

„ „ „ beautiful ZION

A Biblical and Artistic Interpretation of
its Stained Glass Windows,
Zion United Church of Christ,
Transfer, PA

by M. Robbie Arnold, October 2020

Zion is "the City of our God" and a place that belongs to Him. It is called "the joy of all the earth" and "the perfection of beauty" (Psalm 48; 50:2). "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).



#1 THE ROSE WINDOW

This window is located at the front right side of Zion's sanctuary, behind the choir seating area.

It was donated by congregants Mr. and Mrs. Philip Landfried in 1902, and was in place when the newly constructed Church building was dedicated that same year.

Stained glass was in vogue during this period in history. Louis Comfort Tiffany was a foremost designer and producer of both stained glass windows and lamps. His studio and production facility were located in New York City.

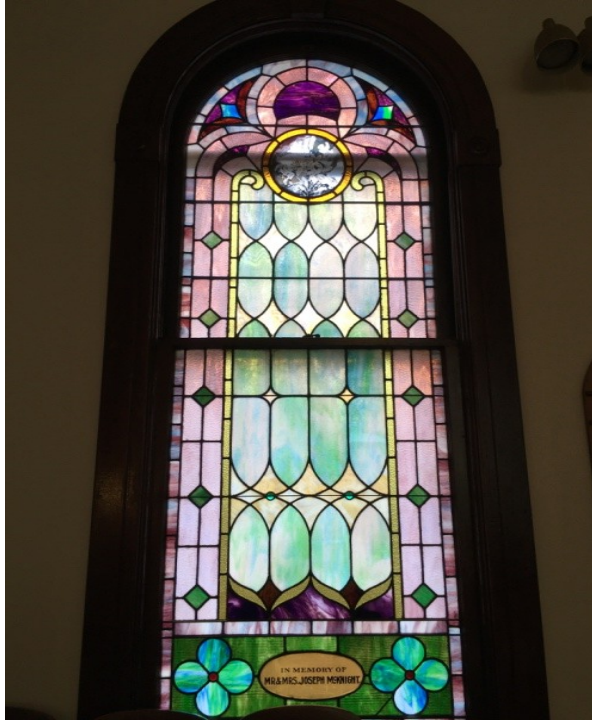
More than likely, Zion's sanctuary windows were designed and made

in Pittsburgh, PA causing them to be more cost effective. 'Local' manufacture and distribution reduced the risk of breakage of the fragile glass creations by shortening their travel over rough roads.

The Rose Window features a centered medallion depicting three entwined pink roses in full bloom. All roses symbolize God's love at work in the world as well as His intricate and elegant creative touch. In the 'language of flowers,' red (pink) symbolizes the Passion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The grouping of three roses suggests The Holy Trinity, The Three in One. The remainder of the window is made up of a balanced geometric blend of pastel hues which provide a peaceful background upon which the roses lay.

*The wilderness and
the solitary place
shall be glad for
them; and the
"desert shall re-
joice, and blossom
as the rose."*

