

# SYMBOLS OF WORSHIP



## MIDWAY HILLS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

[midwayhills.org](http://midwayhills.org)  
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Dallas, Texas 75229

# The Meaning of Symbols in Our Worship of God

at

## Midway Hills Christian Church

Since the beginning of time, humankind has sought ways to express the spiritual significance of the universe. Art, religion, and music are some of our greatest efforts at these expressions of the eternal, unearthly, and unspoken meaning of life. These all find a powerful expression of unearthly truths when used in combination in the Christian Faith.

Art, by means of architecture and its allied arts (mosaic, stained glass, etc.) determines the initial impact that the house of worship has on people in the community, especially on every person who enters the door of the church. It reflects the theology of the church members and echoes the liturgy of every worship service. Every church adopts its own symbolic representations of the eternal values that it proclaims through beauty, proportion, color, and the many symbols throughout its house of worship.

The vision of Midway Hills Christian Church is to create in worship a strong sense of the holy. However, we cannot engineer God's presence. But we can design the spoken word, music, prayers, and powerful religious symbols that invite the divine grace of God to impact our hearts, minds, and souls.

Though this booklet endeavors to make us more aware of the unique art forms adopted and utilized by Midway Hills Christian Church, in reality, all art must essentially be interpreted by each individual person viewing it. Though brief descriptions of various pieces of art are included, and some interpretation from the artists and designers are given, the true meaning of each piece of art is left up to you, the viewer, the ones to whom the artwork's message forever speaks new and powerful words and feelings.

## **William E. Benson, A.I.A., architect**

William E. Benson, A.I.A., architect and engineer, received his degree from the University of Illinois in 1947. After a year of graduate work in design, he moved to Dallas, where he opened his own office in 1952. During a period of rapid church expansion, he designed nearly fifty church projects from master plans and first units to sanctuaries.

In 1954, Bill was employed by the Joint Board of the Christian Churches of Dallas County to design the master plan and first unit for what was to become Midway Hills Christian Church. The first unit, partially funded by the Joint Board, was built by a group of MHCC members acting as the contractor. Bill was one of those who labored in many ways to complete the first building in 1956. That building housed all church functions, including worship, education, fellowship, and offices.

Again in 1960, Bill was assigned his second MHCC building project, the children's education building. This completed a second step in the master plan for MHCC.

Next, for more than a year, he participated in a committee appointed to establish the philosophical and theological basis for developing a sanctuary design. After the congregation approved the results of the committee's study, his architectural firm was selected to fulfill these plans. The sanctuary was dedicated on September 12, 1965.

Bill worked closely with various artists and craftsmen to assure a unified whole in the building. Though he personally designed the communion table, he commissioned Henry Bartscht, Professor of Art at the University of Dallas, to design and execute the copper panels. MHCC has often been visited by Perkins Seminary students as they study church art and architecture.

Bill and Lee Benson were charter members of MHCC. Bill served in many capacities at MHCC, including deacon, elder, trustee and chairman of the Board. He served the Joint Board of the Christian Churches of Dallas County as secretary and was one of the original organizers of the Dallas Area Association of Christian Churches and served as its director and committee chairman. He was active in community affairs as director of the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce, Vice President of the Dallas Founders Lions Club, President of Save Open Space and member of the Campus Christian Ministries at University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University.

As a professional, he was a member of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) and the Texas Society of Architects.

# The Designers & Builders of our Worship Symbols

(continued)

## **John Kebrle—designer and artist for stained glass windows and etched glass panels.**

John Kebrle, owner of Kebrle Stained Glass Studio in Dallas, the firm his father founded in 1920, designed, fabricated, and installed all of the stained glass windows at Midway Hills Christian Church. He has served as president of the Stained Glass Association of America and has worked with many churches in the Dallas area. However, his global reputation comes from his many windows at Hard Rock Café facilities throughout the world.

## **Heri Bert Bartscht (1919—1996) —designer and fabricator of the copper panels on the communion table.**

Heri Bartscht was a noted Dallas sculptor and professor of art at the University of Dallas from 1961 until 1990. He worked in wood, stone, clay, bronze, and copper and often his figurative subjects were influenced by his devout religious beliefs.

