

Remigius church in Hengelo, Province of Gelderland, The Netherlands

*Drawn up by the foundation "Stichting Vrienden van de Remigiuskerk Hengelo Gld."
(Friends of the Remigius Church Hengelo, Gelderland)*

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REMIGIUS CHURCH IN HENGELO, GELDERLAND

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Introduction

Daar midden in het dorpjen	(In the centre of the village
Daar staat een oude kerk	you can find this old church
Zo rustig en zo vredig	so quiet and so peaceful
Nog stevig en nog sterk	still sturdy and still strong
Zijn heldere klokkentoren	Its clear-sounding belltower
Hoort men nog elke dag	can be heard every day
'k Hoop dat ik nog vele jaren (bis)	I hope that I for many years to come (2x)
Zijn klanken horen mag.	may hear it tolling.

This second stanza of Hengelo's anthem clearly indicates the central place the Remigius Church takes in our community. Some years ago the foundation "Friends of the Remigius Church" was founded in order to contribute to the upkeep of the building, the interior and the organ. In this way we want to keep our religious and cultural heritage intact!

Within this framework all kinds of activities are organized to facilitate this and to keep the contacts among the "Friends" alive. There is a wide range of activities: exhibitions, musical evenings, etc. etc.

Each of you may become a contributor to this foundation. These "Friends" will receive a reduction in the entrance fee for these activities. Please contact Mr. P. Ebbinge (tel. 0575 464672).

The Foundation "Friends of the Remigius Church" has put together this booklet about the history of the church, the building and the organ, to be used during your visit.

1. The historical background of the Remigius Church

The first church building was most probably erected around the year 963.

In a document of 1152 the church of Hengelo is already called a parish church.

In 1207 the church of Hengelo was part of the property of the Abbey Saint Panteleon in Cologne. In that very same year the church was transferred to the monastery called Bethlehem near Doetinchem. In all probability the name Hengelo can be traced back to the founder of this abbey, the holy archbishop Bruno of Cologne. In a last will and testament this Bruno speaks about "Heingelo" (Hengelo). Saint Remigius, archbishop of Reims, was the patron saint of the church.

In 1307 AD the monastery lost Saint Panteleon and Hengelo, which became the property of count Reinald I. In his turn he transferred the church to the Knights Hospitaller (the Order of Malta).

The first church was probably a simple wooden edifice. Later a church of stone was built in the same place, which was enlarged again later on.

The chancel with a sacristy on the north side and the adjacent chapel were built around the year 1400 AD. Inside the church on the north side you may draw the conclusion from the presence of the arches that there used to be a small stone church here. In later years the nave and the tower were built, which both probably date from the middle of the fifteenth century. The church belonged to the diocese of Münster and was presumably dedicated to Saint Remigius.

2. The Church Building

The architectural style

The Remigius church is a late-gothic pseudo-basilica. The word 'pseudo' indicates that not all the characteristics of a basilica are present, e.g. a raised nave is absent.

The church has a chancel closed on three sides and a robust tower consisting of three sections with a much narrower spire.

The building is a unity of style. The most striking thing about the building is the ratio between the length of the church and the height of the tower. The nave of the church is too short.

Originally the church had no aisles, and when these were added they simply carved out the existing walls of the nave. The existent pillars clearly show that they used to be part of an ancient thick wall.

The tower and the bells

The tower dates from the middle of the fifteenth century. It is built of layers of tuff stone (this is a natural stone made up of volcanic ashes). Some years ago the tower underwent a thorough restoration. It is the highest tower of Hengelo and the surrounding area. It is 65 metres high. Nowadays the tower is the property of the municipality of Bronckhorst. There are two bells in the tower. In the bigger of the two you can find the inscription in seventeenth century Dutch: "Gedenckt den Sterfdag, wan gij hoert den clockenslag. Peter van Trier heeft mij gegoeten, 1612". (When you hear the bell tolling, think of the day of your demise. Peter van Trier has cast me, 1612). The Latin inscription in the small bell, which is also the oldest (1446) is: "Dum trahor audite voco ad gaudia vitae" (When I am being tolled, listen, because I am calling you to the joy of living). The names of Thons Yser and Gerrit van der Voerst are mentioned (both were church wardens in Zutphen) as well as that of one Aernt Doegh.

In the Second World War the smaller bell was confiscated by the Germans. After the war this bell was found again in good condition at a foundry just across the border. The German founders had considered it a real shame to melt this ancient bell and make weapons from it.

The big bell was cast in 1612 by Peter van Trier. The two bells are usually sounded simultaneously, except on Saturday nights when only the bigger of the two is sounded at sunset.

