Oikoumene" meaning "ecumenical", "To go forward together" Give attention to the cross, shaped over the boat, a symbol of the church on the waters of a stormy world.



The last plaque is the symbol of the United Church of Christ and the inscription is from the "statement of faith" adopted in 1959 after the union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical Reformed Church: "Binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races."



The six plaques are the work of a former local artist

Observe at the far end of the narthex on the right side a memorial book, symbol of remembrance and love. On the front page: "To all the members entered into life." There is also added the words of Jesus from John's gospel, 14:19, "Because I live, you will live also." Entered into the memorial book are the names of members of the Church since the organization of the congregation in 1943. Every member has had a ministry too.

Above the memorial book is the prayer of the Reverend Ellsworth L. Richardson, the minister of the church at the time this sanctuary was dedicated, February 3, 1963. The closing paragraph of the prayer is significant: "We are grateful to God that thou has led us to this moment. Continue to watch over us and keep us in the hollow of thy hands. Amen"

Another symbol of rejoicing to the glory of God, not seen but heard, is the carillon. Listen while the carillon plays a familiar hymn like "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past"

There are other symbols at the exit from the sanctuary through the doors opening to the courtyard

Turning to the other side of the narthex and looking to your left you will find on the wall a plaque symbolizing the ministry of God's word dedicated in honor of the five senior ministers who have served this church: The Reverend Richard R. Morgan, 1943-1945, who organized the church with the support of the Southern California Conference and dedicated laity of this community, some of whom are still with us. The other ordained ministers are: The Reverend Philip E. Gregory, 1945-1956; The Reverend Ellsworth L. Richardson, 1956-1971; The Reverend John M. Reynolds, 1971-1983; The Reverend William J. Eilers, 1983 to date.

Give attention to the border of the plaque (placed March 14, 1968) with the words "Faith", "Inspiration", "Devotion", "Leadership". Notice the St. Andrew's cross on each of the four corners

Other symbols are on the table below the plaque; the guest book and religious literature.

The guest book is symbolic of those wanderers who seek comfort in the worship of God through Jesus Christ

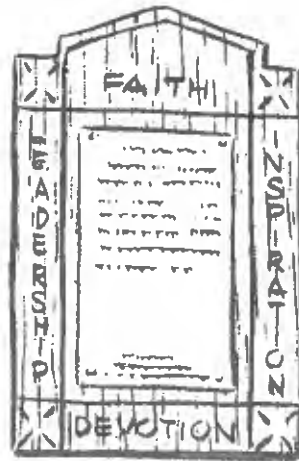
The literature is symbolic of carrying forward the words and deeds of Jesus, the prophets, and the ministers of God's word. The United Church of Christ symbol is seen twice on this table.



Now, step inside the nave through the center doors and advance to the chancel.

Observe that the color blue predominates the room, in the rugs, upholstery of the pews and the background of the wall behind the cross which dominates the ambience of the room. Blue, of course, is the symbol for loyalty, and in this case loyalty to God and his Son, Jesus Christ

Give attention now to the pulpit from which the minister preaches. The pulpit is a symbol of freedom to preach the Word. The minister may preach whatever the Word demands "to afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted." The minister seeks to meet needs for the care of the soul in uniting people to God.

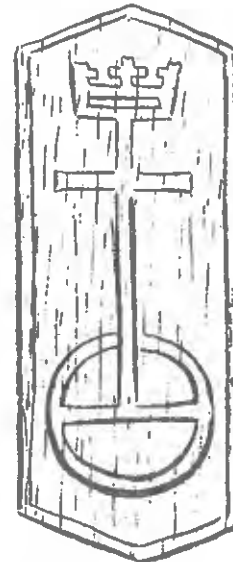


On the front of the pulpit are carved stems of wheat symbolizing when the word falls on good ground it brings forth a harvest. When it is allowed to grow, it prospers thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. Another meaning for that particular symbol is the story of the wheat and the tares; if one doesn't know, as the gospel states, which are the tares and which the wheat, one will know at harvest time.

Look now to the right and see the altar. The altar is a symbol of the great love and sacrifice of God's nature. Some people would think of the altar as simply a table on which to put flowers, but do notice the altar is shaped like a tomb, reminiscent of the catacombs where Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper upon the tombs of martyrs! The altar is a symbol of the remembrance of Christ. It is emphasized especially when Holy Communion is celebrated. The altar is also a symbol of God's deep love in that "he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16.) The sacrificial attribute of God is proclaimed to us wherever the altar is seen.



