

Sermon by the Rev. Ralph E. Merrill
St. James' Church, New London, Conn.
July 7, 1991

THE WINDOWS IN SAINT JAMES'

My trusty Webster's Dictionary tells me that a window is an opening to admit light or air (or both), and to allow a view of what is inside or outside.

There are 19 such apertures in St. James' at present—not counting those in the narthex or steeple. They come in various shapes and sizes. There were once two more large windows where the organ pipes are now located (the sacristy and organ chamber were added after the building was constructed). And there were once at least 10 triangular vents, or clerestory windows, along both sides of the roof ridge—designed to let in light and air and to prevent dry rot in the ceiling. The remaining windows don't admit much light. They let in too much air in winter and not enough in summer. None allows a view of what's inside or out. Slightly more than half have been reglazed.

One of the features of Gothic architecture is its allowance of lots of space for windows. More often than not, glass is used to plug the openings. That glass is usually colored to keep the sun out of our eyes. From there, it's a natural step to arrange the colored glass in decorative fashion or in designs that teach lessons or tell stories.

If these windows don't allow us to see inside or outside, they can enable us to see something else. They can be "windows of the soul" if we let them tell their story. Look around you. You'll see no pattern or plan. Unlike St. Mark's in New Britain and a few other churches lucky enough to be glazed in a single stroke (or following a pre-planned theme), we — like most churches — have evolved over the years. Our windows reflect the changing, eclectic, heterogeneous, diverse congregation that we are. They also reflect the faith of the donors and designers, and changing attitudes in expression of belief.

When St. James' opened this, its 3rd building, in 1850, it was much like you see it now—with a couple of important exceptions. The altar was unobstructed at the East end, with organ and choir in the gallery. All windows were of the same grisaille glass still seen in several openings, along with the present East (Altar) and West (rose) windows of more elaborate decoration. (The window over the Altar—and perhaps that to its left as well—was a gift of "The Ladies Sewing Circle", forerunner of our E.C.W.)

Most likely the early windows were regarded as temporary, installed to do the job until works of greater art could be given. In 1881-2, the small window to the right of the Altar was reglazed in memory of the Rev. Dr. Robert Hallam, builder and benefactor of this place. It is directly above a memorial tablet and his mortal remains which are beneath the chapel floor. This is the first of three windows with a resurrection theme—attesting to a central Christian belief and an appropriate way to memorialize a loved one.

Another resurrection window appeared in 1889 (front nave, right side). Then came five Tiffany windows in 1910, and another in 1911—with what is believed to be a Tiffany, later in 1922. The next and latest installation, telling the story of Samuel Seabury, was installed by the organ console, over his mortal remains, in 1962.

When this building opened, it contained no crosses or candles. A surplice was the only vestment likely to be tolerated. The Eucharist was celebrated rarely—probably only four times a year. The Gothic style was being newly revived. It was to herald the Oxford Movement, making way for symbolism, ceremony, and the radical reappearance of the human form in religious art and worship. Windows are only part of the story.

We are a people of change. The way we represent eternal truths changes accordingly. Our worship today isn't the same as yesterday; it will be different tomorrow. So, too, with the art forms which express our belief.

Open your eyes, your heart, and your mind to what surrounds you. Let God speak through what is seen, as the unseen mystery of life unfolds before our very eyes.

Sermon by the Rev. Ralph E. Merrill
St. James' Church, New London, Conn.
July 14, 1991

THE GRISAILLE WINDOWS -- 1850

According to research by our Parish Archivist, Albert Dewire, the original (1850) windows are believed to have been designed by the Henry E. Sharp Studio in New York, working in close conjunction with this building's architect, Richard Upjohn. Upjohn was aware of the special window treatment required by Gothic revival architecture. The Gothic style allowed plenty of space for windows. But, can you imagine this building with clear glass throughout? Not only would we be blinded by sunlight on a typical Sunday morning, but the medieval form of architecture represents the security of the womb. "Holy Mother Church" is more than a catch phrase. (If you recall the events leading up to our nation's Civil War, you can see why the notion of "refuge" or "sanctuary" would tempt congregations to build in this style.) People desired a safe, secure place to retire to commune with God--obscured from rubbing shoulders with neighbor and the "real world".

To subdue the lighting and yet add interest, Upjohn and the Sharp Studio introduced here the technique known as "grisaille glass" (from the French word for the color "grey"). The main body of these windows are heavily painted except for a small relief design--an "opening" to admit just enough (but not too much) light. In our case the dominant design appears to be a stylized fleur-de-lis, symbol of the Virgin Mary and of the Trinity. Different colored borders, with vines and leaves, in each window provide an interesting combination of light and shadows and serve as contrast to the black and white main glazing.

