

A Description of the Nave Teaching Windows



Christ's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Oreland, Pennsylvania

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Window photos by Pastor Bill Vanderslice



THE GOOD SHEPHERD WIDOW

This window is located in the Church Lobby and depicts Jesus as the Good Shepherd with the opening verse of Psalm 23.

AN INTRODUCTION

The Nave Teaching Windows of Christ's Lutheran Church are the result of a most generous gift by Mr. Edward H. Gessner. The windows are given in loving memory of his wife, Mildred A. Gessner. The congregation deeply appreciates his gift and the opportunity it has given them to proclaim God's Word in such a striking and beautiful way.

The windows were designed by Mr. Tony Mako and fabricated by the Ann Willet Stained Glass Atelier in Spring House, Pennsylvania. The windows were constructed using techniques employed in the medieval glass windows in Europe. All glass is mouth blown pot-metal imported antique glass with painted portions fused by kiln and all done in a "dignified contemporary" style to match the architecture of the church. The windows show a consummate skill and artistry in their completed state.

The rationale underlying the windows and their message is that the windows should form an integral part of the teaching ministry and the outreach ministry of the congregation to the community. To this end, the windows will be used by this congregation as visual aids in teaching curriculum for children, youth and adults. This booklet will enable individuals to learn from the windows. Pastors and congregations in the community are invited to use these teaching windows in their own congregational programs of Christian education. The windows are numbered counterclockwise 1 through 10 beginning at the back of the sanctuary on the right hand side.

The Word of God is His gift to all persons. The congregation of Christ's Church is grateful for the opportunity given to it to proclaim that Word in such a beautiful way.

THE WORD OF GOD

An Explanation of the Doctrine and Its Application for Teaching Windows

The Word of God is a major theological concept in the Bible and in Christian theology generally. It is a term which appears hundreds of times in the Old and New Testaments, most often as God's message to people in the various circumstances of human experience, and in some cases as the Person of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is a synonym for the gospel about Christ and is sometimes used to describe the Holy Scriptures themselves. Most important is to recognize with Martin Luther that the Word of God is none other than God Himself acting upon and in behalf of people and the world. The Word thus expresses God as creating, God as judging, and God as redeeming. In all cases, the Word is God effecting His will.

To use the Word of God as a unifying theme for the ten windows in the church nave is thus most appropriate as a means of proclaiming and teaching our faith. To express the theme most fully, the ten windows relate to one another in two ways. First, each window has its corresponding part in the window on the opposite side of the nave, as follows:

Windows 1 and 10 have as their theme "The Word in Creation." Window 1 is the first creation and Window 10 is the new creation to come.

Windows 2 and 9 have as their theme "The Word in the World." Window 2 expresses the role of the people of Abraham (*Israel*) as the agent of blessing for others and Window 9 expresses the role of the church serving the needy of the world.

Windows 3 and 8 portray "The Word in Human Words" proclaimed to the people of Israel through the prophets (3) and to the people of the church through the reformers (8), in each case challenging the people of God to be faithful witnesses.

Windows 4 and 7, “The Word as Law,” deal with the Word of God as instruction and judgment. Window 4 sets forth the decalogue as God’s Word to Israel as the guide for her life as the redeemed people. Window 7 proclaims the Gospel’s hard word that judges Christians in terms of their priorities.

Windows 5 and 6 depict “The Word as the Person” in Jesus Christ. Window 5 concentrates on the incarnation, baptism and ministry of Jesus using the words from the prologue of the Gospel of John and on the crucifixion. Window 6 announces the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples on Pentecost.

The second way in which the windows relate to one another is seen in the vertical sequence from the rear of the church to the front on the right side of the nave facing the chancel and from the front to the rear of the church on the left side of the nave.

