



**September 6th 2020**

This morning's service is one of a series of joint services for the Church of Scotland congregations in the town. This act of worship has been prepared to allow us all to spend some time with God, knowing that others are sharing in it. Today we are joined by the congregation of Penicuik's Episcopal Church, St James the Less. The service is led by Rev Peter Wood, of Penicuik South with Howgate, and Rev Nick Bowry of St James.

We thank all involved in creating and distributing this service, and praise God for his unchanging character and unfailing love.

This order of service is for you to use as you are able: some of you may wish simply to read it, whether silently or aloud. Others may wish to listen, and even join in with the singing: just click on the links. If you want to join in the whole service, you'll find it here <https://youtu.be/3qNNFnnKMUE>

If you would like to listen to just the sermon and a prayer, dial 01968 700121 : there will be about 20 seconds' silence, after which the recording should start. NB The phone recording of the sermon is an abridged version – the full sermon is available on YouTube.

**WELCOME and INTRODUCTION: Rev Peter Wood**

Good morning.

Well, thanks for taking time to join with Christians across Penicuik as we reflect, pray and sing praise to the maker of this wonderful world.

Back in June we had a service in which we celebrated the glory of God in creation. It's great to look into creation to help us think about the beauty and mystery of this God given life.

Jesus often related his teaching to the natural world around him.

To fishermen, to farmers, to gardeners, to growers...

At this time of year many of us are needing to sort out our gardens in preparation for winter and new growth next year.

So this month we are reading part of John 15 and our theme is Pruning for Growth.

### **OPENING WORDS (Rob and Brenda Bellis, PNK)**

We light a light in the name of the maker

**Who lit the world and breathed the breath of life in us.**

We light a light in the name of the Son

**Who saved the world and stretched out his hand to us.**

We light a light in the name of the Spirit

**Who encompasses the world and blesses our soul with yearning.**

We light three lights for the trinity of love:

**God above us, God beside us, God beneath us;**

**The beginning, the end the everlasting One.**

### **Opening praise: Come down, O love divine**

Watch video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLjaslOT8TA>

1 Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with your own ardor glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2 Then let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let your glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and make my pathway clear, by your illuming.

3 Let holy charity  
my outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become my inner clothing;  
true lowliness of heart  
which takes the humbler part,  
and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong  
with which the soul will long

shall far surpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace  
till we become the place  
in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

*Bianco da Siena (fl.1367 - 1434) adapted by Richard F Littledale (1833 - 1890) © Jubilate Hymns Ltd*

### **FRUIT (Peter Wood PSK&H)**

Juicy, squidgy, ripe, colourful, exotic, good for you, vitamin C,  
Fruit!

#### **What words would you use to describe it?**

Fruit is great, isn't it!

Spanish peaches,

Kenyan mangos,

Scottish raspberries.

#### **What's your favourite fruit and why?**

#### **Can you name a fruit for every letter of the alphabet?**

Try it and see!

Give yourself 30 seconds!

Apricot, blueberries, cherry, damson, elderberry, fig, grapes, honeydew melon ... I??  
jackfruit, kumquat, lemon, mandarin, nectarine, olive, papaya, quince, raspberry,  
satsuma, tangerine, ugli fruit, **V**???... water melon, **X**???...yucca, zucchini... ???

#### **What fruits can you think of in the bible?**

It's a bit of a struggle beyond the deadly apple to think of many, but there are 34  
verses in the NT about our lives producing spiritual fruit.

We are going to hear one these (John 15) where Jesus talks about cutting back  
areas of our lives which are not producing fruit.

And the fruit that John speaks about is the love of God.

That God's love in us might grow, might flourish might produce a harvest.

#### **SONG: We see the fruitful harvest**

Watch video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMpM65Ez2hc>

We see the fruitful harvest

our gracious God provides,

and how, in his abundance,

our needs are satisfied.

He sends the yearly seasons,

and feeds with joy and care;

pure light and living water  
poured out for all to share.

*Lord of all the harvest,  
creation brings you praise,  
so we will join the joyful song  
of everything you've made.*

This world of revelation  
unfolds before our eyes,  
the birds sing out God's glories,  
his wisdom fills the skies.  
The seeds are sown to teach us  
of death that leads to life.  
The fruitful trees remind us  
to live each day in Christ.

