Stained Glass Windows
Tiffany, D’Ascenzo, Willett
Sermons in Stained Glass
of
First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta
Revised December 6, 2016

The windows are presented here in the historical sequence of the story.
Windows above are on the North Wall, from front to rear
Windows below are on the South Wall, from front to rear

Locating the Windows in the Sanctuary
When you enter the sanctuary from Peachtree, the West wall with the pulpit, organ, and Rose Window is in front of you. To your right is the North wall where the sequence of the ten History Windows begins with the Abrahamic Covenant Window near the front of the church. The story proceeds with the five windows along this wall and then moves to the other side, the South wall, at the front, with the Resurrection Window.
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## Origin of this booklet

This document grew out of a suggestion by Mrs. Martha Earnest (1845-1934) to Dr. Lyons that a booklet about the windows be created. He began to write notes about each window. Dr. Gardner and Dr. Lyons turned these notes into a booklet which later served as a primary source for the material presented in our 150th anniversary book “The First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, 150th Anniversary”.

Bill Lyons, grandson of Dr. Lyons, created a small booklet, “A Self-Guided Tour”, about the windows which was published in December 2000. At the time many items of information about the windows were missing. Later Bill began the process of finding missing information and creating this larger booklet which has had various names. It is now identified as “Stained Glass Windows”.

Please send Bill your questions, comments and suggestions for additions. Any errors in this document are the responsibility of Bill Lyons who can be contacted at wlyons@gmail.com or 770-805-9017.

## Locating the Windows in the Sanctuary

When you enter the sanctuary from Peachtree, the East wall with the pulpit, organ, and Rose Window are in front of you. To your right is the North wall where the sequence of the ten History Windows begins with the Abrahamic Covenant Window near the front of the church. The story proceeds with the five windows along this wall and then moves to the other side at the front, the South wall with the Resurrection Window.
Stained Glass Windows at First Presbyterian Church

This booklet begins with the ten History Windows in the sanctuary presented in the sequence of the story. These are followed by the East Window and the Rose Window in the sanctuary. Next are the Jesus and the Little Children in the Berean Room (Reception Room) and the four Narthex Windows. The Winship Chapel and its windows are covered in a separate booklet.

Ten History Windows

There are twelve large windows in the sanctuary. Ten of these windows surround the floor of the sanctuary, five on each side. These represent ten events, or stories, from the history of the Bible. I have chosen to call these the Ten History Windows.

The first impression of each History window is of a scene representing a single, familiar, story.

Actually the structure of each window is very complex. The primary scene is composed of three windows (or panes) which together are referred to as a “trefoil”, or tripartite schema.

Above the trefoil are eight tall, slender panes (or windows) which appear similar in all ten windows but are distinctly different. We have adopted the term Octet, or the Mansions, for these panes.

Below the trefoil are three smaller windows, which we refer to as the Triplet. The center window of the Triplet contains a primary element which links each window to the previous window, or the time before.

Further below are two more small “windows”, referred to as the Pair. On one side of the sanctuary these are filled with stained glass and illuminated from outside as are the larger windows. On the other side, mosaics have been used to fill the spaces.

Viewing the History Windows

As we describe how to view the ten History windows, we will concentrate on three elements: first is the symbol in the central window of the Triplet, just below the trefoil; next is the great scene in the trefoil; last is the small symbol near the top of the center pane of each trefoil. These elements give the primary message of the window.

The details of other elements are described and discussed in Appendix L - Elements of a History Window and Appendix H - Inscriptions.

As you look at each window, you should look first at the scene in the center window below the trefoil, which in many cases refers to the past, or what has come before.

Next the three panes of the trefoil tell the story of the window.

Finally, the small symbol near the top of the center pane of the trefoil points to the future.

Variations of this design exist in some of the windows.

In presentations of the entire series of windows this procedure will be followed in the discussion of each window, moving in waves from bottom to top, then again, bottom to top, to understand the meaning of the windows.
### Reference Chart from Appendix D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History Windows</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Installation Date</th>
<th>Installation Sequence</th>
<th>Artist Who Created</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrahamic Covenant</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>12 Jan 1930</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tiffany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, Psalms, Prophets</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>19 June 1938</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>D’Ascenzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>12 July 1931</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tiffany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Ministry</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>9 July 1939</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>D’Ascenzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>14 May 1922</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tiffany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Resurrection            | South Side | 20 April 1919     | 1                     | Tiffany            |
| Ascension               | South Side | 27 Nov 1921       | 3                     | Tiffany            |
| Pentecost               | South Side | 17 Dec 1939       | 9                     | D’Ascenzo          |
| Martyr                  | South Side | 25 Feb 1940       | 10                    | D’Ascenzo          |
| Christian Missions      | South Side | 17 April 1921     | 2                     | Tiffany            |

**East & West Windows**

- **East - Second Coming**
  - 4 Jan 1948, 2, Willet

- **- Christ’s Return - The Great East Window**
  - Rose, 3 May 1992, 5, Willet

**Windows in Other Locations**

- **Berean Room**
  - Jesus and Little Children, 1 April 1934, 1, Tiffany

- **Narthex**
  - Two pairs of windows, 16 Mar 1969, 4, Willet

- **Winship Chapel**
  - Christ and His Parables, 24 Oct 1965, 3, Willet

Who executed each sanctuary window, Location and sequence installed, Installed - Group and dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tiffany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D’Ascenzo</td>
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<td>5 B</td>
<td>7 C</td>
<td>6 B</td>
<td>8 C</td>
<td>4 A</td>
<td>1 A</td>
<td>3 A</td>
<td>9 C</td>
<td>10 C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sequence & Group)

