

# St Andrew's Newsletter September 2021

“To plough is to pray... and the harvest answers and fulfils.”  
Robert Green Ingersoll.

“Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.” James 3:18

Dear Friends,

September marks the beginning of Autumn. I love how poet Wendell Berry describes this season; “*The summer ends, and it is time / To face another way.*” These words remind us that all things are passing – yet the promise of new beginnings



continues to beckon us onward. The leaves that fall to the ground become the womb of spring. As Jesus put it; “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

We humans are not usually great at relinquishment. I wonder how life would be if we took a lesson from the trees, gracefully surrendering the things we need to let go of in order to embrace the new blessings God has planned? The Lord of life always has more to give. When we hold onto things past their time we can become spiritual ‘hoarders’, possessed by the past. Is that really what God wants for us?

Author Joyce Rupp has written a prayer which contains these lines; “*When I fight the changes of unwanted, unsought events and struggle to keep things just as they are... place me on the wings of travelling birds flying south, willing to leave their nests of comfort as they journey to another destination.*”

May this be our prayer too as we journey onwards through a new season with hope in all that is to come.

Esther and Jessie x

## THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR PAT

On **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September at 2 pm** we will share in a service of celebration and thanksgiving for the life of our dear friend Pat Whiskin, followed by tea and cake in the hall.

## SEPTEMBER CHOIR CONCERT

Our choir will be performing a light-hearted programme of secular music celebrating the return of singing to our church followed by fizz and cake on **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 4 pm**. Everyone is welcome to come along to what promises to be a wonderful afternoon. Admission is free but if you can make a donation to church funds it would be much appreciated :)



## AUTUMN FAIR

We are looking forward to the return of our annual fair on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 11 am – 2 pm**. There will be the usual selection of delicious cakes, preserves and refreshments plus bottle tombola, raffle, cards, books, bric a brac and more. If you can donate items for us to sell please put them in the box in the Narthex. We also need volunteers to help set up on Friday and man stalls on the day. Please speak to Esther if you can help. [estherfoss79@gmail.com](mailto:estherfoss79@gmail.com) Thank you.

## HARVEST FESTIVAL

We'll be celebrating the Harvest on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October with a Renew service partly led by our young people. We will be having a collection of **non perishable** items to be donated to the Purley Food Hub. The Hub would be particularly grateful for small bottles of squash, cartons of long life fruit juice, small packets/boxes of tea bags, small jars of coffee, jars of jam and honey, and tinned meals suitable for vegetarians. Thank you for your generosity to people in need.



## POP IN TEAS

We are delighted that the Contact Group Pop in Teas will restart from 14<sup>th</sup> September. All are welcome to share in a fun time of fellowship accompanied by a delicious array of goodies! Please contact Monica for more information: [monicajefford886@gmail.com](mailto:monicajefford886@gmail.com)

## A THOUGHT FOR HARVEST

Deuteronomy 8:7-10; *“For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.”*

Harvest Time – harvest takes time! That’s how it is in nature... and it’s how it is for us too (though we may not like it). There is a process that begins long before the crop is cut. The first step is the preparation of the earth for planting... which is also known as ploughing.

A ploughed field can look and feel a bit like the wilderness. Not much happens in the wilderness does it? It is a barren and desolate place. John Masefield’s poem ‘Autumn Ploughing’ has a sense of this bleakness, a kind of ending that comes with the closing of a fruitful season and the first hints of the winter:

*And field mice and finches’ beaks have found  
The last spilled seed corn left upon the ground;  
And no more swallows miracle in air;  
When the green tuft no longer hides the hare,  
And dropping starling flights at evening come;  
When birds, except the robin, have gone dumb,  
And leaves are rustling downwards everywhere;  
Then out, with the great horses, come the ploughs,  
And all day long the slow procession goes,  
Darkening the stubble fields with broadening strips.  
Grey sea-gulls settle after to carouse:  
Harvest prepares upon the harvest’s close,  
Before the blackbird pecks the scarlet hips.*

Of course, we know that ploughing is a necessary preparation before a harvest can come. I wonder if the ‘wilderness’ times of our life can also be preludes to growth – though they may feel anything but. We never know what is coming next on our life’s journey. As the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard put it; “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.”

