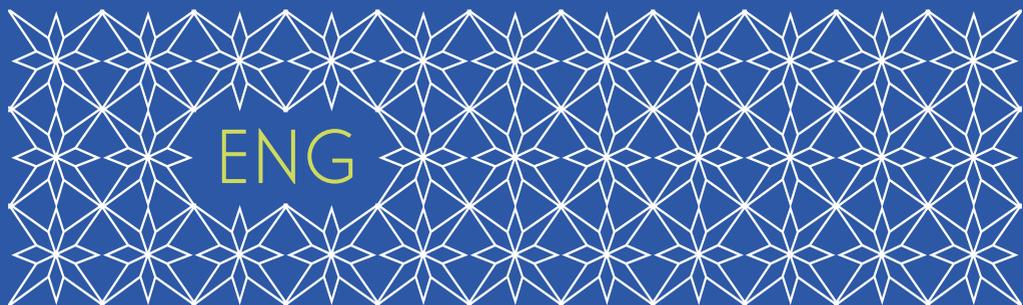


# THE GREAT SAINT LAURENCE CHURCH

Introductory booklet for visitors of the Great Saint Laurence Church



ENG



The Great Saint Laurence Church, 1573  
Anthonius Keldermans (ca 1440-1512)  
L 85 x B 56 x H 35 m





# WELCOME!

Welcome to the Great Saint Laurence Church. Panels with introductory texts in Dutch and English are placed throughout the church. Many of these panels have interactive screens with extra information in Dutch, English, and German. This way, you can learn everything about this church and its remarkable history. Have fun!

## 1.2 ROUTE, MUSEUM SHOP, BAR, CLOAKROOM, LAVATORY

The positions of the panels are indicated on the additional map. Our advice? Start your tour of the church at the large exhibition wall opposite the bar. After that, each route will be as interesting as the next. The museum shop, the bar, the cloakroom and the toilets are also indicated on the map.

## 1.3 KIDS

There's a special kids' route with fun questions for children. These questions can be found on the interactive panels with a kids' button. They can write down their answers in the booklet that is freely available at the entrance, or in the Great Saint Laurence Church App. Information on how to download the app is on the panels at the entrance of the church.



Museumshop



## 1.4 HOSTS AND GUIDES

Our hosts are happy to welcome you and answer any questions you might have. On busy days, there are guides as well, who will show you around and tell you all about the church's history.

## 1.5 GREAT SAINT LAURENCE CHURCH APP

Instructions on how to download the app are on the panels at the entrance of the church. The Great Saint Laurence Church app provides you with extra information about the church, the kids' tour and a description of the most remarkable graves in the church.

## 1.6 WEBSITE AND EXTRA INFORMATION

There is a lot of information about the church's history and art on the panels, as well as on the interactive screens and in the app. Do you want to know even more about the church? Visit [www.grotekerk-alkmaar.nl](http://www.grotekerk-alkmaar.nl) or browse through the books in the museum shop. For specific information about the organs, visit [www.alkmaarorgelstad.nl](http://www.alkmaarorgelstad.nl).



# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The history of the church is visualized on the exhibition wall opposite the bar. This wall is divided into the four periods that distinguish the church's history:

(2.1) Construction of the church, (2.2) Catholic era, (2.3) Protestant era and (2.4) Site of culture and connection.

## 2.1 CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH

Prior to the construction of this building, another small wooden church was located here. The remains of a Roman church were found here as well, as a result of archaeological excavations. A high church tower was added to the Roman church, but it collapsed quickly after its completion, in 1468. This church was replaced by the current Gothic church, which was completed around 1518. The timeline of the construction process is shown on the digital screen. There, you can also find information about the restoration of the model painting of the church. This model painting served as an aid to collect funding for the construction of the church.

