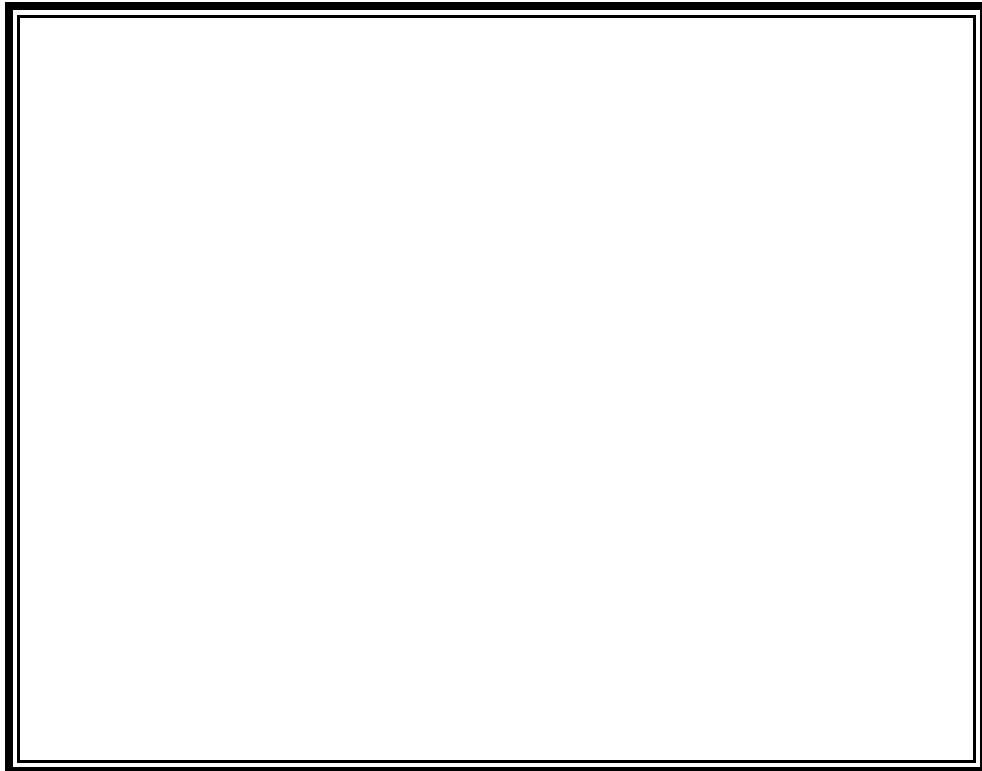


***TO THE  
GLORY OF GOD  
AND THE  
SALVATION OF MAN***



***On The Occasion of the Dedication of the Sanctuary of  
Our Savior Lutheran Church  
Houston, Texas  
On the Twenty-fifth Day of June  
In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand  
The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession***

*Pastor Laurence L. White - Author*  
*Published by Our Savior Lutheran Church*  
*Houston, Texas*  
*First Edition - 2000*  
*Second Expanded Edition - 2015*



*Marble Cornerstone of the Mountain Church - Seiffen Im Erzgebirge - 1779*

*“To The Glory Of God And The Salvation Of Man”* - These words were engraved in golden letters on the marble cornerstone of the Bergkirche in the little village of Seiffen in 1779. They were designed to express the hope and the conviction with which this Lutheran congregation had constructed in new sanctuary. In many respects, the design of our sanctuary has been inspired by this classic Lutheran church building. It is our heartfelt prayer as we dedicate our new church today that everything may be done *“To the Glory of God and the Salvation of Man.”* May the Gospel of salvation resound in this House of God with power from on high. May His Word ever be preached among us in all of its saving Truth and purity. May the sacraments which our gracious Lord has established always be rightly administered in our congregation for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of our faith. We dedicate our new church today, two hundred and twenty-one years after that Saxon cornerstone was laid *“To the Glory of God and the Salvation of Man.”*

## ***PREFACE***

*“Architecture for churches is a matter of the Gospel. A church that is interested in proclaiming the Gospel must also be interested in architecture, for year after year the architecture of the church proclaims a message, a message that either augments the preached Word, or conflicts with it. Church architecture, therefore cannot simply be left to those of refined tastes, the aesthetic elite, or even the professional architect. If the Gospel of Christ is worthy of accurate verbal proclamation, week by week, it is also worthy of faithful architectural proclamation, where its message goes on speaking year after year....It is most unfortunate that many people understand the word ‘architecture’ solely in terms of style. A church is a place where God’s people gather together to worship Him, and how they worship, as well as what they believe, is either reinforced or undermined by the architecture. Church architecture is therefore first and foremost a matter of theology rather than a matter of style.” (Donald Bruggink, Christ And Architecture)*



*The Frauenkirche - Dresden*



There is an indissoluble connection between what we build and what we believe. That connection is twofold. The design of our churches is, in the first instance an expression of what we believe about the identity and the worship of God. This applies to both interior design and exterior structure. We dare not overlook the opportunity for witness to the community around us that the appearance of our churches provides. Secondly, over the long term, the architecture of a place of worship influences, in a subtle but real way, the substance of that which we believe. In 1963, Dr. Edward S. Frey, then the Executive Secretary of the Department of Church Architecture for the United Lutheran Church in America, published a thought-provoking book entitled *This Before Architecture*. The core of his presentation was the assertion that it was essential for theology to take priority in the design and construction of churches. Frey argued passionately that the dominance of stylistic considerations and architectural fashion in the building of American churches was indicative of the declining importance of Biblical theology within those churches. The ULCA leader offered the following acerbic observations:

*“The program of the church whose people will not think under God takes on bit by bit the mores of the secular groups that surround it, bidding for attention - badges and buttons, banners, bingo, and bake sales, and a theology witless and anemic, with no power to save...I have visited many church buildings in which the kitchen is the best planned room...What can one believe about this other than that the congregation understands better what goes on in the kitchen than what is meant to happen in the sanctuary?”* (Edward Frey, *This Before Architecture*, p. 6)

Nearly half a century later Dr. Frey’s warning about the disappearance of the church into the murky waters of the surrounding culture is revealed to have been tragically prescient. Superficial, generic church architecture is only one symptom of a more basic shift toward superficial generic Christianity. Churches are designed to look like theaters because what passes for worship is perceived to be nothing more than the effort to entertain an already jaded audience. Pastors are no longer expected to be faithful spokesmen of the Word of God, but actors on a stage.

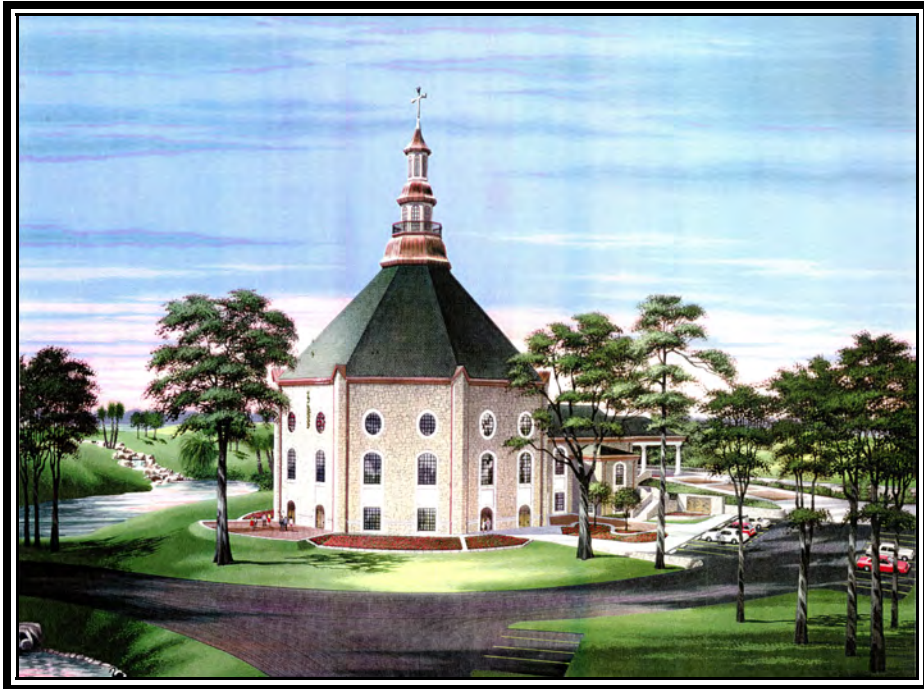
In much of modern Christendom the focus has deliberately turned from God to man. Religion has become just one more dimension of humanity’s obsession with itself. This shift is encouraged as the path to success, the only way to bring in the bodies and the bucks necessary to build a mega-church around a popular, high



*Interior View of the City Church of St. Mary In Wittenberg*

profile clergy celebrity. George Barna, the premier pollster of contemporary evangelicalism earnestly urges - *“Think of your church not as a religious meeting place, but as a service agency - an entity that exists to satisfy peoples’ needs.”* The implications of this perspective are profound, reaching out to transform every dimension of the church’s existence, particularly worship and architecture. As one prominent defender of historic Christianity notes:

*“A human centered theology will regard worship as our activity for God, each other, or ourselves. Consequently it will demand architecture that borrows from the entertainment or business world. Instead of calling us out of the world to ‘sing a new song’ it will perpetuate our old identity which was to have been buried in baptism.”* (Michael Horton, *Why Sacred Space Matters* , p. 12)



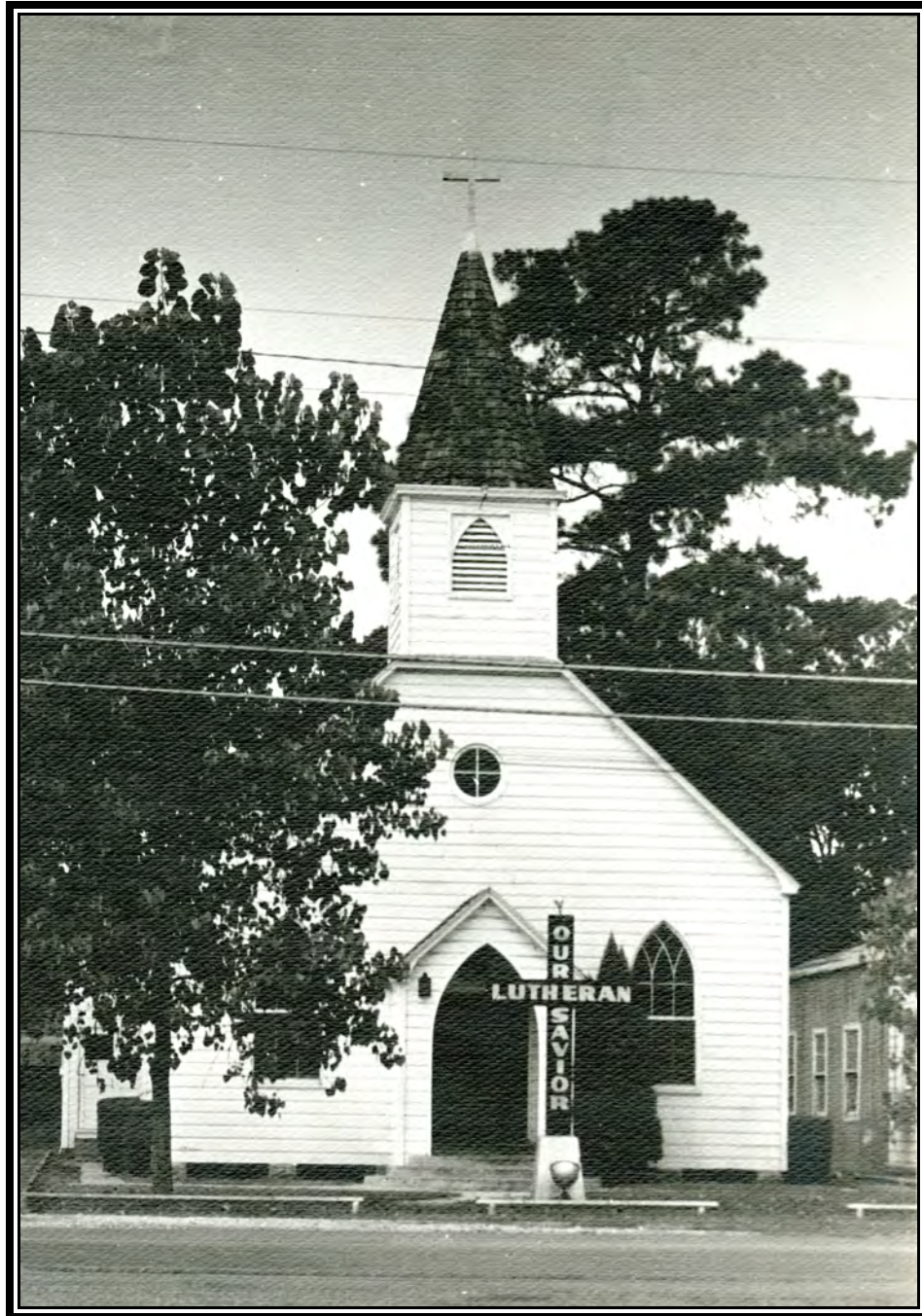
*Architect’s Drawing of Our Savior Lutheran Church*

This is, of course, not to say that there is only one permissible or proper form of church architecture. God has not prescribed a particular church design since the days of King Solomon. Rather, the point is that whatever size or style our churches may be, their design ought to be determined by and expressive of our theology. For Lutherans, as we shall see, that theology centers on the gracious God who comes to His people in the person of His Son Jesus Christ; the God who speaks to us in His Word and offers us life and salvation thru the Means of Grace which He has established - the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

This church building is a declaration of faith by the members of Our Savior Lutheran Church. It is our affirmation in wood and stone, steel and glass, of our steadfast resolve to believe, teach and confess the saving Truth of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. At the inception of the planning process for the construction of our new sanctuary, the congregation unanimously adopted this resolution: *“To design a sanctuary whose external appearance and internal arrangement distinctively express our commitment to the doctrinal heritage of the Lutheran Church are consistent with architectural expressions of that theology in historic Lutheran church buildings both in Europe and in the United States.”* That resolve to build a deliberately Lutheran Church has governed the entire planning and construction process. The design of this building is the embodiment of that which we believe about God, His people, and their interaction in the Divine Service. This



faith is our legacy, passed on to us by those who have gone before - the faithful men and women of preceding generations whose loyalty to the Word of God, and whose willingness to sacrifice for their faith have made this congregation what it is today. We are resolved, by the grace of God, to pass that heritage along to those who come after us. It is our fervent hope and prayer that this church will stand as a witness, not only for today, but for generations still to come. May our merciful God bless this House built to His glory. May He dwell among us here in Word and Sacrament according to His promise. May our children, and our children's children be blessed to gather here to encounter the Lord in the faithful preaching of His Word, in the saving water of Holy Baptism, and in the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ received from His altar.



*Our First Church - 1945*



*Groundbreaking Ceremony For Our Second Church - April 3, 1960*



*Dedication of Our Second Church - November 30, 1960*

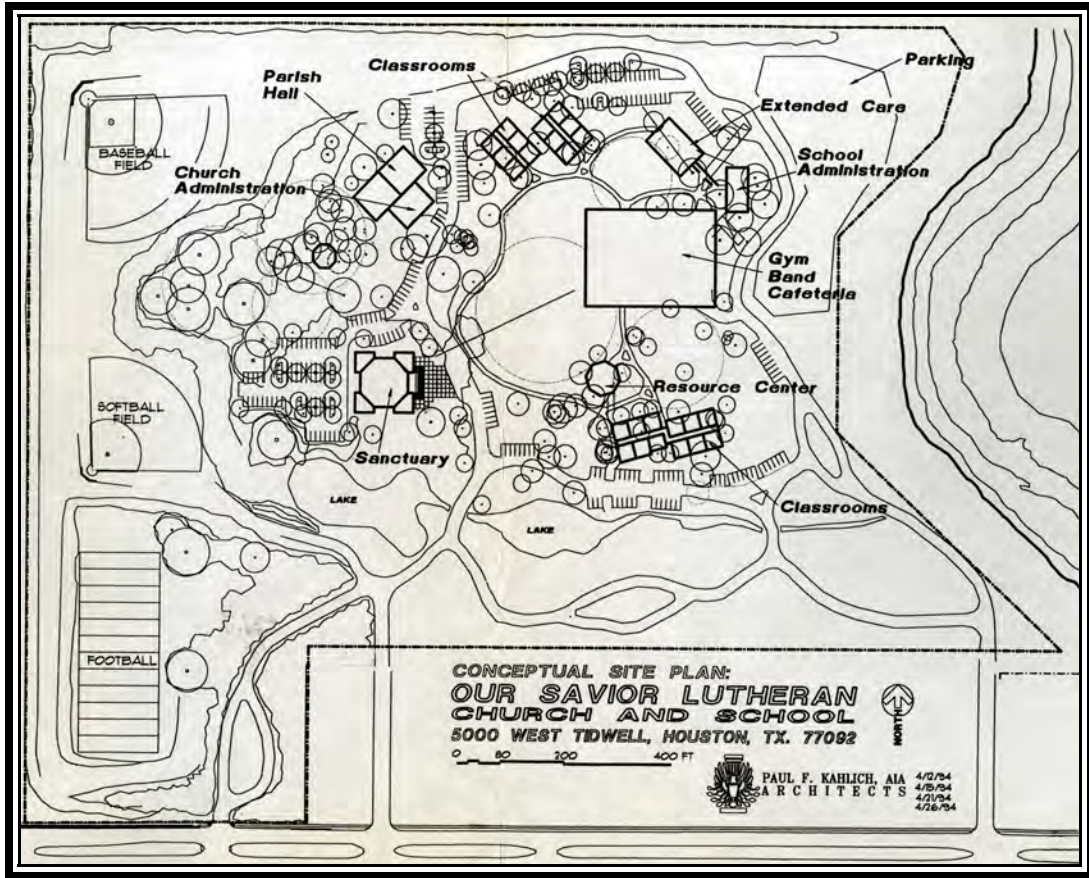




*Groundbreaking  
Celebration For the Third  
Church And School  
June 2, 1996*







*Undeveloped Sixty Acre Property From the Southwest*





*Undeveloped Sixty Acre Property From The North*



*The Forest Primeval Before Clearing Began*





*The Interior Of the Frauenkirche - Dresden*



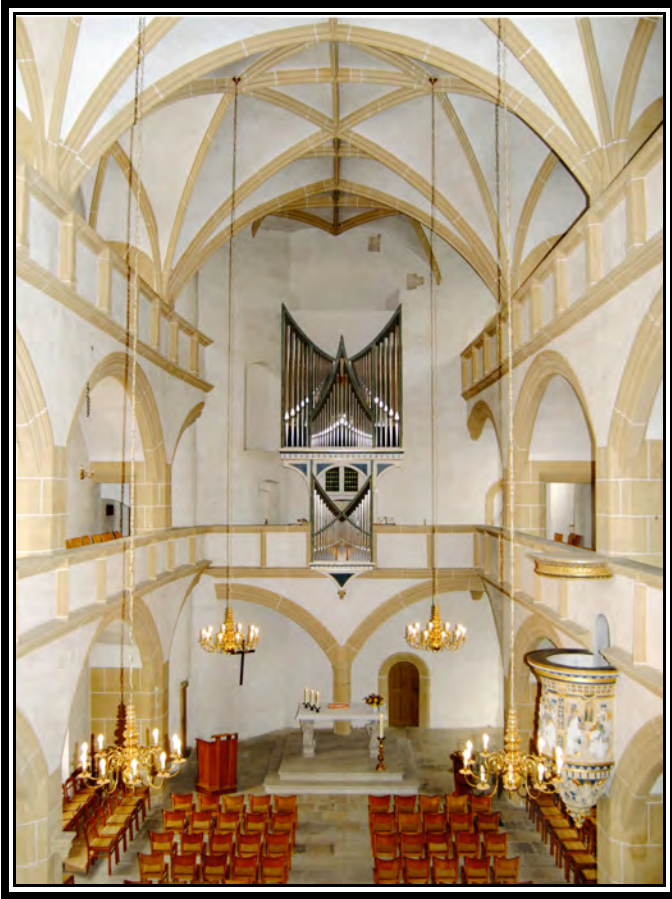


*Interior View Of St. Lorenz Evangelical Church - Nuremberg*

## ***Lutheran Church Architecture***

Many of the best known Lutheran churches in Europe were built prior to the reformation in accordance with the cruciform cathedral pattern of traditional Roman Catholic church architecture. As the movement for reform surged across Central Europe and Scandinavia in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, ancient churches and cathedrals became Lutheran along with the territories in which they were located. Wherever possible, internal arrangements were changed to accommodate the gathering of God's people around Word and Sacrament, but of necessity, the basic configuration of the buildings themselves remained unchanged. One of the most prominent examples of this pattern is St. Lorenz Church in the Bavarian city of Nuremberg. Only as Lutherans began to build churches of their own does a distinctively Lutheran style of church architecture begin to emerge.

