

Resources for the Celebration of Harvest Festival



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THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK

Explanatory note to clergy and worship leaders

This modest resource pack aims to provide you with an eclectic source of up-to-date material suitable for harvest festivals. It offers some suggestions as to how your churches might celebrate harvest in the context of today's agriculture and food production and in the context of congregations who may have little or no connection with those processes. The nostalgic harvest-homes of yesteryear bear little relation to the harvests of today but we still owe gratitude and praise to our creator God from whom all blessings flow.

This material offers the means to help you to help your congregations worship meaningfully and to show support for its local farmers at this time. We hope you will have the opportunity to look through the material and please make use of whatever is appropriate to your plans and ideas. This year we also have available 'Suggestions for your Harvest Service'.

You can find further information about the work of The Farming Community Network (FCN) at www.fcn.org.uk, emailing mail@fcn.org.uk or ringing 01788 510866. Please ask if you would like supplies of our leaflets, a visiting speaker or information on how to make a donation.

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1. Why celebrate harvest?

**The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it...
'He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to
cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth: wine that
gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread
that sustains his heart.'** *Psalm 104, 14-15*

Harvest has surely been celebrated ever since human beings first planted seeds, cut the heads of grain and stored them to use through the times of scarcity. When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land and left off their nomadic existence in the wilderness, they adapted the agricultural festivals being kept in the Promised Land and these have come down to us today: Lammas, the time of the First Fruits, corresponds to the Feast of Weeks when the first sheaf of the barley harvest was offered. Our Harvest Festival corresponds to the Feast of Tabernacles which is described as “*the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year*” (Exodus 23:16). This was the last and greatest feast of the Jewish year and it was sometimes simply referred to as ‘the feast’. During this time, the men dwelt in green booths or ‘tabernacles’ made out of branches, in commemoration of their time in the wilderness when there were no harvests, and they depended on God for their daily food. So there is much precedent in the Old Testament for a festival thanking God for food and farming. Land and faith in the Old Testament are inseparable, even as the cities of the exilic and post-exilic periods thrived and grew. People understood their dependence on a good harvest blessed by God.

The Gospels are full of allusion to agriculture and harvest and although early Christianity was arguably a faith of the cities people were clear about the provenance of the food that they ate. At the time of Christ it is estimated that around 90% of a person's time would have been spent producing and preparing food. Since the very early days the Christian Church has historically played a key role in reinforcing the connection between people and the land, particularly through the Harvest Festival which really came into its own during the Victorian era. Today harvest is second only to Christmas as the most popular time for ‘going to church’ and is still one of the most popular celebrations, both in town and country.

It is interesting that many harvest celebrations are nostalgically redolent of a blissful era of harvest-home that owes much to Thomas Hardy. Others owe much to the excellent work of global aid agencies and fair trade bodies who remind us that food production and matters of justice in agriculture are global issues. But it seems to us at FCN, that neither of those extremes really make much connection with the people of this country, whether in rural or urban churches. Most people no longer have any familial links with farming and folk memory is fading of the communal importance of local harvests. Equally, third world and fair trade issues at harvest time appeal to our Christian sense of justice. They make rational sense and rightly pull on our heart-strings. Yet they do not connect with our experience in an immediate way as the celebration of harvest is meant to do. They do not help us link our faith to our dependence upon the earth and the way in which the food arrives on our plates.

Eating food is one of the few things common to all human experience. What type of food we consume and how readily available it is to us may vary widely. But we all eat. In our society the meals on our table will have been brought there through the contribution of many different people working in a variety of environments. This food chain typically involves farmers or fishermen, processors, retailers and those who purchase and prepare the food to eat. It is important that we reconnect our congregations with these realities.

A harvest service is an opportunity to offer to God the contribution we make in bringing food to the table; to give thanks and pray for others in the chain upon whom we are dependent; and above all to praise God who starts off each chain by creating the sun's radiance and giving life to all living things.

It may seem strange that we bring tinned goods to decorate our place of worship but these can be a modern way of acknowledging our dependence on God. On the other hand, lumps of coal or sheaves of wheat may evoke memories in older people of harvests of the past, when life was harder and the celebrations more poignant; just as the 'tabernacles' reminded the Israelites of the harder, more dependent times. For all generations a reminder is appropriate of the basic humble elements of soil, water and grain on which we all depend, and the fruits of which we should share with the poor at this time.

Harvest is a wonderful opportunity to connect in people's minds the growing focus in our society on environment, health and food with God. It is a wonderful opportunity to talk about the production and consumption of local food. It is a wonderful opportunity to give thanks for all the wonderful gifts of creation and to reconnect with our place as stewards of that creation. It is also an opportunity to pray for and with the farming community, many of whom are struggling to make a living in today's global economic climate.