## 2.2 CATHOLIC ERA

The church was originally built for the Catholic service. Throughout the Catholic period, the church was abundantly decorated. However, there are unfortunately no examples of decorated pre-Reformation Catholic churches in The Netherlands. To get a glimpse of a church filled with

altars, statues and colored stained-glass windows, we can look to the nineteenth-century Sint Laurentius Church, located at Verdrongenoord in Alkmaar. On this panel, the tragic story of the church's last Catholic pastor is told: together with his chaplain, he was executed by hanging during the Reformation.

## 2.3 PROTESTANT ERA

After the Reformation, the church was redecorated to suit the more modest Protestant service. The altars, statues and decorations were removed. During subsequent renovations, like the one in the eighteenth century, the coloured stained-glass windows were replaced by regular windows. The chancel was used to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The silver that is on display in the glass showcase was donated in 2017 by the Protestant Council in Alkmaar. The silver is engraved: 'In remembrance of Lady Ci Baert 1749, passed away The 24th of November'. Another part of the silver belonged to the church in Koedijk. This church was brought down in 1947.

## 2.4 PLACE OF CULTURE AND CONNECTION

The final part of the wall is dedicated to renovation, restoration and the current role of the church. Through the ages, there have been numerous restorations. Up until the French era (from 1795 onwards) the city council was responsible for the upkeep of the church. After that, the church council held this responsibility. This led to a deferral of restoration activities. At the end of the nineteenth century, Alkmaar's city architect, Willem Frederik Du Croix, restored the building. However, follow-up restorations were postponed yet again. There were very few governmental contributions, so restorations were limited – the choir was stabilised and the lantern tower was fortified in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it wasn't until the nineteen-forties that these restoration activities were completed. In recent years, more renovations and restorations were done.

Nowadays, the church is a place where exhibitions, cultural events and conventions take place. That makes it an important cultural hub in Alkmaar.



Liturgical Vessels  
Donated by the Protestant  
parish in Alkmaar



Baptistry





# BAPTISTERY AND FUNERAL CHAPEL

## 3 BAPTISTERY

On the wall next to the organ, you can find information about the baptismal ritual before the Reformation. Behind this screen is the Catholic baptistery, which – unfortunately – is not open to the public. However, on the lower screen, you can see what the chapel looks like. A short film explains how the Catholic baptismal ritual was performed. The baptism takes place by pouring holy water over the child's head.

## 4 FUNERAL CHAPEL

The funeral chapel was located at the north side of the main organ. Here, the deceased was laid out and preparations for the funeral took place. Burying in the church remained a common ritual until 1830.



## 4.1 GRAVESTONE VAN DER MEY

Local hero Maerten Pietersz. van der Mey is buried behind the screen: his grave is covered with a decorated gravestone. He played an important part during the Siege of Alkmaar in 1573. Outside, at the western wall of the church, his statue – made by Mari Andriessen – was erected in 1965. During the Spanish siege in 1573, he was one of several messengers who managed to carry letters from the Geuzen (also known as *The Beggars*) and the city council to Sonoy. Sonoy led the resistance against the Spaniards on behalf of William of Orange (*William the Silent*). In later years, Van der Mey became a contractor of public works and an innovator in wind mill technologies. You can find more information about Van der Mey on the digital screen.

## 4.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In the nineteen-nineties, underfloor heating was installed in the church, and thus a substantial restoration took place. It was therefore a suitable moment for excavation works. Remains of older church buildings were found, as well as many grave goods. On the digital screen, you can see photos of the excavations and the objects that were found in the graves. In the glass showcase, a few items are on display.

