

# St. Johannis Church

## Architecture and building history

St. Johanniskirche is the oldest church in Soltau. It was first mentioned in a document in 1464. At that time, a stone building replaced a wooden church, which was extended again in 1597/98. In 1755 it was demolished and a late-baroque hall church was built. In 1849/50 the tower was built. In the Christmas night of 1906 this church burned down completely. Only the outer walls remained.



After the fire, the church was rebuilt in the neo-baroque style by the Consistorial architect Wendebourg and could be consecrated in 1908.

The present exterior view is essentially the same as before 1908. The height of the tower is 68 meters.

In 1972/73 the church was redesigned according to the plans of the church building director Müller. The church had become too large for the regular church services with its more than 1000 seats. During the redesign, seven parish rooms were built into the old church interior. The altar was moved from its place in the eastern choir room to the south wall, where it had already stood before the reconstruction in 1908.

## Altar and altar wall

The altar at the front attracts attention. The mosaic represents the Lamb (Christ) on the book with the seven seals (Revelation 5). The standard of the cross, which holds the Lamb, is the sign of victory of the risen Christ. A late medieval altar crucifix can only be seen during church services.



The altar wall was designed by the Rotenburg painter and graphic artist Rudolf Schäfer. The paintings are the main component of the 1921 monument to the members of the Soltau parish

who died in the First World War. The church interior and murals are connected by neoclassical architectural painting. The theme of the painting composition is the sacrifice. In the middle is the symbolic sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ at the institution of the Lord's Supper.

The side pictures contain Old Testament scenes from the Abraham stories:

On the left the meeting of Abraham with Melchisedek (Genesis 14). The priest-king Melchizedek hands bread and wine to the returning army commander.

On the right is Abraham with his son Isaac. On the mountain Abraham passes a test of faith.

## Organ

In 1968 the Hammer company from Hanover completed an organ with 40 stops in the St. Johanniskirche, divided into four works: pedal, main, upper and Brustwerk. The instrument stands in a case from 1908 (predecessor organ: Furtwängler & Hammer), which was extended by two pedal towers. In 1994, the Berlin firm Schuke completely renovated and re-intonated the work. Today it is the largest instrument in the church district.



## Ceiling Painting

The ceiling painting by the Hanoverian painter Carl Wiederhold from 1907 is, together with the



altar table, baptismal font, evangelist figures at the pulpit, organ prospectus and gallery balustrade, part of the neo-baroque church furnishings, which were also preserved after 1973.

The painting depicts Christ on the throne of glory. Jesus Christ is enthroned on the rainbow in front of a large solar disc, his right hand is raised for blessing. His left hand holds an open book with the first and last letter of the Greek

alphabet: Alpha and Omega (cf. Revelation 21:6: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end").

As he triumphs over Satan, he is surrounded by the

Evangelists: John (eagle), Luke (bull), Matthew (angel) and Mark (lion).

Below the evangelist groups, three angels represent the divine virtues: Faith (cross), love (heart) and hope (anchor), (cf. 1 Corinthians 13).

## Chimes

The particularly sonorous A minor chime dates from 1907 and consists of the large 3.65 tonne Christ bell, the middle Luther bell and the small Paul Gerhardt bell. The bells are inscribed with parts of the angels' praise of God in the Christmas story (Luke 2:14): "Glory to God in the highest" - "Peace on earth" - "Good will to all people".

Experts consider the chimes of the church of St. Johannis to be one of the most beautiful in Germany.

Here you can hear the church bells:



(all recordings: Horst Wundschuh)

*God bless and protect you,  
that your face shines  
and he gives you his peace!  
Amen*

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## St. Johannis Soltau



*In this church you shall feel welcome and be at peace!*

*Here you shall recover and cheer up. Receive a little trust through the love of Jesus Christ. Discover the joy of living together with others. And look to the future with the help of God.*