



Grace Lutheran Church
Elgin, Texas

Stained Glass Windows
and Sanctuary
Appointments

The Fall into Sin

Genesis 1-3

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ... and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:1, 31 KJV). That pristine condition of God’s perfect creation did not last, however. This window is a sort of snapshot of the moment the woman gave-in to the temptation to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The serpent, shown on the branch above the man’s head, led the woman to doubt God’s Word that they would die for the disobedient eating and lured the woman to eat by promising her god-like status if she did. The man, through whom God’s Word had been given to the woman (and thus for Dr. Luther also the woman’s pastor), also seems ready to eat the fruit.

They ate. Their eyes were opened. They were ashamed, and they tried to hide from God. Yet, they could not escape the judgment of the Lord, Whose Presence in the Garden is indicated in the window by the beams of light. Before He delivered that judgment to the woman and man, however, He made the first Gospel promise while cursing the serpent:

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:16 KJV)

Jesus fulfilled this “proto-Gospel” promise when He crushed Satan’s power on the cross, even as Satan killed Jesus. The Liturgy’s Proper Preface for Lent recalls this, saying that Satan “who by a tree once overcame” was likewise overcome “by a tree”. Indeed, the cross for us becomes the tree of life from which we eat and live forever (Genesis 3:22; Revelation 2:7).

After delivering the law and the Gospel to the man and the woman, God made the first sacrifice to cover their shame (Genesis 3:21), which bloodshed also points to Christ’s innocent sacrifice for us. Though forgiven, Adam and Eve still suffered the consequences for their sin: God drove them from the garden and they eventually died, returning to the dust from which God formed them. (Genesis 2:7; 3:19)

Satan's Kingdom

Romans 5

“As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; ... so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12 KJV). It is fitting that the symbol below The Fall into Sin window reminds us of sin's and Satan's power over the world and over us.

This “original sin” we inherit at conception (Psalm 51:5) means, as we confess in the Liturgy, “that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against [God] by thought, word, and deed”. This original sin leaves all, no matter their age, spiritually dead and unable to believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him (Augsburg Confession II:1-2; Small Catechism, II:6).

Birth from above of water and the Spirit (John 3:5) cleanses us of all of our sin, but until delivered from this vale of tears even the baptized remain saints and sinners: unable to always do the good they want to do or to not do the evil they know they should not do (Romans 7:19).



The Flood

Genesis 6-9

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:5, 8 KJV). The condemnation of the law and the deliverance of the Gospel are both evident in the earliest verses of the account of the flood.

The Lord decided to wipe corrupt humankind off the face of the earth, except for Noah and his family. Noah and his family were also sinners, but they found righteousness in God’s grace—that is, they lived by faith (Hebrews 11:7). At God’s direction, Noah made an ark and brought in two of every living creature, to also keep them alive. God Himself shut them in.

Then, the fountains of the great deep and the windows of heaven opened, and rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. For another 150 days, the waters covered the entire earth (at one point twenty feet over the highest mountain), and every living thing upon the face of the earth was destroyed except for Noah and those with him in the ark.

God remembered Noah (and all those with him) and sent a wind to make the waters recede. The ark came to rest, and, some time later, a dove returning to the ark with a freshly plucked olive showed Noah that the waters had receded. Shortly after, God sent Noah out from the ark, and the first thing Noah did was to build an altar to the Lord and worship Him.

The flood and Noah’s deliverance were both an end, of sorts, to sin and a new beginning. Similarly, in His preaching, Jesus used the flood as an example of the suddenness of His return (Matthew 24:37-39). So it was that Dr. Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* (Baptism, question 4) teaches us that:

The Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with sins and all evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Confession and absolution occurs at the Baptismal “fountain”.

Baptism and Church

1 Peter 3

“The ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:20b-21a KJV). It seems odd to say *water* saved Noah and his family, but that is how the Holy Spirit inspired St. Peter.

We pass through the Baptismal waters to enter into the Church, what Dr. Martin Luther in the “flood prayer” of his Baptismal rite called the “holy ark of Christendom” (AE 53:97). The main body of a church building is called the “nave”, from the Latin word for ship, which was from the Greek.

The New Testament is full of “ship-as-church” imagery. On more than one occasion, St. Peter climbed from the sea into from a ship (Matthew 14:28-32; John 21:7, 11), and those in the ship with Christ are safe from the stormy seas of life (see Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:22-25; but compare Ephesians 4:14).

Over this ark of the Church is the sign of God’s covenantal promise: the rainbow (Genesis 9:8-17).



Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22

“The angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven ... And said ... because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; ... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;” (Genesis 22:15-8 *KJV*). The third window shows this moment, the artist envisioning Abraham and Isaac embracing after the ram God provided had been sacrificed on the altar.

Abraham and Sarah had waited so long for Isaac to be born. Space here does not permit recounting their whole story; Genesis 15-21 covers it. All of us, but especially those who have waited some time for the conception of a child, can probably imagine the anguish that could have prevented Abraham from “passing” God’s test of faith: to sacrifice Isaac.

Perhaps the most important part of this account comes when Abraham and Isaac are on their way together. Isaac asks where the lamb for the offering is, and Abraham tells him that God would provide a lamb, which He did. (Genesis 22:6-8, 13.)

Lest we think that the lamb God provided meant that Abraham did not make the sacrifice, remember that the author of Hebrews says that Abraham *did* offer Isaac and, figuratively, received him back from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Abraham’s willingness to offer his one and only legitimate son as a sacrifice beautifully prefigures God the Father’s great love in offering as a sacrifice His only-begotten Son, Jesus (Abraham’s descendant in Whom all the nations of the earth are blessed). Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life. (John 3:16-18.) Abraham is an example for us in this faith, too; Scripture tells us repeatedly that “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Indeed, the righteous live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11).

The Agnus Dei

John 1:29, 36

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29 KJV). Abraham said God would provide a lamb, and John the Baptizer identified God’s lamb as Jesus. (*Agnus Dei* is Latin for “Lamb of God.”)

The precise “Lamb of God” expression used by John is only used in this chapter of St. John the Evangelist’s Gospel account. Jesus is also called the Lamb some thirty times in the Revelation to St. John, but a different expression is used. The general idea is that of sacrifice, which Jesus made of Himself with no complaint (Isaiah 53:7; Jeremiah 11:19).

The congregation sings to the *Agnus Dei* in the liturgy of the communion service (see *The Lutheran Hymnal*, page 28). This canticle, or liturgical song, is not just a repetition of John’s words or addressed to Jesus in heaven; rather, it is sung to the Lamb present on the altar in the Sacrament with His very Body and Blood sacrificed—given and shed—for the forgiveness of your sins.



Passover

Exodus 12

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:13 *KJV*).

Abraham and Isaac’s descendants ended up enslaved in Egypt, but God sent Moses to lead the people out of bondage. When the Pharaoh would not free God’s people for them to worship God, God sent a series of ten plagues to demonstrate His power and superiority over the gods of Egypt. The last and worst plague was the sending of the Destroyer to kill every firstborn.

God also provided a way to escape the destruction of the tenth plague, however: the believers were to sacrifice a spotless lamb and take its blood to mark the side and upper posts of the houses in which they ate the lamb. God would see the blood and pass over the house. It happened just as God said it would. Next, Pharaoh let the Israelites go, and they left in great haste, without time to knead their bread and let it rise (it was “unleavened”).

