



GROWING GOOD FOR HARVEST 2022

ALL GOOD GIFTS

Introduction

Harvest is a time when we are all invited to bring our gifts, to reflect on God's goodness to us and to give thanks.

This harvest the Church Urban Fund has produced a free resource pack to your church give thanks and celebrate the good gifts in your community, including the individuals and organisations who are making a difference amid the soaring cost-of-living.

Our communities have faced one crisis after another, and it's one of the most challenging times of our lives. But churches like yours are doing so much to help build communities of support across our country – perhaps through charitable giving, prayer, foodbanks, warm spaces, or daily acts of kindness. We want to celebrate these gifts this harvest.

This guide reflects some of the themes covered in the Growing Good Toolkit session on Participation.

Find out more here:



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Liturgical resources are provided in a separate resource.

Inviting others to take part

Harvest is a great opportunity to invite the wider community to join a special service of celebration. You could include an interview slot where you showcase the work of a local community project and interview one of their volunteers.

Read the story on page 7 of how St Luke's Prestonville used their harvest service as an opportunity to connect with, celebrate and thank all those who are part of their work in the community.

Use our customisable poster to advertise your harvest celebration service. Visit: <https://growing-good.org.uk/uploads/img/All-Good-Gifts-Harvest-22-Church-Poster.pdf>



Old and New Testament Readings

The following readings share some of the themes of gift, generosity and gratitude.

EXODUS 35:4-29

Moses instructs the Israelites to bring gifts to build the tabernacle.

PSALM 65

A psalm of praise, remembering God's care for the world and his people.

MATTHEW 4:18-22

When Jesus calls the disciples, he uses people's gifts right from the start, and through helping out they become more like Jesus.

ROMANS 12:3-8

We all have different gifts to bring but each is necessary and valued.

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-9

Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for all who are involved in growing God's kingdom.



Sermon Notes

The sermon notes pick up some of the themes from the suggested readings and are written by Reverend David Tomlinson, vicar of St Paul's Birmingham and chair of Thrive Together, a member of the Together Network.

Introduction

One way to get into theme of participation would be to start with a potato (this links in with the more traditional harvest celebration of God's good gifts in Creation, and you could make some reference to the almost universal enjoyment of chips!). The next connection is key to the use of the potato: some people shorten the name potato to "tater."

Now there are lots of taters but which of these three should a Christian be: spectator, dictator, or participator? This can be a rhetorical or responsive question. Either way, you can get to "participator."

Yes, we are called to participate which means we do not tell others what do like a dictator, or just watch others work like a spectator, but we join in with what is going on: we participate.

Participator:

Besides being here to celebrate the Harvest, we are thanking all those who participate in our church's life, and especially in our... (here you can add any missional activities, and perhaps our social action projects.)

One of the amazing features of being a Christian is that we participate in God's life. By baptism and faith we participate in the life of Christ, and share in God's eternal life.

Belonging to Jesus Christ means that we come together with His other sisters and brothers to form communities of love.

We love God:

And we do that today by praising God. Psalm 65 is a poem about how God is worthy of praise because God answers our prayers, forgive us, provides a wonderful world to treasure and enjoy (reference to the climate emergency might fit here).

In response to God's generosity expressed in the many gifts he gives us, we give thanks. Generosity, gifts, and gratitude are wrapped up together in one glorious present for the Christian. (This can serve as a kind of refrain.)

We love each other:

When you love someone you want to give them things, even maybe your last chip!

We show our love for each other by offering what we can to the life of our community. In the Old Testament, Moses invited the people to bring their gifts to make a magnificent tent so God could dwell with his people. Exodus 35:4-29 tells us how everyone contributed their skills, their money, their time, and energy, and there was more than enough to make a beautiful place for worship (Exodus 36:5)

Paul in Romans 12:3-8 reminds us that we are one body. Our unity is not uniformity: we are all unique, and we bring our own gifts to share generously with each other, and for the good of our community. Together we are thankful for what each one brings. Generosity, gifts, and gratitude are wrapped up together in one glorious present for the Christian.

We love the world

In Matthew 4:18-22, Jesus calls four fishermen from their nets to follow him in helping other people to be caught up in God's love - to participate in God's love with us. Philippians 1:3-9, Paul rejoice in how the church in Philippi are sharing God's love in that busy, bustling city.

We give thanks today particularly for...
(missional activity, social action project).\

Generosity, gifts, and gratitude are wrapped up together in one glorious present for the Christian.

Conclusion:

We are participators. We celebrate today the generosity of so many people in giving themselves as we love God, each other, and the world.

And we rejoice in God's generosity, the gifts he gifts us, and we express our gratitude.

Listen/Sing

[Your Labor is Not In Vain](#)

[Heaven's voice brings the dawn](#)

[Now thank we all our God](#)

[We plough the fields and scatter](#)

All-age activity & talk

Head Heart Hands is a simple activity to help people identify their own gifts and what they have to contribute, to connect with other people with shared interests, and to find out what gifts other people have to contribute.

We've provided two ideas for using this activity: as an interactive talk for all ages within a service, or as an activity for a small group of adults, young people or children.

Both options encourage us to focus on gifts of the head (knowledge), gifts of the heart (passions) and gifts of the hands (practical skills).

Together we are called to love God and love our neighbours. And we do this by bringing our individual gifts for the benefit of everyone.

Scan this QR code to download the Head Heart Hands activity guide:



Making a gift to CUF

During a hymn or song, or at the end of your celebration service, you can allow people time to offer a collection towards the work of the Church Urban Fund.

We want to acknowledge that these are difficult times for all of us. Church Urban Fund is so thankful that there are people and churches in our community, like yours, who are joining our mission to see those most in need assisted, supported and empowered in times of crisis.

If your church is able to send a donation today, you will be working alongside Church Urban Fund to provide the practical support local partners need to support their communities – so they are not just surviving, but flourishing.

Scan this QR code to set up a virtual collection page.



**Alternatively, people can donate directly:
Online: www.cuf.org.uk/donate-money
Phone: 0203 752 5655**

HOW YOU CAN HELP:



£25

could provide access to a food pantry.



£100

could equip 5 churches with the resources to meet local need.



£1000

could provide one year of wrap-around support for someone experiencing homelessness

CELEBRATING AND GROWING SUNDAY CONNECTIONS AT ST LUKE'S PRESTONVILLE

St Luke's Prestonville is a small church close to the centre of Brighton that hosts and supports a number of community organisations and projects. Some of these activities are run by members of the congregation but a large proportion of them are volunteered by people with a passion for the particular project.

Getting involved with the Growing Good course provoked the church to think about how they might acknowledge, celebrate and engage all those participating in the community around St Luke's.

Last harvest they held a service that focused on the work of the Real Junk Food Project which provides a free lunch twice a week, and the community gardening project that uses a small piece of church land. The project volunteers were invited to attend the service and talk about their work.

Reverend Martin Poole said, 'It was an opportunity to celebrate the amazing work of each of these groups, to say thank you to all the volunteers who give their time, and to show them that what they do connects to the faith life of the church and ultimately to the nature of a God who shares their passion for caring for the poor and needy, the outcast and destitute, the lonely and forgotten.'

