St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church

1545 State Street

Presbyterianism in New Orleans hearkens back to 1818 and thus ranks among the oldest non-Catholic groups in New Orleans. (Christ Church Cathedral celebrated its bicentennial in 2005.) For a detailed history, see the art notes for the First Presbyterian Church.

The final downtown home of the First Presbyterian Church was an impressive Gothic-style church designed by Henry Howard on Lafayette Square, where the first services were held in November 1857. Gradually, however, parishioners were moving uptown, and the parish began organizing a mission church. In 1906 it bought the block at the corner of St. Charles Avenue and State Street, building the Little Church in 1914 to house The St. Charles Avenue Branch of the First Presbyterian Church. Six years later the branch church voted that it was large enough to function independently, and in 1939 the parent church moved to the corner of Jefferson and South Claiborne avenues.

Todays church building, French gothic in style, was dedicated in February 1930. Of Indiana limestone, it includes bright stained glass windows with small geometric panes and inset symbols. These come from the Oidtmann studio of Linnich, Germany.

The stained glass windows in the chapel on the first floor of the Education Building are an artistic triumph, depicting the story of the Creation in brilliant movements of color. Arranged in six windows, each representing one day of Creation, the progression flows, roughly, from the chaos of the universe, through worlds of sea critters and Louisiana flora, to human beings and even a cow. The more one looks, the more figures become visible, but the artist has taken some artistic license with the order of events (for example, a butterfly and a mosquito appear on Day Three, well before God created animals, and a human hand and human toes are in the window for Day One).

The artist for the chapel windows is Stephen Wilson of Baton Rouge, a graduate of LSU, where he studied with the renowned Paul Dufour. Steve has created windows for dozens of churches in the Southeast, principally Louisiana and Texas, including St. George Catholic Church and First Presbyterian Church in Baton Rouge. The artist served as our guide at these churches during the final Stained Glass Art in Sacred Places, in 2019.

*Visited November 2013*

**The Creation Chronology**

(Warning: The windows take liberty with this chronology!)

Day One: Light; separation of day and night

Day Two: Separating sky from water

Day Three: Separating of water from land; Creation of plants

Day Four: Creation of the sun and the moon

Day Six: Land-dwelling animals, including insects, and human beings

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