Introduction

Stained-glass Lessons

Abbot Suger (1081-1151) of St. Denis near Paris, referred to stained glass windows as the Poor Man's Bible. Suger is recorded as being the first abbot to put stained glass in his abbey church. An catechism of that period asks the question:

"What should one do on entering the church?"

The answer:

"There are three things one must do: One should take Holy Water [to remind one of one's baptism], adore the Blessed Sacrament [to acknowledge the presence of Christ], then walk around the church and contemplate the windows."

The word "window" comes from the old English words "vind" [wind] and "auga" [eye]. In the typical Norman church, after which this building is modelled, the windows were small slits made into the wall opened to the elements; the interior width of the window was large enough for a long-bow man to stand and shoot from; the exterior slit was narrow enough to afford the bowman protection while keeping the wind out. If there were any decorations in the building, they were painted on the walls or hung from mouldings or railings. As church architects and builders began to explore new materials and architectural designs, it became possible to pierce the walls and create ever larger openings through which the light could be admitted. These larger spaces were filled with colored glass to keep out the elements and to provide transparent pictures as the amount of wall space available for pictures were no longer available.

The art of stained glass-making reached its peak in Europe in the early 13th century but that same art continues to this day. The techniques used to make stained glass have changed very little since those days; glass making is a time-consuming and labor-intensive task. The finest and oldest examples of stained glass in Europe are found in Chartres Cathedral in France; in England the oldest glass is the Five Sisters window in the North Transept of the Cathedral, and Metropolitan Church of St. Peter in York – the oldest stained glass is found in Canterbury Cathedral.

St. John's Windows

The glass windows here at St. John's, like all stained glass, depend on several things for their effect. First, the architectural style that provides the squared physical frame for the window while the glass at the top is painted and structured as a curve to recall the basic Norman style of the building's exterior. Second, the play of the light at different times of the day changes
the character and feeling of the windows and the room. Third, the
subject matter of the windows is designed to teach.

The windows are located in four separate areas: the narthex, the
nave, the chapel, and the parish hall; this booklet describes the
windows in this order.

This Guide

This booklet is written not so much as a historical perspective on
stained glass, as there are many well-written books on that
subject, but as a reflective and meditative look at this particular
worship space. I have used the medieval "mindset" to reflect on
what these windows say to us in the late 20th Century, and I offer
this reflection as part of the ongoing experience of God's presence
in this place.

Theodore J. Neuhaus, BSc, MDiv
Interim Priest 1992-1993
The Narthex

The three windows in the narthex show two members of the choir and an acolyte. The choir windows are given in memory of George W. and Ida Bishop Strong by their son George and family friends as noted in the second remembrance book; neither of the Strongs served in the choir but they were both active members of the Parish. The acolyte window is given in memory of Mrs. Gudney Hoover by Grace and Roy Kidson and Chester L. Hursh. These windows reflect the choir and acolyte vestments worn at St. John's in those days. All three windows were installed in 1967.
The Nave

The last stained glass window in this building was dedicated on All Saints' Day 1992. With the installation of this window, the theological statement of this room has been completed. The following description follows the present order of the windows rather than the order that the windows were installed. It is recommended that one stand before the altar rail opening to follow the order of this narrative. However, we begin with the East window.

Resurrection Window (East Window)

This Resurrection window, given by Adelbert Moore in memory of his wife, was dedicated on 8 December 1935. Mr. Moore served the parish as senior warden and layreader, and he only saw the window in its place only once as on the day following its dedication he suffered a heart attack and died within three days. In his will, Mr. Moore left his house to St. John's; the house was sold and the proceeds put towards the Parish Hall into which the old east window was moved. (For those who want to know what the old windows looked like, see the window in the Parish Hall and the small window in the hallway outside the chapel.) We begin our "tour" from the leftmost lancet of this window with the Greek alpha (A) that recalls the words from Revelation about God: "I am the Alpha and the Omega". From here turn to the left (towards the pulpit) to the first window.

Window 1: Abraham Sacrificing Isaac.

This window begins the story of our salvation history. The call of God to Abraham to sacrifice his only son, the child through whom Abraham was to be blessed, prefigures God's own sacrifice of His Son on the cross (Genesis 22:9-12). Note the four logs under Isaac's knee (the Four Gospels), the Trinitarian number (three) of arches supporting the altar, and the lamb entwined in the thorns underneath (Christ crowned with thorns). This window was given in memory of William and Jessie P. Thomson by their friends listed in the second remembrance book; this window was dedicated on 5 May 1963. (As of this writing, their daughter Jessie is living at the Church Home in St. Paul and their son William is living in St. Louis Park.)

