

# *History of the Chrismon Tree*

The Chrismon tree began as an offering to God in the Lutheran Church of the Ascension, 295 West Main Street, in Danville, Virginia, in 1957. God blessed the offering, and it has become a symbol of praise and thanksgiving to Him.

Mrs. Harry W. Spencer, the originator of the Chrismons, said, "I realized Christmas was the birthday of the Christ Child. Let us honor the Child, the Person He is." After many weeks of research, Mrs. Spencer came across some drawings of designs called Chrismons. "Chrismon" (Kriz'mon) is a combination of parts of two words: CHRISt and MONogram. A Chrismon is just that, a monogram of Christ. The sketches found were copies of Chrismons designed and carved or drawn by some of the earliest Christians. The monograms were found in many places – some on jewelry and utensils, others on doors or in catacombs or in buildings. Early Christians used them to identify themselves to one another, to designate meeting places of the church, and sometimes, to show unbelievers where they stood.

The designs were quite beautiful and would make lovely tree decorations. Mrs. Spencer said, "It occurred to me that by using these early symbols of our faith to decorate the tree, we would bring out distinctly the real reason we celebrate this day of the year. I hoped such a tree would not only be worthy of being placed in the Lord's house, but would also contribute to the spirit of worship in this holy seasons."

All Chrismons are made in a combination of white and gold. White, the liturgical color for Christmas, refers to our Lord's purity and perfection; the gold, to His majesty and glory.

The evergreen tree, which symbolizes the eternal life which our Savior has won for us, is background for the tiny white lights. May these lights lead us to Christ—the Light of the world.

May the symbols placed on our tree continually remind you of God's greatest gift to us all, Jesus Christ.

## **Nativity Chrismons**



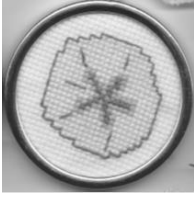
**Scroll** – The scroll symbolizes the Old Testament and reminds us of the prophecies regarding Christ's birth.



**Lamp** – The lamp symbolized the wisdom found in the Bible and the knowledge it reveals to us about God. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet" Ps. 119:105



**Star of David** – Reminds us that the Messiah would be of the house of David.



**Sand Dollar** – On the Sand dollar shell a five point star can be found. This star has come represent the star of Bethlehem.



**Manger** – Symbolizes the manger in which Mary placed the baby Jesus.

## Passion Chrismons



**Grapes** – Grapes are used to symbolize the Last Supper, and the Lord's Supper.



**Chalice** – This represents the cup Christ used at the Last Supper. The letters are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and mean that Christ is the beginning and the end of everything.



**Rooster** – The Rooster reminds us of Peter's denial of Christ when the "cock crowed."



**Crown of Thorns and Nails** – Reminds us that Christ was crucified “and broken for us.”



**Latin Cross** – Represents the kind of cross upon which Jesus was crucified.



**Calvary Cross** – This is the Latin cross standing on three steps which represent faith, hope and love.



**Anchor Cross with Fish** – The anchor was used by early Christians as a sign of the cross. Some believe that one fish represents Christ while the other represents us, and is asking whether we are willing to die for him as he was for us.

## Victory Chrismons



**Cross with a Snake** – The snake represents Satan and the cross Christ's victory over him.



**Butterfly** – Symbolized the resurrection and the new life of Christ and those who believe in Him.



**Cross with Crowns** – This means that Christ is King of Kings and has conquered sin and death.



**Lamb** – The standing Lamb symbolizes Christ as the Lamb of God victorious over sin and death.



**Lyre** – Reminds us of the joy we should have towards God for the great gift of His only Son.



**Ship** – The ship with the crosses represents the Church, for which Christ died, and over which he is Lord.



**Ark and Rainbow** – The ark is a symbol of the church and the rainbow of God's promise to be with us "always."



**IHS Block**– I, H and S are the first three letters of Jesus' name in the Greek language. The block represents a cornerstone. The message is that Jesus is the cornerstone of the church.



**Cross with small crosses** – This represents Christ and the twelve apostles.



**Celtic Cross** – The circle at the top of the cross represents the gift of eternal life purchased at Calvary.



**Descending Dove** – A symbol of the Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus at His Baptism and which fills us when we become Christians.



**Burning Bush** – The seven flames represent the Holy Spirit



**Jerusalem Cross** – Symbol of Christianity unity.



**Shell With Drops of Water** – Represents Christian Baptism.



**Fish** – The fish was one of the first signs used by Christians to identify themselves. IXOYC in Greek spells fish, but the letters also stand for Jesus Christ, God's Son.



**Circle of Fish** – The circle represents eternity and the fish stands for Jesus. The message is that Christ is eternal.



**Chi Rho** – The first letters the Greek word for Christ.



**Anchor** – Used by Christians as a symbol for the cross when they were persecuted.



**Cross Crosslet** – Made by combining four Greek crosses. Symbolizes the spread of Christianity to the four corners of the earth.



**Cross and Orb** – The orb symbolizes the world and, with a cross, the triumph of Christ over it.



**Alpha and Omega** – Christ said, “I am the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” (Rev. 1:8)



**Circle and Triangle** – Reminds us of the eternity of the Trinity.



**IHS** – The first three letters of Jesus' name in the Greek Language.