**Morning Praise @ Home 30th June 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading John 15: 1 – 12

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**Reflection from John**

Today is Burton Open Gardens Weekend with a mixture of

* Well established gardens
* New Gardens

The truth is that whether we have a new garden or one that is well established BOTH are constantly evolving, changing and requiring attention.

The same is true of a Church – a Congregation – a Community of Christians. EVEN THE WELL-ESTABLISHED HAS TO ADAPT AND EVOLVE.

Our Bible Reading **JOHN 15: 1 – 12** uses the image of a vineyard, a vineyard needing attention, and makes exactly the same point: every garden - every vineyard - every church - every Christian needs to constantly adapt and be transformed.

Last week, I had to go to Birkenhead Docks.

It’s a place that in the past has flourished and died. Over a long time it has adapted and declined and it is now going through significant change to flourish in multiple ways.

It is far from finished. It is messy. It’s a mixture of decay and new beginnings. It’s dynamic and needing serious attention - just like a garden.

I was there to meet a Church leader and to discover the changes happening as they seek to establish a new Congregation alongside an established Church. This is a significant venture initiated by Chester Diocese.

We talked about the Minister and her dual role.

We talked about the congregation, starting with herself and her husband.

It meets on a Wednesday evening. They meet in a sales office. It’s not perfect but it’s warm with a kitchen and a loo. Let me explain how they are evolving.

* Worship
* Teaching
* Training to follow Jesus
* New ministries
* Discovering their vision together
* Connecting with an emerging wider community

We talked about those who have joined them - they are like a new garden BUT the truth is that whilst some in this new Church family have no church background others have come from other churches and want to be part of something that has life about it. Some have been de-churched many years ago.

There is a phrase ***everyone gets to play****,* which encapsulates how the church is meant to function – everyone, not just the professional clergy, learning to live the way that Jesus did, with the Holy Spirit empowering us to do so.

In Birkenhead docks I saw something that was full of challenges and full of promise. I saw something old adapting alongside something new. I saw life. I saw God’s Garden.

And I wondered and hankered after that same dynamic happening in our well-established garden here.

Someone explained recently that every time the Church has been transformed in the past 2000 years three key factors have been happening which speak of pruning and new life.

* An external crisis - the surrounding culture and the church’s life have drifted apart.
* An inner conviction - a growing conviction among God’s people that we need God to move.
* There’s God-given momentum - signs of the Spirit moving in fresh ways.

What could that look like here? Birkenhead and Burton are very different places but in essence they are the same. God needs a free hand to work his vineyard. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Amanda**

Father, we pray for your Church locally, nationally and world-wide. We pray for our shared mission to your world. We pray for open eyes and open hearts for those who need to hear your message of grace. We pray for kindness among our faith communions, and joy in shared fellowship in you.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Father, we lift before you the leaders of the nations. We are confident that You sovereignly place every leader and that You have marked the days for which You use them for Your purposes. By Your mighty hand we pray that You would be merciful to our nation to work in the hearts of those to whom You give authority. We pray for peace. We pray for unity. But whether in conflict or unity we are confident that You are implementing Your plan and accomplishing Your will. Lord God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our country and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Jesus, we ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity, especially those who are victims of abuse and violence, deceit and poverty. We ask for ears that will hear the cries of troubled children, men and women oppressed because of race or religion or gender. We ask for minds and hearts that are open to responding to need where it exists.

We take a moment to pray silently for those we know who are hurting, struggling, in need and in want of you.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

God of love, we praise you for the magnificence of creation and both marvel at its grandeur and the intricacies of its smallest life forms. As we reflect on your creation, help us to take in its true significance. This is your work in which you have invested deeply of yourself, the outpouring of your creativity. So we ask you instil in us a proper reverence for all that you have made - a genuine respect for all environments and all creatures. Lord we are in awe of the formidable power of nature but, in these times, may we also come to comprehend its complex fragility.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Mighty God, your love reaches beyond the grave. At the end of our days on earth be with us and with those we love and have gone before us.

We pray now for the family and friends of those who have recently died.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today 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***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**