



CONTEMPLATING LENT A journey with artist Sophie Hacker

Week One – Tuesday 23 February

This week Sophie discusses the first stained glass window she made which is located in the church of St John the Baptist, Hampshire.

The window is crowned by a golden sun which links the top tracery and the two lights. The sun is made up of thorn shapes, and it's at once both the sun SUN which gives us warmth and light, and the son SON symbolised by the crown of thorns. The son is then reflected in a winding river which moves between the two lights, from top right, filling much of the right hand side, before flowing out at the bottom left. The

reflected thorns remind us of the moment of Christ's own baptism in the waters of the river Jordan. The presence of the spirit is represented in the burning bush to right of the river, aflame with the holiness of God.

In the stonework of the south door, there's a simple carved outline of a hand, placed exactly where you might rest your hand when leaving - it's thought that this might have been used by worshippers to rededicate the week ahead to God.

I incorporated this unusual bit of mediaeval graffiti into my window, placing the hand in the middle of the left light. The fingertips brush the waters of the river, offering a helping hand to us, the faithful, as we live out our own baptism, and even as we cross the waters between life and death. The hand is marked by a wound - a small diamond-shaped piece of uncoloured glass. The fields and villages beyond can be easily seen through this little shard - reminding us that creation's been redeemed and healed through the cross.

To the right of the hand, a belly of land swells out to the river. And I meant it to BE a belly. 'For the creation waits with eager longing for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God'. The earth is literally pregnant with expectation.

There are four distinct areas of land

- the belly
- the very bottom right hand corner
- a bluish area between the fingers
- and an area above, where it meets the sky

Each part has been treated slightly differently in paint, evoking either fields, pebbles, sand or grasses. They're the 'four corners of the world' - the message of redemption is universal.

In the sky, I've scratched through the paint to indicate wing-like shapes. They're angels - bursting out as the heavens are opened when Jesus came up out of the water at his own baptism.

This window is on the north wall of the church, directly opposite the south porch, and the font sits right next to the door, representing the symbolic entrance into the life of the church through baptism. The meanings in the window offer a rich visual language to illustrate the significance and importance of this sacrament. As our eyes travel up the window, we're taken on a symbolic journey of Christ's ministry from his baptism through to his death and crowned finally with his glorious resurrection.