

Sunday 11th October 2020 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

The service is our Harvest Service and our readings Deuteronomy 8: 10-14 and 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11 focus on Thanksgiving and Sharing. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

Harvest Appeal - We are launching our appeal for tinned, dried or packets of food to be donated to church so we can give it to the Friary who support those who are vulnerable through food packages, support and advice. Please drop off at Eleanor's house or contact her on eleanor@bulwellurc.org.uk or 07480113252 and she can collect.

Call to worship

God of abundance, God of fruitfulness,
God of generosity, God of love beyond measure.

God of extravagance, God of celebration,
God of goodness, God of love beyond imagining.



We gather to bring the best we can offer to give thanks for the good things you give us to share your generosity with others and to celebrate by feasting at your table.

A prayer of confession

Lord, we confess that we are forever changing.
Some days we are like smooth pathways;
your word doesn't penetrate at all.
At other times we are rocky ground;
we seize what you have to say quickly,
but it doesn't last.

And there are times when our lives are
so full of other things that your word is choked.

Forgive us, we pray, for these lapses in our listening.

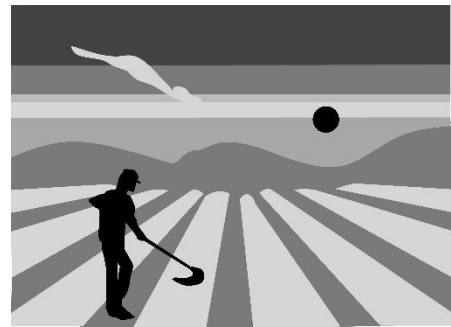
**We seek to give you our full attention,
for the flourishing of your word.**

Amen.

Our Father

Song We plough the fields and scatter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fJlgTWk7Jc>



Deuteronomy 8: 10-14 – Give Thanks

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then

your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (NIVUK)

2 Corinthians 9: 6-11 - Generosity encouraged

⁶ Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written:

‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures for ever.’^[a]

¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. (NIVUK)

Harvest - Generosity Encouraged

Jesus told many parables about harvest-time and the people working to bring the harvest in, and he told his friends that all the people who cared about God were like God’s harvest, so he sent his friends out like good and careful harvesters to bring the people safely to God. This is what makes Harvest such a powerful festival and one worth celebrating in all its different facets.

Deuteronomy 8: 10-14 reminds us to give thanks and guard our hearts against complacency in a commercial and materialistic world. No one forgets to eat, so it is natural to remember to say thank you to God for giving us food to eat – and for giving us physical bodies so that we can enjoy different foods – “Give us this day our daily bread.”

At first glance this phrase might seem somewhat inappropriate for those of us who live in Europe or North America who have bread in our cupboards and freezers. But to take that view is to misunderstand the deep truth which Jesus wants us to absorb.

He invites us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” because when we say these words with sincerity and meaning, we build for ourselves a barrier against ingratitude. All that comes from God must be taken, not for granted, but with gratitude.

God does, of course, know what we are in need of but He also knows that unless we come face to face daily with the fact that we are creatures of need, then we can soon develop a spirit of independence, and withdraw ourselves from close contact and fellowship with Him.

The force of Deuteronomy 8: 1—14 is that if we neglect to pray for our needs, we will begin to take the blessings of life for granted, and gradually, at first without realising it, we will

succumb to the senseless notion that we can provide for the necessities of life, and that we are perfectly capable of managing our own affairs, without any help from God.

Today however, a new note to harvest has been introduced – a Biblical one – that of sharing God’s abundance with the world’s poor. Every night around the world millions of people go to bed hungry and wake up to another day of not knowing where the next meal is coming from. As we rightly give thanks for God’s provision to us, we cannot help but be aware of the many situations that exist – e.g. Nicaragua as highlighted by Christian Aid this year and in 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11 Paul encourages us to give generously.

It is not simply a matter of literal sharing but responding to issues. These will range from third world debt; giving when disaster strikes; giving to aid communities in their development; engaging in action on fairly traded goods. This is now a ‘small’ world and I think that is how God sees it.

Yet we must still look to home. In 2012 I helped start the Bestwood and Bulwell Foodbank. Last year 3,125 three-day emergency food supplies were given to people in crisis. In Sutton, Mary’s Foodbank was formed in 2014 and more recently in response to the COVID situation Churches & community groups have established a Food Parcel Project.

People need help all year round but Harvest is still a very visible focus and is important because it can help our Foodbank and supporting projects to be able to replenish stocks. We look to be entering a phase of more restrictions and supermarkets may restrict the number of items we can buy. There is a case that Harvest is even more important this year. We need to respond wisely and share together to meet the needs of all in our community.

Prayers of intercession

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for those who follow the crowd, looking for leadership and guidance, for those who seek easy answers and simple explanations.

We pray for those with entrenched views that prejudice them to the cry of those in need. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for those who sow seeds on rocky ground, looking for instant gratification, for those who seek happiness in the things they possess.

We pray for those who chase false dreams of wealth and fame.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for those who sow seeds among thorns, looking for things that will not bring them peace, for those who seek to escape from the pain in their lives.

We pray for those who are lost to themselves.

We pray for wisdom, for happiness, for peace, for all those we have prayed for this day, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Song Come ye thankful people come (Contemporary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOWibuy1uV8>

Holy Communion – Harvest Thanksgiving Prayer

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for your Word is our heritage
and your ways are the joy of our hearts forever.

You created the earth and planted it freely, bringing forth an abundant harvest of life.
Through Moses and the prophets, you gave us our Word to be the birth-right of all your children.

You sent your child, Jesus the Christ, among us in the likeness of sinful flesh,
to teach us to walk according to your Spirit and to deal with the sin
that constantly struggles to come to birth and rule over us, dividing us and robbing us of the
joy of living.

When he was killed by those who are hostile to you, you raised him from the dead
and sent your Spirit to us, giving us life and sowing within us
an abundant harvest of peace and righteousness.

**Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,
we offer you thanks and praise at all times
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit.
We bless you for Christ, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.
By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine, that the cup which we bless may be to us the
communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that
shall last.

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

Prayer after communion

Loving God, you have fed us generously at this table, as we have remembered Jesus and
rejoiced that he is with us today. We are ready now to follow him, and to be your people in
the world. May your Holy Spirit show us the way, make us holy and fill us with love.

A sending out prayer

Like seeds broadcast on the wind,
send us out from this place
to sow your seeds of love
in every place we go.

Amen.

