

Church Together

Jesus - I Am The True Vine

23rd January 2022



Welcome

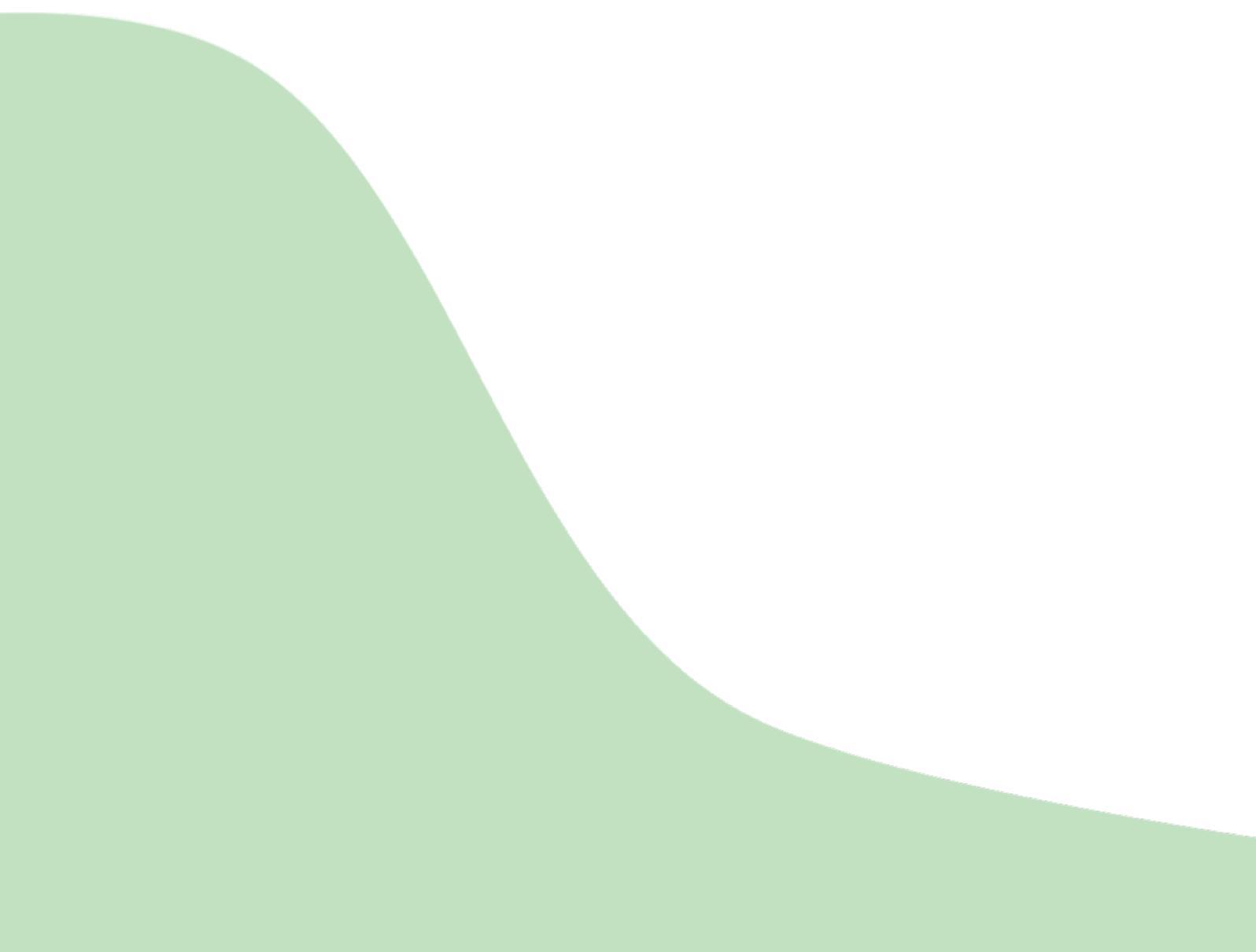
Welcome to **Church Together**.

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together.

Our flexible Sunday worship patterns blend together on - line services, home deliveries and E - mailed copies of Church Together.

