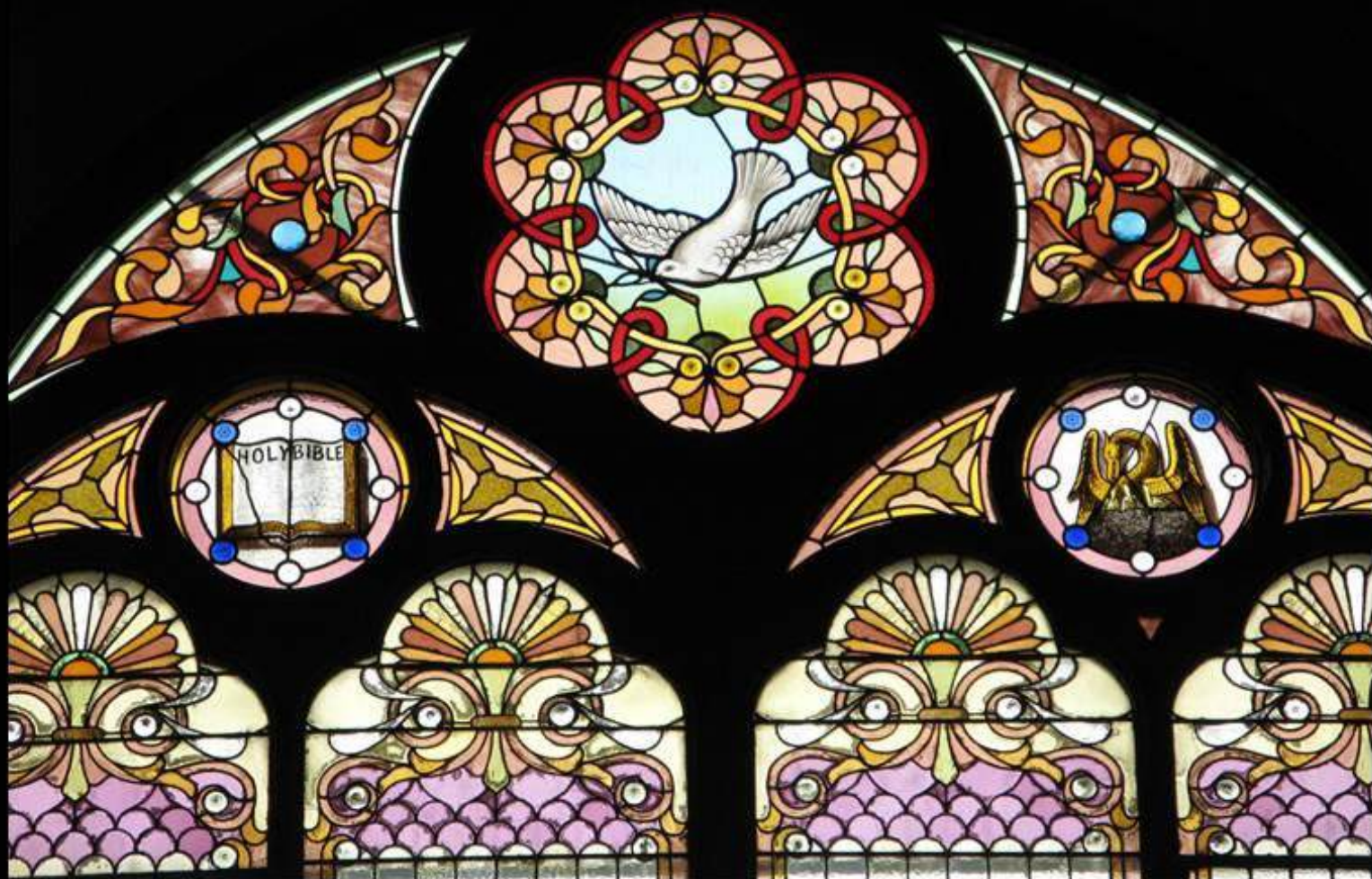


**A PICTORIAL GUIDE TO
DUNDAS STREET CENTRE
UNITED CHURCH**



..... a very special beauty

BY DIANE A. CUPPELS

FIGURE 1: MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE CHURCH (INSET PRESENTS A CLOSE-UP OF A DOOR LANTERN)

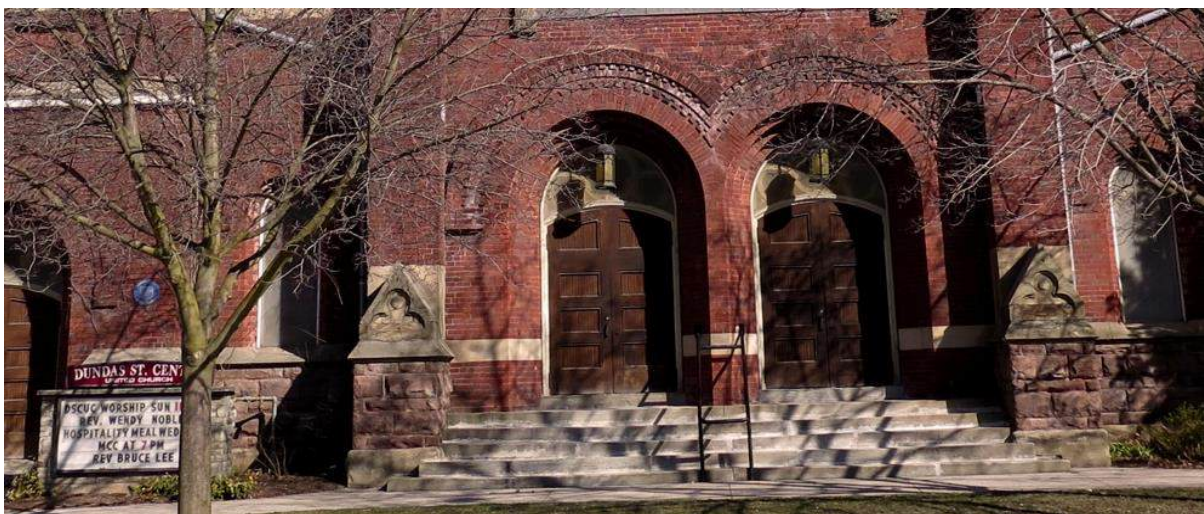
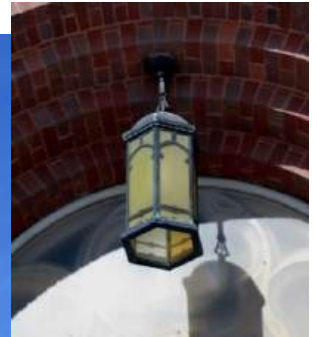
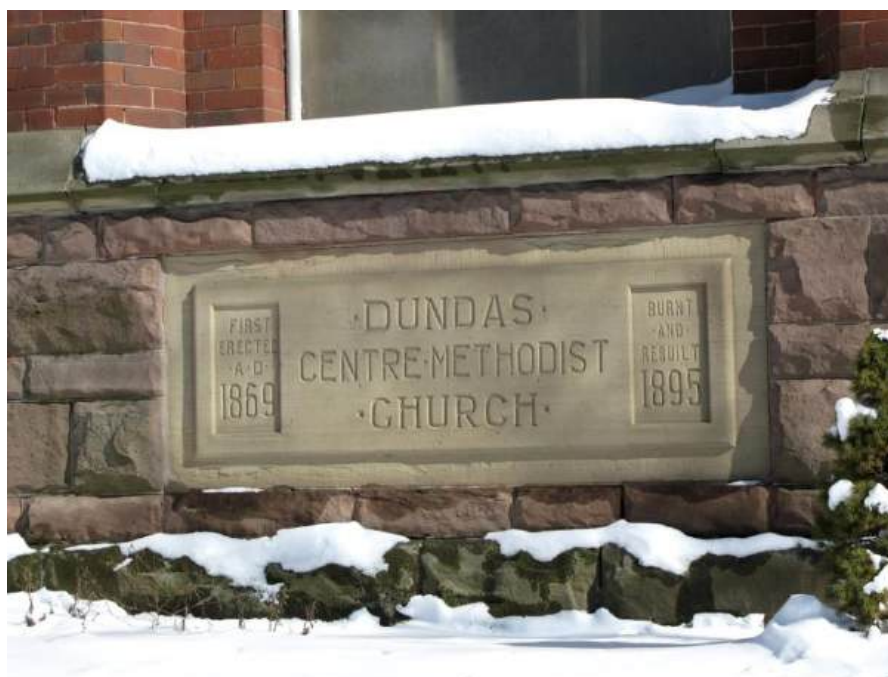


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482 Dundas St., London, Ontario, N6B 1W6

FOREWORD

Pictures can tell us so much more than words alone! Within these pages are a series of photographs, lovingly taken by Diane Cuppels, that tell us stories about art, style, history, and a place known as Dundas Street Centre United Church. They highlight some of the more obvious architectural features of the building but also some of the hidden gems. This church is not only a place of great beauty, but the beauty and art help to create the sense of sacredness, grace, and peace. A sense of the holy! As beauty is said to be in the eyes of the beholder, may this pictorial guide highlight and open eyes to the wonder and beauty that is in our midst.

