



# ART GLASS WINDOWS

Enjoy their beauty

Understand their significance

Learn their history

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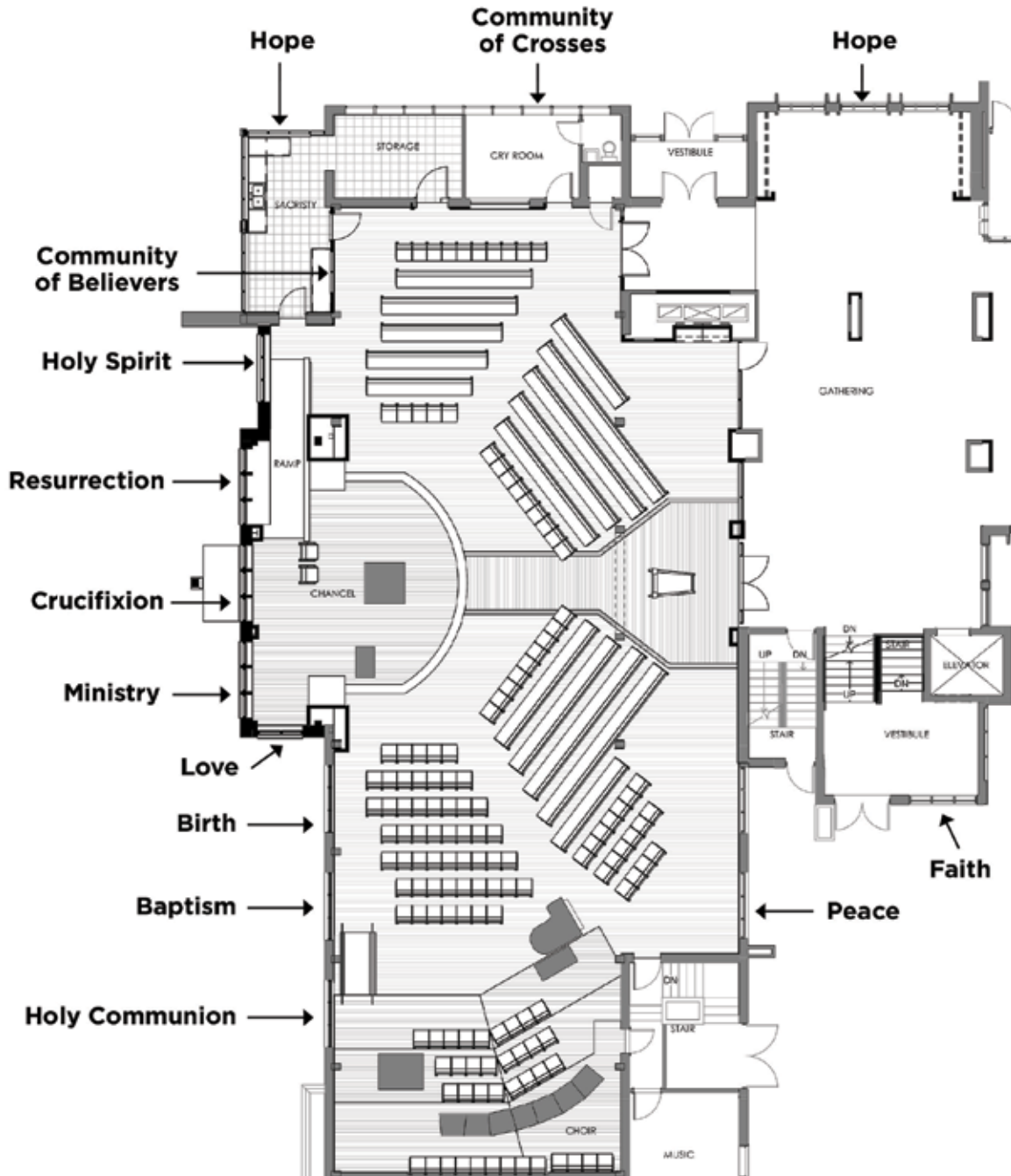
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# LOCATION OF WINDOWS

The art glass windows are presented in a sequence that starts in the sanctuary along the west wall going from south to north, then along the north wall, back to the east wall, and out to the entry way and north side of the Gathering Space. The sequence ends with a return to the sacristy, a room located to the right of the altar platform.



# INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent features at Midvale Community Lutheran Church is a series of faceted or slab glass windows that frame the worship and gathering spaces. These windows, formally called “Dalle de Verre” from their French origin, are commonly referred to as art glass windows.

This booklet highlights the symbolic and religious art embedded in these art glass windows. In the early Christian church, symbols represented concepts and supported the spoken Word for greater understanding among people who could neither read nor write. In the modern world symbols still enhance understanding and convey religious meaning. Each of the thirteen windows focuses on a different theme, featuring one or more symbols associated with the subject. Accompanying the pictures of each window is a brief interpretation of the symbol attributed to early Christianity.

The windows are constructed of thick colored glass set in a matrix of concrete and epoxy resin. White abstract religious symbols are placed throughout the windows on a background of colored and neutral glass pieces. The one-inch thick glass, chipped on its edges, refracts the sun and sky, saturating the church interior with brilliant light.

Each window frame consists of nine sections arranged in three vertical panels of three sections. Part of the beauty and drama of the windows is the color progression from dark to lighter colors as the windows go from south to north. Hints of the main color of each window are embedded in the preceding window and the window that follows.

These unique windows were created in 1972 as part of a sanctuary restoration made necessary by a church fire the fall before. They lined both sides of the long narrow church. The windows gained a new prominence in 2010 when the altar area was moved to a new location in front of the west windows. As the congregation faces the altar they now looked directly at the array of colorful windows.

