

## 150 Years Abiding in Christ – The Logo

Since the end of January, you have seen the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo and theme verse on the front of the bulletin, as well as on our website and Facebook page. Recently I was asked about how the theme verse was chosen and the logo developed (the meaning behind it). In the January article I mentioned that as we contemplated a theme for our 150th anniversary, considering our namesake, a verse from the Gospel of John seemed fitting. And the Word of our Lord from John 15:5 seemed particularly fitting and encouraging: *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Our Lord and Creator is THE source of Life, (the Tree of Life) the only true source of life, not only physical life, but especially spiritual and eternal life. The very meaning of our existence is to be connected to, be in a relationship with the Lord our Creator/the Vine. To be separated from that Vine, from the Lord of Life is death – physical, spiritual, and eternal. And tragically, that is exactly the condition each of us was born into in this fallen world – cut off from our Lord in sinful guilt and thus lifeless, fruitless, dead.

But our loving Lord already had in mind from before creation how He would save us from such guilt and death and reconnect us to Him and thus have Life flow back into us and through us. And it is during this Lenten season that we are especially reminded how God sent the Promised Seed of the woman, His own dear Son as our substitute under His Law and justice. Jesus gave His innocent life upon the Cross as the payment due/wages for our sinful guilt. The Seed was then “planted”, buried, and just as He promised, on the third day He physically rose from the dead to prove that the price had been paid and we had been saved from the guilt of our sin. The Tree of Life burst forth from the tomb in victory over sin, death and the devil.

And it was in the blessed water and Word of our Baptism that God the Holy Spirit created the faith in our hearts to trust in that saving work of Jesus, grafted us back into the Vine of Life Jesus Christ, and caused His True Life to flow from Him and into us, flooding us with new, true, eternal life! He made us alive again in Him and thus began to bear fruit of this new life through us.

This incredible Good News is what is depicted in our logo:

The Cross is central, as it always is to be. The Cross serves as the reminder of our Lord’s payment for our sinful guilt, the giving of His Life that we may be rescued from death and have life restored. This tree of death would become the Tree of Life, as the Seed of the Woman has bruised the serpent’s head, crushed his ability to accuse us and rob death of its sting.

The crown of thorns upon the cross, as well as the INRI (the sign Pontius Pilate order placed upon it, the letters standing for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) reminds us that the Son of David faithfully has come and bears forth the promised fruit of eternal life, and reigns over His Kingdom of Grace. (*Isa 11:1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*)

The very familiar sketch of St. John’s is grafted to the cross/Vine of Life. By God’s gracious work, He formed through a body of believers this parish, those connected to Christ by grace through faith and who for 150 years have been abiding in Christ, have been gathered around and fed by His Means of Grace. And abiding in Christ, He has been bearing His fruit through this parish. The church is also at the foot of the Cross, for Christ Crucified and Risen is our foundation.

Additionally, the Cross is coming out of our sanctuary – the place where His Word is proclaimed and Sacraments rightly offered, the place where He has promised to be and to come and serve us with His forgiveness and grace. This message of Christ Crucified and Risen is also proclaimed from here unto the world around us.

The roots coming from the church remind us that we are rooted in Christ, the Tree of Life.  
*Jeremiah 17:7-8 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. (8) He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."*

No matter what afflicts us, even in times of drought, abiding in Christ, relying on Him, He does not cease to nurture us and bear fruit through us.

I repeat from January, for 150 years, through good times and difficult times, God has graciously given life to the lifeless here at St. John's. He has seen to it that His children, His branches abide in Him through His Means of Grace and abiding in Him He has produced and keeps producing the His good fruit in this parish, for apart from Him we can do nothing, indeed, we perish. By God's grace, we are 150 years abiding in Christ!

Pastor