

# Te Deum Window



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Dayton, Ohio

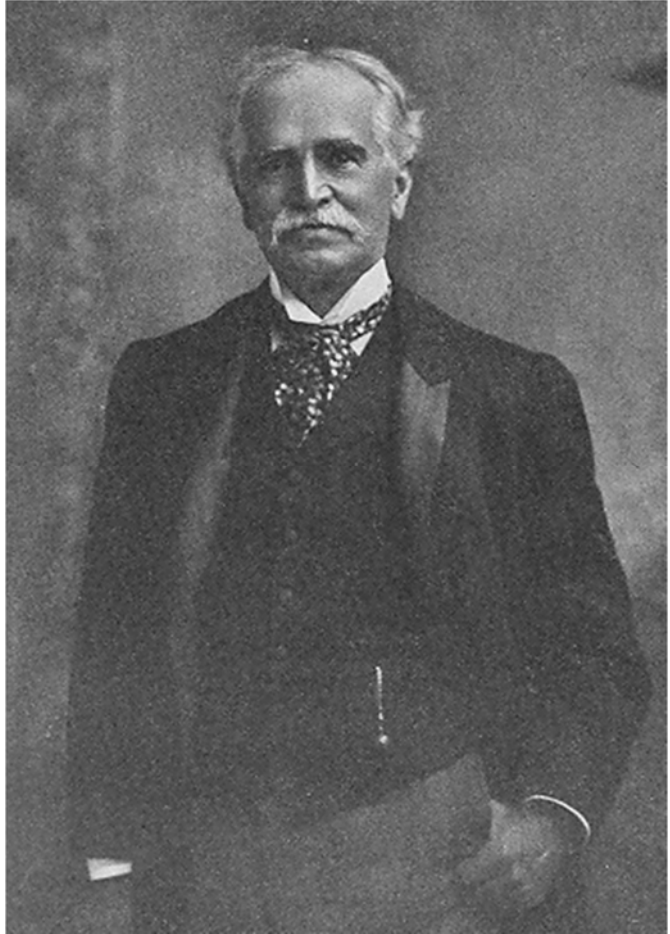
## **HISTORY**

The focal point in the Sanctuary is the Stoddard memorial window, designed by Tiffany studios, on the south wall of the church. The window was given by Susan K. Stoddard in memory of John W. Stoddard (1837-1917), who was an active and supportive member of First Presbyterian Church, Dayton, and a successful businessman, having founded the Dayton Motor Car Company, which launched Stoddard-Dayton automobiles in 1905.

The window was commissioned from the New York studio of Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1918. It was completed in 1919 at a cost of \$10,000. After a short public display in New York, it was shipped to Dayton and installed in the south wall of the First Presbyterian Church.

When Ralph Adams Cram, the nationally recognized architect, was hired to build Westminster, he initially dismissed the idea of using this window in his new design, reportedly for aesthetic reasons. Minutes of a special

meeting of the Building Committee on July 17, 1924, record his eventual reluctant acceptance that this memorial window, "though not especially good, should be embodied in the new building." Subsequently, he designed the building in such a way that with all the front doors open, one may walk up the steps from the street to the Sanctuary and have an unobstructed view of the full height of the window.



John W. Stoddard

## CONSTRUCTION

The earliest brochures about this window quote Edward Stanton George, who is identified as one of the great artists of stained glass. Mr. George was also, at the time, the manager of the Ecclesiastical Department at Tiffany Studios. He calls this “the finest medallion window in America” and adds the assurance that it is no doubt Tiffany’s masterpiece.

This is known as a medallion window because of the distinct panels within it. It is known as a triple lancet window because of the shape of the three sections, which are each tall, thin and come to a point at the top.



Louis C. Tiffany

Mr. Louis C. Tiffany was well-renowned for the unique nature and high quality of his stained glass work. In a 1922 publication by Tiffany studios, which features a picture of this window, Tiffany is described as a scientist as well as an artist, who “discovered a means of producing a material fraught with colors, surfaces and textures in infinite variety and varying degrees of transparency. It was not only opalescent, deriving its play of colors largely by transmitted light, but it was also iridescent with a permanent, metallic lustre, emitting rainbow effects by light reflected from the surfaces,” which he trademarked as Tiffany favrile glass. This window is composed of thousands of varying pieces of this multi-colored and multi-textured glass, held together by strips of lead and copper.

