



**COME, LET US WORSHIP**

Sensing the  
Divine in a  
**Special Space**

**Vienna Baptist Church**  
Vienna, Virginia



A people of faith on the journey of life



## Come, Let Us Worship

Welcome to the Worship Room, where we the people of Vienna Baptist Church gather to experience God's presence among us. Since we believe worship is at the heart of the relationship we have with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we created this space to invoke the human-divine connection that confirms us as the people of God in our time.

Here we are surrounded not only by those who worship with us, but also by beautiful and meaningful symbols that remind us of the Christian faith we share and our unique journey as a congregation. Here together we encounter the living God, sing our praises, offer our prayers, receive wisdom from the Word, experience the Lord's Supper, baptize new Christians, and become equipped to go forth in ministry.

In these pages we share the symbolism and stories manifested in the physical space before you, in hopes that your worship with us will be even more meaningful.

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Page 2, Antonio Iannalfi, Baptistery of St. John, Florence

Page 9, Turner D. Bridgforth

Pages 10-11, courtesy of Vienna Baptist Church

All others, Scott Suchman, 2005



## Why the Octagonal Shape?

The physical facilities a congregation selects to serve as its face to the community reveal the group's sense of identity, and the unusual octagonal shape of Vienna Baptist Church's Worship Room resonates with a long tradition here of doing things a little differently (see history on pages 10 and 11).

Founded in 1957, by the 1980s the congregation had outgrown its original worship space. Seeing itself as a regional church drawing from suburbs beyond the Vienna community, VBC took the opportunity to reimagine the space it needed not just for worship, but also for education, fellowship, drama, and mission efforts. Of all the new construction and renovation, the most challenging consideration was what the new worship space should look like.

What was the right design? A majority of church sanctuaries through the years have been rectangular: a basilica (nave with parallel aisles); or a basilica with transept, in the shape of a cross—the plan of VBC's earlier worship room.

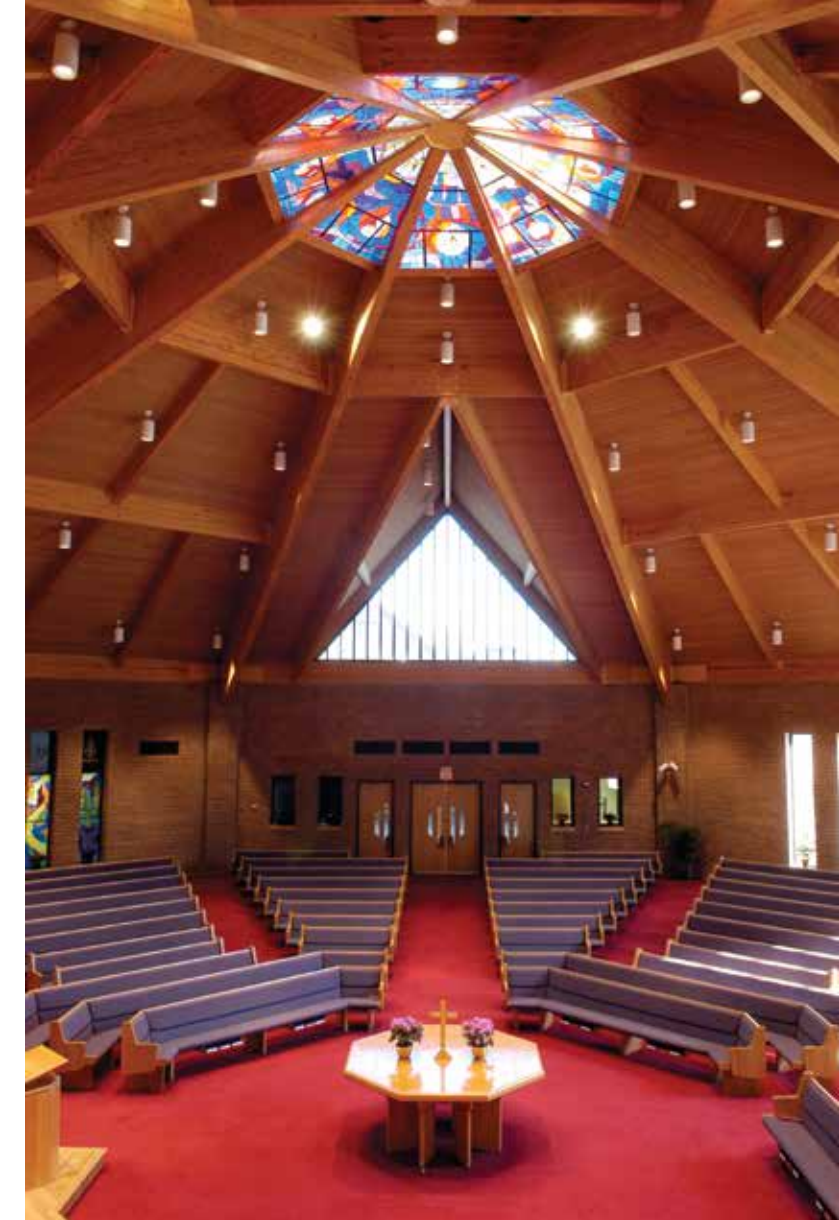
Should VBC build a larger version of the transept? Should it adopt a popular trend at the time, that of a large multipurpose room that could be reconfigured for other activities as well as worship? Or what about worshipping in the round? Was there any shape that could be considered distinctively and historically Baptist?



