Praying in the LIGHT of God's Great Story:

The Worship Center Windows of Tallowood Baptist Church

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

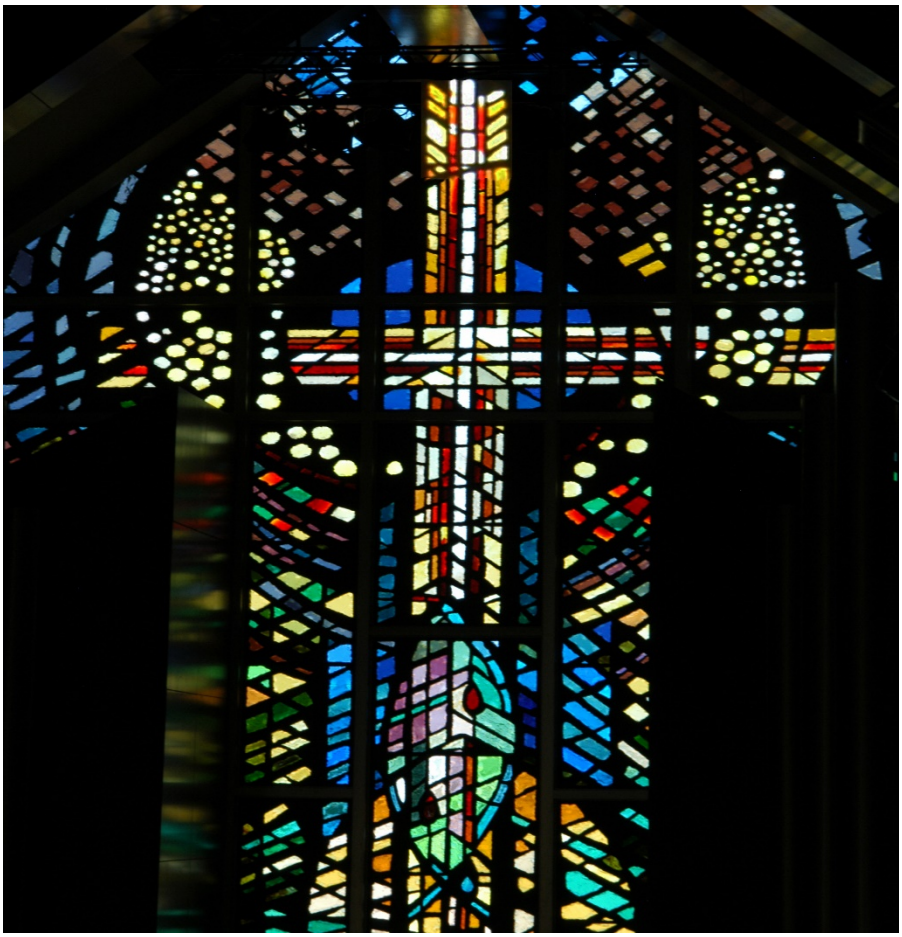
"...when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me." Micah 7:8

On January 11, 2009, Tallowood Baptist Church dedicated a new Worship Center. Among the beautiful elements of this sacred space are four faceted glass windows. Tallowood contracted Dennis Harmon of Emmanuel Studios, Nashville, Tennessee, for the design and installation of the windows. Working with members of the building committee and the pastor, the windows were designed with beautiful colors and intricate designs to illustrate and symbolize the Old and New Testaments, the Great Commission, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Background of Stained Glass and Faceted Glass

Stained glass windows originally served the purpose of keeping a building sealed while also letting light in. In the life of the church, the windows have not only been beautiful; they have been used to tell stories and share symbols. This was particularly helpful in teaching stories and truths to people who could not read.

The Worship Center windows are composed of faceted glass, not stained glass. A couple of features distinguish it from leaded stained glass: the glass is an inch thick and the surface is faceted or chipped. Rather than the glass being bound together with strips of H-shaped cast lead (called "cames") like stained glass, faceted glass is held together with an epoxy (a cement-like substance). This allows the spaces between the glass to vary if desired, providing a rich interplay of translucent light and opaque epoxy. Faceted glass was developed in France in the 1920's.



The **West Window** (behind the pulpit and the baptistry) portrays the unique life and impact of Christ. The central feature is the **CROSS**; all other elements radiate from and call attention to the cross.

