

2 May 2021

Worship Sheet for Sunday 2 May Growing together in Christ

Jesus speaks of his Father as the gardener, of pruning for growth, of the need for the branches to remain connected to and draw strength from the tree and its roots. All this reminds us of our need to be connected to one another and to Jesus so that together we might grow together in faith and service.

Call: The gardener is coming with twine and shears. A bonfire is smouldering in the corner of the vineyard.

Are you ready to be pruned and reconfigured? Are you ready to let go of your independence and become part of something bigger? "I am the real vine," Jesus said. "Stick with me."

Pray Lord, many of us enjoy the garden, being able to get out in the open air and in more normal time enjoy the company of friends and family, even perhaps bigger gatherings – and we are grateful for the beautiful countryside around us here in Angus. And yet, as the calendars change to May and we look forward to some prospect of better weather we know that all is not as it should be – not in the world of nature, of health, of the economy, relationships, spiritually. And yet you are as committed to us and our world as you have ever been – you long for us to return to you, to abide in your love, to draw life and strength from you. Draw us closer to you and to one another and help us to value our togetherness both with one another and directly with you. We are conditioned to get on with things ourselves, to manage (or not!) on our own but remind us that by design you have made us to love and be loved, to encourage and be encouraged, to support and be supported among the fellowship of believers and in fellowship with your dear Son. Draw us closer into love with him and all those who love him and hear us as we pray together saying Our Father...

Read John 15:1-10 Jesus the true Vine.

Thought Anyone who knows me at all well knows that I am no gardener. It's not beyond me to cut the grass or lop a branch or do a tad of weeding though even that is a rarity due to the help I get at the manse. But, anything technical, anything that requires any real knowledge is out. I am not green fingered in the slightest. But, I can recognise the commitment and expertise of others and appreciate it. I remember being particularly struck by the benefits of serious pruning. No pussyfooting about, no tinkering at the edges but some serious cutting back, fairly severe pruning that perhaps caused you to wonder if the poor bush would ever recover. In time, the benefits became apparent – with the resultant growth and blooms showing the advantage of closer connection to the roots, greater access to nutrients and a concentration in health rather than energy being wastefully dissipated. Of course, Jesus was pointing to our need to be rooted in his love, connected, drawing life and strength from him. He just can't foresee us surviving never mind flourishing apart from his love. We are also together in his love. Our connections to one another in love and our respective bonds to Jesus are so important and we need to value and encourage one another. Mind you, we are not responsible for pruning others – though we have to be open to God doing that in us. Our priority is cooperating with God's plans for giving growth to his body, to us and ensuring that we are open to growing in love towards him and to one another, that together we might be better able to show his love to the world.

Praise Mission Praise 54 verses 1 & 3 with chorus.

Pray Lord, the world is in such need of your love and grace. Thank you for your commitment to us not only to love us, but to work in us that we might be better able to love our neighbours. Help us to be open to grow in grace and love towards you and to one another. Help us to understand the importance of living out a relationship of love with Jesus, of being nourished by the gifts of his grace – such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and so much more. In a world that is so deeply divided in so many ways we need these qualities to be able to address the challenges. Help us to be open to your love – not only on special occasions but continuously, to seek to grow in our faith and love, to be open to receive love and encouragement from others and to be eager and generous to show it towards others for your sake. Bless our country as we seek to move out of some of the restrictions that have dominated our lives for well over a year, bless us as we come up to the elections, watch over those who are still coping with the effects of the virus in various ways and help us to build back together in way that is open, understanding and patient – seeking to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. In our prayer walk we remember those who live or work in John Street.

SILENCE

Lord hear our prayers spoken and unspoken and answer them for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.

Notices

To assist those unable to access material via the internet we have established a phone line where people can phone in to hear the mini service or sermon.

01674 902624.

To hear the mini service people just need to dial in and wait. To hear the sermon, after dialling you need to press 1 then #. In either case there is a few seconds delay while the message loads so tell folk not to hang up! If folk press 1 for the sermon before the intro finishes the system doesn't pick up on it and it defaults to the mini service. The message now says wait until after the tone before pressing 1 but give it a few seconds after that and do press # after pressing 1.

Sermon, prayers and news (or links to them) will be uploaded to our website www.oldandstandrews.com and the Old and St Andrew's Facebook page. Feel free to copy this and pass it on to Church members or friends who might not use the web or social media

There has been some relaxation in the covid restrictions affecting Sunday services. The overall cap of 50 in numbers has been removed but we are still required to adhere to 2m social distancing. The seating "spots" in the Church are being adjusted so that we can accommodate some people who are part of the same household or bubble. Until we see how things work out we will still ask people to phone to indicate they are planning to come. Now however you will be asked to indicate how many are coming together eg a couple, or three from one family. You may be asked to sit as a group in a particular area of the Church. The aim is to make it possible to have as many people as we can able to worship together. So while, we are still asking people to phone, I hope you see that things are opening up and there is every chance that we will be accommodate those who, at this time, wish to attend.

There is no indication at the moment about being allowed to sing, but representations are being made.

Anyone displaying any symptoms (or knowing themselves to have been in close contact with someone who has) must not attend worship but stay at home.

IF YOU ARE THINKING OF COMING PLEASE PHONE THELMA ROBB 672263 OR WILLIE SINCLAIR DURING THE WEEK PRIOR TO A PARTICULAR SUNDAY ON 675671 SO THAT WE HAVE AN IDEA OF NUMBERS AND IF YOU ARE COMING AS A BUBBLE, HOW MANY THERE WILL BE IN THE FAMILY GROUP.

Please continue to pray for one another and support where you can and remember that the congregation is united in love wherever we are and however we are worshipping.

Stay safe! May the Lord bless you!

Ian

Rev Dr Ian A McLean