



Light of Heaven:

The Stained Glass Windows of First Christian Church

by Jim Bradley

One of the most beautiful aspects of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Wilmington, Ohio is the amazing array of its stained glass windows. There are a total of seventy-two stained glass windows in the church in 22 different sizes with sixty-seven windows in the original sanctuary building built in 1908. These windows are installed on three levels in the church. The newest window in the sanctuary building is the side light next to the Walnut Street entrance. The education building, added in 1992, features four stained glass windows, three in the Narthex and one in the Library. These windows were designed by Susan Foland Ertel, niece of lifetime members Jim and Betty Foland.

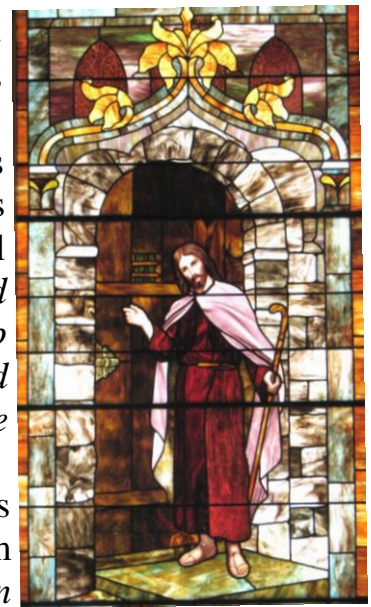
The windows were ordered through the Bryant Brothers of Columbus, Ohio and may have been created by the Povey Brothers Art & Stained Glass Works in Portland, Oregon. Povey stained glass windows are notable for their use of “jewels”, small, thickly cut faceted pieces of glass in rich colors, and for the use of American opalescent glass. However, they also freely used imported glass from Europe. It is difficult to identify Povey Brothers’ windows since most of them were not signed.



The two largest windows are 192 inches by 110 inches and have in excess of one thousand pieces.

The Walnut Street window depicts Jesus the Good Shepherd tending his sheep. This image is found in the Gospel of John 10:11-16; *“I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for my sheep”* (14-15).

The Columbus Street window depicts image of Jesus knocking at the door from Matthew 7:7-8; *“Ask and it will be given*



to you; Seek and you will find; Knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; He who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

These passages are but two of many reminiscent in these beautiful windows. These windows were removed, cleaned and repaired recently at a cost of \$35,000 (the entire sanctuary building was constructed at a cost of \$25,000 in 1908).

From the narthex, the window just inside the church to the right, was above a door before the new addition was constructed at which time the door was bricked up and sealed shut.

All of the Church's windows are the prettiest when the sun shines through them although the windows on the Columbus Street side only get indirect light throughout the year.

The entrance at the corner of Walnut and Columbus Streets has ten windows of which seven are above the ceiling at the entrance. The beauty of these windows is not visible from outside the building and can only be viewed from a crawl space. The only exception at this entrance is the side light windows and the one above the door. There are sixteen windows in the belfry. They are very beautiful when viewed from inside the attic on a sunny day. The one-hundred year old wood beams in this space add to their beauty.

The three windows on the Walnut Street side past the entrance extend from the first floor (now a storage room) up to the balcony. The other three windows in the balcony match one of the windows in the basement. The window above the door in the former Pastor's office is also unique. Eight windows on the main floor of the church match each other. The windows above the choir loft create a pretty setting from which our gifted choir performs each Sunday.

There are seventeen stained glass windows in the basement. The two in the boiler room are plain glass. There are three windows in the basement that are different, one each in the women's restroom, train club room (directly under the sanctuary), and the hallway on Walnut Street. The four windows below the choir loft in the basement are also different, but match each other. Nine windows in the basement match. Four of the church's windows have been damaged and repaired.

This handout is an abbreviated version of an 11 page document by Jim Bradley.
Edited by Pastor Tom Stephenson.

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