

THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH

Above: At First Congregational Church, 16 of the windows, including The Ascension, center, were created by the Tiffany studio. Below: Four of the windows at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church represent the gospels.

## WINDOWS ON THE SPIRIT

Beautiful stained glass illuminates local churches

By **TAHREE LANE**  
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Light transformed carries a certain magic, as builders have known for centuries when including stained glass in churches.

"I think it triggers a deep emotional response to the light that comes through the surface," says Janine Ody, Toledo artist. "Light is very spiritual."

One of the earliest examples dates to 7th century England in a stone monastery known as Wearmouth-Jarrow. It's believed that French architects and stained-glass makers, considered the finest in Europe, set up their workshops near the construction site.

Another early example is the windows in Augsburg Cathedral in Germany, dating to about 1120. Within decades, other cathedrals (Le Mans, Poitiers, Chartres, and Canterbury), installed windows depicting saints or Bible stories which were instructive to the illiterate masses.

Ruby and blue glasses initially dominated the glazier's palette because of their relatively simple formulas. By the 14th century, smoky ambers, yellow-greens, and gray-purples were used. Arabian glass windows appeared in the second half of the 13th century and gradually moved north into Europe.

### The art of glass

Stained glass requires both art and craft: the talent to create an image, and the engineering skills to assemble an entire piece that will fit into a frame and support its own weight. After a thousand years, the fabrication of such windows has changed little.

Even the tools Ms. Ody uses are similar — a glass cutter, a lead knife, a grozer, glass pliers, a large brush, measurements, and horseshoe nails. In the last 20 years, she's made windows for 30 houses of worship and restored many others.

The process often begins (as it may well have a millennium ago) with meetings between artist, architect, and a church aesthetics committee to determine what images, symbols, or geometry they want in the windows.

The artist notes exterior light conditions such as the direction the window will face, shadows cast by nearby buildings, and the effect of nearby trees and whether they're evergreens or will drop their leaves in autumn.

After Ms. Ody perfects a small drawing of a window she makes a full-scale drawing on paper. One tool her ancient predecessors didn't have was an overhead projector on which the image is beamed to paper tacked on the wall, whereupon she traces it. Those early French glaziers probably drew their actual-sized "cartoons," as they're called, on paper lined with a grid. After it's traced on paper, she colors it.

She uses a carbide wheel to cut the colored glass she's ordered specifically for each project from Indiana, West Virginia, Chicago, or Europe. Some glass is mouth-blown, some is rolled by machine from a glassmaker's special recipe, and some is mass-produced.

When all the pieces for a section are cut, she tacks them with beeswax onto clear glass that is backlit, allowing her to scrutinize the result and make final adjustments.

"You might bring forward anything that needs some emphasis, and make sure the pieces are subtle that need to be subtle."

Only after her eye is satisfied does she assemble them with lead comes or, in the case of a mosaic, with mortar.

Finally, she seals the panel with cement glaze and cleans it. After several weeks of curing, it's ready for installation.

### Local treasures

Ask local art and history buffs about church windows and they're quick to mention First Congregational Church on Collingwood Boulevard in the Old West End.

In this sturdy 1912 building are 19 stained glass windows, the piece de resistance of which is The Ascension, in the center of the north wall. Clad in robes of white, Jesus rises heavenward, his arms outstretched in a blessing of 11 faithful disciples.

It's one of 16 created by the Tiffany studio, eight of which were built by Louis Comfort Tiffany himself. Flanking it are windows themed to Truth, Justice, Hope, and Inspiration.

"These are landmarks," says historian Fred Folger of the trove of beautiful windows in area churches. "You drive by a lot of these all the time but you don't realize what artistic beauty there is on the inside."

He notes other gems, such as a large Ascension window at St. Mark's Episcopal, across the street from First Congregational; the high windows in the magnificent Rosary Cathedral; the sanctuary of Collingwood Presbyterian, and St. Stephen's Catholic Church on Consaul Street near the original Tony Packo's.

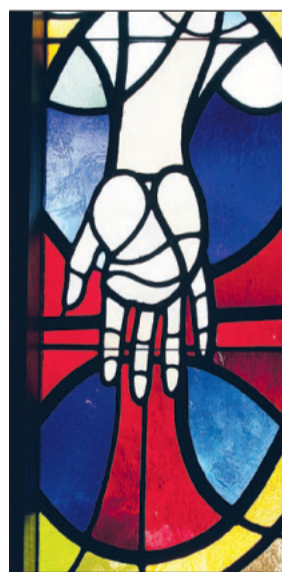
In the newly steepled St. Patrick's Historic Catholic Church just south of downtown Toledo, windows have been restored. One shows Saint Patrick converting the king of Ireland; another, King David with a harp, and St. Cecilia, patron saint of music.

