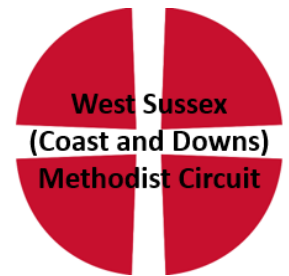


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

October 2021



Frontlines of Harvest

As Autumn creeps in with its golden leaves we often celebrate Harvest, tables laden with goods as a visual reminder of God's provision for us that will then be passed on to the community, e.g. via foodbanks.

This month Worshipping Together will focus on the theme of harvest by thinking about some of the roles in the modern day harvest industry and giving thanks to God for them. These people work on the frontline of the industry, feeding the nation and world, but are sometimes taken for granted.



Worshipping Together comprises an act of worship for the month, with a different set reading and reflection for each week, shared as a starting point for your own reflections. As you worship and draw closer to God, may God draw close to you, speak to you and journey with you beyond the words of these pages, strengthened by God's ever-present Spirit.

We invite you to use **Worshipping Together** at a time that suits you, in whatever way works for you, to spend time with God knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with others across the circuit family.

Please share these resources with others.

Also available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

*As you prepare to worship, you may like a period of quiet, or to light a candle.
Become aware of God's already present presence.*

Gathering Scripture¹: from Psalm 65

You tend the land and water it

And the earth produces its abundance.

You crown each year with your bounty,

and our storehouses overflow with your goodness.

The mountain meadows are covered with flocks

and the valleys are filled with corn;

Your people celebrate your boundless grace

They shout for joy and sing.

Sing the following harvest hymn, or a favourite of your own:

Come, you thankful people come²

1. 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!

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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!

¹ From [Psalm for Harvest Sunday \(virtualmethodist.blogspot.com\)](http://virtualmethodist.blogspot.com).

² Come, you thankful people by Henry Alford (1810–1871) adapted by Compilers of Hymns for Today's Church, StF No.123

Prayers of praise³

Lord we have come because you have called us.
We have come because you have made us your people.
We have come because we belong to you.
We have come to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.
We have come to give you thanks and praise.
We have come because you have called us.

Lord we have come with praise and thanksgiving,
with joy and celebration, with worship and acclamation.
We come because you are the Lord of the harvest
and you are worthy of our glory and adoration.
We come because you have filled us with thankfulness.
We come in the power of the Spirit
to honour your name and give thanks for your glory. Amen.



³ Adapted from 500 Prayers for all Occasions by David Clowes, p26, No.46. and 500 More prayers by David Clowes, p24, No.40.

*Below are readings and reflections for each week through October.
This month we reflect on the Frontline roles in the harvest industry.*

These reflections are mere starting points, and you are encouraged to ponder and pray through and beyond what is written, as you listen and respond to God.

Frontlines of Harvest

Week beginning Sunday 3rd October

Reading: Exodus 34:21-24

Exodus 34 is an interesting chapter – read it all if you can. It weaves together God’s covenant promise of faithfulness to creation of humanity, God’s instructions for healthy living in the 10 commandments, and from our set reading today, the spiritual practice of Sabbath.

My grandad was a farmer and growing up I remember we would work all hours of the day. Farming, as part of the harvest industry is a demanding vocation, especially during lambing or harvest time. Here in Exodus 34 we see how God knows that some seasons are busier than others – but yet still in all seasons, no matter how busy and demanding, there must be rest.

In a society that struggles to rest, with shops open 24 hours, promise of same-day delivery and the expectation that shop shelves are always well stocked, the harvest industry can be under huge pressure to deliver – whether those expectations are realistic or not. We too can feel under pressure in our own ways. God’s call to sabbath rest reminds us that God made us human beings, not human doings, and our well-being is dependant on taking the regular rest that we need.

Reflect: Are you under pressure? When did you last rest?
How do you celebrate God’s gift of Sabbath?

Pray: For those under pressure in the harvesting and food industry.

Act: Make sure you plan regular rest into your day and week – this is your Sabbath – which God created for your good and well-being.



Harvest Frontline: Fishing

Week beginning Sunday 10th October

Reading: John 21: 1-8

John 21 comes after Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus disciples are unsure what life without Jesus is going to look like, and they return to their past-time of fishing. But they find nothing. Then, one they think a stranger appears on the shore, and tells professionals what to do – 'cast on the other side'. Rather than arrogance, they humbly do so, and catch a huge haul – and then the beloved disciple says to Peter 'it is the Lord'.



