HARVEST 2012

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions to Bible readings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductions to texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collects of the day</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers of the People 1 - 3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offertory Prayers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsory prayers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayers of confession</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest - Introductory background notes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectionary notes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sermon sources</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See also Parish Resource Pack for Harvest for YEAR A on this site

www.churchnewsireland.org
INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Joel 2:21-27

Joel has described a plague of locusts which has invaded Palestine, with devastating effect. The Day of the Lord can be like this, but if the people of Judah repent and turn to the Lord, he will spare Judah from such a fate.

Psalm 126

1 Timothy 2:1-7

The author, in urging that certain teachers should teach “divine training that is known by faith”, had said that the goal of teaching is love, sharing God’s generosity with one’s neighbour. Now he offers instructions on prayer.

Matthew 6:25-33

Our reading is from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just said that it is impossible to serve two masters: one cannot love both. Accumulation of wealth and providing for times of difficulty can cause people such anxiety that they fail to put God first in their lives.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%202:1-7&version=TNIV

INTRODUCTORY SENTENCES

Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, our own God, will bless us. Psalm 67.6

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious, for his steadfast love endures for ever. Psalm 107.1

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. Genesis 8.22

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 2 Corinthians 9.10

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Matthew 9.37b,38
COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect one

Almighty and everlasting God,
who hast graciously given on to us
the fruits of the earth in their season;
We yield thee humble and hearty thanks for this thy bounty;
beseeking thee to give us grace rightly
to use the same to thy glory,
and the relief of those that need;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end.

or

O almighty God and heavenly Father;
We glorify thee that thou hast fulfilled to us thy gracious promise,
that, while the earth remaineth,
seed-time and harvest shall not fail.
We bless you for the kindly fruits of the earth,
which thou hast given to our use.
Teach us, we beseech thee, to remember
that it is not by bread alone that man doth live;
and grant us evermore to feed on him
who is the true bread from heaven,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit,
be all honour and glory, world without end.

Collect two

Eternal God,
you crown the year with your goodness
and give us the fruits of the earth in their season:
Grant that But we may use them to your glory,
for the relief of those in need
and for our own well-being;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of the harvest,
with joy we have offered thanksgiving for your love in creation
and have shared in the bread and wine of the kingdom.
By your grace plant within us such reverence
for all that you give us
that will make us wise stewards the of the good things we enjoy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PEACE

The harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. cf Galatians 5.22,23
Let us offer our prayers to God for the life of the world
and for all God’s people in their daily life and work.
God, the beginning and end of all things,
in your providence and care
you watch unceasingly over all creation;
we offer our prayers
that in us and in all your people your will may be done,
according to your wise and loving purpose in Christ our Lord.
Lord of all life:
hear our prayer.

We pray for all through whom we receive sustenance and life;
for farmers and agricultural workers,
for packers, distributors and company boards;
as you have so ordered our life that we depend upon each other,
enable us by your grace to seek the well-being of others before our own.
Lord of all creation:
hear our prayer.

We pray for all engaged in research to safeguard crops against disease,
and to produce abundant life among those who hunger
and whose lives are at risk.
Prosper the work of their hands
and the searching of their minds,
that their labour may be for the welfare of all.
Lord of all wisdom:
hear our prayer.

We pray for governments and aid agencies,
and those areas of the world where there is disaster, drought
and starvation.
By the grace of your Spirit,
touch our hearts
and the hearts of all who live in comfortable plenty,
and make us wise stewards of your gifts.
Lord of all justice:
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are ill,
remembering those in hospital and nursing homes
and all who are known to us.
We pray for all who care for them.
Give skill and understanding
to all who work for their well-being.
Lord of all compassion:
hear our prayer.

We remember those who have died,
whom we entrust to your eternal love
in the hope of resurrection to new life.
Lord of all peace:  
**hear our prayer.**

We offer ourselves to your service,  
asking that by the Spirit at work in us  
others may receive a rich harvest of love and joy and peace.  
Lord of all faithfulness:  
**hear our prayer.**

God of grace,  
as you are ever at work in your creation,  
so fulfil your wise and loving purpose in us  
and in all for whom we pray,  
that with them and in all that you have made,  
your glory may be revealed  
and the whole earth give praise to you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**


**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Let us pray to God, the Lord of the harvest,  
that he will bring to fruition all that he desires for his creation.  

