

2026 Harvest reflection

Stories, reflections and prayers written by people who have used food banks.



View the reflection at trussell.org.uk/harvest

Harvest Trussell tables

Support your local food bank and join churches UK-wide

We invite your church to make this Harvest a time for food, connection, celebration and gratitude – including people from all backgrounds, particularly people facing financial hardship.

Churches play a key role in creating a more just and equal society, in which people do not have to turn to food banks to get the essentials they need. Churches can be places where everyone finds a home and we recognise the dignity of every person, made in the image of God.

There is a strong link between hunger and social isolation, so how can your church support people experiencing hardship at Harvest time and beyond?

Trestle tables are often used in many ways across the life of a church community, particularly to share food. This resource includes ideas for turning your trestle tables into a 'Trussell table' as part of your Harvest celebrations, as well as inspiring your congregation and guests to donate food, and use their collective voice to call for change.



Trussell table options

Ideas based on the time you have to prepare

We know how busy church life can be – so the ideas below are designed to make best use of the time you have available.

Pick one:

1 We have 15 minutes to prepare... a food bank collection table

2 We have 1-2 hours to prepare... a Harvest meal, focused on justice

3 We have 4-5 hours to prepare... a chance to cook and have a conversation about hardship and hope with your wider community



Did you know...?

1 in 4

people referred to food banks experience severe social isolation, being in touch with people socially once a month, or never.



A warm welcome at your Harvest event can bring people together and make a real difference

Remember there may be people in your church Harvest services who are experiencing hunger and can't afford the essentials. So do plan how you will make immediate support available and accessible, or put people in touch with food banks or other local organisations.

These ideas have been developed alongside people with lived experience of hunger and poverty, as well as together with church leaders. If you want any help to adapt these resources or to be put in contact with your local food bank, please email us at churches@trussell.org.uk
We would love to hear from you.

15 mins Food bank collection table

Tips for getting set up:

1 Locate your table at the front of your church space for the Harvest service.

2 Display the final page of this resource as a poster in the run-up to your Harvest celebration. Add the details of your local food bank, contact them to see which items they most urgently need, then add them to the end of the shopping list.

3 Why not **decorate the table** with a tablecloth, flowers or candles?

4 Arrange an anonymous **donation bag swap** during the service, to help people reflect on the different amounts we all have to offer.

- In advance, give people bags to bring their Harvest donations in.
- Before the service, ask people to place their bags at the back of the room. A volunteer should then discreetly mix up the items in the bags, making sure some contain more than others. This is important, so no one feels self-conscious about the amount they can donate.
- During the service, explain that the bags have been repacked, and that everyone will be handed a randomly chosen bag. Ask people to unpack this new bag onto the food bank collection table.
- Invite people to reflect on the fact that everyone has been generous, but some people can't give as much. Perhaps use the parable of the widow's mite in Luke 21:1-4, which pulls out the theme of the widow's generosity while pointing to the injustice of the system perpetuated by people with power.

5 During the service, you could show a Trussell Harvest video on the theme of justice and compassion (trussell.org.uk/church-films) – or screen our short film about the Guarantee our Essentials campaign (trussell.org.uk/church-GOE).



Ask people to consider the following: “What more could we do as a church community to stand in solidarity with people facing hardship?”

Once donations have been placed onto your food bank collection table you could use one of the Harvest prayers included at the end of this resource.



Your Harvest collection table could help families in your community facing hardship

1-2 hours Harvest meal

Alongside a food collection, plan a meal that helps people connect, consider the injustice of hunger in the UK, and explore how to work together to take action.

Tips for getting set up:

1 Think about people who aren't usually included around your table, and how you might invite them. This might include people on the edge of church life, or participants in community projects.

2 **Share the preparation of the meal.** List the jobs that need doing, and ask everyone how they'd like to help, without assumptions. Your meal could be a bring and share, with different cultural or family dishes.

3 Consider the appropriate **health and safety requirements.** This might include a risk assessment, food safety, insurance, dietary requirements and allergies. For more info, see ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-events

4 Help people think about justice - and how it relates to faith, church and wider society - with our latest Guarantee our Essentials materials.

