

Jan 2, 2022 – Covenant – circuit online

Hymns:

I am no longer mine (Matt Beckingham),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xANAUdouuk>

Great is thy faithfulness – StF 51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLsGGPFsufQ>

Take this moment — StF 513, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFYt0S2UFDU>

Purify my heart — StF 508, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKfuZVWr-8I>

Come, let us use the Grace Divine – StF 549

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf0J_tOIB3Y

O Thou Who Camest – StF 564, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzjkNAb2EFg>

Scriptures:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Romans 12:1-2

John 15:1-11

==ORDER OF SERVICE ==

Preservice music: I am no longer mine (Matt Beckingham),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xANAUdouuk>

Call to worship — BBP

Great is thy faithfulness – StF 51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLsGGPFsufQ>

Prayer – Methodist Worship Book, 282ff, ppt slides 1-5

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Take this moment — StF 513, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFYt0S2UFDU>

Romans 12:1-2

Purify my heart — StF 508, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKfuZVWr-8I>

John 15:1-11

Meditation/Interview with Chris Chare — Being nurtured in the Vine — bearing Fruit

Covenant Intro and Confessions – MW 285-6, ppt slides 6-11

Come, let us use the Grace Divine (MW287),

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf0J_tOIB3Y

Covenant Prayer – MW 287-9, ppt slides 13-18

Intercessions – MW 290-1—Chris Chare, ppt slides 19-21

O Thou Who Camest – StF 564, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzjkNAb2EFg>

Benediction — BBP — ppt slide 22

Deuteronomy 29: 10-15

You stand assembled today, all of you, before the LORD your God—the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water—to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, sworn by an oath, which the LORD your God is making with you today; in order that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the LORD our God, but also with those who are not here with us today.

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the LORD’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, By the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

John 15:1-11

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.

²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.

Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

⁴Abide in me as I abide in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

⁵I am the vine, you are the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Interview with Chris Chare

BBP: I've been thinking about this reading from John
and how it speaks about our 'connectedness' with the Vine — with God —
about how being 'Connected' can mean being aware of God's presence
like the branches are connected with the Vine — whether 'branches' have awareness!
Perhaps we only recognise branches are disconnected
When they begin to die...

About how we are 'Nourished' like a branch when we are connected
When we are receiving God's divine flow, like sap flowing through us
About how being 'Connected' and 'Nourished' is revealed in 'Producing' —
Producing fruit that emerges from the sap/divine flow ...
And the 'Fruits of the Spirit' are: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control,
endurance, faithfulness, goodness, generosity

This scripture comes to us today as we're talking about Covenant —
Which we as Methodists understand as both a personal and a collective exercise —
A kind of 'stock taking' which we do personally — but in the presence of others.
Usually we use the text from Deuteronomy which sets the scene
of Moses calling all the people together to consider together —
We haven't used that one today because we're not able to physically gather together —
So I'm wondering: How do we stay connected in times of pandemic?

[Chris response]

Covenant as a time to 'take stock' —
What's growing?
Which of the fruits of the Spirit are flourishing?
What needs fertilising?
What's died and needs to be cut back?
If this becomes 'compost', what might it nourish for the future?
What needs pruning? — perhaps it has grown so rapidly that it's taking all the energy
Do I need to be moved/transplanted in order to flourish?

You are I were speaking earlier about how this might apply to our churches —
And the 'traffic light' evaluations we've been asked to do,
Which seem to also reflect whether our churches are producing 'fruit' —
Though sometimes that just seems to be a matter of numbers,
And it's hard to put a 'number' on peace and patience and joy —
Yet we also realise that these are the spiritual qualities that attract others,
So perhaps rating a church's 'fruit' in terms of the Fruits of the Spirit
Is not such a bad idea!

“Listen, my people, here is my challenge:
Can you be loving as I love you?
Those who offend you, hurt or ill-treat you,
Like you God’s children, they’re precious too!”

Do you mean us, Lord? Can it be done, Lord?
Self-giving love that looks for no gain?
If you’ll stay close we’ll give it a try, Lord,
Showing your mercy, sharing your pain.

“Listen, my people, here is my challenge:
Can you forgive as I forgive you?
Those who have failed you, pained or betrayed you,
Do not condemn, you’ve all done it too.”

Do you mean us, Lord? Can it be done, Lord?
You will repay, so leave it to you?
Help us to trust and let you be judge, Lord.
As you forgive, may we forgive too.

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