PRAY: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Galatians 2:20

Consider what the cross meant in the life of Jesus, and what it now means in your own life.

Ask the Lord to deepen your knowledge and experience of Christ's cross. Ask Him to transform you to be this deeply and fully identified with Christ; to make you Christ-like. Trust that He knows how to do this.

In the center of the window is the **Ichthus** (the first letters of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" spell the Greek word "fish"), a symbol that early Christians used to identify themselves and recognize one another.

PRAY: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 14:19
Ask the Lord to make your connection to Jesus the most defining characteristic of your life. Ask that you would join Jesus in "fishing" for/drawing in others.

Drops of blood are falling from the cross. These become **drops of water** that nurture a **vine** growing at the foot of the cross. This represents Jesus giving His life for others, and others experiencing the life that arises from His sacrificial death and resurrection life. The people of God are these seeds; He plants them, intending that they grow.

PRAY: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves His life loses it, and whoever hates His life in the world will keep it for eternal life." John 12:24-25

Yield yourself to this process of dying that you might live. Follow Jesus into this act of surrendering your life to Him that He may bring new life though you.

PRAY that He will help you abide in Him—to stay vitally continually connected and attached to Him. Ask Him to remove whatever would keep you apart from Him.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

The **South Window** represents the Old Testament, the beginning, the time before Christ's birth.

The apex of the window celebrates **creation**: stars and planets emerge out of the darkness at the very top. Light has come! Creator God calls order out of chaos!

PRAY "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens… What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" Psalm 8:1, 4 Consider what the handiwork of God—the creation with all it contains—reveals about the heart of God. What about creation especially touches you? Thank Him for that. Worship Him.

Ask to know God better through those things He has made.

The sides and center of the window highlight the **stories of people** who were used by God in the Great Story He is telling. Look to the left and find a cluster of symbols telling the story of **Moses**: a burning bush, the snake that was raised on the stick, and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Notice the three columns that

represent **Solomon's** Temple, the big fish that represents the story of God's love for Nineveh and the story of His prophet **Jonah**.

To the left is **Noah's** ark, and the rainbow, dove, and olive branch that signaled the end of the flood. Further down there are stars (innumerable!) representing the promised offspring of **Abraham**, and a ram that God provided when He spared Isaac… when the faithfulness of God and the obedience of man met.

The center base of the window reminds of the kings and the kingdom of Israel. Symbols from **King David's** life include a shepherd's staff and sheep, a harp, and a crown.

PRAY: God obviously uses individuals strategically to join Him in accomplishing His purposes. "[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined the allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us." Acts 17:26-27

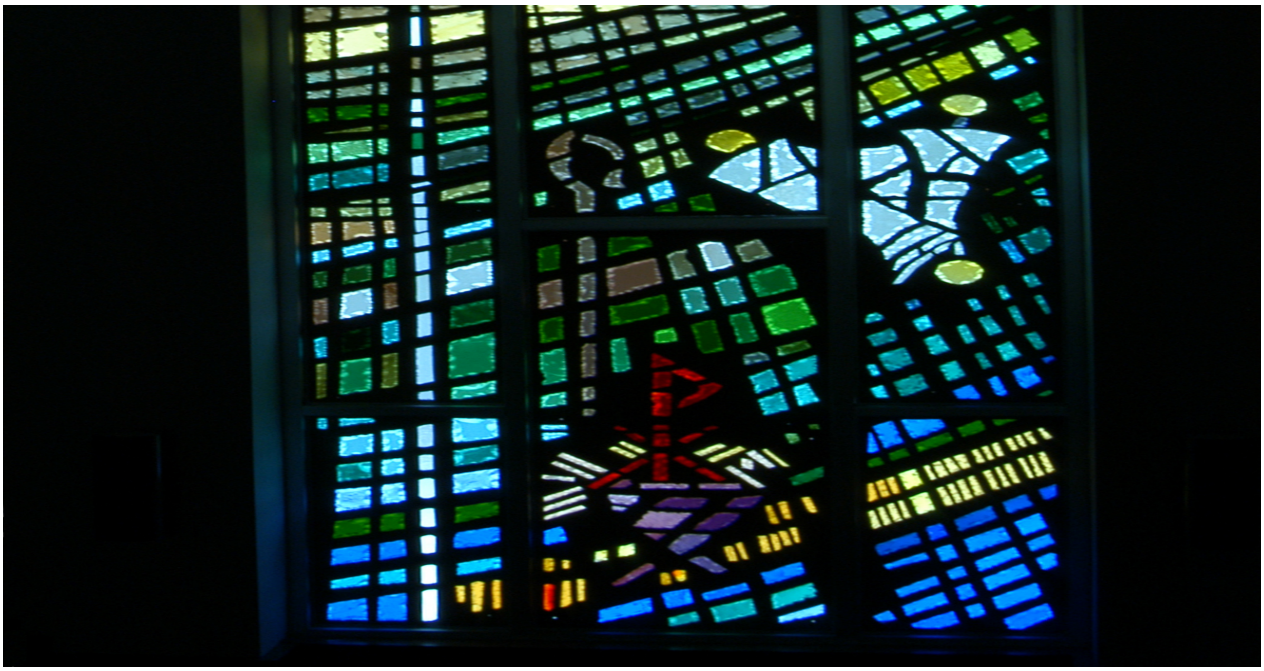
Clearly God is purposeful about the time, place, and course of the lives of each of us. Pray that you will fulfill the purpose He had in mind when He strategically gave you your time and place to live your unique life.

