

**Harvest Thoughts for BCT:** I'm writing these few words for *Bakewell Churches Together* (BCT) at the beginning of July when the sun is shining and we have just had the hottest day of the year so far. The tractors with trailers attached have been going up and down our country lanes and the combined harvesters have been on the move from early in the morning until quite late at night. The farmers have to plan ahead – crop rotation, leaving this or that field fallow, getting the lambs to market and the ewes ready for next year. Yes, a farmer's life is definitely not an easy one and it requires three hundred and sixty-five days a year commitment. The editors of *Bakewell Churches Together*, like the farmers, also have to plan their yearly activities and we are grateful to them for the gift of their time as we try to keep alive and well the happy relationships we have in our different church families.

Harvest Thanksgiving has a prominent place in church communities usually in late September or October and in some liturgy books we'll find Scripture readings and prayers suggested for this special celebration which, like our flower festivals, is often attended by many non-regular churchgoers. We are all moved, I think, by something we see as beautiful and by the wonder of the produce of our fields which provide us with what is necessary for our human needs. To see the fields planted, the crops growing, the produce in the markets and we humans can simply enjoy all this wonderful fruit of the earth! How marvellous that is.

Harvest Thanksgiving reminds us that we *receive* much from the soil and the toil of others who give much of themselves in their daily work so that we might have food on our tables. Annual harvest celebrations can lead us to be grateful recipients of what creation offers to us but, also, they can guide us to become more and more aware of our stewardship of creation as well. In the Bible the authors see the soil as a place where God's creative presence can be seen: "*the earth has yielded its fruit for God our God has blessed us.*" [Ps. 67: 6] In the prayer of the Eucharist we have a text: "*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation for through your goodness we have this bread and wine to offer: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, they will become our spiritual food.*" The link between worship and creation is very strong.

Perhaps this time round we can do a little bit more to watch our use of plastics and how we dispose of them? Now that would help us to be more conscientious stewards of the gift of the earth which has been entrusted to us from the Creator.

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