Window 2: The prophet Isaiah.

The scene shows the moment when Isaiah responds to the call of God to speak to the world (Isaiah 6:1-8). The seraph angel places the coal of fire on the prophet's lips; the small Christ child reminds us that it is this prophet who foretells the coming of the Messiah. Under the prophet in the lower panel is a saw superimposed on a star of David; this reminds us that Isaiah was killed by being sawn apart, the star reminds us of the Epiphany, the showing forth of
the Lord's messiah. This window was given by Grace Benson in memory of her husband LeRoy E. Benson; this window was dedicated on 5 May 1963. The Benson's daughter Vicky Madsen, is still a member of this parish.

Window 3: The Annunciation (Luke 126-31)

The angel Gabriel tells Mary she is being asked to bear the messiah. The lily held by the angel is the sign of the Incarnation; its association stems from the legend that as Eve left the Garden of Eden weeping, the lily sprang up from her tears. Mary is kneeling and at her side is an open Bible reflecting the tradition that she was reading the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14) when the angel appeared. In the lower portion of the window is a dove, the Holy Spirit. The shaft of light behind the angel tells us that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven like a shaft of light and that as light passes through the glass without breaking it, so the conception of our Lord was done without disturbing the virginity of Mary (a medieval attempt to show the doctrine of the Virgin Birth). This and the companion window (Window 4) were given by the family of Edward Crandall, junior, and was dedicated on 18 February 1962.

Window 4: The Visitation of Elizabeth by Mary (Luke 1:39-45)

Elizabeth is shown as the older woman in that she stands on the step while Mary stands on the ground. Elizabeth's arm is extended in greeting and blessing as she recognizes Mary as the bearer of the messiah. Again, the lily of the annunciation in the lower panel applies to both women as they are bearing sons of promise (Luke 1:17).

Windows 5 and 6: Christ the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-15)

Christ Knocking at the Door (Rev 3:30)

These two windows were the first set of windows placed in the nave; they were originally next to the pulpit. Window 5 shows Jesus in a traditional Victorian stance as shepherd, that is, a romanticised figure. The Trinitarian number of 3 is reflected in the pattern under the shepherd and the number of sheep with the shepherd.

Window 6 is a rendering of the famous late Victorian Holman Hunt painting; however, in this version there is a handle on the door unlike the Hunt painting in which there is no handle; Hunt wished the viewer to understand that only the person behind the door can open the door in response to the Messiah's call.

These windows were designed by Audrey Slack's mother in memory of the sisters Eva Austin Price (her mother) and Alice Austin (her aunt); the windows were given by George Price and Miss Ella Austin. These windows were dedicated on 5 March 1939.
Window 7: The Nativity of Christ (Luke 2:4-7).

The star is the same star that appears in the Isaiah window (window 2). The village seen over Mary's right shoulder is Bethlehem, the home of bread, the ancient royal city of David. Joseph stands holding the candle, Christ the light of the world, which reminds us also of the Song of Simeon: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, a Light to lighten the Gentiles". The flower in the lower portion is the Rose of Sharon, a reference to the Messiah who shall spring as a flower from barren ground. This window was given by family and friends in memory of Catharine Serviss Miller, the mother of Mary Miller of this Parish. The window was dedicated on 18 February 1962.


It was the custom that the first male child be offered to God. The event is also known as the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary; these events are remembered in the Church Kalendar on 2 February and historically known as the Candlemass. The candle again reminds us of the Light of the World, the two natures of the Christ (man and God - candle and flame), and the purity of Mary. Joseph holds a cage with two pigeons reminding us that the family sacrificed the offering of the poorest of the poor. This window was given in memory of Donald Miner Davidson by family and friends as noted in the first remembrance book. The window was dedicated on 18 February 1962.


