

ALL SAINTS CHURCH PAVEMENT, YORK

Commemorative Window to those who served in Afghanistan – North Nave Aisle (1.8m x 3.0m) 2015

The City of York Afghanistan Commemorative Appeal was launched by The York Press in 2011 and supported by thousands of readers and other residents from across the city. I was then asked by The Press, following publicity about my window for the RAF Club in London, to create a lasting memorial to those who have sacrificed their lives in combat, in particular three York servicemen who died in the Afghan conflict. I met with the families of these three men several times while working on the design, and was inspired by their desire for peace and their sons' commitment to their country and their comrades.

The main focus of the window is the traditional symbol of peace in the form of a dove, which is also the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Beneath the dove is a winding pavement, made from cobbles or sets; a reference to the Church of All Saints Pavement, which stands on one of the earliest paved streets in York. In the distance can be seen a glimpse of the Heavenly City, the final resting place of all our journeys.

Coloured lines in the pavement refer to the three Regiments which have lost men serving in Afghanistan: the Royal Dragoon Guards (maroon, gold and green), the 40th Regiment Royal Artillery (red and blue) and the Royal Marines (blue, red, green and yellow).

The three York servicemen are represented as individual stones, proudly displaying their regimental badges, and flying upwards towards the dove and the Heavenly City. The yellow colour beneath the stones reminds us of the sun and desert earth of Afghanistan. On the sides of the cobbles are the names and ranks of the three men: Lance Bombardier Matthew Hatton, Trooper Ashley David Smith and Marine David Hart.

The pavement spirals up from the ground towards the Heavenly City, with the focus of the underlying geometry at the meeting point between the pavement and the symbol of the Holy Spirit – the intersection of Earth and Heaven. The sapphire blue background at the top of the window is a reference to the appearance of the Divine Being on Mount Sinai: "they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone" [Exodus 24:10].

In the Book of Esther the king's palace has "a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble" [Esther 1:6]. In the Heavenly City itself, "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" [Revelation 21:21], suggesting glass as an appropriate medium for this memorial. These biblical references emphasise the precious nature of each individual stone within the pavement, here representing the precious lives of each service man and woman.

That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:15)

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose, so we also believe that God will bring with Him those who have died (1 Thessalonians 4:14)

The memorial inscription reads:

THIS WINDOW IS DEDICATED TO THE GLORY OF
GOD
TO THE MEMORY OF ALL THOSE FROM YORK
WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN THE CAUSE OF
PEACE
AND OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN AFGHANISTAN 2001-2014

At the bottom left of the window, below the inscription, grows a single White Rose of Yorkshire. The White Rose is surrounded by an array of poppies, the universal symbol of remembrance of the fallen. These poppies, placed along the pavement towards the Heavenly City, remind us that the sacrifice of all our servicemen and women in the service of their country should not be forgotten. Whilst their precious earthly lives were lost, they were given so that others might have peace – as Christ was sacrificed on the Cross for the salvation and redemption of all.



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