

All-age service for Harvest

Introduction

This service focuses on potatoes, whose growth is hidden until harvest-time, as a way of exploring the idea that only God knows what the harvest of our hearts will be like.

Gather

A gathering prayer

We have come together to worship, and to thank God for journeying with us through the year.

We have come from our fields and gardens to give thanks for the harvest of our land, and to ask for God's continued blessing on the work of our hands. **Amen.**

Let us come before God with thanksgiving, and sing joyfully in psalms.

For God tends the earth and waters it, and makes it rich and fertile.

Lord of the harvest, all is yours:

the rains that fall, the suns that shine, the seed once hidden in the ground, the skill that makes the harvest grow.

We bring our thanks to you this day, **new praises from our lips shall sound.**

Behind the loaf is the snowy flour,

and behind the flour, the mill,

and behind the mill, the wheat and the sun **and the rain and the creator's will.**

Teach us, our God and King,

to see you in all things,

and in anything we do,

to do it as for you.

Song: Come and thank God

Sing to 'London's burning'.

Come and thank God, come and thank God, for the harvest, for the harvest.

Praise God, praise God.

Give God the glory, give God the glory.

Once people are used to singing the words, why not try it as a round? Or add some actions (work out your own). Or add more verses by changing the second line, e.g.

for each other...

for his goodness...

he has called us...

Explore the Word

Matthew 13.1-9,18-23

Ask a household or group to practise this reading from *The Dramatised Bible* (or similar) and present it.

Talk

In advance, prepare a large box of dry soil with some potatoes buried in it. You will also need a seed potato, a fork, wellies, and two or three small hand trowels.

Has anyone grown potatoes? How do you do it? You plant the seed potato (*show one; it is not a seed!*) and then wait. When shoots come up, you know something is happening – the plants are alive and growing; but you don't know what is going on under the ground. Sometimes the potatoes are dug up early – we call these 'new' potatoes. For the main crop we have to wait until the leaves have died down. But you still don't know what's happening below ground until, finally, the day comes and out comes the fork (*show one*), on go the wellies (*wear some*) and you carefully start digging for the potatoes. It's exciting! What are you going to find? Will it be a big harvest or just a small one? You can't tell from the leaves! Who would like to help dig some up? (*Ask a few young volunteers to use the trowels to dig up the potatoes in the box*)

Our Bible story just now was about wheat, but it might be easier to compare our lives to potatoes! Things may look good on the outside, but underneath we might not be so fruitful. Or maybe our lives look rather dim and ordinary on the outside, but in our hearts, and our own quiet ways, we are being very fruitful for God. Only we ourselves and God know what's really going on inside us.

In a little while, we will bring symbols of the harvest and offer them to God, partly to say thank you, but also as an opportunity to offer ourselves again to God. We can ask to be like the strong wheat – or, if you prefer, a hidden fruitful potato – so that our lives produce an abundant harvest for God, as we follow the example of Jesus.

Song: Come you thankful people, come



Thanksgiving

We give thanks for God's abundant goodness to us throughout the year.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for all the gifts you have given us; for our life and the world in which we live: **Father, we give you thanks and praise.**

For the work we are able to do, for the truth we are permitted to learn, for the good there has been in our lives: **Father, we give you thanks and praise.**

For the order and constancy of nature, for the beauty and bounty of the world, for day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest: **Father, we give you thanks and praise.**

For the boundless store of harvest, for the fruits of the earth, to sustain and gladden life: **Father, we give you thanks and praise.**

For the industry and perseverance of those who work on our farms, for those who shape the farmer's tools and build machines, for those who, by their skill and labour have helped to supply our food: **Father, we give you thanks and praise.**

For the comforts of life, for our homes and their joys, for our village/town/city and its community life:

Father, we give you thanks and praise.

For our communion with you, Father of all, for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, for his life and his death, for his resurrection and ascension, for his redemption of all creation, for the inspiration of your Holy Spirit: **we give you thanks and praise, Lord God, our heavenly Father. Amen.**

Song: Jubilate, everybody

Offering of symbolic gifts

Two people (e.g. a parent and child) bring each offering forward: one to carry it, the other to say the sentence that begins 'We bring...':

Offering of soil

We bring the soil of our fields and gardens, as a symbol of all that God has created.

The earth is the Lord's.
And all that is in it.

Offering of fruits of the earth

We bring the harvest of our fields and of our gardens as symbols of our work in partnership with God.

We know we shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**

Offering of seeds

We bring the seeds for next year's planting as a symbol of God's promise to provide our daily bread.

They sow fields and plant vineyards which give them fruitful harvest.

God blesses them and they multiply greatly.

Offering of water

We bring water as a symbol of our dependence on God for life, and of the new life God gives in baptism.

God will sprinkle clear water over you. **We shall be made clean from all that defiles us.**

Offering of bread and wine

We bring bread and wine as symbols of our use of God's gifts, and of his spiritual food, the sacrament of his body and blood.

Everything in heaven and earth is yours.
All things come from you, and of your own do we give to you.

Heavenly Father, with our thanksgiving, we ask pardon for our failure always to be good stewards of your gifts. Accept this loaf of bread and this wine as a sign of our gratitude, and of our desire to dedicate our work and our lives to your praise and glory.
Amen.

Song: Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Prayer

Almighty God,
our heavenly creator,
you give us so much.
Give us also, we pray,
loving hearts and practical minds,
that in the worldwide task of caring,
no-one may starve while we eat so well.
In the name of Jesus,
the bread of life, we pray.
Amen.



Go with God

Song: O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

A blessing

May God the Father,
who made us to enjoy creation,
God the Son,
who called us and asked us to answer,
and God the Spirit,
who fills us with joyfulness,
bless us all this day.
Amen.

Take home

As people go out of church, have a sack of potatoes and give them one each, to remind them of today's worship.