2. Possible themes to explore around harvest

- Food and faith (see FCN "*Feasting and Fasting*" four part PowerPoint based course. This was designed as a Lent course but has many applications for harvest time.)
- Harvest issues 2012 (See *Harvest reflections* by Bob Baker - page 25 below)
- Where does our food come from? Our roots in the earth
- Food security and politics
- Harvest and the urban church
- Fair trade for British farming

- Local food initiatives
- Climate change and global food sustainability
- Wild harvest – the harvest of the countryside
- The beauty of the rural landscape
- The Christian response to the global food situation
- The Church's Mission to farming
- The importance of land in the Bible
- The Farming Community Network – its work and mission (*see FCN 'Help the Harvest' PowerPoint presentation*)



3. Ideas for enhancing your celebration of Harvest Festival

Here are some ideas to explore for celebrating harvest:

- Have a harvest loaf making competition and display them in the church
- Invite the local primary school to make soup for the school with the harvest produce
- Have a harvest flower and fruits festival
- Arrange a Harvest Supper on a farm with local food and drink and a short act of worship in a barn and finish with a barn dance or farm walk
- Add elements to your harvest thanksgiving that will make it even more appealing to those who do not normally come. Talk about the processing of food from field to plate and involve farmers, gardeners, allotment holders, women's groups, local pub owners, processors, retailers, shoppers, caterers and anyone involved in providing food!
- Consider a civic service of thanksgiving for food and all involved in its production and invite local councillors
- Explore how raw materials turn into the finished product with a procession or display of raw materials and finished products

- Interview a member of the congregation about their role in bringing food to the table
- Base your harvest display on the idea of the food chain incorporating a toy tractor, a food processor, a basket, a saucepan etc.
- Have a harvest lunch and invite those in the community who are in need, isolated and unhappy to come and join you. Give them marvellous hospitality
- Ensure that any church catering uses local food and drink and fair trade products
- You may like to consider taking up an offering for FCN to support its valuable work in the farming community
- Twin with a church in a different sort of community (if you are rural invite an urban or suburban church to join you – if you are urban make links with a church in a rural setting)
- Commit to continuing support of your farming community through prayer, making pastoral contact and letting them know that you are behind them.
- Identify members of your congregations who may have a particular heart to work with the agricultural community and ask if they would like to be part of a wider Christian response to farming
- Arrange a trip to your local Farmers Market around harvest time or invite local producers to contribute to a local festival of local food



4. Scripture Readings suitable for harvest

- The Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:16 and Deuteronomy 16:9, 13) gives the Old Testament background to celebrating the in-gathering of the threshing floor and wine press
- Genesis 1:1-5, 24-end; 2:1-4
- Genesis 41:46-49, 53-57
- Deuteronomy 8
- Deuteronomy 26:1-11
- Deuteronomy 28:1-14
- Ezekiel 27:1-12
- Joel 2:21-28
- Micah 4:1-5
- Psalm 65
- Psalm 104
- Isaiah 35:1-10
- Matthew 6:2-end
- Matthew 13:1-9
- Matthew 13:18-30
- Luke 12:16-31
- John 2:1-11
- John 4:31-38
- John 6:5-12
- John 6:27-35
- Romans 8:18-25
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
- Philippians 4:4-9
- Revelation 21:22; 22:5
- For a bad harvest look at Habbakuk 3



5. Harvest prayers

Collects

God of the heavens and the earth,
You call us to share in the care of your creation and to
bring food and fruitfulness from field and farm. Hear our
prayer for all who make their living on the land and
make us grateful for the work of their hands and for the
generosity of your provision.

We ask this in the name of Christ. **Amen** (*From Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre*)

Almighty and bountiful God,
You have given us this earth as an inheritance for ourselves and for the generations to come:
Accept, we pray, the fullness of our harvest, and guard
our thankful hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. **Amen** (*From Send A Cow Harvest Service 2006*)

Almighty Creator God,
In your hands are the seeds of life and you have blessed us abundantly.
May we in whom the seeds have grown bear the fruits of love and
generosity; May we sow that others may reap and rejoice in a harvest
of plenty;
For the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen** (*From Send A Cow Harvest
Service 2006*)

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** (*From Common Worship. Additional Collects* ©
Archbishops' Council, 2000)

God our Creator,
You have made us one with this earth, to
tend it and to bring forth fruit;
May we so respect and cherish all that has life from you that
we may share in the labour of all creation
to give birth to your hidden glory,
Through Jesus Christ. **Amen** (*Janet Morley, All Desires Known 1988*)

Loving Creator God,
The whole earth proclaims your glory.
Everywhere we look we see your handiwork.
Help us to enjoy the earth gently and to work so that all may be fed.
We pray for those who work the land both nearby and in different countries May they
receive a just reward for their labour and may their work both as food producers and
stewards of the land be honoured. In Jesus' name. **Amen** (*CRC and the Rural Support
Network "Bringing Food to the Table"*)

Praise and thanksgiving

As we celebrate our plenty and give thanks for our food,
Father we praise you for all you have done and for all you have given.

For shelves that are laden and cupboards that are full. For
food available, varied, and affordable
for taste and for flavour,
for a healthy appetite and
the means to satisfy it.
For all that is symbolised in this Harvest Service
Creator and Sustainer of all, **We
thank and praise you.**

For Provider and Producer,
God and farmer working together in harmony. For all in the food chain from
field to factory, retailer to consumer, each one depending on the others.
Creator and Sustainer of all, **We thank and praise you.**

For our countryside;
Fertile, diverse and beautiful, supplying so
much of what we need; Our food, our water,
crops for industry, energy and medicine.
Source of our leisure, relaxation and renewal.
Creator and Sustainer of all,
We thank and praise you. Amen.

Lord, we praise you for the harvest of the fields around
For fields of wheat and barley; for oil-seed rape and maize,
for healthy herds, for sheep and pigs, We give thanks.

We praise you for the harvest of local hedgerows, for the
straggling bramble; for black showers of elderberry,
for mushrooms nestling in the dewy grass We
give thanks.

