

Note from the Pastor

Growing in Christ

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes<sup>[a]</sup> so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> '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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Between the then and the now — or the now and the what's coming next — there is always a time of waiting. This irritates most of us, me included!

I have been reading a book called 'An Unhurried Leader', The writer returns and centre's upon Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-17. Jesus' words are key for understanding how we thrive in our spiritual life and in particular different seasons of life. The image of God being a gardener is apt because while you are waiting, this is when God is still working. When you are waiting for the fulfilment of the efforts or energy that you have put into something, you may think nothing's happening.

While that seed is hidden in the ground, it is slowly germinating, the ground is being weeded and the gardener is taking care of the seed. And when that seed bursts with God's blessing on it, one day a little shoot will stick up out of the ground, and then you will see that it's working. Until then, you need to trust that God is working — even when you can't see the fruit of your labour.

Plants take time to grow. There's no such thing as instant maturity. No farmer goes out, plants the seed in the ground, comes back an hour later, digs it up, and expects it to have grown. You've just got to let it be. Leave it covered, and let God grow it in his time.

That's the start of birthing fruit in our life, but the process doesn't end there. There is a warning that if we don't remain in him, then our efforts will become worthless, thrown away. Jesus' main feature in this reading is about remaining in him. This is explained further in the latter part of the reading as meaning obedience, love and trust as we walk with Jesus. The image of pruning is part of that process too. Remaining in Christ is surrendering those parts of us that need cutting off. I'm not a gardener by any means, but I know enough that without pruning a tree can be prevented from bearing the fruit it has within it. The same for us too. When we trust in God's nurturing abilities we are able to bear more fruit in loving others, loving God, trusting God in the waiting and walking faithfully, even when we can't see ahead.

Pastor David

**Live Zoom Sunday Church Service, 9.45 for 10am**

**'Vision – Social Transformation and Justice'**

The code, password and telephone numbers needed to join have been circulated to all and can also be found on the Beulah Family Facebook page. **If you log in from 9.30 am there is an opportunity to meet in small groups until 9.55 am when we will all be together again for the service.**

## **The reopening of the church building for Sunday services**

Dear Beulah family

We plan to open the building for Sunday worship from Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup>. The overriding consideration in doing this is the safety of all who attend. The Elders and Deacons met on Tuesday morning and gave very careful consideration to all the risk assessments that had been drawn up in line with government and BU guidelines.

The first few weeks will be very much 'see how it goes' and we will learn and change things as we need to but we wanted those who are considering coming to be clear about what to expect. This will not be 'church' as normal but it is an opportunity to meet with God together. Just like Zoom meetings, it is far from ideal but an awful lot better than not connecting at all. However, technology permitting, we plan to link the 'live' church with those attending on Zoom.

Please read the following information carefully.

### **If you plan on attending, you will need to**

- a) reserve a seat in advance
- b) follow the instructions of the stewards at all times

### **How to reserve a seat**

If you want to attend, you will need to phone the church office between 9.00am and 1.00pm Monday to Friday to book a seat. You will be asked for the following information

- a. Your name
- b. Whether you will be coming on your own or with others from your 'social bubble' This means either people in your own household or with whom you have formed a support bubble ( an exclusive relationship with one other household)- you cannot change this from week to week!
- c. If you have any needs of which we should be aware when we are allocating your seat i.e do you need a chair with arms? Will you be in a wheelchair, are you able to manage steps?

You will be instructed **not** to come if you are at all unwell or have a high temperature, a new, continuous cough a loss of, or change to, your sense of taste or smell.

You will be instructed that you will need to wear a face mask or face covering at all times in the building. If you have a medical exemption, you will be asked to bring the letter with you the first time you come and we will then keep a record for future weeks.

### **Please note**

Places are limited. From Monday to Wednesday each week priority will be given to those who are unable to join the services via zoom. All places not allocated by Wednesday lunchtime will be allocated on the basis of first come first served.

It will be necessary to call each week for the following Sunday. Don't assume that because you come one week you will automatically be given a place for the next- you won't!

### **What to expect when you arrive.**

1. All those arriving will be asked to queue along the walls from either the Buckhurst or Clifford road end maintaining 2m distance. Entrance will only be via the Clifford road door.
2. A member of the welcome team will greet you at the beginning of the church path and take your temperature! If it should be high you will be advised to return home and call NHS111 for advice.
3. If you are not already wearing your mask you will be asked to put it on before entering the building (we will have spares in case you have left yours at home).
4. On entering the building another member of the welcome team will remind you to sanitise your hands - two automatic dispensers are available.

5. You will be invited to enter the church by the first (East) door where a steward will greet you and guide you to your seat. All seats will have been allocated when you booked – please be gracious and take the seat you have been offered. If you move, the seat you have vacated would need to be sanitised before anyone else could use it and we don't have anyone to do this.
6. Those within a bubble will be seated together. Everyone else will be seated either on their own in a pew or at one end of a pew with one other person at the other end- however tempting we are asked not to move nearer to each other or to talk to those around you.
7. A one -way system will operate. You will enter through the door nearest the Clifford Road and exit through the door into Buckhurst Road (see below with regard to those who cannot manage the stairs to that exit).
8. If you arrive without having booked beforehand, and there are spare seats, you will be asked for your name and a contact number, and to follow the instructions above.

### **Please note**

The stewards and welcoming team are following the instructions of the Elders and Deacons who are legally responsible for your safety. Please do as you are asked. We are trying to keep everyone safe!

### **For your safety**

The pew cushions have been removed as they are impossible to clean quickly. Please bring your own cushion if you need one.

The church bibles have been removed for the same reason. Please bring your own.

The offering bags have also been removed. The offering will be received on leaving the church in an appropriate receptacle.

The Beulah Centre is completely out of bounds (other than to exit the building in the case of fire) as that part of the building remains a building site.

There will be no singing.

The only toilets available will be those by the Buckhurst Room (accessible only down a short flight of steps.) Initially, to simplify cleaning, we are asking anyone who needs the facilities to use the unisex toilet.

### **When it's time to leave**

At the end of the service you will be asked to remain in your seat until asked to leave by a steward. Exiting the Buckhurst Road door involves walking down steps. If this is not possible for you, you are asked to remain seated. The stewards will let you know when the way is clear for you to leave by the Clifford Road door.

On leaving the building please disperse quickly. It is very important we are a good witness to our neighbours and not seen to put ourselves or them at risk by gathering together outside church. The welcomers will be on hand to remind you of this.

This will be 'church' for the immediate future. It won't be 'church' as we remember it. But the Elders and Deacons are trying their best to provide 'church' as well as we can in the present.

**Thank you for your patience.**