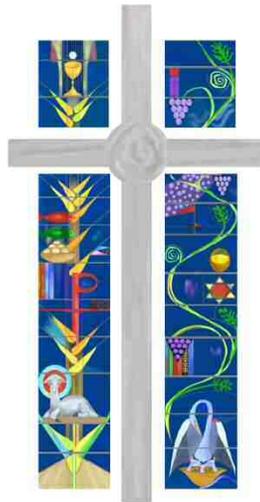




**WINDOWS OF
HOPE**

WINDOWS OF HOPE



**Hope United Church of Christ
6273 Eichelberger at Tamm
Saint Louis, Missouri**

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INTRODUCTION

Every church building is a theological statement: a doxology in stone, glass, wood and people gathered and a faith declared in steel, arch and accent. These silent stones, arches and stained glass, gifts from our fathers and mothers in the faith, still speak to us and take on new meaning as we change, the world changes, our faith is tested and we grow in grace and wisdom.

The artistically evocative windows of Hope United Church of Christ were created by the Emil Frei organization of St. Louis, with office and studios located in Kirkwood. The design work was accomplished largely by Emil Frei and Frank Deck in consultation with Mrs. Florence Zulauf and several others of the congregation. The lush windows were installed as the building was under construction in late 1956 and early 1957. The new building was dedicated on Palm Sunday of 1957. As stained glass needs the light of the sun to bring them to their fullest potential, so we need the Son of God to pass light through us as well so we can reflect, refract His love in our times.

The windows of Hope are just that—windows of hope. From the brilliantly colored victorious and reigning Christ window above the small altar created in 1948 in the historic chapel chancel to the sanctuary glass, we behold not only rich artistry and enduring beauty, but we also come face to face with profound theological expressions as well.

The sanctuary is shaped as a cross, with the long nave forming the upright piece and the transept and crib room creating the horizontal piece. From the narthex to the altar, from the transept to the crib room, young and older alike—or literally from cradle to grave—we assemble in the shape of a cross. The whole people of God who assemble here week by week become the Body of Christ—imbibing that cross, residing in that cross, living and dying by that cross.

We enter the sanctuary via Baptism: the lush rose window high over the Tamm Avenue entrance celebrates the essential sacramental marking of our identity—the waters of baptism are the same waters with which God called creation out of chaos, saved Noah with a rainbow sign, sealed his love for his people through their watery passage to a land of promise and covenant and now in Jesus Christ brought through the waters of death to new life.

The ancient symbol of the church sanctuary as it is shaped here is the symbol of a sailing vessel, a ship whose anchor is Christ Jesus. The ship is marked at the entrance with Baptism and at the front with Communion, the two Sacraments for Reformed Christians. The symbol of ship for church indicates both harbor and open seas, times of rest and renewal, as well as times of movement and journey.

As we come to worship here, we find harbor as we renew for the sailing and challenges of daily life. We know who our Anchor is. And the Spirit of God gives wind to the sails and keeps us moving together on the right course for the times in which we find ourselves.

The ship sails through waters calm and troubled, from Baptismal renewal to Table renewal, stern to stem, tacking back and forth through times of perplexity and hope. With those who have gone before us and those who will follow in future generations, we are the travelers over these seas, unfathomably deep. Yet we hope without fear for God is with us.

Note the deep hues of blue-gray in the background glass for all the sanctuary windows. Note how they nearly swirl, some places quietly and calmly, in other selections of glass, more tumultuously, turbulently. Remember the sanctuary as sailing vessel. See the dark backgrounds in glass as metaphor for the deep waters through which God calls us together to pass—water at once embodying life and death.

FIRST AND SECOND CREATION PANELS:
SEPARATION OF LIGHT FROM DARKNESS AND CREATION OF THE FIRMAMENT

In the transept, there are six panels of glass representing the six days of God's creation as recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. "*In the beginning,*" announces the ancient writer, "when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be *light*;' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day."