Today's Service for this fourth Sunday in 2022 will be looking at: **John 15 v. 1-17**

The theme for today's service is: **Jesus - I Am The True Vine**





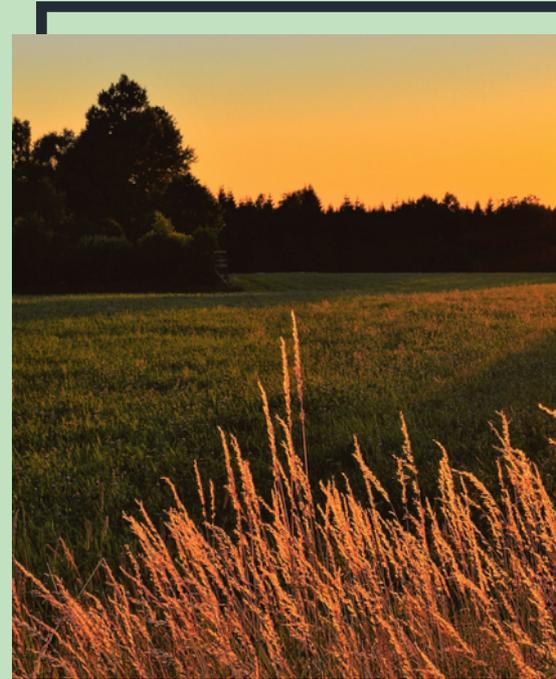
Today's service that is set out in this edition of **Church Together** is looking at **Jesus - I Am The True Vine**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for our **Fourth Sunday Service Of 2022** and that you would indeed **Know That You Are Rooted In Jesus.**

Call To Worship

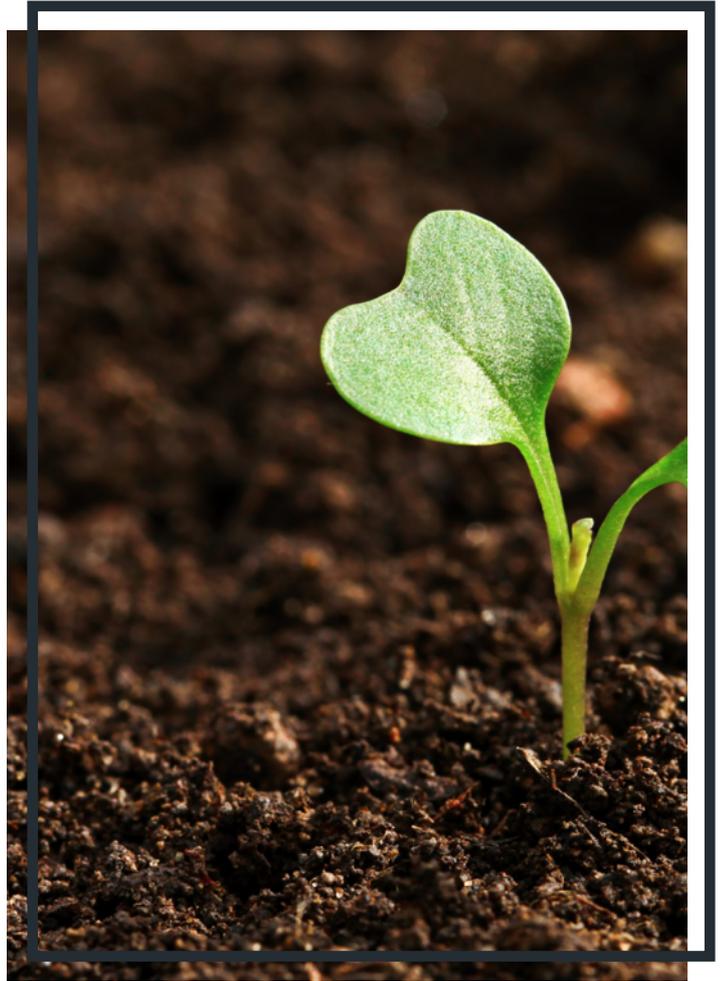
Psalm 92 v. 1 - 4 NLT

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
To sing praises to the Most High.
It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in
the morning,
Your faithfulness in the evening,
Accompanied by the harp and lute
And the harmony of the lyre.
You thrill me, Lord, with all you
have done for me!
I sing for joy because of what
you have done.



