

Outdoor Church: Fruit Trees

This lends itself perfectly to an orchard, especially a community orchard. You want to do it when the trees are in leaf (and ideally in fruit – August/September, maybe October).

You will need:

- Sketchpads / Sheet of paper and clipboard
- Pencils, rubbers
- Cut out shapes of apples, pears and plums, enough for everyone to have all 3 shapes
- Mats to sit on

1. Welcome Prayer / Worship

2. Sketch a tree

Choose one of the trees from the orchard, and observe it. Walk around and take a good look. What are the leaves like? Is there any fruit? Then draw it.

3. Share

Get back together and talk a bit about your tree – what shape is it? Is it going in all directions or quite 2-D? How much fruit is there? Is it straight or wonky? Did you notice anything you hadn't expected?

4. Fruit Quiz

(we did this for an orchard growing plums, apples and pears. You could adapt if you have different trees).

Give out apple, pear and plum shapes to each person. If you have more time, you could all draw, colour and cut out these shapes as part of the session.

Explain I'm going to ask a question, and you have to hold up the one you think is the correct answer as your vote. Apple, pear or plum? Then we'll see if it's right.

- The dried fruit version of this is a prune (*plum*)
- This is the main fruit used to make cider (*apple*)
- A popular variety of this fruit is the Victoria (*plum*)
- There are more than 3,000 varieties worldwide (*pear*)
- Scientists believe this fruit came out of Central Asia and the Middle East (*apple*)
- This is closely related to cherries and peaches (*plum*)
- Both the Ancient Greeks and Romans valued this fruit, and it was associated with love (*pear*)

- It's thought these were brought to England by the Romans (*pear & plum*)
- There are 2,500 varieties of this fruit in the UK alone and 7,000 globally (*apple*)
- The earliest version of this fruit is thought to have come from China and Japan (*plum*)
- King Henry 8th got his chief fruitier to find more varieties of this fruit! (*apple*)
- 1575 Queen Elizabeth 1st was so impressed by this tree's beauty she made it an emblem of city of Worcester (*pear*)
- Well know varieties are Conference and Comice (*pear*)
- In the UK, you harvest these August/September (*plum*)
- The tree can live for 250 years so the ancient Chinese used it as a symbol of immortality (*pear*)
- This fruit protects your heart as it has plenty of potassium (*plum*)
- It can come in the colours, yellow, red, purple, blue and nearly black (*plum*)
- In Greek mythology, this was seen as a forbidden fruit (*apple*)
- They usually grow to 12 m but can get to 20 m high (*pear*)
- You harvest these in England August -November (*pear & apple*)

5. Bible connection

Ask and discuss: Fruit is often used as a symbol in the Bible. What does it symbolise?

- People being useful, productive
- Blessing to others
- Outward signs of your belief and faith in God – evidence that God's love is in your life
- God working good things out in people's lives
- "bear fruit" – a life that is following in Jesus' footsteps

One example are these words from Jesus:

"Yes, I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For without me you can do nothing."- John 15.5-6

The passage a lot of us know is Galatians (you could print this verse out before to give out to people):

*"When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control.** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross...if we are now living by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."*
Galatians 5:22-25

6. Share and Pray - in pairs / threes

What is it like being around people when they show these qualities? How does it make you feel?

How did Jesus show these “fruits” in his own life – can you name any examples?

For children (and adults!): Could you put this list of fruits in order of the ones you find most easy / come naturally to those you find more difficult? What would you like the Holy Spirit to help you with, from this list?

Just for adults: Which of these “spiritual fruits” do you feel God has been growing in your life recently? How have life’s circumstances been creating qualities like goodness, patience, self-control, etc? Sometimes experiencing challenges or temptations actually help to develop these “fruits” - which can be difficult. Which fruits are you lacking and would like more of?

Looking further afield to our local communities, which ‘fruits’ can we celebrate? Which are lacking? Maybe you can draw this on your tree, as a symbol of what to pray for. Look back at your picture throughout the week and continue to pray for yourself and your community.

Pray: Pray together, thanking God for what ‘fruit’ he is growing in you, and praying you will continue to show his love through your life. Pray for God to grow the areas that are lacking in our local area.

This was a session from Park Church Luton (www.parkchurchluton.com)

See also www.engageworship.org for creative ideas for all-age worship.