

OUR STAINED GLASS WINDOWS:

From the time the present sanctuary was completed in 1867 until 1950, our windows were clear glass similar to the windows on the wall that separates the sanctuary from the narthex (the Woodward Avenue lobby area) on the first floor.

It was during the pastorate of Dr. Henry Hitt Crane (1938-58) that the church decided it was time to replace those clear glass windows with real stained glass. The Henry Willet Company in Philadelphia was contracted to do this artistic work around themes chosen by the church. Members and groups within the church sponsored each window. Brass plaques were installed by each window telling who or what group underwrote the cost of each window and the person or persons honored or memorialized by their donation. Although the windows in the four corners of the first-floor room and the Great West Window in the balcony on the Woodward side of the church are stylistically quite different from the rest—actually paintings on glass—all the windows were crafted by Willet company artisans. The work began in 1950. The completed windows were dedicated in 1955. The brass plaques can still be seen by most of the windows, but unfortunately a few are now missing.

The Great West Window was given in memory of Dr. Guy Chambers Filkins, who was our organist and director of music for over 30 years. He also composed several pieces of music for the choirs under his direction which are still in our music library. Near the top are three maps showing all the continents indicating that “the world is our parish.” The large lancets which comprise the lower two-thirds of this window depict the forces of evil on the left, and the forces of good on the right, divided by the central figure of a young Jesus, here depicted without a beard. In that same window, I suspect without Crane’s knowledge, a portrait of him by the steeple of this church is included, representing free speech in contrast to an image of a microphone being held away from people, depicting the lack of that right on the left side. That window is a fitting tribute to Dr. Crane as it encapsulates the very essence of his ministry and the ministry of this church throughout its history—the call to embody the gospel in action making God’s love manifestly abundant to all, or as Rev. Edwin Rowe used to say, “taking our faith from the sanctuary out into the streets.”

The Henry Willet company has since merged with another to become the Willet-Hauser Architectural Glass Company now headquartered in Winona, Minnesota (they still maintain their stained-glass studio in Philadelphia). Their company motto is “Where light learns to speak.” They still inspect our windows every 5 years and send us a report on their condition and recommendations for their upkeep.

--Jim Bull, Church Historian

GLOSSARY OF STAINED GLASS WINDOW TERMS

Mosaic – A decoration made by inlaying the patterns [of] small pieces of variously colored glass or other material.

Stained glass – A translucent mosaic held together by lead. The lead is not merely a connecting medium, but plays a part of its own in the design.

Fenestration –An architectural term applied to the arrangement of windows on the outside walls of a building.

Lancet – In architecture, a high and pointed arch; hence an acutely pointed window with such an arch at the top. It was the dominant form in early English Gothic architecture. (Many of our windows have three lancets together.)

Mullion – A slender bar or pier forming a division between the lights of windows.

Nimbus – A circle, disc or any indication of radiant light around the heads of divinities and saints. You can see these “halos” around the heads of disciples, and especially around Jesus’ head.

Predella –The lower part of a window, usually containing a symbol or subject complete in itself. (In our windows, the predellas are usually on the same theme as the lancets above them.)

Tracery – Decorative open work in the head (top) of a gothic window; a decorative pattern formed by the curves and intersections of the molded bars of the mullions. Many of these are “**Rose traceries**” – circular windows filled with tracery, so named because of the petal-like shape of the mullions. (Most of our three-lancet windows have a Rose tracery at the top.)