



The Tree of Life

On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. *Rev 22:1-2*

**LCANZ Simultaneous
Art Exhibition 2024**



FEATURED IMAGE: 'ESTABLISHED IN GOD'S LOVE' – LIBBY KRAHLING

These resources are brought to you by the Commission on Worship Visual Arts Working Group. Our mission is to encourage and support the use of Visual Arts in worship and in the life of the church.

If you would like to be a part of our team, please contact us via our website:

<http://visualarts.lca.org.au/>

A Special Opportunity

God uses the wonder of creation to reveal profound spiritual messages. Many artists are inspired by nature and see in the natural world the 'footprints' of God. We hope you will join us in this exhibition to explore this theme and celebrate trees, life, fruit, healing, connectedness, God's promises and whatever new inspirations you have! This is a wonderful opportunity to share the love of Christ through creativity in your community.

Who: Artists of all ages, stages and media are invited to participate in exhibitions in their local communities.

Where: Exhibitions can be held anywhere – in your school hall, your church, the local coffee shop. You may wish to share your work with your online communities too!

When: August, 2024 to coincide with the South Australian Living Artists program which runs at that time. Please feel free to adjust the timeframe – just let us know when and where you are exhibiting so we can help you publicise your event!

In this resource pack, you will find a devotion, some suggested Bible passages and discussion questions, activity ideas and stimulus activities to help you explore the theme and start planning.

To register your interest in this project, please contact Jan Kaesler - kaeslerjan@gmail.com or visit our website - <https://visualarts.lca.org.au/>

RSVP: May 31, 2024



“The mountains and hills will burst into singing, and the trees will shout for joy.”

Isaiah 55:12



The Tree of Life

Tree of Life images are found in many cultures since ancient times, with links to religion, philosophy and spirituality. It is a universally recognised symbol with variations used in logos and even worn as jewellery.

For Christians, the Tree of Life represents an eternal, life-giving relationship with God.

We first see the tree in the garden of Eden at creation, where those who ate from it would live forever (**Genesis 2:9, 3:22**). The tree appears again in **Revelation**, in heavenly images of God's restoration in the new heaven and new earth. (Rev 2:7b, 22:2, 22:14)

These "bookends" not only nicely frame the entire bible, but they also highlight the completion of God's saving plan. The tree that was lost will be replanted, the creation that was lost will be restored.

Between these 'bookends', throughout the bible, there are many other references and allusions to the Tree of Life.

In the book of **Proverbs**, the Tree of Life is used as imagery in conjunction with wisdom and understanding, the fruit of righteousness, fulfilled desire, and a gentle tongue. (Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 13:12, 15:4)

The writer of **Psalms** 1 evokes another image, likening people to healthy trees planted by streams of water. Their nourishment is God's word, which they meditate on day and night. They flourish and produce fruit in season. Many other psalms use images of trees clapping and shouting for joy in their praise of God.

New Testament writers draw a profound connection between Jesus' cross and the Tree of Life. Just like the first garden had a tree that brought life, through Jesus's death on that tree and his resurrection three days later, all people have access to 'eat the fruit of the tree of life' and live forever.

There was a garden in the place where [Jesus] was crucified (John 19:41)
He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to
righteousness. (1 Peter 2:24)

Some ancient theologians taught that the cross is the tree, that Christ himself is the tree, and that the medicinal fruit of the tree is the body and blood of Christ, linking it to Holy Communion.

In the **Gospels**, Jesus' depiction of our connectedness to him offers an even richer image. Jesus said that he is the vine (tree) and we are the branches. (John 15:4-5) Not only are we nourished from this tree, we're invited to become part of it, helping produce its fruit, so that Jesus' life and love can spread through us to others. As Luther taught, we are 'little Christs' to our neighbours, for in so doing we find our true identity as children of God.

Jesus also used trees to illustrate the Kingdom of God. From the parable of the mustard seed we learn that God's kingdom is more than it seems. It may start small, but is the tallest growing tree and provides shelter and homes for the birds.

The Tree of Life isn't just an image in the Bible that represents immortality. The tree of life is a promise. It reminds us that through Jesus Christ our lives are nourished, enriched and eternal. One day God will make everything right again and the nations, broken throughout history, will find healing.

