

THE BOYD MURAL, ARTWORK AND STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

AT ST MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH MORWELL

- 1) **The Boyd Mural “The Ascending Christ”**. The commanding mural on the east wall of the Church behind the Altar is an outstanding work of art by the famous Australian artist [Arthur Boyd](#).

Arthur Merric Boyd (1920 – 1999) was part of the great dynastic Boyd family of artists, writers and sculptors. Arthur was probably the most famous of them all and is one of the greatest of Australia’s 20th century artists. He was 1995 Australian of the Year and had the unusual distinction of having an Australian Postage Stamp series in his honour while he was still living. Nowadays this is a much more common occurrence.

“*The Ascending Christ*” is a vast work measuring 5m by 8m. While giving the initial impression of being a mosaic, the mural is in fact painted in casein and tempura on a number of hardboard sections mounted together. The rich blues evoke the great Byzantine Church mosaics that used lapis lazuli gemstone and seek to evoke the mystery and beauty of heaven into which the Christ is now ascending. This mural depicts that profound mystical biblical event called The Ascension which occurred 40 days after the Resurrection of Christ Jesus. In this event, the risen Christ finally leaves behind his disciples and the earthly realm to return fully into the Kingdom of Heaven. The luminescent white ascending Christ seems has both arms outstretched as if in total embrace and blessing of the world he has come to redeem and to welcome back into the loving nurture of God. The Christ seems to hover like an empowering spiritual presence over the altar and all who are gathered in the church. “The Ascending Christ” forms an emphatic backdrop to the worship space and makes an awe-inspiring statement as you enter the church.

This current church is the third St Mary’s Church built in Morwell and was specifically designed to house the wonderful mural left in its care after the original church where the mural was placed, St John’s Yallourn, and the complete town of Yallourn, were demolished to make to make way for the Yallourn Open Cut coal mine. The Boyd Mural was valued in 1989 at \$120,000 and then in the year 2000 at \$500,000.

- 2) **Painting of “The Recollections of Mary”** The work on the South wall of the church is the painting by local Morwell artist [Robert Pelchen](#). This painting is partly inspired by the famous sculpture of Michelangelo called The Pieta. A very helpful explanation of the seven recollections depicted in the painting is to be found mounted in a frame below the painting.

3) Painting of “The three Churches of St Mary in Morwell”

Another work by Robert Pelchen is a water colour, to be found on the South wall. This work depicts the first St Mary’s Church in Morwell built in 1886, followed by the second church in 1958 and then the third church in 1979.

4) Painting of “A Parish Family Baptism” A larger painting on the South wall of the church is by St Mary’s Parishioner Jacqueline Johns, created and hung in 2010. Stylized members of the Parish Family are depicted, at the baptism of an adult. The figures are faceless and black to represent both anonymity and racial inclusivity. Members of the Koori and South Sudanese Community of our Parish have found the painting very meaningful.

5) Painting of “Turtle Dreaming” This traditional aboriginal artwork, on the South wall of the church, is by local Aboriginal Artist [Ronald Edwards](#) and was also painted and hung in 2010. The lines on the turtles depict the various Gunai-Kurnai tribes of this region who are the original custodians of the land around Morwell.

6) Blue Glass Chalice The lovely and beautifully crafted blue glass chalice on the glass shelf on the south wall is by local Morwell artist [Tony Hanning](#).

7) Wooden Altar Frontispiece is a carving by well-known Melbourne Sculptor Eva Schubert and is based on a fourth-century CE representation of the “Resurrection and empty Tomb of Christ”. The empty cross with a sleeping soldier on either side recalls the guards placed by the Roman Governor Pilate on Christ’s tomb after his burial. Chickens standing on the arms of the cross denote new life. The laurel wreath is the Roman symbol of the victorious winner of a race. The letters inside the wreath are the first two letters of Christ’s name in Greek, Chi Rho. Surmounting the design is a figure representing the Spirit of God.

8) “Last Supper” Window . The first window on the North side of Church is a window depicting the Last Supper and Institution of Holy Communion. The window is by local Morwell artist Tony Hanning (one time Director of the Morwell Art Gallery). The words of Institution used by Jesus at the Last Supper and said at every Communion Service are etched into the window as well as a picture of a chalice of wine and paten of bread for Holy communion.

9) “Our Lord’s Crucifixion and Resurrection” Window. The second window on the North side of Church is wonderfully crafted by local Churchill artists Vi and Geoffrey Biram. The bottom of the window shows the bread and the wine of the Last Supper and the twelve stones representing the twelve disciples, with the bottom stone set apart being Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus. Above this are the images of Judas’ betrayal in the thirty pieces of silver and of Peter’s denial of Jesus in the cock crowing. Then above this are depicted Jesus carrying his cross and other figures trudging on the road to Calvary. Above them are the three crosses on Calvary Hill (or Golgotha). Above these is the dark

circle of the empty tomb and finally the burst of light in the Resurrection of Jesus. This window is 'jam-packed' with symbols of the final events of Jesus' life.

10) "The Creation" Window. The third window on the North side of the Church is a beautiful window crafted again by the local Churchill artists Vi and Geoffrey Biram. The bottom of the window depicts the beginning of Creation with God's light dividing the primeval darkness. The Word of God (or Logos) speaks into and through Creation and so land begins to emerge from the waters of chaos. Life forms also emerge and are interwoven with chromosome symbols (the rod-like structures) representing the ongoing evolution of life. Tree branches and birds top the sky and then above all this are the sun and the moon and planets. Right at the top, as the peak of Creation, are the symbols of man and woman depicted under the arch of God's continuing love and nurture in the form of a blue rainbow.

There are **three banners** in the Church:

- a) On the East wall is a large and beautifully coloured banner depicting the Holy Spirit of God in the biblical symbol of the dove, with the words 'Come Holy Spirit' sewn into the banner.
- b) On the North wall over the far east window is a banner symbolizing the importance on music in worship, with the words 'Then sings my Soul, my Saviour God to Thee' flowing down the music stave of the banner.
- c) On the North wall in the far west corner is a banner depicting God's Family, all linked in a circle of inclusion and welcome.