

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Grace in Leipzig-Wahren

(since 1935 - original name of consecration unknown)

History

Wahren is situated at a fork in an old remote road, coming from Merseburg / Halle, which branched off towards Taucha and Leipzig. During the 10th century, a German base was founded on what was then Sorbian ground and now the site of the church hill. In February 1004, King Henry II issued a document in *Warim* which mentions that base for the first time (Leipzig was first mentioned in 1015).

A noble residence to which belonged a parish church arose in the course of the German settlement around 1100. Likely wooden originally, it was replaced by a stone building before 1200. That masonry can still be found in the walls of the chancel and nave. (Two small, well-preserved compass windows were rediscovered and uncovered in the course of the last renovation in 1992.) An extensive reconstruction started during the second half of the 15th century which resulted in the unique character of the Wahren church with its remarkable tower, enlarged, pointed-arch windows in the nave and its extended chancel. (The east window still retains the old ornamented bricks.)

The Reformation, which began in 1544 and ended in 1562, had little effect on structural aspects. A new student's choir (the place for the cantor and kurrende) was erected in 1629/30 and externally decorated with a stepped gable in the manieristic style. After the church had got an organ in the west wing in 1697, from which the cantor has henceforth led the church music, it was redesigned to be a patronage lodge by the manor family *von Stammer*. The galleries also received a second floor in the Baroque period. And, in 1736, the flamboyant winged altar from 1497 was patched into the new rear panel which is framed by wood-carving. In 1844, the winged altar was removed and replaced by the pulpit, which had been standing in the southeast corner of the nave until then. The result of the renovation was a light and friendly room corresponding to the contemporary sentiment of the time.

The modernisation, which took place between 1901 and 1903, preserved much of the medieval architecture, thanks to the critical assistance of the famous art historian Cornelius Gurlitt (1850-1938). However, structural innovations were also consciously carried out according to the emerging Leipzig Art Nouveau style under the guidance of architect, Fritz Drechsler (1861 – 1922). The side staircases at the tower and the staircase to the former manor lodge also date from the same time, whereas the southern extension, the old mortuary, dates back to 1668.

Furnishings (covering over 800 years)

Romanesque: baptismal font, originally framed in red, prior to 1200; work piece, now in use as Easter candelabra

Gothic: remnants of the winged altar (12 apostles) built in 1497 and part of the bottom section, the predella (with two Christmas pictures); the tower basement, now baptistry, with two ogival arched gap windows; the outside design of the middle chancel window

Renaissance: tomb stones of Georg Blanck († 1579) and Magdalena Blanck, born von *Einsiedel* († 1597); chancel, remarkable wood-carvings and marquetry from about 1600, only partly preserved due to the reconstruction of 1844

Baroque: the tomb stone of Reverend Caspar Nicolai († 1707); rear panel of the altar from 1736

Art Nouveau (Jugendstil): two wrought-iron communicant lattices (to the side of the altar), a lectern and a wooden baptism (everything designed by Fritz Drechsler in 1903).

Gerhard Graf, Leipzig-Wahren, Spring 2010