



On your marks

Harvest is an opportunity to remind ourselves and to invite others to recognise that this is God's world; that he has given us more than enough for our need (although not of course for our greed); and that he loves to give us good things as a sign of the unfailing love he offers to every one of us. An all-age harvest service is a moment for us all to say a big thank you to God.

The Bible is rich in harvest imagery which is no surprise given how much people in the past were so dependent on having a good harvest. God's goodness is seen in the abundance and extravagance of nature's gifts to us, and the Bible also uses harvest images to describe the sort of lives we should live in response - namely, that we should be like a well-watered garden (Isaiah 58), a fruitful vine (John 15), an evergreen tree (Psalm 1) and an ever-flowing stream (Isaiah 48).

Get set

You will need:

- A display area with some items already arranged in the order of the colours of the rainbow for the special display (see below).
- Long pieces of ribbon in each of the colours of the rainbow, hidden around the church.
- A large decorative crown - this can be bought from toy stores or shops that sell party goods - I used a basket-shaped crown from IKEA.
- Items to go in the crown: a blow-up globe; some fruits of different colours; some rainbow-coloured wool; a length of rainbow ribbon (for example, HobbyCraft stock rolls).
- A large rainbow banner - which could be prepared by the children's group or a banner-making team the week before - or a rainbow canopy (IKEA do one to go over a child's bed)
- A Bible reading that picks up the service theme of praise and thanks at Harvest time - for example, Psalm 67.
- Some simple-to-sing and easy-to-learn songs for between the sections of the service suggested below. Remember that this is a service to which many newcomers or less frequent church-attenders come and they may not be familiar or even comfortable with some of our modern worship songs or old-fashioned hymns.

Go!

1. The harvest display

The promise of a regular harvest is first given by God to Noah following the flood and is sealed by the sign of the rainbow (see Genesis 8:21 - 22 and 9:8 - 17).

- In advance, ask the church family to bring harvest gifts that match one of the colours of the rainbow - red and orange vegetables, yellow and green fruits, offerings in blue tins, bunches of purple/violet flowers and so on.



- When the harvest gifts are brought up during the service, have a group of adults and children there to receive them and to sort them out by colour so as to create a rainbow of thanks to God.
- Link this to the promises in Genesis:

As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat; winter and summer, day and night. *Genesis 8:22 (CEV)*

The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise forever. When I send clouds over the earth, and a rainbow appears in the sky, I will remember my promise to you and to all other living creatures. *Genesis 9: 12 - 15a (CEV)*

2. Introduction

Thank you is the key word for today. It's good to be thankful. It's cool to say thanks to God! It's good for our relationship with God and with each other not to forget those two little words. It's good for our health... it's good for the development of character... it's good for our spiritual growth... and it's good for our attitude to our possessions and our blessings!

Our big church events remind us of what's important: important moments in our story of faith; important attitudes on our journey of faith.

- *Christmas* reminds us how God stepped into our world as one of us - reminding us of *The Big Gift*
- *Easter* reminds us how Jesus chose to die and rise again for us - reminding us of *The Big Rescue*
- *Pentecost* reminds us how the Holy Spirit can pour God's love into our hearts - reminding us of *The Big Change*
- *Lent* reminds us how each of us has messed up big time - reminding us of *The Big Sorry*
- *Advent* reminds us how we need to get ready to welcome God - reminding us of *The Big Finale*

And Harvest is a time to remember God's goodness - it's The Big Thank You

So let's give a big thank you to God:

Thank you God... (*louder*)...

Thank you God... (*and even louder*)...

THANK YOU GOD

(You could also say thank you in silence using sign language - see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEtHSsDpb0c>.)

- But what are we thanking God for?

Well, our theme is colours of harvest and it's a time to thank God because he is a rainbow-coloured God who has given us a rainbow-coloured harvest, which is out of love for his rainbow-coloured people - you and me.

3. **Interactive talk - Part 1 - A rainbow-coloured God**

'God is light and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). So if God is light, then he is all the colours that make up light - all the colours of the rainbow.

