

# The Stained Glass of St. John Lutheran Church



Clinton, Iowa

The windows of our Sanctuary visually display the Lutheran faith. What the Creeds express in words, our windows express in images. Through the means of art, they preach to us the Law and the Gospel. One can understand the central messages of the Lutheran faith simply by looking around. Let these windows and their expression of the faith heighten your experience as we receive His gifts in the Divine Service.



### Martin Luther's Seal

The image is of a white flower and red heart with a cross inside. Around the symbol are reminders of the theology of the Lutheran Reformation, "Grace

Alone, Faith Alone, The Word Alone." Traditionally, we call this Martin Luther's seal. Luther's seal was meant to be more than a reminder of Martin Luther, it was to be a summary of his theology. He states: "There is first to be a cross, black and placed in a heart, which should be of its natural color, so that I myself would be reminded that faith in the Crucified saves us. For if one believes from the heart, he will be justified. Even though it is a black cross, which mortifies and which also should hurt us, yet it leaves the heart in its natural color and does not ruin nature; that is the cross does not kill but keeps man alive. For the just man lives by faith, but by faith in the Crucified One.

Such a heart is to be in the midst of a white rose, to symbolize that faith gives joy, comfort and peace; in a word it places the believer into a white joyful rose; for this faith does not give peace and joy as the world gives and, therefore, the rose is to be white and not red, for white is the color of the spirits of all the angels."

(Luther Works, 49, 358-9).

## A Mighty Fortress

Luther's best known hymn is A Mighty Fortress is our God. The hymn is based on Psalm 46 and Romans 8:31-39 and was probably written in 1527 or 1528. Although it is

often known as the battle hymn of the Reformation, Luther wrote this hymn in a particularly dark period of his life and work, and we should thus probably see this as a hymn of comfort in the midst of trial and sorrow.



## Cling to the Cross

Here we see a person who kneels before and holds fast to the Cross of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:18 "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

## The Holy Trinity

This window upholds our belief in the Triune God. We believe in One God, eternally revealed in three Persons. It confesses on the inside of the triangle, "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God." Then on the outside of the Triangle, "The Father is not the Son, The Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father." The



Augsburg Confession states, “God is one divine essence who is eternal...of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He is the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. Yet there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (Nehemiah 9:6; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19)



### Hosanna

This window reflects the celebration of Palm Sunday as we remember the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem before His crucifixion. The crowds shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of

David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9). The word Hosanna is the Hebrew phrase אֲנִי

ה[ 'yviAh meaning “save, now” or “save, we pray” from Psalms 113-118.

### Praise Ye the Lord

God gives us the command and the privilege in the Psalms to respond to His gifts of grace with praise through song. The Psalmist declares in Psalm 30:4, “Sing

praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.” And in Psalm 92:1-3, “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.” The



command to “praise ye the Lord” in Hebrew is the word *hallelujah* or *alleluia*. It is right to give Him thanks and praise.



### I Am the Vine, Ye Are the Branches

Jesus makes numerous “I Am” statements in the book of John which point to His divinity as the great I Am of Exodus 3:14. The divine name of God in the Old Testament, *Yahweh*

sounds like the Hebrew for, “I Am”. In John 15:5, Jesus speaks of the life we have in Jesus who is the great *I Am*, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

### A Dove and an Olive Branch

In Genesis 8, as Noah and his family waited for the floods to subside, Noah sent out a dove “And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.” The dove is a symbol for the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16), and an olive branch is often a symbol of peace and prosperity (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).





### The Crucifixion

St. John records that at Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:19), "Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'" On this cross, we see the

letters, "INRI" which are Latin, **IESUS NAZARENUS REX IUDÆORUM**, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Behind the cross are the sponge with sour wine on a branch given to Jesus immediately before His death (John 19:29), and the spear that pierced His side after His death (John 19:34).

### The Lord is My Light

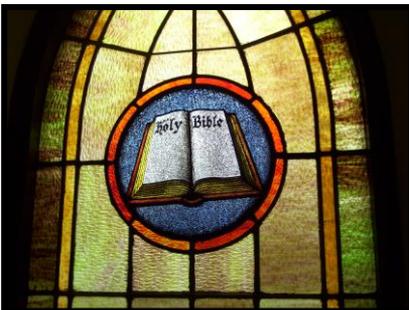
The Psalmist declares in Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Like light, Jesus reveals things for what they are, dispelling the darkness of sin, ignorance, evil and despair. Jesus Christ is the "Light of the world" (John 8:12).



### The Holy Bible

Jesus said, "The Scriptures bear witness about me" (John 5:39). The message of the Bible is the good news of God's work to reconcile the world to Himself through the life,



death and resurrection of Jesus. Throughout Old and New Testaments, the central message of the Scripture is the account of how God was in the world preparing it to receive His Son and then what His Son did when He was here.

## The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and record the natural law, the will of God for us. The Law always accuses us, as we examine



ourselves according to the Ten Commandments. Each commandment also teaches us how God's gifts are used to His honor and glory. The first table (commandments 1-3) relates to our relationship with God. The second table (commandments 4-10) addresses God's will for us in our relationships with one another.



## The Hand of God

The **Manus Dei**, Latin for "the hand of God" is a common symbol for the Triune God. The three extended fingers represent the Trinity while the two bent fingers represent the two

natures of Christ, divine and human. Pastors hold their right hand this way when pronouncing a blessing. The circle behind the hand is a nimbus, symbolizing holiness. A nimbus containing a cross represents Divinity.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."



## The Lamb of God

In John 1:29, John the Baptist, as he sees Jesus, declares, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Here we see Jesus the Lamb of God, marked with the Divine

Nimbus, holding a processional cross with a banner proclaiming in Latin, **Ecce Agnus Dei**, “Behold the Lamb of God.” As St. John announces in Revelation, as he reveals the heavenly worship of our Passover Lamb, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12)

## The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove at Jesus’ Baptism. Matthew 3:16-17, “And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens



were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”



### Prayers as Incense

A thurible is a metal censer suspended from chains, in which incense is burned during worship services. The words of Psalm 141:2 are part of our Evening Prayer Service, “Let my

prayer rise before you as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!” Incense symbolizes the prayers of the Church.

### The Baptismal Font

Martin Luther makes clear the great blessings of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism when he writes in the Small Catechism, “Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's



command and combined with God's word.” The Sacrament of Holy Baptism “works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this.” (Matthew 29:19; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Peter 3:21)



### The Office of the Keys

According to the Small Catechism, “The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold

forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.” Speaking to His Disciples, Jesus said, “If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld” (John 20:23). And, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

### The Sacrament of the Altar

Wheat and grapes point to the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion. The Small Catechism states, “It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ



under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.” In Holy Communion we fellowship in the Body and Blood of Christ, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16) As with Holy Baptism, Holy



Communion is a means of grace and “in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

## Faith, Hope, & Charity

This image forms a fine conclusion to our windows. Located behind the organ pipes, this window is a bit difficult to see. Filled with a familiar cross and



with a familiar cross and palm, the image also has an anchor, representing the hope we have in Christ, “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). The words on this symbol, “Faith, Hope, Charity” come from Corinthians 13, “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”



*He is the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation.  
For by Him all things were created,  
in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-  
all things were created through Him and for Him.  
And He is before all things,  
and in Him all things hold together.  
And He is the head of the body, the church.  
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that in everything He might be preeminent.  
For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,  
and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things,  
whether on earth or in heaven,  
making peace by the blood of His cross.*

**Colossians 1:15-20**



Soli Deo Gloria,  
Pastor Daniel Pool  
Ash Wednesday, 2010