



# *St. John's A Visitor's Guide*

**The Anglican Church of St. John the Evangelist**

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## **FOREWARD**

Welcome to St. John's Church!

The purpose of this booklet is to give you a historical description of the principal features of a building that has been one of the architectural treasures of London since it was built in 1888.

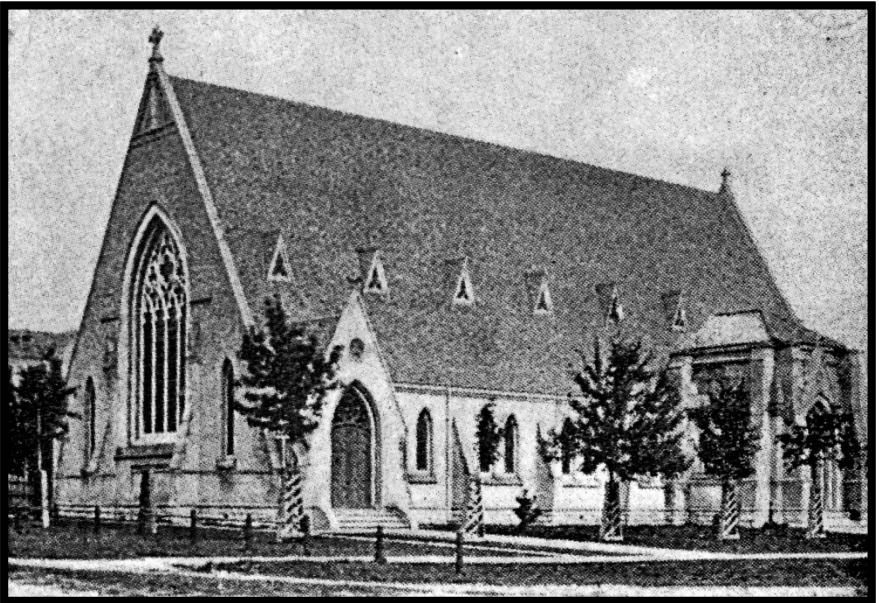
At the same time, it is the self-portrait of a community of faith. If you are a newcomer, it is also an invitation to become a part of the family of St. John's, and join in our shared life of worship, spiritual development and outreach.

God bless you!

## **CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, LONDON, ONTARIO**

The Church of Saint John the Evangelist as you see it today is the third home of a parish that began in 1864 with the building of a Chapel of St. John the Evangelist on St. George Street next to the newly founded Huron College. When that building was closed in 1884, the congregation moved to the Chapter House of the new Cathedral of the Holy Trinity on Piccadilly Street planned by Bishop Isaac Hellmuth, second Bishop of Huron. There parishioners worshipped until the present Church of St. John the Evangelist was built in 1888.

### **THE BUILDING**



Original exterior of church

The building itself speaks of the tradition of the English Church. Its plan and architectural design are based on those of the mediaeval parish church, with a long rectangular Nave leading to a Choir and Chancel at its east end. Between the Nave and Choir is an open Rood Screen, so-called from the Rood, or crucifix, which surmounted it in pre-Reformation times. This serves as a

triumphal arch leading to the High Altar, as well as an effective setting for the occasional liturgical drama, such as the Christmas Pageant. The timber roof of the nave is supported by hammer-beams, the outward thrust of which is taken by wall-buttresses on the exterior of the building. It is lit by small dormer windows filled with pale-coloured glass.



Original interior of church

The original plan of 1888 had a flat east wall and no side aisle. Although a spire was part of the architect's design, this was not added until 1897. In 1927 the east wall was opened up into a three-sided apse, and between 1952 and 1956 the Chapel, the North Aisle and the Baptistry were added, all blending in with the Gothic style of the original structure. The story of these and other changes is told in Jud Purdy's centennial history of St. John's Parish, "Bright the Vision", published in 1988, and in Gordon Bartram's "Historical Sketch" of 1960.



## **THE REREDOS**

When it was installed behind the High Altar in 1955, the oak reredos consisted of nine niches in Gothic style, two of them occupied by carved figures of the Good Shepherd and Saint John the Evangelist. The reredos and figures were given by Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Scatcherd in memory of their son John who died in infancy. The completion of the reredos was made possible by a bequest made in 1970 by Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Norris in memory of their son Charles, tragically killed in a motorcycle accident.

The original plan was to supply six oak figures for the empty niches on either side of the altar cross. They were to represent the continuity of the Christian faith from the time of the Apostles down to the present, and its spread from the Holy Land to southwestern Ontario. They were thought of in pairs: Saint Peter, Apostle to the Jews, with Saint Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles; Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who brought the Roman tradition to southern England, with Saint Columba, who introduced the Irish tradition to Scotland and northern England; and finally Father Jean de Brébeuf, who preached the Gospel to

the first inhabitants of this part of Ontario, with Isaac Hellmuth, second Bishop of Huron.

