What’s harvest all about?

This lesson helps your Sunday school children to grasp the true meaning of Harvest Festival – where our food comes from; why we give thanks to God for the harvest; and why we need to support farmers in Africa.

Why do we celebrate harvest?

Discussing the following will help the children understand what harvest means:

- Explain the growing cycle – planting the seed, nurturing the growing plant, harvesting the plant and then using the product.
- Show the children examples of food, such as an apple and some apple juice, and a potato and some crisps. Help the children understand that the food we eat originates from the land.
- Explain that farmers all over the world, including those in the UK and those in Africa, pray for sunshine, rain and good soil to help their crops grow well.
- Discuss the meaning of Harvest Festival. Explain that having prayed to God for a good harvest, we must then give thanks for the food we eat and remember those who are less fortunate than us.

Looking at life for African farmers

You can then move on to looking at what life is like for farmers in Africa, and why they need our prayers and support this harvest.

You can read the following points out to the children. Encourage them to ask questions and compare what they hear with their own lives and experiences.

- Most people in Africa make their own food. They grow crops like maize, beans, tomatoes and cabbages, and they keep animals. They have no supermarkets to buy food from.
- African farmers don’t have tractors and other machines that farmers in the UK use. They dig their land by hand using simple hand-held tools, or perhaps even an ox plough.
- Sometimes it doesn’t rain for a long time in Africa. The farmers may have to walk a long way to collect water from rivers and wells.
- It’s very hot in Africa. This makes it hard to work in the fields, and it means the plants sometimes get too dry and die.
- Children in Africa start farming at a very early age. They help their mums and dads in the fields.
- If farmers have a poor harvest, they may not have enough food for their families, so people are hungry. They also can’t afford to sell any of their crops so that they have money for medicines and school books for the children.
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What help do African farmers need?

You can guide the Sunday school to consider what support African farmers need. This then helps the children understand the importance of Farm Africa’s work, and the fundraising activities you undertake. It also helps the children write a prayer for African farmers.

With some brainstorming, you can help the children see what farmers in Africa need:

- Sunshine, water and good soil for their crops
- Training to improve their farming knowledge and skills
- More modern equipment
- Animals which will breed and produce food like milk and eggs

You can then help the children understand the role of both prayer and the practical support that Farm Africa gives to those in need. You can find more information about the work of Farm Africa at www.farmafrica.org.uk.

Activities to accompany ‘What’s harvest all about?’

Prayers for African farmers

Ask the children to write simple prayers for African farmers. You may like to help them think of what farmers need most – support and good growing conditions. You can either use the template below, or you can use the welly outline available to download from www.farmafrica.org.uk/givehungertheboot and create a display for the church. Alternatively, you may like to use the prayers in the following ‘mini farmers’ activity.

Dear Lord,
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
Amen

Mini farmers

Children learn best through practical activities, and this one is both fun and educational.

1. Help each child write a harvest prayer for African farmers (see the previous activity) on a piece of paper.
2. Choose some plant seeds – green bean or mustard cress seeds are ideal because they will grow quickly and satisfy your impatient mini farmers!
3. Find some old plant pots. You could even ask the children to decorate them.
4. Help each child to place his or her harvest prayer in a plant pot and cover it with soil. Then show the children how to plant the seeds.
5. Explain to the children what the seeds need in order to thrive. Find a suitably light and warm spot for the plant pots, and then help the children water their plants each week. [Someone may need to give them a little drink mid-week as well.]
6. When the seedlings grow, you can remind the children that they are ‘harvesting’ their prayer for the farmers of Africa.

This activity also complements the lesson on The Parable of the Sower.
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Dear Lord,

Please watch over farmers in Africa and their families.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Amen