May the seed of faith, planted in you at baptism, grow and flourish, rooted in the power of God's Word. May the love of Christ flow through you, and may your life bear the fruit of the Spirit so you may be a blessing to all around you. Amen.

More bible passages you may like to explore:

- Psalm 1:1-3
- Ezekiel 47:12
- Daniel 4:10-12
- Isaiah 11:1
- Matthew 13:31-32
- Jeremiah 17:7-8
- Colossians 2:7
- Isaiah 55:12-13
- Psalm 52:12



But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.

Psalm 52:8

Activity Suggestions

- In a group or on your own, brainstorm everything you can think of related to trees and life - creation, growth cycles, seasons, how trees give life and shelter...You might like to create a mind-map like the one in this package.
- Choose a Bible passage from the list (or another related text), and spend time reading it through, noticing images, interesting thoughts and thinking about connections to your own experience. Start drawing or journaling your thoughts.
- Congregations might like to have a special service to coincide with their exhibition. A 'Season of Creation' service might be especially appropriate.
- Your exhibition launch might coincide with a local tree-planting day.
- If you are charging for entrance or collecting donations, consider donating towards a garden or outdoor project at your local church, school or aged care facility.
- Consider hosting a workshop for interested artists. You could begin with the devotion in this pack, and then use the stimulus cards and mind map to help people unpack the theme and excite their imaginations.

Consider Collaborative Artwork

If you are working with a group with mixed abilities/experience, or you have people who don't feel very confident exhibiting a solo piece, you might like to work on a collaborative artwork. There are lots of ideas on Pinterest for collaborative art (see our Pinterest page, "LCANZ Visual Arts").

Some ideas:

- Create a mural or wall hanging, beginning with a cross. Provide leaf templates for everyone to decorate and attach.
- Collect leaf or bark 'rubbings' from participants to make into a collaborative artwork.
- Design a collage of leaf prints.
- Invite people to hang photos of family members to a large branch or Christmas tree. The Tree of Life should also include photos of those who are already in heaven.

Stimulus Cards

You might like to use the stimulus cards on the following pages. Print them out double-sided and cut out each card. You could laminate them if you are likely to pass them around or use them for more than one group.

You can use these in lots of ways:

- As discussion starters – put them in a pile and have people draw one out at random to discuss with a partner or small group. Share your thoughts with the whole group.
- As journaling tools – have people choose an image which speaks to them, and give them time to draw, collage or journal about the stimulus on the back of the card. This is a great way of drawing out deep, personal connections to the topic.
- As a teaching resource – some of the cards would work well as classroom or group study activities. You could use a couple of cards to get the group started, and then let them choose whichever card or image they want to respond to.



Was there a 'special' tree in your life? Perhaps one you liked to climb or one that has a special memory for you?

What is your favourite season of the year? How do trees dress themselves for this season?

How many creatures can you think of that make their homes or shelter in trees?

Trees are great for the environment.
In what ways do trees give life?

What does the clapping of trees sound like? What language do they use to shout for joy?
Isaiah 55:12

How is a family tree like a Tree of Life?

The oldest tree in the world ('*Methuselah*') is now 4,600 years old.
Compare its appearance with the 'Tree of Life' image.

What is your favourite fruit?
The Tree of Life produces fruit 12 times a year!
How can we wait patiently for what is to come?



In what ways might the Tree of Life remind us of Holy Communion?

Ezekiel 47:12

Have you ever seen a shoot sprouting from a stump? Even the cutting down of a tree doesn't always end its life.

Isaiah 11:1

The Tree of Life is fed by a river of the water of life.
Its life source is Living Water.

Revelation 22:1-2

Daniel has a vision of a tree that reached the sky and could be seen by everyone in the world.

Daniel 4:10-12

Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith.

Colossians 2:7

Trees will come up in place of thorns. This will be a sign that will last forever, a reminder of what I, the Lord, have done.

