

St Paul's Sale

Stained Glass of the East Window

St Philip and St Stephen

St Philip- what do we know about him? Already we might have some confusion, as this is not Philip the disciple being depicted, but Philip the evangelist also known as Philip the deacon:

⁵ What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. Acts 6:5-6

Philip is one of the 7 deacons who were chosen to attend to the church in Jerusalem.

It's helpful he's pictured next to St Stephen in our stained glass, as after Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:54-60), Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached with such success that Simon Magus became a convert (Acts 8:9-13).

Philip was then told by an angel of the Lord to go the road between Jerusalem and Gaza and here he instructed and baptised the Ethiopian eunuch.

*³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' **Acts 8: 35-37***

Stephen was also a deacon in the church at Jerusalem and was chosen to distribute food and charitable aid to poorer members of the community ref Acts 6:5.

Stephen angered people of various synagogues by his teachings. Accused of blasphemy at his trial he made a speech denouncing the religious authorities and was stoned to death which you can read about in the book of Acts chapter 7.

Stephen was the first Christian martyr. He is depicted as holding a green palm frond which is symbol of victory, triumph and eternal life and a miniature church building.

St Mark and St Silas.

St Mark is holding a roll of papyrus and is accorded with writing the Gospel of St Mark.

According to Coptic Christian tradition, Mark was born in Cyrene, present day Libya which is on the coast of North Africa. According to the historian Eusebius, after the arrest and subsequent escape of St Peter the disciple from Jerusalem, Peter travelled through modern day Turkey to go to Rome. Somewhere along the way he met Mark and Mark became his travel companion and interpreter. Mark wrote down Peter's sermons thereby composing his Gospel through Peter's eye witness accounts. Mark then left Peter, according to Acts chapter 15, he went to Cyprus with Barnabas. In AD49 headed to the great city of Alexandria in Egypt off the north African coast. He founded the Church of Alexandria, and the Coptic orthodox, Greek orthodox and Coptic catholic churches all trace their origins to this original community and is honoured as the founder of Christianity in Africa.

St Silas, is assumed to Silvanus, leading member of the early Christian community.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy are listed as co-authors of the two New Testament letters to the Thessalonians. (1 Thess 1:1). The Second letter to the Corinthians mentions Silas as having preached with Paul and Timothy to the church in Corinth, (2 Corinthians 1:19) and the First Epistle of Peter describes Silas as a "faithful brother":

*¹² Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you, and to testify that this is the true grace of God. **1 Peter 5:12***

Silas was selected by Paul to accompany him on his second mission journey after Paul and Barnabas split over an argument involving Mark's participation. It was during the second mission that Silas and Paul were imprisoned briefly in Philippi, where an earthquake broke their chains and opened the prison door. Silas is sometimes depicted in art carrying broken chains.

St Paul and St Barnabus

So not unsurprisingly we have a depiction of St Paul, our patron saint.

St Paul is depicted here with sword in hand which symbolises his martyrdom and what I think is his letters. We read St Paul's writings almost every day in our churches and he is regarded as one of the most important figures of the apostolic age. He was known as Saul a Pharisee, a Jew trained in the law and a persecutor of Christians. He never met Jesus in person, but encountered the risen Christ sometime after the martyrdom of St Stephen to which he was in attendance (Acts 7:58).

Saul was heading to Damascus with papers to arrest followers of Jesus, but on the journey he had a vision of Jesus addressing him. This led to a complete transformation and his renaming as Paul, as we read in Acts chapter 9:

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'⁵ He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'⁷ The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

According to Acts 4:36, **Barnabas** was a Cypriot Jew who sold his land and gave the proceeds the Christian community in Jerusalem. Named an apostle in Acts 14 he and Paul undertook missionary journeys together and defended Gentile converts. They travelled together helping others to follow Jesus and participated in the Council of Jerusalem. Barnabas and Paul successfully evangelized among the "God-fearing" Gentiles who attended synagogues in various cities of Turkey. He is depicted holding the Gospel of Matthew and a pilgrim's staff and is the patron saint of Cyprus.