Lord of creation,  
we see that the fields are ripe for harvesting:  
we pray for your Church,  
that it may be ready to gather fruit for eternal life.  

Lord of the harvest,  
in your mercy hear us.

You have created the universe by your eternal Word,  
and have blessed humankind in giving us dominion over the earth:  
we pray for the world,  
that we may honour and share its resources,  
and live in reverence for the creation  
and in harmony with one another.  

Lord of the harvest,  
in your mercy hear us.

Your Son has promised that the Spirit will lead us into all truth:  
we pray for the community in which you have set us,  
for one another and for ourselves,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love and joy and peace.  

Lord of the harvest,  
in your mercy hear us.

You have given your people a rich land,  
yet by sin we have made a world of suffering and sorrow:  
we pray for those who bear the weight of affliction,
that they may come to share the life of wholeness and plenty.
Lord of the harvest,
in your mercy hear us.

Your Son Jesus Christ is the first-fruits of the resurrection
and will reap the harvest of the dead at the end of time:
we pray that he will gather us all together
with those who have gone before
in the banquet of the age to come.
Lord of the harvest,
in your mercy hear us.

Source of all life
and giver of all that is good,
hear our prayers and grant us all that is in accordance with your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above,
so we lift our hearts up to you, God,
in praise and thanksgiving.

As we count our blessings, and acknowledge your goodness,
our hearts go out to those who do not have,
and who are in need.

We thank you for plentiful harvests and full refrigerators
and ask that you supply the needs of those who are hungry.

We thank you for jobs that provide for our families
and supply the needs of our society,
and pray that you would care for those who have no work,
or the dignity and purpose it brings.

We thank you for opportunities and choices,
for meaning and challenges,
and pray that you would give a sense of purpose
to those who feel trapped.

We thank you for family and friends who love us and care for us
and pray that you would befriend those who are alone.

The abundance of the harvest
is a symbol of the abundance of your love in our lives.
May we live in a spirit of gratitude to you
and generosity to our neighbour.

Loving God, in this season and all year long,
give to us the gift of a thankful heart,
so that we may acknowledge you as the giver
of all that is good in our lives.
In the name of Jesus we ask it.
Amen.

~ posted on the Presbyterian Church in Canada website.  http://www.presbyterian.ca/

PREFACE
And now we give you thanks
because you make us stewards of your creation,
to praise you day by day
for the marvels of your wisdom and power.

PRAYERS
Almighty and everlasting God, we offer you our grateful thanks for your fatherly goodness
and care in giving us your gifts and the fruits of the earth in through the seasons. Give us
grace to use them rightly, to your glory, for our own well being, and for the relief of those in
need; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord of creation, whose glory is all around and within us: open our eyes to your wonders,
that we may serve you with reverence and know your peace at our lives' end, through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth
in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need
and for your own well-being; 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.

God, you are more generous than the most loving parent; yet we depend on the harvests
of other lands, and the labours of people of many races. Make us grateful for what they do
for us; help us to trade in such a way that we may not exploit others, and to share our
plenty with those in need; that none may go hungry while your earth yields so abundantly.
Amen

Father God, give to all who work the land, wisdom to understand your laws, and to co-
operate with your wise ordering of the world: and grant that the bountiful fruits of the earth
may not be hoarded by the selfish or squandered by the foolish, but that all who work may
share abundantly in the harvest of the soil. Amen

Forgive us Lord, for thinking of ourselves more than others; for eating too much without
considering those who have nothing at all; for our lack of diligence in searching for ways to
share our riches with the hungry and the thirsty. Your Son came to earth that everyone
might be blessed and forgiveness offered to the penitent. Amen

God of harvest,
gardener supreme,
you place us at the centre,
feed us, equip us and,
having provided for us,
look to a different harvest—
a fruitfulness of lives

www.churchnewsireland.org
in service to you
and others.
God of harvest,
feed us
prune us
harvest us
that our lives
might bring glory to you.

