

Tales of Talent

Recently, two members of the Grace Family were willing to share their talents and our congregation has certainly been blessed by their generosity. Ryan Brown, Sr. refurbished the bench in the Cremains Garden and Julie Bagley-Elder created the barn quilt that now hangs in the southern entry to our building. In addition to the final products, we hope you will find meaning in the conversations we share today.

Ryan Brown, Sr. - Cremains Garden Bench



Do you remember when you became a member at Grace?

My family moved to Rock Hill when I was 10, probably about 34 years ago or so. We moved from Lexington, SC. Grace was the only Lutheran church nearby.

Why did you join Grace?

I didn't have a choice! That's where Mom and Dad decided to go and we've been ever since.

You have an amazing gift for woodworking. Do you think of yourself as a carpenter, a craftsman, an artist, or something else?

I don't know that I'm any of those yet. I'm fairly new to woodworking. I've always enjoyed working outside, working with my hands. Hold my feet to the fire for an answer and I'd say craftsman fits the best. I've always enjoyed taking things apart and putting them back together again.

How did you get started working with wood?

Woodworking really runs in the family. My dad is a good woodworker, and my uncle was one of the finest craftsmen that I have ever met. Personally, I only really started just last year. Through the years I have helped my dad build cabinets for the workshop; we built a bed back when I was a teenager. I have helped him on a variety of projects. I got started on my own just last year when Lisa [Ryan's wife] wanted me to build her a swing. Her parents had an old, busted swing, a frame that was sitting on the ground. I took it apart, found that many of the parts were broken, and offered to build a new one. I used the old frame as a template and made a new, modified swing. I guess things took off from there.

How long do your projects typically take?

That depends on what it is. I can build a swing in a day. Most of the projects are smaller, and I haven't started on large furniture yet. I've gotten requests lately for an end table that is also a dog kennel, so my list of projects is expanding - I've got a whole folder of projects I'm going to try in the future. I've built a couple of toy boxes, cutting boards, serving trays and other small woodwork and for the most part I can do my projects in a day or two.

How many projects do you like to work on at any given time? One at a time? Several?

For the most part, yeah, just one at a time. I had several cutting boards ordered last year at Christmas. I must have made 5 or 6 cutting boards for a friend of mine. I had all those in clamps last year in the shop waiting for the glue to set and that was probably the most I've had at one time. I probably wouldn't do that many again.

What led you to use your gifts for the bench that is now in Grace's Cremains Garden?

Out of the blue, Floyd Ritchie emailed me one day saying the bench in the garden was in rough shape. He knew I was into woodworking and wondered if I would be interested in repairing it, giving it what it needs. Knowing I didn't have anywhere to work - my new shop is still being built - I wasn't sure. I took a few days to get back to him. I thought I could do it with my dad at his house though, and so I asked for pictures of the bench. Even though I had only refinished one piece of furniture years ago, when I saw the pictures, I thought that would be no problem.

What can you tell us about the process for making that piece?

One Sunday after church, Lisa and I went down to look at it in person. I thought it would be pretty simple, just being some wood slats bolted into the frame. We took it with us that day. I took it to my dad's house and we started to think about what we could use. We could use some treated lumber, which was in there before. I also knew I had some beautiful cedar I bought from a guy recently. Cedar is strong, won't weather, and would last a long time. We cut the slats into the right length and width, sanded it down. The back piece was more



difficult. We used the existing wood on the bench for a template so we could match the curve on the top. We cut it out on a band saw, sanded it, glued it together. We also cleaned up the black iron and repainted that. I also have to give credit to Lisa. She has been a huge asset for me with the final detail work on some projects, and especially on this bench. She was the one who applied two coats of tung oil, which gives it a natural finish and my dad added another two coats, too, all of which will protect it and keep it shining beautifully. I have to give credit to my finishers!

Craftsmanship - a lot like art - evokes a response by the time we see the final product.

What does this bench say to you? What do you hope it says to others?

I'm not good at interpretation. For me it's good to step back and see how far it's come. For others, I hope they look at it, see that it's beautiful, and are inspired to take the time to go sit in the garden.

What has working with wood revealed to you about God or faith? Any insights?

I truly believe that God has given me the abilities and talents to do what I'm doing. That's true for anybody who is good at anything. It's true for Ryan, Jr. and his baseball; it's true for Jaden and his music. Some take a little longer to find the gifts God gives them. I hope that I'm able to carry on for a long time using the gifts God gave me.

What would you say to other people who might not have considered sharing their gifts with Grace before?

I used to be worried about messing things up, things going wrong, or the final product not looking right in the end. From being a mechanic to being a woodworker, now I have the mentality that we can fix it. And if I can't fix it, somebody can. I'd invite people to think about it, pray about it, and ultimately, go for it! Share your talents.