- **Group A** 8 years 1919-1922
- **Group B** 7 years 1930-1931
- **Group C** 8 years 1938-1940
- **East** 44 years 1948-1992
- **West**

Booklets Three and Four give details about the design and creation of the windows.
See Appendix K - Counting the Stained Glass Windows for a discussion of how many stained glass windows are in our church.
Abrahamic Covenant
Genesis 3:15; 12:1-9; 17:1-8

This first window in the sequence was executed by Tiffany and honors Evelyn Hayden Phillips. This was the fifth window installed.

This window is the depiction of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The scene in the lower panel shows a heel upon the head of the serpent [Genesis 3:15] which is a reminder of the story of the Garden of Eden. This carries the symbolism that from the very beginning all the way through history every person who has ever lived, including each of us, has had a struggle between good and evil.

In the center panel of the trefoil God is speaking to Abraham. The Lord said to him “I will make my covenant between me and you.” God is represented by the shaft of light coming down from heaven. God is saying to him "If you will go out of your country and from your kindred and from your people, I will make of you a great nation and will bless you", and Abraham is accepting this covenant with God. This scene depicts a man of strong character who hears God speak and carries out God's directive throughout his own life.

The right panel shows Sarah, his wife, who doesn't know what the voice means, doesn't know what is happening, but is perfectly willing, as shown by her stance and her clasped hands, to go with Abraham wherever he leads her.

The left panel shows Abraham's nephew, Lot. He is a busy man, too busy to be bothered by spiritual matters. He has his sheep around him, grazing and drinking from the stream. While God spoke to Abraham, Lot tended sheep. Abraham, however, hears God, obeys His voice, and ultimately, establishes the people of Israel. They all share the Blessing.

The small scene near the top shows God's hand blessing Abraham. That blessing endured throughout all the years of Abraham's life and indeed throughout Jewish history until Christ gave us the new covenant.

The symbol in this window which perhaps is most important of all is the beam of bright light shining upon the uplifted face of Abraham who is upon his knees. It is the sign and token of the Presence of God in Covenant Grace. Abraham is represented as a person of striking appearance, large, deeply interested, and definitely responding to the call of God.

Concerning the light, Dr. Lyons wrote: “While thinking of Abraham and the shaft of light falling so wonderfully upon his uplifted face, one recalls his question to Mr Louis Tiffany, asking him whether the association of more color, with the white light would make it more effective. After a pause, and with very deep and reverent emotion, he said: 'It is better as it is. Let others have all the joy that color brings, but may the grace of God give me to understand His wondrous manifestation of His power and character in pure white light.'”
Law, Psalms, Prophets
Exodus 3:1-12; Psalm 23; Isaiah 62:10-12

The next window is the first window executed by D’Ascenzo. It honors George and Lucie Harrison.

The scene at the bottom refers back to the preceding window. Dr. Lyons describes this small group of three as “Wise Men - Pilgrims of Night looking towards sunrise.”

The three large panels in the middle (referred to as a trefoil) depict three stories from very different times. They cover a period of about 1,500 years while the world was looking for and waiting for the coming of the Redeemer. Gardner uses simply “Pilgrims of the night”.

On the left of the trefoil the Law is represented by Moses, perhaps the greatest man of the Old Testament. In the background is Mt. Sinai. Moses has just come down from Mt. Sinai where God spoke to him, giving him the Ten Commandments. At Moses’ feet is the burning bush, the symbol that God is with Moses and that his spirit will be with him all of his life. Moses was very close to God. This great man brought the children of Israel out of Egypt where they had been slaves for 400 years, trained them, developed an army, and formed them into a great nation. All the while this man was staying close to God and trying to lead the people through God's will.

The larger center panel depicts the Psalms represented by the sweet singer of Israel, David, with his harp. This picture presents David long before he became king. Here he is the shepherd boy. Even in his youth he composed beautiful psalms. At his feet his sheep are drinking from the spring. His shepherd’s crook is lying on the ground in front of his left foot.

The right panel depicts the prophets represented by the prophet Isaiah who throughout his prophecy told about the coming of Jesus Christ. For that reason he was picked from all the prophets to be depicted in the window. Isaiah is not facing toward the other figures in the window. He is looking toward the next window, because Isaiah prophesied more than any other person in the Old Testament, the coming of Jesus Christ.

The small window near the top depicts God's hand pointing toward the next window, toward the coming of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lyons’ son commented that Dr. Lyons had a great struggle about having Isaiah turn his back on the rest of the picture, but he could not get away from the necessity of having Isaiah face the future, particularly the Advent.

Great care was taken by D’Ascenzo to match the style and colors of the Tiffany windows. Some who are well experienced with Tiffany’s work can distinguish between the Tiffany and D’Ascenzo windows. For many of us it is easy to imagine that these windows of historic events all came from the same source.
The Advent window, executed by Tiffany, was given by Mrs. J. M. High. This window honors her daughter, mother, and grandmother. In 1898 Mrs. High was one of the prime movers of the new North Avenue Presbyterian Church, “far out” on the edge of town. We have found no evidence that she ever returned to FPC.

