

Art and Architecture in St. Stephen's Church



The church has a striking design with its high ceilings, pillars and long nave that turns poured concrete into a work of art. St. Stephen's was built on the first parcel sold from the old Belvedere Golf and Country Club. The rector at that time, The Rev. Edward John Mohr, penned The Building Plan Committee's report detailing their agreed design principles for the new church building. Mohr was confident that St. Stephen's would be considered in future days as the "finest small parish church on the Pacific Coast – a plain and simple structure, perhaps, but one setting forth to all the marvels and wonders of God."

Ernest Frederick Winkler AIA was the architect for the building which the Tiburon Pelican described as a "contemporary design with historic proportions." The cornerstone for the new church was laid in May of 1955.

The Christus Rex

The Reverend Mohr commissioned a local artist, David Lemon, to create the Christus Rex. Lemon lived in the old Union cod fishery on the west shore of Belvedere Island, which had become a local artist colony after the fishery closed. The fishery building could be accessed only by foot via a steep path or by boat. Lemon carved the wooden Christus Rex at the fishery. When finished, men from the church hauled it over the steep hill to St. Stephen's. David Lemon died in 1997 shortly after an exhibition of his art work in the St. Stephen's sanctuary. The sculpture remains the focal point of the sanctuary.



Sanctuary Windows

The stained glass windows are of abstract design constructed with three dimensional glass held with cement rather than lead. The chunks of glass are said to represent the stones by which St. Stephen was martyred. They represent an important part of glass history as they are the very first *dalle de verre* (slab of glass) windows made by an American studio following a process that



originated in France. They were made using a leading-edge process by H.W. Cummings, whose family lived on Corinthian Island. The lower windows appear to portray the Christian symbol of a fish, while the upper ones (best seen from the choir loft) include a chalice, paten, star, candle and perhaps a carpenter's square.

The Communion Table

The hexagonal communion table was carved from heavy California walnut by another local artist, David Foss. The Rev. John Thornton (rector from 1969 to 1982) commissioned Foss to create a number of walnut furnishings for the church which were made over a period of years from 1970 to 1998. These included the communion table, the candleholders, the lectern (finished in 1992), and the memorial table (completed in 1998) which was initially used as the rector and his staff's desk.



The Baptismal Font

The baptismal font was also created and carved from California walnut by David Foss. It was completed in 1972. David Foss still lives in the Bay Area.



The Pulpit

The wooden pulpit made of California walnut to mirror the other furnishings was completed in 2023. Jan Gullett, a member of St. Stephen's since 1996, built the pulpit in his garage from wood he sourced in Oregon.



The Choir Loft Railing

The choir loft and choir railing were designed by Jim Bischoff, an architect who sang with the St. Stephen's choir for thirty years.



Artwork on the Interior Church Pillars

In 2014, a group of parishioners led by Ginny Doyle raised the funds to acquire the icons hanging on the church pillars. Elaine Roemen of Port Orford, Oregon created these panels on rusted sheet metal with gold leaf applied and painted in oils.



The Frobenius Pipe Organ

In 1989 the Church installed its majestic pipe organ with 1,676 pipes, built for St. Stephen's in Denmark and shipped via the Panama Canal. The choir loft in the rear of the church was redesigned to hold the organ, thereby preserving the Christus Rex in the chancel as the focus of St. Stephen's worship.