*Rev. Wendy Noble
Dundas St. Centre United Church*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first started working on this pictorial guide, I read through historical records concerning the church and its contents that a former church member, Bruce Thornley (deceased), and a current church member, Mary Harding, had compiled. They had dedicated a large amount of time and effort to the gathering of this data, for which I am most grateful. I also wish to thank the staff of the Ivey Family London Room of the London Public Library for helping me locate information about the early years of the church. Many thanks to Rev. Wendy Noble for writing the Foreword and to Dianne Allen for permitting me to reproduce her wonderful drawing. Thanks also must be given to the staff at the London Kwik Kopy Design & Print Centre for their technical expertise in the printing of this publication. Last but certainly not least, I wish to thank my husband, James Traquair, for his suggestions, encouragement and critique of early drafts of the guide.

*Diane A. Cuppels
June 25, 2017*

CHURCH HISTORY

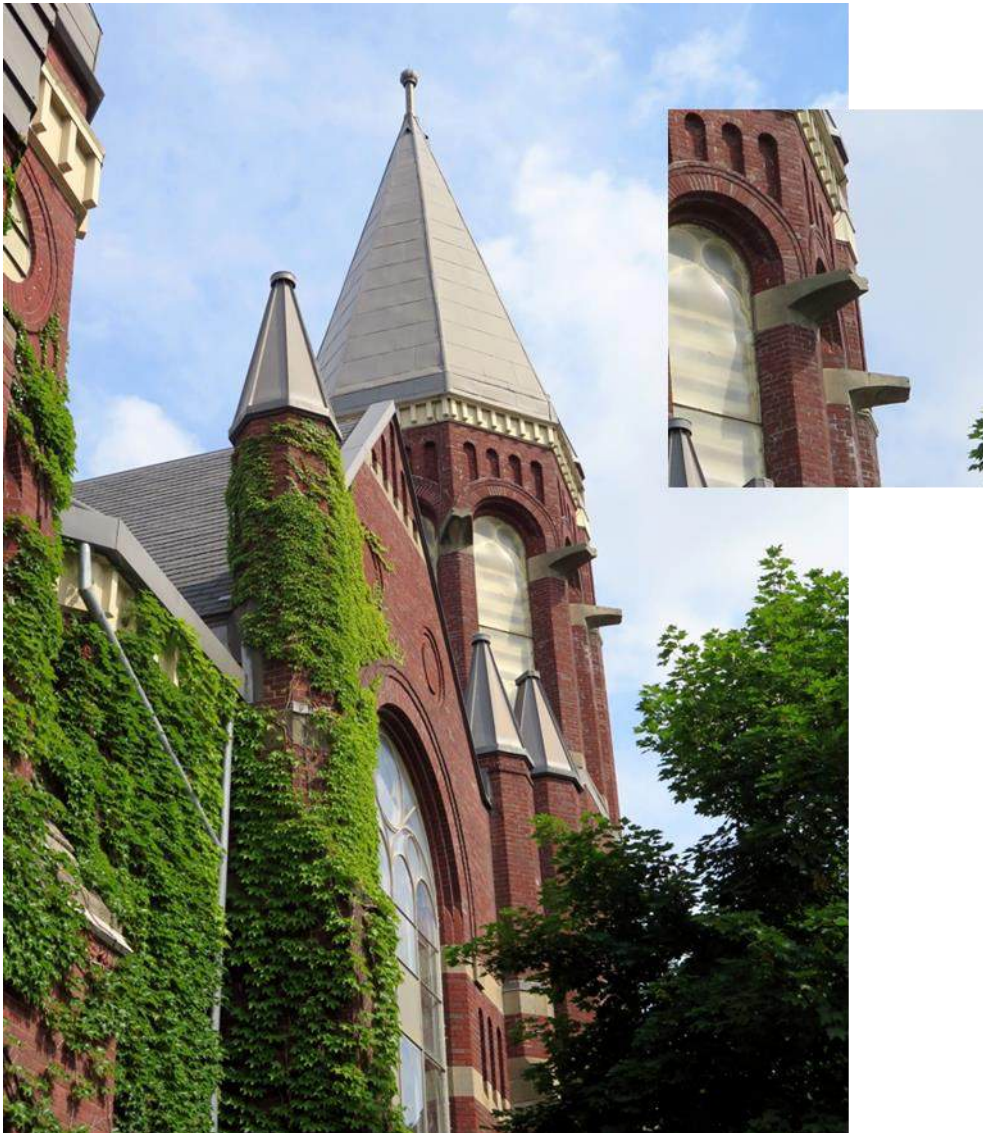
We began in 1846 as a group of British and American Methodists meeting for prayer and worship in a small cottage on Adelaide Street near Bathurst. In 1856 a house was rented for worship on Adelaide Street while plans were being made for construction of a church. By 1860 a frame church, able to accommodate 300 people, had been built on the northeast corner of Adelaide and King Streets. Adelaide Methodist Church, as it was called, was sold later to the Anglicans and then to the Baptists. It was moved to the south side of King Street and enlarged to become the Adelaide Street Baptist Church. Wooded property at the corner of Dundas and Maitland Streets was purchased in 1869. The yellow-brick, Gothic-style Dundas Street Wesleyan Methodist Church was dedicated on April 3, 1870. In 1876 it was named Dundas Street Centre Methodist Church to distinguish it from Dundas Street East Methodist Church built in 1874. Dundas Street Centre Methodist Church burned to the ground on February 13, 1895, but was quickly replaced with the present red-brick building. The cornerstone was laid July 1, 1895. The Sunday School Auditorium was completed first and dedicated on October 24, 1895; the new Sanctuary was dedicated on May 24, 1896. The Sanctuary was given a heritage designation by the city in 1985; in 1991 the narthex and exterior also received a heritage designation (City of London By-Law L.S.P.-2855-378 amended by L.S.P.-2855(a)-175. The church, having a Priority One designation, is one of London's most important heritage structures (1).



CHURCH EXTERIOR

The church, built in 1895 was designed by Toronto architect George William King, who also drafted plans for the Stratford, Ontario, town hall. It was built in the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival (RRR) style of architecture, a style favored for public buildings and churches during the late Victorian era. These buildings were made of heavy cut stones with rough textures and contrasting colours; they also have deeply recessed door openings and dramatic Syrian (an early Christian form) semicircular (often compound) arches that rise from ground level (Figure 1) (2).

FIGURE 2: VIEW OF THE MAIN TOWER (SOUTHWEST CORNER) (INSET SHOWS ITS GUTTER SPOUTS)



The church is constructed of red brick and cut stone and is accented with decorative brick coursing and yellow sandstone. The foundation, extending six feet above ground, consists of alternating buff Cleveland stone and red Credit Valley stone (3). The complex roof line has three large towers along with several smaller towers and minarets. The largest tower (Figure 2) is 112 feet high. Such a massive corner tower is characteristic of the RRR style. A defining feature of the tower is the projecting gutter spouts (inset to Figure 2). Originally covered with slate, the roof is supported by 12-ton steel trusses. N. Tursky states: 'King's exterior design stresses various disjunctive elements....it exploits tension between symmetry and asymmetry ...between unbroken mass and intricate detail...and between the intriguingly various textures of the different materials used for the church face' (3).

NARTHEX (VESTIBULE)

To enter the church from Dundas Street, one climbs a set of stairs, passes under one of the ornate compound arches that frame the four pairs of large oak doors and steps into the Narthex (Vestibule). A yellow stained glass lantern hangs over each set of doors (Figure 1). Above each pair of doors are lunettes with three circular transom lights containing stained (Figure 3A) or painted glass (Figure 3B and 3C). Above the centre pair of

