

# BEHIND THE RED DOORS

*“Come to me all you who are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. . .”*

MATTHEW 11:28

As you entered the cathedral today, no doubt you noticed something different. Red doors! You may be wondering why the doors of Christ Church Cathedral are now red. Well, here is a brief history and reason behind this change.

The tradition of red doors originated in England during the Middle Ages when it was a sign of sanctuary. If you were being pursued by someone, you would be safe if you could reach the church door. No one would dare commit violence on holy ground. Furthermore, the Church didn't have to abide by civil law. Pursuers could proceed no further, and victims knew that the red doors meant sanctuary, refuge, and safety. The person who claimed sanctuary like this could state his case to the priest and ask for justice to be served. The red doors also represented protection from spiritual evil as well. In the beginnings of cathedral architecture, red stood for the Blood of Christ, and it was painted on the north, south, and east doors of a church. In other words, they were making “the sign of the cross,” which ultimately marked the church as a safety zone from spiritual dangers in addition to protection from physical harm.



Other meanings for red doors through the ages include red being a reminder of the Passover and God's covenant with the Israelites. And, as mentioned above, red is a symbol for the sacrificial blood of Christ, our entry into salvation. It is also indicative of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Wittenberg Cathedral is believed to have had red doors, the church where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, so red may symbolize a church of the Reformation. Other stories go that if church doors were painted red, it meant their mortgage was paid off!

Today many Episcopal churches, as well as Lutheran, Methodist, Roman Catholic and others, paint their doors red to symbolize that they are a haven for emotional and spiritual healing, a place for forgiveness and reconciliation. In other words, their red doors are an invitation to visitors to enter a space filled with the Holy Spirit. Bright red doors shine with welcoming warmth. They gleam like fire and show the way to the Holy Spirit to all who walk through them.

In keeping with the that tradition, Christ Church Cathedral is a sanctuary and refuge for *all* who enter its doors. And our doors now are a reflection and representation of who we are, what we believe, and what we do.

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