



E-NEWS – Sermon December 6, 2015 – Stained Glass

To Members of Saint Mary Magdalene – until Christmas I will send this weekly news, adapted from my Sunday sermon, [remember it is a spoken sermon, not a literary composition]. It is my part to promote our need for additional funds to complete our church construction endeavors. Thank you for whatever you can do to help us.

Take a look at the end of my sermon where there is a glass design which attempts to portray simply our current challenge and efforts.

Stained Glass

Literacy rates, being able to read, did not rise beyond 30% until the 1800's. Which meant most people could not read the Bible. Preachers and teachers had to tell the Bible stories. Preachers and people were helped to remember the Bible stories by pictures, statues, and stained glass windows.

Wealthy patrons - in Rome the patrons were often the Popes - they provided funds for artists to do their work. Michelangelo was hired to paint the Sistine Chapel. He did not do it on his free time as a volunteer. There are so many paintings of the Madonna and Child and other Christmas themes that the Post Office has no difficulty finding a new one each year for the Christmas stamps.

Today's sermon is the 6th in the series of 9 sermons about our new church. The topic is: stained glass. I need to tell, or re-tell, our story. Our parish patron is St Mary Magdalene, so it was appropriate we honor her in some way in the new church. It was assumed we would never have the resources to commission a famous artist to create a window or a mosaic or a painting or something new just for us.

3 years ago we became aware of not one, but two stained glass windows of St Mary Magdalene from 2 closed churches in Troy New York. The windows were created about 100 years ago by a famous studio in Munich, Germany - Mayer studio, founded in 1847 and still in business. In the two Troy churches there were more windows than the two Mary Magdalenes.

I presented the idea to our architects and Parish Council and to the whole parish in a weekend announcement. Much to my surprise 6 parish members came forward with a total of \$100,000 to purchase the 6 windows. Later our Knights of Columbus offered \$25,000 for a Rose Window.

I was surprised at these gifts and a good bit nervous and I remember having a conversation with myself: [please don't tell anyone I do this] *'what did you just do? You have money for windows, but no money for a church to put them in.'*

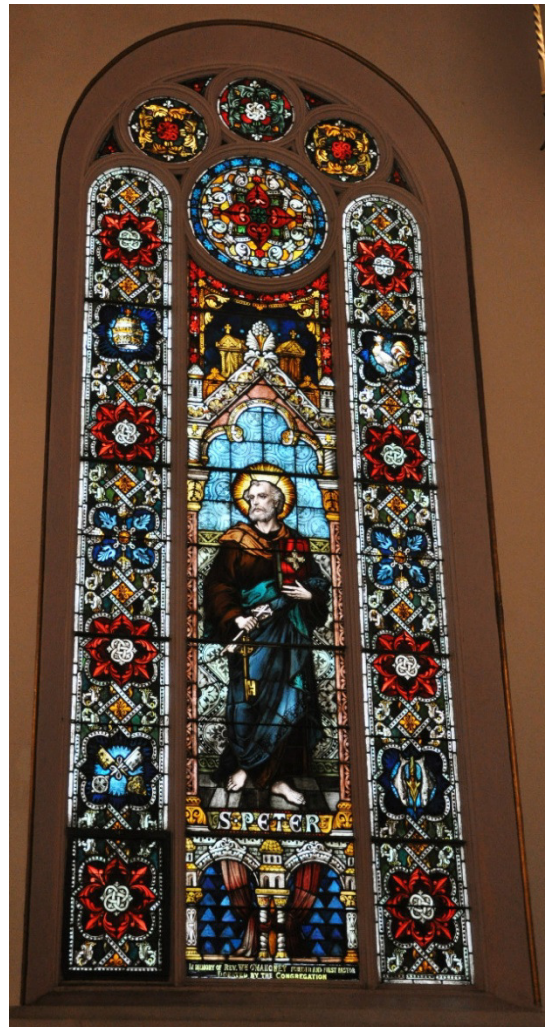
How would we be able to keep a promise to these people within a reasonable time? God has been good to us, and more people have been generous, and so we hope soon to have an announcement about that building. We are grateful to the original window donors and to all who have helped since then in the larger project.

What stories will these windows tell? We had some choices from the 2 closed churches; we choose: Annunciation of Angel Gabriel to Mary, John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, Jesus meeting the woman at the well, and Mary Magdalene at the tomb when she meets Jesus at the Resurrection.

A larger window of St Peter, the Apostle chosen by Jesus to pastor his church, will be in the center. In the back, facing west is the Rose Window, which is colorful and complex with St Cecilia in the center. She is the patron of church music. In our chapel will be the second window of St Mary Magdalene - in this one she is a beautiful young woman.

The 100 year old windows are now being cleaned and refurbished in a studio in Southern Pines. Photos of them are on our website and in the lobby bulletin board.

St. Peter



Rose Window



Side Windows

But there is still another window story: we also have 16 very tall windows, 8 on each side, windows that will allow for much light in the church. The windows will not be clear, but opaque in some fashion.

Ultimately, some day, I hope we can tell stories in these windows. They would not be traditional stained glass, but with symbols and pictures and words designed in such a way as to continue to allow for light to come in.

What stories could these windows tell? I propose: the many stories of the Old Testament. There are 46 books in the Old Testament, some books are never read on Sundays, and some books are read only once or twice every three years.

Second Sunday of Advent Reading

Question for you today: what do you know about the book read today - Baruch? Today is the only time in 3 years. Who was Baruch? When was this book written? What were the circumstances of the Hebrew people at that time? Are there any well-known verses from this book? Does the book have much relevance to us who read it today?