## 4.3 TOMBSTONES IN THE CHURCH

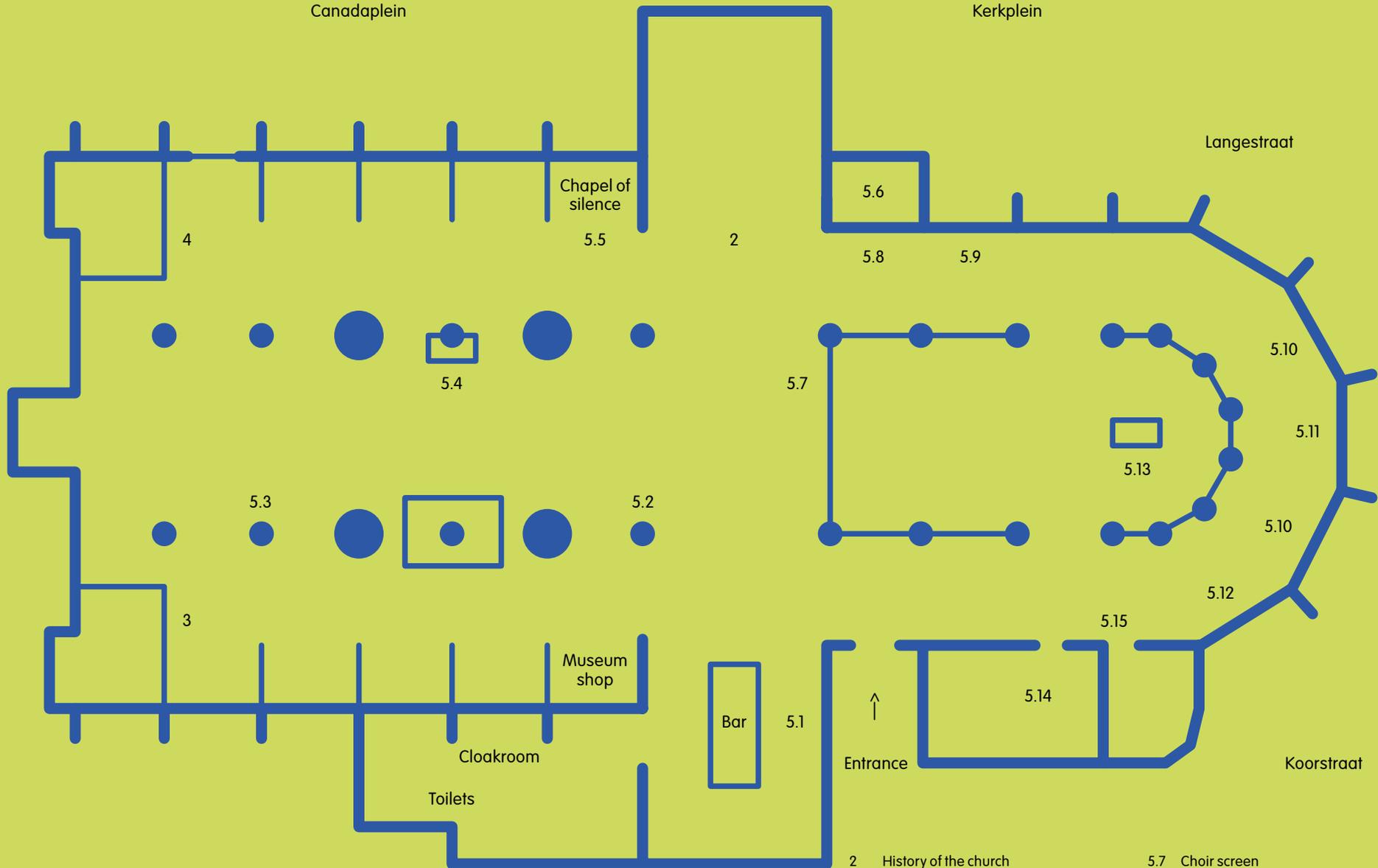
There are about 1700 tombstones in the church. On the digital screen you can find an selection of 24 tombstones with a remarkable history. The locations and numbers of these tombstones are on the screen. You can read these interesting stories on your smartphone as well, with the Great Saint Laurence Church app.



