



## St Barnabas' Stained Glass Window

Rachel Phillips

### BACKGROUND

The initial meeting with Kathy and Ian regarding the window gave me the foundation for the design. She came with several ideas and lots of material for me to work with. What was clear from the beginning was that the window should contain the figure of St Barnabas and reflect his qualities as the disciple known as the 'Son of Encouragement'. She wanted the link to the church to be even clearer with the addition of the dedication wording to 'St Barnabas' and use of the church's date of opening/dedication, '1888.'

Kathy was keen to emphasise a very practical aspect of support and encouragement; the bringing and giving of alms. The other aspect she wanted to express was the spreading of the Gospel and suggested the use of vine imagery or some other kind of fruit, such as pomegranates, to symbolically represent the seeds, growth and fruitfulness of the Gospel.

I was also given a copy of an article, 'These are the Garments; A Study of the garments of the High Priest of Israel', by Charles W. Slemming. This article speaks movingly and powerfully of the grace of God found in Christ, our great High Priest. In considering the garments, mention is made of the hem of alternating golden bells and pomegranates around the base of the High Priests' robe. These are considered as being symbolic of fruitfulness and peace. Passages from the article I found particularly significant were;

*'We have said the blue robe was an emblem of kingly grace. How many would endeavour to show us grace today in shreds, a weak and broken grace that cannot keep a man. Blessed be God, He has made grace to be unrendable! Works may fail, our love may waver, our passions may vary, but grace does not depend on these things or it would be merited and the word means, 'unmerited favour'. The word of God says, 'For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.'*

*We are given to understand that although the pomegranate is not over appreciated in England, yet it is considered a luscious fruit in the East. As the apple is the fruit of love, (Song of Solomon ii) and the grape is the emblem of joy, (John xv), so the pomegranate is that which speaks of peace, (Joel i). Love, joy and peace go together, (Gal v22) ....The two spies bring back pomegranates with their large bunch of grapes from Eschol, (Num xiii23), as a witness that the land was fruitful. In that inspired Song of Solomon we read: 'I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruit of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded', (vi. 11) 'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth; there I will give thee my loves' (vii.12)*

*Golden Bells tell us of the gospel of peace. ..while the priest lived and moved the bells rang, and while the bells rang the people knew that the priest was alive. We can know that Jesus lives and that He is making intercession for us for we, too, can hear the bells. Child of God, can you hear the bells now ringing? If you can, thy will cheer your failing heart. Listen! Soul in darkness, they will tell you he is your light. Listen! Child of sorrow and*

*disappointment, it is a note of joy and hope. Listen! Tired one, do you hear the heavenly sound? Jesus lives to make intercession for YOU.*

My other considerations were to design a window that would relate to, but not fight with, the existing windows in the church, (particularly in the altar end.) I also wanted a window that would use the light well and be colourful and cheering without making the area too dark.

I used a few direct visual references, the existing windows being one, to help with the design. One of the others was the existing cover of the Services of Holy Communion booklet used at St Barnabas' Church, with its dynamic representation of the dove of the Holy Spirit.

THE INITIAL DESIGN(Small Scale)

CARTOON (Full size working drawing)



The design and cartoon above show some of the changes that happened in the development of the design.

The main elements of the design are the blue-robed figure of St Barnabas embracing another person and passing him a gift which is symbolic of practical support, it could be money, food or any other physical item.

The window is a reflection on the whole idea of encouragement; that which we can bring to each other and that which God brings to each of us, both directly and through others.



Left:

*Glass waiting  
to be fired*

The figures, whilst representing a specific person in the case of St Barnabas, use the medieval tradition of simplified and stylised features in order to also represent any and all of humanity. The Dove, a symbol of the Holy Spirit seen in the top, has been altered from the initial design to be wholly flame and fire-like in the later one so that, whilst still representing the Holy Spirit, now relate more strongly to His enabling and transforming work as illustrated in the story of Pentecost.

The background is made up of interlinking lines that join the flame of the Holy Spirit at the top of the window to the rings of simplified bells and pomegranates, colour, and dedication text at the base.



Finished Window

**The finished window** uses hand-made glass; each piece has unique bubbles, striations and markings causing the light that passes through to be bounced around. This gives the finished window a richness and means that it changes in appearance through the day as the light moves and changes.

The glass has been painted in various stages, with each layer fired in a kiln to permanently adhere it to the surface of the glass. Coloured enamels and a 'Silver Stain' that produces a yellow colour have also been added to the glass to further enrich and modify the colours of the glass.

We all need encouragement, and we can all give it. St Barnabas was someone who encouraged in practical, emotional and spiritual ways and is an inspiration for encouraging others in all those same ways.



Top section of finished window