

## South Side Windows

Continuing back along the south side, every second set of windows contains pictures. The first of these is called *Christ In The Temple*. It shows Christ as a child of 12 conversing with the learned priests of the temple in Jerusalem. The story is in Luke 2:47 and states: "All who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."

The next picture is named *St. Paul*. He is important to us, not only because our church is named for him, but because nearly half of the New Testament is comprised of letters written by him to churches he had either founded or visited. This shows him with a sword. In describing the armor of a Christian, Paul talks of the "sword of the Spirit." (Ephesians 6:17)

The next set of pictures depicts people of the Old Testament. The first picture, *Ruth, the Gleaner*, illustrates the story from the Book of Ruth, showing her gleaning wheat in the fields of Boaz, whom she later married. She and Boaz became ancestors of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus.

The other Old Testament picture is of *Moses* to whom God gave the Ten Commandments. It is unusual that it shows Moses with a scroll on which the Ten Commandments are written rather than the stone tablets normally associated with Moses.

## Main Street Windows

The large window facing Main Street was designed for this location and is titled *Come Unto Me* from the passage in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." In the circle at the top of the window is what looks like a dove; however, the records say it is a phoenix. Greek mythology says the phoenix bird was consumed by flames and arose alive from the ashes. For Christians, this symbolizes resurrection.

## North Side Windows

From Main Street, the first window on the north side shows Jesus consoling a young man whose head is on his lap. Thus, the picture is named *The Comforting Christ* or *Christ The Consoler*.

The next picture in this first set is *The Good Shepherd*, illustrating the story of the good shepherd and the sheep in John 10:1-16, specifically John 10:11, where Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, I will guard my flock, I will tend my sheep."

The next picture is called *The Three Marys*, or *He Is Risen*, illustrating Matthew 28:6 when the angel says, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said." The angel in white is standing on the tomb, and the three Marys are robed in red, blue, and green.

The last picture is named *The Ascension*. It shows Jesus being taken into heaven, as described in Luke 24:51, "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Most ascension pictures show Jesus in white for purity; this shows him in a purple robe, signifying royalty.

## Other Windows

The other windows have various religious symbols and geometric designs – circles for eternity, flowers of the lily (*fleur-de-lis*) for the Trinity. Windows like these also are in the Narthex, the Chapel, and rooms on other floors. A total of 89 stained-glass windows are located throughout the sanctuary building.

## Ceiling

Gothic architecture is reflected in the shape of the ceiling, which resembles the hull of an upturned ship. The early Phoenician Christians, who were seafaring people, turned the hull of a ship upside down and held their worship services under it. This tradition has continued in Gothic structures. In some large churches, the ceiling is stone or dark wood. This ceiling is pecky cypress, which has tiny pockets or recesses in it; less than 10 percent of cypress trees have this characteristic.

The art deco light fixtures are etched amber glass. Each fixture contains 25 light bulbs, and when they are replaced, scaffolding has to access them.

## Narthex

The Narthex is at the Main Street entry. The word *narthex* comes from the Latin, meaning *outer court*. The doors are leather-covered with unpolished brass nail heads. Above the doors are designs of four open circles, representing the Four Gospels. Within the circles are shields, representing St. Paul. The glass cross in the doors is a Latin cross. The furniture in the Narthex contains carvings of grapes, leaves, and vines. The floor here and in the Sanctuary is slate.

## Outside

### Jones Plaza and Sunshine Fountain

In the late 1990s Calumet Street between the Jones and Sanctuary buildings was purchased and reconfigured into the Jones Plaza, named in memory of the Jones family of charter members whose descendants continue to worship here.

The Sunshine Fountain in the middle of the plaza was built through individual gifts in memory of Anne Jones Brice. Dedicated in 2002, the fountain was designed by Jesus Moroles who explained that the sculpture is round and in the open so people could move

around it and touch it. The flowing water symbolizes the water necessary for life and growth.

"The design is that of the sun, with rays around it," he said. "The rays resemble the buttresses of the church building. Each ray is carved differently, to symbolize the diversity of human beings."

## Christ Statue

The statue of Christ on the front lawn is a copy of a famous statue by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, who made the original in 1819. That statue is in the National Church of Denmark in Copenhagen, and other copies are located around the world. Placed at St. Paul's in 1965, this copy was given by the Henderson family in memory of Robert Henderson and his sister, Edna Henderson Bowles.

Summarizing from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale in *Guideposts* magazine: Thorvaldsen prepared the clay model for this statue with arms raised high in a gesture of imperious leadership. Then he left his studio to let the soft clay harden overnight. But when he returned, Jesus' arms had drooped. They no longer commanded; they seemed to have fallen into a gesture of pleading.