The booklet concludes with a history of the windows, including the origin of the “Dalle de Verre” technique and the story of how Midvale came to acquire these unique windows. Information is also included on the studio that created them, design decisions and how some have been moved since they were first installed.



## **HOLY COMMUNION** (Grapes and Wheat)

**Holy Communion** draws on the images of grapes and wheat, which typically denote the wine and bread Jesus gave to the disciples at the Last Supper. Wheat has numerous biblical meanings and is often pictured in a single stalk or a bound sheaf of grain. When wheat is coupled with grapes, the two images become the icon for Holy Communion. As a crop widely grown in ancient Palestine, grape vines became the image representing the blood Jesus shed on the cross or the embodiment of Christ. This window is located alongside the choir loft and is often overlooked, both for its placement away from the general seating area and its intense deep blue color that reflects less light.

## **BAPTISM** (Shell and Water)

Christ's baptism is viewed as the beginning of his earthly ministry and is observed in January of the Christian liturgical calendar. **Baptism** includes a set of abstract symbols signifying the water and scalloped shells used by early Christians in the rite of baptism. The droplets denote the water in which Jesus was baptized, and when portrayed in a cluster of three, signify the Trinity. Historically, and even today at Midvale, pastors use a shell to scoop up the water that is poured over the head of the one baptized while repeating the words, "Baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."



## **BIRTH** (Manger, Star and Angel wings)

The art glass window on the birth of Christ contains some of the most well-known symbols for the Christmas season. In **Birth**, a star, angel wings, and a manger appear in abstracted form. The two side panels include the star that appeared in the sky at Christ's birth and wings that represent the angels who announced the birth of the infant Jesus to the shepherds. In the center panel a stylized manger also represents the birth of Christ. This manger includes the Chi Rho, a symbol that preceded the Christian cross. Chi Rho is the name for a Christian monogram (a motif made by combining two or more letters to form one symbol). The symbol is formed from the first two letters X and P of the Greek word for Christ. It is sometimes called a Christogram.

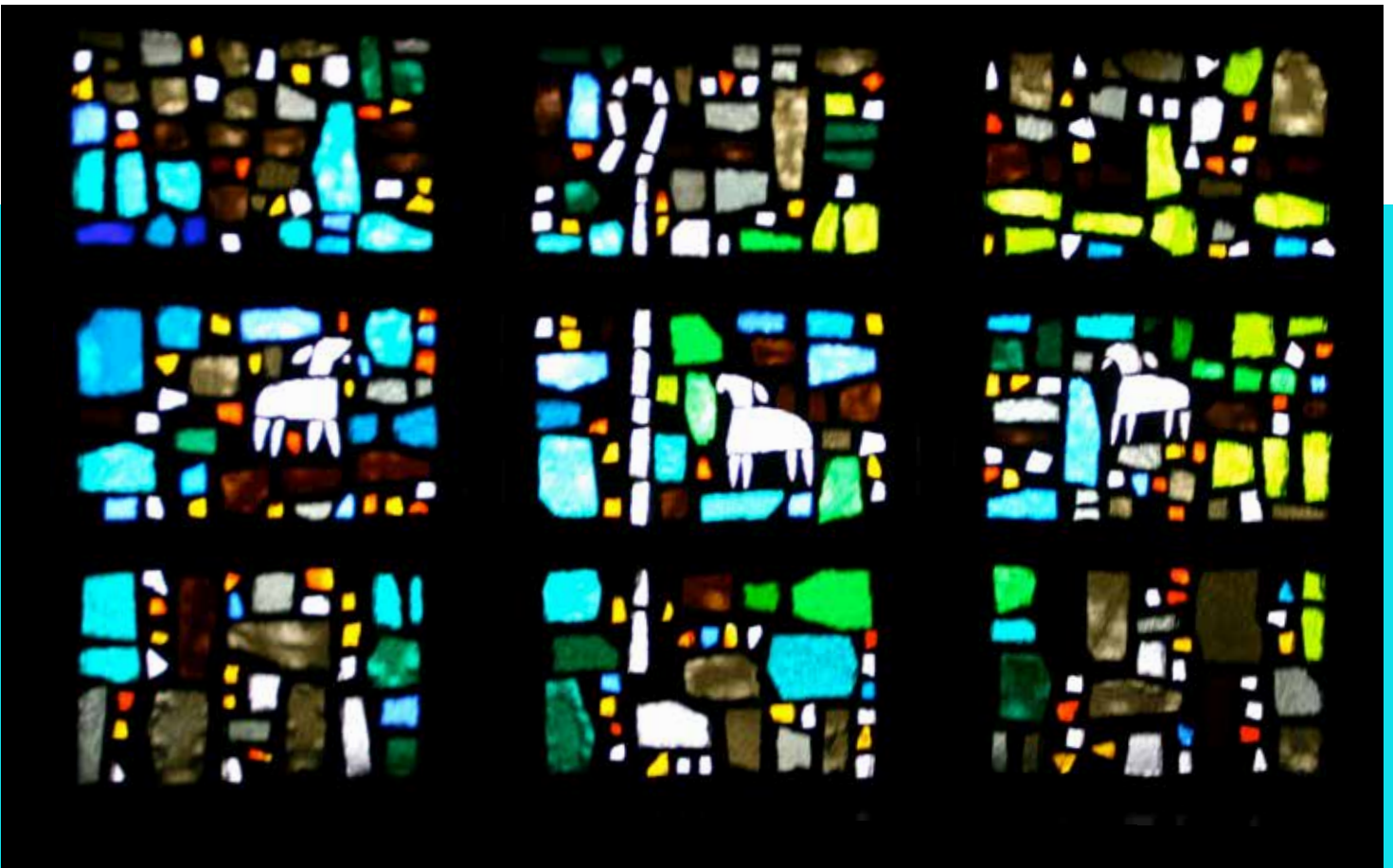






## **LOVE** (Rose and Heart)

Two of the three panels of **Love** are installed in an extension of the altar area between **Birth** and **Ministry**. The third panel is found in the sacristy. Three time-honored Christian images represent love with the cross often rendered with both a heart and a rose resting in the middle. The heart personifies the sacred heart of Jesus and his divine love for humanity. On a broader level, scriptures show the heart as the center of one's being and as the means of differentiating right from wrong. The rose symbolizes the Virgin Mary, a white rose for purity and the blood-red rose for martyrdom. Ultimately, the cross in its many forms represents both "love and hope" and "sacrifice and death." This window is partially hidden, with views only available from the north side of the sanctuary or from the altar platform.



