

## **Harvest Family Service**

### **Outline:**

*The aim of this service is to both celebrate the Harvest and the abundance we are blessed with, and to also consider how we use our blessings to help others. We will look specifically at compassion / mercy and how each person, no matter how old or how young can show true compassion to those around us.*

*Focussing on the story of the Good Samaritan we will wonder together about the message Jesus was teaching and how it applies to our lives today.*

*Feel free to edit and use this service in whatever way suits your situation. It can also be altered to use as a school assembly.*

### **Set up:**

#### ***Compassion / Mercy tree***

*Before the service you can create your compassion / mercy tree – this can be made by placing large sticks into a pot filled with sand so they stand up – or clay / plasticine. Leaves will then be hung on the branches loosely with string. Alternatively you could draw a tree onto a large flipchart sized piece of paper and have the leaves stuck on with blue tack so they can easily be removed.*

*Cut out leaf shapes roughly the size of your hand so that they are large enough to write on. Use different coloured card / sugar paper.*

*Think of a range of different needs in your community where families can show mercy / compassion.*

*Examples include:*

- *Buying food shopping and donating it to a family in need or to a local food bank.*
- *Offering to babysit for free for a couple that needs to spend time together.*
- *Offering to walk a dog for a person who is ill or unable to get out.*
- *Offering to tidy someone's garden – rake up leaves etc – for free.*

*Make sure you have plenty of pens / markers for each family to use so they can write their own acts of compassion.*



## Sensory farm in a tub

*When asking the questions about what harvest is children will often feel more confident to answer whilst playing rather than being put on the spot with nothing tangible to give them context. It also helps their general concentration and ability to absorb the message.*

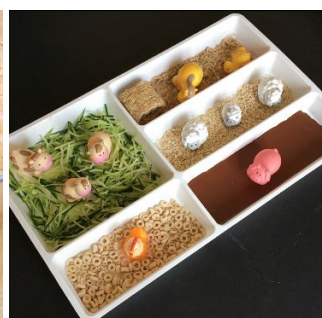
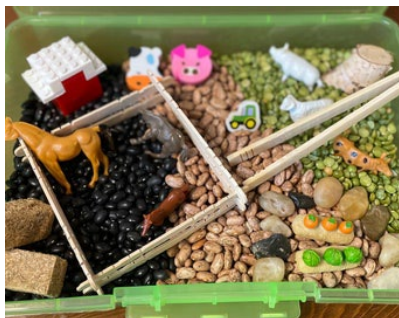
*If you have space you might like to set up some farm tubs on a plastic matt at the front of the church and invite the younger members (roughly those aged 3-5 and any neurodiverse children who benefit from sensory play) to play during the service. Alternatively you could do mini farms which children can take to their pew / seats.*

### **Ideas for the tub:**

*Mini- farm in the pews: Shoe box. Clean plastic Ice Cream Tub. Cutlery tray.*

*Contents:*

- *Dried peas / beans / rice. As below you could die rice green for the grass*
- *Toy farm animals and tractors.*
- *Twigs, stones etc*
- *Wheatabix for haybales.*
- *Shredded paper or straw.*



## **Introduction:**

*Welcome the families to your service. Invite them to look around the church and notice any Harvest decorations / displays you have and how beautiful they are.*

*Ask the children if they can tell you what has been happening on the farms during the summer.*

*Can they tell you what this time is called in the farming calendar?*

*You might want to give a BRIEF(!) outline of the history of harvest celebrations in Ireland and what some of the old traditions were – corn dollys etc.*

*Ask if anyone says “grace” or a prayer of thanks before they eat their meals each day?*

*Explain that during this service we are saying a big “grace” if you like – we are taking time to give thanks to God for the harvest, for all the food that has been grown and gathered this year, for all the abundance we have in this country. For the good weather, the rain and the sunshine, the grass and the animals.*

## **Worship**

There are many songs you could choose for giving thanks,

From the traditional:

*We plough the fields and scatter*

*Morning has broken*

*We see the fruitful harvest*

To the modern

*Lord of the Harvest* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fM81ATTfVJw>

*Creation Sings* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf8xKiC1dq0>

*Freely we have received:* <https://youtu.be/upv9S5h-jvo>

## **Read**

You can either read direct from the Bible – or ask one of the older Children to read – or you might want to read the story of the “Kind Stranger” from the Lion Storyteller Bible. If you want to use a video to re-tell the story, Saddleback kids have a good version on Youtube but we would encourage you to read the story from the Bible first.