After many preliminary clay studies by the sculptor Ray Robinson, the present idea emerged of uniting the three niches on either side of the cross and filling them with terra cotta panels in low relief incorporating the figures into a landscape setting. The canopies of the niches were left to form a continuous cresting, as was often done in Gothic architecture. The side panels were dedicated on September 11, 1977 and, to link the two, the centre panel, introducing the empty cross of Golgotha, was added on July 17, 1978.

The whole design is focused on the empty cross of Golgotha, and symbolizes the spread of the Gospel in space and time, from the moment when the true meaning of the Cross was first grasped by the Apostles, not of death and defeat, but of redemption and hope. On the relief the Cross of Good Friday is a reminder of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation; the cross in front of it, the altar cross, is the resplendent Cross of Easter, of victory over sin and death.

The figures to the right are still in discussion, as if pondering the charge of Christ to his disciples, "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem". Those on the left have already turned, one of them pointing to two distant figures on the right. The deeply receding landscape not only suggests the passage of time in the Church's history, but is also a metaphor for the "eternal present" in which all her saints are united.

## THE BELLS

The story of the bells of St. John's Church goes back to a small bell brought from the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, the parish's first home, in 1895. Since the tower was not completed until 1898, the bell was hung in a small belfry on the Church School roof. In 1916 it was replaced with a new bell installed in the tower. This single iron bell remained in faithful service until 1951 when it was found to have developed a crack.



In 1954 the Board of Management approved the construction of a steel framework to accommodate four swinging bells. Also, designs were prepared by the Verdin Company for additional framing above this structure to accommodate a possible twelve-bell chime.

However, the church was not able to raise sufficient funds to proceed any further.

In 1994 Walter Blackburn's widow Marjorie died, leaving in her will sufficient funds "to provide the remaining bells to complete the set now in the Church of St. John the Evangelist". The Rector, Canon Bain Peever, formed a new Bell Committee, including the Organist Hugh McLean, and renewed contact with the Verdin Company. The company proposed to supply and install a set of twelve bronze bells, with power units and an automatic player, which could be programmed to play tunes encoded in its memory. This installation would then provide a total of 14 bells.

The bells were cast in Belgium and received at the church in February, 1996. The installation was completed in April, and the bells were dedicated on Easter Sunday 1996.



## THE ORGAN



Since the church was built only three organs have graced its chancel. The first was donated by Bishop Isaac Hellmuth. This instrument was a small two-manual tracker organ of around twelve stops. The hand-bellows were replaced by an electric blower in 1921, but the instrument suffered from recurring



problems. Thus, a new electro-pneumatic organ was purchased from the Woodstock Organ Company and dedicated September 27, 1936. Ivor Brake, the Organist and Choirmaster, drew up the three-manual design, which included 23 stops of about 1300 pipes and a set of tubular chimes. In 1963 the console was replaced with one of all-electric design by Mr. John Bright, and in 1978 the organ proper was dismantled and the pipes cleaned and re-leathered. However, these measures failed to solve the console's recurring mechanical problems.

Accordingly, in 1981, two new Organ Committees were formed: one responsible for the finances, the other, in which the Organist and Choirmaster, Hugh McLean played a leading role, for the purchase of a new instrument. Advice was sought from experts, and three types of instrument were considered: electronic, electro-pneumatic, and mechanical (tracker) action, as well as the possibility of reconditioning the existing instrument. At a Vestry Meetings in early 1982 the congregation voted to replace the Woodstock organ with a tracker organ. Subsequently the contract was awarded to Gabriel Kney and Company for a two-manual organ with mechanical key action and electric stop action. The Woodstock organ was played for the last time when Ivor Brake gave a short recital on May 27, 1984. On Sunday morning, November 25, 1984, the new instrument spoke for the first time in a Dedication Service beginning with a stirring rendering of Psalm 100, and showed its power and range in an Inaugural Concert that evening.

Some of the 1564 pipes in the organ are in front of the case, where they have both an aesthetic and functional purpose. The case itself acts as a sounding board for the whole organ, and, while it stands as far into the Choir as possible for maximum sound projection into the Nave, a few grills assist in this task. Immediately above the keyboards are the pipes of the Swell Organ, whose louvres for the "swelling" sound are shielded by carvings. The reed pipes of the Krummhorn stop are in front of this case. The remaining pipes of the Great Organ, the lower of

the two keyboards, and the Pedal Organ are behind the large flue pipes in front of the case. These are the Praestank rank (from Latin *praestare* – to stand forth), or Diapasons.