The Castle Church in the Saxon town of Torgau, near Luther's home in Wittenberg, was one of the first such Lutheran churches. Incorporated into the fortress residence of Duke John the Magnanimous, Elector of Saxony, the Castle Church anticipated a number of the distinctive features which were to become characteristic of Lutheran church architecture. The cruciform configuration of the medieval cathedral with a long narrow nave concluding in a transept which separated it from the chancel and the choir is gone. This hallowed tradition is replaced by a large rectangular central space surrounded by multiple balconies. The pulpit is placed in the center of the first balcony to enable the entire congregation to hear and see the pastor as he proclaims and teaches the Word of God. This placement reflects the centrality of Biblical preaching in the churches of the Reformation. The altar is not placed in a distant chancel, distant from the congregation, where a priest re-enacts the sacrifice of the mass on behalf of those present, or those in whose memory the mass is being said. Instead, the altar is located in the same central area, affirming the reality of a God who is present among His people in the Body and Blood of His Son. The Baptismal Font stands prominently before the altar as a visible reminder of the "washing of regeneration" through which



*Interior of the Castle Church In Torgau*



*Pulpit Of The Castle Church In Torgau*

God made each of us a part of His family the Church. Martin Luther's response to this first Lutheran church building was quite enthusiastic. *"Even King Solomon himself never built so beautiful a temple as Torgau has!"* The Reformer preached the dedicatory sermon for the new Castle Church of Torgau on October 5, 1544. His message focused on the manner in which the design of the sanctuary captured the essence of evangelical worship as it has been restored by God through the Reformation:

*"My dear friends, we are now to bless and consecrated this new house to our Lord Jesus Christ...in order that the purpose of this new house may be such that nothing else may ever happen in it except that our dear Lord Himself may speak to us through His holy Word, and we respond to Him through prayer and praise...God very wisely arranged and appointed things, and instituted the Holy Sacrament to be administered in the congregation at a place where we can come together, pray, and give thanks to God..Christ makes an even stronger promise in Matthew 18 that wherever even two or three are gathered together in His Name, He would be in the midst of them, and what they agreed upon to pray for together would be done for them by His heavenly Father. How much more then, should not this assurance comfort a whole congregation of Christians when they pray together in unity for something in Christ's name? And even if no other fruit came from it, it would still be altogether sufficient that if two or three, or a whole multitude of you were together, Christ Himself would be present among you. And there, most certainly, God the Father and the Holy Spirit too, would not be absent, and the holy angels would not be far away, but the devil and his hellish troops would not be willingly anywhere near...Let us call upon God and pray. First, for His holy*



*Church, that He may preserve His holy Word among us and extend it everywhere. And then, that He may keep this house pure, as it now is, God be praised, consecrated and sanctified through God's Word, that it may not be desecrated or defiled by the devil and his lies and false doctrine. And then also for all governments and public peace in the German lands, that God may graciously preserve and strengthen the same against the devil and his servants, the pope, bishops, and papists, and wicked Turks; for here we have need of a strong prayer; for it is grievous torment to see and endure such discord and errant cunning of the devil and his rabble.” (Martin Luther, AE, 51, pp. 333ff.)*

The concept of a large central space surrounded by multiple balconies, focused upon the architectural representations of the Means of Grace - altar, pulpit, and font - became the consistent pattern of Lutheran church architecture in the decades which followed. Lutheran churches were built in a broad variety of configurations - octagonal, square, rectangular, etc. - but a clear emphasis upon altar, font, and pulpit were carefully maintained. In a pre-sound system era this arrangement also made practical sense. In Lutheran worship the members of the congregation are not neither spectators nor an audience to be entertained. Instead they are active participants in the dialog of the liturgy, a conversation initiated and empowered by God. They listen attentively to the Word as it is proclaimed by their pastor in the sermon and confess its truth in the great hymns of the faith.

Superintendent Christian Wilsch summarized the Lutheran perspective well in his sermon for the dedication of the new Lutheran church in the village of Pretschendorf near Dresden in 1773. He made specific reference to the central features of Lutheran Church design in the characteristic alignment of *“Pulpit, altar, baptismal font and organ, set each in their proper place in relation to one another.”*

*“If our God is a God of order, then it must please Him if everything is in order in His House. It is therefore fitting that a church building be designed in beautiful symmetry, with pulpit, altar, baptismal font and organ set each in their proper place in relation to one another. Every balcony and pillar in the church should also be built in such a way that all may clearly see the pastor in the pulpit and at the altar.” (Harmut Mai, Die Evangelische Kanzel Altar, p.5)*

Evangelical Lutheranism's commitment to maintain and express the centrality of the Means of Grace in the design of its churches came to be expressed most creatively and effectively in the development of the Lutheran *“Kanzelaltar”* (Pulpit/Altar). A pulpit/altar is a structure in which the altar and the pulpit are joined together in such a way that the pulpit is placed above and behind the altar. Typically the font is then located in front of the altar combining all three architectural representations of the Means of Grace most prominently at the central axis of the sanctuary. This combination becomes



*“Martin Luther Preaching The Dedication At Torgau” by Lucas Cranach the Elder*



*“Dreieigkeits Kirche - Carlsfeld*

helps to avoid the two most common pitfalls which afflict so much of Christian worship today. The first is the diversion of attention from the message to the messenger (pastor/priest) - either as the episcopally empowered mediator through whom God’s grace is exclusively channeled or as the celebrity in charge whose dynamic oratory or winsome personality defines both the style and the substance of worship for his adoring audience. The second common trap is the an overemphasis upon one of the Means of Grace at the expense of the other. This may take the form of minimizing the sacraments in favor of preaching or vice-versa. In either case, the full richness of God’s gracious bounty of forgiveness is denied.

The use of the pulpit/altar flourished throughout the Reformation heartlands of German and Scandinavia throughout the era of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Unfortunately, as Lutheranism began to change in later years so did pulpit/altars, thus demonstrating once again the indissoluble

the dominant feature of the physical environment for the Divine Service. The pulpit altar is considered by many scholars to be the single most important contribution of Lutheran theology to the history of Church architecture.

In his definitive study *Die Evangelische Kanzelaltar*, Hartmut Mai argues that the evangelical pulpit/altar offers a unique opportunity for structuring a liturgical center in such a way as to give decisive architectural express to the focus of the worship of the Lutheran Church upon the Means of Grace as the one center around which the congregation gathers to worship God. At the same time, he contends that the pulpit/altar expressed the essential unity and equality of Word and Sacrament in Biblically defined worship. (Hartmut Mai, *Die Evangelische Kanzelaltar*, p. 201)

This deliberate fixation upon the Means of Grace also



*Pulpit/Altar - Dreieinigkeitskirche - Carlsfeld*





*“Klaebu Kirke - Norway*



*Lutherische Kirche von Friedensfürsten - Deutschland*

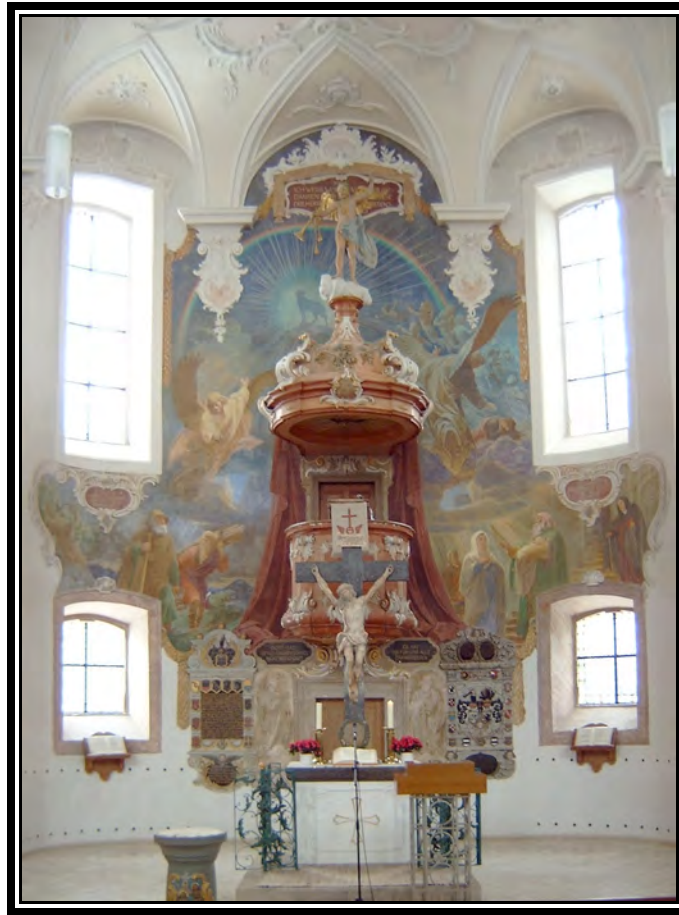




*“Evangelische Kirche Von Rellingen*



*“Sor Fron Kirke - Hundorp, Oppland, Norway*



***“Kanzelaltar - Altdorf Kirche, Deutschland***

connection between church architecture and theology. Orthodoxy gave way to Pietism, which, in turn, yielded to the Rationalism of the Enlightenment. Pulpits became teacher’s lecterns from which human thinkers spouted their own wisdom - or that of those from whom they had learned. Rationalism had little, if any, use for the sacraments and accordingly altars diminished into little more than shelves used to store books and candles. Dr. Hartmut Mai summed up the theological significance of the historic Lutheran Pulpit/Altar and its practical possibilities in this way:

*“The rediscovered Gospel, in the richness of its sin-cancelling grace, mediated through the Word and the Sacraments, is the center of the theological concept. Faith Alone (‘Sola Fide’) in this Gospel is all that is necessary for salvation. The preaching office, which is the one and only office for the church which God has established, has the Word to deliver and the Sacraments to administer. Word and Sacrament once again constitute the Christian congregation, since Word and Sacrament are the forms of the one Gospel which have been determined by God. Their close interrelationship is also dogmatically determined. The Sacraments were understood in the sense of Augustine’s ‘verbum visibile’. Preaching also obtained a sacramental sense in Lutheran theology as the ‘viva vox evangelii’ through which God Himself speaks to His people...The Reformation’s exaltation of the Word and its emphasis on the essential unity of the Word with the Sacraments made the axial placement of the pulpit behind the altar viable, and in the Lutheran Church led to a broad variety of structural combinations in reference to the pulpit and the altar...One can also recognize in the Pulpit/Altar - from a theological point of view - the possibility of ordering the liturgical*



*center in such a way that a theology of worship is most clearly demonstrated - so long as it was implemented in masterful artistry with an unambiguous placement within the surrounding space. The Pulpit/Altar is fitting and proper as an expression of - the majesty of the preaching of God's Word; the primary position of the Word among the Means of Grace - founded upon its universal significance; the free and open proclamation of the Truth of the Gospel; the unity of Word, Sacrament, and prayer; and, the variety of means through which God has determined to deal with His congregation." (Mai, p. 149, 201)*



*Pulpit/Altar of the Georg Bähr Kirche in Seusslitz, Saxony*

The Pulpit/Altar of the “Georg Bähr Kirche” in the Saxon village of Seusslitz is a superb example of the ideal Pulpit/Altar. Most appropriately for this study, with its particular interest in the Dresden Frauenkirche, this most smaller church was also designed by the renown Baroque architect Georg Bähr, and bears his name today. This Pulpit/Altar demonstrates an appropriate balance between pulpit and altar, neither overpowering the other, but each demonstrating by their careful placement the vital interrelationship between Word and Sacrament. The “*Shekinah*” - the “*Glory Cloud*” of the Old Testament - which visually affirmed the presence of God among His people - rests above the altar at the base of the pulpit crucifix, reflecting the truth that God now dwells among His own in Christ through Word and Sacrament. The crucifix extends upward to the platform upon which the pulpit Bible rests, thus proclaiming that all Scripture is a book about Christ the Savior of the world and that from this pulpit the Gospel of Christ crucified will be the core message of every sermon. In resplendent baroque grandeur, the Latin word “*Sanctus*” - “*Holy*” extends over the entire Pulpit/Altar in gleaming golden letters. The “*tris-hagion*” - “*Holy! Holy! Holy!*” - is the eternal song of the angels which surround God’s heavenly throne. Within the divine service the canticle of the Sanctus - preceding the Words of Institution, affirms the real presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the sacrament. This architectural design is replete with profound theological meaning.

The vital combination of Word and sacrament so essential to a genuine Biblical/Lutheran theology of worship was distorted first by Pietism and later by rationalism. Pietism withdrew from Word and Sacrament into the realm of personal feelings and individual emotions. The Pietist relied upon his own impressions and reactions. Worship was robbed of its theological substance to become almost exclusively emotive. Rationalism, growing out of the so-called Enlightenment, moved in the opposite direction. It rejected the Bible as unreliable and inaccurate and enshrined human reason as the replacement for Scripture. Enlightenment thinkers perceived themselves to be coming forth from the darkness of superstition and ignorance which Christianity had imposed upon mankind to bask in the glory. Liberal churches were reduced to the status of lecture halls. As the sacramental nature of the divine service was denigrated and ultimately abandoned the form of the pulpit/altars also changed. The pulpits grew larger and the altars diminished until they were diminished to the status of insignificant shelves tucked unobtrusively beneath the massive pulpits which towered above them. These distortions of the original concept notwithstanding, the pulpit/altar remains an effective architectural expression of the centrality of the Means of Grace in Christian worship.



*Pulpit/Altar of Christians Evangelical Church,  
Copenhagen, Denmark*



*Pulpit/Altar of the Village Church in  
Unternrißdorf, Germany*





*Augustus The Strong  
King of Saxony and Poland*

Of all the scores of octagonal churches built throughout the lands of the Reformation none was more massive nor magnificent than the “*Frauenkirche*” (“*the Church of Our Lady*”) built in the city of Dresden beginning in 1726. This grand church seats 3,500 people and towered 350 feet above the waters of the Elbe River which flowed through the beautiful city of Dresden. Dresden was the capital of the Kingdom of Saxony. The impetus for the building of this church was the 1697 conversion of Augustus the Strong, the King of Saxony, from Lutheranism to Roman Catholicism. Augustus had been offered the throne of the neighboring Kingdom of Poland on the condition that he become a Catholic. The ambitious politician was only too happy to comply with this request in order to double the size of his realm and vastly enhance his power and stature among the monarchs of central Europe. He not only abandoned the faith of his forefathers but proceeded to build a magnificent new Catholic church, the “*Hofkirche*” - (“*Court Church*”) adjacent to his palace in the heart of the foremost Lutheran city in Europe. This would enable the King and his courtiers, whom he required to join him in his conversion, to conveniently worship according to the teachings of his new faith. The reaction of the

Lutheran burghers of the city quickly proceeded from dismay to rage. The records of the City Council indicate that they resolved to build a Lutheran church which would rival St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. It was to be, in their own words, “*a St. Peter’s of the true Evangelical religion.*” (Hans Joachim Kuke, *Die Frauenkirche In Dresden*, p. 9) Their new church was to be named “*the Evangelical Cathedral of Saint Peter and St. Paul.*” If Rome had one apostolic patron, Dresden would go them one better and have two. Unfortunately, for that particular detail of their plan, the new church was to be built on the ruins of an old church named “*the Frauenkirche*” (“*the Church of Our Lady*”). The citizens of Dresden continued to refer to the new church built upon that site by the old name and do so to this day. Germans are most steadfast folk!

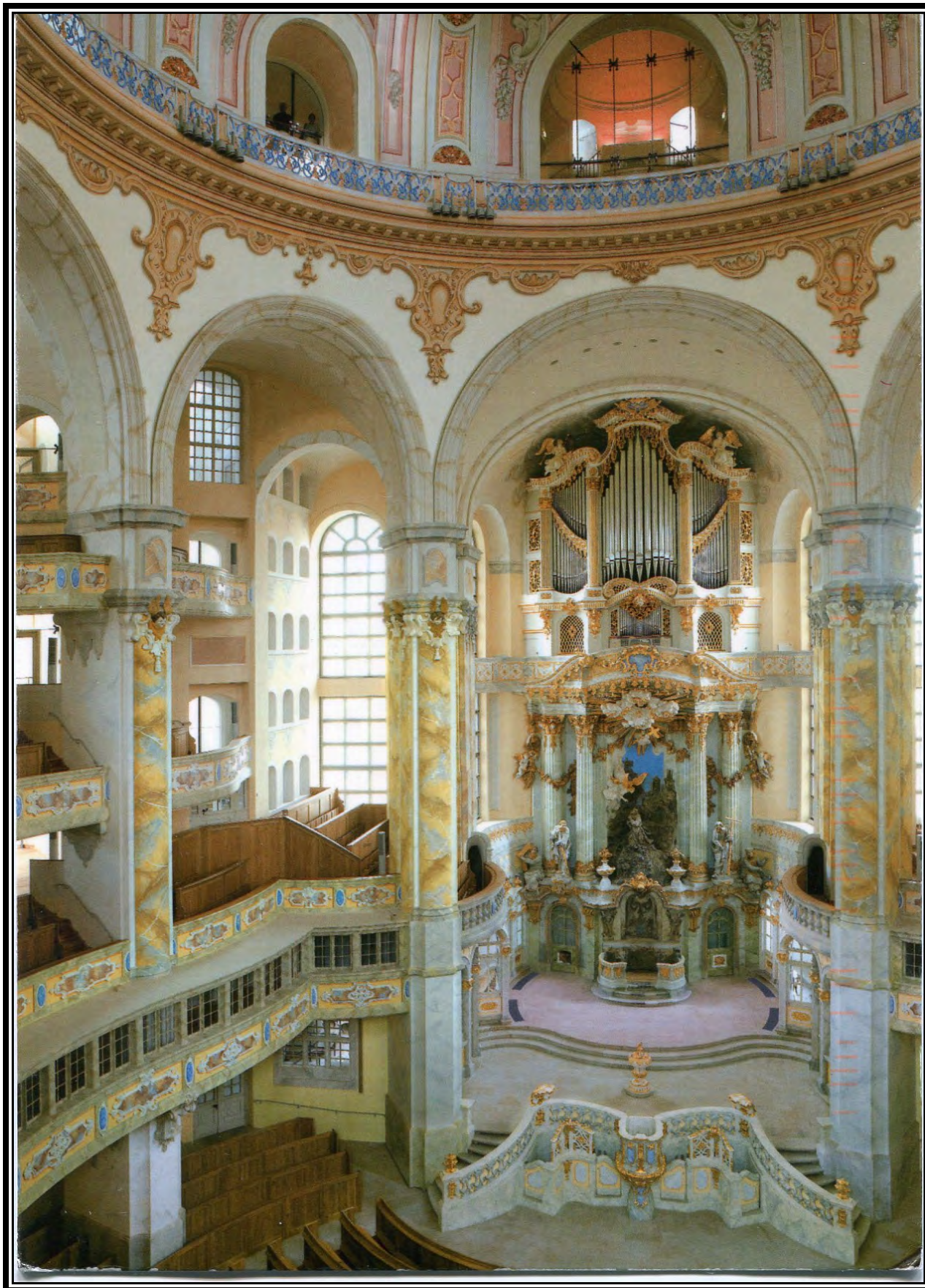


*The Hofkirche and Royal  
Palace In Dresden Today*



*The Frauenkirche In Dresden Today*





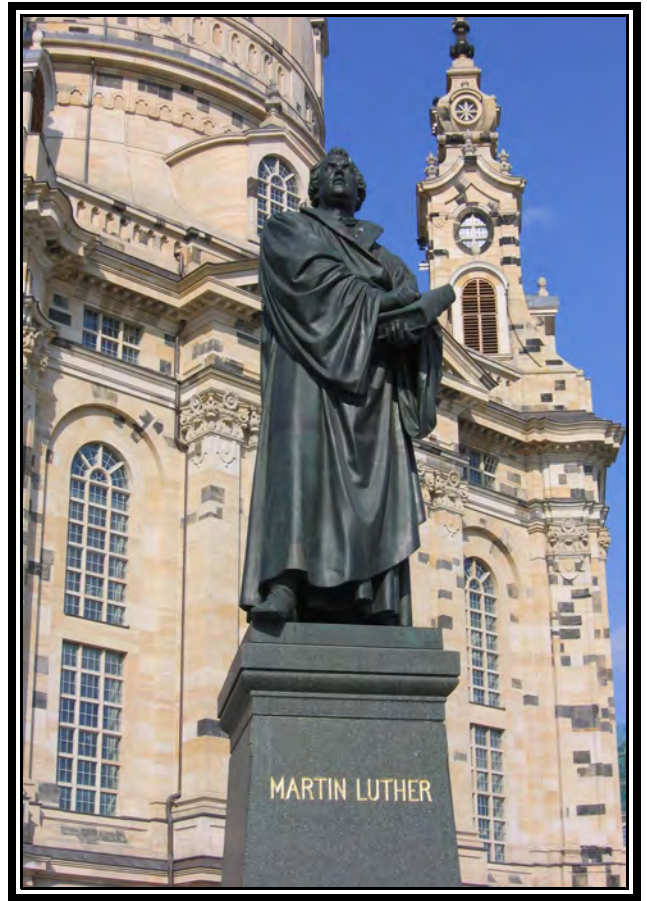
*Frauenkirche, Dresden Interior*



Architect George Bähr was commissioned to design a sanctuary which would express Dresden's commitment to the faith of the Reformation. Bähr proposed an octagonal sanctuary surrounded by seven balconies and surmounted by a massive dome built of Saxon sandstone. The architect's intent was to embody the Biblical view of worship and the church which had been courageously restored by Martin Luther and those who stood with him. The sanctuary was specifically designed to facilitate the gathering of a very large congregation around Word and Sacrament in such a way as to enable every worshiper to hear the proclamation of the Word, and join in the singing of the hymns and the liturgy. The massive structure which Bähr erected accommodated 3,500 worshipers and towered nearly 350 feet over the city. It is said that there was a time when the church was filled three times every Sunday. Most delightfully the dome towered over the King's Hofkirche and cast its shadow down upon through much of the day. The Dresdeners affectionately nicknamed the great church which dominated the skyline of their city "the Stone Bell" (German - "die Steinere Glocke"). A large bronze statue of Martin Luther, steadfastly holding a Bible in his hands stood directly outside the church. Seldom in the history of ecclesiastical architecture has a church building been so deliberately and emphatically designed as a confessional statement. Historian Matthias

