St. Luke Episcopal Church

1222 North Dorgenois Street

The Greek inscription above the front door is a reminder that this structure once housed the Greek Orthodox congregation, now on Robert E. Lee Boulevard. Since 1976 the congregation of St. Lukes, the only predominantly black Episcopalian parish in Louisiana, has made this their home.

St. Luke’s traces its history back to 1855, when Bishop Leonidas Polk created a parish for the religious instruction of the colored race. At that time, St. Paul’s Episcopal was building a new church and donated construction materials to the St. Luke’s congregation, but that structure burned down in 1863.

Thereafter located in a series of Uptown locations, St. Lukes was able to purchase this solid 1950 church in 1976 through the financial help of generous parishioners. Gaudet Hall honors Mrs. Frances Joseph Gaudet, a leader in prison and educational reform and founder of an orphanage in Gentilly. (The Episcopal Church recognized her contributions by setting aside December 30 as her feast day.)

In 1990 the congregation undertook major decorative improvements, in particular replacing the simple nonfigurative windows with striking stained glass figural designs. Working closely with the Shenandoah Studios of Stained Glass in Front Royal, Virginia, the parish participated actively in the selection of the designs. The Reinarts Studio of Winona, Minnesota, had created the St. Luke window in 1984.

Two windows celebrate individuals of great significance to the congregation: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mrs. Frances Gaudet. The remaining windows show more traditional church images, such as the Good Shepherd, the Crucifixion, and the Return of the Prodigal Son. Look closely, and you will see that all the figures are depicted as African Americans. As in real life, coloration ranges from dark brown to tan.

Although the windows in the entry and over the altar are of traditional stained glass, the technique used for most of the windows is *dalle de verre,* or slab glass. This is cut in thick chunks, faceted to catch the light, and set in an epoxy matrix. Those familiar with the Algiers Point United Methodist Church or St. David Catholic Church will recognize this artistic technique.

The focus of St. Lukes windows, as well as the craftsmens technique, make this church a fascinating stop on any tour.

**Windows**

St. Luke

Holy Spirit and Alpha Blessed Sacrament

Paschal lamb and Omega

Altar

Annunciation

Crucifixion Visitation

Prodigal Son Nativity

Martin Luther King, Jr. Good Samaritan

Interior entry doors

Ecclesia in Louisiana \* St. Luke Episcopal Church,

Spirit of the church

Closet

Breaking bread

Absolom Jones\*\* Stairway

Sunrise and sunset

Wisdom

Choir Loft

Robing room Good Shepherd

Sun at horizon and moon

Angel

\* This window includes the Roman numerals for 1838, the date of the founding of the Episcopal Diocese in Louisiana.

\*\* First black Episcopal priest in the U.S.

*Toured:*

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