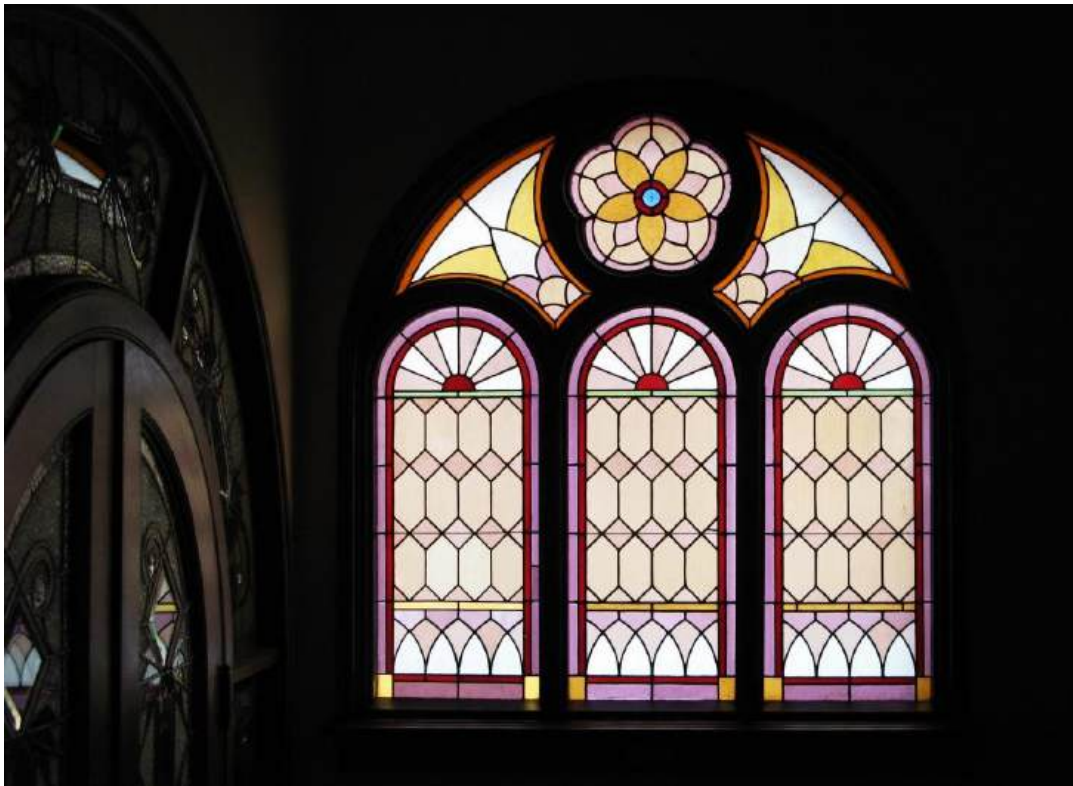
FIGURE 3. STAINED GLASS ABOVE ENTRY DOORS





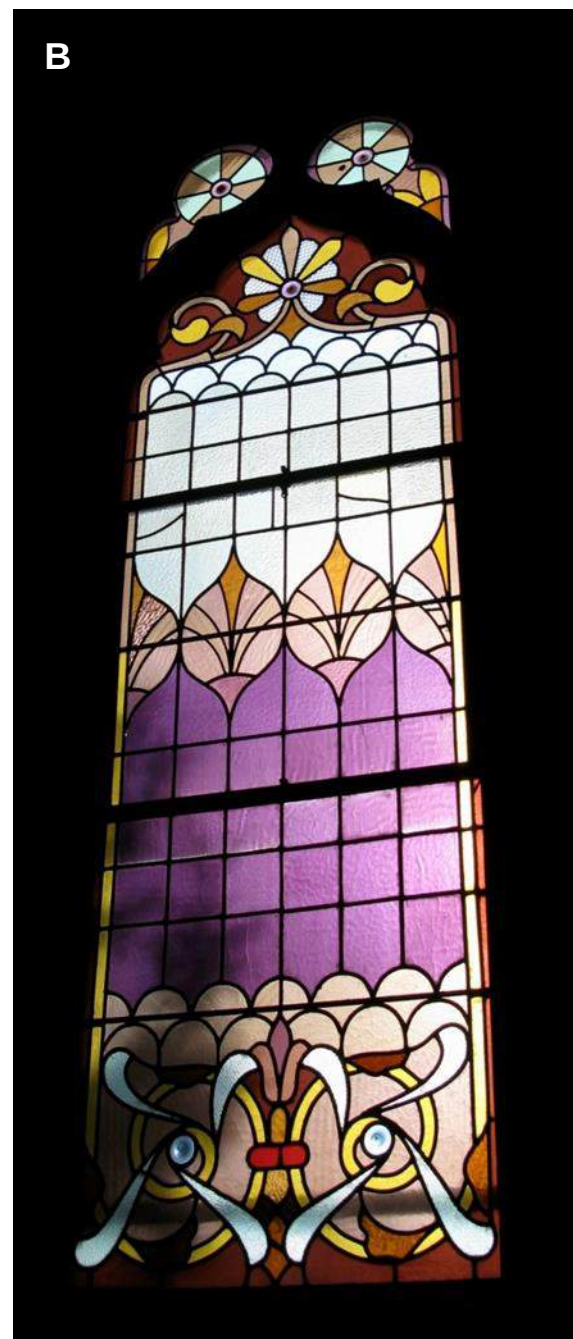
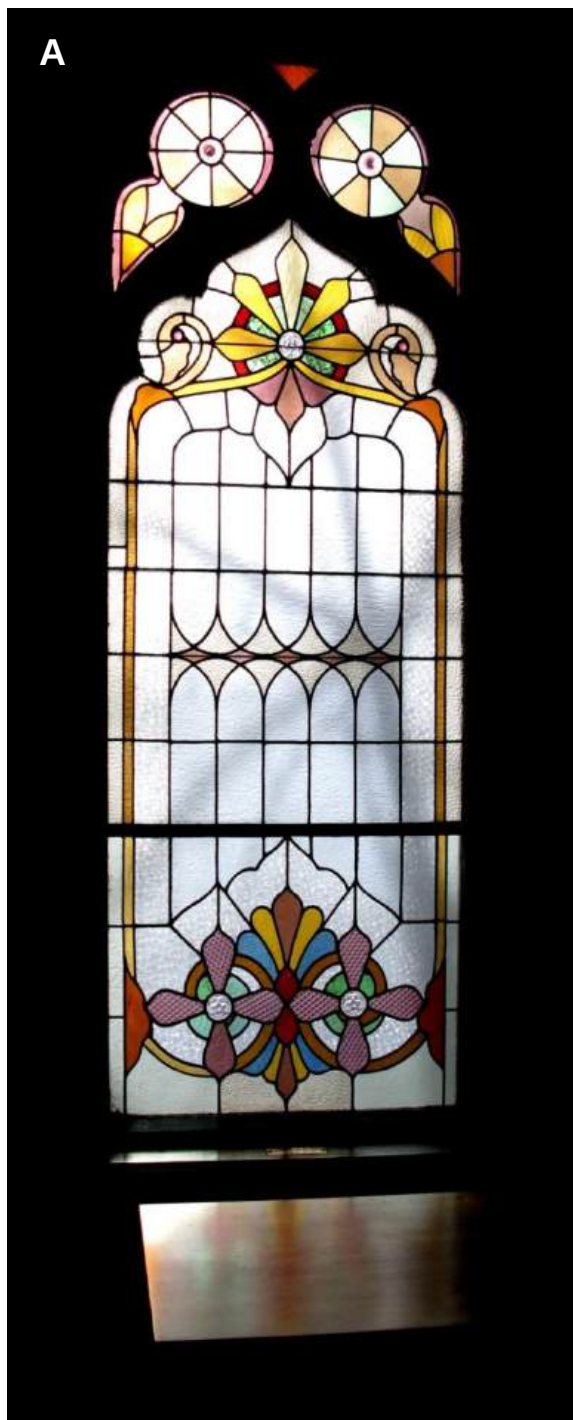
of doors are painted glass transom lights showing St. Luke the Evangelist, as a winged ox representing service, strength and sacrifice, and St. Mark the Evangelist, as a winged lion representing courage (Figures 3B and 3C)(4). Whether the other two entryways were to have painted glass depictions of Evangelists St. John and St. Matthew is unknown. The stained glass windows in the Narthex (examples are shown in Figures 4