As is the custom with our Jewish brethren to this day, a male child becomes a man at age 13 after being examined by the elders. This examination concerns the boy's understanding of the Torah and of the oral tradition that is part of the lore all men of Israel were to know; note the book in the hands of some of the elders and the scroll of the Torah (lower panel). In the background are Mary and Joseph who returned to the Temple looking for Jesus. Note also that Mary and Joseph are in a posture of listening, not in a posture of exasperation as the result of looking for a lost son. This window was given in memory of Hazel Dale Nelson by her daughter and son-in-law William K. and Marjorie Nelson (in whose memory a window appears in the chapel). This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

Window 10: Jesus' Childhood Scene

The last window on the pulpit side is an imaginary day in the childhood of Jesus in Nazareth ("Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter?"). It should be remembered that a carpenter
in Biblical times was more of what the 20th Century calls a building contractor who is in charge of all aspects of construction. The old hymn refers to Jesus learned how to operate the plane (lower panel) and the lathe. This window was given in memory of Ralph Downs Tyler by family and friends as noted in the first remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

We now cross the back of the nave to the back window on the south side of the room.

Window 11: The Feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6:35-44).

Note the small boy holds the two fish and the five loaves are in the basket. The two baskets in the lower panel remind us that the leftovers from this miracle could not be held in even these two extra large baskets; this reminds us that the gifts and grace of God given in the Eucharist can never be totally contained by us. This window was given in memory of John N. and Veronica Karagheusian by their families and was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

Window 12: The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew's 5).

Note that the crowd includes all people: children, women, men. The open book in the lower panel reminds us that all of Jesus' teachings were to expand our understanding of the Scriptures, especially that of the Torah; this is also a continuation of the theme of Jesus in the Temple seen in Window 9. This window was given in memory of Albert K. Kikian by his daughter Emily D. Karagheusian and was dedicated on 5 May 1963.


The lower panel reminds us that this healing was accomplished by Jesus spitting on the ground and applying the mud to the eye of the blind man. This window was given in memory of Sara Mae Carr by family and friends as noted in the first remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 18 February 1962.

Window 14: The Raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-44).

The bands that restrain Lazarus reminds us of the swaddling bands used to wrap the Christ Child as He lay in the manger. The butterfly in the lower panel reminds us of the resurrection. This window was also given in memory of Sara Mae Carr by family and friends as noted in the second remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 18 February 1962.

Windows 15 and 16: Christ Blessing the Children (Matthew 19:13-15)
In addition to being different in design from the other windows, the window contains an oddity - the boy holding the rabbit. The priest who was involved with the commission of this window (Fr. William Goddard) does not know why the rabbit was included in the picture. In religious art, the rabbit is a mixed image of good and bad, mostly bad, that does not seem to apply to this setting; the rabbit is probably the designer's whim. This window was given in memory of Denise Carr Nelson by her family. Denise was the daughter of Sara Mae Carr in whose memory the previous two windows were given, and the sister of Ardis Ochsner who gave those two windows. These windows were dedicated on 10 August 1959.

Window 17: The Anointing of our Lord at the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6-13)

Some scholars think the anointing may have been done by Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; others think it may be Mary Magdalene. The city in the background is Jerusalem to which Jesus would go to be tried and from which he would be crucified. The male figure would be Simon, the host of the dinner party. The flask (the narrow necked jar) would have been the container brought by Mary; the wide-mouthed jug reminds us of the water jug used to wash the feet of all who came to the dinner, and reminds us of the Last Supper when Jesus took the water and washed the feet of his disciples. This window was given in memory of Ralph S. and Lambert Raymond by family and friends as noted in the first remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 31 December 1961.

Window 18: The Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Mark 11:7-11)

The gate is called Beautiful and it is in the east wall of the city of Jerusalem, the domed building represents the Temple. The child leading the donkey reminds us of the passage, "And a little child shall lead them", and it evokes the Flight into Egypt by the Holy Family. The two palm fronds in the lower panel remind us of the palm branches spread along the way and also that the palm branch was the sign of martyrdom in religious art. This window was given in memory of Carl A. and Florence Steel by family and friends as noted in the second remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 31 December 1961.

Window 19: The Last Supper (OLuke 22:14-21, 23)

Jesus presides at the table, which looks like a shepherd's crook, at which the 12 apostles are seated. The grain sheave and grape cluster in the lower panel symbolize the traditional elements of bread and wine. Jesus is dressed as priest with his hand raised in blessing over both the cup and the viewer. This window was given
in memory of G. Frank and Grace Masters by their daughter Ann Williams. This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.


