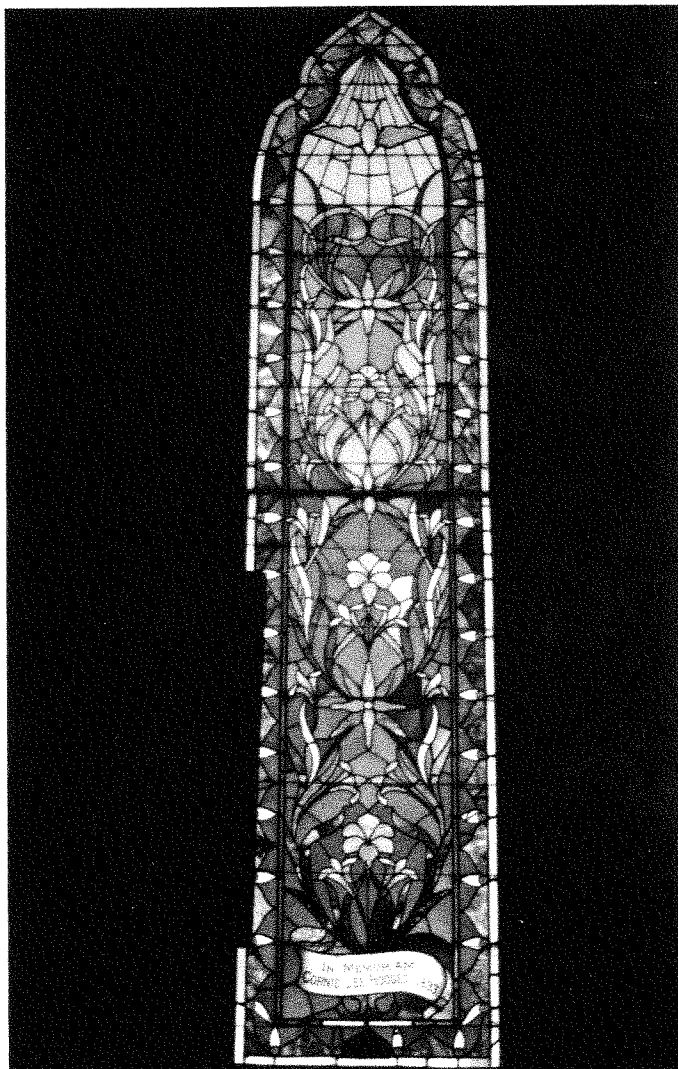


***STAINED GLASS WINDOWS
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH***

Georgetown, Texas

by
Clara Scarbrough, 1994

Photograph of Windows by Donna Scarbrough Josey



INTRODUCTION

Light is the very center of being—the force of life itself. Light can symbolize knowledge, understanding, truth, and vision. Each person's inner light can become a constant reminder that God IS light, created light, grants light, and continues to offer its gift to every person, as he did to the many, many thousands who have worshipped in this Georgetown sanctuary for more than a century. "Although it is the most ephemeral means of architectural expression, light is the most powerful," a well-known architect once described stained glass.

Georgetown's Methodist Episcopal Church, South, built its sanctuary in 1891-93 and installed the splendid stained glass windows about June 1893. The windows' Gothic Revival form harmonizes with the church's architectural design. Set against the rugged-looking, hand hewn limestone walls of the exterior, and into the simple, plastered walls of the interior, these windows transmit radiant light and focus eyes of worshippers to symbols pictured in the glass, and upward to the heavy wood beams (note the quatrefoil symbol carved there), and to the vaulted, beaded ceiling of hard pine.

Since light itself is ever-changing, so the windows reflect a kaleidoscope of varying shades, depending on the time of day, the angle and intensity of sunlight (or lack of it), or the season of the year. Before restoration of the glass in the 1960s and 70s, when clear plastic panels were added outside for protection from the elements, the windows appeared even more brilliant and breathtaking than now. A particular spot in the glass might gleam, jewel-like, and even sometimes seem to ignite, when the sun's rays strike the glass at exactly the right angle. Whatever adjectives viewers might select to describe the vast range of color and tones in the designs—muted, glowing, iridescent, or radiant—the stained glass picture is a serene backdrop for worship.

