

**Mayville Lutheran Church Sanctuary  
Stained Glass Windows**

**Sanctuary - Stained Glass Window #1**

During the four Sundays of Advent this year we will “explain” the symbolism of our four stained-glass windows. We begin with Window number one (closest to the front) because it is called the Advent Window celebrating Jesus’ birth.

Beginning with the second panel from the bottom we see the hand of prophecy pointing to the manger. In the hand is a scroll symbolizing the writings of the prophets who foretold the coming of God’s Messiah, pointing to the Christ who was to come.

The third section portrays the manger containing the Christ-child. It reminds us that Jesus, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, was born in a humble stall meant for animals.

At the top of the third section and extending into the fourth are three crowns which represent the three wisemen who visited Jesus when He was an infant. We recall they came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is believed that the generosity of the wisemen inspired the custom of gift-giving which we continue to practice.

At the top of the fourth panel and in the fifth, we see a large star surrounded by several smaller stars. The night of Jesus’ birth is depicted here with the “star in the east” shining most brightly of all. The large star shines over the stable at Jesus’ birth and eventually leads the wisemen to Bethlehem.

Thus the five sections of the first window lead us from the prophecy of the Old Testament, through Christmas, to the Epiphany – the visitation of the wisemen.

**Sanctuary - Stained Glass Window #2**

On this Second Sunday in Advent, we look at window number two (second from the front). It is called the Window of Lent because it tells the story of Christ’s suffering and death.

Beginning in the first panel and extending into the second, we see hands holding a severed circle. This symbol takes us to the Upper room where Jesus took the bread in His hands, broke it and gave it to His disciples, thus instituting the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The second section also contains small circles representing the 30 pieces of silver which Judas received for identifying Christ, reminding us of Jesus’ rejection and betrayal.

Above the silver piece is a cup from which red drops are falling. Here we call to mind Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” and His sweat became as drops of blood.

The third panel also includes hands breaking a staff. They are Pilate’s hands, and the breaking of the staff signifies his decision to condemn Jesus to death by crucifixion.

In the fourth pane we see the cloak of Jesus and three dice. We are reminded of how the soldiers gambled in greed as the son of God suffered and died.

In the fifth panel we see the gruesome cross with its yellow inscription plate, embraced with a crown of thorns. Also included here is the outline of the tomb into which Jesus’ body was laid. The tomb arches over the fifth panel and is primarily red in color.

### Sanctuary - Stained Glass Window #3

Our third stained-glass window (third from the front) is called the “Easter Window,” and it tells of the resurrection and triumph of Christ and the Day of Judgment.

The phoenix (bird) encompasses most of the lower two panels. This strange mythological bird is said to have risen from the fire and ashes of its own death to a new life. Thus the early Christians saw, in this ancient symbol, the story of Christ’s own Resurrection.

Immediately above the phoenix’s head we see a crown and scepter, which represent the kingship of Christ (crown) and His power over heaven and earth (scepter). The two symbols together point us to the risen, conquering and triumphant Christ.

The third panel is dominated by “The Book of Life,” from which hang seven seals (circles). Here we are reminded of the Revelation of St. John as he spoke of the signs of the end time and its culmination in the Second Coming of Christ. As each of the seven seals is broken open, the Day of Judgment draws nearer.

Upon the Book of Life stands a lamb – the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The lamb, signifying our Lord Jesus Christ, carries the banner of peace and righteousness, signs of the new creation He comes to establish.

Finally in the fifth section of the window we see an angel blowing on a trumpet. Here we call to mind the picture is in the book of Revelations where the angels blow on their trumpets to announce the Day of Judgment. We might also remember Paul writing, “And the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised ...”

So, our third window tells the story of Christ from the day of His Resurrection from death to the day when He comes to judge the living and the dead, and to establish His lordship over all creation.

### Sanctuary - Stained Glass Window #4

Our fourth window (nearest the back) is called the Pentecost Window. The most detailed of all the windows, it deals with the Day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit’s part in Christian growth.

To understand this window, it is best to begin at the top, with the fifth and fourth panes. Here we see a dove, long a symbol of the Holy Spirit, descending. As it once rested on Jesus, now we are reminded of its visitation on the twelve apostles. Then we see the tongues of fire (in red, and red and white) as an outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit. There are twelve of these tongues for the twelve apostles, but they come down from the top to the bottom of the window to illustrate that the blessings of the Holy Spirit come down also to the people.

In the third panel we observe a seal shell with water dripping, which is a reminder of baptism and our Lord’s command that we should “Go, make disciples ... baptizing...”

There is a cross (barely discernable) behind the shell to help us recall that Baptism is based on Christ’s death for our sins. The cross can be visualized by noting the letter “A”: just above the shell as the top of the cross, and the letter omega (under the water droplets) its bottom. The letters A and Ω are, of course, Alpha and Omega – the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Seeing them reminds us Jesus said He was the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and ending of all things.

In the first panel we see fish. Perhaps the oldest of all Christian symbols, the fish represented the people of God. It was based on the knowledge that the Greek word of fish was an acronym. The first letters of the Greek words for Jesus, Christ, God’s Son our Savior spell out (ΧΘύς or fish. So wherever the sign of the fish was seen, believers could know there was safety and acceptance.