

ST MARY'S CHURCH

SOPWORTH, WILTSHIRE

Creation; Memorial window for Ned Sells –
North Nave Aisle (0.4m x 1.0m) 2018

Presented at the 'Prince and Patron' exhibition, Buckingham Palace 2018

This window is a celebration of creation in all its matchless diversity and of a young life lived to the full yet still filled with possibilities. Ned Sells spent his final months doing rewarding community service in Kenya and Tanzania, and the design deliberately makes reference to the wildlife of East Africa and the sea creatures of its tropical coast.

This design is composed as a series of radiating concentric circles, each representing one of the seven days as described in the Book of Genesis, and underlining God's role as divine geometer and as architect of the universe.

At the heart of the window, a rich orb of intense red and blue glass represents the first moment of creation when the spirit of God, hovering over the face of the waters, speaks light into existence, separates the light from the dark, and names them both.

This is surrounded by the second circle, representing the creation of the sky to divide those waters which are *under the firmament* from the waters in the atmosphere. The clouds and waters are shown divided into two, using formalised conventions found widely in European mediaeval glass and in eastern artistic traditions.

On the third day, God gathers the waters into the oceans and seas, and creates dry land. The land is then covered with grasses, herbs, trees and all plants, bearing seeds to enable it to propagate and be fruitful. This is represented by a circle of graceful, paired acacia trees, which are of practical and symbolic significance in the Bible, and native to East Africa where Ned will have known them.

On the fourth day, the circle bursts beyond the confines of the window, as creation expands beyond the bounds of earth. The sun and moon are brought into being – the *greater light to rule the day the lesser light to rule the night*, and thus a reference back to the first day – and fill the upper and lower parts of the design. The moon is garlanded with a shining, star-filled heaven.

Silhouetted against the light of the sun and moon are the birds of the air and the *abundance of living creatures* which fill the waters, created on the fifth day. The fish identifiable in the window include marlin and tuna, swordfish and barracuda, and the birds include Fischer's lovebird and Hartlaub's turaco, pink-backed pelican, ashy starling and others native to East Africa.

On the sixth day all those *creeping things and beasts of the earth* which live on dry land are created, and a sample of familiar animals can be seen crossing the base of the window – including a warthog and the family dachshund, Crumb. On the same day God creates man and woman, instructing them *to be fruitful and multiply, to have dominion over ... every living thing*, and to benefit from every herb and fruit. Seen at the top of the window, against the light of the sun, man sits at his ease and woman reaches upwards for fruit and nourishment.

The final day is represented by the calm bands of deep blue which fill the head and base of the window. On the seventh day God *ended his work*, sanctified the day, *and then He rested*.

The window was shown in the 'Prince and Patron' exhibition celebrating the 70th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace, 2018.

