

Stained Glass Windows at First Presbyterian Church of Stroudsburg

Main Street windows

At the front of the church are three windows. The middle one is a relatively recent stained glass window. The interior light enhances the beauty of the colors at night and draws attention to the cross, which is its principal design element. This window was given by David Griffith, an elder of the church, in memory of his wife, Jean, in 1959.

The two windows on either side are the two oldest windows in the church. They are the original windows, installed when the church was built in 1868. All the sanctuary windows were like these until 1901, when the first stained glass windows were installed. Note that they are double-hung windows to provide for ventilation. The glass in these front windows is old English stenciled glass in a fleur de lis design. From the pavement they appear very plain—an opaque brownish red. But if one enters the building during the day and ascends the steps, one will find that the daylight shows to advantage the quaint regular pattern of the glass. It was discovered many years ago that replacing damaged panes in these two windows would be prohibitive because of the width of the glass and trying to match the color of the remaining panes.

Balcony windows

The two windows on either side of the balcony were executed by James Dougherty. The Board of Trustees contracted with him in 1901 for a cost of \$50 each. In addition, A. Dreher was paid \$4.00 for assisting in placing the windows, W. Wallace was paid \$12.16 for lumber for the windows, W. Posten was paid \$7.35 for painting the windows and brazing the pipes, and \$1.25 was paid to someone for cleaning the church after the windows were placed. Monies taken in relating to the windows were \$3.85 from the sale of the old sash weights and \$5.50 for the sale of the old windows.

Although overshadowed by the picture windows and difficult to appreciate because the balcony obscures half of each window from the inside, these are very fine windows and deserve attention. Stained glass medallions in the middle of each window are beautifully executed and would be center pieces in many churches. From the balcony one can see half of the cross in one medallion and the Bible and lilies in the other.

Main Sanctuary windows

William Reith was a native of Germany who studied stained glass at the Offenbach Technical School in Baden-Baden. He emigrated to the United States in 1867. After working for several years for stained glass manufacturing firms in Philadelphia, Reith established his own firm on North Seventh Street in Stroudsburg in 1887. His business prospered to such an extent that he was able to move to Germantown, then a Philadelphia neighborhood of wealth and status. From there he serviced mostly New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, although he received commissions from throughout the country.

Six of the main sanctuary windows, and probably all eight, were executed by William Reith, who was in the words of an article in *Waterbury American* in 1901 “almost world-famous for his productions in both the ecclesiastical and domestic style of glass art work.” “The Empty Tomb” is signed “Wm. Reith, Phila., Pa.” Described below are the east side windows, front to back, followed by the west side windows, front to back.

The Empty Tomb

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

There are two great symbols of the Church. The first is the *cross*, around which we gather to weep, mourn, ask forgiveness, pray for help, repent of our sins, and offer to God those things we have done wrong. The second is the *empty tomb*, that mysterious, haunting symbol around which we gather to praise the God who overcame death for us, to rejoice in the gifts of life and love, and to sing and shout, “Hallelujah! He is risen!” maybe at the top of our lungs.

This window is based on a painting by Bernard Plockhorst, a German historical painter. The conception and depth of expression of his paintings were exceptional, but his artistic ability was not highly regarded 125 years ago. He would be all but forgotten if not for the stained glass windows his works inspired. It depicts Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James and John; and Salome at the tomb with an angel in white. This beautiful window has wonderful details: A woman with long golden hair rests her hand on a jar of ointment and spices. Lilies and lily of the valley sprout from the ground. The lily is the flower of Easter and resurrection because of its beauty, white purity, and scent, but also because from its rotting bulb grows the plant: Life blossoms out of decay and death. A crown of thorns, a symbol of crucifixion, is on the edge of the tomb, reminding us that Jesus achieved our redemption through the infamous events of Good Friday. Lastly, the shroud used to wrap Jesus’s body lies empty and cast aside. This window employs both painted and opalescent glass. It is the only signed window: Wm. Reith, Phila., Pa.

