

Harvest Service Suggestion

Readings:

Psalm 65: 5- 13 “It’s a wonderful world”

Luke 19: 1-9: “from grabbing to giving”

Preparation

You will need to collect up six boxes – ideally matching wooden crates, but any box that will stand by itself and has one side open will work. These boxes will need to be built into a display in an accessible part of the worship space, and each box will contain objects as indicated below:

world map; a loaf; first aid kit; dancing shoes; stole and bible; small mirror tiles

You will also need:

- A big collection of autumn leaves
- A selection of gift boxes or wrapped boxes, 3 pairs of over-sized sunglasses
- Enough gift tags for everyone

We gather

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Informal welcome

Introduction and presentation of gifts

Invite people to hold up the harvest gifts they have brought with them.

Look up to the roof – and beyond to the sky

Thank you God for your goodness that blesses us and the earth.

You are generous

All: Thank you, God

Invite people to look around at the congregation and beyond the walls

Voice: Thank you God for the people who made this food and those who will share in it.

You are generous

All: Thank you God

Invite people to look down at the ground and the earth beneath.

Voice: Thank you God for this place, this [village/town/city], this church and for your faithful love over many generation

You are generous

All: Thank you God

Opening hymn with offering of harvest gifts [You might like to have boxes ready and place the gifts straight into them. Arrange some items in a display as well.]

Making connections: *Harvest makes us aware of how much we have to enjoy, but it also makes us aware of how often we fail to take care of the world and those around us. It’s also autumn, a time when the leaves fall, reminding us that sometimes we need to let go of things so that new things can happen. As we scatter leaves this morning, so we remember all the wrong choices we*

have made, the things we have not bothered to do, and the things we did on purpose that have hurt other people, hurt ourselves and hurt God.

Invite people to come forward and collect a handful of leaves and scatter them in front of the altar. While this is happening, play appropriate music. [If you are working with a school, they could prepare a song to sing at this point]

When everyone has returned to their seats, arrange for some young people to sweep up and remove the leaves, then pray in these or similar words

Lord God, we are selfish, we are greedy, we are wasteful of all that you have given us.

Sometimes we forget to say thank you,

Lord have mercy

All: Lord have mercy

Sometimes we ignore the needs of others,

Christ have mercy

All: Lord have mercy

Sometimes we just can't be bothered to live your way.

Lord have mercy

All: Lord have mercy

But we are sorry and ask that you forgive us.

Absolution

Collect

We listen

[You may also need or want to include presentations from school at this point.

Read the Psalm from The Message Bible

Read Luke in usual way [as the talk is a dramatic re-telling of story]

Talk

[You will need one or two adults/teens at the side with the gift-wrapped boxes ready]

Zaccheus? People are wondering what on earth this has to do with harvest. Do we have to give thanks for trees to climb?

Volunteer to be Zach... stand at front with open arms.

Now Zach was a man who liked things. As he began to earn money, so he began to acquire some things.

[Someone comes forward with a box, Zach takes it, and puts it behind him. Repeat a couple of times]

Zach liked his things. He liked to look at them and admire them.

He wanted more. And more. So he cheated a bit here and there to get more things.

[Someone comes and puts a box in Zach's arms. This time he holds it. Then add another box]

He stored up more and more things [*pile boxes on in rapid succession*]
...until he had so much stuff he couldn't see where he was going. He couldn't see that other people had much less than him. He couldn't reach out to help – or to ask for help. He couldn't even move very far from his house! [*place sunglasses over his eyes*]
Poor Zach [aah!]

But then Zach heard that Jesus was coming to town. He managed to find his way out of his house. But he couldn't get to the front of the crowd. No-one would help him or give him a hand. Zach is a real Billy-no-mates. He had loads of stuff, but no friends. After all he couldn't reach out to others himself. So he had to climb that tree .. and then things began to happen.

Firstly Jesus came to eat at his house! He came and shared Zach – and Mrs. Zach's - food. Zach learned about sharing. He put down his things and sat with Jesus.

Then Zach realised he had more than enough stuff – and began to give it away [*get volunteer Zach to give boxes around congregation, helped by others*] he learned about giving.

Suddenly he realised his hands were empty. He could see where he was going and reach out to touch other people. He was free! He learned about thanking. Jesus turned and told everyone salvation, life, freedom, healing – had come that day! Hurray!
Invite three more volunteers to come forward.