The bells still play an important part in community life. Following tradition the small bell is tolled every day at 8 a.m., at noon and at 9 p.m. The sound the bells make used to be a signal for the farmers who were cultivating their land.

The 9 p.m. bell is the so-called “porridge” bell. Around that time people used to eat a plate of porridge before turning in. In former days when the bells were tolled by hand it was the custom to make a few individual sounds with the clapper against the side of the bell when somebody had died. This preceded the actual tolling. The number of times the bell was sounded indicated whether a child, a man or a woman had died.

At present a distinction is still made between somebody who has lived and died within the built-up area of Hengelo (the bells are tolled at 10 a.m.) and somebody who used to live outside the town (the bells are tolled at 11.30 a.m.).

The “meisterbänksken” (schoolmaster’s bench)

In front of the church on the right hand side of the main entrance you can find the “meistersbänksken”. After the service on Sunday mornings, while standing on this bench, the schoolmaster used to read out loud what local news there was and he also mentioned a number of advertisements. For this ‘work’ he was paid in kind, he was given the “meistersgarve” (schoolmaster’s sheaf). The bench you find here is only twenty or thirty years old. It was given as a present and is kept in a good state of repair by the “Hengelose Auto- en Motorrijdersvereniging Hamove” (The Hengelo car and motorbikeclub Hamove).

Above the main entrance there are four heads: two with sad faces and two with happy faces. They stand for the sorrows and the joys of life, but also for the distinction between rich and poor. This contrast between rich and poor is also to be found in the way in which the pews and the benches in the church itself have been arranged. We come back to this subject later on in this leaflet.

The door in the north aisle is known by the name of “schooldeur” (schooldoor), because the school used to be situated right across the street.

Behind the next door on the north side of the church you can find the vestry, built around the year 1400 AD.

On the north-east side of the church (on the Spalstraat) in later years the main entrance was made, but some twenty-five years ago this entrance was walled up again in order to restore the church to its original state.

3. The interior of the building

The porch

The rooms on the left and the right are used by the Protestant community. The one on the left is the vestry and the other one is used as a nursery during services.

Years ago the deacons held sessions in this room when the farmers came round to pay their rent. The parish owned a lot of farmland, which were leased out to farmers. Payment was made in kind by handing over 10% of the rye or buckwheat harvest.

The pews

When you walk into the church the special way in which the pews have been placed will immediately strike you. It is an arrangement typical of the Reformation: the Word of God takes a central place.

Until a few decades ago the pews were rented out. The nobility had seats in a prominent place opposite the pulpit. Well-to-do citizens had spacious seats right at the front. The day-labourers (mostly poor people) had to make do with the so-called “boekweithoek” (Buckwheat corner) and the “rikhoek” (rack corner) between the tower and the door on the north side. They did not sit in pews but on backless beams. This word (“rikhoek”) comes from the word “rik” or “rek” (= rack) where the chickens roost. Even now the pews at the back are narrower than the pews at the front of the church.

The chandeliers

The chandeliers date from the 17th and 18th centuries. The one in the middle dates from the seventeenth century and has two rows of eight branches. The other two date from the eighteenth century and have two rows of six branches each.

The organ

The first organ dates from the eighteenth century, but the instrument did not function satisfactorily. That's why in 1894 it was decided to commission Jan Proper from Kampen to build a new mechanical organ. He made use of various kinds of older pipes.

In 1975 the organ builders Hendriksen and Reitsma from the town of Nunspeet were commissioned to carry out the necessary repairs and to add a group of eight registers, among others an independent pedal.

The organ is a mechanical-action slider chest organ with an air reservoir.

The instrument in this church was put on the list of national monuments, because this organ may be seen as a good example of end nineteenth century organ-building, and because there are very few examples of the work of Mr. Proper.

The pulpit

The pulpit dates from the seventeenth century. It is not round but hexagonal and has rounded panels. It is made of oak. The base of the pulpit and the sounding board are not old. On the pulpit there is still a very old bible (a States Bible) printed in 1714.

The baptismal font

The ancient font from Roman times is presently in the “Twente” museum in Enschede (alas!). The font you see here is from more recent times. The tin basin dates from 1880.

The offertory-boxes

In the south aisle behind the table at which the Lord's Supper is celebrated you will find a few ancient wooden offertory-boxes. These were fastened to the floor a long time ago to prevent theft.

The wall paintings with the apostles

In 1911 at various places in the church wall paintings were discovered under the coat of plaster, which were restored only in 1930. In all probability the murals were made in the fourteenth century by monks living in this region, presumably from the monastery 'Bethlehem' in the town of Doetinchem.

Around the year 1600 the murals were covered by a coat of plaster, most likely as a consequence of the reformation.