Only four originals remain in the nave and transepts. In the interest of accuracy, I refuse to speculate as to various leaves and vines. But, in these four windows, one finds above them a number of symbols easy to identify: the crown of faithfulness; the Chi Rho monogram of Christ; an open book representing the Bible as Word of God; the anchor of hope; a bishop's hat or miter denoting our Episcopal heritage and this parish's role as seat and burial place for America's first bishop; a knotted pretzel-like rope symbolic of the Holy Trinity; a Hebrew monogram depicting our Old Testament roots; and a stalk of lilies pointing to the centrality of the resurrection in our New Covenant community. Smaller grisaille panels, with the same diamond shaped panes as in the nave and transepts, are found in the narthex, gallery, steeple and undercroft--including Hallam Chapel.

Central to the West end is the round, rose window--a memorial to Mrs. Lucretia F. Whiting given by her sister. This was installed for the opening of the building, but remained hidden until the gallery organ was removed in about 1914. Its bright blue background, a heaven filled with bright stars, surrounds traditional symbols of the four Evangelists: Matthew, the man, who attested foremost to Christ's humanity; Mark, the lion, informing us of the royal dignity of Christ; Luke, the ox, symbolic of sacrifice and testimony to that aspect in Christ's life; and John, the eagle, piercing further than all into heaven's mysteries. At the heart of this window is the empty cross, attesting to the power of the Risen Christ and central to the Gospel record.

Moving to the East end, the small window left of the Altar and the large one over it are both original glass. Again, the background is grisaille, though not in diamond shapes like the rest. The relief pattern changes to the grapevine--symbol of Church and Eucharist. Colors here are brighter and symbols more plentiful--relief to the eyes and to those nodding off during tedious sermons and lengthy services. Central theme of the small window is the Alpha and Omega--first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, representing Christ as beginning and end...eternal with the Father. The large front window and focal point is full of symbols. At the very top is the classic shield of the Trinity with its Latin equation. Pastoral staffs (croziers) are linked to key and cross, representing pastoral rule of a kingdom not of this earth. Again the Alpha and Omega appear. So do colored vines of some sort and the fleur-de-lis or trefoil. Colored symbols appear under the descending dove, symbol of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The center medallion contains the victorious Lamb of God above another medallion in which is a cross (the only one at the front of the church until a brass Altar cross would be "tolerated" years later). Left medallions repeat the crown and anchor found elsewhere. Right medallions feature the cup of sacrifice or Eucharist above the Greek "ichthus" monogram--standing for "Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior". The border around one of the medallions was inverted (probably during restoration following damage during the 1938 hurricane); can you find this mistake? And, note, so far we've seen only symbols; the human form won't emerge in our glass until later in the 19th Century.

Sermon by the Rev. Ralph E. Merrill
St. James' Church, New London, Conn.
July 21, 1991

THE TIFFANY WINDOWS

At the beginning of 1910, with two exceptions, all the windows in St. James'—including the two where now there are organ pipes—were of the original (1850) grisaille glass. (The two exceptions were the small Hallam memorial to the right of the Altar reglazed in 1881, and the Allyn memorial at the right front of the nave dating from 1889—both with a resurrection theme.) The organ and choir were still located in the gallery, though by this time some of the brass crosses, candlesticks and vases we now have had begun to appear.

Then, in 1910, an overwhelming change occurred to this plain interior. In the course of that year five windows were reglazed as memorials. The old grisaille glass was presumably taken to the dump, replaced by the latest rage: glass fashioned by the Tiffany Studio in New York. These memorials were paid for by some of the tremendous wealth the whaling industry had generated in New London during its "golden years".

The original glass and that of the 1880's was heavily painted and leaded. Tiffany windows are strikingly different—using revolutionary American techniques. Up to six layers of different colored glass and textures are bonded together in a way that provides shadows and details with minimal use of paint (except on faces) and lead supports. What you see is glass—one piece upon another, layer upon layer—weighing up to 150 pounds per square foot.

Two large windows and the one over the baptistry in the transepts, plus two in the North nave were installed in 1910. The South nave gained another the following year. All six contain the Tiffany studio name in the glass. (Not, however, the actual signature of Louis Comfort Tiffany, which would make them even more valuable.) Another, the so-called "servicemen's window", was installed in 1922. It doesn't bear the Tiffany name either because it was cut down in size (legend has it that it was rejected by St. Bartholomew's in New York) or because the Studio didn't want to claim it. (This is an example of a gift accepted that is designed by the donor and not an artist!) If we didn't know it already, this last Tiffany indicates the nature of the Tiffany Studio: a stable of artists with varying tastes and talents.

