

Clergy Letter: 'Come ye thankful people come'

Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
all is safely gathered in,
where the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide
for our wants to be supplied;
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest home.

Most C. of E. churches celebrate Harvest around this time of year, when Christians give thanks to God for his gifts in creation. There is a continuing thread running through scripture of our dependence on God and on his generosity.

During the Pandemic, I have become even more aware of the changing of the seasons. Maybe that has been your experience as well.

Within this time of unprecedented uncertainty, I have taken comfort in the fact that creation has continued to thrive and 'mark the seasons'. It has been a poignant reminder that God is still 'up and running' despite the chaos that we are experiencing.

But we cannot forget that even creation is undergoing a chaotic challenge. That challenge is the result of climate change.

You may be concerned about this or you might be someone who believes it's all scaremongering by tree huggers. Wherever you stand on the spectrum, doesn't it make sense to preserve finite resources? To switch lights off when they are not needed, to recycle plastic bags and to only buy the food that we need, so that less ends up in the bin.

It is true that these are only small changes, and in the face of pollution and waste around the world, which is beyond our immediate control, it might seem pointless. But, throughout history individuals and small groups have brought great changes which have improved the quality of life dramatically. Things which at first seemed impossible became achievable when enough people got involved.

Christians are called to love God and neighbour. Our neighbours are those we know, as well as those who live on the side of the world whom we will never meet. If we are complacent or selfish, we condemn some of God's beloved children to suffering. We *can* do something positive *if* we choose to.

At the end of September, Archbishop Justin Welby will be visiting our diocese. He has these wise words to say on the subject: *'As people of faith, we must not just state our beliefs – we must live them out. One of our central beliefs is that we find purpose and joy in loving our neighbours. Another is that we are charged by our Creator with taking good care of his creation. The ethical crisis of climate change is an opportunity to find purpose and joy, and to respond to our Creator's charge. Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation'*

At this Harvest Time, may we learn to be good stewards for everyone's sake!

(P.S. Our Parish Harvest Festival will be at 10am on Sunday 19th September in St Lawrence Church and all are welcome)

Your Rector
Reverend Mandy