There is no record of when this window was installed, nor how much it cost. We do know, however, that it was given by Theodore D. Dreher in memory of his parents, Melchoir and Sarah Dreher. Melchoir was born in 1802 in Wyoming, Pennsylvania. Sarah was born in 1807, but there is no record of where, nor what her maiden name was. They had 14 children. Theodore was the tenth. They farmed a tract of land north of Phillips Street on Ninth Street.

Melchoir was received as a member of First Presbyterian in 1846, but the Session minutes indicate some concern about his reception, as he was “guilty not long since of violating the Sabbath publicly, while at the same time he appeared to be ignorant of the sin of his conduct.” His “conscience” was “enlightened” by members of the Session. His name does not appear in the minutes again until April 1874: “The following persons who have been members of this church for several years, but ceased to commune on account of their lack of vital godliness, believing themselves to have been recently converted to Christ, were allowed full privileges of church membership without any further public profession of their faith in Jesus than that which will be made in partaking of the Lord’s Supper, viz., Mr. Melchoir Dreher, Mr. Wilson Dreher, Miss Ella Kern, Miss Rebecca Kern, Miss Lizzie Hollinshead, Miss Helen Wyckoff, Miss Alice Schoonover, Mr. A.B. Wyckoff, and Mr. Archie Jameson.” Many of these people are associated with the windows in the sanctuary. Melchoir also served several times as a Monroe County Commissioner from 1846 to 1852.

Walter H. Dreher of the Walter H. Dreher Agency was a great-grandson of Melchoir and Sarah. Edward Hagerty, a former member and elder of FPC, is a three times great-grandson of Melchoir and Sarah. Westminster Center was originally the residence and store of Darius Dreher, a son of Melchoir and Sarah.

Saint Paul

Scripture: Philemon

Paul, born Saul in Tarsus in Asia Minor, was a tentmaker by trade. His father had been awarded Roman citizenship for noteworthy service to the Roman Empire, a status which Paul inherited. He was educated and a Pharisee—a member of the Jewish sect that survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and evolved into rabbinic Judaism. As such he was fluent in Hebrew, as he must also have been in Aramaic and Greek. Paul was an early opponent of the Christian movement, but he experienced a conversion, probably about 34 CE, after which he became its great champion. Because of his education, Paul was able to give Christianity an intellectual and theological foundation as he put down on paper the essential elements of the Christian message. He became one of Christianity's most prolific writers. Only a portion of his writings appear in the Bible, but about 30% of the Christian Scriptures was written by Paul or attributed to him.

Of the 7 letters that modern scholars believe are authentic Paul, Philemon is the shortest and the only surviving personal letter. While short on theological content, it is long on insight into Paul. Philemon, a well-to-do Christian who had a "house church," was evidently converted by Paul at Ephesus. His slave, Onesimus, had run away and found refuge with Paul in prison. Paul eventually sent Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter appealing to him to receive Onesimus, not as a runaway slave but as a beloved Christian brother. The letter displays those qualities of nobility and humaneness that were wonderfully embodied in the Christian faith. How do we happen to have one of Paul's personal letters preserved in Scripture? The first collection of Paul's letters was published in Ephesus. Philemon and Onesimus were from Ephesus. In 110 CE the bishop of Ephesus was named Onesimus. Perhaps the runaway slave, the collector of the letters, and the bishop were the same person. We could certainly understand how Bishop Onesimus would want to include the letter to Philemon as a tribute to Paul, the man who brought him to Christ.

Unlike some of the other windows, where the theme is focused, this window embraces a theme almost as broad as the whole New Testament. Paul's life, his ministry, his writings, his thought and theology are complex. Three prevailing themes characterize Paul's life and are called to mind by this window. First, Paul wants us to be educated, intelligent, and articulate about our Christian faith. Thus, Paul is carrying *a book*. Second, Paul wants us to share our faith and witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ. Third, Paul wants us to support mission and do mission by serving people and ministering to need.