Isaiah 35:1



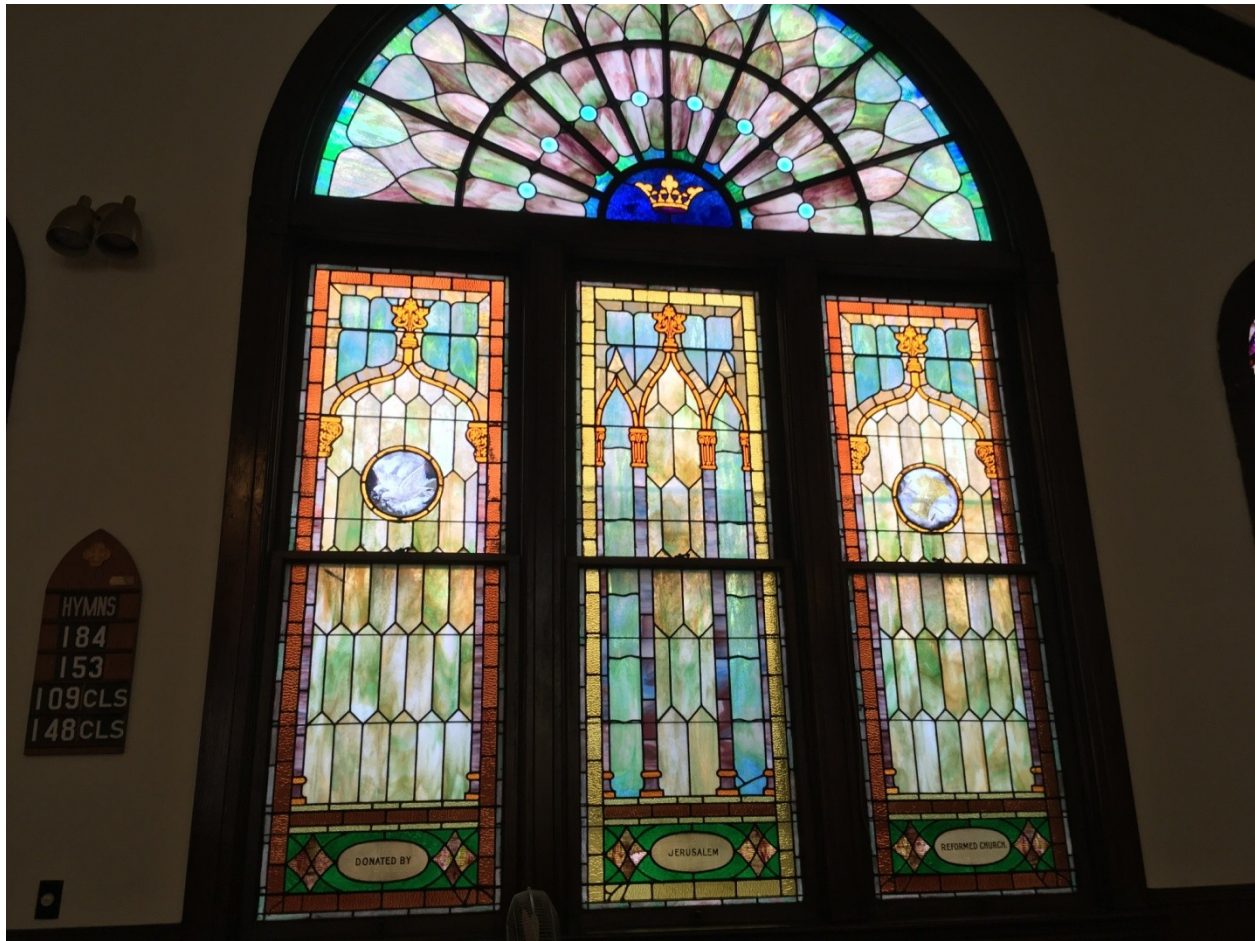
#2 THE LILIES WINDOW

Moving in a clockwise direction from The Rose Window, we see window #2. This stained glass window was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph McKnight. A geometric pattern in shades of purple and blue comprise the background. These colors represent royalty. Costly dyes made from shellfish raised in specific and privately owned bodies of water, were reserved for the clothing of princes and kings. Lydia of Thyatira, a convert to Christianity whose story is found in Acts 16:14 “was a seller of purple cloth.” In its sharp rectangles of colored glass, masculinity is suggested while the rounded edges of the ovals and ellipses add femininity.

The medallion centered at the top of window #2 depicts a grouping of white lilies. Lilies have long been associated with the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and are therefore associated with the celebration of Easter. White stands for purity and the flower of the lily arises from a seemingly dead bulb. In this presentation the lilies are encircled by a golden halo and the halo is supported on both sides by stalks of bamboo or papyrus.

