

# Faith Lutheran Church Valders, Wisconsin



## Symbolism and Meaning

Faith Lutheran Church  
255 Roosevelt St.  
Valders, Wisconsin 54245

Located on a spacious seven and one-half acres on the southwest village limits of Valders, Faith Lutheran evokes surprise and astonishment to all who see it for the first time.

The building speaks of its Norwegian background in the design of the structure. As you approach Valders, through the rolling landscape appears what would look like the bow of a huge Viking ship. A very fitting image in several ways, for through history, the church has been likened to a ship.

The roof rises to its peak directly above the altar, the tip of the Cross at this point being one hundred thirty feet above the adjacent terrain. The change in grade at the site permits both floors of the building to be on grade level with parking lots adjoining the main entrances.



Gjerpen

Valders

Our Savior's

The history of Faith Lutheran Church goes back to 1850, when a group of Norwegian immigrants from Valdres, Norway settled at an area then called, "Maple Grove" later "Gjerpen" about nine miles west of Manitowoc. A few years later another group organized about four miles further along the trail then called

Calumet Road, now US Highway 151 and named their church The Valders Congregation. In 1898 a further group built the Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in the village of Valders between the Gjerpen and Valders churches.

On Sunday, New Years Day, 1961, the three vice-presidents of the afore mentioned church joined hands in services that morning in each of the three, symbolizing the new union of Faith Lutheran Church. The corner stone of Faith with the three hands still reminds those who took part in that exciting but emotion filled day of the wonders God can and does perform through us.



The Faith Lutheran worship and educational facility was dedicated on August 30, 1964. Pastor Robert A. Onkka, at Faith 1960-1973, when asked, how did they bring off an edifice like this in a hamlet of 600 people? replied: "Hope dreamed it. Wisdom decreed it. The people desired it. Genius designed it. Faith dared it. But really, to state the bottom truth, God did it!"

On the upper level one enters through a large spacious glassed-in outer narthex. As one passes through the inner narthex, lighted by the stained faceted glass window, one's eyes automatically see the nave of the church with permanent seating for 300. Light enters the chancel through a skylight sixty feet above the floor and through a side dormer.



Other windows were purposely omitted from the design in order to focus complete attention on the worship center. The natural light is amplified with additional spot lighting. The chancel skylight was glazed with one-way mirror glass, allowing the light to enter from the outside while acting as a mirror from the inside. By directing low voltage, narrow beam high output spotlights on this mirror, the entire chancel is uniquely lighted.

Sacristy and altar kitchen facilities are provided back of the altar screen wall. At the opposite end of the nave, above the inner narthex is a balcony which houses the Allen Digital Computer Organ. This organ contains 38 independent stops without unification or duplexing. The church choirs usually perform from this advantageous location. The balcony also permanently holds a piano and the nave's amplification speaker system.

The upper level of the educational unit also contains the administrative offices, a very comfortable lounge, the church library and three large classrooms.

The lower level houses a large social hall directly under the nave. It will accommodate 350 at tables and has a large stage with storage areas beneath and behind it. The kitchen area to the social hall is located directly behind the lower entry narthex.

The educational area on this level contains two very spacious restroom facilities, three large educational meeting rooms which can each be divided by means of folding doors to house two classrooms. There is also one single classroom, an educational supply room and the furnace – maintenance room.

The Christian Church, from the beginning, has told its stories and beliefs through many signs and symbols.

All communication is in reality carried on through the use of symbols – forms or sounds that are repeated in association with things and ideas. The church early established picture symbols to communicate and repeat its message and teachings. These symbols became the basis for most of the western art through the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The “Scientific age” to some degree mistrusted the visual arts, however, recently a renewed interest in symbols has been evident in the church.

The symbolism used in Faith Lutheran Church has attempted to include many aspects of the Christian life. Following is a listing of those symbols – their location and their meaning.

*The Sculptures*  
*By*  
*O. V. Shaffer*  
*Beloit, Wisconsin*



# Door Markers



The doors to the Sunday School rooms of the four and five year olds on the upper level of the Educational Unit need not be identified only by room number.

It has been found that these little ones respond much more quickly by directing them to the “Christmas” or Manger” door room or to the “Noah’s Ark” door room.

Both of these bronze reliefs will long live in the memories of Faith’s future members.

