St. Paul Lutheran Church

2021 Tara Boulevard***,*** Baton Rouge

Although St. Paul Lutheran Church considers 1957 as the year of its birth, Lutherans were active in Baton Rouge a century before that. In the 1850s the Male and Female Lutheran Benevolent Society, a group of New Orleans free people of color, established the Lutheran Cemetery, the first cemetery for African Americans in Baton Rouge.

In 1957 the national Lutheran organizations sent a mission developer to Baton Rouge, and after weathering initial challenges he assembled a small congregation. Parishioners met first in the parsonage and then in Goodwood Elementary School. The next move was to a small house and then to a real church on Goodwood Avenue at East Airway Drive. When the membership outgrew these quarters, they purchased a lot in the Tara subdivision, completing the church and education building in 1976. Just four years later it opened a mission church on Jones Creek Road.

Artist Adalie Brent, who taught art at local schools and LSU and directed the Louisiana Art and Science Museum for 18 years, designed the cheerful windows that greet church-goers here. Her distinctive style, featuring bright colors and the layers of the natural world, can be found at several churches in the Baton Rouge area as well as in the museum. The challenge of turning design into glass, however, was left to an unknown studio. The windows were probably installed at the time of construction.

These bold pictures are deceptively complex. Mrs. Brent clearly loved nature, and she was also well versed in liturgical symbolism. Among the symbols that seem just random adornments are:

Acorn: Strength, rebirth

Fish: Fish in Greek, *ichthus,* can be scrambled to mean Jesus Christ, Gods Son, Savior

Anchor: Hope, Strength

Butterfly: Resurrection (transformation from something hidden into a beautiful new entity)

Sun: Christ as the light of the world

Star: Universe and heaven, Star of Bethlehem

Phases of the moon, progressing in a clockwise pattern: Complexity of the Creation

Scroll (announcing the birth of Jesus): Advent

Flower (stylized Christmas Star): Christmas

Pomegranate: Fecundity, eternal life, Resurrection

Descending dove: Holy Spirit, Pentecost, peace

Angel: Messenger from God

Lily: Purity

Stylized rose: Spirituality, Virgin Mary

Raindrops: Baptism, purifying quality of religion

Sun: Christ as the light of the world

Dove with cross: Holy Spirit, Pentecost

Waxing and waning waves and phases of the moon: The changing, yet steady, nature of God

*Visited May 18, 2019*

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