At just that time, a group of Vienna Baptist pilgrims traveled to Europe for the 1984 anniversary year of the Oberammergau Passion Play. While touring the Duomo cathedral in Florence, Italy, Pastor Lawrence E. "Larry" Matthews and church member and architect William E. "Will" Daniels noticed a separate small building off to the side.

This free-standing structure was the Baptistery of Saint John, one of the oldest buildings in the city (see photo opposite). It was built in the 11th century in the shape of an octagon and used for baptism by immersion for all Florentines. VBC leaders learned that since early Christian times, the octagon had been a common shape associated with baptism, because the number eight traditionally represented regeneration or resurrection.

Soon Vienna Baptist Church had adopted the octagon for its Worship Room—based on the first uniquely Christian architecture, designed specifically for baptism by immersion.





## A Central Focus to Worship

In shape, form, and artistic elements, the Worship Room reflects the VBC congregation's belief that worship is a dynamic act in which both clergy and congregation participate, guided by the central and empowering presence of God.

The focal point in the room is the communion table, with congregational seating radiating outwardly around it, allowing us to see all those we are worshipping with. The slightly elevated choir loft, removed from its traditional axis location, is oriented toward the communion table in the same manner as the rest of the congregation. This placement reflects the congregation's belief that the choir is part of one corporate body and not a performance group.

The pulpit and baptistery face are located, on axis, beneath a spectacular stained glass Cross Window, announcing the church's emphasis on proclamation of the Word and the Baptist ordinance of believer's baptism.

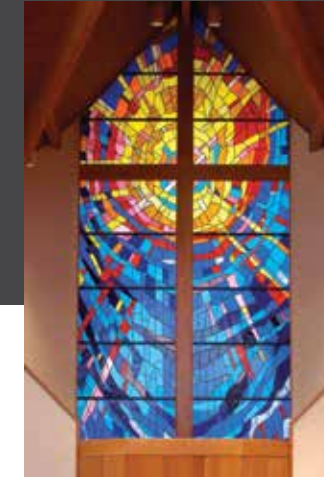
Thus, in a direct line from the main entrance a worshipper encounters the central practices of the congregation: the Lord's Supper at the table, the proclamation of God's Word from the pulpit, and the individual response to God's call through baptism.

The congregation enters from and departs the Worship Room into a large octagonal Foyer, where there is plenty of space for the fellowship that binds us together.

## Symbols in Stained Glass

Stained glass windows in medieval cathedrals were not just beautiful; they were educational, since they could tell stories from the Bible in pictures for a nonliterate population.

The stained glass windows in the VBC Worship Room likewise carry messages about what is important to this congregation.



