

Circuit Harvest Service 4th October 2020

As we gather this Sunday to celebrate Harvest Festival we join with one another in our homes, in our local Christian communities and with congregations around the world, celebrating God's plentiful provision and bountiful blessings.

Call To Worship: Let us praise God.

Africa, Asia and all the world, from Reading to Rio, From Basingstoke to Bangladesh.

Here as we gather to celebrate our Harvest Festival

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever.**

All you BIG things... Mount Kilimanjaro and the River Thames,
The Rift Valley and the New Forest, fat baobabs and shady oak trees...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever.**

All you TINY things... Busy black ants and ladybirds,
Wriggling tadpoles and mosquito larvae, flying locusts and summer rain drops...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever.**

All you SWIFT things... Wild goats and soaring kestrels,
Frightened centipedes and lightning flashes, roaring traffic and leaping gazelles...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship Him for ever and ever.**

All you SLOW things... Curious giraffes and stolid sheep,
Slithering snails and lazy dogs, brown humped camels and meandering rivers...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever.**

All you LOUD things... Monsoon rains on aluminium roofs,
Fireworks on bonfire night, Guides and Brownies on a Tuesday night, train stations and busy bus stops...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever.**

All you QUIET things... Heaps of clouds and sunny libraries,
Scottish Loch and Sahara Desert, grazing rabbits and stalking lions...

Bless the Lord **Praise and worship him for ever and ever. Amen**

Hymn: Bless The Lord O My Soul (10,000 Reasons)

(Performed by One Sound, National Methodist Choir and National Methodist Youth Brass Band)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2M58JuV-FU>

Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul, worship His Holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul, I'll worship Your Holy name.

1. The sun comes up It's a new day dawning; It's time to sing Your song again Whatever may pass And whatever lies before me, Let me be singing When the evening comes.	2. You're rich in love And You're slow to anger; Your name is great And Your heart is kind. For all Your goodness I will keep on singing; Ten thousand reasons For my heart to find.	3. And on that day When my strength is failing; The end draws near And my time has come, Still my soul will Sing Your praise unending Ten thousand years And then forevermore!
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Activity: Play a scavenger hunting game, challenging each other to collect 10 things for which we might be thankful to God at harvest-time. The list might include a fruit, a vegetable, you're favourite drink (if you are not in a church building this could even contain alcohol!) a new item of clothing, your front door key, a picture of a loved one. When you have gathered them all together, say thank you to God for his extravagantly generous gifts of good things.

Harvest Thank You Prayers (Written by the Armstong-Stacey Family at T.M.C.)

Let us pray. God you give us so much, we want to say thank you for everything.

We thank you for our world and all its creatures.

Animals of all different kinds

All the people of the world.

God, today we want to say: **THANK YOU!**

We thank you for the food which keeps us healthy.

Clean water to drink.

For people who bring us our food.

God, today we want to say: **THANK YOU!**

We thank you for people who take care of us.

For all the doctors and nurses

For our teachers at school

For our friends and families who love us

God, today we want to say: **THANK YOU!** And we all say together: **AMEN!**

The Lord's Prayer

Song: The Harvest Samba!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTdIrTIXks&list=PLzm7Dr3CpNqVv-W0xwmCPgSZCVuEEnuoy>

1. Cabbages and greens,

Broccoli and beans,

Cauliflower and roasted potatoes,

Taste so good to me!

Apricots and plums,

Ripened in the sun,

Oranges and yellow bananas,

Good for everyone!

2. Golden corn and wheat,

Oats and sugar beet,

Fluffy rice and tasty spaghetti,

Wonderful to eat!

Coffee, cocoa, tea,

Growing naturally,

Herbal plants and all kinds of spices

Very nice indeed!

Chorus: It's another Harvest Festival

When we bring our fruit and vegetables,

'Cause we want to share the best of all

The good things that we've been given.

It's another opportunity

To be grateful for the food we eat

With a Samba celebration to say

Thank you to God the Father.

Middle 8:

Thank you for your harvest

Thank you for your goodness

For all the fruit and vegetables

And the wonderful things that grow.

(Middle 8 plus V1)

Sermon:

I love trees. I've always loved trees. As a kid I used to love climbing them. I always wanted to live in a tree house like Tarzan. When we lived in Kenya one of our favourite places was a place called "Trout Tree Restaurant" it literally was a restaurant built up a tree with monkeys in the canopy above and fish in the ponds below. Every year at this time when conkers are falling from Horse Chestnut trees I remember when I was a small boy and I found the best conker ever, but instead of playing conkers with it, I planted it. I took a plant pot from my dad's greenhouse and buried it in some earth and watered it and waited. And waited. It took a long time but eventually it grew. Slowly. After about 5 years it was as tall as me and too big for the pot. My Church had an old graveyard behind it with lots of trees and I asked Mr Brooksbank, you know, one of those important property people, and he said I could plant my baby conker tree in the corner. I went back years later and my conker tree had produced conkers of its own.