FIGURE 4. WEST WINDOW OF THE NARTHEX

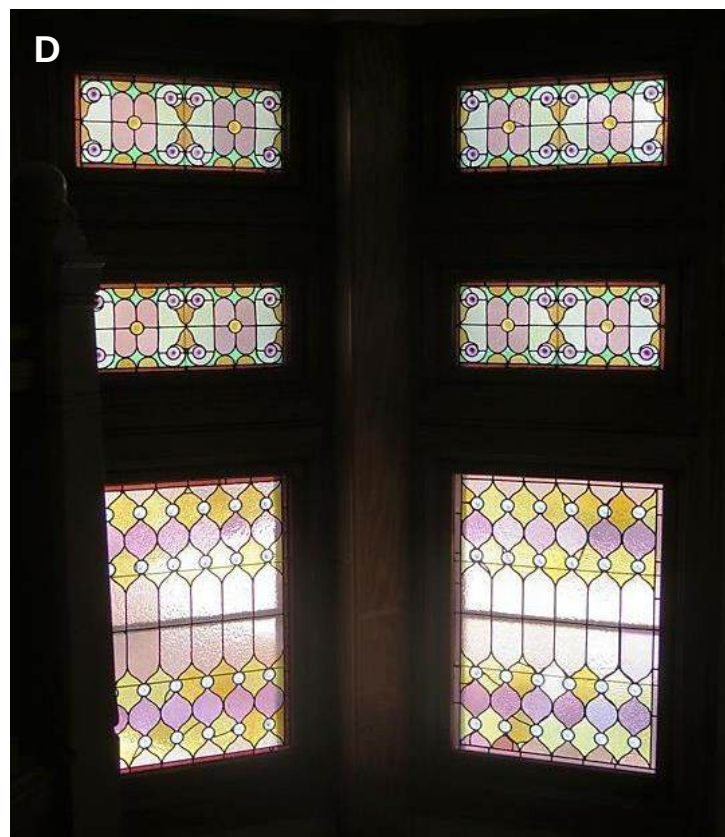
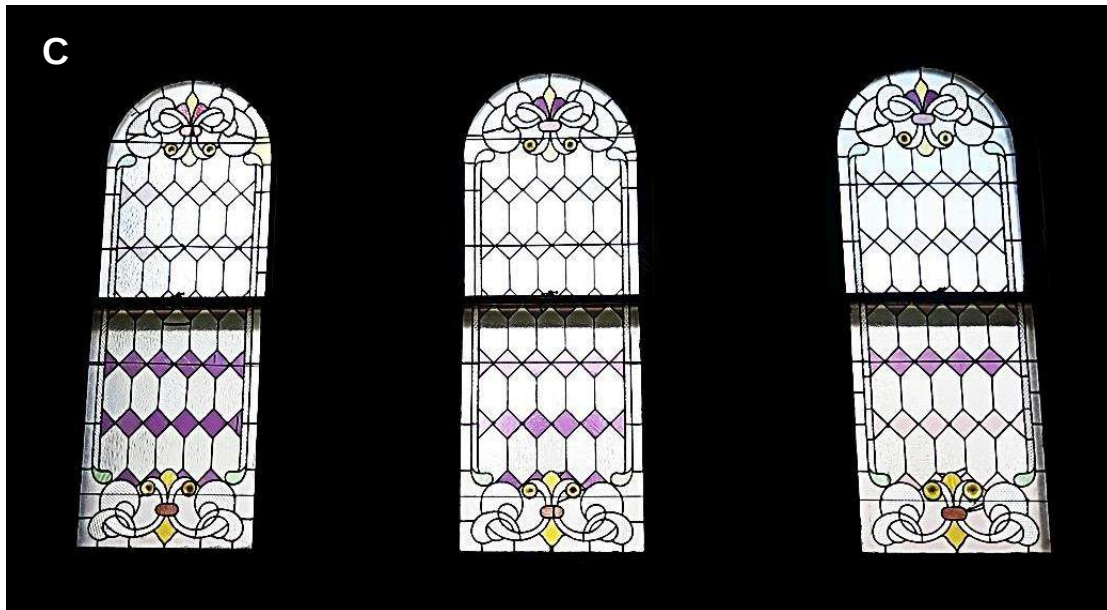


and 5A), as well as elsewhere in the church, were designed, created and installed by the Ontario Stained Glass Company. The geometric patterns appearing on these windows resemble those seen on windows in other

FIGURE 5. CHURCH WINDOWS: (A) SOUTHEAST NARTHEX, (B) SOUTHEAST STAIRCASE TO THE BALCONY, (C) SECOND FLOOR OFFICE IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM, AND (D) NORTHWEST STAIRCASE.



areas of the church. Take note of the bold colours in the windows along the curved staircases leading to the balcony from the Narthex (Figure 5B), the quiet beauty of the second-floor office windows of the Sunday School Coordinator (Figure 5C), and the simple yet effective design of the northwest staircase windows leading to the second floor of the Sunday School Auditorium (Figure 5D).



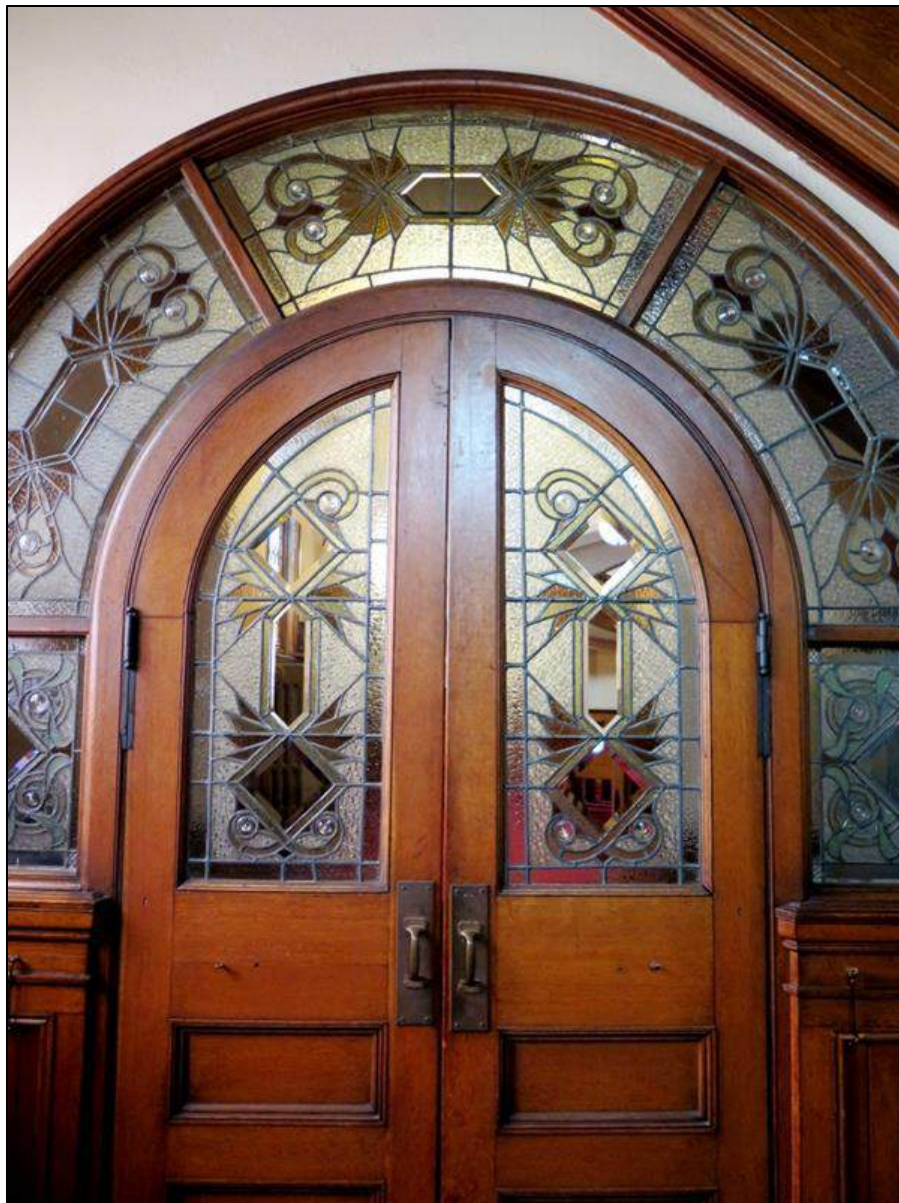
The inner doors of the Narthex (Figure 6) are exquisite. Clear, beveled glass elements intermixed with frosted colourless, pale yellow, and pale orange glass pieces are framed by darkly-stained wood. Sunlight passing through the doors projects flickering patterns on the white Narthex walls. A welcoming site indeed to incoming worshippers!

