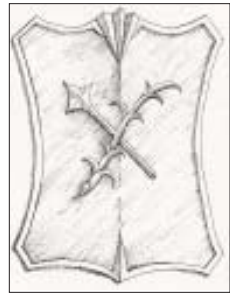
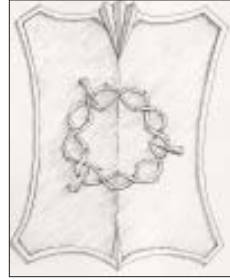


Passion

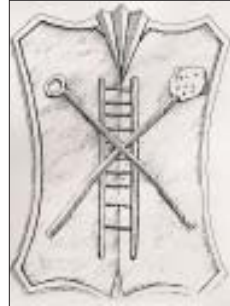
Also carved on the reredos are four shields, representing the passion and death of Christ.



The first is of an olive branch and a club, symbolizing the Garden of Gethsemane (an olive grove), and the club carried by Roman soldiers who came to arrest Jesus.



The second is a crown of thorns and three nails. The Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head, mocked him, and nailed him to the cross with three nails.



The third is a ladder, reed, and sponge. On the cross, Jesus said, "I thirst," and a ladder was raised and he was offered a sponge of wine and gall, as a mild sedative, but he refused it.



The fourth is of a pincer and mallet, used to remove the nails from Christ's body when the cross was lowered.

Spires

The acorns on the reredos spires represent life everlasting.

Baptismal Font

The marble baptismal font at the chancel was given by Dr. and Mrs. J. Edward Hodge in memory of an infant son who died in 1909. It was brought from St. Paul's first church at Milam and McGowen.



The base is designed like a Greek column to echo the design of that structure. The octagonal design in the font symbolizes resurrection.

Chairs

The large carved chair to the right of the altar is called the Bishop's Throne. The design on it and on the chair to the left of the altar continues the symbols of the altar and the reredos.



Carved on the back of the smaller chairs is the fleur de lis, or flower of the lily. This symbolizes purity, innocence, and heavenly bliss. It also stands for the Holy Trinity. The posts of the chancel rail are also fleur de lis.

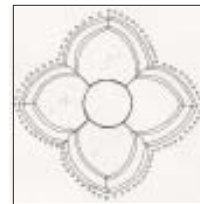
The pointed arches in the carving on the chairs, the pulpit, and the stone archways in the nave symbolize aspiration and striving for growth in spiritual life.

Other Symbols

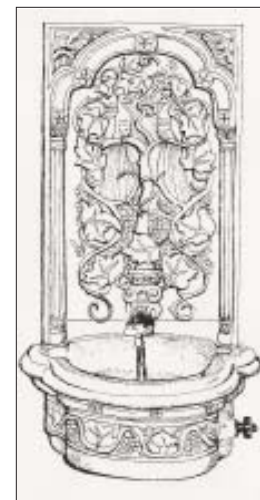
The four-circle design in the glass above the doors and in the wooden design above the doors in the narthex symbolizes the Four Gospels.

Among the many other symbols in the woodwork and the windows are the triangle, trefoil, and circle.

The triangle symbolizes the three persons of the Trinity.



The trefoil, or three circles with centers removed, represent the equality, eternity, and unity of the persons of the Trinity. The circle symbolizes the eternal existence of God, without beginning or end.



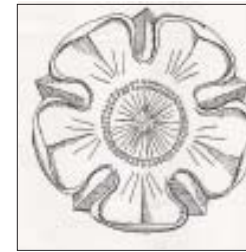
Fountain

The drinking fountain in the narthex has a ceramic frieze of two peacocks. The peacock is symbolic of eternal life.

Outside

The rich symbolism is continued on the outside architecture of St. Paul's, with the pointed arches and the rose and leaf designs in the limestone.

A magnificent statue of Christ faces Main Street. It is a replica of the famous one in the Lutheran Cathedral in Copenhagen, Denmark, done by Bartel Thorvaldsen, a 19th century Danish sculptor.



This statue was presented to St. Paul's in memory of Edna Henderson Bowles and Robert Wilson Henderson by Mrs. R.W. Henderson, Mrs. Joe Wessendorff, and Mrs. Fred Couper.

