

## **CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

### **Window Guide**

In 1926 the windows of Christ Lutheran Church were installed to illustrate the story of Jesus Christ. All church art began in order to help those attending learn more about God and Christianity. Back then, books were costly and rare; and very few people were able to read. Services were conducted in Latin and, out of a heightened sense of the holiness of it all, priests kept their backs to the congregation. People could not read along, nor see what the priest was doing, nor hear or understand what was being said! In all lands and ages, great paintings and magnificent windows were commissioned. The high cost and effort involved was a way that people could honor their faith and show their love and respect. The content was to help illustrate that faith. The windows were meant to inspire and inform.

#### **Common Themes of the Windows**

Notice the setting for each window is like a cathedral. Look at the fancy arches, spires, and domed shape over each picture. That motif is repeated in the large wooden altar and woodwork, the carvings at the side of every pew and the clear leaded glass of the panel of doors along the west aisle. The cathedral style of the woodwork around us matches the cathedral style of the windows and doors. Because our ancestors were doing this for God, there was loving attention to detail.

Also notice that the main picture in every window is set up so that it is as if a person sitting in the pew and looking out that window frame could see that actual scene. These windows were meant to melt away the walls and the miles and the years, allowing you to sit in church, glance out the window and see the Bible scene happening right outside the window. If, for some strange and unusual reason you got bored listening to the preacher, you could look out the window and see Mary and Joseph stopping to rest on their way to Egypt.

Most are paintings done on glass but all of the windows have narrow stripes of colored glass running down the edge of each picture. While some are blue and green, the windows that feature Jesus himself are striped in red and purple. Red symbolizes passion and purple stands for royalty. Additionally, red and purple colored glass are the most expensive because in order to create red, real gold has to be melted in.

Most of the windows feature a circle, enclosing three circles in it, with a triangle in the center, to symbolize the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Every one of the little windows along the lower wall, and most of the big ones, feature what's known as Luther's rose. That bluish flower with the red heart in the center, and the black cross on the red heart, was a seal Luther designed in 1530. He pressed that seal into melted wax to approve any writings going out under his name. It remains the symbol of Lutheranism. A concerted effort seems to have been made to make sure you knew you were in a Lutheran space.

Finally, all of the windows are arranged in the shape of a cross. The long part starts behind the altar with the birth of Jesus and ends with the back window of Jesus ascending into heaven. The story of his whole life is illustrated and lived out between those ends.

The shorter cross beam is from the Wise Men window to the window of the Empty Tomb. The feature that unites them the Parable of the Sower. Half of the parable is illustrated in the one window and half in the other. The windows are also paired by the image of palms under a shield at the very top and center of these two windows. Palm branches are a motif repeated in the windows that are part of the overall cross shaped arrangement of the windows.

## **The Windows**

**Nativity Annunciation Window** behind the altar begins our story.

*In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see-I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'* Luke 2:8-12

In this night scene four shepherds are gathered around their camp fire, resting together. One man's hat is on the ground. Perhaps he'd taken it off to go to sleep or it fell off when he was startled and frightened by the angel's appearance. The water jug, in the foreground on the left, is knocked over. In the top middle of the window, notice the star in the background. Just to the right of center, down low, is the figure of a dog. The distinctive ears and tail reveal a German shepherd! (Lutheranism was originally a German movement. A shepherd leads and protects sheep. A pastor is called a shepherd. So a German shepherd...)

### **Adoration of the Christ Child by the Wise Men.**

*The wise men set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* Matthew 2:9-11

Over Mary's head is a lantern. That, plus the wooden beams of the ceiling above it, set this scene inside a house, not a stable. The wise man on the right is offering a box of gold, recognizing Jesus' kingship. In front of him is an urn for the myrrh, an oil used when preparing a body for burial and beside it is a burner for the frankincense, a symbol of his divinity. Also on the floor is an opened container with a string of pearls spilling out, probably to portray the pearls of wisdom Jesus will share, which will be largely unappreciated.

Jesus' father, Joseph, stands to the left. If you look closely, you can see that he's gripping the edge of the table hard enough to bunch up the cloth. Jesus, on Mary's lap, is mostly unwrapped and exposed, which highlights his humanity. On the right, through an open door a servant waits under the stars with the wise men's animals.

Small picture panels surrounded by blue glass illustrating the **Parable of the Sower** are on either side of the Adoration window.

- To the left: *And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up.* Mark 4:4  
The small inset picture is of a flock of black crows eating the grain.
- On the right: *Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away.* Mark 4:5-6 That small inset picture is of scorched, rocky ground and barren fields.

### **Flight Into Egypt.**

*Now after the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went*

*to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'* Matthew 2:13-15

The palm trees in the background show the Holy family has stopped at an Egyptian oasis in the desert. On the right, Joseph is drawing up water from a pool near his feet while Mary and Jesus sit and rest. The donkey is on the left, behind them. The left forefront reveals the travel bag, walking stick and carpentry tools Joseph had tossed to the ground.

