

## Furniture in the Chancel, a First Sunday Explanation

The Chancel is the part of the church where the main Altar is located and where the Reserved Sacrament is kept, so that it is the focus of devotion and worship. On back wall of the Chancel there is a 'Retable', a built-in stone shelf on which flowers are placed. The two other stone shelves to the south of the Retable are Credence Tables, places where items needed for the Communion celebration (bread, wine, water, chalice, paten, offertory plates, etc.) may conveniently be placed. Above these shelves is a small built-in locked cabinet called the Tabernacle, in which the Reserved Sacrament (bread and wine previously blessed to be the Body and Blood of Christ) is kept. Above the Tabernacle, hanging from the ceiling, is a candle, called the Tabernacle Light. This light is meant to be lit as long as there is Reserved Sacrament present. This tradition goes back to the Temple in ancient Jerusalem, where the lights burned perpetually, acknowledging the eternal presence of God in the Temple. In the center, just in front of the Retable is a very large wooden cross, towering over everything else, representing the primary reality which draws us to worship, Christ's life, death, and resurrection on our behalf. In the midst of the Chancel is the Altar, the place where all our offerings, bread and wine, our financial contributions, and offerings of food, clothing, etc. for outreach, are given to God and blessed for the good of all. At the front of the Chancel is the Altar Rail, for the convenience of worshippers wishing to kneel to receive Communion. The Rail is open in the middle and at both ends, showing the free access all people have to the sacred space. Next to the Rail at the South end is the Ambo. 'Ambo' is Latin for 'both' and it is the name given to something which combines the functions of Lectern (for the reading of God's Word) and Pulpit (for preaching). It is at the front of the Chancel to be as close as possible to the people while still being on a higher level to facilitate everyone seeing and hearing. The Ambo and the Altar typically have cloth hangings in the color of the liturgical season.

In addition to these permanent, fixed items in the Chancel there are movable (and removable) furniture items. The Processional Cross and Candles (commonly referred to as Torches) have stands by the big cross so that they are there to provide a focus for worship. Chairs are placed so that the ministers of worship all have places to sit, without distracting from the Cross and Altar. Typically the larger chairs are used by the clergy. Occasionally one of two the Saint James chairs (carved with the Shell) are brought in to serve as the Bishop's chair or other special function. The Saint James parish banner usually stands against the wall. These things are there whether or not a service is in progress. When we gather for worship, candles are added (on, and sometimes around, the Altar) and linens and other communion vessels and ornaments are added.

The Chancel floor is three steps above the floor of the Nave (where the congregation sits) in order to facilitate visibility for everyone.