I think that there's a good chance people will look at this and want something like it for themselves. Are you accepting requests from people for something like this for their own homes?

That's tough to say. I'm not fully set up yet in the new shop. I've told several people - Lisa, my parents - that I want to take the time to set up my shop in a way that flows for me. I used to work out of my garage. I'd have to pull all my tools out into the driveway, do the work, then put everything back into the garage. I want to take the time to set up the shop in a way that works. Right now, my shop is built, my tools are in it, but it doesn't have power yet. I hope to have that set up in the next few weeks. Then, I'll be able to start making cabinets and larger things. I can't make any promises for Christmas this year, so I don't want to say a definite time. Any woodworker will tell you; you need to have the right setup before you can start doing the work you want to do.

When it's set up, how should people get in touch with you if they want to talk more about you possibly crafting something for them?

They can call me or email me. I'm open to ideas, too! If someone wants something custom, we should talk about it. If someone wants something for the spring, we should talk. I will try and build whatever folks are looking to have. I just need to be set up first.



Any exciting plans coming up?

I recently reached out to Jim Alfors about the Baptism boxes that he builds. I asked him if he had plans or drawings that he'd be willing to share with me. I'd like to try and build those, too. Jim shared his drawings and invited me over to take a look at his wood shop soon. I'm looking forward to seeing how he approaches wood working and seeing his process.

When it comes to woodworking, I only regret that I waited as long as I did to get started. My dad's approval means the world to me and getting to do what he did, learning from him has been a great way to connect. And it's the way I carry on my uncle's legacy - I use his tools today and so, in a way, even though he has died, his craftsmanship carries on with the work I do.

Julie Bagley-Elder – Barn Quilt in South Entrance



Do you remember when you became a member at Grace?

Possibly back in 2000 - somewhere around that time.

Why did you join Grace?

My former husband's father was a Lutheran minister. We had been members at Epiphany Lutheran and we were raising two daughters, and we thought they would have a better opportunity for Youth programming at Grace.

You have an amazing gift for making these barn quilts - that's the name, right?

Barn quilts is the right name, yes.

How did you get started making these striking pieces?

I noticed barn quilts throughout my life traveling throughout the US, mainly in the midwest. Then I started noticing them in the Boone, Blowing Rock area, where my dad has had a house since 1998. So, I researched barn quilts for two years before I began making them, painting them, so I could determine which materials were the best to use. You need materials that will last and withstand the outdoor elements.

What was the first one you made?

The first one I ever made is hanging in my backyard, over my 'she-shed'. After I did my first one, I was hooked.

How long does it take you to make one of them?

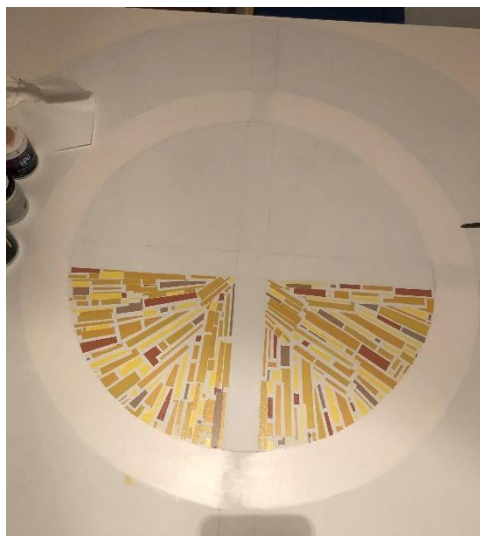
Depending on the size, the pattern, and the number of colors, it varies. I have done a 3'x3' in four days before, but I prefer to have at least a week to spend on each one.

Do you make them one at a time?

I am normally working on at least three or four at a time. It is a long process of applying many coats and this requires a lot of drying time between coats. The paint is applied to MDO (modified density overlay) board or an aluminum composite, with the former being heavier but more traditional.

What led you to make the piece that now hangs in Grace's entrance?