It is dedicated to "the Glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

History

The St. Paul's congregation was organized in 1905-1906. The first church building for the congregation was downtown at Milam and McGowen Streets. The congregation worshiped there until 1927, when more space was needed and plans were begun for the building of the present church building at 5501 Main Street. For additional information, see the brochure titled "History of St. Paul's."

Tours

For more about the sanctuary, including the stained-glass windows, see the separate brochure titled "A Self-Guided Tour of the Sanctuary of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston." Copies should be in the church information racks.

Group tours or guided tours during the week may be arranged by calling the church at 713-528-0527.

Location

St. Paul's is located at 5501 Main Street at Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts. Parking is free of charge in two lots across Fannin Street from the Sanctuary Building. The church is within a block of both Museum District MetroRail stops. Please cross Fannin at the designated crosswalk.

The information in this brochure was compiled by the History and Education Committee of the Altar Guild of St. Paul's UMC.

The sketches are by Alicia J. Moore.

Symbolism

in St. Paul's
United Methodist Church, Houston



*Traditional worship
for contemporary people...
beginning the next 100 years of service*

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
5501 Main Street
Houston, TX 77004
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Symbols have always played an important role in the Christian faith. In the first century, when Christians were often persecuted for their beliefs, symbols were used as a secret language. Symbols of the resurrection and of life everlasting helped maintain their morale.

In later times, the church's teaching and worship inspired other symbols that served to bring people closer to Christ. Symbols were also used for those who could not read.

Today, symbols are used to indicate pictographically the elements of our Christian faith, tradition, and teaching. Symbols are an interesting and valuable supplement to preaching and religious education.

Siting and Architecture

The way the church building is situated on the land and the architecture are as symbolic as the more readily recognized symbols within the building. The custom of building churches on an east and west line is believed to have its origin in the ancient practice of facing Jerusalem when in prayer. The entrance to St. Paul's is to the west, and the altar is to the east.

The architecture of St. Paul's is modified English Gothic. In this type of architecture, the worship area is in the form of a cross, called a "cruciform." The transepts correspond to the transverse bar of a Latin cross. Facing the altar, the north transept is on the left; the south transept is on the right.

The vestibule at the west entrance is called the "narthex." This is from a Greek word meaning "outer court." In the early Christian church, the unbaptized were not permitted to join the congregation, so they stood in the outer court, or narthex, while preparing for membership. Today, this is merely a term for the vestibule in the west end of a church.



The main body of the church proper, between the west end and the chancel, is called the "nave," from the Latin word "navis," meaning ship. In the early days, the church was the "ark" or "ship of the Lord," the ship in which Christians sailed the sea of life.

The original Phoenician temples were ships turned upside down, hence the symbolic custom of Gothic church ceilings resembling the hull of a ship. The ceiling in St. Paul's is pecky cypress.

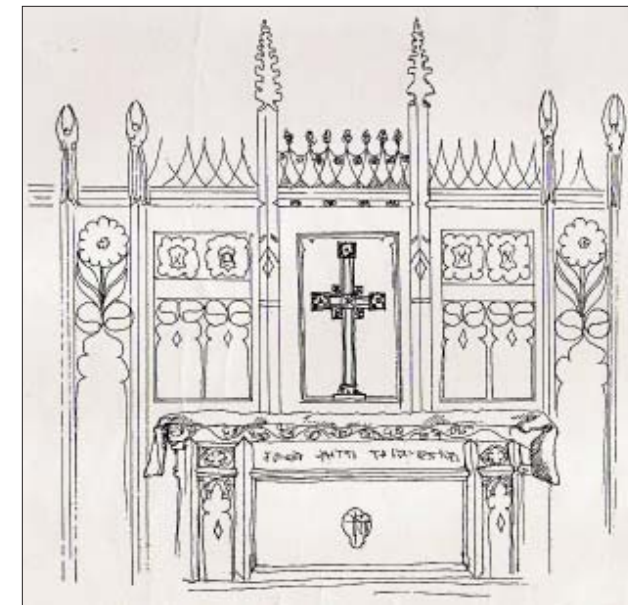
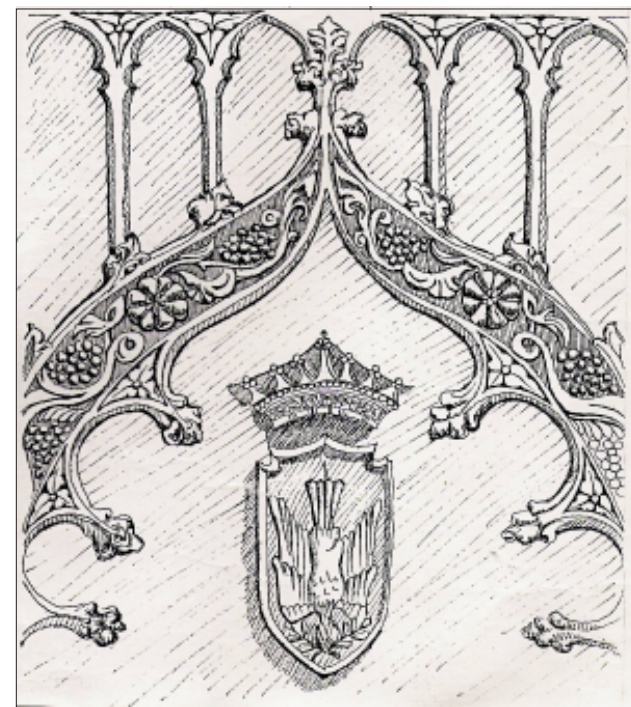
Chancel