Seen in this way, Windows 1 through 5 tell the story of how God’s creation, broken by sin (*Window 1*), leads God to call Abraham and the people of Israel to the responsibility of being a blessing to all people (*Window 2*). This chosen people is encountered by God through the preaching of the prophets who proclaim judgment on the overly comfortable and comfort to the afflicted (*Window 3*). The Ten Commandments, God’s instruction for the people’s good, end up as judgment because of disobedience (*Window 4*), and so God’s sacrifice of his own Son becomes the act by which the fallen creation is restored to fellowship with God (*Window 5*).

Windows 6 through 10 treat the new age which began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples to empower them to proclaim God’s Word (*Window 6*) and points to the fulfillment of this new age when the heavens and the earth are made new, when all suffering and pain will cease (*Window 10*).

In the meantime, while the church exists in this present world, the Gospel makes hard demands causing Christians to be exiles and aliens in the world and forcing choices to be made for the sake of the Gospel (*Window 7*). Among these hard choices are the reforms which were and are made by those who love the church, who call the church to its mission and purpose and to proper understanding of the Gospel (*Window 8*). So, called to its mission and yet waiting for the final day, the church as the Body of Christ in the world through the ministry of the laity serves the world as Christ did by feeding the hungry, providing homes for the homeless, healing the sick, comforting the depressed and advocating justice for the world's oppressed (*Window 9*).

Since the Word is not ambiguous but is announced explicitly through human words, each window will express in two or more languages words that reveal the Word. In some windows, as many as six or seven language examples will be shown.

In each window, the symbol of the persons of the Trinity will be expressed.

The theme of the brokenness of our relationship with God appears in the windows so that one does not get the impression that we have ever been or will be in harmony with God until the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Only one window (*10*) omits the cross.

The teachings in each of the windows is "layered." That is, as one reads the window or comes back to it again and again, the intricate symbolism allows for successively deeper understanding and/or wider application of the doctrine expressed.

WINDOW 1

The Creation and Fall

Iconography: Text—Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning, God created” written in Hebrew and in English. The window shows both creation from the biblical story and from scientific interpretation. It shows male and female as equal and declares that work is an act of creation and therefore is good. Four basic relationships in creation are shown in their purity as God intended and as affected by sin:

- God’s relationship to the world,
- The human relationship to the world,
- God’s relationship to humans, and
- The male and female relationship.

Artist’s Description: The subject of this window is the creation and fall of man. Observing this window from right to left, there are the illustrations of the days of creation.

On the center of the right side superimposed on the whirlpool effect is the symbol of the Trinity in a white/gray background.

There is a woman and man illustrated in an abstract way in a blue ellipse. Blue is used because we are not depicting races but all of the people of the earth. Earth is the blue planet of the solar system.

The big letter Alpha is the symbol of the beginning of the creation. (*The corresponding Window 10 shows the letter Omega as the symbol of the creation of the new heaven and earth.*)

There are also illustrations of the creation broken by sin, i.e., Adam and Eve, the flaming sword and the cherub.



WINDOW 2

The Abrahamic Blessing

Iconography: Text—Genesis 12:3. “By you shall all the families of the earth be blessed” written in Hebrew and in English. Genesis 18:23. “Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked” portrays Abraham’s plea for the lives of those in Sodom and Gomorrah. The window portrays how God’s blessing is given to the world.

Artist’s Description: This window portrays the figure of Abraham growing out of the “tree of knowledge.” The ribbon he holds depicts the three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. On the left side of Abraham is depicted Sarah, his wife.

The blue circle with the Hebrew letter Yod is the symbol for God the Father in this and all the other windows.

On the diagonal of the circle are the symbols of the attributes of God (*Exodus 34*). The Shofar, the lamb and the dagger symbolize the abolishing of human sacrifice. The cross, chalice and bread symbolize the sacrifice of Christ.

The descending dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, part of the hidden symbolism of the Holy Trinity in this window.

The burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah depict the disobedience of God’s people and show his creation broken by sin. The scripture reference alludes to God’s forbearing and forgiving love.

