



**The Benefice of Harden, Wilsden,
Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 13 October 2024
Harvest Festival**



Liz has prepared our worship for today

Call to worship

Holy Spirit of God
We invite you among us.
As we come to celebrate your harvest
And to pray for your justice
We also ask you to bring your peace.
So that the quiet place inside us may speak
In stillness may we be at one with you. **Amen.**

Creator God, You make us welcome.
We are the work of your hand.
You give us life in all its fulness.
May our hearts and our minds,
our prayers and our actions,
be shaped by your will
and inspired by your love. **Amen.**

As we prepare for worship now,
Our good lives can be tangled with thorns.
Thorns of failure and sadness.
Tangles of duties and demands.
Lord, cut away the thorns that wound and choke.
Free us to live and work in your light.

Confession

We confess our sin, and the sins of our society,
in the misuse of God's creation.
God our Father, we are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts
carelessly, and acted ungratefully.
Hear our prayer, and in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We enjoy the fruits of the harvest,
but sometimes forget that you have given them to us.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied,
but ignore the cry of the hungry.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We are thoughtless,
and do not care enough for the world you have made.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We store up goods for ourselves alone,
as if there were no God and no heaven.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

May God who loved the world so much
That he sent his Son to be our Saviour
Forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

God's world is an island of life and beauty –
Formed of stardust, warmed by the sun.
Below us lies melting rock, above us stretches cold vacuum.
We live between: our home –
This thin strip of soil, water and air.
In which we share our lives together.
Which is alive with the Holy Spirit.
Upon which Jesus lived, died and rose again.
From which God's harvest comes.
God, we thank you for our home on earth.
We thank you for our lives together.
We thank you for your love and care.
We thank you for the harvest.

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and you 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**

Readings

First reading: Joel 2:21-27

Do not fear, O soil;
 be glad and rejoice,
 for the Lord has done great things!
Do not fear, you animals of the field,
 for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
 the fig tree and vine give their full yield.
O children of Zion, be glad
 and rejoice in the Lord your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
 he has poured down for you abundant rain,
 the early and the later rain, as before.
The threshing-floors shall be full of grain,
 the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
I will repay you for the years
 that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
 my great army, which I sent against you.
You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
 and praise the name of the Lord your God,
 who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,

and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again
be put to shame.

Second reading: Matthew 6:25-33

‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Reflection with Alison

Here, we are at harvest time again, I must admit it is one of my most favourite seasons, the way the Sun is lower in the sky and the hue of the light that comes through the trees as I walk the dog in the morning. We seem to get spectacular sunrises and sunsets, well that is when we can actually see the Sun given all the rain we’ve had recently. One of my greatest joys of this season is the school assemblies for harvest, this week we had one of our primary schools in church, practising their harvest celebration which they will perform for parents next week. It is full of the great songs such as the Harvest Samba, Autumn Days and the infamous and catchy BIG RED COMBINE HARVESTER! The children seem to love the big red combine harvester song the most because they get to shout at the top of their lungs.

Another joy is that lots of these children in the primary schools where we all work know us through our church contact as well, some of them come to our

messy churches, and it's been a joy for me over the last three years to build community with the schools and to get to see these children growing up. We had a particular moment of joy last week at church when a seven-year-old girl wrote the most amazing piece about Jesus Christ being our Lord and how safe he makes us feel. It was beautifully written, and it made me realise that the work that we do with our children does not fall on stoney soil and is indeed producing fruit.

As the season of harvest comes upon us, we are reminded of the rhythms of creation and the cycle of sowing and reaping, both in the earth and in our lives. The sight of fields full of grain, baskets brimming with fruit, and nature's bounty inspires deep gratitude in our hearts. But perhaps one of the my most heartwarming parts of this season is the joy of hearing children singing their harvest songs. Their voices, full of innocence and delight, echo the ancient traditions of thanksgiving, reminding us that the spirit of gratitude begins young and is nurtured through generations.

In their simple melodies, we hear more than just words; we hear the collective voice of community, of shared learning, and shared joy. These children are symbols of hope and renewal, of the future harvests yet to come. Their songs are a celebration not only of the fruit of the earth but also of the fruit of the spirit—a community bound together by love, faith, and the common good.

At harvest, we turn our hearts to God in thankfulness. We recognise that while we plant and tend, it is God who gives the increase. Every seed that sprouts, every vine that bears fruit, and every ear of corn that ripens under the sun is a reminder of God's abundance and provision. This season teaches us to trust in the Divine, to recognise the sacredness of the ordinary, and to find joy in both giving and receiving.

Let us give thanks not only for the physical harvest but for the fruits of community—the hands that help, the hearts that care, and the unity that sustains us. In this time of harvest, may we be inspired to share generously, live thankfully, and continue nurturing the seeds of kindness and love in our lives and in the lives of others and especially in the lives of our children and young people.

**Let us declare our faith in God.
We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen**

Intercessions with Margaret Harrison

Loving God, the Father of us all, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for the church which is your family on earth today. We pray especially for the part of your family which meets here in our Benefice. We pray that all in positions of power in our world and in our church may use it seeking both to know and do your will and to know and serve the needs of others.

Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father at this harvest season, we think of the abundance of food we are able to obtain. We think of all those who go hungry, both in this country because of financial difficulties, and in other countries because of weather, or through the effects of war.

We pray, good Lord your rich bounty provides for our needs and sustains our lives. Bless us in our stewardship of the earth, in preparing the ground for sowing, tending the crops, and bringing the harvest home that there may be enough for all your people to rejoice in your goodness through Jesus Christ. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of all mercy, we pray for all the nations of the world suffering death and destruction through war, especially the countries of the Middle East, Ukraine, Russia, Sudan and other places in the unrest and violence of these times. Give wisdom of mind and strength of character to those who are called to positions of leadership, overthrow the purposes and designs of evil men and establish the cause of righteousness in every land, that all mankind may be led into the way of peace for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father we thank you for our friends, and especially those who have shared our troubles and sorrows in time past and have supported us in life's dark valleys.

Help us to value our friends and to regard each one as a gift and token of your love, and make us ready to extend friendship to others around us and to remember the lonely and housebound and those who need a friend's helping hand.

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord God we bring to you our worries for all who are in need of your healing today. We pray for people who are sick or in pain, in hospital and at home. We pray for those who are frightened and feel that everything is going wrong. We pray for those who are sad and lonely, and we remember before you those who have died recently, and we pray for all who grieve.

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of time and eternity, we thank you that all our times are in your hands. Rejoicing in your faithfulness we celebrate the life of our Benefice in stories of faith and hope, in worship offered, disciples gathered and communities transformed by your reconciling love. As we give you praise, give us your vision for this place that we cherish, help us to walk your way with its people and pour upon us those gifts we need to work with you that, filled with your Spirit, your church may serve you here with strength and joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Closing prayer and Blessing

This we know, the earth does not belong to us
We belong to the earth.
This we know, all things are connected
Like the blood that connects one family.
This we know, we did not weave the web of life.
We are merely a strand in it.
This we know, whatever we do to the web
We do to ourselves.
Let us give thanks for the gift of creation - and the harvest.
Let us give thanks that all things
Hold together in Christ.
Holy Spirit of God
May the space within that we keep for you
Become ever deeper and wider.
May the busyness of our brains
And the cares of our hearts
Give way to the light of your presence.
O God, come home with us this harvest time
And evermore. **Amen.**

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.