We praise you for the harvest of gardens and allotments;
For earthy roots and crackling cabbage, for
hanging beans and striped courgette We
give thanks.

Lord we praise you for the harvest of talents in this church; for
buildings well maintained, for flower arrangements and music,
for responsible stewardship, for charities supported.
We give thanks.

We praise you for the harvest of fellowship here at
for friends made and support given.
For people with whom to laugh and with whom to weep.
We give thanks.

Lord we praise you for the harvest of prayer in this place.
For commitment deepened; for discipleship taken up,
for the cross carried and the burdens borne We give
thanks.

Now Lord we dedicate this festival of harvest thanksgiving to you.
Bless us, strengthen us, unite us in your love.
Amen (*The Reverend Rachel Parkinson, Northallerton*)

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it;
The world and all that lives in it. **Thanks
be to God.**

All the animals of the forest are the Lord's and
so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.
Thanks be to God

The Lord makes grass to grow for the cattle and
plants for us to cultivate.
Thanks be to God

The Lord brings forth food from the earth,
wine that gladdens our hearts. **Thanks
be to God**

Oil to make our faces shine,
bread that sustains our hearts
Thanks be to God

The Lord makes springs pour water into the valleys; It
flows between the mountains.
Thanks be to God

The birds of the air nest by the waters; They
sing among the branches.

Thanks be to God

For all who cooperate and collaborate with God to
bring food to our tables,

Thanks be to God

For farmers, growers, packers and processors, for
breeders, stock people, shepherds and dairy-farmers

Thanks be to God

For distributors, hauliers, retailers and stall-holders, for
chefs, cooks and creative entrepreneurs

Thanks be to God

Amen

For the gift of creation: The enormous and the tiny.
For refreshment: for a challenge, for
gentle beauty: for fierce splendour,
for all the variety of place and season.

We praise you.

For the inheritance in creation from generations past:
For landscape, for craft and skill.

For breed and variety in livestock and crops, for
fertility maintained.

We praise you.

For those who represent us all in tending creation:
For gardeners, for foresters, for farmers **We**
praise you.

For Christ's blessing of bread and for revealing the
divine presence in earthly things.

We praise you.

We praise you.

Petition

Lord God,
Help us we pray to recognise the difference
between satisfaction and smugness, being
content and being comfortable.

May our expressions of gratitude never
deafen us to the cries of those in need.
And in celebrating your love may we
never forget that your love reaches
others through us.

Amen

Confession

When we are unkind to people and forget they are God's children, when we are careless with the beasts and forget they are God's creation; When we ill-treat the land and forget it is the splendour of God, forgive us, Oh God of love, and reconcile us to yourself, to one another and to the creation.

Teach us, that the earth and all its fullness is yours.
Remind us that your Son too enjoyed the fruits of harvest in Galilee and join us now as we celebrate your good gifts together.

Amen

As we celebrate your goodness so we confront our own sin, our greed and insensitivity, our failure to appreciate what we have and the opportunities you have given, Our readiness to complain, our unwillingness to praise. **Father, forgive and renew us.**

Food taken for granted, work unappreciated and poorly rewarded; Self-centred blindness to other's needs. Deliberate deafness to the cries of the hungry, Coldness of heart to those deprived of affection, **Father, forgive and renew us.**

A landscape threatened and an economy at risk; a countryside disheartened, its communities uncertain and confused, its isolation and exclusion ignored. **Father, forgive and renew us.**

May our sins be forgiven,
Our blindness, deafness and coldness of heart be healed.
May your renewing spirit rest on us And fill our nation with your love and hope.
In Jesus' name.

Amen

Intercession

We pray for those whose lives are caught up with your creation, and who work with you in tending and nurturing it; those who even now suffer as a result of the crisis in our countryside; those afraid for their future, those struggling to survive; all whose livelihood and existence is under threat. May they know your presence and be conscious of the help that you bring. Through both may they find hope for their future.
Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for the hungry and the homeless, the broken and bereaved.
For all for whom this day brings sadness and little joy.
For the lonely and the helpless, for those whose hope has been shattered And
their faith destroyed.
Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

For the struggling and the oppressed. for those
without power to negotiate or bargain; for all
whose work goes unrewarded, whose produce
is undervalued. For all who feel unwanted,
believing their skills are no longer needed.
Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

For all who struggle to change the system,
striving for justice and fair trade, trying to overcome political
blindness and public insensitivity. For all who influence our
thinking, our buying and consuming; for all who formulate
policy and manage the market; for fairness and
compassion in all walks of life. Lord, in your mercy **Hear
our prayer.**

For responsible stewardship in our using of your world;
for sustainable consumption as well as production;
for care for creation and compassion for each other.
Lord, may your Kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as
it is in heaven **Amen Merciful
Father...**

We pray for farmers, their families and communities and all who depend on them and
for all who are worried about tomorrow and facing difficulties today,
Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

For agricultural chaplains, rural churches, The Farming Community Network and their partner
charities;
for the communities in which they work and the people to whom they minister
Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

For retailers and suppliers
and for all involved in the processing and transporting of food; Lord,
in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For urban communities far removed from food production;
for children and young people with little knowledge of where their food comes from
Lord, in your mercy
Hear our prayer

For those that go hungry and those who endeavour to feed them;
for relief agencies and aid workers giving
help and healing to those in need,
Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

For restraint and fairness in the use of economic power; for
discernment and a long view in farm policy and decision;
for justice in world trade,
Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

For ourselves that we may eat with joy and with care; for
land and livestock and love for those who care for them,
Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer

For the ability to appreciate your generosity
and a readiness to recognise our dependency on each other
and on you. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer. Merciful father...

