

Chilmark Community Church drawings

By **Abby Remer** - October 23, 2024

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The exhibit was held at the Chilmark Public Library. —Dena Porter

Virginia Stone and Anne Ganz pay a loving homage to the Chilmark Community Church they so adore in their exhibition of engaging drawings, at the Chilmark library through Oct. 31.

The 45 works by the two artists fill the space, and convey a sense of community.

Stone's candid compositions place us in the pews, peering about at the sanctuary around us. Her pieces capture specific members she sketches on Sunday mornings, and exude a quiet air of devotion.

Members sit attentively, preachers deliver sermons, and musicians perform.

With additional images of an elaborate chandelier, a bouquet on the altar, and views outside the window, you can almost hear the service going on in the background.

There are a few drawings of the outside of the church that Stone did during the pandemic, when services were held outdoors. The one of the top of the steeple against a solid dark background includes several



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seagulls flying by, including one carrying a rainbow-colored mask: "At the time, we were getting into the issue with the Methodist Church that they didn't want to allow gay or lesbian preachers, so the rainbow fits with that."

Stone, who trained academically, sketches in brown pencil at church, and sometimes comes back for more details and adds color at home.

Stone was actually the one to encourage Ganz to start sketching on Sunday mornings, too.

Where Stone's works are realistic, Ganz is an illustrator with the quick, spare markmaking of a cartoonist. She alludes to scenes with a minimum of detail. She adds words to capture a moment in time, whether members are drinking coffee after the service, or community members at pizza night, a town meeting involving the church, or people serving at lobster roll meals.

One of Ganz's pieces depicts Stone sketching during a sermon with the words "Free to Draw" boldly printed on top. And that's what she has done her whole life, starting as far back as she can remember.

Ganz credits her first-grade art and history teachers here on the Island as the two significant early influences in her life. Later, it was Turkish coffeehouse posters, Persian miniature paintings, and the French artist Honoré-Victorin Daumier, whose many works offer commentary on the social and political life in France from the 1830 Revolution to the fall of the second Napoleonic Empire in 1870.

For this show, Ganz has enlarged her small notebook drawings to quite large pieces, increasing the immediacy of her style. She sketches in pen and ink, and then scans the images on her computer, adding color through a software program, and sometimes enhancing the resulting print with a colored pencil.

The exhibit came about at Stone's initiative: "I always felt like I needed to do something with my works, and when Anne started drawing, I thought, We need to show these, and we need to do it now. We felt it was good for the Chilmark Church to have the promotion, because we are doing a lot."

In addition, they were celebrating their disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church to become an inclusive, independent community church, with a half-time pastor supported by members and friends, and the summer Flea Market and lobster roll sales.



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“Then this spring, when we were celebrating our disaffiliation, Ron Rappaport, our local lawyer who had helped us, suddenly passed away,” Stone explains. “So we decided we would dedicate the show to Ron, and all the proceeds will go to the church endowment fund for some of the money we spent during the disaffiliation.”

Stone notes, “If anyone is interested in going to a religious institution, they might check us out, because it’s a very special little place. And we do a lot. Many people who come to our pizza night, and those who help sell or buy the lobster rolls, are not our Sunday morning congregants. We have changed our name, and no longer belong to the Methodist Church — we are a community church, and people can come and be part of the community aspect.”

Ganz adds that she hopes “viewers will also walk away with the freedom to draw!”

“Chilmark Community Church Drawings” is on view at the Chilmark library through Oct. 31.

