A PILGRIM SONG



The new stained glass window for the Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle is underway, and will be installed in 2027 on the north-west side of the Nave. I am pleased to share some background information on the window, and the thoughts and inspiration behind the design.

The window imagery is inspired by Psalm 133, which is attributed to King David. It is one of the Pilgrim Songs or Songs of Ascent - a title given to the 15 Psalms 120-134. The city of Jerusalem is on a hilltop and pilgrims traveling there for Jewish festivals traditionally sang these songs on the "ascent" to the city. Many biblical scholars believe the Pilgrim Songs were first sung at the dedication of Solomon's temple.

Psalm 133 is a hymn in praise of unity among the people of God. To pilgrims coming from all corners of the world, the first verse was a reminder that whatever their differences, they were all God's people: "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The second and third verses use images celebrating a blessing under God: Aaron (brother of Moses) receiving the Holy Oil and the life-giving dew from Mount Hermon to the arid lands below.

I began the design process by reading and re-reading Psalm 133 while considering the sanctuary, the light, the congregation, surrounding artwork, and frame and tracery for the new window. The prominent circles at the top of the tracery seemed to fit well as a symbol of unity, and thus circles became a unifying shape in the window.

The resulting design is an interpretation of the Psalm, created in a manner sensitive to the Arts & Crafts architectural style of the church. This is expressed through forms from nature (tree, leaves, fruit) symbolic geometry, ornament, texture and natural colouration. While the window faces north, there is a lovely, warm luminosity reflected from the courtyard's walls. The technique used to make the window will be the traditional leaded method, including glass painting, sandblasting and silver-stain. The glass itself is primarily antique (hand-blown), imported from Germany. A kiln-formed textured blue glass may be created especially for the water/ sea / sky area.

In the lower section of the window Aaron cradles a globe in his right hand. His left hand is placed over his heart in a loving, compassionate gesture. The globe, the hand and the heart all speak to our common humanity and shared destiny. They remind us that even in our diversity, we all belong to God. Aaron's gaze invites us to reflect deeply on our spiritual life.

Aaron's cloak is a desert colour – red ochre – with black, white, and amber ornaments. Encircling the figure is the Tree of Life, which stands in the Heavenly Jerusalem as described in Revelations: "On either side of the river is the Tree of Life …. and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

The blue panels to the left and right of the figure contain the natural elements of water, sea and sky. At the base of the panels, the musical score (Anglican Psalter) for Psalm 133 is shown along with the inscription from the first line of the Psalm.

In the upper panel, the Tree of Life completes its circle and arcs over the top of the window. In the distance, the landscape of Mount Hermon is seen. Above the mountains, light sweeps through the tracery shapes and starry skies.

Sarah Hall, September 2026