

## A History of the St. Marcus Sanctuary

The story of St. Marcus begins in 1872 when St. John's Lutheran Church on 4<sup>th</sup> & Prairie (now Highland Ave.), later to move to 8<sup>th</sup> & Vliet Sts., opened a branch school on Beaubian & Short Sts. (now Palmer and Garfield) to relieve crowding at their main school campus. St. John's bought a house and 50-ft. lot, conducting a one-room school on the first floor. In 1875 13 families agreed to buy the house and lot from St. John's and begin a new congregation which they called St. Marcus (named after the German way of referring to the second book of the New Testament.) Their one called worker, Rev. Joseph Westenberger, taught school all week and conducted worship services in a chapel on the second floor on Sundays.

After six years of steady growth, the congregation acquired a second lot, moved the school/house to the rear of the lots, and built a much larger frame church facing Palmer St. The interior was decorated in the German Gothic style, with an ornately carved pedestal pulpit, canopy, and altar. All were painted white and gilded. The altar's centerpiece was an oil painting of Christ in Gethsemane modeled after German artist Heinrich Hofmann's famous painting in Riverside Church in New York City.

The congregation grew very rapidly in the next three decades, however, and the congregation soon resolved to build a larger worship space. The present red brick church was begun in 1913 and completed in February of 1914. Its exterior was designed in the stylish new English Gothic style, with large square towers (but no steeples), limestone trim, wide windows with a flatter arch, and castle-like crenellations at the tops of the two towers. The interior, however, still utilized the older German Gothic style, with its dark, richly carved oak woodwork, curving balcony railing, and elaborate hymnboard surrounds. The congregation chose to keep the 1881 altar and baptismal font (and probably the pulpit and its canopy as well). The sanctuary was lit by curving rows of light bulbs in sockets placed in the ceiling plaster ribs.

Architect: Leiser & Holst

Concrete: Clos Construction

Ironwork: Henniecke Co.

Sheet metal & copper: Schumann & Roden

Plaster: Alb. Wartchow & Sons

Painting: Louis Borchardt

Quartersawn oak interior paneling: donated by F.F.C. Schroeder of Badger Sash & Door

Masonry: Gustave Jeske & Son

Cut Stone: William Erdmann

Carpentry: William Seeger

Electrical: Rohn Co.

Plumbing: Schumann & Luebke

Pews: American Seating Co.

The magnificent stained glass windows were based on designs by the German painter Heinrich Hofmann and carried out by Carl Reimann of Milwaukee (see Appendix K). Mr. Reimann probably also did the oil on canvas paintings of the women at the tomb of Christ and the Easter angels, one with a flaming sword, which are mounted high above the hymnboards.

As the 75th anniversary in 1950 approached, however, the congregation resolved to renovate and change the interior of the church. New carpeting was added, and the decision was made to remove the altar, pulpit, canopy, modest communion rail, baptismal font, and lectern. No one knows

what happened to any of those items. The light bulbs and sockets were all removed and replaced by chandeliers.

The only pieces of the 1881 church known to have survived are the stained glass window from 1900 in the north stairwell, the gilded dove underneath the pulpit canopy, the narthex memorial plaque to Rev. Ernst F. Dornfeld from 1911, and the large oil painting of Christ in Gethsemane (now hanging in the south gym lobby).

The committee chose to install blond oak chancel furniture in the Modern Gothic style, very fashionable in the 1950's. The elaborate stenciling on the walls was painted over and tall wainscot paneling was installed on either side of the altar. A small pulpit and even smaller lectern were placed on the chancel floor. A new wooden baptismal font was built. During the centennial year of 1975 artist Jerome Harders, a son of the congregation, was commissioned to carve a large blond oak cross, which was then mounted in the center of the wall above the altar in front of red velvet dossal curtains.

In 1983 St. Marcus was given the historic chancel furniture from the demolished St. Jacobi Lutheran Church on 13th & Mitchell on the south side. It had been stored in pieces in Gilbert Manske's garage for six years. Included were the altar (disassembled in pieces), pulpit, pulpit staircase, and lectern. The communion rail was given as well but it couldn't be made to fit at St. Marcus and was not installed. The beautiful yellow poplar woodwork had been commissioned for St. Jacobi in 1903 by the Hann-Wangerin-Weickhardt Co. on Burrell St. in Milwaukee.