### THE CROSS WINDOW

Just as VBC's original 1957 Worship Room had cross windows at each end, so the focal point of the current Worship Room is a large stained glass Cross Window. With dramatic and dynamic design, it calls to mind the living Christ—full of energy and light in the center that moves gradually outward toward the darker areas, just as the love of God reaches out to the darkness of the world.



### THE SPIRIT WINDOW

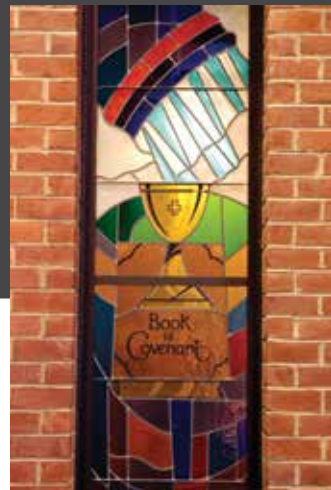
Directly above the communion table at the center of the room is the Spirit Window, recalling the Trinity and suggesting God's presence through the Holy Spirit in every act of worship. This deliberately central placement says that Vienna Baptist Church is a congregation that gathers with the living Christ at the table, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Shown in the design are 12 flames, representing the 12 disciples who received the Spirit as tongues of fire at Pentecost.





## The Covenant Windows

A series of windows along the north side of the Worship Room depicts important elements of the VBC covenant, which can be found on the inside back cover after page 12. These windows, along with the central Cross Window and the Spirit Window, were designed and fabricated by Ronald Neill Dixon, formerly of Shenandoah Studios of Stained Glass Inc., Front Royal, Virginia.

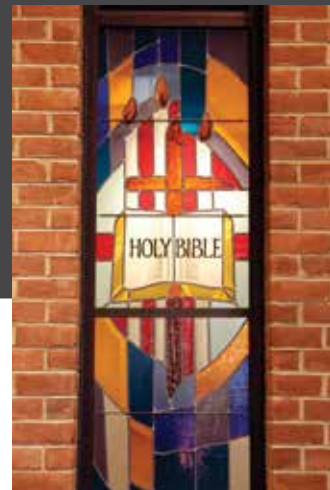


### COVENANT WINDOW

*Rainbow:* This represents God's original covenant through Noah, the shaft of light heralding God's faithfulness to all generations.

*Chalice:* The cup from the Lord's Supper symbolizes God's New Covenant through Jesus, the fulfilled promise of hope and life.

*Book of Covenant:* VBC's own covenant represents the commitments that bind the congregation together in worship, fellowship, and ministry.

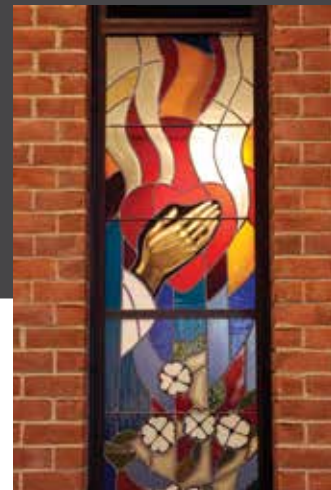


### WORSHIP WINDOW

*Bible:* Within the biblical library, we encounter God's acts of salvation in history. God's initiative is the basis of our worship.

*Cross:* The central symbol of Christian faith, the cross conveys the message of God's redeeming love made flesh in Jesus the Christ.

*Candles:* These are symbols of the worship we offer in response to God's grace toward us, and presence with us.

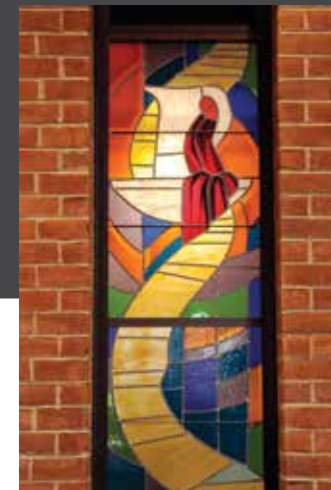


### LOVE WINDOW

*Heart:* The traditional symbol of love represents our covenant commitment to live in love and forgiveness with each other.

