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Dear Friends,

*...I am the vine, and my Father is the vinegrower...
Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit (John 15)*

The long wait is over and this Sunday our churches in The Parishes of Radyr, St Fagans & Michaelston-super-Ely reopen for public worship. There will be services at 9.15am in St John's, 10am in St Mary's and 11am in Christ Church and our 8am and 6pm services will be reintroduced very soon. Whilst we continue to pray for those who have lost loved ones, the decline in Covid infections, the effectiveness of the vaccination programme and the gradual easing of restrictions is cause for celebration. I do hope you will return to your parish church where I can assure you that social distancing, thorough sanitisation and mask wearing will provide a safe and secure worship environment once again.

Jesus gathers his disciples around him one last time. The feet are washed, the meal is eaten Judas has gone out into the darkness and Jesus prepares his closest friends for his death. He tries to give them courage and the assurance of his presence and guidance. Using familiar images he also speaks of judgment. Israel knew herself to be God's own vineyard, planted and cared for by her Maker yet they had failed to be fruitful by focussing on themselves rather than the needs of others. So when Jesus says "I am the true vine" he is challenging the children of Israel to amend their ways and bear fruit in their lives. Jesus recognises that without God he can do nothing. His listeners would have known only too well that the best grapes on a vine are those growing closest to the centre and the straggler and straying branches must be pruned so they will bear fruit. Branches that fail to bear fruit are removed by the vine-grower, and even the branches that do bear fruit are pruned so they produce even more fruit. Pruning now creates fruitfulness in the future. "Abide in me as I abide in you" Jesus says pointedly to his friends.



In the past two weeks I have asked you to think, pray and share with me how our parishes could proclaim the gospel afresh in this generation. Thank you to all who have written for you have provided us much to think about. Here are some of your ideas - they are in no particular order:

Many said we should to do more for our young people — comments included:

- Appointing an experienced Youth Leader (for the Ministry Area), providing modified space for crèches, children's groups and services on days and at times better suited to families
- Pet Services, Messy Church, Youth Club
- Make church interesting so children stay after they have a place at the high school!
- Focus on our welcome and find ways to be more sociable after worship ...coffee doesn't work!
- Rejuvenating the choir, drawing in new voices and perhaps even launching a youth choir
- Restarting a "Radyr Parish Music Group"
- More social gatherings (lunches, tea, BBQs, Agape meals, walks, small groups)
- Relaunch and promote concerts, fundraising events and our toddler groups
- Launch a repair cafe - an eco friendly way to recycle/repair/save money
- Re-imagine Sunday worship - less formal, "a bit more modern occasionally"

- Less wordy, non Eucharistic services with music, silence, meditation (people enjoyed the variety of images, modern music and liturgy on Zoom)
- Continue with occasional Zoom services to build relationships across the parishes
- Improve our Social Media presence and digital communications
- Learn how to communicate our faith effectively
- Community projects such as Good Neighbours, Food Banks, supporting overseas Mission
- Projects to show our concern for creation
- Partner with Community Council, WI, Village Hall e.g. gardening/litter picking
- Raising up more volunteers who would give an hour or so a week or fortnight to our grounds - meet up, chat, garden and share coffee and cake afterwards
- A Get-together with the Syrian family to learn each other's culture e.g. Welsh/Syrian cookery
- Joint fund raising events for larger projects
- Pilgrim walks/retreats together
- Actively support the fundraising events of all parishes in the Ministry Area
- Launch a Talent Exchange Register/Forum - individuals offering their talents to help others

Back in 2014 when the Church Research Group published "From Anecdote To Evidence" it found that churches that grew and flourished when clergy and worshippers are intentional about growth. Researchers found growing churches are intentional in mission, actively engaging in their local context, willing to change and adapt, have welcoming cultures, leaders who innovate, envision and motivate, active lay leaders, and who engage children and young people effectively.

Whilst churches, and individuals, who bear fruit tend to do a small number of things well rather than numerous things in a mediocre way the image of The Vine reminds us that those who plant must also prune. There can be no resurrection without death

As we re-open for public worship we face another turning point in the life of The Church. Years of decline followed by lengthy lockdowns and church closures have led us to rethink what it means to be part of God's church today. We know that if we are to survive we must communicate our faith in new ways to a broken and hurting world so that the living vine might grow and flourish.

Yours in Christ

Vicki