

Welcome to Stanford Memorial Church

These SELF-GUIDED TOUR NOTES complement the booklet “Glory of Angels: A History and Guide,” published by the Stanford Alumni Association, 1995 (available at the Stanford Bookstore).

1 From the VESTIBULE inside the church, go back outside to the Main Quadrangle. From the QUADRANGLE, look upward to the Celtic cross atop a remarkable mosaic façade. It portrays a moment just before Christ’s ascension (Luke 24:50-51); below, a Tree of Life embraces the virtues of Love, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Before re-entering the church, we also see a small memorial garden to the right and bronze class plaques, beginning with 1892 and extending toward the current year, each sealing the class record as a time capsule.

2 Bronze angels greet you from the massive entry doors. Come into the VESTIBULE with its marble mosaic at your feet and a tapestry mosaic of glass tiles (“tesserae”) on the wall. Feel the slight tilt of the tiles, producing an array of reflections from the gold leaf embedded in clear glass, and note the rich colors (20,000 throughout the church) produced with molten metallic oxides. Mosaic angels float on the wall above, and many more of sandstone, glass, and brass reside within.

3 Enter the right-hand door and PAUSE inside. To your right is the church’s original baptismal font and above, a unique window portraying Leland Stanford Jr. ascending toward the throne of heaven.

4 Move to the center aisle of the NAVE and note the cruciform shape of the church. On your left and forward is an east transept and balcony and on your right and forward, there is a west transept and balcony (Side Chapel). The Hebrew Bible mosaics and New Testament windows of the nave flank a warm fir ceiling high above oak pews. Forward and above is the DOME and skylight.

5 Move down the east arcade. There are 140 STAINED GLASS WINDOWS, 19 of which are large interpretations of European paintings of the life of Jesus. The first three, along this arcade, are “The Annunciation,” “The Flight into Egypt,” and “The Home in Nazareth.” Each window is transformed from its original painting or engraving into vivid color and pearly effect in glass of many thicknesses and varied clarity. Each has fine detail, and many display perspective depth and landscape. Details of sources for these stained-glass interpretations may be found in “Glory of Angels,” p. 34 ff.

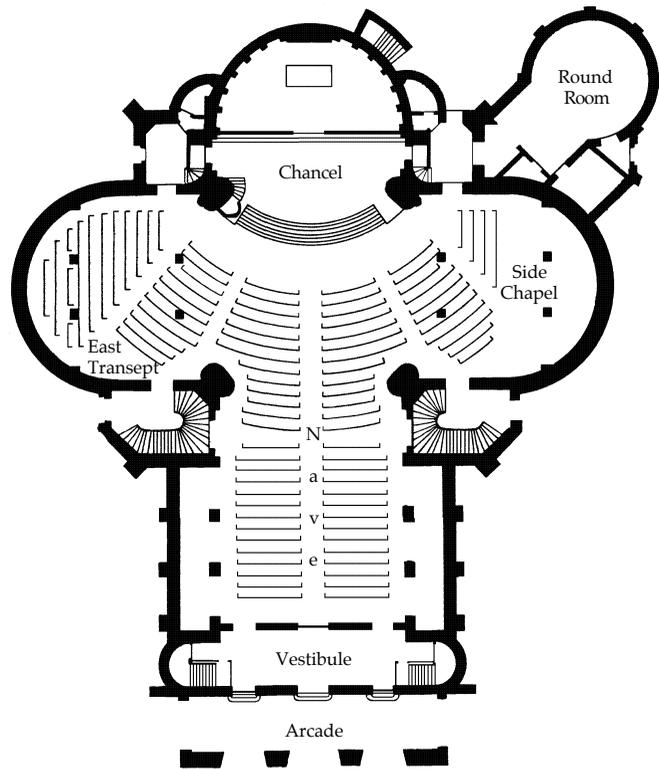
6 Continue to note the windows, including among others “The Sermon on the Mount” in the EAST TRANSEPT and, across the way in the SIDE CHAPEL, “Bread and Fishes” and “The Good Shepherd.” Both in the windows and in the mosaics, Biblical references are found below each scene. Women are prominent throughout the church, as Jane Stanford wished, participating equally in the history and benefits of religion; the high windows alternate male and female figures. There are recurring themes of comfort and divine guardianship as well.