A perfect four-petal flower in blue sits at the bottom of the window panel, to the right and the left of center. This may be a stylized cross upon which a small purple circle rests at the juncture, revealing Christ as the connector between life, death, and life everlasting.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear...See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.” Matt. 6:28



#3 DOVES & WHEAT TEMPLE WINDOW

This three paneled set of windows make up a majestic triptych. They were given by Jerusalem Reformed Church, Greenville, PA. Each panel projects the idea of 'temple' through depiction of architectural columns, mirroring those in the sanctuary space of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Each column also supports an arch which culminates in a Star of David-shaped finial. The triptych itself is capped by a fan-shaped window, called Palladian, in which a golden crown is displayed on a royal blue background. It is possible that the Palladian suggests a peacock's tail feathers spread open. The peacock is an artistic symbol for royalty, especially in the Middle East and ancient Egypt.

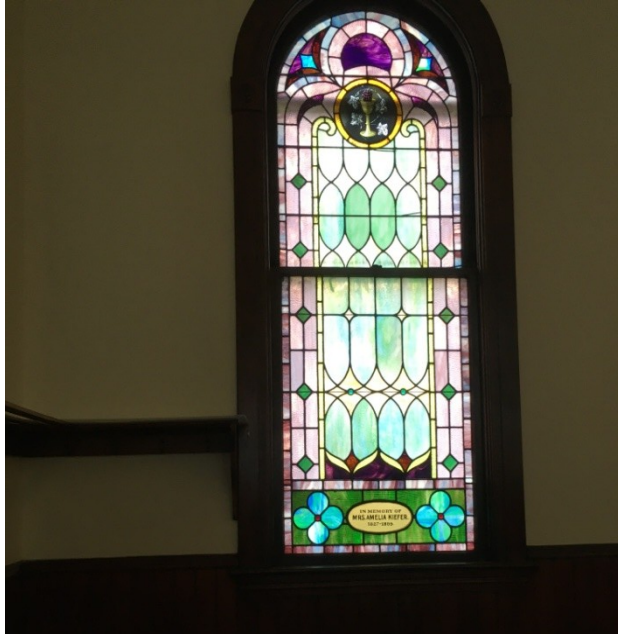
The two side windows flanking the center window, each display a center medallion. On the left, the medallion depicts white doves representing purity and peace. Doves also indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit. The medallion on the right shows a sheaf of wheat and the tool used in the winnowing process. Both doves and wheat were items of sacrifice at the Temple.

"Then John gave this testimony; I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Jesus." John 1:32

#4 THE LILIES WINDOW

This window is a twin of window #2, and was given by Mrs. Regina McKinley and Sons.

