

**Harvest Thanksgiving  
Cashmere Presbyterian  
Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Rev Hamish Galloway**

**Celebrating Abundant Diversity**

**Text:** Exodus 23:16

“Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first-fruits of the crops you sow in your field.  
Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the  
field.”  
(Exodus 23:16)

**Explore** a basket of harvest fruits from a garden!

**Introduction**

This week past Pope Francis travelled to the birthplace of Abraham, the ancient site of the city of Ur, now in present day Iraq. He met there with leaders of Islam and Judaism – 3 great religions who all trace their origins back to Abraham. In a place so recently torn apart by violence, some of it religiously motivated, it was a palpable call for peace and understanding, working on what we have in common for the sake of our common human condition!

One of those things we have in common is *Thanksgiving* for the harvest. All 3 religions have this common bond. For Christianity and Judaism, it goes back to passages like Exodus 23:16

*“Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field.*

*“Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.*

In Judaism this is called the Feast of Tabernacles. I was in Jerusalem for this festival in October 2009! It is a 7 day holiday. Part of their celebration is the building of temporary dwelling of booths that reminded them of 2 things:

- a) The temporary dwelling farmers would live in at the time of harvest, and
- b) The fragile temporary dwelling of the 40 years in the desert during the Exodus!

I invite the children to make a hut! A temporary dwelling up the front here.

One of the wonderful things is the way in which this has taken on diverse expression in the many cultures of the world! I think of the passages in Genesis 18 and 22 that speak of Abraham as being a blessing to all nations. Certainly this common thread of thanksgiving for the harvest is one wonderful way this is expressed, century after century, culture after culture.

This simple concept has been spiced up through cultural lens!

*Spiced! Up!* We will do a little exercise where the children are divided into 2 teams, the church into 2 sides, and the children will be given spices to describe to their side of the church to guess!

Let’s explore this through the lens not only of culture but also of seasons:

**1. Spring Time**

The seeds are sown, hopes of a good crop are high! Is this my favourite time of year?

Let us pray a prayer of hope.  
Let us sing All Things Bright and Beautiful!

## 2. Summer Time

Things are growing! It is hot. Water is needed.

Listen to this reading about water: John 4

A prayer of thanksgiving for water for our gardens and our souls *and* intercession for places suffering baren dryness.

## 3. Autumn Time

The harvest! Is this my favourite time! Seems that there is much to celebrate:

Let's celebrate all the diverse cultural ways we do this!

In the church today we have thanksgiving offerings with a variety of cultural perspectives to explore!

And here are some interesting facts about thanksgiving from cultural backgrounds represented in our church (from the website [harvestfestivals.net](http://harvestfestivals.net))

### i. Scottish Harvest Festival

In Scotland they celebrate the harvest festival known as "**Lammas**" meaning loaf mass. A loaf of bread is made from the first wheat that is cut. This is then taken to church for which the bread is eaten for the Mass.

In the Scotland Isles they have the festival after the men have come back from the deep-sea fishing.

Also in Scotland they hold a festival known as **St. Michael's Mass** or **Michaelmas** and it is held on September 29. Fairs with markets and games, especially horseracing are associated. It is associated with the color gold, all the harvest colors, the harvest and bounty of the land, and the sacred king

### ii. Dutch Harvest Festival

Dutch Catholics celebrate the **Feast of Saint Martin of Tours** or as it is also known as **Martinmas**, held on November 11. This feast was held to honor the Hungarian saint who, as legend goes, hid in a barn when he heard he had been appointed a bishop and believed he did not earn such an honor. A honking goose as legend goes was to reveal his hiding place, so roast goose became a traditional dish for **Martinmas** feast, along with wine made from the grape harvest.

### iii. German Harvest Festival

In Germany the **Erntedanktag** is an official holiday. Harvest Festivals are celebrated in churches and market places, in homes and dance halls. Religious holiday traditions are a part of the local culture and are enjoyed by the whole community.

The German Erntedankfest is primarily a rural and a religious celebration. When it is celebrated in larger cities, it is usually part of a church service.

Erntedankfest is often celebrated on the first Sunday in October, which is usually also the first Sunday following Michaelstag or Michaelmas which is 29 Sept, but, various locales may give thanks at different times during September and October.

