

Written Service Sunday October 8th
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Deacon Helen Snowball

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Deacon Helen Snowball to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Psalm 104

O Lord our God, how great you are;
All the world depends on you:
Praise the Lord our God!

You make trees and grasses grow;
You provide the food we need:
Praise the Lord our God!

Seed to harvest, wheat to bread;
All our gladness comes from you:
Praise the Lord our God!

We will sing to the Lord all our days;
May our worship bring you joy:
Praise the Lord our God!
Simon Taylor, from Autumn, by Ruth Burgess

Hymn StF 51 Great is thy Faithfulness

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not
As thou hast been, thou forever will be

Great is thy faithfulness
Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed thy hand hath provided
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

2. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love
Refrain

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine with 10, 000 beside.
Refrain

Thomas O Chisholm (1866-1960)

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts,
That the God who breathed this world into being,
Placed stars into the heavens
And designed a butterfly's wing -
Is the God who entrusted his son to the care of ordinary
people;
became vulnerable that we might know how strong is
the wonder of Love.
A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp.
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore.

Confession

God of mercy and compassion,
We confess that at times we do not treat food as we
should.
We take it for granted, and forget to be thankful for
your provision;
We celebrate our plenty, with insufficient thought for
those who do without;
We complain too easily when we cannot have what we
desire;
We enjoy the fruits of others' labour, without always
asking if it has been fairly sourced;
We celebrate its convenience, while others struggle to
obtain enough.
We demand value and choice as the right of consumers,
But forget that our place in creation is as carers and
stewards.
Help us we pray to obtain food, to eat food, to share
food, in ways that reflect the true values of your
Kingdom.
Give us an appetite for Justice, for peace and love and
fairness for all.
Through Christ who invited all to pray for daily bread.

Let's spend a moment thinking about the things we
wish to seek God's forgiveness for.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
This is his gracious word:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Thanksgiving

Generous and righteous God

We thank you for food

Which satisfies our needs and sustains our bodies

Reminding us that you are the source and provider of all things.

We thank you for taste and texture, sweet and savoury

Through which food brings us pleasure and fulfilment -

Reminding us of the richness of your goodness and grace

We thank you for hospitality, where shared food and warm conversation reminds us of the generous welcome that is ours in you.

We thank you and pray that in sharing our bread through the work and ministry of all of us, or by simply responding to the needs we encounter, we might help others see more of you.

Amen

Readings: Genesis 1:9-25

9-10 Then God said, "Let the water beneath the sky be gathered into oceans so that the dry land will emerge." And so it was. Then God named the dry land "earth," and the water "seas." And God was pleased. 11-12 And he said, "Let the earth burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant, and fruit trees with seeds inside the fruit, so that these seeds will produce the kinds of plants and fruits they came from." And so it was, and God was pleased. 13 This all occurred on the third day.

14-15 Then God said, "Let bright lights appear in the sky to give light to the earth and to identify the day and the night; they shall bring about the seasons on the earth, and mark the days and years." And so it was. 16 For God had made two huge lights, the sun and moon, to shine down upon the earth—the larger one, the sun, to preside over the day and the smaller one, the moon, to preside through the night; he had also made the stars. 17 And God set them in the sky to light the earth, 18 and to preside over the day and night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God was pleased. 19 This all happened on the fourth day.

20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with fish and other life, and let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." 21-22 So God created great sea animals, and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God looked at them with pleasure, and blessed them all. "Multiply and stock the oceans," he told them, and to the birds he said, "Let your numbers increase. Fill the earth!" 23 That ended the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal—cattle and reptiles and wildlife of every kind." And so it was. 25 God made all sorts of wild

animals and cattle and reptiles. And God was pleased with what he had done.

John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' 10 Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

Hymn – StF 126 – Praise God for the Harvest of Orchard and Field

Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field,
praise God for the people who gather their yield,
the long hours of labour, the skills of a team,
the patience of science, the power of machine.

Praise God for the harvest that comes from afar,
from market and harbour, the sea and the shore:
foods packed and transported, and gathered and grown
by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.

Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined,
selected and smelted, or shaped and refined:
for oil and iron, for copper and coal,
praise God, who in love has provided them all.

Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,
the urge to discover, create, and fulfill:
for plans and inventions that promise to gain
a future more hopeful, a world more humane.

Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love from leaders and peoples who struggle and serve with patience and kindness, that all may be led to freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

Brian Wren (1936)

Reflection

Imagine for a moment that you have unlimited money, that you have so much money you could do anything you like with it. After you've shared it out amongst your family – paid off mortgages and set up grandchildren with trust funds or whatever – what would you do with the rest? There are so many good charities out there, so many good causes it could be difficult to decide what to do.

God has given us all we could ever need, there is enough for everyone – food and water, if we would only share. What do you imagine we could do to help this planet and the starving people on it if we had Elon Musk's money? We would like people in Africa to have access to clean water. We'd also like people in Yemen to not be starving. We'd like the houses washed downriver because of floods to remain standing. We'd like places like Morocco to have better defences against earthquakes. We can't stop earthquakes, but we could make sure the buildings are built on solid ground, with better materials.

I chose the reading from Genesis for today because it's the best way to demonstrate God's good creation, and it bears hearing again of what God created, and how it was 'good'.

God said 'let there be...' because he had decreed and understood what was required. There was a purpose to God's actions. God understood that humans would need light, and water, and air, and fish in the sea and creatures on the ground and birds in the sky. I don't know whether God thought we would eat the fish and the birds, but he made them to bring us joy. There was vegetation at the dawn of time too, food for us – fruit and veg so that we would be healthy and not starve. God created flowers for us to delight in, flowers that would feed the bees and pollinate other flowers – he had it all in hand, all thought out and perfect.

God saw the needs we would have, and he thought about how he would provide. And Jesus too, saw the need of the people on the mountainside when he had somehow managed to gather a whole bunch of people to him. Wanting peace and quiet, instead he ended up with 5000 men there, not to mention the women and children. They were hungry, but his compassion told him what he needed to do. Not only does he feed them for their current hunger, he also provides for later too.

I imagine they all went away with a little doggy bag, or a little red and white lunchbox with the Methodist Orb stamped on it. Jesus teaches about sharing, trusting and being hospitable with one another. He showed them what to do – to give what you have and then to share it, to be considerate and compassion to one another.

Jesus showed us the way, and that's what we do isn't it – we try to follow Christ. This is our harvest festival, when we give thanks for what we have, when we offer donations for the people who don't have as much as we do. In years gone by, there would be fresh produce in the harvest display, and it might get distributed around the houses. I remember as a kid going round after church with bags of food for the elderly around the church, now it goes to the foodbank.

Harvest festival is not the same today as it used to be. Once over there would be sheaves of wheat, maybe freshly baked bread and newly dug vegetables, now we have tins and packets. But that's not a sign that things were better or worse on those days, they were just different. There have always been people who have more need, and there have always been churches full of people who will help where they can. We read in the Genesis passage about God's great creation, of the provision that we have, of God's love for us so much that he made sure there was everything we could ever need. And we read in the passage from John's gospel how Jesus not only fed everyone miraculously with only five loaves and two fishes, but he provided more than they actually needed.

Harvest Festival was a time for thanking God for his provision, for his sending the rain and the sunshine to make the harvest grow. It was a time for farmers to Thank God that after all their hard work, the harvest was done, and the people would eat. And today, it is still a time for us to thank God. We might grumble at the rain 'cos we want a hot summer, then we grumble 'cos then it's just too hot – but none of that matters when we get to Harvest Festival. We still thank God for his provision, and we thank God that we are able to provide these gifts to foodbank.

It is the time of year when we remember God's good gifts, when we remember that God not only provided food and water, and air and sunshine, but he also gave us Jesus Christ. And in Christ, we have the perfect example of someone who understands what people need, what provision they lack, and shows us how we can help. We thank God that we can help, that we have the ability to do that, but also that we have the will to do that. There are people who could help but don't.

This Harvest Festival, we can thank God for his provisions to us. Thank God for the greatest creation. Thank God for his presence with us and giving us the strength and ability to continue to do the work of his Kingdom.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Pray for the world, for the countries in war, the countries in drought - desperate for that which we take for granted - clean water.

Pray for free speech, but that we can express ourselves graciously, without causing hurt to others.

Pray for our government, the leaders who make big decisions that affect all of us.

Pray for the people of Libya recovering from floods, the people of Morocco recovering from an earthquake.

Pray for the family of Elianna Andam, the 15 year old stabbed in London.

And we pray for the people that we know, those who especially need prayers at this time. We pray for the people who need Christ the most, and those who think they need him the least.

We ask all these prayers in the name of your son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn – StF 124 – For the Fruits of his Creation

For the fruits of his creation
thanks be to God;
for his gifts to every nation
thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
in our worldwide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

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Blessing

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now
and evermore.

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ.
Amen