

A LIGHT WITHIN:

Mercy's stained-glass collection

The true beauty and light shining within Mercy Medical Center's historical collection of stained-glass windows radiates in tribute to the heartfelt works of Sister Mary Lawrence Hallagan.



Mercy had 24 stained-glass windows from the former hospital chapel restored to their former glory as part of a yearlong celebration of the life of Sr. Mary Lawrence, a former administrator at Mercy Medical Center and a community leader who selflessly worked to brighten the lives of others.

Sr. Mary Lawrence's contributions to the Cedar Rapids area were as multifaceted as the colorful, ornate windows on display to the public on the upper level of the Lundy Pavilion of Mercy Medical Center. (Visitors may park in the Eighth Street Parking Ramp for convenient access to Lundy Pavilion.) An informational brochure, available at the exhibit, provides background information about Sr. Mary Lawrence, the history of the windows and details about the stained glass.

The windows were commissioned in the 1940s from Daprato Rigali Studios, Inc., Chicago, to beautify the hospital's chapel in 1948. Later, when the completion of Mercy's new patient tower in the 1970s made the chapel less accessible, a new chapel was built and the windows were stored away until they were resurrected in 2010.

Only the Sacred Heart and a smaller cross window remained at the hospital to provide a beautiful focal point in the chapel. Our Lady of Mercy is displayed at the Dennis & Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy to bring comfort and hope to hospice patients and their families.

A Light Within consists of four windows featuring patron saints of the sick and suffering, including St. Catherine of Siena, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Barbara and St. Raphael. These four windows, along with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of Mercy, are part of an original

collection of 12 3x4-foot windows. This accounts for six of the large-sized windows—where the other six (featuring Saints Roch, Margaret Mary, Joseph, Therese the Little Flower, Camillus de Lellis and Anthony) are now is a mystery.

The exhibit also features eight square windows with symbols and four small, rectangular windows (three with symbols, one with the cross).

Each of these precious and irreplaceable windows was restored by Glass Heritage, LLC, Davenport, a fully accredited studio of the Stained Glass Association of America that specializes in glass art, architectural art glass work and religious windows, and is certified in the restoration and preservation of historic stained glass. Glass Heritage recently restored the \$3 million stained glass window created by Grant Wood that had been damaged in the 2008 flood at Veterans Memorial Building, Cedar Rapids.

John Watts, co-owner of Glass Heritage, LLC, provides some details regarding the stained glass restoration process: "The Mercy windows were in fair condition when we received them. Any breaks that were found were infused with hyxtal adhesive, which is designed specifically for glass. Each window was hand-cleaned with de-ionized water and ph-neutral soap in order to protect the paint. Additionally, all joints and lead were carefully inspected and any necessary repairs were made."

Each of the large windows took approximately 20 hours of work with two to three people working on each window at various times, each performing his or her specific function.

The restoration of these windows was made possible by a generous gift from Dennis and Jacque Holloway, Cedar Rapids. Mercy also is grateful to Glass Heritage for its help in reducing costs.

'People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.'

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Psychiatrist and author