

October brings autumnal days and in church, a flurry of Harvest Festivals. “We plough the fields and scatter” will be sung enthusiastically in our churches as we enjoy our annual blessing of harvest nostalgia once again.

And yet we know that in many ways the traditional picture of harvest does not fit the reality any more. Our farmers harvested their arable crops weeks ago in the midst of fierce heat and drought and we are told that yields from the corn this year will be down because of the weather. Farmers have struggled to feed livestock as grass has died in the intense heat. In our gardens and allotments we have had difficulty keeping vegetables and flowers watered and alive, and with a hosepipe ban in place our lawns are looking parched and brown. The natural world has had a hard summer and we pray that the autumn rains will be sufficient to top up our hard pressed water resources.

We find ourselves unsettled and anxious about the effects of climate change that seem to be coming on us so quickly at the moment. Our normal patterns of weather seem disrupted and we wonder what the future will bring. Could our food supply chains be threatened in this changing world? All the security of harvest seems shaken.

At such a time it is surely more important than ever to give thanks for what we do have and to appreciate the richness of our resources in this country. We perhaps need to value more deeply the role of our farmers and the importance of all those who work to safeguard the beauty and fertility of our natural world. Compared with so many places around the world we are blessed with food on the shelves in our shops and clean water in our taps every day. We should not take such things for granted.

More than this, we must use this harvest thanksgiving time to remember those around the world who do not have enough to eat and who are constantly in fear of losing their land and livelihoods through violence or drought. Climate change is affecting all of our lives but those who are suffering most from it are the poorest people in Africa and Asia, those who have contributed least to the excess CO2 warming our planet. This injustice should really make us stop in our tracks and do all we can to alleviate their suffering. As we give thanks to God for all the good things that we have here in the UK, let us open our hearts and give all we can financially to serve our brothers and sisters in need.

Each of us has a responsibility to work to reduce our carbon footprint and do what we can to be faithful stewards of this fragile world that we live in. Our children and grandchildren deserve to inherit a world as beautiful and fruitful as the one that we inherited.

With love in Christ,

Revd Diana