Canadaplein

Kerkplein

Langestraat



The Great Saint Laurence Church, 1573  
Anthonius Keldermans (ca 1440-1512)  
L 85 x B 56 x H 35 m

- |     |                                   |      |   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|---|
| 2   | History of the church             | 5.7  | Choir screen                                      |
| 3   | Baptistry                         | 5.8  | Van Covelens organ                                |
| 4   | Funeral chapel                    | 5.9  | Tomb of Floris V and ship model Michiel de Ruyter |
| 5.1 | Missing artworks                  | 5.10 | Biers   |
| 5.2 | The church according to Saenredam | 5.11 | Pelgrims and the Miracle of Alkmaar               |
| 5.3 | Van Hagerbeer-Schnitger organ     | 5.12 | Library   |
| 5.4 | Pulpit, baptismal area and pews   | 5.13 | Last Judgement                                    |
| 5.5 | Laurentius chapel                 | 5.14 | Consistory  |
| 5.6 | Gentlemen's chamber               | 5.15 | Model painting                                    |



# POINTS OF INTEREST

## 5.1 MISSING ARTWORKS

Two important works of art disappeared from the church after the Reformation. The largest one is the Laurentius altarpiece, commissioned by the church and painted by Maarten van Heemskerck in 1538-1543. In 1581, almost ten years after the Reformation in Alkmaar, an art dealer in Alkmaar managed to sell it to the king of Sweden, who subsequently placed it in a church in Stockholm. Later, he donated it to the bishop of the cathedral in Linköping, where it is still on display. The triptych that can be seen on the wall near the bar is the same size as Van Heemskerck's artwork, and was used in 1996 as a frame for a project of Alkmaar-based artist Kees Bolten. In this project, the images from Sweden were digitally reproduced in Alkmaar. When his photos started to lose colour, the frame was reused by Pauline Bakker, who created the current painting on the occasion of Alkmaar's 750-year anniversary.

Another important work of art from this church, the Seven Works of Mercy, made by the Master of Alkmaar in 1504, was sold to the Rijksmuseum in 1918, in order to pay for the upkeep of the church. On the digital screen, you can see the seven parts of this exceptional artwork.



The Saint Laurence Church in Alkmaar  
Pieter Jansz Saenredam, 1661



## 5.2 THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO SAENREDAM

Another important work of art for this church is the interior painting by Pieter Saenredam that is on display in the City Museum of Alkmaar. It was made in 1661-1665 and it shows this church with white walls, the main organ, which was brand new at that time, and the Protestant interior, with a focus on the pulpit. An image of this artwork can be seen on the digital screen, to show the differences in comparison to the Catholic interior. This is merely an artist's impression: we cannot know for sure what the church looked like during the Catholic era.

On this panel, you can also find more information about the parts of the church that are not open to the public: the attic above the arched roof over the nave, the attic above the side aisles, the ambulatory and all staircases and corridors leading towards them.

### 5.3 VAN HAGERBEER-SCHNITGER ORGAN

After the Reformation, the brothers Galtus, Germer and Jacobus van Hagerbeer were asked to build a new organ with three manuals and 31 registers. The church already owned two choir organs from before the Reformation, which were located on both sides of the chancel. A few registers from the organ on the south side were reused to build the new main organ. Jacob van Campen, who was also the architect for the Royal Palace at Dam Square in Amsterdam, designed the front of the organ. The case was painted by Caesar van Everdingen, a renowned artist from Alkmaar. More information about this painter can be found on the digital screen. In 1722, Frans Caspar Schnitger was asked to work on the organ. Behind the same front, he placed 56 registers. On the screen, you can watch an interview with Alkmaar's current city organist, Pieter van Dijk, who also plays the music that you can hear at the panel.

