

## Message - John 15 V1-8

I have taken this reflection in part from the Roots magazine 'Adult and All Age' ( Issue 59 May/June 2012 ) which is a resource we , Orphir and Stenness Kirk , subscribe to to , support the weekly lectionary readings .

Vines were prized plants in ancient Israel: God's peace was said to come about when people sat under their own vine . The vine was a symbol of wealth and a life settled enough to plant for the long term . The wine produced from the grapes of the vine was prized as a gift of God and Psalm 104 says 'He makes wine that gladdens the heart of man' . Sometimes Israel is described as 'Gods Vine ' ( Jeremiah 2 . 21 ) in a metaphor which reflects the special relationship between God and Israel . Jeremiah 2 v 21 says 'I planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock ' . So it is not surprising that Jesus picks up on this image to describe his own special relationship with God : the vine grower is essential to the life of the plant .

More surprising perhaps is his use of this organic dependence, to illustrate the special relationship between himself and his followers . They relied on him for their very life , sharing the energy he provided and enabling his life to

bear fruit . The word 'abide ' is especially important in this context and is used over and over again in John's gospel to reflect an ongoing , permanent relationship with Christ .

But vines require to be pruned, cut back and shaped in the winter to determine the number of buds that will be allowed to become grape clusters . Too many buds, and nothing will grow properly . Jesus uses this image just after he has spoken to his disciples about his own death, perhaps recognising the pain his words have caused them . The disappointment of seeing cherished hopes cut away ,is all part of the process of growth and acknowledging that the vine grower has the skill to prune expertly ,so that what remains will flourish , better than before .

The true believers by living with their union with Christ will produce much fruit whereas those who turn their back on following Christ are unproductive and will be separated from the vine - cut off and tossed aside .

Jesus said 'I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener ....No branch can bear fruit by its self : it must remain in the vine . If a man remains in me and I in him ,he will bear much fruit ' .        AMEN

I found a nice little poem by Michelle Lowndes which reflects this . Michelle Lowndes is a New Zealander , a stay at home mum ,who writes Christian songs ,poems , children's books and greeting cards .You can find the poem on the back of the Link .

### Connected to the Vine of Christ

We must stay connected  
To the vine of Jesus Christ,  
The very source of our faith  
And the meaning of our lives

For we will produce much fruit  
as we draw from the vine  
The nourishment of the Lord,  
which feeds our souls and minds .

But if we fail to stay  
Connected to the Lord  
And abide by his promises  
we long ago were taught .

Then we will be cut off  
unable to produce  
The lasting and abundant fruit  
that God so longs to use .

For the Lord wants us to be  
Reflecting Jesus Christ  
So the world will clearly see  
The love of God inside .

We need to allow the Lord  
To take our branches and prune  
The part that's become withered  
So we'll continue to bloom .