## **MINISTRY** (Shepherd's Staff and Sheep)

Installed at the front left of the altar platform, **Ministry** characterizes Jesus as the shepherd who guides his sheep. In a well-known New Testament passage, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me... and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10: 11-16). Throughout scriptures, there are multiple references to a shepherd as one who guides and protects, most notably, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). Christ fulfills Old Testament prophecies that a shepherd will come to guide and save humankind. Over time, Jesus as the good shepherd has been portrayed in countless paintings, books, stained-glass, and other works of art. In **Ministry**, the images of a staff and sheep are the conceptual icons of Jesus, the one who “will feed his flocks like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom” (Isaiah 40:11).

## CRUCIFIXION (Three Crosses)

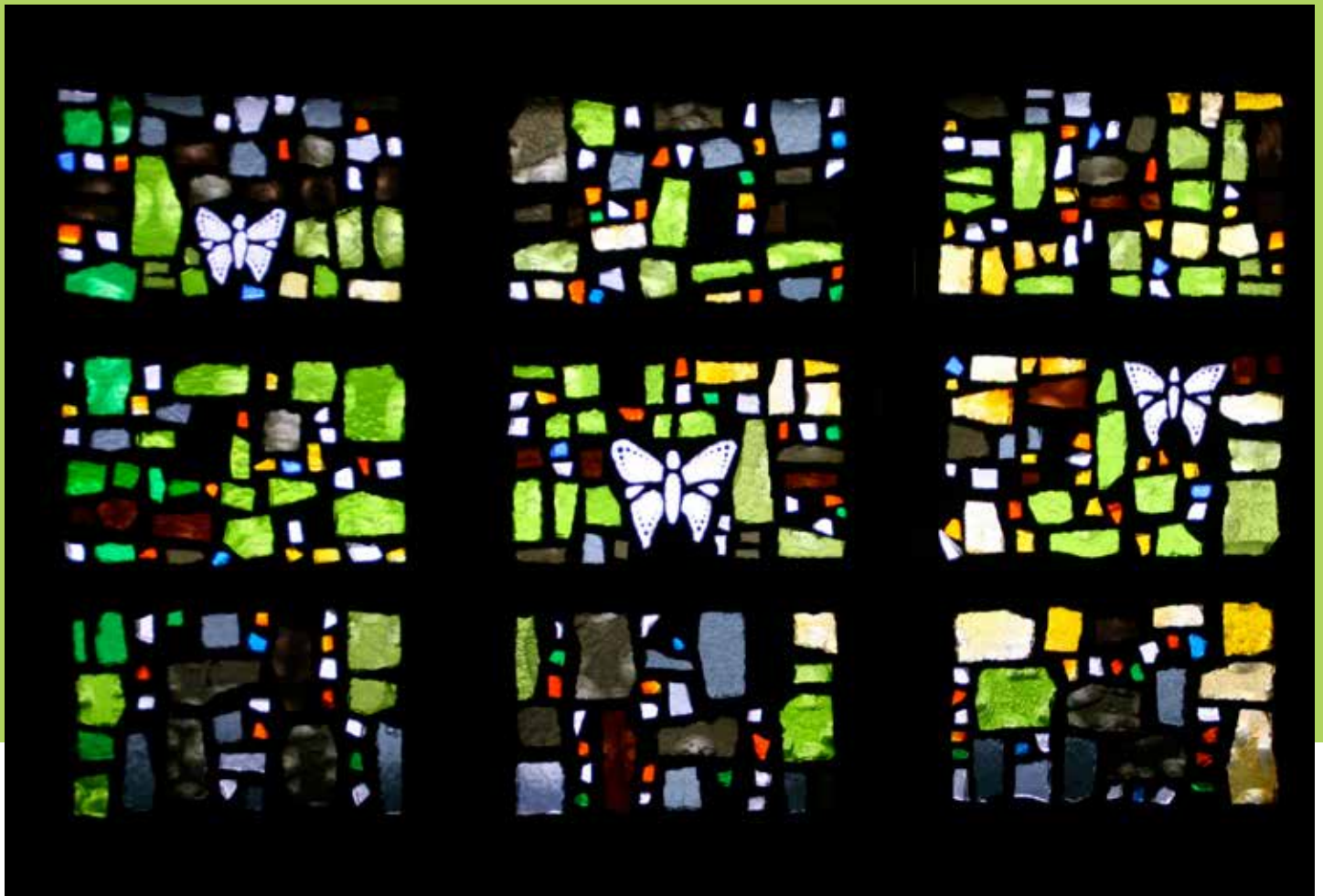
**Crucifixion** is one of the most striking art glass windows. It is positioned at the center of the altar's soaring back wall below large clear windows that showcase the outside sculptural cross. Commemorating the crucifixion of Christ, the center panel displays three intertwined white crosses symbolizing Jesus and the two thieves who died beside him. In the 2010 church remodeling, the three panels in this window were reset with wood dividers that give more height and prominence to the depiction of Christ's suffering on Good Friday.

