

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 22 September 2024
Celebrating Harvest**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Across the benefice, over the next two Sundays, we are celebrating harvest - the gathering in of the cereals and vegetables, fruits and berries that have been growing in fields and hedgerows, gardens and allotments. It is a bumper year for some crops. What's grown well in your garden? But some cereals have failed to thrive in the abundance of spring rain. In our prayers, we'll be remembering the farmers who are struggling at this time.

Harvest is a time for giving thanks to our Creator God for his creation, as well as for his generous love. Let's pledge to be better co-carers of the beautiful world that he has made for us and all his creatures.

May we care as he cares for Planet Earth.

God bless,

Revd Katrina

Vicar

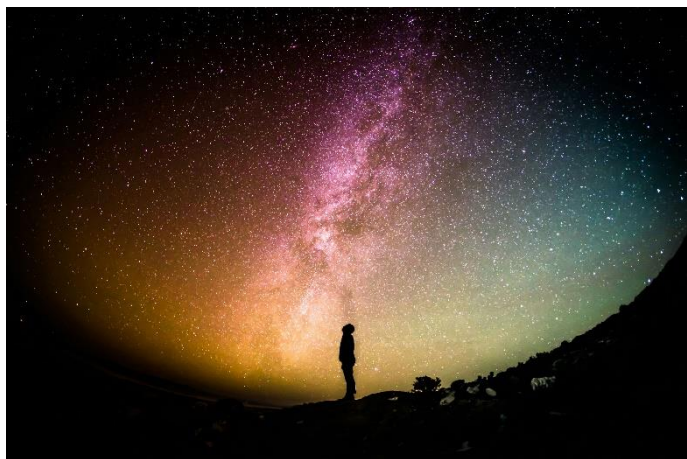
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*As you prepare to celebrate the fruitfulness of God's creation,
I invite you to offer your heartfelt praise to the God of all that is.*



Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,
sing and praise your God and mine!
Great the Lord in love and wisdom,
might and majesty divine!
He who framed the starry heavens
knows and names them as they
shine.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926-2024)

based on Psalm 147

CCLI reported

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Enough!

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and drink in the wondrous beauty of his glorious creation. If you wish, go and look at your garden. Where can you see signs of God's presence and his loving provision? Open your heart to him. Receive of his love as you offer your thanks and praise. When you are ready, say this prayer.

Lord, here I am,
surrounded by your beautiful creation,
sitting in the peace of my home.
All that I have and all that I am is your gift to me.
As I offer you the gift of this time,
give of yourself to me, I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

*Our time of letting go begins with the opening verse of the well-known Harvest hymn: **We plough the fields and scatter**. It reminds us that life on earth exists because God made our world to be life-bearing. Our crops grow because of God's life-giving actions. It is a sign of our dependence on him for all that we have. Yet - we can be too self-reliant.*

What do you need to let go of this harvest-time?

We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand:
he sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes, and the sunshine,
and soft, refreshing rain.

Matthias Claudius (1740-1815)

Feel God's love for you and for all of his creation. Sense his forgiveness. Let go and place yourself into his hands. Feel your self-reliance fading as you trust in his providing for your daily needs and his guiding of your life. Promise to be more aware of his generous provision in the coming week. With him, you have enough. More than enough.



When you are ready, offer your thanks and praise in the uplifting words of the hymn's chorus.

All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.

Matthias Claudius (1740-1815)

trans. by Jane Montgomery Campbell (1817-1878)

OUR HARVEST COLLECT

Across our villages, over the next two weeks, we will be praying this Harvest Collect. Add your voice to this earthly cycle of praise and promise to our God who made us with love.

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.**

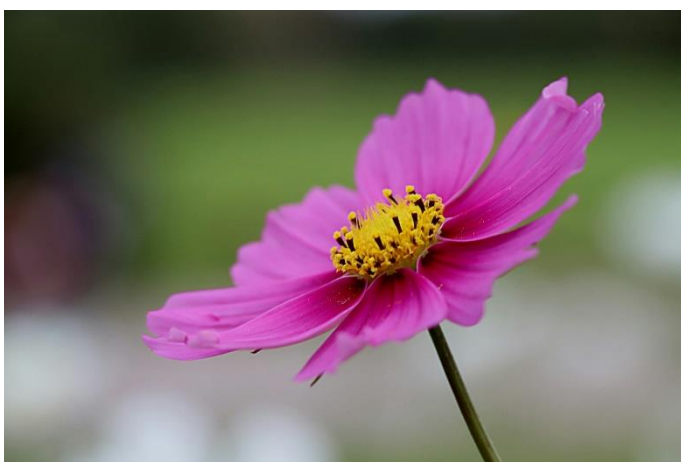
*I've just finished reading an insightful book on Christian living in a time of climate crisis. It is **Just Living** by Ruth Valerio. Our shops are full to bursting with good things to eat, beautiful clothes to wear, and helpful gadgets for office and home. We could literally spend... spend... spend... if we have the money to do so. It is all too easy to overlook the cost to Planet Earth of all our purchases.*

