

Growing in Depth, Growing in Number

Notes 19th January 2025

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January is a great moment to look back at our church vision and values, not just as a box-ticking exercise but as a source of inspiration for the year ahead. These guideposts help us discern, refocus, and bring purpose to everything we do—from ministries to programs, from the small to the big.

Our vision statement starts with “Our intention is to grow in number and in depth and to seek the transformation and renewal of our lives, our town and our world.”

Read John 15. 1-8

In this passage, Jesus describes Himself as the true vine, the Father as the gardener, and believers as the branches. He prunes the local church to make it more fruitful through several means.

Discuss

- What does it mean for Jesus to "prune" the church, and have you seen this process at work at St James, in your life?
- How can a church ensure it remains connected to the "vine" and avoids trying to bear fruit on its own strength?
- In what ways does pruning bring glory to God, and how can we embrace this process as a positive part of growth?

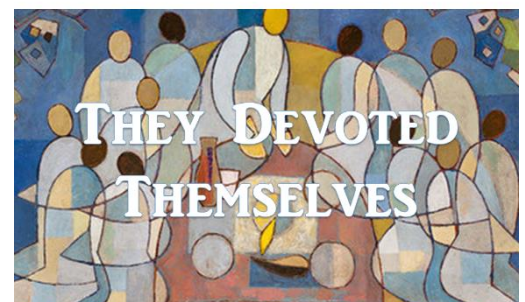


Jesus prunes the local church to make it more fruitful by addressing unfruitful branches, cutting away sin, complacency, and areas of ineffectiveness to refocus His body on His mission. Even fruitful branches are not exempt from pruning; through refining challenges, trials, and discipline, He deepens faith, fosters reliance on Him, and spurs spiritual growth. At the heart of this process is the church's call to abide in Christ—the true vine—drawing life, strength, and vitality through prayer, Scripture, and obedience. Ultimately, this fruitfulness is not for the church's glory but for the Father's, as the church becomes a living testimony to His power, purpose, and presence.

Read Acts 2. 42-47

This passage describes the hallmarks of vibrant, sacrificial, and Spirit-led community centred on Christ.

- Take some time to name them and reflect on how we express those at St James
- What do we do well?
- What do we need to be better at?



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Looking at the list here under, is there an aspect of the church life that you have not touched on?

- **Devotion to Teaching:** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, emphasizing the importance of learning and growing in faith.
- **Fellowship:** They were committed to communal life, building strong relationships among believers.
- **Breaking of Bread:** This refers both to shared meals and the practice of the Lord's Supper, highlighting unity and remembrance of Christ.
- **Prayer:** Prayer was central to their community, demonstrating dependence on God.
- **Signs and Wonders:** The apostles performed miracles, which fostered awe and faith among the people.
- **Sharing of Possessions:** Because of their generosity no one among them was in need.
- **Daily Worship and Unity:** They met regularly in the temple courts for worship and broke bread in their homes, showing both public and private expressions of faith.
- **Joy and Generosity:** Their lives were marked by gladness and sincerity of heart, and they shared with joy and generosity.
- **Evangelism and Growth:** Their lifestyle and witness led to the Lord adding to their number daily those who were being saved

For me there are three aspects of this list that challenges me: Prayer, Signs and Wonder, Evangelism.

This was a praying faith community that expected God to turn up and saw daily growth. In 2025, I would like to see growth in our personal and communal prayer rhythm, inviting God's presence and power, creating an expectation for Him to move in transformative ways. Furthermore, I want to continue fostering a culture of intentional evangelism, where every members joyfully share the gospel, invite their friends and neighbours and show them practical care.

Through a genuine and ongoing encounter with the Father, we are being transformed into obedient followers of Jesus, actively engaging in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

God of every blessing, this coming year continue to prune our priorities, refine our listening and realign our ministries. Shape our common life so that we more sincerely live your Kingdom realities and powers. Amen