The eastern part of the cruciform is divided into two parts, the chancel and the sanctuary, separated from the nave by a railing.

At the front of the chancel on the left side is the lectern, or Epistle side, for reading scriptures and making announcements. On the right side is the pulpit, or Gospel side, for reading the Gospel and preaching the Word.

Carved on the pulpit front are symbols of a crown and a shield containing a descending dove. (See below.) The crown is the symbol of Christ's heavenly kingship. It proclaims that he is King of Kings.

The shield signifies trust. It is also a symbol of St. Paul. In Ephesians 6:16, St. Paul describes the armor of a Christian as including the "shield of faith." The descending dove on the shield is the symbol of the Holy Spirit descending. (Mark 1:9-11)



Sanctuary and Altar

Behind the chancel is the sanctuary, or "sanctum," the holy place where the altar stands. This area also has seats for the ministers and those who take part in the liturgical functions. No doubt the idea of the sanctuary and altar came from the one in the Jewish Temple, where animal sacrifices were offered.

The Christian altar is a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and a place where we offer gifts of bread and wine to be sanctified for remembrance of his suffering and triumph.

The grape clusters, vine, and leaves carved around the top of the altar are symbolic of the Holy Communion. The 12 clusters of grapes stand for the 12 disciples. The words "This do in remembrance of me" are Jesus' words to his disciples in the Upper Room. Carved in the center of the altar are the letters "IHC." This is an abbreviation in Greek for "Jesus."



Candles and Cross

The Christ Candle by the lectern represents Jesus' words, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) Two candles on the altar represent the twofold nature of Christ - human and divine. The candles in the seven-candle candelabra represent the seven flames of the spirit. (Rev. 4:5)

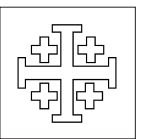
The silver cross used on the altar is a Celtic cross. A cross always reminds us of the love of God as revealed in Christ. The circle in the center emphasizes the endless nature of that love.



Another cross is carved in the wood behind the silver cross. The "X" and "P" on it are called the "Chi Rho" and are the first letters of "Christ" in Greek. The Chi Rho is one of the most ancient of all monographs used to remind us of Christ.

The cross used in processions at St. Paul's is a Jerusalem Cross. One of the meanings of this cross is that the large cross in the center represents the first Christian

church in Jerusalem founded by the disciples and the four small Greek crosses on the sides represent the four corners of the earth to which the Gospel spread. A simpler form of this cross, above right, is used as the logo for St. Paul's.



This processional cross was designed and made by Val Link, a professor in the University of Houston Fine Arts Department. It was provided through funds from Wayne Swallows and was first used in late 1996, after the sketches for this brochure were made.

Reredos

The panel in back of the altar is called the reredos (**rer** dahs). On each side is a large rose, symbolizing the promised Messiah. (Isaiah 35:1) This symbol dates back to the 13th century. The rose also symbolizes love and reminds us of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son...."



Angels

The beautiful carving at the top of the reredos includes praying angels. Angels symbolize heavenly peace. Angels in the presence of God always have been the most fitting symbol of divine praise.

On the side of the choir loft are singing angels and a lyre, representing sacred music.