Saddleback cartoon of the good Samaritan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osfQg4yKtq8>

### **Luke 10 v 25 – 37 (MEV)**

<sup>25</sup> Now, a lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?”

<sup>27</sup> He answered, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind’<sup>[a]</sup> and ‘your neighbour as yourself.’<sup>[b]</sup>”

<sup>28</sup> He said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> By chance a priest came down that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to that place, looked at him and passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, <sup>34</sup> and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Then he set him on his own donkey and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day when he departed, he took out two denarii<sup>[c]</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, ‘Take care of him. I will repay you whatever else you spend when I return.’

<sup>36</sup> “Now which of these three do you think was a neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?”

<sup>37</sup> He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

## **Talk:**

Who loves stories?

Call out to me some of your favourite stories or books.

Some great stories there. What is it about that story that makes it your favourite? Is it because it's exciting? Is it because there's a puzzle in it that you have to solve? Is it because it makes you think and gets your brain working?

Stories are amazing, they can challenge us, help us to learn new things and even make us feel some big emotions.

Jesus told many stories and we can find many of them in the Bible. One of the most famous stories is the one we just heard – the story of the Good Samaritan. Who's heard that story before? It's a story that Jesus used to help us to learn more about what is important to God and how we should live our lives.

The first point Jesus made was that we should Love God first with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. This means that God comes first in our life – before TV, Play stations, X-boxes, before soccer, before rugby, before food – even chocolate!!

Then we come to the second point Jesus wanted us to learn, and for this he knew we needed a bit more help understanding what he meant, which is why he told the story.

We heard how three different people came across a Jewish man who had been attacked. Now keep in mind this man was in a very bad way – he was been bleeding, his clothes had been ripped and he would have been covered in dirt. It was clear from the way he looked that he was desperate for help. He wasn't the sort of fella you would walk past and think "ah sure he'll be grand".

However two of the people in the story did exactly that – they walked past him, did nothing to help.

The first person to pass by was a priest - someone who you'd think would be exactly the sort to help. But no, not only did he not help, he actually walked over to the other side of the road to avoid him

I wonder why he did that? I wonder what thoughts were going through his mind?

*(allow time to let minds wonder about this – you're not gathering answers, just wondering together)*

The second person to come along also worked in the Temple, so again you'd think they were the sort who would surely try and help.

But no. This man also did all he could to avoid the injured man.

I wonder why. I wonder if he saw the priest cross to the other side of the road before he got there?

I wonder how he felt after he walked away?

So, as we know then a third person came along. A person who came from a different group of people, the Samaritans, who were a group who did not like the Jewish people.

If anything you would think this man, the Samaritan, might even have been glad to see the Jewish man in such a bad way. But no – the Samaritan put aside all the things he'd grown up with – the bad attitudes, the prejudices and anger – and the Bible tells us he felt compassion towards the man who was attacked.

That's a big word isn't it - compassion? Who can tell me - what do you think it means?

Sometimes it can be fun to look at a word in a different language. When it comes to the Bible we often look to see what our English words mean when they are written in the Greek language, because sometimes English words can be too simple and miss the full meaning. The Greek language gives us a much clearer idea of how the word was used in that part of the Bible.

So, the word compassion when we look at it in the Greek language is an even bigger word that's even harder to say!

σπλαγχνίζομαι (pronounced: splangkh-nid'-zom-ahee) which means to be moved in your inner parts – the bowels, stomach, all the bits in your tummy!