#5 THE COMMUNION CUP WINDOW



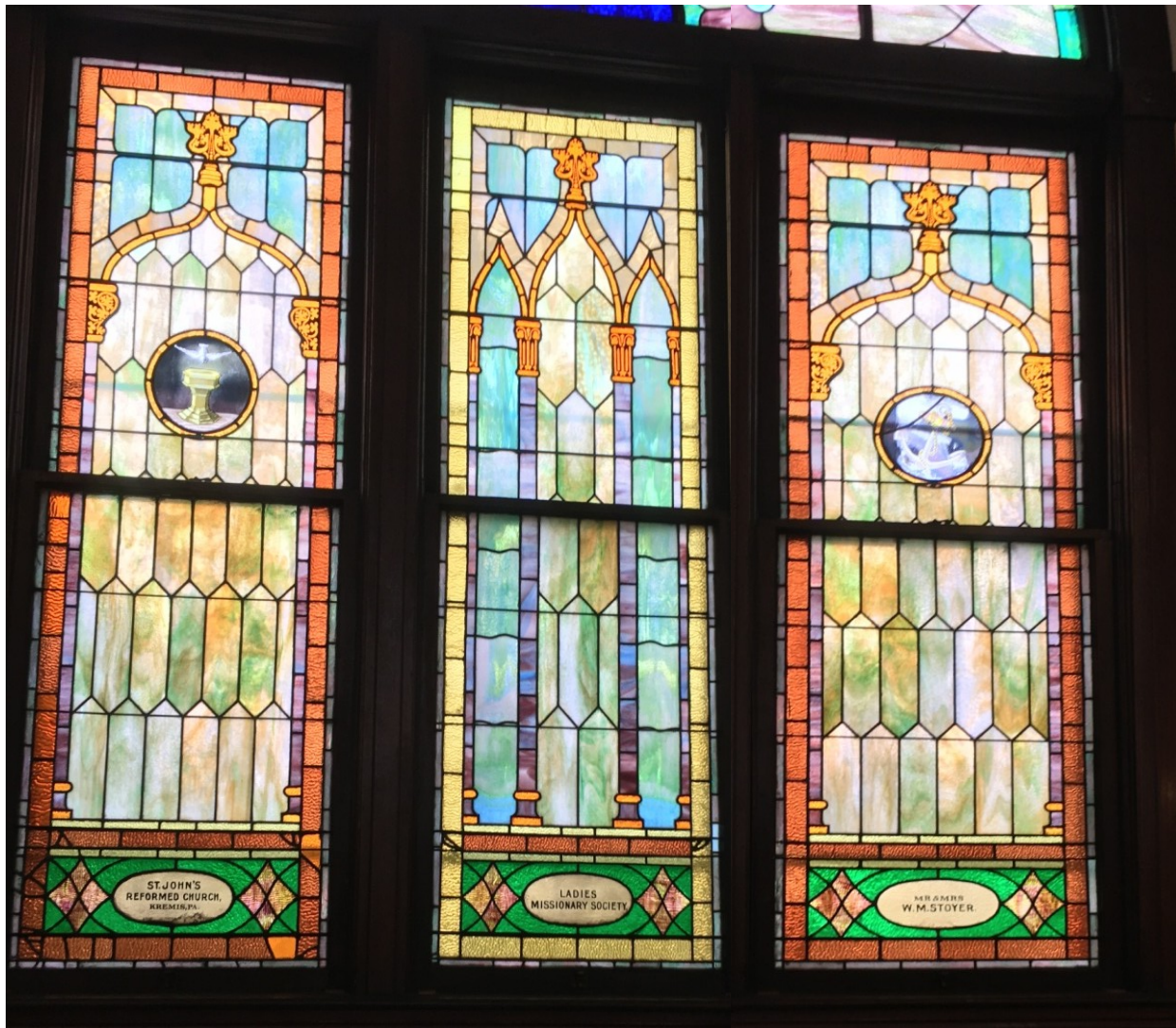
The medallion of this window is found centered, at the panel's top. It depicts a golden chalice containing a cluster of purple grapes. The grapes have not yet been pressed to make wine, so we know this to be symbolic of The Last Supper prior to Christ's death. Christ has not shed his blood, the grapes have not yielded their juice, and the vine is still attached to the grape cluster. Also, the grape leaves appear full and fresh suggesting Christ in the fullness of His ministry. The background is the familiar geometric design in pastel colors, with the bottom



corners anchored by the stylized petal-like cross.

This window was given in memory of Mrs. Amelia Kiefer, 1827-1899.

