

Dear Friends

This Sunday is our Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday, when we remember God's provision for us in his creation. We remember that God is the maker and sustainer of all things, and we give thanks to him for his goodness.

I reflect that my last sabbatical, some six or seven years ago, was taken at a place called Bradwell on Sea, on the Essex coast. I was invited to be chaplain for three months to the Othona community, a Christian community situated near to the chapel, St Peter's in the Wall, founded by St Cedd when he sailed down from Northumbria to bring the gospel to the east of England. If you think that St Andrew's, Great Linford is an old church, think again. St Peter's in the Wall was founded in 654.

At Othona we seemed to be closer to nature, and closer to the harvest, than we are where we live now in Milton Keynes. The community at Othona is surrounded by wheat fields which would have been harvested in the early autumn, and the community grew much of their own fruit and vegetables. We ate and drank what the land provided, plenty of plums from the bountiful plum trees, and with apples from the orchard we enjoyed freshly squeezed apple juice made from the windfalls and consumed plenty of apple crumbles.

It was good to have that reminder of how much we rely on the produce of the land for our health and strength. And because the community wasn't connected up to mains electricity it relied for much of its power on a wind turbine, which seemed to zoom around even in the lightest of breezes. We were very careful about the amount of electricity that we used day to day.

With this talk of harvest I am reminded of the call of Jesus to his followers to bear fruit. Jesus says this: 'By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...' (John 15: 8, 16).

As Christians we are encouraged to be fruitful. Indeed, that's one of the marks of Christian discipleship - that we bear fruit and bring glory to God. So as we celebrate harvest this let's remind ourselves not only of the harvest of creation which we all enjoy, but the harvest of our own lives which will enrich the lives of other people and will bring glory to God. I plan to make my prayer each and every morning, 'Lord, show me how I can be fruitful today.' Will you make that your prayer as well?

With best wishes

Your friend and pastor

David