

October 2021

Reverend Michael writes:

Harvest Revisited

As I write this month, we have just celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving – note the church calls it a thanksgiving rather than a festival.



Harvest is a festival which most people think goes back into the mists of time. We imagine joyful peasants accompanying horse drawn carts full of produce back into barns. We imagine the whole village coming together to celebrate that all has been safely gathered in, and a lot of us, quite probably, think back to harvests that we knew as a child and fondly imagine that it was ever thus.

Not so, of course.

The hymns that people think of as being traditional harvest hymns have relatively modern dates to them, and we find little mention of a harvest festival in Cranmer's prayer book.

If ever there was a traditional harvest, it was Lammas-time the celebration of the first fruits of the harvest at the start of August. The idea being, and this one does go back into the mists of time, that if you offer God the first bit of the harvest, He will be so pleased and delighted by the offering, that you will get a bumper crop and get to keep the rest all to yourself. Good economics, but bad spirituality.

Perhaps this year more than ever before we should mark harvest thanksgiving, to remember our interdependence and to give thanks for others, not just the NHS but those in our society who have given so much to ensure that everything keeps happening, whether it is haulage drivers, retail workers, refuse collectors, or any one of the other myriad

of people who have gone about day after day doing their work. We are seeing first hand how important our food production and distribution is. We are unlikely to run out of food but with the exception of the start of the pandemic we are likely to see food shortages on a scale not seen in the memory of those under 50 years old due to various reasons, lack of lorry drivers, lack of CO2 and lack of labour to harvest the crops. We have lived in times when virtually anything we wanted whether in season or not here, was available in our shops. We are now realising that food stability is fragile even for developed nations and so perhaps we can appreciate that for many people around the world its not just an inconvenience but can be a matter of life and death.

As in previous years, our parish is supporting the Rochester Diocesan Poverty and Hope Appeal and the collection at the Harvest Service and the profit from our harvest lunch has been given to this appeal but it is not too late to donate to it if you missed Harvest. There are four projects being supported, two in Africa, one in Sri Lanka and one here in Kent. The Diocesan Website has more details on these projects but one is particularly relevant at harvest time and that is the one in Malawi helping farmers adjust to climate change with drought-resistant crops. This is a new project for this Appeal and will make a huge difference in food stability.

More details can be found on the Rochester Diocesan Website at <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/poverty-and-hope/>

You may donate through St.Martin's either in cash, or through our Free Will Offering System also through the secure 'Give a Little' links on our Church Website www.stmartinchelsfield.org.uk

So far we have raised £224 from the Harvest Service and Lunch.

Rev Michael