There is another harvest,  
the workers are so few.  
We'll tend the seeds he's planted  
and see his word bear fruit.  
Creation groans in longing  
for earth to be restored,  
that day of celebration:  
the harvest of the Lord.

*© Sam Hargreaves / Resound Worship, Administered by Jubilate Hymns Ltd -  
[copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk](mailto:copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk) CCL# 7131467*

## **READINGS (Wilma Wilson, PSK&H)**

### **Psalm 1**

O, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with scoffers,  
That they will delight in doing everything the Lord wants.

Day and night they will think about his law.  
They are like trees planted along the riverbank  
bearing fruit each season without fail.  
Their leaves never wither  
and in all they do they prosper.

But this is not true of the wicked:

they are like worthless chaff scattered by the wind;  
they will be condemned at the time of judgement.  
Sinners will have no place among the godly,  
for the Lord watches over the path of the godly  
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

### **John 15: Jesus, the True Vine**

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.  
He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit,  
and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.  
You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you.  
Remain in me, and I will remain in you,  
for a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine,  
and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.

"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey me you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

*Both readings: Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.*

### **REFLECTIONS (1): Nick Bowry and Dave Owen (both StJ) Peter Wood (PSK&H)**

**Nick:** Dave Owen is an expert gardener. In his short tutorial on how to prune a fruiting bush, Dave explained why pruning was essential. There were three main reasons: Firstly, in order that the bush can grow good quality fruit, the productive branches need to be carefully pruned back. There needs to be sufficient new growth from which flowers and fruiting buds can grow strongly, but not so much new growth that there is a proliferation of small and weak fruit. In verses 2 and 3 of the gospel reading we learn that Jesus, the true vine, needs pruned so that any branches that bear fruit can bear more good quality fruit.

In our individual lives and in our lives as congregations, we need to be mindful about how much we can do. Doing 'more' isn't often a productive and sensible option. We need to decide to cut back on something we are doing in order to have the resources to take on something else and do it well. Are you someone who needs to prune back

on activities in order to garner the strength to do things well? Are you over-stretched, and the fruit you can offer will therefore be of lesser quality and put a strain on the branch that bears the fruit? I have an apple tree like that this year, over-burdened with small fruit, with several branches bowing down to the ground and in a strong wind, likely to snap. Jesus recognised the need to prune back, so we should do too.

Secondly, Dave mentioned that for a fruiting bush to be healthy, all the old deadwood needed to be cut away, old growth was not productive and could lead to disease.

Anything that is dead, anything that is not productive and could lead to disease needs to be cut out; it is not able to contribute to God's kingdom. We are challenged to consider if there are aspects of our lives which are 'dead to God', that are injurious to our health; physical, mental and spiritual. What do we need to let go of, what do we need to cut out of our lives so that we can be healthy, productive and abide with our Lord as part of the true vine.

Lastly, Dave mentioned that pruning is essential to let healthy light and air reach all parts of the fruiting bush. Without light and air the plant would not thrive and be fruitful. Are there areas of our individual lives and lives as congregations that have become choked up and a bit of a mess? What aspects of our lives could do with being in the light of Christ and cleansed with the breath of wind of the Holy Spirit? What would be cut back, and what may that light and breath of air give us as an impetus to become more fruitful? What would being in a good healthy shape mean for us? How would it enable us to respond as fruitful branches on the true vine?

Pruning is a necessary annual event for fruiting bushes and vines. May I suggest an annual pruning for ourselves would also be a very helpful and productive task.

Contemplate what in your individual lives, and as a community of faith may need pruned; to ensure good quality fruit, to cut out deadwood and reduce the risk for disease, and to cut back the clutter to let in the life-giving light and air of our Lord.

For as our gospel reading says, 'My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'

Now, where are my pruning secateurs, there is work to be done in God's garden.

### **Poem:**

You are called to become  
A perfect creation.  
No one is called to become  
Who you are called to be.

It does not matter  
How short or tall  
Or thick-set or slow  
You may be.

It does not matter  
Whether you sparkle with life

Or are as silent as a still pool.  
Whether you sing your song aloud  
Or weep alone in darkness.  
It does not matter  
Whether you feel loved and admired  
Or unloved and alone  
For you are called to become  
A perfect creation.  
No one's shadow  
Should cloud your becoming.  
No one's light  
Should dispel your spark.  
For the Lord delights in you,  
Jealously looks upon you  
And encourages with gentle joy  
Every movement of the Spirit  
Within you.