Blessings

Bless to us, O God
The sun that shines above us
The rain that falls upon us
The earth that sustains us
The air that surrounds us
The love that binds us.

Amen

May God who has made us, who loves us and who gives us life bless
and keep us, now and always.

Amen

Graces for use before meals

The five finger prayer. Counting off on your fingers give thanks for:

1. God the giver of life
2. Farmers who brought in the harvest from land and sea
3. Food processors who add variety and longevity
4. Distributors and retailers who make it available
5. The person who shopped for and cooked the food.

May God, the Creator and provider of all now laid before us fill us with a sense of gratitude, not only for his provision but also for the work and commitment of all who have grown and prepared this food.

Amen

For the privilege of being concerned with the production of food;
for the pleasure of living in this beautiful place; for
the participation we enjoy in this event,
Lord God, for these and all your gifts we give you humble thanks.

Amen

May the food that we eat bring us contentment and sustenance,
May the wine that we drink bring us pleasure and refreshment.
May the company we share bring us friendship and laughter
and may all we enjoy make us humble and grateful to God, the
Creator and giver of all that is good.

Amen



6. Liturgies for harvest

Meditations

Once again the earth has produced her increase. The harvest of grain is drying, ready for feed and bread, the harvest of roots in part is lifted, in part awaits the lifting.

V O give thanks to the Lord of Lords.

R For His mercy endures forever.

The harvest of the vine, the grape, the pea, the bean, the harvest of the bush, the gooseberry, the currant, the raspberry, the harvest of the tree, the plum, the apple, the pear, are now in part gathered, in part ripening.

V O give thanks to the Lord of Lords.

R For His mercy endures forever.

Vegetables in their variety have yielded crops, and are still yielding, flowers have blossomed and seeded, we have food for the winter and food for the market, the fruit of our labour and the gift of God.

V O give thanks to the Lord of Lords.

R For His mercy endures forever.

We have enough, we have laboured to produce the food we enjoy, we have laboured that we might have means to purchase the food we enjoy.

V O give thanks to the Lord of Lords.

R For His mercy endures forever.

There are those that have not enough, for whatever the reason they hunger and have not the means to purchase relief.

V In your prosperity do not forget the alien and the stranger.

R We will not forget our brother in his need.

And yet there is enough food for all, but it is not always where it is needed, or at a price which can be afforded.

V In your prosperity do not forget the alien and the stranger.

R We will not forget our brother in his need.

Beyond this bread we look to the bread of heaven; beyond this fruit we look to the fruits of eternal life.

V *You are worthy, O Lord God, to receive glory and honour and power.*
R **Because by your will all things were created and have their being.**

Beyond the well-fed beasts, beyond the well-cooked meat, beyond the satisfaction of bodily hunger, we look to the satisfaction of heart and soul and we welcome the day when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

V *You are worthy, O Lord God, to receive glory and honour and power.*
R **Because by your will all things were created and have their being.**

Beyond the beauty of the flowers and fruits in all their variety of form and colour, in all the pleasing delight of skilful arrangement, we look to the beauty that does not fade.

V *You are worthy, O Lord God, to receive glory and honour and power.*
R **Because by your will all things were created and have their being.**

Beyond all human joy and achievement, we look to the time when our stewardship is completed and the whole creation shall rejoice in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

V *You are worthy, O Lord God, to receive glory and honour and power.*
R **Because by your will all things were created and have their being.**

A Thanksgiving

Minister: In the Spring we ask for God's blessing on all growing crops.
Now in Autumn, our prayers answered, we bring the finest fruits of our harvest in thankfulness to God.

1st Speaker: The seed harvest, seeds for clover, grass seeds for hay, the best of this year's corn kept to be seed for next year's crops. God brings forth grass for the cattle.

People: **And green herbs for our need.**

2nd Speaker: The harvest of vegetables, potatoes and hops. The Lord your God shall bless you in all the works of your hand.

People: **Therefore we shall surely rejoice and be thankful.**

3rd Speaker: The harvest of fruit, apples and flowers. For these things bless Him who made you

People: **and has replenished us with His good things.**

4th Speaker: The harvest of cornfields, the oats and wheat, rye and barley - our daily bread, yet we do not live by bread alone,

People: **but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

ALL: **Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the victory and the majesty. All things come from you, O Lord, and of your own do we give you.**

Minister: Let us give thanks unto the Lord.

People: **Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth for evermore.**

Minister: For the blessing of seed and soil, of rain and sunshine, the changing appearance of the land through every season.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

Minister: For the mist of Autumn mornings, and the keen freshness of an English day, with the smell of frost in the air.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

Minister: For the endless variety of the products of the earth in orchard and garden, field and hedgerow.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

Minister: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, eternal King.

People: **Who brings forth bread from the earth.**

ALL: **O Lord God Almighty, who has promised that while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not cease, we give you hearty thanks for the blessings of harvest which of your bounty we have received: and for these and all your mercies we laud and magnify your glorious name.**

Minister: Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God for the industry and perseverance, the hard work and cheerfulness of farmers and farm workers.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

Minister: For those who have designed and built the farmers' machines, for the means of transport, and for all involved in land management and environmental care.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

Minister: For all those who by their skill and labour have helped to supply our food, and all the necessities of life.

