

Pruning

Welcome to our reflection for Church without Walls

Here are some ideas of how to use these reflections:

Pray that God will lead your thoughts.

Sit comfortably, take a few deep breaths and relax.

Let your mind wander as you read the reflection.

Write down your thoughts in a notebook. If you are busy, try and pick out something to take with you in odd moments during the day.

You may wish to memorise the Bible verse. Write it out and stick it up somewhere.

Bible Verse

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
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.*

(John 15: 1-2)



Reflection

On my daily walks I've seen many people cutting back their shrubs and hedges. The cutting back, at this time, is necessary because of nature's wildly exuberant growth – of which we may also be glad. Pruning brings a sense of normality – it's what we always do – and of order restored, which is very welcome. In a pandemic we are still able to control this, at least. Those of us longing for a haircut may slightly envy the trimmed shrubs!

It is interesting to remember too that we often cut back flowering plants quite harshly at this time because the hard cut will give rise, in the weeks ahead, to a more abundant flowering than might otherwise have been the case. As a result of Covid 19, many plans, hopes and expectations have been cut off; weddings, sporting events and commemorations cancelled, livelihoods taken away, studies cut short, exams cancelled. The list could go on. And yet I am amazed and humbled at the response of many people to this harsh pruning. Restaurants have produced meals and transported them to those in need. The furloughed have volunteered. Neighbours have become friends and helpers. The plans and expectations of teachers have been cut back and yet we have observed a flowering of dedication and skill among them, as they transform their working environment and re-plan their lessons in order to welcome pupils back into school in the best possible way.

Are there examples of flowering and fruitfulness that you have observed? You might write them down or keep a newspaper cutting to remind you of the kindness and resilience you have seen. Allow yourself to be inspired.

The above Bible verse always reminds me of afternoons in the garden with my own father, who taught me to prune a vine, explaining as he went what he was doing and why.

The main pruning time for vines is in the early winter but in spring and summer the excess of new growth needs to be controlled and taken back, so that a reduced number of branches will produce the optimum number of bunches of grapes. The little tendrils that the vine shoots out, which are unproductive, can be nipped off, because they only sap energy. Can you think of things in your life which are unproductive and sap energy? What needs to be nipped off? You might ask God to help you discern this. What might flower in its place? My father gave me some good advice. Can you think of good advice that you have received in the past or more recently. Do you value it?

In plant terms, pruning leads to strengthening and new growth. Can you see signs of this around you in nature and perhaps within yourself too?

Lindsay Farley