God instituted a way for the people to remember His deliverance. Every year they were to celebrate both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was restricted to those who were of the household of faith, admitted by the rite of circumcision (Exodus 12:43-45). Of the Passover, the children were taught: “It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses” (Exodus 12:27).

Jesus greatly desired to celebrate the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:15), but the last time He did, the teaching changed. Jesus, the Spotless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19), gave His own flesh and blood for believers (marked by the circumcision of Baptism) to eat and drink in order both to be delivered from slavery to sin and its plague of death and to be freed to worship God. When God looks at us who believe, He sees not the filthy rags of our sin (Isaiah 64:6), but robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).



Chalice and Host

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7 KJV). The chalice (cup) and host (wafer, called “host” from the Latin for “sacrifice”) remind us that Jesus fulfills the Passover as He gives us His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins.

The beginning part of the communion liturgy (called the Proper Preface) during the Easter season says that Jesus “is the very Paschal Lamb who was offered for us and hath taken away the sins of the world.” (TLH, p.25). That means He is our Passover Lamb, as “Paschal” comes from the Greek word for “Passover”.

As the people of Israel ate the physical body of the lamb slain for their deliverance, so we eat the real, physical body of the Lamb slain on the cross for our deliverance. Christ’s presence with us in the blood of the chalice and the body of the host is not spiritual only, but it is also physical.

Note that on the opposite side of the Sanctuary the windows are flipped, as it were. Paired with Jesus’ Institution of the Sacrament of the Altar is a small window reminding us of the Lord’s Passover.

Moses and the law

Exodus 19-34

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand ... the skin of his face shone ...” (Exodus 34:29 *KJV*). This is what our fifth window shows: Moses’ arrival before the people with the second set of stone tablets of the then-renewed covenant; Exodus 19-34 tells why a second set and renewal were needed, and it tells more about Moses’ face (as does 2 Corinthians 3:7-18).

God Himself wrote on the tablets all the details of the covenant, though we usually think of them as containing only the Ten Commandments. We also usually think of the first table as commandments pertaining to our love of God and the second as centering on our love of our neighbors (see Matthew 22:34-40). Even knowing this, however, we are still outside—though not far outside—the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:28-31).

Yet, without the law we would not know that we had sinned (Romans 3:20; 7:7). The law is a mirror to us, showing us our sin. Not only are all people sinful from conception (Psalm 51:5), but also all have actually sinned (Romans 3:23; 5:12). Moreover, when we break the law at one point we are guilty of breaking it all (James 2:10). Given all that, it is hard for us to see the commandments as God intended them: descriptive statements of how His people would live their lives since He delivered them.

The law was grace, but we have received grace on top of grace, God says through St. John, continuing, “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17). Jesus kept the law perfectly, as we cannot, and He paid the price for our not having kept it. This Good News calls us to repent of our sin, confess it, and to believe in Jesus. Under the new covenant (or testament), God’s teaching is written on the tablets of our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3).

We generally call the Bible’s teaching of what we are to do or not do “the law” and its teaching of what God has done and still does for our salvation “the Gospel”. Note well that there are also other, broader uses of both of these words in the Bible.

Legal freedom

Romans 10:4

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4 KJV). “End” here can mean both “termination”, “cessation”, and “goal”, “culmination”. Jesus Himself said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). When He died on the cross He boldly proclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30), which could refer to the law.

Yet, we remain under the law, for we are both saint and sinner. The “saint”, the person redeemed by the work completed on the cross, now does not live under the law (Romans 6:14-15), but the “sinner”, the old Adam or original sin remaining in us, still does. These two natures are in this life always at war within us (Romans 7:7-25).

St. Paul and Martin Luther, following St. Paul, detail well the life free from the law but still under it. See St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians, especially chapters 3-6, and Martin Luther’s 1520 writing *On the Freedom of a Christian*, found in volume 31, pages 327-377, of the American Edition of *Luther’s Works*.



King David

1 Samuel 16-2 Samuel 24

“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:16 *KJV*), so God spoke to David through Nathan the prophet. Our sixth window shows the great King David on his throne, holding a copy of the *Torah* in keeping with God’s prophecy through Moses (Deuteronomy 17:18).

David the shepherd boy killed a lion to protect the sheep he tended. David the musician played a lyre for Israel’s first human king, Saul. David also served Saul as armor bearer and commander of the army, after David killed the Philistine giant, Goliath, with a sling and a stone. David the king was Israel’s strongest king and the measure of every king that followed.

As great a king as David was, however, he was also a great sinner. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, murdered. Holy Scripture says, “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (2 Samuel 11:27). The Lord confronted David through Nathan the prophet. David confessed: “I have sinned against the Lord”, and Nathan absolved him, saying: “The Lord also hath put away thy sin” (2 Samuel 12:13). David’s penitential psalm speaks of that forgiveness and wonderfully reminds us of Baptism (Psalm 51:2, 7).

As great a king as David was, Jesus is greater. Jesus is even greater than David’s son Solomon, who succeeded David on the throne and “represented the height of Israel’s splendor and became the pattern of the Messiah”. Jesus is the greatest King (we see His crown in connection with the cross under the crucifixion window, and we see Him pictured with a crown in the window over the altar). Our all-powerful King, God and Man, rules over all creatures (believers and unbelievers). This merciful Son of David rules all relations, all situations. But, the King of Kings especially governs and protects His Church and leads it to glory. Though His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), everything on earth and in heaven serves the one purpose of gathering and preserving His Church!

Psalms & Star

Psalm 95:2

“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms” (Psalm 95:2 KJV; and The Venite of Matins).

Psalms were written by David and served as the prayer book, or hymnal, of the Old Testament, as they are a part of hymnals today. David not only wrote Psalms used as hymns and parts of the liturgies, but he also saw to it that the services of the Lord were carried out, and he planned and supplied for the building of the Temple that Solomon saw completed. God’s Presence moved from Moses’ Tabernacle to Solomon’s Temple and is with us in this place today. As the worship in David’s day was “liturgical”, with chanting and such, so liturgical worship provides the context for us as we receive God’s gift of forgiveness in Word and Sacrament.

Legend says that the Star of David, sometimes called Magen David (Hebrew for “Shield of David”) comes from a symbol on David’s or his soldiers’ shields, but archaeological evidence and only relatively-recent use of the symbol do not support this claim



Elijah and Elisha

2 Kings 2:1-18

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11 *KJV*). This is the moment depicted by our final Old Testament window, which serves to commemorate not only Elijah and Elisha, who are pictured, but also the Old Testament prophets who are not pictured and all their successors.

When the kingdom once united under David and Solomon was divided and ruled by less faithful men, God sent prophets to call the kings and their subjects to return to the Lord from their false gods, such as Baal, a golden calf. Elijah participated in a contest of sorts between Baal and the Lord (1 Kings 18:18-46). In the contest, after Baal failed to answer his 450 prophets by igniting a bull set on wood, the Lord answered Elijah by dropping fire that consumed his water-drenched sacrifice, wood, stones, soil, and even the water left in a trench around the altar. The people fell on their faces and confessed that only the Lord was truly God. True faith then was in the Lord God of Israel alone.

