



## Putting the Finishing Features on the Columbarium with Artwork by Ross Snodgrass

“As a kid, as soon as I could pick up a crayon, I knew I had to do art work,” says Ross Snodgrass. He was well-educated in art work and color, but never had much time to paint seriously until he retired.

Now, Desert Palms Presbyterian Church has become the beneficiary of Snodgrass’ excellent talent in the form of seven paintings depicting the first seven days of creation. The first one illustrates the time when God divided the light from the darkness. The second shows the sea being separated from the skies. And the third is a pastoral scene where God created trees and seed-bearing plants. The fourth painting shows where God divided the night from the day, and the four seasons. A fifth painting depicts creatures God created to fill

the waters and the air, while a sixth focuses on creatures of the land including human beings themselves. The last painting draws attention to the completion of God’s creation.

“Different people from church came to me and asked if I would paint some murals in the columbarium,” Snodgrass recalls. ‘Pastor Jim Crelin said, well, there are seven spaces to fill, so how about the first seven days of creation?’ “I said that sounds like a good project. I think I would have fun doing that.”

Using the brilliance of his colors and the artistry of his composition, Snodgrass’ paintings do indeed show the power and majesty of God’s handiwork. Snodgrass says he was trained in the Venetian old master’s style of painting. That means he applies glazing, or paint, in layers to achieve the color he wants. Each color requires three or more layers of glaze to attain the precisely accurate hue. In some cases the result is a mottled effect.

“These paintings are my interpretation of what the King James Version of the Bible is saying,” Snodgrass says. So each painting is captioned with a few lines of text from Scripture that tell what God created in a given day, or span of time. Paintings are done in acrylic on 40-by-46-inch wood panels.

Snodgrass spent his entire career working in the paint and chemical coatings industry. In 1971, while working at a paint manufacturing company, he was asked to join the Color Marketing Group, an international trade association that helps various industries – such as paint manufacturers, automobiles, carpet, fabrics and more – predict which colors will be popular two to five years in advance. “I joined them when it was a fledgling organization, and it grew to have some 1,500 members worldwide,” says Snodgrass.

“We had conventions twice a year, spring and fall, and we went to each meeting with what we considered – through our work – were going to be the best colors in the future and those colors that were declining. When you got all these people together from industries where color is an important part of the marketing efforts, you could see how colors were progressing. You could see the trend coming. Every one of these people worked in color for their industry.” Snodgrass served the association in various offices and on the board of directors until retirement. They presented him with the Service Award and made him a lifetime member for his work.

Snodgrass’ art education began when he was a fifth-grader in Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. His parents sent him to art school to get special training at Carnegie Tech, which is now Carnegie Mellon University and Carnegie Museum. “I would go there every Saturday. You had to take a bus and two street cars to get there,” he says. “This is in addition to taking art classes at Mount Lebanon grade school, high school and university.”

Snodgrass graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a bachelor’s degree in 1952, then spent two years in the Air Force as a Top Secret Control officer. “I did a lot of courier work where you would have a brief case handcuffed to your left wrist and carry a handgun. I traveled around the country delivering top secret documents.” In 1952 he married Mary Lou, who passed away in 2015 after 63 years of marriage. The couple had three sons, eight grandchildren and two great grand-daughters.

Upon discharge from the military, Snodgrass went back to the University of Pittsburgh to get a master’s degree in business. Next he worked for a Pittsburgh-based paint manufacturer as advertising director. From there he advanced in the same company to corporate headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, and was active in the Presbyterian Church there. After ten years in Columbus, he moved to Chicago as sales manager for a company that manufactured color systems for the paint and automobile industries.

While based in Chicago, Snodgrass became a member and Trustee at the First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights. There, he was put in charge of revamping the landscaping for the entire church grounds. Snodgrass completed his career with 17 years as Midwest regional manager for the American Paint Journal company. At that time he retired and moved to Sun City West, where he joined the Sun West Art Club and Vanguard Artists where he served as the president and past president.

Painting the murals for the Columbarium at Desert Palms Church is a team effort, Snodgrass emphasizes. The woodworkers, framers and glass installers are Dick Hayes, Curt Pippen, Don Swanson, Jim Vaughn and Jim Booy. The lettering is painted by Brian Spencer. "Any talent I have came from God at birth," says Snodgrass. "I am just the messenger."