On this altar there is another symbol, "IHS". The letters "IHS" are capital letters for "Jesus" in Greek



The candles on the altar are symbols of Jesus "the light of the world". A common interpretation is that the two candles represent the human and divine natures of Jesus. The candles also symbolize for others the Old and New Testament.

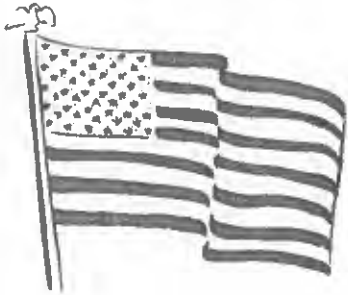
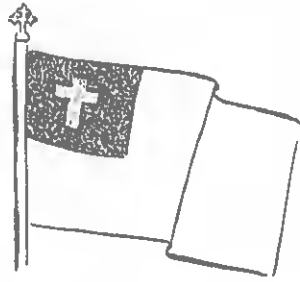
Now turn to the right and see the lectern. The United Church symbol is on the front of the lectern.

The lectern is the base from which the Holy Word is read and spoken. Selections of divine passages are often chosen from the Church lectionary. You will observe that the Bible on the lectern is open. The open Bible is a symbol of freedom for everyone to read the scriptures. It is sometimes forgotten that in medieval times only the clergy and scholars read the Bible; the people were not permitted to do so. Then, too, many people were illiterate, but today we are blessed in America since almost everyone can read and have the opportunity to study the Bible. The Bibles in the pews are also an invitation to the congregation to read the Scriptures.

To the right of the lectern and the Bible is the baptismal font. The baptismal font indicates to the adult being baptized that God accepts, forgives, and calls each person. By baptism one is initiated into the Christian faith. When parents bring their children for the Sacrament of Baptism, the baptism is completed later at confirmation when the baby grows to adulthood and makes his or her own declaration to be a Christian. The cross with the symbol of a crown on the baptismal font is, again, the symbol of the United Church of Christ.



To the right of the font is the Christian flag. It symbolizes the kingdom of God. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33). The white portion of the flag represents purity, innocence, and peace. The cross on the flag depicts God's love as exemplified in Jesus' death and resurrection, and the promise of eternal life. The flag also exemplifies brotherhood and sisterhood uniting all humanity in service and love.



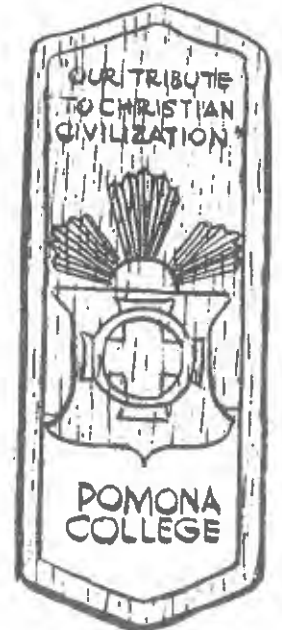
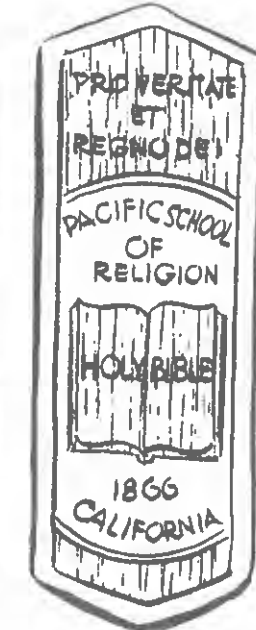
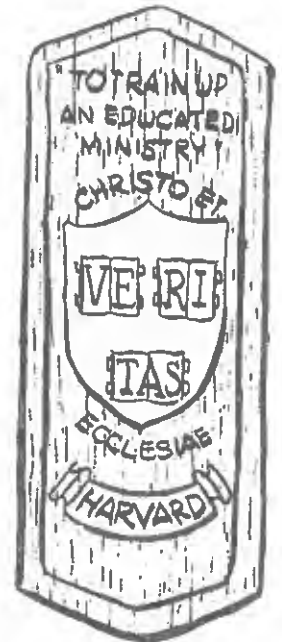
Next to the Christian flag is the American flag bringing to mind citizenship in our nation. The red color denotes courage, the white purity, and the blue truth and loyalty. The fifty stars represent the fifty states of the Union, each not only a territory but also the people of those states. George Washington said that the stars are from heaven, and the red is from the mother country separated by white stripes representing liberty.

Observe to the left of the chancel the organ, the piano and the choir pews, which indicate that the sound of music, harmonious and heartlifting, is a very important part of the worship of God and very acceptable in God's sight.