In 1997 St. Marcus was ready for a complete chancel renovation. Marvin Ritchie of Madison painted, gilded, and installed the historic pulpit, altar, and lectern. Cabinetmaker Mark Kant of the Janesville Furniture Co. constructed a new curving communion rail and a new canopy above the pulpit. All remaining blond woodwork was stripped and finished to match the darker oak of the rest of the interior woodwork.

The polychromed woodcarving in the center of the altar commemorates the Ascension of Christ. The hands raised in blessing bear the marks of the crucifixion nails, as do the feet. The side of our Lord shows the mark of the spear. He is welcomed into heaven by four angels, here stylistically represented as little "cherubs." These four oddly enough reflect the plaster "cherub" capitals that St. Marcus already had in its chancel walls. The Eleven disciples look up from below--this took place after Judas' death, but before Matthias' election. The faces of our Savior, the angels, and the disciples are intentionally portrayed in a variety of racial features.

The holy cross is lifted up at the peak of the Altar, once bloody and sad, but now golden and lifted up high as a sign of triumph for Christians. The three letters in the altar's base, **I H S**, stand for one of Christ's titles in Latin, *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, "Jesus, Savior of Mankind."

The beautiful Advent wreath and the Christmas creche, with its Italian-made large plaster figures, were gifts of the Altar Guild. The Guild also provided all altar, lectern, and pulpit paraments and pastors' stoles. St. Marcus is unique in using gold as the color for the Epiphany season, green

for the annual Feast of St. Patrick, and also African-themed kente cloth for the paraments for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s annual remembrance Sunday and Juneteenth Sunday.

In 2012 an entirely new baptismal font and ewer shelf were built by St. Marcus member Nathan Sebald. It was designed by Amanda Gerken Raabe to match the altar and pulpit.

## The Bells of St. Marcus

The congregation's design team in 1913 wanted bells to signal the start of each worship service. There are three of them in the south belfry. They don't really *hang*—the iron yokes that hold them are mounted on axles, set on sturdy wooden trestles, and turned by large wheels on the side. The St. Marcus bells are bronze, cast in St. Louis in 1914 by the Henry Stuckstede Bell Foundry. This company at one time was the largest bell founder in the Midwest and was in business from 1855-1931.

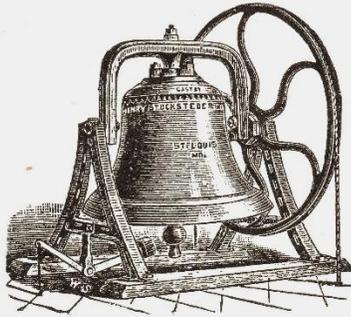
- The small bell bears the legend, "*Selig sind, die das Wort Gottes hören und bewahren*" ("Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it"), a quote from Luke 11:28. It was donated by the confirmation class (apparently of 1914).
- The middle-sized bell bears the legend, "*O Land, Land, Land, höre des Herren Wort*" ("Oh, earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord"), a quote from Jeremiah 22:29. It was given by Mrs. Julia Gaertner.
- The large bell bears the legend, "*Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe, Friede auf Erden, und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen*" ("Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men"), a quote from Luke 2:14. Underneath the large bell is a big hammer mounted on a pivot so that the bell can be tolled as well as swung. This bell also was donated by the confirmation class.

Establiert 1855.

# Hy. Stuckstede Bell Foundry Co.

1312 and 1314 So. 2nd St.

St. Louis, Mo.



## Kirchen-Glocken und Harmonische Geläute

aus reinem Ingot-Kupfer und Bank-Zinn, dem besten Glockenmetall, in jeder beliebigen Größe gegossen. Katalog mit Zeichnungen wird auf Wunsch zugesandt. Die älteste und größte deutsche Glockengießerei in Amerika. Bei Bestellungen erwähne man den Gemeindeblatt-Kalender.