Elijah, who recruited his successor Elisha at God’s direction, saw with his own eyes the ultimate salvation about which he prophesied. Elijah, along with Moses, appeared with Jesus at Jesus’ great Epiphany on the Mount of Transfiguration, where they talked about the exodus (or deliverance) that Jesus was about to bring about in Jerusalem (Luke 9:30-31). Greater than Moses and Elijah, Jesus, as God’s greatest prophet, suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all humankind. The forgiveness Jesus won is available to anyone who has true faith in Jesus alone.

God’s taking Elijah to heaven bodily points to Christ’s ascension. God’s taking Elijah to heaven on the clouds and Christ’s ascension behind the clouds also point to Jesus’ coming on the clouds of heaven, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead. Every eye will see Him, and He will take those with faith in Him to be with Him forever. Eternity with Christ in heaven is the fulfillment of all every true prophet ever spoke.



Preaching Office

2 Kings 1:8

“He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins” (2 Kings 1:8 *KJV*). Elijah’s camel’s hair garment and leather belt identified him as a prophet (as they identified John the Baptizer in Matthew 3:4), and Elijah also was closely connected with an altar and water. Unique clothing also identifies today’s prophets, pastors, who are also closely connected with the water of Holy Baptism and the altar from where they serve Holy Communion.

As Elijah and Elisha performed miracles with water and food, so pastors today use water and food as means for the giving the forgiveness of sins—miracles brought about by Jesus’ power. Jesus also continues to carry out His prophetic office through the rightly called and ordained occupants of His preaching office. The cloak of the Old Testament prophet was connected with the gift of the Spirit, as is the pastor’s stole. See *TLH* #483:1 for how one hymnwriter connects in song the prophets and the pastors.

The Nativity

Luke 2:1-20

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7 *KJV*). We have turned the corner from the windows on the south side of the Nave to the windows on the north, and we have turned from Old Testament accounts to those of the New. First is the Nativity of Our Lord.

By divine inspiration St. Paul writes, “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4 *KJV*). St. Luke’s Gospel account is a little more specific, locating Jesus’ birth “when Cyrenius was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:2 *KJV*). The Eternal Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among His creatures (John 1:14) was the long awaited fulfilling of many Old Testament prophecies, going all the way back to the garden and the promised Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15).

As St. Paul continues, the Incarnation was “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5 *KJV*). Yet, the Incarnation alone did not save us from our sins. The *Baby* Jesus being born does us no good unless He grows up to be the *Man* Jesus Who dies for us. The Nicene Creed clearly makes the connection, confessing of Jesus: “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary And was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate”.

The church father Irenaeus writes, “On account of His great love, [Jesus] became what we are, so that He might bring us to be what He Himself is.” The blessed or happy exchange of the Incarnation is ours most concretely in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Note that the window’s artist takes liberty in putting a flying, effeminate angel at the stable. While angels do not have wings, they are so pictured to show they are not ordinary creatures. Similarly, the gold disc around the heads of the Christ child and the angel (called a nimbus, aureole, or halo) shows them to have God’s glory and be holy. The shepherds represent us, who make known that which is told us concerning this Child (Luke 2:17).



The Second Adam

1 Corinthians 15:21-22
“Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22 *KJV*). The symbol in the lower portion of this window recalls God’s creating man, Adam, from the dust of the ground. This symbol is most properly paired as it is with the Nativity window.

St. Paul at length in Romans 5:12-21 compares Adam and Christ. St. Paul notes that Adam’s sin brought death and made many sinners but that God’s grace and the gift that came by Christ brought life and made many righteous.

The birth of Christ, the second Adam, brings re-creation. Re-creation is available to everyone who believes and is thereby united to Christ in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. St. Paul writes: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17 *KJV*).

Those who are made new in Baptism still daily repent, putting their old Adam to death so a new man comes to
17 life (*Small Catechism* III:4).

John & Our Lord's Baptism

Matthew 3; Mark 1:1-12; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:15-36

“Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:16-17 *KJV*.) Thus, our second New Testament window represents this event, The Baptism of our Lord as well as its instrument, John the Baptizer.

Filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb (and thus an example of infant faith even before birth), John the Baptizer was the last Old Testament prophet. John had the power and spirit of Elijah (he even wore a raiment of camel's hair as Elijah had). He prepared the way for the Lord, giving knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins. He did not hesitate to preach the law even when it might have cost him his life, as it did when he condemned Herod the tetrarch, who had divorced and remarried. He preached the law in order to call people to repent and believe the good news, and John especially emphasized the fruits of repentance, those things that people who have repented and believed should do in their lives.

When Jesus, Who had no sins or sinful nature for baptism to wash away, came to John, He had to convince John that Baptism was necessary to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:13-15). Thus, Jesus appeared a sinner among sinners and in the water of the Jordan essentially took on the sins of the world. He sacramentally involved Himself with sinners and involved them with His own death. The Father's voice from heaven (shown by the rays of light) accepted Christ's righteousness and obedience substituting for sinners' unrighteousness and disobedience.

Dr. Martin Luther's baptismal hymn well summarizes the Baptism's importance (quoted from *ELH*, #247:1):

To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ, / The Father's will obeying
And there was by St. John baptized, / All righteousness fulfilling.
There He did consecrate a bath / To wash away transgression,
To rescue us from bitter death / By His own blood and passion,
New life for us creating!

Baptismal Shell

Matthew 28:19

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4 KJV).

As Jesus involved Himself with sinners sacramentally, sinners sacramentally involve themselves with Him. The shell can remind everyone of their own baptisms, for shells are sometimes used to pour the water on the baptized as the window shows John pouring water on Jesus. (Jesus most likely was not immersed!) At the font, regardless of whether a shell is used, believing sinners receive forgiveness of sins, are delivered from death and the devil, and are given eternal salvation.

The three persons of the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—were all present at Jesus’ Baptism, and the Trinitarian Name given in Baptism (Matthew 28:19) is represented in the window by the three drops of water.



The Lord's Supper

Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-38

“The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, ‘Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.’ After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, ‘This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 *KJV*.) The third New Testament window shows the institution of the Lord's Supper, and we recall our Lord's words that once and for all empower the weekly celebrations of His Sacred Meal in our midst and time.

Jesus Himself said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53 *KJV*). The Church early on knew how important this meal was, and so it devoted itself to this fellowship of the breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42), and it did so in the privacy of house churches, away from those who did not believe (Acts 2:46). Likewise, faithful congregations today practice “Closed Communion” in keeping with the historic practice of the Church as evidenced in Holy Scripture (for example, Romans 16:17) and the Lutheran Confessions (for example, Apology 15:40).

Overstating the importance of the Sacrament of the Altar for the life of the Church is probably impossible. For, Christ's Body and Blood given in, with, and under bread and wine give the forgiveness of sins, and thus life and salvation. Bodily eating and drinking do not do this alone, of course, but along with Christ's words and the faith that receives them. To deny Christ's real, physical presence in the Sacrament, Dr. Martin Luther states, is to be outside the Christian Church.

The Sacrament administered in keeping with the Gospel (and as a jewel in the setting of the historic Christian liturgy) not only “shows forth the Lord's death until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26) but is a mark of the church (Augsburg Confession 7:1).

“What higher gift can we inherit?” the hymnwriter asks (*TLH* #315:9, line 1), answering and praying with the refrain, “Lord, may Thy body and Thy blood / Be for my soul the highest good!”



