



A Harvest Reflection by Rev'd Stella Mills, Associate Rural Chaplain October 2022

Here we are in autumn and what a year it has been so far. The war in Ukraine has lasted more than six months and seems to be going on for many more yet. Indeed, some of our farmers have ploughed the pastures and grown wheat, not just for better profit but to help feed the world both in human and livestock terms. This situation has influenced energy prices as those of us who use oil for heating will be able to testify in a very visible way. Electricity and gas are also affected, of course. We've also seen a new Prime Minister and a new Monarch on the passing of HM The Queen. King Charles III led the country in mourning in September and is now establishing himself as he copes with the red boxes and all the other matters of State. His work for the countryside and farming, in particular, is well known, especially through the work of charities such as *The Prince's Countryside Fund* which will continue to support projects in our beautiful rural landscapes.

In the midst of all this change, the weather brought us a drought, at least in many parts of England, so that farmers were using the winter feed to keep the milk flowing and their animals from going too hungry. Many of us will have wondered if we would have a harvest at all. But the rains have come and, just as in 1976 for those of us who can remember that year, the grass has become green again and farmers have been able to turn their animals out into the fields. In the midst of climate change and all the damage that humans over the past years have done to nature and the balance of its existence, a restorative power has worked to save us from destruction.

Christians believe that God in his creating power has made a world which is balanced and good for all nature, where each creature has its part to play in keeping that balance. But in God's gracious wisdom, the rain has fallen and the sunshine given warmth (or heat as in this summer!) to produce the harvest. Of course, some crops have been lost because of the drought and some farmers will be concerned about feeding their animals this winter but autumn is the time to stop and say thank you to God for all his goodness in bringing crops to fruition and food to our tables. We are grateful to farmers and horticulturalists across the world for food which is readily available on our supermarket shelves. But we acknowledge the part that God has done in bringing growth to the seeds we sowed earlier in the year and for bringing healthy livestock which have fed our tables and produced stock for continuing growth and future harvesting.

The Bible has many stories based around farming but perhaps one of the most famous is that of Noah and the Flood. Noah built a boat in response to God's destruction of the earth which was overcome with water, and Noah, in obeying God, was saved from the Flood. When God restored the earth, he made a promise that while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease (Genesis 8:22). These words have been set to music and often open a harvest thanksgiving today to remind us of God's goodness to us. However we may be feeling this harvest, God will keep his promise that our ploughing, sowing, reaping and binding will produce a harvest which will feed us and our livestock when we work together in sharing his goodness to us. Our God is generous in giving; may we be generous in sharing our harvest and in giving thanks to God for his protection and care.