- What are the colours of the rainbow?

God said, 'Let there be light' (Genesis 1:3), and through that light, which started everything off, all other colours come to life in the world that God gave us.

Show a large decorative crown, to which should be tied ribbons that the congregation is invited to find from different parts of the church at this point in the service.

- What is there in the King's crown for us?

Bring out the blow-up globe - we believe that our world is a gift from God the King. As a reminder of some of the things that have been created that do not grow but display the colours of the rainbow, toss the globe around the congregation and call out the colours of the rainbow in turn. When the globe is caught, the catcher names a part of creation that goes with that colour - for example, rocks, gems, famous places and so on.

Now read Psalm 24:1 - 2 (CEV):

The earth and everything on it belong to the Lord. The world and its people belong to him. The Lord placed it all on the oceans and rivers.

God has given us a rainbow planet - it's an amazing gift.

At this point, you might like to use part of 'The African Canticle' from *An African Prayer Book* by Desmond Tutu (Doubleday, 2006).

4. **Interactive talk - Part 2 - A rainbow-coloured harvest**

We have a rainbow God... who gives us... a rainbow-coloured harvest.

- What else is in the King's crown for us?

Bring out fruits of different colours in coloured bowls, and as you bring each one out, ask for suggestions of other fruits of the same colour. You could offer these around to the congregation to be eaten.



Read Psalm 67:6 - 7 (CEV):

Our God has blessed the earth with a wonderful harvest! Pray for his blessings to continue and for everyone on earth to worship our God.

God has given us such a colourful diet! He gives a riot of colour because God loves to create as much variety as possible.

But there is more.

- What else is there in the King's crown?

5. **Interactive talk - Part 3 - A rainbow-coloured people**

Bring out a ball of rainbow wool. Toss this around the congregation to link up the people of God here as a rainbow of gifts. Each one of us is part of God's rainbow plan for the world... his plan to mend and heal this broken planet. He starts by mending and healing each one of us, as we come to Jesus, who is filled with God's light: the light of the world - the 'rainbow-holding' light of the world.

Read John 8:12 (CEV) and John 10:10 (CEV):

Jesus said:

...I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life.

...I came so that everyone would have life, and have it fully.

Life in all its fullness is a life in full colour, not black and white. Jesus took our darkness - our gloomy shadow life - into himself at the cross and offers instead life in full colour - a rainbow life.

Now, we are to be his rainbow people in ...(name your church)... or wherever we are.

As such, we can reach out to those who are lonely; those in need; those who are struggling with life; those who haven't heard about God; those who are longing to belong.

So we have a rainbow world, a rainbow harvest and a rainbow people. There's so much to say thank you for!

Let's give a big thank you for our world; a big thank you for our harvest; a big thank you for making us his rainbow people.

6. **Prayers**

There are some examples of simple harvest prayers in Barnabas Children's Prayers (BRF, 2011).



7. Interactive talk - Final part - The big rainbow promise

Draw out a rainbow ribbon. And there's one more thing... about the rainbow. God gave us a special promise with this rainbow. It comes at the end of the story of Noah and the flood. It's a promise that God will always be faithful. God will always be there in the future. God won't ever let us down. That's his harvest commitment to us.

Read Genesis 9:16 - 17 (CEV):

When I see the rainbow in the sky, I will always remember the promise that I have made to every living creature. The rainbow will be the sign of that solemn promise.

This is a big promise... so let's bring out a big rainbow!

Unfurl and set up a big rainbow - perhaps a banner that has been made or an umbrella, or, if you can get hold of one, a large rainbow canopy of some sort.

God said he will never give up on us again... he will never turn his back on us... and Jesus echoes this when he says, 'I am with you always, even to the end of time' (Matthew 28:20).

Yet another reason to say a big thank you to God this harvest.

See the Barnabas website for some other ideas that might be useful for this service:

- [Harvest - Seed confession](#)
- [A harvest psalm](#)