WINDOW 3

Israel's Prophets

Iconography: Major Text—"The Word of the Lord came to me saying" written in Hebrew and in English. This phrase is found in several places in Scripture and was used by the prophets whenever they began to speak the Word of God. Supporting tests are from Amos 1 and Amos 5. The four prophets portrayed are Elijah, Amos, Ezekiel and Isaiah. The background is Jerusalem.

Artist's Description: This window showing four prophets illustrates their teachings and prophecies through symbolic expressions superimposed on the figures.

Elijah: the scale with crown and "yod" on the top of the scale depicts that the mighty God rules with justice. The rain destroying the flame of Baal's altar illustrates this prophet's victory over the priests of Baal.

Amos: a lion roaring from Zion depicts God's anger against the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The flame emerging from the water at the bottom of the window is the symbol of the victory of justice.

Ezekiel: his message that God is forgiving and forbearing and will give new life to the destroyed is portrayed in the illustration of the Valley of the Dry Bones.

Isaiah: this teaches that the center of faith is the knowledge of God. To symbolize this, He is holding a scroll in his hands with the inscription "comfort, comfort my people." This refers to the people in Babylonian captivity.

The other illustrations at the bottom of the window depict the destruction of the Temple of Solomon, the Ziggurat (*Tower of Babel*) and the famous Istar Gate in Babylonia. The lion and the lamb dwell together by the river in peace. The pictures on the right and left top depict the prophecy of the Messiah (*a child is born*) and Elijah's ascension (*the flaming chariot*).



WINDOW 4

The Decalogue

Iconography: Text—Exodus 20:3. “You shall have no other Gods” written in Hebrew and in English. This is the supreme command of God to His people in the Mosaic Covenant. The window shows Moses as the dominant figure with Aaron, Miriam, Sinai, the Golden Calf and the burning bush.

Artist’s Description: This window depicts the supreme command of God to His people in the Mosaic Covenant. On the left is the figure of Moses standing on a rock, symbolizing Mt. Sinai, at the base of which are clustered the tents of the Israelites in the wilderness.

On the lower left is the burning bush with the “yod” identifying God’s presence.

The right side of the window illustrates Miriam and Aaron hearing God’s law and separating themselves from the cult of the Golden Calf. The letter “yod” is superimposed on the Exodus quotation with two rays emanating from it. One ray shines approvingly on the decalogue; the other, depicting wrath with red lightning, strikes the statue of the Golden Calf.

This window also portrays symbols of the Trinity.



WINDOW 5

The Incarnation, Ministry and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Iconography: Texts—John 1:1ff. “In the beginning was the Word . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Luke 4:18. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Texts are written in Greek and in English.

