

Selmeston Church The Annunciation Window by Charles Kempe (1837 - 1907)



Charles Eamer Kempe
(June 29, 1837 - April 29, 1907)

Kempe a well-known Victorian stained glass designer. He studied for the priesthood at Pembroke College, Oxford, but it became clear that his severe stammer would be an impediment to preaching. He decided that "if I was not permitted to minister in the Sanctuary I would use my talents to adorn it", and went to study architecture with the firm of George Frederick Bodley, where he learned the art of decorating church walls and ceilings.

During this part of his life he was making a serious study of mediaeval stained glass, and in 1866 he opened a studio of his own in London, supplying not only stained glass to Bodley's firm but also furnishings and vestments. By 1899 he had over fifty employees.



As a trademark, the firm used a golden garb or wheatsheaf, taken from Kempe's own coat of arms.

After his death, the firm was taken over by Kempe's cousin, Walter Tower, and thenceforth used a black tower above the golden garb. A lack of orders caused by the Great Depression ended the firm's life in 1934.

Kempe was a rather shy person, who never married. He had a dog called Nora. He is buried in the churchyard at St Wulfran's Church, Ovingdean

The Annunciation -
An image for Christian devotion

The humble acceptance of God's message by Mary, as portrayed in images of the annunciation, has always been a favourite subject for Christian art.

Devotionally it reminds every Christian that God wants them also to fulfil His purpose for their lives and that they are to carry Christ spiritual within them.

Every believer can echo Mary's assent '*I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said*'. [Luke 1:38](#). It is an unconditional 'yes' whose consequences Mary is yet to fully realise.

The window is in memory of Revd William Douglas Parish, former Vicar of Selmeston cum Alciston and Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral.