

NEW WINE?

“And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins” (Mark 2:22)



In this analogy in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is saying something about the coming kingdom - the “new thing” that God was doing with Jesus' arrival. A chapter before Jesus breaks into the action saying, “repent for the kingdom of God is near (at hand).” (Mark 1:15) The meaning of the original Greek is “within touching distance, within your grasp”.

So why would new wine be so dangerous to the structure of an old wineskin? Well new wine was still processing. It was lively and effervescent. And the pressure from inside would break an older, more fragile vessel. A new wineskin can withstand that power.

And it was from this verse the movement known as New Wine got its name back in 1989 when the first festival took place in a field in Somerset.

By the time I first went to a New Wine festival it was 2006. I had been a Christian for just over 4 years. The decision to go camping at a Christian festival was a bold one. I had never been to a Christian festival, and I had never been camping! What could go wrong eh?

I took to sleeping under canvas and cooking on a little gas stove carrying water from a standpipe and queuing for the toilets and showers ok. Not sure I would say that I have ever enjoyed it but endured well would be more like it.

Erecting the tent was always an entertaining exercise – it didn't always end in a row! Setting down again and packing up the car would usually be a little easier – except for the year when a storm brought the festival to an early

closure and packing up in the dark left some uncertainty whether we had all the pegs and torches and socks!

One year, the one time we went to the northern site in Newark, my ex-wife fell ill and had to stay home in Nottingham. Over the next three days I would set down the tent and pack up the car (needing help to get it out of the mud after showers of rain!) but with help from friends I did manage to get it all home again. Phew!

But over 17 years of attending most years, it went rather well. I must confess that the year we hired a caravan, placed on site for us by the hire company, which was next to the toilet and shower block, was probably the best! Expensive but worth it, since we had a 5-year-old and less than one year old infant by then.

Camping aside, the experience of gathering with 12000 other Christians was amazing. Worshipping with 5000 people in a huge marquee and hearing incredible speakers was so influential on my own growth as a disciple. The availability of prayer ministry and prophetic words was healing and building up of the soul.

The relief of the first coffee of the day from the café, the conversations to be had with strangers from churches all over the world in the queue, the joy of our children when they came back from their groups (morning and evening). Even singing their new songs from the CD we bought, alongside a few new books to consume in the car on the way home was a highlight of the week.

In that first year the main speaker in the morning session was Kenny Borthwick. He was at the time the leader of the Clan Gathering, the Scottish equivalent of New Wine, and was a dry humoured theologian with witty and impactful stories wrapped around explanation of the texts. His task was to cover the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible), one book each morning. I was fascinated and expanded in equal measure. I have been blessed by his wisdom ever since (being a Facebook friend).

New Wine was birthed out of the 1980's charismatic movement brought by John Wimber from the US. Wimber was a quiet ex rock and roll musician

and worship leader who had an experience of Holy Spirit ministry. He was a quietly spoken, erudite speaker, telling stories and sharing testimony. His story is not one of Damascene change overnight, rather a patient perseverance, praying and waiting for what he believed God had promised. In fact, he got so close to giving up, after years of frustrated hopes, that the whole movement could have never been. But God did come in power, to heal and to build up what would become the Vineyard movement.

Wimber came to the UK in the mid 1980's and so influenced certain churches and church leaders that a charismatic movement was born here in the UK. The influence of John Wimber continues today in all sorts of churches. It is worth noting that many are Church of England churches and indeed the UK Vineyard movement began in the CofE!

I have not, for a number of reasons, been to the New Wine Festival for the last 3 years. It runs from 28th July to 2nd August 2026. I will not be attending this year either...BUT it is online.

So, I invite you to join me at a **New Wine Festival Watch Party at All Saints**. The format will be to gather together to watch sessions (largely in the morning). They last for 1.5-2 hours and include some introduction, often information from certain mission agencies and their work, a block of sung worship (and the sound of 5000 voices!) a speaker and then some time of ministry prayer afterwards.

You do not need to wear wellies (but you can), there should be a queue for the loos, you will have slept in a bed and can fill your water bottle from a tap. And we can learn, and worship and be blessed together.

If you are curious, let me know. Give it a try. You might like it. You will be blessed and you might encounter God in a new way.

Wishing you every blessing

Your brother in Christ

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* Details are in the Parish News