As we think about God's gifts to us at harvest this year I want us to think about God's greatest gift to us, God's gift of love. I want us to use three pictures to help us to do this. They are pictures I took in Guilford

Cathedral just over a week ago of Tapestries created by an artist called Jacqui Parkinson. They tell three short stories from the Bible and in each picture there is a tree. If you are using a computer you might want to make the pictures even bigger so you can see what's in them better.

(To find out more about the artist and her work go to <http://www.jacqui-textile.com/index.html>)

Bible Story from Genesis 1-3: *When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the man and the woman hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God. God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

The man said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid."

God said, "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I told you not to eat from?"

The Creation Story: The Tree of Life

Genesis is the name of the first book in the bible. Genesis means "beginning". Most people think the Genesis story is a way of explaining things rather than being exactly what happened, that it isn't a book of scientific facts but a story of relationships and becoming. It tells why God created the universe. It begins with the story of how God created the world and how he created plants and animals, then a man and a woman, named Adam and Eve. And he made a wonderful place called the Garden of Eden. You'd love it – lots of tame animals, beautiful plants, and lots of good things to eat. Everything was amazing! Unfortunately Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and went and spoilt things. They made their choice and ate the forbidden fruit. They've turned their backs on Life as God intended. This panel is a picture of what the artist thought it might have been like. Take a look at the Garden of Eden...

Some Questions:

Which are your favourite animals? Can you see some surprising ones which the artist included for fun?

Can you see the two big trees in garden? One is called the Tree of Life, the other the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam and Eve they could have anything in the Garden, except fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Can you see what its fruit looks like? And can you see who's pecking at its seeds?

There are two figures on either side. Do you think they are friendly or scary?

Do you think the angels are guarding the garden to keep people out or welcome them in?

Can you see Adam and Eve? What do you think they are thinking? Are they happy or sad?



In the story, one creature was supposed to have persuaded Adam and Eve to disobey God. Can you see what the creature is?

Can you see the river? It's flowing out of the Garden in four directions, and it's called the River of Life.

Bible Story from Luke 23: *When they got to a place called Skull Hill they crucified him...Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them; they don't know what they're doing."*

One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him, "Some Saviour you are! Save yourself! Save us!" But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? We deserve this, but not him, he did nothing to deserve this."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom."

Jesus said, "Don't worry, I will. Today you will join me in paradise."

The Easter Story: The death of Christ on the tree

The tree of life was now guarded so there was no way back for women and men to pick the fruit from the Tree of Life. But God hasn't abandoned those he loves. The Creator has found a way. At just the right time Jesus was crucified on a cross to make it possible for all to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Here the Tree of Life is a tree of both death and life. Christ crucified to bring life for all women and men. Bringing together the beginning and the end of the story. Humanity's loss and humanity's everlasting gain. Death for now, but life for eternity. Take a look at the panel showing Jesus on the cross but also on the Tree of Life...



You probably have learnt that Jesus Christ was crucified - killed, dying a horrible death on a cross. It's very hard to understand, but Christians believe he didn't try to escape but actually chose this to happen, overturning a load of bad things that people have done. In dying this way, he gave his life for everyone so that they may live well and forever.

Some Questions:

The outlines of the people show they are all feeling something different. What would you be feeling?

Can you see what's coming out of his side? In the bible, it describes how Jesus was stabbed in the side by a soldier's spear. Normally you'd expect a lot of blood, but a witness at the time said it was blood and water.

Can you see what the artist has made of the wound?

What does the artist want us to think by including the River of Life in this way?

I wonder why the artist includes animals and trees in the picture as well as people. What do you think?

Bible Story from Revelation 21: *Then the Angel showed me Water-of-Life River, crystal bright. It flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb, right down the middle of the street. The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the river, producing 12 kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit each month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations. Never again will anything be cursed. The throne of God and of the Lamb is at the centre. His servants will offer God service – worshipping, they'll reflect God's love.*

The Final Story: The Tree of Life in a new Heaven and a new Earth

We live in the in-between times, between the beginning and the end of the Story. In the amazing visions of Revelation we're promised that there will come a day when everything is made new and glorious.

And again the Tree of Life is at the centre: fruit for everyone, all the time and leaves that will bring peace to the nations. All of creation working together in harmony. And in the garden there is now a city a place with rooms prepared for everyone. Reservations can be made at any time. We can all "come home".