Bloody Door

Exodus 12

“When He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you” (Exodus 12:23 *KJV*). As the lamb’s blood around the door marked households to be spared death when the Passover was instituted, so the blood of our Passover Lamb spares us from eternal death.

As noted with the Passover and Chalice and Host windows on the east side of the nave, there is a strong connection between the Old Testament Passover type and the New Testament fulfillment of it. Dr. Martin Luther’s Easter hymn makes this strong connection quite explicit (quoted from *TLH*, #195:3, lines 3-4):

See, His blood doth mark our door;
Faith points to it, Death passes o’er,
And Satan cannot harm us.

Hallelujah!

Jesus longed to eat with His disciples the particular Passover at which He instituted the Lord’s Supper, for He would not eat it again until its eternal fulfillment (Luke 22:15-16; Revelation 19:9). May we also so long to eat and drink this heavenly food!

The Crucifixion

Mt 27:27-61; Mk 15:16-47; Lk 23:26-56; Jn 19:17-42

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33 *KJV*.) The Crucifixion Window holds the fourth and center place among the New Testament windows, even as its purpose, our redemption, holds the central place in the Christian faith and its revelation in Holy Scripture. On the cross the first Gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled (and so are all other Gospel promises) as the Seed of the Woman crushes the Serpent’s head, overcoming by a tree he who by a tree once overcame.

The harsh brutality of recent popular portrayals of the crucifixion is not present in this artist’s representation of the event, that is, the blood and other marks of the whipping and beating Jesus endured before even getting to the cross are not shown (neither is the title that was on the cross, though loin cloths that probably were not present are shown). By no means, however, should the absence of blood be taken as a denial of the suffering Jesus experienced, which fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5 *KJV*).

The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day incited the people and the Romans against Jesus, and the Roman soldiers carried out the crucifixion. The people accepted the blame (Matthew 27:25), and Pilate denied responsibility (Matthew 27:24), but the Church has always confessed that each individual sinner is the final cause of Jesus’ death. The following verse from a popular Lenten hymn by Paul Gerhardt is typical (*TLH* #171:4, see also his #172:4):

I caused Thy grief and sighing

By evils multiplying / As countless as the sands.

I caused the woes unnumbered

With which Thy soul is cumbered, / Thy sorrows raised by wicked hands.

As told by John 19:25-27, the window shows, among those at the foot of Jesus’ cross, His mother and the disciple whom he loved. As Jesus entrusted Mary’s care to John, so Jesus entrusts the Church she represents to his ministry and his successors.



Nehushtan

Numbers 21:4-9

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15 *KJV*). Jesus here recalls the saving symbol Nehushtan (2 Kings 18:4) and emphasizes the Means of Grace.

In Numbers 21, the snake-bitten Israelites were as good as dead, but were given new life by faith in the promise of God attached to a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole. In John 3, Jesus illustrated to Nicodemus that sin-plagued people who are as good as damned are given new life by faith in the promise of God attached to water that connects one to the Son of Man lifted up on a cross.

Just as looking at the serpent lifted up on the pole did not save without faith, so Baptism and the other Means of Grace do not save a person like some magic charms but save only when the person receives their benefits in faith. That saving faith is in Christ, lifted up to draw all to Himself (John 12:32).

Our Lord's Resurrection

Mt 28:1-7; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-10; Jn 20:1-18

“The angel answered and said unto the women, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, Who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” (Matthew 28:5-6 *KJV*) The fifth New Testament window is about Our Lord's Resurrection, though we do not see Jesus in the window any more than the women saw Him in the empty tomb.

After coming back to life and descending into hell to proclaim victory there, Jesus declared victory on earth by showing Himself to be alive, not as a mere ghost, but as flesh and blood that could be touched (John 20:27) and could eat (John 21:15). We know that “the third day He rose again from the dead” (Apostolic Creed) “according to the Scriptures” (Nicene Creed); that is to say, more than fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, the Resurrection of our Lord is reported by the New Testament Gospel accounts. No mere symbol, the resurrection did actually occur and means something, for if Our Lord's Resurrection did not occur, then our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Jesus' own teaching told of His coming death *and resurrection*, so one of the things the Resurrection does is prove that Jesus' teaching is the truth. The Resurrection also proves that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Father accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. Perhaps more than these things, however, what matters to believers is that they, too, shall rise. Jesus is the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20 *KJV*). He said, “because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19 *KJV*) and “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26 *KJV*).

Since God is God of the living not of the dead (Luke 20:38), cemeteries are really just places for empty bodies to sleep. When we look for our loved ones who are dead to this world, what the angels asked the women might be asked of us: “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5 *KJV*).

It might be said the Church's answer comes in the traditional Easter greeting: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, hallelujah!

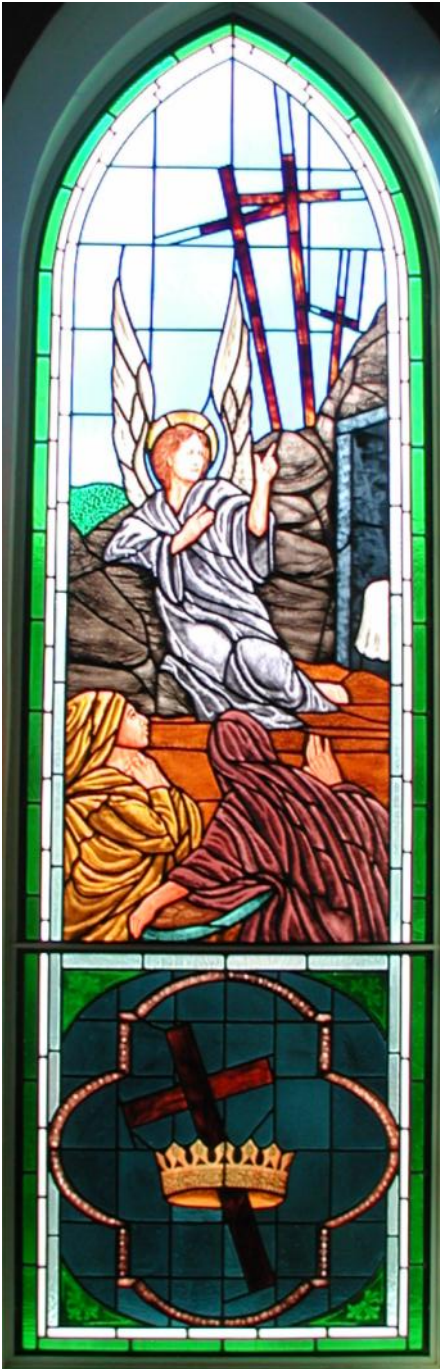
Cross and Crown

Luke 24:26

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26 KJV). While one might expect a crown of thorns with the cross, this window shows a cross and glorious crown. Jesus clearly taught that for Him and for His followers the path to glory included a cross (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:20).

Crowned with a glorious crown, Jesus our King rules over all creatures (Matthew 28:18), governs and protects His Church (John 18:36-37), and leads His Church to glory (2 Timothy 4:18).

To those who follow Him, enduring their own crosses, Jesus also promises crowns, thrones, and a heavenly banquet, of which the Sacrament of the Altar is a foretaste (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; Revelation 3:21). His is a theology of the cross, not a theology of glory. There is a great reversal, and the world is turned upside down. Things are not as they appear: defeat is victory; and water, a sinful man’s words, and bread and wine give the forgiveness that victory won.