Mrs. High made many contributions to FPC and Atlanta as did many of those who are responsible for our windows. Her name is immortalized in the High Museum, which was once her home and stands next to our church. The museum was founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association. In 1926, the High family, for whom the museum is named, donated their family home for the museum.

The scene at the bottom contains symbols of the three elements that are central to the preceding window: first the outline of the harp representing David is in the center; second the two stones with the Ten Commandments representing Moses; third around the stones is a red mantle representing the prophets.

The large center panel shows the Baby in Mary's arms in the stable, with Joseph in the background leaning on his crook, looking with great reverence on Jesus. At their feet is a worshiper bringing gifts. The little lamb at the bottom is indicative of the fact that the scene is in a stable.

On the left the Wise Men arrive from the East bearing gifts. On the right, shepherds, who were the first to hear the Glad News, watch the scene. They are presenting the lamb they bring with them. Here we have Jewish and Gentile people all coming to worship Jesus Christ, reminding us that the New Testament is largely written by Jews, and Christianity was first a Jewish religion.

Near the top of the center panel is the star of Bethlehem.

My favorite story about the windows is told in my grandfather’s handwritten notes. Dr. Lyons wrote:

Trouble with the artists in picturing the infant Jesus, they insisted on representing him as a little, mature old man sitting on Mary’s knee, and preaching, performing miracles etc. I explained to them that the child Jesus must be represented as a normal little babe, resting in His Mother’s arm. They all took great pains to paint little, mature men! I told Mr Tiffany that I would have to advise the donor of the window to cancel the contract etc. They renewed their frenzied efforts to sketch an infant child Jesus; but all failed again.

Finally, I suggested to Mr Tiffany that he send two or three artists to a lying in hospital, and ask a nurse to let them see a recently born babe for a model. There was a chorus of “Ah! That is great!” And without further ado they sketched several very lovely and appropriate baby pictures!

Just as Dr. Lyons and Tiffany’s artists struggled to depict Jesus’ face in this scene, so have we for 2000 years sought to embrace and understand the meaning of Jesus’ identity.
Jesus’ Ministry (Christ’s Life and Ministry)

This window, executed by D’Ascenzo, was given by Ernest and Emily Woodruff.

In Dr. Lyons’ words:

In this window we have pictured one of the ephocal periods of our Savior’s life - His brief ministry of some three years. In ignorance, sin, and bodily weakness are men, women, and children. Unto them He went teaching, forgiving, healing.

The small scene at the bottom shows the open door. "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

The trefoil depicts Jesus during the three years of his ministry engaged in teaching, healing, preaching. Notice the people crowded around him. Here are every type of person, well dressed people, poverty stricken people. The man just under Christ’s left hand is the “lame man” who Christ raised to walk again. The scene includes children, grown people, old people, all worshiping Christ. In the left panel everybody is looking at Christ and listening to his words except three men at the top of the panel. They are turned away from Christ and represent those Jewish people who were plotting even then to kill Christ.

Above their heads, are two streaks of light which represent lightning, indicating the great upheaval that is to come, caused by the determination of these people to destroy Jesus Christ and stop his teaching.

The scene above shows the shepherd's crook indicating that Christ came to save the lost sheep.

A story about this window gives another example of the close interplay between the designer, the artist, and the craftsman in carrying out the vision. The lame man is standing just to the right of Jesus under His left hand. In the original artist’s drawing, the lame man was lying on the ground, clutching his crutch. Clearly the crutch needed to be broken and he needed to be standing.

Dr. Lyons wrote to D’Ascenzo (21 Nov 1938):

I am thoroughly convinced that a man who had been a cripple all his life and had just been healed by the Saviour should not only break his crutches and throw them away, but should have his religion in his legs and be standing on them expressing love and gratitude.

Following this discussion, the artists depicted the man standing and holding his broken crutch. Clearly he needed to be holding his crutch so we could identify him.
Passion  

This window, executed by Tiffany, honors Olive Markham Healey.

In the panel at the bottom is the sacrificial lamb indicating that Christ is to be sacrificed.

This window is fittingly darker than any of the others. The full moon is shining through the olive trees.

In the trefoil the three panels are all part of the same scene which depicts Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The moonlight is coming down through the olive trees and Jesus is on his knees, praying intently. He is saying "Thy will be done, but if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." This is probably a scene of greater suffering than even Calvary. Here Jesus sweat drops of blood. At Jesus' feet there is the silhouette of a cross, and Jesus knows that God's answer is that His life is leading toward crucifixion.

Above, in the small scene is the crown of thorns and just at the top of the crown of thorns is a little cross all of it on a blood red background, indicating the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made.

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Why did Dr. Lyons choose the Garden of Gethsemane and not show a window of the crucifixion of Jesus? According to Dr. Lyons, the choice is very significant. Christ's decision was made in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here Jesus chose to go to his death. He prayed to God. And God gave him the answer.

After that it is all anticlimactic. The crucifixion itself is a physical thing. Jesus' determination to go through with God's will took place here in the Garden of Gethsemane and that was the most difficult moment. The Bible tells us he was sweating great drops of blood, so intent was he on his decision. This window depicts Jesus’ intense emotion as he made the spiritual decision that he would be sacrificed and follow through on God's will.

