

STAINED GLASS SANCTUARY WINDOWS

First Presbyterian Church, Kirkwood, Missouri

The thirteen four by twenty-eight foot windows at the south wall of the apse provide a striking contrast to the otherwise stark interior of the sanctuary. Their size, use of bold colors, clear labeling of subjects represented, and the blue and red ribbon which ties each of the six subordinate windows together ending with the Christ window, draws attention to and highlights the Christ window's central message: *"By grace are you saved."* This message dominates and establishes both the atmosphere for worship and its basic premise.

From top to bottom, each window heralds its subjects with a name and a figure, below which appears an incident central to that person's life or writing; and the final or lower panel offers a scene that is central to that person's message. Both the middle and lower panels, in most instances, include a Bible verse. A description of windows, from left to right, facing the apse follows.

MOSES appears with the rock tablets on a bare rock pedestal, from which lightning streaks from above to the rocks alongside. Hand with nimbus in attitude of giving appears above Moses' head, which has horns, along with the fire representing zeal or dedication.

Middle Panel: Shows two priests with sacrificial animal, behind which the Ark of the Covenant can be seen behind the opened curtains, where parts of the guarding golden cherubim are visible. Verse: *"...He shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head."* (Exodus 29: 10)

Bottom Panel: Refers to Abraham who lived 500 years before Moses. Melchizedek "Prince of Salem" and "Priest of the Most High God" offers bread and wine. The figure of Melchizedek points upward—a foreshadowing of the New Covenant. Verse: *"And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine..."* (Genesis 14: 18)

ISAIAH appears with the flame of zeal above his head where the hand of God holds tongs with a red hot coal, recalling Isaiah's vision and call. (Isaiah 6: 1-9)

Middle Panel: Jesus, identified by golden halo and cross, is stripped and bound to a post. Stone wall and barred window suggest prison, and a Roman soldier stands by with scourge in hand. Verse: *"He was despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows..."* (Isaiah 53: 3)

Bottom Panel: A woman appears to sit on an open flower, holding a small child identified as Jesus by halo and red cross. Two men nearby kneel in worship. Verse: *"And there shall come forth a root out of the stem of Jesse..."* (Isaiah 11: 1)

JEREMIAH appears with fire of dedication and a circle with hand and extended finger pointing. He stands with hands uplifted in horror. He is surrounded by devastation: the temple, nation and land. His message is one of personal responsibility.

Middle Panel: An Assyrian soldier with sword approaches an Israelite family, who wait helplessly. Verse: *"...and they shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine."* (Jeremiah 16: 4)

Lower Panel: Picture of idolatry—a boy waves a sensor of incense, smoke rings ascend, a green snake (symbol of evil) issues from the mouth of one of his companions. Verse: *"In that they went to burn incense and to serve other gods."* (Jeremiah 44: 3)

AMOS, a rural, laboring prophet, whose ministry occurred before both Jeremiah and Isaiah, stands in hilly, green country where sheep graze, holding tools in his hands, with the zeal of dedication over his head. Dark sky and lightning cast a pall on the scene.

Middle Panel: A couple runs from overwhelming disaster (earthquake). Verse: *"I will send a fire upon Judah..."* (Amos 2: 5)

Bottom Panel: David with harp and crown is hanging on a beam or stone that has fallen. He looks at the second figure identified as Christ by halo and red cross, who seems to be assisting (raising?) him. Verse: *"Seek good and not evil, that you may live..."* (Amos 5: 14)

DAVID, King of Israel, stands in kingly pose, with the flame of zeal above his head, and two anointing or bestowing hands suggesting his special relationship to God.

Middle Panel: Samuel anointing David. Crown and crest are symbols of royalty. Small beam shines from crest and attracts attention to the vague shape of two crosses. Reference to another king? Verse: *"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord..."* (Psalms 118: 26)

Bottom Panel: David's regal splendor--a kingly crown, scepter in left hand, an orb with cross in right hand. Note the king's bare feet and the rainbow behind. Verse: *"Thy throne is established of old. Thou art from everlasting."* (II Samuel 7: 18)

DANIEL, with flame of zeal and dove flying toward him, stands in thoughtful pose with prayer shawl on his head.

Middle Panel: Recalls the story of the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3: 28) *"The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego has sent his angel and rescued his servants."* (No verse given on this panel.)