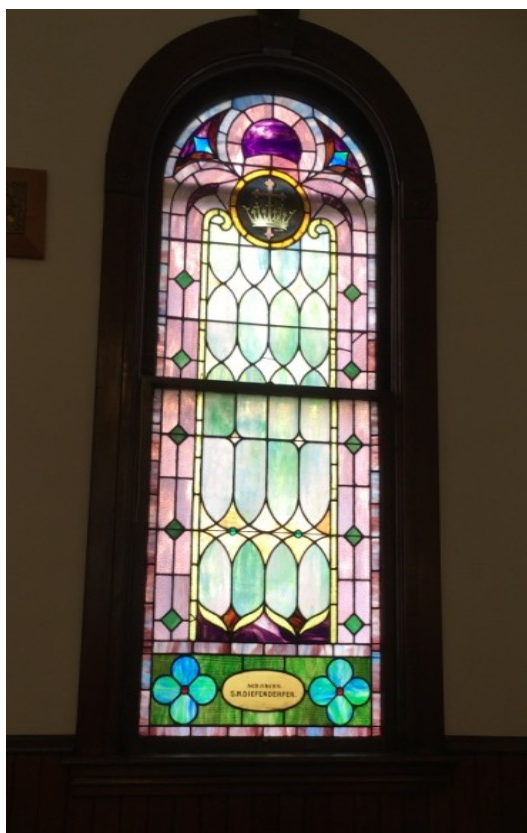
"Then Jesus took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to the disciples saying, Drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matt. 26: 27-28



#6 POST RESURRECTION WINDOWS

This triptych is a twin of window #3 The Doves and Wheat. They are not identical, however. These three panels also show architectural elements of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, boasting ornate columns supporting arches, culminating above in stylized finials. The finials of both triptychs draw our attention heavenward and remind us of the greatness of our God. While the panels of #3 window represent the Old Testament and its sacrificial system for forgiveness of sins, #6 triptych represents New Testament theology, that of the debt of sin having been paid in full by Christ. The panel on the left, within its centered medallion addresses Baptism; the Holy Spirit in the form of a white dove hovers above the font containing the water. This panel was given by St. John's Reformed Church, Kremis, PA. The middle panel was donated by Ladies Missionary Society. The panel on the right contains within its medallion, a ship's anchor. Jesus Christ is the anchor who keeps us steady in the tumultuous seas of life. It was given by Mr. and Mrs. W.M. Stoyer. This triptych is also capped by a Paladin, again suggesting in artistic form, the royal peacock.

"Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8



#7 THE CROSS AND CROWN WINDOW

This is the final window on the left side wall of the sanctuary. Like the others, it is a geometric design in which rectangles and rounded shapes are used to give balance to composition. It copies the other windows of the sanctuary in its coloring, suggesting royalty in the hues of purple and blue. The bottom corners are weighted with the familiar stylized cross at left and right. They are placed upon an emerald green background providing a contrast between lush foliage and death on a cross. We see once more the suggestion of either bamboo or papyrus growing up toward the medallion, helping to



support it and tying theological beliefs to terra firma (earth). The top-centered

medallion features an elaborate crown of gold whose finials are themselves smaller crowns. Within this king's coronet, stands the Cross, upright, and not leaning for support on its surroundings.

This panel was donated by Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Diefenderfer.

"FOR GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT TO SAVE THE WORLD THROUGH HIM." John 3:17

#8 THE BIBLE WINDOW



“Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light on my path.” Psalm 119:105

“Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matt. 28:17

This lovely window, to the left of the Dias, isn't as large as those comprising the triptychs, or the single stand alone panels. It faces the congregation as they sit in the sanctuary. The window is positioned to catch the eye and hold one's attention. Similar in its geometric design and color to the other sanctuary panels, it was given by Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Reimold. Its top center medallion depicts a Bible and represents the authority and relevance of God's Word and Law, as well as its accessibility in our country. The Bible is open to remind us to read it, and to ensure God's Word flows out through us and into the world.

