

PASTOR'S PATCH



I visit Buckfast Abbey every six weeks meeting with other Baptist Ministers to gather, pray and hold each other spiritually accountable before the Lord. Not only is it an enriching time, it is also an enriching environment with the Abbey and grounds that have provided a quiet place of prayer for centuries. At the Abbey there is a wonderful arbor, a series of 17 trees grown and pruned in such a way to link together and create a structure.

As I went there this week, still reflecting on the timely message from Colin Opie on 17th March where he unpacked Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17, I was struck by a very tangible depiction of unity.

Jesus says – *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

(John chapter 17 verse 20-23)

This living arbor is made of many trees, each one unique. But it has taken years of care by the gardeners and growth and perseverance by the trees as they are encouraged to embrace together, thus providing mutual strength. This was not accomplished overnight, but slowly, deliberately and patiently. As a result these trees have a strength greater than they would if they were solitary trees. Though they are now in winter mode, devoid of leaves, the summer will once again bring out foliage and provide shade for weary visitors to linger under away from the hot sun.

Jesus' longing is to see all believers (including our congregation) *brought to complete unity*. Let us do all we can to aid that prayer to be answered.

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