The other symbol that indicates that the figure is Paul is *the sword*. We know that Paul eventually ended up in prison in Rome. Whether he traveled to Spain and returned to Rome, or remained under house arrest in Rome, we do not know. But when Nero needed a scapegoat for the fires that devastated Rome, he turned to the Christians. Many were sent to their deaths, including Paul. As a Roman citizen, Paul could not be crucified. He would have been beheaded by one swift stroke of a sword.

This window was given in 1901 by the Sunday School. The Sunday School reports for 1899, 1900, and 1901 show receipts totaling \$175.98 given to fund a stained glass window. In 1901 an expense of \$157.86 was recorded "For Window." The fact that donations were received in 1899 and 1900 suggests a plan to install stained glass windows in the sanctuary. This is one of the four windows donated by a church group.

The Giving of Alms

Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Luke 12: 38-44

The giving of alms means a charitable relief of the poor, something that permeates both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. It is an exercise of righteousness, piety, and faith. It is not merely a requirement of the law but an expression of faith in the goodness of God and a God-given responsibility. It speaks to the fact that we are blessed to be a blessing to others. God gave to us, so we in turn give to others in gratitude.

The window is beautiful in its design and color. The standing woman is taking coins from a small purse and giving them to the supplicant figure kneeling at her feet. The coins may not be apparent from the far side of the sanctuary, but they can be clearly seen as one draws nearer.

The window was given in 1901 in memory of Thomas McFall McIlhaney and Catharine Maria McIlhaney by their daughters. Thomas McIlhaney was born in Lower Mount Bethel Township, Pennsylvania, in 1823. His formal education was meager. He learned tailoring in his father's shop and continued that trade in Snydersville. In 1847 McIlhaney moved to Tannersville, where he served in several important offices of Pocono Township. This service led to his appointment as clerk in the Harrisburg office of Jacob Frey, State Auditor General. In 1860 he was elected Prothonotary of Monroe County. He was continuously reelected to this post until he chose to retire in 1878. At that time he began to study law in the office of the Honorable Charlton Burnett. Two years later, McIlhaney was admitted to the practice of law.

To quote *The Commemorative Biographical Record of Northeastern Pennsylvania* (J. H. Beers & Co., Chicago, 1901), McIlhaney "was identified with different business enterprises, and at the time of his death was president of Stroudsburg National Bank. As a businessman, Mr. McIlhaney was noted for his industry, integrity and force of character, combined with kindness of heart and great liberality in the support of worthy and progressive movements. He possessed a wonderfully retentive memory, and his mind was well-balanced and systematic, his ability and accuracy as an accountant being especially notable. While firm in his convictions of right, he was considerate with those whose opinions differed from his own, while his suavity and geniality of disposition made him popular in any circle. He was a leading member of the Presbyterian Church, to which he gave liberally of his time and means, serving for many years as trustee. . . His death occurred suddenly on December 15, 1885.

"Mrs. McIlhaney, who was held in high esteem for her fine mental gifts and womanly character, was born in 1823 in Lower Mt. Bethel Township, and came of an old Northampton County family." Typical of the time, little more is known about this seemingly remarkable woman other than that she was "only a housewife" in a home "blessed with six children."

John the Baptist

Scripture: Luke 3: 1-20

John the Baptist generated a lot of attention in his time. He took on the “big fish” of his day and ended up with his head on a platter, at the request of Herod’s second wife, Herodias, through her daughter, who won a favor from her step-father. John was no respecter of people. He called the upper classes that came out to hear him a brood of vipers. His message was one of imminent judgment, not world-wide salvation like that of Jesus. The appeal of John the Baptist in his own time came down to the simple directness of his message and his morality. His message: Repent now. His morality: Simple and basic; very demanding but not radical. The morality of John’s time bred hypocrisy based on superficial standards. There is certainly the danger that people who think they are religious forget that first of all they need to be honest, considerate, kind, compassionate, and humble. When those fundamentals are neglected, then all efforts at spiritual development are unsubstantial and insecure. But one cannot stop there, and that is what John did. John’s message had a passionate urgency: He preached judgment as imminent and repentance as severe but straightforward and simple. John the Baptist was the forerunner but not the Messiah, because he lacked the penetrating analysis of the human moral problem and of the human need—the analysis that Jesus provided. John proclaimed terror, not Good News. He thought that the kingdom of God would come in a catastrophic act and with a sudden revelation. Jesus knew that the kingdom is built by the grace of God through those who are willing to live, work, struggle, celebrate, suffer, and if need be, die for the purposes of God. John saw redemption as immediate. Jesus recognized that it is most often patient and gradual, worked out through people who do not suppose that a single stroke will decide the battles of right and wrong. The coming of the kingdom of God will most likely involve disappointments, victories that are only partial, and temporary defeats that must be endured. It requires consecration that is willing to face crosses and to go past them into life.