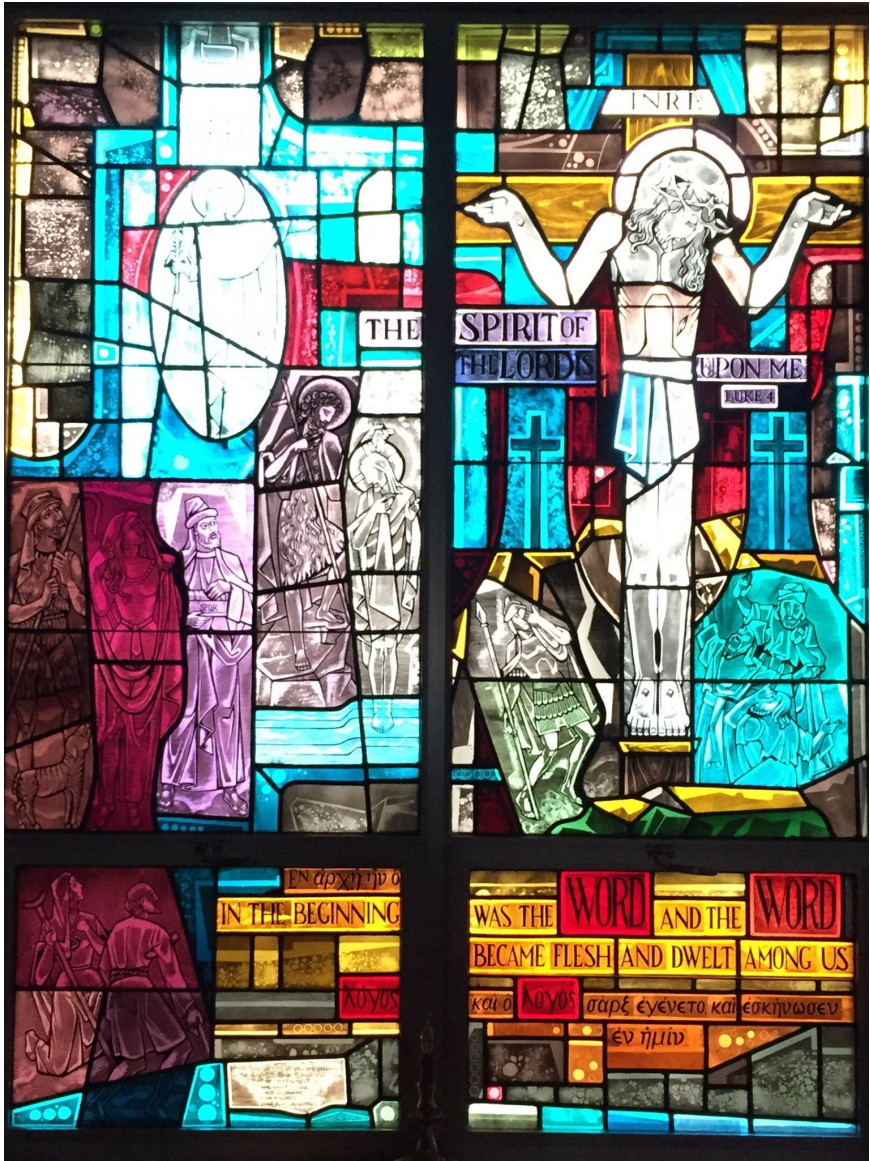
The window shows Jesus as God’s Word to His people and His role as Messiah or servant of the Lord. His baptism and the persons he related to (*tax collectors, prostitutes, shepherds, poor, crippled, etc.*) are also shown.

Artist’s Description: This window portrays the incarnation, baptism, ministry and crucifixion of Jesus. On the right side of the window is the illustration of the crucifixion; the rock with the two crosses depicts Golgotha. On the right are figures accusing and showing fear and rejections. On the left a Roman soldier covers his face and exclaims that Christ is the Son of God.

The left window expresses the incarnation with the angel of the annunciation pointing toward the figure of Christ and announcing the incarnation of the Son of God. There is purposely no manger scene.

The baptism of Jesus is illustrated to the right of the angel while below the angel are depicted the outcasts and the poor and the lame for whom Jesus came (*the three figures portray shepherds, prostitutes and tax collectors*) and who are described in the Isaiah passage “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” The theme of the window revolves around the John passage.

The symbols of the Trinity are part of this window as they are part of every window.



WINDOW 6

The Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ and the Day of Pentecost

Iconography: Text—"He is risen!" as quoted in all the Gospels, written in English, Greek, Latin, Arabic, German and Swahili. The role of women in their confrontation by the angel is portrayed. The Day of Pentecost and the beginning of the church beyond Jerusalem is shown.

Artist's Description: On the left of the window, an angel stands in front of the empty tomb and points toward the top of the window where the scripture verse is written in six different languages representing major segments of the world.

To the side of this illustration, three women are coming to the tomb to minister to the body of Christ according to Jewish law. The letter Yod not only symbolizes God the Father but also the Jewish law.

In the left ventilator section is portrayed the appearing of Christ to Mary Magdalene.

The right window portrays Pentecost. The descending dove with seven flames is the Holy Spirit; the disciples are depicted in Jerusalem.

