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Thank you!



A warm welcome to the Gengenbacher Abtei- or Stadtkirche St. Marien!

With the following explanations we want to help our visitor to get to know our church. Give yourself some time for this personal discovery and, maybe, for a moment of silence or personal prayer.

The history of the monastery and the town of Gengenbach began around 725 when St. Pirmin and his companions founded a Benedictine monastery on this site. They were supported by the Franconian Duke Ruthard, who provided the appropriate plots of land. For more than 1000 years the monks shaped the city and the whole surrounding area with their presence, until the abbey was dissolved in 1807 during the time of Secularization.

The plan of the monastery of St. Gallen from the beginning of the 9th century served as a model for the construction of the Benedictine abbey in Gengenbach. The year of construction of the present city church and former abbey church probably dates back to the first half of the 12th century. The formal language on the western façade reminds in its own way of the long history of the church or its Romanesque origin and of individual reconstruction measures.

Over the course of many generations, structural changes have been made to this place of worship time and again, according to the taste of the time. In 1505, the "Frauenchörlein", a late Gothic product, was erected on the north side of the church and is significant in terms of art history. The "Holy Tomb" inside is the oldest preserved work of art in the church. In 1694 the "Josefschörle" with the baroque altar fresco from 1786 was added on the opposite side as a symmetrical compensation.

After the destruction during the Thirty Years' War, a major fire broke out in the town in 1689, which also destroyed a large part of the abbey church. It was rebuilt between 1690 and 1722 by the Vorarlberg architect Franz Beer. It received a baroque interior and the new church tower, which was completed in 1716.

The strong historicism at the end of the 19th century led to the neo-Romanesque redesign of the interior of the church between 1893 and 1906. Carl Philipp Schilling painted the biblical scenes in the church in the classicist style and in the Nazarene style.

The paintings on the ceiling or on the side walls of the nave show various scenes from the life of Jesus, as they are portrayed to us in the Gospels. The picture on the ceiling of the crossing shows Jesus' death on the cross, the throne of grace with God the Father and in the corners the four evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Holy Trinity is depicted above the high altar and Christ and Mary, Queen of Heaven, is depicted on the front wall of the choir arch. In addition, there is the depiction of famous saints from the entire history of the church and important figures from the Old Testament. The Apostolic Creed, which can be read in Latin on the side walls of the nave, refers to the basis of Christian faith.

The neo-Gothic pulpit made of white terracotta was made in 1900 by a Baden-Baden company according to the design of the building director Meckel, who was in charge of the baroque deconstruction of the church. The high altar in the apse, made of the same material, shows Jesus in the circle of his disciples at the Last Supper (left) and the wedding at Cana (right).

Only parts of the choir stalls and a confessional remain of the former baroque building. A magnificent Baroque organ, originally in the choir, was sold to Freiburg in 1904, where it is now in the Augustinian Museum. Today's organ on the gallery above the main entrance was built around 1899 by Wilhelm Schwarz. It is the second largest Romantic organ in Baden and has an excellent sound.

After the Second Vatican Council, a new altar and a new ambo were consecrated in 1985. The altar is adorned with vines and grapes, while the ambo, where the Word of God is proclaimed, depicts the four evangelists. Another important piece of equipment in the church is the baptismal font. It was created in the workshop of the Gengenbach sculptor Peter Schwab (1729-1791) and depicts the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. In the rear part of the church, various scenes from the Holy Script are depicted in the year-round crib with the help of the so-called Egli figures.

After visiting the church, we invite you to visit the former cloister or inner courtyard of the old monastery and the lovingly designed herb garden. Instead of the old monastery, the main part of the building now houses rooms of the Offenburg University of Applied Sciences and the parish office of the Catholic parish.

Discover this wonderfully decorated church, where people have been searching for and worshipping God for many hundreds of years. Treat yourself to a moment of pause and personal prayer and feel welcome here!

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