



EMMANUEL CHURCH – HARVEST WORSHIP FOR 27TH SEPTEMBER 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 27th September 2020.
If you are able, watch this small service via the Emmanuel Church website: www.emmanuel-eastbourne.org.uk.

Welcome and Gathering: ‘As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease’ (Genesis 8.22)

Opening Prayer including the following Prayer of Confession.

Let us confess our forgetfulness of the needs of the poor, and repent of the ways in which we waste the resources of the world. God has blessed us, but still God’s children go hungry.

Lord, have mercy. **LORD, HAVE MERCY.**

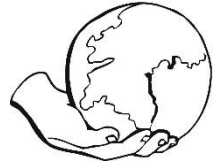
God has blessed us, but still the poor cry out for justice.

Christ, have mercy. **CHRIST, HAVE MERCY.**

God has blessed us, but still we see inequality and oppression in the earth.

Lord, have mercy. **LORD, HAVE MERCY.**

The Lord says to every humble heart: ‘Your sins are forgiven’. **AMEN. THANKS BE TO GOD.**



Reading: Matthew 7:7-11 ‘God’s Gifts to Us All’

⁷ ‘Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Address: ‘Harvest 2020’

Prayer of Intercession and The Lord’s Prayer:

Let us offer our prayers to God for the life of the world and for all God’s people:
God, the beginning and end of all things, in your providence and care you watch unceasingly over all creation; we offer our prayers that in us and in all your people your will may be done, according to your wise and loving purpose in Christ our Lord. Lord of all life: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

We pray for all through whom we receive sustenance and life; as you have so ordered our life that we depend upon each other, enable us by your grace to seek the well-being of others before our own. Touch our hearts and the hearts of all who live in comfortable plenty, and make us wise stewards of your gifts. Lord of all life: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

We pray for those who are ill, especially those with coronavirus and those who treat them; for those who are awaiting surgery and treatments. Give skill and understanding to all who work for their well-being whether in hospital or home. We offer ourselves to your service, asking that by the Spirit at work in us others may receive a rich harvest of love and joy and peace. Lord of all life: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

God of grace, as you are ever at work in your creation, so fulfil your wise and loving purpose in us and in all for whom we pray, that with them and in all that you have made, your glory may be revealed and the whole earth give praise to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

Blessing

Address: 'Harvest 2020'

If you enjoy your major sporting events you could be forgiven for feeling a bit flat at the moment. The 2020 Olympics and Paralympic Games in Tokyo: cancelled and rescheduled to take place in 2021. Golf's Ryder Cup has been wiped from this year's diaries, and the Football Euros (which England were obviously going to win) has also gone. Tragically even the annual Cooper's-Hill Cheese-Rolling Competition has gone, though I gather a solitary cheese was rolled down the hill to symbolically mark the event – which sounds like possibly the most irrelevant sporting occasion I have ever heard of.



This weekend is Emmanuel's 'Harvest 2020' and unlike the events I have mentioned, I have not heard a single person suggest that we simply cancel Harvest and hold it in 2021 instead. Not one! Never mind that none of us can sing *We Plough the Fields and Scatter* out loud; never mind that we have no shared lunch, no *Black Strap Molasses* playing at church, no packed church on a Sunday – it's pre-booked by appointment and YouTube hits only. As a church, Harvest is simply too important a festival to cancel, overlook, delay, or declare null and void. Many people 'do' Harvest and wouldn't dream of cancelling it – and I am not just talking about our farmers and workers across our agricultural sector. For Christians, we cannot not do Harvest!

I am not the first person to think that Christianity is not really a noun, it's a verb. We 'do' Christianity, you and I. Harvest is the same: we 'do' Harvest. Fundamental to this is thanksgiving and acknowledging in this season the love and grace of God: the gifts of God of nature and produce. And if 'God is good' – one of the core beliefs we hold – then God's gifts are good. More than this they are only good, and they are always good. And so whether in peace or wartime, famine or plenty, pandemic or health... we can give thanks: Remember these words? '*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above; then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love*'. They are as true now as ever. Maybe they feel truer than ever for us today.

For those brave enough to 'do Harvest' in these times, it means we give thanks for wheat and fruit and supermarkets and all who work so hard to fill shelves and fill our stomachs. It means we give thanks for carers at home, in care homes, in hospitals, nurses, doctors, scientists, testers, politicians and planners; for taxi-drivers and teachers, factory and social workers, people keeping businesses and the economy going. Look with the right eyes, and you'll see God's strength there, God's compassion, God's resilience, wisdom – and yes, God's vulnerability and God's suffering and sadness too. We don't cancel Harvest because we can't have a ploughman's and a barn



dance – we continue to thank God profoundly for life, for love, for presence, and the knowledge that God is here, with us in all Harvest 2020 means for us. A great deal has stopped in lockdown, but God's giving is not one of them. So for us, it means that we don't stop thanksgiving either. We give thanks, roll up our sleeves and join in too. Why? Because we're called to. So, in Emmanuel's Harvest we gather our gifts together whether of money, or food for the Foodbank, or our hopes and prayers, and bring them to God that they all go out into the world to bring something of the goodness of God to another.

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity* reminds us that, basically, everything is God's anyway! He writes it's a bit like a small child asking her father for sixpence so she can buy him a present: "It's all very nice and proper but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction." Jesus reminds the people listening to him just how good their heavenly Father God is, if they will only believe a little bit deeper, a little bit bigger! It may be a Harvest like no other in our lifetime, but rest assured may there be no end to our gathering, thanksgiving, and sharing. For there is no end to God's giving, God's goodness: for Harvest 2020 and forever after.