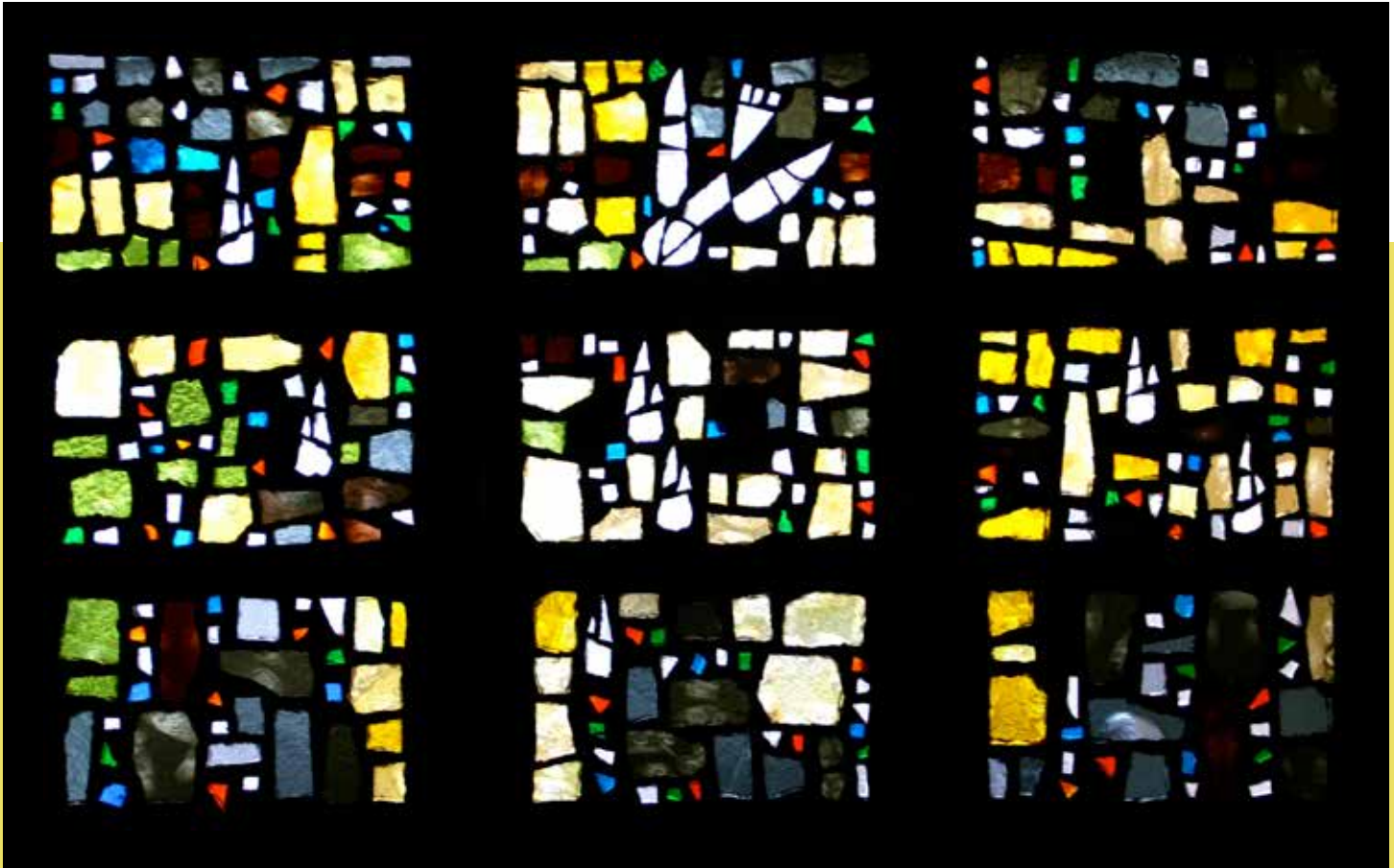
When the decision to move the altar platform to the west wall was made, it was assumed that the art glass windows along the west wall would remain in their original sequence and no particular attention was paid to which window would be behind the new altar area. It was a breakthrough moment when the building committee and the architect realized that the center of the new altar area would end up in front of the window with the crosses. With its center panel of three crosses falling directly behind the altar table this window was perfect to serve as an altar backdrop — like a sign from heaven that this major rearrangement of the worship space was meant to be. The placement of the **Crucifixion** and the outdoor sculptural cross above it results in a unique reflection in the water of the baptismal font when viewed from the entrance to the sanctuary.