This is a picture of the last scene in Revelation, the last book in the bible. A man called John had a series of amazing visions in a kind of dream. He was told lots of important things, which he wrote down for everyone to read. He had a vision of a great city of heaven. The artist has given us her version of what she thinks it might look like. What can you see?

Some Questions:

Can you spot, for example, a tree, fruit, little houses, a river, city walls?

What was in the other two pictures that's not in this picture? Why isn't it here?

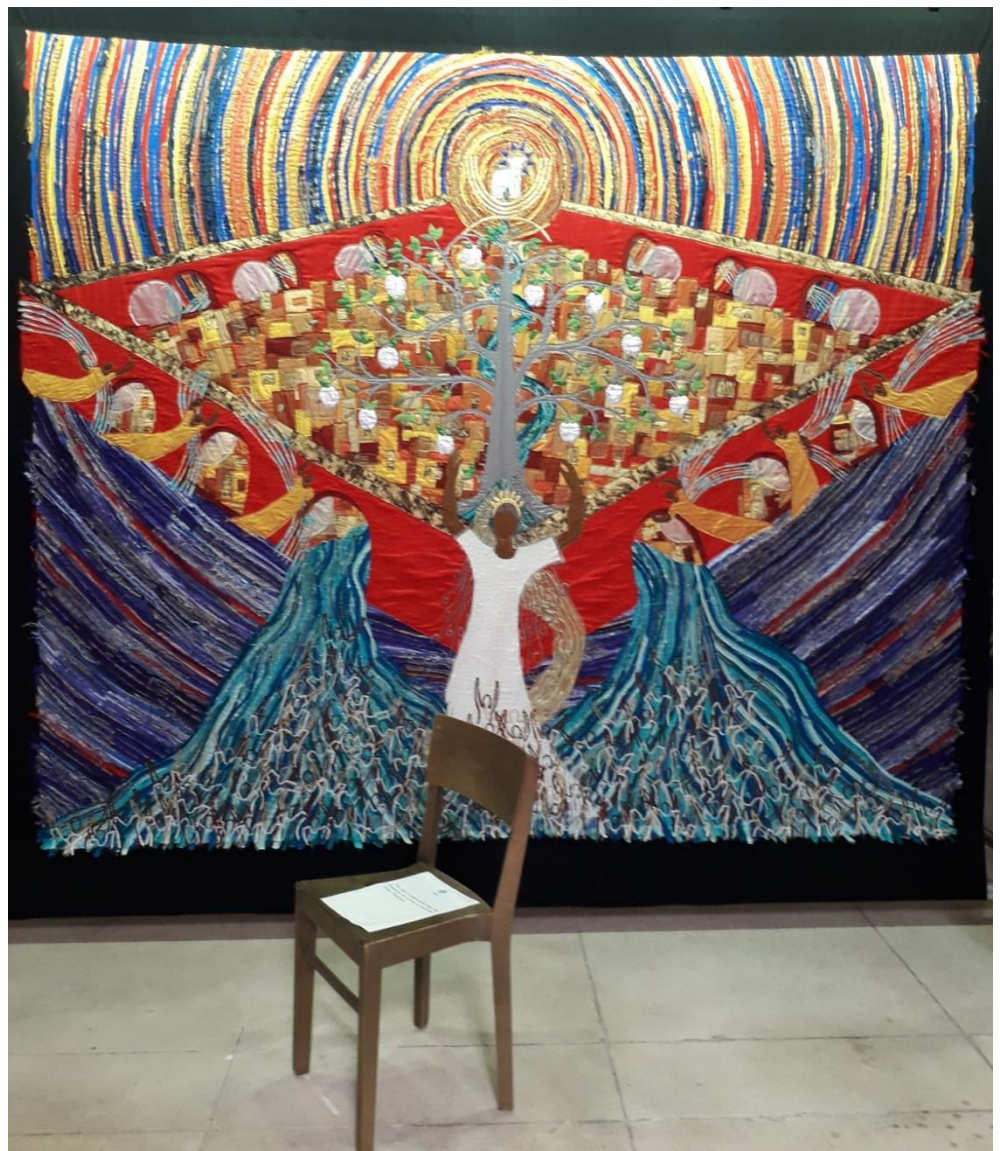
What is in the middle of the city?

Can you see the angels at the doorways? Do you think the angels are guarding the city to keep people out or welcome them in?

Who do you think will live in this new city with its beautiful garden?

When I took this final picture in Guilford Cathedral last week I was

upset because of the chair in the way. The chair had a message on it. "This chair has been placed here for use by a member of the choir. Please do not touch it". I wanted to move it because it was spoiling my



picture. But as I've looked at the three pictures of The Tree of Life I've grown to like the chair. The chair is like an invitation to sit and look at the picture, perhaps to wonder where my place in the picture is.