### 5.4 PULPIT, BAPTISMAL AREA AND PEWS

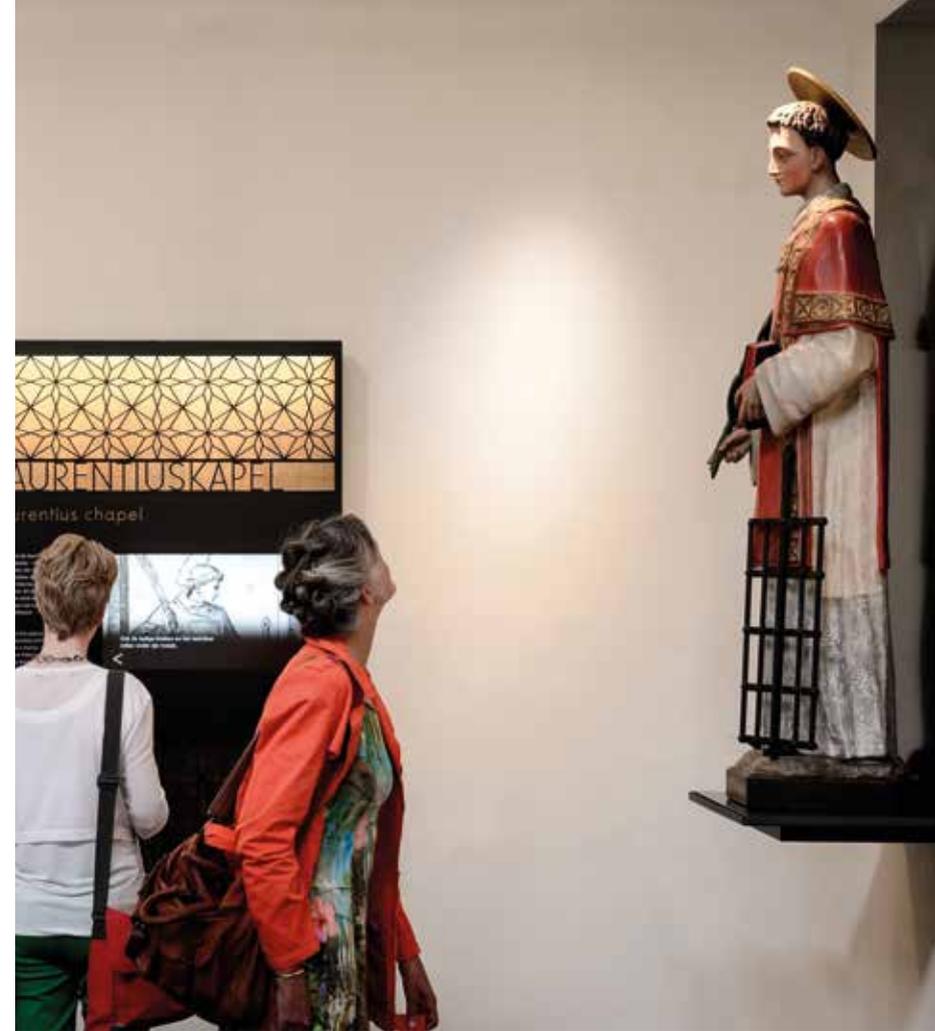
The pulpit was made in 1665. There's a vine on the pulpit: the grapes allude to a declaration of Christ, 'I am the true vine.' He thus states he is the source from which life springs. A tower with a laurel wreath is also visible: this is the coat of arms of Alkmaar. The laurel wreath refers to the expression 'in Alkmaar, victory starts'. 'Victory' alludes to the Siege of Alkmaar in 1573. On the foot, made out of stone, the coats of arms of the church wardens can be seen.

The screen around the baptismal area is from 1605, and it's the oldest one in The Netherlands. In the baptismal area, behind this screen, many children were baptized. The screen is decorated with lions and pelicans. It is said that pelicans would peck their own chest to feed their young with their blood: this symbolizes Christ, who sacrifices himself on the cross.

Across the pulpit, pews that are somewhat higher are visible: the best seats in the church. This is where the mayors, the aldermen, and the church wardens would be seated. These benches were made in the seventeenth century. The Protestant baptismal ritual is explained on the panel, illustrated by short videos of the baptismal ceremonies of the royal family. Even though these ceremonies did not take place in Alkmaar, they provide a good insight into baptism.