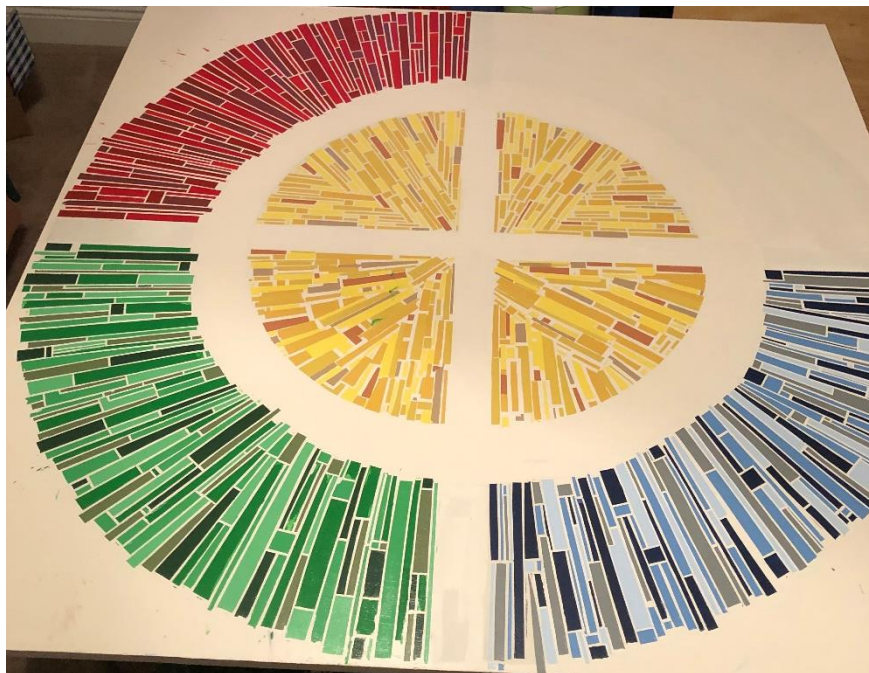
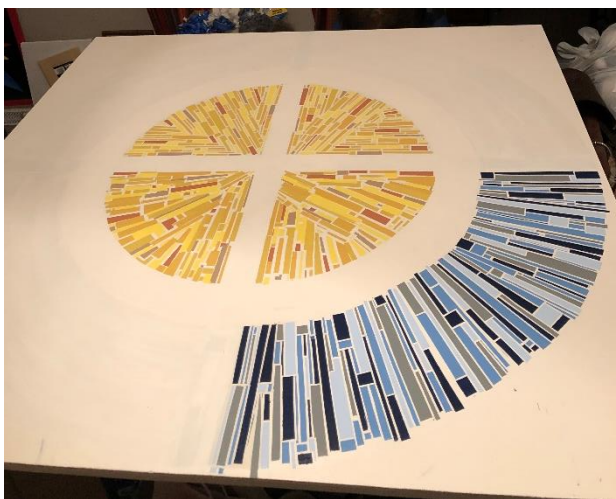
Betty Sue Seigler from the Beautification Committee came to me and asked if I could do a barn quilt based on a picture she gave me.



What can you tell us about the process for making that piece?

It is a 4'x4' piece, done on 3/4" MDO board. My husband cut the size for the board and sanded the edges, then I primed the board with a high-quality exterior primer consisting of three coats on the front, the back, and all edges. Once it was primed and dried, I drew free hand the design using a combination of rulers and yard sticks. I used painter's tape to separate each color and section of high-quality exterior paint.

Each color took between 3-12 coats of paint, depending on how much was needed to achieve the desired hue. Then, the tape was removed, I added any needed touch ups. This piece was very detailed and there were 23 different colors used. This piece took me 7 months to complete. I could do the next one quicker now that I've figured out all the little quirks in that pattern.



The thing I love about art is that it evokes a reaction from the person who looks at it. What does this piece say to you?

To me, this piece depicts the different colors and moods of the liturgical year through the variety of shades of each color used.

What might it say about Grace, or God, or faith?

The church, like nature, goes through seasons and the change of seasons mirrors the changes of our lives. Every change of season reminds us of God's promises, power,

and timetable. God is right beside us during each season of our lives and he uses each of those seasons to shape us, mold us, into the people we were created to be.

What would you say to other people who might not have considered sharing their gifts with Grace before?

Every single one of us has a gift that God has given us. Some people might not realize that, or have come to know theirs yet, but I feel everyone has something special and our gifts should be shared with our church and our community. It's a way to get involved and we please God when we share the talents we are given.

I think that there's a good chance people will look at this and want something like it for themselves. Are you accepting requests from people for something like this for their own homes?

Yes! I would be glad to make anything anyone else would like. They were originally designed to be displayed on barns, but these pieces are not limited to barns anymore. Many people are now hanging barn quilts inside their homes, on the outside of their houses, their porches, garages, and even on their businesses.

Do you make custom sizes?

I do. I make any size from 1'x1' to 8'x8' and any combination of sizes that would be desired in-between.

How should people contact you to explore the possibility of having some of your art for their own homes?

They can call or text me at 803-620-1571, email me at jlbagley2@gmail.com, or send me a private message on Facebook. I do have a Facebook page called Barn Quilts by Jules where you can see the more than 100 I have done.