Erntedankfest is not a big day of family get-togethers and feasting, but, there are some turkey substitutes, usually so-called Masthühnchen, or chickens bred to be fattened up for more meat. Der Kapaun is a castrated rooster that is fed until he's heavier than the average rooster. Die Poularde is the hen equivalent, a sterilized pullet that is also fattened up.

A "harvest crown" or **Erntekrone** is formed of ears of grain, flowers and fruit is taken to church in solemn procession. Mostly the celebration includes the blessing of gifts, a parish celebration and/or morning drinking festivals also known as **Frühschoppen**.

### iv. Korean Harvest Festival

The 15th day of the eighth lunar month is Ch'usok, or also known as the Harvest Moon Festival.

Koreans begin the day with rites honoring their ancestors. Offerings are made of newly harvested foods. [Songp'yon](#), crescent-shaped rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds, chestnut paste or beans, are a Ch'usok favorite.

Families visit the graves of their ancestors to bow and clean the area for the coming winter. Activities for the day include masked dance, Kanggangsullae, an ancient circle dance, tug-of-war game and the tortoise game, kobuk-nori, in which two men dress as a tortoise and tour the village dancing and performing for food and drink.

Most of all, Ch'usok is a time to give thanks for the autumn harvest and reaffirm familial and community ties.

Thanksgiving in Korea people have Ttok (rice cakes) made with the newly harvested rice, and just-picked fruits and nuts such as persimmons, chestnuts, and Chinese dates are used in memorial services for ancestors when Koreans visit their ancestors' graves. Special foods eaten during Ch'usok are songp'yon, freshly picked fruit, toran-t'ang (taro soup) and song-i (mushrooms).

Chu Suk is a Korean Festival that takes place during the harvest season.

Families travel to their ancestral sites. Memorial services take place and visits of respect are made to the grave site of ancestors. After the Memorial services, there is a special meal to celebrate and be thankful for each other.

The night before Chu Suk is the time for Kang Kang Sue Wol Lae. Kang Kang Sue Wol Lae is a traditional ceremony where women gather in a circle and sing songs.

Other activities that take place during Chu Suk are wrestling, archery, singing folk music, and a game called turtle tag.

Altogether, Chu Suk is a time of feasting and happiness.

#### **v. India**

In our congregation we have the Porten family who come from Southern India and worshipped there in a lovely church Holy Trinity Cathedral Kottayam. Kevin writes of their festival:

Back in India, harvest thanksgiving is a full Sunday festival.

Starts with Holy communion service in which the highlight will be a fruit-vegetable basket (resembling the first harvest) which will be processed in and out by the assistant vicar during the start and end of service. It will be blessed by priest during the service.

Soon after the service a flag will be hoisted which marks the start of harvest festival.

Next will be breakfast arrange by church committee for all after the service.

After that, there will be lots of counters arranged along the church internal roads by Church members/fellowships/groups and the money earned through these counters will go to Church account. Counters include different games for kids and elders where for each game you need to pay a small money, food stalls (by different fellowships in church where homemade food will be live cooked and sold) and a special counter for auction.

Auction counter is the highlight where all Church members will bring their first harvest or any kind of stuffs from home which will be auctioned off. The fruit-veg basket which was blessed by the vicar during the service will be the first item to be auctioned and will be called off by someone for the highest price usually. Priest will lead the auction for this particular fruit-veg basket.

Lunch and dinner will be available for all at a nominal price and the day ends with a musical concert.

In addition, there will be different races (cycle slow race, lemon spoon race, running), games like football and various competitions including singing, drawing, bible quiz which will keep all age people engaged.

There will be housie going on every hour from start of the day until end with a grand lucky dip with 3 mega prizes. Each family will receive a lucky dip ticket book (almost one month before the harvest festival) consisting of 20 tickets which has to sold to church members or public.

Harvest Thanksgiving is a day in the calendar year when we church members used to catch up with lots of fun and food. Miss those times.

All revenue out of the harvest festival will comes to church account in the end and will be utilized for several charity works. Average collection of the day will be around 15,000 to 20,000 NZD.

#### **4. And then there is Winter!**

Hopefully the food from the harvest can sustain the cold, barren months. There are infamous examples through history where people starved because of failed harvest.

A prayer of intercession for places where food is scarce.