People: **We bless and praise the Lord our God.**

ALL: **O God who is present in every good work undertaken in your name, we thank you for those who work hard in the countryside throughout the year, for the strength and skill of farmers and workers on the land, and for all who work to provide our food day by day, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen

Minister: God made this world, and us in His own image, and He pronounced it all very good. He made it beautiful and bountiful, intending us to enjoy it and manage it wisely. Yet despite God's generous provision, we have neglected and misused his creation.

ALL: **O Lord, we recognise our failure as guardians of this beautiful planet. We recognise our greed and carelessness, which has upset the balance of nature. Save us from further self-destruction. Stir us to adjust our lifestyles, and to work vigorously towards a healthy environment for every nation.**

Minister: Let us remember the farming community in this country.

ALL: **We pray for those facing an uncertain future and for those who have already been forced out of agriculture. We pray for those who are suffering from anxiety and depression. We pray that you will bless the work of Agricultural Chaplains and The Farming Community Networkwork and its partner charities as they seek to bring help and hope.**

Minister: Let us remember those who lack the necessities of life.

ALL: **O Lord, we remember with shame that although there is enough food produced in the world for everyone, millions starve. Forgive us where we have not challenged or changed the economic and political systems that produce and maintain such inequalities.**

**From all laziness, grumbling and discontent,
From all failure to give of the best that is in us,
From thinking too much of ourselves, and too little of others, Good
Lord deliver us.**

Minister: O Lord God, who has brought us, your servants, one more stage upon our journey, pardon our wrong doings in the past, we beseech you, and help us to do better in the days to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



The Offering

Let us give thanks for the sharing of all God's gifts and ask for God's blessing upon our own harvest and upon the harvests of those far away.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.

Through your goodness we have these gifts to offer,

Which earth has given and human hands have tended and grown and reared. **Blessed be God for ever.**

The Offering of Soil

Reader We bring top soil, symbol of that which you have created and sun and rain have nurtured.
You have laid the foundations of earth: and the heavens are the work of your fingers.

Leader *The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it:*

All **The compass of the world and those that dwell therein.**

The Offering of Seed

Reader We bring the harvest of seeds for next year's crops.

You bring forth grass for the cattle and all things green for us to use.

Leader *That they may sow their land to yield them fruits of increase:*

All **He blesses them so that they multiply greatly.**

The Offering of Grain

Reader We bring the harvest of our cornfields.

You prepare the corn, for so you provide the earth.

Leader *We cannot live by bread alone:*

All **But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**

The Offering of Animal Produce

Reader We bring the produce of our dairies, together with wool and leather.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle.

Leader *You open wide your hand:*

All **And fill all things with your bounteous gift.**

The offering of honey

Reader We bring the harvest of our hives. You guide the bees and bless those that keep them

Leader *Lord thank you for your sweet blessings*

All **Sweeter than honey, dripping from the honeycomb.**

The Offering of Fruit

Reader We bring the harvest of apples and pears and the fruits of bush and hedgerow.

The tree bears her fruit, the fig tree and vine yield their strength.

Leader *He gives food to all flesh:*

All **For his mercy endures for ever.**

The Offering of Vegetables and Root Crops

Reader We bring the harvest of vegetables.

O Lord, you preserve both man and beast; how excellent is your mercy, O God.

Leader *When you open your hand:*

All **They are filled with good.**

The Offering of Flowers and Vineyards

Reader We bring the harvest of flowers and of vineyards.

The trees bear their fruit, the fig tree and vine yield their fruit.

Leader *You bring food out of the earth:*

All **And wine that makes glad the human heart.**

The Gifts of Resourcefulness

Reader We bring symbols of the machinery we use, thanking you for your gifts of knowledge and invention, enabling us to use more adequately the resources of nature. God gives food to those who fear Him, He remembers His covenant for ever.

Leader *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:*

All **Those that keep his commandments are of good understanding.**

The Offering of Bread

Reader In this loaf of bread we bring the harvest of our lands. For bread is the source of human strength and the fruit of human hands.

Leader *To God, Creator, Redeemer, Judge, we offer back with thanksgiving that which He has given.*

All **Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty: for every thing in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.**

Leader *Brothers and sisters, do not forget that the judgement of God is upon us, for any misuse of our stewardship, for any neglect of our land, for all waste and adulteration of our food, and for all injustice in its distribution that we can prevent. With our thanksgiving therefore let us ask pardon for all failures in our stewardship, and pray God to accept this loaf of daily bread, as a sign of our thankfulness, and of our desire to dedicate both our work and our lives to his obedience.*

Final Prayer said together

O God our Father, we thank you that once again you have fulfilled your gracious promise that, while earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not fail. We bless you for the kindly fruits of the earth which you have given to our use. Teach us, when we pray, that it is not by bread alone that we live; and grant us evermore to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end.

Amen



7. Short talks on harvest themes

Stuck behind a tractor! (by Reverend Sarah Brown)

Hoorah!! It is harvest time again!! There you are, hurtling through the lanes in your car on some mission of huge national importance, muttering venomously at cyclists in helmets shaped like wasps' bottoms, inconsiderate enough to want a bit of your road (and hoping they can't lip-read), rounding a bend and coming up behind the ponderous majesty of a tractor and trailer. On closer inspection over the next ten minutes you conclude that it is actually a convoy of three tractors and two trailers and the glory of the aforementioned ponderous majesty begins to wear a bit thin! Hoorah. It is harvest time again. And I would wager a considerable sum that most of you do not at this point start singing songs of everlasting thanks and praise to our great God for his generous provision, or blessing the farmers for the work they do to put food on our plates!