Gretschel describes the significance of the Frauenkirche in this way: "The Stone Bell was the most important example of Protestant Church Architecture in the world - Martin Luther's 'Mighty Fortress' in Saxon sandstone, the St. Peter's Basilica of the Reformation, built in the center of the city of Elector Augustus, the Catholic convert." (Matthias Gretschel, *Die Dresdener Frauenkirche*, p. 9)

The Frauenkirche stood as a monument to the steadfast faith of the Reformation until the morning of April 15, 1945. In the aftermath of two days of massive fire-bombing which devastated the old city of Dresden and left 120,000 refugees from the East dead, the great dome collapsed. The bronze Luther monument by Ernst Rietschel was blasted from its pedestal to lie in shattered fragments amid the ruins. The bright gold of the sandstone blocks was turned to black by the fires which consumed the city. Dresden had the misfortune to be located in East Germany, the Communist portion of the divided nation. The East German government refused to permit the reconstruction of the church. Their political agenda was better served by allowing the scorched ruins to remain in place at the heart of the city as a memorial to those who died as the victims of "Anglo-American Imperialism." The huge mound of rubble remained untouched in the heart of the city for forty-five years. It was not until the fall of the Soviet Union and German reunification in 1990 that the painstaking process of rebuilding began. In recent years Our Savior has joined with Lutheran Churches from across the world in contributing toward the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. The completion of the historic project is planned for 2006. Archeologists have sifted through the shattered stones with meticulous care, identifying and numbering each fragment and determining wherever one of the original building block is fit for replacement in the new building. In this way the link to the past and the authenticity of the structure will be maintained. As can be seen in the photo above, the black stones amid their new



*The Martin Luther Statue In Front Of The Frauenkirche In Dresden*



*Sheep Grazing In the City Square Before the Ruins of the Frauenkirche*



*“The Ruins Cry Out A Warning”*



counterparts witness to the sad history of the great church.

Christian Gotthelf Reuther served as one of George Bähr's apprentices during the construction of the Frauenkirche. A few years later, in 1776, Reuther, now an architect in his own right, was commissioned to design and build a new church for the Lutheran congregation in the mountain village of Seiffen, about 45 kilometers southwest of Dresden. The village was located in the midst of an active tin and silver mining region known as the "Ore Mountains" (German - "Erzgebirge") on the border between Saxony and Bohemia. The mines played out and mining had declined in the region by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Seiffen is now known throughout the world for its woodcarvers and toy makers. Colorful angels, miners



*Seiffen - The Toymakers' Village On Christmas Eve*

dressed in their traditional garb, nutcrackers, smoking men, music boxes, pyramids, and gleaming bows of candlelight are sent from Seiffen to countries all around the globe. Many of these wooden toys includes the quaint eight-sided Lutheran church which Christian Reuther designed for the town. In effect, what Reuther built for Seiffen was nothing other than a smaller version of that which His mentor, George Bahr had built in Dresden. The same Lutheran theology of worship is embodied in both churches although on a radically different scale. The "Mountain Church" ("Berg Kirche"), as the building came to be known, was also an octagon surrounded by multiple balconies, crowned with a wooden dome and steeple. At the heart of the sanctuary is the pulpit altar and the baptismal font. The church accommodates about 550 people. Miners' Lanterns, fashioned of tin dug out of the surrounding hills, line the balconies. Glittering crystal chandeliers, created at the Heidelbach Glass Works near Seiffen, illumine the sanctuary. The Mountain Church is located on a hillside overlooking the village. It is clear that for these folks their church is the focal point of their lives. On Christmas Eve, the village is aglow with golden light. Strolling children's Choirs, "die Kurrende," move through the streets of the town, singing the carols of the season. As crowds stream up the hillside for Christmas Eve Services, a brass choir on the exterior balcony at the base of the church steeple sounds forth the beloved tones of Martin Luther's Christmas hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" (German "Von Himmel Hoch Da Komm Ich Her") across the snowy hillsides.









*Pulpit/Altar - Mountain Church - Seiffen*



*Pulpit/Altar - Mountain Church - Seiffen*



*Christmas Time In Seiffen*





*The Pulpit/Altar of St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Serbin, Texas*

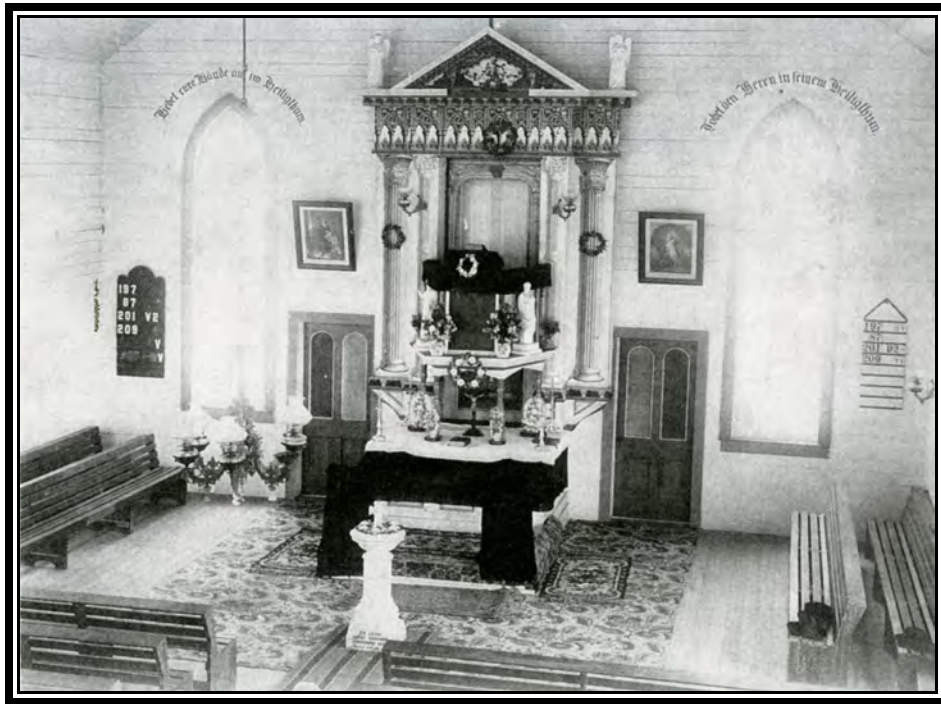
Many of the German and Wendish emigrants who came to Texas in the 19<sup>th</sup> left their fatherland because of religious persecution. They traveled to the new world to be able to believe, teach and confess the Lutheran faith of their forefathers without interference from the governments of the various German principalities and state churches. That being the case, it should not come as a surprise that the churches which they built in the rugged hill country of central Texas, particularly in the first generations, reflected the distinctive Lutheran church architecture of the homelands of the Reformation. St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Serbin, Texas, is a prime example of this pattern at work. This congregation was organized in 1854 by a group of Wendish emigrants who had left their homes in southeastern Saxony to escape the rationalism and liberalism which prevailed in the state church of the Kingdom of Saxony. Pastor Johann Killian, the leader of the group, was a close friend of C.F.W. Walther, the founder of the Missouri Synod. The church which Pastor Killian and his congregation built in Serbin was in many way a reproduction of the Lutheran Church which they had left behind in the Saxon town of Klitten. The church's design expresses the Wends' solid commitment to confessional Lutheranism which had led them to settle in Texas. The beautiful Pulpit/Altar and the wrap around

balcony of St. Paul's Church reflect the characteristic features of Lutheran Church architecture throughout central Europe. The congregation continues to worship in their original sanctuary to this day.



*St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Serbin, Texas*





*The Pulpit/Altar of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Warda, Texas*

The same classic Lutheran Means of Grace approach to church design can be seen in other historic churches of the Hill Country of Central Texas. Both Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Warda and Trinity Lutheran Church in Fedor included pulpits/altars in the first churches they built in the rural communities in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In both instances, font altar, and pulpit stood at the center of the sanctuary as the focus of the entire worship space. The unity of Word and Sacrament as the vital core of the Divine Service was clearly reflected in the unified structure of pulpit and altar. The pulpits were placed with careful symmetry so that it did not overshadow the altar, but rose up majestically from it, thus indicating that the message which was to be proclaimed from those pulpits was not the word of man but the true Word of God Himself. The two structures were linked by majestic Corinthian columns adorned with angels and the prominently displayed cross of Christ. The architecture of these churches unmistakably displayed the Lutheran theology upon which these congregations had been founded. It is most impressive that in these rural settlements where subsistence farming would be an ongoing struggle to survive, these faithful Lutherans raised up churches to the God of their fathers with such meticulous care.



*Pulpit/Altar of Trinity Lutheran Church  
Fedor, Texas*



*“Christ In The Garden” - From The Altar of the Frauenkirche*

## ***The Artwork and Liturgical Appointments Of Our Savior Lutheran Church***

This is the rich heritage upon which we have built. It is no coincidence that there are few novelties to be found in our new sanctuary. Rather than pursuing the latest trends, or conforming to the most current fashions, the members of Our Savior Lutheran Church have deliberately attempted to design and construct this church in a manner that expresses our firm commitment to the doctrinal heritage of historic Lutheranism. This church building is a declaration of our convictions as Lutherans and an indication of our resolve to stand steadfast in that faith through all of the years to come. We dedicate our sanctuary today *“To The Glory of God and the Salvation of Man.”*

Lutheranism’s historic openness to liturgical art, in contrast to the reticence of much of Protestantism, is deeply rooted in its theology of the incarnation. God is to be known, first and foremost, in the Person of His Son, who became flesh and dwelt among us as a man. John Calvin, on the other hand, was preoccupied with the glory of God and, therefore, with His Law. For Calvin this resulted in a faith which *“ushers him out of the world in every respect.”* (Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, p. 460) Calvin rejected the use of the visual arts in the church as idolatrous. Classic Calvinist churches to this day are stark and bare, devoid of painting or sculpture. In sharp contrast, Martin Luther’s theology of the cross focused on the God who was incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ, born in the manger of Bethlehem and crucified on the cross of Calvary. In Luther’s view, the arts were a gift of God, to be enlisted as allies of the Church as a most effective means to enrich and express the faith of God’s people. In his introduction to the *“Wittenberg Hymnal”* of 1524, Luther declared: *“Nor am I of the opinion that the Gospel should ignore and blight all the arts, as some of the hyper-religious claim. But I would like to see*



*all the arts, especially music be used in the service of Him who gave and made them.*” (Martin Luther, AE, 53, p. 316). This viewpoint is the direct result of Luther’s theology of the cross. Daniel Hardy summarized Luther’s line of thought in this helpful manner:

*“For Luther, God’s justification in Christ, and the dynamic of human transformation were deeply historical, that is, temporarily extended. It was for this reason, apparently, that Luther was open to the arts; his attention to the liturgy and churches was no accident...Luther seemed to regard human history as such as the theater for God’s action. This opened a possibility for the arts not present in the others...This may also explain Luther’s greater attention to buildings, liturgy and music as allies in Christian faith, which sharply distinguished his views from those of the other reformers.”* (Daniel W. Hardy, *Seeing Beyond the Word - Visual Arts in the Calvinist Tradition*, p.11,16)

The rich abundance of paintings and sculptures in the historic Lutheran churches of central Europe offers vibrant testimony to the practical power of this theology of the incarnation. Dr. Paul Kretzmann offered this cogent survey of the role of art in the Lutheran Church:

*“The Lutheran Church, in matters of seasons, decorations, and ritual conducts itself with both true conservatism and the exercise of Christian liberty...In order to bring the knowledge of grace to mens’ hearts has preserved those usages of the past relating to the seasons of the church year, the appointments of the church buildings, and the liturgical church service, which being good and serviceable, suit the true church of God in all ages. To confess its faith, it did not hesitate to enlist the aid of pure and beautiful art forms, not only in the harmonies of poetry and music, but also in architecture, sculpture, painting, bronze-work, wood-carving and embroidery, so long as these aided its purpose of edification and instruction. In this it follows the lead of Luther.”* (Paul Kretzmann, *Christian Art In The Place And In The Form Of Christian Worship*, p.4)



*The Altar In The Evangelical Church of Saint Peter And Saint Paul In Weimar by Lucas Cranach the Elder*

The “Lutherhalle” in Wittenberg displays a painting by Wilhelm von Kaulbach entitled “*The Era of the Reformation*” which dramatically displays this relationship between art - along with all other forms of human endeavor - and Biblical truth. Luther stands at the center of the scene, holding aloft the open Bible in the midst of a vast hall. He is surrounded by his fellow theologians who are distributing the Lord’s Supper to the princes of Germany. In this way, von Kaulbach reminds us of the centrality of the Gospel of Word and Sacrament in both of God’s Kingdoms, the church and the realm of this world. All around the reformer and his colleagues are representatives of all the arts and sciences - painters and sculptors, musicians and poets, scientists and philosophers - each pursuing his craft to the greater glory of God as the application and expression of Biblical truth. Those who express the beauty of the earth and those who seek to understand her mysteries also serve the God who is the Creator of all things and whose foremost revelation of Himself to us comes in the person of His Son, the Word made flesh. Contemporary secularism has largely succeeded in driving a wedge between faith in Christ and every other area of human endeavor, whether that be science, art, or politics. This false barrier of separation would have been vigorous and completely rejected by our forefathers in the era of the Reformation as an arbitrary and arrogant limitation of the scope of God the Creator.



The design of Our Savior’s sanctuary follows the pattern of classic Lutheran Reformation church architecture. We have chosen the octagon to provide the large central space. In the symbolism of the ancient church, eight is the number of the resurrection and the new creation. Christ rose from the dead on the eighth day after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In seven days God created all the natural world.



On the eighth day, one is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit to live by faith within God's new creation. Hence, the octagon, with its eight sides is the traditional configuration of baptistries and baptismal fonts. This design reflects historic Christendom's recognition of Holy Baptism as "*a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*" (Titus 3:5) Aside from this most appropriate symbolism, the shape of the octagon lends itself well to the Lutheran congregation's desire to bring its members together around the architectural representations of the Means of Grace, the pulpit, the altar, and the font. Thus the attention of the people is naturally focused upon those Means of Grace as the reason for our gathering and the source from which its empowerment is derived, according to the promise of God. To consistently carry through this symbolism each of the three architectural representations of the Means within our eight sided church is also octagonal. Within this House of God, through the ministry of Word and sacrament, we become a part of God's new creation, rising from the death of sin to newness of life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In his fascinating study of the doctrine of Holy Baptism *The Font of Life - Ambrose, Augustine And the Mystery of Baptism*, Northwestern University Professor Dr. Gary Wills notes the profound significance of the octagon and the numerological symbolism of the number eight in connection with the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan baptized St. Augustine in the octagonal baptistry of his cathedral in the octagonal baptismal font which was surrounded by eight columns with eight candle holders:



***The Octagonal Baptismal Font In Eisleben  
In Which Martin Luther Was Baptized***

*"The number eight was a symbol of eternity since it followed on the seven days of creation in the Bible, and it was the number for Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection. Ambrose often emphasized this sacred meaning: 'The seventh day revealed the mystery of the Law; the eighth day revealed the mystery of the resurrection.' 'The seventh day belongs to the Old Testament. The eight belongs to the New, when Christ rose from the dead and the light of a new form of salvation penetrated us all. This day the prophet referred to when he said, 'This is the day which the Lord made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.' (Psalm 118:24) On this day the brilliance of the entire and completed circumcision flooded in on sinners. For the Old Testament gave a partial meaning to the day in the rite of circumcision-though that was still veiled in a shadow. Now the Sun of Justice arrives, and by the completion of His own suffering beams out His rays of illumination. He unveiled the Sun to all and broke open the incandescence of eternal life.' Baptism was a new beginning in the setting of a new beginning....The poem Ambrose dedicated to the building is preserved...' This eight sided temple has been raised to holy purpose, and eight sides of the font perform their task. That number befits a chamber for baptizing. It towers so that people may be saved, in the splendor of Christ's rising to break the bars of death and bring life out of the tombs. Freeing*



***Our Savior Church Steeple***

*from death's stain repenting men, cleansed in the font's pure running stream.'"* (George Wills, *The Font of Life - Ambrose, Augustine And the Mystery of Baptism* p. 9)

The peak of the sanctuary of Our Savior Lutheran Church is crowned by a unique steeple of steel and copper. A gleaming stainless steel cross surmounts the crest of the steeple. The massive arms of the cross each flare out to the four points of the compass signifying the determination of the members of this congregation not only to serve the families of this community in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ but also to support the proclamation of His Gospel of salvation all around the world. The steeple is seventy-two feet tall and thirty-two feet in diameter at its base. The entire steeple structure weighs just over thirty-two tons. The steeple was constructed for Our Savior by J. & L. Sheet Metal Company of Houston.

The steeple reflects the design of its counterpart atop the Mountain Church in Seiffen. The steeple's distinctive "Onion Dome" ("Zwibelturm") was prevalent throughout the Reformation heartland in central Europe. It had long been a distinctive feature

of Byzantine and Russian Orthodox Church design since well before 1,000 A.D. Alexei Lidov, a Russian historian of church architecture, suggests that the origin of this remarkable feature of eastern steeple design should be traced to the most primitive Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the canopy which was erected there over the cave believed to have been the tomb from which Christ rose to new life on the original Easter. Lidov argues that such a dramatic departure from previous practice could not have occurred so widely and so quickly without a profound theological/symbolic foundation.

