

HISTORY OF THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS AND TRINITY



**Zion Lutheran Church
Bismarck, ND**

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The four stained glass windows in the back of the church were obtained from an LCMS church that closed recently. Read more about the stained-glass windows and the church where they came from.

Background

In November 2025, Trinity Lutheran Church of Drayton, ND closed. In early 2026, several items from the church were listed for sale on the North Dakota LCMS District's website. Before the windows were listed, Pastor Marcis informed Zion members who were former Trinity members of the windows. As a result, some former members of Trinity, who are now members at Zion, acquired Trinity's stained-glass windows. Many other members of Zion contributed money and/or time to the window installation at Zion. See Appendix 1 for donors and volunteers.

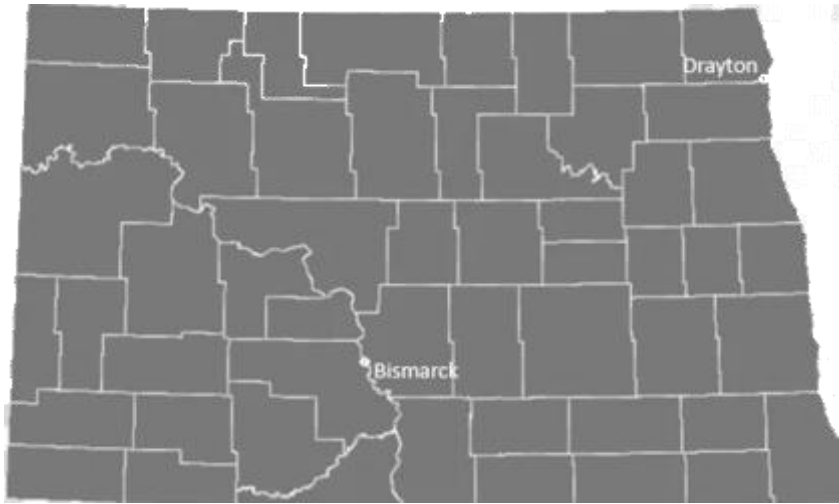
Generally, the four windows depict the means of grace (the Word of God and the two Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion) and the crown of righteousness (our eternal reward, won for us by the blood of the Lamb). The windows were originally created in 1988 by the late Glee Grau, formerly of Dickinson. See Appendix 2 for more information on her background.

History - Trinity Lutheran Church

In 1887, Zion Evangelical Lutheran church was established south of Drayton near the Acton cemetery. A new church building was constructed in 1925 south of this location about mid-way between Drayton and Grafton. In 1947, the church split and formed two congregations, one in Drayton and one in Grafton. The church in Grafton retained the name Zion while the church in Drayton was named Trinity. The building was sold to Trinity, moved to Drayton, and dedicated in 1948. In 1974, the building was expanded to make a larger entrance, create additional space for Bible class and Sunday School, and improve bathrooms.

In 1958 both Trinity and Zion had vacancies. At that time there was a shortage of pastors in the LCMS. The congregations of Trinity and Zion decided to form a two-point parish.

For more information on the history of Trinity Lutheran Church of Drayton, ND, see Appendix 3.



The city of Drayton is located in northeast North Dakota.

1988 – Windows dedicated at Trinity

The stained-glass windows were originally installed in 1988 at Trinity Lutheran church in Drayton, ND. The stained-glass windows were installed over double hung windows (vertical sliding windows). If you look closely at the stained-glass windows, you will notice a metal inset near the center. This inset was to allow room for the lever of the double hung window.

The stained-glass windows were dedicated during a worship service in 1988. Glee Grau, who created the stained-glass windows for Trinity, documented her thoughts that went into the creation of the windows. Pastor Seter authored the dedication service and thanksgiving for 40 years as a Christian congregation.

See Appendix 4 for photos of the installation in 1988 and Appendix 5 for the dedication service in 1988.

2026 – Windows retrofitted for Zion Lutheran, Bismarck

In 2026, former members from Trinity (now current members of Zion) acquired the stained-glass windows from Trinity and Zion members paid for the retrofit. Since the stained-glass windows would not fit any windows at Zion, a plan was developed for the windows. The plan included creating a backlit system and framing the windows.

The beautiful stained-glass windows at Messiah in Mandan were examined to come up with ideas. Pastor Zellers, the pastor at Messiah, described the process in detail. He guided his congregation through the development of the windows as he has skills (artistic and technical) for making stained-glass windows and working with the congregation as the pastor.

The direct LED backlit windows at Messiah fit inside the wall (composed of studs and sheet rock). The overall thickness of the system was around 10-12 inches +/-, but fit perfectly in the wall. Although the LED backlit windows at Messiah work wonderfully in their building, Zion would need a system with much less thickness as the windows would be mounted on the surface of the wall made of concrete block/structural clay tile.

The solution was to utilize an edge-lit LED backlit system. The LED panels are only 5/16" thick in this application. Edge-lit LED backlight panels have been used to light stained glass windows. The LED panel used at Zion was mounted to plywood. There is a small gap (+/- 1/2") between the LED panel and the stained-glass window. The overall thickness of the system is less than 3 inches. This minimizes the chance of someone in the pew bumping into it.

During the construction process, Pastor Zellers was enlisted to make some repairs to the windows. You can see some photos below of his work. He also provided some special cleaner for stained glass windows that really made them shine.



Pastor Zellers replacing some glass



Pastor Zellers making some repairs

Pastor Zellers was asked which Bible verses come to mind for each window.
Below was his response:

For the cross and crown

Revelation 1:5-6

⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

For the chalice

1st Corinthians 10:16

¹⁶ Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

For the Baptismal shell

Matthew 28:19

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

For the open Bible

1st Peter 1:25

but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

Which Bible verses come to mind when you view the stained-glass windows?

You can view other photos during the process in Appendix 6. The following page shows the completed windows installed at Zion.



The stained-glass windows “frame” the beautiful banners made by Joyce Walker from Zion.

2026 – Windows rededicated at Zion

The stained-glass windows were rededicated at Zion Lutheran church of Bismarck, ND on August 23, 2026. This coincided with Zion’s annual single service Sunday followed by brunch.

See Appendix 7 for information from the rededication service at Zion.

Moving forward

The stained-glass windows depict God's good gifts to us through Word and Sacrament where we receive the gift of faith, become a child of God, receive the forgiveness of sins and strengthening of our faith, and have the promise of life everlasting. All this points to Christ's work on cross for us and the eternal hope and joy we have whether he calls us home to be with Him or comes for us on the last day.