Born in Breslau, Germany in 1919, Bartscht studied for six years at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and was a two-time recipient of the City of Munich Scholarship. After arriving in Dallas in 1953, his artistic career continue to thrive. In 1954, he received the top award at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts annual art exhibition. He quickly became very involved with the local art community by founding and directing the Dallas Society for Contemporary Arts, the forerunner of the Dallas Museum of Contemporary Art. In 1958, Bartscht helped create a private school of art in Dallas and in 1961 was asked to establish a sculpture program at the University of Dallas, which led to his thirty-year teaching career at the university.

Though active in creating numerous community art projects in Dallas, he completed over fifty commissions for churches throughout the Southwest. As a devout Roman Catholic, Bartscht was always at his best with liturgical art. In addition to his work for MHCC, he created the double life size Crucifixion for the Sacred Heart Cathedral on Ross Avenue, and the rooster bell tower for the First United Lutheran Church on Mockingbird Lane.

# The Building



Groundbreaking for the first building (Fellowship Hall building) occurred on July 10, 1955. The first service in the building was in the fellowship hall on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1956. Ground was broken on June 29, 1958, for the second building, the Children's Education building. The sanctuary was dedicated on September 12, 1965.

A Sanctuary Study Committee researched and analyzed the theology and the practices of the Christian Church to form the basis of the sanctuary design. The primary concept of the design of the sanctuary came from two conclusions of the study committee: 1) The belief that the service of communion is central to the Christian Church worship service, both philosophically and physically; the gathered church should, in fact, gather round the table as the twelve apostles did, and 2) The choir should be participants in the worship as members of the congregation. All elements of the sanctuary plan (pews, suspended cross, symmetry of the roof, location of the choir, and central location of the communion table) emphasizes the centrality of communion with God.

Towering above the sanctuary is a spire topped with a cross, clearly identifying it as a gathering place of Christian believers and sojourners. In front of the main entrance stands the Edgar DeWitt Jones Bell Tower —dedicated in October, 1956— supported by three columns, representing the Holy Trinity. Both the exterior and interior of the building are intended to create a response of being in the presence of God, and receptive to God's message through corporate worship and individual meditation.

# The Symbol of Stained Glass

Stained glass is the only art form entirely developed in and for the Christian era. No other craft deals in light as brilliant or as elemental as that of stained glass. Color is of paramount consideration. Pure color in light has the power of lifting the observer out of himself and into unspoken realms of meaning and feeling. But stained glass must be more than just exciting, in a worship center it must be inspiring. Through a dynamic marriage of brilliant color and creative design, stained glass suggests heavenly events, virtues, and ideas.

The broken, yet harmonious color and design of the stained glass windows at Midway Hills Christian Church create its own aesthetic atmosphere of warmth and beauty, grace and power, to feed the heart, mind, body, and soul of each unique sojourner.



## Ecumenical Window

### East Wall

*“And all shall be one in Christ.”*

The East Wall Ecumenical Window was a gift of the family of Edgar DeWitt Jones by his family. Dr. Jones was an esteemed theologian and pastor named Minister Emeritus of Central Woodward Christian Church, Detroit, Michigan.

This window symbolizes the Universal Church. At the top is the hand of God, from which all things come; below it is the cross with its base resting on the curved surface of the world, demonstrating the gospel's message throughout the world. The large vertical crossed lineal pattern (some see it as similar to the sign of the fish, others as the shape of a flame) that runs from the top of the window to the bottom and crosses over the cross, denotes that “I am the vine and you are the branches.”

The base of the cross has its roots in the Star of David, as Christianity sprang from and has its roots embedded in Judaism. Resting on the left of the cross are the Ten Commandments, and to the right of the cross are St. Peter's Basilica in Rome (representing the Roman Church) and the Hagai Sophia in Istanbul (representing the Eastern Church).

The Luther Rose Shield (red heart on white background to left of cross) was designed by Martin Luther, and represents the religious enlightenment of the Reformation.

