

Harvest Thanksgiving



(image: thischurch.com)

We take a breath and come intentionally into God's presence

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us, open our hearts and minds to all you have to say and show us this day. **Amen.**

Creator God,

You made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons. As we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Harvest Quiz: Can you name a fruit or vegetable for each letter of the alphabet?
(Some of the more difficult lettered ones given below!)

Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

First Fruits and Tithes

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard

labour on us, ⁷ we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹ and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. ¹¹ Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

Reflection

I think this is a lovely reading for harvest, full of thanksgiving and hope for the future. In great gratitude the people who have settled and worked the land take their first fruits of the harvest in offering to the house of God. They thank God for their crops and produce, whilst remembering when things weren't so good for their people, when they were enslaved, mistreated and not free to prosper. In remembering this and the wonders of God which led to their freedom, they then celebrate God's bounty with all the people, including at God's bequest the aliens, foreigners, immigrants of the land.

Gratitude is at the heart of harvest. Gratitude to God for all of nature's resources and elements needed for growth. Gratitude to those who work and tend the land, or go to sea. Gratitude to the suppliers and distributors, producers, food workers- that huge chain from seed to table.

I was touched by a recent Facebook post by Hannah (who has reflected for us before) and the positive comments that followed. Hannah talked of the 'whiffy' smell of manure and how rather than it being an annoyance it reminds her of the richness of the countryside around us, and of how hard our farmers work to produce food for us all, putting in long, long hours. You don't have to go far here at the moment to see field after field harvested and that wonder of what crop will be sown and appear there next.

Harvest Festival, concentrates our thanks for the multitudes and varieties of foods we eat; the treasures harvested of the year and importantly it also prays for, points us to the new sowing and planting - the hope of the next year- as the cycle begins again. It also encourages us to remember and provide for, for those who don't celebrate a harvest or enjoy food on the table.

This week saw the last of the Churches Together Food Parcels go out to local families in need over the extended summer, ahead of schools return. 91 families received parcels, with 59 volunteers (including a number from our Churches. Thank-you.) who made the project possible. Foodbank hopes to continue to offer support where it is needed.

According to UNICEF (2018) approximately 3.1 million children die from undernutrition each year. Hunger and undernutrition contributes to more than half of global child deaths, as it can also make children more vulnerable to illness and disease.

There is enough food to feed the world if it was shared more equally. Mahatma Gandhi famously said "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."

Biblically, Harvest is about tending, thankfulness and sharing. Landowners are asked to leave some of the outer crop in the field for others who have little to harvest for themselves. Harvest reminds us that we are fed through the hard work of farmers and others, of ourselves if we grow some produce, but ultimately it is God's generous provision and gifts to us which makes it all possible, and in acknowledgement of this we should as generously pass excess on to those in need.

There is a tale about an elderly woman who was poor. She prayed to God and God gave her 10 apples. This was wonderful. 'Now I can get the things I need,' she said. She was so hungry of course that she ate the first three apples and so was full. The next three apples she traded for some shelter so that she could be safe from the rain and the sun. She exchanged the next three apples for some clothes, so she was no longer cold at night. But there was then one apple left over. 'Why did you give me one more apple than I needed?' she asked God. God replied, 'So you too can share'.

May we always be thankful to God for the harvest, and generous in sharing our windfalls with others. **Amen**

Worship Music

Colours of Day – Lucy Gibson attached

Come, ye thankful people, come- with lyrics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf7Z8ukqiok>

Count Your Blessings – with lyrics: the Celebration Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32FeHuhz1Qk>

We Plough the Fields and Scatter – with Lyrics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccVEjKfKAV4>

Prayers of Intercession

Generous God,

We thank you for all the good things you give us;
For the food and choice of food in our cupboards.

We ask your provision for all who are hungry or
uncertain of where their next meal will come from.

In our time of plenty help us to share, in our time of need help us to receive.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

We thank-you for and pray for the work of Foodbank, FareShare
and those charities and individuals who give aid and support.

Help us to share the harvests of the world more fairly,
to reduce our consumer footprint and be good stewards of all you have given us.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the hard work of farmers, for all those who grow,
develop, protect, prepare and deliver our food.

May all workers and suppliers receive fair pay for work and produce;
And animal welfare be a concern for us.

We pray for those whose harvests have been poor.

For those areas devastated by hurricane, floods or war.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

We pray for schools as they return, for heads and governing bodies;
For pupils and staff, especially those who are feeling anxious
and vulnerable to return.

We pray for our communities, for the needs of those within them.

For our churches, bishops and one another.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

We ask your healing presence to surround those who are unwell.

And your peace to surround those who are depressed, anxious and fearful.

We remember before you those who have died,

whom we entrust to your eternal love

Comfort those who grieve and reassure us of your eternal care.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

In this moment of stillness we join together to lift before God the prayers of our hearts this day

**Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace;
and the blessing of God almighty the
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Quiz (some more difficult) Answers: *Date, Fennel, Haricot Bean, Honeydew
Melon, Kiwi Fruit, Iceberg Lettuce, Jerusalem Artichoke, Quince, Ugli Fruit, Victoria
Plum, Watercress, Yam, Zucchini* 😊 Do let me know if you would like any others!