

The sculpture at the baptismal font

This installation, consisting of “flags” made of luminescent fabric, symbols of baptism – the dove, the sea shell and the star – and ribbons, shows forth the baptismal font as the epicenter of the Epiphany project. Epiphany is the season of mission in the church; as Jesus’ ministry to the world began with his baptism by John at the river Jordan, so does our baptism begin our ministries. In the surrounding space is a “work in progress” -- various displays that come and go -- images, information, projects, pictures of people in their daily life and work.

This work of art originated in a series of conversations among four people in our community: Julia Talcott, Christopher Rao, Linda Clark and Doug Lloyd. We began with the image of the Tibetan prayer flags – pieces of cloth on poles or strings that dot villages, back yards and paths all over the world. On these flags are religious symbols and prayers. As the wind moves through the flags the prayers go out into the world.

Working with this general idea we began a dialogue with the space. We picked up the triangle as a dominant geometric figure, found on the font itself, in the top of the font, in the tracery in the organ case. The font itself has three sides to symbolize the Trinity. Another major aspect of our planning was the palette of colors. It was taken from the windows that overlook the font. We analyzed the light coming through the windows and then went shopping for the fabric, bringing back remnants and draping them in the space, choosing some colors and timbres and discarding others.

From there, we began to deal with the problem of installing this triangle of cloth over the font. We had hoped to suspend it from the ceiling but “nixed” that possibility because of cost. Doug and Julia worked out the present construction –dowels, wire filament, bolts and screw eyes creating an isosceles triangle positioned over the font.

During the week leading up to Byron Rushing’s arrival on January 11th, we began the project of installation, cutting the cloth, measuring distances, sewing the fabric sleeve that supports the flags and contains the symbols, putting it up and taking it down because it wasn’t right, cutting more fabric, ironing it, changing our ideas when the structure sagged, et cetera.

The bright red ribbons were the last to be added. They provide strings for people to add prayers. Round circles of paper are close by. Leave your prayer in the basket and someone will staple it to the sculpture. As people pass by the font, the prayer ribbons move with them, sending the prayers into the community and the world.