So here is your challenge for harvest and beyond. I've learned to do it and if I can manage it anyone can. If you get stuck on your travels behind a tractor or a combine or a plough or any other mysteriously shaped implement of the sod, (by which I mean, of course, the soil!) take it as an opportunity for reflection, for thanksgiving and for praise.

Why should you bother? Firstly because praising God for what he gives us should become a matter of habit in all of us and secondly because as a nation we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the farmers who are taken totally for granted by most of us who have become emotionally and practically detached from the source of our food.

We cannot and must not take national food security as a given. Climate change and population growth mean that it is more difficult to produce enough grain for the world's needs. Global markets will sell to the highest bidder regardless of need. Political mismanagement and the power of global enterprise in the inherently local business of food production are putting countless family farms out of business.

So when you get stuck behind that tractor take a deep breath, smile and wave at the farmer and ask for God's blessing on his family and work. Reflect on our corporate relationship to food and the land as the God given source of all our well-being and praise God from whom all blessings flow.

And if I rush in late to take your service on a Sunday morning you will understand why!

Happy harvest to you all.

The frozen chip (The process from farm to plate) *(PowerPoint images available on request)*

A third of all chips are produced by McCains based in Scarborough.

1. God provides the light, water and soil plus the spark of life in the seed potato.
2. Farmers running traditional mixed farms supply McCains. Many in Yorkshire. All potatoes used are UK grown.
3. In winter the ground is prepared for planting and the stones removed.
4. In early spring seed potatoes are planted in rows with a mechanical planter.
5. The farmer must water, fertilise and protect the plants from infection.
6. In early Autumn the green tops are removed before a harvesting machine lifts the potatoes.
7. McCain chipping factory is largest employer in Scarborough. It processes 1,200 tonnes of potatoes each day.
8. Their skins are blasted off with steam then they are forced under water through a grid of blades that cut them into chips.
9. They are then fried and frozen.
10. 364 days of the year lorries deliver frozen chips to distribution centres all over the UK. They are then delivered to shops where they sit in freezers waiting to be bought.
11. In prayer give thanks to God the Creator. Pray for farmers dependent on climate and price, for workers in food factories, for delivery drivers and shop workers, for those at home who shop and cook.

The story of Joseph (www.Christianaid.org.uk/campaign sourced at Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre resources)

In Jacob's household the brothers did most of the work in bringing food to the table. They drive the flocks to Shechem in the dry season to find new pasture. Joseph lives a comfortable life with his father near Hebron. He is consumer rather than producer. But later in the story, through his gifts of strategic planning and foresight, Joseph brings food to his family's table in times of famine.

Stereotypes and prejudice abound in the relationship between urban and rural populations. We are quick to dismiss each other's talents yet without the rural the urban would starve and without the urban the rural would not find markets for its produce. It is often in times of crisis that we finally realise our dependence on each other.

The Egyptian famine reminds us that all harvests are vulnerable. In this country last year flooding, foot and mouth disease and Bluetongue remind us of this fact. In some African countries a failed harvest can still bring famine. Joseph's actions spread beyond Egypt to all the world. Our concern should be that through international cooperation, food is brought to the table of every human family.

As the famine increases Joseph uses the power it gives him to determine future conditions of trade. Concentration in the food chain can lead to injustice. In this country supermarkets are in the strongest bargaining position and our farming industry is in crisis. Internationally, profit

hungry multinationals control the distribution and manufacture of food and the rich countries determine international trade rules. The God of Amos and Micah demands justice in all trade relationships.

While Jacob erred in showing favouritism, he loved and grieved over all his sons. God's love is also for all and He grieves over our divisions and injustices. At the end of the story of Joseph there is family reconciliation. Can we use harvest, a symbol of God's generosity and faithfulness – to be reconciled across the urban-rural divide, recognise our common humanity, value our different gifts and face up to the local and global issues around food production?

On Mark 4:26-29

(©Rev Canon Tony Ingleby, Truro Diocese)

Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces corn - first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Lord, you make it sound all very simple -

"Scatter the seed and then go to bed and sleep."

No mention of soil analysis, market analysis, subsidy payments analysis.

No mention of buying the machinery or hiring the contractor. Then there's choosing the crop and the variety, ploughing, rolling, harrowing, enriching the soil with fertilisers, top dressing, weed control, pest control

...

You make no mention of what to do with the field margins, maintaining the hedges, promoting the wildlife, and jumping through the hoops and filling in the forms to qualify for environmental payments.

No, it's simply, "Scatter the seed" and then, "All by itself the soil produces corn." Then all we have to do is harvest it.

No mention of the chance that, despite all your best efforts, you might not make a living.

A living you might make, but living things you receive as gift, as you also receive the conditions for growth - warmth, water, nutrients ... and that life force which flows against the energy dissipating tide of the universe. Humanity can select and modify the species of life;

humanity can, by continual efforts, conform the distribution of the species to serve the food needs of the people of the planet;

humanity can organise the rewards for being part of this great enterprise in a way that promotes the values of the society. So many things humanity can do, humanity has done, but humanity can't make the life you are born into and born out of.

The miracle of life is a continuum from which we can never stand apart and say, "This is my work."