Unique among all of the large windows in our church, this is the only window to contain only a single figure.

It is an interesting fact that the shadow of the cross is an actual shadow cast by some dark blue glass suspended between the colored glass and the protective shield.

The message of the window is emphasized by its location in the darkest corner of the church. It marks a time when darkness seemingly overcomes the light.
This window, executed by Tiffany, was the first window installed. It honors Hugh and Josephine Inman.

In the bottom scene is a cup which represents the dregs of sorrow and of shame that Jesus Christ had to endure on the cross. All that happened between the Garden of Gethsemane and this scene is symbolized by that cup.

In the large panel, Christ is seen rising from the dead and walking from the tomb. It is as if he had just unwrapped the napkin from his face. The napkin is shown in his left hand. He is stepping out of the tomb, and people will soon be going through Jerusalem singing "He is risen. He is risen!" A brilliant light shines around him as he steps from the tomb.

In the left panel are the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb who appear very frightened. One is hiding behind his shield. On the right disciples come bringing flowers. Higher in these panels are the two angels that were standing at the opening to the tomb. The whole Christian message depends on Christ's death and resurrection. Death is overcome.

Above is the victorious cross. He has conquered death!

Notice the shadow of the bent knee in the robe. This is actually in the glass and not painted on or touched in. Tiffany had a way of taking infinite pains in selecting a piece of glass that would, in itself exactly fit the need without any retouching.

As a child born into this congregation this window was always very special to me. My family always sat in a pew across the sanctuary, near the front right corner. It was a very interesting viewpoint for many reasons. Among other things, I had a life-long memory of the early morning view of the windows across from our seats, illuminated by the brilliant morning sun. At the time, I did not focus on the use of light in the windows, as I do today.

The place where we sat was not the front row at that time. Significant improvement to our facility in later years caused us to remove several of the front rows. In the original version, as in the Marietta Street location, the center isle did not go all the way to the front of the church. Besides being a complication for brides, another interesting event surrounds this configuration.

In 1969, in the midst of the growth of civil rights activism, a group of protestors showed up in our sanctuary. After presenting themselves at the rear of the church they marched down the center isle. Not to be deterred, they climbed over the pews. Dr. Fifield, later describing himself as having shaking knees, maintained his composure, allowed them to read their statement, reminded them we were in the midst of a service, and invited them to join in the service.
Ascension
Acts 1:1-14; Revelation 1:18

The next window, executed by Tiffany, honors Samuel Inman.

The scene at the bottom shows two keys. Christ said “I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death.”

In the large scene Christ's disciples are gathered around Him at the Mount of Olives. He was with them after his resurrection for forty days, and they listened to him and began to understand what they had never understood during his life . . . the meaning of His sacrificial death and His resurrection. The scene depicts Christ at the end of the forty days in the scene of the ascension. His disciples are all around Him and Christ is ascending into heaven with the clouds in the background as He rises.

High above is the crown of glory that Christ is going to heaven to receive.

This was intended to be the second window installed, but the plan was modified by a change in window ten (see Appendix A, Plans for the Sequence and Names of the Windows).
The next window, executed by D’Ascenzo, honors Samuel and Elizabeth Hoyt.

The window was given by William R Hoyt, the “Willie” who wrote a letter, dated April 26, 1914, which told Dr. Lyons of the action of the Session to issue a call to him to come to Atlanta.

The small scene at the bottom is very interesting. Before Christ ascended to heaven, he told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. Here they are on their knees praying for the Holy Spirit to come.

As the disciples waited in the upper room, 40 days later, there was a great rustling like a strong wind. The Holy Spirit descends like tongues of fire, and entered into the life of each of those believers. The great scene shows the Holy Spirit coming into their lives, just as the Holy Spirit enters into the life of every believer in every generation.

Above is a dove. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is frequently represented by the dove.

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Now, a story about the flames, which further illustrates the give and take between the designer, the artists and the craftsmen. Eleanor Hoyt Dabney (the author’s cousin) recently added this story which I had never heard. Eleanor is one of the two Hoyt sisters who unveiled the window. Her grandfather, Elder W. R. Hoyt, visited Philadelphia with my grandfather to review the progress of the window. They found the window to their liking, except for one feature.

Family lore tells the story this way: The flames were a problem. Hoyt told the artist, “Those flames look too much like goldfish. They must be changed, or I will not pay for it.”
**Martyr**
Acts 6:8-15, 7:1, 54-60; 8:1

The next window, executed by D’Ascenzo, honors James and Emily English.

In the scene at the bottom are the disciples, going to the four corners of the earth to tell others about Jesus Christ. Jesus had told the disciples, after they received the Holy Spirit, to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

The hardships faced by the Martyrs when they go out and tell others about Jesus Christ are represented by the story of the stoning of Stephen. The scene shows Stephen outside the walls of Jerusalem. He is being stoned to death because he has testified that he believes in Jesus Christ. The men in the side panels, are throwing the stones which are huge. The meanness in the faces of the stone throwers reflects the hatred they have in their hearts.

Stephen has already become emaciated physically, but spiritually he is not emaciated at all. He is uplifted by the great Light that is coming down from heaven. Heaven is opened and he sees Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God. The man in the background behind Stephen is Saul of Tarsus, standing with the cloaks of the people who were stoning Stephen. He himself is consenting to the death of Stephen. Saul later became converted and became the Apostle Paul.

