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Beards was commissioned to create stained glass depicting the 12 stations of the cross in the sanctuary of First United Methodist Church.

Stained glass memories

Beard's Decorating Center honors loved ones with stained glass pieces

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After resident Faye Farmer's husband died in 2000, she wanted to memorialize him. Beards Decorating Center designed and installed a stained-glass window in her church, Bethel Community, a small country church just north of Kirksville.

Beards customized the window — like they do with all their customers' designs — to honor Farmer's Navy days in World War II. They placed anchors at the bottom corners of the two-paned window and featured an open Bible in the middle of the top pane.

A few years later, a tornado hit Bethel Community Church, blowing the top pane out of the window frame. Farmer called Burt Beard, vice president of Beards, to figure out what to do. They searched for the pane to see what they could salvage and were shocked by what they saw approximately half a mile from the church.

"The window was entirely destroyed, all broken up, but the Bible was intact," Beard said. "We told people afterwards, 'The word of God stayed strong.' The window was trashed, but the Bible was intact."

Beards immediately began repairing the top pane, starting with the Bible and trashing the rest. The window now is repaired and reinstated in Bethel Community Church, once again honoring the memory of Farmer's husband.

Requests for stained-glass window repair was actually Beards' gateway into that art, Beards employee Norma Stanley said.

"It was back in '77 or '78," Stanley said. "We were starting to get repair work. People were needing church windows repaired — a lot of the church windows around here are 100 years old."

Stanley said the history behind each stained-glass window is one of her favorite parts — they're so old and often have a story. Working with stained glass also is something Walt Beard,

Burt's father, always wanted to do, Stanley said. After his father's passing in 1995, his mother became president of the company, and Burt continued the art.

Beard said he grew up at the shop, hanging around as a kid and grew to love what the company does.

"My dad passed it on to me, and I'll pass it on to the next generation down the road," Beard said. "Everything we do is from generation to generation."

Beards, a family-owned business founded in 1916 by George Fellers, originally was named Fellers. When Fellers' daughter, Gladys, married Walter Beard Sr., the name was changed to Fellers and Beards. When Walt Beard came back from fighting in World War II, he changed the name to Beards.

Throughout the years, they've adapted their work, adding to the services they offer.

"You see the Pittsburgh Paints sign, and you think paint is all we do, but we do so much more," Beard said.



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Burt Beard draws designs for all the stained glass windows the family-owned business produces.