Contents Page

Introduction to Harvest 3
Ideas for Worship 3-9
Primary School Visit 10-11
Youth Group Session 12-13
Harvest

This service is probably the most familiar to us and it is also the service for which there is a great deal of material produced, much of it on an annual basis. In Common Worship: Times and Seasons, ‘The Agricultural Year’ it suggests, ‘Its origins are usually traced to the adaptation in 1843 of Lammas Day by the Revd R S Hawker, a parish priest in Cornwall.’ This service had gained official Anglican recognition by 1862.

The purpose of this festival is thanksgiving. We thank God for his generous provision and we thank farmers for their work and commitment in producing our food. Many churches invite a local farmer to give a harvest report during the service to ensure that the worship and thanksgiving relate to the reality of the local harvest.

Traditionally, worshippers bring harvest gifts to share with others. In many settings it is considered more appropriate to support local foodbanks or other charities through harvest giving.

Feasting is an important part of the harvest celebration. Food sourcing should be considered carefully, supporting local producers where possible.

Ideas for Worship

The following resources are all taken from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, ‘The Agricultural Year’.

Invitation to Confession
Let us confess our forgetfulness of the needs of the poor, and repent of the ways in which we waste the resources of the world.

God has blessed us,
but still God’s children go hungry.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

God has blessed us,
but still the poor cry out for justice.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

God has blessed us,
but still we see inequality and oppression in the earth.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to God,
the God of all peoples of the earth.
For the colour and forms of your creation
and our place within it,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For our daily food,
and for those whose work and skill
bring your good gifts to us,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For the gifts and graces inspired in human minds and hearts;
for insight and imagination,
for the skills of research
which bring healing and fulfilment to the lives of many;
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For the light and shades of the changing seasons,
and their variety and dependability;
for new life and growth out of barrenness and decay;
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For new hope and strength in our communities,
especially in your Church and among all you call to serve you,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For all in whose lives we see
goodness, kindness, gentleness, patience and humility,
and all the fruit of the Spirit,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.

For the life we have been given,
and for all those whom you have given us to share it,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:
your mercy endures for ever.
Worship for a Harvest Thanksgiving

Intercessions
Let us offer our prayers to God for the life of the world
and for all God’s people in their daily life and work.

God, the beginning and end of all things,
in your providence and care
you watch unceasingly over all creation;
we offer our prayers
that in us and in all your people your will may be done,
according to your wise and loving purpose in Christ our Lord.
Lord of all life:
hear our prayer.

We pray for all through whom we receive sustenance and life;
for farmers and agricultural workers,
for packers, distributors and company boards;
as you have so ordered our life that we depend upon each other,
enable us by your grace to seek the well-being of others before
our own.
Lord of all creation:
hear our prayer.

We pray for all engaged in research to safeguard crops against disease,
and to produce abundant life among those who hunger
and whose lives are at risk.
Prosper the work of their hands
and the searching of their minds,
that their labour may be for the welfare of all.
Lord of all wisdom:
hear our prayer.

We pray for governments and aid agencies,
and those areas of the world where there is disaster, drought
and starvation.
By the grace of your Spirit,
touch our hearts
and the hearts of all who live in comfortable plenty,
and make us wise stewards of your gifts.
Lord of all justice:
hear our prayer.
Intercessions (Continued...)

We pray for those who are ill, remembering those in hospital and nursing homes and all who are known to us. We pray for all who care for them. Give skill and understanding to all who work for their well-being. Lord of all compassion: hear our prayer.

We remember those who have died, whom we entrust to your eternal love in the hope of resurrection to new life. Lord of all peace: hear our prayer.

We offer ourselves to your service, asking that by the Spirit at work in us others may receive a rich harvest of love and joy and peace. Lord of all faithfulness: hear our prayer.

God of grace, as you are ever at work in your creation, so fulfil your wise and loving purpose in us and in all for whom we pray, that with them and in all that you have made, your glory may be revealed and the whole earth give praise to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Worship for a Harvest Thanksgiving

The Bringing Forward of Symbols of the Harvest
Let us bring forward symbols of the harvest, gifts that God has created and his sun and rain have nurtured. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of the cornfields, the oats and the wheat, the rye and the barley. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of roots, the swedes and mangolds, turnips and sugar beet. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of seeds for next year’s crops, for clover, for hay and for corn. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of vegetables, peas, potatoes, beans and hops. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of pears and apples, berries and herbs. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the harvest of flowers, the finest blooms from our gardens and our fields. 
Thanks be to God.

Bring forward the grain and the grape, for our Saviour took bread and wine to feed us with his body and his blood, given and shed for the life of the world. Let us feed on him by faith with thanksgiving. 
Thanks be to God.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, praise him, all creatures here below, praise him above, ye heavenly host, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 
Amen.

Blessings
God the Father, who created the world, give you grace to be wise stewards of his creation. 
Amen.

