

Commitment for **Life**



Commitment for Life

HARVEST SERVICE

2023

Welcome!

LOVE IN ACTION!

Dear Commitment for Life Supporters

Thank you for sharing this Service of Worship resource for harvest. Please feel free to use as much or as little as you need, and to change things to suit your context.

Jesus often shared meals and enjoyed doing so. Harvest time is or at least ought to be a joyful time of sharing! If nothing else, have fun during your service so that you encourage an atmosphere of celebration and thankfulness for God's free gifts of bread and wine... and everything from bananas to papayas.

Our theme is 'Love in Action' and we want to focus our attention on Zimbabwe given that Kevin has just returned from his visit to that wonderful country. We invite you to pray, listen and think about how we can offer our love in action for that beloved region of the world.





EXPLANATION

- ✓ We hope you find what you need for your Harvest service, like pictures, prayers, sermon ideas, and hymn suggestions. There is a vague Order of Service, treat it as a mere suggestion.
- ✓ You may wish to place CfL giving envelopes in the pews, but the act of giving money is not the service highlight. Rather, we emphasise Love in Action through the myriad creative ways of the Spirit!
- ✓ Why not host a meal as Love in Action? What a great way to celebrate this year's harvest. And if you ensure that **Fairtrade** products are visibly purchased and used, you are already demonstrating Love in Action without even saying a word.



Contact suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk if you need resources to make the service more interactive

Call to Worship

WELCOME!

'And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands!' declares the prophet in Isaiah 55.

Well, if there is one time of the year that even the mighty Baobab rejoices, then surely that time is harvest.

Welcome to our Commitment for Life service of worship! Isaiah 55 is our call to worship

Followed by an opening hymn of your choice - see selection below



Hey! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come and buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?...

For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.



WORSHIP GOD!

How to be Love in Action
with Commitment for Life

Why is Sharing so Important?
with Jesus of Nazareth

Love in Action during Harvest
Lessons from Zimbabwe



Opening Prayer

God of all Love in Action, we come together in joy. We thank you for the abundance of your provision. We have gathered in so many gifts this year that you have freely given. We have been blessed, and we celebrate and praise you for all the gifts you have shared. We desire earnestly to thank and bless you through the way that we respond to the needs that we see in our world, in Jesus' name. Help us to open our hearts to the Word, in scripture and in the stories of love and grace that we share today. Amen.



For children

ALL AGE ACTIVITY

Props in bag: balloon, invitations, cake, decorations, present etc.

Have you thrown a party? What do you need for a party? (Take suggestions from the children/congregation. Take out of your bag items when they are suggested and if necessary, get some children up to hold the items.)

You also need people for a party. Show an invitation. Who would you invite to your party? Your best friends? the most popular kids in your class? Those who are well behaved and who are well dressed? Or those who never seem to be invited to parties?

How do you feel, when people you have invited decline the invitation and give you an excuse for not wanting to attend! Or at the last minute no one you invited shows up?

When we have a party or plan a special event, we usually only send out one invitation to each person we want to invite. In Jesus' time, people would send out two invites. The first was to tell everyone about the event and that they were invited. The second to tell them that everything was ready and that it was time for them to come.



Jesus told a story about a man who planned an amazing party with lots of delicious food. But when the party was about to start, all the people that he had invited started to make excuses and said they could not come. The man was very upset, but he did not want his amazing party to go to waste, so he invited those people who were hungry, or living on the streets, or had disabilities, or were excluded from society all because they did not fit in.

Through this story, Jesus encourages us to live our lives differently. We should be different. We should say No! when we see people hungry, or left out, or made to feel small. We should not make excuses and forget God's wonderful invitation to share our lives with Jesus. When that happens, then no one will be left out. No one will go hungry. God is generous and at harvest, we celebrate all the good things that God has provided. At the same time, we work for a world where no person is exploited or excluded ever again.

Next time you throw a party, or hold a celebration why not show God's love in action by inviting those who do not usually get invited!

Song suggestion:

· **Love in Action** by Nick and Becky Drake

<https://youtu.be/zx8Z5bEyHVE>





WHAT IS COMMITMENT FOR LIFE?

Commitment for Life is the global justice programme of the United Reformed Church. we work closely with our partners, Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Through Commitment for Life all of us here today can be faithful to God's call to work for justice in three regions of the world: Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Today's service focuses our attention on Zimbabwe and we'll hear from Kevin Snyman from the Mission Team at church House who recently visited a few of our country programmes in the region.

[You might wish to include a Hymn around here - see suggestions](#)



contact us at
commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk

Kevin & Suzanne

GET IN TOUCH

SERMON THOUGHTS



There is a story doing the rounds on Facebook: just imagine if a monkey, it goes, found a huge bunch of bananas, and then refused to share them, but instead started hoarding as many of those bananas as it could! You can be sure that the vets would be falling over themselves to find out what was wrong with the poor, deranged creature. But when a human being hoards all their wealth, economists put their picture on the cover of Forbes magazine!

It may be useful to begin by outlining the way that we see God's economy operating in the Bible: throughout scripture we read that God operates through abundance and free sharing, along with the warning against bulking up bananas in ever bigger and better barns (alliteration intended).

Kevin Snyman, the URC Church House Programme Officer (here you could use your own experience of similar) recently travelled to Zimbabwe to visit some of our CfL partners. He reports that wherever he went, especially in very rural areas, he was offered food. Often, he would find that he was treated as the treasured guest, and a chicken might be slaughtered in his honour. He would be given the best bits to eat, like the feet and the entrails. Chicken feet are very tasty, if a little crunchy (with apologies to our vegetarian members).