On the north wall of the choir the figures are facing one another. The robes undulate in wide folds.

The identification of the apostles on the basis of their attributes and the separate articles of the Apostles' Creed on the 'ribbons' causes some problems. The saints stand in the following order: Peter, Paul, Andrew, John, James the Greater, Thomas, James the Less, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon the Zealot and Jude Thaddeus.

It is quite remarkable that Paul as the second figure recites the end of the credo and that John and James the Less are represented as the fourth and fifth figures respectively. This is not the usual order, so in all likelihood there was not a firmly established tradition with regard to the order in which the apostles should be represented. Matthias is absent, but in accordance with the official canon Paul was put between Peter and Andrew. He has taken along Matthias' text, owing to which the order of the Apostles' Creed is upset. We can see that the artist has made a mistake as regards the order in which James and John should have been represented, but this may probably have been due to the fact that he had to work from models which, considering the many variations in the order of the apostles, may very easily have given rise to misunderstandings.

A representation of the Deesis (= in Byzantine art, a traditional representation of Christ enthroned, flanked by Mary and John the Baptist, and sometimes angels) is absent.

As far as content is concerned the message of the murals (i.e. the apostles who by means of the Apostles' Creed give testimony of the essence of their faith and by doing so clearly base themselves on the core of the Old Testament) was presumably considered to be sufficient.

The representations of the twelve apostles have been painted in four groups spread out over the surface of the walls: five on the north wall, twice two between the windows of the apse, and three on the south wall.

All the apostles are standing beneath canopies.

Group 1: Peter, Paul, Andrew, John and James the Greater

Group 2: Thomas and James the Less

Group 3: Philip and Bartholomew

Group 4: Matthew, Simon the Zealot and Jude Taddeus

Group 1:

Each of them carries in his hand an attribute that is characteristic for him and a ribbon on which an article of the Apostles' Creed is to be found.

<u>Apostle</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Text ribbon</u>
Peter	Key and book	I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth
Paul	The sword, because he perished by the sword	Life everlasting
Andrew, Peter's brother	The X-shaped cross. He is supposed to have died a martyr's death	And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord
John	The chalice, from which a snake raises its head near his left hand, while his right is making the sign of the cross over the chalice, as a reminder of the poisoned wine he was once offered	Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried
James the Greater, John's brother	Presumably a pilgrim's staff and a pitcher	Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary

Group 2:

Canopy: A big building of three floors, similar to the Ark, as it used to be symbolised in Romanesque murals, but here in Gothic shapes with the addition of pinnacles.

Thomas	The lance. According to a legend he died a martyr's death stabbed with a lance or spear, after having been shot at with arrows from all sides	Descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead
James the Less	A fuller's pounder or staff. He is said to have been thrown from a temple wall and afterwards beaten to death with a pounder	He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty

Group 3

Canopy: A big church building with many spires

Philip	The staff in the shape of a cross, signifying that he preached the 'Saviour' who was crucified	From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
Bartholomew	The knife. He is supposed to have been skinned alive.	I believe in the Holy Ghost

Group 4

Canopy: Over each apostle a separate canopy

Matthew	The sword. Some say that he was killed with a sword, others say that he died a natural death.	A holy, catholic church
Simon the Zealot	The spear. He is also sometimes represented with a saw in his hand, because according to a legend he was sawn in two.	The Communion of Saints
Jude Thaddeus	Probably a halberd, a battle-axe with a long spike.	The Resurrection of the body

In the 14th and 15th centuries wall paintings played an important part in the preaching of the faith. The priests in the diocese of Utrecht were repeatedly instructed by the church authorities that on Sundays in the course of the service they were expected to explain the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Apart from that they had to tell the congregation once a month or at least three to four times a year what the Ten Commandments and the sacraments signified. The murals could then be a good visual help and they could also serve as a permanent reminder for the worshippers.

It is a message which also in the time of the Reformation lost nothing of its meaning: However, in the Netherlands the apostles and the prophets are replaced by the texts of the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed. The written word replaced the representation. The legends of the apostles who had formulated their beliefs so powerfully, were no longer depicted, but the function of religious instruction remained intact.

To the left of the choir you can see two more wall paintings

Group 5

The Three Wise Men worship Jesus Christ

The mural shows the mother Mary with the baby Jesus Christ, who is worshipped by the Three Wise Men (Kings). The large feet of the wise men are symbolic for their long journey. As was customary in those days the kings are portrayed as knights.

Group 6

On the left you see a representation of Saint Margaret, martyr, who defeats the dragon. On the right you see Saint Brigitta, patroness against toothache, who has a pair of pincers in her hand.

At the back of the church in a niche you will find the former communion set of the church (wine jug and plate). It is private property.