SYMBOLS

"Reverent men have fashioned visual symbols of their approach to God, and brought these symbols to a luminous and mysterious life by the living light that shines down from the sky. . . , somber and joyous, brooding and brilliant."* Interpretations of many symbols are almost inescapable, often touching into memories gathered in childhood of Biblical scenes and events. More subtle meanings may depend on the individual's interests and experiences. Red, crimson, blue, and purple

may imply the heavenly royalty of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Trefoil forms of flowers or leaves can also suggest the Trinity. Dr. Ed H. Steelman's small folder about the stained glass windows and their symbols presents a brief, lucid description with scriptural references.

A special symbol outdoors atop the spire should be mentioned. It is the fish [Greek: *ichthys*], which early in Biblical history was understood as the acrostic for Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior. Although the spire has been toppled twice by lightning strikes, the symbol has remained intact.

Before or after church, amble inside the sanctuary to study the design of the floor plan, which is based on the equidistant arms and upright of the Greek cross. The four ends of the cross create the four main walls of the sanctuary. The window pattern on these longest walls consists of one large, pointed center window, subdivided into four slender lancet panels of stained glass and a round window at the peak, and one full length window standing alone at each side, Gothic in shape. Where the arms and upright of the cross intersect at four points, pairs of shorter walls are created: divisions between the sanctuary and what were originally three vestibules and the pastor's study, on the northwest, northeast, southeast and southwest corners of the church. With the addition of a Religious Education Building in 1930 onto the west side of the sanctuary, the southwest and northwest study and vestibule became passageways into the new building.

WEST WINDOWS

"Harvest windows," as this writer thinks of them, are featured behind the altar on the west wall, so designated because of their harvest colors—rich golds, yellows, and browns, with touches of purple and green. A round medallion at the top of the center unit frames a scroll, inscribed "Holy Gospel." The Gospel refers to the good story of Christianity: its history, its doctrine, its literature, and its meaning. Stately, crossed palm branches in the left panel suggest nobility, justice, victory. A Bible with caption, "They rest from their labors," along with the palms and a nearby wreath, repeat the victory theme. In the right panel shines the sun, its life-giving rays providing bounteous harvests, and suggesting, too, that good souls can become harvests through their own lives. A sickle, a sheaf of wheat, plump wheat kernels, grapes, and grapevines continue the harvest simile. The vine and its branches, representing Jesus and his people, is also used to refer to God's mercy

and peace for his children, and to the entire community of mankind in relation to God. Wheat and grapes played an essential role in biblical times for both physical and spiritual nourishment. That thread continues to this day in the ritual of Holy Communion.

The lower section of the center window was removed during a renovation project in the early 1950s, so that the organ pipes could be moved farther back. The window was stored by a local lumber company, whose owner was a church member, with plans to incorporate the stained glass elsewhere in the church at a later date. The window disappeared, however, and church officials were never able to locate it. No description of this section has been found.

NORTH WINDOWS

On the north, one may interpret symbols of our own winter and springtime religious seasons, including the annunciation, the birth of Christ, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. The medallion circle originally displayed a large rock, symbol of the foundation upon which Jesus told Peter he would build his church. During window restoration in the 1960s-70s, the rock was broken. The replacement is a seven-pronged lamp or menorah, another symbol of light, with all its many meanings. A descending white turtle dove refers to the Holy Spirit that descended upon Jesus when he received baptism. Mary chose a dove to sacrifice after Jesus' birth. White lilies symbolize purity, which leads us to the annunciation. In one panel, three medallions, each with triple lilies, remind us of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The sun and its rays continue to spread light to all. Other panels feature two crosses, recalling crucifixion, resurrection, and redemption. An anchor, representing stability, is superimposed on one of the crosses, reminding worshipers that God is always our anchor and hope; the second cross is ornamented with a crown, denoting Christ's sacrifice, victory, and his promise of reward to faithful Christians.

EAST WINDOWS

A balcony along the east wall interrupts the visual continuity of its windows, most of them done in strong, bright colors.