*"Moreover the onion dome can be found not only in physical depictions of the Jerusalem shrine, but also in any representation of a Christian church, giving it the character of a universal symbol. From the outset, the onion dome was not perceived simply as a actual architectural detail in Jerusalem, but as an ideal form, symbolically pointing to the inner union of each Christian church and the proto-church of the Holy Sepulcher. To understand the meaning of the iconographic motif, it is of essential significance that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which appeared on the site of Christ's redeeming sacrifice was interpreted as the New Jerusalem, the visible embodiment of the heavenly kingdom. In other words, the onion dome evoked thoughts of the ideal church, as a precise image of the New Jerusalem."* (Alexei Lidov, *The Canopy Over the Holy Sepulcher - On the Introduction Of Onion Shaped Domes.*, p.7)

The nearly universal adoption of this feature in the churches of Russia would have been a natural expression of the Tsar's fervent desire to replace the fallen Emperor of Constantinople as the leader of



Eastern Orthodoxy.

Our Savior's is the largest onion dome tower in North America. A huge crane hoisted the steeple into place in three sections during a festive celebration attended by more than 800 people on November 21, 1999. A hymn, specially composed for the occasion expressed the significance of this unique architectural feature of the new sanctuary:

*“Raise the cross of Christ our Savior  
Gleaming bright against the sky;  
Lift the steeple up t’ward heaven,  
Glorious home of God on high.  
Here God deigns to dwell among us  
He whom heavens cannot contain,  
By His sacred Word and Promise  
Still within His Church doth reign!*

*All around us spreads the city,  
Busy, bustling, filled with strife -  
Lost within sin’s fatal darkness  
Death triumphant over life.  
Families flounder, children perish,  
Selfishness and greed prevail  
We must raise the cross of Jesus,  
Sign of Love that cannot fail.*

*Raise the Cross of Christ our Savior  
Gleaming bright against the sky!  
Lift the steeple up t’ward heaven  
Glorious home of God on High.  
May this soaring steeple signal  
Faith in God who reigns above;  
Pointing out the path to heaven  
Showing forth His gracious love.*

*Let God’s faithful people rally,  
Round this shining upraised cross;  
Now together move we forward  
Counting this world’s gain but loss.  
In these days of fear and falsehood  
Boldly now, His Truth proclaim!  
Like the saints who came before us  
Teach His Word! Confess His Name!  
(L. White, 1999)*



*Steeple Raising Ceremony  
November 21, 1999*



*Entering The Sanctuary*

As the great bronze doors swing open and one enters the sanctuary of Our Savior Lutheran Church, it is immediately evident that this is a place of worship and that the focus of that worship is the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This is not a auditorium where an audience gathers to be entertained nor a theater for flamboyant stage production. To enter this sanctuary is to stand in the presence of the Lord and to exclaim, as did Jacob our father: *“How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God; this is the gate of heaven!”* (Genesis 28:17)

The architectural representations of the Means of Grace - the font, the altar, and the pulpit - are in the center of the worship space. The pulpit/altar of historic Lutheran church architecture is restored, proclaiming the unity and the centrality of Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service. Pulpit, altar and font are carefully aligned down the central axis of the space, each an octagon like the building itself. They are all the same size, eight feet in diameter, signaling both their significance and their similarity. All three are of similar design and material. Their intricate wood carvings and beautiful colors serve to further emphasize their crucial role in the worship of God’s people. They are clearly the focal point of all the other artwork and statuary in and surrounding the chancel - the crucifix and the angels. The orientation of the worship space is vertical, drawing the congregation together around Word and Sacrament, and directing our

attention toward the God of heaven Who speaks to us in His Word, claims us as His own in the water, and offers us the precious body and blood of His only Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

In keeping with the ancient traditions of the church, the octagonal baptismal font is place in the center aisle near the entrance to the sanctuary as a reminder that Holy Baptism is the means through which God incorporates His people into the Church. As the apostle teaches in Romans Chapter 6: *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried, therefore, with Him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”* The font is constructed of Slavonian oak with carved lindenwood relief panels on each of its eight sides. The relief panels are modeled after 16<sup>th</sup> Century woodcuts depicting the twelve apostles by the great Reformation artist Lucas Cranach the Elder. Six of the eight relief panels display the twelve apostles who were commissioned to baptize (Matthew 28:19). Our images are based upon a series of woodcuts published by Cranach in 1512 entitled *“Christ, The Twelves Apostles, And Paul.”* Each of the apostles are depicted with the instrument of their martyrdom and/or the symbolic objects most commonly associated with their ministries; for example, Saint Peter holds the Keys of the Kingdom and a book representing his New Testament epistles; Saint Andrew, the X shaped cross upon which he was crucified; Saint James the Less the fuller’s club with which he was beaten to death, Saint John the poisoned chalice from which the Lord delivered him; Saint Phillip, a cross and a staff for his missionary activity; Saint Batholomew - a human skin because he was flayed alive; Thomas - the lance by which he was





*Master Carver Wilhelm In Studio Demetz Carving A Panel For the Font*



*The Baptism of Jesus and Means of Grace Panels From the Baptismal Font*





***Master Carver Francesco Mocchi  
Finishing John the Baptist For the Font***

lamb, of course, was the sacrificial animal of the Temple, and with this designation John foretold that Jesus would give up His own life as the offering for sin. John holds a cross shaped staff in his hands and the figure of a lamb reclines at his feet. From his reverent posture the Baptist is gazing up toward the figure of Christ upon the cross which is suspended directly over the altar. Thus are the font and the altar visually bound together with the pulpit, rising behind the altar from which the crucified Christ is to be proclaimed. The image of the Baptist gesturing toward Christ as the Lamb of God is derived from the central panel of the magnificent Cranach Altar in the City Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Weimar.

Baptism is the water of new life. This is symbolized by the fact that the water of the font which surrounds the wood carving is constantly flowing. This is also consistent with the ancient custom of baptizing in “living water.” “The sight and sound of living, running, water is a powerful key to our remembering all of the meanings of water and baptism suggested by nature, as well as the meanings of water and baptism suggested by Scripture.” (Walter C. Huffmann, *Where We Worship*, p. 22)

martyred; Saint Matthew - an open book because of his Gospel; Saint James the Greater - the headsman’s axe by which he died; Saint Simon - the saw used in his execution; St. Jude Thaddeus - the stave by which he was beaten to death; Saint Matthias, a butcher’s cleaver, the instrument of his death for Christ. The remaining two reliefs, in the front and back of the font are also based upon Cranach woodcuts and emphasize the importance of Holy Baptism as a Means of Grace: “*The Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist*” (1548); and “*The True Religion of Christ*” (1545).

To strengthen the theological connection between the font and the altar a magnificent original carving of a kneeling Saint John the Baptist was placed in the center of the Baptismal Font, surrounded by running water like that of the Jordan River where John had faithfully carried out his ministry as the forerunner of the Messiah. When Jesus came to Saint John to be baptized, John hailed him as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:28) The



***John The Baptist In The Baptismal Font***





*Baptismal Font Our Savior Church Houston*



*Baptismal Font Castle Church Wittenberg*



*Reformation Era Baptismal Font - St. Johanneskirche Wölfenbüttel*



*The Shekinah Atop the Pulpit/Altar of Trinitatiskirche Wölfenbüttel*

The altar follows the font on the Means of Grace central axis of the sanctuary. In the worship of the Lutheran Church, the altar bears a threefold significance. It serves, first of all, as a portrayal of the sacrificial death of Christ for us upon the cross as the central theme of God's plan of salvation. This once for all sacrifice was prefigured in the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament Tabernacle/Temple. The core concept of those sacrifices was that a righteous God cannot simply overlook sin. His justice demands blood must be shed, innocent life must be offered, to pay the price for sin. Sinful man was incapable of paying that price for himself and therefore, God in His grace, paid the ransom price Himself in the perfect life and innocent death of His own Son. The cross became the sacred altar upon which that saving blood was shed. Secondly, the altar is the physical symbol of the gracious presence of God among us in Word and Sacrament. In this sense, the altar function like the sacred Ark of the Covenant which was the physical symbol of God's presence among the Children of Israel. In many of the historic Lutheran churches of central Europe, a carved representation of the "Shekinah" the Glory Cloud/Pillar which rested over the Ark between the outstretched wings of the exalted Cherubim, was incorporated into the pulpit/altar. This was designed to remind the congregation that the same God who led Israel through the wilderness with pillars of cloud and fire, and who graciously dwelt within the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple, now dwells among His people through Christ in Word and Sacrament. As in the illustration above the Shekinah was typically depicted as a cloud with fiery beams of light shooting forth from. The Tetragrammaton, that is, the sacred name of God in Hebrew "JHWH," was typically imposed upon the cloud, often surrounded with a triangle to signify the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Finally, the third reason why the altar has always played a crucial symbolic role in Lutheran Church architecture is as a witness to the critical significance of the Lord's Supper, the Sacrament of the Altar, as an essential component of the worship of a Christian congregation. Among the churches of Christendom the Lutheran Church is unique,



among numerous other reasons, in that it is the Church of Word and Sacrament. By deliberate design the altar stands exactly at the center of the sanctuary, between the baptismal font and the pulpit. Thus do we confess our belief that when we gather to worship here the awesome God, whom the highest heavens cannot contain, graciously deigns to dwell among us in Word and Sacrament.

The design for our altar is inspired by the design of the Luther Church in the Saxon village of Torgau, near Wittenberg. As previously noted, the Luther Church of Torgau was actually the first church to have been built by Lutherans. The original altar of this church was inspired by the vision of heaven received by the Prophet Isaiah and recorded in Chapter 6 of his Book of Prophecy. Isaiah saw the Lord upon his glorious throne with the majestic six-winged Seraphim surrounding God's throne as they sang an eternal "Trishagion" ("Thrice Holy");

*"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings; with two he covered his face; with two he covered his feet; and with two he flew. And one called to the other and said: 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the threshold shook at the voice of Him who called and the House was filled with smoke." (Isaiah 6:1-4)*



***Isaiah's Vision of God's Seated Above The Ark Within The Holy of Holies Surrounded By The Seraphim***

The reference for this vision was actually inscribed upon the massive "reredos" which stood behind the original altar just below an elaborate image of the Shekinah glory of the Lord. The "mensa," that is the flat surface at the top of the altar table, rests upon the outstretched wings of four standing seraphs. Each stands in reverence before the Lord with bowed heads and folded hands. All of this, both in Torgau and in Houston, is intended to convey the conviction that God is present here in this midst of His people. He comes to dwell among us in Word and Sacrament according to His promise through Christ our Lord.



*The Original Altar and Reredos of Luther Church In Togau Displaying the Sheikinah and the Reference to Isaiah 6*

Our Savior's altar reflects the same themes drawn from the heavenly vision of the Prophet Isaiah. Like the font and the pulpit, the altar is an octagon, eight feet in diameter. The mensa of the altar is crafted of inlaid oak. Like the Torgau Altar it is supported on the wings of four kneeling angels. These angels also bow in reverent awe before the Lord of Hosts, filled with wonder that such a God would deign to dwell among His people. The angels are hand carved linden wood, each meticulously detailed and brightly colored. The four altar angels are clad in the mail and armor of warriors, each presenting a drawn sword, as the guardians who have been created to surround the throne of God. The acclamation, "Holy" from the Trishagion of Isaiah 6 is carved into four of the eight sides of the octagon and highlighted in gleaming gold leaf. The angel's song of praise reverberates from the congregation every time God's people gather for worship in this place. The term "Holy" is presented in four languages, chosen for their role in the history of Lutheran worship and theology - English, Greek ("Hagios"), Latin ("Sanctus") and German ("Heilig").

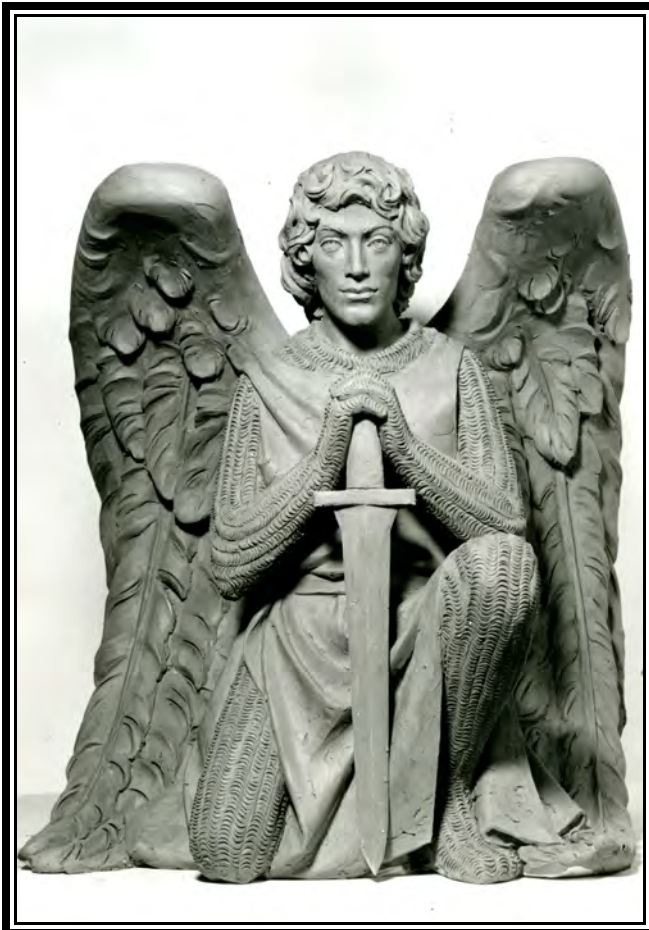


*The Isaiah Altar*





*Applying Gold Leaf To The Altar Angels*



*The Clay Model For The Altar Angels*



*The Face of An Angel*

The theme of Isaiah's magnificent vision of heavenly glory continues in the custom designed sanctuary tapestries displayed on either side of the chancel. These exquisite works of art are each eight feet wide and twenty-two feet long. They were designed for us by Dirk Slabbink at the internationally renown Slabbink Studios in the ancient city of Bruges, Belgium. The Seraphim displayed upon the banners surround the Shekinah, the Glory Cloud which signifies the presence of God. The cloud is pierced in every direction with bolts of burning light which emanate from the presence of the Lord Almighty upon His throne. The divine presence is indicated by the Tetragrammton, the four letters of the most sacred Name of God Almighty - "JHWH" - "Jahweh". The angels worship in humble adoration. The words of their song of praise from Isaiah 6 are visually conveyed by the scrolls which they hold in their hands: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Heaven and Earth are full of Your Glory!" The angels soaring up at the top of the banners gesture toward the altar and the crucifix above it, thus reminding us every Sunday that in Christ "we behold His Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Luther's magnificent hymn, "Isaiah Mighty Seer In Days of Old" captured the scene of the prophet's vision perfectly.

*"Above the throne were stately seraphim. Six wings had they these messengers of Him.  
With twain they veiled their faces as was meet. And with the other twain they veiled their feet.  
And with the other twain aloft they soared - One to another called and praised the Lord:  
"Holy is God the Lord of Sabaoth! Holy is God the Lord of Sabaoth!  
Holy is God the Lord of Sabaoth!  
The beams and lintels trembled at their cry, And clouds of smoke enwrapped the Throne on High.*



*"The Glory of the Holy Trinity" - Włodzimierz Tetmjr*





*“Holy, Holy, Holy Banner - Slabbinck*



*“Holy, Holy, Holy Banner - Slabbinck*

Two bronze angel candelabra stand mounted on carved oak pedestals between the altar and the pulpit. The angels face one another across the altar, framing the pulpit with their magnificent wings outstretched high behind them. In this way they appear to stand over the altar like the great golden cherubim, which rested upon the Mercy Seat, the cover of the sacred ark. The large candles which they hold in the hands glitter with light as did the Holy of Holies in the ancient temple with the glory of the presence of the Most High dwelt within. The Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred object among the furnishings of the Tabernacle/Temple. It served to represent, not God Himself, but the Throne of the Holy God and the physical manifestation of His divine Presence among His people. Their presence and position in our sanctuary (note the connection of the English term derived from the Latin “*sanctus*” to the concept of holiness) is yet another way to visually affirm our conviction that according to His promise the Lord dwells among us in this place through the Means of Grace which He has established and empowered - the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. The placement of the bronze cherubim between the pulpit and the altar also serves to stress the indissoluble connection between the preached Word of Scripture and the sacramental presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. The God who deigns to dwell among us is a gracious God offering us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.



*"The Seraphim Candelabra"*





Holy Scripture designates only two angels by name: the archangels Michael and Gabriel. Carved lindenwood figures of these to mighty servants of the Lord - each over seven feet tall- stand at the back of the chancel behind the pulpit. “Michael” (Hebrew - “He Who Is Like God”) is the prince of the hosts of heaven. In Revelation Chapter 12, it is the Archangel Michael and his angels who fight against the Dragon to defeat Satan and all those who follow them and cast them down into Hell. Our carving of Michael depicts the Champion of Heaven at the moment of his victory over the devil. Satan lies helpless at the Archangel’s feet, crushed and chained. Michael’s great sword is raised in watchful triumph, lest his most devious foe attempt to rise again. Lutheran commentators have historically understood Saint John’s vision of war in heaven in Chapter 12 to be a symbolic representation of the success of Christ’s accomplishment of the plan of salvation. By His death on the cross, the Savior has won forgiveness for the sins of mankind and thus removed the basis for Christ’s accusations against us. The power of the Adversary has been broken. As Jesus had promised



*“The Archangel Michael  
Prince Of The Hosts Of Heaven”*

on the eve of His death: *“Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the Prince of this World will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men to Myself.”* (John 12:31-32)



*“A Masterpiece In Progress”*

Michael also appears as the Champion of the Hosts of the Lord in the prophecies of Daniel. God promised Daniel that amid the troubles of the Final Days Michael would protect and defend the faithful. *“At that time shall arise Michael, the Great Prince, who has charge of your people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been seen since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the Book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”* (Daniel 12:1-3)



***“The Downfall of the Adversary - Defeated by Saint Michael the Archangel”***

The Apostle, St. Jude, mentions personal combat between Michael and the devil over the body of Moses as he urged Christians to practice the humble reliance of the great Archangel upon the power of God: *“But when the Archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgement, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”* (Jude 9) The reference here is to an apocryphal Jewish account of a confrontation between Michael and Satan immediately after the death of Moses upon Mount Nebo. Satan attempted to claim the prophet’s body, accusing him of being a murderer for killing the Egyptian overseer. Even great Michael did not presume to debate Satan’s devious trickery on his own but simply dismissed the Liar by calling upon the Name of the Lord. Jude suggested that his people practice the same humility and demonstrate the same unshakable confidence in the power of God.

*“Gabriel”* (Hebrew - *“Mighty One of God”*) stands opposite Michael at the back of the chancel. The Archangel Gabriel is the Messenger of the Lord in Scripture. It Gabriel who announces the impending births of both John the Baptist and Jesus to their bewildered parents. In Hebrew tradition, Gabriel is also associated with the judgement of God and is thus typically depicted with the trumpet of God in his hand. The blast of that Judgement Trumpet will bring an end to this world of sin and suffering and hail the

beginning of the new heaven and earth where the people of God will dwell in His presence for all eternity. We chose to depict this foremost messenger of the Lord in the role of a guardian. In Matthew 18, Jesus sets the humble trust of the little child before His disciples as the exemplary faith of those who were to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He warns His disciples not to disparage the little ones because: *“For I tell you the truth that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 18:10) The beautiful concept of a Guardian Angel who watches over and protects the children of God has provided great comfort and security for the household of faith throughout its history. Like the two small children in the statue we live out our lives under God’s loving guidance and protection. As usual, Martin Luther’s observations on the subject of angels and children are particularly helpful.