Note the colors, as though a dawning is still happening. Not once and for all in creation but new dawnings with each new day, new separations of our own darkness and light, the discernment of callings, shortcomings, appreciation of strengths. God speaks it all into being, our gray areas, our blues and darker places. And the *triangular form* from the beginning, the Trinitarian belief that Creator, Christ and Spirit *is* there from the beginning. The first Creation panel—separation of light from darkness.

The second panel, the creation of the firmament, shows the *clouds* and *waters* pouring from them. A dome God made next in the midst of the waters and separated it from the waters under the dome—the beginnings of sky and rain and clouds, the bringing of order to what had been only watery chaos, the ending of day two.

The panel still cut of grays and watery blues, though new with rainy, stormy lines marking the moment, and the yellows of lightning and hurricane blacks and swirling grays and browns stirred up.



THIRD AND FOURTH CREATION PANELS:
SEPARATION OF LAND FROM WATER AND CREATION OF SUN, MOON AND STARS

The third panel celebrates the separation of water from land and the bringing forth of green, growing things, plants yielding fruit, trees of all kinds, a rich statement for a church situated across from a beautiful city park. The creation of *earth, sea, fruit* and *tree* and “God saw that it was good.” Always with sweeping, creative lines rising up, the creative genius of God, still forming things, still creating as time goes by.

Panel four—day four—celebrates the creation of *sun, moon* and *stars*. And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky ... and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years ... ” And so we are blessed with day and night, sky and stars, by days-end on the fourth day. Now, we can lie on our backs in the park at night and see the stars, enjoy the sun by day and the moonlight by night.



FIFTH AND SIXTH CREATION PANELS:
CREATION OF BIRDS AND FISH AND CREATION OF HUMANKIND

Day five—the first of the last two panels where we see God’s genius at play in the creation of living, breathing things—shows the *birds* of the air and the *fish* of the sea. Note the simplicity of window design yet the complexity of colors, sign of the intricacy of creation: swarming, teeming, squalling, breeding, balanced, now endangered creation. Birds going down together, mysteriously knowing which way is warm, and sea creatures shaped as fish, with other eyes, the fish so often multiplied with loaves by our Lord, the simple meal of fish by the lake. An early Christian symbol—the fish—a sign to other Christians of belonging, after Jesus had hung from a cross and then somehow was raised up among them.

Finally, day six rises higher in glass than birds or beasts. Humans stand up and have life and responsibility. Threatened, endangered, yet precious in God’s sight —human in so many different forms, colors, religions, persuasions, all made in God’s image. “And so God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.” Note our *tall, androgynous figure* simply clothed, standing among us neither distinctly male nor female yet clearly fully human, presiding over creation in panel six tending the green garden of God, with long fingers extended, not grasping, not greedy, not clutching but rather open, extended, caring somehow it appears; caring for all that is created by God as are we created male and female by God in God’s complex, mysterious image.

Multifaceted, textured, breakable, like fine glass. God’s light shining through.



FIRST AND SECOND OLD TESTAMENT PANELS: RAINBOW AND NOAH'S ARK

Hope for Physical Survival

Genesis 6-9 tell the long Noah narrative. The world was a mess. God was ready to strike the record clean, deeply hurt from creation. Long-fingered human caring and loving had become tight-fisted greed and selfishness, squandering God's bounty and trampling God's ordered goodness. Noah embodied God's faithful, long-suffering love the everlasting hope of salvation.

The first two panels portray an abiding hope—hope for physical survival and God's promise never again to destroy creation. The *ark* symbolizes renewed creation, a second chance for us all. Noah, a man righteous and true to God, becomes God's slender shoot for the survival of the species.

The panel is still cut of grays and watery blues, though new with rainy, stormy lines marking the moment, the separate waters of the creation beneath the simple vessel, as it rides upward on the waves, turbulent, yet rising against the background of blue-gray chaos.