#9 THE ALPHA AND OMEGA WINDOW

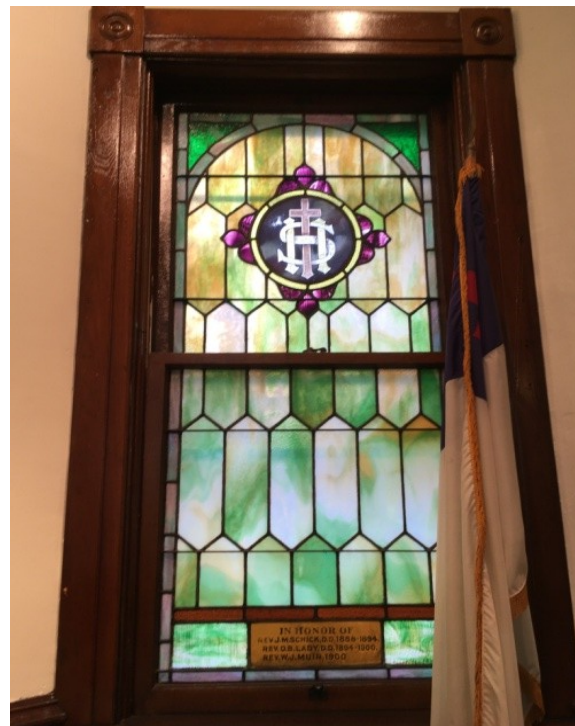
This beautiful and simple, yet profound panel reveals the identity of God. This window is situated to the left side of the Communion table, at the back of the Dias. Within its top center medallion is the first letter of the Greek alphabet entwined with the last letter of that same alphabet. Together, the letters tell that God is complete and full. Nothing can be added to Him nor taken away from Him. He is all we, and the rest of Creation need. As the author of life, God is both Beginning and End, the First and the Last.



The Building Committee presented this window honoring Rev. W.J. Muir; J.R. Womer, J.N. Batteiger, G.J. Reimold, F.M. Dieffenderfer, C.A. Dieffenderfer

