

Faith in Foodbanks? – Harvest



Harvest

Harvest celebrations are a long-standing tradition stretching back to the days when almost every community in Britain was a rural one. Churches would be decked with the produce of the fields and many of those who gathered for worship would have quite literally been out in the fields, in the days before, engaged in the back-breaking task of cutting and pulling the crops from the ground.

We might sense that this has lost something of its immediate relevance in a society where the majority of people now live in urban communities and our food is obtained from supermarkets, convenience stores and take-aways. But harvest is more than simply a celebration of all things rural – it is a reminder that God is at the centre of our production and consumption of food.

Our Scriptures not only describe God as Creator, to whom we rightly give thanks for the produce of the earth, but a God of justice, who has much to say about how we share and distribute those resources. Harvest is a community celebration, reminding us not only that “all good gifts around us are sent from heaven above” but that we are called to love our neighbour and ensure that everyone in our community is able to share them.

One way in which churches have increasingly responded to this challenge is through the work of foodbanks. Foodbanks offer themselves as a natural focus for a harvest celebration, and of course might well become the recipient of any produce that is displayed in the service.

The Joint Public Issues Team recently published “**Faith in Foodbanks?**” a resource that helps churches engage and think more deeply about this ministry. This includes an all-age service outline which offers itself as a useful resource for a harvest service. Various study and information resources also help a congregation to think more deeply about some of the issues that emerge from the work of foodbanks. You can download the resources at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks

A Prayer for Harvest

Creator God;

**As we give you thanks for the gift of food, and the capacity to produce and share it,
We confess that we do not always use the resources of this earth as we should;
Food can be produced in ways that causes harm to other elements of your creation;
Supply chains are developed through which some grow rich and others are exploited;
People in our community remain hungry while others consume more than they need.**

**As we acknowledge you as the source of life and being
Help us to hear the cry of those who are made in your image but denied your justice.
Today we pray for the work of Foodbanks;
Bless and encourage all those who work and volunteer within them,
And be close to all who rely on their provision.
Help us not only to see them as an expression of your love and care
But also as a sign of a world that is not as it should be;
A reason to ask questions, and to challenge those circumstances that make them necessary.**

**In our receiving and giving and sharing of food
Help us to celebrate and explore every aspect of your nature and message
In the name of Jesus we pray - AMEN**