A partial *rainbow* rises high above the ark, vivid in color, announcing that God saves creation. The creative, still forming genius of God, redeeming us as time goes by. Suggested here is the partial rainbow, pointing, open-ended, perhaps backward in time toward creation to the panels featured in the transept. Note the similarity of water in creation and the water beneath the ark, God's creation surviving, a second chance.

The rainbow points toward the creation panels—living, breathing things: birds mysteriously going down together, all types of fish in the sea—all passengers of a tiny ark alive and treasured and pointed hopefully upward in the watery waves, boat and creation together balanced, yet fragile, precarious, endangered.

The rainbow points with hope and forgiveness back toward day six, to the simply clothed, androgynous human being rising higher in glass than birds or beasts, standing up with open hands, newly alive with hope and responsibility—a second chance, presiding afresh over creation tending the green garden of God, long fingers extended, not grasping, greedy or clutching but rather open, extended once again, caring somehow. And care we must, care for all that is created by God.



THIRD AND FOURTH OLD TESTAMENT PANELS:
BURNING BUSH AND AARON'S STAFF

Hope for Deliverance

The left panel is rooted in Exodus 3 and 7, which tell of an emerging people, a people called by God into being. To the left is an exquisite depiction of the *burning bush* as proclaimed in Exodus 3. Exiled Moses, tending his father-in-law Jethro's flocks in the wilderness, encounters the Lord God in a flame of fire out of a bush. Scripture says: "...God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Come no closer! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'"

Here, cut in glass, is the hope for deliverance embodied in Exodus by Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Moses, the appointed leader, called from a bush whose holy flame never goes out; Aaron, the speaker and interpreter, whose serpentine staff epitomizes God's abiding presence and power—God's miraculous authority to deliver His people against the odds; and Miriam, the prophetess, poet, worship leader and musician, whose window is on the floor of the sanctuary, not resident in stained glass, but infused in the singing, worshipping human heart.

The panel to the right of the burning bush is the *staff of Aaron*, turned from a *snake* by God's miraculous might, sign of God's wonders on behalf of his people no matter how great the task before us, no matter how daunting the challenge.



For us today the bush of fiery reds and living greens and the wooden, yet snake-like staff cry out to say that with God, all things are possible, that through God, deliverance is assured. We need have faith alone. That is the stained glass proclamation before us. God's fire shall never burn down. God calls us to serve him and gives us what we need to do his will. The power of his unquenchable fire. The hope of his miraculous staff to lead us through any wilderness.

The rod was used by Aaron and Moses at different times as a sign of God's presence in deliverance—a people delivered—through the Red Sea waters into a land flowing with milk and honey, a place of promise and covenant.

FIFTH AND SIXTH OLD TESTAMENT PANELS: MILK PAIL AND HONEYCOMB AND RAM'S HORNS

Hope for Security

The left panel depicts the Hebrew hope for security in *honeycomb* and *milk pail*. As the slaves of Egypt made their long trek from bondage to covenant freedom, they grumbled and trekked toward a vision of land and settledness; a land flowing with milk and honey. Security is symbolized as enough to eat—milk and honey—so that God’s people would not be hungry:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
... your rod and your staff—they comfort me.”

Placing our hope in God, we shall not want—across any valley, through any wilderness or over any sea. The *ram’s horns* had multiple symbolic functions—they could be the containers of nourishment, symbols of plenty and escape from want. They could also be musical instruments, trumpets with which the Israelites encircled Jericho as walls came tumbling down.

The ram’s horns are at once signs of plenty, power and song. We are, with God, a people of plenty, power and song! Here, in robust color and variety, they epitomize the entrance of the Hebrew children into the land of promise: Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land given unto them by the God of the unquenchable fiery bush, the God of might and miraculous rod, the God of exodus and watery deliverance. Through the watery chaos of slavery, the new people are brought forth into freedom with the ordering and responsibility of covenant, of law and the restless search for justice as God’s new creation.