You know when you are really nervous about something we often say we've got butterflies in our tummy – we don't really do we! It's just that sometimes when our feelings are really big it can make our tummy feel wobbly.

So when Jesus said the Samaritan felt compassion he was saying he had big feelings he couldn't ignore. He felt deeply in his very own body the pain this man was feeling and knew he had to do something to help.

Often when this story is told we talk about who are neighbour is. But I want us today, especially as we think about our Harvest, to think about what sort of neighbour WE are.

When Jesus finished the story he asked the crowd who the real neighbour was – the answer that came back was "the one who showed mercy."



Mercy - that's another funny word isn't it. What do you think it means?

Well, again if we go to the Greek language it really helps us to understand a deeper meaning of the word.

Mercy in Greek is ἔλεος (pronounced: eleos) which means compassion displayed through ACTION.

You see in this story Jesus never told us what the priest and the other man who crossed over the road, were thinking or how they felt. Maybe they did feel bad for the man who'd been attacked but were worried that if they helped it would cost them money, or make them late for something. Maybe they even said a prayer for him as they crossed the road. We don't really know.

Have you ever been in a car when it's broken down? It's not nice is it – how often does it happen when it's raining too?!

At times we might see a person on the motorway or side of the road whose car has broken down, and many of us will think "ah poor fella, I know how that feels". As we look at them we can imagine what they are going through and we feel the same emotions as they probably are feeling. And yet more often than not, despite feeling bad for them we carry on driving past. Our empathy – feeling bad for them – doesn't actually help them does it?

When the crowd answered the good neighbour was the one who showed mercy (compassion displayed through action) what was Jesus' response? Did he say "yes – wasn't he a good guy, wasn't that a nice ending to the story?!"

No, Jesus said "now go and DO the same!"

We are called by God to love those around us as much as we love ourselves. That's something very easy to say but not always easy to do. When we see the reports on the news about other countries who are experiencing famine, floods, war, many times we think to ourselves "that's awful, I feel really bad for them" but so often we get up, make ourselves a drink and forget about it. We are called by God to DO more – to pray first and foremost – but to look for ways that we can put our compassion into action.

When we look at all the food we are blessed with in this country, the safe community we live in, the homes we have and all the beauty of nature around us, we are not to just sit back and say "thank God you for everything." Although that is important. More than that we are called to share our blessings, to find ways help those around us. Especially those who have greater needs than us.

So with that in mind, we are going to do something different this Harvest time.





You will have noticed our tree here – this is our compassion, or mercy tree. Now given that we're now heading into Autumn we know the leaves on the trees are starting to fall. So, we would like you to come up either as a family or as an individual and pick a leaf from the tree.

Some of the leaves have suggestions of ways you can show compassion in our community, ways you can help those around you. Other leaves are blank - on these leaves we invite you to write your own acts of mercy, a way that you will commit to help those around you.

It might be a neighbour who you can help with buying shopping, it might be spending some of your time off with a person you know is lonely, it might be offering to baby sit for free to help a family you know. At school it might be that you become friends with the new boy or girl, or playing with the person no-one else will play with.

It could be that you will do a shop and donate the food to a local food bank, or raise money to help a local charity, or share your home with a family who've escaped the war in Ukraine.

You can give money to the Bishop's Appeal who are working with organisations in many countries to provide food, accommodation and support.

There are so many ways you can show compassion and mercy, if you struggle to think of one, ask God to show you opportunities in your life – but be ready, He will!

### **Prayer:**

Lord of the Harvest, we give you praise and thanks for the abundance of our world.

For crops that grew well, for animals that have thrived, for clean water to drink.

Help us Lord not to take these blessings for granted.

May we take seriously your command to care for the earth and your creation.

We want to follow your commands to love you first and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Open our eyes Lord to the needs of those around us and show us how we can help.

As we make these commitments to show mercy and compassion to others help us to not forget that it is you who sustains us.

May we learn to trust you more.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.