The center round medallion features a homing dove carrying a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak, tapping the memory of Noah and the

ark-flood story. In the seafaring traffic of ancient times, ships customarily carried homing pigeons aboard to search for land during floods, or when ships were sailing in unfamiliar territory. To Noah, the return of the dove with its fresh leaf demonstrated that the great flood was at last receding, and symbolized overcoming the storms of life and forces of evil.

SOUTH WINDOWS

A Bible with a lamp upon it is the centerpiece of the round medallion on the south wall. Again this signifies light, or guidance: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The left window displays a dull blue-gray glass, some of which is probably not original. Mismatches or patched pieces are occasionally visible where damaged glass has required replacement. On the far right is a Latin cross, with an upright longer than the cross arms. Two wings clasp the sides of the cross, symbolizing God's protection through his Holy Spirit, the healing power and promise of peace that comes through Christ's agony and final victory on the cross. An unusual design in the lower section of the right window needs to be seen at fairly close range. It displays a stone tablet or thick scroll being illuminated by two crossed, inverted torches. The "tongues of fire" at the tips of the torches may allude to the Pentecostal experience when tongues of fire enveloped the heads of each disciple, God's way of empowering them to witness for Christ Jesus.

THE MEMORIAL WINDOWS

Five memorial windows, and a sixth presented as a special gift to the church, are among the more elaborate and original of all the windows. Brief biographies of persons so honored tell poignant stories of men, women, and children who have belonged to this church.

SAMUEL GILLESPIE SANDERS (1852-1892)

Samuel Gillespie Sanders was one of the five first professors at Southwestern University, where he began teaching in 1875 as head of the languages and bookkeeping departments. He had previously been on the faculty of nearby Salado College from 1871 to 1874. He was born in Cheraw, S.C., was graduated first in his class at Wofford College,

Spartanburg, S.C., and moved from there to teach in Salado, Texas. In 1874, Southwestern University offered him a teaching position. He accepted, with the provision that in 1874-75 he would be allowed to study at the University of Virginia to complete his Master of Arts degree. About this time, he married Mary Shipp, daughter of the president of Wofford College. His wife had a number of close relatives following teaching or scholarly careers, and Sanders was completely at home in that circle.

Soon after moving in 1875 to Georgetown and his post at Southwestern, Professor Sanders became Sunday School superintendent at First Methodist Church. He held this position until his untimely death on Sept. 30, 1892, caused by complications from appendicitis. He was just 40 years old. An infant son, John Randolph Sanders, had been born three weeks earlier, Sept. 4, 1892. That Sanders was widely known and respected is evident from a body of printed material about his death, and from this church's memorial window in his honor. It reads:

"Our Beloved Superintendent
Prof. S. C. Sanders, A. M.
Erected by the Sunday School."

[Editor's note: S. "C." Sanders should have been written S. G. Sanders—a case of typographical error in stained glass!]

The baby son, John Randolph, could never remember his father. When he neared his 100th birthday, he came in the spring of 1992 to this sanctuary for a nostalgic visit to his father's beloved church and to view the memorial that Georgetown Sunday School had placed here in his honor.

SUSAN HALE SNYDER WULFJEN (1816-1892)

Another memorial window on the west wall has a cryptic inscription that needs explaining. It reads:

"To the Memory of Our Mother
Mrs. Susan Wulfjen
Snyder Wulfjen"

A hyphen between Snyder and Wulfjen might have helped to indicate that the memorial was placed in the window by the Snyder and

Wulfjen children. Susan Hale was born Jan. 11, 1816, and was married to Charles W. Snyder in Yazoo County, Mississippi, while in her teen years. They had four children, Dudley Hiram [some sources show Dudley Hale], born in 1833; John Wesley, born in 1834; Elizabeth [no birth date available]; and Thomas Shelton, born in 1839. In 1840 at the age of 30, Charles Snyder was killed in a tragic accident, leaving Susan with the four small children. She was remarried in 1842 to John Ernst Wulfjen, by whom she had six other children before Wulfjen was killed in a gun accident. She and the ten youngsters were suddenly without a breadwinner, and Susan told the three Snyder boys, who were older, that they must try to help earn part of their livelihood.