Margaret Silf says; “If God has ploughed up your life, it was to plant new seeds.” Has this been our experience? Perhaps we are still waiting to see the harvest appear, if so, we can take courage. In her book, ‘The Way of Wisdom’ she recounts an experience she had in the desert. “I was amazed when a Bedouin guide showed us a tiny dried up seed that he picked up from the arid desert sand. He spat on the little seed, and then the miracle happened. Before our eyes, the seed began to sprout! The

incident gave me real hope that the dried up seeds inside us can also sprout into new life, but this often happens when we are, so to speak, ‘spat on’ by our experiences. The seed sprang to life in minutes. Our own resurrections can take a lifetime or longer. The timescale is not ours to fathom. Yet the pattern is as true for us as for that little seed.”

Our reading reminds us that new life is always waiting for us: *“The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams... a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees and pomegranates... You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord... for the good... that he has given you.”*

These words were spoken to a people in Exile, reminding them of God’s past blessings in leading his people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Remembering what God has done in the past gave them – and gives us – hope for the future.

We cannot bypass the plough. It’s a necessary prelude to life – just as the cross is a necessary part of Easter. Once we accept this, we can help others too - perhaps by sharing part of our own stories, supporting them in our prayers and in other practical ways – often ‘just being there’ is the most powerful witness we can give. As Ella Wheeler Wilcox put it; “With every deed you are sowing a seed, though the harvest you may not see.”

May we pray that our lives may be fruitful fields, for the good of all creation. .

## CORNY JOKES

Why did the farmer feed his pigs sugar and vinegar? He wanted sweet and sour pork. ☺

Why did the lamb call the police? Because he’d been fleeced. ☺

Did you hear about the magic tractor? It turned into a field. ☺

Why did the pig dump her boyfriend? Because he was a real boar. ☺

The church council met to discuss the pastor’s compensation package for the coming year. After the meeting the chair of council told the pastor: “We are very sorry, Pastor, but we decided that we cannot give you a raise next year.”

“But you must give me a raise,” said the pastor. “I am but a poor preacher!”

“I know,” the council chair said. “We hear you every Sunday.” ☺



## PRAYERS

### Pray for Afghanistan

O God of mercy and of peace,  
 We hold before you the peoples of Afghanistan.  
 Be living bread to those who are hungry each day  
 Be healing and wholeness to those who have no access  
 to health care amidst the ravages of pandemic  
 Be their true home to all who have been displaced  
 Be open arms of loving acceptance to those who fear  
 because of their gender, ethnicity, religious or political  
 views  
 Be peace to those engaged in armed conflict and those  
 who live within its shadow.  
 Turn our hearts and minds to your ways of just and gentle  
 peace,  
 Open our eyes to see you in all acts of compassionate  
 care  
 Strengthen our hearts to step out in solidarity with your  
 suffering people and  
 Hold us all in your unfailing love. Amen  
 (Christian Aid)

God, you call us out of darkness.  
 May we hear your voice  
 in the cry of our brothers and sisters in crisis.  
 As you walk alongside us always,  
 may we walk beside one another  
 listening and responding in love.  
 Shine the light of your compassion through us,  
 dispelling chaos, fear and despair.  
 Breathe hope and courage into all our hearts  
 as we work together to rebuild once more.

Strengthen us, Lord, and keep us steadfast.  
 Bring healing and comfort to all  
 and lead us renewed into your marvellous light.  
 Amen.  
 (CAFOD)

Loving Lord, we pray for those who have no harvest to  
 celebrate, no crops to gather, or labour to pursue.  
 We pray for those who live on land that is hard to farm,  
 scratching out a living in a hostile soil,  
 amidst rocky ground and scorching earth.  
 We pray for those who scratch no living from the earth,  
 where the whole world seems to squeeze the life from their  
 bodies.  
 We pray for those who have left their homes,  
 driven by war or want, to become refugees, aliens  
 dependent on others. We pray for those without work:  
 women and men made redundant by changing needs,  
 children living off their wits in the streets of sprawling  
 cities. We pray for those with no energy for praise,  
 whose bread is bitterness and whose water is tears.  
 We confess our part in the sin of the world  
 and pray that you might grant us a vision of justice as well  
 as charity and strengthen our readiness to change as well  
 as to help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
 (The Baptist Union)

As we welcome the Autumn season,  
 may the earlier setting of the sun  
 remind us to take time to rest.  
 May the brilliant colours of the leaves  
 remind us of the wonder of your creation.  
 May the steam of our breath in the cool air  
 remind us that it is you who give us the breath of life.  
 May the harvest from the fields remind us of the  
 abundance we have been given and bounty we are to  
 share with others.  
 May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great  
 promise that death is temporary and life is eternal.  
 We praise you for your goodness forever and ever.  
 Amen.  
 (University of Notre Dame, Indiana)