Fishing is a highly-skilled - and at times dangerous - job. It takes commitment, patience, and a willingness to take risks knowing not every casting of the nets will bring in a haul. Perhaps that's why Jesus seemed to have a soft spot for fishermen. Commitment, patience, and risk taking are all key characteristics we seek to nurture in ourselves as Christ's disciples.

Trusting in a stranger (who they later realise is Jesus), means they reap rewards. When you're a professional, trained, and experienced, it can be hard taking direction from others – but sometimes it is through the humble, listening heart that is willing to try something different that Jesus speaks and moves most powerfully.

Reflect: How are you nurturing a humble, patient heart for Jesus?

Pray: For those in the fishing industry, dealing with changes due to Brexit and the ongoing impact of current haulage challenges in the UK and beyond.

Act: Take time this week to humble yourself to learn something new.

Harvest Frontline: Farming

Week beginning Sunday 17th October

Reading: Genesis 2:15-17 & Ecclesiastes 11:4-6



In last month's Worshipping Together we saw how the creation narratives in Genesis 1 & 2 instruct humanity to care for creation as a core calling of God's people. Creation, it's fruitfulness and bounty is there to provide sustenance for creation, food for our bodies and beauty for our eyes to behold. But for land to be fruitful it needs tending and to be cared for – plants need nurturing with their own food and water to enable them to bear much fruit. Creation must be tended so that its bounty is used in moderation to enable long term sustainability.

Farming is a vocation of risk, choices and seeking sustainability – and all that with the uncertainty of the future. Crops must be tilled and harvested at the opportune time, but weather can be unpredictable leading to years where some harvests are more bountiful than others.

Ecclesiastes 11 echoes this faithful uncertainty and faithful risk. Farmers cannot wait for certainty, if they did they would not sow anything. They take an educated risk, entrusting their future to the land and creation - and as Christians we might therefore say they entrust their future to God.

There is a lot we can learn in the life of the church thinking about faithful risk taking. Faith in God depends upon trusting in the unknown and unfathomable – believing despite unanswered questions and uncertain futures. Trusting God is with us and for us. If we waited for certainty in all things, we'd be denying God, not trusting God, and trusting only our own analysis of certainty. Faith is risk, faith is uncertainty, faith is trusting God to provide regardless of our own desires and expectations.

Reflect: What risks have you taken recently?
How are you practicing faithful risk?

Pray: For those working in the farming industry in the UK and world.

Act: Take a faithful risk this month – pray about what to do and see what God does. A few ideas: you could share a story of faithfulness in your own life with a friend, offer to pray for or with someone in need...



Harvest Frontline: Distribution

Week beginning Sunday 24th October

Reading: John 2: 1-11

As I write we've just had a weekend of fuel shortages at the pumps. The nation has panicked because of the growing shortage of HGV drivers leading to delayed deliveries. The situation has been

made worse by people over-consuming and buying more fuel than they needed.

I wonder if the shortage of wine at Cana was because of over-consumption. Culturally wine was an important part of a wedding and it would have probably been expected that it was 'freely' flowing. Thus, when preparing for a wedding feast there ought to be plenty of wine – but at this wedding they run out and there is a risk of being shunned for poor hospitality. Jesus resolves the wine shortage in the story by turning water into wine, the best wine! At this wedding the best really was yet to come!

I'm not suggesting you can fill your fuel tank with water and Jesus will turn it to fuel (though it is not beyond God's immeasurable power!). But it does remind us that in times of uncertainty and fear our first turn should not be the fuel pumps – but to the power and presence of God who promises us care, provision and acceptance, and the love of Christian community.

The story also reminds us of the complexity of planning, predicting and logistics that is involved in modern day haulage and distribution. Brexit, pandemic and the blocked Suez Canal have all shaken this industry, and reminded us not to take for granted this relatively unseen frontline service to the nation and world.

Reflect: How have you known God's provision in your life?

Pray: For those working in the haulage and distribution sector. Give thanks to God for their service.

Act: Next time you are feeling fearful or anxious, consciously pause, turn to God in prayer for peace, reassurance and direction.

Harvest Frontline: Sales

Week beginning Sunday 31st October

Reading: Genesis 41:46-49, 53-57



Joseph is sometimes spoken of one who saved Egypt (and beyond) from famine. Having the vision to store up the excess bounty of the land during times of plenty to then distribute during 7 years of famine.

