

Proposed mosaic for the Church of St Paul, Bedford, January 2024.

A note on the artist: Jim Blackstone, Saint Dunstan Icons.

'Saint Dunstan Icons' is the business name used by Dr Jim Blackstone (www.dunstanicons.com). In early 2023, Jim co-founded the Chichester Workshop for Liturgical Art (www.chichesterworkshop.org) alongside artists Aidan Hart and Martin Earle, in association with Chichester Cathedral: this is a unique project for making, training and teaching in the skills and the related theology of liturgical art (that is to say, art serving the Church's life of worship). He is based near Chichester, working practically on commissions in a shared workshop, and also teaching apprentices and others, including providing regular teaching for a group of iconographers based in Bethlehem ('The Holy Land Iconographers').

Of particular relevance to the proposal for St Paul's Church is a mosaic that Jim made in 2022 as part of a three month residency, titled 'The Art of Workshop', in Chichester Cathedral itself. This mosaic of Saint Dominic was commissioned by the Cathedral originally for the Cathedral's Canons' Vestry, but through popular interest it was placed on a purpose-built oak stand by the Lady Chapel in the area of the shrine of Saint Richard, where it remains to date (November 2023). An image of the mosaic has been used in online and offline publications variously by the Cathedral, including on the front of the Cathedral's recently rewritten Vision statement.

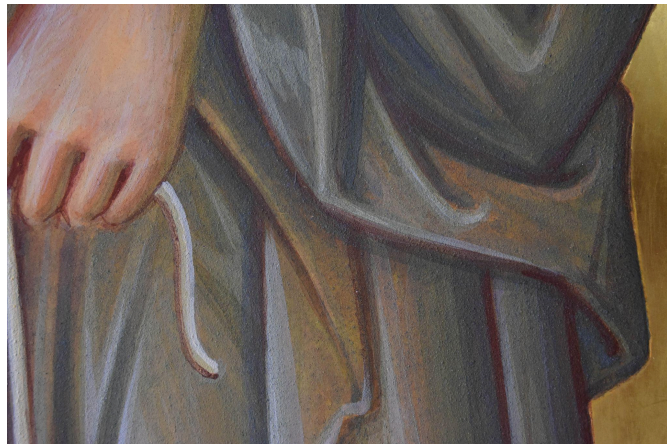




Mosaic of Saint Dominic for Chichester Cathedral

Jim initially trained in mosaic, using the Ravenna (or double reverse) method, under Aidan Hart, during which time he assisted in making a mosaic for a church in Texas. He uses traditional methods and the highest quality materials including tesserae ordered from Venice and the surrounding area.

Another Cathedral commission that he has recently completed is a panel icon of St Andrew for the north transept of St Davids Cathedral, about 90cm in height. Fitted by hand to a wall niche, this icon was made from oak and tulip wood, gesso, gold leaf and egg tempera.



Panel icon of Saint Andrew for St Davids Cathedral

Further, a panel icon painted by Jim was recently offered as a gift to His Holiness Pope Francis by the Lord Bishop of Chichester, in October 2023, in the course of the Synod in Rome.

And, in December 2023, Jim shared with Martin Earle the [Grand Prize](#) in the 2023 Sacred Art Competition given by the Catholic Art Institute (United States) for a 3 metre high double sided crucifix made for St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Aberdeen, UK.

Aside from the above, he has worked variously on panel icons for churches and individuals, and exhibited. He has also assisted in preparing and painting church wall paintings in the UK (in Warwickshire, Lancashire, and Shropshire).

Prior to working as an iconographer, Jim worked in a residential social setting with emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children; as a portrait painter; in a contemplative monastic community; as a teacher in London secondary schools (at St Dunstan's College in Catford and at St Paul's School in Barnes); in university lay chaplaincy (at Clare College, Cambridge); and as an ordained minister in the Church of England (in the Dioceses of Southwark and London), among other things. He has been secretary to the Society for Ecumenical Studies in the UK and has been a participant reporter in a World Council of Churches Faith and Order Consultation.

He studied Theology and Religious Studies at Peterhouse, Cambridge. He later completed a doctorate on the thought of the Orthodox saint Gregory Palamas at Clare College, Cambridge. He authored a book based upon this research, published by Peter Lang.