

Harvest – 4 October 2025 – CE/GR

CE

My usual approach to anything is to ask “why” – why do we do this, when did this all start.

So I did a bit of research which I hope you’ll find interesting too.

There are different 3 harvest festivals mentioned in the old testament.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) – celebrated in the Spring commemorating the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.

The Feast of Weeks or First Fruits (Shavuot) – occurs about 50 days after Passover and celebrates the first fruits of the barley harvest.

And the Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles) (Sukkot) – celebrated in the autumn, marking the completion of the harvest and the gathering in of crops.

All 3 of these celebrate God’s blessings and show the people’s gratitude to God for rain, sunshine and healthy crops.

In Deuteronomy 16:10 it says “celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the Lord your God **by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you**”.

There is an ancient Christian Festival called Lammas – celebrated on 1 August and this is equivalent to the First Fruits Festival I just mentioned.

Lammas which is old English – means Loaf Mass where ‘loaf’ is obviously bread and Mass refers to the Eucharist/communion. A specially prepared loaf would be baked from the first grain harvested and brought to church.

There would often be thanksgiving services at the end of a good harvest with the last sheaf of corn brought into church to give thanks.

But the tradition of the Harvest Festival service as we know it was only formalised back in the Victorian era – when a Revd Robert Hawker in Cornwall encouraged his congregation to bring food gifts to church which would then be shared out to those in need in their community.

The common theme of all these services is to give thanks to God and acknowledge our gratitude for God’s hand in all of creation.

GR

In our Gospel reading Jesus is confronting his disciples with some truth... they were looking for him because he had satisfied their physical hunger.

They probably felt full for a change.

But what about their spiritual hunger and needs?

He spells it out.. I am all you need.

Come to me for everything

After all, everything comes from God.
He created the world and everything in it. He gives us good gifts...
Talents, resources, relationships, food, clothing, love. eternal life.
We are called to be his hands and feet and to share what we have.

Our church strap line is to share the love of God.
That isn't the unseen, emotional, feelings, hearts and flowers, soppy, love but
practical and helpful. Actually making a difference.
Supporting people both materially and emotionally.

CE

When we were thinking about this we realised that so many of our activities
live out that strapline – Sharing God's Love

Either physically with food or funds:

- Caring Cuisine
- Foodbank
- Our Hardship Fund

Or via emotional and loving support:

- The Bereavement Journey
- The weekly café
- Our Christmas gathering for those on their own over the holiday period

As a church we live out Acts 4 v 32 'All the believers were one in mind and heart. Selfishness was not a part of their community, for they shared everything they had with one another'.

GR

Of course, we also need to nourish ourselves.

We have a habit of putting ourselves at the centre and think IT'S ME. But real spiritual growth is to acknowledge how completely dependent we are on God
We need the fuel. And that fuel is clearly from the bread of life, our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Like the manna from heaven provided to Moses and the Israelites, daily.
It needs replenishing. It needs to be fresh each day.

So, Harvest time is an opportunity to give thanks for all we have been given.
For our needs being met.

And especially to share it. And in doing that, offering up ourselves too. To serve and further His kingdom.

He is the bread of life

Carol Elsasser & Gilly Robinson, 5 October 2025