God the Son, who redeemed the world, inspire you to go out as labourers into his harvest. 
Amen.

God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of creation, help you to bear his fruits of love, joy and peace. 
Amen.
Additional Resources

Resources in this pack

Please find in this pack the following prepared resources for you to use.
• Material for talk/activity with children for use in church group or primary school
• Youth group session

Additional resources can be found at:

In *New Patterns of Worship* (Church House Publishing 2002) there is a section headed ‘All creation worships’ (page 458 onwards) which contains a series of text and liturgical resources. This includes a celebration of Holy Communion, a one-off service and a fully worked leader’s order of service.

Germinate worship resources for harvest can be accessed through the following link. Here you will find a wealth of resources from Holy Communion to children’s worship material. http://germinate.net/tag/harvest/?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=all&Itemid=138.

On the Anglican Communion Environmental Network website there are a number of resources for use in worship, not simply for a Harvest Service, but in order to mark ‘Creation Time’ also known as ‘The season of creation’ which runs from 1 September to 4 October each year. This is a time to pray for and celebrate creation, to focus on the story of the Earth and commit to a ministry of healing the Earth. http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/season-of-creation-2016.aspx

A Rocha UK also has material that can be used in Creation Time or as a one-off for Environment Sunday, which is usually celebrated on the first Sunday in June. Their website www.a-rocha.org.uk has a wide range of resources including their annual resource packs, for example:

‘Where is your Home?’
‘Just Food?’ A biblical understanding of Food
‘PlanetWise’ Ways to care for people and the planet
‘Heal the land’

Liturgal resources from the Diocese of Guildford for Creation Time entitled ‘Let all things their creator bless’ can be downloaded at http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/media/253283/Let-all-things-their-Creator-bless-2016.pdf

Christian Aid website contains resources for worship as well as resources for use in both primary and secondary school assemblies at http://www.christianaid.org.uk
Additional Resources

Evangelical Alliance
www.eauk.org

TearFund
http://www.tearfund.org/

Resources from the Diocese of Gloucester include materials for Harvest in the form of a church-school resource ‘Experience Harvest’
http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/schools/jumping-fish/church-resources/

Other Resources
Essex Agricultural Society  http://www.essexag.co.uk/

*Essex Schools Food and Farming Day at Writtle College*
Their website contains information about curriculum links for schools which might also be of use in church-school links. http://www.essexag.co.uk/teacher-information/

Revd Andrew Merchant is the Anglican Chaplain at Writtle College
E-mail: Andrew.merchant@btinternet.com
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*Essex Producers*
There are a significant number of Essex producers and products, from wheat to sausages. Some of these companies are very supportive and willing to be approached to be part of such festivals and services.

The best way to engage is through local relationships but if you would like some advice on who to contact please speak to our Rural Adviser Revd Janet Nicholls (see page 4).
Harvest

Preparation: This final session will last up to half an hour but is designed to happen prior to, (ideally on the same day as) the school harvest festival. This ties the focus you’ve had on agricultural festivals throughout the year into the harvest thanksgiving. You will also have the potatoes planted by the children at Rogation to harvest as part of this session.

For this session you will need: Some large garden forks (for adults to use) and smaller garden tools to help harvest the potatoes, some buckets.

Remember: Due to the summer holiday happening the children who planted the potatoes will have changed school year!

This session needs to be held at the school garden area.

Introduction: Introduce yourself to the children and say which church you’ve come from. Ask them how they’re settling into their new school year.

Recap: Remind the children that you’ve been thinking about different agricultural festivals as you’ve visited this year and that you’d like them to cast their minds back to January. What festival did you look at then (Plough Sunday) and what happened?

Now ask them to cast their minds back to April/May. What festival did you look at then (Rogation/Rogationtide) and what happened?

Ask: Do any of the children know which festival churches are thinking about at the moment? (Harvest)

Do they know what happens at harvest time...
- On farms? (Harvesting)
- In churches? (Service, food donated to those in need, harvest supper)
- In their school? (Service, food donated to those in need)

Explain to the children that Harvest is a time in the church calendar where we think about all the food we enjoy, those who’ve grown it and those who don’t have enough food to eat.
Primary School Visit

Quiz: Where does our food come from?

This quiz works well if you get children to move to different areas as a means of ‘voting’ on their answer.

Questions (answers are underlined)

Part 1: What’s it made from?
Corn Flakes - A - Grain of corn/sweetcorn / B - Rice / C - Sweet bread
Cheese - A - A mix of oil and flour / B - Milk / C - Plant
Spaghetti - A - From the spaghetti tree / B - Wheat / C - Rice
Haribo - A - Treacle / B - Some kind of chewy Fat / C - Sugar
(Some kind of fat is also an acceptable answer as gelatine is often present)
Biscuits - A - Oil / B - Flour / C - Fine Wheat

Part 2: Where does it come from?
Chocolate - A – England / B - Ghana/Africa / C - Australia
Oranges - A – America / B – Spain / C - Italy
Fish Fingers - A – Antarctica / B - North Sea / C - Rivers in Scotland

Explain: Explain that Harvest often marks the end of the agricultural year. The land has been ploughed and prayed for, crops planted and God’s blessing asked on them and finally all the food that has been grown can be picked/dug up and enjoyed.