Two ranks of pipes have been retained from the old organ: the large wooden Open Flute, and the Erzähler Celeste, revoiced from the Woodstock Great Gemshorn. The tubular chimes, too, have been reconditioned and wall-mounted behind the organ.

## THE CHAPEL



The chapel, located to the north of the organ, was not part of the original church interior. It was added in 1927 by reconfiguring space during renovations. The present reredos was originally behind the main altar in the chancel and was moved to the chapel when a new reredos was added to the sanctuary. The oak screen at the entrance to the chapel was dedicated in 1952. The chapel seats about 30 people and is used for mid-week and 8:00 a.m. Sunday services.

## THE BAPTISTRY



The Duffield Memorial Baptisty, located in an alcove near the rear of the cloister, was added during the renovations of 1956. This beautiful area was built in an era when private baptism was prevalent. Although this practice was tolerated by the Church at the time, it was really intended only for exceptional circumstances and ran counter to Thomas Cranmer's doctrine of public baptism at a regular worship service. Hence, the space was designed with seating only for the baptismal party and is unsuited for public baptism as its position makes it hidden from view for many parishioners. When the Anglican Church renewed the call for public baptism, a new moveable font was ordered so as to be positioned at the front of the church and readily visible to all.

## THE FONT



The portable font, kept at the front of the nave near the lectern, is moved into a central position for services of Holy Baptism. This oaken font was dedicated in 1997. It has an octagonal configuration, the number eight signifying regeneration. The beautifully carved side panels represent birth, growth, death and rebirth through the life cycle of an oak tree, with each panel depicting a stage in its development from seed to full growth and death, but ending with rebirth back at the seed. Baptism is seen as death unto sin and rebirth to new life.

## THE WINDOWS

Stained glass as we know it first developed in the twelfth century as a result of building techniques that allowed larger openings in the church walls, which could then be filled with designs in glowing colours in place of the more subdued wall paintings that preceded them. The subjects of these designs are usually of two types: the icon and the narrative. The icon usually presents Christ or a saint as a single figure; the narrative usually illustrates a story from the New Testament or from the sayings of Christ.



The central panel of the Good Shepherd Window over the Altar combines both types of subject matter. Here the familiar figure of Christ appears as an icon for our contemplation, but is also an illustration of Christ's words, "I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep". He holds a shepherd's crook in his left hand and carries a young sheep in his arms. The thorn stuck in the sheep's wool reminds us of Christ's story of the shepherd who had a hundred sheep, but goes out looking for the one lost sheep and rejoices when he has found it. But this is also an Easter window. Christ wears the purple robe and crown of thorns put on him by mocking soldiers, and his hands and feet show the marks of the Crucifixion.

This window dates from 1888, and is therefore the oldest window in the church. However, when it was restored in 1936, the figures of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary were inserted in the side panels.

The other great icon window is the War Memorial in the west wall of the church, dedicated to those who served in the armed services in both World Wars. As in the Good Shepherd Window, the central figure is that of Christ, shown in a medallion at the head of the window. He is surrounded by emblems: the Chalice (Faith), the Anchor (Hope) and the Cross (Sacrificial Love), and monogram HIS (the first three Greek letters of "Jesus").

Below him are the four Patron Saints of the British Isles, Saint Patrick, Saint George, Saint Andrew and Saint David. These are flanked by the figures of the Archangel Gabriel on the left, with the Dove of Peace above him, and of the Archangel Michael on the right, with the Scales of Justice above him. Hovering above this group are angels bearing palms and symbols of the Passion. In the panels at the bottom of the window are the crests of the three armed services, together with the Eagle, the symbol of Saint John the Evangelist.

Themes from the life of Christ begin with the Nativity, seen in narrative windows in the Chapel and in the southwest corner of the nave and in an icon of the Virgin and Child over the door into the Tower. In a pair of windows in the north aisle this is followed by the Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple. The Passion of Our Lord is represented only indirectly, as in the Good Shepherd window, but the Resurrection appears in a window in the chapel, and the Ascension in a window at the northwest corner of the nave.