Thank God for those He has used before and is working through now to accomplish His redemption.

So much is happening here! And there are so many hints and signs that **anticipate** the coming of Jesus. What do you notice that foreshadows His life, work, sacrifice? His role as king and deliverer? Remember that Jesus was always God's plan.

PRAY: "That which was from the beginning… that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you… and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:1-3 Worship God! Marvel at His works, His ways, His exquisite intentionality and foresight and sovereignty.

The **North Window** depicts the birth, life, and passion of Jesus. Notice symbols that were in the Old Testament window that connect with the New Testament story: shepherd's staff, dove…



The apex of the central panel features a brilliant **cross** that serves as background and covering for all else. The items at the base of this window symbolize Jesus' **birth** (the manger, with the Chi-Rho symbol representing the Christ child), encountering religious leaders in the **Temple** (scrolls), and His identity as the **shepherd** of His people (a staff, like King David's).

The left side of the window depicts Christ's ministry, beginning with the **dove**-like manifestation of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, and a **pitcher** of water whose contents turn to wine (His first miracle performed at the wedding at Cana).

Further down are **loaves and fish** to recall His miracles of feeding multitudes.

Then there is a shaft of **wheat** and a bunch of **grapes**, symbolizing the last supper, and thirty white circles representing the **pieces of silver** Judas received for betraying Jesus.

Notice the uniqueness of Jesus' birth and calling, and the mixture of the good (miracles and acts) that He did, and the types of things that happened to Him.

PRAY: "I can do nothing on my own… I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me… For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me." John 5:30, 36 All that Jesus did, all that was done to Him, was done to fulfill the will of His Father.

His life was marked by consistent and powerful obedience. "Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Hebrews 5:8-9

Ask the Lord to help you to obey the Lord in all things—in what you do and say, and in response to the opportunities and difficulties of life. Ask that the hallmark of your life might be trustful obedience.

PRAY: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom he foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." Romans 8:28-29