The scene above is the light from heaven in the small panel at the top that flows into the center panel, and casts the light upon Saul’s shoulder. This bit of the light from heaven indicates that he is going to be touched by the message of Jesus Christ and he himself will become the great apostle Paul.

This is the last of the History windows (completed in 1940), very late in the life of Dr. Lyons. In the opinion of the author, this is the only window in which the obstruction between the large panels detracts from the scene. Note the “long arm” of the man on the left throwing the stone. During the development of the earlier windows, Dr. Lyons would visit the artist’s site several times, often with a member of the family contributing the window. By this time his ability to travel had become very limited. Perhaps closer participation would have been beneficial for this window.
The final window around the floor of the sanctuary was executed by Tiffany. It is particularly interesting for several reasons. It was given by the members of the congregation of FPC to honor Mrs. Lyons, wife of Dr. Lyons upon her early death at 52. The window also honors Dr. Lyons in a later inscription after his death.

The lower scenes show an open Bible. Extending through all three of the lower windows is a Roman arch. It was significant to the spread of Christianity that during the first centuries after Christ's resurrection Rome was powerful. Although the empire was very much opposed to Christianity, unwittingly it made possible the spread of Christianity. Rome had conquered the lands all around the Mediterranean. It had built great roads, developed shipping, and established law and order. These improvements made possible the spread of Christianity because men could move about and preach the message of Christ, the Savior.

If you look very closely you will see the letters SPQR, representing the Roman words Senatus Populus Que Romanus . . . the senate and people of Rome. All over the empire these words appeared on every Roman arch.

The trefoil depicts the spread of Christianity which is why this window is known as the Christian Missions Window. Here is Saul, now Paul, preaching in Macedonia. God had sent him into Macedonia though he wanted to stay in Asia Minor. The scene shows him at Philippi preaching. Lydia, the lady who sold purple linens, is at his feet being converted as is her entire family. The people listening to Paul represent people of all races from Africa, Asia, Europe, all listening and being converted to Christianity.

In the small scene near the top a bright light shines. The notes of Dr. Lyons’ son show that this is a lamp which is “symbolic of the light which led the messengers of the Gospel on their way.”

Tiffany reported that in all his research he could not find a similar church window.

This was the second window installed. The windows plan on the back page of the dedication bulletin identifies the window as “Mission”. This window is the only window given by the congregation. All of the others were given by families or individuals.

The dedication sermon for this window was preached by Rev. Charles R. Hemphill, DD, of Louisville, KY. Dr. Lyons is not listed in this service. In his sermon two weeks later Dr. Lyons said “There is a kind of spiritual beauty in this window which even Tiffany’s skill cannot provide. It is made of grace upon grace ... and it reflects your sympathy, your love, your loyalty, and your generosity which a grateful pastor and his family will always see as the chief beauty of this glorious window.”
Other Stained Glass Windows

In addition to the History Windows there are other significant stained glass windows in our church. The two which are the largest are in our sanctuary, the East and Rose Windows, are presented here. Also presented here is the Jesus and the Little Children Window, in the Berean Room (Reception Room) which brings many fond memories to people of all ages who have seen it regularly. The smaller Narthex Windows are more difficult to notice, but are very beautiful. The three windows in Winship Chapel are presented in a separate booklet.

After the completion of the ten History Windows in 1940, for some years the windows were considered to be completed. The Rose Window had been dropped form the plan in the early years. The East Window space had been shielded by a curtain. Efforts had been made to develop a suitable treatment for the East Window by both Tiffany and D’Ascenzo, but they were unsuccessful. Extensive discussions of these issues are presented in another section of this paper.

For some time prior to 1937, the East Window space had a curtain. The bulletin of 25 July 1937, contains a lengthy statement about “Decoration of Church” which contains the statement “The curtain is to be removed from the east window, and the window to be refinished in a darker color.” It is presumed that the “darker color” refers to the wood frame and not to the glass.

The East and Rose windows do not portray historical events. One is prophecy, the other is a classical design of a different origin.

**East - The Great East Window - Second Coming - Christ’s Return**

II Kings 13:17  Acts 1:7-11;  John 4:18

This window was executed in 1948 by Willet. It honors Emily English Robinson. It was given to the church by Mr. James D. Robinson. It is above the balcony on the east wall. For some years it was the last of the plan for eleven windows.

This window was installed under Dr. Gardner’s leadership after Dr. Lyons’ death.

In the lower scene is a globe, representing the world. In front of the globe is a cross, indicating that the missionary effort represented in the last window in the History series is ultimately to take God's word to every people of the world, declaring that through Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, salvation has come to mankind.

In the large panel above the globe, Christ is coming down to earth from heaven; one foot is yet to touch the earth. He has come back in an aura of heavenly light. Everything is joyous. The people, standing in families, are welcoming him, including the children, the babe, and mother and father. Even the flowers have responded.

See the booklet, Plan and Design, for larger images of the East Window, and a discussion of the design.
Around Christ's feet and closely above the heads of the people, are blossoms that are like lilacs in bloom. Everything is joyously welcoming Jesus Christ. He left the world as the sorrowing Saviour. He comes back as the Sovereign Lord. He has on the red robe of kingship and in his left hand holds the scepter of power.

Above his head is the royal crown, declaring him Lord of lords and King of kings, forever and forever.

