

Dorset South & West. Written Service.
Sunday 6th October 2024. Harvest Festival Service
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to worship: The land has yielded its harvest: God our God has blessed us. Psalm 67:6
The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice

We are in Harvest Festival time and today we join with four churches in our Circuit who are also celebrating with a harvest festival. Our first harvest hymn was written by Henry Alford. He was a clergymen who was very versatile: an artist, an organist and singer, composer of verses and a very talented speaker. In the autumn of 1844, while he was at Wymeswold, his first Parish, the people decided to have a festival, rejoicing in the abundant harvest already gathered into their barns.

Alford wrote a song for this particular occasion, which has been sung consistently during Harvest Thanksgiving celebrations ever since.

STF 123

Come, you thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!
Fruit and crops are gathered in
safe before the storms begin:
God our maker will provide
for our needs to be supplied;
come, with all his people, come,
raise the song of harvest home!

For the Lord our God shall come
and shall bring his harvest home;
he himself on that great day,
worthless things shall take away,
give his angels charge at last
in the fire the weeds to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store
in his care for evermore.

All the world is God's own field,
harvests for his praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown
here for joy or sorrow grown:
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear -
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

Even so, Lord, quickly come -
bring your final harvest home!
Gather all your people in
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there together purified,
ever thankful at your side -
come, with all your angels, come,
bring that glorious harvest home!

A moment of gratitude.

After singing this inspiring hymn, Try this for a few moments: Talk to God, thanking him, and refraining from asking for anything for yourself. Rededicate yourself to a life of thankfulness. Try to see and appreciate the little things that we so often overlook.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Ephesians 5:21

Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Father in heaven all good gifts come from you. You send the sunshine and the rain, and it is through your love and care that we enjoy the harvest time. Thank you for providing so richly for our needs. When we consider how you have blessed us we are humbled and grateful. You bless us with the wonders of creation. The splendour of the earth. From the beauty of the countryside to the awesome tireless beauty of the ocean. Everything we need, you provide. We thank you that you bring to us so much joy to behold and bounteous goods to sustain our needs.

We praise you for the skills you give to those who cooperate and collaborate with you our provider, to bring food to our tables. For farmers, growers, packers and processors, for breeders, shepherds and dairy-farmers, For distributors, hauliers, retailers and stall-holders, for chefs, cooks and creative entrepreneurs, Thanks be to God for the bounty of the harvest and all who give to us so much to delight in. **Amen.**

Let us confess our times of forgetfulness of God's provision.

We confess our failure to give thanks and the ways in which we have wasted the gifts of creation.

We confess to you our lack of care for the world you have given us.

We confess to you our selfishness in not sharing the earth's bounty fairly.

We confess to you our failure to protect resources for others.

May God show us his mercy, restore us in his likeness and give us generous hearts and lives. **Amen**

STF 100 All things bright and beautiful,

Cecil Frances Humphreys (later known as Fanny Alexander) was born in Dublin, in 1818. The inspiration for perhaps her most famous hymn was drawn from the Bible, poetry and the natural world? In Psalm 104:24- 25. we read that God made everything, including all the wonders of the natural world.

In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's epic poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. "He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all."

Fanny Alexander visited Markree Castle in Sligo and many assume that the beauty of the surrounding gardens inspired her lyrics. However, she was also a regular visitor to Bellarena House in Co. Derry. It's thought that words "the purple-headed mountain" and "the river running by" in the hymn were inspired by the area surrounding that house. inspired her to write this time honoured hymn. As we sing we too marvel at the wonders of our world and give thanks to God.

*All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.*

Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,
he made their glowing colours,
he made their tiny wings:

The purple heathered mountain,
the river running by,
the sunset, and the morning

that brightens up the sky:

The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden,
he made them every one:

He gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty,
who has made all things well:

Bible Reading: Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Reflection.

The psalmist says, "when I consider...". How would you complete that sentence especially thinking about harvest time?