## RESURRECTION (Butterfly)

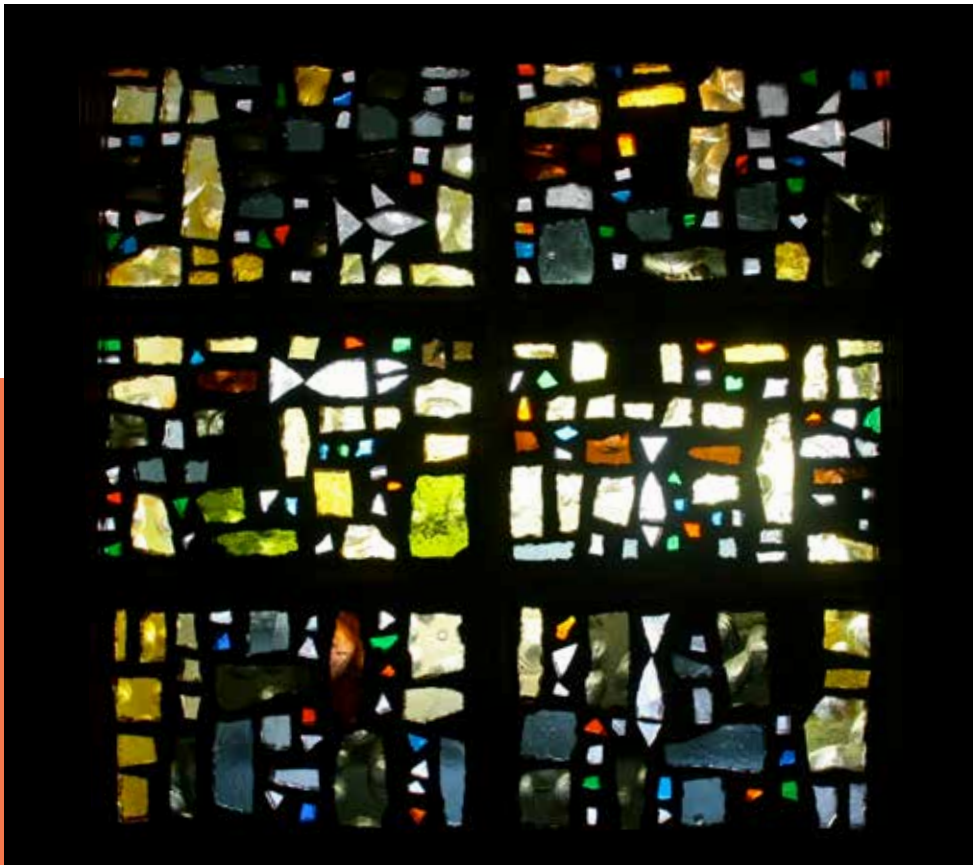
On the right side of the altar platform is **Resurrection** and its butterfly image, the long-established Easter symbol representing Christ's resurrection and transformation. Just as the butterfly emerges from its chrysalis soaring upward to cast off its previous existence, so are the followers of Jesus Christ born to new life. The butterfly often serves as a metaphor for various aspects of Christian life and spiritual rebirth, such as the soul or divine presence. Other common depictions are the qualities of joy, hope and personal growth. Additionally, butterflies have a broad range of distinctive colors that carry unique meanings and legends with them. A chance encounter with a butterfly is often thought to have spiritual meaning, and as in **Resurrection**, a white butterfly is seen as a sign of blessing.





## **HOLY SPIRIT** (Dove and Fire)

Christian art has long drawn on the image of a dove to represent the **Holy Spirit**. Positioned to the right of **Resurrection, Holy Spirit** features the dove as the Holy Spirit descending at Pentecost. The dove, an emblem of the Spirit of God, appears often in portrayals of the annunciation, the baptism of Jesus, and the Trinity. Early in the New Testament, the dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit descending as the heavens open at Jesus' baptism, with a voice saying, "You are my Son the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) The dove appears again at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes to the Apostles, just ten days after the ascension of Jesus. Additionally, a dove is described as hovering above the Pentecostal scene, and sometimes, as marking the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send the Counselor. Wind and fire are other familiar images that commemorate Pentecost, which is viewed as the birth of the Christian church.



## Community of Believers (Fish)

**Community of Believers** is located on an interior wall between the sanctuary and the sacristy, using only six sections of the original window. All sections of the window include fish symbols that symbolize Christ's followers in the first century. Oppressed and threatened by the Romans, the early believers adopted a fish as the means to identify each other and mark their secret meeting places. The ancient fish icon was long known to Romans and other pagan cultures, and unlike the cross, the image did not arouse suspicion.

The fish also serves as a Christian symbol for Jesus, and when three fish are intertwined, they become a symbol for the "Trinity." In the New Testament numerous associations are tied to fish. In one account, Jesus takes two fish and five loaves of bread and miraculously multiplies them to feed a crowd of five thousand. Another time early in his ministry, Jesus speaks with brothers James and John, the fishermen, promising them they would become fishers of people. Again, after the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples who have been fishing without success on the Sea of Galilee, telling them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Wondrously, their nets overflow with fish. At other times, the fish icon is tied to baptism. Just as baptismal water represents new life, so is water life to the fish.

In the move to their current location several of the fish sections were repositioned upside down from their original placement. Apparently, abstract fish looked the same to the installers who had no way of knowing which was the top or bottom, or how the fish were positioned in the original window.

## Community of Crosses (Small Crosses)

The art glass windows on the north side of the sanctuary are high on the wall.

The four panels include numerous crosses in different sizes and shades of yellow, blue and clear glass. The window is named **Community of Crosses** but there is no historical information to explain the choice of this symbol. One might wonder if it is tied to the “community” in Midvale’s name or because crosses are often used to designate churches.

The strong yellow color completes the color journey of the windows from dark hues at the south end of the sanctuary to light hues on the north wall. However, the windows do include some blue which connects them back to the other windows.

Originally, the four panels were installed behind a small balcony and not easily seen. In the 2010 remodeling the balcony was removed and the windows became much more visible. A portion of the north wall was recently painted a deep dusty blue and the windows gained more prominence and intensity.



## Peace (Olive Branches)

Two windows titled **Peace** are situated in the southeast corner of the East wall. They are similar, each with a single olive branch. Their blue colors mirror the colors of the **Baptism** and **Birth of Christ** windows on the opposite side of the sanctuary. In ancient Christianity, the dove holding an olive branch was a symbol for peace. This is believed to derive from the Biblical story of Noah and the flood when the dove returns to the Ark with a freshly plucked olive leaf. To Noah this was proof of land and that God had ended the flood. In this context the image of peace typically represents new life.