But you can co-operate, using the gifts, the warmth, the water, the nutrients, using the developments the techniques and the technology and you can grow a crop, to feed the hungry and the not so hungry. And when it comes to the harvest you can feel satisfied and thankful. And perhaps it is also possible that a satisfied society can feel thankful too,

thankful enough to worship God the giver of good food and also to reward his earthly agent, the farmer.

Wet Harvest (©Rev Canon Tony Ingleby 2004, Truro Diocese)

God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (*Matthew 5:45*)

So this weather isn't a punishment. The spoiling of the crop, the extra time to harvest what we can, the extra cost of drying it, the poor quality, the low price ... It's not a punishment; It's just the way things are from time to time.

In a way it ought to be a relief for farmers to come back to complaints about the weather. It would be a relief if that was the only worry. But other factors are still operating. And decisions still have to be made. Like "what is the best land use under the single payment scheme?" How do we weigh it up with so many unknowns? Unknown costs, unknown prices, unknown weather, unknown harvests...

When God did use rain as punishment – Noah and all that – There was a safe place for the few and a rainbow at the end.

In this rain there is safety for the many of our land – The world market means food for the supermarket shelves even if it has been taken from the plates of the world's poor. It's the small band of producers who are afraid of being wiped out.

What about a rainbow for them? DEFRA likes to paint their reforms in rainbow colours: Decoupled payments to produce a sustainable future for the farming industry. It sounds good in principal but how does it work if other countries are travelling by different paths at different speeds?

Do I again hear the shouts of "Diversify"? Boat building? A visitor attraction like a menagerie? That worked for Noah ... but it only lasted him a year.

The rainbow for farmers will have to have variety to cover a wide spectrum. It will have to be bright and beautiful, and visible to many who have lost the will to look up.

Meanwhile.... Rain.

*Heavenly Father,
Thank you that you give us our daily bread.
Thank you for those whose work produces the harvest
and whose livelihood depends on it. Support them
through their frustrations and guide them in their
decisions.
Bless them and their families; in Jesus' name. Amen*

Harvest Reflection *(Edward P Echin, author of Earth Spirituality, Jesus at the Centre 1999 cited in Christian Ecological Link Resource available from the Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre)*

At harvest we thank and praise God for all his gifts of food and weather, especially his plants which mature in autumn and nourish us all year. Harvest is also an opportunity to give thanks and to praise God for all the creatures which move in the waters, fly in the sky and live on land. Harvest reminds us that all earth creatures are a community created to praise and glorify God. Nature matures in the autumn even without human help. Wild creatures enjoy the fruits of the season. With human cooperation however, nature glorifies God through cultivated fields, including grain and grapes which make bread and wine. Human hands and voices represent the whole earth community, in Christ, to God. The transformation of the earth at harvest is a sign, the beginning of the final transformation of all material creation in the resurrection when God does not make a new thing, but makes "all things new".

The Farming Community Network - notes to accompany PowerPoint slide show

Whether we are urban or rural, rich or poor, black or white or something in between, we all in this country have a great deal to thank God for.

The Farming Community Network (often known as FCN) is a Christian ecumenical voluntary organisation, which has a countrywide network of volunteers who view it as their mission to help farming people through difficult times in their lives.

Popular myth would have it that farmers have a rather affluent, cushy existence but while some of them are doing well, there are many who are struggling. This presentation explains why FCN exists, why it believes that it is doing God's work and why it believes that the Church has a duty to be pastorally and prayerfully alongside our farmers.

The Bible is very clear that the earth is the Lord's and that God is the generous author of summer and winter and springtime and harvest. We have a beautiful landscape in this country that has been shaped by centuries of farmers producing food for the growing urban populations. We eat because of them, we can enjoy our rural environment because of them and we can marvel at nature partly because of their work. You might think therefore, and particularly as talk of global food shortages creeps up the political agenda, that our farmers would be confident, treasured and well supported in our society. In fact this is far from the truth.

Many families in the farming community are suffering intensely. Suicide among farmers is proportionally more prevalent than among members of any other profession.

Rural poverty is silent and unnoticed by the urban majority but it can be acute. Low incomes, (we know many families netting less than £8k per year), combined with rising costs of feed, fertiliser and diesel leads to rapidly accelerating debt of an order that would terrify most of us. Poor prices, disease, weather, government bureaucracy and the drive by supermarkets for ever cheaper food has led many farmers into despair and because they work in isolation the outcome can be devastating. Debt and despair lead to higher than average incidence of family break up and mental illness. Our farmers feel abandoned by the government and betrayed by businesses. They know that most of the population neither knows nor cares about the source of its food and they know that their buyers will sell them out for lower grade, cheaper and substandard product from around the world.

The Farming Community Network is the Church's response to the difficulties many farmers find themselves in. Our 400 so volunteers come from farming backgrounds or rural communities as it is important that farmers can talk to people who understand their problems. We have a national helpline manned 365 days a year by volunteers who refer callers to a local volunteer who will visit, listen and 'walk with' the family through the duration of the problems – sometimes for weeks, months and even years.

We are ecumenical and view ourselves as the Church in action. We depend on churches and individuals for prayer, financial support and awareness raising and we'd love to talk to you more about any or all of that. But even if you don't want to support FCN beyond today there is much that you can do to support your farmers. Encourage them. Let them know that the church cares about them. Buy local produce and when you go to the supermarket check-out what you are buying. Lots of Christians buy fair trade coffee, tea, bananas and chocolate and a good thing too. But what might it mean to operate a fair trade policy towards British farmers?