FIGURE 6. NARTHEX INNER DOORS ON THE WEST SIDE



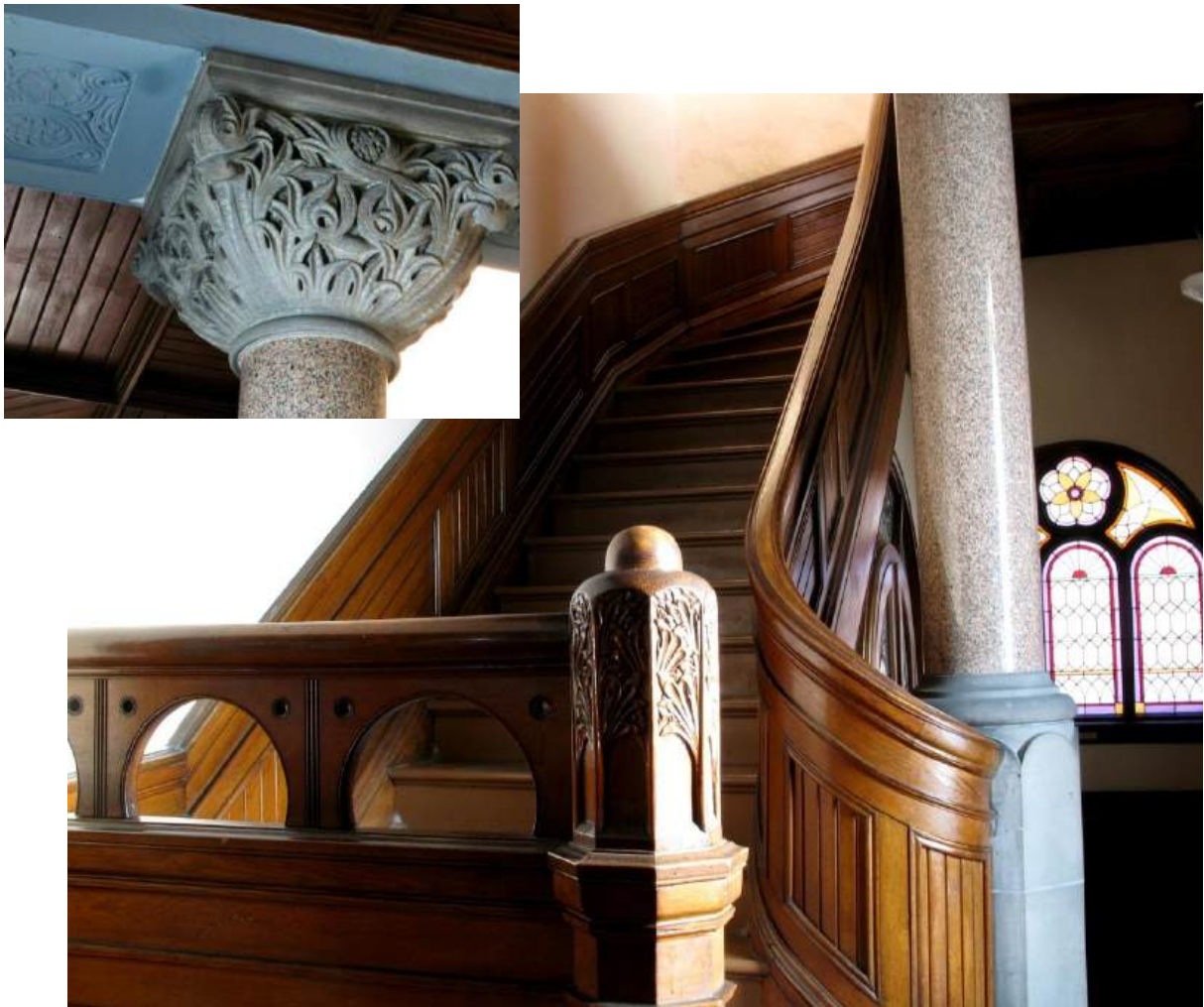
If one enters the church using either the easternmost or westernmost front doors, one can then proceed across the Narthex and into the Sanctuary through superbly crafted double oak doors that have stained glass panels and an overhead arch of stained glass with a simple but elegant geometric pattern (Figure 7). The glass colours are the same as those used for the Narthex inner doors. Again, notice the ever-present rounded Romanesque arches. The glass panels in the central doors from the Narthex to the Sanctuary (not shown) have the same geometric pattern and colour scheme.

FIGURE 7. EAST DOOR INTO THE NARTHEX FROM THE SANCTUARY



In the Narthex, at the base of curved oak staircase, are two impressive polished granite columns with highly decorated capitals (column tops) (Figure 8). A curved leaf motif has been carved on these capitals, as well as on the oak newel post cap of the staircase. Such curved leaf designs are present throughout the church on both wooden and plaster structures and depict the leaves of *Acanthus species*, which are common Mediterranean plants. The *Acanthus* ornament is said to have originated in ancient Greek times but was not extensively used until the Roman period (5). Byzantine and Romanesque influences are evident.

FIGURE 8: NARTHEX EAST COLUMN AND STAIRCASE TO BALCONY (INSET IS THE COLUMN CAPITOL)



SANCTUARY

As stated in a May 25, 1896, *London Free Press* article entitled *In Their New Home*, “The elegance of the new church cannot be adequately described....and the people were glad that they had built such a temple for the worship of the living God”(6). The layout is typical of a 19th century Methodist church with the choir loft placed above the pulpit and a beautifully-decorated organ case framing both structures (1). The Sanctuary (Figure 9) initially could hold 1,280 adults or an adult/child mix of 1,500 (7). Today, because several of the pews have been removed, maximum seating is approximately 600. The seats are arranged in a circular fashion, facing the pulpit with no obstructed views for anyone attending a worship service. The acoustics are superb! The Sanctuary ceiling is a light pink, just as it was in 1896 (6). Four beautiful gray-green Armenian arches span the room (originally they were white)(Figure 10).

FIGURE 9. SANCTUARY AS SEEN FROM THE NARTHEX



On the arches are Celtic-like, triple swirls of *Acanthus* leaves encircling interlace elements and rosettes (stylized flower images). At the base of each arch is a highly-decorated pilaster (Figure 11). The centre of the pilaster capitol has a single circle of interwoven bands and bolts surrounded by *Acanthus* leaves; the upper section of the shaft is decorated with a repeat of the design found on the arches. The pilasters join with the spectacular gray-green cornice moulding that rings the Sanctuary. The cornice moulding is frieze-like showing *Acanthus* leaves and an unknown flower (Lotus?) in relief with complementary geometric patterns on the borders. All this elaborate plastering was the work of brothers Peter and John Murray. Intricate, intertwining floral details are typical of the RRR architectural style.

FIGURE 10. MEETING OF THE SANCTUARY'S ARMENIAN ARCHES (INSET SHOWS A CLOSE-UP OF THE DESIGN)

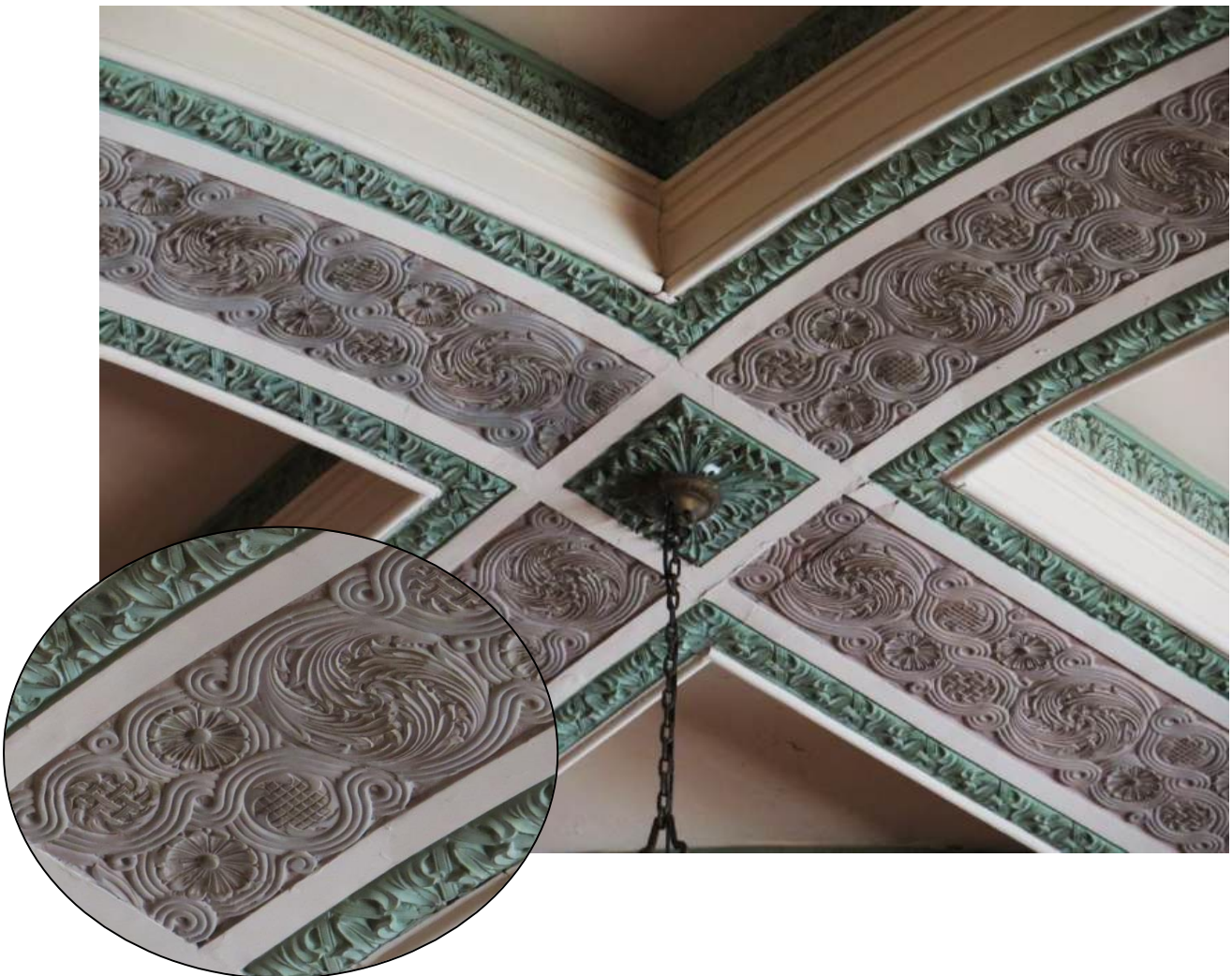


FIGURE 11. PILASTER (A) AT THE BASE OF AN ARMENIAN ARCH AND CORNICE MOULDING (B)



BALCONY

The balcony, carried on cantilevers with no support columns, sweeps magnificently through the Sanctuary in a horseshoe design (Figure 12). The striking cast iron railing with a gilt finish (Figures 12 and 13), which was designed and installed by Denisteel Foundry, is typical of the late Victorian era.

