**Harvest Festival Service**

About this service

* This is a non-eucharistic service (Service of the Word) but can be easily adapted to fit a communion service.
* It draws on prayers from the Anglican tradition but can be adapted for any denomination.
* Hymns are suggested at suitable points but feel free to choose your own. See ‘Harvest hymns and songs’ resource for other suggestions.
* Words in bold are for everyone to say.

Beforehand

* Start advertising your Harvest festival several weeks in advance on your notice sheets, noticeboards, parish magazines and social media. Harvest festivals can be popular community events. Is there an opportunity to work with local schools and/or community groups to promote your service?
* Make it clear in advance whether you will be holding a collection of goods to be donated to a local food bank or a financial collection so people can come prepared. If you are collecting goods, liaise with a local food bank to see what items are particularly required.
* In preparing for this service, you might want to find out more about the Trussell Trust: go to <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/church-support/>

Why hold a Harvest Festival?

Harvest festival may seem like a very ancient tradition but it was actually a Victorian innovation by the Cornish clergyman, Reverend Robert Hawker (1803-75). Hawker wanted to revive the Lammas-tide tradition of giving thanks for the ‘first fruits’ of the wheat harvest. Lammas-tide traditionally took place in early August but Hawker moved his Harvest festival to early October and instead made it a celebration of the ‘gathering in’ of all the harvest.

A Harvest festival today is an opportunity to give thanks to God for his provision for all our needs, and to take practical action to help people in need. This service focuses on the work of the Trussell Trust, a charity who support a network of 1,300 food banks all over the UK. They are also working to raise awareness of the reasons people have no option but to turn to a food bank, as well as campaign for a future where everyone has enough to cover life’s essentials. As the cost of living continues to soar, food banks have seen a decrease in donations alongside an increasing need in their communities for support.

This service is an opportunity to raise awareness of the work of the Trussell Trust (including your local food bank if you have one) and to invite donations (of goods and money) to support this work.

**The Service**

**Greeting**

Welcome in the name of Christ.

God’s grace, mercy and peace be with you

**And also with you.**

**Opening hymn: We plough the fields and scatter or Come ye thankful people come**

**Introduction to the service**

A very warm welcome to our Harvest festival, when we give thanks to God for all his good gifts, and especially today for the provision of food. But as we celebrate today we’re very mindful that although we live in a wealthy country (the 5th richest in the world), there are people in our communities who have no option but to turn to a food bank to feed themselves and their children. The Covid 19 pandemic and the cost –of living crisis have only made this situation worse.

Today we will be thinking about our call as Christians to help people in need and there will be an opportunity to support the work of the Trussell Trust. The Trussell Trust is a charity that supports 1300 food banks across the UK, many of them run by churches. These food banks provide people in our communities with emergency food parcels, compassion, advice and practical support to help people facing financial hardship. They also campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

Unfortunately, as needs have increased, donations have not kept up and some food banks are struggling to meet this rise. That’s why our support is even more vital.

Thank you if you’ve brought some goods to donate today – there will be an opportunity to bring those up later – and there will also be opportunities to make a financial donation and to think more deeply about our response to God’s call to be compassionate and generous towards people who are struggling.

**Introduction to confession**

As we begin our service, let’s take a few moments to ask God’s forgiveness for the injustices we see in our world today.

**The confession**

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.

**Amen.**

**Absolution**

Almighty God,

who forgives all who truly repent,

have mercy upon you,

pardon and deliver you from all your sins,

confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,

and keep you in life eternal;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**A special prayer for Harvest**

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness

and give us the fruits of the earth in their season:

grant that we may use them to your glory,

for the relief of those in need and for 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.ii**

**Hymn or song, eg Give thanks with a grateful heart or In the Lord I’ll be ever thankful**

**First reading: Psalm 67 (NRSV)**

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us

and make his face to shine upon us,

2That your way may be known upon earth,

your saving power among all nations.

3Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

4Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

for you judge the peoples with equity

and guide the nations upon earth.

5Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

6The earth has yielded its increase;

God, our God, has blessed us.

7May God continue to bless us;

let all the ends of the earth revere him.

**Gospel reading: Luke 12.13-21**

This reading could be done in a dramatised version with 3 different readers: one to be the narrator/Jesus, one to be the rich man and one to be the voice of God.

**Talk: Based on Luke 12.13-21 – see separate notes with your Trussell Trust Harvest Resources**

**Hymn: God of the poor (Beauty for brokenness) or The servant song**

**Offering our gifts**

During the final verses or an instrumental reprise, invite people to bring up their food donations or take a collection for the work of the Trussell Trust.

**Thanksgiving prayer for the offering**

Generous God, all things come from you

and of your own do we give you.

Thank you for these donated goods [or this collection].

We ask that each gift may be used wisely and may be of help to someone in need.

In Jesus’ name.

**Amen.**

**Prayers of intercession**

Lord of the Harvest,

we give thanks for your bountiful provision.

Thank you for the flowers of the field, for trees laden with fruit, for fields of wheat and barley.

We ask your blessing on all who grow, harvest and get food to us: the farmers, the pickers, the packers and the delivery drivers.

Lord of the Harvest,

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Harvest,

We pray for those who run food banks [especially our own local food bank(s)].

Thank you for all who volunteer their time to keep them going.

We pray that you would energise and inspire them when times are tough.

We also pray for all those who use food banks, that they may be sustained in body, mind and spirit.

Lord of the Harvest,

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Harvest,

we ask your blessing on the work of the Trussell Trust.

Thank you for all they do to support food banks [including our own local food bank(s)].

Give them wisdom as they campaign for change so that food banks and a UK without the need for food banks.

We also pray for those in government and all who have the power to make life better for those most in need.

May they be guided by values of justice and dignity for all.

Lord of the Harvest,

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Harvest,

finally we pray for ourselves.

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 the Harvest,**

**accept these prayers in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

**Amen**.

**Action: My Harvest pledge card**

As a response to the service and to what they have heard about the work of the Trussell Trust, invite everyone to fill in a pledge card and to take it home with them. The Pledge cards are available for download alongside the rest of the Trussell Trust Harvest Resources. If you have any issues then please email churches@trusselltrust.org

**Final hymn: For the fruits of his creation or Great is thy faithfulness**

**Sending out**

Freely you have received, freely give.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

If you have found this resource helpful and want to receive updates from our Church Engagement team including new resources to help you and your church join the fight against hunger then sign up here:

[www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/church-support/join/](http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/church-support/join/)