



THE ALPHA & OMEGA TAPESTRY, ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH, MIDLAND

In 2015, a full two years before its completion, a small committee began a conversation about worship and the church liturgical colours. Who knew then, upon meeting with church member Marjolyn van der Wel, that a small seed of an idea would be transformed by the Holy Spirit to become a 16x4 foot tapestry vibrant with themes of the presence of God in creation and us. Marjolyn did the initial artwork, set up the loom, hand dyed every thread and wove the tapestry itself. There are thousands of different colours and hues in this work of art. She worked seven days a week for six hours a day for just under two years.



The Greek letters, Alpha and Omega, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. "Revelations" talks about God who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the one who was, is and will be. God is in time and beyond time. Behind the letters are both the sunrise and the sunset echoing the theme that God is present always, in the morning through to evening, in birth and in death and life beyond death. The curves indicate God who moves and works in our world and reaches out to us. In response we reach up and out to God. It is not a perfect circle as we are not perfect. The blues within the circle around the Alpha and Omega are both dark and then light. The dark blues remind us of the dark times in our lives while the light blue reminds us of joy and happiness. No matter what happens God is with us in all things. The yellow on the outside of the curve lifts us up to God/heaven/the sacred as we are all part of the circle of life which is in God.

The curves from the sides represent the roundness of the earth placed in the blues of the universe itself. The blues in the lower portion of the tapestry represent the seas.



The jagged red ribbon reminds us of the "Genesis" and the chaos of creation where the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, moved upon the darkness. Red, like a volcano spewing fire is the explosion of life. God created the universe out of nothing. Red is the colour of the spirit, full of energy, pulsing with breath and alive in our world.



The green is the land with growth and newness of life.  
The fragments of purple, darker shapes are all part of the ongoing evolution of creation.





There is an aboriginal theme to the tapestry as we live in an aboriginal world and share their land. Indigenous spirituality is rich and vibrant and we have much to learn from our First Nations people. The United Church of Canada seeks to honour all paths to God. The colours of the Alpha and Omega are first nations' colours of black, white, red and yellow indicating the four directions and the elements of earth, air, fire and water. The multiple colours outlined in the black on the upper and lower mid section of the tapestry were inspired by First Nation art.



The burgundy on the lower edge grounds us in our worship connecting all who gather into the tapestry with its rich and vibrant themes and colours. It picks up on the colour of the choir gowns, and the variety of colours in the sanctuary.

### **Our Tapestry Maker:**



**Marjolyn Van der Wel** was born in The Hague, The Netherlands and immigrated to Canada in 1967. She holds a teaching degree in textiles from the State industrial College in The Hague.

She has been weaving for 40 years and has woven more than 50 tapestries, of which two large ones are permanently exhibited in the American School of The Hague and the American Protestant Church in The Hague. She publishes regularly articles on weaving techniques in the Complex Weavers magazine. Her work has been exhibited in shows in The Netherlands, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ontario, Nova Scotia and BC.

In 2002, she received the Canadian Weavers reward in Vancouver. Marjolyn has lived in various Canadian provinces as well in Europe and the USA. At present she resides in Penetanguishene and is an active member of St. Paul's.

For Marjolyn, weaving is part of her spirituality. She hopes that others will experience the tapestry and make their own connections to it.

### Designing and Work on the Tapestry



From the initial artist's concept hand to drawn in scale on the 14'x4" paper that would then be attached behind the loom.

The threads are wound to make a skein of 6 grams to dye.

Each thread was hand dyed. The colours dyes were created with varying hues then the to dry.



wool was hung

Finally the weaving could begin.



The tapestry now hangs in the sanctuary of St. Paul's United Church. It invites us to worship, to ponder, to pray and to allow the Spirit to engage us through this work of art. We are grateful to God and to Marjolyn for this gift.