*Hand:* The hand reminds us that love must be translated into deeds of service and ministry.

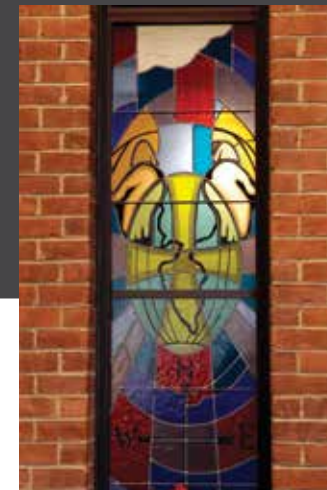
*Dogwood Blossoms:* This symbol of the Commonwealth of Virginia underlines the fact that deeds of love begin right where we live.



### STEWARDSHIP WINDOW

*Road:* The road symbolizes our response to our Christian calling (vocation) throughout our lifelong Christian pilgrimage. The journey is both an inward growth in faith and an outward effort to live as faithful stewards.

*Basin, Pitcher, and Towel:* These symbolize the Christian life as a life of service, as we offer who we are and what we possess to be used to communicate God's love to others.



### MISSION WINDOW

*Outstretched Hands:* These remind us of God's love for all of creation, and that we are to communicate blessing through our hands as we proclaim the Gospel "through words and deeds."

*Globe and Cross:* Our commitment as a congregation is to share this good news with our neighbors and provide resources for others to share the Gospel beyond where we can go.

*Four Points of the Compass:* Such sharing goes forth in all directions, beginning where we are and extending throughout the world.



## Other Artistic Elements

### WOOD AND METAL FURNISHINGS

Wood furnishings of oak evoke the symbolism of the wind of the Holy Spirit moving over the waters. The wood furnishings include the baptistery face, pulpit, pulpit chairs, communion table, lectern, display pedestals, and doors. Each pair of cast bronze handles on the doors from the Foyer to the Worship Room and Parlor forms an octagon overlaid with a cross. All these were custom designed and executed on commission to Vienna Baptist Church by the renowned Southwest artist and sculptor, Federico Armijo, of Armijo Architectural Elements, Albuquerque, New Mexico.



### PIPE ORGAN

The two-manual 27-rank pipe organ was custom-designed for the Worship Room by Randall Dyer and Associates, of Jefferson City, Tennessee. The instrument is a modern version of organs of classical design, both tonally and visually. The selection of stops is intended not only for accompaniment of congregational and choral song, but also for playing the literature of the instrument.

Ideally located behind the choir and speaking directly into the room, each division of the organ is separately encased, to blend and focus the sound. Visible pipes are all speaking, and the screens behind the pipes represent the rays of the rising morning sun.

## Many Forms of Worship

Our primary worship takes place at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning. Services offer scripture, sermon message, prayer, music, and community-building actions, along with the regular ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism. A service might also include drama—and in fact, the chancel area was conceived as a space suitable for the arts.

VBC generally follows the liturgical church year, and texts come from the New Revised Common Lectionary.

Our music draws from thousands of years of musical expression. The Chancel Choir offers special musical worship events, including an All Saints service that might feature a requiem; an Advent service featuring works by composers such as G.F. Handel or Benjamin Britten; and another major choral work in the spring. Children and youth also present music.

A monthly Vespers service at 5:30 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month offers a time of quiet reflection and singing, including music of the Taizé community.

Other organizations also use the Worship Room regularly; several Korean congregations worship here, and community groups present special music and programs. Among them are local choral societies, high school choirs, the Choristers Guild, and the George Mason University Music Department. These groups enjoy both the room's intimacy and its excellent acoustics and sightlines.

Above all, VBC's Worship Room serves as the heart of the facility that houses our congregation, just as worship is at the center of our response to the God who lovingly calls us into a divine relationship.







A service in the old Worship Room



Youth presenting the musical *Godspell*

## VBC's Tradition of Distinctiveness

Vienna Baptist Church was born as a Southern Baptist mission to serve the growing suburb of Vienna, Va., in the 1950s. At first, the mission church held worship and Bible study classes in a furnished model home. VBC was constituted as a church on Jan. 20, 1957, with 122 charter members, and soon the new church purchased acreage on Marshall Road and built its first building.

