

A SHORT GUIDE

Kleiner Michel - Architecture and Art

„Moin!“ – the *Kleiner Michel* welcomes you!

This leaflet serves as a brief introduction – to our history; our art, and the city we've lived in for centuries. Feel free to take a copy with you; your kind contributions may be placed in the boxes near the statues.

Kleiner Michel – where Hamburg exceeded herself



The population of early 17th century Hamburg was overflowing the city's boundaries. The old city integrated a larger area within a newly built fortified wall, effectively doubling Hamburg's size; an expansion that was so consequently planned and executed that Hamburg withstood the 30 Years War unscathed.

On the site of Hamburg's first protestant-built church, the *Kleiner Michel* was originally near the city walls to serve a cemetery and as such, the name derives from the church's dedication to Archangel Michael, who accompanies souls to heaven... or perhaps it's only because building happened to end on St. Michael's day. No one knows for sure.

A growing number of international refugees soon outgrew the first *Michaelis* church – it was truly too *klein* (small). In 1647 a new, larger construction had been begun on higher ground. The *Großer* (large) *Michel* was completed in 1661 leaving the *Kleiner Michel*, surplus to requirements and abandoned. In 1747 it was demolished. But then, just three years later, on March 10th 1750, the *Großer Michel* burnt to the ground. Two architects were engaged. Neither was willing to agree with the other on anything. In exasperation, a rich merchant gave the money to rebuild the *Kleiner Michel* on the original site as a cheap, quick, but temporary solution. Completed by 1757, the *Kleiner Michel* served as an auxiliary church until 1762 when the larger *Großer Michel* was finally completed. Ever since, there has been a *Großer* and a *Kleiner Michel* co-existing side by side.

Kleiner Michel – Hamburg's French connection ...



The French occupation, under Napoléon 1st, from 1811 to 1813, were austere years of hardship for Hamburg's population, particularly its merchants. But these were also years when old legal structures and restrictions were obsolete. All citizens (albeit an exclusively male privilege) were granted equal rights. Professional restrictions imposed by guilds, and others, were abolished and religious freedom was established. Non Lutheran Protestants (Calvinists and Mennonites), Jews and Catholics became free citizens with full civil rights. No longer was it necessary to leave Hamburg to find liberal attitudes and religious freedom under the Danes who offered a greater civil freedom (*Große Freiheit*) in Altona (today part of Hamburg, to the West).

France decreed Hamburg must have a Catholic church. The *Großer Michel* was (and is) Lutheran. In 1811, Napoléon 1st decreed the *Kleiner Michel* to be Hamburg's first Catholic public place of worship – dedicated to St. Ansgar, a French-born Saint (+864) who founded the Catholic Churches of Hamburg and Scandinavia.

As France's European dominance diminished, their forces withdrew, and town counsellors revoked many of the privileges granted during the occupation. But the *Kleiner Michel* remained Catholic.

140 years later the terrible destruction of World War II left the *Kleiner Michel* in ruins. France's Consul General, Baron Andréa de Merciat, organized 1952/1955 finance to help rebuild the *Kleiner Michel* as a sign of solidarity and reconciliation. And so, now, the Emperor Charlemagne (considered by France and Germany to be their founding father) stands symbolic and proud in the forecourt of this church, which since 1955 is home to a French speaking Catholic Parish in Hamburg.

Notables baptised in the *Kleiner Michel* include: the pianist **Hermann Cohen** in 1847; in 1897 the publicist and Nobel prize-winner **Carl von Ossietzky**; and in 1897 the composer **Gustav Mahler**.

In 1923 **Johannes Prassek** received the sacrament of Confirmation; in 1943 the Priest, was beheaded by the Nazis as one of the Lübeck Martyrs. **Eduard Proffittlich SJ** worked in the *Kleiner Michel* between 1928 and 1930. In 1942 he succumbed under Stalin's pogrom against Christians in Estonia. The church in Estonia and Russia strives currently for his beatification.

Kleiner Michel – Hamburg's gateway to the world

The *Kleiner Michel* is traditionally a place for different nationalities to come together; more so than any other parish in the city. This was never more true than during the 19th century, when the exodus to the New World was at its height, and many people found, instead, a new home in Hamburg. Today the *Kleiner Michel's* parishioners comprise of Christians from all over Europe, Africa, Asia and America. It is truly a gateway to the world, in the middle of Hamburg.



Appropriately, above the main entrance is an inscription from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians [Eph. 4.3.] reading:

SERVATE UNITATEM SPIRITUS IN VINCULO PACIS

Keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. Striving for unity should serve peace and not promote discord.

The French architect after World War II, J.-C. Moreux, organised the inscription to signify the doors of the *Kleiner Michel* will always be open for people from all over the world and in peaceful co-existence with all Christians, catholic, protestant or orthodox.