*“The dear angels are not so proud as we human beings are. They walk in obedience to God, serve mankind, and take care of little children. How could they perform a more insignificant work than taking care of children day and night? What does a child do? It eats, cries, sleeps, etc. A marvelous thing it is that the holy servants of God take care of eating, drinking, sleeping and waking children! It certainly seems to be an insignificant work. But the angels do it with joy; for it is well pleasing to God who has commanded them to do it.”* (LW,34,2,p. 249)





*“Another Masterpiece In The Making”*



*“Gabriel Guardian of the Children”*



*“Four Angels Round My Bed”  
Four corners to my bed,  
Four angels round my head:  
One to watch, one to pray;  
Two to bear my soul away.*



*"Trumpet Angel"*



*"Trumpet Angel"*



*"Musical Cherubim For The Loft"*





Our Savior's sanctuary is aflutter with angels. The Bible tells us that the angels in heaven worship and praise the Lord constantly. As we worship the God of our salvation in this place our voices are added to the resplendent "ten thousand times ten thousand" which surround the heavenly throne (Revelation 5). The Early Church Father Origen was quite correct when he noted: "So when the saints are assembled there will be a double church, one of men and one of angels." We sought to convey this wonder with our host of angels. Contemporary Lutheran theologian Peter Brunner offered these insightful observations about the nature and significance of the worship of the angels:

*"The worship of the angel is the already perfected worship of the creature. In his perfected praise of God, the angel is himself perfected. The praise of God has become the inviolable nature of the angel. He finds his being exclusively and definitively in the praise of God...In his worship, the angel is nothing other than an echoing wall which echoes God's being and God's deeds in words of praise and witness... Therefore the praise of the heavenly beings suffers no interruption (Rev. 4:8) Since the act of praising is the angel's nature and existence in one, his praise of God is nothing other than the reality of his being... Therefore the angel's praise is a song rendered in uninterrupted perfect spontaneity. The praise of an angel is a hymn in which the creature melts away before God... The crucified and exalted Christ is the core of the angelic worship ever since His exaltation (Rev. 5:6-12) In the center of the heavenly Jerusalem, in the center of the many thousands of angels, stands Jesus - 'the Mediator of a new Covenant and the Sprinkled Blood' (Heb. 12:22-24) Therefore, the worship of the angels revolves around the same center as that of the church on earth, even though the real presence of Jesus and His blood in heaven is of a different type and form than in His real presence in the worship of the church on earth. But He who is present is the same - Jesus with His shed blood... The worship of the angels and the worship of the church are not separated by an iron curtain. Because they have the same center, the Lamb that was slain, they stand in real communication with each other. The church on earth may already join in the praises of the angels, and pray God to grant that its voice on earth may unite with the Sanctus of the angels in heaven. When the church assembles in worship around the crucified Christ, present in the Spirit and in the Lord's Supper, the worship of the church is opened up to and oriented to the worship of the angels... The worship of the church on earth is in immediate touch with the worship in the heavenly Jerusalem and takes place in real association with it. (Rev. 7:9-12; Heb. 12:22-24)" (Peter Brunner, Worship In The Name Of Jesus, p. 91ff.)*



***"The Heavenly Worship Of the Angels" - Mural Russian Orthodox Church***



*The Trumpet Angels In Process*

Four more beautiful angels complete our angelic host. Two trumpet angels are mounted on the sanctuary walls on either side of the organ above the Choir Loft. These carved lindenwood figures are 6.5 feet tall. Each holds a golden trumpet raised to his lips. These are the trumpets of jubilation and praise of which the psalmist spoke millennia ago.



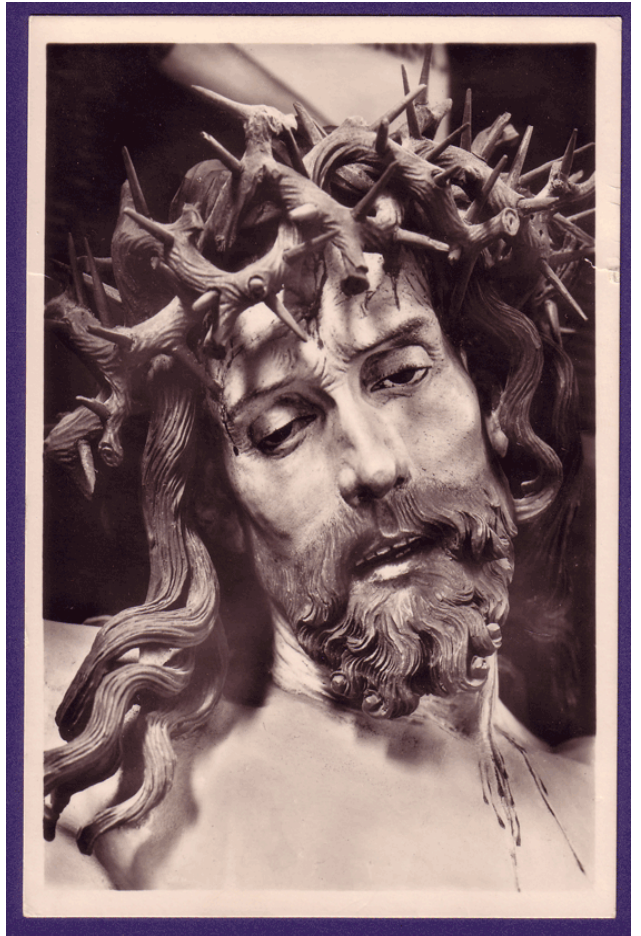
*The Calvary Angels*

*“Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary! Praise Him in His mighty heavens! Praise Him for His great acts of power! Praise Him for His surpassing greatness! Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet! Praise Him with the harp and lyre! Praise Him with tambourine and dancing! Praise Him with the strings and flute! Praise Him with the clash of cymbals; praise Him with resounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150)*

Finally, there are two guardian angels stationed on either side of the crucifix, standing at the ends of the music loft. These two life sized lindenwood figure are clad a s warriors holding spears in their hands. They appear to gaze in solemn wonder at the sight of God’s only Son sacrificing His life for fallen mankind upon the cross. Their position and their posture serve to direct the attention of the worshiper toward the crucified Christ.



Both architecturally and theologically the Gerhaert crucifix, is the central focus of the entire sanctuary. That centrality is literally true, the crucifix is suspended in the actual center of the worship space, both vertically and horizontally. It's magnitude and placement are designed to convey the theological truth that the sacrificial death of the God/Man Jesus Christ is the foundational reality of the Christian faith. Christ's sacrificial death in our place - for the forgiveness of our sins is the one and only possible basis for the salvation of humanity. Worship is possible only because of the death of Christ upon the cross and therefore worship takes places within this sanctuary literally at the foot of the cross. The placement of the crucifix over the altar and the pulpit serves to simultaneously emphasize the role of the altar as the emblem of Christ's sacrificial death as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The communicants who gather around that altar to receive the true body and blood of the Lord in the sacrament of the altar are able to glance upward toward the Savior who has given His life for them. The pastor standing in the pulpit is reminded every time he enters that pulpit to stand only a few feet below the base of the cross that it is his responsibility to proclaim Christ and Him crucified in each and every sermon he preaches.



*The Face of the Original Gerhaert Crucifix  
Pfarrkirche, Nordlingen, Germany*



*Carving The Face of the Savior*



*Ivo Demetz With the Completed Corpus  
For the Gerhaert Crucifix*

The Gerhaert Crucifix is named for the Medieval artist Nikolas Gerhaert von Leyden. Our crucifix is modeled after the crucifix which Gerhaert carved for the Pfarrkirche in the German city of Nordlingen. We chose this particular carving because of its amazing combination of superlative artistry with historical accuracy. The realistic nature of the lindenwood “*corpus*,” that is, the body of Christ upon the cross is intended to impress upon the worshiper the grim reality of death by crucifixion, and thus the high price that God’s Son was willing to pay for our salvation. Nowhere else can the depth and power of God’s love for us be seen more clearly than at the cross. The Savior bows His weary head, still crowned with the mocking thorns, as if to look down in love upon the congregation gathered below. The intricate detail of the expression upon His tortured face makes the figure’s humanity seem very real. The “*titulus*”, the placard placed by the Romans over the head of the condemned criminal bears the full inscription as detailed in the Biblical text “*Jesus of Nazareth - King of the Jews*” in Greek - the common language; Hebrew - the language of the Jewish Court; and Latin - the language of the Roman Court. (Cf. John 19:19-21) The “*corpus*” is eight feet tall and the cross is sixteen feet tall. The cross is carved of rough hewn oak. The “*patibulum*” - the horizontal cross beam is bowed in the traditional manner to

signify the weight of the sin’s guilt for the entire human race crushing down upon Jesus.



*Carving From The Historical Model*





*"The Face Of Our Savior"*





*Pulpit - Kongsberg Church Finland*



*Pulpit - Berliner Dom*



*Pulpit - Royal Gallery, Tyska Church - Stockholm*





*Pulpit - Altar - Font From Above*

The third component of the architectural representations of the Means of Grace in Our Savior's sanctuary is the pulpit. The English word "*pulpit*" comes from a Latin term which refers to a raised platform or dais from which a speaker addresses a crowd. In the history of Christian worship this term came to be used to identify the site from which the man called to the Office of the Holy Ministry proclaimed the Word of God within the sanctuary. As the preaching of the Word faded into insignificance in the medieval church, so did the size and prominence of the pulpits within the churches. The architecture mirrored the theology of worship. This architectural trend was dramatically reversed by the Reformation. Martin Luther declared: "*Know, first of all, that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of*



*The Pulpit and the Crucifix Ready For Shipment From Demetz*

*God's Word and prayer, no matter how briefly...Therefore, when God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together at all.*" (Martin Luther, AE, 53, p.11). The pulpits of classic Lutheran churches in the heartlands of the Reformation are massive masterpieces. They serve to dramatically emphasize the crucial role of faithful Biblical preaching in the worship of the church. The illustrations on the opposite page demonstrate the point. The disappearance of the pulpit in the modern church is symptomatic of the fundamental shift which has taken place in our view of worship, no longer centered upon the Word of God, but upon the self-diagnosed needs of man. Michael Horton explains the significance of the change.

*"The old Reformed pulpits were exalted works of supreme craftsmanship. Why so many steps? Why so high? Why so prominent and unmovable? Because, as theologian Karl Barth answered - preaching used to be God's Word to His Church. But now it has become the preacher's wit and inspiration for the consumers...'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away' such promises should move us to make it impossible to turn the chancel into a stage. It **should** be inconvenient to move the pulpit, font, and table. It is, after all, these which make us a Christian people, not the praise band, not the drama team, not the special effects."* (Michael Horton, *Modern Reformation*, 7, 3, pp. 9-10)

A word ought to be said about the absence of a permanent lectern in our chancel. The use of lecterns has become common in Lutheran Churches since the gothic revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Lecterns were not characteristically included in Lutheran Churches prior to that time. In the liturgical worship of the Lutheran Church the lessons were read either from the pulpit or from the traditional "horns" of the altar. In this way the symbolic architectural significance of altar and pulpit as the architectural locus of God and His Word were maintained. Originally, the lectern was intended only for use when someone other than a pastor read the lessons for the day. Over the years that significant distinction has been lost. Even in those churches where a somewhat traditional chancel still survives, the use of a lectern has intruded.



*The Chancel During A Pastoral Installation*





*The Pulpit Altar*

The lectern becomes the place from which the lessons are read and pastors preach their sermons from the pulpit. This practice tends to send an ambiguous message. Dr. James F. White argues:

*“The lectern, now so common in many Protestant churches, was introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which copied it from the Middle Ages. Most often, it is used to balance a pulpit at the other side of the chancel. But why should the reading of the lessons be separated from the preaching of the Word? Indeed, placing the Bible on a lectern apart from the pulpit suggests that the source and authority of the written and the preached Word are different.”* (James F. White, *Protestant Worship And Church Architecture*, p. 37)

In many churches today the lectern joins the pulpit and the altar as one of the three visual focal points of the church, frequently relegating the Baptismal Font to an obscure corner, or, even worse, demoting the font to largely irrelevant status of an optional, removable furnishing, which is to be hauled out only on those occasions when it is actually to be used and then promptly relegated back to obscurity. It is truly deplorable that a Holy Sacrament established by Christ Himself to offer and convey the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation should be treated with such casual contempt. A 1987 study of church architecture sponsored by the three major Lutheran Synods in the United States at that time, rightly concluded:

*“One place of the Word, and one congregational Bible, speak more eloquently of our Lutheran understanding of ministry and of proclaiming the Word...Today there is no theological or liturgical reason to have a lectern. It is better to have a single place of the Word from which the Word of God is both read and preached.”* (Walter C. Huffmann, *Where We Worship*, p. 23)



*The Means of Grace Altar Triptych In The City Church of St. Mary  
Wittenberg - by Lucas Cranach the Elder*

The carved reliefs which adorn our pulpit are inspired by the magnificent triptych which Lucas Cranach the Elder created to rise above the “*Reformation Altar*” City Church of St. Mary on Wittenberg’s main square. St Mary’s is often described as “*the Mother Church of the Reformation.*” While the 95 Theses were originally posted a few blocks away on the doors of the Castle Church, it was here at St. Mary’s that Martin Luther served as preacher and where the Biblical convictions of the reformers were first put into actual practice. This masterpiece of Reformation art was dedicated on 24 April, 1547. Ironically this was the same day that Lutheran forces suffered a disastrous military defeat in the Battle of Mühlberg. The triptych was carefully designed to wean the people of Wittenberg away from the empty ritualism and works upon which they had been raised and redirect their worship to the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Each of the three panels depicts one of the Means of Grace.

On the left, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is presented. Phillip Melancthon, Luther’s close friend and colleague at the University performs the baptism of an infant before the assembled congregation. Cranach here exercises a bit of artistic license, in that Melancthon, although one of the most brilliant theologians and teachers of the Reformation, was not an ordained pastor and would therefore not have been qualified to actually perform a baptism. Given the precarious manner in which Phillip has the child balanced on the palm of his hand over the font, that is probably just as well.

The large central panel is placed directly above the altar and dominates the presentation. It presents Christ’s institution of the Sacrament of the Altar, Holy Communion. That is, no doubt, the reason for its particular prominence in this setting. We see our Lord and the apostles in the Upper Room on Thursday evening of Holy Week. They are gathered around a large circular table of the sort that would be typical in





*Final Touches On The Word Of God Panel For The Pulpit*

the ordinary German castle of the day. The view outside the large windows display the rugged wooded German countryside with another medieval castle on the adjoining hilltop. The setting is deliberate, intended to convey the thought that the events of the life of the Savior are directly relevant to the lives of His people in every time and place. The traditional components of the “*pesach*” the ceremonial meal of



*Side View Of The Pulpit*



*“The Word They Still Shall Let Remain”*

the Hebrew Feast of Passover are displayed upon the table with the lamb at it's center. Jesus is seated at the head of the table with thirteen men seated around it. Why thirteen, rather than the actual twelve? Cranach answers our question by having one of the men turning to the waiter for a glass of wine so that we may see his face. The thirteenth apostle at this Last Supper is Martin Luther, bearded as he was during his time of concealment in the Elector's fortress, the Wartburg. Now the castle displayed through the open window comes into familiar focus. It is the Wartburg. Cranach has brilliantly used these details of his masterpiece as a most powerful association of Luther and his doctrines - especially the controversial doctrine of Holy Communion - with Christ and His apostles. Other details of the image are equally instructive. John, the beloved disciple, sits at Jesus' left side, embracing His Lord. On Christ's right, in the prominent front of the painting is Judas Iscariot. He was the treasurer of the group and can be identified by the purse which can be seen hanging from his belt over his leg. Jesus is reaching out to the betrayer, with the hand of love and forgiveness. The artist conveys Judas' reject of Christ and His love visually by having Judas bite the outstretched hand of love.

The right panel presents the Word of God at work in the Office of the Keys. John Bugenhagen, the Pastor of the City Church is depicted in the *“Confessional Chair”* (German - *“Beichtstuhl”*). He holds a key in each hand, representing the responsibility to forgive or to refuse to forgive sin which Christ has entrusted to the Office of the Holy Ministry within His Church. With his right hand he forgives the sins of the repentant sinner who is humbly kneeling at his side with his hands folded in prayer. The bonds which had bound the sinner have been cut, again using the imagery of Christ. (Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23) With his left hand, Pastor Bugenhagen refuses to forgive the sins of the impenitent sinner. Cranach conveys the substance of his action and the basis for it by having Bugenhagen withdraw the key from the impenitent whose hands remain bound and depict the sinner dressed in a bright red robe, stalking away with his face flushed in anger, glaring back at the pastor. The three panels depicting baptism, communion and the keys are carved in lindenwood reliefs mounted in the three front sections of the octagonal pulpit. The skill of the master craftsmen has reproduced each of the scenes in amazing detail. The seal of Our Savior Lutheran Church, the open Bible with Luther's crest, surmounted by the cross of Christ is carved into the adjacent section of the pulpit on either side. Cherubim adorn the pulpit's corners. The pulpit is elevated five steps above the floor of the chancel to maximize visibility from all levels of the sanctuary. A hand carved oak staircase provides access to the pulpit.

The Wittenberg Pulpit stands in our sanctuary as a testimony to our conviction as Lutherans that the Gospel preached and proclaimed among us is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes (Romans 1:16). It is our fervent prayer that God may continue to bless our congregation with faithful pastors who will declare God's Word from this pulpit in all of its saving Truth and purity.





*Holy Baptism*



*Holy Communion*

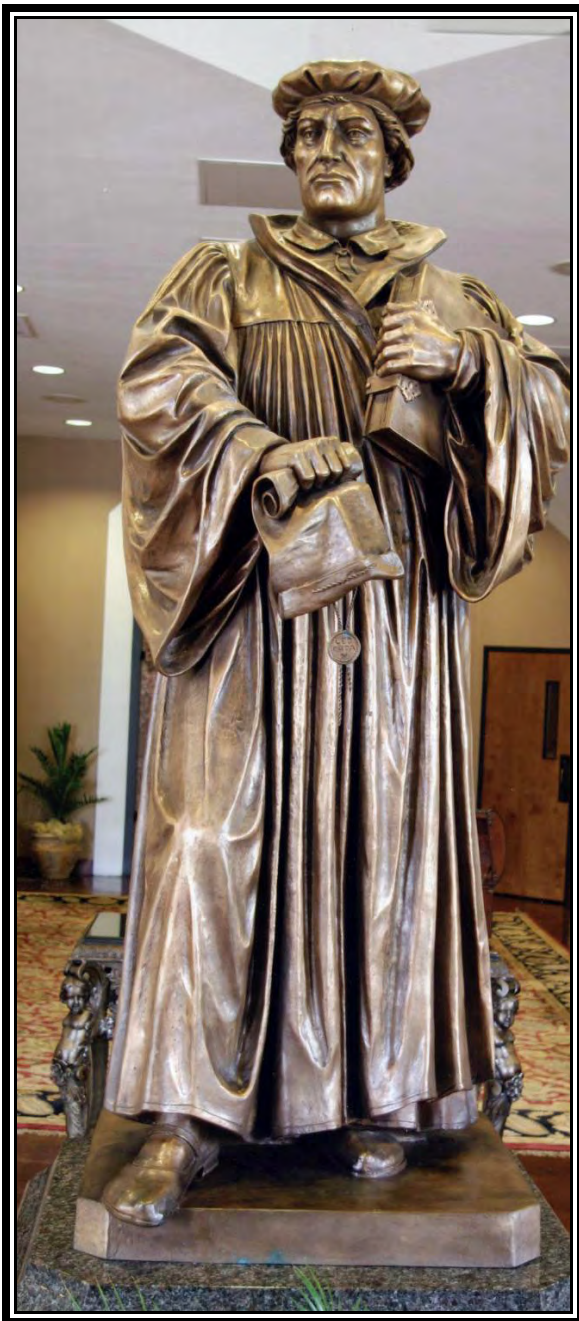


*The Word Of Forgiveness*



*God's Word And Luther's Doctrine Pure*





***Dr. Martin Luther***

Dr. Martin Luther stands at the entrance to our church just inside the narthex. Neither the statue nor its placement is a coincidence. Instead, it is a declaration of our firm conviction that the doctrines of the Lutheran Reformation are, in fact, the Truth of the Word of God. Our forefathers in the Lutheran Church Missouri boldly confessed that confidence on the masthead of the Synod's German publication "*Der Lutheraner*" with the unequivocal motto - "*God's Word and Luther's Doctrine Pure Shall Now And Evermore Endure.*" We want everyone who enters our church to recognize our stand. Most of contemporary Christendom, and, sadly, most of Lutheranism, non-controversial ambiguity in these permissive times. That is not the position of this congregation. We boldly confess the Truth of God's Word. We reject the lies and distortions of the Adversary. In a culture of death we stand for life. In a society of immorality we stand for marriage and family. Thus, Martin Luther stands at our door so that all may know that "*Here we stand!*"

The stern determined figure of the young Doctor of Theology is depicted as he appeared on the morning of 10 December, 1520. On that day Luther calmly walked through the Elster Gate on the southeast side of Wittenberg. He made his way to a nearby fire which had been kindled by the students of the University. He clutched in his hand a most significant document. It had come a few days earlier from the Vatican in Rome, from His Holiness Pope Leo X. The document was popularly identified as a "*Papal Bull*" a title derived from the large wax seal (Latin - "*Bulla*") which had been attached to it displaying the keys of St. Peter. This papal decree was a sentence of excommunication, condemning Luther to eternal damnation in Hell, unless he immediately recanted his false doctrines and submitted to the authority of the Pope. Luther would later recall that he stood before the fire that day "*shaking and praying.*" He hurled the decree of excommunication into the flames, thereby rejecting the

pope's judgement and affirming his own resolve to stand faithfully in defense of the teaching of the Bible. Our bronze depicts Luther as he stepped toward the blazing fire, the the excommunication decree in his hand. The "*bull*" the large wax seal of Lope Leo X is attached at its base, the Pope's name inscribed in it. It was a crucial moment in the long history of the people of God.

