

## Service for Caversham Park URC on Sunday 22 September 2024

### Harvest Festival

#### *Preparing to hear God's Word*

*Welcome, introduction and lighting of candles*

*Call to Worship*

*Psalms 126:5-6*

(5) May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

(6) Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Hymn

Come, ye thankful people come

#### *Prayers of Approach, Adoration and Confession*

Lord you are great! You make springs flow down the valleys, streams between the hills, giving drink to the wild animals and river banks for birds to nest, singing in the trees.

From your storehouse in the sky, you water the mountains and saturate the earth, greening the grass for the cattle, swelling the grain, bringing bread to sustain our strength, wine to gladden our hearts and oil to make our faces shine.

All your creatures look to you in hope – you open your hand and we are filled with good things.

And so we pray:

How good and right it is, to give you thanks, our God.

**The sights and scents of harvest remind us of the wonder of growth.**

Rain and sunshine combine to bring the best from your creation.

**Here, in blossom and fruitfulness, shine all the colours of the rainbow.**

Your promise never fails. Creation tells the everlasting story of your goodness towards us.

It is written in your handiwork and whispered on the breeze.

**And we are part of it, called to shape the future, to care for the earth, and to share with one another.**

Therefore, give us grace to do all that is Christlike so that we may bear fruit in daily acts of goodness and reap the harvest of our souls. **Amen.**

#### *Confession*

We confess our sin, and the sins of our society, in the misuse of God's creation.

God our Father, we are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly, and acted ungratefully. Hear our prayer, and in your mercy:

**forgive us and help us.**

We enjoy the fruits of the harvest, but sometimes forget that you have given them to us. Father, in your mercy:

**forgive us and help us.**

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied, but ignore the cry of the hungry. Father, in your mercy:

**forgive us and help us.**

We are thoughtless, and do not care enough for the world you have made. Father, in your mercy:  
**forgive us and help us.**

We store up goods for ourselves alone, as if there were no God and no heaven. Father, in your mercy:

**forgive us and help us.**

*Assurance of Pardon*

May the Lord enrich us with his grace, and nourish us with his blessing; the Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil; the Lord accept our prayers, and absolve us from our offences, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen.**

### ***Hearing God's Word***

#### *Theme Introduction*

Today is our Harvest Festival. Every day we should give thanks to God for all that he gives us, but at this time of year we come together to focus particularly on his gifts, to thank him for them, and to consider what he calls us to do with them.

#### *Collect for the Day*

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reading from Scripture                      Joel 2:21-27

Canticle of the Creatures (said antiphonally)

Reading(s) from Scripture                      1 Timothy 6:6-10,              Matthew 6:25-34

Hymn    We plough the fields and scatter

Sermon

### ***Responding to God's Word***

Hymn    For the beauty of the earth

*Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession*

The response to “Lord of the harvest” is “**Hear our prayer.**”

We pray for this Church in Caversham Park, for your other Churches in this area, for the United Reformed Church and for the universal Church on earth and in heaven. At this time we give you thanks for your servant Saint Francis, and particularly for the events eight hundred years ago when his followers came to this land and when he was marked with the wounds of Christ. Bless all who are inspired by his example to care for all creation, to help the sick and the poor, and to bring your good news to all. Help us, Lord, to bring in a great harvest of souls.

Lord of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this wonderful world that you have given us. We thank you for its fruitfulness, and for the amazing connections by which ecological systems support each other. We confess that too often we have taken its produce in a way that harms the natural environment and undermines its sustainability, and which uses our strength to take from those who are weaker. Empower us to recognise your power in all your gifts, to look after them as responsible stewards, to heal the wounds and damage that destroy them, and to share them generously with all your people. Help us to acknowledge your harvest and use it wisely.

Lord of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world. Give wisdom to the leaders of all nations and groups, that they may not fight for your harvest gifts, but work for peace and justice so that all may have enough. We pray particularly for a change of heart for all who are destroying in Israel, Gaza, Lebanon and neighbouring countries, in Russia and Ukraine, in Somalia, Sudan and other African countries, and wherever your kingdom of justice and peace is denied. We ask for relief for all victims of war. We pray for all who are hungry, homeless, unemployed or ill, so that they cannot earn their own bread. Help us to share your harvest as brothers and sisters.

Lord of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who are sick or suffering, especially people whom we know or know about. Send them your harvest of healing and comfort.

Lord of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

We remember those who have died. Grant that we may share with them as those whom you have harvested and gathered into your heavenly store, and enjoy your goodness and greatness for ever.

Lord of the harvest, **hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for our daily bread in the words that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven...**

**Amen.**

**The Offering**

If you have remembered to bring offerings of food, please bring them up now and place them on the table. We will take them to Readifood in the next few days, to be shared through their food bank and through the Churches’ in Reading Drop-in Centre with people who need it.

Sarah, please bring the offerings of money.

Almighty God, we offer you these gifts of food, to be shared with our neighbours in Reading. We offer you these gifts of money, to be used to spread your Good News and build up your Kingdom. We offer ourselves to be used in your service as you may call us. Give us the will to share whatever we have as generously as possible, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

Hymn

For the fruits of all creation

The Blessing (7)

O God our Father, we thank you that once again you have fulfilled your gracious promise that, while earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not fail. We bless you for the kindly fruits of the earth which you have given to our use. Teach us, when we pray, that it is not by bread alone that we live; and grant us evermore to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end.

**Amen.**

And let us bless one another with the Grace:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for ever. Amen.**