

Harvest Festival Service



Hymn Numbers taken from either Hymns Old and New (New Anglican Edition, 1996) (HO&N) or Seasonal Worship from the Countryside (SWC)

Preparation

Arrange for different people to bring specific items as offerings. The prayers should be said by those bringing up the gifts. The first items should be earth (soil) and water, without which there could be no life at all. There are four other offerings: bread and cereal or grains, wine and oil, fruit and vegetables, eggs and milk. Other products such as wool, beer or cider could be substituted for the above.

Welcome and Opening *(based on Verses from Genesis 1, RSV)*

And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with seed in it.' And it was so. And God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, every bird of the air, every creeping thing, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.'" And it was so. God saw that it was good.

Hymn: Come, ye thankful people, come (HO&N 101)

Prayer

Almighty God and Creator,
you only can make the seeds to grow
and the land to bring forth the crops for our sustenance.
On you we rely for the warmth of the sun,
the refreshing life-giving rain,
for our well-being.
Teach us the valuable lesson of humility,
that we may work always and only
in harmony with your law.
Make us righteous and just
to all of your creation.
We give thanks and praise
for your loving kindness
and for the bounty of this harvest.
We bring before you these offerings in joy and gladness.

The first offering of soil and water is brought up, blessed and laid on the altar table.

Offering Prayer

Lord, out of the emptiness
you brought forth all that we need for life.
Accept these offerings of earth and water

as a token of our gratitude for your loving renewal of them
in the face of our failure to care properly for your creation.

Amen.

Reading

From George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, quoted by James George in 'Asking for the Earth', saying that the evolution of humankind is not possible apart from surrounding nature (SWC page127).

or

The earth is at the same time mother, she is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human. She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all. The earth of humankind contains all moistness, all verdancy, all germinating power. It is in so many ways fruitful. All creation comes from it. Yet it forms the basic raw material for humankind but also the substance of the incarnation of God's son.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Hymn: Praise, O praise our God and King (HO&N 423) *or* When God made the Garden of creation

The second offering of bread and grains or seeds is brought up, blessed and laid on the altar table.

Offering Prayer

Almighty and ever-loving God,
though we may scatter the seeds on the land;
though we tend and care for them
still without your aid they would lie barren and dead.

We offer this grain and this bread
as symbols of remembrance of this truth.

Let us never forget that without you,
we too are as dried grain on barren land.

Amen.

Reading

Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into act, and bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit and bad thoughts bad fruit. The outer world of circumstances shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of [its] own harvest, [humankind] learns both by suffering and bliss. Following the desires, aspirations and thoughts by which one allows oneself to be dominated.... a person at last arrives at their fruition and fulfilment in the outer condition of life.

James Allen from As a Man Thinketh

or

There is no such thing as 'my' bread. All bread is ours and is given to me, to others through me, and to me through others. For not only bread, but all things necessary for sustenance in this life, are given on loan to us with others, and because of others and for others, and to others through us.

Meister Eckhart (1290-1329)

Hymn: I am the bread of life (HO&N 222) *or* Bread of Heaven, on thee we feed (HO&N 67) *or*
We plough the fields and scatter (HO&N 534) (alternative version on SWC page 136)

The third offering of wine and oil is brought up, blessed and placed upon the altar table.

Offering Prayer

Lord Jesus, just as this wine and this oil,
pressed from fruits dispersed upon the boughs,
gave you and your followers joy and light,
so too, it is a reminder of all that you gave for us.
Take us, our bodies and our souls,
to be crushed and poured out
for your glory and service in the world.
Amen.

Reading (Based on verses from Leviticus 25, 26, 31, Numbers 35, Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5)

The Lord commands, 'The land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord; every seventh day and every seventh year shall be a Sabbath for the Lord; you will neither sow your fields nor prune your vineyard. If you obey my laws and keep my commandments, then I will reward you with rains in their season, and the land shall yield her produce and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And I will give peace in the land. If you remember that the land is sacred and you do not pollute nor defile the land on which you dwell, if you allow your beasts to rest and respect them and your servants, then you will prosper. But if you disobey me and do not allow the land to rest and recover, then I will make your cities into wastelands, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation. The land will also be in desolation and the people will be scattered in desolate places and among strangers and enemies. Then the land will lie barren and enjoy her Sabbath rest, because you did not allow her to rest whilst you dwelt upon her.'

Hymn: Now the green blade riseth (HO&N 355)

The fourth offering of fruit and vegetables is brought up, blessed and placed with the other offerings.

Offering Prayer

Almighty God, you have provided for us
an abundance of good food.
We give thanks for the variety and freshness
of all the things we are able to enjoy in our daily diets,
and we offer these fruits and vegetables
as a sign of our appreciation of your great goodness.
May we never forget to care for those
who have little or nothing in this world.
Amen.

Reading

Remember the poor when you look out on the fields you own,
On your plump cows grazing.
Remember the poor when you look into your barn,
At the abundance of your harvest.
Remember the poor when the wind howls and the rain falls,
As you sit warm and dry in your house.
Remember the poor when you eat fine meat
And drink fine ale at your fine carved table.

The cows have grass to eat;
The rabbits have burrows for shelter;
The birds have warm nests;
But the poor have no food except what you feed them,
No shelter except your house when you welcome them,

No warmth except your glowing fire.

Author unknown

Hymn: I the Lord of sea and sky (HO&N 235)

The fifth and final offering of milk and eggs is brought up, blessed and placed upon the altar table.

Offering Prayer

Great Creator, we give thanks and praise
for the beauty of all your creation.

All that we offer to you is your own,
and yet we know that you, in your great love and mercy
will look kindly upon us and our offerings.

Take them and us to be a sign in this, your world,
symbols of your power and mercy.

Amen.

Reading

From *The Circle of Creation* by John Eaton, recounting the dragonfly laying eggs for the botany teacher, and the blackbird laying her eggs in St. Kevin's hand (SWC page 131).

Hymn: Morning Has Broken (HO&N 337) *or* We are not our own

Blessing

It is suggested that this service be followed by either a harvest supper in a nearby hall; or the serving of bread and cheese, with a selection of cold drinks in the church or chapel.