

The design of the
Glass doors
in St.Thomas Church
Lymington
by Tracey Sheppard



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I felt it was important to produce a design which directed the viewer's eye toward the altar.

I looked at the words of Isaiah 56 v7: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an **house of prayer for all people.**" The last three words of the verse are especially inclusive, and send a clear message of welcome to all visitors.

On the right hand door, the words are worked into the form of the elm tree, where they are left as unengraved glass against the texture of the bark. This means that light passes through the letters uninterrupted during the day.

I wanted to create a design which links the environment and history of Lymington with the traditions of Christian art .

The town is surrounded by the trees of the New Forest and sits beside the water. Both trees and water are recognisable Christian symbols.

On researching the history of the place name I discovered the word tun means a farm or hamlet, whilst Limen is believed to be a corruption of a Celtic word lemana meaning **elm tree**. This tree has a place in Christian art where it is seen to allude to the dignity of life and because of the spread of its great branches in every

direction, it serves as a symbol of the strength which is derived by the devout from their faith in the scriptures. It might also be seen here as the Tree of Life sheltering **birds** in amongst the boughs.

I have chosen a sparrow and goldfinches. These too have a symbolism.

Sparrow: considered to be the lowliest among all birds, is therefore a symbol of the lowly, the least among all people, who were, nevertheless, under the protection of God the Father.

Goldfinch: because it is fond of eating thistles, and all thorny plants have been accepted as an allusion to Christ's crown of thorns, this bird has become accepted as a symbol of the Passion of Christ.

Water is a symbol of cleansing and purification. It is used in the sacrament of Baptism, where it washes away sin and gives newness of life. It is also linked with the Eucharist. Here I have drawn four **waves** one for each of the Gospels, rolling across the doors and washing around the roots of the tree. In the waters below swim **fish**, an ancient Christian symbol representing all souls who swim toward salvation.

I have also incorporated a decorative texture inspired by the shape of **salt crystals**. From the Middle Ages until the 19th Century Lymington was famous for making salt. Salt is a symbol of strength, Christ in the Sermon on the Mount called His disciples "the salt of the earth." Matthew 5v13.

The glass doors were donated in memory of Margery Sargent, a worshipper at St Thomas Church from 1961 to 2003.