

Reshaping Church

Throughout the generations church constantly has been adapting language and action to the culture. Modern church offers choices from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, 1980 Alternative Services and Common Worship. More recent years includes Fresh Expression such as Messy Church and Pioneers. Reshaping involves necessary pruning of the letting go, the continuation and introducing new ways.

Here we are in 2020 refocusing on Christ during Covid-19 and post Covid-19. An opportunity to equip people to discover or rediscover God in the midst of this global crisis. One way St Mary's is embracing this is through Charlie's Wild Church. Charlie is inspiring us to connect or reconnect with God's redeeming love reaching into the whole of creation. Her vision draws us to search for the sacred place that belongs outdoors. Often with amazing discovery. One Wild Church at the end of May Charlie connected leaves with light. This took me on journey beyond the session that still continues today.

We were invited to go for a walk. Along the way collect about 12 leaves.



My days of going for a walk have passed. Luckily we inherited a garden in which the previous owner had planted numerous trees.

As I gathered the leaves it was not long before I found myself spending a few moments pondering; Do I want this leaf? How different is it from the others I have collected? Though I had no idea at this point what the activity was going to be I had a deep sense my leaves needed to be very different.

What also struck me was how the trees had grown.

When the young saplings had been planted close to each other they had as much light as they wanted. Growing into maturity they end up fighting over this precious light.



Branches invade other species. Trunks grow sideways.

Sometimes I had to search back to the roots to discover which leave came from which tree.

The activity was to make a collage and then hang it on the window and watch the light penetrate through the leaves.

The picture below shows how I overlapped my leaves. Rather pleased with myself that I had filled every available space.



All I can see is darkness.

This next picture is the same but hanging on the window.

What an amazing transformation. The amount of light shining through and around each leaf.



What once was hidden is no longer.

Trying to refocus on Christ in order to reshape church will mean sometimes it feels we are leaves in darkness.



Time waiting and watching for that glimmer of light does not disappoint.

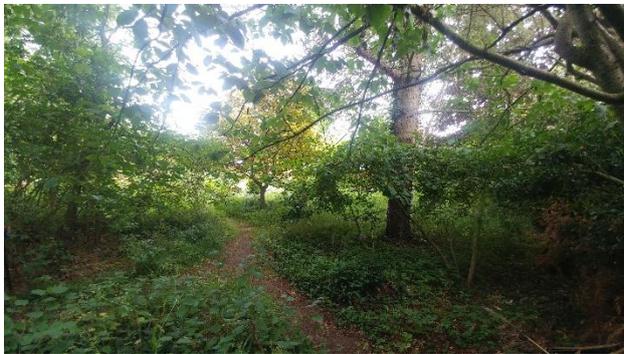
Here you see the same picture taken four weeks later. The leaves are still there occupying the same space. Only more consumed by light.

"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples. [John 15:1-8]

Our overcrowded garden has taken 10 years of difficult and painful decisions. In reshaping the garden the trees that remain are once again healthy and flower in abundance. We are rewarded as the light shines through enabling us to see their rich colours.



Even our wild area now has abundance of new life.

We also have planted new trees more appropriate for the conditions and in the correct space to survive.

The most valuable consequence of pruning is growth. Wild Church is the sacred space in action both inside and outside reflecting God’s love and goodness.

We may grow differently but our roots stay as one.

