



Harvest Festival

Thank you to our Farmers

Sunday 27th September 2020

This year, many people have become aware – some for the first time – of the vital role UK farms play in feeding our nation, while the food shortages we experienced in the early days of the COVID-19 lockdown reminded us how fragile the supply chain can be.

Unable to go out, many people have been cooking and baking more than in the past, and some are growing fruit and vegetables at home for the first time. All of this has resulted in a more conscious appreciation of the food we eat and where it has come from.

As churches and communities across the UK prepare to celebrate harvest festivals, let's embrace this opportunity to thank the farmers across the UK who grow our food for us.

This has been a difficult year for many in the farming community which is negotiating a 'triple threat' of challenges. The weather is, once again, proving to be problematic for many farmers; autumn and winter flooding meant some crops sown in the autumn were washed away, and the planting of spring crops was delayed. This was followed by a very dry spring which is having lasting effects: crops have been slower to grow, and some farmers are already having to feed their animals as there is insufficient grazing available.

The shape of new agricultural policy and trade deals is beginning to emerge as Britain renegotiates many of its international relationships following its exit from the European Union, but there will be a significant lack of clarity around the details of this for some time to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for the farming community. As we know, the process of harvesting many of our crops is hugely reliant on migrant labour, with people coming to the UK for a season, living and working on local farms before returning home. Much of this travel has been curtailed by restrictions in response to COVID-19.

Other farms have sought to increase their income by diversifying into farm shops, holiday lets and other activities; again, COVID-19 restrictions have made much of this activity impossible over the last few months.

This year, perhaps more than ever, the farming community in the UK needs our support! The material that follows includes some very practical ways in which we can demonstrate how much we value it, both through the ways in which we engage directly with farms and farmers across the UK, and in the choices we make as we shop.

THE GATHERING

The Lord of the Harvest be with you
and also with you.

Welcome & Introduction

Let us come before God with thanksgiving,
And give our offerings to him joyfully in the Lord.

For he tends the earth and waters it,
He makes it rich & fertile.

Lord of the Harvest, all is yours,
The rains that fall, the suns that shine,

The seed once hidden in the ground,
The skill that makes the harvest grow.

Our thanks we bring to you this day,
New praises from our lips shall sound.

We pray together
Creator God,
you give seed for us to sow,
and bread for us to eat;
make us thankful for what we have received;
make us able to do those generous things which supply
your people's needs;
so all the world may give you thanks and glory.
Amen.

Hymn: We plough the fields and scatter

The Collect (Special Prayer for today)

Loving God,
we give thanks for those who produce our food:
for farmers and fishermen, factory and shop workers. We
pray for those for whom this has been a difficult year:
farmers who have battled the weather to grow food, delivery
drivers and shop workers who kept working despite the
pandemic.
Help us to value and support each other.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Saying Sorry

Harvest makes us aware of how much we have to enjoy, but
it also make us aware of how often we fail to take care of
the world and those around us.
It's also autumn, a time when the leaves fall, remaining us
that sometimes we need to let go of things so that new
things can happen.

As we see the scatter leaves, (*leaves are scattered*)
so we remember all the wrong choices we have made, the
things we have not bothered to do, and the things we did on
purpose that have hurt other people, hurt ourselves and hurt
God.

Lord God, we are selfish, we are greedy,
We are wasteful of all that you have given us.

Sometimes we forget to say thank you.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Sometimes we ignore the needs of others

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

Sometimes we just can't be bothered to live your way.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

God we are sorry and ask that you forgive

(Leaves are picked up)

May the God of love bring us back to himself,

forgive us our sins

and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Bible Readings, Psalm 104:1-15 & John 2:1-11

At the end the reader says....

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The Gospel

John 2:1-11: The 'staggering generosity' of God

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Glory to you, O Lord

At the end of the reading...

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The wedding at Cana may not be the most obvious 'harvest' passage, but it is a compelling picture of the staggering generosity of God's provision. As a wedding host faces the humiliation of running out of wine, Jesus intervenes; the resulting wine is of the highest quality and there's plenty of it, the equivalent of nine hundred bottles for a party that was already part way through!

Think of some of the abundance of nature many of us have experienced in a new way because of COVID-19 lockdown: birdsong, a profusion of wildflowers, butterflies and insects. The sheer glory of creation is all around us, but God the Creator calls us to work with him.

At Cana, Jesus performed the miracle but he chose to work with others; the servants had to move the jars and fill them, then take the wine to the steward to taste. These apparently small acts were vital.

In the same way, farmers work with God in his creation to produce our food. While not all farmers would use this language, many talk of being 'stewards of the land', wanting to pass it on in a better condition than they found it.

THE TALK

A message from James Plunkett about SOFEA

Prayers

As our Saviour taught us so we pray

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against
us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**Creator God,
the whole earth proclaims your glory.
Field and forest, farm and garden all sing your praise!
As we gaze at the world around us we see your
handiwork;
your fingerprint is everywhere.
This is your world; help us to enjoy it gently.
In Jesus' name.
Amen**

The Blessing

May God's joy be in our hearts
May God's peace be in our world
May God's love be known between us
And the blessings of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with us, this day and always.
Amen.

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