Song Suggestion

Morning Has Broken



Opening Prayer

Lord God of Hosts, who is like you? Your strength and faithfulness, Lord, are all around you. You founded the world and all that is in it; your hand is mighty, your right hand lifted high; your throne is founded on righteousness and justice; love and faithfulness are in attendance on you. Happy the people who have learnt to acclaim you. Blessed be the Lord for ever.

Amen

Bible

Reading

John 15 v. 1 – 17 NIV

The Vine and the Branches

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I

have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.



You are my friends if you
do what I command.

—
John 15:14



Song Suggestion

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is
Mine



Jesus loves us like dear friends, and is willing to give everything for us, even His life. He is assuming we, who can do nothing without Him, will come to love Him just as much.



Prayers of Intercession

God of all things, you hold the depths of all that you have created in the palm of your hand. You are closer to us than the air we breathe. We pray that you indeed would fill our lives with your wonderful love and light. May we be grafted into you, knowing that we belong to you and are loved by you. Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light into the world in which you have placed us. Let us never shrink back from who we are in you or hide our light inside ourselves. Loving, Lord Jesus, we pray this day that you would renew in us a deep sense of joy, love, peace and hope that only you can bring to us. Instil within us this day we pray, your love and your salvation.

God of grace and compassion our hearts are full of gratitude as we think of the many blessings in our lives:

Heavenly Father we pray for all those who work in **Education**. For teaching assistants, teachers, lecturers and all those who make education possible. With all the changes that are going on at this present time, we pray for those who are fearful of what the future might hold for them, may they know your strength is always with them.

Loving Lord, we pray for those who work in **Industry and Commerce**. We pray and ask that you will support them

in their daily tasks.

Lord, this day we pray for those who work in **Agriculture**. We pray for farmers who at this time of the year will be seeking to work on their lands and maybe do not have the manpower to get everything done this year. Bless them with labourers for the jobs that need to be done.

Lord our God, we pray for those who have lost their jobs and livelihood. We pray for the unemployed, asking that they may not lose their self - respect, nor their pride, nor their hope.

Lord you are both compassionate and caring and we seek to lift before you all who are suffering from ill health, coronavirus or other ailments. We pray for all those who are concerned, anxious, worried, depressed, lonely, or fearful about the future. We continue to pray for those caring for loved ones, whether that be at home, in care homes or in hospital.

Gracious Lord, we bring before you today those who are bereaved, either recently or sometime ago and for who at the beginning of a New Year brings back memories of loved ones.

Finally Lord, we pray for those who work in the **Medical Profession**. We pray especially for Doctors, Nurses and all those who care for the sick and dying. Give them strength in body, mind and spirit in order to cope with the stresses and strains of all that they do.

Amen

Church Together Thought

In the Old Testament, the vine frequently represents the people of Israel – planted and nurtured by God. The image is often used to show the difference between God’s ideal for his people and the reality of their unfaithfulness.

Jesus’ claim to be the **‘true vine’** is therefore very striking! He is the one whose life has demonstrated perfect obedience and utter reliance on God. In this passage that we have read together, Jesus calls his disciples to share the life he has in the Father. **John 15 v. 9 – 10** says: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love’, and so, Jesus calls his disciples to become one people in him.

Joined by the Spirit

The disciples had been deeply worried when

their master told them he would be going away. Some boasted of their determination to follow him, wherever he went, as we read in **John 13 v. 37**. Others wanted to know more about the likely direction (**John 14 v. 5**)! Jesus assures them that he will not let them down (**John 14 v. 3**) and promises to send the Holy Spirit - the '*one called alongside*'.

His words of reassurance continue through the following two chapters and the activity of the Spirit is further explained in **John 15 v. 26 - 16 v. 15**. It is the Holy Spirit who makes it possible to respond to Jesus' call to remain in him - to be part of him as branches are part of a vine.

One in Christ

Jesus' words in John about the work of the Spirit fall either side of a passage about living in his love and loving one another. We can see a parallel to this in **1 Corinthians 12 and 14** where Paul discusses the gifts of the Holy Spirit either side of his beautiful description of Christian love that is found in **1 Corinthians 13**.

At the heart of the Spirit's activity is the bringing together of all who share in the love of Christ. Paul's concern is for the unity of the Church in the one Spirit. When Jesus prays for his disciples (**John 17**), after reassuring them of the Holy Spirit's presence and calling them to remain in him, one of his

main concerns is that *'they may be one'*.