A focus of worship is the Cross on the front chancel wall, lighted so beautifully. It is a Latin cross, originally a symbol of shame like the electric chair is thought of today. But the cross was transformed in history after Jesus' death into a vital symbol of the sacrificial nature of God. The cross is empty because it speaks of God's power in raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus' self-surrender, seemingly so tragic, is changed into glory.



Let me suggest you leave the sanctuary through the same center aisle doors by which you entered. The nave screen, the reverse of the narthex screen, continues the plaques. Here they symbolize the academic influence of higher Christian education as founded under Congregational influence. From left to right are plaques to tell of Grinnell, Fisk University (originally an institution for black students, but now integrated), Harvard, Yale, Pacific School of Religion, and Pomona College. These plaques remind us that our founders believed in education, as much education as one has the capacity to use.



From this point move outside into the courtyard

Stand for a moment near the figure of St Francis immediately to your right. St Francis has already been seen in the garden during this tour. You may think of one of the hymns in the church's hymn book, Number 64, entitled, "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Lift up your voice  
And with us sing  
Allelulia,  
Thou burning sun with golden beam,  
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,  
Oh praise Him, Oh praise Him,  
Allelulia

Amen



Under the breezeway at the entrance to Gregory Court on the right wall you see another carving, a sign indicating the naming of the courtyard for the Reverend Mr Philip Gregory. This plaque is a symbol of the love and respect for a minister of the Lord.



The next stop on your tour is a visit to the building across Gregory Court from the sanctuary to Bridge Hall. Look upward to the belfry on Bridge Hall. There, one may appreciate the bell, symbol of the Infinite One and always the eminence of worship.

Upon entering Bridge Hall you see in the vestibule a beautiful ceramic mosaic depicting a madonna. This artwork is symbolic of the place of womanhood in the church and the blessing that has come to the church not only through Mary, Jesus' mother, but also through the faithful servants of God: men, women and children through the ages.

The plantings beneath the madonna symbolize life and resurrection



Your last stop is on the St. Ann's side of the church standing on the sidewalk. There is the outdoor wooden cross that fits so well with the architectural structure. Seen at night it lights up the whole side of the church and the green lawn with the eternal message of hope. It may give one a final moment for prayer and to say with the poet,

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the sun of bliss is beaming  
Light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming  
Adds more luster to the day.



We hope you enjoyed the symbolism, art and architecture of the church as it tells the story of God's love, acceptance and call to each one of us, "Follow me"

This booklet, "Self-Tour of Christian Symbols", comes from a lecture tour recorded on cassette, October, 1981. At the request of the Memorial Committee it has been transposed to writing, revised, and reviewed.

My thanks to the Reverend Ellsworth Richardson, who made some corrections and additions, to Dorothy Butcher for typing it from tape and with her husband, Bill, added the section on colors and music, to Dolores Haggard, who typed the booklet for printing and who assembled the list of memorials and donors.