The kernel of wheat (bread) and bunch of grapes (wine) represent the communion of the Christian Church.

To the right of the lower part of the Cross is a small spire of four different colors representing all the people of the world, all children of God, as one in the Universal Church.

The colors used in this window are: blue/blue-gray (celestial bodies), red/gold/yellow (life, love, passion), and green/terreverde (everlasting life and regeneration).

## Resurrection Window

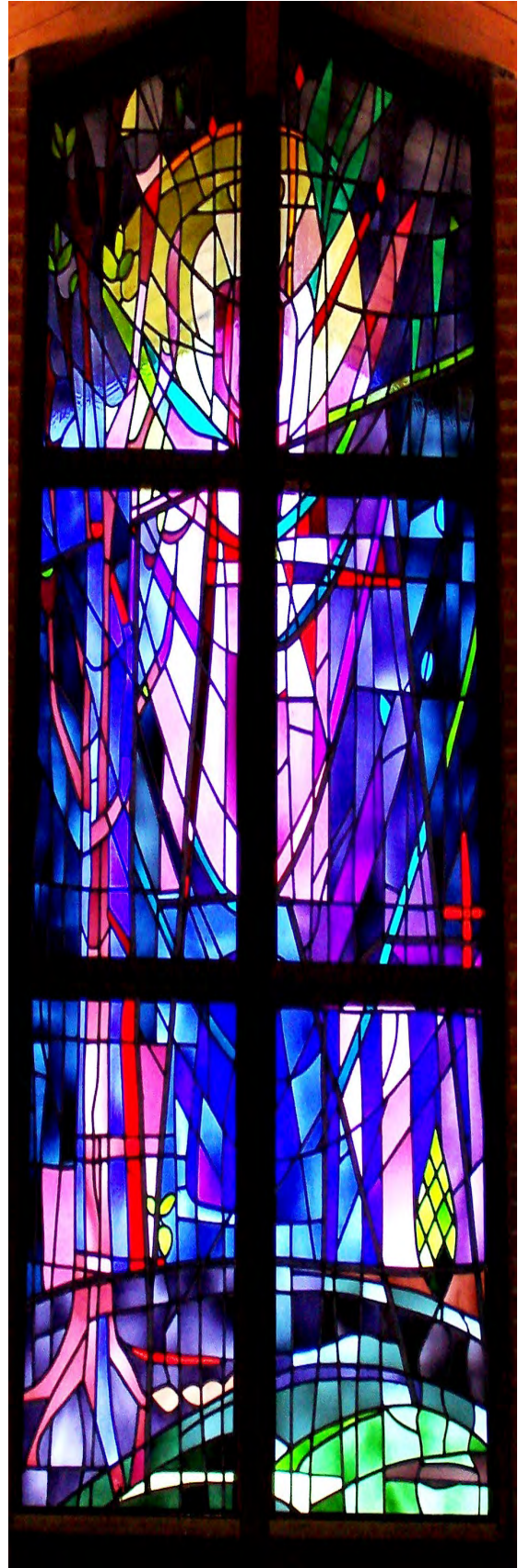
### West Wall

*“Eternal Life in and with Christ”*

This window symbolizes rebirth in the resurrected Lord. The dominant figure of this window is the resurrected Christ with arms uplifted with the wind of the Holy Spirit encircling the head. The resurrected Lord stands atop a depiction of the empty tomb.

In the left part of the window, from bottom to top, is a tree with sprouting leaves at the top, and a sprouting seed in the lower right hand panel—both symbolizing life and rebirth of the earth. In the top two right hand panels, there are various combinations of blue/green representing peacock feathers, which grow back more brilliantly than ever when old ones are shed. The bold vertical columns in the lower right panel depict the restored temple, another representation of the resurrected Christ.

The color green appears at various locations in this window, representing eternal life.





## Incarnation Window

### North Baptistry Wall

*“And the word was made flesh”*



This window depicts the incarnation (God among humanity in Christ) of Jesus and Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The dominant feature of this window is the representation of Christ preaching. Behind Jesus are the blowing winds of the Holy Spirit.