What memories do you have of harvest past? Perhaps polishing apples to make them shine in the harvest decorations. Or making up harvest baskets for the school children's harvest festival. Baskets that would later be taken to the elderly in the community. I remember making a huge collage in our primary school class to represent one of the verse's of the hymn we have just sung. Living in the heart of Birmingham it was hard to imagine what a purple headed mountain might look like. It's still one of my favourite verses in the hymn. Harvest suppers where great occasions and you could never have enough apple pies. What are your favourite memories about harvest festivals in the past?

A biblical story about harvest is found in **Mark 4:26-29**: Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces corn - first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

The kingdom of God is a present reality and is as sure as the harvest of a sheaf of corn. It's a mystery but a miracle that we experience without fully understanding and appreciation of it.

Try making a few words from the word HARVEST and some of them will definitely help us to understand and appreciate the truth about the harvest.

The first word that comes to mind for me is: HAVE , the essence of harvest is to recognise and give thanks for what we have. We are so far removed now from the reality of the harvest. Due in part to technology and globalism. Nothing is seasonal anymore, we can ship it in from everywhere that has our hearts desires in season. Or modify the growing conditions to affect the seasonal output. Strawberries freshly grown in time for Christmas! The nearest to getting close to a tractor might be the ones we get stuck behind in a traffic jam. However little we know about our current day harvest, the fact remains that we do have so much choice and food is in a ready supply for most of us. We have much to be thankful for, the harvest has come. I left out R to make my first word and the final three letters of HARVEST. Putting them together and you have REST. There are many different ways to see the definition of that word. Especially as we think about harvest. For the Farmers there is no rest if there's to be another harvest for us to enjoy. Farmers are often folks who struggle to make a living or a life for

themselves. The demands of the work can create severe isolation and loneliness. The weather can change the outcome of the harvest drastically. Government levies and our demands can cripple the livelihoods of hardworking farmers. What about The Rest? Those people who are struggling to make ends meet and to put food on the table for themselves and their families? In our current economic climate many are reliant on food banks, that in turn struggle to be able to give more than just the basics for a short time to a multitude of needs. Also we cannot celebrate harvest without thinking about the rest of the world where when crops fail there's little or no hope. Extreme forces of nature or the effects of warfare and civil unrest mean so many in our world STARVE. To make another word out of HARVEST. We might ask, where is God in all this? Is He taking his rest, while food bank queue's grow or those queuing for Red Cross and similar charity handouts are being helped? The letter I left out of HARVEST to make STARVE is...H. Are you with me? How many of you have been checking my spelling? It's ok and if I have missed a letter or made a mistake well I am sure someone will gently point it out to me. We need each other and no one is perfect. The letter H is interesting, in it's capital form it could be seen as two I's with a bridge between the I and I. As a 'h', what could you describe it as? Still the I but with a curve bending down or a resting place. My point is that the H or h could make us think about ourselves being the bridge between individual needs or a place to bring some of the harvest to the REST.

I love the story about Stone soup and for me it's the essence of the harvest that has and will come. Stone Soup is a European folk story in which hungry strangers convince the people of a town to each share a small amount of their food in order to make a meal. Some traveller's come to a village, carrying nothing more than an empty cooking pot. Upon their arrival, the villagers are unwilling to share any of their food stores with the very hungry traveller's. Then the traveller's go to a stream and fill the pot with water, drop a large stone in it, and place it over a fire. One of the villagers becomes curious and asks what they are doing. The traveller's answer that they are making "stone soup", which tastes wonderful and which they would be delighted to share with the villager, although it still needs a little bit of garnish, which they are missing, to improve the flavour.

The villager, who anticipates enjoying a share of the soup, does not mind parting with a few carrots, so these are added to the soup. Another villager walks by, inquiring about the pot, and the traveller's again mention their stone soup which has not yet reached its full potential. More and more villagers walk by, each adding another ingredient, like potatoes, onions, cabbages, peas, celery, tomatoes, sweetcorn, meat (like chicken, pork and beef), milk, butter, salt and pepper. Finally, the stone (being inedible) is removed from the pot, and a delicious and nourishing pot of soup is enjoyed by traveller's and villagers alike. Although the traveller's have thus tricked the villagers into sharing their food with them, they have successfully transformed it into a tasty meal which they share with the donors.