In his book, **Life Together**, Dietrich Bonhoeffer emphasizes that our unity in Christ is not an ideal we must strive to create, but rather a spiritual reality 'created by God in Christ in which we may participate'. The Holy Spirit is the lifeblood of the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12**), the sap giving life to the branches of the vine.

Fruit of the vine

God desires that our lives be like the fruitful branches of a grapevine. The only way to be fruitful is to remain connected to Jesus, the vine, and to allow God, the gardener, to prune our lives in ways that will stimulate growth and fruitfulness. It is God's cultivating, weeding and pruning in our lives that brings forth spiritual fruit. Just as sustenance for the desired fruit comes through the vine, so fullness of life comes through faith in Jesus Christ. We need to stay close to God in Jesus Christ, the source of our spiritual growth and fruitfulness.

The vine is not cultivated for decoration, but for the practical purpose of producing grapes. The gardener (**v. 1**) has a clear intention - that the branches should bear fruit. And what is the best expression of that fruit?

It's to be found in **John 15 v. 17** when Jesus says: 'Love each other'.

So what does the thought of belonging to 'Jesus the Vine' speak of, for us today? Maybe the following helps us to think that through a bit more.

WE BELONG TO CHRIST

Only Christ can satisfy us; only Jesus can scatter our darkness; only Jesus can (and did) give his life because of his great love for us. We need to ask ourselves; do we belong on his vine (**John 15 v. 4**)? If we do, then **John 15 v. 15**, which says: 'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you'; shows us that Jesus graciously regards us as his friends.

ILLUSTRATION

When astronauts first landed on the moon, Buzz Aldrin asked mission control in Houston for a few moments of silence for each person listening to give thanks in his own individual way. For Buzz, this meant taking communion. Afterwards he wrote: 'I opened the little plastic packages which contained bread and wine. I poured wine into the chalice my parish had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine curled slowly and gracefully up the cup. It was interesting to think that the very first liquid

ever poured on the moon, and the first food eaten there, were consecrated elements. Just before I partook of the elements, I read the words which I had chosen to indicate our trust that as man probes into space, we are in fact acting in Christ. I sensed especially strongly my unity with our church back home, and with the Church everywhere. I read: **"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me."**

WE NEED EACH OTHER

In **John 15 v. 9 – 12** we see that genuine, unconditional love overflows from the abundant love that God has shown us. It is only when we experience and remain in God's love (shared by people we trust and respect) can we genuinely love ourselves and others. God's joy is made complete in us when we experience his love in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

Even those whose inner resources are best replenished in solitude, not partying, need other people to whom they belong to. **John 15 v. 12 – 14** reflect this when we read what Jesus instructs his disciples to do. Jesus says: 'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I

command.

ILLUSTRATION

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
No hands but yours, no feet but yours;
Yours are the eyes through which is to look
out

Christ's compassion to the world;
Yours are the feet with which he is to go
about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless
men now.

St Teresa of Avila, 16th century

WE ARE CALLED TO BEAR GOOD FRUIT

God the Father is the gardener. Gardeners know that fruit is improved when side - shoots are shortened at an early stage. Diseased or dead wood has to be cut out. Jesus reflects on this when he says to his disciples in **John 15 v. 2, 3**: 'He (*that is the Father*) cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you'. Remaining close to Christ, so that he is also 'at home' in us, means that we have to be obedient to him (**v. 10, 16, 17**), especially over how we relate to others. **We are reminded of this in John 15 v. 10, 16, 17** which says: 'If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love,

just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last - and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other'.