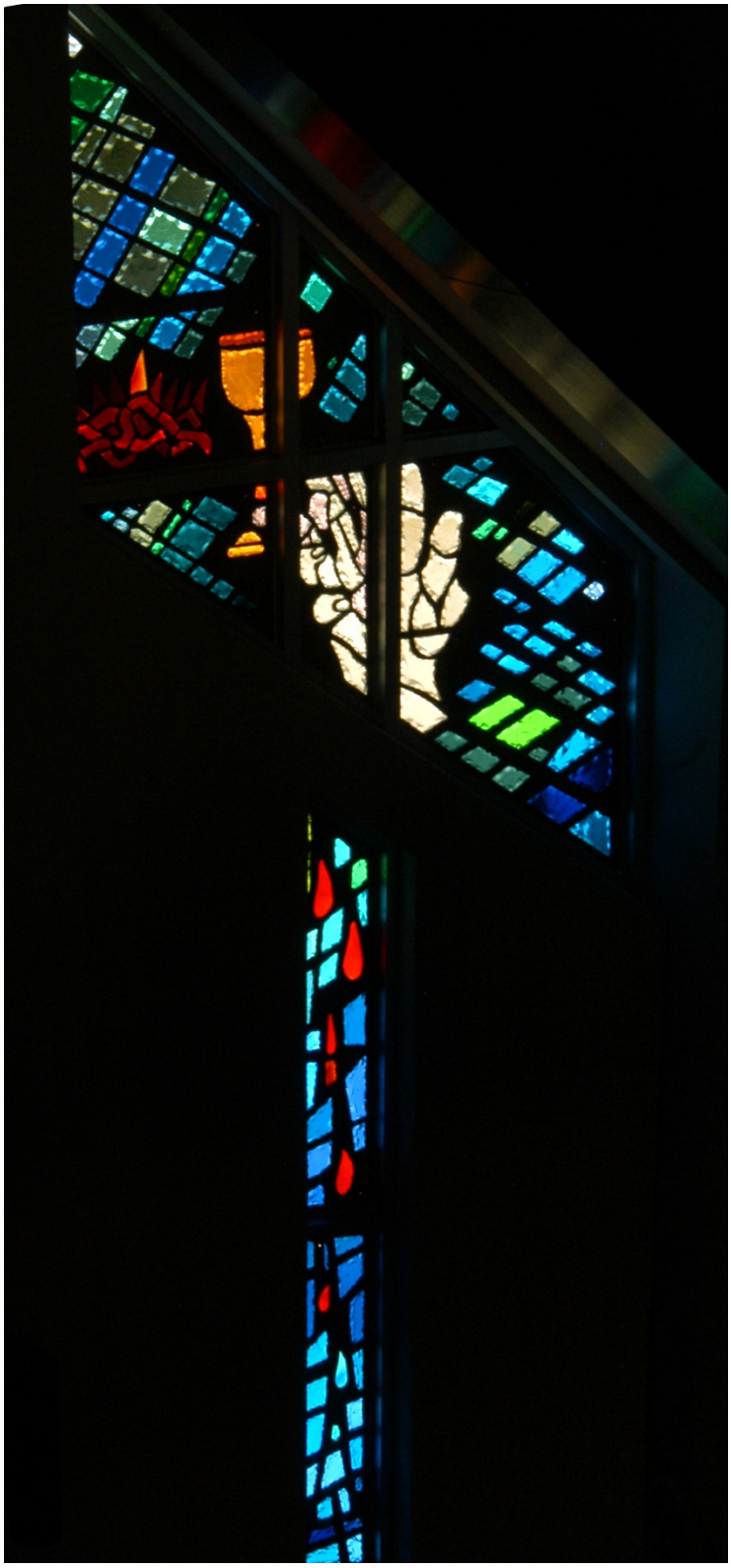
Surely Jesus lived with daily, practical, powerful, and confident trust that His sovereign Father was working all things together for good. Ask for grace to trust the Father like this in the midst of your own circumstances.

The right side of the window represents the **Passion** of Christ. He is the sacrificial **lamb**. His experience on the cross included receiving the **cup** of sour wine and the **crown of thorns**. His hands are pictured folded in an earnest **prayer of surrender**.

