

**Sunday 2 May 2021 – Vocations Sunday**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Opening Prayer**

“Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord” (Psalm 150 v 6)

**Hymn: Let all the world in every corner sing (StF57)**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/PfXldoDnvq4>

Let all the world in every corner sing:  
my God and King!  
The heavens are not too high,  
his praise may thither fly;  
the earth is not too low,  
his praises there may grow.  
Let all the world in every corner sing:  
my God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing:  
my God and King!  
The Church with psalms must shout,  
no door can keep them out;  
but above all, the heart  
must bear the longest part.  
Let all the world in every corner sing:  
my God and King!

*George Herbert (1593-1633)*

Let us pray together

**Read Psalm 150, followed by these prayers of adoration and confession**

Loving God we give you thanks and praise for the works of your creation in all its wonder and richness of diversity, a window for us to see who you are.

Majestic, awe-inspiring, beyond understanding, the source of being. We wonder at you, as we wonder at your world. We especially give you praise and thanks for your son, Jesus. We wonder at how you revealed yourself in him and went through the agony of death on the cross that we can know you. We wonder also at the many talents and different characteristics that you have bestowed on each of us today through your Spirit, which lead to acts of amazing creativity and kindness. You have shown us how there can be such strength in both togetherness and diversity, just as there is within the Trinity. Forgive us then when we fail to use the gifts you have given us, when we deny those talents in others and prevent them becoming the people you intended, when we fail to work together with others to achieve your purposes. Help us to know the freedom of forgiveness and to be open channels of your love and grace to others. Amen

**Read Psalm 150 again, this time out loud with rising gusto if you can!**

**Today's Gospel Reading:** John 15 v 1-8

### **Time to Reflect**

Let me start by saying that I am no gardener. I enjoy doing things in the garden, but I am mostly clueless. This is particularly evident when it comes to pruning and cutting back. I tend to pussy foot around and snip round the edges of my plants. Take my hedge. It is always untidy with a sort of Dennis the Menace messy haircut look to it, in stark contrast to my next-door neighbour whose own hedge is a thing of beauty, shaped and manicured tightly.

I remember the first winter in my last house, when I was horrified by what the council workers did to the beautiful oak trees lining the Crescent where I lived. It looked devastated, like a nuclear bomb had gone off nearby. I nearly wrote in to complain. I needn't have worried, of course – they did know what they were doing and by the end of that summer the trees were back, only better, with more strength and shape from the new growth.

Pruning and cutting back is essential to the process of growth. Particularly to fruit bearing plants like the vine. Jesus knew it, hence the wonderful image of John 15 v1-8, which has much to say to us this Vocations Sunday.

In the Old Testament the vine is a symbol of Israel, but it is usually mentioned in the context of having been allowed to run wild, for example in Isaiah 5. Vines in the Middle East were (and still are) fast growing and if left unchecked

would grow in all directions, with lots of branches, meaning that the fruit bearing branches produced lots of small, poor quality fruit. Quite simply, to produce a good crop, there needed to be regular ruthless pruning, particularly in its early years. Jesus says that he is the true vine, the true Israel if you like and he exhorts his disciples to abide in him, to allow God who is the gardener to prune back those useless and tangled branches, so that good fruit will be produced.

Many of us in the Church (and I include myself too) could learn from this. We take on too many jobs, have too many roles and hats to wear and consider ourselves indispensable. Who else would do it, if not me? The place would fall apart without me, we say. Well maybe we should just try it. Step back. If you do have 3 roles, give up 2 and give your all to the one remaining role. I am not necessarily the best person to invoke garden wisdom, but even I have noticed that you create a space in the garden something else will soon grow there. Perhaps by hanging on to those 2 extra roles we not only reduce the quality of the fruit we produce, but we are preventing others exercising their calling and ministry.

On this Vocations Sunday, when we are asked to reflect on the part we play in the ministry of God's Church, we should consider what needs pruning in our lives, so that the Vine produces abundant, sweet fruit. Sometimes less is more. And if you find this message hard, no sour grapes, please!

Take a time to sit quietly

### **Prayers of concern**

Loving, Lord God, help each of us to abide in you and produce fruit, not any old fruit, but the best fruit we can. Prune us back, remove those areas of our lives that get in the way of each other and help us to concentrate on the things you have truly called us to do. Help us to realise the gifts you have given us and how best to use them for your Kingdom.

Loving, Lord God may your Church be a window to you, that the world may see your love for all people in action. Bring an end to bickering, nit-picking and infighting. Unite your Church, give it a voice to challenge injustice and act with kindness. Make it a safe space, where people can reach their potential and work together. Help it to grow in love and produce rich fruit in abundance.

Loving, Lord God, we bring our world and local communities to you. So much conflict, hurt and suffering. We think of those mourning loved ones, those who feel isolated and cut off from family and friends due to the pandemic, those who live in fear for whatever reason. Bring the fruit of healing and peace to their place of need and instill in us a desire to be the answer to that prayer today. Amen.

Let us say now the words of The Lord's Prayer in whatever language or version preferred.

***The Lord's Prayer***

*Our Father .....*

***Hymn: Listen to O thou who camest from above*** – StF564 or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind <https://youtu.be/PfDjL2CGQ9w>

O thou who camest from above  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work, and speak, and think for thee;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up thy gift in me --

Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make the sacrifice complete.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

## **Blessing**

May the Lord bless you and make his face to shine upon you; may he water you with his love, that you grow in him and bless others with rich fruitful lives. Amen.

Original Materials by **John Hay**

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

## **John 15 v 1-8**

### **Jesus the True Vine**

‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.