The story of the process of trying to achieve an installation of this window, first by Tiffany, later by D’Ascenzo, and finally by Willet, is covered later in this document.

The previous windows all represent the story told in the Bible of an event or a collection of events. This window represents a prophecy. This makes it very different in many ways, and perhaps sheds a bit of understanding of the difficulty in finding a depiction which was suitable to our congregation.

Dr. Wirth in his sermon series, comments:

Ever since the first century, many Christians have predicted a time when Christ would come again and they have all been wrong. Others have claimed, and they back it up with the Bible, that Christ's return will be accompanied by horrible tribulation, and they have worked out a schedule, a timetable, for what will happen, including a thousand years of war and travail before peace finally comes.

I have listened to the predictions, I have read the scripture passages (which many Bible scholars believe were describing the persecution under the Roman Empire), I have seen the charts projecting the end times and I think that all of that is a waste of time.

Why? Because Jesus said before He ascended into heaven: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7), and the angels added “He will come again in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

Now I ask you: If someone you loved deeply went away for a while and then came home again, how would you receive them? With fearful anguish and trepidation or with open arms of love and joyful anticipation?

Someday Jesus Christ is coming again and because "His perfect love casts out all fear" (I John 4:18), we can look forward to His return with hope and expectation. But between now and then, my Christian friends, we are Homeward Bound! So let us rejoice on this Easter Day of celebration. For Christ is Risen, He has ascended into heaven, and He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, here and now and forevermore.

I particularly commend this discussion of this window which is given in the sermon by Dr. Wirth. It helped me to put the relationship of the historical events within the first ten windows and the prophecy in this window, into perspective. So many have ascribed incorrect meanings to the Second Coming so many times. Dr. George Wirth does an excellent job of dealing with this issue. Understanding this perspective has helped me to understand the difficulties encountered in completing this window.

Complications in completing this window continued into the final weeks when the installation was delayed by the discovery that the framework for the window had rotted with time and had to be replaced.
Dr. Lyons is known to have done an original design for each of the sanctuary windows, except the Rose. As discussed earlier and in the section on Correspondence with the Artists, the design of this window was the most difficult. It was the first of our large windows done by Willet, whose style was dramatically different from the style of the History Windows preferred by Dr. Lyons.

Tiffany presented two cartoon proposals for this window, one of which survives in our archives.

Although Dr. Lyons urged D’Ascenzo to complete the history windows so that this window could be considered, it is not known if such a proposal was ever presented.

Later, in correspondence with Willet on the subject of design of the window, Dr. Gardner says “The theme of this last space is going to be exceedingly difficult to portray, because it will be the Second Coming and Final Judgement of our Saviour. Before Dr. Lyons’ death we literally spent many hours discussing the whole theme. While we reached no conclusion in the matter, still we felt the best possible portrayal might be that of the single figure of Christ. However, this will have to be worked out later.”

A week later, on 24 July 1943, Dr. Gardner returns to the theme of the difficulty of designing a presentation of the Second Coming. “While the portrayal of the Second Coming will present difficulties I don’t think they will be insurmountable. Of course, it would have been for an Apocalyptic Window.”

My father was a member of the small committee responsible for approving the design of this window in the 1940's, after his father’s death. It appears that the design which was accepted was largely resolved by the time of my father’s death in August 1946. From then until shortly before the installation in December 1947, little is known. My father and another member of the three person committee had passed away following the approval of the design. In 1947, a letter from Dr. Gardner asks about the long period of no response.

The window was finally installed one and one-half years after my father’s death in August 1946, on the 100th anniversary of our congregation, January 4, 1948. There is no record of any visits to Willet’s studios to review the progress of the final stages of development of the window.

The image of the window which is used in the 100th booklet appears to be the design submitted in 1946. The window as installed differs in several key respects.

**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder**

Recently a cousin offered some comments about my paper. I took advantage of her call to also ask about a range of other subjects as I often do. This practice has brought me many helpful memories about windows, organs, crosses, and other interesting elements.

Soon we got around to windows and I asked her about the dedication of the East Window. Few can answer with certainty the following question: “Was there a curtain over the window at the time the window was unveiled?” (An earlier curtain had been removed in a renovation.) She remembered the curtain very clearly. Further, she said, “When it was pulled back, everyone let out a gasp.” This is the same memory my mother used to tell, which I have been reluctant to repeat until I heard it from several others.

**Why did they gasp?**

The gasp may have been a response to the beautiful colors and dramatic design. Few remember the event or recall stories about it. All who have told me of it say that the reaction was of bewilderment that the design and style were so different from the earlier windows. Some mention specific design issues with which they are
uncomfortable.

At the time of the installation of the East window, members of our congregation had grown up with the design, style, and colors of the History Windows. They were accustomed to a series of windows in which the style and design was consistent and the personality of the artist was less prominent than the story in the window. For those who found this attractive, the East Window struck a discordant note.

These women and several others found the window so distinctly different from the ten History Windows that it was a shock to them.

From my personal perspective, the design of the East window is not greatly different from many windows in other churches and museums, but it is dramatically different from the History Windows which I had come to know and to admire. I have made a reasonable peace with the window, but still am a bit dismayed by it. As do many others, I find that the vivid “Willet colors” draw attention to other features which many find aesthetically disturbing. Often mentioned are the depiction of the hands, face, and feet of Jesus, as well as the unaccustomed rendering of the angels.