This Harvest as we remember with glad and thankful hearts all that God has provided for us. I invite you to think about the Tree of Life with its life giving fruit and the River of Life with its life giving water. Where do you sit? Where do you find yourself in the pictures? Which part of the story is important for you? How can you allow the Tree of Life and the River of Life to affect your story?

Hymn: Down The Mountain The River Flows (StF 377)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYzEvs3A4>

1. Down the mountain the river flows
And it brings refreshing wherever it goes.
Through the valleys and over the fields
The river is rushing and the river is here.

2. The river of God is teeming with Life,
And all who touch it will be revived
And those who linger on this river's shore.
Will come back thirsting for more of the Lord.

*The river of God sets our feet a-dancing,
The river of God fills our hearts with cheers,
The river of God fills our mouth with laughter
And we rejoice for the river is here.*

3. Up to the mountain, we love to go
To find the presence of the Lord.
Along the banks of the river we run,
We dance with laughter giving praise to the son

PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Prayer Craft Idea: As the leaves start to fall off the trees this Autumn why don't you collect as many different types of leaves as you can then make a giant prayer picture, praying for a different person or place in need each time you stick a leaf on your picture.

Generous God, at this harvest time we thank you for all the good things you give us. As we thank you for our food, we remember all those who do not have enough for even one proper meal each day. Lord, Bless all those who suffer because of the greed of others.

We pray for the homeless, and those who depend on the charity of others. We pray for local foodbanks, providing food for those in need. Help us to share the harvests of the world more fairly, so everyone can be fed and there will be no more starvation.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

At this harvest time, we thank you for the hard work of all those who grow, protect and prepare our food; for the shopkeepers, the transport delivery drivers, the processors and the farmers. Bless all those, Lord, who do not earn a fair day's pay for their hard work, both at home and in other countries. Help us to want to buy local produce and fairly traded goods wherever we can so that everyone can work with dignity and there will be no more poverty.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

At this harvest time we thank you for the world we see around us; for the flowers, the trees and the animals. Bless all those who care for them, Lord. Help us to protect your creation by being careful about how we use your resources, so that there will be clean water, clean air and plenty of wild birds, mammals and insects to maintain the ecological balance of our countryside.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

We give thanks for all that is good in your creation and all who bring in the Harvest of the sea and the land. We are conscious of so much that we get wrong. So we give thanks too, for your grace and patience with

us, when we fail to look after your world as we should. Help us to change so that we too become a new creation walking in the light of your Gospel.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer**

At this harvest time we ask for your blessing on our families, friends and neighbours, and on those who are sick. We pray for those whose lives have been gathered in to your presence, whose work here is done: Help us to recognise the interdependence of all of life and the importance of just relations and community, and help us become good stewards of all you continue to give us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of the harvest: **hear our prayer** **Amen**

Hymn: You're The Word of God the Father (Author of Creation)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVpkR4gYTIg>

1. You're the Word of God the Father
from before the world began;
every star and every planet
has been fashioned by your hand.
All creation holds together
by the power of your voice.
Let the skies declare your glory,
let the land and seas rejoice!

***You're the Author of creation,
you're the Lord of everyone
and your cry of love rings out
across the lands.***

2. Yet you left the gaze of angels,
came to seek and save the lost,
and exchanged the joy of Heaven
for the anguish of a cross.
With a prayer you fed the hungry,
with a word you stilled the sea,
yet how silently you suffered
that the guilty may go free.

3. With a shout you rose victorious
wresting victory from the grave,
and ascended into Heaven
leading captives in your way.
Now you stand before the Father
interceding for your own;
from each tribe and tongue and nation
you are leading sinners home.

BLESSING

May God the creator, who is the source of all goodness and growth,
pour his blessing upon all things created, and upon you his children,
May Christ, the Author of Creation, accompany you in the telling of your story,
that you may use God's gifts to his glory and the welfare of all peoples;
May the Sustaining Spirit produce in you the fruit of the Tree of Life and God's love flow from you like the
refreshing River of Life

Tend to one another, care for God's good creation,
and bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Alternative Traditional Harvest Hymns

Come Ye Thankful People, Come (H&P 355 StF 123)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imK0j7eBJsc>

1. 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!

2. 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;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

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

4. 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 presence to abide:
Come, with all Thine angels, come
Raise the glorious harvest home!

Hymn: We Plough The Fields and Scatter (H&P 352 StF 130)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccVEjKfKAV4>

1. 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.

2. 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.

Refrain:
All good gifts around us
Are sent from heav'n above;
Then thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord,
For all his love.

3. We thank Thee then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food;
Accept the gifts we offer
For all Thy love imparts,
And what Thou most desirest—
Our humble, thankful hearts.