



# Keep the Pencil Moving A Tribute to Nick Parrendo

*Text and Photography by Tony Glander*

Nick Parrendo was demonstrating how to brainstorm a design by sketching with charcoal at a Stained Glass Association of America (SGAA) conference many years ago. His hand flew over the paper, dragging the charcoal for a few silent moments, until he stood back with a smile and pointed to the emerging image of a face.

The pause was momentary and not at all with any form of boasting. It was done more with a sense of amazement that Parrendo's hands could have produced this drawing, and whether we stayed or left was of no consequence. He had become lost in the creation of his work. Parrendo had a talent for design and drawing, but more than that, he had a passion for them. I always thought he felt the gift wasn't so much given to him as that it actually flowed through him.

## A Life Well Lived

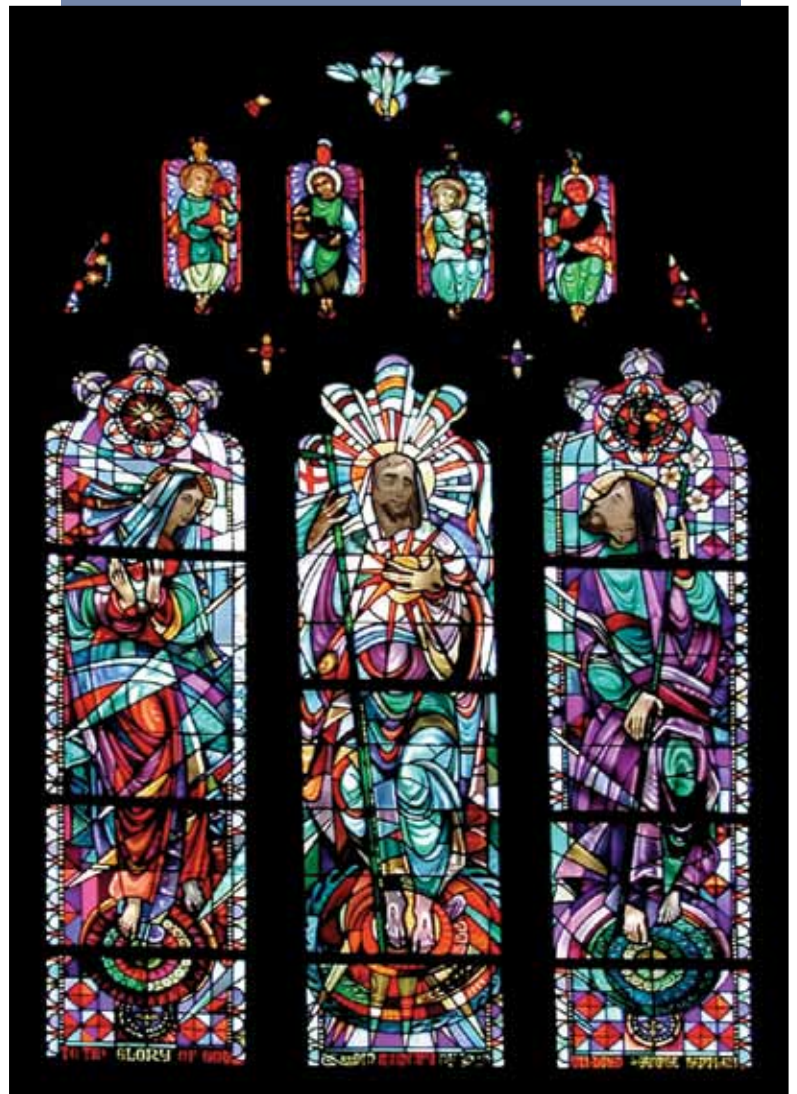
Parrendo passed away February 11, 2016, at the age of 87. He was the owner of Hunt Stained Glass Studio in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, since 1987, but he had been working there since 1950. His studio is responsible for thousands of windows over the years and all of them designed by Parrendo since the 1960s. His son, David, runs the office and his daughter, Celeste, a muralist, helps in the studio from time to time.