The Ascension of Our Lord

Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:6-11

“He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9 *KJV*). The sixth New Testament window pictures this moment: the end of the Lord Jesus Christ’s post-Resurrection appearances and the beginning of the period when He would no longer show Himself on earth in what had been His usual, comprehensible, bodily mode of presence.

Too often people think that at His ascension Jesus left this world and thus is no longer around. By Divine inspiration, the Gospel accounts of Matthew and of John (not to mention the shortest ending of Mark) somewhat avoid that impression; they do not include an account of the Ascension. Nevertheless, the Ascension is an important part of what is believed about Jesus, for even in St. John’s account it is implied (John 3:13; 20:17). Especially worth noting, however, is how St. Matthew’s account at its end emphasizes Jesus’ eternal presence with His Church through Word and Sacrament (Matthew 28:16-20). This is Jesus’ incomprehensible, spiritual mode of presence. Through this mode Jesus forgives sins, working through the preaching office He established and its use of water, bread, and wine.

Some believe, supported by mistranslations of the Bible, that Jesus cannot be with His Church in this way, that heaven is a definite place and that Jesus is confined there and so cannot be present everywhere with His human nature. They deny both His omnipresence and omnipotence; true faith is quite to the contrary.

In the Apostolic Creed we confess that Jesus “ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty”. Figuratively seated at the Father’s right hand, Jesus is honored by the Father and totally controls all for the benefit of His Church. The Creed continues, “From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Indeed, the period of His presence with His Church only according to the spiritual mode will end at His second coming. As the angels at His ascension said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11 *KJV*). “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20 *KJV*).

Luther's Rose

Song of Solomon 2:1

“The Christian’s heart is resting on roses / E’ven while beneath the cross it reposes.” Martin Luther wrote this couplet to summarize his “Coat of Arms”.

Though Song of Solomon 2:1, “I am the rose of Sharon,” is sometimes taken to refer to Christ or even to Mary, there is evidence that Luther also saw the delicate rose as representing the Christian amidst the thorny world (2:2).

Luther describes how the black cross set in a heart reminds that faith in Christ the Crucified saves. The heart in the white rose shows that faith brings joy, comfort, and peace. The rose in the sky-colored field signifies that joy of the Spirit and faith is but the beginning of the heavenly joy to come.

Though this Luther’s Rose window was not originally planned to be paired with the Ascension window, Divine Providence resulted in their union, and it is not without validity. We now embrace heavenly joy by the hope of our own ascensions, which hope is itself built on Christ’s ascension (*TLH* 216:1, line 1).



Pentecost

Acts 2:1-41

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come... there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-4 *KJV*). The seventh New Testament window, the fourteenth and final nave window, portrays this moment that some identify as the beginning of the Christian Church.

The Old Testament festival of Pentecost brought to a close the 50-day Feast of Weeks (also known as the Feast of Harvest). At that time, the people were to offer a tribute offering of the first fruits of their harvest. On that very festival day, the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit and thereby brought in three-thousand souls as the first fruits of the harvest of the New Testament Church. That New Testament Church continues to celebrate Pentecost 50 days after it celebrates the Resurrection of our Lord.

St. Peter’s sermon that Pentecost day called the event the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy regarding the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). The Holy Spirit continues to be poured out, though neither early Christian believers nor today’s believers receive the Holy Spirit with tongues of fire as did the twelve apostles. Rather, new converts to Christianity have their own personal Pentecosts at the Baptismal font, not with flame, but with water and the Word. As Jesus’ own Baptism was the occasion for the Holy Spirit’s descent to Him, so the Holy Spirit descends to His followers in Baptism (John 3:5).

On Pentecost and in the days following “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47 *KJV*). Likewise today, the Lord, adds to His Church, not human beings. He does this as believers continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (Word) and the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers (the Sacrament of the Altar) (Acts 2:42), in the same ways He gives the forgiveness of sins Jesus won for all people on the cross. The gains today may not seem as numerous, but the Lord continues to add to His Church daily, even when by earthly measures and from a human perspective it gets smaller and smaller.

Scroll and Sheaf

Matthew 9:37-38

“The harvest truly is plenteous” (Matthew 9:37 *KJV*). The Lord of the Harvest not only sends out the workers but He also takes care of growing the plants (Mark 4:26-29; 1 Corinthians 3:5). God gives birth to, grows, and harvests with His Word (Isaiah 55:10-11). (The scroll does not represent only the Old Testament law, for Jesus Himself found Gospel there, as in Luke 4:16-22).

The Pentecost connection between the Old Testament offering of harvest first fruits and the New Testament gathering of the Church is significant. Holy Scripture frequently describes God’s work in agricultural terms, especially in Jesus’ teaching, with parables such as the sower and soils (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23, et al.) and the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

The latter parable especially makes clear that the Church only appears to have bad people in it—a separation is coming when the evil will be set ablaze and the good gathered into heavenly barns.



Christ in judgment

Matthew 25:31; Revelation 22:13; Exodus 25:17-22

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory (Matthew 25:31 *KJV*). This is the scene pictured in the first window one observes when entering the nave, though this, the most prominent of all the windows in the sanctuary of the church, is really the last window in the series. Christ’s return in judgment is not a terrifying scene for Christians, for it is the consummation of all their sure and certain hope.

There are several noteworthy things about the portrayal of the Savior. Christ’s head is adorned with a glorious crown and surrounded by an aureole (or nimbus) indicating His heavenly origin. He is robed in priestly robes and holds in His hands the world of His creation, which He has governed and providentially directed for the benefit of His Church (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Christ is accompanied by two heavenly creatures. Though in the passage quoted above Jesus says He will be accompanied by angels, the artist in the window has pictured Him with heavenly creatures more resembling Cherubim, such as those placed outside the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Some think of Cherubim as a “class” or “rank” of angels, but at a minimum they are among the one company of heaven that joins in the eternal worship of God, as the communion liturgy confesses (and see the role of the Seraphim as described by Isaiah 6:1-7).

Not just coincidentally, at the bottom of the window is the top of the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, where God met with the people of the Old Testament both in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. The Mercy Seat was guarded by Cherubim (Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6-9; Hebrews 9:5), and Cherubim also stood in the Most Holy Place of the Temple (1 Kings 6:23-28). The heavenly creatures are clearly associated with God’s Presence.

More importantly, however, the Mercy Seat is also connected with blood shed for atonement—both the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16) and Christ’s sacrifice in the New Testament (Romans 3:25). In the window, Christ Himself

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appears above the Mercy Seat pictured, and the altar below the picture of the Ark's Cover is for us the Mercy Seat, where Christ Himself is Present with the forgiveness He won on the cross.

Other symbols in the window include symbols for the three Persons of the Trinity (the All-seeing Eye of the Father, the Jerusalem Cross for the Son, and the Dove for the Holy Spirit) and the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, representing Christ who is the beginning and end [Revelation 1:8; 22:13]).

Knees that do not bow before the Lord now (at least in spirit) will do so when He comes again in glory (Philippians 2:10).

The Altar Reredos

John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:23; Revelation 4:7

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 *KJV*). The Incarnate God is the focus of the reredos (the decorative panel behind the altar), with a statue of the Savior, a crucifix, and statues of the men God inspired to write the four accounts of the one Gospel. (They are shown with their very ancient symbols corresponding to Revelation 4:7.)

