Dear guests,

We welcome you to this house of God and are happy that you are taking the time to appreciate the church and its works of art. We invite you to take your time, appreciate the atmosphere, and sense the faith which has found its expression in the works of art.

To accompany you on your way through this church, we have drawn up this document. We kindly request you to put it back at the end of your visit, so that the following guest will have the same help.

History of the Frauenkirche

In the Middle Ages, the free imperial city of Nürnberg (Nuremberg) consisted of two parts, one settlement around the Church of St. Sebaldus in the north and one around St. Lorenz in the south. The two sections of the city were separated from each other by the Pegnitz.

In the 12th century, a Jewish quarter with a synagogue developed on this spot, where the Marktplatz (market square) and the Frauenkirche are located today. When the two sections of the city were combined by a common wall, this square became the centre of the city and thus assumed central importance. The city council of Nürnberg wanted to erect a large market place here and requested permission to do so from Charles IV, the monarch at the time.

As the ruler, Charles had a duty to care for the Jewish citizens of his empire. However, because his position as monarch was in question and not at all secure, he caused the cities in his empire to persecute their Jews. He received possession of the Jewish fortunes, and rewarded his followers to ensure their support for himself.

Nürnberg's wish for a central market place came to him during this time. He gave the residents of Nürnberg, who until then had been friendly to the Jews, the permission - if not the order - to drive our their Jews. This led to a terrible pogrom in December, 1349, in which at least 562 Jews were burned to death.

At the same time that he gave permission to tear down the Jewish quarter with the so called Market Document, Charles IV also decreed that a church dedicated to Mary should be erected in place of the Jewish synagogue. This church, founded by Charles IV in the year 1355, served not only a religious but also a political purpose.

In order to be accepted as ruler through the grace of God, it was necessary to be in possession of the so called Crown Jewels. After being elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1356, Charles IV wanted to store these symbols of his power in the centre of the Empire, in Nürnberg. The Crown Jewels (= the Imperial Insignia: the Emperor’s Crown, the Imperial Orb, Cloak, Sceptre and the Imperial Reliquaries: the Holy Lance and the Holy Nail, etc.) were supposed to be stored in the Church of our Lady, which had been founded for that purpose.

This did not happen, most likely due to the Emperor’s security concerns. He had them brought to Karlstein Castle, near Prague. As you will find out later, the layout of the church was nevertheless shaped by the thought of being a holy shrine for the Crown Jewels. This design could not be altered, because the construction of the church was already in full swing.

The Crown Jewels first came to Nürnberg again under Emperor Sigismund in 1423, and were stored in the Church of the Holy Spirit. In 1796 they were brought to Regensburg and then to Vienna, so that Napoleon would not be able to seize them. During World War II, Hitler had them stored in Nürnberg again for a short time. Today they are once again located in the Hofburg (Imperial Palace) in Vienna.

The Frauenkirche became Lutheran in the year 1525, after Nürnberg converted to Protestantism during the Reformation. The church was turned into a preaching church with galleries on the side walls. Nürnberg became part of the new Kingdom of Bavaria in the year 1806, and for the first time in their history the citizens had religious freedom. In 1810 the Catholic congregation purchased the Frauenkirche from the Lutheran. The church had been left bare after the Reformation and secularisation, so pieces o art were purchased from torn down monasteries and convents in Nürnberg. The first catholic mass could then be celebrated in this church in 1816.

The Frauenkirche was heavily damaged by the bombing raids of 1945. Only the west facade with the entrance and the choir above it, the old sacristy on the south side, and the northern and southern
outer walls stayed intact. The artwork had been stored in the so called art bunker underneath the castle and was therefore undamaged.

**The church was completely renovated from 1983 to 1991.** At that time the entire choir was redesigned according to the guidelines of the second Vatican Council: the altar was moved forward and now connects the nave to the choir in an ideal manner. The altar, symbol for Christ, should stand in the middle of the events of the service and make Christ's presence in the mass clear. The bottom portion of the side altar was also redone and a modern tabernacle was created. This tabernacle is reminiscent of a Torah scroll, the holy scripture of Judaism, and is intended to make the close connection between Judaism and Christianity clear. At the same time it emphasizes the meaning of the word of God. In addition it also reminds us of the synagogue that once stood here.

In the southern side nave you can see a **Klais-Orga**n, which was also built during the renovations. It includes 3052 pipes and 42 registers. A fresco from the 14th century was uncovered in the northern side nave, although to this day it has not been able to be deciphered.

**The Room**

The church was probably constructed from 1350 to 1358 by **Peter Parler**, who was the Master Cathedral Builder of Charles IV and had completed the Veits Cathedral in Prague. The layout was designed with the thought of storing the Crown Jewels here.