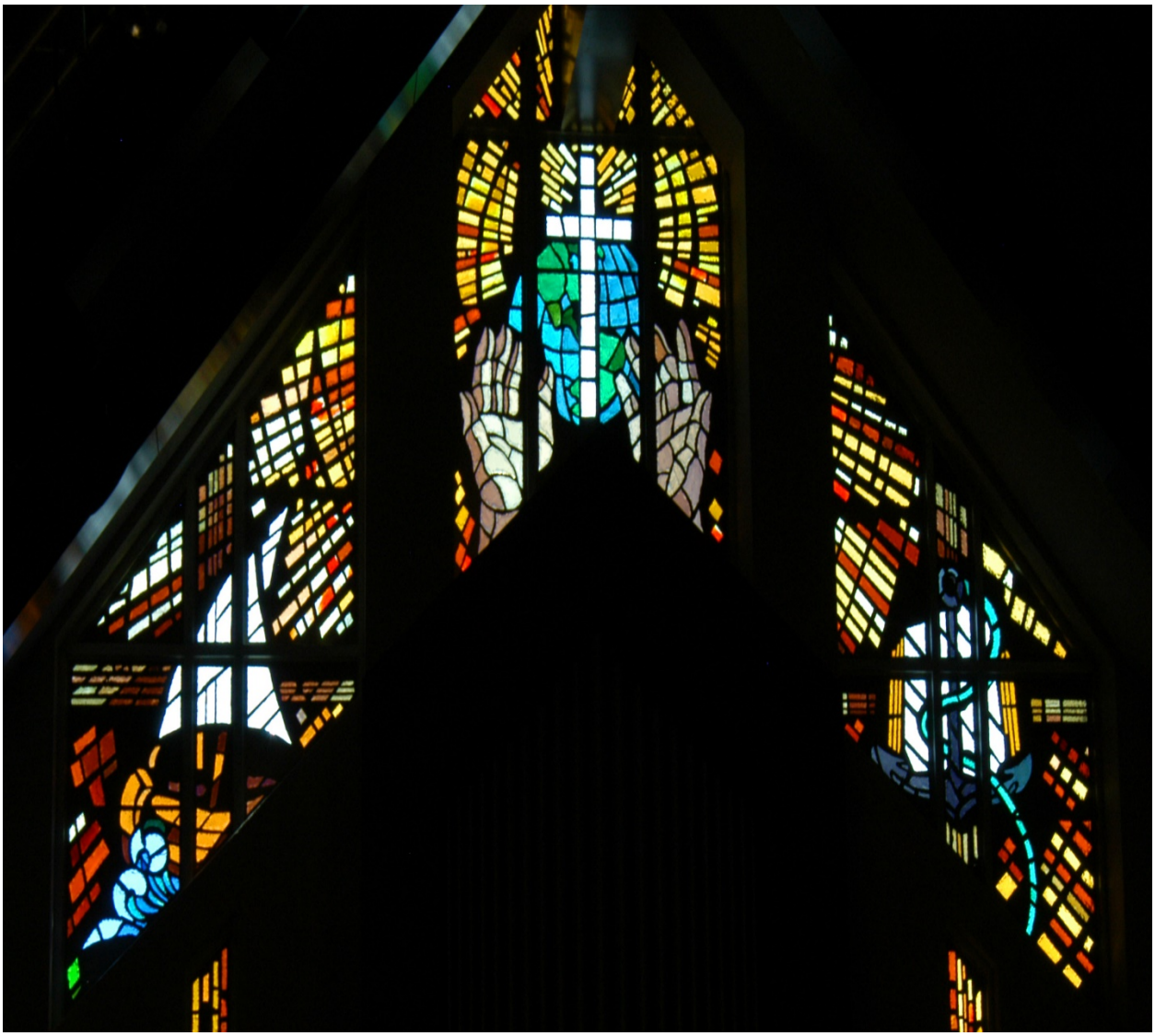
PRAY: "…looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your

struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." Hebrews 12:2-3

Ask for the grace to look to Jesus and to consider Him. Spend time meditating on His experience of betrayal, suffering, and death. What new things might He reveal to you in the familiar story?



The **East Window** pictures the **Great Commission** (the hands reaching out to the entire world), the **birth of the Church** (the two doves, with one portraying baptism by water and the other baptism by fire, the Holy Spirit), and the **mobilization** of the people of God (boat) to carry the **message of Christ** (cross) to the world. The anchor that holds us steady is set in the **Word of God**.



PRAY: "We have this (the promises of God and the hope set before us) as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf…" Hebrews 6:18b-19

Ask the Lord to deepen your acquaintance with and dependence on His promises.

PRAY: “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

Ask the Lord for this degree of motivation, focus, and faithfulness for your own life. Pray for opportunities to testify to the gospel.

PRAY: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” Mark 16:15b

Ask the Lord to make you sensitive and responsive to the opportunities you have to proclaim His gospel. Ask Him to make this a habit, a lifestyle, for you. Then arrange your life accordingly.

In **conclusion**, may these windows remind you that you are a part of the best story ever; may their symbols prompt you to pray for the furthering of God’s story in our world and your life; may they be used by God to show you fresh aspects of the Father, Son, and Spirit; and may they lead you into worship.

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.” Revelation 21:3

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Revelation 22:20