### OPEN TO DIVERSITY

From its inception the church was open to diversity and to doing things a little differently.

Vienna Baptist Church has been in the vanguard of Baptist churches making decisions about such issues as ordaining women as deacons (1971) and women as ministers (1981). Although almost no other Southern Baptist church was ordaining women during that period, VBC made the decision without controversy.

When Southern Baptist Convention leadership became more conservative during the 1980s, VBC left the SBC and became associated with the more moderate Alliance of Baptists in 1989. In 1991, VBC affiliated with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches USA.

### DOING MISSIONS

From its beginning, VBC has found creative ways to serve actively in its community and beyond. While still a young church, in 1964 it hosted a Cuban refugee family. Other mission action groups followed: the 50/90 Club in 1968; a Mothers' Day Out program in 1971 that

eventually became the Vienna Baptist Children's Center; ministry to the Ayr Hill adult home in 1976; Our Daily Bread food delivery in 1988; and participation in such other community ministries as the Committee for Helping Others and the Shepherd's Center.

Many of these are ongoing today. More recently, in 2010 we began a partnership with City Gate, an urban ministry in Washington, D.C., through which an intergenerational team from our congregation interacts regularly with children in the Richardson Dwellings public housing location in Northeast D.C.

### GOD'S MESSAGE THROUGH THE ARTS

Music, arts, and drama have been a form of mission outreach from VBC's earliest years. In 1958 the church produced the play, *In the Same Country*, and dozens of productions have followed, including *A Man Called Peter*, *Godspell*, and *Shadowlands*. Each Advent since 1967, VBC has offered to the community a Living Nativity, featuring live animals and a dramatic recreation of the story of Jesus' birth, which draws a large crowd from the neighborhood.

### RETREAT EMPHASIS

Vienna Baptist Church values prayer and retreat in church life. The first retreat took place in 1959 in Prince William

Forest Park; later, in 1980, a group of VBC families purchased 40 acres and a lodge in Lost River, W.Va., that became the Lost River Retreat Center. In addition to VBC retreats for children, youth, young adults, and adult groups, the retreat center hosts retreats and conferences for other organizations.

### CHILDREN'S CENTER

The Vienna Baptist Children's Center is a developmental school that offers a high-quality early childhood program for ages 3 months through 5 years. In a safe and nurturing environment, VBCC promotes the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development of young children.

### GROWING TOGETHER

These themes have been constant throughout the life of Vienna Baptist Church: openness to diversity, creativity, and inclusiveness; a heart for doing Christ's work in mission; a longing to grow closer to God through spiritual growth; and, as our covenant says, a desire to "live under Christ's lordship as a local expression of His church."



## Led to Show the Glory of God

*Chief Architect and Visionary,  
and Construction Supervisor*  
William E. Daniels, AIA

### *VBC Building Committee*

Pat Aprahamian  
Lewis Christian  
Carolyn Crawford  
Will Daniels  
Lauris M. Eek Jr., chair  
Janet Ford  
David Kersey  
Rod LaFever  
Lawrence E. Matthews, pastor  
Bill Sykes  
Clarene Vickery  
Al Willson

Vienna Baptist Church dedicated its Worship Room in 1987, its 30th anniversary year. Many special gifts given in honor or in memoriam made the Worship Room and its furnishings possible. A detailed list is maintained in a Book of Gifts and Memorials.



### **VIENNA BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT**

We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ is called to live under His lordship and continue His ministry to the world. We therefore covenant together as a local expression of His church:

- To engage regularly in the worship of God, Bible study, and opportunities for growth in the Christian faith.
- To live in Christian love and forgiveness in our families, congregation, and relations with all people.
- To fulfill our Christian vocation through the stewardship of life and possessions, both within and beyond the congregation.
- To proclaim the gospel through words and deeds to those whose lives ours touch, and provide the resources necessary for others to do so throughout the world.





A people of faith on the journey of life

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