In the *Kleiner Michel* the last Lutheran sermon was given on March 17, 1811. The pastor, J.F. Toenies, said,

"We should and must leave this temple and hand it to our brothers that they may have a house of prayer, to give public honour to our and their God, and to our and their Saviour.

To you all, who cherished time here, gathering strength from the words of life; receiving at this altar the pledge of forthcoming Salvation; to all of you who shed a quiet tear with me at this separation; to you all, let it be your consolation that this house remains a house of worship."

In 2011, the 200th anniversary of this transfer was celebrated by the principal pastor of the *Großer Michel* together with the *Kleiner Michel's* parish priest in a joint-dialogue sermon.



HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS

ca 1600 Construction of a cemetery chapel with bell tower.

1605 First regular service.

1647 The now officially-termed *Neustadt* community purchases the first *Michaelis* church from the St. Nikolai community and constructs nearby the *Großer Michel*, finished in 1661. *Kleiner Michel* falls into disrepair – demolished in 1747.

1750 10th March – *Großer Michel* destroyed by fire.

1754-57 *Kleiner Michel* re-constructed as a temporary solution.

1762 Consecration of the finally completed *Großer Michel*.

1807 During the occupation Napoleon's Spanish troops celebrate Catholic Mass in the Lutheran *Kleiner Michel*.

1811 *Kleiner Michel* officially designated Roman Catholic and consecrated to St. Ansgar on the 3rd February.

1814 French troops finally withdraw from Hamburg. *Kleiner Michel* continues Catholic services.

1824 The City of Hamburg purchases the *Kleiner Michel* from the Lutheran community for 30.000 Marks and, for a fraction of the purchase price, hand over the building to at that time 6.000 Hamburg Catholics.

1830 *Kleiner Michel* renovated to a standard better-than-new.

1865 A religious relic from Ansgar's forearm is given to the *Kleiner Michel*, to commemorate the millennium-anniversary of the death of the Saint, first Bishop of Hamburg.

1945 *Kleiner Michel* destroyed by Allied incendiary bombing.

1955 Consecration of the present construction, designed by French architect Jean-Charles Moreux. Net construction costs are met by the French Consul General in Hamburg. St. Bernhard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is declared co-patron of the *Kleiner Michel*.

1977 Refurbishment in the style of the 1970's.

2006 Jesuits are entrusted with pastoral care at *Kleiner Michel*. In 2007 Hamburg's Jesuit community transfers here.

2011 On the 200th anniversary of the last Lutheran sermon the principal pastor of *Großer Michel* together with *Kleiner Michel's* parish priest hold a joint-dialogue sermon.

2012/13 Renovation and second refurbishment – the church is restored by architect Klaus Dörnen, Oldenburg/ H. in line with the original French architectural style of Jean-Charles Moreux.

THE CHURCH PORTAL

The inscription, SERVATE UNITATEM SPIRITUS IN VINCULO PACIS, stands above a classical neo-French portal on a North German clinker-brick façade. This is symbolic of the bond between France and the Hanseatic City Hamburg.

Classicism was the French style throughout their 1806 to 1814 domination of Hamburg. Under French Rule, in 1811, Hamburg was designated Departmental Capital City and therefore an important political and geographical site. The inscription indicates ecumenism and affinity with all Christian churches in the city, particularly with the principal nearby Lutheran church, *Großer Michel*.

18TH CENTURY SILVER TREASURE

In 1719 a mob plundered the Imperial Embassy in Hamburg and destroyed the Ambassadors private Catholic chapel. The city was obliged to erect a new embassy complete with chapel. Numerous silver candlesticks and liturgical instruments originate from this time, as does the pendant perpetual-sanctuary-lamp in front of the tabernacle, all of which were crafted in Augsburg and Hamburg around the year 1740.



BAROQUE LITURGICAL VESTMENT

Under French occupation, the Kleiner Michel was first sequestrated for the Catholic cult in 1807. In 1811, on March 20th, a son was born to Napoléon who decreed the Church should organise celebrations throughout his empire.



THE CROSS

In 2010 the Frankfurter Jesuits donated a baroque cross of northern Italian origin, which is now on permanent loan.

MADONNA OF THE KLEINER MICHEL AND THE STATUE OF SAINT BISHOP ANSGAR

Two figures survive the destruction of World War II. In 2013, after a fateful and eventful journey, these were restored to their original condition (insofar as was possible).

These carvings are by Franz-Bernhard Schiller, done in Hamburg (*1815 in Ostritz Oberlausitz, +1857 in Hamburg). The parish purchased them in 1856.