The classical Gothic design draws the eyes of the observer both up and forward towards the altar space. This sense of space is enhanced because of its harmonious dimensions. On one hand this is brought forth because the side naves are as tall as the middle nave (making this the first so-called hall church in Franconia!). On the other hand the entire nave stands on a nearly square ground plan that has middle. This middle lies between the four columns, and this is exactly where the Crown Jewels were supposed to be kept in a shrine. Because there were no pews in medieval times, the layout allowed a procession around the shrine.

Thus the room has what one might call a "storage feel" to it; at the same time its tranquillity also corresponds to a religious longing of time, of resting in God.

The **Michaelschor** (Michael's Choir) is located above the entrance hall. It was supposed to be at the Emperor's disposal as a sort of "royal box" and make it possible for him to take part in services in seclusion. The choir is named after the archangel Michael, who was the patron saint of the Ruler and the Empire.

The outer facades are also in accordance with the concept behind this church. The western facade (outside) was supposed to serve as a monstrance or exhibition stage for the display of the Crown Jewels. The balcony, which was surely originally planned to be larger, was supposed to make this possible.

**The Artwork**

**The Tucheralter in the east choir:**

This altar, created by an unknown Master around 1445, is the most important example of panel painting in Nürnberg before Albrecht Dürer. It was created as the high altar for the Augustinian Monastery of St. Veit, which was torn down in 1816. On the front side, from the left: St. Augustine speaking with his mother, St. Monica, the Annunciation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, St. Paul the hermit and St. Anthony.

With its gold ground and its vividly portrayed figures, this painting illustrates the transition from the Middle Ages to modern history.

The **Strahlenkranzman** (literally, a Madonna with light radiating in a circle), from the year 1440, is located above the altar. Two angels are holding a crown above her head.

Directly above the crown, in the middle window, you can see three panes of stained glass next to one another. These are the original panes of the **Kaiserfenster** (Emperor Window). Charles IV had it created for the Frauenkirche, and they are the oldest pieces of stained glass in Nürnberg. To the left is St. Paul with the sword, in the middle is Maria with the Christ Child and to the right is St. Christopher. The other windows were donations from Patrician families in Nürnberg during the 16th and 17th centuries.
The life sized figures in the choir: On the left, the three wise men are approaching the mother of God; at the end of the choir to the left, next to the Strahlenkranzmadonna, is John the Baptist; to the right of the Madonna is Christ; the next statue to the right is probably St. Ludmilla, Duchess of Bohemia and grandmother of the next figure, St. Wenzel, the national hero of Bohemia.

To the right and left of the windows you see 18 angels with candlesticks from the Veit Stoß school, approximately 1510.

On the north side, with the main entrance on your left, you can see the following pieces (from the rear of the church towards the front):

The Pergenstorfer Epitaph with Maria (An epitaph is a memorial plaque for somebody who has passed away.) This sandstone epitaph was donated by the Pergenstorfer family to the Augustinian monastery, which was torn down in 1816. Adam Kraft created this work around 1498. It shows Maria as a protector of Christianity; on the left, under her coat, are religious and secular dignitaries. Members of the donating family can be seen on the right.

On the Altar of Maria you see a Madonna with the Christ child from about 1480.

Next to that is a painting from around 1520, the Holy Family: Maria with the baby Jesus in her lap, next to her is her mother Anna, and their respective husbands, Joseph and Joachim. There are also three small angels playing.

Another epitaph by Adam Kraft is located in the transition from the nave to the choir, the Epitaph of the family Rebeck with the Crowning of Mary. It was made around the year 1500 and shows Maria being crowned by God the Father and God the Son.

You may have noticed the curved paintings on two columns. These are also epitaphs. To the left is the Resurrection of Christ (about 1440, artist unknown). On the right is an epitaph to the royal chef, Michael Raffael. (In the left of the picture, with the armour.) This was probably created around the year 1489 by Michael Wolgemut. There are two depictions of the archangel Michael here. On the left he is slaying a dragon, and on the right he is judging souls using a scale.

If you look back to the entrance hall, you will see a tympanum above the entrance. It shows Christ carrying the cross in the upper part, and his Interment in the lower.

The Entrance Hall

This entrance hall survived the destruction of the war in 1945. The ornamental figures, from the construction period around 1360, correspond to the patronage to Mary: in the lower left of the tympanum above the portal is the birth of Jesus; above that is the proclamation of the angels to the Shepard’s; the three wise men from the east are worshipping on the lower right; and above them is a portrayal of Jesus in the temple. In the arches, a number of figures - Kings from the Old Testament, prophets, and saints - are calling attention to the coming Messiah.

Das Männleinlaufen

At the stroke of 12 noon, the seven nobles (the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier, the King of Bohemia, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg and the Count Palantine on the Rhine) appear and show their reverence to the Emperor.

This is reminiscent of the Golden Bull of Emperor Charles IV, in the year 1356, which decreed that each newly elected King or Emperor had to spend his first day in office in Nürnberg.

The decorative gable, from 1509, is the last work of Adam Kraft; already showing signs of death, he created it with his last bit of energy.