## Christmas Manger



## Noah’s Ark

On the Library door



## *The Sun of Righteousness*



Door Pulls from Narthex into Inner Narthex

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments, “The skin of his face *shown* because he had been talking with God.” (Exodus 34:29). Can there be a better reminder of what we may experience as we enter the sanctuary for worship than these nave door pulls with the radiant face?

We are also reminded of our blessed Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration – “And His face did shine as the sun.” (Mathew 17:2)

It also has reference to the prophecy, Malachi 4:2, “Unto you that fear My Name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.” This is what we anticipate to receive in the experience of the Word and Sacraments.

## Ten Commandments



Center Aisle Doors

These remind us of the Law of God whose function, as Paul said is, “To bring us unto Christ; that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24)

The two sets of aisle door handles thus remind us of the Law and Gospel, the two divisions of the Word of God.

# Trumpeting Angels



Side Aisle Doors

These are a symbol of the call to worship  
and the heralding of the good news.

# The Baptismal

Baptism is one of the two sacraments of the church. The font is placed in the inner narthex to remind us that we enter the church through Holy Baptism. Because baptisms will ordinarily take place before the altar as a part of the worship life of the family of God, the baptism bowl can be placed on the altar rail.



Above the font – The Dove, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, is here multiplied to the number seven to signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. This theme is repeated in the window. Galatians 5:22 – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Gladness, Faithfulness



The cover and the base – These are divided into six parts which represent the six days of creation. These are surmounted and come together at the cross, which represents the day of redemption.

It is also a cross over the world signifying the triumph of Jesus over the sin of the world – a symbol of the world conquest of his cross through the means of grace, namely, Word and Sacrament.

Around the edge of the font and in the six openings of the cover is a vine, symbolic of Christ the endless vine who is in the midst of the world.



The Scallop Shell – (at six points around the edge of the bowl). John is said to have baptized Jesus with water from a scallop shell and it has been used as a symbol of baptism since then.

# The Altar



The Crown of Thorns is universally recognized as a sign of Christ's suffering. A Chi Rho is placed within the crown. This is the most common sign for Christ's name. It is a monogram of the first two letters, Chi (X) and Rho (P), of the Greek word for Christ, (the Anointed one). Although it is seen in many places, it is used here within the altar because this is where we celebrate Christ's death and resurrection in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



The Menorah is the seven-branched candle holder used in the tabernacle and temple. Here it holds our altar book and reminds us of the traditions and historic roots of our church.



The candle holders are formed by three sides and supported on the three legs signifying the Trinity. There are two candle holders to remind us of the two natures of Christ, human and divine.



The paten or bread plate has a hammered bronze dish with the texture left showing and the words: "...We all share in the one body ..." I Cor. 10:17 in open relief.

## *The Christ Candle*



This special Paschal Candle or Christ Candle and the Candle-holder symbolize the light of our Risen Lord and His victory over darkness, sin and death. When lit during our worship services, it represents the victory and presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. He is guiding and leading us as God led Israel by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire through the wilderness.

Special markings on the candle include the Cross representing the power of the resurrection spanning all time; the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8). Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end of all things.

A perch is added which forms a cross. A dove which symbolizes the Holy Spirit has descended upon the cross. Under the stem of the candle-holder is placed a globe which represents the world. A hook is fastened to the globe and an eight-linked chain is attached from the dove to the hook. (The number eight is

the symbol of regeneration.) The four legs symbolize the four corners of the earth. We have been given the privilege of proclaiming our Lord's Good News to the world.

Placed upon the stem of the candle-holder is a shield. Christ's Divine Nature is pictured on this shield, the Chi Rho symbol. It is the abbreviation of the word Christ. This name of our Savior was spelled "XPICTOC" in ancient Greek uncials. Taking the first two letters of this word "XPICTOC", the abbreviation "XP" was the result. This is called the Chi Rho, from the names of the Greek letters "X" and "P".

*Handmade by a member of Valders Church,  
Pastor Allen Erickson, ordained in 1951.*



# The Pulpit



From this pulpit the Word will be preached. The authors of the four Gospels have been the principle recorders of Christ's life.

The most common symbol for these four evangelists are:

St. Mathew – winged man, for his Gospel begins with the human ancestry of Christ.