SEVENTH AND EIGHTH OLD TESTAMENT PANELS: TEN COMMANDMENTS AND SCALES OF JUSTICE

Hope for Justice

The final north nave window, cut in half by the balcony, symbolizes the hope for justice. The upper window depicts the *tablets* of God's law as recorded in Exodus 20 and the lower window the *scales* of justice, always to be kept in balance, as the Hebrew experience rose and fell through times of injustice, prophetic calling, exile and restoration.

The cutting in half of tablet and scales windows is suggestive of the injustice that continues to slice our society in half. With each generation, challenges arise to bridge the gap because the injustice is always with us and God's call for justice is always cut off from the reality. Here, we have in architecture and theology, a summons in stained glass. We must strive to bring the two portions of the window together.

Jesus said in Matthew's gospel, "For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me" as the woman anointed him with costly ointment. His comments are poignant and prophetic. Yes, we shall always have the poor with us. Yes, we always seem to be cut off from true balance, sliced in half by unfairness in heart, systems and structures. What must we do from year to year, from generation to generation as Jews and Christians, as Micah would have us do: live justly, love tenderly, walk humbly?



FIRST AND SECOND NEW TESTAMENT PANELS: RISING SUN AND MANGER WITH CROSS

Hope for a Messiah

New Testament symbols of hope begin at the back of the sanctuary and follow forward along the south wall to the front, creating a full circle inside the nave, an expression of completion—God’s encircling love for the community. We are loved. The windows want to say that about God as they “encircle” us with both Testaments surrounding us with glass messages of hope.

So we come again to theology in glass—giving us identity, mission, igniting imaginative possibility from the middle of one century into the beginning of the next in these uncertain times.

As we enter the sanctuary from the Tamm entrance, the first window to our right is the *manger with cross*, which symbolizes the sun of righteousness, the union of birth, death and resurrection.

So it is with us as we enter, acknowledging at once in coming to this place the complicated interaction of all our births, our deaths, our brokenness, our hunger and our need for renewal, for rising up with healing on our wings.

The striking, split image in glass promises, with each new dawning and *rising sun*, the One for whom the ancients yearned, Emmanuel, God with us. The direct reference comes from the prophet Malachi 4:2 and the prophet’s hope for a messiah: “But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.”

The transept glass for day four of creation has the same bright sun. This Jesus of Nazareth is the One who completes creation by his rising, the healing in his resurrection wings. The Promised One of Israel completes creation in human form, and the sun is symbolic of the Messiah, imprinted as it is with the Greek letters *IHC*, the first three letters in the word for Jesus. Greek is the major language of the New Testament, and *IHC* is an earlier version of *IHS*, also a sacred monogram for the name Jesus.



THIRD AND FOURTH NEW TESTAMENT PANELS: CROSS KEYS AND THREE CROSSES

Hope for Forgiveness and Redemption

The *cross keys* symbolize a complex set of openings: the unlocking of us from sin through the cross and the keys to the kingdom given to Peter in Matthew 16. Peter's failures and his forgiveness are in the form of keys shaped like a cross for he was the one who denied the Lord three times yet the one in whom Jesus established a new resurrection community.

Keys in the shape of a cross show us that we have the means to unlock the kingdom's power. We, like Peter, sin and fall short. God in Christ, who has once and for all purchased us with his love, still seeks and saves us. God has not given up on this world.

Note the *three crosses* sharing the same, tiny plot of ground. Jesus carried his cross up Golgotha and hung there to die between two thieves. Christ comes to us and shares our common lot, our small plot of ground. For as He ministered to the two men dying beside him that day, He continues to minister unto us to share our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

What does "hope for redemption" mean? Through his sacrifice on the cross He has bought us and paid the price for our salvation through his own body and blood. When we say hope for "redemption," we mean the supreme act of God who pays the price for us in Christ. But not for us alone, for "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son."

That love, that redemption is given for all.



FIFTH AND SIXTH NEW TESTAMENT PANELS:
CROWN AND ANCHOR AND BOUND REEDS WITH ATTACHED BLADE

Hope for the Kingdom of God and Brotherhood

The *anchor* is the ancient symbol for hope and an early symbol found in Roman catacombs and referenced in the letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20: “... we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

We travel through the waters in this nave whose sure and steadfast anchor is our hope in Jesus, the high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—priest and king, blessing to Abraham, whose sacrificial meal is noted in the chancel communion windows.