7 Face the CHANCEL and ALTAR. With the pulpit on the left and an angel lectern on the right, enjoy the three glorious central windows of the Nativity, Crucifixion, and Ascension. A mosaic “glory” of angels spans the curved wall of the chancel below the prophets, from John the Baptist on the far left, around to Isaiah at the far right. Below are candle niches which, before 1906, held statues of the apostles. Biblical images honoring both Jewish and Christian traditions are in the church around you. The Carrara marble altar rail and altar with Eucharist wreath stand before a mosaic of the Last Supper, brilliantly copied by the Salviati artisans from a Roselli fresco in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, with explicit permission from the Pope.

8 In front of the angel lectern, there is a good vantage point from which to view the central dome and skylight, originally the base of a tall steeple. The dome is supported by four archangels, identified in the Hebrew tradition as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel (with his downcast eyes). The dome surmounts an ivy band and several symbols, including the Ten Commandments and the star of the Epiphany, painted to resemble mosaic work. From here, also look back and up to the two large ORGANS in the choir loft (the original Murray-Harris romantic organ with its pipes on the two sides of the loft and, in the center, the baroque Fisk-Nanney organ). In the SIDE CHAPEL are the renaissance Potter-Brinegar organ and a continuo organ. To the left of these is the Tudor organ built by the firm of Hupalo & Repasky in 2010.

9 Note the beautiful SANDSTONE CARVING in the arches and railings, as well as the quatrefoils and inscriptions in the walls. The stone is from a quarry in the Almaden area of San José, California and was created by the originality and skill of many craftsmen directed by John McGilvray. Note the unusual ceiling lamps of pearly white and deep blue glass under metal filigree. Look across to the mural of “Adam and Eve” and, above you now, to the mural of “The Prediction of the Prophets...” These LARGE MOSAICS were created in Venice on large drawings before their installation at Stanford. Stained-glass artists Frederick and Charles Lamb in New York, designer Antonio Paoletti and mosaic master Maurizio Camerino in Venice, H.H. Richardson and later architects, and many skilled artisans were all participants in the story of the church.

10 As you proceed past the last large windows, note again the unique combinations of artistic and religious images and materials in a Victorian-era edifice. Appreciate the recurring themes of ANGELS as well as SORROW, COMFORT, and INCLUSIVENESS. These have been foundations for more than 100 years in a place of teaching, music, community service, and faith: Stanford Memorial Church.



Jane Stanford envisioned this non-denominational church at the heart of the university, and dedicated it to her husband's memory. Three forward arches preserved space for the church in 1887 as the central Quad was built for the university's 1891 opening. The church rose between 1899 and 1903, opening on January 25th. The 1906 earthquake forced rebuilding of the façade and the interior, but the 80-foot spire was not replaced. Of the 140 windows, only the façade window was damaged. Repair was again required after the 1989 quake, mainly in the church's interior.

Message from the Office for Religious Life: Welcome to the “unique experiment” that is Memorial Church, as described by its first chaplain. Leland and Jane Stanford insisted that spirituality and morality lie at the center of higher education at their university, but they were also clear that here “no profession of religious faith or belief shall be exacted of anyone for any reason.” Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger, who was invited to speak at the dedication of the church in 1903, later wrote that “Mrs. Stanford has sat at the feet of...Unitarians, Trinitarians, infidels, Brahmins, Buddhists, Mohammedans, materialists, atheists, all have been heard, all were welcomed.”

SUNDAY SERVICES

10 a.m. University Public Worship

Christian Ecumenical services with Holy Communion offered twice a month, and a Multifaith service once a month. Childcare offered during the academic year for children preschool-age and under. Sacrament of Baptism offered twice during the academic year.

4:30 p.m. Roman Catholic Mass

9 p.m. Compline

A 30-minute reflective service of chant held in the candlelit ambiance of the church, featuring local choirs. (Academic year only).

10 p.m. Roman Catholic Mass

Memorial Church Tours led by a docent take place on Fridays at 1:00 pm and last Sundays of the month at 11:15 am. These tours are free, open to all, and are one hour in length. Meet at the front of the church.

The Office for Religious Life extends grateful thanks to Memorial Church docent Susan Christiansen for her contributions to this guide, and to Jim M'Guinness, whose beautiful artwork graces its front cover.

Stanford Memorial Church

Self-Guided Tour



Office for Religious Life Mission:

To guide, nurture and enhance spiritual, religious and ethical life within the Stanford University community.

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