

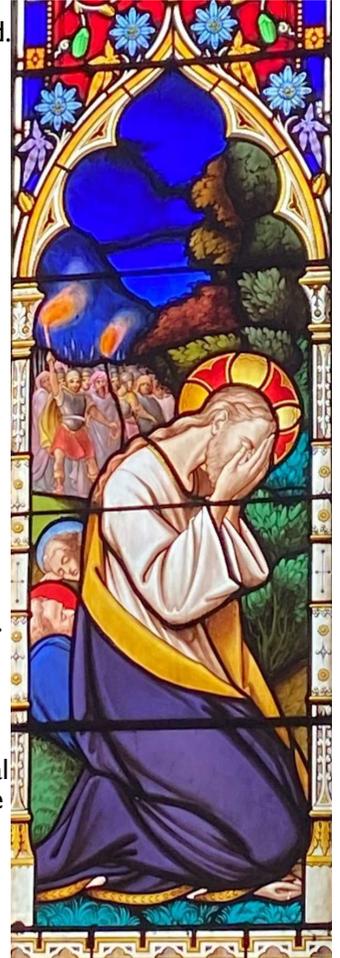
On the cover of the March edition of the Dedham Parish Magazine was one of the wonderful stained-glass windows in Dedham Church. We are fortunate to have so much lovely stained glass in Dedham church and indeed other nearby churches. Decorating churches, not just with stained glass, but with painting of the interiors, was the norm in medieval times but this was almost entirely swept away in the Reformation, so very little stained glass from that period remains. Narrative stained glass was used to illustrate important biblical stories and quotations for worshippers many of whom were unable to read. The majority of stained glass in our churches now is Victorian and was placed as memorials by wealthy parishioners commemorating their loved ones or local vicars.

These windows are beautiful and it is easy to view them as simply decoration, and indeed the

narrative panels are nearly always surrounded by very beautiful depictions of motifs such as stylised flowers and figures of angels. It is, however, worth looking more carefully at these works of art as they also tell in detail important biblical stories, or illustrate quotations nearly always from the gospels.

Over the next few months, we shall look at windows in Dedham and some of our surrounding churches. Let's start with the window pictured on last month's Magazine. Made in 1865, it is found at the east end of the southern aisle.

This window has three panels. In the left hand panel, Jesus is praying on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane struggling with the reality of the awful ordeal which, he knows, imminently awaits him "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22: 42). He had asked his disciples to keep watch but even these, his most enthusiastic followers, fell asleep, and can be seen on the ground behind Jesus: illustrating man's weakness, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 40: 41). Meanwhile in the background armed soldiers (John 18: 3) are advancing to arrest Jesus, guided by Judas in the pink head-dress coming to betray Jesus with a kiss.



Left hand panel.
The Garden of
Gethsemane



Right hand panel.
Crown of Thorns

The scene in the right panel depicts Jesus being held by a soldier, while another places a crown of thorns on his head, before mocking, deriding and hitting him. (Mark 15). (One can only speculate as to why this soldier is depicted without facial features.) Jesus' face however, clearly conveys his sadness at the unfolding events.

The central panel shows Jesus on the way to Calvary; at this stage he is still carrying the cross as in the traditional "Stations of the Cross" which interestingly are not all in the Bible Gospels, but are nevertheless enshrined in Christian tradition. Jesus meets his mother on his way to Golgotha for his crucifixion. One cannot really imagine the sorrow and anguish which Mary must have felt about her son's fate. She is kneeling with her hands raised up in supplication, but she knows that she must be resigned to the fulfilment of Jesus' divine destiny. Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane is documented in all three



Central panel.
Stations of the Cross

Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and his arrest in the garden in all four Gospels including John. The mocking of Jesus also appears in all four Gospels though Luke omits the detail of the Crown of Thorns.

Underneath these three panels is a very important quote from Jesus which also appears in all three synoptic Gospels. Unfortunately, the central piece of this inscription has been damaged and lost from the base of the central panel, but the full quote is: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me". (Matthew 16: 24).

Next time you are in Dedham Church or passing by take a moment to look more closely at this amazing and inspiring window.

Adrian Beckingsale