

A Brief History of Stauffer Chapel

Stauffer Chapel was made possible by a gift from Beverly Stauffer, wife of John Stauffer of the Stauffer Chemical Company and a long-time friend of Pepperdine University. On November 4, 1973, soon after the Malibu campus was opened, the chapel was dedicated. The most distinctive feature of the chapel is its stained glass windows that enclose it on either end with huge colorful walls made of hand-blown glass in 125 hues and shades of color. The glass was purchased from Blenko Glass Company in Milton, West Virginia, one of the oldest antique stained glass companies in the United States. At the time the chapel was built the windows comprised the largest exhibit of stained glass west of the Mississippi. Including the six arched side windows, there are 3,000 square feet of stained glass. Six scenes are prominent on the side windows and can be seen woven into the main windows. The pattern of the stained glass overlooking the Pacific Ocean is the "Tree of Life" with an open Bible featured in the center of the window. These magnificent windows were the work of artists Robert D. and Bette L. Donovan of Burbank, California. They completed the final panel of glass in 1972, after thirteen months of work. The building itself was designed by architect John Sheridan. With the completion of the chapel and its magnificent stained glass windows, Chancellor Emeritus M. Norvel Young observed that "The chapel has proved to be a little jewel, which the late Beverly Stauffer was so pleased to give to the University." In 1995 Robert and Bette Donovan returned to Malibu and etched their names in a panel of glass in the windows they had designed and created some twenty-three years earlier.

Stauffer chapel is small and intimate, with seating for approximately 180 people. A balcony contains an organ and space for a small group of vocalists. On March 11, 2002 the chapel was remodeled, at which time the carpet was replaced by travertine marble, providing a simple elegance that is appropriate for any event or service. Other design modifications were made to enhance the acoustics of the chapel, which is particularly evident during a choral concert or a worship service that features a cappella singing. A new organ was also installed at that time.

Visitors to the Pepperdine campus often visit Stauffer Chapel and are struck by the beauty of the stained glass windows and the glory of the patterns of light reflected on the marble floor and walls within its vaulted frame. It is a place that invites reflection, meditation, prayer, and celebration.

*I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where your glory dwells.
Psalm 26:8*