The very type of the Madonna is unique. The Child Jesus, held in the Madonna's left arm, carries an orb of the world with the ease of a Hamburger boy holding a football. At the same time the Child stretches out his right hand, greeting the faithful coming to pray. This invitation is to all – come; pray; and entrust the weight of the world to the Divine Child – come to me all you who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you. [Matthew 11.28]



ALTAR – ST ANSGAR 'S SEPULCHRE IN HAMBURG



Since 1811 St. Ansgar has been the church's Patron Saint. He was born in 801 in Normandy and became a Benedictine Monk in Corbie Monastery.

He moved to the Corvey Monastery in 831 and was appointed Bishop in that year for a Mission North of the Elbe stretching to Sweden. St. Ansgar is at the origins of the church in Hamburg, north of the Elbe and in Scandinavia.

In 846 Vikings sacked Hamburg. The Pope then gave Ansgar the diocese of Bremen, where he died in 865. During the Reformation all his mortal remains were lost apart from those relics which had been removed from his grave earlier. Of these relics one bone from his right forearm "with which Ansgar blessed and baptised" in 1865 was placed in a shrine and donated to the *Kleiner Michel* to commemorate the 1.000th anniversary of his death. This shrine, with relic, was set into the altar made by the local artist Tom Müller. The lectern which supports the bible whilst the Word of God is proclaimed is also made from the same Swedish granite as the altar.



ICONS – HOLY IMAGES

Two pictures – the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of Perpetual Help (originally from Crete and named "Mother of God of the Passion") are situated above the stoups with Holy Water at the entrance doors. The two icons originate from the pre-2nd World War church. They were painted in the latter half of the 19th century. Written on a small metal plaque attached to the frame of the icon of Our Lady is "in the war year 1945 damaged by bombs". Clearly to be seen is a hole in the edge of the virgin's veil caused by bomb fragments.

CONFESSIONAL CHAPEL



Four neo-gothic glass windows of the 1870' were originally from the chapel of a convent for the Sisters of St. Elisabeth (Grey Sisters), which stood on the site of today's Catholic Academy. They show St. Elisabeth of Thuringia and either her husband, Ludwig of Thuringia (who was never canonized but who had had a cult lasting into the 14th century) or the Emperor Charlemagne. Two outer windows of the chapel show Mary and Joseph.

The small Cross and the Good Shepherd in the confessional are both contemporary works from the Atelier of the "Monastère Notre Dame de Mougères" in Caux / France 2011.

APOSTLE LAMPS

The plan of the church is based on the character of a Burgundian Romanesque assembly hall. Like in most catholic churches twelve apostle lamps represent the twelve apostles, who symbolise the twelve tribes of Israel.

THE ORGAN

We are looking forward to a new organ to be completed in 2018. Using the parts of the old organ from the 1950' Thomas Gaida from South-Germany is building an instrument with estimated 4.500 Flutes in combination with modern electronic music technique.

We want to provide a special contribution to the vivid scene of church music in Hamburg.

THE BELLS

Since 1959 there are 12 bronze bells in the bell tower, manufactured by the Otto foundry, Bremen with the tones e'-g'-a'-c', "St. Mary", "St. Ansgar", "St. Bernhard", "St. Michael".

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The 14 Stations of the Cross by artist Fritz Fleer (1975) invite the faithful to walk in silent prayer around the chancel. Enter through the right-hand side where the Word of God is proclaimed. The 14 Plaques are a meditation on the stations of Jesus' way from Gethsemane to the cross on Golgotha (always from the outside to the inside). They emphasize the Altar in the middle of the chancel upon which the faithful celebrate Christ's resurrection. Works from Fritz Fleer can be seen in all five Lutheran churches in the city.



CHRISTMAS STAR



From Advent until 2nd February the Star hangs from the cupola. This glass star, manufactured in the Atelier Schneemelcher, Quedlinburg, was made in 2013 out of glass panels used during restoration of the *Kleiner Michel*'s windows. The star is 1.5m in diameter.

CHRISTMAS CRIB

Sculptor Leo Ohl (1912-1979) crafted the figures. He also carved the statue of St. Joseph standing in the assembly hall.



GLASS WINDOWS

The simple style of the glass windows was the design of architect Jean-Charles Moreux in 1955. The ornamentation was executed in the Cistercian tradition taking influence from the typical Grisaille style to honour St. Bernhard under the principal: beauty is increased by reducing alternative designs, a common practice in all Cistercian monasteries.

CHARLEMAGNE IN THE FORECOURT

The bronze figure of Emperor Charlemagne (747 – 814; "Karl der Große"), with four lions, stood first downtown on the *Alter Fischmarkt*. In 1918 the original statue was melted down. In 1926 a new figure was cast based on the existing model of the original. Charlemagne stands guard looking toward the portal of the church of Bishop Ansgar (801 – 865).