

A MONUMENT FULL OF LIFE



Built in the second half of the 13th century, the Hospital of the Holy Spirit in Lübeck is one of the oldest social institutions in Europe. Wealthy Lübeck merchants and the city council established a hospice for the sick and needy, out of compassion but also out of concern for their own salvation. Even today, parts of the building, constructed in the North German Brick Gothic style, are used as a municipal senior citizens' facility.

The medieval foundation has been preserved to this day as a public foundation. It forms the basis for the expansion and maintenance of the hospital.



The three-aisled hall church contains, among other things, valuable wall paintings from around 1300 with the faces of the benefactors, wood-carved figures of saints and altars, as well as 23 paintings on the rood screen depicting scenes from the life of Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia.

Adjoining the church hall is the long hospital hall, the nave. Here, after the building's completion, elderly and sick people found accommodation and care. Initially, the beds in the nave stood side by side without partitions. Around 1820, the wooden cubicles, the "cabins," were built.



Separated by gender, people then lived in 6 square meters of space. There was room for a bed, a chair, and a small wardrobe. Upon moving into the Hospital of the Holy Spirit in the Middle Ages, the residents pledged themselves to a life of poverty, obedience, and chastity, and promised to give alms seven times a day for the pious founders to pray. In return, they received a roof over their heads, food, and since the 17th century, a warm bath eight times a year.



The names of the former residents and the date they moved in can still be seen on the doors of the cubicles. A pharmacy and a small library were available for the residents' needs. The last residents moved from the cubicles to modern senior living facilities in 1970.

Impressions from everyday life



Private life in about
6 square meters

Community in
the corridors of
the hospital



Men meet in the
common room

Christmas arts and crafts market in a historic building

Since 1968, the arts and crafts Christmas market, organized on a voluntary basis by the Association of Women and Culture, has been a guest at the Hospital of the Holy Spirit, initially only in the church hall, then later also in the nave with the cubicles and in the vault.

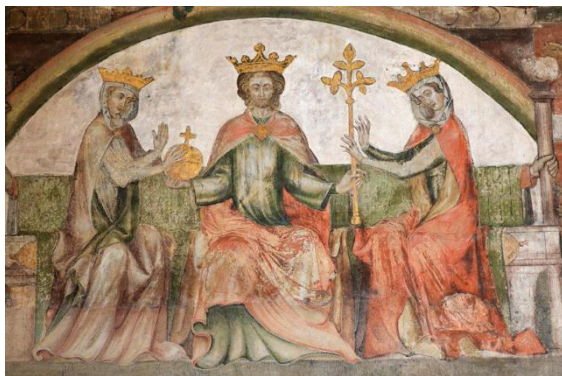


Handicrafts from about 90 selected artists can be found in the church hall, in the cabins of the nave and in the vault.



Every year, the Association of Women and Culture uses the proceeds from the Christmas market to support various cultural and social projects. Over the past two years, around €70,000 has been donated each year.

Contributions have also been made on occasion to the preservation of the historical artworks of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit. For example, in the 1990s, the extensive restoration of the murals on the north wall of the church hall was supported.



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The Hospital of the Holy Spirit

- 1227** The Hospital of the Holy Spirit is founded in Lübeck. It is located at the corner of Pferdemarkt/Marlesgrube.
- 1263** Bishop Johannes III (of Traulau) confirms “the rules of the order which mean that the monks and nuns of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit have to take an oath of chastity, poverty and obedience towards the head of the Hospital and have to wear the robes of the order, white or grey wool as shorn from sheep”.
- 1276** After a big fire in the city, space becomes available for a new building at Koberg (Cow Hill), but the construction work probably started even before this date.
- 1286** Completion of the new building (the church and the hall to the nursing home) at Koberg
- 1300** Construction of the rood screen in the church, supported by six pillars
- 1350** Construction of the cloister
- 1495** Addition of the star-studded vault in the central nave of the church. This simply intersects the upper part of the windows of the western facade and divides the murals on the eastern wall.
- 1517/18** The character of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit changes so that it becomes an old people’s home which is entirely secular. The administration of the institution and the assets of the foundation had always been in the hands of the two most senior of the city’s mayors who act as the chairmen of the foundation. In 1602 the council also appoints four co-chairmen who are ordinary citizens.
- 1806** Cessation of public services in the church
- 1820** The beds which were previously in rows of four in the long hospital hall, the nave, are removed and replaced by the wooden chambers which are still there today.
- 1939** The Council of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck takes on responsibility for the administration of the foundation. This means that the foundation loses its high degree of independence and autonomy.
- 1964** The Senate of Lübeck decides that no further patients are admitted to the Hospital of the Holy Spirit. Until then it had accommodated 170 old people. In addition to the chambers in Langhaus there were single rooms in the gabled houses at Koberg and in Schrankhaus and Kammerhaus.
- 1970** The remaining residents of the old people’s home are moved to the old people’s home and nursing home, Dombreite or Kleine Burgstraße.
- 1973** Reconstruction work commences on the Hospital of the Holy Spirit.
- 1976** The reconstruction work is completed. Since then a maximum of 85 people have been accommodated in single rooms and a few in twin-bed rooms outside Langhaus. For the first time, the old people’s home is let to the city council which now runs it.
- 2001** Many areas are converted into a modern old people’s home and nursing home.