

First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia Self-Guided Tour

You are most welcome to the visit First Presbyterian Church and tour our building. (Printed copies of the Self-Guided Tour are available in the Narthex or in the church office.)

We hope the tour will better help you understand our history of ministry as it relates to the beginning and development of our country and our denomination. The tour begins in the vestibule or narthex facing the sanctuary and moves to the left, down the left or east aisle to the steps of the chancel, and then back on the right or west aisle, returning to the narthex.

Narthex

- ❖ Note the memorials for the first Synod and Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the 300th Anniversary of First Church.

East Aisle

- ❖ The single light window in the north wall of the northeast stairway is a memorial to Marie Louise Weightman Faries who died in 1898. This "angel" window has been attributed to Fannie Sweeney, whose work was shown in the 1893-94 exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and among the Pennsylvania exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The window is partially hidden and is best viewed is by going partway up the stairs.
- ❖ The first window on the east wall is a 1914 signed piece by Tiffany Studios of New York, placed in memory of Emily B. McFadden. This work displays several features typical of the Tiffany-style opalescent glass, streaky (Kokomo) glass, drapery glass, and plating.
- ❖ The Mary Grier Bartol window, just south of the Tiffany window, was placed in 1965 by Willett Studios of Philadelphia, replacing an earlier window.
- ❖ The next window is the work of the Wailles of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Spence of Montreal, placed in 1872, and is in memory of Alice Niles Miller who died in 1865 at the age of 97.
- ❖ Between the Alice Niles Miller window and the next one is the marble plaque in memory of George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, the founders of Second Church.
- ❖ The southernmost window in the east aisle memorializes Isaac Snowden, a ruling elder, who died in 1835. It was placed in 1872 by Magee & Smith of Philadelphia. Snowden was one of the twenty-four original trustees named in the 1772 charter granted to Second Church by Thomas and John Penn, true and absolute proprietaries of the Province of Pennsylvania, and signed by the Lieutenant Governor Richard Penn.
- ❖ In the east transept are 3 windows placed in the church in 1872 at the time of dedication and are attributed to J. & G.H. Gibson of Philadelphia. The left window is in memory of Robert Smith, an elder who died in 1838; the center memorializes James Hunter Cole who died in 1844, and the right window is in memory of Robert Hobart Smith who was ordained an elder in 1827.
- ❖ In the east transept is a cross with a green base of green Iona marble, a symbol of that holy isle.

Pulpit

- ❖ The pulpit is embellished with the names of founders and ministers of both the First and Second Presbyterian Churches. On the left, from First Church, are the names of Francis Makemie, Jedidah Andrews, Francis Alison, and Albert Barnes. On the right, Second Church is represented by George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennant, Ashbel Green, and Elias Beadle.

Steps of Chancel (viewing south)

- ❖ The sanctuary is in the shape of a cruciform. The apse at the top of the cross has five high windows symbolizing the life of Christ, his birth, baptism, crucifixion, resurrection, and descent of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The communion table is a large block of Italian marble and the memorial candlesticks are of carved and gilded walnut, designed to repeat the decorative motif of the cross; they are the work of contemporary liturgical artist Davis D'Ambley. The octagonal limestone baptismal font bears symbols of baptism: a star, a scallop shell, and an eagle.
- ❖ Music, the universal language, has played a very important role in the life and worship of First Church. When the church building was dedicated in 1872, attention was made to the "very large and fine" organ by the Public Ledger together with the outstanding choir. Dr. Alexander McCurdy, Jr., from the Curtis Institute and Westminster Choir College, assumed the position of organist-choirmaster in 1927. He was followed by John Tuttle, a student of McCurdy's, Thomas Jaber, and Robert Carwithu, also a student of McCurdy. Currently Andrew Senn is the Director of Music as music continues to be offered to the glory to God at First Church.

Steps of Chancel (viewing north)

- ❖ The large four-light lancet window in the north wall is the largest in the building, rising 31'6" above the floor. It was originally completed in 1872 but when the first organ was replaced in 1906, it was completely boarded over, and the window disappeared from view for over ninety years. When the Organ Gallery was restored and rebuilt by the Reuter Organ Company in 2000, the colorful window reappeared, much to the delight of the congregation.
- ❖ The original Gallery Organ was by Simmons in 1872 with expansions and rebuilds by Hutchings-Votey in 1904, Austin in 1926, and Moller in 1954. The Reuter instrument consists of 80 ranks and 5,000 pipes. An 18 rank Chancel Organ was installed in the east and west transepts by Moller in 1954.

West Transept and Aisle

- ❖ The Steinway Piano was donated to the church by Dr. Ana Matonis in the summer of 2003. It is a model D grand piano which was purchased from Steinway piano in 1896 by Charles Dana of New York City. It was sold to Frederick Juilliard, the nephew and heir to August Juilliard, the benefactor of the Juilliard School of Music, in 1914. Ignace Paderweski played the instrument in 1897 and his endorsement of the piano remains on the piano, stating "This piano is a marvel". In 1937 the Greenwich Academy acquired the piano from the estate of Frederick Juilliard and Dr. Matonis purchased the piano from them in 1980.
- ❖ The seven Tiffany lancet windows in the west transept were donated by John M. Logan in 1906 and represent Old Testament figures which the congregation knows as the "Prophet Windows". Beginning on the left are the pictures of Abraham, Joseph, Samuel, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Daniel.
- ❖ The adjacent window, by Gibson of Philadelphia, was placed in 1872 by Charles F. Haseltine.
- ❖ Just beyond this window is a Gothic memorial tablet in memory of Elias R. Beadle, minister of Second Church during the construction of this building.
- ❖ The next window was placed by James L. Harmar in 1872 in memory of Sarah Coit Lanman Harmar. The placement of this window created controversy in that it was the first window in which figures appeared which were seen as contrary to Presbyterian practice. A glance around the sanctuary, with its figures of angels, saints, prophets, and patriarchs proves that objection to figural windows was short lived.
- ❖ The "Parable Window" is next and is a signed example of the work of Jean Baptiste Capronnier of Brussels, the only work in this country.
- ❖ The Hubbell window was inaccurately thought to be done by the American artist John LaFarge. It was placed by Mrs. Hubbell in memory of her husband Ferdinand Wakeful Hubbell probably in 1889.