#10 IHS WINDOW

The panel to the right of the Communion table and within the Dias area displays a Christogram in its center medallion. This is Jesus' monogram. The Greek letters of IHS are the abbreviation of the name IHΣΟΥΣ (Jesus). Christians mistakenly believe IHS to be an abbreviation of 'In His Service.' Christ's monogram often is seen on the front wooden panel of a Communion table.



This window was given in honor of Rev. J.M. Schick, D.D 1868-1894; Rev. D.B. Lady, D.D. 1884-1900; Rev. W.J. Muir, 1900

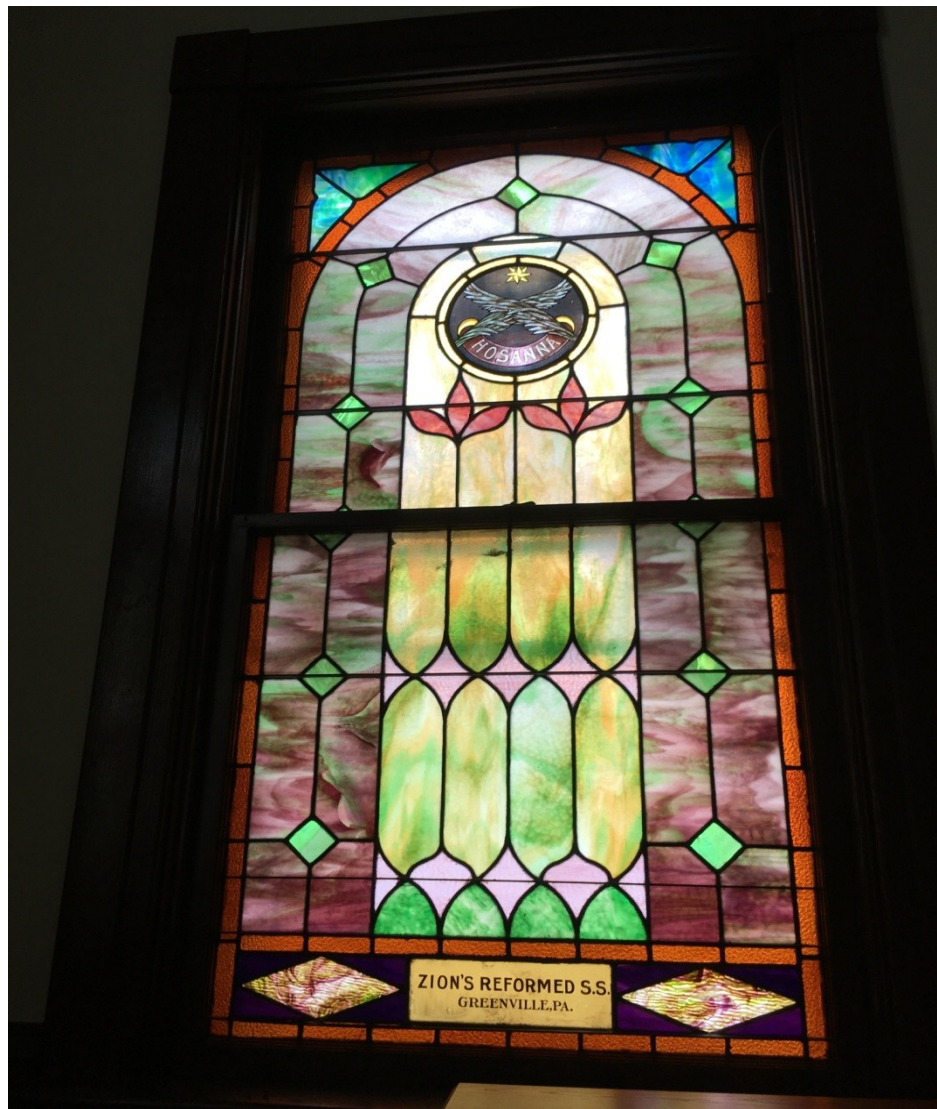
"(The Lord said to Moses) Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." Ex 25: 8