"There's a very handsome window in the 1935 mausoleum chapel of Toledo Memorial Park, of an angel by an open tomb pointing up, and a three-part window in an addition to the mausoleum," Mr. Folger notes.

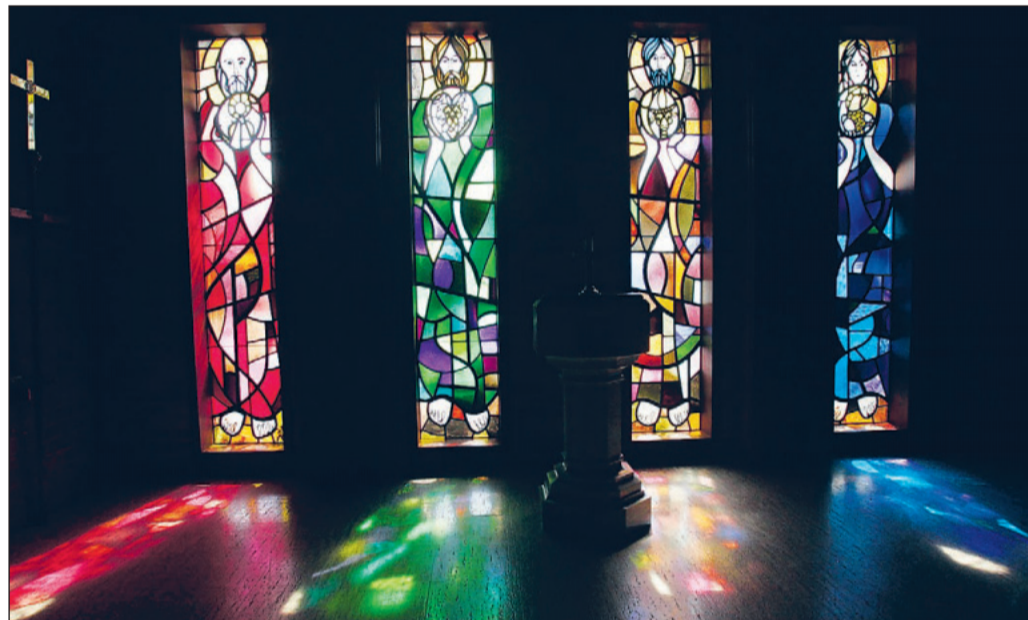
Among the churches where fine windows can be found are Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Monroe Street United Methodist, Ebenezer Missionary Baptist on Ashland Avenue, St. John's Lutheran on Erie Street, Trinity Episcopal, and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral on North Superior Street.

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For a slide show see: [www.toledoblade.com](http://www.toledoblade.com)



Detail from a window in St. Matthew's.



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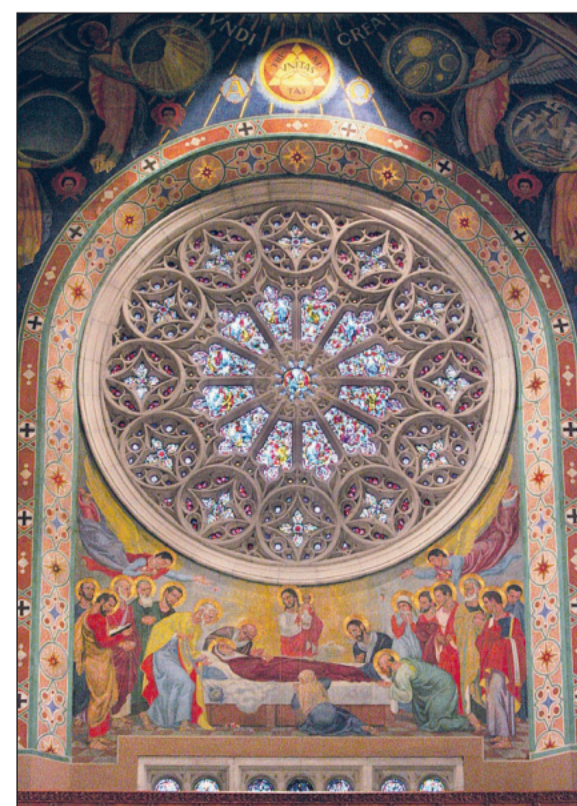


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Above: Janine Ody works on a preliminary sketch for a church window.

Left: The 28-foot Rose Window in Rosary Cathedral.

Below: A window at the True Church of the Apostolic Faith. The building once was a synagogue.



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