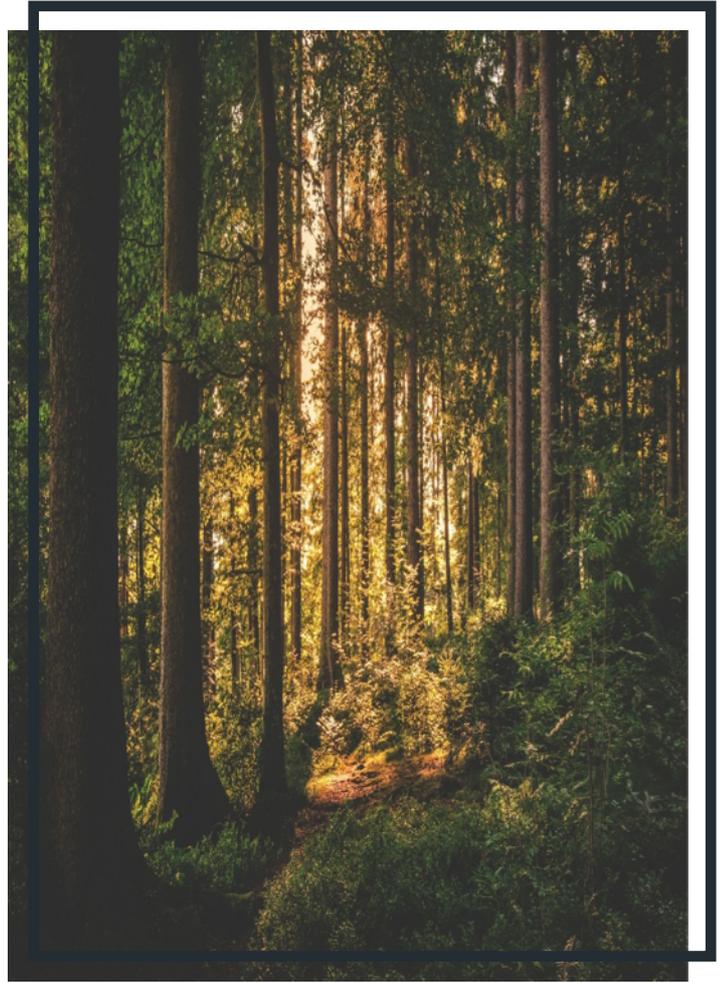
ILLUSTRATION

A lady by the name of Margaret Old once wrote: "I once had a grapevine. One spring, its buds failed to burst into leaf. Scraping the bark showed no sign of life. Why had it died? A neighbour, whose patio was only a few feet away from the main stem of the vine, had needed to carry out drainage work. In the excavations, the main root of the vine must have been fatally damaged. No root, no living branch; no living branch, no fruit!"

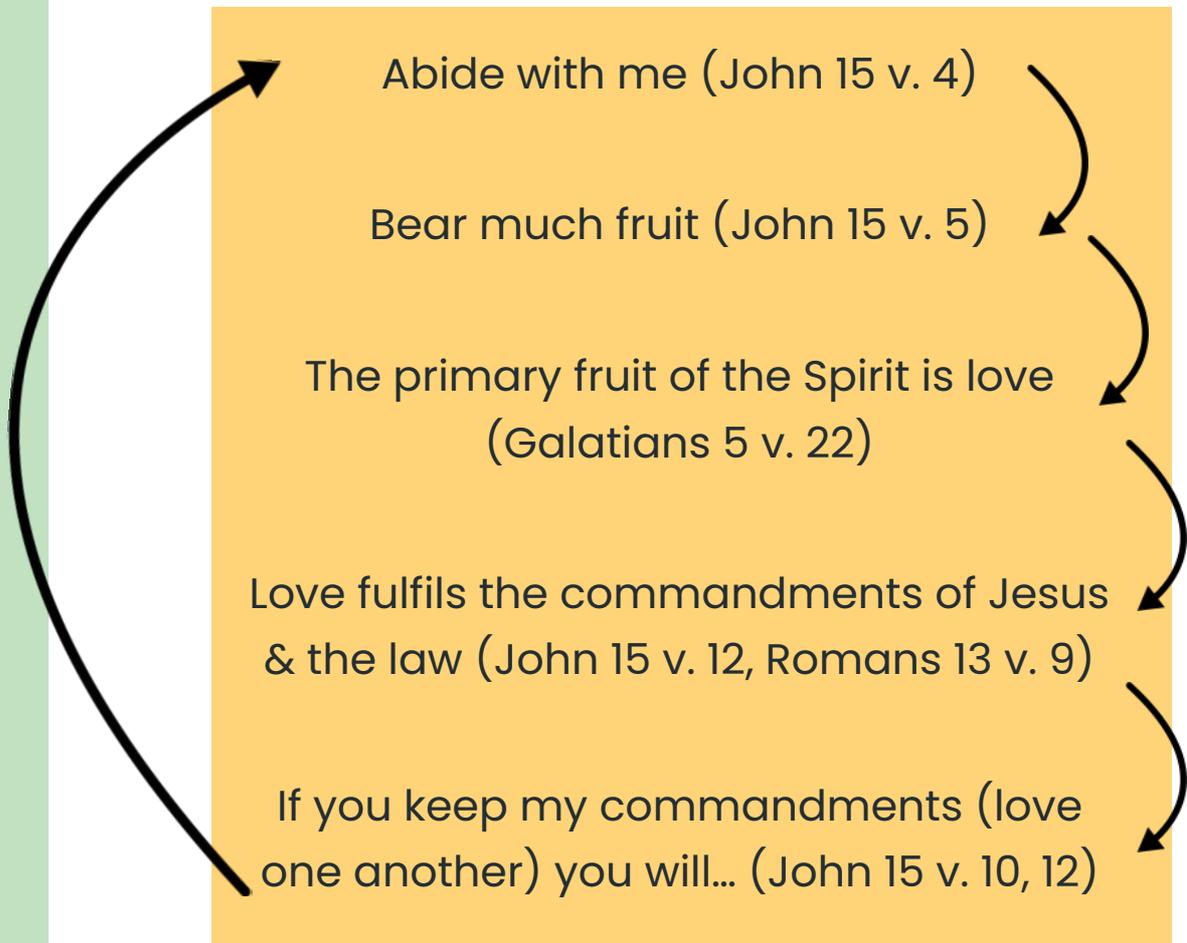
Let's be rooted in Christ, joined in fellowship with each other and sharing in the Good News of his Kingdom here on earth.