After his initial disappointment, Thorvaldsen then saw the image of the true Jesus, the Man of Compassion. At that moment he became a Christian and eventually named the statue, "Come Unto Me."

## Bankston Green/Williford Labyrinth

In honor of now-retired senior minister Dr. James L. (Jim) Bankston and his nearly 20 years of service to St. Paul's, in 2014 the front lawn at Main and Binz/Bissonnet was transformed into the Bankston Green.

This also made the area accessible and more user-friendly with benches and landscaping surrounding the Chartres-pattern Labyrinth, dedicated to St. Paul's now-retired minister of spiritual formation, Rev. Gail Williford.

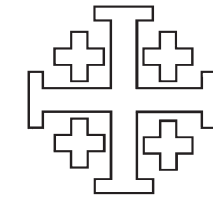
## History *(also see History of St. Paul's brochure)*

The St. Paul's congregation was organized in 1905-1906. Members worshiped in the first Sanctuary building at Milam and McGowen until 1927, when more space was needed and plans were begun for the current, larger church building.

## Tours

Tours of the sanctuary are provided at 12:15 p.m. on certain Sundays. These will be announced in that Sunday's worship bulletin.

To arrange a guided group tour, call the church at 713-528-0527 or email [info@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:info@stpaulshouston.org).



*St. Paul's  
United  
Methodist  
Church  
is  
a cathedral  
for Houston  
that  
embodies  
its diversity,  
inspires faith,  
and  
leads change  
for the common  
good  
of all peoples  
and  
communities.*

# A Self-Guided Tour of the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston

ST. PAUL'S  
UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH  
5501 Main Street at Binz/  
Bissonnet  
Houston, TX 77004  
*in the Museum District*  
713-528-0527 Phone  
713-528-7748 FAX  
[www.stpaulshouston.org](http://www.stpaulshouston.org)

Traditional worship  
for contemporary people

## Architecture

The architecture is Modified English Gothic. This design creates an older appearance than the actual construction date of 1929-1930. The outside is Indiana limestone, the roof and most of the original floors are slate. The architect was Alfred C. Finn, popular in Houston in the late 20’s, and a protégé of Houston civic leader Jesse H. Jones, who was a member of St. Paul’s congregation. Finn also is well known for his design of the San Jacinto Monument and the Gulf Building (now part of Chase Bank downtown).

In traditional Gothic style, the worship area is shaped in the form of a cross, or cruciform. The center aisle forms the long bar of the cross, and the cross bar ends in the transepts. In larger Gothic churches, the transepts are deep, some holding small chapels with candles and kneelers for prayers. In this church, the transepts only hold a few pews and the large Wesley windows. (See “Windows” section.)

The worship area, often called the *sanctuary*, is actually the *nave*, from the Latin word *navis*, meaning *ship*. In early years, the church was considered “the ship of the Lord on which the Christians sailed the sea of life.”

The actual *sanctuary*, from the Latin *sanctum*, is where the altar is located. From that area to the altar rail is the *chancel*, from the Latin *cancelli*. The pulpit on the south side is for preaching the Word and reading the Gospel. The lectern on the north side is for reading other scriptures and making announcements.

## Candles

Candles play a significant role in liturgical worship services. The single tall candle by the lectern is called the *Christ Candle*, referring to Jesus’ words, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) Two candles on the altar represent the two-fold nature of Jesus – human and divine.

Sometimes seven-candle candelabras are on the altar or beside it. These are used on special occasions, such as Easter, Christmas, and weddings. The seven candles represent the seven flames of the Spirit, referred to in the Book of Revelation. (Rev. 4:5)

## Crosses

There are many types of crosses, each with meanings beyond the reminder of God’s love as revealed in Christ.

A plain cross with a long bar and a shorter crossbar is known as a Latin cross. Examples of those are in the glass in the doors.

The silver cross often on the altar with the circle in the center is known as a Celtic cross, associated with Wales and Ireland. The circle represents eternal life.

The letters *IHS* are in the center of the Celtic cross, and the letters *IHC* are in the shield in the center of the altar. Both are an abbreviation for *Jesus*, the full Greek word being *IHEOYE*. Because of various transliterations from ancient Greek to English, the letters S and C may have the same use.

Behind the silver cross is a Latin cross carved in wood with the Greek letters *XP* (Chi Rho) in the center. These are the first two letters in Greek for the word *Christ*. These letters also are on the pillows in the chairs. The full word in Greek is *XPIETOE*.

Another type of cross is the *Jerusalem*, or *Crusaders*, cross. Our processional cross, on the wall to the right, is such a cross. The Jerusalem cross used in St. Paul’s logo is on our banners, worship bulletins, other printed material, and signage. Among the several symbolic meanings for this cross, one is that the large cross in the center represents the original Christian church in Jerusalem founded by the disciples, and the four small Greek crosses represent the four corners of the earth to which the Gospel spread. Jesus told his disciples to take the good news to the ends of the earth.