This can remind us of the creation story in Genesis where God tells Adam to look after the land. In the same way we’ve been looking after this area of land at our school for the last 10 months.

Harvesting the Potatoes
Explain that we’re going to harvest our potatoes now in preparation for our school harvest assembly where we’ll show everyone else what we’ve been up to.

Start off the harvesting by using the big fork to loosen the ground then invite the children in 2s or 3s to work using the smaller forks to dig up the potatoes and put them in the buckets.

Extra Note
If you can tie all this into the harvest festival time of collective worship in school, it will give a chance for the children to share what they’ve been doing with the rest of the school and to present their freshly dug potatoes as part of the harvest festival.

Close this short session together using the following short prayer from Common Worship: Times and Seasons, ‘The Agricultural Year’

Prayer
For our daily food, and for those whose work and skill bring your good gifts to us, we bring our thanks, good Lord: your mercy endures for ever.
Amen.
Session Aims
- To explore the meaning behind harvest
- To think about all the food we enjoy and to thank God for it
- To think about those in need within our community who need food to eat


Equipment: ball (suitable for throwing indoors), flipchart paper, coloured felt tips

Ice Breaker: Invite the young people to sit in a circle and introduce this variation of the supermarket game. Each person starts their go with ‘I went to the harvest festival and I brought...’ and then adds something they could bring e.g. baked beans. The next person says the same opening sentence but then says the previous player’s item plus their own. The game goes on until you have a long list of items and everyone is struggling to remember them all!

Explain: Explain to the group that today is harvest festival which is about celebrating all the good things we have to eat and thanking God for them.

Ask: When you were at primary school what did you do for harvest? Why do you think your school did that? Do you know where the food went? (Many will have taken food into school which may have been donated to local homeless shelters etc.)

Bible Passage: As a group read through Psalm 104:13-15

Discussion Questions
1 – What does this passage tell us? (All food is provided by God)
2 – What can we learn from this today?

Thankful Prayers
Using a beach ball or other ball suitable for indoor use, have your group stand in a circle. Invite them to throw the ball around the circle (in no particular order) and each time someone has it they must name a favourite food that they are thankful to God for. They then throw it to another person of their choice.

Game: Invite the group to imagine that they were only allowed to choose 3 items of food to live on for the rest of their life. After they've had a few minutes to think about this, ask them what they'd choose and why.

Explain: Explain to the group that some people in the world have a choice of what they can eat and that others have very limited choice.
Youth Group Session

Ask: Ask the group to think about how they’d feel if they didn’t have enough food to eat or couldn’t afford food.

Read: Deuteronomy 24:19-22

Explain: Explain to the group that in biblical times after the fields were harvested what was left in the fields wasn’t re-harvested but left for those who were poor to help themselves to which meant people could be looked after. This practice of gleaning was common place in recent memory.

Discussion Questions
1 – What can we learn from this passage about looking after others?
2 – What would this look like in our society?

Explain: Explain to the group that throughout the bible we’re told to look after the poor and those less fortunate than us.

Discuss: Using a large sheet of paper ask the young people to think about who in their community is less fortunate than them and might struggle.

Using a different colour pen ask the group to think about how we can help these people.

Response
Explain to the group that just as all the harvest produce in church will go to help those less fortunate we are going to do something as a group to help others.

The suggestions below are two ideas you could do (pick one or come up with your own).

Idea 1 - Food Bank Giving
Hand out a medium size cardboard box to each member of your group and challenge them to put something (non-perishable) in it for the next few weeks (perhaps up until October half term or maybe even Christmas) and then to donate it to a local food bank. (You could get them all to bring them to church first and the leader could take all the boxes or even do a group trip to drop them off.)

Idea 2 - Live Below the Line
Live Below the Line is a charity initiative that challenges people to live on £1 or less per day for a week. You could do this as a group and plan to do it in the future as part of this session – The Live Below The Line website has plenty of ideas
https://www.livebelowtheline.com/uk/

Closing Prayers
Finish the session by inviting the group to go around and say one thing they are thankful for and one thing they’d like prayer for. Round these ‘Prayer and Praise’ prayers off by offering the young people’s prayers to God.
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Common Worship: Times and Seasons is published by Church House Publishing and available via www.chpublishing.co.uk and is also available on the Church of England website www.churchofengland.org

Other liturgical material is adapted from resources found on www.germinate.net

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