

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

The Dossal

T. Norman Mansell (1904-1991) was the architect of some 135 churches during his lifetime, including our own St. Mark's. He specialized in Lutheran church ecclesiastical projects throughout his career. From the 1940s through the 1960s he designed churches for Lutheran congregations throughout the United States. Twenty-four churches are in Pennsylvania.

In the dedication booklet for the new St. Mark's (1960), Mr. Mansell wrote: "... every detail has been carefully studied ... the lectern, pulpit, and furnishings of the church have been carefully thought through for scale, color and design. (*Note: the dossal could be included here.*) We think many of these details will be outstanding works of art in which this church and the community may take pride. They will be distinctive in this church and will not be copies of stereotyped designs used elsewhere.

"Color in particular deserves mention by itself. Color has been used here with one relating to another ... it may be said that here will be a harmonious oasis of color in a desert of battleship gray."

It was our desire to replicate as close as possible the look of the chancel and the dossal from 1960, to capture the architect's intentions, so that they may be enjoyed by members of this congregation and those of future generations. We are not disappointed.

The fabrics for this project were woven in Bruges, Belgium. Of special note are the symbols and designs.

The rich, red saxony damask fabric includes fleur-de-lis crosses – a stylized lily representing purity, the Virgin Mary, new life, and the Holy Trinity. They are surrounded by the crown of thorns and nails of the Cross. The fabric also features quatrefoils – four intersecting circles representing the four Evangelists ... Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ... and the four directions of the world ... North, South, East, and West.

The orphrey stripes feature a blue field with a centered brocade ribbon reflecting designs found in the red damask. Along the margins are decorative ribbons of alternating gold and blue squares.

The dossal creates a background for the altar and for the focal point of our worship ... the Cross of Christ ...

a reminder to us of His humiliation and suffering, His atoning sacrifice, and ultimately, His victory over death.

Gratitude is extended to everyone who made this project possible ... the suppliers, the contractors, the donors. Each has given generously to this project, including their knowledge and abilities, to help achieve an incredible result. May the beauty of the renewed dossal glorify God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“Soli Deo Gloria” ... “Glory to God alone”.

With appreciation from the
Worship & Music Committee

Fabric supplier A. T. Merhaut, Allison Park, PA
Upholstery The Barn Fabric Center, Williamsport
Contractor Lundy Construction Co., Inc.
Williamsport

And to every donor to this project!

c. 1970



c. 2026



Here is a comparison of dossals, c.1970 and 2026. Not exact, but very similar! Captures the “essence” of the original.