The *crown*, a metaphor for king, kingdom and authority, can be found in Revelation 2:10: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

The strange-looking image in glass to the right of the anchor and crown is the *fascis of bound reeds*. Dating back to Roman times, bound reeds with attached blade were a symbol of authority and power in times of negotiation.

The fascis—or bound reeds with blade—call us into covenant with others. The Christian life and our hope for the kingdom are made flesh as we bind together, creating a sharp, keen, united force to work with authority in common cause to bring the kingdom closer.

This motif is clearly part and parcel of who we are as the United Church of Christ. It is our denominational heritage and our future calling to seek common ground with other Christians, for example, to move forward on mergers of Evangelical and Reformed, of Congregational and Christian, of United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ, of new engagement with Presbyterians and Evangelical Lutherans and other communions around the world or across the park.

The bound reeds and sword, the call to brotherhood and sisterhood, are meant to be our lifeblood, our self-identity and our mandate to live out the prayer of Jesus that we might all be one.



SEVENTH AND EIGHTH NEW TESTAMENT PANELS:
TRIANGLE WITH CIRCLE AND GATES OF HEAVEN

Hope for Eternal Life in Christ

The right panel shows the open *gates of heaven*, with the ubiquitous *Chi Rho* symbol for Christ. Christ's forgiving, redeeming presence is in all of life's joys and sorrows, in birth and life and death unto eternal life. Glass arches of the doors point upward as though striving for spiritual growth, as we must in this lifetime. And one day in God's own time and way, we shall be received through those opened doors to eternal life.

In the left panel, eternity is symbolized by the *circle* because it has no beginning and no end; the *triangle* woven into the circle indicates once again the centrality of the Trinity as theological bedrock for us: God as Creator, Christ and Spirit. Recall the very first transept panel of the creation story, the use of a triangle for the first day of creation—God in three persons, we believe, was present at the beginning and shall ever be present even unto eternity.



CHANCEL PANELS

The richly colored panels of the altar window silently receive the dawning eastern sky. Together, they surround the resurrection cross. Together, they rise up, celebrating the Lord's supper. These chancel windows depict biblical stories grounded in both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament.

Both colorful chancel panels rise up around the cross, embracing the cross, enhanced, balanced, beautiful and distinct. Some images come from scripture. Some come from legend. Some images are obvious and clear. Some are more subtle images that are shrouded, seeking explanation and needing a closer, meditative look. The windows are intertwined between the Old and the New Testaments, as the Seder/Passover meal is intertwined with the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday.

