



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

*Living with History*

**HPC meeting date: 10/19/2015**  
**Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4**  
**Staff reviewer: Dean Doerrfeld**  
**PTS**

<b>Property</b>	833 W. Wisconsin Ave. Individually Designated Historic Property
<b>Owner/Applicant</b>	ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH 833 WEST WISCONSIN AVENUE MILWAUKEE, WI 53233 PHONE: (414) 651-0805
<b>Proposal</b>	This proposal involves the removal of two, memorial, stained-glass windows from the east aisle of the church and the installation of wood-frame windows with translucent glazing.
<b>Staff Comments</b>	<p>St. James is a rectangular, end-gabled, rock-faced limestone structure measuring 124 feet long by 55 feet wide. It has architecturally treated elevations facing north, east and west. At the south end of the church are two later additions that give the building its cruciform shape. The east wing is the parish house added in 1899, while the west wing contains a chapel. The north is the principal elevation. It is composed of the gabled nave wall and the abutting tower on the east. The nave wall contains the main entrance set within a gabled, compound arched portal. The original wooden doors were replaced with gold-tone aluminum and glass doors in 1966. Flanking the entrance are narrow, Gothic-arched, leaded windows. Above the portal, a pair of tall, narrow, traceried, Gothic leaded-glass windows fill the upper wall. In the gable, a large, lobed window is surmounted by a tiny-quatrefoil window just below the gable peak. All of the windows have stone hood moulds. A buttressed pinnacle at the west corner of the façade is balanced by a massive square tower at the east corner.</p> <p>The east tower is a massively buttressed structure that rises in three stages to a broach spire. A pair of lancet windows in the base face West Wisconsin Avenue while paneled oak doors lead into the church on the east side. The second stage of the tower has a lobed, stained-glass window high up on the wall on the north side. The third stage of the tower has a large, traceried belfry opening on all sides, above which is a slate-clad broach spire.</p> <p>The east and west elevations have heavily-buttressed, one-story, side aisles abutting the clerestory-lit, two-story nave. A pair of stained glass windows fills each bay of the side aisles. At the south end of each side elevation is the parish house addition of 1899.</p> <p>The church was constructed in 1867-68 to the designs of Gordon William Lloyd of Detroit. A fire in 1872 destroyed most of the building leaving only the stone walls and some windows. During 1873-74 the church was rebuilt to Lloyd's original plans incorporating some elements omitted during the original construction. The Parish House was added in 1899 and the interior of the church was remodeled in 1913-1914. Much of the woodwork within the Nativity Chapel was donated to the church and originally was located in a 16<sup>th</sup> century chapel near Brussels, Belgium. The church achieves significance as the oldest example of a stone, gothic Revival church in Milwaukee and the oldest Episcopalian congregation on the west side. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, designated a Milwaukee Landmark in 1980, and a Locally Designated Historic Property in 1991.</p>

The two stained glass windows are located in the east aisle wall of church. The windows are of the memorial type and display two of The Beatitudes: “Blessed are the Merciful,” and “Blessed are the Pure in Heart.” The windows are composed of polychromatic glass, many panes of which were manufactured to simulate folds in cloth. The glass is held in place by hand-soldered lead comes. Details such as faces, hair, hands, and lettering were hand-painted on the interior—a process perfected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The windows are reportedly the work of Tiffany and Company, which pioneered the process of rolling glass to create simulated folds. Research by HPC staff has not confirmed this.

The stained glass composition is held within a trefoil topped wooden frame set within the splay of the window opening. The exterior view of the windows is masked by a wood storm/protective panel with translucent glazing. The entire assembly is further protected by an exterior metal grille.

Painted panels at the base of the memorial windows bear the inscription “Anna Alice Smith” on the left panel and “March 14, 1856-March 25, 1915” on the right.

Leaded glass windows are a distinctive feature of the Gothic Revival style in general, and this church in particular. Removal of these character defining features is not appropriate and does not comply with historic district guidelines, or standards established by the Secretary of the Interior. The design guidelines for this property state in Paragraph C that windows should be retained, and again in Paragraph D that trim and ornamentation should also be retained.

The windows are an integral part of the building envelope and removal of this historic fabric diminishes the material integrity of the church. The retention of historic fabric, especially those commemorating congregants, is paramount to our interpretation of religious sites from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. There is no evidence of physical deterioration, and if so, the windows should be repaired. Denying this request to remove the windows does not affect the use or occupancy of the building for religious or other purposes.

**Recommendation**

Removal of stained glass windows: Disapprove

**Conditions**

**Previous HPC action**

**Previous Council action**