The mountain hillsides where Jesus preached to the multitude are seen in the lower two panels. At the very bottom of the window (hidden by the baptistry wall) is a river of life (baptism) with red fish swimming in it depicting Christ's followers as "fishers of men." This river continues through several of the windows on the East Wall.

# The Beatitude Windows

## Matthew 5:3-10

The beatitude windows are the narrow windows placed at regular intervals throughout the sanctuary.

***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”***

The lantern depicts the humble human spirit looking for light, represented by the cross, in the darkness.



***Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”***

The butterfly is a symbol of joy and the possibility of hope in the cocoon of hopelessness.



***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”***

The oxen yoke is a reminder of our submission to the divine plan of God.



***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”***

The open Bible symbolizes one way through which God fills those who truly desire goodness.



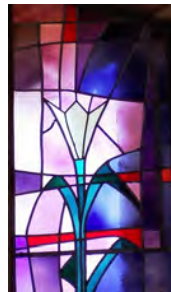
***“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”***

The pierced heart held by the comforting hand symbolizes mercy, kindness, unselfish service and good will.



***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”***

For centuries, the lily has represented the characteristic of purity, rooted and grounded in the earth, and nourished by the sun and rain.



***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the Sons of God.”***

Since ancient times, the dove and olive branch have served as symbols of peace.



***“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.”***



The sword represents martyrdom and suffering; the keys represent the promise of the kingdom to come.

## The Baptistry



The baptistry is a beautiful display of sienna travertine marble, covered with many broken pieces that make a large mosaic of crosses.

## The Suspended Cross

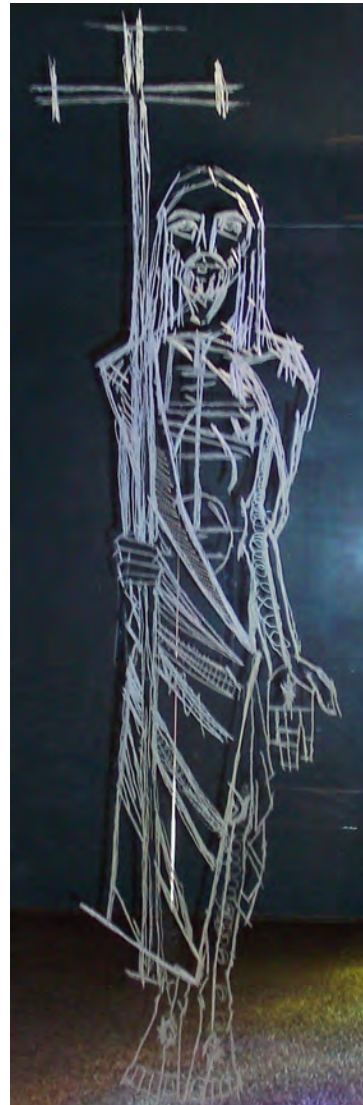
The suspended cross is neither grounded in the world or in heaven, but stands as a bridge between worldly history and eternal life with God.



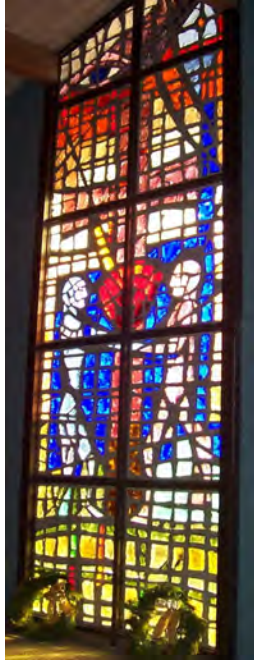
# The Crucifixion & Resurrection

## Etched Windows

The main entry doors to the sanctuary from the gathering area are flanked by two etched glass panels depicting the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.



# The Narthex



## **Reconciliation Window**

*“You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

God is symbolized by the Omnipotent Eye, the observer of all things; the dove represents the Holy Spirit. Two human figures, representing all persons, are grasping a heart in front of a rose-colored cross, both symbols of Christ’s suffering. Some see the red figure as a symbol of a chalice.