On the lower part of the right side and also on the ventilator section are portrayed seven different architectural styles of building to correspond to the seven churches in the early Christian church.



WINDOW 7

The Gospel as a Two-edged Sword

Iconography: Text—Matthew 10:34. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword,” written in Latin and in English. The window portrays the stoning of Stephen while Saul watches, the persecutions illustrated in Revelation and in the early church.

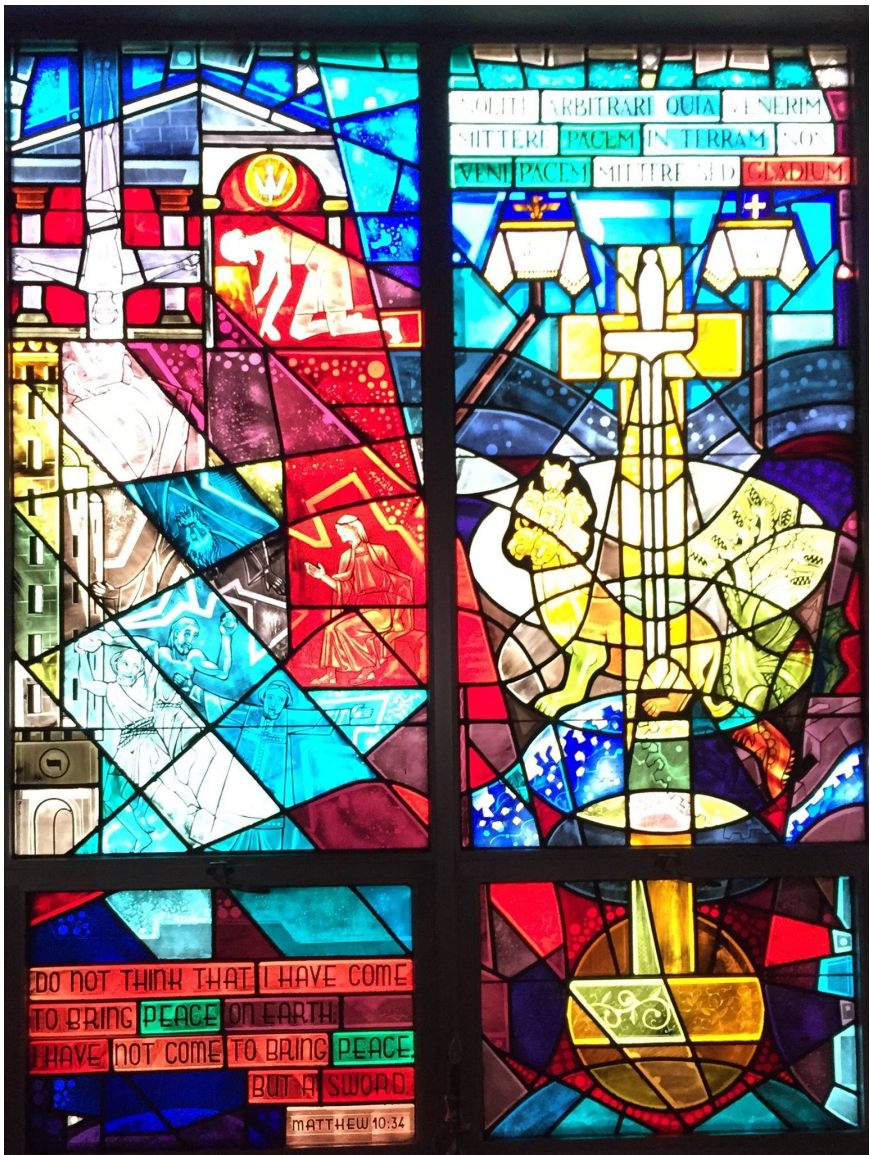
Artist’s Description: This window illustrates the persecutions in the early church, the martyrdoms and the victory over Satan, the beast as described in the Book of Revelation.

