

We often receive questions about St. John's stained-glass windows. In this 150th year of our existence, we researched the history of them and here it is:

The earliest picture we have of the little white church is 1900 and there was no stained glass seen. In 1931, a Confirmation picture taken outside the church shows stained glass, but the time they were installed remains unknown. When the "new" church, now our Fellowship Hall, was built, salvageable portions of those original windows were repaired by Royce Polfus and used on either side of the entrance doors and on the west wall.

The first stained-glass window in our present church, installed over the sliding glass doors, was given by the Cassel Family in memory of their beautiful child, Daniel, who left this world too soon. Within a few years, the other windows followed.

Because our church is named for St. John, the artist who designed our windows (including the first window) drew her inspiration from the Gospel of John. Each of the 3-paned windows represent a part of the Triune God. If you stand in the sanctuary facing the windows, the left one is the Son, or Christ, window, the middle is the Holy Spirit window, and the Father, or God, window is on the right. The images over the emergency exit doors are simply extensions of the adjoining window.

The Christ window is the interpretation of several verses from John, including 1:9 "The true light was coming into the world" and 8:12 "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life." The window shows the light of Christ emerging from the darkness. (This is the only window whose drawing was modified. In the initial sketch, the light of Christ looked like a giant spider, so it was redrawn.) If you look at our very first stained glass window above the sanctuary sliding doors, you will see a blue circle about Christ's head and shoulders. The circle motif is repeated in the Christ window and is the only one of the three which contains many true circular patterns.

The center window, the Holy Spirit window, is based on John 1:32 "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove" and, in chapter 16, Jesus speaks of the coming of the Spirit. If you look in the upper right-hand corner of the center window, there is the image of a dove, the Holy Spirit. In the water of the Spirit window are two fishes above and below a loaf of bread, a reminder of the miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand in chapter 6.

The intensely colored and powerful window on the right is the God window, the Creator, interpreted from John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the

Word was God. What has come into being was life and the life was the light that shines in the darkness . . .and the darkness does not overcome it."

Interpretations of the Gospel of John also connect the 3 windows. Beginning in the Christ window, "the living water" starts its flow moving across the Spirit window into the God window, 4:14 "a spring of water, gushing to eternal life," and 7:38 "out of the believers' heart shall flow rivers of living water," and, in chapters 1 and 3, the waters of Holy Baptism.

A vine originates in the Christ window, growing larger as it moves across into the God window, from 15:1 "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower" and from the same chapter, v. 5 "I am the vine, and you are the branches." It is a reminder of our journey toward God, our growth in faith. The vines' course toward God passing through the waters of the Spirit window is an interpretation of 3:5 "no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."

The yellow stained-glass, "the light of life," seen predominantly in the God and Christ windows (5:26 "For just as the Father has life. . .so he has granted the Son also to have life"), is also seen in the Holy Spirit, the dove (6:63 "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless").

An interpretation of the Gospel of John could be lent to our very first stained-glass window. It is comforting and reassuring to see Christ watching over not only the children in the window, but His children in the sanctuary, and beyond. Ch.10:14 ". . .I know my own and my own know me". A Good Shepherd, if you will. We tend to associate this concept with Ps. 23, but John 10:1-18 tells of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

The vine and water starting at the Christ window, both of which Gather, Grow and Go, are a reminder of our mission statement.

The 150th Anniversary Team hopes this background explanation is helpful. The Team echoes the words of Pastor Zamzow, pastor at the time of the windows dedication: May the contemplation of these beautiful windows aid our meditation upon the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

In Christ,

Betty Stevens



The South Entrance with windows from our original church building.



Our first stained glass window in our new church building.



*The series of windows in our sanctuary based on the
Gospel of John.*