Two things identify the figure in the window as John the Baptist: the pilgrim’s staff topped with a cross and the small shield containing a cross, probably a Greek chi—the first letter of Christ, Greek for Messiah—with a lamb in the center. The figure’s left hand points to the cross and the lamb, symbolizing that John was the forerunner of the Christ.

This is the least effective of the windows, not only in its technical execution of coloring but also in the countenance of John, who is presented as sweet and kind rather than strong, wild-eyed, and raging against the multitudes.

This window was given in 1901 by the Senior and Junior Societies of Christian Endeavor, one of the three church groups that donated windows. Financial reports for 1900 and 1901 for these two societies show receipts totaling \$138.48 for the window and an expense in 1901 of \$107.73 “For Window.”

Christ Praying in the Garden

Scripture: Mark 14:26-42

The scene from Gethsemane is one of the most remarkable scenes in the gospels. Jesus was under severe emotional strain, comparable to nothing else he had experienced, so much so that he sought the help of others—Peter, James and John. But they were so physically and emotionally exhausted that sleep overcame them. Jesus had to make his decision alone, symbolic of all of life. There are some things between an individual and God that must be settled in the awful loneliness of one's own soul.

Thus, the drama unfolds. The presence of God attends Jesus as he kneels to pray, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." There is no moment more intimate in all of scripture: Jesus addresses God as "Abba," translated "Papa" or "Daddy." There are many hours of agonizing pacing and soul-wrenching discourse with Jesus's Abba before he finally succumbs to the decision: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Gethsemane is the place where the individual meets the divine, any place and any time when we struggle to know the will of God for us. When we meet and touch the divine, a deepening love abides that embraces and participates in the struggle to understand and accept God's will.

This window is based on a painting by Heinrich Hans Hoffmann, part of a group of young, enthusiastic Germans nicknamed the Nazarenes because of their religious piety. They routinely presented "the beauty of Christ's regular features, his sad expression, the dignity of his figure enclosed in melodious folds of a classic garment." Hoffmann has been all but forgotten by the art world, but the inspiration he gave to stained-glass craftsmen has been memorable and enduring. "Christ Praying" is composed entirely of painted antique glass rather than opalescent glass.

There is no record of when this window was installed, nor how much it cost. We do know, however, that it was given in memory of John Kern (1801-1884) and Rachel Kunkle Kern (1805-1891), perhaps by one or more of their six children. Rachel was a member of First Presbyterian, but there is no record of John joining. Two of their daughters, Ella and Rebecca, were active members.

Rachel and John were farmers in Stroud Twp. The 1850 census shows that their children ranged in age from 4 to 20 years. Also living with them was Anst Kern, age 83, born in Germany—perhaps a Hessian POW who remained in America after the Revolutionary War. Sometime between 1858 and 1875 the family bought the lot and house at 913 Main Street. Three of the Kern children, George (1836-1916), Ella (1843-1923), and Rebecca (1845-1931), never married and continued to live there. About 1904 they built the house that today houses the Monroe County Bar Association. Another daughter, Sally (b. 1842) married George Dreher. Sally and George were the grand-aunt and uncle of former renowned Thespian and First Presbyterian member, Frank Kerr.

In John Kern's obituary on January 1, 1885 in the *Jeffersonian Republican* it was noted that after moving to Stroud Borough he became a member of the Town Council, serving one term, and served one term as County Commissioner from 1845-1847. "He was highly respected and, though he lived to good old age, his death will be sincerely regretted by his many friends as well as by his relatives."

