



Fruitfulness & Harvest

Preparation

- *Share with people, in advance, the focus on “fruitfulness and harvest”. Encourage people to bring any fruit or vegetables, particularly anything home grown!*
- *Have a basket of conkers and autumn leaves that can be passed round and shared.*
- *Cut out enough paper apples for everyone to have one. Have pens ready for people to write on the apples.*
- *Make a harvest display ideally with everyone sitting in a circle round it.*
- *This service is about half an hour long. After the service, it’s a good idea to share refreshments together.*
- *The prayers in this service are based on “Bread of Community” in “Ploughshares and First Fruits” by Chris Thorpe published by Canterbury Press.*

Opening Prayer

God of the harvest
bless the work of our
hearts and hands,
bless the fruits of our
cooperation and community.
Give us grace to discern
your presence in one another
and in the natural world
and in the seasons.
As we still our bodies,
slow our breathing and
open ourselves to you,
quieten our minds and hearts.
Amen

Fruit and garden produce

I wonder if you have ever grown fruit or vegetables in your garden. Using the fruit and vegetables in front of us and the pictures on the next page, let's take a few minutes to share our experiences of picking fruit or harvesting vegetables.



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Hymn

We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand.
God sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes, and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.
All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above.
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love.

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.
All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above.
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love.

We thank thee then, O Father, for all things bright and good,
the seed-time, and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer, for all thy love imparts,
but that though most desirest, our humble, thankful hearts.
All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above.
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love.

Bible Reading

Our Bible reading is from Psalm 65 verses 9-13.

You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.

The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.

You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.

The grasslands of the desert overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.

The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning
is now and shall be for ever. Amen

Fruitfulness

We're going to pass round some conkers and autumn leaves – and you may like to take a conker and a leaf and enjoy the colour and the feel of them.



Image by [👁👁 Mabel Amber, who will one day](#) from [Pixabay](#)

As we do so, we hear some words about fruitfulness written by Henri Nouwen, a Dutch priest, professor and writer in the last century.

“You have to be really aware of the difference between fruitfulness and success because the world is always talking to you about your success... And there is nothing wrong with any of that. I am saying that finally that’s not the question. The question is: “Are you going to bear fruit?” And the amazing thing is that our fruitfulness comes out of our vulnerability and not just out of our power. Actually it comes out of our powerlessness. If the ground wants to be fruitful, you have to break it open a little bit. The hard ground cannot bear fruit; it has to be raked open. And the mystery is that our illness and our weakness and our many ways of dying are often the ways that we get in touch with our vulnerabilities. You and I have to trust that they will allow us to be more fruitful if lived faithfully. Precisely where we are weakest and often most broken and most needy, precisely there can be the ground of our fruitfulness...Like trees that die and become fuel, and like leaves that die and become fertilizer, in nature something new comes out from death all the time. So you have to realize that you are part of that beautiful process.”

Prayers

So we come to God in thankfulness for fruitfulness and harvest. Let's spend a few minutes naming the fruitfulness that we are thankful for today.

And let's write this onto our paper apples.



Image by [S. Hermann & F. Richter](#) from [Pixabay](#)

We give thanks for the harvest of the land.
We pray for all who work to bring us the essentials of life.
We remember the challenges of the growing season
and we give thanks for the fruitfulness of the land.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer.

We give thanks for the harvest of our community life.
We pray for all who build up our shared life.
Help us to think of others and to act for future generations.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer.

We give thanks for the harvest of our own lives
and for all that has been fruitful in us.
Give us grace to grow in faith and hope and love.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer.

We remember all who are struggling in body, mind or spirit.
And we remember those who have died
and are gathered into the harvest of heaven.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer.

Hymn

Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
to keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

The Lord's Prayer

We finish by joining together in the words of the Lord's Prayer, which connect us as one family across the generations and around the world:

Our Father, which 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.
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



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For more information on our dementia-friendly churches network across the Diocese of Lichfield in Staffordshire, The Black Country and north Shropshire, contact

Sarah Thorpe, Dementia-Friendly Church Enabler, Diocese of Lichfield

sarah.thorpe@lichfield.anglican.org 0798 224 8949