The statue of the Savior is the central piece of the reredos, and, by the reredos’ prominent placement, the Jesus statue is also the focus of the whole sanctuary. His right hand is making a gesture used in blessing, which gesture recalls both His own two natures, human and Divine, and the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus is shown with the stigmata, the marks of His crucifixion (as the hymn says, “rich wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified” [*TLH* 341:3]). His clothing resembles the chausible worn by the celebrant at the Eucharist, for He is the true Celebrant at every celebration of the Sacrament.

Directly below the statue of the Savior is a brass cross with a wooden corpus, or body, of Christ. Such a crucifix is a time-tested and beautiful reminder of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins. Protestants who object to crucifixes often wrongly claim an empty cross is a better witness to the resurrection (though the cross would have been empty even if Christ had not risen). We properly preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23 and 2:2) in Word and art. (Some also object to any use of statues and images, but their objections are often based on a wrong understanding of Exodus 20:4; God took human flesh in Jesus, and we can picture Him.)

The statue on the upper left of the reredos is that of St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist. St. Matthew was a Jew and, before His call by Jesus, he was a tax collector known as Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), and therefore an outcast in Jewish society. He holds a scroll, perhaps of the Old Testament, for St. Matthew’s account more than the others emphasizes the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. By St.

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Matthew's feet is a representation of the "Divine Man" because his account also teaches well about Christ's human nature.

On the upper right is the statue of St. Mark, also referred to by the New Testament as John and as John Mark. Though not an apostle sent directly by Jesus, St. Mark was apparently a friend of Peter's family and was a co-worker of St. Paul and Barnabas (see references to Mark in Acts, Colossians, 2 Timothy, Philemon, and 1 Peter). Mark's account records a detail that is thought to tell of himself (14:51-52), but in general the content is thought to be the preaching of Peter, for whom Mark is said to have been an

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interpreter. Some tradition holds that St. Mark's account was written in Rome after Peter's death. The lion with St. Mark's statue represents his account's telling of Christ's royal dignity.

The statue of St. Luke is on the lower left of the reredos. The likely-Gentile "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:10, 11, 14) was also a co-worker of St. Paul's, accompanying him on several missionary journeys and writing of their trips together in the first person plural, "we" (for example, Acts 16:11-17). St. Luke's Gospel account can be said to reflect St. Paul's influence and St. Luke's own education (for examples, the highly literary and Greek natures of the account). St. Luke holds the writer's quill and a book, for he was carried along by God to write not only the Gospel account that bears his name but also the book of Acts. St. Luke's Gospel account especially highlights the sacrificial nature of Jesus' life and work, which the bull at his feet represents.

Last but not least is the statue of St. John, apostle and evangelist, on the reredos' lower right corner. St. John's uniquely theological account complements the more blow-by-blow, "synoptic" (taking the common view) accounts of the other evangelists. The disciple whom Jesus loved (his own reference to himself in places such as John 19:26 and 21:20) is shown holding the writer's quill and a scroll. In addition to the Gospel account that bears his name, St. John wrote three epistles and a record of the Revelation Christ made to him. Notice that this brother of the apostle James is the only evangelist without the beard of age. The eagle at St. John's feet represents the work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, Who plays an especially prominent role in John's Gospel account.

The reredos also features two other noteworthy symbols. First, there are above the heads of the evangelists grape leaves and fruit. Though with heads of wheat the grapes are taken as a symbol of the Eucharist (as on the communion rail), here on the reredos they can be connected with Jesus' teaching that those who remain in Him, the True Vine, will bear fruit (John 15:1-8). Second, there are twelve crosses, which can symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles—in either case the fullness of the Church, for twelve is also a number of completeness.

Sacramental Furnishings

Rom. 6:3; Jn. 20:23; Heb. 13:10

There are several furnishings in the sanctuary and chancel that are specifically tied to the Sacraments of the Church: the Font, Altar Rail, and Altar.

The Baptismal Font is the first of these encountered as one makes his or her way to the front of the nave. The Font is appropriately placed where people pass by it on their way to the altar, reminding all that it is through Baptism that God makes us His children and brings us into the Church. Some churches place a greater emphasis on this symbolism by placing the font at the door entering the nave and leaving the font open so people can use its water to make the sign of the cross and thereby further remember their baptisms.



This Font, made by Classic Design Cabinets, is the only completely new furnishing in the sanctuary (other than the pews). There is a metal cross at the top of the Font's lid that both functions as a handle and reminds the baptized that they are baptized into Christ's death (Romans 6:3). The eight sides of the Font are highly symbolic, relating primarily to the Eighth Day, though the eight survivors of the flood in the ark also come up in connection with Holy Baptism (Genesis 8:18; 1 Peter 3:20-22).

God's work of creation counts seven days (Genesis 1:1-2:3), so the eighth day begins a new week and is the start of something new, most significantly God's work of redemption. Newborn boys, including Jesus, were circumcised on the eighth day (see Genesis 17, especially 10-12; Luke 1:59), and circumcision and the eighth day thus marked the infants' new life among God's people of the covenant. (The eighth day also plays a significant role in Old Testament cleansing rituals, such as those in Leviticus 14 and 15.)

With Holy Week thought to in a way repeat the seven days of creation and with Jesus rising on the first day of a new week

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(John 20:1), the Resurrection extends God's work past the Sabbath and makes the eighth day the eternal day of the new creation or re-creation. Judaism similarly regarded the eighth day as the time of the new heavens and new earth. (Jesus "ordaining" His apostles the evening of that eighth day may also be significant; see Leviticus 9:1.) Since the resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples for the second time on the eighth day after His resurrection and first appearance (John 20:19), the second Sunday after Easter also counts as an eighth day of a sort and is in that sense the conclusion of the Easter proclamation.

The eighth day was also the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which recalled both the people of Israel's temporary status on God's land and His delivering them from slavery (see, for example, Leviticus 23:36; 25:23; Numbers 29:35; Hebrews 11:13-16). Once on the eighth day of this festival, Jesus, God in the flesh Who "tabernacles" among His people (John 1:14), declared Himself to be the source of living water by referring to a ritual pouring of water on the altar (John 7:37-39; confer John 4:13-14; Revelation 7:17; 21:6). Thus, the Baptismal Font is for us the source, or fountain, of the living water, or the water of life, that cleanses from sin and uncleanness (see, for example, Psalm 36:9; Zechariah 13:1). After all this, it is not surprising that beginning in the early church baptisms were done on the eighth day after the child was born or that some fonts have eight sides.

There are two different symbols on the sides of the Font. The eight scallop shells are usual symbols of Baptism (see the second New Testament window and the left window in the chancel). The four crosses can be taken to represent the four directions in which the disciples would go making disciples of Christ the Crucified through baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). Note also that the four directions of this world plus the four directions of the next equal the eight sides of the font.

The stainless-steel bowl inside the font holds sufficient water for the golden shell inside to scoop up the water to be poured on the person being baptized. Though water itself must be used, the way the water is applied (namely, by sprinkling, pouring, or

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immersing) is an indifferent matter for Lutherans. Though Jesus stood in the water of the Jordan River, John likely poured water over His head, as the water was shallow (see the second New Testament window). Early in church history, moving, or “living”, water was used for Baptisms, then larger tanks in special Baptismal rooms known as baptisteries were used, and eventually the church came to use fonts as are widely used today.