The two large transept windows are companions in style. Both employ bright colors. Ornate tabernacles or trellis-like tracery surmounts the figures, with shields in the top panels. The South transept window was given by Sebastian Lawrence of the Lorenzo family that came from Italy and made a fortune here supplying ships. (It also endowed a hospital—now integrated into Lawrence Memorial.) These, like other early Italian immigrants, found only Episcopal and Congregational houses of worship; they opted for the former as closer to their Roman Catholic heritage. This large and expensive gift memorialized Sebastian's sons. Looking at the window, you won't be surprised to learn that their names were Sebastian, Joseph and Francis. And, in all likelihood, the faces on the saints are representations of the Lawrence men—a technique often employed by artists of the period. This odd collection of "saints" stands in a glorious floral field—the colors of which change with the sunlight and are a fusion of glass without any paint. The North transept window representing the Holy Family was given in memory of Captain Lyman Allyn by his wife, Harriet. Joseph is pictured working as a carpenter, the child Jesus walks prophetically holding a lamb and a light, and the Virgin Mary sits beside her symbol, the lily, which is also a symbol of the resurrection. Shields above of cross, anchor and heart denote faith, hope and love. The Baptistry window contains figures representing truth and justice against an unusual red background that looks like crushed velvet—quite a contrast to the muted colors employed elsewhere by Tiffany. Truth holds the sword and torch, wearing a key and laurel wreath. Justice's sword is curved, and the balance or scales is trade-mark. This, called the Crozier Williams window, was given by the family of Charles Augustus Williams.

North nave Tiffanys are a pair in color and style. The left is in memory of George D. Whittlesey, given by his wife. It portrays the angelic appearance to the shepherds at the Nativity.. The right was given in memory of Mrs. Whittlesey by Julia Havenmeyer, her sister. It depicts the angelic appearance to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation.

THE TIFFANY WINDOWS continued

In 1911, the South nave gained the George and Mary Ironside memorial, given by Edward C. Hammond. It portrays Jesus' appearance to his disciples following the Resurrection. (Our 3rd "resurrection window"!) Note the halo around Christ's head. It and the star in the opposite Nativity window demonstrate the skilled craftsmanship of the Tiffany Studio. Refraction of light, controlled by thickness of glass, make these areas shine even in darkest moments.

The final Tiffany installed is the Mansfield memorial portraying two World War I servicemen hovering on the edge of a cliff before St. Michael the angel. Presented by the noted actor, Richard Mansfield, and his wife, Beatrice, it memorializes their son, Richard, and his buddy, Jack Morris Wright. The Mansfield family lived in New York (source of the connection with St. Bartholomew's) and summered in New London (reason for this memorial here and a monument in Cedar Grove Cemetery). Young Richard, learning of Wright's death at age 19, enlisted and was killed three months later. If there is any truth to the story that this window was first designed and offered to St. Bartholomew's it's rejection there may have been because of its poor taste or because that church is of Byzantine design and already filled with precious glass. The painted heads, off-scale in this case, resemble the Lawrence window in looks and purpose. In any event, the quality and artistry set it apart from the other Tiffanys—as well as the date of installation and lack of "signature". It does, however, provide a memorial to those who made the supreme sacrifice, recalling them and their deeds, and remembering them as forever young.

Sermon by the Rev. Ralph E. Merrill
St. James' Church, New London, Conn.
July 28, 1991

OTHER WINDOWS

In addition to the seven Tiffany windows in St. James', there are three other replacements of the original 1850 grisaille glass. The first to be reglazed was the small window to the right of the Altar, given by Benjamin Stark in memory of the Rev. Dr. Robert Hallam. It was designed by Cox and Sons of London, England, and installed during 1881 and 1882. This is the first appearance of any bodily likeness in this building—a representation of Christ's resurrection, complete with a likeness of the Risen Lord triumphantly holding a banner of victory, with Mary Magdalene (or some other female) holding what looks to be the stone that had blocked the tomb's entrance, with a sleeping Roman soldier at their feet. At the base are words from the Creed: "I look for the resurrection of the Dead."

In 1889, another window was reglazed with a resurrection theme. This is boldly inscribed "St. Matthew - Chapter 28". However, if one reads that Evangelist's account of the resurrection, it describes only two women visiting with only one angel at the empty tomb. Again, the Risen Christ holds the banner of victory. This time there are two Roman soldiers at his feet—both awake and overwhelmed. Three empty crosses on Calvary are in the background. Lots of angels hover in the intricate tracery. This window was arranged for by Miss Mary M. Foote and Mr. Rinehart in memory of Francis Allyn. They were friends of the Allyn family. Interestingly, neither window from the 1880's has a memorial inscription. It's believed Mr. Allyn was once mayor of New London and owner and operator of a sea-going packet. In all likelihood this window is of English glass—some describe it as of the "Munich school". Documentation of source and the man memorialized are subjects of continuing research.