My one qualm about the story is that the villagers donate items only because they want a share of the final product. In that sense it makes it a story about self interest rather than sacrificial giving . Let's share this prayer from the 'Farming Community Network', based on the words you can make from HARVEST and let us pray for an end to greed and selfishness that all may share in the harvest.

HARVEST time is here again.

We HAVE brought THE flowers, fruit and vegetables
that we HAVE grown in THE summer HEAT.

We STARE AT THE HARVEST of EARTH and SEA.

We RAVE over THE lovely flowers arranged in A VASE.

Thank you, Lord God, for HARVEST.

We throw good food away as TRASH for RATS to EAT
AT an alarming RATE.

We HAVE so much; while millions STARVE.

SAVE us from greed and selfishness.

Help us, Lord, to SHARE THE good things you HAVE given,
that everyone may HAVE enough to EAT, STAVE off THE pangs of hunger and AVERT
starvation.

Take away all HATE from our HEARTS
and fill THE EARTH with your love from EAST to west
and back again.

HEAR our prayer, Lord of the HARVEST. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercessions: from The Farming Community Network.

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 the end of all things in your providence and care you watch unceasingly over all creation; We pray for all through whom we receive substance and life; for all farming families who work so hard, often in adverse conditions, to provide our food and look after our countryside; for packers, processors, distributors and retailers. **Lord of all life: Hear our prayer**

We pray for young people in farming, for Young Farmers Clubs, for those studying at agricultural colleges and for the next generation of farmers as they bring new skills, energy and vision to the care of the countryside and the production of food in sustainably ways. **Lord of all life:Hear our prayer**

For the Farming Help charities, especially for the work of The Farming Community Network, as they work together to alleviate stress and support farming families; for FCN volunteers who walk with farming families as friends and companions, that they may do so with integrity, insight and understanding. Pray for their safety and well-being as they work with distressing and challenging situations; may their Christian faith sustain them.

Lord of all life: Hear our prayer

We pray for a just and fair relationship between the farmer and the retailer; for researchers and academics, for food writers and political commentators, for government officials and all those involved in shaping public policies and attitudes to food production and consumption; for the reduction in food waste and a new valuing and honouring of the fruits of the earth. **Lord of all life: Hear our prayer**

We pray for governments and aid agencies and those areas of the world where there is disaster, drought and starvation; for all involved in agricultural research who face the challenge to produce more food for a growing world, without harming the environment; and grant us all generous hearts in the face of immediate crises.

Lord of all life: 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 life: 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**

We say the Lord's Prayer.

Our final hymn was written by Matthias Claudius (1740-1815). He was born in Germany. The son of a Lutheran pastor. Claudius set out to write a poem rather than a hymn. The poem depicted friends coming to a home to partake in a feast. It depicted God as the one whose generous providence made it possible for those people to enjoy that festive gathering.

A British English teacher, Jane Campbell (1817-1878), translated Claudius' poem, reshaping it as a hymn. The hymn celebrates God's role in providing the food and other good gifts that sustain us. It says what, while we sow and scatter the seed, God is the one who feeds and waters the seed so that it might end up as the daily bread on our table.

STF 130

We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand;
he sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft, refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

He only is the maker

of all things near and far;
he paints the wayside flower,
he lights the evening star;
the winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.

We thank you then, O Father,
for all things bright and good:
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and, what you most desire,
our humble, thankful hearts.

The Blessing:

God the Father, who created the world, give us grace to be wise stewards of his creation.
God the Son, who redeemed the world, inspire us to go out as labourers into his harvest.
God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of creation, help us bear his fruits of love, joy and peace.
And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us now and forever more. **Amen**

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