

***Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 3rd October 2021***



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘Then He took the children in his arms and placed His hands on their heads and blessed them.’ (Mark 10: 16)

How have you been managing as the shortage of road haulage drivers affects food on our shelves, fuel for our cars and facilitated support such as carers, school and hospital staff not being able to maintain the important functions they provide for our communities? We have been praying for all those needing to get to their places of work; to their hospital appointments, funerals and weddings; and for the stress levels of HGV and other truck drivers as they bring us the goods we need for our country to function and thrive.

Such shortages help us to focus our gratitude upon the otherwise ‘invisible’ work of people like fuel station staff who play an important role as seamless cogs in the machinery of our society. I know we have been especially praying for the quiet and dedicated work of The Boaz Project and for all its members, who sometimes travel significant distances to benefit from Boaz’ nurturing environment.



Source: creditplus.co.uk

Within the midst of all this upheaval, our parishes have begun to celebrate Harvest. Our sense of gratitude once again helps us to focus on all those who quietly get on with growing crops and tending animals, devoting themselves to their vocation, often working long hours in gruelling conditions of heat and cold, flood and drought.



Harvest Font Decoration by Jo Baughan at St Peter's Church, Wherwell

I cannot imagine the sense of frustration and distress farmers must often feel as they survey crops blighted by disease and weather conditions, let alone the financial difficulties they will have to face if their harvest fails. Given such remarkable fortitude, it has been heart-breaking this week to hear farmers reporting they have had to destroy their crops of fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs and meat products because they cannot get them transported to retail destinations. As it was when the Coronavirus pandemic first hit our world, these recent difficulties with transportation, however they have been caused, should be an opportunity for us to stop and reflect on the many aspects of our lives which we take so much for granted. It is time for us to imitate Jesus, blessing each other as we work towards building relationships of gratitude, harmony and peace across nations, rather than blocking our natural desire to share the glory of the world's abundant riches.

Whether we are giving thanks for a full tank of fuel or a full stomach after a nutritious meal, the Christian understanding of harvest encourages us to value afresh how God blesses us, His children, and how we are responsible for sharing His blessing equally among us – each of us seamless cogs in the work of God's kingdom here on earth.

We see this action of shared blessing through the charities our Harvest donations support: in the work of Winchester Nightshelter, a Christian beacon of light to the homeless community in our City; to the Basics Banks in both Winchester and Andover, who support those struggling to keep a roof over their heads and families fed.



‘Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me’ by Lucas Cranach the Younger

We also see this Christian benevolence writ large in the actions of those who pit themselves against remarkable odds – whether it is the selfless action of a teacher or a hospice nurse, a tanker driver or a smile given to another in a time of trial. Last weekend, it was the gift of harpist, Domini Hogg, who gave a concert at St Peter and Holy Cross, Wherwell, which has brought much needed financial support to our church. Domini used her very clear gifts freely to support us in the work we do for our community. I cannot thank her enough for the selfless blessing of her generous heart.

In a similar way, the good folk of Sparsholt held an incredibly successful day of coffees, teas and scrumptious cakes in support of Macmillan Nurses. I know all about the delicious cakes as one was gluten-free and brought to me. Ironically, I was unable to get to the Sparsholt event as I was working in a hospice with Macmillan nurses at the time, and so am able to attest to their superb professionalism and support of those in their care.

This Sunday, whilst many of us might be grumbling about the wet weather, one of our number will be pitting himself against the elements as he raises money for Shelter. Michael Coleman will be running the London Marathon in aid of the homeless charity, Shelter. Whilst, like me, your running days might be behind you, it would be wonderful if you could think about supporting Michael’s marathon run. Any sponsorship you can offer to help Shelter’s work with people struggling with homelessness or bad housing would be very gratefully received. Please click on the following link for more details: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MechanicalMole>

Mark’s Gospel story this Sunday, gives us the clear image of Christ’s tender love to the innocent and vulnerable in our world. The disciples see the children gathering around Jesus as a problem, but Jesus doesn’t see them that way. Quite the contrary, Jesus sees these little ones as innocents with a pure heart whose instinct is to trust Him and through Him to embrace God’s unconditional love. We too have a responsibility to see the vulnerable and weak, not as a problem but as an opportunity to help us shine out God’s love. However we go about it, may we also strive to be like little children; opening our hearts to the harvest of God’s love, and using all the gifts and skills our Creator blesses us with, however robust or infirm we are, to ensure a fairer world for all.

Yours, in the blessing of Christ’s harvest,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

RHS/Bible Society Psalm 23 Garden



This week, I am giving Austen Hooker's gardening slot over to a very special exhibit, which has won Gold at the Chelsea Garden Show. As I mentioned last week, The Psalm 23 Garden has won the hearts of judges and visitors to Chelsea alike, and has touched the lives of many across the country who have been making their very own Psalm 23 gardens. Creating a sense of peace and wholeness in the midst of a Pandemic which has claimed all too many lives, blighted countless others and brought with it a cloud of fear and anxiety, sickness and confusion.

Psalm 23, more commonly known to us all as '*The Lord is my Shepherd*', could have been written for our modern world as we live through the Coronavirus pandemic. Its message is one of encouragement, comfort, succour and hope as people look to the Lord for protection and sustenance, both in this world and the next. The garden's creator, Sarah Eberle, has interpreted the Psalm in the form of a garden, in such a way as to create a verdant space which offers people a place to breathe, to re-engage with nature, and feel mentally, physically and spiritually restored. Do visit the link here to see the garden for yourself and find its peace:

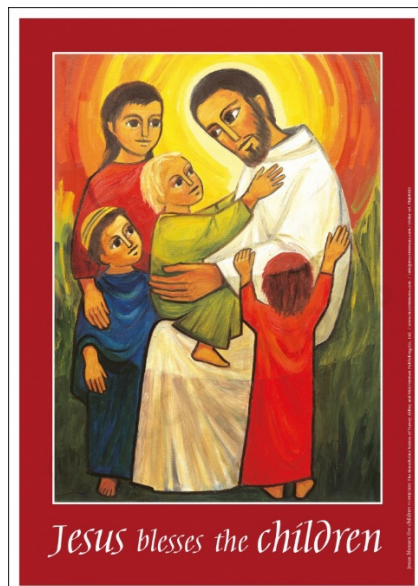
[See Bible Society: The Psalm 23 Show Garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2021 / RHS Gardening](#)

Collect Prayer for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith that,
forsaking what lies behind and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of everlasting joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil:
For Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.



Mark 10: 13-16 Jesus Blesses the Children

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.' Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below

Please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>3rd Oct</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church		6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – William Tyndale
<i>10th Oct</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>17th Oct</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		8am - Holy Communion	
<i>24th Oct</i>			Morning Prayer	Harvest Festival	8am - Holy Communion
<i>27th Oct (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>31st Oct</i>	<i>With Wh</i>	All Souls Service		6pm – All Souls Service	3pm – All Souls Service <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – Thomas à Becket