Early Christian art portrayed the dove as the Holy Spirit and the olive branch as a symbol of peace. When pictured with Mary, the dove represents themes of purity, devotion and caring. In the New Testament, Luke reports “The heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove.” (Luke 3:22)







## **Faith (Shield)**

Three sections of **Faith**, a window removed from the sanctuary in the 1994 remodeling, are placed in the south entry just off the parking lot. Featuring a shield as the symbol, they are very visible to all who enter the church. On either side of the main section with its large shield are sections with small crosses.

A shield with a cross in the center was a well-recognized faith symbol among early Christians. This meaning apparently came from the verse in Ephesians (6:16) that states, “Take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Given this fighting image, it is logical that a shield with an embedded cross was used by those who fought for Christianity, especially during the Crusades. Another interpretation of the shield is courage, probably taken from Psalm (28:7). “The Lord is my strength and my shield.” Although the shield is not considered an important Christian symbol, it is representative of the faithful life when used in a Christian context.

The remaining six sections of **Faith** were stored from 1994 until the 2010 remodeling and they are now found in the sacristy.



## Hope (Anchor)

Six sections of **Hope**, another window removed from the sanctuary in the 1994 remodeling, are now placed in the sacristy. Two of these sections create a large anchor symbol at the north end.

In most anchors the upper beam forms the shape of a cross. The anchor, with a center cross, has long been used in Christian symbolism to represent hope. Since anchors held ships safely in place, they were considered ancient symbols of safety, thus of hope. Early Christians may have adopted the anchor as a covert image since it was familiar to Romans in another context. In Christian terms, the anchor is a symbol of the hope of salvation and eternal life, which explains why anchors are found on many early Christian graves. The epistle to the Hebrews (6:19) for the first time connects the idea of hope with the symbol of the anchor: "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain."

For some unknown reason, **Hope** was split up during the 1994 remodeling, placing three sections with no discernable symbol at the north end of the Gathering Space and combining the remaining six sections, including the anchor symbol, with three sections from another window to use as a freestanding divider between the sanctuary and the old narthex. At the time everyone assumed that the three window sections in the Gathering Space were part of the same **Faith** window as those placed at the south entryway. Little attention was given to a small strange white shape in the upper left corner of the rightmost section.

In 2010, when an inventory of all the windows was undertaken in hopes of using the stored and displaced windows in the remodeling project, close examination of the three sections in the Gathering Space revealed that their color placed them as part of the window called **Hope**, rather than that of **Faith**. That recognition led to new interest in the section with the strange white shape.

Finally, someone realized that the anchor symbol in the sacristy is noticeably incomplete on its right side! Sure enough - that strange white shape is the tip of the anchor! Pictures of the original window confirmed that the section in the Gathering Space had been an adjacent section that completed the anchor symbol. Unfortunately, it was too costly to exchange the Gathering Space sections with others or the anchor might have been complete once again. But at least the mystery of the strange white shape was solved.



## Sacristy

Remaining sections from the original **Hope** (anchor), **Faith** (shield) and **Love** (heart and rose) windows have been placed in the sacristy, blending the color sequence and making it a unique feature of the space where communion is prepared and altar furnishings are stored.



# HISTORY OF THE WINDOWS

## Dalle de Verre Windows

The windows installed on the walls of Midvale's worship and gathering spaces are a storied collection of art glass windows known as "Dalle de Verre," or faceted, or slab glass. The origin of this approach can be traced to a technique 16 centuries old when craftsmen constructed rudimentary windows of thick jagged glass set in wood and stone frames. Similar window applications eventually reached France and re-emerged after World War One as a less expensive strategy to rebuild the windows of war-torn churches.

During the same time, the modern art movement had captured the attention of architects, artists and craftsmen as they were working to rebuild France. This proved to be a catalyst for new techniques and spawned interest in the thick glass windows that French critics called a new sacred art. It also was during the time when abstraction was replacing representational art.

The first faceted glass used in North America is thought to be in the 1930s by French artist Auguste Labouret for a church in Quebec, Canada. The architectural art form came to the United States in 1954 when the First Presbyterian Church in Stamford, Connecticut dedicated a new structure containing twenty thousand pieces of faceted glass that were designed and fabricated by the Loire Studio in Sartes, France.

Midvale's art glass windows were constructed by the Conrad Schmitt Studio, founded in Milwaukee in 1889 and now located in New Berlin, Wisconsin. A recent search on the history of the studio unearthed some fascinating information on how faceted glass became part of their work. Bernard Gruenke, a principal in the Conrad Schmitt business, traveled to Europe in the late 1940s to visit sites of major art installations and search for more progressive design. He was immediately inspired by France's novel "dalle de verre" method, and upon return began experimenting with the format. In 1949, he created what is believed to be the first faceted glass window made in the United States. Soon he was touring the country to demonstrate the new window medium. The Conrad Schmitt Studio, well known at the time for stained glass work, now became a fabricator of faceted glass projects as well. Ultimately, Gruenke is credited with being the first American artist to produce a large-scale "dalle de verre" installation with his work at Notre Dame University and Moreau Seminary. Although this impressionistic type of glass has diminished in popularity, it is still made by the studio today upon request.

Midvale's windows were built with a glass storm-window on the outside to help avoid deterioration from the elements. As a result, the windows have held up very well for over fifty years. Since the church had no air conditioning when the windows were installed, some lower sections are fitted with screens so they can be opened.



## How Midvale Came to Have These Windows

In October 1971, Midvale sustained a major fire in the sanctuary and education wing. The building was nearly a total loss, but deemed restorable, a process that took close to four months. During the first seven weeks, the congregation worshipped at Holy Name Seminary on Madison's west side. Midvale members admired the lovely mosaics and stained glass windows in this worship space and encouraged the church leadership to consider incorporating similar art in Midvale's building as it was restored.