The left side of the window depicts the persecution of the early church in Judea showing the martyrdom of James the Less, leader of the Jerusalem church, and the stoning of Stephen. Saul, who later becomes Paul, witnesses the stoning.

Above is depicted the scene of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome. Peter was crucified head down and Paul was executed by the sword.

On the upper right window below the Latin quotation are two Roman banners. The pagan banner, the left one, has a broken pole while the banner with the Christian symbol, the right one, stands straight in victory. The large symbol with the superimposed two-edged sword is the cross of the Church Triumphant.

There are two beasts, one is coming out of the earth and the other is emerging from the sea. Both are thrown into a bottomless pit. In the contemporary interpretation of this window, the pit is shown as a “black hole” in space.



WINDOW 8

The Reformers

Iconography: Text—Romans 1:16, 17. “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. . .in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith;” as it is written: “He who through faith is righteous shall live,” written in English, Latin and the last phrase in German.

Luther is seen translating the scriptures; the window also features music in church and worship and includes John Hus, John Calvin and modern day reformers, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pope John XXIII and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Artist’s Description: This window illustrates the reformers who, in their time in history, called the church to return to its mission and purpose and to regain a proper understanding of the Gospel.

Martin Luther is shown nailing the theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Illustrated around him are the Bible translated in 1534, the treatise, “The Freedom of the Christian Man” in 1521 and music notes from the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress.”

At the bottom left is illustrated the martyrdom of John Hus depicting the legend where it is recorded he said to the crowd, “You can kill me because I am Hus (*meaning a goose*) but a swan (*meaning Luther*) is coming and you cannot destroy him.”

Other figures are John Calvin preaching (*in his hand is the Book of the Institutes*) and on the right window, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*a modern martyr killed by the Nazis*), Pope John XXIII (*a Roman Catholic reformer*) and Martin Luther King, Jr., an American black reformer/martyr instrumental in bringing about civil rights in the United States for blacks and other minorities in the 1960s.



WINDOW 9

The Church in Society

Iconography: Texts—Romans 12:1. “I appeal to you brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship,” and James 1:27. “Pure religion is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” Phrases from the Roman 12 passage are written in Arabic, Algonquin American Indian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Swahili as well as English.

The window illustrates the role of the church in bringing order and justice to the world, especially through the ministry of the laity of the church and in the vocations to which they are called: Agriculture, Merchant/Business, The Law, Housekeeping, Music and The Fine Arts, The Healing Profession, Engineering, the Crafts and Teaching.

Artist’s Description: On the left side of the window is the figure of Christ superimposed on the globe of the earth. There are two major symbols. One is Caduceus—the symbol for healing and the other is two fish and five loaves—the symbol for feeding the hungry.

On the right side of the window, the main symbol is the ship called “Oikumene,” describing the universal or ecumenical church.

There are four symbols connected with this portrayal, signifying the major works or goals of the church in society: a book with flaming torch (*freedom of religion*), a dove with an olive branch and cross (*peace in Christ*), the Chi Rho symbol (*the proclaiming of God’s salvation in Christ*) and the cornucopia and the cross (*the feeding of the hungry*). The faces and the corresponding language examples depict different nationalities and races representing the composition of the church. The small symbols scattered throughout the windows denote the vocations or callings of God’s people.