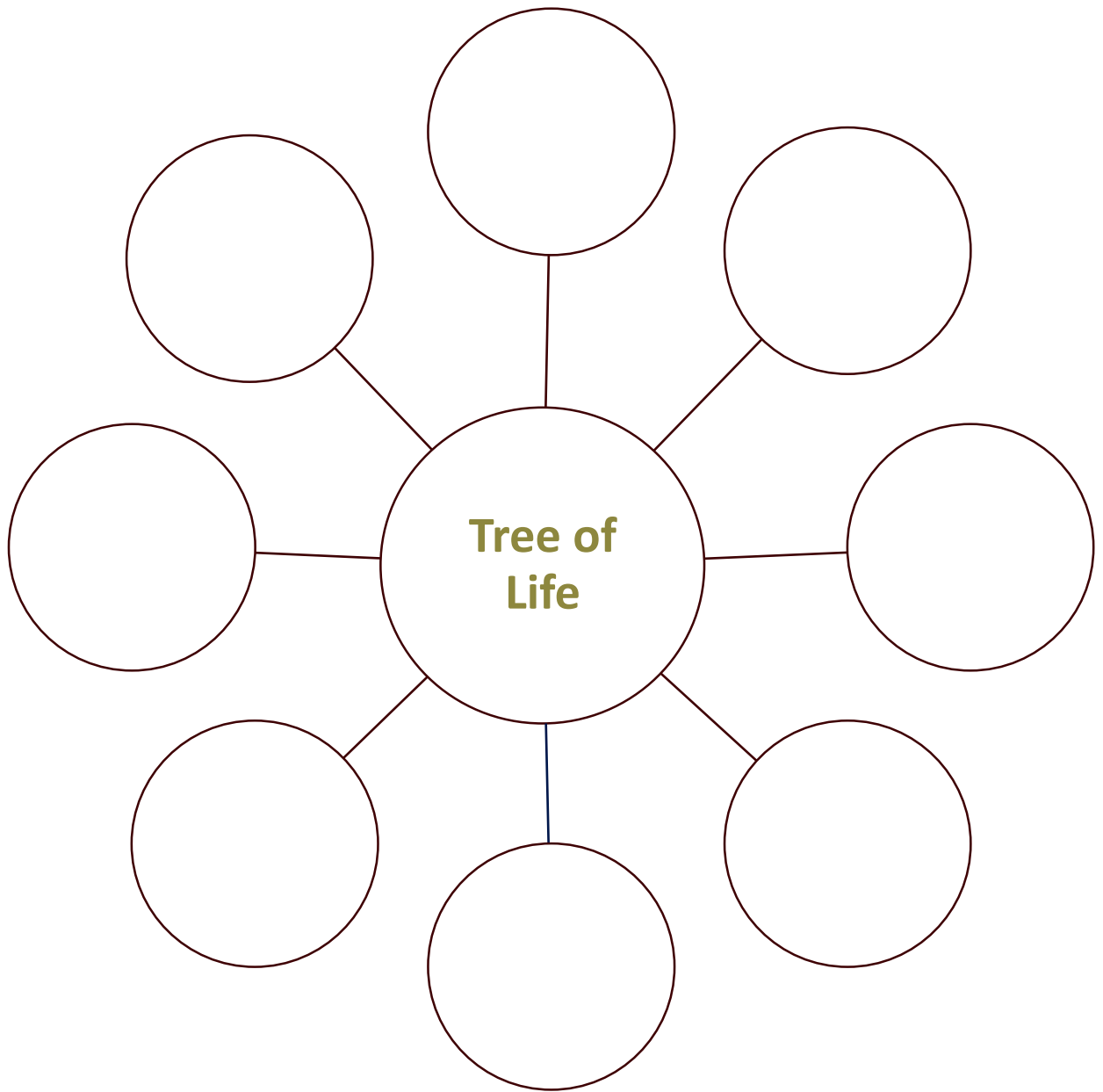
Isaiah 55:13

To have good fruit you must have a healthy tree. A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears.

Matthew 12:33

Those whose robes are washed clean have the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life and go into the heavenly city.

Revelation 22:14
Matthew 22:11



This is a mind-map. You can use it to brainstorm as many ideas as you can related to banquets. In the circles around the central words “Tree of Life”, write down your ideas. You might like to think about trees in general, trees in the bible, fruit, shade and shelter, leaves, healing, connectedness, God’s promises. Add in more circles, write notes around the outside – have fun!