

Fall 2023



Dear Friends:

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As you probably know, trees develop an internal ring each year that they are alive, and so when you look at a cross-section, you can count the rings and see its age. There are many such displays of trees that go back before the Civil War, before George Washington was inaugurated, before Europeans first settled permanently in North America in Jamestown in 1607. But the oldest trees on the planet are far older than that: the oldest, in fact, is a bristlecone pine tree known as “Methuselah” in California that is thought to be almost 5000 years old, which means it was already mature when God forged a covenant with Abraham!

Of course, it is not enough to simply stay alive; the question is how well you are flourishing. That’s Jeremiah’s point in the passage from which we are taking our 2024 Annual Stewardship theme, “Rooted in Tradition, Flourishing in Mission”:

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

A tree whose roots are planted firmly by the sustenance of a living stream of water not only endures challenging times, but “never fails to bear fruit.” That is the definition of flourishing for a tree, and it is no less so for us in our life of faith.

This congregation has a long and rich tradition of powerful worship, engaging education and spiritual formation, rich fellowship, deep community, and vibrant service to others. It is those roots that have allowed us not simply to survive, but to flourish throughout the years. Now, even as we are reaching into a promising future of expanding our mission, we continue to flourish here and now in our life and ministry together.

The next few years are an exciting and pivotal time for us as a congregation. I and the other members of the Session ask you to prayerfully consider what a generous and impactful pledge would be for you to make in 2024, and to make this church your top giving priority if you have not already done so.

Doing so will help ensure that we continue to bear much fruit, as Jesus has called us to do, as we live into the future to which God is calling us!

Grace and Peace,

J.C. Austin
Senior Pastor