Jesus is kneeling at a rock while the hand of God presents him the cup of sacrifice. The three disciples sleep undisturbed below. The flowers and tree remind us that even in presence of death (the rock) that life is to come forth as water came from the rock in the Wilderness; there is also a reminder of the rose of Sharon. This window was given in memory of Benjamin and Frederica Darby by their daughter and son-in-law Anne and Richard Cobb. This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

Window 21: Jesus before Pilate (Matthew 27:11-14)

The scene is immediately after Pilate has condemned Jesus and he is washing his hands. Behind Pilate is the sign of his secular authority, the lector, which consists of the rods of punishment wrapped around the axe of death. The place is the praetorium as shown by the flagstones and the raised floor. The ewer and basin are similar to those used in many baptisms, and the table and basin in which Pilate washes his hands reminds us that in Baptism, we too are cleansed from sin (is the opening in the table holding the basin the sign that we enter into the life of Christ through baptism?). This window was given in memory of Agnes E. Carton by her nephew Jack Grant, the son of Susan C. Grant. This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

Window 22: Jesus carrying his cross (Johhn 19:17-18)

This is the most stylized of the windows in that Jesus would have only carried the cross-beam, but it should actually show Simon of Cyrene doing that. The grassy path is smooth and outside the city (the hymn, There is a Green Hill Far Away?); the actual path would have been an uneven street in the city. The three crosses remind us of the site of the crucifixion. The lower panel shows the five nails used to attach Jesus to the cross. This window was given in memory of Susan C. Grant by friends and a bequest from the Agnes E. Carton estate as noted in the first remembrance book. This window was dedicated on 5 May 1963.

This now returns us to the center of the altar rail and the Resurrection window.

The East Window

In this window we see the angel at the empty tomb talking to the apostles Peter and John who stand in the entrance to the cave; Mary
Magdalene stands behind holding the jar with the spices and ointment (is this to remind us of window 17?). Behind the figures is a town - this town can be Jerusalem where the apostles were gathered in the upper room, Emmaus to which some of the apostles went, or Galilee ("Tell them to go to Galilee where I will meet them"). Or is it the world into which the message is to be taken? The right panel indicates that all has now been revealed (the Ω) as the crown of life, center lance at the top, has been won by Jesus' resurrection.

The Great West Window

Turn around and view the Great West window. This window incorporates much within itself that reminds us who and what we are about in this Parish. First, within western literature the phrase "to go west" originally meant to die - as with the sun rising in the East reminding us of life and a new day, the sun setting in the west was representative of the end of the day and dying. The direction West also indicated material things (of this world) and in a very wide focus while the East reminded us of the spirit and things more narrowly focused (in the rising Son).

The baptism of Jesus by John as shown in this window reminds us of many things. First, it is the dedication and purpose of this parish family to bring that which is outside inside - we are a community called to live out our baptism (from the inside it reminds us of what we are to do, from the outside, we proclaim to the world what we are about). It also reminds us that as Jesus continued the wilderness journey of the prophets begun in Egypt to the promised land, so too we are called to journey out of ourselves into a new relationship with God.

In church architecture the west window is referred to as the Water window in that under it stands the font in which we are baptized into the church and enter into a relationship with God - we go from death (west) through baptism to life giving journey (east) to find the presence of God.

In this stylized window, we see two supporters or donors - the woman with the roses on the right has the face of Connie Quest, in whose memory the window is given, while on the left the man in the foreground is Fred Quest who gave the window. The unidentified figure next to Fred is St. Mark as it was Mark who began his gospel by relating the baptism of Jesus (any similarity of the Mark figure to the writer of this description is in the eye of the beholder only). Consequently, as one turns from the great West window one turns from the world to the East window and the presence of Jesus as the risen Lord.

The Building

The wooden walls of the nave in which you stand reminds us of Moses' reed basket in which he was placed for safe keeping, of Noah's ark in which God brought his creation to a new place, and of the boat from which Jesus calmed the storms.
Worship Space as Reflection

This, then, ends our tour of the windows in the nave of this building. Taken together, the whole of this space is a constant reminder that we are a people on pilgrimage to find God with us—a place where we struggle with God's presence in ourselves, in each other, and in community. It is an ark in which we form community and celebrate community with all its warts and perfection. But it is not a place to which we flee the world, rather, it is the place in which we gather to be able to deal with the world as healers and pastors—as John proclaimed the word to the world, so too must we live out the word in the world.