

We hold in our hearts places where isolation has laid waste, deprivation has parched, dreams have withered.

Flow afresh through these places by your spirit.

*In silence we lift to God our prayers for our communities ...*

Re-root us in you **that your Kingdom may grow through us**

Life-giving God, We pray for our Church where apathy diseases:

Plant in us a dis-ease with all that stifles your Spirit and where lack of vision is causing your people to perish graft us into your limitless love.

Where weariness withers: revive us with the Light of Jesus

*In silence we lift to God our prayers for the Church...*

Re-root us in you **that your Kingdom may grow through us.**

We pray for ourselves and the concerns of our hearts, lifting them in silence to you...

Prune us to be ready to respond to you. Re-wild us with your ever-flowing grace. Graft us to you, that we may bear much fruit.

Re-root us in you **that your Kingdom may grow through us. Amen**

We set aside our Offering for the work of God through the Church.

Creator God, you made the plants and trees, the people and the animals. We want to say thank you for all of that and more, by sharing what we have with others. The money we give is a symbol of our thanks to you for all you have made and all that you are. Amen

Hymn: StF 446 **I will offer up my life**

Blessing:

May each tree you see this week be a reminder of the connection you have with the Creator of that tree. May each fruit you eat be a reminder of the goodness of the Spirit of God nurturing you.

Go in peace to bear fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Amen

Adapted from the Connexional Service for Vocations Sunday.

**Darlington District**

**2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 Vocations Sunday**



Call to Worship

Praise God in his holy house of worship;

Praise him under the open skies;

Praise God in our homes,

Praise him in our schools and on our streets, and at our work.

Praise him for his acts of power,

Praise him for his magnificent greatness;

Praise with a blast on the trumpet,

Praise with music through our headphones,

Praise him with big noises,

praise him in quiet whispers.

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!

Hallelujah!

Hymn StF 57 **Let all the world in every corner sing**

Opening prayers

In the beginning, God made everything and saw that it was good.

God of all, we come before you today just as we are.

We lift to you the joy of being alive.

We praise you that we are part of your amazing Creation.

Plant in us an ever-growing love for you.

Let worship and praise burst from our hearts.

Let the fruitfulness of our lives bring glory to you. **Amen**

**Lord's Prayer**

Today's Bible Reading: [John 15:1-9](#)

Reflection

Jesus chooses the imagery of the vine. In the Old Testament the vine is sometimes used as a symbol of the Messiah, a sign of hope. It is also used as a metaphor for Israel when the people have been found lacking in terms of their Godliness; when there is a need for change.

What we read in John chapter 15 is hopeful whilst making clear that we need to change. It is hopeful because we are reminded that we are interconnected with the Spirit of God through our relationship with Jesus. Pause for a moment to think which words come to your mind when you think of being connected through the Holy Spirit, with Jesus.

Some examples might be: love, fruitfulness, joy, abundance, connection and abiding with. In a word association game we might go from abide, to live with, then to home, rest, safety, to family, to friends and to love. To abide in Jesus is all of that and more; we are invited to abide in all that Jesus is. If we do then we will be fully alive. We are nourished with the same life giving Spirit, we are loved, just as Jesus is loved by the Creator. What do you think are the abundant fruits of a life lived like this? *(Take a moment to think before reading on.)*

They might be characteristics like love, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, peace, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

[\(Galatians 5: 22-23\)](#) Today is Vocations Sunday and I think a vocation that is nourished in the life giving Spirit of God would have fruit like this list – let's hear them again; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.



Words like calling and vocation can sometimes scare us. It might help to think of it like this: the primary call of a Christian is to follow Jesus, and the journey that emerges from that, for each of us, is our own unique vocation. Do you see your journey with Jesus as a vocation? Or do you think that vocations are just for ministers, and nurses and teachers? The Bible reading today suggests that the abundant fruit will grow where we are most connected to the vine. So on Vocations Sunday, I wonder, what happens if we look at where our life is bearing fruit and ask, 'could this be evidence of my vocation?' Pause again and ask yourself: Where in my life, at the moment, are signs of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control?

The bible reading also speaks some tough words about us needing to change, to be pruned. It might be that things that were once bearing abundant fruit on our journey, are not anymore. How do we know if some of our vocational branches are ready to be pruned? Are there things that once bore fruit that are now a burden, a chore, that bring a sense of gloom, and sadly the fruit is no longer abundant and juicy? If so, it might be time for change, time to have those branches pruned.

Vocations Sunday isn't just about us as individuals; it is also about the vocation of the church. Where is the abundant fruit in the life of your church? And what needs to be pruned? As we emerge from lockdown, this is the time to ask, what is the vocation of the church in the time and the place we find ourselves? Is it the same as it was in 2019? Or has that which was fruitful now dried up? We may have hard decisions to make as church communities. On a vineyard when the tractors come to prune the vines it looks brutal, but it is necessary if the vine is to grow new and delicious fruit. Our God is a God of love and a God of invitation. God waits patiently in our lives.

As we work out our vocations, individually and as a community, God is waiting, but God isn't waiting like the vacuum packed grapes in the supermarket, waiting for us to open the packet and let the fruit out. God is waiting and is active. The invitation is to look, and to notice where God is at work, where there is evidence of the fruit of God's Spirit. That's where we join in.

#### Prayers of Intercession:

Abiding God, We lift our world to you

Holding in our hearts places where lives are crushed by injustice torn up by conflict or trampled by the greed of others.

May justice germinate and righteousness ripen that all may know your abundant love.

*In silence we lift to God our prayers for the world....*

Re-root us in you **that your Kingdom may grow through us.**

Nurturing God, we pray for our communities