SERMON THOUGHTS



In many ways, these rural communities operate within God's economy. They share what they have without asking for money. Imagine you are invited to your mum's home for a meal, and at the end she gives you a slip of paper that says, you owe me twenty quid for the meal! If mum would not do that to us, how much less would God expect payment for all the gifts God provides!

Kevin arrived at a Christian Aid project deep in the rural parts of Mutoko and interviewed the headman who oversaw the farming project that Commitment for Life has been supporting for some time. "We have everything we need here," he told us. "I do not need to go into the village to buy anything if I don't want to. God provides all we need right here." Part of the reason why this community is so self-sufficient is because of understanding how God works in each environmental context. Christian Aid assisted them with farming techniques that suited their dry conditions. The 'no-plough' method sees farmers dig small holes with a stick in which they plant a seed. This small hole collects and holds water far more efficiently than ploughed fields. In addition, the underground ecology is not disturbed. The mycelium network, bugs and worms all work together to improve the health of the soil. The corn and vegetables and lemons and papayas harvested are incredibly robust and healthy and tasty and nutritious. The community was so happy to share the fruits of their bumper Zimbabwe harvest with us!



SERMON THOUGHTS



In a close by region in Mutoko, Kevin saw how indigenous plants were carefully identified, selected, harvested, and ground up into animal feed. This method of relying on naturally-growing species rather than on imported grasses and feeds, means that farming is far less destructive, and the environment is able to cope very well with the livestock.

We could learn so much from Zimbabwe here in the UK! How can we make our farming and food production more organic, more natural, and less reliant on the mechanised, fossil fuel-driven techniques? How can we arrange our food production and distribution so that those who are at most at risk in society can all share in God's abundance?

This is the image of love in action that Jesus offers in Luke 14. God is impatient with those who have so much already that they poo-poo the idea of sharing in God's feast. They have so much else going on, why should they rely on God? The irony is that if God decides even for one year to stop the rain or the sun, that even the wealthy would starve. Every one of us depends for our lives on God's economy of abundance and free gifts, even though we sometimes forget. We wonder then why we find it so easy to blame the poor for their poverty? Why do many fall so easily for scapegoating and finger pointing? Is this an unconscious way that some justify their wealth in the face of such great need?



SERMON THOUGHTS



Jesus teaches us that the hungry should be fed, that food is a gift from God, that eating together connects us to one another, to the land, and to God, and that eating is an act of caring for one another and for the earth.

This harvest, let us celebrate abundance. Let's trust it. Let's no longer be those who lack faith and generosity with the harvest we have gathered. We are called to share. We are called to invite those who have the least to come and share in our meal, without imposing costs and conditions. This is the vision of the coming Kingdom where money is no longer needed, where everything in God's creation belongs to every creature equally, and we humans take only what we need for our daily bread.

Let this then be our love in action, to share God's abundance with our neighbour in need, and work for a world where there is no such thing as poverty or wealth, only abundance to be shared for free.

Hymn here and/ or Questions in Groups

- 1) Have you ever travelled to an African country? Please share that with two or three people around you (not family.)
- 2) What are some of the ways that you do or could work to address poverty in the world?



Prayers of Intercession

PRAY!

Add your Intercessory Prayers here followed by Final Hymn, and Benediction

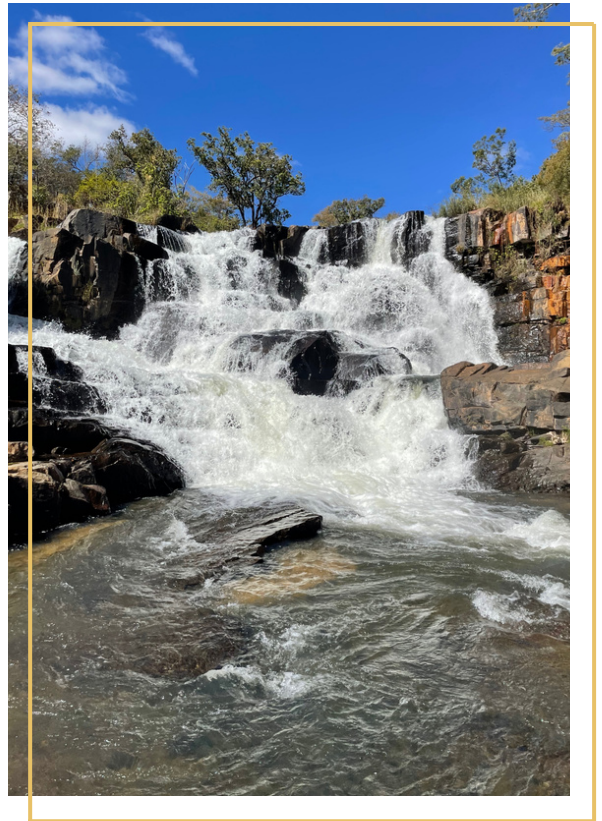
Hymn Suggestions

Rejoice & Sing

40 Come, you thankful people, come
41 for the beauty of the earth
42 For the fruits of all creation
124 We plough the fields and scatter
415 You shall go out with joy
474 Brother, sister, let me serve you
477 Let there be love
567 Thy hand, O God has guided
620 For the healing of the nations

Singing the Faith

35 The trumpets sound (the feast is ready)
102 For the beauty of the earth
123 Come, you thankful people, come
124 For the fruits of all creation
126 Praise God for harvest of orchard
130 We plough the fields and scatter
401 Come, sinners, to the gospel feast
487 You shall go out with joy
611 Brother, sister, let me serve you
615 Let love be real, in giving and receiving
663 I the Lord of sea and sky



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

God of ABUNDANCE!!!

come and eat for free!

Why is Generosity Important?

with Commitment for Life