A decorative border with Art Deco motifs, featuring stylized eyes and geometric patterns, framing the text.

NARTHEX SYMBOLS

Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church
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NARTHEX SYMBOLS MAXWELL STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

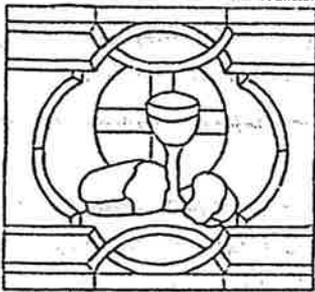
As one enters the sanctuary of Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church through the front doors, the first room to be seen is the narthex, which serves as an entryway to the place where the congregation gathers to worship. The symbols seen in the stained glass windows and the needlepoint hangings tell us who we are and why we are gathered.

The artwork is the creation of Dori Hudson, a member of the church, whose designing was done in consultation with other church members. Sunstreams Stained Glass produced the stained glass windows, a Lexington studio owned by Dori and her husband. The needlepointing is the work of four members of the church: Janet Gum, Rusty Haydon, Doris Marshall and Maureen Mauser.

The intent of the symbols is to place before all who enter the uniqueness of a place of worship. It is to remind us that we are God's people. By becoming aware of the divine presence in one place, we are helped to see the presence and activity of God in this world. The symbols tell us three things about who we are as God's people: (1) We are a community of faith, a unique people bound together by our commitment to Jesus Christ. (2) We are a people who gather to worship so that our faith can be nourished. (3) We are commissioned people who demonstrate God's love and work throughout our city and world.

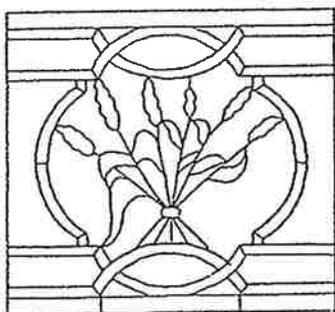
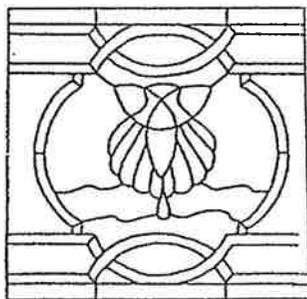
The symbols are described, starting with the two windows on the center doors, then the two windows on either side of them and finally, the windows on the doors leading to the side parlors.

The center windows are positioned over doors that open to the focal point of worship, the open Bible and Communion Table. The windows depict the two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion. Sacraments are the word made visible, giving form to that which is written in Scripture.



The chosen communion symbol is the cup and broken bread. Behind these is a cross in a circle. The Circle has no beginning or ending and is used as a symbol for God who is eternal. The symbol points to wholeness and unity. We have used colors frequently in these windows to be symbols. Purple is the color for suffering, for royalty, and for Lent and Advent. White is the liturgical color for Christ, and stands for purity.

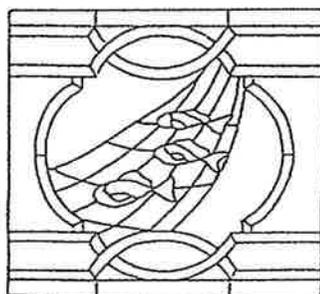
The chosen Baptism symbol is the shell and water. This is combined with trinity to remind us that we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Again, the colors are important: white – purity, and green representing creation, growth and new life.



The windows at the left stand for the gathered church. One symbol for this is the wheat and tares or in modern language, wheat and weeds. The symbol means that both individually and as a

group we are believers and doubters, followers of God's will and sinners, producers of good and evil, inspired and needing forgiveness.

