

Jimmy's Reflection – September 2025

Over these Summer months, amongst the hot sunny days, there has been a strange phenomenon this year. Already, the trees have autumnal hues, hedgerows are full of berries, wild blackberries have been harvested since mid-July and fruit trees are heavily laden. All this against a background of parched fields for grazing sheep and cattle, and an early harvest where arable crops are high in quality but low in quantity, putting more pressure on the farming community around us.

And it seems that life goes on. September heralds both harvest festivals and the new academic year. For some, it will be a new class, a new school, or new college, or new university, or a gap year, or a new job. For the Methodist Church it is a new year with welcome services for new ministers, as it was for me last year.

Amongst this newness, harvest festivals help us to pause, reflect and thank God for the crops that are harvested. Growing things is hard work, especially when your livelihood depends on it. For those of us with allotments or garden edges, the crops are planned for, mindful of their different growing seasons.... several weeks growth like radishes or several years for asparagus. There is the hard work making sure the soil preparation is optimal for the crops. It involves endurance of sowing seeds and re-sowing if needed. And patience, as the plants are cultivated, weeded, watered, and harvested at the right time.

It is easy to see why Jesus used parables centring on the growing of crops to teach about the kingdom of God: with the parable of the Sower (Luke 8: 4-15); faith like a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20); and the plentiful harvest and scarcity of workers (Matthew 9:35-38).

Can I suggest that we use this precedent to help us start to reflect on this last year in readiness for our harvest festival on Sunday, 5th October?

Let us celebrate and thank God for all that the members of Stonehouse Methodist Church do. For the fellowship and friendship shared in the Bible Study groups, the monthly Community meal and monthly prayer meeting, and Sunday worship. For the pastoral care we have for each other. For the many things associated with Eco-church, of Gold awards and celebrations, of garden work groups, of being an important voice in our church. For the publicity group that shares the good news happening at SMC, the social group that brings so much fun and fellowship and the awesome working group that quietly keeps the church so well maintained. For our collaborations with the food bank and with APT Community hub, and the active leadership and involvement with Churches Together in Stonehouse. For the school visit earlier in the year with over 100 children visiting, for the shoebox collections and the newly formed youth club. For the availability of the church building for groups in the community. So much to offer to God at our

harvest festival with grateful thanks – and I am sure I will have forgotten something.

And for ourselves. Let us take time to pause and reflect on our faith and belief in God. I draw upon some of the monthly reflections of our last year. In February, we considered what are the bridges we shake when we walk with God, like a mouse (us) and an elephant (God) walking over rickety bridges? In the frostiness of March, we thought of dog walking at the pace of a dog sniff, reminding ourselves to pause and listen to what God is saying to us. In May, we contemplated leaning on a farmgate and using the Examen to reflect on what God is doing in our lives.

And as we celebrate and thank God for our faith journeys and all that happens at SMC, let us consider **today's seeds** of faith, that have been harvested from this past season. And for us to be open to where God is calling us to prepare and plant them in hope, in readiness for **tomorrow's harvest**.