

## **A Thankful Harvest**

The signs of the changing seasons are very much around us now; the days are shortening, the leaves on the trees are browning and beginning to fall, and the tractors and harvesters are hard at work in the fields around Braunstone, Thorpe Astley and Leicester Forest East. Seeing the harvest being gathered in is a reassuring reminder in these unprecedented times that life goes on, even as we face more uncertainty and restrictions on social activities. We still have many things to be thankful for. The Coronavirus pandemic has actually made us more conscious of some of these; for instance our food providers, delivery workers, care staff, as well as the kindness of friends and neighbours. Several of us have had others undertake our weekly shopping for us whilst we have been shielding or self-isolating; something for which I was extremely grateful at that time!



The other day a Zoom conversation with friends turned to the need amidst all the stresses and strains we are all under at the moment, to take the time to stop and remember to celebrate the good things that have happened this year. Someone's happy news of a pregnancy or engagement. Getting good school or college grades. A phone or video call from a much missed loved one. A shortened day giving us the chance to admire a brilliant sunrise or sunset. These may only be little moments or small things in the grand scheme, but don't they shine out amidst the murk and cloud it so often feels like we are living under? To avoid getting swallowed up in doom and gloom, we can restore the balance when we spend a little while remembering and giving thanks for these small, beautiful events which life is all about.

Before long we will be entering our traditional national time of remembering, as we approach Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day in the early part of November. This is a time when normally we would gather together to give thanks for those who have sacrificed their lives in the cause of freedom, the fruits of which sacrifice we are finding temporarily curtailed at the moment as we battle a new and invisible enemy. In Remembrance-tide, we remember all who were victims of those ancient foes of human flourishing; war, violence and inhumanity to our fellow human beings. Lives snatched cruelly away, but celebrated and remembered still, at the eleventh hour.

Remembrance is going to be very different this year. There will not be any gatherings at local war memorials across our area. Nor will there be a civic Remembrance service at either St. Andrew's or St. Crispin's churches. With COVID19 cases rising across our area at the time of writing, there is just no way of holding a large Remembrance service or gathering in a way that doesn't put people at risk or that would be workable within the current national and local legal guidelines. Our local councils and Anglican churches have therefore decided with great reluctance not to hold a gathered service for Remembrance this year.



This does not mean however that we will not be remembering, not giving thanks or honouring the sacrifices made by so many in the armed forces, the civilian population, and conscripted animals during armed conflicts on our behalf. We can still do our remembering and thanksgiving, even if we cannot do so standing literally shoulder-to-shoulder. The churches of St. Andrew's, Leicester Forest East and St. Crispin's, Braunstone Town with Thorpe Astley are inviting you to join us in decorating our front windows with poppies or other artwork that speaks of our remembering and our thanksgiving. Many of us found our days in lockdown brightened by the rainbows and other window decorations in support of our NHS and care workers; our hope is this can make a similar impact and allow us all to still publicly mark our remembering this year. Some of us might draw inspiration from the traditional poppy images or from it being 75 years since the end of the Second World War, or from a personal or family connection. It really is up to you – it's your act of remembrance, that together with others will show our collective gratitude for those who gave their yesterday for our today.

On Remembrance Sunday (8<sup>th</sup> November) at 10:30am on Facebook<sup>1</sup> we will be streaming a special online Remembrance service, which you are warmly invited to join us for, and at 11am on Remembrance Sunday and at 11am on 11<sup>th</sup> November (Armistice Day) we are also inviting everyone to stand on their doorstep for 2 minutes in silence. We cannot stand together this year, but together we can stand, in memory and gratitude.

In these ways we hope we can all still meaningfully mark Remembrance-tide, within the limitations we face at present. It is a solemn reminder that whatever happens in life, there are still things we can be thankful for – and that is perhaps the greatest Harvest of all, as one of the Church's traditional Harvest songs reminds us:

*"Accept the gifts we offer for all thy love imparts,  
and what thou most desirest, our humble, thankful hearts.  
All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;  
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love"*<sup>2</sup>

Revd Dave Hover  
Priest-in-charge for St. Andrew's, Leicester Forest East  
& St. Crispin's, Braunstone Town with Thorpe Astley

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/StAndrewsLFE> or <https://www.facebook.com/StCrispinsBraunstone>

<sup>2</sup> *We plough the fields and scatter*, by Matthias Claudius (1740-1815) trans. Jane Montgomery Campbell (1817-1878) alt.