Laurentius chapel



### 5.5 LAURENTIUS CHAPEL

This chapel has been remodeled in 2015: it is now a chapel of silence, where visitors can light a candle. A nineteenth-century statue of Saint Laurentius can be found in the chapel. He is the patron saint of this church, together with Matthias. On the digital screen, the story of Laurentius is told. On the screen behind the candles, part of an old poem about Laurentius is visible.

## 5.6 GENTLEMEN'S CHAMBER

Part of this room houses the bellows of the Van Covelens organ, with air bags that pump air into the pipes of the organ. This room has had multiple functions: it served as a prison as well as a boardroom. This is why this room is called 'Herenkamer', which translates to 'Gentlemen's chamber'. A declaration on the responsibilities of administrators is sewn on the edge of the carpet.

## 5.7 CHOIR SCREEN

The choir screen also dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. It served as a partition between the churchgoers and the priest on the chancel. At that time, there were two separate doors that led to the chancel. After the Reformation, these doors were turned into a double door, and the chancel was used for the Lord's Supper in the Protestant service.

## 5.8 VAN COVELENS ORGAN

This organ is the oldest playable organ in the Netherlands, and was manufactured by Jan van Covelens in 1511. Back then, it was an organ with one manual and eight registers. Van Covelens' student Claes Willemsz expanded the instrument in 1545 with two to three registers. The organ stop was added in 1551 by his son Allart Claesz. In later times, a lot of additions were made to the organ, but during the restoration in 2000 – done by Flentrop Orgelbouw in Zaandam – the decision was made to reconstruct the organ as it was in 1511. On the digital panel, you can see more information about the workings of the organ.

## 5.9 TOMB OF FLORIS V AND SHIP MODEL MICHIEL DE RUYTER

Near this panel is the tomb of Dutch count Floris V. Floris is not buried here. After he was murdered in 1296, citizens of Alkmaar brought his body to the city by ship and he was laid out in this church. He was buried in Rijnsburg. However, according to the customs of those days, his intestines were buried here, in stone vases. The inscription

that mentions the fact that his intestines were placed here, was added to his gravestone in the fifteenth century.

A ship model is on display near the tomb. This miniature war ship was painted by Caesar van Everdingen in 1667. He added a panorama of Alkmaar and placed four women at the windows of the officer's quarters. The inscription 'De Ruyter is mijn naam' ('De Ruyter is my name') and the date 'anno 1667' ('in the year 1667') both refer to an important historical event, when admiral De Ruyter defeated the English at Chatham.

## 5.10 BIERS

At a funeral, the casket had to be carried from the house of the deceased to the church. In the church, biers were necessary for transport. These biers, dating back to the eighteenth century, are interesting examples. One belonged to the Saint Lucas Guild and was used when a member of the guild or their family members passed away. The other bier was used for the funeral of the particularly wealthy Gerrit Wildeman, and the residents of the courtyard that holds his name.

## 5.11 PILGRIMS AND THE MIRACLE OF ALKMAAR

On the outside of the church, at the side of the Langestraat, a symbol of a shell is visible. This symbol denotes that, in Catholic times, the church was a stop along the route to Santiago de Compostella. According to the legend, the grave of Saint Jacob – John the Evangelist's brother – is located there. The shell, known as 'Jacob's shell', is the only still visible sign of pilgrimage in this church.

On this screen, you can also find more information about the Miracle of Alkmaar, also known as the 'Blood Miracle'. This miracle took place in the church that was located here in earlier times: a priest was leading his first service, but because of his bad conscience due to earlier events, his hands were trembling so much that he spilled wine on his chasuble. These wine stains were cut out of the fabric, but the stained

piece of fabric kept returning. It was put away and subsequently forgotten. Years later, a sailor got in trouble on sea, and prayed for help. An angel told him they would help, if he would retrieve the piece of fabric and would make sure it would be worshipped. This resulted in the start of a 'miracle culture', including a pilgrimage.

