

Over the years, the Christmas tree has become a symbol of Christ as the "tree of life." Through the birth of Jesus, believers have been given God's gifts of life, light and wisdom.

The use of Chrismons to decorate Christmas trees is popular in many churches today. Chrismons were first developed in 1957 by Frances Kipps Spencer of Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Va. In an effort to create appropriate decorations for her church Christmas tree, Spencer fashioned centuries-old symbols into white and gold tree decorations.

"Chrismon" is a combination of the words "Christ" and "monogram," and means "symbols of Christ." Chrismons are gold and white, representing majesty and purity. Ideas for fashioning them are developed from early Christian symbols, the Bible and church histories.

Although Chrismons have been used in the United States since 1957, many symbols of Christianity have come down to us through the ages. Early Christians often worshipped in secret to avoid possible persecution and death. They developed certain symbols that were used to communicate with fellow believers and direct Christians to secret places of worship. Symbols that signified the believers' faith often adorned doors and buildings, and were included on items such as jewelry and household utensils.

Spencer's Chrismons and similar designs are now used on Chrismon trees in churches of different denominations throughout the country. The lighting of the Chrismon tree often is incorporated with the hanging of the greens in some churches.