So next along we've got **St Timothy** who was born in Turkey and had a Jewish mother who converted to Christianity and a Greek father. The Apostle Paul met him during his second missionary journey and he became Paul's companion and missionary partner (along with Silas, who we've already come across too. Timothy ended up staying in Ephesus on the western Turkish coast and becoming Bishop of the church there. In the year 97 AD, the 80-year-old bishop Timothy tried to halt a procession in honour of the goddess Diana by preaching the Gospel. Those taking part in the procession beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death.

Next along is **St Luke**- one of the four evangelists- and the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

Many scholars believe that Luke was a doctor who lived in the Hellenistic city of Antioch in south Turkey born of a Greek family and it's clear from the Greek that he uses in his writing that he's highly educated and is familiar with ancient Classical and Hellenistic Greek authors, such as Homer, Aesop, and Plato. His writings make up over a quarter of the New Testament. He died aged 84 in Greece. In art St Luke is depicted by a ox, sometimes with wings as referred to in the book of Revelation (Rev 4:7).

St Cornelius and Dorcas.

Cornelius is the centurion, not the Pope of the same name, as we can see him depicted in the clothing of a Roman soldier. We think Cornelius was a centurion in *Cohors Italica* in other words the Italian cohort. He was stationed in Caesarea just off the coast of present day Israel. He is depicted in the New Testament as a God-fearing man who always prayed and was full of good works and deeds of alms. (Acts 10:1-4).

Cornelius receives a vision in which an angel of God tells him that his prayers have been heard. The angel then instructs Cornelius to send the men of his household to Joppa, where they will find Simon Peter, who is residing with a man also named Simon who is a tanner. When Cornelius' men arrive, Simon Peter understands that through this vision the Lord commanded the Apostle to preach the Word of God to the Gentiles. Peter accompanies Cornelius' men back to Caesarea. When Cornelius meets Simon Peter, he falls at Peter's feet. Simon Peter raises the centurion and the two men share their visions. Simon Peter tells of Jesus' ministry and the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit descends on everyone at the gathering. Cornelius is then baptised. His baptism is considered an important event in the history of the early Christian church, along with the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by St Philip. The reception of Cornelius sparked a debate among the leaders of the new community of followers of Jesus, culminating in the decision to allow Gentiles to become Christians without conforming to Jewish requirements for circumcision.

Finally we come to the only female represented on our stained glass windows, known as **Dorcas** in Greek, but also known as Tabitha in Aramaic. She was an early disciple of Jesus mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. She lived in the port city of Joppa which was part of Palestine. Acts describes her as being known for her "good works and acts of mercy", sewing clothes for the poor. When she died, the widows of her community mourned her and sent urgently for Peter (Acts 9:38), who was in nearby Lydda. As evidence of her charity, they showed him some of the clothes she had sewn, and according to the biblical account he raised her from the dead. According to the New Testament, Tabitha died in Joppa, at the house of Simon the tanner who we just heard about in relation to Cornelius.

Out of the 9 men and 1 woman featured in the stained glass windows, we have a person originating from North Africa, a person from Italy, a person from Cyprus and others from Turkey, Greece and the Holy Land including a Palestinian Christian.

When I look at the glass they visually don't represent for me the ethnicities of those we just have just heard about. There are however somewhat unusual colours of the halos above their heads. St Mark has a purple halo, Barnabas in red, Paul in pink, Luke in yellow and Timothy in green. I would love to know why the stained-glass artist put a rainbow of halos onto our saints.

What does that mean or symbolise?

I suggest that when we look at the rainbow halos we are reminded of those words from the book of Revelation, chapter 7, verse 9:

"After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands"

That through the rainbow we are reminded of the wonderful diversity of our God's people, those from every tribe and nation who encountered Jesus and made the decision to follow him.