



Artwork: Karen & Dan Velasco

Angel of the Church

By LeeAnne Steenhoek

I am because You Are. I am because We Are. Ubuntu is a word from the Zulu of South Africa. It's a human quality that includes the essential human virtues; Compassion and humanity. Asked to find the Angel of the church for my spiritual director program, I researched and interviewed staff and a handful of church members. The Angel of First Church is LOVE.

If the physical building of First Church crumbled it would be debilitating. This church is stunning, even awe-inspiring but the bonds of this church are forged on Faith and Fellowship, experiencing God together.

Using the letters in LOVE I'll articulate what I believe to be First Church's Angel, The Angel of LOVE.

L

L is for Laughter, Light, Learning Life and Love. This L is made from textured stained glass to honor Loved ones taken too soon, loved ones living in our hearts. L is our longing to be whole and heal. Little ones to Him Belong. L is also for the Lyre. King David was a man after God's own heart. David made mistakes and we do too. David wrote many songs for God on his Lyre with beautiful lyrical poetry in the Psalms. God forgave David and God forgives us. We forgive each other in Grace. Music is a beautiful way to worship and Experience God, Honor God. *Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing Praise.* Psalm 98:4. Our organ, bells and vocalists are transcendental, helping us experience God.

O

O is for Omega. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Magnum Opus, Master Work. As part of Creation, we are God's Master Work, made in God's image. The dome is for worshipers to EXPERIENCE God and represents being in relationship with our Creator bringing the heavens to us. The Sanctuary, the dome, the circular rim of the rose window is the fulcrum between heaven and Earth. The Circle of Life; the Spiral is within the dome. Communion with God. God's omniscience. The all-seeing eye. God's omnipotent; God is all-powerful. God is Immutable; not changeable. God is immortal; God does not die. God can only be experienced! History: This dome was built and dedicated in 1896, the 11th iteration of this building. The dome and Rose window are unique. The church was once the municipal or government center. The dome and sanctuary structure support transformative musical experience as we worship.

V

V Is for Veneration. We honor and respect God. This V is also a Fulcrum just beneath the floating Cross. Jesus is our Gateway to knowing the Way. Jesus calls himself the Way, the Truth and the Light. Our cross has Habakkuk 2:20, *In his Holy temple let all the Earth be silent.* The cross appears to float above the altar and the pulpit representing God's transcendence shrouded in Mystery. V is also for Volunteers, the backbone of First Church.

E

E is for Emmanuel. God with us. The Holy Spirit guides us. RUAH!!! God shows up as roaring wind or a still, small voice. We are transformed through the fires of Pentecost, the Covenants of Confirmation, Baptism. E is also for Enter and Exit. When we receive the Benediction, the pastor blesses us and we Enter our Mission Field. Our Worship ends and Our Service Begins. We nurture and care for humankind and all of Creation with the help of God. When we return to the sanctuary, we Enter into an Experience with our Living God. Emmanuel. As Katherine Hankey's hymn goes, *I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, because I know tis true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.*