— John Birch

*For use in times of a failed harvest*
Heavenly Father,
when you brought drought upon the land in the time of Elijah the prophet,
you provided for the widow and her son, so that the little they had was sufficient for them.
Comfort us and provide for us in this time of drought (/failed harvest).
Give us patience, so that we may not despair of your help. Preserve the little which we have,
and by your blessing let our present need work for our good.
We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

*Amen.*

**The Bringing Forward of Symbols of the Harvest**
Let us bring forward symbols of the harvest,
gifts that God has created and his sun and rain have nurtured.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of the cornfields,
the oats and the wheat, the rye and the barley.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of roots,
the swedes and mangolds, turnips and sugar beet.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of seeds for next year’s crops,
for clover, for hay and for corn.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of vegetables,
peas, potatoes, beans and hops.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of pears and apples, berries and herbs.

**Thanks be to God.**

Bring forward the harvest of flowers,
the finest blooms from our gardens and our fields.

**Thanks be to God.**
Bring forward the grain and the grape, for our Saviour took bread and wine to feed us with his body and his blood, given and shed for the life of the world. Let us feed on him by faith with thanksgiving.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,**

**praise him, all creatures here below,**

**praise him above, ye heavenly host,**

**praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

*Amen.*

**Thanksgiving**

Let us give thanks to God, the God of all peoples of the earth. For the colour and forms of your creation and our place within it, we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**

For our daily food, and for those whose work and skill bring your good gifts to us, we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**

For the gifts and graces inspired in human minds and hearts; for insight and imagination, for the skills of research which bring healing and fulfilment to the lives of many; we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**

For the light and shades of the changing seasons, and their variety and dependability; for new life and growth out of barrenness and decay; we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**

For new hope and strength in our communities, especially in your Church and among all you call to serve you, we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**

For all in whose lives we see goodness, kindness, gentleness, patience and humility, and all the fruit of the Spirit, we bring our thanks, good Lord:

**your mercy endures for ever.**
For the life we have been given,
and for all those whom you have given us to share it,
we bring our thanks, good Lord:

your mercy endures for ever.

Offertory Prayers
Heavenly Father, thank you for all the good things
you continue to provide for us.
Don't let us take your gifts for granted
or abuse them.
Instead, help us always to rely on you in faith.
Use us and what you have given us
for your good purposes.

Amen.

Gracious and giving God - you have poured out your abundance upon
us in this land - and we thank you. We remember that what we
have comes from you and that it is you who gives us strength to
build homes and to acquire wealth. So it is at this time, O God,
we make our thank offering to you. We pray that you will bless
it on its way. By it, and by all our actions, may others be
blessed, and your name truly glorified - this both now and
forevermore. Amen.

Blessings
May God our creator,
who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the air,
bestow on you his care
and increase the harvest of your righteousness;
and the blessing …

God the Father, who created the world,
give you grace to be wise stewards of his creation.
Amen.

God the Son, who redeemed the world,
inspire you to go out as labourers into his harvest.
Amen.

God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of creation,
help you to bear his fruits of love, joy and peace.
Amen.
And the blessing …

Freely you have received, freely give.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Tend the earth, care for God’s good creation
and bring forth the fruits of righteousness.
Go in the peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

May God the Father bless you, who first sowed the seeds of eternal life in your hearts,
may God the Son bless you, who nurtures you with the rain and sunshine of love; may
God the Holy Spirit bless you, who brings us all to fruition; and may the blessing of God
Almighty be among you and remain with you always. Amen

RESPONSORY PRAYERS

Litany of Thanksgiving

We praise and thank our God
for all that we have been given!

We praise and thank our God
for earth and oceans, rain and sun, for food and homes.

We praise and thank our God
for the blessings of life and faith and hope.

We praise and thank our God
for the Creator who made us, the Christ who saved us,
and the Counselor who guides us.

We praise and thank our God
for family and friends, for neighbors and coworkers.

We praise and thank our God
for God has blessed us beyond all expectations.

We praise and thank our God
for all blessings which compel us
to reach out to those with less,
to be of service to any in need,
to keep company with the unwelcome,
to seek peace and make friends of our enemies.

Let us pray,
Lord God, you have enriched us, saved us, loved us.
Open our hearts and minds to your will
that we may be free to share everything we have,
to give away whatever holds us hostage in spirit,
that we may always know that possessions are just that:
things, lovely to have,
but in the end only good for the good they can do in this world.
Keep us always in that work,
the work of Christ and Christ’s kingdom,
the kingdom of God. Amen.