#11 THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE WINDOW

On the left wall of the narthex, in what is the formal entrance into the Church, is positioned this impressive double panel window, capped by a Palladian. The serenity of the colors in this grouping establishes a sense of reverence, order, and peace in preparation for worshiping God. It is the image of the golden Lamp of Knowledge atop an open book and the image demands attention. The words written on the pages of the book are 'A light to our path.' Through this image and the words contained within it, we are assured that the true Word of God, which brings us wisdom, will be preached in this Church. The colorful burst behind the image of lamp and book accentuate their importance.

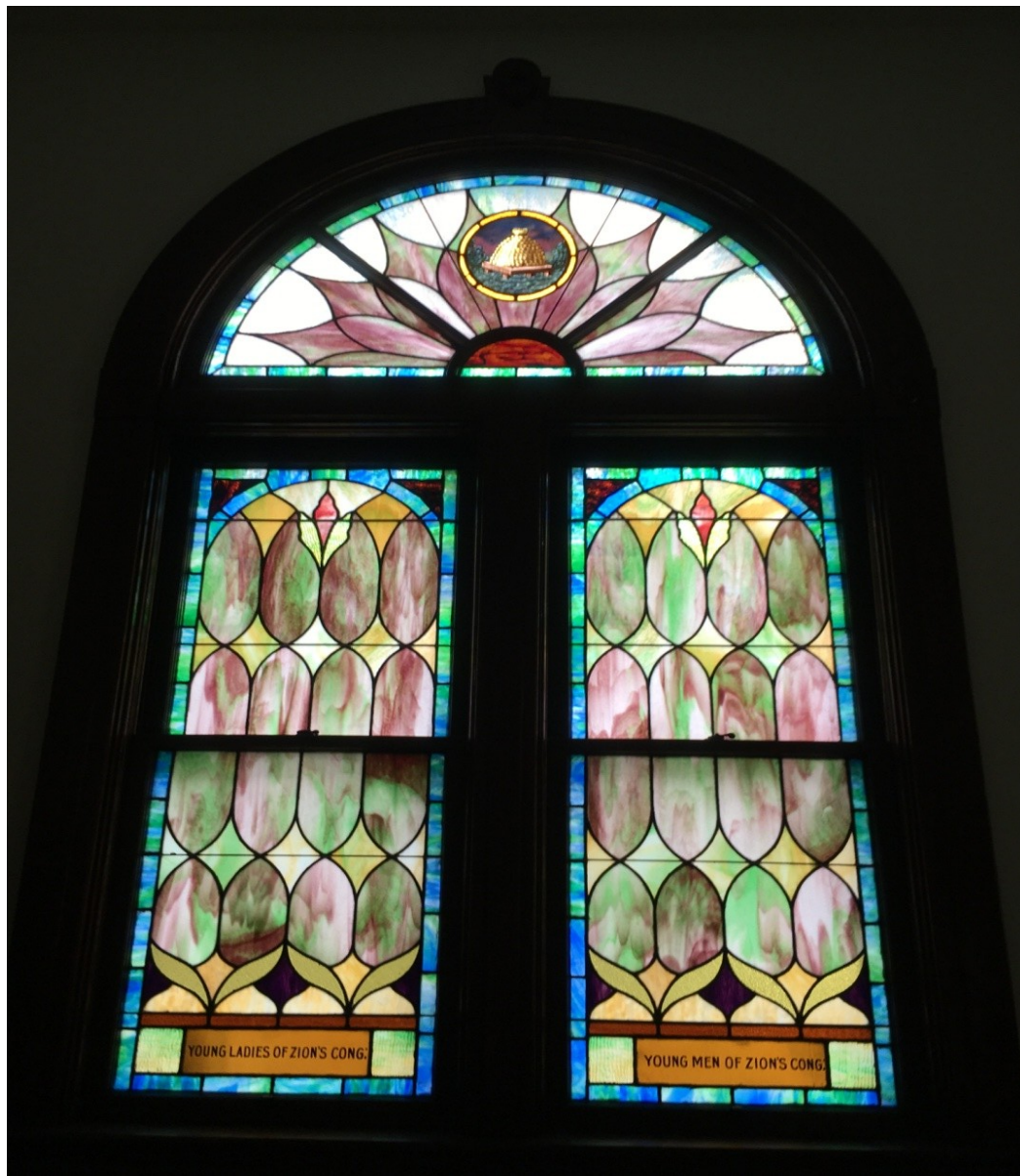
These windows were given by Mr. and Mrs. Jos. K. Womer, and in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rickert.



#12 THE PALMS WINDOW

This single panel is located in the room behind the sanctuary in the former Sunday school room. It is a neighbor to the right, of The Beehive Window. Within its top centered medallion are the image of raised palm branches. This brings to mind the events of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem of Jesus. An archway into an ancient walled city like Jerusalem is suggested by the crossed palms. Jesus would have ridden a donkey through a stone arch after descending the Mount of Olives from Bethphage. Underneath the medallion is “Hosanna”, an expression of adoration, praise, and joy which was cried out by the people lining the road. They spread palm branches for Jesus and the donkey to walk upon. Flower petals support the medallion and speak to the Truth, though seemingly improbable and mysterious, of the Son of God. This window was presented by the Sunday school of Zion Reformed Church, Greenville, PA.

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from palm trees, and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” Matt. 21:8-9



#13 THE BEEHIVE WINDOW

This set of panels is found in what was previously a Sunday school room. The room is behind the rear of the sanctuary and to the right of the Church's formal entrance. The matching windows suggest the floral aspect of God's Creation as noted by the green leaves growing at the bottom of both panels. They look healthy and watered. The Palladian capping the windows displays a stylized chrysanthemum or daisy, with purple/pink petals and a brown center. The medallion contains a beehive likeness. Bees represent faithful laborers and live dependently within a harmonious community.

This set of panels was given in honor of the young ladies and young men of Zion's congregation.

"In that day the Lord will whistle...for bees from the land of Assyria. They will all come and settle..." Isaiah 7:18-19