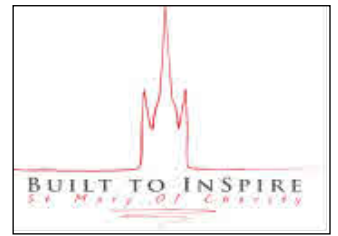




TELLING STORIES IN PICTURES



UNDERSTANDING STORIES IN PICTURES

You might already be very good at understanding stories told in pictures, because comics and children's books do this. In the past, Bible stories were told in pictures in stained glass, paintings or carvings, so that people who could not read could understand them.

Pictures were often arranged so that the most important event of the story was the largest. The main character might be placed higher up or in the middle of the scene. The story might go from left to right across the window, or in another order, so people could "read" it like a book. People would learn the stories from listening to sermons too.

STAINED GLASS

The earliest examples of stained glass windows date back to about 540 AD, though most of them are from the 9th century onwards.

Many of the stained glass windows in English churches were destroyed during the English Reformation in the 16th century (see information sheet), and were replaced by clear glass, but during Victorian times coloured glass windows became popular again.

In St Mary of Charity church in Faversham, most of the windows are from the 19th and 20th century. They show scenes from the life of Christ, and stories from the Bible including Noah building the Ark and the sacrifices of Job.



A detail showing the Tree of Knowledge from St Mary of Charity



The painted column 1306

CARVINGS

Carvings were an important part of the images used in churches and were often unusual, creative or playful. They might show animals or figures from ancient stories.

Some of the carvings on the misericords (tip-up seats) in St Mary of Charity date back to the 15th century. They show animals including a fox, a camel and an ape, as well as a jester, a dragon and even a mermaid. If you look very carefully you can see the church cat - twice!



Carving of jackals on stall end 1851



WHY BIBLE STORIES ARE IMPORTANT

Bible stories are an important part of being a good Christian. They help people to understand what they need to do in their everyday lives to behave in the way Jesus taught them was right.

People listen to sermons by the priest and also look at the images in the church - stained glass windows, paintings and even carvings show characters and events from the Bible. In this way, people come to know the Bible well and have time to think carefully about the messages that the stories contain.



PAINTINGS

Many churches had wall paintings and in St Mary of Charity there is a painted column dating back to 1306 which has survived the Reformation. The pictures on it are scenes from the life of Christ and we can imagine how the church might have looked when it had lots of paintings like this.

The reredos (painted altar screen) above was designed by the famous Gilbert Scott and installed in 1867.



STORIES IN STAINED GLASS

THE BEAUTY OF STAINED GLASS

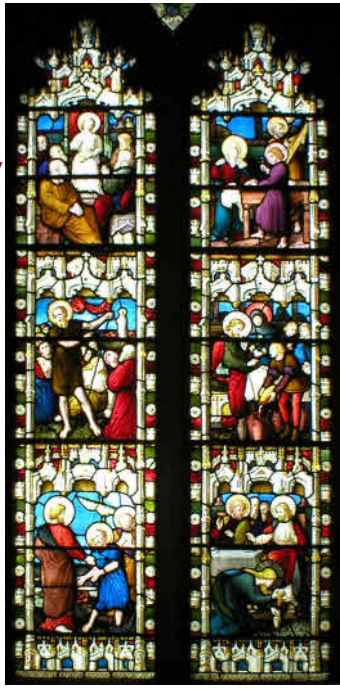
As well as telling stories, stained glass windows help to make the church feel different from ordinary buildings. There are other things about a church which also feel special, such as the high ceiling and fine carvings. Sunlight shining through the glass is very beautiful and encourages people to think of the beauty of God's creation.

This huge stained glass window, at the east end of St Mary of Charity, is above the altar and shows the saints and heavenly hierarchy (order of importance).

READING THE STORY

This window, in the south transept of St Mary of Charity, was made in 1869 and shows scenes from the Life of Christ. If you look at them separately, below, can you work out what each picture shows?

Draw a line from each picture to its description.



How many different colours can you see in this window?

Make a list of them here:



- Jesus learns to be a carpenter in his childhood
- Jesus aged 12 listening to the teachers in the temple and asking questions
- Jesus finds his disciples, Simon, Peter and Andrew, while they were out fishing
- John the Baptist with Jesus approaching to be baptised
- Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding
- Mary pours perfume on Jesus's feet and wipes them with her hair



STORIES IN PAINTINGS



THE PAINTED COLUMN AT ST MARY OF CHARITY

This column was painted by an unknown artist more than 700 years ago in 1306, and it is a rare example of the type of painting which would once have been found in churches all over the country. It shows scenes from the life of Christ.

Before the English Reformation, all the columns in the church would have been painted like this, but most of the paintings were covered or destroyed when decoration in churches was removed.