In our world and in our lives we might not collect things like Zach did.
But .. *begin piling some of the harvest foods onto the hands of the first volunteer. Pile on quite a lot and then put sunglasses over eyes.*

We have so much food in our lives we no longer see that there are people who are going hungry.
Then begin piling books, laptop, school stuff on the 2nd person. Then put sunglasses on.

We have so many opportunities to learn, we forget that there are people who can't even go to school.
Then invite lots of other volunteers to crowd round the 3rd person. Then put on sunglasses.

Some of us have so many friends and people who love us, that we no longer look out for those who are lonely and unloved.

This has everything to do with Harvest.

Three key words [*could have these on cards/ohp etc*]: sharing, giving, thanking.

Sometimes our lives are so full of things – possessions, anxiety, being important, coming first – that we also find it hard to see where we are going, or to reach out to others. When we share in hospitality and friendship, when we give away generously to others, and when we are thankful for all that God has given us, then we are able to enjoy all of God's world together with all God's people.

We respond

We declare our faith

Making connections: We share together as God's family, remembering all that we believe:

The Creed

Prayers

Place the 6 boxes at the front, each with one of the objects in.

If you have a congregation who are able to do this, split into groups of about 6 – 12

One person from each group comes forward and takes an object. [In a large congregation you will need to have more than one of each object available]

Each group has one minute to pray for themes that emerge from that object, before returning it and choosing another.

At the end gather all the prayers in these or similar words:

Loving God, you shower us with good things and you know all the needs we have. You listen to our prayers and hear the unspoken words in our hearts. Hear our prayers today, in Jesus name.

Amen.

OR

Invite someone to show each object and introduce a theme as indicated. Then invite people to pray by themselves or with another person for a minute for the theme.

Map of the world - for every place where there is war and injustice

Loaf - for everyone who is struggling to find food or make ends meet

First aid kit – for all who are unwell and for those who care

Dancing shoes – for all who help us show joy in our lives

Stole and bible – for the church

Mirror tiles or mirror – for ourselves

OR

Invite school or other group to prepare prayers using the objects as their starting point

OR

Offer formal prayers whilst someone takes the object from the box and walks around showing it to people:

Map of the world:

Creator God, your world is wonderful, full of delight and difference. We pray today for all who care for the world and for those who work to bring us understanding. We pray for those places where life is demanding, for those living in hostile climates caused by nature or caused by human beings. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Lord hear our prayer

Please

Loaf:

Generous God, we pray today for all who work to bring us food and for all who speak out for those who have little food. We pray for those who will not have enough to eat today, and for all those who are working to bring help. In every place bring your hope and healing. Lord hear our prayer

Please

First aid kit:

Healing God, we pray today for all who endure pain in mind or body and for those who help. We pray for those working in hospitals and those in research, those who work in our community and those caring out of love. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Lord, hear our prayer

All: Please

Dancing shoes:

Joyful God, we pray today for all who bring us delight and help us show praise and thanks in our daily lives. For our children and those we love, for those who entertain and those who create beauty in words and music, paint or clay, we pray that your creative life would overflow with joy. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Lord hear our prayer

All: Please

Stole and bible:

Holy God, we pray today for the life of our church, for all who serve and all who lead. Help us to be people who share generously and speak boldly of your love. Give our leaders and teachers wisdom, and give each of us the courage we need to follow you. In every place bring your hope and healing.

Lord hear our prayer

All: please

Mirror or mirror tiles:

Loving God, we pray for ourselves, knowing that you see each of us with eyes of love. Help us to love ourselves as you love us and to reflect your image into the world around us. In my life bring hope and healing.

Lord, hear our prayer

All: please

If this is a non-Eucharistic service, use the Lord's prayer to gather prayers together
If a Eucharist, end prayers in usual way.

The Peace

We go out into the world

Invite people to come and collect the gift tags from a box. Suggest people take them home and then attach to some small gift to give to another person or if your church is going to give the harvest gifts away, they could be attached to packets/tins before being given away.

Voice 1:

We have celebrated Harvest,
brought our gifts, sung our hymns and remembered our God.

Voice 2:

As we go into the world,
May God help us to live our lives
As people of the harvest
To share and to give,
to bless and to love
through Jesus, our friend and saviour. Amen.

Blessing

Minister:

May God's joy be in our hearts [place hand on heart]
May God's peace be in our world [sweep hand out in front]
May God's love be known between us [hold hands or touch palms]
and the blessing of God etc...

Amen.

The Dismissal

Minister: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.