Harvest is an important time for us at FCN because it gives us the opportunity to talk to nonfarming people about farming issues. If God really wants the Church to be a voice to the voiceless, relieve oppression and promote justice then FCN is going to do its best. Can you help?



8. Children and harvest

Harvest prayer for children to enact

The letters H, A, R, V, E, S, T are printed on large cards for individual children (or adults) to hold up so that the congregation can see them. The person leading worship then reads the prayer, emphasising each of the words in capitals which can be made from the letters the children have. The children stand in a line, stepping forward and changing places as necessary to spell out the word that has been read out, holding their letter up high so as to be seen. Those whose letters are not needed for that word stay back and keep their letter low down. It is quite difficult to do, as the children are in effect spelling backwards, so that the words are visible to the congregation.

This activity should occasion some merriment and often some confusion. Small children may need to have an adult helping them.

When the prayer has been gone through once, ask the children to form the word HARVEST again and then to remain still, while the whole prayer is read through again – seamlessly, as it were!

Here is the prayer in its totality.....

HARVEST time is here again.

We **HAVE** brought **THE** flowers, fruit and vegetables that we **HAVE** grown in **THE** summer **HEAT**.

We **STARE AT THE HARVEST** of **EARTH** and **SEA**.

We **RAVE** over **THE** lovely flowers arranged in **A VASE**.

Thank you, Lord God, for **HARVEST**.

We throw good food away as **TRASH** for **RATS** to **EAT AT** an alarming **RATE**.

We **HAVE** so much; while millions **STARVE**.

SAVE us from greed and selfishness.

Help us, Lord, to **SHARE THE** good things you **HAVE** given,

that everyone may **HAVE** enough to **EAT, STAVE** off **THE** pangs of hunger and **AVERT** starvation.

Take away all **HATE** from our **HEARTS** and fill **THE EARTH** with your love from **EAST** to west and back again.

HEAR our prayer, Lord of the **HARVEST**.

Amen

A simpler more serious variation

Seven people hold up a letter each to spell out the word HARVEST. What makes a good harvest?

To answer this question the letters are rearranged to spell HAVE. List all the many things which we have from God for which we are grateful including food, clean water, farmers to cultivate land, insects to pollinate crops, rain and sun.

The letters are rearranged to spell STARVE as we remember the people who do not have the things we have and the birds who starve from lack of food if the insects they eat are poisoned.

The letters are then rearranged to spell SHARE. We share God's earth with other people and other creatures. When we share what we have with those who starve that is what makes a good harvest.

Activities

- Bring a shopping basket full of foods. How do these products arrive at our dining table? Older children could draw flowcharts of the production process. Where is God in this?
- Interview a farmer or someone involved in food preparation or sale. Encourage the children to ask questions.
- Discuss what is made from wheat. Focus on the different stages of making bread (with very young children you might use the story of The Little Red Hen). Planting, cutting, harvesting, milling, grinding, baking and eating. Using a bread maker bake a loaf.
- Focus on one local food. Produce images, tell its story, sample it.
- Find some recipes for traditional harvest fare or local delicacies e.g. Shropshire Fidget, Suffolk Fourses Cake etc. Bring some to eat.
- Explore the benefits of eating seasonal food. What food is in season at present?
- Explore what fair trade might mean for local farmers. (*all age/older*)
- Act of Commitment to (e.g.) pray the five finger grace every day, buy local food, use the market as well as the supermarket, buy fairly traded food or learn more about food and where it comes from. (*Great for youth groups and Sunday schools.*)

Foodie prayer

For food, glorious food and those who provide it

Let us praise God

For potatoes and pasta, crumbly cheese and juicy tomatoes

Let us praise God

For the smell of freshly baked bread, for butter and honey, jam and cream

Let us praise God

For colourful carrots and bendy bananas, peppers and peanuts and pears

Let us praise God

For sizzling sausages and bacon butties, for crunchy apples and seedless grapes

Let us praise God

For milk and for juice, for fish and for chips

Let us praise God

For chocolate and for biscuits, for cornflakes and toast

Let us praise God

For food, glorious food and those who provide it

Let us praise God

Amen



9. Harvest songs

This is an incomplete sample of hymns and suitable songs that can be found in a variety of hymn books or praise collections.

- For the beauty of the earth
- To thee dear Lord we give you thanks
- In Christ Alone
- Great is thy faithfulness
- God whose farm is all creation
- We plough the fields and scatter
- For the fruits of his creation
- Let us with a gladsome mind
- You shall go out with joy
- Praise and thanksgiving, Father we offer
- Come ye thankful people come
- I am the bread of life
- Bread of heaven on thee we feed
- I the Lord of sea and sky
- Now the green blade riseth
- Morning has broken

10. Links to related sources of information

Organisation	Website	Telephone number	Postal address
The Farming Community Network (FCN)	www.fcn.org.uk	01788 510866	Manor Farm West Haddon Northampton NN6 7AQ
Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre	www.germinate.net		Stoneleigh Park Warwickshire CV8 2LZ
McCain Chips	www.mccain.com		

National Farmers Union (Farming fun resources)	www.nfuonline.com		
Oxfam	www.oxfam.org.uk/resources		
Christian Ecology Link	www.christian-ecology.org.uk	0845 4598460	CEL Information Officer 10 Beech Hall Road Highams Park London E4 9NX
FCN PowerPoint presentations	www.fcn.org.uk	01788 510866	Manor Farm West Haddon Northampton NN6 7AQ