In this window there is a dominant note of purple, a rich and glowing color, and yet there is very little purple glass. Instead, this is the result of light shining through glass of different colors in such a way as to produce a third color.

## **SYMBOLISM**

The name Te Deum is a 5th century Latin hymn that begins “Te Deum laudamus,” which means “We praise thee, O God,” and is one of the main themes Tiffany used in designing the window:

*We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.  
All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.  
To Thee all Angels, the Heavens, and all the Powers,  
the Cherubim, and Seraphim proclaim without ceasing:  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth (Hosts)!  
The heavens and the earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.  
The glorious chorus of the Apostles,  
the admirable company of the Prophets,  
the white-robed army of Martyrs praises Thee.*

*Throughout the whole world the holy Church gives praise to Thee,  
the Father of infinite majesty;  
they praise your admirable, true, and only Son;  
and also the Holy Spirit, our Advocate.*

*You are the King of glory, O Christ.  
You are the eternal Son of the Father.  
To deliver us, you became human, and did not disdain the Virgin's womb.  
Having blunted the sting of death,  
You opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.  
You sit at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.  
You are believed to be the Judge who will come.  
Therefore, we beseech you, come to the aid of your servants,  
whom You have redeemed by Your precious blood.  
Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.*

*Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance.  
Govern them, and extol them from now into eternity.  
Day by day, we bless Thee; and we praise your name forever,  
yea, for ever and ever.  
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep this day without sin.  
Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, as we have trusted in Thee.  
In Thee, O Lord, I have trusted; let me never be confounded.*



## **CENTER LANCET**

**TOP MEDALLION:** Christ enthroned. This is designed after Tiffany's other source of inspiration: the book of Revelation. This panel is based on Revelation 4:3: "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The rainbow is also the sign of God's covenant with Noah, and is thus a symbol of hope. The trefoil outer design represents the trinity. The cross in his hand is the triumphal cross (a cross on top of an orb), which represents Christ's reign over the whole world. His other hand is raised, offering a blessing.

Beneath this panel are the words: "We praise Thee O God." These words, with those in the subsequent panels below it, begin the "Te Deum" hymn.

The quatrefoil design on the remaining center panels reflects the four gospels and the recurrent theme of four in the book of Revelation. The images in the different shields are derived from Revelation 4:6-7: "...in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle," which also echoes a description in Ezekiel 1:5-10.

**SECOND MEDALLION:** The shield of the gospel writer Matthew. Matthew is depicted with the face of a man with wings. The shield is surrounded by six people, and sits in front of pillars, perhaps suggested by Revelation 3:12: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.” Two of the six are holding up the pillars that support the throne in the upper panel. Wings are visible on two. The six, with haloes, are in white robes, and at least three are wearing crowns, as described in Revelation 4:4: “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Their depiction suggests the possibility that this group represents an order of angels called Thrones, a name taken from Colossians 1:16. Outside the quatrefoil, in each niche separately, are the sun, the moon with two stars, a planet (Saturn), and a group of stars or planets, suggesting God’s creative power of the firmament of heaven.



Beneath this panel are the words:  
“We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord”



**THIRD MEDALLION:** The shield of the gospel writer Mark. Mark is depicted with the face of a lion with wings. The shield is held by a crowned, standing angel, surrounded by eight people. The people, with haloes and the suggestion of wings, are in white robes, and at least the two in front are wearing crowns. Their depiction suggests the possibility that this group represents an order of angels called Dominions, a name taken from Colossians 1:16. In front of the people runs a banner that quotes Mark 1:8: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Beneath this panel are the words:  
“All the Earth doth worship”



**FOURTH MEDALLION:** The shield of the gospel writer Luke. Luke is depicted with the face of an ox with wings. The shield is surrounded by four people, and sits under the face of a cherub, over an altar, perhaps suggested by Revelation 16:7: “And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” The four people, with wings and haloes, are in white robes, but not wearing crowns. They are leaning on walking sticks. One is wearing a military helmet, which suggests the possibility that this group represents an order of angels called Virtues, based on the four cardinal virtues: temperance, prudence, fortitude, and justice.



