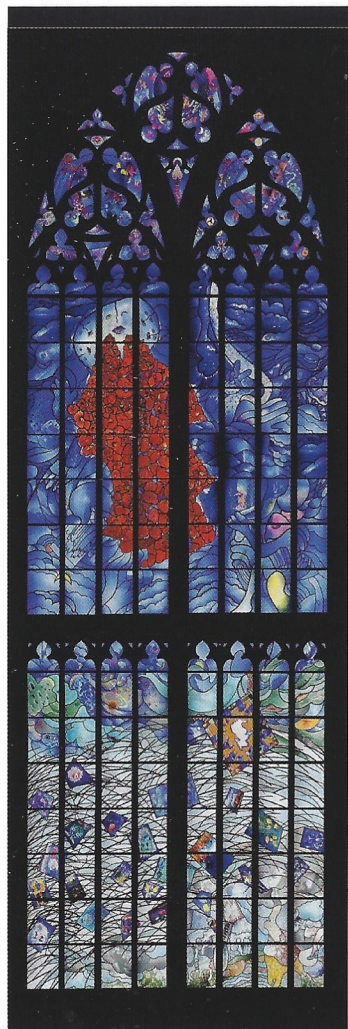


tortoise, the symbol of patience and modesty, slow but persistent. At the foot of the pulpit we see a wooden eagle. In the Bible, the eagle teaches his offspring to fly and rescues them when they fall, as does God with human beings. He teaches them how to live and comes to their rescue.

## Peace

Many of the stained-glass windows in the church have a religious or political theme. The largest and most recent one is the 18 meter window in the northern transept, made by Michel van Overbeeke in 2008 and titled 'Peace and Tolerance'. The window



symbolizes our world history: It depicts creation from the perspective of different cultures and moves from left to right. The new Jerusalem (Book of Revelations) is represented as a gold square. It's the Lamb of God, Christ, who makes this new world happen. The dark red figure in the upper part has five faces, the five world religions. Its 'cloak of charity and love' consists of five different red flowers, symbols of love, faith, sympathy, purity and tenderness. The window seeks to express the community of all nations and to illustrate understanding and acceptance of both the past and the future of mankind. The Bavo shop sells a book with the description of this window.

## Mary Chapel

This late medieval chapel was redecorated in 2015 as a space for rest, peace, meditation and prayer. At the entrance there is a small statue of Christ, called PAX, made by the flemish sculptor Albert Termote. He invites the visitors to enter the chapel and wishes us peace. On the wall is a painting from the artist Bert Grotjohann, made in 2015, titled 'I will meet you there'. Two white doves are in the center symbolizing peace and the Holy Ghost, God's presence among the people. You may light a candle in the Mary chapel.



## More information

[www.bavo.nl](http://www.bavo.nl)

[www.bavovrienden.nl](http://www.bavovrienden.nl)

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INFORMATION

# SYMBOLIC IMAGERY

IN THE BAVO CHURCH



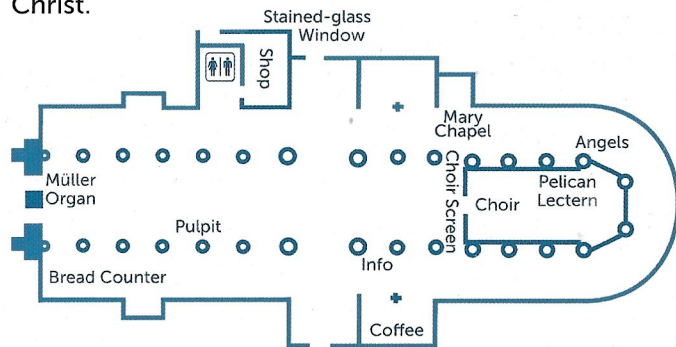


## Welcome to the church of St. Bavo

This church was built in the 14th and 15th century and a Protestant church since 1577. This brochure gives a brief impression of the rich symbolism in this church: images of love, hope and faith.

## The light comes from the east

The line of sight of the St. Bavo church is focused to the east. There the sun rises and the light comes into the world. This reminds people that the light brings goodness and peace into the world through Jesus Christ.

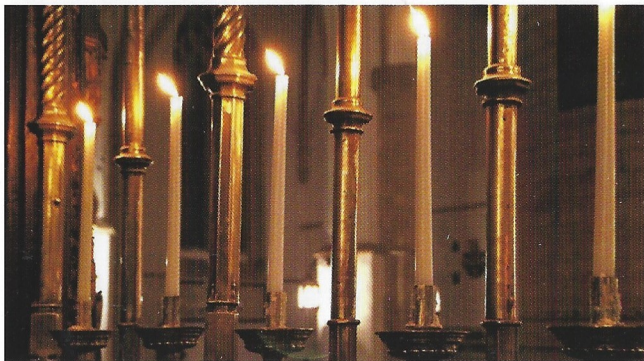


## The cross

Like many other churches, St. Bavo is built in the shape of a cross. The cross is the central symbol in the Christian faith. It's the sign of Jesus Christ's love, committing himself to help the weak. His selflessness is not always appreciated. It cost him his life, killed on the cross alongside criminals.

## Vine

At the east side of the church is the Choir. This was the place where the altar stood and where daily prayers



were sung. The Choir is separated from the rest of the church by a beautiful copper choir screen, made in 1517 by Jan Fierens, a craftsman from Mechelen. At the top of the screen there are vines and bunches of grapes, the very symbol of Christ who is the true vine. He feeds the faithful and they shall bear a lot of fruit: love, peace, patience, goodness and more. In this symbol the presence of Christ among the people is visible for everyone. The burning candles in the screen give the impression of the 'burning bush' from the Old Testament where God spoke to Moses and thus to all of us.

## Sacrifice

There is a brass lectern in the Choir made by Jan Fierens in 1499 in the shape of a pelican pecking her breast. In earlier days one thought that pelicans pecked their breast open in order to feed their offspring with their own blood. It was a symbol of Jesus who gave his life for us. In reality, the lectern resembles more an eagle. Probably, in those days one did not know what a pelican looked like.



## Pillar biters

On both sides of the screen are two half panels of pillar biters (see the frontpage of this folder), depicting believers who were so fanatical that they bit the pillars. Their devotion did not spill into home or daily life but was for appearances only.

## Bread to live on

On one of the arches in the northern aisle there is a wallpainting from ca 1480, showing eight floating angels against a blue heaven background with golden stars. The Sacrament house where the host was stored was under this arch. It's a symbol of the



'spiritual bread', Jesus Christ. He said: 'I am the bread of life'. The angels therefore carry scrolls with the words: 'food for people on their way' and 'whoever eats this bread shall live forever'.

## The word

The pulpit stands central in the nave, making clear that the main purpose of the (Protestant) church is: passing on the biblical stories and 'updating' them to the present time, telling us how we can live a better life with God and with each other. The pulpit was erected between 1490 and 1680. On the canopy is written: 'Gods woort blijft inder ewicheyt' (the word of God endures for evermore). The copper handrails



are full of animal symbolism: the banisters are snakes creeping away, a picture of evil, fleeing the word of God; that word lifts you up and makes you sing (the birds); it feeds you (the grapes) and it purifies you and makes you righteous (the salamander). The button on the top of the stairs is a