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Harvest Prayer of Confession

We confess our sin, and the sins of our society,
in the misuse of God’s creation.
God our Father, we are sorry
for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly,
and acted ungratefully.
Hear our prayer, and in your mercy:
forge us and help us.

We enjoy the fruits of the harvest,
but sometimes forget that you have given them to us.
Father, in your mercy:
forge us and help us.

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied,
but ignore the cry of the hungry.
Father, in your mercy:
forge us and help us.

We are thoughtless,
and do not care enough for the world you have made.
Father, in your mercy:
forge us and help us.

We store up goods for ourselves alone,
as if there were no God and no heaven.
Father, in your mercy:
forge us and help us.


Prayer of Confession

For the times that we behaved irresponsibly towards your gifts of creation:
Lord, in your mercy,
forge us and help us.

For the times that we have ignored the spiritual and material needs
of those who are not so fortunate as ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy,
forgive us and help us.

For the times that we have failed to proclaim your gospel
through indifference, selfishness or bad example:

Lord, in your mercy,
forgive us and help us.

May Almighty God have mercy upon us,
forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen

— from Harvest Resources from CMS, on the CMS website.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO HARVEST  1

Harvest Festival dates from pagan times and gives thanks for a successful harvest. For the Jews feasts were held in celebration of good harvests several times a year. Jesus refers to the grape harvest in today’s reading from Matthew.

Jesus uses it to illustrate that the Pharisees had really lost the plot. They were so afraid that the Jews might be exiled to Babylon again, that they thought if they kept every law, both the written laws of Moses and the oral traditional law of their ancestors, that God would keep them safe in Jerusalem. Because it was so difficult to keep all these laws, rather than drawing people to God they had the opposite effect, they began to put barriers in their way. The Pharisees were misusing the gifts and responsibilities which had been entrusted to them and Jesus spoke out against this abuse.

Rather than preparing the ground and making it fertile and ready for the harvest it was becoming more bleak and barren by the day. Not only had the Pharisees misused the gifts of God, most importantly they did not recognise the greatest gift which God had given the world, His Son. They liked to listen to Jesus, but they thought His ideas were too radical. Jesus told them repeatedly that they kept the letter of the law, but lost the spirit; they made a show of loving God with their public prayers, but they didn’t have compassion for people and the harvest was being lost.

God has given us many gifts, some of which we celebrate through the harvest festival. We remember His goodness and provision for us and are challenged to use His gifts wisely. Many people are less fortunate than ourselves and we need to remember God loves them too, and often could use us, and the gifts He has given us (to look after) to demonstrate that love for them, not just at harvest time, but all the year through. Using the gifts He has given us in the service of others is one of the most appropriate ways of demonstrating our gratitude to God for what He has done for us. Sam Cappleman

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO HARVEST  2

Today many of us live in towns and our contacts with the countryside are slight. We do not know much about seasons, farming and the agricultural calendar. Much of our food is
processed and packaged, we don’t get it from the field and the farm, instead we get it from Tesco or Sainsbury’s. We can now easily buy imported fruit and vegetables which are not in season in our own country.

However, this doesn’t mean that we cannot celebrate harvest in a meaningful way. Actually we could say that harvest is more important now because we need to be reminded of our dependence on God and our responsibility to treat the world properly. We must not become just indiscriminate consumers, unaware and unconcerned about how our food is produced. We now have the potential to do so much damage to our world so this is very important.

Harvest is a time to focus upon our environment, to thank God for it, and consider our responsibility for our environment. Issues such as genetics, animal husbandry, pollution—all of these are in sharp focus at Harvest. (I was interested to read a paper this week circulated by John Stubbs at St Mark’s, it was from the Methodist Church concerning genetics and it is available for home group study.)

Harvest falls in the time of the Christian calendar with a liturgical colour of green - this is a good colour with all of its ecological and environmental connotations. The message of the ecological movement is that we all have an impact upon the natural world. We are all consumers or producers, so we are all links in a long chain of action which can either protect or destroy our natural environment. God put mankind into the Garden of Eden ‘to till it and keep it’ Genesis 2:15.

