

Service of the Word 4 October 2020  
Harvest [Pentecost 18]

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## Welcome

Good Morning and welcome to our service. Today we are celebrating our Harvest Festival. You can certainly tell that it is harvest time here in the Highlands as tractors and trailers are moving up and down the roads well into the night. It is a busy time of the year for our local farmers, as harvest is for farmers all over the world. Most folk with gardens are also busy gathering in fruit, vegetables and flowers ahead of the inevitable autumn storms. As it happens one of those storms is due here this weekend. Harvest is a busy time but it is also a time that reminds us to pause and remember to give thanks to God for the many blessings in our lives. So this morning we join our voices, virtual and present, in praise and thanksgiving for all the good gifts which God gives us each day.

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## Gathering

We are gathered together as the family of God  
to offer praise and thanksgivings  
to ask forgiveness of our sins  
to hear and receive God's holy Word  
to pray for the needs of the world  
and to seek God's grace  
that through Jesus Christ our Lord  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit  
we may give ourselves to God's service.

## Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.  
Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.  
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;  
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.  
But we acknowledge our wickedness;  
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.  
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us.  
May the Lord forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are  
and direct what we shall be,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Praise

Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
with God the Son, Jesus Christ,  
and God the Holy Spirit,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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## Collect of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory; so that none may hunger, none may thirst, and all may cherish the gifts of your creation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen

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## First Reading Psalm 8 NIVUK

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
in the heavens.

Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you have set in place,

what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

human beings that you care for them?<sup>[c]</sup>

You have made them<sup>[d]</sup> a little lower than the angels<sup>[e]</sup>

and crowned them<sup>[f]</sup> with glory and honour.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands;

you put everything under their<sup>[g]</sup> feet:

all flocks and herds,

and the animals of the wild,

the birds in the sky,

and the fish in the sea,

all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

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## Second Reading John 15. 1-17 MSG

*[Jesus said]* "I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-

bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

“I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done—kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.

“I’ve told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I’m no longer calling you servants because servants don’t understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I’ve named you friends because I’ve let you in on everything I’ve heard from the Father.

“You didn’t choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won’t spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

“But remember the root command: Love one another.

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## Reflection

Normally on a Harvest Festival Sunday our little church would be decorated with fruit, vegetables, flowers and a variety of non-perishable items for the local food bank. Today the church looks the same as it did last week and every week since we reopened. It is not just the look of the church which has changed this year but also our whole relationship with food. As covid related restrictions are reimposed there have been reports in the media that some

people are once again *panic buying* in case there may be a shortage in the coming weeks. The supermarkets are confidently reassuring us that there is enough to go around and plenty for everyone. Well, plenty for everyone who can afford it that is. Our local food bank, like many across the country, is crying out for donations as more and more people face unemployment or a reduction in income. Early in the pandemic, if you can remember way back to March, one of our biggest concerns other than catching the covid virus was *can I get a supermarket delivery slot!* And if I am lucky enough to get a delivery will I get the food that I ordered. Many went in the blink of an eye from confidently stocking their cupboards and refrigerators to worrying where the next meal would come from. Food became an obsession: getting food, preparing food, eating food then round and round again.

I feel this year, more than any time in the past, the intimately balanced relationship between farmers as growers, food producers and the shops that supply us has become very clear to each and everyone of us. The unsung heroes have been the supermarket delivery drivers who frankly have been the salvation of many during lockdown and self-isolation. For many more people, those who suddenly became unemployed, the precarious balance of simply feeding yourself and your family came into sharp focus. Food Banks are the other heroes of this time relying on the generosity of others to feed those in need.

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This year perhaps more than any other has focused our attention on our interdependence on each other and on God. I can remember earnest discussions among clergy on how to make Harvest Festival *really meaningful* in urban and suburban churches. And I can remember virtually empty rural churches at harvest time because frankly everyone was out bringing in the harvest and too busy to take time off for church services. In many rural communities evensong was the most popular harvest service because at least it came at the end of the working day. This year the many different ways we are joined together in producing and consuming food has become painfully obvious. We need each other and we need the blessing of God's creation in order to survive and to thrive. The Psalmist reminds us that we too are part of God' creation to be celebrated. We too are the work of God's hands and we forget that at our peril

Harvest for us this year should be first and foremost a celebration of God's blessing to us in creation. It should be a recognition that we are intimately and inextricably bound up with that creation and with each other.

We should celebrate the majesty of God's gifts while caring for each other with compassionate love.

Our little church may be bare of harvest produce this year but it is still hopefully full of God's blessings. Please wherever you are give generously to your local food bank if you are able. Say thank you to the supermarket delivery person, staff in the shops and if you happen to meet one a local farmer, gardener or supplier. God is good, generous, and loving in bestowing blessings on us - we can be no less good, generous and loving in our dealings with each other. Jesus reminds us that the root command is *Love one another as God steadfastly loves you.*

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## Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Let us pray, for the church and the world, thanking God for the blessings in our lives*

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## Intercessions

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### Blessing

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen

### Act of Dedication

Almighty God,  
we thank you for the gift of your holy word:  
may it be a lantern to our feet,  
a light upon our paths,  
and a strength to our lives.  
Take us and use us to love and serve all people  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Praise

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.  
You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his works.

You renew the face of the earth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \* you renew the face of the earth.

### Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Be with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and evermore. Amen