The picture on the right shows the column in the church, and the large picture above shows the paintings spread out as if the column has been laid flat.

Have a look at the separate pictures next to it - can you find them in the larger image?



The Annunciation: the Angel Gabriel speaks to Mary

The Visitation: Mary and her Cousin Elizabeth

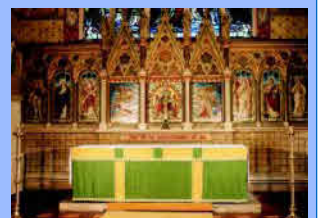


The column in the church



The Annunciation to the Shepherds: two of the shepherds are visible (and a small white dog)

The High Altar is in the east of the church and also known as the Lord's Table or the Holy Table. This is the most important part of the church as it is where the priest celebrates Holy Communion, or Mass. The decorated panel behind the table is called a reredos.

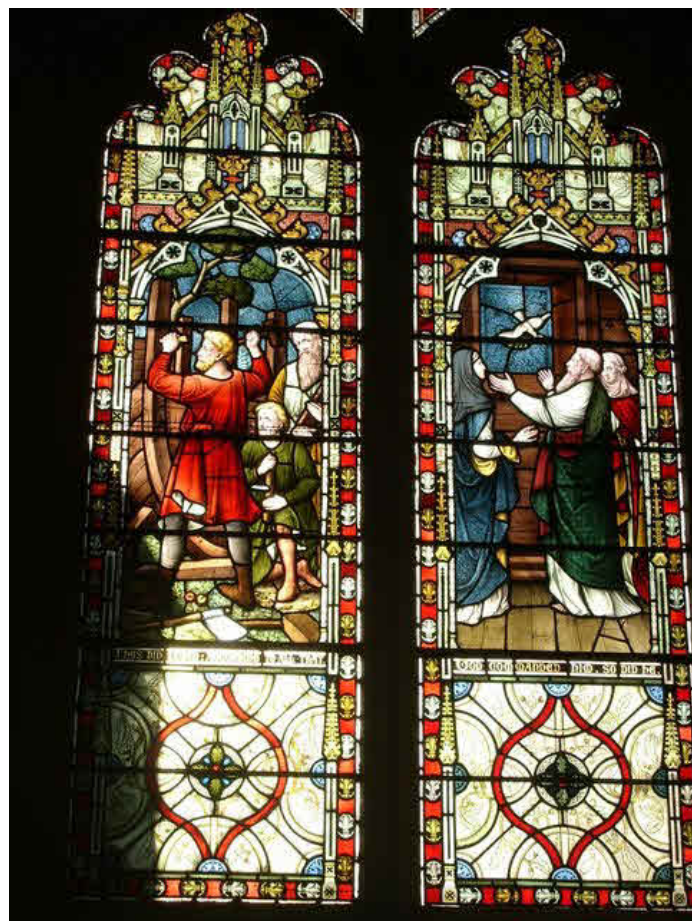


THE STORY OF NOAH'S ARK

You probably know the story of Noah's Ark, but did you know there is a stained glass window in St Mary of Charity church in Faversham which features two scenes from the story?

Look at the window and read the story below, then see if you can work out which scenes are shown in the window.

Imagine you were creating a stained glass window or painting for the church, showing the whole story of Noah's Ark in six pictures. Which parts of the story would you choose? Write them down in the panel below - you could have a go at drawing or painting them too!



Scenes from the story of Noah's Ark, shown in a window made in honour of Queen Victoria's jubilee at St Mary of Charity church in Faversham



Detail of Noah's Ark in a stained glass window at St Mary of Charity

IF YOU WANT TO READ IT IN THE BIBLE:

This story can be found in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 6 verse 1 to Chapter 9 Verse 17.

I would choose these scenes from the story for my window or painting:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Noah's Ark and the Flood

God saw that people were behaving in bad ways and decided to wipe the wickedness from the face of the earth. There was one good man, Noah, and God told him to build an ark for himself and his family to prepare for a mighty flood that would destroy everything.

God told Noah to bring into the ark two of each living creature, one male and one female, along with every kind of food they would need while on the ark. Noah did as God commanded.

After they went into the ark, rain fell for forty days and nights and flood waters covered the earth for a hundred and fifty days. Then the waters began to recede and the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Noah sent a raven to see if there was land, but the raven flew to and fro then returned to the ark. Noah waited seven days and sent a dove, and the dove returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak. Noah and his family waited months while the surface of the earth dried out.

Finally after a year, Noah and his family came out of the ark. God promised never again to destroy all the living creatures on the earth, and made a covenant with Noah: "Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." As a sign of this everlasting covenant, God set a rainbow in the clouds.