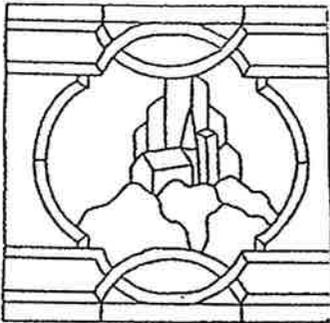
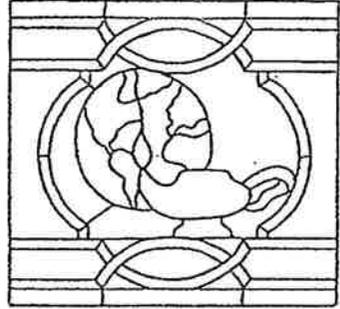
The symbol of the fish is one that brings to mind a variety of meanings. The fish is the symbol for Christ. It also reminds us of the call to be fishers of men and women. In addition it recalls the story of the disciples fishing in vain, only to be rewarded with abundance when Christ joins them.



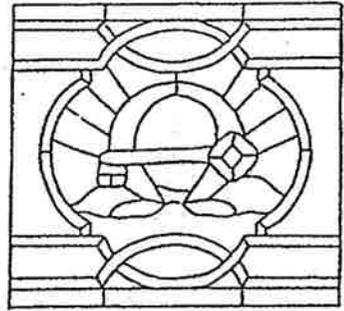
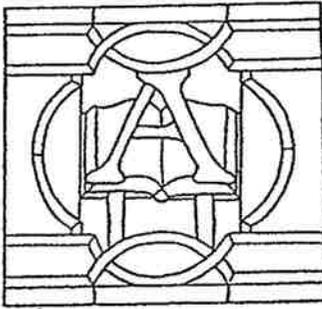
The two windows at the right are the windows of commissioning. We are a people sent into the world.

The first is the light of the world. When looking at this symbol one is reminded of the song from *Godspell*:

*You are the light of the world,
But if that light's under a bushel,
It's lost something kind of crucial
You've got to live right to be the light of the world."*



The last window brings to mind a mixture of expressions about the church: The church is involved in the world around it, the church is founded on a rock and finally, the church is like the city on a hill. It cannot be hidden.



The windows leading to the parlors display the Alpha and Omega symbols. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and represent the beginning and end of human history, both of which are in the hands of God.

God is beyond time, offering it as a gift to us. At the beginning of time God was evident through the divine act of creating. At the end of time, God's ultimate triumph will be shown through the perfect Kingdom for which we pray when we say "Thy Kingdom come."

Both windows use white as the symbol for Christ and green as the sign of creation and new creation. Both also contain symbols for the scriptures. The Alpha has the open Bible. The Omega has a four-sided key symbolizing the gospels, the key to understanding what the Kingdom of God is and will be.



The needlepoint hanging to the left of the center doors contains the seal of the Presbyterian Church, which was designed for the new church created by the 1983 union of the major branches of the Presbyterian family.

The basic symbolic motifs in the seal are the cross, Scripture, the dove and flames.

The descending dove is the traditional symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The two centerlines of the cross represent an open book, emphasizing the central role of Scripture in Reformed tradition. Beneath the image of the book is the suggestion of a lectern or pulpit, which captures the important role of preaching in the history of Presbyterian worship.

Integrated into the lower part of the design are flames, which form an implied triangle, a traditional symbol of the Trinity. The flames themselves convey a double meaning — as a symbol of revelation when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and as a symbol of the fire at Pentecost when the church was born.

The symbols and messages of the windows and needle pointing are to serve as reminders to those who enter that this church is God's people, gathered, commissioned and serving.



The cover border is the one found in the windows of the main sanctuary and repeated in simplified form in the needlepoint and narthex windows.

The windows of the sanctuary are Mission Style, a non-figurative style popular in the years just prior to World War I. While not specifically symbolic, the border does include the early Christian sign of the fish. This symbol was used to point the way to the place of worship.

Funding for the windows and needlepointing was made available through the Memorial fund. Many gifts, recorded in the permanent memorial book, made this beautiful project possible.