Unique and loved you stand.  
Beautiful or stunted in your growth  
But never without hope and life.  
For you are called to become  
A perfect creation.

This becoming may be  
Gentle or harsh,  
Subtle or violent.  
But it never ceases,  
Never pauses or hesitates.  
Only is—  
Creative force—  
Calling you,  
Calling you to become  
A perfect creation.

*Called to Become, from Edwina Gateley, There Was No Path So I Trod One (1996, 2013)*

## **REFLECTIONS (2): Peter Wood (PSK&H)**

### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS (Joyce Maclean PSK&H)**

Heavenly Father, Creator of all things,  
We bow before your throne of grace as we bring before you our prayers for others.

Heavenly Father, we pray into this pandemic which has so affected the world. We lift before you all those families which have lost loved ones, that they may know your peace and strength. Please engage us in places where we are needed, to bring your words of comfort and to be practical providers. Where there is heartache, Lord, may the Holy Spirit reign to bring healing to that pain and loss.

We ask that people will keep themselves and others safe by being responsible and adhering to the preventative measures which are in place. Lord, we pray for all those we know who are ill, in pain (whether physical or mental), kept apart from loved ones or feeling lost and alone, and those awaiting treatments which have been postponed because of Covid: we ask that your love will extend through the supportive hands of your people here. Be with every NHS worker who strives to bring healing at this difficult time.

Father, we remember our schools and the children returning to classrooms. Rest your hands upon them and their teachers, and guide the government and local authorities to be responsive to each need as it arises. May there be sufficient and functional PPE where and when required.

Father, we pray for our world, divided and broken, where words and actions are often tempered by hate, selfishness, greed and domination. And we grieve where different faiths battle for power and supremacy rather than share words of unity and growth. We ask that you fill us with a fresh understanding, fill our hearts so that we do not conform to the patterns of this world, that we are not tempted and made weak in our commitment.

Lord, be with the local Kirk Sessions as we look to re-open our churches in a safe environment which meets the needs of our congregations. And for those who are anxious about returning, help us to allay any fears and be responsive to individual requirements. We pray for our ministers as they bring us your teaching. Inspire them, Father, as they seek to be strong, fruitful and loving leader, and keep them well and safe.

We lift before you the congregations in Penicuik, seeking your will for the way forward. Excite us, Lord, about new ways and fresh expressions of the Gospel, lead us together onto a path to see afresh the beauty of your creation and the opportunities we have to share all we know and understand of your love. As vines reaching out, touching, spreading, help us to accept and learn from the need to be pruned, curtailed from sinking onto rocky ground, instead blossoming and flourishing into fresh growth to be the people you have called us to be. Destroy any complacency of our hearts, and make us bold. Lead us to those in need, and also to those who dwell in the riches of the lives they live but have yet to learn of the richness of following you.

Father, go before us and behind us and beside us as our feet travel on rocky, twisted or straight paths. Lift us when we stumble, carry us when we fall, and inspire us on the narrow paths so that in boldness we may glorify the wonder and love



of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And all God's people said: **AMEN**

**CLOSING SONG: May the grace**

Watch video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INPoOfjFJ5s>

May the grace of Jesus Christ  
and the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Spirit  
be with us.

The Lord bless us and keep us,  
his face shine upon us,  
his grace and his peace rest on us.

© Mark Bradford / Resound Worship, Administered by Jubilate Hymns Ltd -  
[copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk](mailto:copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk) CCL# 7088236

**CLOSING WORDS: Rob and Brenda Bellis (PNK)**

*In the midst of creation,  
In the fields and in the town,  
To all who will listen  
**I will tell of your love.***

*In the company of the poor,  
In the presence of the mighty,  
To all who will listen  
**I will tell of your love.***

***Your love goes beyond my words.  
Your love goes out into all the world.***  
*To all who will listen  
**I will tell of your love.***

**BLESSING (Peter Wood)**

May the Creator spirit  
help you realise the beauty that has been placed within you.  
May the spirit of Jesus  
grow in and through you much fruit.  
And may the fire of the Spirit  
bring light and warmth to you and to all around.

*All songs used on this sheet used by permission: CCL Licence No 974355 Scottish Charity No SC005838*

The following congregations were involved in this service:

PNK: Penicuik North Church

PSKH: Penicuik South with Howgate

StM: Penicuik St Mungo's

StJ: St James the Less Episcopal Church