Through her book, Ruth introduced me to Earth Overshoot Day. It is the day in the year when our consumption as a human race reaches Earth's capacity to cope with our use of its resources and dispose of our waste. Back in 2016, when Ruth wrote her book, this fell on August 19th. This year, it fell on August 1st - 18 days earlier than eight years ago. It is a sign that we are in debt to our planet and to those who will come after us, and our overdraft is growing year-on-year.

We can't keep on living like this as a nation and as individual households, because the poorer nations are suffering and our children's children are going to suffer because of our excesses.

It is a very simple message - we need to live more simply so that others may simply live. Pause to ponder this. It may be that you already live quite simply. If so, pray for those who love to have the next new thing, who enjoy having wardrobes full of new clothes. Give thanks for the younger generations who have re-discovered the joy of swapping clothes, of trading in their surplus items.

Our next verse celebrates that all of our world's resources come from the one who gave us life. Like the birds in our fields, we should delight in the simple pleasures of life - pleasures such as freshly baked bread or the scent of newly cut grass. What makes your heart sing or brings a smile to your face? Give thanks for these as you sing or say this verse.



He only is the maker
of all things near and far;
he paints the wayside flower,
he lights the evening star;
the winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.

*Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)
trans. Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)*

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Do not worry...

Jesus said, 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

'And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25-34

... Simply live each day as it comes.

Earth Overshoot Day was not an issue in Jesus' time. Nor was it an issue when I was a child in the 60s. We shopped locally and we bought less. Mum made do and mended (or repurposed) our clothes. Dad grew plenty of vegetables - carrots, runner beans and potatoes - and fruit - rhubarb, gooseberries and blackcurrants, and salad items too. We put less waste in our bins. We didn't have a lot but we didn't go without. As a family, we lived simply, and happily, content with our lot in life. Enough was enough for us.

What was life like when you were growing up?

It was easier in the 1960s, I think, to recognise God's hand at work, and his handiwork, in our gardens and allotments, in our countryside, and in our lifestyles. It was easier to give thanks for his generous love, a love which extends to all of his creatures.

Children in our cities and towns, and on our new housing developments, are growing up without as much hands on contact with nature. Gone are the days when - as a child - you helped your dad dig up this year's crop of potatoes; a crop that would see you through the winter months. Gone are the days when - as a child - you helped your mum top and tail berries picked in your own garden. Children spend less time outdoors - in woods, fields and gardens. What childhood experiences would you like children today to experience? Pray for this nearness to God's creation.

It is by being close to nature that we can fall in love with what we see, smell or touch. Creation is God's handiwork. Outside in God's glorious countryside and churchyards - as well as in church - are where we can help the young find and fall in love with the God who made the birds and bees, the butterflies and beetles. And, celebrate harvest as we have been doing for years, with hearts full of awe and wonder, joy and praise.

Lift up to God the children in your life. Pray for their love of nature, their love of our Creator God who made all the life that is around us.

And, praise God that you have more than enough of his love in your life, and receive so generously of his good gifts. He provides for all creatures.



We thank thee then, O Father,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our-life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all thy love imparts,
and, what thou most desirest,
our humble, thankful hearts.

*Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)
trans. Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)*

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to say these harvest prayers and to add your own.

Generous God, all that I have, all that I am, you have given to me.
You give me life, and I love you with every fibre of my being.
Teach me to love as you love, and to care for your creation as you care.
Lord, hear my prayer.

Creator God, thank you for the beauty of Planet Earth,
and for all that sustains life. As a human race, help us to live with
just enough. Thinking of how our excesses harm others, I pray for...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Loving God, thank you for all who care for those who are sick:
doctors and nurses, carers and vets. Bless, Lord, all in their care.
Thank you for all who fill my life with love. I lift up to you...
Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

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 those who 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.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
and you provide for me. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**