#### 5.12 LIBRARY

Between the end of the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century, the library of Alkmaar, known as the 'Librije', was located above the entrance of the church. The traces of its construction - along with its mention in 1545 and the mention of reconstruction or redecoration in 1594 - have been completely lost. However, the collection of books that was in the library in the seventeenth century, is luckily still intact. These books can be found in the Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, where visitors can still study them. A few examples and a mayor's bible are on display in the showcase.

#### 5.13 LAST JUDGMENT

The vault painting of the Last Judgment was made between 1516 and 1519 by Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen, who was the earliest well-known artist in the north of The Netherlands. This work is still part of the tradition of the Middle Ages, though it has some characteristic features that fit the Renaissance as well, especially in the poses of the figures.

This painting is meant to serve as a reminder of what awaits us at the end of times. In the middle there's Christ on the throne, with on one side Mary and on the other side John the Baptist. Underneath them, one can see the dead rising from their graves, who will eventually meet their end in heaven (on Christ's right side) or hell (on his left side). Beneath Christ, one can see the archangel Michael, who weighs the souls on his scale. On the right side the Hellmouth is visible, an aggressive beast that devours souls.

The monumental vault ceiling was removed from its original place in 1885, due to the bad condition it was in, and was eventually brought

to the Rijksmuseum. In 1925, it was returned to Alkmaar, where it was restored by Gerhard Jansen in 1942-1944. During another restoration, in 2003-2011, by Willem Haakma Wagenaar and Edwin van den Brink, the vault was once again removed, so that each board could be restored. The fountain, the Hellmouth and the Holy Spirit have been restored to their original state on the basis of traces of these initial works. The restored Last Judgment was revealed on the 8th of October 2011, by Queen Beatrix.

In 1999, the vault of the northern transept, which was thought to be lost, was rediscovered by Haakma Wagenaar and Van den Brink. They restored it and put it back in its original place.