Most recent addition to our windows is another of English glass. It's the so-called Seabury Window near the cenotaph atop his mortal remains. Installed in 1962, it is in memory of Frederick and Louise Whittenmore—made possible by a bequest of \$2,500 from Mr. Whittenmore and an additional \$500 from their son. (The Whittenmores were active here. He, as Vestryman and Warden just prior to and during World War II.) Goddard and Gibbs of London executed this window and also that in the American War Memorial behind the High Altar in St. Paul's Cathedral there. Our window portrays the life and significance of the Rt. Rev. Samuel Seabury, who served as 3rd resident rector and 1st American Bishop concurrently. The top panel contains seals of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Connecticut, and the two Scottish Diocese of Aberdeen and that of Ross & Moray—from whence came Seabury's consecrators. Celtic Crosses speak of ties to Scotland for the gift of the historic episcopate. Beneath a bishop's hat or miter in the left lancet are medallions picturing Seabury's election at the glebe house in Woodbury on March 25, 1783; his consecration as Bishop by Scottish Bishops Kilgour, Skinner and Petrie in Aberdeen, Scotland, on November 14, 1784; and the first Confirmation, hitherto impossible, on American soil. Surmounted by a bishop's staff or crozier, the right lancet shows a typical sailing vessel such as Seabury used on two trans-Atlantic passages—once for medical studies and ordination as Deacon and Priest, again for consecration as Bishop. His portrait at a lectern may represent his first sermon at Newport, following the voyage home as Bishop. Beneath is an artist's rendering of our second building, in which Seabury served and which he completed and consecrated following that of St. Paul's, Norwalk, on September 20, 1787.

Notes from REM talk on 5/21/95

In 1850 New London was the 2nd largest whaling port in the country. The original St. James Church was built at the foot of State St. and served the Anglican sailors who worked in the whaling trade.

The second St. James was built where the Salvation Army is now.

Rev. Hallam the rector wanted a grander church and one that was different so he had the current church building built of New Jersey freestone. It was a time of neogothic revival and the church was built in this fashion with a pointed arch to the heavens and in cruciform shape. Altars always faced east.

The church was designed by Richard Upjohn who also designed Trinity Church, Wall St. NY and Calvary Church, Stonington.

To understand the use of buttresses, read Pillars of the Earth.

Money ran out several times during the building of the church and Mr. Hallam paid for the continued building himself.

What is now the flower room, was added later as a sewing room. The organ pipes were added later.

In 1916 the choir stalls and a larger communion rail were added to the chancel.

The pews were originally rented which supported the church instead of pledges. Each pew renter had to take care of his pew.

The church had no cross or candles until the Oxford movement in the late 1800s. The retable was added as a memorial. During the time of Rev. Wilbur, the wood over the retable and the angels were gilded.

In the 16 and 17 century, the Society for the Preservation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts required that the 10 commandments and the Lords Prayer were to be printed behind the altar. They appeared and disappeared and eventually the 10 commandments disappeared at St. James, leaving the Lords prayer, Apostles Creed, Beatitudes and random bible verses instead.

Upjohn designed the church with gray glass windows called Grisaille. Windows were needed to let in light but were colored to keep out the sun. This being the case, the next step was to put in pictures.

Early glass windows had designs and symbols such as the grisaille one in the church with the bishops miter and the rope symbolizing the trinity above the main window.

The window over the altar was paid for by the women of the church.

The first window with people is the one over the Hallam plaque. This replaced what was probably the omega window to match the alpha window on the opposite side of the east wall. This is one of the three resurrection windows in the church.

The first window on the right is made of thin glass with a lot of black paint. This is the European style. The Tiffany windows are the one of Jesus by the boat, 2 on the left hand side of the nave, two in the transepts, and the red one over the baptistery. They change colors as the weather changes the light outside.

The window of the two aviators may have been one by the Tiffany studio but not one of their best. It was given by Richard Mansfield, the actor in memory of his son and friend who died in battle.

The Lawrence window came about as the Lawrence family who were ships chandlers in New London went to St. James as there were no Roman Catholic churches in town until 1870. The window has 4 or five layers of glass and no paint except on the facial features. It is to represent Mr. Lawrence and his two sons. The tracery over the heads of the people is done with copper fused between the glass.