Harvest & the Feast of St Francis 2026 : from Fr.Mike.

‘Gathering the Gifts of Creation and the Gifts We Share.’

Harvest is one of the few moments in the church year when the land itself seems to speak. Long before we gather in church with baskets, tins, flowers, and produce, creation has been quietly at work: soil opening, roots reaching, rain falling, sun warming, life unfolding in patient rhythms older than any of us. Harvest is our annual reminder that we live within a world that is both **gifted** and **giving**.

But Harvest is not simply a celebration of abundance. It is a moment of **truth**. It asks us to look honestly at *how* we **receive**, *how* we **share**, and *how* we **care** for the earth that sustains all of us.

1. Harvest begins with gratitude — but gratitude must lead somewhere…

Gratitude is never passive. It’s not just a warm feeling or a polite nod to the season. True gratitude **changes us**. It reorders our priorities. It makes us **attentive** to the sources of our blessings and **mindful** of those who do not share them.

When we bring our Harvest gifts — food for the foodbank or the Community Fridge in our church porch, donations for those in need, produce from gardens and allotments — we are acknowledging something profound: that what we have ***is not ours alone***. It comes to us through the labour of others, the **generosity** of creation, and the **grace** of God.

Gratitude becomes generosity. Generosity becomes justice. Justice becomes hope.

This is the Harvest journey.

2. Harvest reminds us that creation is not simply a backdrop — it is a partner

As an **Eco Church**, we are learning to see creation not as scenery but as a living community in which we have responsibilities. The churchyard teaches us this every day. In the meadow where wildflowers seed, in the hedgerows where birds shelter, in the quiet corners where long grass stands until autumn, we see that creation flourishes when we allow it space, dignity, and care.

Harvest is the season when creation's voice is loudest. It tells us:

- that soil is not a resource to be exhausted but rather a living system to be nurtured
- that biodiversity is not decoration - it is the foundation of life
- that our choices — chemical-free management, composting, planting native species — are in reality, acts of **guardianship**
- that the earth responds to kindness with abundance.

In tending our churchyard, we are practising the same virtues Harvest calls for: **patience, attentiveness, restraint**, and **hope**.

And on this Feast of St Francis, we remember that Francis saw creation as **kin** — **brother sun, sister moon, brother fire, sister water**. He understood that creation is not an object, but a **relationship**. Harvest invites us to see the world with that same Franciscan **reverence**.

3. Harvest is about gathering — but also about releasing

The biblical pattern of Harvest is never "store up for yourself." It is always "share so that all may live." The 'gleaning' laws of the Old Testament required farmers to leave the edges of their fields unharvested so that the poor and the stranger could gather what they needed. God therefore built **generosity** into the very structure of agriculture.

In our context, the edges of the field might look like:

- the **extra** tins we bring for the foodbank
- the **donations** we make to support families in crisis
- the **time** we give to community projects
- the **care** we show in stewarding our land so future generations inherit a world still capable of flourishing. The key takeaway is this:

Harvest teaches us that abundance is not complete until it becomes blessing for others.

4. Harvest invites us to consider the gifts *we* are harvesting in ourselves

The season is not only about crops. It is about the fruits of the Spirit growing within us. What has God been cultivating in you this year?

Perhaps **patience,** born from a difficult season. Perhaps **compassion**, deepened by someone else's need. Perhaps **courage**, strengthened by a challenge you didn't expect. Perhaps **hope**, quietly renewed in the midst of uncertainty.

These are Harvest gifts too — gifts to be gathered, cherished, and shared.

Eco Church work often reveals them: the patience of waiting for a meadow to establish, the hope of planting trees whose shade we may never live to sit under, the courage of making choices that resist convenience in favour of **care**.

5. Harvest calls us to imagine a different kind of abundance

The world often measures abundance in terms of profit, productivity, and possession. But the Gospel measures abundance in terms of **relationship**, **justice**, and **shared flourishing.**

A churchyard **rich in biodiversity** is abundant. A community where **no one** goes hungry is abundant. A congregation that **shares its gifts freely** is abundant. A people who see creation as **sacred** are abundant.

Harvest invites us to choose this kind of abundance — the abundance that reflects the kingdom of God.

6. Harvest ends with a commissioning

We do not leave Harvest Sunday simply feeling thankful. We leave with a **calling**.

To tend the earth with reverence. To share our resources with generosity. To notice the quiet gifts God is growing within us. To sow kindness, justice, and hope in **every** season.

Our churchyard, with its zones of care and its rhythms of growth, becomes a living parable of this calling. It shows us that guardianship is not dramatic; it is **daily**. It is not

loud; it is **faithful**. It's never about control; it is about **cooperation with the God** who brings life from the soil.

So, as we celebrate Harvest — and honour St Francis, the saint who saw creation as family — may we gather not only the fruits of the *earth* but also gather the fruits of **grace**. And may we become, in our community and in our care for creation, people who truly help God's world to flourish. Amen.

(Fr. Mike, Harvest 2026)