



AN EXPLANATION OF HARVEST GIFTS AT ST JUDE'S 10:30AM SUNDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2024

Let's be honest. Harvest for us city dwellers is odd. Our families' regular food supplies don't get directly affected by a lack of rain, it is economic circumstances that either do or don't put food on our tables.

We know that regularly having things to eat is just not possible for some in our city and across the world. This is why the Harvest donations at St Jude's aren't about marrows and decorative wheat shaped loaves.

These decorations are great to remind us historically why there was such local relief when a harvest was gathered in. Folk could live fuller lives knowing they could feed their families - and that is still a feeling today – just not linked to the fields. That first Harvest Festival was back in 1843, in Morwenstow, Cornwall, when a Revd Robert Hawker invited his congregation to come to church to praise God for His provision and to share the bounty of their harvest.

Now though, while far separated from agriculture, we again invite folk to gather to thank God for what we have and to share with others who aren't as fortunate. As a church we want share what we have – it's part of the reason for our renewing the church building so the community can also use it, for the free Hub Café and our monthly Sunday Brunch gatherings and the free breakfasts at Jude's Club, our children's Sunday morning group.

FOOD FREELY GIVEN AND A FAITH SIMPLY SHARED

This Harvest we still want to offer a free brunch as it is also the first Sunday of a month when we gather in that way - a friendly welcome to enjoy each other's company over a breakfast with different generations around a table, all before our short service. But this October, it is also an opportunity for all of us to ponder just how grateful we are for what we have, both in practical ways and for our faith that brings life and hope. We will thank God for his generosity and give our gifts to others who aren't as fortunate. Food freely given and a faith simply shared.

At its surface for city dwellers, that gratitude is about finance and food - acknowledging we have what others desperately need, and then wanting to share it. But at a deeper level it's also about sharing the other part of our lives that brings us life, and hope and purpose – the original 'Sower' - Jesus himself. That's why we support two Christian ministries at Harvest, one local, one overseas. These two charities share in practical ways with others in need while also offering, if asked, more about the God in whom they have found so much, who encourages generosity – and life.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again.

Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:35

AND SO, OUR DONATIONS WILL GO IN TWO DIRECTIONS...

1. Plymouth Food Bank

Any food donated will go to the Christian charity, Plymouth's heavily used Oasis Food Bank, who we maintain light support for during the year. If you want to bring any items for them, please ensure they have long use by dates, i.e. tinned or dry foods, as they may need to be stored for a few months. The Food Banks can get a bit overwhelmed at Harvest, but it's an important stocking time for them for the next few months when donations will dip down again to lower levels. Fresh fruit and vegetables are hard for them to store, so please don't donate those.

There are a few types of food they regularly find they are short of - tinned meats, tinned fish and soup – and a regular need is always for pasta. Do feel free to bring a variety of items, but they tell us these are some of their core needs. If you want to bring anything in before the 6th October, that's OK, we'll just store it up somewhere ready for our service.

2. TEN – Harvest for the Hungry

We have been strong supporters of this organisation and helped in some way in its inception decades ago when they started out as Euroevangelism (they have since changed their name to Transform Europe Now, or TEN). Back then, it began with taking food parcels out to those struggling in areas like Romania. Today however, TEN work with partner churches in the same poorest parts of Europe – many having had a strain on their charity work because of the huge numbers of refugee families they now also need to support from bordering Ukraine. Unlike years ago, instead of actual food, TEN now gathers funds in the UK which they share with Churches in these areas. Those partner churches then carry out their feeding programmes among Europe's poorest, while offering help, not just physically, but also in faith.

We therefore ask for financial donations for TEN each Harvest. There will be gift envelopes in Church and if you want to give via a cheque, then it will need to be made payable to TEN with "Harvest for the Hungry" written on the back.

For whatever you may want to give, thank you.