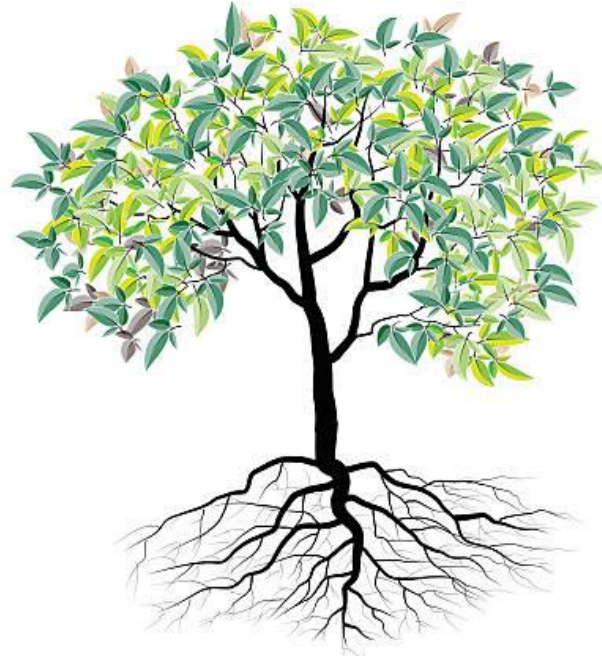


Assessment Tool – How healthy is our church?

Jesus often used images from nature like trees and plants to describe the growth of the kingdom of God. Vision 2026 encourages us to use the image of a healthy tree to help us assess the health of our local church. To introduce this theme you may like to watch a 5-minute video by Archdeacon Mark which can be found at: [Bearing Good Fruit // Midweek Message // 8th October 2020 - YouTube](#). Alternatively you can read a longer introduction in the Vision Update document, pages 9-12, available [here](#).

The image of a strong, healthy tree can give us a picture of what makes a healthy church. Begin by pondering this image of an olive tree, a very common tree found in Palestine, one that would have been so familiar to Jesus. In what ways is your local church like a healthy, fruitful tree?



For each of the six characteristics of a healthy tree listed below, give your church a rating from 1 (very healthy) to 5 (very unhealthy) and explain briefly why you chose that letter. If you score highly in an area, please suggest in the box provided an example or illustration of why you think the church is strong in this area. And if you put a low score in an area, please suggest what one action we

could take that would strengthen the church in that area. Remember that the Father is the Gardener, and he loves his church. This is an opportunity to speak the truth in love and build up the church.

1 A healthy tree has deep roots

The roots of a healthy tree can spread as wide as its branches. How deep are the roots of our church? Do they go deep into God, who is the source of our life, through inspiring worship, deep prayer, meditation on Scripture, the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Or are the roots of our church too shallow or stunted to sustain the great canopy of activity above? How could we give attention to deepening our spiritual roots?

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?

2 A healthy tree is growing

We read in Acts that 'day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.' Can we think of those who have joined our church in the last few years and what made them come? Who are the missing groups of people (age, culture, ethnicity) we need to reach if our church is to reflect the diversity of the parish it serves, and to be a foretaste of the multi-generational, multi-ethnic worship of heaven? What courses or small groups or other avenues do we offer to help enquirers find out more about the Christian faith?

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?

3 A healthy tree bears good fruit

What kind of fruit is our church producing? Do outsiders and those inside the church see the fruit of the Holy Spirit revealed in love, joy peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control within our church family? Or do they see instead factions, envy, quarrels, strife and impurity, what St Paul describes as 'the works of the flesh'? (Galatians 5.19-25)

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?

4 A healthy tree is good for its environment

As biologists keep reminding us, trees are the lungs of the earth, absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. In what way is our church having a transforming, life-giving effect on its wider community, breathing the breath of the Spirit over its parish? What are the areas of dis-ease in our community where the church could make a difference? Where is God calling us to speak out for justice for the oppressed, or to actively care for those in need?

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?

5 A healthy tree needs to be pruned

Trees need to be pruned to remove disease, dead wood or where they are extending in the wrong direction. Jesus speaks about pruning a vine in order for it to bear more fruit (John 15.1-6). Re-establishing church life after lockdown gives us the chance to ask some difficult questions, rather than simply trying to restart things which are no longer fruitful or healthy. What are the things that absorb a lot of time and effort in our church but do not help us to make disciples, be witnesses, grow leaders or inspire children and young people?

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?

6 A healthy tree produces new saplings

When was the last time our church started a new service or planted a new congregation? What might be the next opportunity to plant a new local congregation within the life of our parish? If saplings enable the tree to reproduce itself for future generations, what sort of new service or congregation might help our church to reach the young or those outside? Which generations are missing, and how might we start to reach them?

My score: 1 2 3 4 5 (1 – very healthy; 5 – very unhealthy)

Why?