Bottom Panel: Daniel stands among the lions. Verse: *"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us."* (Daniel 3: 17)

THE CHRIST WINDOW dominates, in position, color and design; the red and blue ribbons joining the other windows which end at the center panel enhance the compelling focus toward this central panel. Behind Christ's head the triangle represents the Trinity, while the circle symbolizes eternity. The white dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, is released from his breast, and he is standing upon the green shape of the world. This is the Christ in authority at the *"right hand of the Father."* Verse: *"By grace are you saved..."* (Ephesians 2: 8)

"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor putting everything in subjection under his feet." (Hebrews 2: 8) The body of the dead, green serpent draped over the wooden cross symbolizes Christ's victory over sin and death. *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."* (John 3: 14-15; Numbers 21: 9)

Three red stars of hope lighten a dark sky in the background, and two human figures plead in the foreground. They sit or kneel beneath the cross with arms uplifted. Perhaps dwellers in Satan's fiery realm, Adam and Eve, or you and I. They hope, and there is reason for their hope; they plead and there is reason for their pleading. (Romans 6: 23) *"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

A large, circular blue plate below these figures forms the background for the cross. Inside the blue plate, three diagonal light lines cross and may suggest the Trinity. The yellow circle imposed on the cross reminds the onlooker that God is eternal—without beginning or end. The heart aflame signifies intense devotion. Notice the tip of the spear near the heart which is wounded and from which blood flows. This appears to be held upon a chalice, embossed with a cross. (Mark 14: 24) *"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many."* Verses: *"In him is our Peace..."* (Ephesians 2: 14) and (John 3: 16), *"For God so loved the World..."*

MATTHEW stands in quiet dignity as he contemplates the Hand of God, which is before and above him, beckoning. Matthew's Gospel is a book of beginnings concerned with Old Testament prophecies fulfilled, the lineage of Christ, and details especially significant to Jewish Christians.

Middle Panel: The Holy Spirit descends as a dove upon Mary who is praying as the angel delivers God's message. *"He shall save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1: 21)

Bottom Panel: Presents the birth of Christ through the three wise men who follow the star. Verse: *"...For we have seen his star and are come to worship."* (Matthew 2: 2)

MARK stands with stern face and folded arms beneath the Hand of God directly overhead, which is open and flat, as if ordering or demanding. Although Mark was not one of the disciples, he seems to have been close to them for some time, and he traveled to Rome with Peter. The quill in his left hand identifies him as a Gospel writer.

Middle Panel: Shows Jesus after his ministry has begun, being baptized by John the Baptist. As he emerges, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove. Verse: *"The Spirit like a dove descending upon him..."* (Mark 1: 10)

Bottom Panel: An extension of the baptism, presenting Jesus as the Lamb of God. The golden halo with red cross makes this clear, and the banner carried over the right shoulder symbolizes the resurrection. This is called "The Banner of Victory," or "The Victory of the Lamb." Verse: *"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."* (John 1: 29)

LUKE, probably a Gentile who became a Christian, stands with arms lowered as the Holy Spirit descends. He holds a book, and the sign on the cover represents the first two letters in the Greek word "Christ."

Middle Panel: Represents the healing of the ruler of the synagogue's daughter. This panel depicts the moment Christ tells the girl, presumed to have died, to rise. Verse: *"Took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Maid, arise!'"* (Luke 8: 55)

Bottom Panel: Shows Jesus in benediction over two disciples. Verse: *"...Sent them two by two before his face into every city and place."* (Luke 10: 1)

JOHN stands with his head turned toward Christ, and the dove of the Holy Spirit flies directly over his head toward the congregation; the background is not Palestine. Bright hills and crowded town suggest Ephesus, which tradition considers John's home. He holds a pen in his right hand and a book with the sign of the cross on its cover in his left, representing his Gospel.

Middle Panel: Scene from the Wedding at Cana—Christ's first miracle. Verse: *"Fill the waterpots with water."* (John 2: 7)

Bottom Panel: Raising of Lazarus. Jesus stands facing the opening to the tomb, while the gravecloth-bound Lazarus emerges. Martha and another onlooker look not at her brother but at Jesus. Verse: *"When he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'"* (John 11: 44)

PETER is the subject of centuries of debate concerning his unique standing—Was he given special powers which placed him above the other disciples and made him prominent in the Church Universal? Here he has neither impressive nor regal bearing. The Hand of God is directly above his head, similar to the Old Testament prophets facing his panel. Beside his head the cock of denial appears. Behind his figure, houses are crowded together, jostling one another on a slope; the city wall is castellated. Such battlements are found in European cities. Tradition holds that Peter was martyred in Rome during Nero's reign.

Below: The panels run together presenting the Feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit with flame and commotion descends upon the apostles. Directly below Peter's feet, the Hand of God bestows the symbol of the Holy Spirit. From the circle around the dove, smaller doves issue. Verse: *"And they were filled with the Holy Ghost..."* (Acts 2: 4)

PAUL stands with the Hand of God over his head. The scroll in his right hand symbolizes his contribution to the New Testament; more than one-third can be attributed to Paul. His influence is immeasurable. The figure's background is clearly urban, probably a Western city, Rome or Athens.

Middle Panel: Christ stands with an uplifted foot upon a dark, ugly skeleton. Verse: *"Oh, death where is thy sting?"* (I Corinthians 15: 55)

Bottom Panel: This panel is the simplest design in the 13 windows. A man and woman stand facing each other with hands clasped. Between them in the shadow a small table with cross and open book are seen. The colors are restrained, blue and green, suggesting hope and tranquility. Verse: *"For we are his workmanship created in Christ..."* (Ephesians 2: 10)