**Reading from Deuteronomy 26: 1-11**

**26**When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, **2**you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. **3**You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, ‘Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.’ **4**When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, **5**you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. **6**When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, **7**we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. **8**The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; **9**and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. **10**So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. **11**Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

**From the Arthur Rank Centre**

Creation, land, agriculture and farming are themes which run through the whole of the Bible. This passage that reveals different aspects of the way this writer explored and understood the relationship between God and his creation.

Revd Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, has offered a brief reflection on the passage, giving our whole church community the opportunity to reflect together on what the Bible has to say about harvest.

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 This passage reminds us that all food is a gift from God. The offering of the first fruits also reminds the people of Israel of their history and all that God has done for them. As a response they are instructed to make sure that everyone gets a share, including the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

Farmers today are often very aware of the history of their farm and see themselves in a line of fellow stewards wanting to leave the land better than they found it.

• How has your perspective on food and creation changed this year?

The things of the earth are important to God, so we should treat them and each other with respect.

• How has your view of food changed in the last months?

• Who would you like to thank today for the food that you’ve eaten?

• What do you have to praise God for?

• Have you experienced creation differently in the last few months?

Harvest 2020 TO OUR FARMERS! This year, many people have become aware – some for the first time – of the vital role UK farms play in feeding our nation, while the food shortages we experienced in the early days of the COVID-19 lockdown reminded us how fragile the supply chain can be. Unable to go out, many people have been cooking and baking more than in the past, and some are growing fruit and vegetables at home for the first time. All of this has resulted in a more conscious appreciation of the food we eat and where it has come from. As churches and communities across the UK prepare to celebrate harvest festivals, let’s embrace this opportunity to thank the farmers across the UK who grow our food for us. This has been a difficult year for many in the farming community which is negotiating a ‘triple threat’ of challenges.

The weather is, once again, proving to be problematic for many farmers; autumn and winter flooding meant some crops sown in the autumn were washed away, and the planting of spring crops was delayed. This was followed by a very dry spring which is having lasting effects: crops have been slower to grow, and some farmers are already having to feed their animals as there is insufficient grazing available. The shape of new agricultural policy and trade deals is beginning to emerge as Britain renegotiates many of its international relationships following its exit from the European Union, but there will be a significant lack of clarity around the details of this for some time to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for the farming community. As we know, the process of harvesting many of our crops is hugely reliant on migrant labour, with people coming to the UK for a season, living and working on local farms before returning home. Much of this travel has been curtailed by restrictions in response to COVID-19.

Other farms have sought to increase their income by diversifying into farm shops, holiday lets and other activities; again, COVID-19 restrictions have made much of this activity impossible over the last few months. This year, perhaps more than ever, the farming community in the UK needs our support!

**Prayers by Helen Briggs** St Michael and All Angels, Harvest,

Dear Lord, at this season of St Michael and All Angels, we give you thanks for Michael, prince of angels, who contends by our side, for Gabriel, your herald, who brings glad tidings, for Raphael, the protector who ministers your healing. With them and the whole company of heaven we praise and worship you

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer*

Lord God, whose son Jesus Christ understood people’s fear and pain before they spoke of them, we pray for all those who are suffering from Covid 19, both at home or in hospital. And we ask your blessing on all those who are caring for them and all those working so hard to develop a vaccine. We pray also for all who are ill at this time, for those waiting for treatment for other ailments, for those anxiously awaiting a diagnosis. Surround the frightened with your tenderness, give strength those in pain, hold the weak in your arms of love and give hope and patience to those who are recovering. We pray for the souls of all those who have died, who are now at peace and we ask your blessing on those who grieve that they may be comforted

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer*

Generous God, at this harvest time, we thank you for all the good things that you give us. We thank you for our food and we remember all those who do not have enough to eat. We pray for the work of the local foodbanks, providing food for those so sorely in need. Help us to share the harvests of the world more fairly and to give to those who have so little. We thank you Lord for the hard work of all those who grow and prepare our food, for the farmers, the market gardeners, the fishermen, the shopkeepers and the delivery drivers. We give thanks for all that is good in your creation and ask you to bless all those who bring in the harvest of both land and sea

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer*

We thank you Lord at this time for the beauty of the natural world we see around us, for breathtaking landscapes and seascapes. During this period of uncertainly in our lives, the natural world has taken on an added importance for many of us. Help us to protect your creation by being careful about how we use the world’s resources, so that there will be clean water, clean air and a healthy and plentiful wildlife to maintain the ecological balance of our countryside for future generations. In the words of the hymn: “For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, Lord of all to thee we raise, this our joyful hymn of praise”

*Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ*