

Early Word: John 15:1-8

Easter 5, Year B

By Beth Barnett

This is an intergenerational storytelling engagement using John 15:1-8, exploring Connection and Community

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| <p>You will need:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text of John 15: 1-8 displayed on screen or print copies • Leader • Reader • Box of Sultanas or raisins • Bunch of fresh grapes in a glass bowl • Bottle of Grape juice (or wine if appropriate in your context). • 32 wooden sticks of various shapes and lengths, but thick enough (at least a couple of centimetres) to be written on clearly. Prepare the sticks before hand, writing one phrase of John 15:1-8 (see below) on each stick with permanent marker. White 'Posca' pen will be especially effective. • 32 green paper leaf shape (see template). Prepare these before hand, writing one phrase of John 15:1-8 (see below) on each stick with permanent marker. • 14 pieces of bubblewrap, cut roughly in the shape of a bunch of grapes and painted green or purple. 6 with the word 'Fruit' written on it; 8 with the word 'Remain' written on it. • Large sheet or ground mat or tablecloth, spread in a large space in your gathering. |
| <p>Time required:</p> | <p>5-7 minutes</p> |

Summary: Members of your gathering piece together a ‘vine’ from branches, leaves and fruit inscribed with the text of John 15, reading the text twice as this is formed. The gathering is invited to reflect on the formation of the vine as an expression of the life Jesus’ teaching describes.

Introduction

Our Bible reading today is about grapes.

First prepared volunteer calls out “I’ve got some grapes!” and holds up a box or raisins or sultanas.

Yes. They are some grapes – but they aren’t the grapes the Bible reading is about. Maybe you can share them with some friends.

Second prepared volunteer calls out “I’ve got some grapes!” and holds up a bunch of fresh grapes in a glass bowl.

Yes. They are some grapes – but they aren’t the grapes the Bible reading is about. Maybe you can share them with some friends.

Third prepared volunteer calls out “I’ve got some grapes!” and holds up a bottle of grape juice (or red wine if that is appropriate in your community).

Yes. They are some grapes – but they aren’t the grapes the Bible reading is about. Maybe you can share them with some friends.

Unlike the sultanas or the single bunch of grapes or the crushed grapes in the bottle, the grapes in the Bible reading are all still connected together and growing together on the vine.

So as we read the Bible today, we are going to take our cue from the grapevine and try to read in a way that shows how we are connected, and growing together.

We have a large pile of branches and leaves and grapes. We all need to share in this together.

You are all invited to come and gather whatever you would like from this pile. Take one or two or as many pieces as you would like – there’s plenty. These branches, leaves and grapes are the resources for our reading.

While people come forward to choose their resources continue with some background:

This will help us read Jesus’ teaching from the Bible and help us see Jesus’ teaching in front of us. We don’t know where or when Jesus was when he gave us this teaching – but there is a much greater chance that he was near an actual vine, than near a Bible: there were plenty of vines in the first century in Israel and zero Bibles.



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If everyone has taken resources and there is still some left, give the invitation again, or take trays of the left over resources among the people to make sure all of the resources are distributed.

Reading

As we read today, the whole of the passage will be on the screen (or on printed sheets). Check the pieces that you have gathered and make sure you know what the words say.

Ask those around you to help if you can't easily read the writing and offer to help those around you if you can.

Our reader will read each phrase for our first reading. If you have that phrase on your branch, come and place it on the cloth (or give it to someone enthusiastic around you). As you do, read the phrase for us, so we hear it again in your voice.

Let's listen as the vine grows slowly. Let's listen as the words of Jesus spread and grow amongst us in our different voices.

I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vine-grower.
He removes every branch in me
that bears no fruit.
Every branch that bears fruit
he prunes to make it bear more fruit.
You have already been pruned
by the word that I have spoken to you.
Remain in me as I remain in you.
Just as the branch
cannot bear fruit by itself
unless it remains in the vine,
neither can you
unless you remain in me.
I am the vine,
you are the branches.
Those who remain in me
and I in them
bear much fruit,
because apart from me
you can do nothing.
Whoever does not remain in me
is thrown away like a branch and withers;
such branches are gathered,
thrown into the fire, and burned.
If you remain in me,
and my words remain in you,
ask for whatever you wish,



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and it will be done for you.
My Father is glorified by this,
that you bear much fruit
and become my disciples.

We are going to read again, because we want to really listen to Jesus' teaching. This time, our reader will read each phrase – if you have that phrase on your leaf come and place it on the cloth (or give it to someone enthusiastic around you). As you do read the phrase for us so we hear it again, in your own voice. If you have a bunch of grapes, come and add them to the vine as you hear the words “fruit” and “remain” spoken.

Let's listen as this vine grows slowly. Let's listen as the words of Jesus spread and grow amongst us in our different voices.

Reader reads, phrase by phrase again, as leaves and fruit are added to the vine. Following the second reading, invite reflection on the vine and the passage using the following prompts:

- What did you notice about the way the vine took shape?
- What did you notice about how people worked together or separately?
- Which words from the reading caught your attention?
- Looking at the shape of this vine, and thinking about Jesus' words, what do you think is important for our community to pay attention to or to talk about or to explore further?



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