

Parishes of Cornforth and Ferryhill with Chilton

HARVEST FESTIVAL



Welcome and Introduction

We come to sing the song of harvest home, to thank God for the harvest of our gardens and allotments, our fields and farms, bringing food to our tables and meeting many of our physical needs. We celebrate all that is seasonal and local, as we enjoy the fruit of the earth in due season. We give thanks for the fertility of the earth and the creativity of our hands in finding new ways to adapt and change in difficult times.

We remember any who struggle to put food on the table, who go hungry when the harvest fails, who suffer from extreme and unseasonal weather due to climate change. We thank God too for the harvest of our community, our common life together, the harvest of our own deepest selves, our growing towards maturity and wisdom. Through hymns and anthems, readings and prayers, we raise the song of harvest home.

Hymn - 101 Come, ye thankful people, come

Soil

Harvest begins with the soil. With increasingly sophisticated tools and machinery and with the use of fertilizers and chemicals, our attention can be deflected from the core vitality of the soil. We need to rediscover a respect for the soil as the basis for sustainable farming for the long term.

Reading: Matthew 13.1–9

Jesus invites us to reflect on different kinds of soil, noticing the fertility of the ground and our readiness to hear his word.

Prayer

God the Sower,
may the good news of your love for us
find the good soil of our hearts,
that we may embrace the changes needed
to care for your creation
and for one another.
May our harvest be sustainable,
some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
Let anyone with ears listen,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

**A Bible and symbol of the Harvest
are placed on the altar**

Seed

In the face of the environmental crisis, we sometimes feel the problem is too vast for us to make a difference. As individuals we can easily feel overwhelmed, powerless to bring about change. But each of us can make an impact, from small beginnings, from small changes in approach. And a handful of seeds reminds us that great things can grow from tiny seeds. What an encouragement to allow the seed of hope to take root and grow in our lives!

Reading: Mark 4.26–32

Jesus reminds us that even the smallest of seeds can produce a large harvest.

Prayer

God of the mustard seed,
from tiny beginnings you bring abundant blessing.
Give us wisdom to use your gifts well,
to understand the impact of our farming.
Give us courage to take even small steps in the face of
climate change.
Give us generous hearts to share with those who go
hungry, as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn Praise and thanksgiving

Albert F. Bayly (1901-84) © Oxford University Press

Praise and thanksgiving,
Father we offer,
for all things living

you have made good;
Harvest of sown fields,
fruits of the orchard,
hay from the mown fields,
blossom and wood.

Lord, bless the labour
we bring to serve you,
that with our neighbour
we may be fed.

Sowing or tilling,
we would work with you;
harvesting, milling,
for daily bread.

Father, providing
food for your children,
your wisdom guiding
teaches us share
one with another,
so that rejoicing
with us, our brother
may know your care.

Then will your blessing
reach every people;
Each one confessing
your gracious hand.
When you are reigning
no one will hunger:
your love sustaining
fruitful the land.

Growth

Water is essential for growth; it is the vector for all life. In recent years we have seen our climate changing, with a devastating effect on the impact of water – from scarcity to deluge. Times of drought have led to failed crops; times of flood have seen homes inundated where we have built houses on flood plains. Ezekiel's image of the water of life speaks of restored balance, of enough for all, of abundant life – God's vision of a climate in balance, where wounds are healed.

Reading: Ezekiel 47.6–12

God promises fruitfulness and abundant life, with healing for the nations.

Prayer

God of the growing grain,
of the abundant earth,
you have blessed us with fruitful lands,
providing more than enough for our needs,
with plenty to share.

Help us to honour you in our care for the land,
and in the healing of the nations,
that the earth may continue to be fruitful,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn 116 - Fairwaved the golden corn

Gathering

We are sometimes tempted to achieve the maximum yield for short-term profits, but the long-term impact can be devastating for sustainability and biodiversity. We are beginning to recognize the need to take less, to leave more space for nature to flourish. God calls us to be generous and to look to a longer horizon, as well as to notice what other people need. What is true for sustainable farming is also true for sustainable community and family life.