But something in the story I noticed more recently was in v56 – Joseph **sold** to the Egyptians. Did Joseph buy from the Egyptians during the times of plenty? We're not told... maybe he did, and having bought from the people during 7 years of plenty and stored the food, he now sold it back to them. But if he didn't, buy it, as the text perhaps suggests, Joseph can also be seen to be taking advantage of a desperate situation and exploiting people's starvation for economic gain. I leave you to ponder what you think!

Joseph perhaps develops an early structure of capitalism – which can be used both positively and negatively for the nurture of society and well-being of its people.

The Joseph story does demonstrate the significant responsibility those who are responsible for the distribution of food have in society. When the pandemic began we suddenly realised how easily we have taken for granted the fact that food was always on the supermarket shelves. Shops did their utmost to keep food flowing when the nation was panicking about a looming virus which at the time we knew so little about. Reminded of their responsibility, let's be grateful for those who work in grocery sector to serve us – while also attentive to the ways the system and institution can exploit.

Reflect: How do you find society nurturing you and your well-being? Are there ways it is not supporting you?

Pray: For people working in the grocery and food sector selling us food for our daily sustenance.

Act: Next time you are buying something, be sure to thank those who serve you!

Prayer of dedication and commitment⁴

Lord of the harvest we commit ourselves to work for justice,
for fairness and for equal opportunities and shares for all.

Lord of the harvest, we commit ourselves to trust you
and to depend on you for all things, walking faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus.

Lord of the harvest, we commit ourselves to being open to the work of the Spirit
and to seek his infilling, life-changing presence and power.

Lord of the harvest, sow the seeds of your grace in our lives
that we may reap a rich harvest of eternal life. Amen.

Hymn for Reflection: Called by Christ to be disciples⁵

1. Called by Christ to be disciples
every day in every place,
we are not to hide as hermits
but to spread the way of grace;
citizens of heaven's kingdom,
though this world is where we live,
as we serve a faithful Master,
faithful service may we give.

2. Richly varied are our pathways,
many callings we pursue:
may we use our gifts and talents
always, Lord, to honour you;
so in government or commerce,
college, hospice, farm or home,
whether volunteers or earning,
may we see your kingdom come.

3. Hard decisions may confront us,
urging us to compromise;
still obedience is our watchword —
make us strong and make us wise!
Secular is turned to sacred,
made a precious offering,
as our daily lives are fashioned
in submission to our King.



⁴ From 500 More prayers for all occasions, David Clowes, p305, No.294

⁵ Called by Christ by Martin Leckebusch (b. 1962) Singing the Faith No.660

Prayers of Intercession⁶

Father, we pray for your creation.

You gave us responsibility for all that you have made.

You entrusted every living creature into our care.

But we have betrayed that trust and neglected our responsibility.

We have allowed your good earth to become polluted by our greed,
damaged by our selfishness and sucked dry by our materialism.

Father by your Holy Spirit, forgives us,

give us a renewed urgency to fulfil the task you laid upon us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for government and business around the world,

whose decisions effect your creation now and for the future.

We pray they will act justly and be faithful stewards of your creation.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for ordinary people. Those we work with and share our lives with.

For those whose daily work crushes out of them the trust that they are your

children. We pray for those who find life's daily pressures difficult to cope with.

We hold before you all who find their daily work toil or burden.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for those who see creation but do not see you,

for those who marvel at this world,

but do not lift their hearts to worship its Maker.

May they discover you as Lord of creation and eternity.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves. We are your creation. We acknowledge that we are

wonderfully made, capable of amazing acts of kindness, love and understanding.

Yet we also need your healing, forgiving, and transforming grace.

Touch our hearts with your love, lives with your grace and lips with your truth.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

⁶ Adapted from 500 Prayers for all occasions, David Clowes, p256, No.346.

Sing the following hymn, or a favourite of your own:

For the fruits of his creation⁷

1. For the fruits of all creation,
thanks be to God;
for the 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.

2. 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 world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

3. 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.

Closing Blessing⁸

God the creator made you.
God the Saviour heals you.
God the Spirit sends you.
Go now, for God is with you. Amen.



⁷ For the fruits of his creation by Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000), Singing the Faith No.124

⁸ From 500 prayers for all occasions, David Clowes, p456, No.484.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Acknowledgements

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