

+WEEKLY REFLECTION

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The Harvest is now!

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9.37)

Living in a very rural area of mainly farmland and small villages means that this gospel passage resonates with me, especially as a greater proportion of my parishioners are farmers.

However, our actual harvests are less about cereal crops and more about lamb and beef alongside grass silage to feed livestock through the winter months.

A good 'harvest' for us is the safe delivery of lambs and calves and dry enough weather to 'get the grass cut'. 'Harvest' is an ongoing and never-ending cycle of hard work, ensuring that all opportunities of harvesting the 'produce' are taken. Lambing and calving happen when they happen, they cannot be put off, nor can you afford to overlook the promise of a spell of dry weather to get the grass cut.

This is a little like the Kingdom of God. Jesus could see the great 'harvest' before him of desperate people needing a shepherd to care for them, bind up their wounds and to 'feed' them. Without a shepherd the sheep who have escaped the fold become lost, or separated from the flock, and will remain 'harassed and helpless' (Matthew 9.36) like the crowds that flocked to Jesus in need of his compassion.

Like farming when all hands are required to bring in the crops or to deliver the lambs, Jesus needs all hands-on deck to help 'harvest souls' and there is an urgency with this. We 'the church' cannot delay in putting ourselves 'to the plough'; joining in with God's Mission of prayer, being a Christian presence, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ who forgave us our sins and persuading people of the power of the Cross and the gift of eternal life.

So the harvest is Now! Yes, we need more 'labourers' but God is answering our prayers as we hear of people returning to church, or coming for the first time, or buying a Bible to read.

This is happening now, in our parishes, and as the Rural Renewal Officer for the Diocese as well as a rural parish Priest I am seeing and hearing about these green shoots of growth and renewal.

We therefore give thanks to the Lord of the Harvest for this growing spiritual hunger and readiness of people willing to seek out and to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, Amen

Rev Karen Herschell, Rector of Hodder Valley and Diocesan Rural Renewal Officer