With our increasing technology we are able to till the earth more than ever before. With the aid of science we are able to turn waste animal products into food for the same animals, and we are able to change the substance of plants and animals so that they can resist disease or be more productive. The ability to make a crop resist pests might bring food and life to millions. However this same technology also puts us at risk, as never before of being unable to keep the earth and its resources in the condition in which we have inherited it from previous generations.

Harvest festivals, while giving us the chance to thank God for the riches of the natural world, also present us with the more solemn task of contemplating our responsibilities to nature. In more and more Harvest Festival services Christians must give thanks to God but accompany those thanks with promises to keep our environment safe, which is the means of all future harvests. Harvest is about how we use the things which God has given to us. We can use God’s gifts wisely for our benefit and share them with others, or we can abuse them. God gives to us resources which we can do many different things with. Some of those things are worthwhile and some of those things are very destructive. I think especially of the passage in the bible which speaks about a day when we will learn to use resources wisely. Instead of using metal to make swords we would use it to make ploughshares, instead of using it to make knives we would make pruning hooks. ‘Swords into ploughshares, Knives into pruning hooks’ Today this might say ‘Bombs into buckets.’ Today we each need to ask ourselves how we can use the gifts God has given us wisely, for the benefit of all and not just for ourselves. Charles Royden

LECTIONARY NOTES
Diocese of Montreal - comments on each of the readings
http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/archive/btksgm.shtml

www.churchnewsireland.org
Psalm 126
This psalm, probably referring to the exile of the Israelites, speaks to people who have been forcibly removed from their own land or have had their land rights abused – like those whom Ekta Parishad are gathering, and the forest farmers of Rajasthan. You might further explore something of the identity of covenant people being utterly bound up in their stories and their land. To have it taken away, or more accurately, to have been taken away from it, strikes at the heart of how they saw themselves as God’s people.

The Psalm psalm is an image of a dry land needing replenishment, where those who sow seeds have only their tears to water them with. This perhaps describes the actions of Ekta Parishad – that started with seeds of protest, watered by tears of anger and grief, and has grown into the movement passing across India like huge watercourses, replenishing hope where it touches.

It is faith and hope that prevents us from being consumed by anger and grief, and channels it into this kind of action. Deliverance requires toil and tears. But hope can waver, perseverance can falter. Thomas Merton writes in ‘Letter to a young activist’:

‘Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work that you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and may achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but the value of rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it becomes much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything.’

This resolution to focus on people is at the heart of Christian Aid’s partnership work.

Matthew 6:25-32
‘Look at the lilies’

Anthony de Mello suggests that the first way to become aware of God is simply to go and look at things. Not try and figure them out, not try and hear a hidden message or deduce a lesson for life. Just look. Don’t try to find God. Just look. As a starting point, lilies come highly recommended. If this is a harvest festival, or symbols of honey and vinegar are visible in the church, people could be encouraged to ‘just look’.

This slowing down and looking is a powerful statement, a modeling of an alternative way. What would the world be like if we all just sat and ‘looked’ more often (being content with food and clothes)? Jesus here offers an alternative to the hoarding of stuff and daily ‘panic buying’ that we all experience. A connection can be explored between this inner peace (bestowed as we learn to ‘simply look’) and the outer peace and justice.

What would this passage say to a mother in west Africa who cannot feed her children? Perhaps she might raise questions about who has taken hold of her share. Perhaps Jesus might ask the same question. There is certainly an important challenge here about the kind of values that the body, and food and shelter, have been given in our society.
Jesus’ words challenge us to reframe our understanding of needs, wants and abundance, to look and see differently, and to never be so driven that we fail to see the glory of God in the life of the world.

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Don’t worry - Canon Ann Smith, Diocese of Toronto
http://onlinesermons.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/harvest-thanksgiving-year-b.html

Faith, fear and planet Earth - Australian Lutheran - reflecting on the passage from Joel.

Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 6. From Trinity Study centre - not specifically a harvest sermon but a useful basis for one.

Emphasis on Thanksgiving - from Episcopal church Sermons that work series
http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/sermons_that_work_116709_ENG_HTM.htm

Living simply - uses several objects as visual aids. Enables participation by children - finding posters under pews etc.
http://sermonsandprayers.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/living-simply.html

Stone soup - Rockies net - Scroll down
http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-thansmsu.php

CHILDREN

Rockies Net - Children’s address and prayers - scroll down
http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-thansmsu.php