The stained glass work from the studio embraced Parrendo's distinctive design, and it didn't end with glass. He learned how to carve wood and even carved statues from styrofoam, coating them and placing them on the roof of the studio.

His motto, "Keep the pencil moving," was appropriate for Parrendo. He kept designing, whether it was for a large stained glass installation or an Easter card. His work was rich in design, color, and symbolism. He knew what iconography would bring a saint's image to life or show him how to illuminate a line of text from the Bible. He worked every day to improve himself. He never considered himself a master of stained glass, but referred to himself often as an apprentice.

Parrendo lived his life faith first. Since discovering his gift of drawing and finding his faith in a hospital at age 10, he continued both throughout his life. And nothing made him shine more than talking about his family. Whether it was speaking reverently about his wife, who passed away from leukemia in 1981, or about one of his four children, nothing made him shine brighter.

"The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give your gift away." – David Viscott



*Nick Parrendo's window of the Holy Family in St Mary's Episcopal Church in Arlington, Virginia, 2011.*

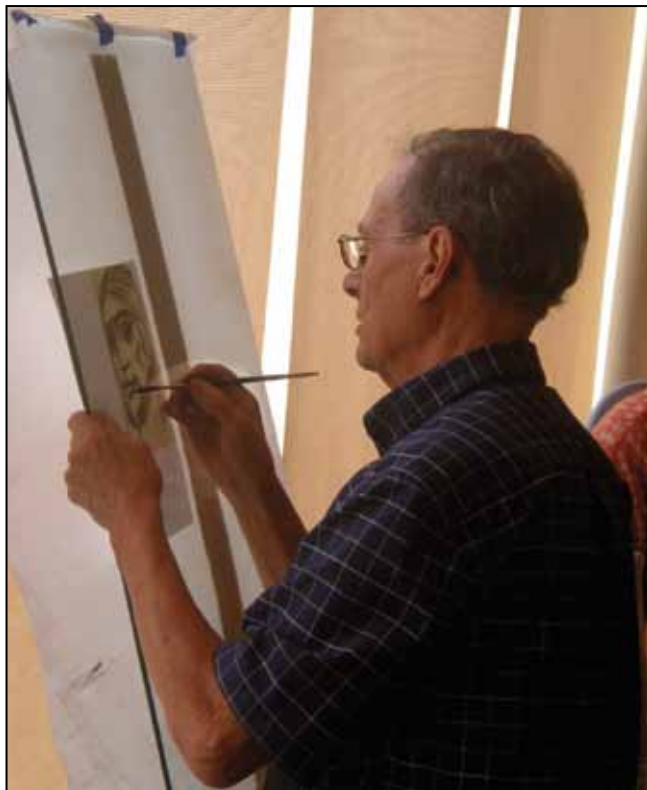
Because of Parrendo's friendly demeanor and willingness to help, he was well known throughout the stained glass industry. He was a Senior Advisor for the AGG for many years and received the Joseph Barnes Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009. He had also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the SGAA in 1999, and in 2004 he received the Excellence in Education Award from the SGAA. But if asked about any of these awards, he would be humbly mystified as to why he had received them.

### Mentoring by Example

Many individuals will miss this stained glass industry giant, and the industry, as a whole, will miss his example. He was always humble, but proud of his work. He recognized the importance of continually developing his gift, and he sought out ways to help encourage others. In a day that promotes selfishness and boasting, Parrendo shined a light on the path to happiness through living his life by example. He found his gift, worked to develop it, and touched many lives while giving it away.

Parrendo's death is a sad event throughout the stained glass community, but his death, just like his life, should be looked on as an inspiration. If you are new to glass or need help, find someone like Nick Parrendo. And if you have the experience and talent that he forged, find someone to mentor to help pass it along. This would be a great way to commemorate his life. GA

Visit [americanglassguild.org](http://americanglassguild.org) for more information on the American Glass Guild, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to encouraging and promoting the creation, conservation, and history of stained, leaded, and decorative glass.



*Parrendo painting in his studio during an AGG workshop, July 2012.*

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