

November 4, 2018

Psalm 1:3

Isaiah 10:14

Revelation 22:1-2

St. James Church Logo “Leaves and Nest”

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

To date, when have explored the following parts of our logo: the tree, hands and arms, cross, roots, water, triangle, circle, outer ring, and the seed. Today, we will be focusing our attention on the green leaves and the nest formed by the open hands.

Let’s begin with the leaves of the tree, which are evergreen. So, what does it take for a tree to survive and even flourish: four things (sunlight, water, soil and air). The leaves contain chlorophyll that can turn the sunlight into a type of energy that the tree can use to turn air and water into useable food. Air enters the tree through tiny holes on the underside of the leaf, while water and minerals in the soil get sucked up by the trees roots, which may be several feet underground and quite far from the tree trunk. Roots are very important because they soak in water and nutrients that the tree needs, and the weight of the soil above the roots also keep the tree from tipping over.

Enough of the science lesson, right! Yet, you’ve got the point, no! You can’t remain evergreen, fully alive and functioning without nourishment. Yet, some of us don’t quite feel alive because we are running on empty. We’re missing the essentials of what it takes to not only survive, but flourish as well.

Let’s unpack nourishment for a moment. We would never think of not eating and drinking for weeks and months on end

and expect to feel good, much less live. Yet, we do not look at our own spiritual life and the Body of Christ the Church in the same way. Rather, we may go weeks or even months without the fellowship of other Christians, without prayer – other than when we need something, which can hinder any relationship when there are only the gimmies, and nothing that is more mutual, much less showing devotion. We may feel like we are barely surviving because we are going around with a very limited familiarity much less understanding of scripture, other than what we may have gotten in 3rd grade Sunday School. Which is adequate for a child, but does not lead to survival as an adult, especially when you have to go through sickness, death, and major life transitions.

Life started when God breathed into us at birth the breath of life, like God breathed into Adam and Eve. So, we got it at the very beginning of our life. Yet, if we are to be evergreen, truly alive, we must continue to take in air. So then, how do we do that? We do that by being open to God's Spirit. The same Biblical word that is used for "breath" is also used for "spirit". In other words, when it comes to living we must continually be open to and take in God's very Spirit, which we do by listening, and being led by the Spirit. What is the enemy of being filled with God's Spirit? Rushing, we become out of breath. Yet, if we take the time to sit and breath in deeply what God has for us and wants to give us each day, we can be full, and thus have everything we need to handle whatever life may throw at us.

We received water at our baptism, at the very beginning of our Christian walk. Yet, if we do not continue to partake of the living water offered by Jesus Christ via a daily walk with him we would run dry. And because of having a life too full with that which is not necessary for life, we leave little room for deep drinking, instead we try and take a little sip here and a

little sip there and wonder why we are thirsty, yearning for something more.

Some of us have yet to set down roots. And thus, we wonder why we feel shaky amidst life's storms and storms will come whether we want them to or not. We are told in scripture to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Why? because it is important to set down roots. If not, we go through life merely on the surface, with no chance to get to a deeper place with one another, other than "hi". Yes, we're not perfect here. But, none the less, this is the place, which if you will let it, will become a steadying factor our lives because we will know and thus be able to count on the support of others when the hurricane comes barreling through your life trying to turn your life completely upside down.

And then, there is the Sonlight. In returning from Italy, there is one image that I just can't erase from my mind and that is the balcony of St. Mary's Basilica in Rome. We went to see it on day one of our trip. It was early evening and the sun was getting ready to go down. And though the balcony has a roof which makes the mosaic on the outer wall difficult to see due to the shade, the sun shown on a section of the mosaic of "Christ the Light of the World" that I could not help but get, that no matter what time it is, he still remains the light of the world, because as scripture says, "Darkness is not dark to thee, O Lord, for the darkness is as bright as the day." We cannot survive and remain evergreen without the light, the Light of the World to illumine and guide us no matter whether it is day or night.

And then there is the nest. In the leaves we had nourishment and in the nest we receive the nurturing we need, which is meant to lead to flying and the leaving of the nest. The

interesting thing about nests are, they are not meant to be a permanent shelter, but rather a launching place. Too many churches think of their mission as creating a permanent shelter where people come and stay. Yet, Church is meant to be a place where people come and go.

I am amused at how some birds decorate their nest. Some just put in the essentials, namely vegetation such as leaves and twigs and sometimes a little mud, while other birds seem to pull out all the stops when it comes to selecting building material by acquiring tinsel, aluminum foil, flower petals, and strips of cloth. Why? - to attract others. That is the work of the church, to attract others, so that they may find a place to be protected and nurtured, so that there may be growth and eventual flight.

I think of Ray, who needed a nest and found St. James. It was here that he was able to not only grow, but also hatch, and then fly from this nest. He has flown the nest and is now soaring with confidence.

It is interesting to me, that even birds that have been raised in captivity can still build their species nest without ever having seen one. I do think that it is instinctual for us to open our hands to others, so as to provide others with a place where they can be safe and nourished, and that to not love others and not welcome them is counterintuitive to Christianity. For, when we have been loved as we have been loved by God, how can we not love others!

What do the sparrow, wren, robin, starling and blackbird have in common – they all cross-species feed. When does that occur? It can occur when there is nest failure. In other words, no problem, we will pick up what needs to happen. Even amidst

their grief, bereaved pair of robins have been observed feeding song thrushes. We as followers of Jesus have the capacity for empathy, and thus we can take the tragedy that is ours and help others in theirs. And then there is the case of orphaned birds where there is the loud begging of hungry birds. As St. James Church, we hear others cry and respond. We give, because they are in need.

And finally, I would be amiss if I did not mention feathers in nest building. People need a comfortable, warm environment on which to grow. Sometimes that means pulling out all the feathers in the area of the front of the bird known as the brood patch, so that eggs may develop and eventually hatch from warmth transference. This requires sacrifice, the giving of oneself, and that is what it takes for some to be able to grow, hatch, and fly.

May God help us stay evergreen and in our nest building do whatever it takes to make sure others can grow, emerge, and soar. Amen and Amen.