The Luther Bronze in our doorway is modeled after a Luther Memorial in Eisleben, Germany, the village where the reformer was born and where he died.. The original was cast in 1883 by Rudolf Siemering in honor of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Luther's birth. The impressive figure is 6.5 feet tall and weighs 650 pounds. It was cast using the "*lost wax*" method which enables the artist to reproduce his subject in particularly fine detail. Luther wears the academic robes and cap of a Doctor of Theology. His Bible is clutched to his heart. His right hand crushes the "*Bull of Excommunication*" The lines of his face are set



in firm resolve as he prepares to thrust the document into the fire, know full well the personal risk involved. All the others who had dared to walk this path - Jerome Savonarola, John Hus, William Tyndale, and John Wycliffe - had burned at the stake. The presence of this statue so prominently display in the narthex of our church is a declaration of our resolve to remain faithful to the Truth of Holy Scripture and to continue to stand against the vicious evils which are destroying our country. We humbly pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will bless that resolve and empower us to be faithful.



*Luther Burning The Papal Bull Of Excommunication*

Having been excommunicated by the spiritual authority of the Roman Church, Luther was summoned before the secular authority of the Emperor in April of 1521. An Imperial Diet, that is, a parliament of the princes and rulers of the Holy Roman Empire was held in the ancient city of Worms on the River Rhine. It was a tense and difficult time. The Islamic hordes of the Ottoman Turks were invading Europe. Soon their invincible armies would besiege the Emperor's capital city, Vienna. Emperor Charles V was a loyal son of the Roman Catholic Church. He was desperately afraid that division in the ranks of Christendom would doom his empire to destruction by the Turks. Charles demanded that Luther recant his writings and retract the false doctrines which the Pope had condemned. Martin Luther responded to the Emperor's demand on 18 April, 1521 with these sublimely courageous words:

*"Since your serene Majesty and your lordships ask for a simple answer, I will give it in this manner without horns or teeth. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by clear reason (for I trust neither popes nor councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves) I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited for my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor right. I can do nothing else. Here I stand. God help me! Amen."*

This crucial moment in the history of the Christian Church is commemorated by a magnificent bronze relief mounted on a stone retaining wall of a limestone retaining wall facing the plaza to the east of the sanctuary. The relief is seven feet tall and fifteen feet long. Its design is inspired by a similar but smaller relief panel at the base of the Reformation Monument in Worms which was designed by Ernst Rietschel in 1869.



*The Reformation Monument In Worms, Germany*

The scene presents Luther standing before Emperor Charles V, seated upon the imperial throne. Charles is surrounded by the most powerful leaders of church and state, who are listening in stunned silence as this lowly monk takes his steadfast stand. *“Here I Stand!”* Five senior pastors have served Our Savior Lutheran Church throughout its history. With the assistance of the skilled craftsmen of the Studio Demetz we have inserted those five pastors into the group standing around Martin Luther as a visual affirmation of our blessed heritage and our resolve to remain faithful to that heritage. Moving across the relief from left to right, the figures depicted on the panel are: Duke Frederick the Wise of Saxony - Elector of the Holy Roman Empire; Emperor Charles V; Archduke Ferdinand of Austria; Archbishop Albert of Mainz - Elector of the Holy Roman Empire; Johann von der Eck - Papal Inquisitor; Duke John Frederick the Magnanimous of Saxony; Duke Joachim of Brandenburg - Elector of the Holy Roman Empire; Dr. Laurence L. White; Dr. Martin Luther; Count Ulrich von Hutten; Cardinal Aleander - Representative of His Holiness Pope Leo X; Pastor William Gerdes; Pastor John Schultz; the Archbishop of Trier; Pastor Allen Schuldheiss; and, Pastor Walter Huber. In this congregation *“God’s Word and Luther’s Doctrine Pure Shall Now and Evermore Endure.”* That is our firm resolve and humble prayer.





*The Original Relief On The Worms Reformation Monument*

The Rietschel Diet of Worms Relief at the base of the Luther Statue in the Reformation Monument is unique in that it brings together all of the major participants in the dramatic confrontation which became the Reformation. The artist went to considerable lengths to portray each of the characters as accurately as possible, based upon available woodcuts and portraits from the period. The Imperial Court of the Emperor from Vienna is represented by the young emperor himself with his brother Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. The Church spokesman was John Eck, the Papal Inquisitor who had already adjudged Luther to be a heretic,



*“The Our Savior Diet Of Worms Bronze Relief With the Pastors Of Our Congregation”*



Cardinal Cajetan, the confidant and personal representative of Pope Leo X, and Richard von Greiffenklau, the Archbishop of Trier. The archbishop had been invited by Charles as a perceived moderate whom he hoped could negotiate a compromise with Luther. Archbishop Albert of Mainz was also an Elector and it was he who authorized the Tetzel indulgence which originally provoked the confrontation. The German nobility which supported Luther was personified by Frederick the Wise, Duke of Saxony and one of the Electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and Duke John Frederick the Magnanimous of Saxony who subsequently became Elector. It is amazing how much history a skilled artist can incorporate into one scene.

Six large lindenwood carvings of Christ are placed around the perimeter of the sanctuary. Each is intended to emphasize a particular dimension of the ministry and/or identity of our Savior. The first is *“Christ The Lord Of Life.”* The statue depicts our Savior gently cuddling a newborn child in his arms. The infant is so small that it cannot yet support its own head but must be cradled in such a way that he rests against the adult who holds him. Christ’s hand provides that support stretching up to the base of the baby’s head. At the same time, Jesus is tenderly bending His head to kiss the newborn on the forehead. This poignant figure is designed to acknowledge Christ’s love for every human person, and his particular care for the smallest and most vulnerable human beings - the unborn and the newborn. Sinful people have a tragic tendency to judge the value of a person by their strength, their beauty, their power over others, their wealth, etc. God’s love is most compelling for those who are unloved and cast aside by men. *“Yet You are He who took me*



*“Christ The Lord Of Life*

*from the womb. You made me trust You from my mother’s breasts. On You I was cast from my birth and from my mother’s womb You have been my God.”* (Psalm 22:9-10) *“For You formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are works, my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.”* (Psalm 139: 13-15) *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”* (Jeremiah 1:5) : *“The Lord called me from the womb. From the body of my mother He named my name...And now the Lord says, He who formed me from the womb to be His servant...Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb!”* (Isaiah 49:1,5,15)

The next carving in the series presents one of the most popular and powerful designations of the Savior in Scripture. Sheep and shepherds have always been an effective analogy of God’s love for the Hebrews as a people who had been herdsmen throughout much of their history. Jesus describes His ministry using the ancient analogy



of the care of a shepherd for his sheep in John Chapter 10: *“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep...I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me. Just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.. I must bring them also and they will listen to listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one Shepherd.”* (John 10:11,14-16)

Our Savior’s *Christ the Good Shepherd* depicts the Lord with a shepherd’s crook in hand. He holds a small lamb cradled in his arm. His gaze is directed attentively forward alert for any potential threat to His flock. As Scripture teaches, that which sets the Good Shepherd apart from all the others is the unique intensity of His commitment to His sheep and His love for them. The Good Shepherd loved His sheep so much that He was prepared to lay down His life for them. Anyone who is inclined to question whether Jesus loves them need only look to the cross where He who is both the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God willingly gave up His own life to rescue them from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

As we move past the huge bronze doors which are the main entrance to the sanctuary the next figure in the Jesus Series present the baby Jesus held reverently in the arms of an old man dressed in the traditional garb of a devout Jew. The man is Simeon.

*“Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And the man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the Temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples; a Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.’”* (Luke 2:25-32)



***Christ The Good Shepherd***

Tradition indicates that old Simeon was the foremost rabbi of Judaism at this moment in time. His joyful song of praise has been incorporated into the ancient liturgy of the Church in the Canticle which is called the *“Nunc Dimittis.”* Christ is the long awaited Messiah, the Savior who perfectly fulfills all of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The old man has waited his entire life in the serene confidence



***Lord Now Lettest Thou Thy Servant Depart In Peace***

of one who trusts the promises of God. This aged Pharisee was now prepared to “*depart in peace*” for God had kept His promise and he has seen the Savior of Israel and the world. Simeon is the first man in the New Testament to indicate that Jesus was born to be the Savior “*of all peoples.*” At the same time he warns that the Savior will cause profound division within Israel and meet with bitter opposition from among the chosen people - “*this child is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.*” (Luke 2:33) The wise man further alludes to the suffering and death of Jesus as he warns Mary - “*and a sword will pierce through your own soul also so that the thoughts of many will be revealed.*” (Luke 2:34) In our beautiful wood carving Simeon is holding the Christ Child out as if to confess and display Him to the crowds around him in the Temple courts.

The next statue in the Christ Our Savior series moves from His childhood encounter with Simeon to the night of His Passion amid the dark shadows of the Garden of Gethsemane. The Gospels tell us that after the Last Supper in the Upper Room, Jesus led His disciples out of the city, across the Valley of the Kidron, to a grove of olive trees which He had used in the past as a place of solitude and retreat from the crowds. This would be the isolated place to which Judas would lead the soldiers of the High Priest to arrest Him. Christ was well aware of that which confronted Him in the hours to come. The overwhelming burden of guilt for the sins of humanity which He would take upon Himself far surpassed the physical agony and personal humiliation which would be inflicted upon Him by His vicious enemies. These last few quiet moments in the Garden provided our Lord with an opportunity for reflection and prayer. He was fully prepared to do what needed to be done - “*Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done.*” (Luke 23:42) These anguished words of prayer provide a

profoundly intimate glimpse into the heart of our Savior in the last few moments before the horrendous events of His passion and death began. They are revealed so that we might understand both the depth of God’s love for us and the dreadful gravity of sin. The guilt and condemnation of every sin which had ever been and which would ever be committed by rebellious, defiant mankind is about to come crashing down upon Jesus. St. Luke’s description of our Savior’s dreadful anguish is painfully clear: “*And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.*” (Luke 23:43-44) Nowhere else in Scripture is the immensity of His suffering for us more clearly revealed.



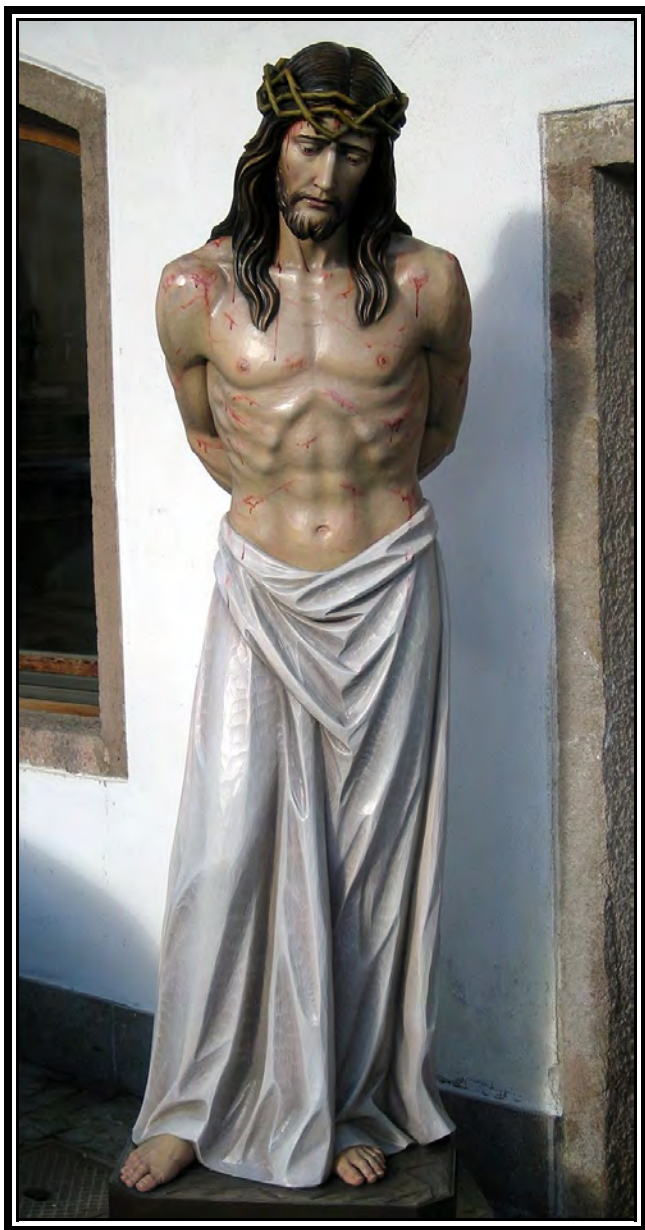


*In The Garden*

Our statue of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane depicts the Savior on His knees in prayer, His hands folded as He addresses His heavenly Father. An angel has been dispatched to His aid as the burden of mankind's sin is crushing down upon Him. As the Evangelist, St. Luke had described, the agonized sweat is pouring forth from Him like thick drops of blood. The Savior slumps against the angel, resting His weary head upon the messenger's shoulder. The angel's arms reach out to support and comfort the Lord in His moment of greatest need. The figures display both the intensity of Christ's suffering and the compassion of God the Father for His only begotten Son displayed by the mighty angel whom He has sent to Jesus.



*"His Father Sent Angels To Comfort Him" by Carl Bloch*



***Behold the Man***

The trials of Jesus which followed His arrest in the Garden reflected the convoluted, overlapping, often hostile jurisdictions of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman Palestine. First the Lord was taken to the palace of Annas, the former High Priest who was the most powerful Jewish political leader of the time. Annas attempted unsuccessfully to interrogate Jesus to obtain incriminating evidence which could be used against him. In the meantime, Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas scrambled to gather a quorum of his supporters on the Sanhedrin to conduct an illegal midnight session of the Council of the Seventy. In the course of that meeting, Caiaphas learned that Jesus was from Galilee and sent Him to be judged by Herod Antipas whom the Romans had appointed governor of northern Palestine. Herod toyed with Him briefly and then sent him back to Caiaphas, not wanting anything to do with this most controversial scheme. Jesus was condemned for the crime of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God. A second Sanhedrin trial had to be held at dawn to comply with the law which prohibited night sessions of the Council. From there, Jesus had to be taken to the palace of the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate who alone had the right to impose a death sentence. Throughout all of these shenanigans Jesus was beaten, scourged and abused. Pilate resented being manipulated by the Jewish leaders and made every attempt to release Jesus. The most dramatic of his efforts was to brutalize this man who had already been beaten nearly to death, force a punishing crown of thorns down upon His bloody brow, and present him to the howling mob as the King of the Jews. His declaration to the howling mob in Latin was "*Ecce Homo!*" "*Behold the Man!*" The crowd's only

answer was "*Crucify Him!*" This statue presents our Savior at that pathetic moment. Battered and abused. The mockery of a thorn crown upon His bleeding brow. He stands before the people whom He had come to save, while His chosen people scream for His death. The prophet had predicted precisely this outcome many centuries before.

*"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned - every one - to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6)*



The wood carving poignantly captures the total abandonment of Jesus as we “Behold the Man!”

From the depths of suffering and degradation, the final figure in the series rises to the height of exalted glory. The Risen Christ displays the exalted Lord who has been restored to His full glory and power as the Son of God. Death could not hold Him and on the third day, exactly as has been prophesied, the body and soul of the God/Man Jesus were reunited as He was restored to life again. Death could not hold Him and by His resurrection from the dead the power of death was broken forever. The figure of the Risen Christ still bears the wounds of the nails which held Him to the cross. The gash in His side through which the Roman Centurion had driven a spear into His heart remains evident. These wounds will certify that this is in fact Jesus of Nazareth who offered up His life upon the cross as the innocent sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. A gleaming golden halo of heavenly majesty surrounds his head. Christ raises one hand in blessing while the other holds the white banner of victory in his hand, displaying the red cross to acknowledge the instrument by which His victory had been achieved.

*“Christ has been raised from the dead, the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep... For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death...Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed...Then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15, passim)*



***The Risen Christ***

The Christ Our Savior series of hand carved masterpieces fills the perimeter of the sanctuary with the image of Jesus in figures designed to constantly remind the worshiper of the Lord’s identity as the Son of God who came down into our world, born a defenseless infant, who would live the perfect life which none of us could live for ourselves, and then suffer and die in our place, to pay the redemption price of sin, and rise from the dead in victorious glory as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The New Testament comes to its triumphant conclusion in the Book of Revelation. The Apocalypse of Saint John, as Revelation is traditionally designated, includes a series of seven breath-taking visions which uncover the future of the people of God throughout the end times and beyond into the eternity which God has graciously prepared for His people. Our Savior commissioned an original series of ten stain glass windows to portray Christ within these visions. The Apocalypse Windows were designed for us by Mr. Angelo Gherardi of Chicago, Illinois. This amazing artist is the American consultant of the Demetz Studios, and one of the foremost stained glass artists in this country. Angelo was able to take Pastor White's ideas and transform them into amazing color.



*“Christ The Alpha Window”*



*“Christ The Omega Window”*

The Apocalypse Series begins on the south wall of the Sanctuary with two windows over the organ pipes. These windows present Christ as the Alpha and the Omega. Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. This designation of our Lord appears only in the visions of Revelation. It is repeated in those visions three times. The first is in the introduction to the Vision of the Letters to the Seven Churches which begin the book:

*“Grace to you and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the Dead, and the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests of His God and Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:4-8)*





*“Jesus Christ the Alpha and the Omega” by Viktor Vasnetsov*

The other two references to the Alpha and the Omega come in the final chapters of the book. In the conclusion of the seventh vision of the new heaven and the new earth the Lord declares:

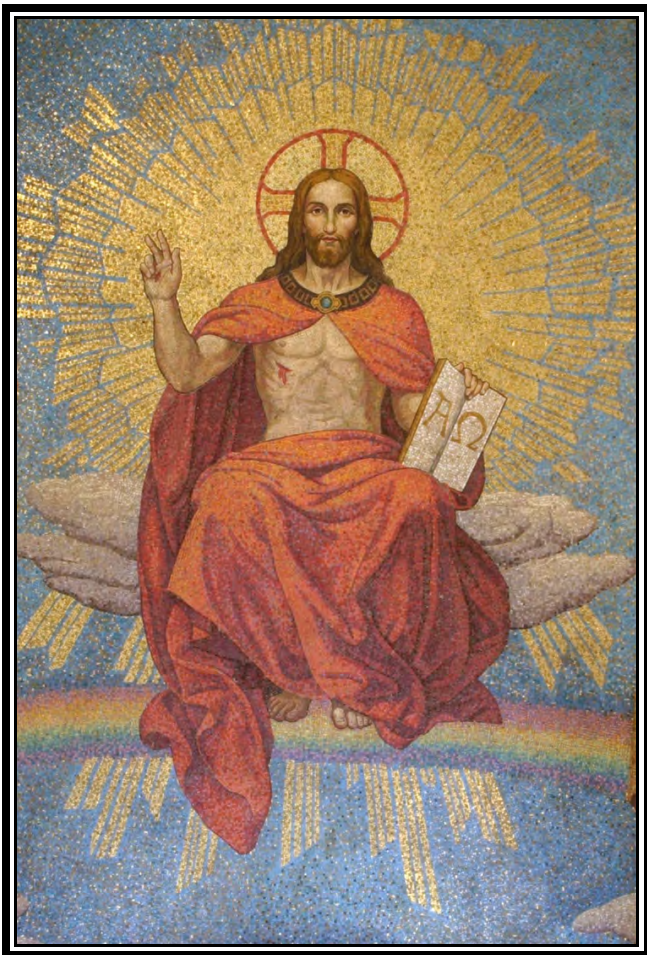
*“And He who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also He said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and ‘I will be His God and He will be My Son.’” (Revelation 21:5-7)*

The nature of the one God in Holy Scripture is essentially defined by His transcendence. He is not the personification of natural forces like the many gods and goddesses of the pagans. He does not have a source. He is the source of everything else that is. He is not subject to the fundamental categories of time and space which govern throughout creation. He is without beginning and without end, “*Yahweh*” - “*I Am*.” The identification of Jesus Christ as “*the Alpha and the Omega*” is an assertion of His transcendence and therefore of His deity. Jesus is true God.