The Snyder boys began by purchasing and selling small quantities of various products, buying where the goods or produce were plentiful and selling where they were not available. Apples were one of their first successful trading ventures. They gradually increased their purchases as finances would allow. Soon they were moving about from Mississippi into Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Missouri with their trading.

Meanwhile, Susan Wulfjen's father, Dr. Thomas Hale, in about 1851, moved to Round Rock, Texas, where he practiced medicine. Susan Snyder Wulfjen decided to move the family to Round Rock to be near her father. As the Civil War approached, the Snyder brothers were commissioned by the Confederacy to procure beef to feed the troops. Their experience in trading and traveling with produce served them well in that military assignment. After the war, the two older brothers, Dudley and John Snyder, moved to Georgetown and became partners in what became an enormous cattle business. Tom Snyder lived in Liberty Hill, but joined the other two brothers from time to time in their enterprises.

The Snyder Brothers became famous throughout the nation for their large cattle operations and also for the high standards of moral conduct that they set for themselves and the cowboys they hired. Their workmen were given three simple rules to follow while on the job: don't drink whiskey, don't gamble or play cards, and don't curse or swear. The Snyders clung to this practice throughout their years in the rugged cattle business, and became widely known for that reason, as well as for their industry and success. They were strong supporters of this Methodist Church and of Southwestern University.

Susan Snyder Wulfjen's influence over her ten children was reflected in their lives, and their devotion to her is apparent in the memorial

window. She died in Round Rock on Nov. 29, 1892, was buried in the Old Round Rock Cemetery.

CORNIE LEE HODGES (1870-1891)

A northside memorial window has a brief inscription:

"In Memoriam: Cornie Lee Hodges 1893."

Cornie Lee Hodges was born on Dec. 28, 1870, to Mr. and Mrs. James W. Hodges of Georgetown. She grew up here and attended Georgetown schools, after which she attended a school in the north to study elocution. The young lady became engaged to be married a short time later, when, unexpectedly, she died on Dec. 13, 1891, at the age of 20 years, 11 months, and 21 days, according to her headstone.

The mourning family arranged for the window in her memory.

Miss Hodges's father served as Williamson County Clerk for a number of years and was named by Southwestern University president, Dr. Francis Asbury Mood, as one of the Georgetown men who came to the University's rescue financially, when the University was in great need during the 1870s and 1880s. Dr. Mood stated that the entire state of Texas outside Williamson County gave somewhat less than \$4,000 to help keep the University insolvent, and that it was only with the aid of Hodges and the Snyders [also note Snyder memorial] that Southwestern University managed to remain alive.

WILLIAM VAUGHAN FOSTER (1890-1893)

A two year-old child, William Vaughan Foster, is memorialized in another northside window. He was the son of Dr. G. W. and Mattie L. Hoskins Foster. He was born May 1, 1890, and died Feb. 23, 1893, of spinal meningitis. No satisfactory treatment was known for the disease at that time, and descendants remember how deeply Dr. Foster expressed his frustration and grief for many years afterward, that, as a physician, he was unable to save the life of this small boy, his own son.

Sue Mood McMichael, a granddaughter of the Fosters (and great granddaughter of Dr. and Mrs. F. A. Mood), remembered visiting in the Foster home at 912 Forest Street, when she was a young girl and

played under the live oak trees. The trees were still healthy in 1993, when she and a classmate and several relatives spent a weekend in the restored home (which had become a "bed and breakfast"), for Sue's 70th class reunion at Southwestern University. In 1987, she attended consecration services for the church's new Atkin Hall and was present at services in this sanctuary. She especially appreciated seeing the memorial window dedicated to her uncle, William Vaughan Foster. The stained glass panel reads:

"William Vaughan Foster."

Dr. and Mrs. Foster had seven children, six of whom lived to adulthood; all six received their degrees from Southwestern University.

MRS. LUCY R. SHARPE (1865-1893)

A third memorial window on the north wall reads simply:

"Mrs. Lucy R. Sharpe."