The window committee [of which my father was a member], and Dr. Gardner had approved the “As Designed” version shown above. That design appeals to many as more harmonious with the previous windows. Davison Phillips, who was called to be Dr. Gardner’s assistant, remarks in his comments at the 130th Celebration that Dr. Gardner “had been ill and wanted to have some additional staff help.”

But “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. In this case perhaps we should add “The memory of the beholder”.

Many of those who did not grow up with the History Windows prefer the classical characteristics of the East and Rose Windows to the other windows.

**Rose Window**

Psalms 148, 150; Matthew 5:14-16

The Rose window, the second sanctuary window by Willet, honors Frank Carter. It was designed by Crosby Willet (son of Henry Lee Willett who designed the East and other windows), Dr. Pressly, and Dr. Wirth and was installed in 1996. The space originally provided for it had recently been rediscovered, during planning for a renovation.

The beauty of this window is remarkable, although it is very different from all the other windows. It is clearly a Willet production from a classical design. It is the only window in the sanctuary to use the traditional medieval symbol of the Nimbus, a circle of light, or halo, around the head.

The dedication bulletin has these words, “Painton Cowan in his book Rose Windows writes: ‘The rose window as an eternal symbol transcends words.’” This window is neither history, nor prophecy. To me it has always simply been an expression of exultation in color and design.

Though markedly different from most of our windows the ruby and blue colors for which Willet is well known are very traditional. Christ is enthroned in glory, seated on a rainbow, with the river of life flowing from his feet. He is holding the Book of Life, with the symbols of God’s everlasting presence, the Alpha and Omega. The
surrounding trefoils depict angels of praise.

The traceries are medieval, vine-like ornamentation.

A Willet document dated 16 Sep 1991 contains the following description:

DESCRIPTION OF THE ROSE WINDOW

The Rose Window is a development of Gothic architecture. There were circle windows in classic and romanesque styles but it remained for medieval architects who were building window openings larger and larger in order to let in more light to divide these larger circles with mullions like the spokes of a wheel or the petal of a rose. The shapes of openings had symbolic meaning as did all ornament of the period. Thus the circle symbolized one God and the triangle or trefoil the Trinity.

In the center of the rose window, designed for the First Presbyterian Church at the Willet Studios of Philadelphia, Jesus is portrayed as he is described in the book of Revelation. He sits on a Rainbow Throne, encircled in glory, holding the book of Seals. On the pages of the book are Alpha and Omega, first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. From the foot of the throne streams the river of the water of life.

In the trefoil shaped openings are angels of praise and prayer. These symbols are derived from Psalms: musical instruments and singing from psalms 149, 150, and others, the smoking censor from Psalm 141:2 [‘Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense.’]. As benefits the heavenly host, the angels are surrounded with stars.

In the smaller other openings are stylized leaf shapes. These are also typical of the Gothic period when the number of divisions of the leaves, three in this design, also have symbolism. It was only as they approached the renaissance the medieval craftsmen represented actual leaves and gave them symbolism.

Labeled stained glass windows are made today in the same way as they were in the medieval time. A few tools, like the glass cutter, have been improved over the years.

The craftsmen today has paper available rather than drawing on whitewashed boards. Glass, colored in the pot, is cut to the desired intricate shapes. Features, folds of garments, and other details are painted on with a vitrifiable metallic oxide paint which is fired on to make it permanent. Then the pieces of glass are joined with strips of grooved lead which are soldered at every joint. When installed the component parts are further strengthened with reinforcing bars.

The Willet Studios that produced this design was founded in 1898. Their work can be seen in every state of the United States and in fourteen foreign countries. It is unclear if the processes described here by Willet are different from the processes used by Tiffany and D’Ascenzo.

Early on, the intent to have a Rose window was removed from plans. It is unclear at what time the space was covered over. Several members of the church recall the window space was filled by a glass circle, perhaps before the 1928 expansion. In 1992, when a major improvement in our organ was made, the long forgotten window was rediscovered. It had been shown in one of the earliest plans, but was not mentioned in any plan from 1918 until 1992. A photograph in the 150th of the Taratus wedding in 1957 shows what appears to be a
circle, but no glass. We believe this outline on the plan matches the size of the Rose Window, and also of the original stone framework for a possible Rose Window.

Several members (three to date) have told of memories of clear translucent glass in the space of the Rose Window before it was covered over. It is possible that it was bricked over in the expansion program of 1928, when the education building and bell tower were added. A 1957 photograph is shown in Section Six of this paper.

We are still searching for pictures which show the “glass circle” phase of this window. If you know of any, please let us know.

Other Windows and Mosaics in the Sanctuary

The sanctuary contains other windows and mosaics which are often overlooked. The two tall, narrow windows on either side of the East window are simply decorative, and have no symbolism of which we are aware.

Each of the five History windows on the south wall has two small windows below. Below the Ascension window are windows which contain the symbols for Alpha and Omega. Below the Missions window are windows with swords. I believe these have some meaning but cannot find those notes at this time. We are not aware of any meaning associated with the pairs under the other three windows at this time.

It is believed that these were installed at the times of the window installations.