As a result, Conrad Schmitt Studios of New Berlin, Wisconsin, the same studio that made the windows at Holy Name, was chosen for the interior design of the restored sanctuary. Their work included the windows, altar area backdrop with a mosaic centerpiece, and altar furnishings. According to notes found in Midvale's archives, members of the Altar Guild visited the Conrad Schmitt Studios to see how Midvale's windows were made. One long-time member recalls that some members preferred traditional stained-glass windows, but these proved to be too expensive for the budget. Ultimately, the unique and less costly art glass style window was agreed upon.

In retrospect, it was a wise decision as the windows offer a timeless appeal and have a contemporary look fifty years later.

Helen Hickman, an art glass specialist working for the studio, created the blueprint for the individual windows, as well as the Christ Mosaic that now hangs near the primary church entrance. Hickman worked with then Pastor Stan Klyve to develop the window themes. Correspondence indicates that they used a book of symbols as the basis for many of the window designs. Pastor Klyve focused on choosing symbols of religious themes that were familiar to congregants and would be recognized for their religious connotations.

Recent inquiry has found that Helen Hickman brought a prestigious background to Midvale's art glass project, as at the time she was recognized as an inter-denominational and ecclesiastical designer of stained glass. Over the span of three decades Hickman created glass and mosaics for more than 600 churches, synagogues and hospitals. She became the first woman president of the Stained Glass Association of America in 1978, and over time she received countless awards.

Midvale's windows were not only constructed in a unique and innovative style by a local studio with an international reputation, but their design was created by a well-known and nationally respected woman artist.

***“The cross adorned shield appears to be the most consistently used for Faith, and while the heart is most often suggested for Charity or Christian Love, we still favor the rose, also a symbol of virtue”***

— Helen Hickman, art glass specialist at Conrad Schmidt Studios

## Relocation of Windows

During the past thirty years a number of Midvale's windows have moved to new locations or been stored for a period of time. The most recent remodeling in 2010 restored all but four sections of one window to prominent locations in the church. The movement of various windows around the church is shown in the fold out which details the original and current layouts.

When the new art glass windows were first installed in 1972 they lined both sides of the long narrow church and included four additional windows installed behind a second-floor balcony on the north end. The west wall featured the sacraments followed by major events in the life of Christ. The east wall began with two similar windows titled Peace, installed higher on the wall because the space in front of them was a small choir seating area with several risers to elevate the choir members. These two windows were followed by windows featuring Christian themes of Love, Hope, Faith and Community. The east windows mirrored the color progression of the west windows.

In 1994 the addition of an attached gathering space necessitated the removal of the four theme windows from the east wall. Parts of two were used as dividers between the sanctuary and the narthex on the north side, and sections of the other windows were used in the gathering space and entry way. The remaining pieces were stored for future use.

When the altar area moved to a new location on the west wall in 2010, the panels of Crucifixion, now located behind the newly designed altar area were left in their original sequence, but each panel was reset in a wider frame. Two panels of Love from storage were installed as part of the extension to the west because their colors best fit the color progression between Birth and Ministry. The six sections displaying the most fish symbols from Community were installed on the wall between the sacristy and the sanctuary. Other panels and sections from the former hallways and storage area were placed in the sacristy. Four sections remain in storage, three from Community and one from Love.



Findorff workmen  
reframing and reinstalling  
art glass windows in the  
2010 remodeling

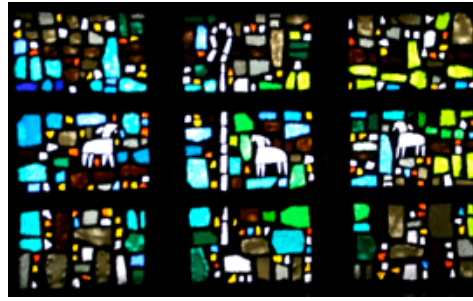


# RECONFIGURED WINDOWS

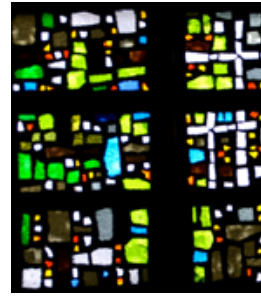
BLUE - Remain in Original Location/Sequence