FIGURE 12. VIEW OF THE NORTHEAST SIDE OF THE SANCTUARY'S CURVED BALCONY (INSET PRESENTS A CLOSE-UP OF THE BALCONY'S CAST IRON RAILING)

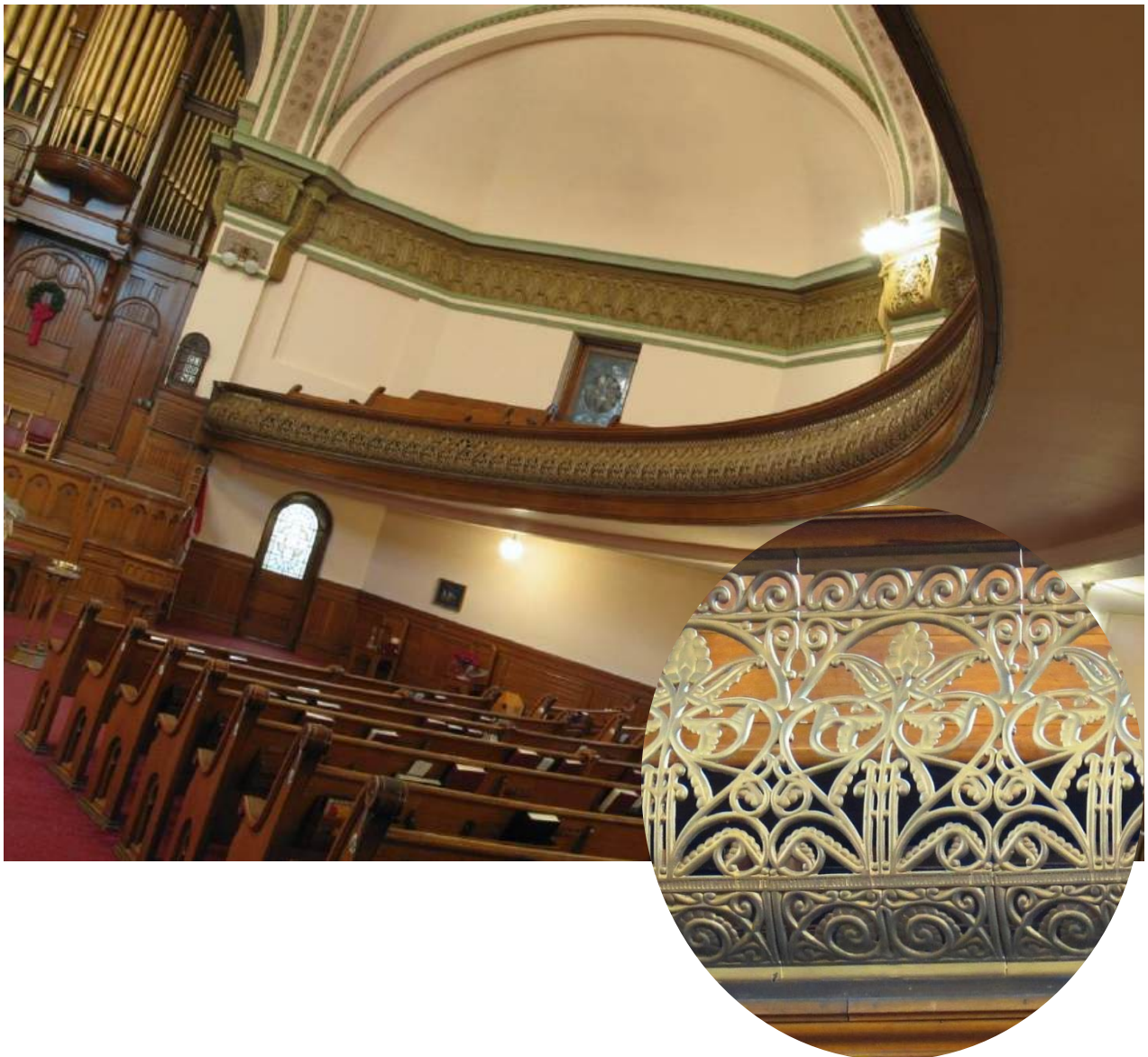


FIGURE 13. VIEW OF THE NORTHWEST SIDE OF THE BALCONY SHOWING THE CORNICE MOULDING AND A PILASTER



PEWS

The pews are made of solid oak and stained a warm red-brown. Originally, the church wood carried a dark strain, perhaps similar to that in the present day Narthex. At the end of each pew is a numbered oval (from the days when pews were rented); on top of the oval are a five-petalled rosette and an *Acanthus* leaf cluster (Figure 14). Rosettes, like Acanthus leaves, have been used as architectural ornamentation since the days of the ancient Greeks and earlier. Originally, the underside of the seats had wire holders to accommodate men's hats. A few hat holders can still be observed under the balcony pews.

FIGURE 14. CHURCH PEWS IN THE BALCONY (INSET SHOWS THE END OF A DOWNSTAIRS PEW)



PULPIT

The beautifully-carved pulpit (Figure 15) is of highly polished solid oak, with an angel's face and wings facing the congregation. Under the angel is a stand originally used for communion and collection plates but which now houses the Sanctuary's Bible. The craftsman contracted to make the pulpit was A. Hamilton (7). Circular elements with a cross weave (interlace) pattern, as seen on the arches and pilasters, are present below the angel and on the pulpit corners. Initially, three massive solid oak chairs, actually built into the choir loft, sat behind the pulpit; they were replaced by the ones shown in Figure 16, most probably in the 1930s.

FIGURE 15. CLOSE-UP VIEW OF THE FRONT AND SIDE OF THE PULPIT (INSET PRESENTS A PULPIT CORNER)



FIGURE 16. THREE OAK CHAIRS THAT ONCE SAT IN FRONT OF THE CHOIR LOFT.



Each panel of the choir loft is decorated with a beautifully-carved eight-petalled rosette (Figure 17). The meaning, if there is one, for this image is unknown. Ancient Greeks considered it a symbol of spiritual rebirth or regeneration (4).