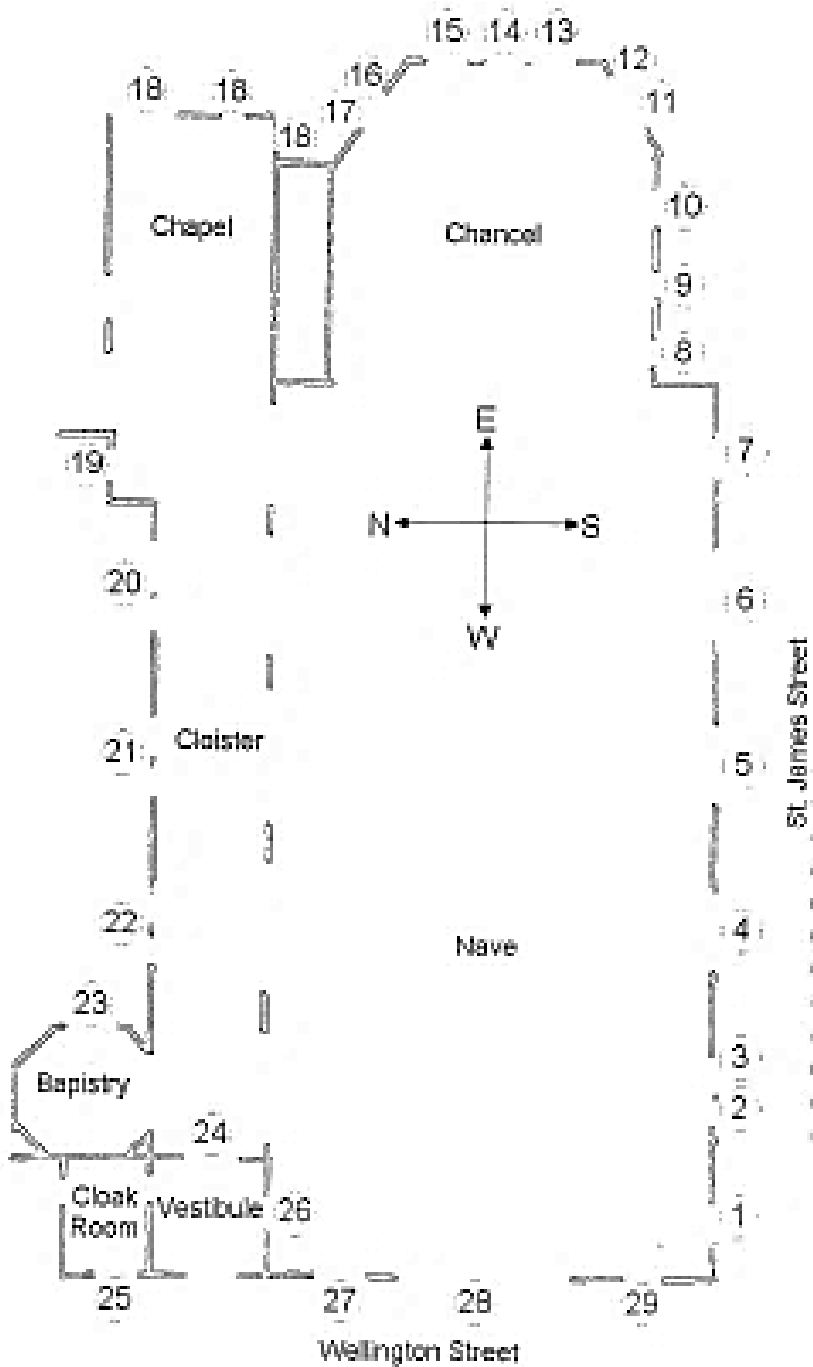
Other windows reflect the aspirations and special concerns of the parish of St. John the Evangelist over the years. These include the ministry of healing, as represented by Saint Luke and the Good Samaritan; the care of children, as reflected in the recurring theme of Christ blessing the children; and outreach into the

community, as represented by examples such as the window on the south side of the nave, in which Charity distributes bread to the hungry.

## **WINDOWS**

1. The Good Shepherd
2. Christ and Mary Magdalene at the Tomb
3. The Greatest of these is Charity
4. The Calling of James and John; John and Peter at the Sepulchre
5. Christ Blessing the Children (2)
6. Behold the Lamb of God (2)
7. The Virgin and Child
- 8, 9, 10. Symbols of Our Faith
11. St. Luke the Evangelist
12. St. John the Evangelist
13. The Blessed Virgin Mary
14. The Good Shepherd
15. St. John the Baptist
16. St. Paul
17. St. Peter
18. St. Luke and St. Paul; The Resurrection; The Nativity (3)
19. Priscilla
20. The Presentation in the Temple (2)
21. Christ Blessing the Children; The Good Samaritan (2)
22. The Light of the World; Woman with Spinning Wheel (2)
23. Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me
24. In the Beginning
25. The Holy Eucharist
26. The Lord is My Shepherd
27. The Ascension of Christ
28. War Memorial Window
29. The Nativity

See the next page for a numbered sketch of the position of the windows.







We hope you have enjoyed your tour of St. John's and we invite you to join us in worship, fellowship, and social action at any time.

Peace

*Shining Light Through Active Compassion*

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