## **Worship Window**

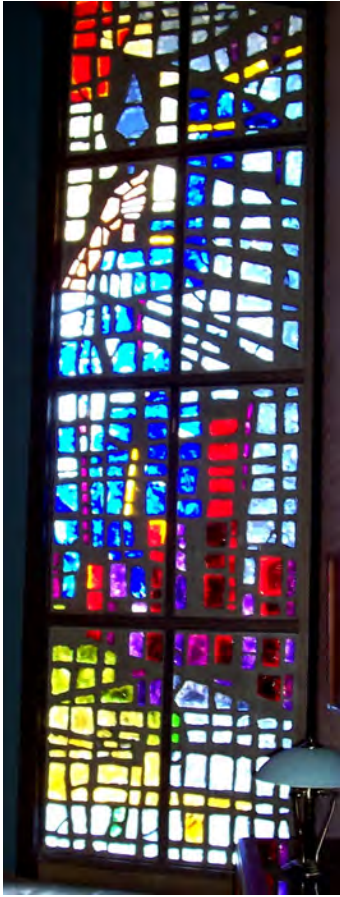
Converging lines at the top invite people to enter to worship.

The hands at the top are bathed in the light of God and are raised in adoration, seeking guidance from God.

Below is the symbol of the church-in-the-round, reminding us that we are not only in communion with God but in relation to each other as well.



## The Narthex—continued



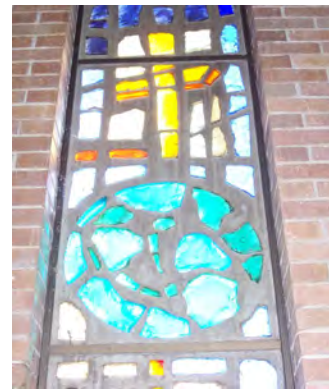
### Service and Witness to the World

Emerging and dispersing lines indicate that Christian teaching is to be practiced in all walks of life.

The hand with the trowel represents vocations through which we, sharing in the building of the city, make our personal witness to the community around us.

Beneath the hands are the various vertical shapes and sizes of tall buildings of a metropolis done in brilliant colors. Our city is the starting point for us to go out into the world to live and build a life in God's Holy Light.

### Enter to Worship—Depart to Serve



These windows represent our entering to worship and our departing to serve. The flower is a sign of preparation for worship, and the globe over the cross represents our concern for the mission of the church to the world.

