



The Grace Church

Tree is rich with many signs and symbols of the Easter faith of God's New Creation. At first, its breadth and lushness suggests the great, sheltering

tree that began with a tiny seed whose growth comes from faith in God.

Peter refers to Jesus's 'death on a tree' in Acts 5.30, and his listeners, familiar with Deut. 21.22-23, would have been reminded that such deaths were cursed. The Gospel story with its stunning Easter morning surprise, reveals that Jesus's death is a reversal of that curse, and God's renewal of Creation. The New Testament writers and the early church fathers used these paired and reversed symbols to illustrate the hope for humans. And that takes us back to the originary scene at the Tree of Life found in the Garden of Eden.

This Tree of Life is also referred to in Revelation 22.2 where the use of symmetries suggest another "reversal"—an undoing of what Adam got wrong. This Good News of a new beginning for human beings is suggested by referring to Jesus as the new Adam, pairing the Garden of Eden (Adam's will) and the Garden of Gethsemane ("Thy will") for example.

The lushness of our tree also suggests the abundant life of this new beginning for humans which was opened up in Jesus'

forgiveness-soaked resurrection. Jesus said that “the tree is known by its fruit” (Mt.12.33). His Eucharistic instructions tell us that the fruit of the resurrection tree is now to be eaten, precisely because it is no longer inside an enclosed garden, but outside any walls, and *this* Tree of Life is growing in the unenclosed fields of Grace, in the fields of South Berkshire County.

The tree is based on the image of perhaps the oldest tree on Route 7, not too far from our worship space at Crissey Farm near the Price Chopper shopping center. It is a very large sycamore tree, to which we, with creative license, have added the leaves of the Middle Eastern sycamore tree—the tree climbed by Zaccheus in ancient Jericho in order to get a better look at Jesus. When Zaccheus, warts and all, came down at Jesus’s invitation, he was on his way to dine with Christ, the author of his abundant new life.

Whether you are hungry for the fruit of the Tree of Life or whether you are trying to get a better look of someone who loves you ‘anyway’, step into Grace where strangers become friends. We are an Open and Affirming church. Every one of every age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental ability, or economic status is invited to join us as together we live out the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, service, and justice. No matter where you are in your spiritual journey—you are welcome here.