Heart/Rose/Cross: Love



Shepherd/Sheep: Ministry of Christ



Crosses: Crucifixion



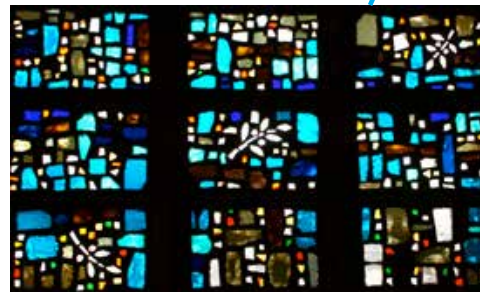
Stars/Chi-Rho: Birth of Christ



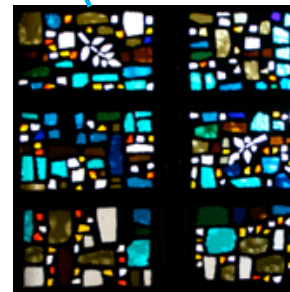
Shell/Water: Baptism



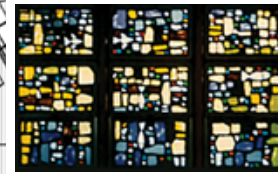
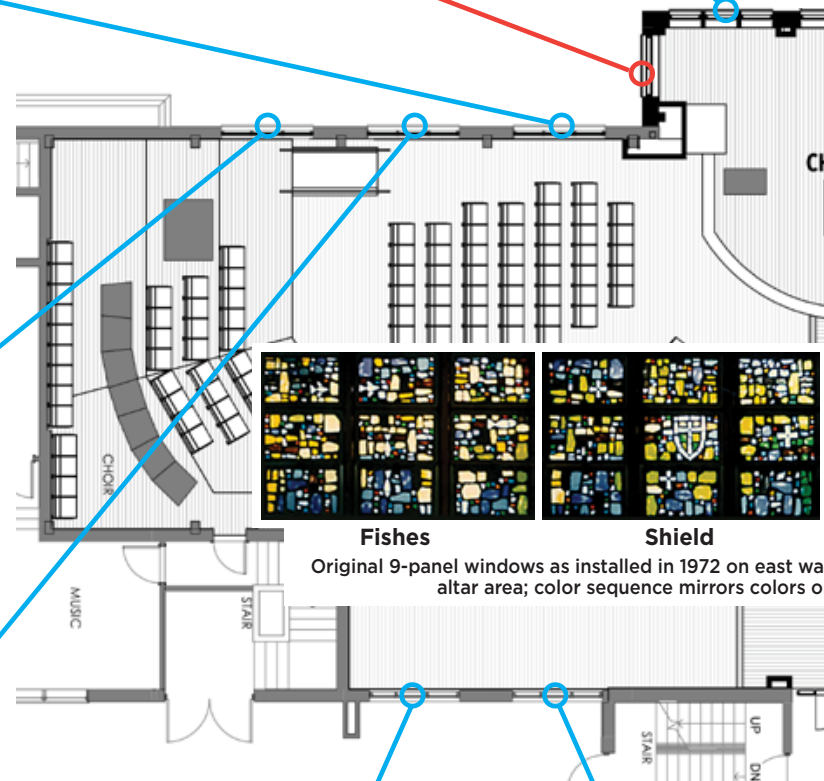
Grapes/Wheat: Holy Communion



Olive Branches: Peace Theme



Olive Branches: P



Fishes



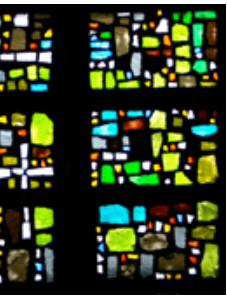
Shield

Original 9-panel windows as installed in 1972 on east wall of altar area; color sequence mirrors colors of new windows.



# STAINED GLASS FROM 2010 REMODELING

Sequence **RED** - Moved to New Location



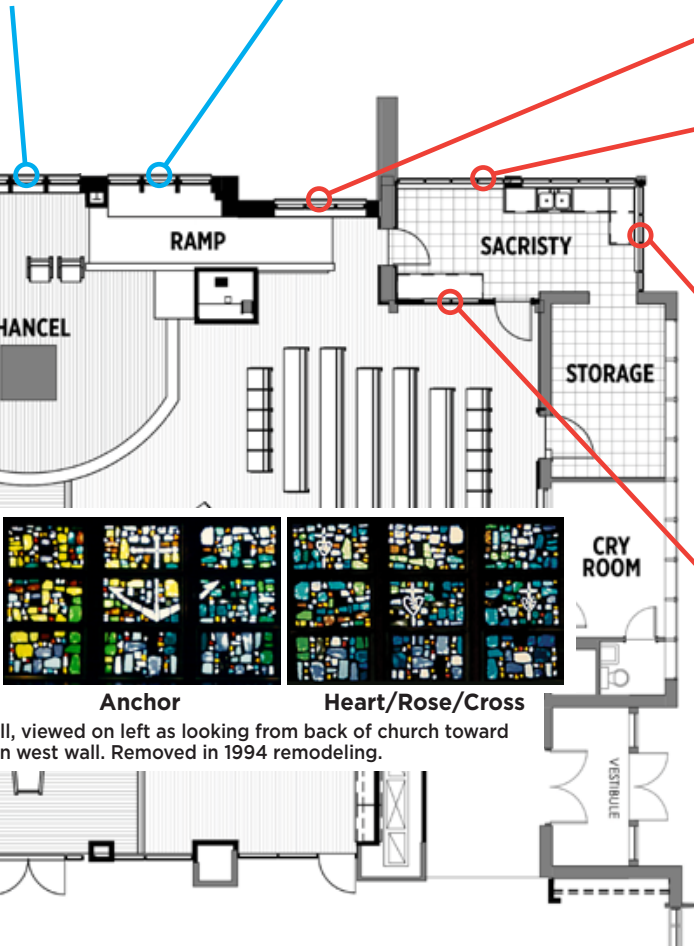
Ascension of Christ



Butterfly: Resurrection of Christ



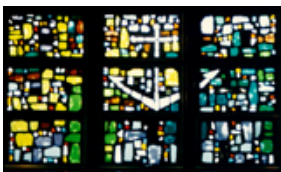
Dove: Pentecost



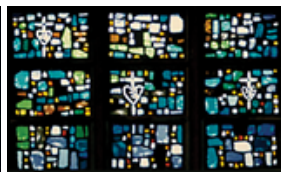
Panels from Heart/Rose/Cross + Shield/Crosses (Sacristy)



Panels from Anchor: Hope + Shield (Sacristy)

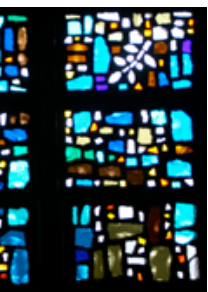


Anchor



Heart/Rose/Cross

Viewed on left as looking from back of church toward west wall. Removed in 1994 remodeling.



Peace Theme



Panels from Shield/Crosses: Faith (South Entrance)



Panels from Fishes: Community (Divider Wall)



Panels from Anchor: Hope (Gathering Space)

*Three sections from the fish panel and one section from Heart/Rose are in storage.*