She was born Lucy R. Oakley, Jan. 17, 1865, and was married to Alfred Lansing Sharp, who had decided, after he as an adult, to spell his name without the "e" in Sharp, according to family descendants. Lucy and Alfred Lansing Sharp[e] lost an infant son, named Alfred Lansing for his father. The baby was born Nov. 21, 1891, and died on May 10, 1892. A few months later, the mother, Lucy R. Oakley Sharp[e], died on Feb. 10, 1893. The "e" ending on Lucy's surname was retained on the stained glass window, but her tombstone has the spelling, "Sharp."

Family members living in 1993 were uncertain about a reason for the spelling variation, but suggested it may have resulted from political disagreements concerning the Civil War. Alfred Lansing Sharp[e], had a brother in Georgetown, Harry Seth Sharpe, who served as a Texas Collector of Customs and was a member of the first Texas Legislature to convene after Reconstruction. He always used the "Sharpe" form of his name. Lucy Sharp[e]'s husband, after dropping the "e," continued using the shorter spelling throughout his life.

MRS. A. G. BOYCE.

A stained glass window in the south wall was donated by a local cattleman's wife, Mrs. A. G. Boyce. Her inscription reads:

"Erected by Mrs. A. G. Boyce."

The donor's husband, Albert G. Boyce, moved to the Rice's Crossing area of Williamson County in 1853, where he engaged in a cattle business, rounding up many of the wild cattle that roamed along Brushy Creek. Boyce and another cattleman, Francis Yearwood, Sr., of Georgetown, worked together on the huge XIT Ranch in north Texas, and became close friends. Boyce introduced Miss Ella Josephine Coffee to Yearwood, and the couple later married. Yearwood and his bride returned to the Yearwood ranch north of Georgetown to live, and the Boyces also came back to their Williamson County ranch. A. G. Boyce promised that, if the Yearwoods would name their first son "Boyce", the boy would receive one of Boyce's fine registered Herefords. The agreement was carried out and that Hereford gift became the ancestor of a large herd of that well-known breed on the Yearwood Ranch, which the family operated for 82 years.

Besides the large, splendid windows that dominate the four main walls of the sanctuary, there are a surprising number of other colored windows throughout the building, located near the four small rooms originally forming vestibules on three corners of the church and the pastor's study on the southwest corner. These rooms filled most of the outer space created between arms and upright of the sanctuary's Greek cross. The four walls for the bell tower-spire entrance and the shorter tower on the north contain wheel-shaped windows, and extra sets of pointed windows in the taller tower. The other foyers and study originally had flat roofs. Above that roof line, on each intersecting wall, was originally a set of three high, small, slender, pointed windows, to capture the outdoor light and further illuminate the sanctuary. Of these high windows there are eight sets, or 24 singles, all visible from the sanctuary. Try to find any two sets exactly alike.

The vestibules' exterior walls do not extend quite as far as the main sanctuary's outside corner. These short sanctuary wall spaces permitted architects to include a full-length lancet window near the outer corners of the sanctuary, just beyond the vestibule's outer wall. These

eight windows can be seen indoors (never all at one glance) as the visitor looks toward one of the exits in the sanctuary, or toward the back corners near the altar. In 1930, when a new structure was attached to the sanctuary on the west side, slight variations were made in placement of these windows, where new passageways were constructed. (As this is being written in 1994, an extensive renovation of the 1930 building west of the sanctuary is underway, involving some of the windows on the west and south ends. There, the arrangements cannot be accurately described at this moment.)

A few windows in the entry rooms cannot be seen from the sanctuary. Above the main exterior doors on the northeast, two handsome stained glass transom panels in a double trefoil, or ancient crown (beehive) design, are worked in varying shades of green. The door leading from there into the sanctuary has a narrow fan-light of clear, beveled glass. The vestibules also have double-paneled stained glass windows on an exterior wall.

A casual count of all the windows varies, not only with the person counting, but often even with the same person, namely, this writer. The large window unit in the center of each main wall is obviously subdivided into five distinct sections, which some might count as separate windows. Similarly, the group of three high, small windows could be counted as one unit or three windows, and so on. Depending on the system used, the church has about 31 units of stained glass windows, or 71 separately framed panels, each panel with its own distinct design. When the renovation is done, someone may want to demand a recount.