Song Suggestion

Bind Us Together, Lord



Abiding With Jesus



Abide	Remain in fellowship with, reliance upon and obedience to the Lord Jesus Speaks of the our requirement to see fruit
In Me	It's all about Jesus, not us! Speaks of the One whose life makes it all possible
Bear Fruit	Character, changed life, good works, thankfulness Speaks of the result that brings God glory

Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

Now that we find ourselves once again holding services in Church, we are able to give of our finances to the work of the Lord when we are in church.

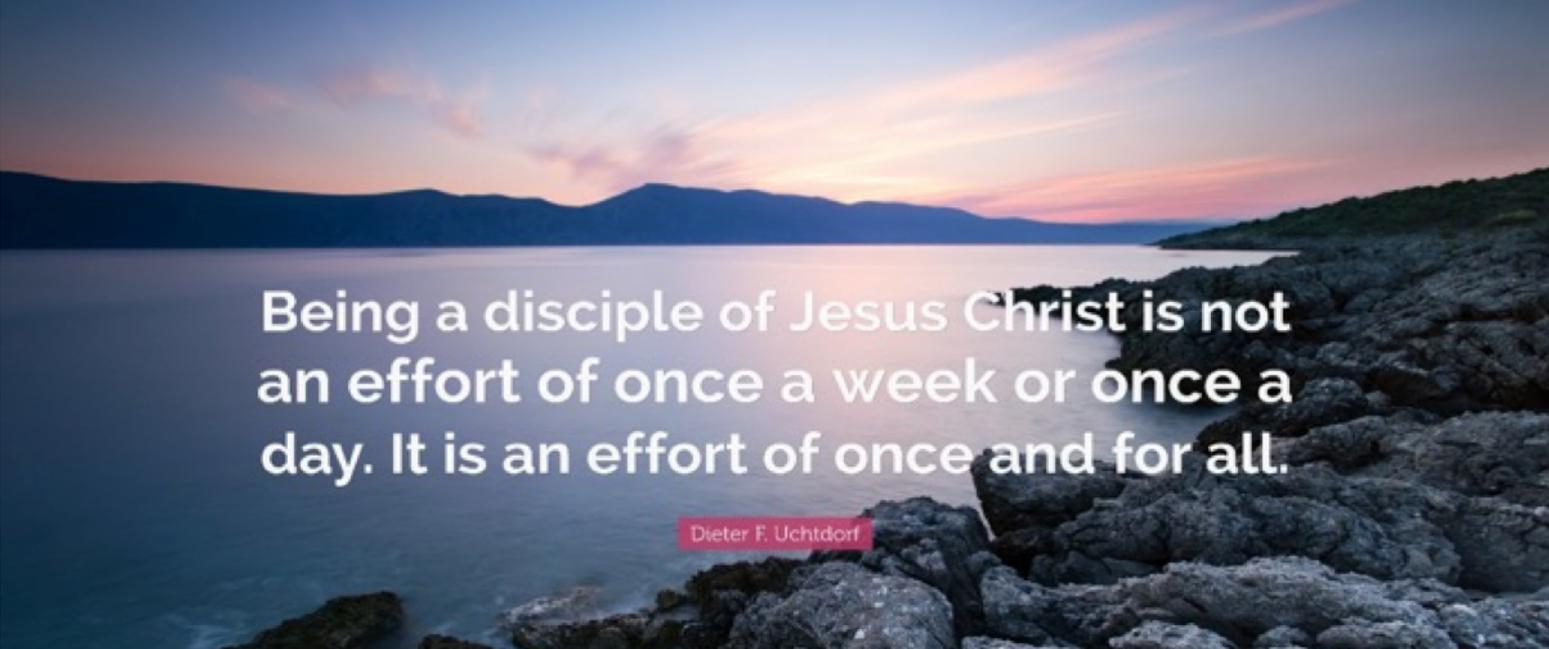
If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
And the glory, forever and ever.