Beneath this panel are the words:  
“Thee, the Father Everlasting”





**FIFTH MEDALLION:** The shield of the gospel writer John. John is depicted with the face of an eagle with wings. The shield is held by a crowned, standing angel, flanked by two people, with wings and haloes, seated. The person on the right rests on a sword and wears a laurel wreath. The person on the left unrolls a banner that reads, “Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” Their depictions suggest the possibility that they are from an order of angels called Archangels, with the one on the left being St. Gabriel, the messenger of God (Luke 1:19, 26-38), and the one on the right being St. Michael, the militant angel (Jude 1:9).



At the bottom, beneath this panel, are the words:  
“to the hallowed memory of  
1837 John W. Stoddard 1917  
by his wife Susan K. Stoddard 1918”



## LEFT AND RIGHT LANCETS

The peak of the left lancet contains the Greek letter alpha, set in a trefoil. The peak of the right lancet contains the Greek letter omega. This is a representation of Christ, from Revelations 1:8. Under these on both sides are the words, “Holy, Holy.”

The remaining panels contain the shields of the twelve disciples. There is a cherub face over each of the panels. The name of each disciple is below his shield. The spaces between the shields are locked into one composition by a stylized design of the True Vine, a reference to Jesus (John 15:1-5).



### LEFT LANCET

**FIRST PANEL:** The shield of Peter. Keys crossed over an upside-down cross. The keys, one silver and one gold, are a reference to Jesus’ statement to Peter in Matthew 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The different metals represent heaven and earth. The inverted cross represents a traditional belief about Peter’s death in Rome, how Peter insisted he was not worthy to be crucified in the same position as Jesus.



**SECOND PANEL:** The shield of Andrew, brother of Peter. Andrew’s cross, also called the Saltrine cross (which means, shaped like an X) with leather straps. This represents a traditional belief about Andrew’s death on an X-shaped cross, bound to it instead of nailed, to prolong the agony.



**THIRD PANEL:** The shield of James, the great. A Pilgrim’s staff, a water vessel, and a scallop shell. All three items represent long pilgrimages. These represent a traditional belief of James’ pilgrimage to Spain to be the first to establish Christianity there.



**FOURTH PANEL:** The shield of John, the beloved disciple. A serpent in a chalice. This represents a traditional belief that an attempt was made to kill John with a poisoned chalice. Further tradition says the poison transformed into a serpent before John drank it.



**FIFTH PANEL:** The shield of Thomas, the doubting disciple. A lance and an open Bible. The open Bible represents Thomas' missionary work to the East. The lance represents a traditional belief about Thomas' death by an angry king who thrust a lance through Thomas' body while he was kneeling in prayer.

**SIXTH PANEL:** The shield of James, the less. Crossed fuller's clubs. The clubs represent a traditional belief about James' death where, after first being thrown off the temple wall, was stoned by the mob, and was ultimately killed by the blows of the club of a fuller (garment cleaner), after which his body was sawed apart.

### **RIGHT LANCET**

**FIRST PANEL:** The shield of Philip. A cross. This represents a traditional belief in Philip's mission work to Phrygia, where he used the cross to chase away the serpents the people were worshipping, and his subsequent hanging at Hierapolis.

**SECOND PANEL:** The shield of Bartholomew. Crossed flaying knives. The flaying knives represent a traditional belief that, while doing missionary work in Armenia, Bartholomew was flayed alive before being crucified.

**THIRD PANEL:** The shield of Matthew. The portico of a customs house. This stylized rendition of where taxes would be paid, represents Matthew's former occupation as a tax collector.

**FOURTH PANEL:** The shield of Jude. A budded Celtic cross. This represents a traditional belief that Jude, known also as Thaddeus, joined Simon in his missionary work travels, including possibly to the British Isles.

**FIFTH PANEL:** The shield of Simon the Zealot. A saw. The saw represents a traditional belief that Simon was killed by being sawed in half.

**SIXTH PANEL:** The shield of Matthias, the disciple selected by casting lots to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:21-26). A battle ax. The battle ax represents a traditional belief about Matthias' death by stoning, followed by a beheading.





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