

Harvest 2023



HIDDEN TREASURES

Make time this harvest season to reflect on the treasures around you and pray for the Holy Spirit to help us think and act differently – for the good of all.

Thank you for joining with CUF in prayer, reflection and action this harvest season. You can use this resource pack with your church community, at home with your family or as an individual. It can be used at any time during harvest, or whenever you feel called to reflect on how Jesus is calling you to participate in His transforming work in our lives and communities.

We've provided a scripture reading, reflection, questions for reflection and discussion and intercessions. These can be adapted to suit your context, whether as part of a church service, with a small group or at home. You can ask one person to lead the service or invite a few people to take part in the reading and intercessions.

We've also provided an optional all-age activity that you can use as part of your service or at another time.



You will need:

- Copies of the reading and intercessions if inviting others to participate.
- Instructions sheet and equipment for optional activity (see activity instructions)

Scripture Reading

John 2: 1-10 (NRSV)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them,

"Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the person in charge of the banquet." So they took it.

When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."

Reflection

The harvest season is a great opportunity to reflect on God's provision for us and God's blessing for others. It can help us practice gratitude, even in difficult times, and connect us with the Lord who is here, whose Spirit is with us and works through us. It can also help us think about the treasures that are around us.

In this reading from John's Gospel, Jesus, his mother Mary, and his disciples attend a wedding in the village of Cana. At this time, weddings lasted for days, and hospitality was a sacred duty. Mary notices that the wine has run out. To run out of wine was not just an inconvenience but would be a cause of shame in the community, which could last for many years. Mary has discerned what is happening and wants to do all that she can to help.

The huge stone water jars nearby hold 20-30 gallons of water each, and Jesus asks the servants to fill them to the brim with water and then serve some to the person in charge of the banquet. The water had become wine and, as we read, the person was amazed at the quality of the wine: "But you have kept the good wine until now."

If we read the story carefully, we notice that Jesus did not perform this miracle alone. Mary

identified that the wine had run out, "They have no wine." And she put her trust and faith in Jesus, "Do whatever he tells you." Then, the servants poured the new wine for others to enjoy – not just any wine, but the best wine.

This story is about transformation. It's about living and thinking differently about the gifts God has given us and using them to make a difference. When we encounter problems to be fixed, can we see them instead as an opportunity for transformation, a calling to something new?

The best wine was created from gifts that were already in the room but were initially overlooked. It required looking around the environment, discerning what was useful, and using items for a purpose that was greater than the sum of their parts. What hidden treasures are in your community? Where can you identify need, and what will you use to fill it?

We can have a part to play in Jesus' transforming work too. Sometimes we need to step up like Mary and identify what has run dry – even if we don't know how to fill it up. Sometimes we need to be servants to fill the jars and to carry and pour the new

Reflection (continued)

wine, sharing goodness and helping others to participate. Through all this, we need to put our trust and faith in Jesus, asking him to show us our jars of water, the gifts we might have overlooked.

This harvest, we encourage you to reflect

on the part Jesus is calling you to play in His transforming work. When has the wine run out for your community? The wine of justice and equality, hospitality and welcome? Where are our jars of water? The gifts that already exist; the potential for change that is already at hand but overlooked and unlikely?

Optional questions for discussion

- How is Jesus calling to you join in with what God is doing in your community?
- In what ways has the wine run out in your community?
- What treasures does your community have? What good things has God provided in your community, that might be overlooked? You could use the mapping activity included in this pack to extend this time of discussion.

Prayers

Invite people to pray for your community silently or out loud. Or use these words as a focus for intercession:

Thank God for his presence which brings light and hope to everything it touches. Pray that he would help your church take steps to be more physically and relationally present in your parish/local area.

Thank God for all the people and gifts he has given in your church and community to grow good. Pray that the social action initiatives in your church might be both an entry point and a discipleship opportunity for those who participate.

Pray that God will give you fresh vision to see the problems that exist in your community, and the grace to look through his eyes to see the things that are already existing in your community, the treasures, that you can use to help meet the needs of people.



Optional activity:

Can you see your jars of water? (an activity for all ages)

Do a mapping activity can help to identify the strengths and the needs in your community.

This can then lead into prayer and action as you name the good things, consider where you can develop new connections, and work with your community to make a difference.

You will need:

- A large map* of your parish/area or large piece of paper if drawing your own map
- Different coloured pens
- Stickers or small post-it notes

*You can find CofE parish maps from www.achurchnearyou.com. For more information about your local area try www.streetcheck.co.uk

Gather people round a large map of your parish/local area, or challenge people to draw their own.

As a group, mark with stickers, dots or drawings:

1. The building where your church meets and other places of worship.
2. Where your church members live.
3. Local institutions and places such as pubs, schools, parks, community centres, sports clubs or arts venues.
4. Local services such as GP surgeries, hospitals and shops.
5. Local employers and businesses.
6. Transport links – stations, bus stops, cycle paths etc.

Chat about what you notice:

- What are the best things about your area?
- Where are the places that people meet and connect with each other?
- What's missing from your area?
- What are the reasons for people to come to your area?
- How could you develop connections with other institutions or organisations.
- How can you support initiatives that already exist?

Take some time together to thank God for all the good things about your local area, pray that your community would flourish and that ask God to show you where you can make a difference.

WANT TO TAKE THIS WORK FURTHER?

You can use the Presence session from our free Growing Good toolkit, and help your church be an active and visible presence in your community.

www.growing-good.org.uk/presence