



# A HARVEST FOR PEACE

These Harvest Festival resources are brought to you by BibleLands, which seeks to improve the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Middle East. We do this in partnership with local Christians, focusing on education, healthcare and community development.

This selection of prayers and suggestions is designed to help you put together a family Harvest Festival based on the theme of the Palestinian olive harvest. This is often a time of unrest between members of different faiths in the Holy Land, but in recent years people have been working together to complete the harvest and promote peace and tolerance.

For more information about the Palestinian olive harvest, please download ***About the olive harvest*** from the Resources section of [www.biblelands.org.uk](http://www.biblelands.org.uk). You can also find a poster to publicise your service.

There is no charge for these materials, but should you be kind enough to hold a collection for BibleLands, we and our partner organisations would be very grateful. If you would like a supply of gift aid envelopes to give out to your congregation, please phone us on 01494 897950 or email [info@biblelands.org.uk](mailto:info@biblelands.org.uk).

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## ***Suggestions for hymns:***

We plough the fields and scatter  
Now thank we all our God  
Peace, perfect peace  
Jubilate Deo  
Praise God for the harvest of farm and of field

Come ye thankful people come  
Great is thy faithfulness  
For the healing of the nations  
You shall go out with joy

## ***Suggestions for readings***

Deuteronomy 24: 17-22  
James 3: 13-18  
Romans 11: 17-24

Galatians 6: 7-10  
2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

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## ***Opening prayer***

Heavenly Father,  
You have given us the green earth, the wide seas, the arable lands and the pastures, the forests and the rivers. You have created plants that will grow in rocky places and you have given your people the inventiveness to survive. You accept all of us as your children in spite of our differences. We thank you for all that you have given us. May we begin to hunger and thirst for justice and peace. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ,  
**Amen**



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## *Affirmation of faith*

**Leader:** Whenever we see a seed of hope planted

**Response:** **We trust you, Lord, to make it grow**

**Leader:** When we see fragile green shoots reach for the light

**Response:** **We reach for you as our protector and guide**

**Leader:** When we climb strong branches and view the world you have made

**Response:** **We remember your olive branch of peace**

**Leader:** When green leaves shelter us from rain

**Response:** **We have faith that you will bring justice to the oppressed**

**Leader:** When we harvest the fruit of the branches

**Response:** **We look forward to a future of plenty for all**

**Leader:** When we plant the seeds again, in a never-ending cycle of renewal

**Response:** **We celebrate the promise of salvation and eternal life**

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## *Confession*

Lord God,

You have given us this world and all the beautiful things in it.

You have given enough for all your people to share.

But we have created imbalance.

We who have plenty have wasted our resources and left others with nothing.

We see images of want in distant lands, and we feel sad but helpless.

We see conflict and say there is nothing that can be done.

We pretend to be too insignificant to make a difference.

We do not love our neighbours as ourselves.

Forgive us our sins and teach us not to make excuses.

Teach us to speak out in situations of injustice and to work together so that all may share in a plentiful harvest.

In the name of Christ,

**Amen**



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## ***Thanksgiving for the Harvest produce***

Lord, we thank you for these wonderful gifts and for every kind of harvest – the harvest of land and sea, of the factories and the mines, of the workshops and classrooms. Bless these offerings and keep us mindful of our brothers and sisters living in poverty throughout the world.

May we always take good care of our resources and use them wisely in your service to produce a fruitful harvest – a harvest of justice and mercy that will feed all your people and glorify your name.

**Amen**

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## ***Blessing***

May God the Father, who is the source of all growth, the provider of refreshing rain, nourishing earth and warm sunlight, pour his blessings on us and all his children, and send us out in the power of his spirit to live and work for his praise and glory.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**Amen**

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## ***Address***

Download ***About the olive harvest*** for some useful facts and figures.

Before the service, collect together some different products that originate from olive trees, for example:

*Olive oil*

*Olives*

*Something made from olive wood e.g. a bowl*

*Olive oil soap*

Talk about the importance of olives in the Holy Land and explain how the olive harvest is threatened by the difficult political situation. How much detail you go into will depend on your congregation and the length of time you want to speak for.

Invite the children up to the front and show them the different olive products you have collected. Ask each child or small group to hold up one of the items.



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Ask the following questions (or make up your own, depending on what props you are using) and ask the children to step forward if they are holding the right answer:

- Which would you use to contain salad?
- Which one(s) would you eat?
- Which can be used for fuel for a lamp?
- Which would you use when washing your hands?

Point out how strange it would be if you tried to wash your hands with olives or use soap as fuel! These products are all so different that it's amazing they all come from the same tree. But they are each valuable and useful.

In some parts of the world, like Israel and Palestine, people live in conflict with their neighbours. There is fighting and injustice. Sometimes it seems as though there is nothing anyone can do to achieve peace. But just as all of these items come from the same tree, what all human beings have in common is that we come from God.

Tell the congregation about the different faiths working together to accomplish the olive harvest. These individuals and groups recognise that although their neighbours are different in race, nationality and religion, it is possible to work together to serve God and promote justice and peace.

Say that the olive harvest begins soon (it takes place in October and November) and it is impossible to know whether it will pass without major incident. The only hope is people recognising one another as neighbours, as human beings and as God's children whom He loves.