



# THANKSGIVING WORSHIP

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. Deuteronomy 8:7-9 (NRSV)

by Marian Raynard

## Call to Worship:

One: Give thanks.

**All: We give thanks for the harvest.**

One: Give thanks.

**All: We give thanks for the blessings of family and friends.**

One: Give thanks.

**All: We give thanks for the blessings of our faith, for Jesus the Christ and the freedom to share these blessings to those in our family, our church community, and the world.**

One: Give thanks.

**Hymn:** #806 – To bless the earth (alternate tune is #801)

## Opening Prayer:

Let us pray. God, we gather together this day offering our praise and thanksgiving to you. We see the work of your hand as we see the changing colours of the season around us. We share in your bounty as we gather in the harvest thanksgiving. Open our hearts to your message as inspired by your Son, Christ Jesus, and our lives to the work of the Holy Spirit. Through your grace and mercy, we offer these our prayers. Amen.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 8:7–18

**Hymn:** #802 – For the fruits of all creation

**Reflection:** Give Thanks!

As 2020 began several people commented, “I hope that this year is better than last year.” It seemed as though there were many obstacles had faced—challenges with health, a struggle to get the crop in (and for some a challenge to gather the harvest), and those whom we said goodbye to as relationships ended or as loved ones died.

There was an optimism, hope, and promise that this year would be filled with gratitude and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for renewed health. Thanksgiving for the support of those around us in difficult times. There was hope that a welcome place would be found as a new church home was sought. As winter gave way to spring our churches, communities, our nation and the entire world found itself facing a situation that many could not fathom—a global pandemic due to COVID 19.

Our faith was tested as we found ourselves faced with the reality of social distancing—which meant we were not to attend worship, to gather together for small groups (WMS, auxiliary meetings, Bible studies, coffee hours, pot luck meals). Everyone suddenly had to be creative with how we could show thanksgiving and express our faith within the confines of our homes. How could we support and care for one another in what felt like such a dark passage of time?

Times of trials and challenge have faced people through the ages, and yet we are reminded that it is vital to hold onto and share our faith, so as to inspire others and ourselves of the hope and thanksgiving of serving a risen Saviour. Many of Jesus’ parables dealt with difficult challenging situations, revealing a renewed hope.

The words read from Deuteronomy is a short part of a speech given by Moses to the Israelites as they journeyed through the Sinai wilderness. His words encourage the Israelites to keep the faith, maintain their covenant relationship with God. God has brought them to a good place: the land is fertile; there is plenty of water, and a wealth of resources. The people will praise God for the blessings they will receive. They are to take good care to remember that it is the Lord God with whom they have a covenant, and whose commandments they are to keep.

In Canada, Thanksgiving is designated as a statutory holiday, the second Monday of October. Growing up on a farm outside of Lucknow Ontario, the Thanksgiving holiday often coincided with the harvest. Family and neighbours who were helping bring in the crop would gather round the table, and together we gave thanks. While working in the Abbey Center with The Iona Community in Scotland the islanders would gather in the Abbey church for a service of Thanksgiving, but only after all the crops were harvested.

This year, how will you “Give Thanks”? The year has been like no other many have witnessed. How will you show your gratitude for your faith, family, freedoms, or health? We give thanks as we share the resources that we have with those who are in need. We give thanks as we take the time to bear witness of the blessings that we have received through a risen Lord. We give thanks as we take the time, and have the courage to stand up for those who are oppressed, to help them to find their voice. We give thanks when we walk along side of those who are dealing with a new or ongoing diagnosis of physical or mental health. We give thanks when we open our hands in gratitude, being open to that which we can receive.

This is a year like we have never seen before, and pray that we will never see again. We are thankful for the blessings of a rich and bountiful land, and I pray that we will look around at the world in which we live and realize that each and every person is a precious gift and for that we need to give thanks.

### **Prayer:**

One: Let us pray:

**All: Glory, gratitude and praise, these we offer to you God.**

One: You are the creator of all things. We see your blessing as we gather the harvest from our fields and gardens. We see your blessing as the fall colours come to pass, reminding us of the warm summer days, and preparing us for the cold winter weather.

**All: Glory, gratitude and praise, these we offer to you God.**

One: You give what we need from the bounty of your grace. You fill your people with good things. We thank you God for the food that we eat, the home we have, the family we belong to, and for the church and community we are part of.

**All: Glory, gratitude and praise, these we offer to you God.**

One: Help us to give and share as you; to give hope to those who are in difficult situations, to seek justice and peace for those who are oppressed, to share food to those who are hungry, to comfort to those who are grieving, and love to those who are lost.

**All: Glory, gratitude and praise, these we offer to you God.**

One: Help us to live our lives with thanksgiving, filled with the grace and peace found in praising you through Jesus Christ our Lord in whose name we pray.

All: Amen.

### Offering Prayer:

God, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving. Bless the gifts we offer to you. We pray that they will bring hope, peace, gratitude, and grace in this season of Harvest Thanksgiving, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Hymn:** #807 – We plough the fields and scatter

### Blessing: (in unison)

As you prepare to go from this place, Give Thanks.

Give thanks for the harvest.

Give thanks for the blessing of faith, family, food, and freedom.

Give thanks for the gifts we give and the ones we receive.

Give thanks for God the Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Photo by Marian Raynard – Harvest Thanksgiving offering at The Iona Abbey 1993