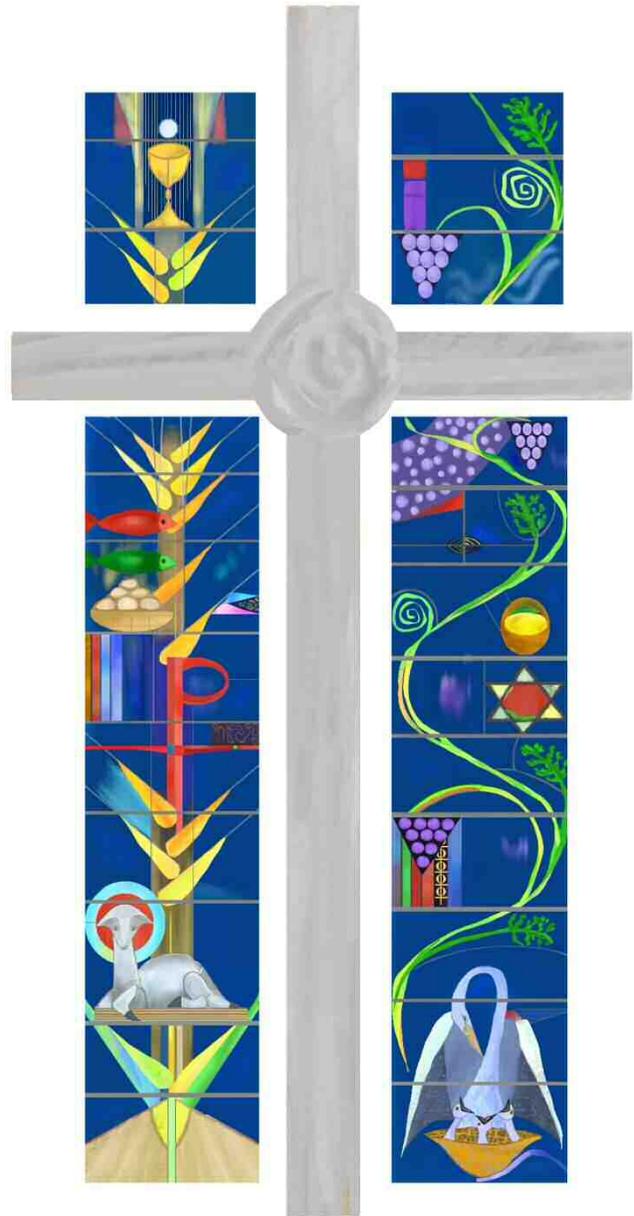
The panel on the left of the stone cross offers a variety of symbols that speak of wheat or bread; the panel on the right of the cross offers a variety of symbols that suggest wine, grapes and blood. Woven together, theologically, are the centrality of bread and wine at the high place of this sanctuary front and center of our common life, a weekly proclamation about who we are as a people who gather—people of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Note dark blues as background, which suggest waters not only of our Baptism but also of life-giving waters that nourish both *wheat shafts* and *grape vines*. Waters keep the faith alive, vital, greening. Clear are the *cup* and *wafer* at the top of the left window. These are symbols of the Communion service and are made clear, too, when the cup at the top left is united with the brownish, rounded, loaf at the middle of the right panel. This is the story of Melchizedek's sacrifice of bread and wine, the first such sacrifice offered in scripture.

The *fish* and *loaves* midway down the left window recall the miracles noted in the gospels in which Jesus took a small portion of each and made of them meals for 4,000 or 5,000 hungry people. Also suggested is the nature of communion—a miraculous, yet common meal open to large numbers people of all ages: men, women and children.

The brilliant red *Chi Rho* letters in Greek look like a capital "P" with a cross beneath it, symbolizing the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ. Christ whose presence is celebrated at every meal offered here.

The *Lamb* reclines near the bottom left, which is a symbol in Hebrew scripture for the tradition of sacrifice. For us as Christians, it is the symbol of Jesus, the new Passover lamb.



CHANCEL PANELS—CONTINUED

At the right panel's top, note the *gray-speckled sweep* of glass moving upward to the lower right of the center of the stone cross. Exodus records God's blessing of manna from heaven, which kept the Israelites alive for 40 years of wilderness grumblings and wanderings until God brought them to the promised land.

The *Star of David* on the right panel midway down again brings testimony to the richness of Hebrew metaphors. Here the designers see a complex image: both Star of David and a Trinitarian symbol twice overlaid. Or, from another angle, a symbol by its shape of the six days of creation, a statement of creation's completion now celebrated in Christ's saving love through the Table.

There are seven separate *stems* with either *grapes* or *leafy blooms*, suggesting the number 7, which in scripture was often a numeric symbol of perfection. Finally, at the bottom of the right window is the legend of the *pelican*. It was told that the custom of the pelican was to prick her side in times of dire need and to feed her young with her own blood, thus forming an excellent example of Christ feeding his followers with his own blood.