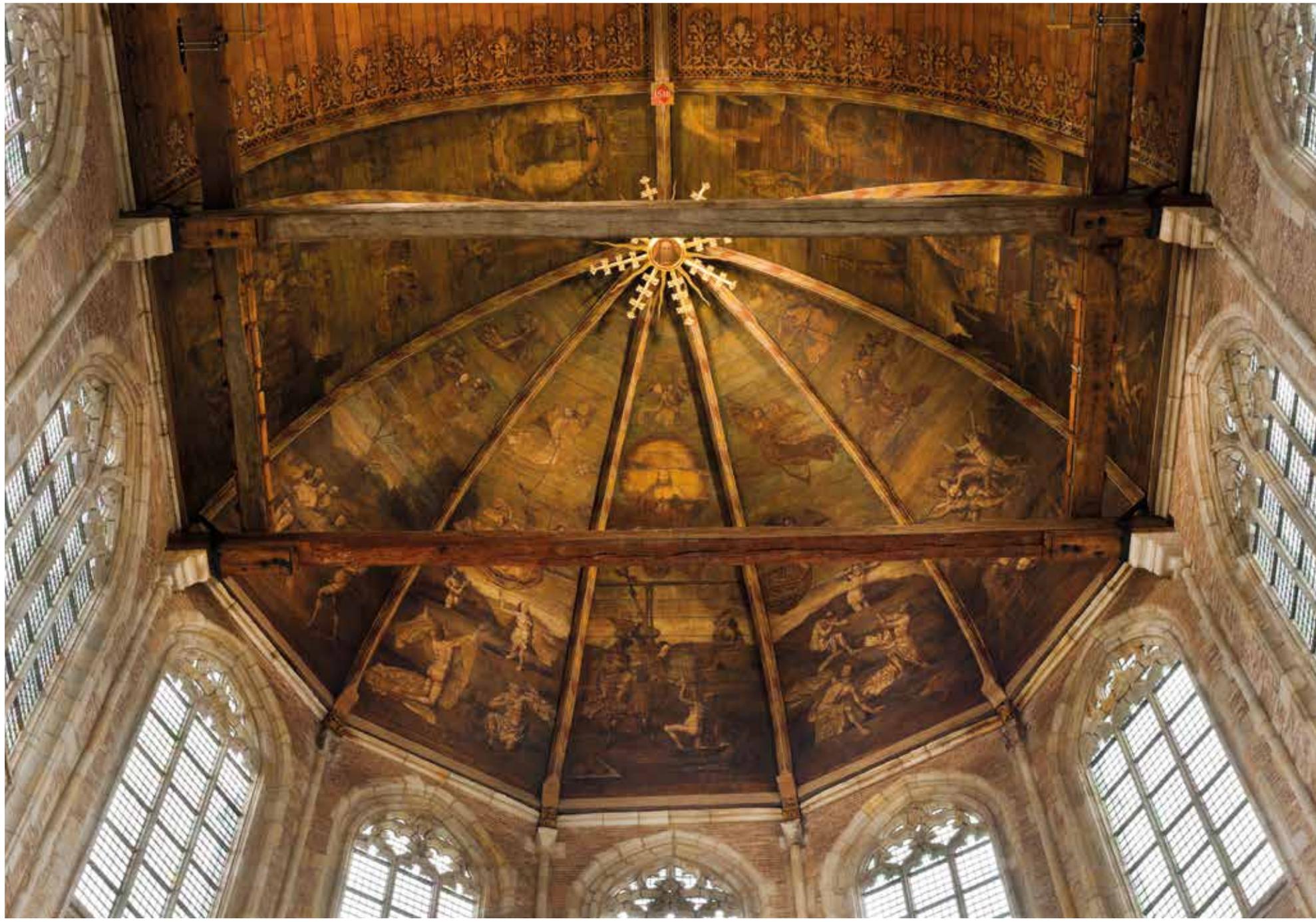
#### 5.14 CONSISTORY

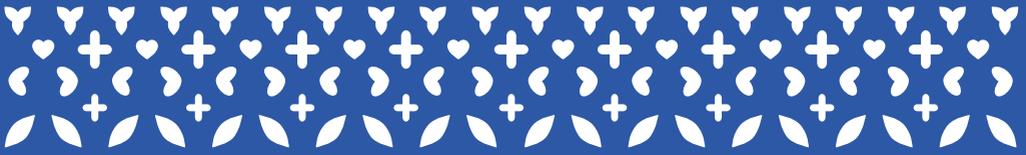
In the Protestant era, this space was a meeting room. The pews that are around the table are reminders of that. Pre-Reformation, priests could change clothes here before the start of the Catholic service. At that time, this room was called the sacristy.

#### 5.15 MODEL PAINTING

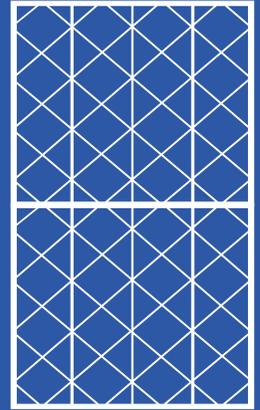
This painting of the church model was probably made to collect funds for the building's construction. Originally, the painting was rectangular. The left part, with the tower, was added later. It was restored between 2004 and 2014 by Martin Bijl.

The Last Judgement, vault painting  
Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen  
ca. 1515





# THE GREAT SAINT LAURENCE CHURCH



## TEXT

Gert van Kleef, Grote Kerk Alkmaar

## PRODUCTION

Elianne van Diepen, TAQA Theater De Vest

## EXHIBITION

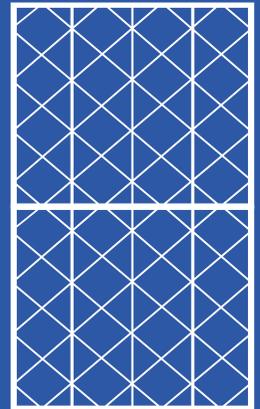
Opera Ontwerpers

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

Bas van Vuurde

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Mike Bink



**TAQA**THEATER  VEST