Christ Knocking at the Door

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22

Often at moments when we least expect it, God comes to us. We may not hear God knocking at our heart's door. We become immersed in our own concerns, preoccupied with job, activities, children, and so on. We are so busy that we cannot hear or feel the touch of God upon our lives, our communities, or our church. Yet Christ says that when the door is opened, he will come in and eat with us. "Eat" does not really convey the meaning of the word used in scripture. It is the word used for the chief meal of the day. It is a long, leisurely meal, filled with much conversation and sharing. This is not a mere courtesy call that Christ offers to make. Christ waits to be invited to stay for an extended visit—almost like a marriage, for better or for worse, till death opens a new relationship.

If we decide to open the door, how will Christ come? No doubt, he will come in humble and unconventional ways, in strange and surprising ways. He will come to disturb our peace. He will come as a healer. How we need to open the door—the eyes of our minds and souls—to the meaning of life and the reality of God! How we need to open the door to the mighty acts of God! How we need to open the door to our redemption!

The window is based on a painting by Holman Hunt, done in the late 19th century. He was a founder of the pre-Raphaelite School of artists. The original painting resides in Keble College, Oxford, England and shows Christ as a regal figure carrying a lantern, standing before a closed door, and knocking. It is a very straightforward interpretation of the scripture. The window is a greatly simplified presentation of the painting. It uses opalescent glass, including drapery glass (high-ridged glass) to define the figure and clothing. It is good in its design and in the effect produced when sunlight strikes it.

The window was given in 1901 in memory of Robert Brown (1806-1885) and Rachel Brown (1817-1879) by their children, Ellen, wife of Joseph Keller, a furniture dealer in Stroudsburg; Daniel, a jeweler in Stroudsburg; Harriet, wife of John B. Storm, attorney, Congressman, and judge; Theodore, of Stroudsburg; John, of Watertown, NY; and Robert, a furniture dealer in Stroudsburg.

The Brown family is one of the oldest in Monroe County. John Brown (1746-1821) came to Stroudsburg from Tatamy to serve under Col. Jacob Stroud. In 1790 he bought a farm from Daniel Brodhead in East Stroudsburg. His son Jacob Brown (1771-1841) eventually purchased the old homestead and farmed it. Jacob was reportedly a leading citizen and one of the first associate judges of Monroe County. His son Robert and wife Rachel also were farmers on land now occupied by Pocono Medical Center and East Stroudsburg University. Their house still stands at the corner of Braeside Avenue and Brown Street. As sympathizers of the Abolition Movement, they maintained a station of the underground railroad. Robert served as a trustee at First Presbyterian and was a member of the committee responsible for buying our present church lot, securing subscriptions, and supervising the construction of our present structure. Robert and Rachel's son Robert (1856-1925) was an elder and Sunday School Superintendent at First Presbyterian. His son Robert (1883-1975) was an elder, the church historian, and Superintendent of Schools in Stroudsburg. The last direct descendant of Robert and Rachel was Louise Brown, who died in 1986, bequeathing half of her estate to our church. Other former members who were descendants of the original Brown family were Helen Brown, a professor at ESU, and Mildred Hoot, mother of member Pam Hoy.

Let the Children Come

Scripture: Luke 18: 9-17

In Jesus's time children, like women, were possessions of little value on their own. Jesus's male disciples were adults, concerned to hear what he had to teach and inspired by his ministry and message. Distractions were annoying as they concentrated on going about the important business of following their master. They became irritated when children burst into their circle, interrupting Jesus and breaking their own concentration. They were impatient when mothers brought their screaming infants and squirming toddlers into the circle. But just as Jesus broke the rules regarding women, he did the same with children, welcoming them because "to such belongs the kingdom of God." The child is dependent, relying on the parents for everything. Everything is a gift. That is the mind and spirit that we need in order to receive the kingdom of God. Children teach us about being dependent on God and about responding to God with spontaneity, enthusiasm, and love.

