

The Chapel of the Presidents was part of the original design of the National Church as planned by the local congregation representatives along with a committee from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian denomination in the mid-1960's.

In the narthex of the Chapel, on the wall facing the front of the chapel is a single ribbon of brass sculpted outline detailing the head of President Dwight David Eisenhower along with a portion of the inaugural prayer which he wrote and prayed just before giving his inaugural address as the 34th President of the United States.

The wall at the left contains the Memorials Archives Case holding notebooks which detail each memorial gift to the congregation, along with a list of the many donors. Donations for special memorials are still received to this day and information about the giving program is available through the Memorials Committee of the Session. The case also contains a complete listing of military members of the congregation who represent individuals within the United States military, serving all over the world – who have their membership here with this congregation.

Within the Chapel are pews brought to this site from the former National Church on Connecticut Avenue and were a portion of the pews within the nave of that sanctuary. There are 17 memorial plaques on the pew ends denoting Presidents who have worshipped in the National Church during their presidency.

Six windows in the nave section depict some specific Presidents of the United States. Starting at the back with President George Washington taking the oath of office with a Bible; President Abraham Lincoln delivering his Gettysburg Address; President Theodore Roosevelt addressing the concerns of conservation; President Woodrow Wilson proposing the League of Nations, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt making a plea for “The Four Freedoms” (*Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want*). The last window depicts President Dwight David Eisenhower in 1954 signing the bill into law which added the words “Under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance.

In the chancel area in the front is the communion table with the open Bible - and behind it is the pulpit with an eagle representing the role of the government, and a 50-star surround representing the 50 states within the nation.

Above the pulpit is a marble tester with a cast bronze Celtic cross representing our Scottish Presbyterian Heritage through the reformation leader John Knox. This cross was donated to the church by the Women's Association, designed and sculpted by Mrs. Miley Tucker Frost a member of the congregation. The cross was dedicated on Good Friday in 2001.

To the left of the pulpit is the baptismal font (a gift from the William Brown Alexander V. family) and surmounted by a small marble cross donated by the SKIFF Mariner Club of the church. Behind this font is the five lancet transept window depicting various religious traditions present in the country and the theme of the windows is *The Struggle for Religious Freedom*.

Of special interest in this chapel is the prie-dieu [a type of prayer desk intended for kneeling in private prayer use]. This particular kneeler was used by President Dwight Eisenhower when he was baptized and was received as member of this church by the Reverend Dr. Edward L. R. Elson in a private ceremony, with the Session of the congregation, on February 1, 1953.

In the balcony Choir Gallery is a second Aeolian-Skinner Organ. This instrument of 38 ranks and three manuals was a gift of the Hemann Allan Family and installed at the same time as the Great Organ in the main sanctuary. The pipes visible at the front of the gallery rail make up the Positiv (*Pose-ah-teev*) Organ division of the instrument, which is used for solo recital work. The main ranks of pipes are shrouded in the far back wall behind an acoustical cloth grill.

The Chapel is used for a variety of religious services including, but not limited to weddings, funerals, and other small worship services. The chapel seats 100 persons, 35 people during post-COVID-19 social distancing.

SOURCES: From archival materials in the Chapman Archives of the church and utilizing information written By Walter E. Besser with editorial advice from The Reverend Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, Senior Minister - 1970 ■ This information is a portion of the Guide Book Material for Docents created in 2013 to support the tours programs of the church. The National Presbyterian Church – 4101 Nebraska Avenue, NW – Washington, DC 20016