Amen

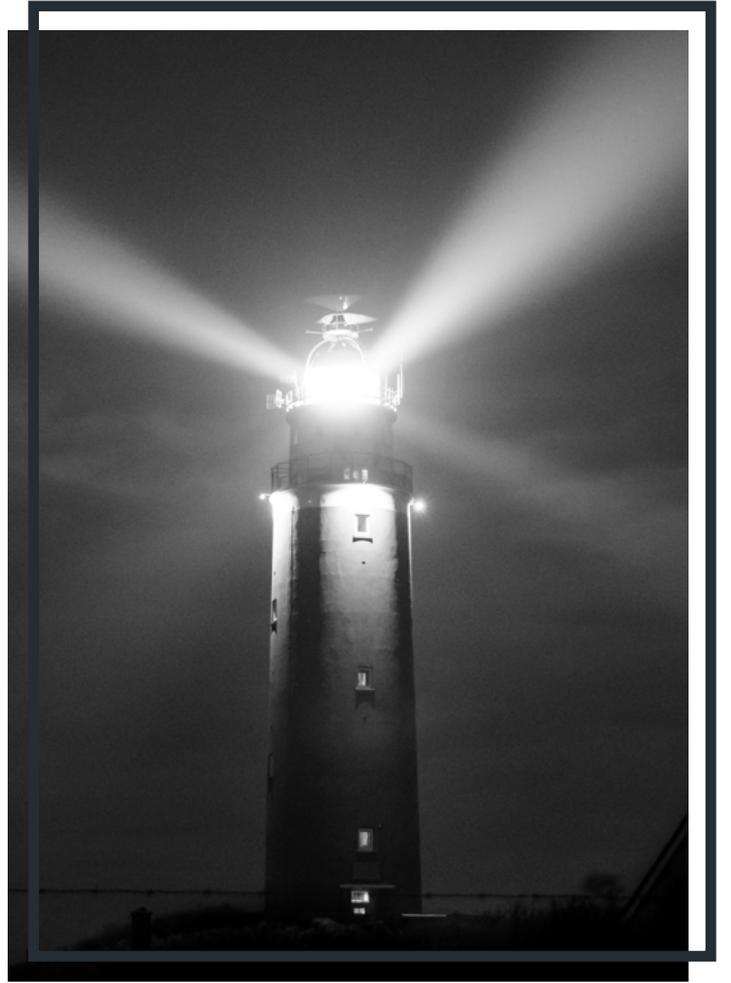


Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not an effort of once a week or once a day. It is an effort of once and for all.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Song Suggestion

Great Is Thy Faithfulness



Blessing



May you be strong to grasp,
with all God's people,
what is the breadth and length and
height and depth of the love of Christ,
and to know it, though it is beyond
knowledge. So may you attain to the
fullness of being,
the fullness of God himself.

Ephesians 3 v. 18, 19

Amen