The “*Christ the Alpha*” Window depicts our Lord as the Word of God by whom all things were made in the beginning.

In the concluding remarks of the book of Revelation and of the Bible, the title Alpha and Omega occurs for the third and final time, as Christ promises the imminence of His coming return:





*“Christ the Alpha and Omega - Eternal Judge”*

*“And He said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place.’ ‘And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of prophecy in this book.’ ...‘Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to enter the city by the gates...I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star...He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen! Come Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen!” (Revelation 22:6-21, *passim*)*



*“Christ the Alpha and Omega - King of Heaven”*

The Alpha Window presents Christ as the Word of God by whom all things were made in the beginning. The Christ figure at the center of the window reaches out His hands in blessing toward all that which He has created. The golden glory cloud of God gleams behind Him. The halo around His head indicates His holiness and glory as the only-begotten Son of God. The Greek letters Alpha and Omega appear within the halo. Behind Christ are the sun, the moon and the stars, revealing the vastness of the universe which He has created. The lower half of the background shows the perfect earth, verdant and green with clear running water amid the trees and plants. Abundant animal life fills the scene with all the creatures living in perfect harmony with one another. The man and the woman are also presented, living in the beauty of Eden where they experience the wonder of God’s gracious presence. All of this comes from Christ who is the Alpha, the beginning of source of everything else which exists.



The Omega Window sets before us the vision of Judgement Day. Christ is seated upon the golden throne of God. As in its counterpart the halo around His head includes the Greek letters Alpha and Omega. The throne rests upon the clouds of heaven and is surrounded by the seraphim. Before the throne stand a host of angels holding golden trumpets which are calling humanity, forth from the grave along with those living on earth on this great and terrible day, to hear the pronouncement of God's righteous judgement as the saints are welcomed to eternal life in heaven and the unbelievers condemned to an eternity apart from God in Hell.

St. John's Vision of the Seven Seals opens in Revelation Chapter 5. The vision is introduced with a magnificent depiction of the Lord upon His heavenly throne surrounded by the twenty-four elders. The mighty four Living Creatures, the Seraphim of prophetic visions, surround the throne with the appearance of a lion, and ox, a man, and an eagle. The Seraphim and the elders sound forth an everlasting trishagion - *"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come...Worthy are You our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created."* (Revelation 4:8,11) The enthroned Lord holds in His hand a scroll which is sealed with seven seals. This scroll is written on both front and back and contains the revelation of all that is to come. One who is worthy to break the seals and reveal the future must be found. At this point in the vision the figure of the Lamb is introduced.



*"The Lamb That Was Slain Window"*

*"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And He went and took the scroll from Him who was seated upon the throne. And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying; 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.' And then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voices of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice; 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!' And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be honor and blessing and glory and might forever and ever!' And the four living creatures said 'Amen!' And the elders fell down and worshiped."* (Revelation 5:6-14)



***“The Lamb Who Was Slain” From the Ghent Altarpiece  
by Jan van Eyck***

At the center of the “*Lamb That Was Slain*” window is the figure of the Lamb himself, signifying Christ who offering up His own life for the sins of the world upon the cross. The Lamb is standing steadfastly at the center of the altar, gazing directly upon the viewer to convey His unshakeable resolve to do what must be done by His sacrifice. The Lamb’s head is surrounded with the golden halo of divine glory. The Lamb was chosen because it was the foremost sacrificial animal of the Old Testament. John the Baptist used exactly the same imagery when he hailed Christ at the Jordan River as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29). The window visually presents the sacrificial dimension of the Lamb by placing Him upon an altar. The altar is draped in paraments of gold and red with the sacred monogram “*IHC*” - the Greek abbreviation for the sacred name of Jesus - at its center. As the sacrificial Lamb stands upon the altar, His crimson lifeblood gushes forth from the wound which has pierced His heart into a large golden chalice standing before Him. In this way, the scene reminds and assures the people of God that the Lamb who was slain remains among them today in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar through which Christ’s precious body and blood are truly present for the forgiveness of their sins, offering them the gracious gifts

of life and salvation. At the crest of the window the paternal benediction of God the Father descends upon the Lamb from the golden beams of the Shekinah, the fire/cloud of Old Testament Israel. In the midst of the fiery cloud is the Dove of the Holy Spirit with his white wings outstretched. In this way, the participation of all three Members of the Divine Trinity in the accomplishment of fallen man’s salvation is signified. The altar is surrounded with angels bearing the traditional “*instruments of the passion*” to indicate how the Lamb was sacrificed for the salvation of men. The pillar upon which Christ was scourged, the sponge upon a stalk by which he was offered drugged wine as He died, the crown of thorns pressed down upon His bloody brow, the spear which pierced His side, and the cross itself displaying the nails which bound Him to it and the Roman titulus which identified Him as the King of the Jews are all included in the scene. In this way the vision is specifically linked to the actual crucifixion of Christ at Golgotha. The angels in the foreground are swinging incense censors which represents the worship and prayers of the saints.



The same majestic vision identifies Jesus as the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah”: “And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more. Behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.’” (Revelation 5:4-5) The association of the lion with the tribe of Judah goes back to the blessing which Jacob had bestowed upon his sons in the closing segment of the Book of Genesis. To Judah, the patriarch had declared:

*“Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down. He crouched as a lion and as a lioness, who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the people.”* (Genesis 49:8-11)

The image of the lion conveys the impression of regal strength and majesty. Judah became the foremost of all the tribes in that the royal line of divinely sanctioned kings came from that tribe. The Jews of today are all descended from the tribe of Judah in that the Northern Kingdom of Israel which broke away from the House of David after the death of Solomon were annihilated or scattered by the Assyrians, never to be restored to their homeland. The tribes of Simeon and Benjamin had previously been absorbed into Judah and in that way also survived the subsequent Babylonian captivity. The priests of the tribe of Levi who lived in the Southern Kingdom also escaped the Assyrian genocide. The combination of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah here with the “Root of David” indicates that both of these titles were intended to



*The Lion of The Tribe Of Judah Window*



identify Christ as the perfect fulfillment of the Davidic dynasty which had abjectly failed to remain faithful to the Lord and to maintain the faithfulness of the nation.

“*The Lion Of The Tribe Of Judah Window*” display a mighty lion standing attentively before the royal throne of the nation. A golden crown is placed upon the throne so that the regal identity of the seat of the King may be unmistakably discerned. The “*Mogen David*” - the five pointed Star of David is displayed above the throne to designate this throne as the kingdom of the royal line of David. Above the star is the Shekinah of divine glory indicating that this line of kings had been established by God Himself. The rays of divine glory are flanked by two ornate columns suggesting that the throne is located in a beautiful palace. The emblems of the other eleven tribes

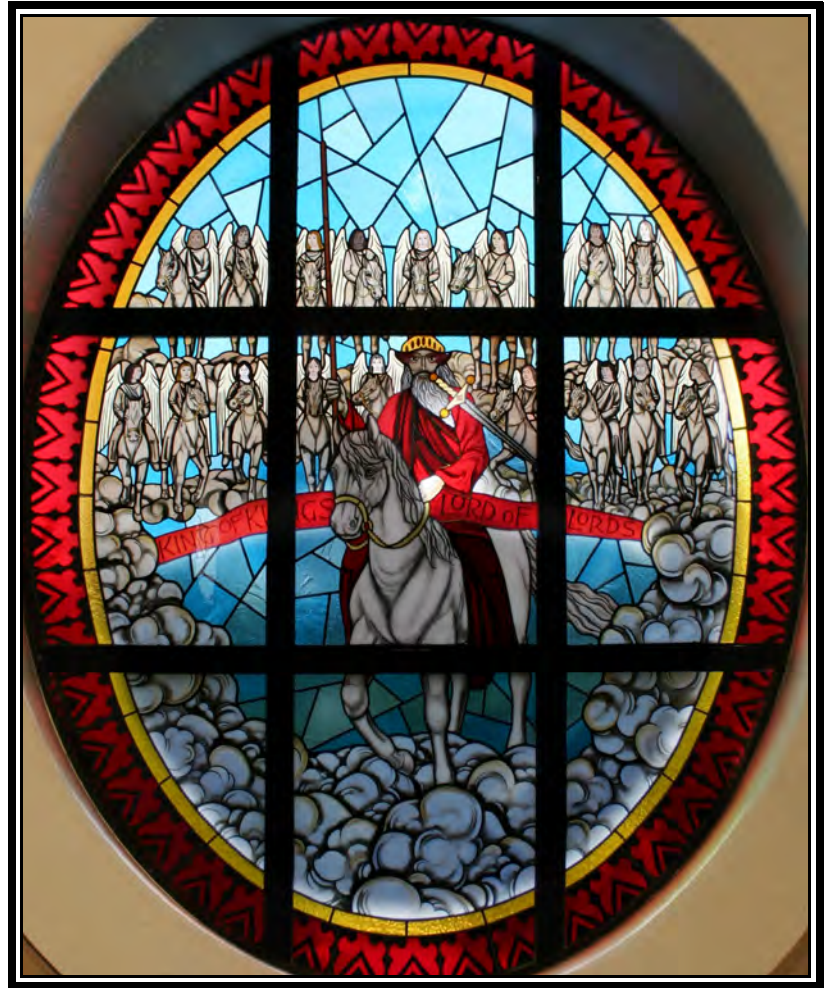
around the base of the throne as a reminder that the Davidic kings had been chosen by God to rule over the entire nation.

In his classic study *Messianic Mountaintops* Dr. Martin Naumann explains the significance of the Messiah’s designation as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in this way:

*“The next sentence describes the glory of this conquering Judah in terms most vivid and familiar to the people of Jacob’s time. The entire prophecy abounds in allusions to the animal world. Naturally, our Hero is portrayed as a lion. We see a progression and growth in this description that fits the history of the tribe of Judah. First the whelp of the lion, then growth into the mature King of Beasts. Ezekiel says; ‘And she brought up one of the whelps and it became a young lion and learned to catch its prey.’ (Ezekiel 19:3) The words of Jacob sound like one describing a scene and action to listeners who cannot see what is being described. Jacob, from his post as seer into the future, describes what he sees. Almost excitedly, he addresses his son directly, and immediately also tells all of the listening audience what his vision is. Hardly is the whelp described when he immediately sees a young lion take his prey, dragging it up to his lair, feeding, and then resting on his haunches, relaxed, but ever ready to defend his domain. He sees the mature lion in his full strength whom no one dares to rouse. The tribe’s leadership, David’s defeat of Goliath, the Davidic dynasty established and secured, yes, indeed, much more. (Psalm 68:18) ‘Thou hast ascended on high. Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts from men; yea, from the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.’” Looking from the New Testament perspective back to this prophecy, we realize that the intent of this vision is no so much to extol the chosen Judah. Nor is the tribe and its victories the topic, nor is David the final point of reference, but rather the great Son of David who is called the Lion of Judah. Hence, as Balaam proves, Judah is the lion, the Ruler to Come, before whom other tribes bow and before whom other nations will fall down and worship, indeed, none other than the Son of God before whom all knees shall bow, willingly or unwillingly. The reason why the brethren of Judah will worship him is that in him the glory of the Lord shall be revealed (Philippians 2:9-11) ‘Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a*



*name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ Thus the road of Judah is from victory to power and glory. This is the meaning of the lion picture.”* (Naumann. Messianic Mountaintops: pp. 31-32)



*“The King Of Kings And Lord Of Lords Window”*

Revelation 19 introduces yet another amazing depiction of our Lord, this time as the Commander of the Hosts of Heaven riding upon a mighty white warhorse.

*“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True’ and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is the ‘Word of God.’ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with an iron rod. He will tread the winepress of the fury of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of Lords.”* (Revelation 19:11-16)

The depiction of the Messiah as a mighty warrior who will defeat His enemies is not unusual in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Isaiah had foretold the coming of God's judgement in these words: *"The Lord will march out like a mighty man. Like a warrior He will stir up His zeal; with a shout He will raise the battle cry and will triumph over His enemies."* (Isaiah 42:13) In the closing verses of his book of prophecy Isaiah anticipated the glorious vindication of God's righteous judgement in similar terminology:

*"The hand of the Lord will be made known to His servants, but His fury will be shown to His foes. See, the Lord is coming with fire and His chariots are like a whirlwind; He will bring down His anger and fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with His sword, the Lord will execute judgement upon all men, and many will be those slain by the Lord."* (Isaiah 66:14-16)



***King of Kings And Lord Of Lords***

Zechariah had promised that God would fight on behalf of His people: *"Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle...Then the Lord my God will come and all His holy ones with Him."* (Zechariah 4:2-3) So also, the messianic Angel of the Lord had appeared to Joshua in the days of the conquest as a mighty warrior: *"Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua went up to Him and asked, 'Are You for us or for our enemies?'"* (Joshua 5:13)

John's vision provides considerable detail in its description of the Lord's mighty champion. He rides upon a white horse, the color of purity and holiness. This warrior is called *"Faithful and True."* Earlier in Revelation Jesus had identified Himself as *"the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Ruler of God's creation."* (Revelation 3:14) The combination serves to emphasize God's absolute reliability. All of His weapons and His raiment emphasize the mighty power of this figure and the blood which stains Him demonstrates the total destruction of His enemies. The double-edged sword protruding from His mouth is the preeminent picture of the Word of God - *"For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it*

*penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12)

The window replicates the dramatic scene in vivid detail presenting the Warrior exactly as He had been described by John. Behind Him follow the warrior angels of heaven thundering across the clouds in their awesome array.





*“The Son Of Man Amid The Golden Lampstands Window”*

The opening vision of the Apocalypse is that of the Son of Man seated amidst the seven golden lampstands which signify the seven churches of Asia Minor. This vision sets the stage for all that is to come and identifies the source of the other six visions which will follow. John describes the glorious figure which was revealed to him in this way:

*“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and I heard a loud voice that was speaking to me like a trumpet saying, ‘Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.’ Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like a Son of Man, clothed with a long white robe and with a golden sash around His chest. The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, “Fear not! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write, therefore, the things that you have seen, those that are, and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in*

*My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” (Revelation 1:10-20)*



***The Son Of Man Amid the Seven Golden Lampstands - Groeningen***

St. John’s description of the figure whom the vision revealed to him is highly detailed, replete with imagery drawn from the messianic prophecy of the Old Testament. The figure is identified as **“someone like a son of man.”** This messianic title originated in Daniel 7:13. It is referred to Jesus eighty times in the gospels and the book of Acts. The flowing robe reaching down to His feet with the golden sash is reminiscent of the elegant vestments of the High Priest (Exodus 28:4-5; Zechariah 3:4) The same word which occurs here appears seven times in the Old Testament and six of those seven occurrences are in reference to the sacred vestments of the High Priest. In Daniel 7:59 the wool white hair symbolizes the ageless eternity of the Ancient of Days. The blazing fire of His eyes indicates the omniscience of God from whom no secrets can be hidden or concealed. His feet **“are like bronze glowing in a fire”** signal that the Son of Man is holy. So Moses before the burning bush was commanded: **“Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”** (Exodus 3:5) So also the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies barefoot on Yom Kippur, the

great Day of Atonement. **“And His voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”** - There is a matchless power in the voice of this man, like the thundering waterfall or the crash of the surf upon the rocks of the shore. Ezekiel uses the image to describe the approach of God: **“And the sound of His coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory.”** (Ezekiel 43:2) The seven stars which He holds in His hand are the angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom these wondrous visions are addressed (cf. Revelation 1:20) The double edged sword which comes forth from His mouth is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 11:4) **“His face was like the sun, shining in all its brilliance.”** As on the Day of Transfiguration when the disciples were given a glimpse of Jesus’ greatness and the face of Christ **“had shone like the sun.”** (Matthew 17:2) This stunning vision of the exalted Christ - which caused the Revelator to fall down upon the ground, hiding his face in awe and wonder, is graphically portrayed in precise detail in the Window of the Seven Lampstands.

The sin cursed creation will come to an end on the Day of Judgement when the Lord Christ who had broken the power of sin and death shall take His rightful place upon the Great White Throne. The Judge shall vindicate the perfect righteousness and justice of God as He proclaims sentence upon every human being who has ever lived from the beginning of time until its end. John’s vision of the Final Judgement paints the image of this climactic moment in these broad strokes:

*“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated upon it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and books were opened. Then another book was opened which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books*



*according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and they were judged, each one according to what he had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire....And He who was seated upon the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He also said, 'Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give from the Spring of the Water of Life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be His God and he will be My son.' (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:5-7)*

At the heart of the Great White Throne Judgement Window is the overpowering figure of Jesus Christ as the final judge of all humanity. Every other detail of the scene either comes from Christ or looks toward. Thus will it truly be on that great and terrible day. The huge throne rest upon the multicolored vault of the heavens as angels on either side sound the trumpets of the judgement. Jesus looks down upon the Book of Life opened before Him. His left hand points toward the surging fires of Hell, the tragic fate of those who have spurned and rejected God's. The damned are depicted amid those bright red flames, fleeing from the righteous judgement of God. His right hand is outstretched toward the white robed host of the redeemed who have been cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. The hand which gestures toward them held palm up open to welcome His people home for all eternity.



*“The Great White Throne Judgement Window”*

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Apocalypse an amazing vision of a pregnant woman “*clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars*” is revealed to St. John. The woman and the child to which she will give birth are woven into the scenes which follow describing the desperate opposition of Satan to Christ and to His Church:

*“And a great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, One who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to His throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days...And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male Child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The Serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the Dragon had poured out from his mouth. Then the Dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.”* (Revelation 12:1-6; 13-17)



*“The Woman Clothed With the Sun Pursued By The Dragon” - Dürer*





*“The Woman Clothed In The Sun Window”*

The scene is introduced as *“a great and wondrous sign”* signaling its special importance. It is common throughout Scripture, in both Old and New Testament to depict the people of God as a woman, a mother or a bride. The same imagery appears elsewhere in the visions of Revelation. The woman here is arrayed in heavenly splendor as a beautiful lady who bears within her body the most precious gift of all, the gift of life. Her purity and beauty are a stark contrast to Harlot Babylon who epitomizes the sinful corruption of the world in Revelation 17. She is *“clothed with the sun”* the brightest of all natural lights, reflecting the boundless of glory of God in whose presence she stands. We are told that *“the moon was under her feet.”* That position indicates dominion and authority. The moon is the queen of the night, the time of darkness. It has always figured prominently in the pagan worship of idols and in the practice of Satanism. Darkness is the realm of sin, death, and the devil, banished from the brightness of God’s light to hide in the shadows. The placement of the moon beneath the feet of the woman indicates the victory which God’s people have won in Christ over sin, death, and the devil. That victory is further signified by the victor’s crown which has been placed upon her head. The Greek term is not the crown of royalty but of victory. It glistens with twelve stars. In the symbolism of Revelation twelve is the number of the people of God because of the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New. The woman is in the final moments of a pregnancy, writhing in the anguish of labor. The image depicts the anguish of the people in the final days preceding the coming of the Messiah in imagery which would have been completely familiar based upon the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

The figure which appears next is the opposite of the woman in every way - death instead of life, darkness instead of light - *“an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.”* This huge serpent is fiery blood red, the color of Hell’s fire, death and destruction. The vast reach

of his cunning and power are symbolized by his seven crowned heads and fearsome horns. He controls all that is of this world having corrupted and defiled the home of fallen humanity in every way imaginable. The reference to his huge tail sweeping a third of the stars of heaven identifies him as none other than Satan himself who enticed many of his fellow angels to join him in his rebellion against the Creator God.