**Matthew**, the gospel writer

*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.* Matthew 9:9

A devout Jew would not shave, so the length and color of his beard, in addition to his thinning hair and receding hairline, portray him as old. This window has two medallions set into the side panels.

- On the left is a cup: *He said to them, 'You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.'* Matthew 20:23
- On the right is a candle: *And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.* Matthew 17:2

### **Jesus Blessing the Children.**

*Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. 'And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.* Matthew 19:13-15

There are two women, four children and a baby. On the lower left, one woman's water jug rests against her leg. The little girl on the right carries a rose, which is a symbol of love and martyrdom, presumably to give to Jesus. The only man in the picture, besides Jesus, is the apostle trying to turn the women and children away.

**Mark**, the evangelist

*Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.* 2 Timothy 4:11

He is writing down the gospel for us to hear every Sunday. Two panels flank him.

- On the left is a picture of the 10 Commandments, which is known as God's Law, carved on stone tablets.
- On the right is a Holy Bible. Together these panels make a statement that, in Jesus, the Law has been fulfilled and the Gospel is victorious.

### **Jesus in the Temple.**

*Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the*

*group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.* Luke 2:41-47

Jesus stands in the inner sanctum of the Temple; red velvet curtains are closed behind him. Books and scrolls, symbols of learning, surround him as he talks to the six rabbis. The varied headdresses of the rabbis indicate their international origins. Jesus' clothes are edged in gold to symbolize his royalty, even though no one else recognized it at that time.

### **Ascension**

After Jesus rose from the dead, for forty days he appeared to the disciples and taught them. Then: *The Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven.* Luke 24:51

Below and in the distance the town can be seen. Only eleven apostles are pictured because Judas has died but has not yet been replaced. The dove on top is the Holy Spirit, which came down from heaven upon Jesus at his baptism, and who comes to stay with us when Jesus rises to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Other symbols include the Alpha and Omega; and two crosses with the palm frond motif; one featuring the 10 Commandments on top of lilies; and the other of palms lying under a Bible. The theme is that the Law has been fulfilled and the Gospel is victorious.

### **Good Shepherd**

*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.* John 10:14

Jesus carries a lamb -the most defenseless and vulnerable- in his arms. Around him, he is crowded by one ram and many sheep, perhaps symbolizing a pastor and his flock. (A female shepherd in church wasn't part of the thinking yet.) It may also be significant that for twelve of the sheep, you can see their eyes.

**Luke**, the third evangelist who wrote the book of Luke and the book of Acts.

*Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.* Colossians 4:14

He seems to be the oldest one -almost bald, with a long beard. He has two panel insets.

- On the left is a rose and an inscription that reads, "God is love."
- On the right are lilies, and the writing on that says "innocence and purity."

### **Jesus with Mary and Martha**

*Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me. 'But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.* 'Luke 10:38-42

Martha stands with a water jug in one hand and a platter in the other. Behind her the table is set, revealing a pile of apples and a cup.

**John**, the fourth evangelist, also known as the beloved disciple. In the gospel he was described as a young man and of all the windows depicting evangelists, he is the youngest, as he has no beard at all. Each side of John's window contains a medallion.

- In the left medallion is a dove to symbolize the Baptism of the Lord: *John testified, "I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove and it rested on him."* John 1:32
- The medallion on the right features a lamb: *The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!'* John 1:29, 36

### **Jesus Appearing in the Upper Room.**

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.* John 20:19-20a

Jesus' hands have been punctured. Behind him, thrown on a chair, we can see the towel he had used to wash their feet three days earlier. Mary Magdalene stands at the edge of the room.

### **Empty Tomb.**

*As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.'* Mark 16:5-6

The left background depicts early morning. In the far background, just barely visible, stand three empty crosses. The first woman on the left is Jesus' mother, Mary. That royal blue robe that she was wearing when the wise men came at Jesus' birth, she wears now, as she has come to attend his body after his death. She leans on another woman and grieves.

The woman to the far right, with her back to us has her head uncovered and her hair is loose. That would be immodest in Jewish culture. She's the one Jesus defended when she washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. It's probably supposed to be Mary Magdalene. She carries a towel and a pitcher, ready to tend to our Lord's body.

But the tomb is empty. The crown of thorns and the wrapping that were on the body lay on the edge of the tomb.

The pair of panels that complete the **Parable of the Sower**, begun opposite, in the Adoration of the Wise Men window, are found here.

- To the left: *Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seed and they produced nothing.* Mark 4:7     The picture is of a briar patch.

- To the right: *Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit. Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one.* Mark 4:8 The picture in that panel is crowded with wheat.

And that's the whole story, of God come down from heaven as a baby announced to poor shepherds; who grew to a man who taught and performed miracles; who was killed for it; who was raised from the dead; and who remains with us and invites us to follow him to this day.

We are the descendants of the people pictured in the Ascension window. We have been charged with living as Christ lived, loving as he loved. Together, these windows tell the story that unites us with our ancestors in the faith and with those more recent ancestors who founded this congregation and who built this church.

Our windows are a legacy they left to us that tell the story that we are preserving and trying to live as Jesus would want us to, as we seek to pass them down to those who will come after us.