## Other Symbolism

The grape clusters, vines, and leaves carved around the top of the altar represent Holy Communion. The carved words “This Do In Remembrance Of Me” are the words of Jesus to his disciples in the Upper Room the last Thursday of his life, when he initiated what we now observe as the Communion Service.

The wooden panel behind the altar, the *reredos* (rear dahs), holds much symbolism. Four small, but significant, shields represent the Passion and Death of Christ.

The first shield has an olive branch and a club, symbolizing the Garden of Gethsemane, which was the olive grove where Jesus was praying when the Roman soldiers arrested him.

The second shield has a crown of thorns and three nails. These represent torture and nailing to the cross.

The third shield has a ladder, reed, and sponge, symbols of his crucifixion. When he said “I thirst,” a ladder was put up to him, and he was offered a sponge of sour wine, or vinegar, which would have acted as a sedative. He refused it.

The fourth shield contains a pincer and a mallet, representing the removal of the nails with a mallet and pincer and lowering Christ’s body from the cross.

A large stylized rose is carved on each side of the reredos; smaller roses are in other places. These symbolize “The Promised Messiah.” In the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, the prophet states that “the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose upon the coming of the promised Messiah.” (Isaiah 35)

At the top of the reredos and on the sides and back of the choir loft are carvings of angels, symbolic of heavenly beings, praising God. The angels at the top are praying and at the sides of the choir loft are singing. Each angel is carved a little differently – note the wings in particular. Also, on the reredos plus the top of the large chairs are spires with acorns, representing life everlasting.

The pulpit and lectern have the vine and grape design, here symbolizing Jesus’ words, “I am the vine and you are the branches.” The carving of the crown on the front of the pulpit reminds us of the Kingship of Christ – “He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” The shield signifies faith and also is a symbol for St. Paul. The descending dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit descending at the time of Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist. (Mark 1:9)

## Kneelers

The kneelers include some of the symbols previously described – several different crosses and Greek letters, including the Alpha and Omega letters, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” The United Methodist logo of the cross and flame also is among the symbols needlepointed into the kneelers.

## Organs

### The Great Organ (The Martha & Madison Farnsworth Organ)

The large organ above the choir loft was installed in 1981 by the Schantz Organ Company of Orville, Ohio. When installed, it contained 76 ranks and incorporated pipes from two previous organs. It has been renovated and upgraded several times, and it currently has 84 ranks and 4,569 pipes of polished zinc. The majority of the pipes are behind the walls on the sides and in the center, stacked closely together. The largest pipes are 32 feet tall, and the smallest are the size of a pencil. It is a four-manual electro-pneumatic instrument, and it is played from a console at the front of the choir loft.

### The Gallery, or Echo, Organ (The Lortz-Walters Gallery Organ)

An echo organ in the balcony ceiling had become inoperable over the years, and the current echo organ was installed among the balcony pews in November 2004 by the Schantz Organ Company. It consists of 12 ranks and 732 pipes in casing on the back wall of the balcony, also made by the Schantz Organ Company to match the casing of the Great Organ.

This organ can be played from the console of the Great Organ alone or in conjunction with the Great Organ. Also, a keyboard can be attached so it can be played from the balcony.

## Windows

St. Paul’s stained-glass windows were made in the *antique* style. To obtain this style, a charcoal mixture is baked into the glass to achieve a diffused light through them. (They are not dirty; the black does not come off.) Because of the predominance of blue in them, these windows also are referred to as *cobalt* windows.

### Original Windows

Three of the original windows in the first St. Paul’s church building downtown were brought to this building – the two large *Wesley* windows in the transepts and the round one above the organ pipes.

The round window over the choir loft was re-configured from a vertical window and is lighted from inside. Called the *Gethsemane Window*, it depicts Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane on the last Thursday of his life, as he prayed “Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.” (Luke 22:39-46)

The large window in the transept on the south side (right, facing the altar) contains the figure of *John Wesley*, the founder of Methodism. John Wesley was a minister in the Church of England in the 1700’s. He rode throughout England on horseback, preaching and teaching. He did not plan to start a new denomination, but when he sent missionaries to America, they became known as Methodist ministers.

The large window in the north transept is of *Charles Wesley*, the brother of John Wesley. He also was a minister in the Church of England and was the hymn writer for the “Methodist Societies,” as they were derisively called in England. He wrote more than 6,000 hymns in his lifetime. Among his hymns best known today are “Hark: The Herald Angels Sing,” “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” “Christ the Lord Has Risen Today,” and “A Charge to Keep I Have.”