



Reflections on Stained Glass

Inspiration

Imagination

Interpretation

Water into Wine

The stained glass window entitled 'Water into Wine' by Susan Bradbury of Stained Glass Design Partnership, was installed in West Kilbride Church, as a part of the restoration and complete adaptation of the old building of St Andrews Church in West Kilbride (a former Free Church Building).

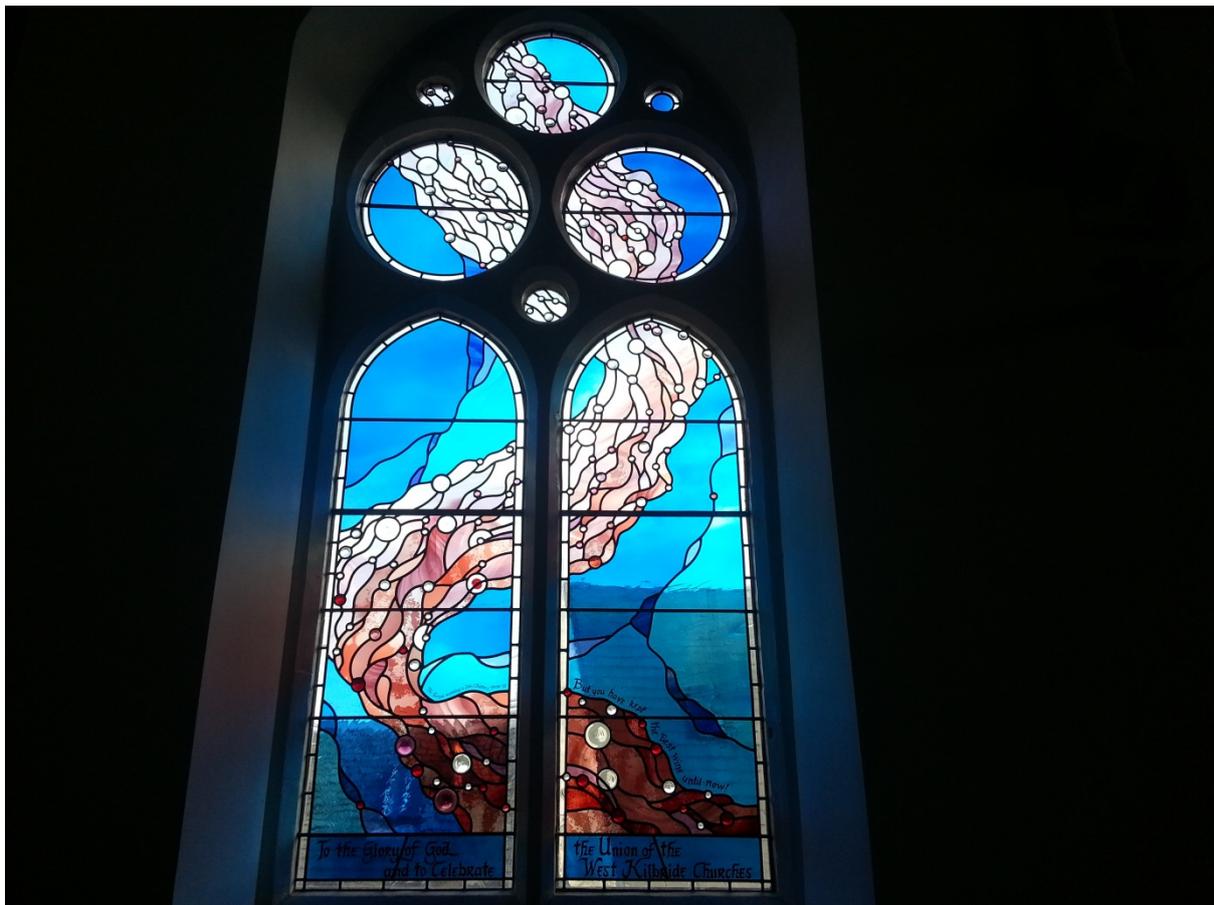
The symbolism of the window is obvious, as the clear and pure water is shown moving in a dynamic manner to become the rich colour of merlot or burgundy wine. It recalls the incident of Cana in Galilee recorded by John's Gospel, as the first of the Seven Signs which can be seen as demonstrating the true nature and character of Jesus of Nazareth. This reading is often associated with marriage ceremonies and perhaps here suggest the marriage of two congregations becoming one, in witness, worship and mission.

The dynamic flow may be important to recognise. The coming together of congregations to become a single living lively unit of witness is not usually or normally achieved without movement of ideas, conceptions, challenging traditions and costly changes in attitude and practices. It is often a painful process and cannot be accomplish overnight.

The window could also be interpreted as symbolising the process of birth. Blood biblically is a symbol of the life force, granted to humans and animals by God. Birth is a time of joy, but it does not come without serious adjustment and change.

There may also be an echo here of the thirst of Jesus on the cross, longing for water, and instead receiving of sponge soaked in vinegar. There are layers of the biblical narrative, and some highlight pain and suffering while also pointing to new life and opportunities. Water is essential for human life, and nature provides it, certainly in the Scottish context. Our world and our environment are shaped by the lochs and rivers which are seen as so characteristic of Scotland.

The richness of the flowing wine may be perceived as blood, as well as wine, and the costliness of sacrifice and the life giving force of God's grace. God does not provide water alone, but grapes and wine, which enriches human life at a physical level, and in a spiritual manner, represents and communicates the power of self-giving love in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pain and sacrifice are also there, in the story of the crucifixion, with the blood of Jesus pouring from his wounds at the Crucifixion. The hymn 'When I survey the wondrous Cross' captures this in the line 'Sorrow and love flow mingled down'. The richness of this verse as with the image suggests that there may be many more layers to uncover in this modern representation of an all so familiar story of the Gospel.



Window: Water into Wine

Location: West Kilbride Church

Artist: Susan Bradbury of Stained Glass Design Partnership

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Nigel Robb for providing us with this material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.