

# ROMANIC CHURCH



SAINT-PREX

Today's Protestant church of Saint-Prex is the 6<sup>th</sup> church built on this site. Its main parts were built between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century.

On the outside you can see a square belfry with porch whose spire was built in the 18th century. The main entrance, built in 1663, shows two markings and the initials "HR" and "PS" whose origins are unknown. They might be stonemasons' "signatures". The three bells of the belfry toll in C sharp, B flat and F sharp minor.

On the north and the east side of the church, which is built on an even place, there lies the village graveyard; The view on the medieval village, the lake and the alps you have from this point is breathtaking.

On the south side of the church, on your left-hand side when going downwards, a chart offers information about the construction of the different churches from the 10th to the 15th century.

The interior of the church is dark, almost austere. Yet after a few minutes, when the eye has adapted to the dim light, the atmosphere becomes brighter.

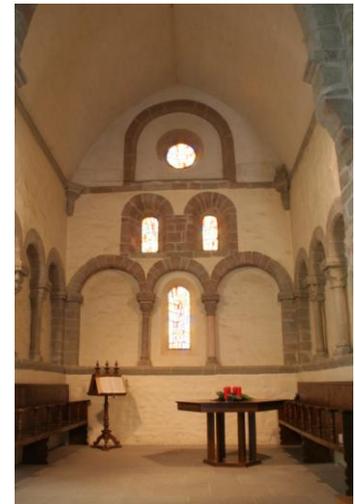


The rectangular nave is 12,5 m long, has high windows and a painted wooden ceiling. A similar example of this kind of ceiling (paleochristian basilica ceilings) can be found in Etoy. The southern aisle, built during the construction of the 5<sup>th</sup> church, has now disappeared. The remarkable western interior porch with its wonderful vault of pointed arches – architecturally echoing the choir – harmonically frames the organ fit in in 1983. This is the narthex measuring 4,5 m. The nave is lit by three windows, all of which are placed near the points of the arches of the arcades of the northern wall. The windows are 1,7 m high and 0,8 m wide.

The square choir of the church, which is 7 m long and reaches a maximum height of 9 m, occupies half the nave. The three sides of the apse form an elegant, windowless arcature whose arches are supported by simple pillars and little columns with cylindrical or polygonal shafts that have artfully crafted bases and capitals.

The choir and the nave are separated by a very beautiful triumphal arch – a pointed arch - taking up the structure of the apse.

The capitals are decorated with volutes, leaves, dentils and, on top, with shells.



Square choirs emerged in the high middle ages due to the influence of Cistercian architecture, an early example of which is Bonmont Abbey near Nyon (Chésereux), built in 1131.

The windows of the choir, fitted in during the last restoration in 1978, were created by the artist Bodjol: warm, bright colours symbolically represent the wine and the bread of the Last Supper. The original order of the windows of the apse has been re-established.

On the window of the southern entrance you can read psalm 119/105 and see a burning lamp; these two elements were added in the 19<sup>th</sup> or at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The window on the northern wall, next to the entrance to the choir, shows the houses of Saint-Prex (the medieval village which was an island in the middle ages). It dates back to 1896 and is signed Hösch.

The furnishings: The choir stalls and the stalls at the northern entrance date back to the year 1704. The furnishings are simple, rustic, without embellishments.



The gold-plated chandeliers with little angels have been preserved, their glass lampshades renewed. The choir has a stone floor, clay tiles have been laid in the nave.

The lid of a monumental pulpit is used as an altar. It dates back to 1663 and is decorated with artfully crafted figurines. The original pulpit was replaced by a simple ambo in 1978.

The ambo, the font, the offertory boxes and the chandeliers made of sandstone or wood were crafted by local artists during the last restoration of the church in 1978. The mural paintings, partially destroyed during the centuries, have nevertheless been restored. It is not recognisable any more what they depict.

The organ was fit in in 1983 by J-F Mignot from Lausanne. It has 13 stops, 826 pipes and 2 manuals. It is placed on a small gallery and thus enhances the beauty of the pointed arch separating the narthex from the nave. The gallery can be reached by an electrical, retractable ladder.

The romanic church on the hill in Saint-Prex has been a place of regular encounters of the most different people: pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela, tourists and people of any age who want to worship god. Of course, the interest in this age-old building that shows the imprints of many generations, must not be forgotten. Since the Reformation in 1536 the church has been Protestant and belongs to the parish of Saint-Prex – Lussy – Vufflens which is part of the Evangelic-Protestant Church of the canton of Waadt.



Dear visitors, dear readers, from this place of spirituality we wish you a pleasant stay in Saint-Prex.  
Jean-Paul. Zoëll, lic.Theol.

This short description of the romanic church in Saint-Prex is based on the book « L'église de Saint-Prex, histoire et archéologie » (available in the tourist office, Place de l'Horloge) and the periodical « Cahiers d'archéologie romande n° 55 », Bibliothèque historique vaudoise, Lausanne, 1992, p 239.