St. Mark – winged lion, for his Gospel opens with a description of the “voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

St. Luke – winged ox, for his Gospel gives the most complete account of the sacrificial death of Christ.

St. John – Eagle, for his Gospel soars heavenward.

These symbols have been mounted on a tree – the Tree of Life, or perhaps a Jesse Tree. (Isaiah 11:1) This verse has stimulated the imagination of artists for centuries. However, no two seem to use the same number of “branches”, nor do they include the same persons.

# The Lectern



Three supports, symbolic of the Trinity, are used to hold the Bible. Between them is a vine. Upon this symbol, the growing out of it, is placed the Bible.

Early Christians chose this symbol because as a vine grows it takes its nourishment from a central stem and does not branch out like a bush from many roots.

# The Dove



The Dove is the most universally used symbol of the Holy Spirit. It is placed in the communion rail because at baptism, the baptismal bowl will be brought forward and placed above this symbol, reminding us of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism.

# *Our Theology*



The abstract quality of the Cross conveys the feeling of the Corpus on the Cross to remind us of our Lord's suffering for our sins and at the same time proclaims the victory of the empty Cross and the resurrection.

The arms of the Cross do not meet. They come from and return to God, symbolized by the circle, which has been left void to give the feeling of Christ emptying Himself and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

# Prayer



The image of Jesus' face created in stain glass is located behind the lectern side of the altar. Jesus stained glass face reminds us that there is something beautiful beyond the world where we live. Light shines through to help us refocus on the things of God and on our faith.

The Prayer Desk and Prie Dieu are for the pastor's private prayer before the service.



The rooster (symbol of St. Peter) and the thirty pieces of silver (symbol of Judas) are to remind the pastor that he should neither deny nor betray his Lord as he conducts the worship and preaches the Gospel.



The wrought-iron sculpture of Jonah and the whale (a favorite children's Bible Store) was not originally intended and planned for.

It was added to the banister on the upper level stair-well after it was discovered that the balusters were spaced too far apart for the safety of the children.

The beautiful lannon stone walls for this stair-well have become a favorite location to display the seasonal banners which talents within the church are so often creating.

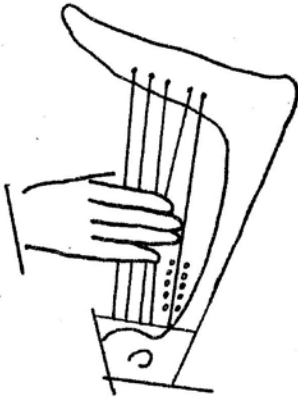


*The 3-Story Slab  
Class Art Window  
By Willet Studio, Philadelphia, PA*

# The Choir Loft



The colorful window area which forms a background for the choir loft speaks to us of David, the shepherd boy, sweet singer, author of the Psalms, represented by his harp. These same psalms form an integral part of Christian liturgy and hymnody today.