John M. Reynolds  
October, 1982

GIFT:	IN MEMORIAM:	DONOR:	GIFT:	IN MEMORIAM:	DONOR:
Sanctuary doors — work of Mogens Abel	Wesley Planalp	The Planalp Estate	Plaque naming Gregory Memorial Court — work of Harold Ekman	Rev. Philip E. Gregory	Many friends
Symbolic wood carvings of 12 Apostles — work of Mogens Abel		The Women's Fellowship	Memorial benches in Gregory Court — work of Harold Ekman	Rev. Philip E. Gregory	Many friends
Narthex Garden	Harriet L. Gum, mother of Mrs. Gilbert	Mr. & Mrs. John I. Gilbert	Bench around tree	George Carpenter, church landscaper	Mrs. George Carpenter
Re-dedication of the Narthex Garden & illuminating equipment	Morris Lerner, M.D.	Velma Lerner	Ceramic Tile Madonna in Bridge Hall — created by Russel L. Leidy		
Large stained glass window in the Narthex	Ruth Favour Davis	Bette Davis	Plantings at base of Ceramic Tile Madonna	Berle H. Walker	Rosabel Walker
Mosaics — created by Joyce Clark "...to all who trust Him..." "...courage in the struggle..." "Christ's presence..." "...eternal life..."	Albert B. Van Patten James B. Owen George Rowley Siegrist Robert J. Howison	Bettina Van Patten Eunice Owen Winifred Siegrist Ruth C. Howison	Wooden Cross on front of church on St. Ann's Drive — work of Harold Ekman	Mrs. E. Vaughan (Florence) Davies	E. Vaughan Davies and Members of the Church
Narthex Screen — 12 wood carvings — work of Harold Ekman		Harold Ekman	Cypress tree by the cross		Stuart & Ethel Hart
Memorial Book — calligraphy by Esther Myhrman, John Asher		The Women's Fellowship	Chandelier in Narthex	Colonel Robert E. Myhrman	Mrs. Esther Myhrman
Dedication Prayer by the Reverend Ellsworth L. Richardson — calligraphy by John Asher			Minister's Study furnishings	George R. Siegrist	Mrs. George R. Siegrist
Carillon	Adelaide and Hedley Reeves Chapman and family, Anna and Edward Hooper and family, and dear friends	Bernece and Hedley Chapman	Desk for Minister's Study	Rev. Philip E. Gregory	First Congregational Church of Minnesota
Carillon speakers in the patio		Bernece and Hedley Chapman	Powder room furnishings	Mr. & Mrs. David H. Winans, Mrs. Fletcher's parents	Amy and LaVerne Fletcher
Senior ministers wall plaque — work of Harold Ekman		The Women's Fellowship	Choir room and bride's vanity	James Breslin Owen	Mrs. James B. Owen
Narthex table — work of Harold Ekman	Dr. Bennet Weaver	The Bennett Weaver Study Group	Friendship Board (bulletin board in courtyard)	John L. Hendricks	Mrs. John L. Hendricks
The Chancel — altar, pulpit, lectern, cross — work of Mogens Abel	William J. and Jane Michel, Edmund and Agnes Dean	Dr. and Mrs. William J. Michel	Outdoor Sign, St. Ann's and Glenneycze — work of Mogens Abel		Mr. and Mrs. Richard Whitaker
Altar candlesticks	George Rowley Siegrist, their son	Mr. & Mrs. George R. Siegrist	Stained glass aisle windows: Panel 1 Panel 2 Panels 3, 4 Panel 5 Panel 6 Panel 7 Panel 8 Panel 9	Mr. George W. Galbraith Mrs. George W. Galbraith	Sylvia Smith Sylvia Smith Claude W. & Gladys A. Sanders Ethel Hart Ethel Hart Winifred Lombard Karl E. Herrick & family Virginia Guild Rogers and S. Alden Guild William H. Reed family and Friends
Bible on lectern	Harry Pell	Mrs. Harry Pell and The Women's Fellowship	Panels 10, 11	Gussie Andersen	Mrs. C. W. DeBus
Baptismal font — work of Harold Ekman	1st Lt. Henry Harvey Persons, USMC	Mr. & Mrs. Henry W. Persons	Panel 12	Mrs. Mary Gatewood and Mr. Clare W. DeBus	Niels E. Hendrickson Marcella Hendrickson Harry and Leila Rannard Edith M. Crandall
Organ	Alice Meissner Stader	Mr. & Mrs. George L. Meissner and Mr. & Mrs. Donald M. Hummel	Panel 13 Panel 14 Panel 15 Panel 16	Ina Hendrickson A. Allen Benedict Mr. & Mrs. A. B. Rannard Elizabeth Crandall	Jane and Paul Westbrook Henrietta Way, Elizabeth C. Way, Mrs. Guy Whitehead
Erzähler Celeste	George L. Meissner	Mr. & Mrs. Donald M. Hummel	Panel 16	Elizabeth Crandall	Friendly Service
Pews	Donald H. Lycan	Mrs. Anna Lycan	Communion tablecloth		Mrs. Levi O. Atwood
Piano	Gladys Welge	Many Friends	Pedestal Planter one	Mrs. William Wallace Way	Southern Cross Circle
St. Francis carving, courtyard — work of Harold Ekman	Frederik Jessen	Mrs. Frederik Jessen	Pedestal Planter two	Gussie Anderson	
Flower box and planting at base of St. Francis	William & Gertrude Bennett	Catharine Bennett	Pedestal Planter three		
			Narthex Usher's Bench — work of Harold Ekman		
			Pulpit chair and cushion — work of Harold Ekman	Charles Cole	Mrs. Marjorie Cole
			Wall paintings in Bridge Hall — work of Nelly Allan		Nelly Allan

Bibles in pews, Hymn Books, plus other Memorials that have been added in the Library have been given by members and friends of the church.

*The Memorial Committee wishes to thank Jack Reynolds for conceiving the idea of improving our appreciation and understanding of the symbols enriching our church. No effort has been spared to assure completeness and accuracy, but the Committee requests your understanding in the event of errors or omissions.*

*Our thanks to Lynton Chambers and friends for contributing to the memorial in Esther Chambers' name, which has made this publication possible.*

*Also, our thanks to Elizabeth (Liz) Richards for her art work and expertise in putting this booklet together and to the Memorial Committee for their help and support. And, last but not least, thanks to all who have contributed to the Memorial Fund.*

*Charles Peterson, Chairman  
June, 1984*