Next week the reading is from Zephaniah; that book is read 2 times in the 3 year cycle. The week after next is Micah - only read one time in 3 years. Consider the same questions for Zephaniah and Micah I offered today about Baruch.

If we saw the names of those books and some symbols or words from them every week on a window in church - maybe we would remember them. Perhaps we would be inspired to study them more at home or in Bible study.

At this moment trying to fashion those windows is only a dream, a vision, a hope. In my life of study in seminary and in preaching on the Old Testament I have found extraordinary lessons in the 46 books - lessons that give an insight into the lives of people who lived so long ago, and lessons that help us still today.

Baruch

Baruch was a secretary to the great prophet Jeremiah. He not only shared the life and times of Jeremiah, but he borrowed quite freely from other books we know in the Old Testament: Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel.

Baruch lived in times of the stress of the exile of his people in Babylon; he lived with people who had the everyday feeling of abandonment.

We are not in exile, but we hear every day stories of people who are. People who once had the security and safety of their homes, but they have had to flee. They know the stress of Baruch and his people.

We also know, even this week, stories of darkness and violence and fear. We know stories of unspeakable actions and the emptiness now in the homes of families because loved ones are taken away. It may be too soon to try to bring words of comfort to those who experience this emptiness.

Memorable

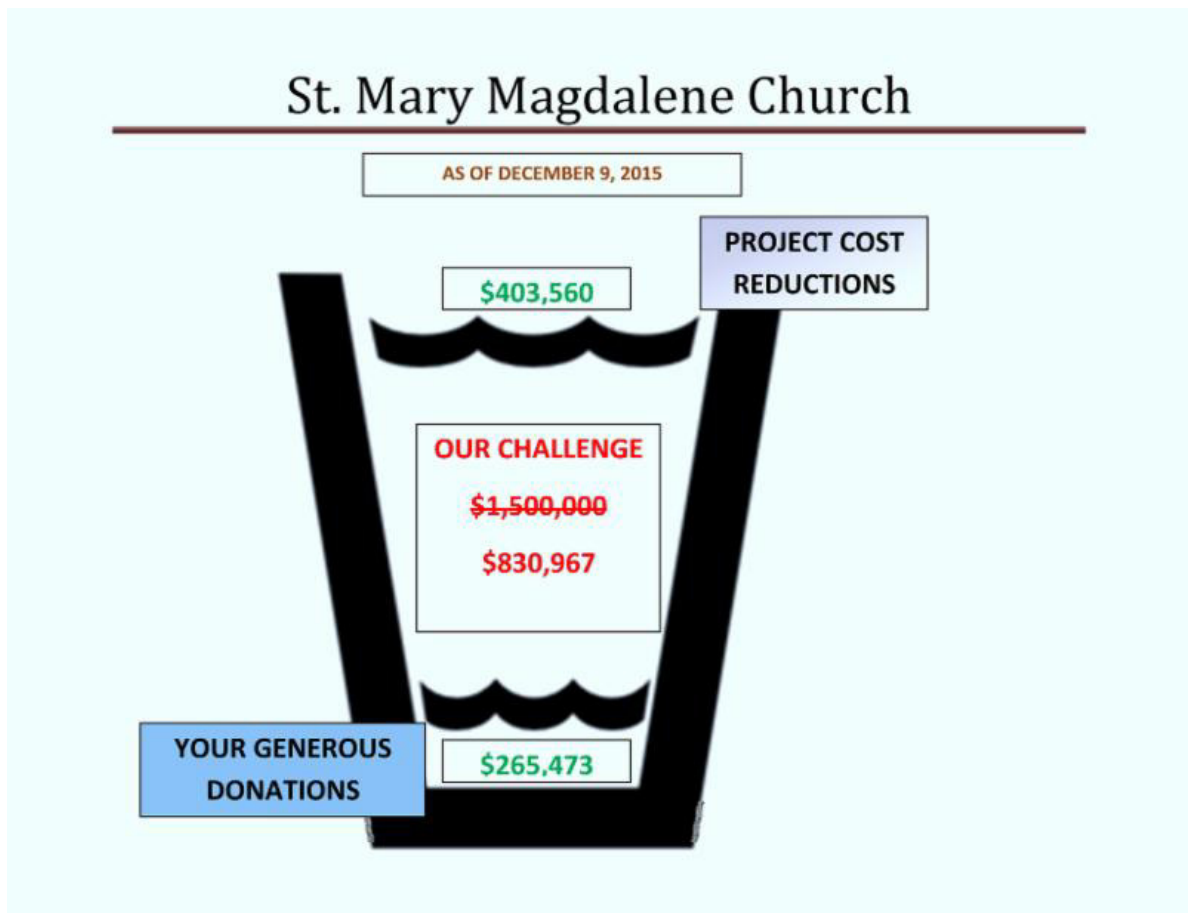
In the first sentence today Baruch wrote: '*Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery.*'

In the concluding words today Baruch makes an attempt to offer an uplifting thought: '*the forests and every fragrant kind of tree . . . overshadows . . . with God's mercy and justice for company.*'

Fragrant trees are part of our Advent preparation for Christmas. We all pray for less *mourning and misery* and for more *fragrant trees*.

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Fundraiser Glass



Bottom Line

We ask each family in our parish to pledge \$5,000 over 3-4 years. If we had a 100% response we would be underway quickly. For those who have already made a pledge/gift, please consider an additional \$2,000 pledge/gift, more if you can, to help us with these new costs. You are the ones who have brought us this far, and you are the ones who will bring us to the finish line. Many thanks.