The next sacramental furnishing one moving forward in the sanctuary encounters is the Altar Rail (also called a communion or chancel rail). It is well said that Christians live their whole



lives between the Font and Altar Rail, having entered the Christian community through Baptism and

being sustained in that community by the Sacrament of the Altar. Between the Font and Altar Rail is also where the pastor stands and pronounces Holy Absolution, an exercise of the Office of the Keys into which he was placed and which he uses for the benefit of the Church, pastor and people together, to whom the Keys were entrusted (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:17-20; John 20:22-23).

The exercise of those Keys by the pastor loosing or binding sins directly relates to who is communed. Genuine Lutherans practice Closed Communion, as the true Church has always done. Only those who are united in the one confession and proclamation of the true faith join in the Sacrament of the Altar, which in part symbolizes that unity. Everyone is properly concerned about who communes (1 Corinthians 11:27-32), but the pastor, as the steward of the mysteries, has ultimate responsibility (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). No one is communed unless they are first instructed, examined, and absolved (see AC_L XXIV:5-6, 36; AC_G XXV:1; AP XV:40; XXIV:1, 49).

The Altar Rail, which came to be used in the Medieval ages, provides a convenient place for communicants to gather in small groups to kneel and receive the Body and Blood of their Lord. Kneeling is optional, and those who do not kneel or are unable to kneel are not judged to be less pious than those who do. The open middle and ends of the rail serve the practical function of access

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but also make it clear that the rail is not there to divide pastor and people nor to indicate that worshipers may not approach God. (Remember the curtain in the temple that served that “dividing” purpose was ripped at the moment of Jesus’ death; see Matthew 27:51.)

It may be noted that the lectern and pulpit ideally would be located outside of the Altar Rail, since the Word is intended for all, but in this case the desire to have the rail available to communicants without having them ascend steps took precedence over such symbolism.

The corner supports between the rail and its vertical posts are decorated with grape vines and clusters of grapes. As noted previously in discussing the reredos (the decorative panel behind the altar), such vines and grapes by themselves relate to Jesus’ teaching about the need to remain in Him, the True Vine, in order to bear fruit (John 15:1-8). Note how this use of the vine and grapes ties the rail to the reredos, and thus to the altar itself, making the rail an extension of the altar.



At the rail the communicants receive bread that is Christ’s Body and wine that is Christ’s Blood. The symbol of the wheat on the rail posts call to mind the bread, and the symbol of the grapes call to mind the wine. The many kernels of grain that are united in the one loaf and the many grapes that are united in the one wine are also symbolic of the many individuals united through the Sacrament in Christ’s one Body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).



The final sacramental furnishing is the Altar (pictured on the next page). The English word “altar” comes through German from the Latin for a place of burnt sacrifice. Faithful servants of God have long built and used altars: Abel, Noah, and Abraham (see Genesis 4:4; 8:20; 12:8; 22:9), just to name a few. All the sacrifices ever offered in the Old Testament pointed to and were surpassed by the New Testament sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the altar of the cross (Hebrews 10:10).

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The Lutheran altar can be said to serve a three-fold purpose. First, the altar is a constant reminder of God's redemption through His once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Second, the altar is the location of God's presence among His people (His mercy seat, as it were) and therefore the direction of prayers and praise. Third, the altar is the place where the elements of the Lord's Supper are consecrated (set apart as holy) and from which they are distributed.

Note that when the pastor speaks to God he faces the altar, and, in general, when he faces the congregation he speaks on God's behalf. The proclamation of the Word's of Institution of the Lord's Supper (and the corresponding action) are done facing the side but are directed to the congregation. Facing the side facilitates access to the missal stand and its altar book.

The symbols on the front of the altar include two sets of Greek letters. The Alpha and Omega on the left and right are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (also shown in the window over the altar). Jesus called Himself by these letters (Revelation 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). The Church uses these letters to recall God's eternity and infinity. The other group of letters form an abbreviation used for the name "Jesus" in early Greek manuscripts of the Bible (with the bar that indicates the abbreviation forming a cross with the middle letter) and also are the first letters of three separate Greek words, those for Jesus, Son, and Savior.



Word Furnishings

Ephesians 6:17; John 12:19; Psalm 150:4

There are several furnishings in the sanctuary and chancel that are specifically tied to the proclamation of God's Word: the lectern, the pulpit, and the organ.

The lectern (from the Latin for "reading") serves as the place from where Holy Scripture is read, generally without the type of explanation given in a sermon. Such readings of God's Word are as old as God's Word itself. In Jesus' day, worship in Jewish synagogues included a reading from the prophets, one from an historical account, and one from the Torah. (For example, Luke 4:14-22). In the Christian church the three readings generally became Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel. All Holy Scripture, St. Paul writes, "is given by inspiration of God," most importantly to make its hearers "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15-16).

Lecterns are common in Lutheran church buildings in America, but this furnishing is not absolutely necessary. Scripture can also properly be read from the horns, or ends, of the altar, with the first and second readings taking place on the liturgical south end of the altar and the Gospel reading taking place on the liturgical north end of the altar. The Gospel reading may also take place in the center of the assembled congregation (signifying the Gospel taken into the world), with the pastor processing there accompanied by the processional cross and perhaps also torches (signifying Christ who is the Light of the World [John 8:12]).

Grace's current lectern is the lectern from the previous sanctuary slightly modified and refinished. The symbol of the sword paired with the open Bible reflects St. Paul's statement in Ephesians 6:17 that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and the symbol also brings to mind another Biblical figure of speech: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing



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even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 *KJV*).

Properly discerning the law that shows us our sin and the Gospel that tells us what Jesus did about our sin, the pastor, as the living voice of Jesus, proclaims and explains God’s Word from the pulpit. The pulpit thus serves a practical function, but the pulpit can also indicate that a sermon generally will be preached. The pulpit’s prominence in Lutheran church architecture also reflects the centrality of preaching in Lutheran worship. Though prophets prophesied in many different places and Jesus likewise preached from various locations, including Peter’s boat (Luke 5:1-3), sermons today are properly preached from the pulpit in order that listeners can fix their attention on what is being preached and not on a preacher moving to and fro as if on a stage (though “pulpit” comes from the Latin for “stage”).

The sermon itself is a “word of exhortation” (Acts 13:15; Hebrews 13:22), which comes in fulfillment of too many passages to mention all here (Luke 24:47 is but one example, and

note there preaching of law and Gospel). The Epistles—perhaps even the Gospels—may have been sermons.

Grace’s current pulpit, like the lectern, is the pulpit from the previous sanctuary placed on a pedestal and refinished. (The pedestal serves the practical function of raising the preacher to a height visible and audible from the whole sanctuary, including the balcony.) Though open in the back, the pulpit would have eight sides if enclosed, and in that way it carries some of the same eighth-day symbolism as the Baptismal Font (see the February 2005 issue of *Grace to You*). The Chi-Rho symbol on the front of the pulpit combines the first



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two Greek letters of the word for Christ. Christ crucified is the focus of all good preaching (1 Corinthians 1:23-24), and the symbol's placement on the front of the pulpit reminds the congregation that in the sermon Jesus Himself is also present preaching to them. The symbol furthermore brings to mind the words spoken by the Greeks in John 12:19, which many pulpits have placed where the pastor can read them upon entering the pulpit: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Another way Jesus is "seen" is by the use of the organ.

