

Let there be harvest in the hearts of children, women and men.  
We pray for those who are spiritually starved,  
who long for meaning in their lives and who need to belong.  
Give to your church patience and energy, boldness to speak out and  
the ability to listen...

We pray for a harvest of faith and of lives transformed by the Gospel  
and we promise to work with you for it, both reaping and sowing.

Let there be harvest in our own lives, and in the lives of those we  
know and love.

We pray for those who are sick or troubled, for those who are lonely  
or who have suffered loss...

We pray for ourselves, that, whatever difficulties we face, our lives  
may be grateful and joyful.

We pray for a harvest of deepened love, more faithful discipleship,  
and we promise to work with you for it, both reaping and sowing.

Lord of the harvest,  
we promise to work with you for the harvest of your kingdom,  
reaping and sowing. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**HYMN For the fruits of all creation** (StF 124 / H&P 342)

### **Closing Prayer:**

Creator God, You have made us stewards of Your earth, You have  
charged us to tend it and to grow food in season; help us to respect  
and to use it to Your glory and to cherish all life that comes from You,  
so that we may share in the labour of all creation to bring relief to  
those in need and to sustain ourselves in our own well-being;  
through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with  
You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Thank you to Rev Marie Beard for preparing our worship sheet this week. Prayers were  
compiled and adapted from various resources:  
Closing prayer – Church of Scotland website  
Praise and Intercessions from Roots on the Web

## **Darlington District**

### **Harvest Worship at Home**

### **3 October 2021**



You may wish to begin by preparing a small display of what 'harvest festival' means to you. A simple bowl of fruit or a small vase of flowers, or anything you would normally use as a point of focus.

**Opening Words:** Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;

**Hymn: We plough the fields and scatter** (StF 130 / H&P 352)

**Opening Prayers:**

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 bring the best that we can offer to give thanks  
for the good things you give us  
to share your generosity with others  
and to celebrate this festival of harvest time.

Forgive us for the times when we have taken your creation for granted,  
when we have ignored the needs of our neighbours, when our  
thoughts and our actions have reflected our brokenness. Heal and  
restore us, loving God. In Christ's name we ask it. **Amen**

**Reading: [John 6:1-15](#)**

It's harvest time and, whatever else is going on in the world, living in  
a rural area makes me aware of how much we still need our farming  
community to 'bring in the sheaves', as well as the manufacturers,  
lorry drivers and deliverers, wholesalers and shop assistants, to  
provide for us our daily bread, and all those other essentials. And  
today we give thanks to God for all those who provide these services  
as well as the bounty of creation itself.

We will all remember back to the beginning of the Covid pandemic when shelves were devoid of flour and loo rolls, the great descent of the locusts stripping back those items which we all found we needed. In many respects it provides us with a good illustration of our need for one another, our dependence on our care of one another.

The gospel reading which was suggested in the 2020 harvest worship material for All We Can, the charitable arm of the Methodist Church, presents us with a story of people in their most basic need. They may have come hungry to hear the message of Jesus but it would seem that their tummies are rumbling too.

Philip comes up with the question that most of us would have as we look at the needs of the crowds around us 'how on earth are we going to feed all these?'. The problem seems vast, insurmountable. How can we provide for all the needs of all these people? And, sadly, when resources seem limited our instincts of self-preservation seem to kick in and we tend to first look after ourselves.

Then there is the boy with the picnic. Had he settled himself down in the midst of the crowds and set out his fish and bread to enjoy it? Or had he, as we imagine, brought his sandwiches to share with Jesus and the disciples? Andrew spots both the gift and the dilemma, 'how far is this going to go?'. But here the miracle begins, the gift, as small as it is, seemingly willingly shared, provides an opportunity for God to do great things.

You have to ask, where does the miracle happen? Certainly, in the hands of our God, the dust of the earth can be transformed into life itself, the message of provision for His people in need rings across the centuries. But if it was that the generous gift of one small boy's packed lunch prompted others to share what they had, then it is no smaller miracle in my mind. God takes and transforms our gifts into something more wonderful, more life giving than we can ever imagine.

And we can be talking about food, water, fuel or vaccines, all gifts to be shared, all of which there is sufficient to go round if we are willing.

During the global pandemic and as we emerge from it, it would be so easy to focus on our own needs and not worry about others, but in fact now is when we must look around us and see the need of others, that God can transform life for us all. In the story of Jesus' feeding thousands with such a small gift, however it may have happened, we are reminded that God really can do great things with just a small amount. If we can be the 'boy with the bread and fish' it can provide, with God's help and guidance, for the whole world.

My daughter Rebecca and I went out for a walk on the outskirts of Corbridge and we noticed as we passed the fields that they weren't brown and bare as we would have expected them to be at the end of harvest. Instead there were already the green shoots popping up of winter wheat or barley. The farmers are always at work, the earth is always busy germinating and growing the next crop, providing for us, and we believe that our God is with us in this great cycle of creating and generating and providing for us. What will we do with the gift once it is ours? Keep it to ourselves, or share it and, by God's grace, see it transform the world?

Reflect – what gifts do I have that I can share and allow God to use them to transform other's lives?

Respond – give, as you are able, to the work of All We Can or a more local charity providing for the needs of the poorest in our society.

HYMN **God in His love for us lent us this planet** (StF 727 / H&P 343)

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord of the harvest,

Thank you for the time of sowing and the time of reaping.

Let there be harvest in your world.

We pray for those places in the world where the crops have failed and for those where poverty is the result of human aggression and human greed. We pray for the work of COP26 in seeking resolutions to the climate crisis that all people may thrive...

We pray for a harvest of peace and plenty

and we promise to work with you for it, both reaping and sowing.