WINDOW 10

The New Creation

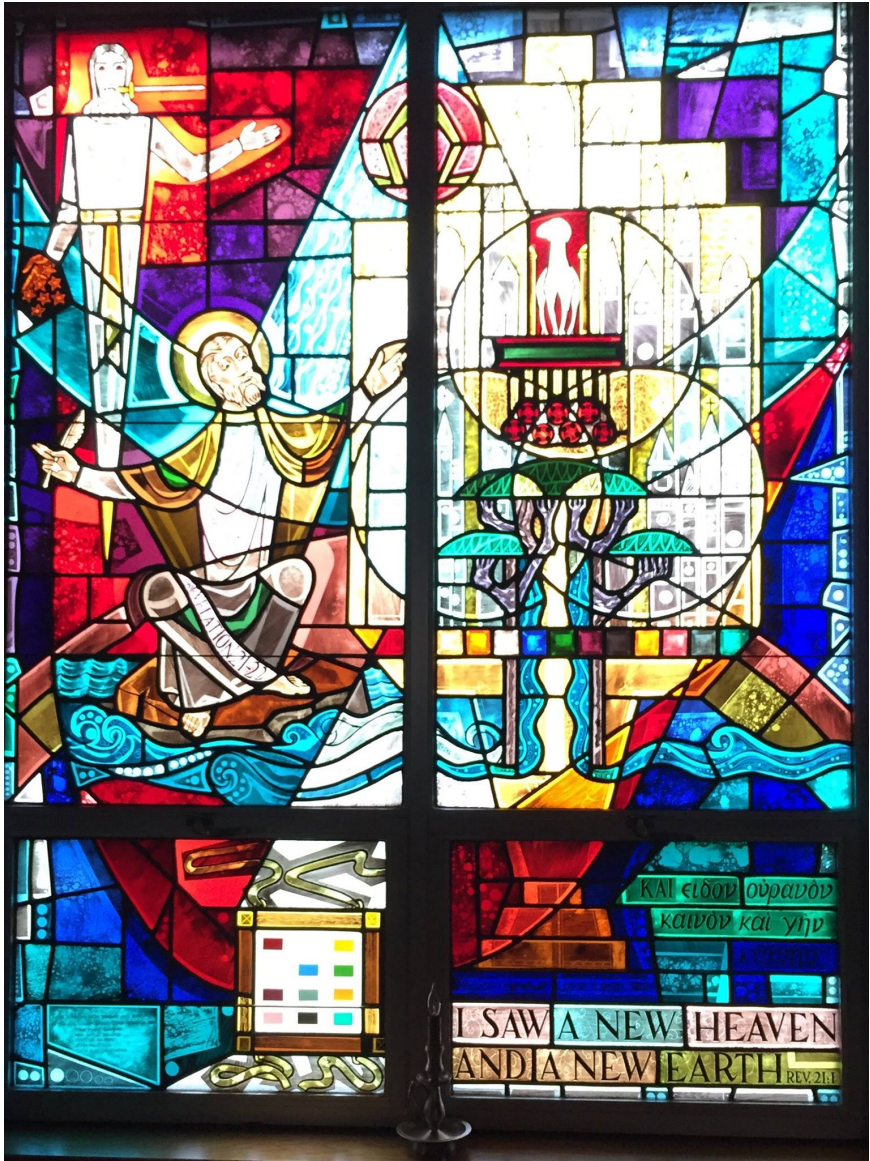
Iconography: Text -- Revelation 21:1. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," written in English and in Greek. The content of the window is as described in the Book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, depicting the world as it will be in God's presence when His kingdom comes in its fullness. There is no sin or brokenness portrayed in this window.

Artist's Description: On the left side of the window, John, author of the Book of Revelation, is sitting on the rocks of the Isle of Patmos envisioning the creation of the New Jerusalem which is superimposed on a seven-armed Menorah.

On the buildings are illustrations of the lamb and the Book with seven seals (*Rev. 5*), the tree of life and the river of life (*Rev. 22*). The foundations of the city are precious stones. These stones are the symbols of the twelve tribes of Israel shown on the breastplate of the high priest.

Behind the seated figure of John is another figure—in appearance like the Son of Man (*John 1:13-17*). The large Greek letter Omega is the symbol of the new Genesis or creation.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega. (*The Alpha symbol is seen in the first creation window.*) There will be complete harmony with God through his Word, Jesus Christ, at the time of the creation of the new heaven and the new earth.





Exterior Church view by Mr. Jerry Beil



Lobby Window | Luther Rose and Original Church Building