The window follows the general theme of a number of paintings of popular religious artists of the late 19th century whose art, like the artists, has faded into obscurity. However, the inspiration the art gave to stained-glass artisans has survived and transcended the original paintings. This window, like many of the others, is a constantly changing work of art, depending on the day, the season, whether the sun is direct or indirect, high or low, whether the sky is clear or overcast.

This window was given in 1901 in loving memory of Jacob L. and Emeline C. Wyckoff by their children, of which they had five. Church records show that Emeline joined First Presbyterian in 1858. There is no record of Jacob joining, but he contributed to and supported the church. He served on the Building Committee that was responsible for the present church building, dedicated in 1868.

Jacob Losey Wyckoff, second of nine children, was born in 1815 in Mendham, New Jersey. In his youth he learned the shoemaker's trade, but he was determined to find a more lucrative trade that allowed more personal interaction. He started out as a huckster in the Mendham area, gradually building up trade. Eventually, he had a number of six-horse teams that made regular trips between New York City, Mendham, and Stroudsburg to supply merchants of country stores. He reportedly built the largest, most pretentious business block in Stroudsburg and was ranked among the wealthy men of Pennsylvania. Although his schooling was limited, he was a great reader with a remarkable memory, which served him well. It was said that he gave generously to those less fortunate than himself and "was an eager advocate of every enterprise that would benefit either his town or the people."

At the time of Jacob's visits to Stroudsburg, Margaret Eagles took in boarders in her home at the corner of Main and Ninth Streets—what is now known as Stroud Mansion. One of those boarders may well have been Jacob, for a daughter of the family, Emeline Crane Eagles, was wed to Jacob in that house in 1847. Their first child, Amzi Babbitt (1850), founded the Wyckoff store. Amzi and his wife, Margaret Alice Holt, were the parents of Ernest Holt, Lulu, and Marion Wyckoff. Ernest and his wife, Anna Siebert Wyckoff, were well-known members of First Presbyterian, as were their six children—Alexander, William, Holt, Margaret, Walter and Peter. William Wyckoff and Margaret Wyckoff Wells as well as their spouses and some of their children remained members.

Woman in White

It is not possible to identify a specific religious theme in this window. If it was executed by William Reith, as were almost surely all the other featured windows, it lacks Reith's characteristic of putting sermons into stained glass. Two things lead to a possible attribution to Reith: the enigmatic female figure holding some type of flower, which is similar to another window attributed to Reith, and the similarity of the glass used in the sky of both "Woman in White" and "The Giving of Alms," a known Reith window. Stained glass designs were often deliberately ambiguous, making them saleable for both religious and secular purposes. Undoubtedly, the Holmes family received a religious interpretation, perhaps a personification of a virtue such as purity, love, hope, or faith, when the window was purchased. But that interpretation has been lost to the collective memory of the church.

The window itself is stunningly beautiful. Changes occur as light passes through the glass at different times and seasons. The woman's robes are done in exquisite drapery glass. This is enhanced by layering, thus creating depth and refracting light in ever-changing rainbows. The fine opalescent glass creates the illusion of landscape, sky, and clouds.

This window was given in 1907 in memory of Stephen Holmes (1836-1904) and Georgiana Blair Holmes by their three children, Edith, Frank, and Norman. Stephen Holmes was born in Maine and completed a thorough education in common-school and in academies there before moving to Pennsylvania. He taught school in Pennsylvania and in New Jersey. At the age of 22 he became Principal of the Stroudsburg Public School. At the same time he studied law in the office of the Honorable S.S. Dreher. In 1861 he began practicing law. In 1863 he was elected district attorney in Monroe County and held that office for three consecutive terms until 1873. Stephen and Georgiana, of Hope, NJ, were married in 1864. Stephen was a director of Stroudsburg Bank and an active member of First Presbyterian, serving as an elder and Clerk of Session. He was noted as having a "public spirit ...shown in many ways," ...being "much esteemed as a citizen," and "being always cast on the side of progress." Upon his sudden death in November 1904, the Session of First Presbyterian gave him a moving tribute in their minutes.