On the other side of the sanctuary the comparable spaces are filled with mosaics. Initially blank spaces were present to add symmetry to the other side of the church. Windows could not be placed on the north side because there is a hallway on the other side of the wall. The beautiful mosaics were added later. The mosaics under the Abrahamic Covenant window may have been installed at the time of the window.

Pictures and information are shown in the 150th Anniversary book on pages 20 - 25. Known details of dates and other information will be given in Appendix H - Inscriptions.

We believe the two mosaics under the Abrahamic Covenant were the first two to be given. The one on the left is inscribed in memory of Mary Hayden Whitner, and her children Evelyn and Richard, Jr.. The one on the right is inscribed in memory in memory of the son, Richard, Jr. The creator of these mosaics is not identified.

The other four pair of mosaics were given in memory of Emily Winship Scott and were created by the Conrad Pickel Studio. Each pair appears to relate to the window above. They are:

- Mount Sinai and the Ten commandments and Prayer and Praise
- The Star of Bethlehem and The Three Wise Men
- Sermon on the Mount and Entry into Jerusalem
- Word of God and Crucifixion

Further information concerning these windows and mosaics would be appreciated.

Winship Chapel

There are three windows in the Winship Chapel which are by Willet. They are described in a separate booklet, Winship Chapel Windows and History.
Discussion of Willet Style

The large Winship Chapel window, rendered in dramatic colors and intricate design, is also classic Willet creation. Small, medieval style figures are embedded in dazzling designs of brilliant colors.

The style of the window is similar to windows created by Willet for Druid Hills Presbyterian in the 1940s. The comments about Willet’s style from “A Soft Radiant Light”, the book produced by Druid Hills Presbyterian about their Willet windows and the techniques he used describe the style well. The following statements are selected from the introductory portion of the Druid Hills book.

Druid Hills Presbyterian Church undertook to build a sanctuary inspired by the great French Gothic cathedrals, complete with stained glass windows.

The overall plan instructs that “all of the glass is done in the Mediaeval manner”

Probably on the advice of Mr. Willet, the session prohibited the opalescent or clouded glass that had become popular in early 20th century America. Rather they called for the “color and luminosity of the Mediaeval glass of France.

The aisle windows [at Druid Hills] recall grisaille technique. Developed in the gloomy climes of 12th century England, grisaille windows maximize light while still minimizing glare. The glass painter starts with clear or lightly tinted glass and paints it using shades of gray or brown.

The session further instructed that the “spirit and devotional treatment should recall the great French cathedrals of Chartres, LeMans and Sainte Chapelle.”

However, it added that our windows should avoid “the archaism sometimes found in Medieval drawing,” so that they might speak “essentially to our own times.”

It is interesting that we long thought that Druid Hills had come into existence through the assistance and participation of members of the Decatur church. A recent chance encounter led me to the understanding, supported by later research, that the Druid Hills congregation grew out of Fourth Presbyterian which was the result of significant leadership of our congregation in 1883.
This window is found in the Reception Room (Berean Classroom) has served many functions for our church. This room served as the initial sanctuary from 1915 to 1919 while the sanctuary was being constructed and later as a temporary sanctuary during several renovations. Originally the room was two stories tall with classrooms on a balcony at the rear.

Tiffany apparently produced this window as one of his final creations and it was dedicated in 1934. Initially it was positioned high on the corridor wall (South wall), above a lectern. Later it was moved to the lower level wall which stands between the Winship Chapel and this room (East wall). It now hangs on the West wall.

The confusion raised by the date of Tiffany’s death (1933), and the date of installation (1934) has not been fully explained. Tiffany created many famous such windows for homes.
The set consists of two pairs of windows which were installed by Willet in 1969.

Left Pair

Peter, on the left of the left pair, is inscribed with “Charles James Currie”

Cornelius, on the right, is inscribed with “For His Work In The Presbyterian Church” and contains an image of the church.

Right Pair

Acquila and Priscilla, on the left of the right pair, is inscribed with “Charles James Currie” and contains an image of a building. The building appears to be the Presbyterian Center on Ponce de Leon which I believe Currie was involved in building.

Paul, on the right, is inscribed with “For His Work In The Presbyterian Church” and contains a green hat.

These windows were installed in 1969. They are mentioned in the bulletin of 16 March 1969. No record has been found of a formal dedication. We hope to add more to the story of these windows soon. If you have anything to add, please send it to Bill Lyons.
Sermons in Stained Glass Booklets

The Architecture & History Committee is pleased to offer this series of booklets. We hope that they will help to make information about the history of our church, our windows, and the material held in our Archives, more accessible to our members and friends.

The full version of this booklet and others in the series are available on the church web site at:

http://www.firstpresatl.org/ourchurch/churchhistory/

This new web site is now available which makes many of these booklets and other documents available. It is based around a more complete presentation of the ten History windows by Tiffany and D’Ascenzo. The Sermons In Stained Glass fund has been established at First Presbyterian to support this development. Your contributions to this fund are appreciated.

Contact Bill Lyons for information on how to access the site. This document remains a work in progress.

Bill Lyons can be contacted at  wwlyons@gmail.com  or 770-805-9017

Please send Bill your comments and suggestions for additions to these documents.

Your interest in the windows and the history of our church is appreciated. Please let us know if there are any individuals or groups who should hear about this.

The master copy of this document is on my home computer at:

C:\Users\Dell Desk\Documents\4 Active 2016\Stained Glass Windows.wpd

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