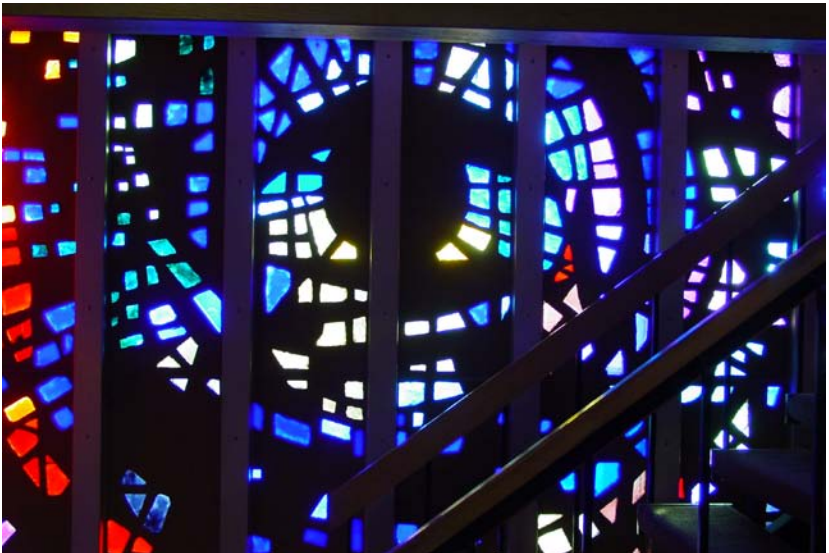




# *Inner Narthex Window*

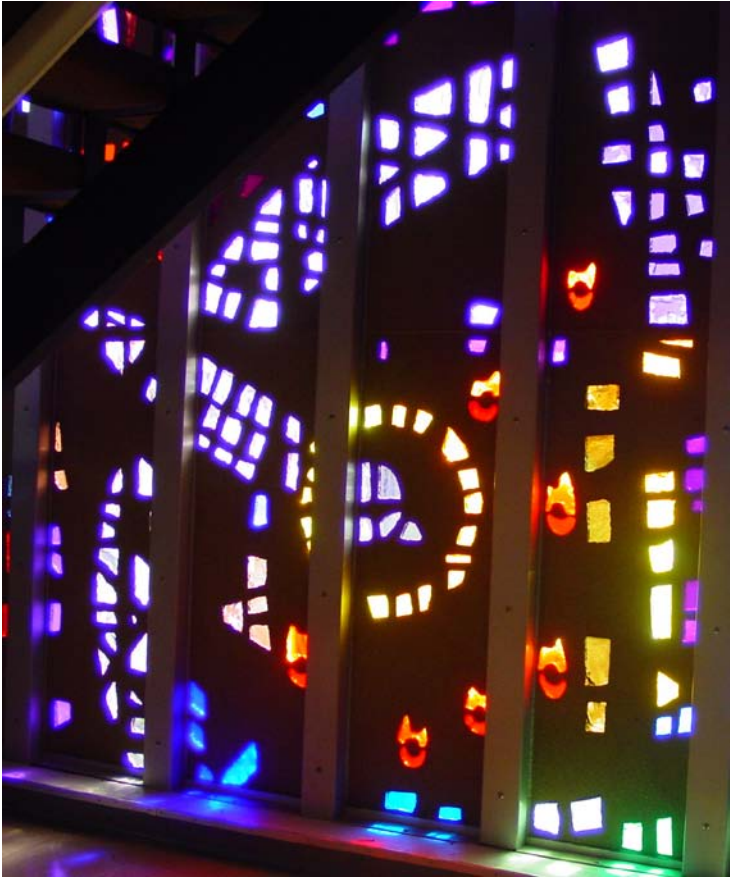
In the concentric circles, the rings of color move out from the symbol of God the Father in the façade window of faceted glass. Breathtaking radiance and complete purity of color are the outstanding characteristics of this relatively new medium of glass.

The window is thirty feet high and twenty feet wide and is seen on all three interior levels of the church as well as forming one complementary effect from the exterior.



Prominent in the section of glass in the inner narthex is the watchful eye of God the Father from which rays extend throughout the whole window. Enthroned in a majesty of purple and blue, so does His power spread throughout the world.

Flying out from the Father is the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by seven ruby flames – reminiscent of Pentecost and reminding us of the seven gifts of the Spirit.

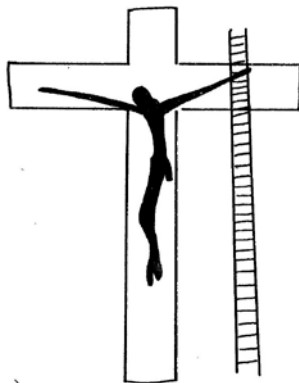


Together with the Christ on the Cross at the lower level, those symbols form the Trinity.

# *The Fellowship Hall Window*



Here we see Christ on the Cross – the price of our salvation.





The scallop shell denotes pilgrimage and is the usual symbol of St. James the Creator.



The four beasts of Revelation Chapter four symbolize the four evangelists. St. John is represented by an eagle.



St. Andrew gave up his calling as a fisherman to become a fisher of men. The fish is a Christian symbol predating even the cross.



The symbol for Peter is the inverted cross upon which he died, not considering himself worthy to hang head upward as Christ had done.



St. Paul's "spiritus gladius", sword of the spirit, is used as his symbol.



Luther's Coat of Arms.  
Black cross-sin;  
red heart-Christ's redemption;  
white rose-purity;  
set on a heavenly blue sky  
surrounded by a golden ring.

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