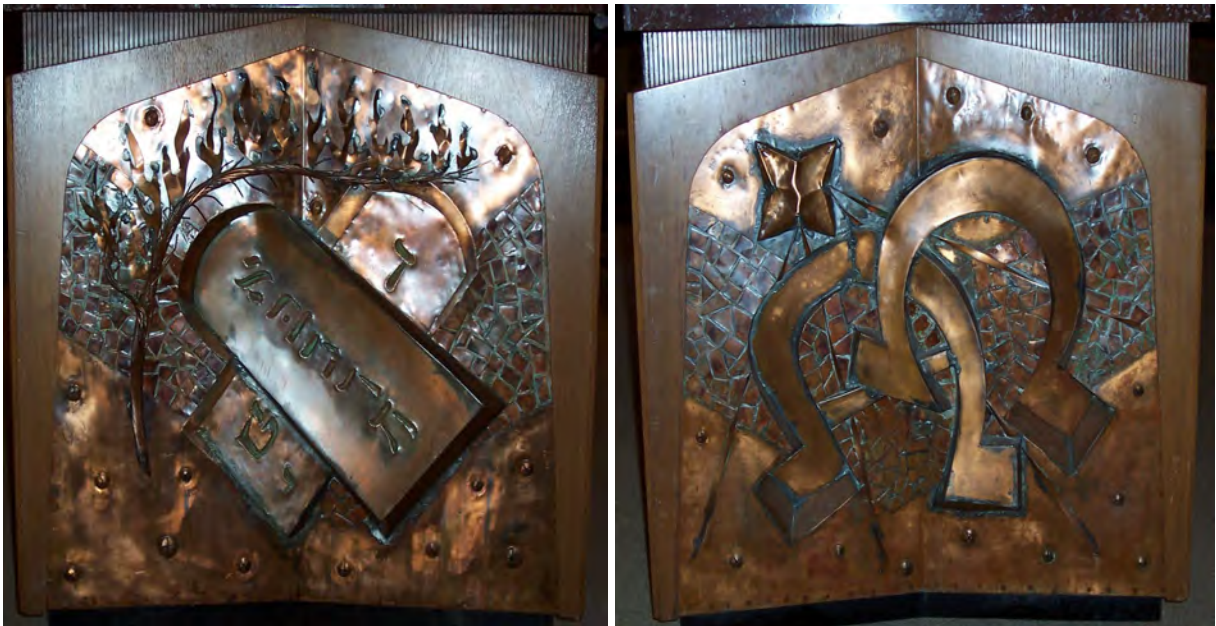
# The Communion Table

With the Study Committee's determination that communion was to be central in the sanctuary, the design, execution, and placement of the communion table received significant attention. The table made of walnut and marble was designed by the architect, William Benson. The copper panels on the four sides of the table were designed and executed by Heri Bartscht, Professor of Art at the University of Dallas.

The table is a gift to MHCC from Tom McNiel to honor his wife Maura McNiel.

The sides of the table are covered with panels representing each of the 12 apostles. Mr. Bartscht did much research to determine appropriate symbols for each of the 12 apostles, identifying each with their name and symbols to represent his vocation or an act during his lifetime with Jesus.

In commenting about the table, Mr. Bartscht said, "The treatment of the copper was exciting. It is the first time copper had been added, by soldering or welding, to achieve the raised three dimensional figures. I used the contemporary approach, occasionally using leftover pieces of materials for certain effects. In the Judas panel, there are places for 30 pieces of ancient silver coins to be added."



The two ends of the table are covered with one panel depicting the burning bush and the tablets of the Ten Commandments representing Moses, and one with the Star of Bethlehem and the Alpha and Omega, which are symbols of Jesus Christ, fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The 12 Apostle Panels of the Communion Table



**PETER**

**JAMES**

**Peter:** Keys of the Kingdom of God witnesses his testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the foundation of faith and key to the realm of God.

**James the Greater:** By tradition traveled to Spain, thus depicted by shells or scallops and a pilgrim's staff referring to long pilgrimages.



**JOHN**

**ANDREW**

**John:** a serpent arising out of a chalice following a story that there was an attempt to poison John, but the poison vanished in the form of a serpent.

**Andrew:** A fish confirming Andrew's role as a fisher man.



**THOMAS**

**JUDE**

**Thomas:** A carpenter's square and spear, first for his role in building the church in India and the spear for his martyrdom.

**Jude:** A boat with a cross-shaped mask reminding us of the tradition that he was a mission who travel long distances.





**PHILIP      BARTHOLOMEW**

**Philip:** A staff surmounted by a cross speaking to his role as a missionary journeys among barbarians in Asia where he spread Christianity.

**Bartholomew:** A sword, testimony to his martyrdom by knife or sword.



**SIMON      JAMES the Less**

**Simon:** A fish on a book by which we remember he was a fisher, a fisher of human beings through the Gospel.

**James the Less:** A saw speaks to his martyrdom by a crowd when he was ninety-six years old.



**MATTHEW      JUDAS**

**Matthew:** The tax collector symbol is an ax with a bag of coins, interestingly in this rendition, the coins are U.S. minted.

**Judas:** Because of his betraying Jesus, his symbol is a slate with slots for 30 coins where ancient coins were to be added.