FIGURE 17. EIGHT-PETALLED ROSETTE AS SEEN ON THE CHOIR LOFT PANELS



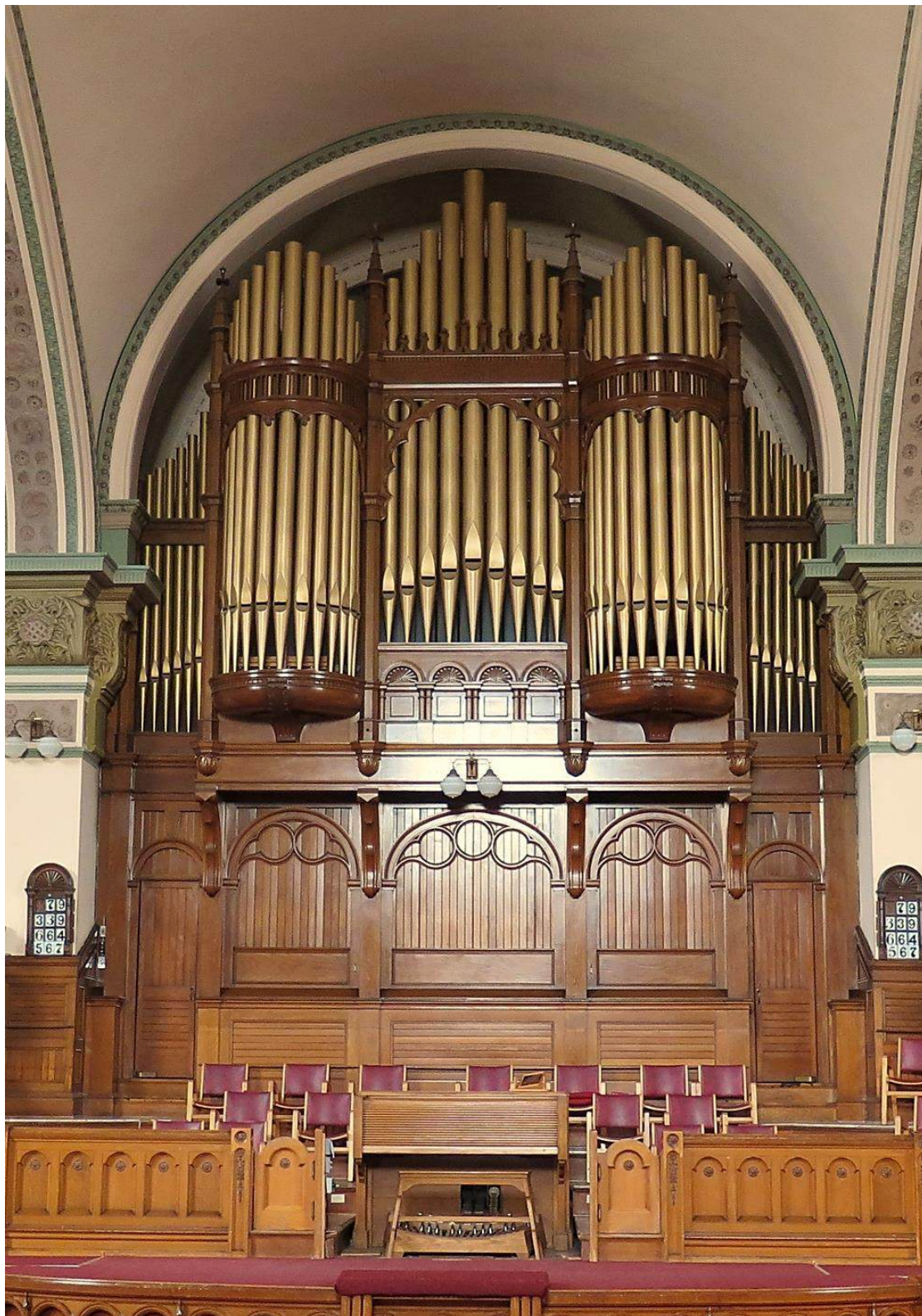
PIPE ORGAN

Our pipe organ, which was installed in 1930 to replace one destroyed by fire, is a three-manual Casavant (For more information on Casavant organs go to: www.casavant.ca). Made by Casavant Frères of St. Hyacinth, Quebec, it is a wonderful example of the fine art of organ building. The original organ had 39 stops, 53 ranks and 3091 pipes. Some pipes are sixteen feet long while others are the size of a pencil. The keys are rosewood, not the usual metal keys (Figure 18). The solid oak, ornamental organ case behind the pulpit platform is one of the heritage-defining elements of the church (Figure 19). When the organ was installed, the organ loft, choir gallery and pulpit platform had to be repositioned, bringing the pulpit forward.

FIGURE 18. ORGAN KEYBOARD



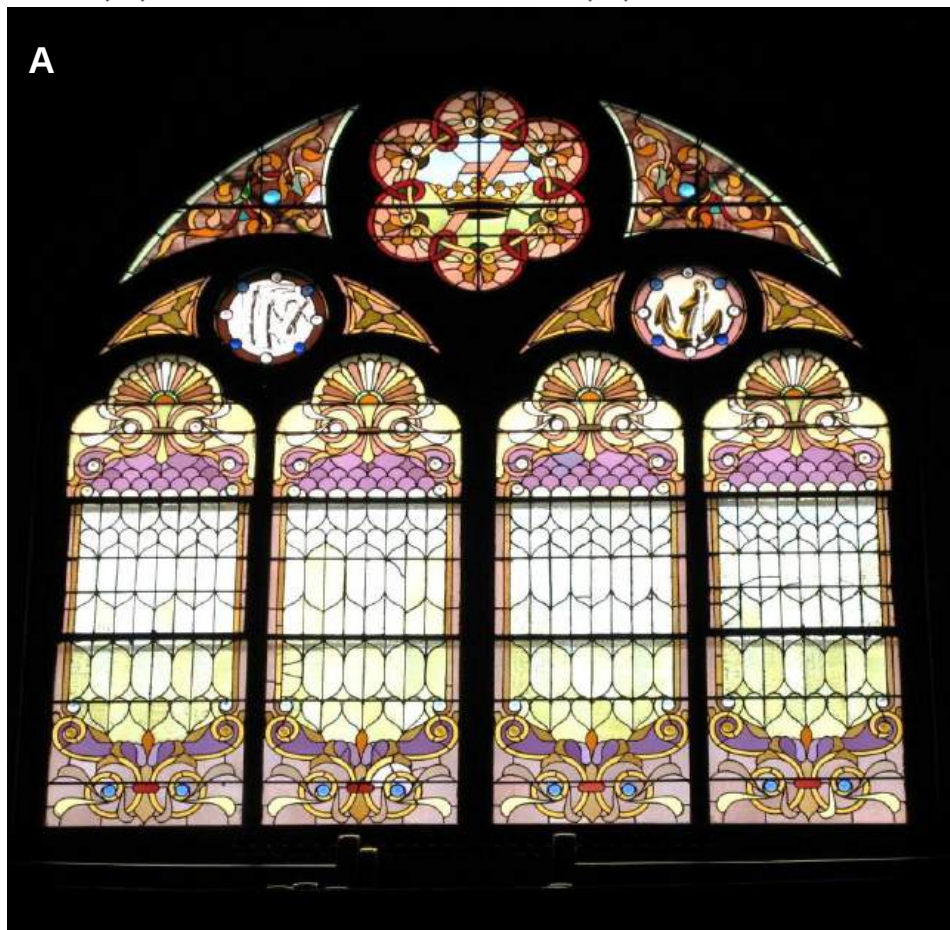
FIGURE 19. ORNAMENTAL ORGAN CASE, CHOIR LOFT AND PULPIT PLATFORM

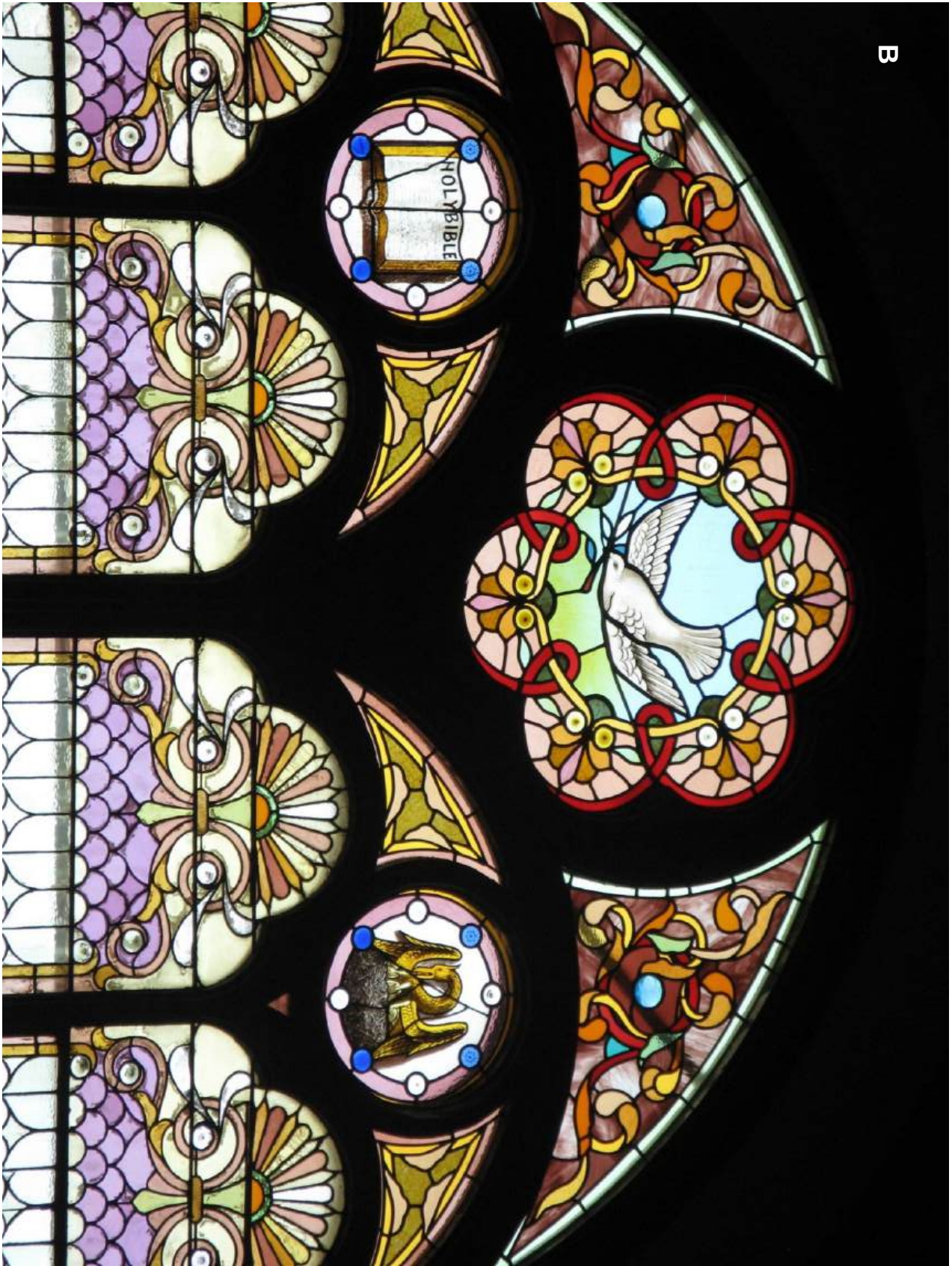


SANCTUARY WINDOWS

As mentioned earlier, the stained glass windows in the Sanctuary are the work of artisans from the Ontario Stained Glass Company. The south window shows a cross with a crown (Figure 20A). This symbol represents the suffering and death of Jesus and his final victory over sin and death. The anchor represents hope and firm Christian faith while *IHS* gives the first 3 letters of Jesus' Greek name: iota, eta, and sigma. On the upper east window (Figure 20B) is the image of a dove with an olive branch (recall the story of Noah and the flood). The dove also represents the Holy Spirit and peace. On the same window are images of the Bible and a pelican. The pelican, being very attentive to its young, is thought to represent the passion of Jesus. On the west window (Figure 20C) is the image of a lamb, representing Jesus 'the Lamb of God,' and the Greek letters alpha and omega ("I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13) (4, 8).