This reference to Christ's feeding his followers with his own blood was first alluded to in Genesis 14 with Melchizedek who appears fleetingly and mysteriously. This passage is enigmatic, stands utterly alone and according to scholars, is enormously difficult to interpret. Melchizedek was probably a king of the ancient city of Salem—the city of Jerusalem as it was known before the Israelite conquest. Melchizedek was not a Jew but a Canaanite and may have been a high priest and king of Jerusalem. He was said to have met and blessed Abraham in a ceremonial meal after a successful battle. At that ceremonial meeting between the victorious Abraham and the hosting Melchizedek, the priest/king offers bread and wine as a sacrificial meal. Abraham in return offers a tithe to the priest Melchizedek.

The mysterious letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament suggests that this sacrificial meal offered by the high priest and king is a forerunner, or foretaste, of the meal offered by Jesus, the perfect high priest in his own sacrifice of body and blood in Jerusalem.

The glass designers understood this as the first written sacrificial meal in all of scripture. In this theological affirmation, we have a harbinger of the Eucharist of Jesus Christ as early as Genesis 14.

The connection here is in Christian interpretation and not in the original intentions of the writer of Genesis. Melchizedek's authority, his lack of any named ancestors and descendants and his dual role as priest and king have led writers, including the unknown author of Hebrews, scholars and glass cutters to see in him and the priestly function he offered as a foreshadowing of the Messiah, especially in Hebrews 7:1-10. Although there is no legitimate historical connection made between Melchizedek and Jesus of Nazareth, the writer of Hebrews claims that Melchizedek, whose sacrificial bread and cup appear in our chancel window, is a forerunner of the mystery of God's free gift in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ that foreshadowing has come to full fruit and the power of life is given to us, especially in the sacrificial meal once offered by the high priest Melchizedek and now consummated in Jesus of Nazareth, the ultimate sacrifice.

The shadowy figure of Melchizedek reflects something of the nature of Christ's priesthood: the dual role of king and priest, its mystery, its timelessness, its superiority to the old order. Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek and superseded the old order of the priestly line of Aaron the Levite, the new line to which King David later belonged and the line from which the Messiah King, Jesus, would one day descend.

Here, too, cut in glass, the hope for deliverance, embodied in the Exodus story of manna in the wilderness. Moses and Aaron had their hands full. The people grumbled. They remembered that at least in slavery in Egypt there were three meals a day and they thought they wanted for nothing. They cried out against Moses and Aaron, their leaders.

CHANCEL PANELS—CONTINUED

In Exodus 16, God miraculously provided a gray-white porous substance, appearing like dew on the desert floor each morning. God instructed Moses and Aaron that the people should take just enough to eat for the day and trust that God would provide daily what the people needed during the wandering years.

God provides. Not by our earning or doing but rather by God's free gift of grace, of manna in our wilderness. This is the stained glass proclamation before us.



BAPTISMAL WINDOW

Here at Hope United Church of Christ, the interplay of glass, timber and stone creates a rich ambience, which, through the genius of our forebears, gives a lasting shape of identity and faith. The baptismal window, the rose window in the balcony, is a window difficult to see and yet, it is always with us, presiding over us, giving us our marking, our sacred identity as we come and go from this place.

The Tamm Avenue entrance to this house of faith is marked by this beautiful, brightly adorned baptismal window. A theological statement: we come to faith via baptism and then are sent forth into the world, a people washed into Christ and his love. The shape of the building says that clearly. We gather in a nave designed as a sailing vessel and shaped as a cross vertically from narthex to chancel, crossing horizontally from transept to crib room.

This baptismal window is just over our heads as we enter, quietly welcoming and then sending us forth. It silently presides over us always, though not always visible because of its location in the loft.

Baptism is invisible, nearly taken for granted, and yet always present and powerful for us as people. In the afternoon, the sun pours through the reds, greens and deep blues, throwing light on the backs of pews and across the carpeting of the center aisle, washing the place with light, blessing us.