HISTORY OF THE STAINED GLASS

Stained glass was made as early as about 300 A. D., when artisans learned to fuse metallic oxides with molten glass to form strong, brilliant, and often jewel-like colors. This basic system, with some variations, has continued even to this day. Such glass is found in many elaborate cathedrals of Europe. Nineteenth century Gothic architecture reached beyond religious buildings and used this kind of glass in institutional, commercial, and residential structures. There are a number of examples right here in Georgetown.

The source of Georgetown First Methodist Episcopal Church, South's glass, installed in 1893 when the sanctuary was built, has not been determined, and is not likely to be. We do know that it was installed by master craftsman and local Georgetown builder, C. S. Belford, of Belford Lumber Co. Mr. Belford built most of the turn-of-the century structures that survive here, and he often used stained glass, especially in churches and residences. Belford's 1893 records of his company were burned, and nothing has been found to indicate his supplier of our church's glass. Specialists in the field seem to agree that it was made in the United States. It is reasonable to believe it could have come from St. Louis. Belford obtained much of his building material from there, including metal work from Mesker Bros., who likely supplied the metal spire on the bell tower and the echoing spire at the northwest end of the sanctuary. Stained glass companies operated in St. Louis in the 1890s. Transportation from that point was direct and less expensive than from anywhere else at the time. Black Art Glass Studio of San Antonio, which restored the church's glass in the 1970s, could not identify the manufacturer, but declared it a fine quality art glass, such as was produced domestically.

Several widely-divergent sources for the windows have been suggested: one in a European country that did not exist at the time, another in a place which did not produce that kind of glass, and Tiffany, whose museum curator examined photographs of our glass and does not believe it came from that company.

The windows apparently reached Georgetown in June 1893. The Williamson County SUN of June 15, 1893, noted: "Some of the memorial windows for the new Methodist Church have been placed in position, and make quite a pretty effect." On June 22, the SUN mentioned that the southwest corner room had been furnished for the pastor's study. The first wedding was held in the new sanctuary on July 13, 1893, uniting Anne Montgomery and S. A. Hodges, as described in the SUN of that week. For more than 100 years, descendants of that couple were members of the church.

Major repair was apparently not required on the windows until about the 1960s. An extremely severe hailstorm about that time took a heavy toll on the windows, and during the pastorate of Wallace Chappell, in about 1969, church officials decided to undertake restoration. Wallace Giddings, who moved with his family to Georgetown in 1960, was one of the window committee members. They contracted with Texas Art Glass Co. of Houston to repair or replace the broken glass, and relead

it. Almost from the beginning, the committee had misgivings about the work. The company worked at an extremely slow pace, and substitutions for broken glass were jarringly inappropriate. Giddings shook his head as he recalled, "We were really seriously afraid we would never get the windows back." The contract with that firm was cancelled, but not without considerable anguish, Rev. Chappell recalled.

The window committee located Black Art Glass Studio at 3225 North Flores Street, San Antonio, and negotiated for them to correct the work already done and finish the restoration job. The Blacks were two brothers who spent most of their lives in this craft. The procedure was to remove windows from one wall and cover the space with plywood while the restoration was done. When this was finished, the windows were replaced, and another set removed. Much of the process took place while Tom Graves was pastor. The entire operation was finally completed at the end of seven years, in 1978. For Easter morning service that spring, the pastor and his wife arranged to have the plywood removed from the large window on the north side. Although the sky was overcast that day, fortunately there was no rain. At the designated point in the service, large numbers of balloons were released to float out into the sky. It was a memorable sight. A few months later, the restoration was completed. Only a few minor repairs have been made during the 16 years since that time.

Soon after restoration, the church considered, and eventually agreed, to place lexan panels on the outer sides of the stained glass wherever it is exposed to nature's elements. Although such coverings somewhat diminish the brilliance of the glass, this has become an almost universal practice.

During restoration, when the north circular window design of a foundation stone was broken beyond repair and replaced by the menorah, J. Thatcher Atkin, an active member in the 1970s, and for whom Atkin Hall is named, noticed the substitution and was not extremely happy about it. The rock symbol appealed to him and he missed it.

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