FIGURE 20. SANCTUARY SOUTH WINDOW (A), EAST WINDOW (B), AND WEST WINDOW (C)





B

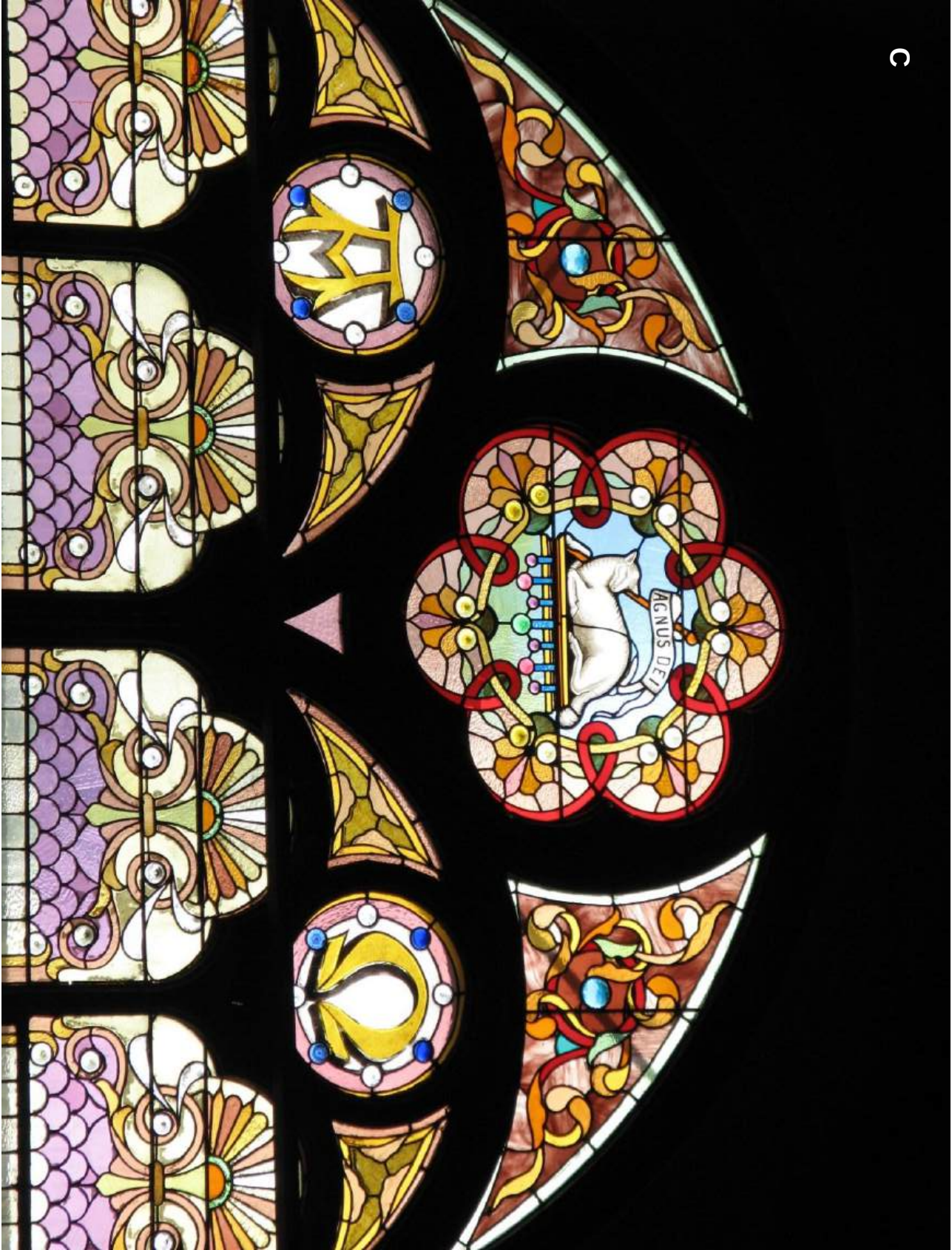


FIGURE 21. THE DOME



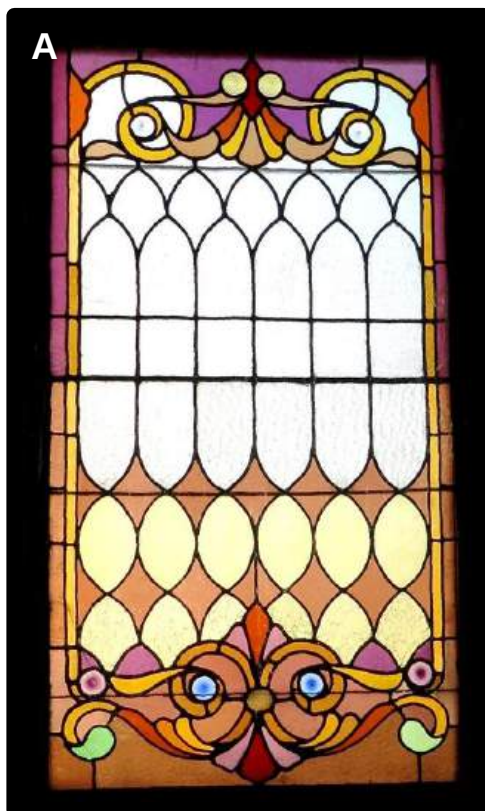
The above photograph (Figure 21) says it all. The magnificent dome is the focal point of the Sanctuary. Walter Morgan was thought responsible for the design of both the dome and Sanctuary windows. Not to be ignored in our exploration of the Sanctuary's stained glass are the lower parts of the windows (Figure 22) featured in Figure 20, as well as the main level stained glass windows (Figure 23 A and B). Notice that the upper part of

the east side lower windows (arrow) cannot be seen from the inside. Too bad! The colours and design appear quite lovely!



FIGURE 22. LOWER PANEL FROM ONE OF THE LARGE UPPER SANCTUARY WINDOWS

FIGURE 23. EAST LOWER SANCTUARY WINDOW AS SEEN FROM INSIDE (A) AND OUTSIDE (B) THE CHURCH



Completing our tour, look up at the northwest/northeast balcony doors (Figure 24A) and then look north, past the choir loft, at the main level exit doors (Figure 24B). The balcony doors have a wonderful stained glass rosette, which is particularly striking when the late afternoon sun makes the frosted glass sparkle. Not all the stained glass segments of the church's windows and doors are original. Over the years there has been breakage here and there and repairs have been made by local stained glass artisans. On the left side of the door window panel in Figure 24B, one can see where repairs have been made.

FIGURE 24. NORTH SIDE SANCTUARY DOORS IN THE BALCONY (A) AND ON THE SANCTUARY MAIN FLOOR (B)



BEAL MURAL

In 1995, six art students from H.B. Beal Secondary School under the direction of their teacher Ted Goodden created a four-panel mural in oil for the church's Sunday School Auditorium (Figure 25). It tells the church's story starting with the disastrous fire in 1895. The next panel shows the

church's reconstruction in 1896. In the third panel, people are attending a worship service during the World War II era. The last panel is a depiction of the present day Maitland/Dundas street corner. What a wonderful gift from our young neighbours!

FIGURE 25. MURAL IN SUNDAY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM



SUMMARY

It would be impossible to highlight all the special features of this magnificent Victorian church in a publication of this size. Hopefully, the reader will come away with a genuine appreciation of the church's splendor and unique beauty. That this grand place of worship still stands is a testament to the creative talents of architect George W. King and the skilled craftsmen that built it and also to the dedication of the countless church members that have lovingly maintained it over these past one hundred and twenty years. It remains a very special beauty.

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Drawing by Dianne Allen

'To those outside, the Dundas Centre Church makes an aggressive statement about the necessary strength of faith in a world that holds both arsonists and heroes. Inside, it expresses that perfect sphere beyond the reach of earthly trials.' (Taursky, 1993)

