

Standing on a hill jutting out over the river Neckar, St. Laurentius is a landmark that dominates the town of Nürtingen. Dedicated to St. Laurentius (St. Lawrence), the original church was probably built in the 10th or 11th century. Excavations underneath the choir showed the walls of a previous building that cannot be precisely dated. In 1138, the Chronicle of the monastery of Zwiefalten mentions a priest in Nürtingen; in 1269, a priest uses a seal showing St. Laurentius.

St. Laurentius (St. Lawrence)

Laurentius was a deacon under Pope Sixtus II. The emperor Valerian, who persecuted the church, had the Pope executed in 258 AD and then ordered Laurentius to hand over the church treasure. When Laurentius presented the poor and sick as the treasure of the church, the enraged emperor had him roasted on a grid.

After the victory of Otto the Great over the Hungarians in the battle on the Lechfeld (955), which took place on 10 August, the feast day of St. Laurentius, many new churches were dedicated to this saint.

In the 13th century patronage of the church passed to the counts of Württemberg. They lost it for a short period, when in **1286** king Rudolf of Habsburg, in league with the duke of Teck, seized the **fortified cemetery** of the parish church.

History of the construction of the church

The present **late Gothic hall church** was built in the last third of the 15th century. To make room for the building, the cemetery was removed outside the town walls in 1455, next to the new Kreuzkirche. First, the **tower** was erected around **1470**. **Ten years later**, Hans Buß **built the choir** with its ribbed vaulting. Finally, replacing a more narrow single nave, the new **nave with two side aisles** was inserted between the choir and tower; this was intended to be vaulted, but there was only a wooden beam ceiling until the late 19th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries, three small towers with a **winding staircase** were added

to give access to the galleries and the tower; the south-western one was designed by Heinrich Schickhardt.

For several centuries, St. Laurentius was not only the parish church, but also the **castle chapel** of the princes of Württemberg. A covered passage led from the castle to the princes' lodge on the western gallery. From 1421 to 1698, six princes' widows resided in the castle, among them the Countess Henriette of Mömpelgard, the Duchess Elisabeth of Brandenburg and the widows of the Dukes Ulrich and Christoph. The longest residence was that of the Duchess Ursula (1593 - 1635).

The two keystones in the choir vaulting with the Württemberg and Brandenburg coats of arms, epitaphs of high-standing courtiers, valuable communion chalices and the embroidered altar cloth of the duchesses (exhibited in the town museum) bear witness to this period.

After falling into disrepair, the castle was demolished after 1765.



The choir

In the ribbed choir vaulting, the original Gothic decoration with flame and flower motifs was restored in 1968. The five **keystones** show, from west to east:

- * the head of Christ
- * a red eagle on a white field, the coat of arms of Elisabeth of Brandenburg, wife of the count/duke Eberhard VI/the younger
- * St. Laurentius with the Gospel, martyr's palm leaf and grid
- * the coat of arms of Count Eberhard VI, who lived in Nürtingen 1485-90
- * the crowned Mary giving the Christ child an apple (the symbol of sin)

In 1969, new **choir windows** showing the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the martyrdom of St. Laurentius were created by Gerhard and Gisela Dreher from Weilheim.

The somewhat mysterious symbols on the round-arch south door are usually interpreted as attributes of saints. Three probably over 200-year-old **cupboard doors** on the Eastern wall of the choir show paintings that depict the birth, entombment and ascension of Christ.

On the outer wall of the vestry is a **fresco** showing the risen Christ with Mary and John and the saints Catherine and Barbara.

The nave and side aisles

One of the treasures of the church is the **wrought-iron choir screen**, which was made by the local ornamental ironworker Bernhard Kaiser in 1624; the crucifix is a work of Simon Schweitzer (of Balingen). On the front and back of the upper transom are two related verses from the Old and New Testament:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in **him** should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)

and

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon **him**; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

<The cross stands above the two "him".>

The six medallions below the transom also show contrasting pictures from the Old and New Testament:

- * John the Baptist
- * The Lamb of God with victory banner
- * The sacrifice of Isaac
- * The rescue of the prophet Jonah from the fish's belly
- * The bronze snake
- * Moses with the tablets of the Law

The new Gothic **pulpit** with the four evangelists, the **altar** and the **baptismal font** all date from the late 19th century, and the **lid of the font** from 1550.

In 1516 Conrad Weiß (of Rottweil) created a Lady triptych (the "**Nürtingen altar**"), which was given to the King of Württemberg in 1841 on his 25th coronation anniversary. In the north-east corner of the nave hangs a copy of the wing showing the birth of Christ.

For centuries, local nobility, clergymen and courtiers were buried in the church. We know of several dozen **epitaphs**, of which ten from the 16th and 17th centuries are still present. Next to the pulpit is the tombstone of Johannes von Sperberseck and his wife Sibylla (1556), the others are underneath the gallery, and in the vestibule below the tower.

Near the gallery the walls are decorated with **figurines** from an earlier baroque organ case (about 1725).

The tower

After the Gothic spire was destroyed by lightning in 1572, the tower was extended by an additional floor with rooms for the tower keeper (occupied until 1947) and the present cupola. The tower "**vault**" on the second floor once housed the treasure chest of the town and its rich hospital. Today it is the "**tower library**" with valuable books belonging to the church, the former grammar school and the former hospital.

In the **bell cage** hang five bells, three (G - A - D) dating to 1948, one (C) from 1622 and, especially valuable, the oldest one (E) from 1493, formerly in the possession of Blaubeuren monastery, which was to be melted down but was bought by the citizens of Nürtingen.

The tower is crowned by a small lantern with the little "ten o'clock bell", which even today invites people every evening to stop working - and drinking in the pubs.

On 15 April 2000, on the eve of Palm Sunday, a devastating **fire** destroyed the organ, which had been built in the 1970s. Several **mural paintings**, which had been uncovered only in 1968, were covered with so much soot that they had to be "reversibly" painted over, leaving only one fragment which shows a group of gossips or possibly beguines.



After extensive renovation, the church was reopened on 21 October 2001. On 3 October 2004 the **new Goll organ** with three manuals, 42 stops and 2905 pipes was consecrated.

The beauty of this church is a fitting scene for the **spiritual life of the congregation**. Services are on Sundays at 10 a.m. You are most welcome to join us.

Objects that used to be in St. Laurentius and are today on display in other locations:

The embroidered altar cloth of the duchesses (about 1580), communion chalices and a baroque angel (on loan to the municipal museum of Nürtingen)

The "Nürtingen altar" (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart)

Pulpit canopy (1620) (St. Martin's Church, Neuffen)

The "Blood Bible of Nürtingen" (with blood traces of Pastor Wölfli, who was killed by soldiers during the 30 Years' War) (Landesbibliothek Stuttgart)

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Rediscover

a House

of Faith

The Parish Church

St. Laurentius

in Nürtingen