Instruments have been used in praising and worshipping God since Old Testament times. The general expression "instruments of music" is found repeatedly in the *King James Version* of the Old Testament (for example, 1 Samuel 18:6), as are specific instruments, such as harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and cymbals (for example, 2 Samuel 6:5). Voices (1 Chronicles 15:16), trumpets (1 Chronicles 16:42, for example), an instrument of ten strings (Psalm 32:2, for example), and a viol (Amos 6:5) are also mentioned (though exact differences between all of these are not known). In the King James of Psalm 150:4, one can even find mention of an "organ", though what this refers to is probably something like a vertical flute or reed pipe, as other translations render that Hebrew word.

The musical instruments of the Old Testament were used in various settings, such as processions and worship centered at the tabernacle or temple. There is mention of the instruments being used in false worship, as well as their being used in true worship. In the case of true worship, the manufacture and use of the instruments are motivated by God's mercy and salvation (see, for example, 2 Chronicles 7:6 and Isaiah 30:20).

The various uses of the instruments in connection with true worship of the one true God make it clear that the people used them as part of their sacrifice of praise directed at God. At the same time, however, such praise of God also served the purpose of proclamation to the world, and thus it needed to be pure. The words that accompanied the music were thus more important than the music itself—a central truth about church music lost for a

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time in history and restored at the time of the Lutheran Reformation. Because the music serves the text it accompanies, organs and other instruments can be seen as word-related furnishings.

A strict definition of “organ” limits the instruments named to those with individual pipes sounded by pressurized air admitted by keyboard-operated valves. St. Augustine around the turn of the 5th century A.D., in commenting on Psalm 150, knew of instruments fitting such a description. In fact, there is evidence such organs existed as early as the 3rd century B.C. and developed in Greek circles. By the 2nd century A.D., before the legalization of the Christian Church, organs were heard in various secular settings and pagan worship contexts. Scholars are not sure why, but in western Europe between 900 and 1200 A.D., the organ came to be almost exclusively a church instrument, with other instruments even banned in some cases. Over time the organ’s role increased and its use spread. Though not at Luther’s time, under Lutheran influence large organs became closely associated with congregational singing.

Instruments are not primarily used in Lutheran worship for the sake of music without texts, and even with texts the music does not aim to manipulate emotions, though emotional responses to music are likely. Though organs and other instruments are used inside and outside the church, the style of music used in the church should never resemble that used in the world—the church is not to conform to the world but transform the world (Romans 12:2).

The organ presently in the sanctuary at Grace Lutheran Church is an expanded form of the organ that was in use in the previous sanctuary. That previous organ was built from 1987-1989 by Otto Hofmann of Austin under the consultation of Prof. Harold Rutz of then Concordia College in Austin. When dedicated on December 10, 1989, that original organ consisted of four ranks, or sets of pipes, enclosed in a swell box, for the organist to control the volume of sound.

Prof. Rutz, in consultation with then Tammy Boettcher and Norman Holmes, developed the schematic for the larger organ

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that would be necessary in the larger sanctuary. Components and additional technical work came from Pascal Boissonet and Michael Visser of Visser Associates in Tomball, Texas, and Larry Marowsky, a pipe organ technician of Jefferson, Wisconsin. More Grace members than can be named here contributed time and effort during the organ relocation and construction processes.

There are two main parts to the present organ. The original four-rank portion of the previous organ is on the right, in the swell box of the present organ, as are four more ranks and the original pedal pipes. Behind and including the large pipes on the left side in an unenclosed chest are the eight ranks of what is known as the “great organ”, as is a rank of wooden pipes added to the pedals of the previous organ.

The present organ has a total of 17 ranks of pipes controlled by two manuals (sets of



keys) and pedal. Some of the additional ranks came from the organ in the auditorium of Mary Hardin-Baylor University in Belton, which organ was dismantled and sold for parts while the expanded Grace organ was being planned. Other ranks were purchased by Norman Holmes. There are also plans for additional ranks.

Candles, Lamps, Lights, and Torches

Genesis 1:3-4; John 8:12

Aside from electric lights used to see, there are many different symbolic lights used in the holy space at Grace Lutheran Church. Among those symbolic lights are processional torches, candelabra, Eucharistic lights, the Sanctuary Lamp, Advent candles, and a Paschal Candle. The use of such lights has a long history, including the early use of oil lamps until candles became more popular (perhaps in the fourth century).

Though probably themselves originally strictly functional, all such lights now are primarily symbolic of Jesus Christ, Who said of Himself, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12, *KJV*). One might also trace the roots of such primary symbolism to such places as Genesis 1:3. Yet, many of these lights also have their own secondary, special symbolisms and uses.

Processional torches are special candles on tall staffs that generally accompany and illuminate the processional crucifix. (Those who carry such candles can be called torchbearers or lucifers, and he who carries the crucifix is a crucifer.) The torches and crucifix are generally placed near the Scriptures and may accompany them in processions.



The candelabra to the left and right of the altar are sometimes called office lights, since they are lit for “Offices” such as Matins and Vespers. These each have seven candles; seven is a number of completeness: God’s Trinity plus the four ends of the earth.

The Eucharistic lights are the two candles on the gradine (the raised shelf immediately behind the altar). These candles are generally lit only for the Sacrament of the Altar (also called the Eucharist), and such use is traceable back to medieval times.

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The Sanctuary Lamp (or Sanctuary Light or Eternal Candle) originally indicated the presence in a tabernacle on the altar of the Body of Christ reserved from the Sacrament of the Altar. Today, where the tabernacle and reserved Host are lacking, this Lamp is understood to symbolize the eternal presence of God in His Word and all Sacraments. Some such Lamps burn continuously.



The candles in the Advent wreath help mark the passage of time in the Advent season of preparing for Christ's coming. Whereas the three purple Advent candles indicate the season's penitential nature, the more joyful pink candle is used on Gaudete ("Rejoice") Sunday, the third Sunday in Advent. Some customs assign special meaning to each individual candle: hope, peace, joy, and love; or prophets, Bethlehem, shepherds, and angels. Strictly speaking, the wreath has four candles (the center "Christ" candle is an importation of the Paschal Candle), and the Advent wreath most properly is removed from the church for Christmas.

The name "Paschal" candle comes originally from the Hebrew word for Passover, which word through Greek came to refer to Easter in Christian usage. With its use dating back to the fourth or fifth century, this candle symbolizes the resurrection's victory over the darkness of sin and death. Placed in a large floorstand, the candle's size and decorations are also symbolic, reflecting in part the pillar of fire that led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. Other decorations (such as the cross, alpha, omega, and the current year) may be traced as is spoken:



Christ yesterday and today; the beginning and the end; His are all times and all ages; to Him be glory and dominion through all the ages of eternity. Amen.

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This “Easter Candle” burns near the Gospel side of the altar throughout most of the 50 days of Easter, and during other times, because of the connection between Easter and Baptism (Romans 6), it is placed near the Baptismal font and used for Baptisms and Funerals. (Some congregations have the helpful custom of giving candles lit from the Paschal candle to the newly baptized, who can then use such candles in remembering their baptisms.)

Other candles used at other times of the year are aisle candles, window candles, special Tenebrae candles, and candles for individual worshippers during Christmas Eve and Easter Vigil services. The old, three-candle candelabra may also be used in the chancel. On special festivals more light is always appropriate.

