



Chet Valley Churches



Harvest Thanksgiving

26th September 2021

Welcome

The earth is the Lord's. **And all that is upon it.**

Created and creative things, **fruit and fruitfulness,**

Springtime and Summer, **seedtime and harvest.**

♪ Hymn: Come Ye Thankful People Come

**Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home!
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come;
Raise the song of harvest-home!**

**All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto his praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Grant, O harvest Lord, that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.**

**For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall take his harvest home;
From his field shall purge away
All that doth offend, that day;
Give his angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In his garner evermore.**

**Even so, Lord, quickly come
Bring thy final harvest home;
Gather thou thy people in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin;**



**There forever purified,
In thy garner to abide:
Come, with all thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious harvest home!**

Reading: Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

Thanksgiving

For the promise of harvest contained within a seed. **We thank you.**

For the oak tree within an acorn. **We thank you.**

The bread within a grain. **We thank you.**

The apple within a pip. **We thank you.**

The mystery of nature gift wrapped for us to sow. **We thank you.**

We see signs of summer’s passing in golden leaves, shortening days, misty mornings, and autumn glow. We sense its passing in rain that dampens, winds that chill, harvest’s bounty placed on show.

Creator God, who brings forth both green shoots and frost, sunrise and sunset, we bring our thanks for seeds that have grown, harvests gathered, storehouses filled, and mouths fed. And, as your good earth rests through winter’s cold, we look forward to its awakening when touched by the warmth of Spring.

Reading: Matthew 6:25-33

“This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn’t life worth more than food? And isn’t the body worth more than clothes? Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in

barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?

“And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass—grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have!

“So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?’ (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.

Talk [Rev Jill]

We come to thank God for all the provision he gives us, it's a chance too, to give some thought to our response to that wonderful provision from the earth, and the life God intends for us all.

We give thanks for the huge variety of harvest today. I wonder what comes to mind when the word 'harvest' is mentioned? For us living here in rural Norfolk, it might be a combine harvester working in a field of wheat or barley. Maybe heaps of corn in a barn or trees in the orchard heavy with delicious fruit, or in recent years, vineyards full of juicy grapes, and all kinds of vegetables being harvested from the fields. Those who live in a city may think of apple, pear or plum trees, raspberries, blackberries and vegetables to gather. In other parts of the country or in other places in the world people will think of a harvest of fish from the sea, coffee, cotton, tea, cocoa, almonds, and other nuts. They may imagine the bright colours of pineapples, oranges, lemons, and bananas. Let's not forget the harvest of Democracy, the work of the staff in the National Health Service, and tutors in schools, colleges, and universities!

In the book of Genesis chapter 8 verse 22 we read “As long as the earth endures seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease”.

These really are comforting words as the world suffers from raging storms, wind, fire, drought, floods, and rising temperatures. All gardeners and farmers all over the world, working with nature, often must wait very patiently for much needed rain for the crops, or dry and calm weather, so that work can continue. Waking up to reality, we have all come to know the need to treat our environment with respect, and to take care of this precious world.

I wonder how many appreciate what goes on to produce a harvest! A great deal of work goes into preparing the soil, nourishment, nurture, and protection of the plants. A great deal of commitment and care is required for many months of the year. When the produce is gathered, we wonder if these wonderful gifts of creation are subsequently stored, distributed, and used wisely. Why it is that some people have so much, and others have so little? Why is it that some are always hungry?

An image I shall never forget was one set in an African village. A basket of food was on the ground a little way off, and a group of 5 or 6 children were told those who reached the food first could have it for themselves. The children then took hold of each other's hands, and they all walked towards the food together, and shared it equally. A wonderful moment of showing love and care for each other!

The words in the Gospel reading might seem very strange to us! Don't worry, don't be anxious, don't be over concerned about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear, your health or your self-image. This is such a challenge for us, as it turns everything upside down! Jesus points us to nature for examples of God's wonderful, beautiful creation and provision.

It is natural to want to adequately provide for our needs, but in our society many people strive, to work much harder and to earn more and more, which often leads to exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and lack of sleep. Jesus calls us to think and act differently, to stop living in this way and to trust God.

Jesus' admonition is important because it indicates there are those who are hearing his teaching, but because of their daily cares, his words will be 'faded out' and so become unfruitful in their lives. Jesus is saying, "Rather than being preoccupied with material things, it is better to seek first God's way of life". There is still so much for us to learn, needing to keep the true goal in mind, the need of the world and the benefit of the people.

Everyone, from small children to executives of large companies can all make a difference in some way! Can we remember to look at the world with the eyes of Christ, to see glimpses of what the Kingdom of heaven looks like, here on earth? God calls us to live life to the full. In response to his total love for us, in providing what we need to bring about better lives for all, let's try to keep our hearts and minds continually seeking the Kingdom of God

♪ Hymn: For the Fruits of His Creation

**For the fruits of his creation, thanks be to God;
For his gifts to ev'ry nation, thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
Thanks be to God.**

**In the just reward of labour, God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done;
In our world-wide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.**

**For the harvests of his Spirit, thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.**



We Declare Our Faith Together

We believe in God the Father
From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son
Who lives in our hearts through faith and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit
Who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers

Lord God, you created the world and you saw that it was good. Today, at harvest time, we lift our eyes and look with fresh awareness at the world you gave us. Open our hearts, Lord, to see the riches and the wonder that you give your children: food to sustain their bodies, marvellous sights and sounds to feed their minds, beauty, and love to fill their souls. Open our hearts, Lord, until they overflow with happiness and thanks for all the gifts you give us in your world. Open our hearts to offer you a rich and fitting harvest not only of our praise, but of our lives, lived in the way that you intended human lives to be.

Lord of the harvest, grow in us generous and loving hearts.

At harvest time we pray for those whose lives are still endured in deserts, with no hope of harvest. We pray for those who live in barren places where the rains fail, and the cattle starve. We pray for those who live in polluted places or places ruined by war and human greed. We pray for those whose land and livestock are devastated by disease – for those who suffer with pain or fever, for those who are weak and helpless. We pray for those who dedicate their lives to caring for them, especially when their caring means risking their own health. We pray for those suffering from anxiety, addictions, or depression, for those losing hope of finding their way to a new and brighter future.

Lord of the harvest, grow in us generous and loving hearts.

Lord God, you commanded long ago that part of every harvest should be set aside to feed the poor and the foreigner. Help us to bring the riches of harvest to the people who have nothing. O Lord, we pray for the work of harvest that you set your church. Teach us to see in every human spirit a shoot that you planted, with all the love that you put into your creation. Help us to flourish and grow towards the perfection that you long for us to reach. Give us humility and patience and guide us to give good care to those around us and in all the world, so that the harvest fills the granaries of heaven and not one is lost.

Lord of the harvest, grow in us generous and loving hearts.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

♪ Hymn: *God is Working His Purpose Out*

**God is working his purpose out, as year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out, and the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.**

**From utmost east to utmost west, wherever souls have trod,
By the mouth of many messengers goes forth the voice of God,
'Give ear to me, ye continents, ye isles, give ear to me,
That the earth may be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.'**

**What can we do to work God's work, to prosper and increase
The brotherhood of all mankind, the reign of the Prince of peace?
What can we do to hasten the time, the time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea?**

Ending

For summer's passing and harvest home, **we thank you.**

For seed that has fallen and the promise of Spring, **we thank you.**

We bless you, God of seed and harvest and we bless each other that the beauty of this world and the love that created it might be expressed though our lives and be a blessing to others now and always. **Amen.**