Reading: Ruth 2.1–7

God calls us to be generous, not focusing on maximum return but being open to sharing.

Prayer

God of the stranger,
we give thanks for the harvest of our community life.
We pray for all who give their time freely to build up our shared life,
to contribute to the common good.
Help us all to think of others, and to act for future generations.
May we be like Ruth, working not just for ourselves,
but building bridges of trust that cross the boundaries of difference,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn - 139 For the healing of the nations

Abundance

Our planet is rich and fertile, and we have enormous resources to meet our needs, provided we are willing to share. Yet much of our economic life is couched in terms of scarcity and an underlying worry that there might not be enough to go round. The psalmist reminds us of the abundance of nature's provision – enough for everyone and plenty to share.

Reading: Psalm 65.9–13

The earth can be fruitful if we honour God in our care of creation.

Prayer

Generous God,
in love you have created the universe,
in abundance you have provisioned our world,
in hope you have called us to know you.
Open our eyes to your wonders,
open our minds to your mystery,
open our hearts to your love,
that we may find the path of thanksgiving
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Music

Offering

The act of offering comes from a sense of gratitude and of partnership. We offer something to God, and to the wider community, to give thanks for all we have received. But are we losing the instinct for offering? What's mine is mine! In a world of self-made men and women, there can be a sense of entitlement and we can lose sight of the need to give and the need to give thanks.

Reading: Leviticus 23.9-14

We are reminded not to forget God, the source of all fruitfulness.

Prayer

God of our first fruits,
give us thankful hearts in this time of gathering.
Grant us a generosity of spirit,
to provide for those who go hungry.
May we offer you the first fruits of our lives,
the very best that we have,

that we in turn may become a blessing,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn - 9 All creatures of our God and king

Sharing

When is enough, enough? The gap between the highest earners and those on low wages or benefits has never been greater. We live in a world of billionaires and beggars. But such evident inequality leads to resentment and social instability. Can there be another way – a way of sharing resources more fairly so that there is enough for all?

Reading: Matthew 14.13–21

Jesus reminds us that God provides enough for everyone.

Prayer

God of abundance and plenty,
where we create scarcity and need through our narrow
self-interest and greed,
break us open, to find in you a generosity of spirit and
willingness to share,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn - 252 Inspired by love and anger

Feast

God's vision for humanity is not one where some have everything, living with lavish excess, while many go hungry. In God's kingdom, there is provision for everyone, with restoration and healing for all who have been excluded or forgotten. Can we make our harvest festival a foretaste of that kingdom?

Reading: Isaiah 25.1-10

God prepares a feast for all people and wipes away the tears from every face.

Prayer

God of the feast,
give us eyes to see your kingdom in our midst,
a table prepared for all, rich food and wine,
with oil to gladden the human heart,
where all are included,
where none are left outside,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn 130 – Fill your hearts with joy and gladness

Bread

Jesus shared bread with all sorts of people as a sign of God's acceptance and love. He asked us to remember him every time we break bread. God is in the business of making bread, the bread of community. We are the yeast, the leaven in the lump. The way we live can change the world, if we can dare to believe that God is with us.

Reading: John 6.30-40

Jesus reveals himself as the bread of life.

Prayer

Loving God, you provide enough for everyone:
this earth is fertile, fruitful and abundant,
but we are sometimes greedy, wasteful and selfish.
Many go hungry despite our plenty,
many are left outside while we enjoy a feast.
Lord Jesus, bread of life,
break us open to your promised kingdom,
give us hearts to gather and share,
as we follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Jesus, Lord of the Harvest.

Amen.

Hymn 534 – We plough the fields and scatter

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**

Blessing

God of the harvest,
bless the labours of our hearts and hands,
bless the fruits of our cooperation and community,
bless the gathering of neighbours and strangers.
Awaken us to your longing for a different world,
where all are welcomed, valued and appreciated.
Give us grace to discern your presence in one another
and in the invitation of your Son, Jesus Christ,
that, together, we may come to the eternal harvest of
your grace.
Amen.