Prominent among symbols here are *vine* and *branches* as noted in scripture from the gospel of John. Baptism is the engrafting of the branches to the vine: Christ is the vine, and we are the branches. That the vine is a symbol for Christ is not only clear in John's narrative but is made crystal clear in the *Chi Rho* symbol, which courses through the rose window from top to bottom—almost lost from sight by the stone cross shadowed from the outside of the building. The Chi Rho, a symbol for Christ in Greek, is topped by a *crown* indicating the kingship of Christ—remember the crown in the fifth New Testament panel on the south wall of the nave—the crown is symbolic of Christ's kingship.

BAPTISMAL WINDOW—CONTINUED

The upper left portion of the window features a *shell* from which pours the waters of baptism, which continually water the base of the vine as if to nourish the union of the vine and branches and the ever vital, greening relationship between Christ and church. There is no end to God's desire for relationship with us. It is continually watered and growing. We are carefully grafted to the living vine.

The Matthew baptismal text, clearly noted in the glass, reads: *"I baptize Thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* The language dances out in the bright glass with the presence of symbols for the three persons of the Trinity—the *triangle* announcing the Father, the *Chi Rho* celebrating the Son and the rich, red *flame*, fueling the Spirit's holy fire.

As each day traverses from morning toward evening, the sun moves from the chancel to the east to the baptismal window to the west. So, too, our baptisms continue, invisibly and quietly, to wash us with light, to bathe us in Christ's love: we are the engrafted branches and He is the living vine.

The deep watery blues as continually poured out from the shell want to spill downward into the nave. Baptismal waters wash over the balcony railings down into the nave windows of deep water, in a gray-blue background, washing and cleansing this people of hope.

Baptism—over our heads, silently, invisibly present to us from day to day from the rising of the sun to its setting—marks us for ministry. Baptism authorizes us to serve. Baptism launches us by life-giving water, pouring down upon us, as each one reaffirms his or her baptism as we enter this sanctuary and renew our adventure of faith.

Baptism is deeply personal, yet profoundly communal. Baptism is a rite of passage for the church community. When a new member—infant or adult—is "grafted" into this body of Christ, it calls us as a church to remember our baptisms, to be thankful to God, to assist others in discerning the God-given gifts that come through the red doors and to go out once again into the world.

The silent invitation in glass is to move in and out—not only into a building here by the park but also into a set of relationships that grow and are nourished by the waters of creation and the waters of our re-creation in Christ.

Each time we pass through these doors, we renew our baptismal vows so as to prepare for yet another week of living bathed in light, washed in grace and watched over in love by the Triune God. In and through Baptism, we are all made one; think of the implications of that statement for world peace—for reconciliation among nations and among persons estranged.

With the baptism of Jesus, the God-man is washed into our humanity, into our yearnings, hopes and hurts, our sorrows, joys and folly. As the God-man is washed into our humanity, we, through our baptisms, are lifted into his divinity, heaven comes to earth, and earth rises up to heaven, like a window high above us in the balcony.

Baptismal water brings order out of chaos. When God set creation into motion and spun the planets, separating water from land and light from darkness, He called things into being and gave them names, ordered and bestowed blessings and called it all good. Baptismal waters signal identity and give us our name among names. Baptism indicates belonging.

To come through these doors is to come for baptism, to renew one's baptism, to draw near to God who calls us all by name and washes us clean and makes us a new creation in Christ.

BAPTISMAL WINDOW—CONTINUED

This beautiful round window over our heads each week reminds us of the blessedness that comes upon our heads and more than that, into our hearts, our lives and our labors. So we come through these doors each week and call each other by name, friends old and new, and as we speak, God's voice calls out from within us, renewing the promises made at baptism—fragile words flung heavenward by human beings, yet meant for all times.

The waters from the shell pour down into this sanctuary, immerse us with blessing and drown us into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. God has chosen us in baptism, gifted us, loved us first and forgiven us beyond any merit or asking, beyond any power of ours to give or even fully receive.

So what's in the glass? The power and promise of God. Our renewal for ministry in Christ who calls us each by name to follow him. Our holy belonging.

Nothing more. Nothing less.



REIGNING CHRIST WINDOW IN THE CHAPEL CHANCEL