# The Pulpit

The Founders' Pulpit is a tribute to the first pastor, Dr. Thomas Ray Bristol, 1953—1966. The pulpit was dedicated:

*For the training of youth and building of character  
For the giving of hope and courage to all human hearts  
For the teaching of morality, justice, and righteousness*

*For the proclamation of comfort for those who mourn  
For the strength to those who are tempted  
For help in right living  
For the salvation of all people*

*For the preaching of the world-wide mission of Jesus  
For the encouragement of social righteousness and building of  
human brotherhood  
For the proclamation of that Christian unity which sees beneath  
all formal differences a bond of fellowship and endeavors to  
keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*



## Memorial Triptych—Narthex Wall

The memorial triptych houses five hundred spaces for the names of all MHCC church members who die. This beautiful art form will help us remember them with love. In the tradition of such memorials for most of history, the material used is bronze, cast as it has been from earliest times in a sand mold, then finished by hand.

The tree has been a meaningful symbol of the life of Midway Hills for several years.

On the front of the closed triptych is a Biblical statement representing the tree of knowledge, the cross, and the tree of life eternal.

The center tree is the cross on which the new creation as revealed in Jesus Christ is obedient unto death and is resurrected.

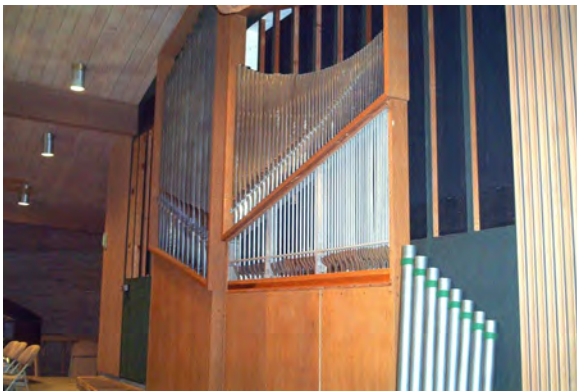
The tree of life eternal is available to all people.

These three trees express our journey of faith from our creation through our struggle with obedience and death, to our faith in resurrection.

A pipe organ is an instrument which primary purpose is to glorify God, to sing praises in Jesus' name, and to unify people in song. Music has the power to erase all distractions from the outside world and transform the individual's focus toward a worshipful experience. A full range of shared experiences: *Reflection, Grief, Exaltation, Penitence, Joy, Prayer and Communion*. No other instrument has such a broad palette to portray each of these experiences as the King of Instruments.



# The McManis Organ

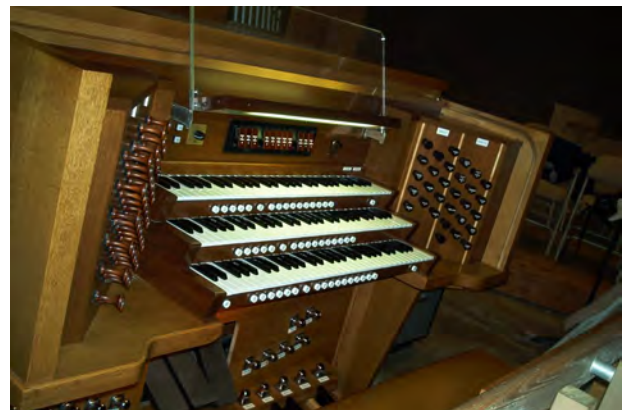


A pipe organ is made of four groups of pipes: The reeds which produce brilliant horns, the principals which act as a foundation, the strings that provide richness, and the flutes which add much of the beauty. These pipes are separated into divisions, each with its own stop list and each controlled by a separate keyboard: the **great**, the **swell**, the **positiv**, and the **pedal**. Both the **swell** and the **positiv** are inside their own chamber, with shades that control the color and volume.

The organ at Midway Hills (as is every organ project) was built with much planning, many opinions, and the quest for the right instrument as well as a search for the monies to fund it. The plan for an electronic instrument was put aside when Gene Ellsworth came on board in 1965, and the McManis Organ Company of Kansas City had a signed contract in 1967 to the tune of \$17,500 for the first stage of the organ. This included the **great**, the **swell**, and the **pedal** organ with plans for the **positiv** to be added when more funds became available.

