

# Artist's panels add color, warmth to church walls

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PHOTOS BY MARC M. SCHULTZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER Niskayuna artist Gerri Moore created 14 "Stations of the Cross" paintings for St. George's Episcopal Church in Schenectady's Stockade section.

Three years ago, some pictures appeared on the walls inside St. George's Episcopal Church, a church in Schenectady's historic Stockade District that dates back to Colonial Days.

They were Stations of the Cross, a series of images depicting Jesus



Christ on the day of his crucifixion, but they were unframed, made of paper and very contemporary.

“They were awful,” says Gerri Moore, a Niskayuna artist and member of St. George’s for 51 years.

Moore volunteered to paint the 14 Stations in a more traditional way, in oil paint on wood panels, and donate her work to the church.



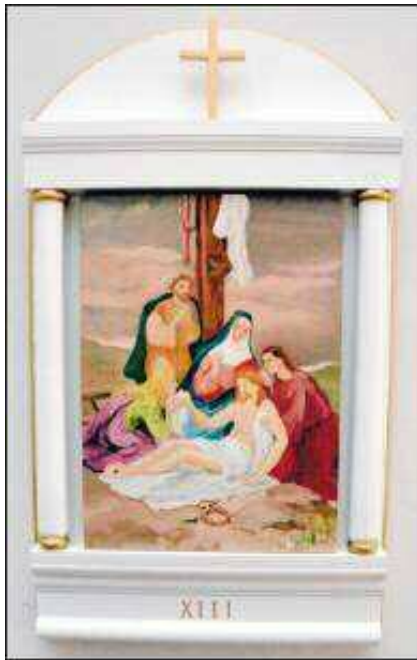
Christopher Henry, a senior warden at the church, designed white, gold-trimmed frames for the 8-by-10-inch paintings, and he and his father, cabinet maker Gordon Henry, built them out of scrap lumber. The two men also donated their work and materials.

On Sept. 20, the Stations were dedicated in a special ceremony of prayers and songs. Each painting was blessed and then hung on the wall.

Moore knew she wanted to be an artist when she was a young girl at Schenectady's Woodlawn Elementary.

“I wanted to go to art school, and my Dad said you have to do something where you can earn a living. So I became a teacher. And then I taught art,” she says.

Moore earned a bachelor's degree at SUNY Potsdam, and when she was 50 years old, she enrolled at SUNY Albany, where she earned her master's in fine art.



Her paintings are often about people, family and friends. For many years, Moore focused on painting her eldest son, Jimmy, who is mentally challenged, and his friends.

Moore lives in Niskayuna and Vero Beach, Florida, with her husband, Jim, a retired General Electric Co. engineer.

The couple has three children — Jimmy, John and Jessica — and two grandchildren.

**Q:** How long did it take to do the 14 paintings?

**A:** About a year and a half. And it took them about a year to do the frames.

**Q:** Did you do research?

**A:** I looked up the Stations of the Cross. I went to one of the Catholic stores and I bought cards that have pictures of the Stations.

**Q:** What was your process? Did you paint them in order?

**A:** No, I started with different ones. I chose the easiest one to start on. I would use the cards as a ground base, to see the figures and the robing. I would use the figures where they were and get them in perspective. I took what I needed and I left out some things. There might be a horse in the background or a temple. I didn't need those details. Then I used my palette, my colors, for all of them.

**Q:** What was it like to paint religious scenes, images of Jesus?

**A:** It was a wonderful thing to do. When I was painting them, I would

contemplate. I felt the warmth. I enjoyed it.

**Q:** What was your challenge with this project?

**A:** That they weren't intrusive. Because St. George's has always been a classic church. I didn't want the stations to be too bright because St. George's is subdued and has a low-key atmosphere. But I think they were small enough that they didn't overpower.

**Q:** Where did you do the painting?

**A:** Most of the work was done in my studio in Florida. In this particular bedroom, there were big windows, and I'd have the light all the way around. I'd go up and my cat would be in the window. Lily slept on the windowsill when I painted the Stations.

**Q:** And this favorite cat also appears in one of the paintings?

**A:** I put Lily in the First Station of the Cross.

**Q:** What is your painting style?

**A:** I like bright colors. I like reds and I love magentas. Sometimes it can be very bright. I like to use a lot of paint. And I usually have a painterly style. When I did abstracts, I would really work really with just color. **Q:** With the oil paint and handmade frames, these paintings could hang at St. George's for a long time. **A:** Yes, forever. They are my legacy.

**Q:** What are you working on now?

**A:** I'm doing a portrait of a woman in Florida who fascinates me. Her name is Annie. She used to be a model for Estee Lauder. She's close to 90. She came over and posed for me. I'm also working on my family. I went from painting Jimmy, all Jimmy, now I paint my grandson, who is 3, and my granddaughter, who is 10.