The object of the Tempter's rage is the Savior who is to be born of the woman. He is born safely and snatched away from the fury of the enemy. God will not allow the plan of salvation to be destroyed. It will be perfectly accomplished according to His purpose for the salvation of His people. This helpless Child will defeat sin, death and the devil by His own death upon the cross. He will then be exalted to the right hand of God in heaven. On the last day His reign will be evident to all as humanity is summoned before Him for judgement and hell along with all of its minions are banished to wretched obscurity for all of eternity. The Woman Clothed In The Sun Window presents the victory of Christ and His Church over Satan and all the powers of Hell in brilliant color. The brightness of the woman stands in stark contrast to be dark red of the dragon writhing furiously beneath her feet in the window as in the words of the original vision of St. John.

The celebration of the resurrection of Christ as the undeniable demonstration of His victory over death appears throughout the visions of the Apocalypse. When Jesus first identifies Himself to Saint John in

Chapter 1 that resurrection is at the center of His self-identification: *"But He laid His right hand on me saying, 'Fear not; I am the First and the Last and the Living One. I died and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the Keys of Death and Hades.'"* (Revelation 1:17-18) The resurrection of Christ affirms His claim to divinity and affirms His victory over death and its power. The reality of the resurrection becomes the foundation for every Christian's expectation of life eternal. St. Paul made this emphatically clear to the Corinthians, some of whom denied the resurrection, in the great *"Resurrection Chapter"* of his first Epistle, 1 Corinthians 15:

*"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order, Christ the Firstfruits, then at His coming,*



*"The Rescue Of the Woman And Her Child"  
Peter Paul Rubens*





*“Christ the Living One Window”*

*those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the Kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every rule, and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death...For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O death, where is your victory?’ O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17,20-26, 52-56)*

The “*Christ the Living One Window*” displays our triumphant Lord at the moment He broke forth from the tomb on Easter morning. The risen Christ is surrounded by a burst of heavenly glory outlined by the clouds and flashes of fiery lightning intended to recall the magnificent “*Shekinah*” - the Glory Cloud/Fire which led the Children of Israel through the wilderness. There is a gleaming golden halo around His head, indicated that the Lord has now been exalted, setting aside the limitations of His voluntary humiliation necessary to dwell upon this earth as a man. The Lord's traditional white banner of victory in His hand which displays the blood red cross. The wounds of His passion, which will later be used to convince doubting Thomas that His Master had indeed risen from the dead, are evident in his hands, feet and sides. The shattered rocks of the tomb and cowering soldiers of the Roman guard can be seen in the foreground. The soldiers who had been assigned to prevent the removal of the body are now on their knees as though



***“The Jesse Tree” - Medieval Gold/Silver  
Book Cover***

compelled to worship Jesus. The Lord Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!

The tenth window in the Apocalypse series portrays our Savior as the heir and fulfillment of the royal line of King David. This prominent detail of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament is mentioned three times in Revelation’s visions. In Chapter 3:7,12-13 Christ asserts that He *“has the Key of David”* and promises to perfectly restore the City of Jerusalem which David had captured from the Jebusites and established as his royal capital:

*“To the Angel of the church in Philadelphia write; ‘The words of the Holy One, the True One, who has the Key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens...I am coming soon. Hold fast so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the Temple of My God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him, the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.’”*

Revelation’s language of *“the key of David”* comes from the prophecy of Isaiah 22:22 where the appointment of a man named Eliakim as the royal treasurer of the Temple, an office which held complete authority over all of the riches and wealth of the treasury was an opportunity to

foretell the role of the coming Messiah. *“I will place on His shoulder the key of the House of David; what He opens, no one can shut, and what He shuts, no one can open.”* The absolute authority of the Savior/Messiah extends, as Revelation 1:18 had indicated; even to death and Hell - *“I hold the keys of Death and Hades.”* The prophets had long foretold that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, born in Bethlehem, the Judean village where David had been born. The rule of David as the greatest King in the history of the nation of Israel served as a pale foreshadowing of the universal, eternal kingdom of David’s divine son and heir.

The next reference to Christ and King David comes in Chapter 5 and the introduction to the Vision of the Scroll with Seven Seals. Christ has the authority to open the seven seals and reveal the future of God’s people to Saint John because He is the promised Messiah, the divine King, *“the Root of David”*:

*“And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals...And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’”* (Revelation 5:5,9-10)

The designation of Christ as the *“Root of David”* is drawn from Isaiah 11: *“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit... In that day, the Root of Jesse shall*



*stand as a signal for the peoples - of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious.”* (Isaiah 11:1,10) The royal house of David would ultimately fail and fall. Nonetheless, from that barren stump, its roots sunk deeply into the verdant soil of God’s promises, a shoot of new life would spring forth. A King who would not fail and whose reign would not be limited to one nation but reach out to embrace all of humanity.

The third and final explicit reference to Christ the Messiah and His royal ancestor King David comes in the conclusion of the Apocalypse where Christ offers His apostle this word of assurance, encouraging him to stand fast in the midst of the trials and tribulations which the visions have described and promising that He will return soon to welcome His faithful people home:

*“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Descendant of David, the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires to take the water of life without price. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen! Come Lord Jesus!”* (Revelation 22:16-17, 20)

The “*Christ The Son Of David Window*” depicts a flourishing tree with the figure of King David at its base. The King is wearing the royal crown and playing the harp which identifies him as the composer of so many of the great hymns of the Book of Psalms. Above the band of heaven which stretches like a rainbow across the glass panels are the figures of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, the human parents of our



*“Christ The Son Of David Window”*



Lord. At the top of the tree is the glorified Christ holding forth His hand in blessing. He is the King who will reign forever and ever in the heavenly Jerusalem. His promises as “*the Root and the Descendant of David*” holds true - “*Surely I am Coming Soon!*” As we gather to worship Him, inspired by the brilliant colors streaming through the Apocalypse Windows, we respond with His people always and everywhere: “*Amen! Come Lord Jesus!*”

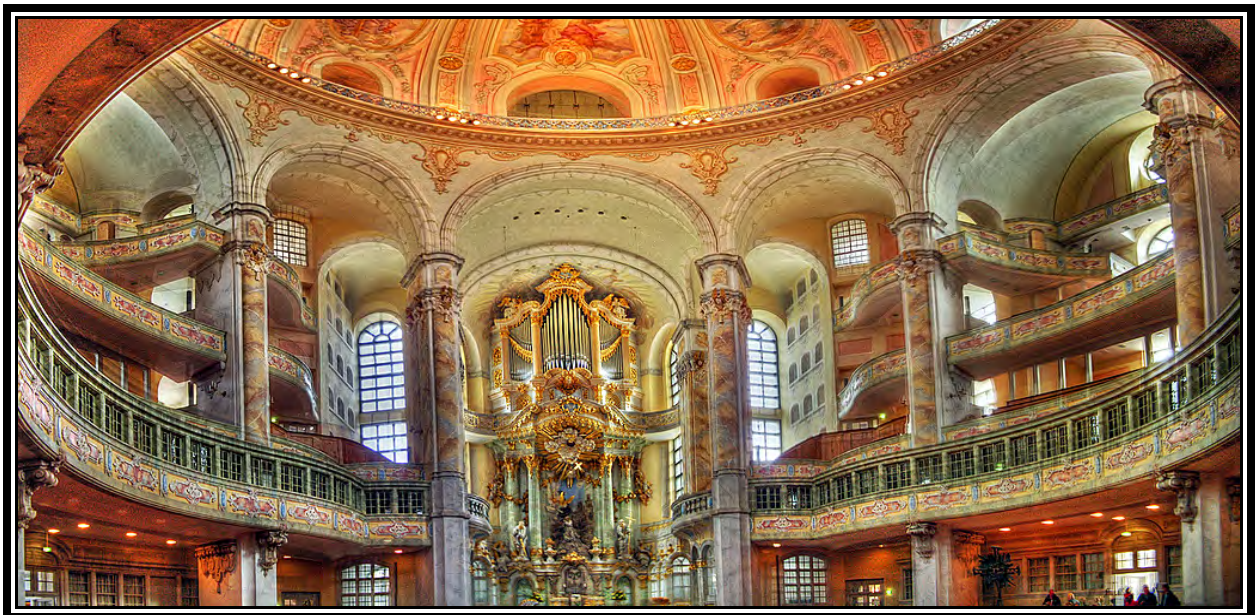


“The Messiah Will Come of the Line of Jesse”



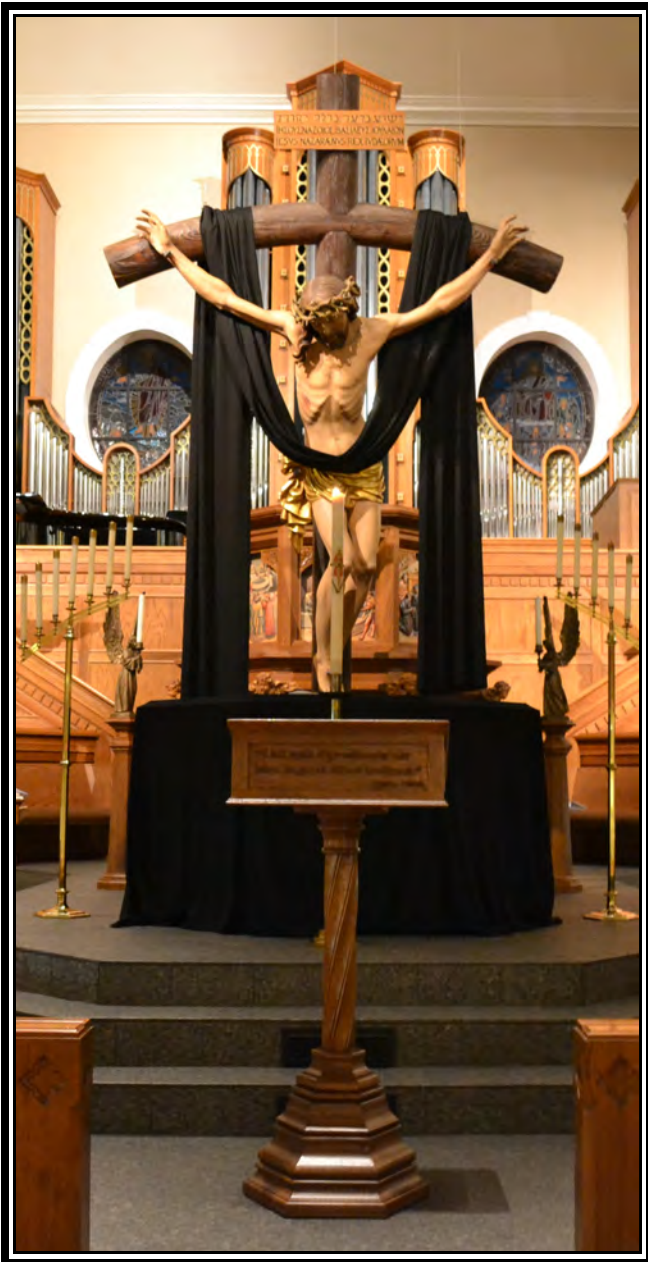


*“The Sanctuary of Our Savior Lutheran Church Seen From The Second Balcony”*



*Interior View of the Dresden Frauenkirche Looking Toward the Organ Loft And Balconies*





The ladies of our amazing Altar Guild do a superlative job decorated the chancel for the great festivals of the Church Year. The Gerhaert Crucifix is mounted on a series of cable winches at the base of the steeple. For the Tenebrae Service on the evening of Good Friday the great crucifix is carefully lowered to the floor behind the altar. The altar is draped completely in black and the Christ Candle stands on the floor in front of the altar. When the service of darkness comes to its climax, the Christ Candle is the only light remaining in the sanctuary, it flickering flame reflecting off the twisted body of our Lord and His tortured face beneath the crown of thorns. The pastor then removes the Christ Candle and processes out through the main doors leaving the sanctuary completely shrouded in darkness. With traditional clap of the "*Strepitus*" - indicating the sealing of the tomb - the candle returns for the conclusion of this most solemn service. An entirely different scene greets the worshiper for the Easter Sunrise Service. The crucifix has been restored to its ordinary position and the triumphant figure of the Risen Christ now stands before the altar surrounded with the brilliant colors of Easter flowers. The Lord is Risen! He is Risen indeed!





*Easter Sunday Communion*



*“Easter Sunday Altar”*





*“The Christmas Eve Altar”*



*The Seiffen Pyramid In The Narthex*

The Christmas Eve Altar is decked in glorious red poinsettias surrounding a beautiful Fontanini Nativity set which includes 16 life-size figures. The infant Christ Child rests in His manger filled with straw, surrounded by the Holy Family, shepherds, wise men from the East, villagers and the animals whose stable has been pre-empted for the most important event in the history of humanity. Glistening white Christmas lights in evergreen garland drape balconies and railing throughout the sanctuary. For an hour prior to the service the choir is on the balcony walkway singing the carols of the season like the singers at the Mountain Church in Seiffen. The Narthex is also decorated with a tall (10 ft.) hand carved wooden pyramid from Seiffen, each swirling level displaying characters from the Christmas story. On the other side of the room is a Bethlehem Christmas village by Fontanini including scores of buildings and hundreds of figures presenting the city of David on the night our Savior was born. The village is assembled each year by the dedicated ladies to the children’s delight. It is no exaggeration whatsoever when we proclaim to our community that Our Savior Lutheran Church is the church that was built for Christmas.





*Art Studio Demetz, In The Alpine Province of South Tyrol*

After extensive research, both in the United States and Europe, the master craftsmen of the Art Studio Demetz, nestled high in the beautiful Alps of South Tyrol, were commissioned to prepare the chancel furnishings, wood carvings, and bronze statuary for Our Savior Lutheran Church. The Demetz Studio has maintained the highest standards of traditional European craftsmanship in providing ecclesiastical art for churches around the world. Mr Ivo Demetz and his remarkable staff implemented our original designs with incredible artistry. They were consistently responsive to our concerns and patient with our occasionally repeats requests for revisions. We are also most grateful to a unique gentleman, Mr. Angelo Gherardi, the United States co-ordinator of the project for Demetz, who provided the shop drawings for all of the artwork and offered invaluable counsel and assistance throughout this effort. In addition, Mr Gherardi personally designed all of our beautiful stain glass windows. We give thanks and praise to God for the artistic talents and abilities which He has bestowed upon these men, and for their dedicated willingness to use that talent to the glory of the God by Whom it was given. Without their unique skill and dedication, this magnificent House of Worship would not have been possible. The photographs which follow provide a glimpse of these craftsmen carrying out their work in the service of our Lord.



*Ivo Demetz Meeting with Pope John Paul II In  
1988*

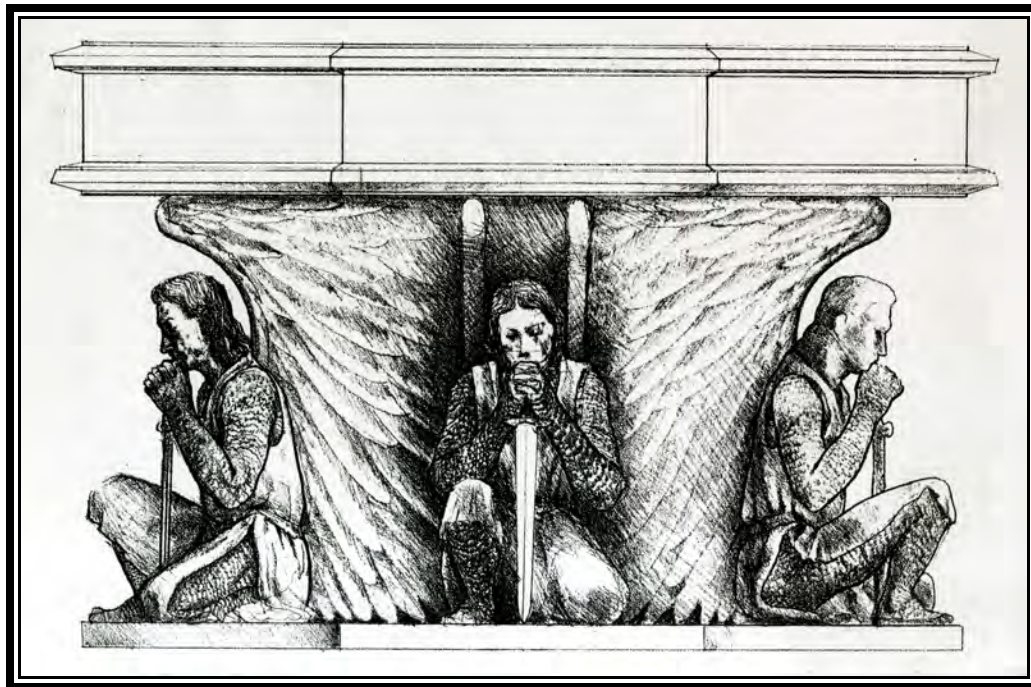




*Ivo Demetz And Angelo Gherardi With the Artist Who Created The Original Model For the Narthex Luther Bronze*



*Carving the Fine Details of the Corpus*



*Angelo's Sketch For The Base Of the Altar*

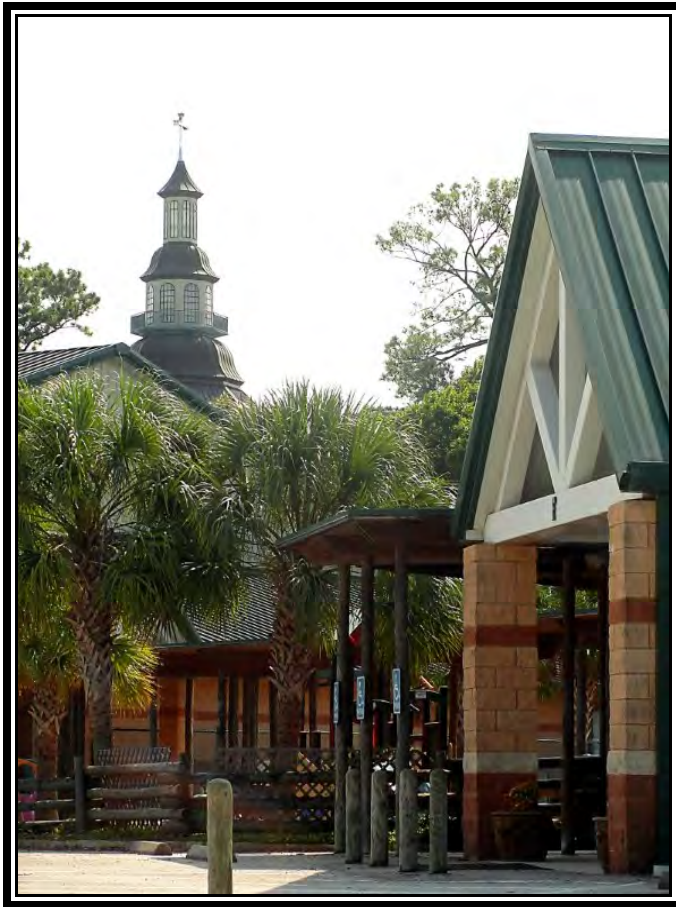




*The Craftsman And His Tools Carving The Altar Side Panels*



*Angelo And Ivo Preparing The Communion Rail*



*The Steeple With the School In The Foreground*

The founding members of Our Savior Lutheran Church were determined to provide a Lutheran Elementary School. They first opened the school in the Fall of 1946. Our Savior Lutheran School is often referred to as “The Best Kept Secret In Houston.” Nestled amongst the trees in the shadows of the historically designed church providing Classical Lutheran education for Pre-Kindergarten thru Grade 8.



*“The Sanctuary From The North”*