In 1972, the Krummhorn (61 reed pipes) was the first rank of pipes added to the **positiv**, and the cost of this project was \$2,750. In 1974 the rest of the **positiv** pipe work was added, the Dulzian (61 reed pipes) was added to the **swell**, and 32 Quintaton pipes (a low flute stop) was added to the **pedal**. These enhancements were at a cost of \$24,500 all of which were performed by Charles McManis. This brings the total cost of installation to \$39,750. There are now 22 ranks with a total of 1,375 pipes.

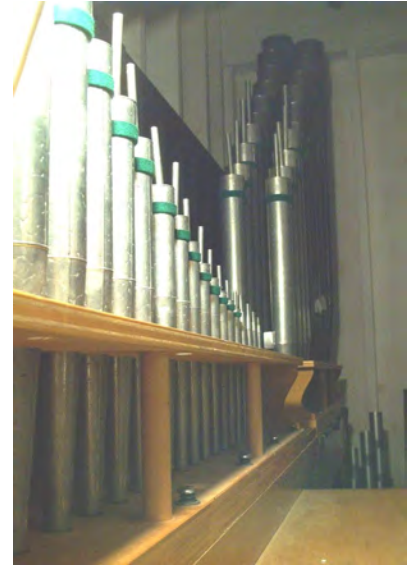
In 1991 under the supervision of Danny Keller, a contract was signed with the Range Organ Company in Mesquite TX for new console with 8 levels of memories, 65 draw stop knobs, and a complete capture and piston system at the cost of \$49,500. Danny designed the placement of the drawknobs, and the contract ensured the console matched the architecture of the sanctuary.





The following is a prayer that Frank Mabee shared on November 16, 1975 at a dedication recital performed by Dr. Ellsworth.

His prayer is still being answered.



Our God and Father, whom the generations have worshipped with sounds of praises, be pleased to accept this organ as an instrument of praise. Grant that its music, with accompanying song, may come as a blessed benediction upon all who worship here. May this organ become undying music in the world as its notes of cheer, comfort, communion, and courage are modulated into human lives for daily task and noble service. To all organists who shall sound its notes, to all choirs that shall sing to its accompaniment, to all worshipers who shall be lifted God-ward by its voice, and to all who enter into this house of God and are aided and encouraged in their praise of God and commitment to His Son. Amen.

### Stop List for the McManis Organ

<u>Pedal</u>
Cornet 32
Sub Bass 16
Quintaton 16
Quinte 10-2/3
Principal 8
Gedeckt 8
Gemshorn 8
Octave 4
Flute 4
Flute 2
Mixture III

<u>Swell</u>
Flute 8
Gemshorn 8
Gemshorn Celeste 8
Flute 4
Gemshorn 4
Gemshorn 2
Quinte 1-1/3
Gemshorn 1
Sharff III
Dulzian 16
Hautbois 8

<u>Great</u>
Gemshorn 16
Principal 16
Chimney Flute 8
Gemshorn 8
Octave 4
Chimney Flute 4
Quinte 2-2/3
Octave 2
Mixture III
Scharff III
Trumpet 8

<u>Positiv</u>
Gedeckt 8
Dulciana 8
Unda Maris 8
Conical Flute 4
Nazard 2-2/3
Principal 2
Tierce 1-3/5
Cymbal III
Krummhorn 8
Tremolo
Zimbelstern

## **In Appreciation**

Today, members of Midway Hills Christian Church worship and commune with God and each other in a beautiful sanctuary with sunlight streaming through magnificent stained glass windows and hear the spoken word and share communion under a beautiful cross. We share beautiful music, and sometimes focus on the beautiful baptistery and its cleansing waters of life.

This worshipful setting was made possible by the generous gifts of many people. We give our special thanks to those many members, both living and dead, who made sacrifices through the years, in order to provide to us such a beautiful, meaningful building, which has been used throughout the years as a place of learning, fellowship, and worship for many, many men, women, and children.

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we remember our history, and the significant contributions that MHCC and its members have made to the Dallas community. We also celebrate the challenges of the present and look forward with anticipation and excitement to the opportunities of the future.

*Thanks be to GOD!*