Include our 'Let's talk' cards on your tables to help spark discussion about food banks and hunger in the UK.



5 Order tablecloth packs (including pens and stickers) to record talking points, prayers and messages of hardship and hope from your time together at Harvest.



6 For news on hunger in the UK and how we're calling for change, you can order copies of **The Hardship Times** - containing inspiring stories of hope and messages of support from famous figures.



7 You can also order our **campaign action posters**, and **It doesn't add up cards** to encourage your guests to add their own voices to our mission.



Don't have time to plan a meal?

You could still use some of these materials in a service or meeting. Order all these items and more, delivered to your door for free, at: trussell.org.uk/harvest-items

4-5 hours Cooking and conversation

Tips for getting set up:

1 Many of the tips from the first two table ideas will be useful here. Remember to make sure you have **considered the appropriate health and safety requirements** for hosting a shared meal. More information and guidance on health and safety is available on Ecclesiastical's website: ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-events

2 Use Harvest as an opportunity to host your wider community for an afternoon of shared cooking and eating together. Think how you might connect with people in your local area who may be facing hunger and social isolation.

3 Your local food bank might have suggestions of people who would welcome an invitation. You could also invite along civic leaders, such as elected officials, police officers or head teachers.

4 This may be an event you could host with other churches in your area, or a Churches Together group. Joining together will help practically, and the more churches and community groups represented will also encourage civic leaders to attend.

5 Everyone invited should take part in preparing and serving the meal together. This can help to break down barriers and stereotypes, creating space for people to engage and belong together.

6 Think about **where you can advertise this event**. Once community and civic leaders are committed to attending, can they advertise the meal in their premises?

7 Suggested **running order** for the event:
Suggested running order for the event:

- Welcome and introductions over teas, coffee and squash.
- Icebreaker to get people mixing and talking. Ask people to get into pairs and share an interesting fact about them, then create groups of four or five people and ask them to find three things they have in common.
- Split into teams to prepare food, tables etc.
- Eat the main course on one table, then swap for pudding.
- Invite people to talk about what hardship and hope mean to them. This might be their own experiences, feelings of compassion towards people facing hardship, or their dreams for a better future. Use the resources on page 4 to help with this!
- Thank you, ending prayer/blessing, and invitation to the next event (see below).

8 At the end of the event you may wish to **get a commitment from your congregation, community, and civic partners** to make this gathering a bi-annual event where the community comes together to listen to one another and discuss local issues. If these larger community meals continue, consider weaving into them other important events that can bring people together, such as Easter or bank holidays. Make sure you include your local food bank in any future plans.

Harvest prayers

O Lord,

what a variety of things you have made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
They all depend on you to give them food as they need it.
When you supply it, they gather it.
You open your hand to feed them,
and they are richly satisfied.

This Harvest, we thank you O Lord for every provision.
We pray for those who go without,
That in your mercy you may provide.
And when we have plenty, help us to share with those in need.
O Lord of the Harvest we praise you,
and it is in Your Name we pray,

Amen!

God our father,

During this season of Harvest we pray for everyone in our country
and in our local community who are facing hunger at this time.

We thank you for the work of the food bank network. May you bless
and sustain all those who respond in acts of loving service to the needs
of their local communities.

We know Lord that you are a God of justice. May your Spirit guide
us then, to have a voice to call for, and the strength to take action
for a country without the need for food banks.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen.

For more service resources including sermon notes,
visit trussell.org.uk/churches/resources

What's next?



Churches like yours are vital in the standing against hunger and poverty locally. Together, we can end the need for food banks. Here are some other ideas for joining us in our mission:

More resources



Take a look at our church materials for Harvest and other times of the year at trussell.org.uk/churches/resources

Church updates

If you love the idea of doing more around poverty and justice in your church, why not sign up to our monthly Church update emails? Each month you'll get news, resources and inspiration around the shared goal of ending hunger together. Sign up at trussell.org.uk/join

Guarantee our Essentials



Your church can further play a part by joining Guarantee our Essentials, our UK-wide call for justice: trussell.org.uk/church-GOE

Install a donation box



If you haven't already got a regular donation box for your local food bank, you might want to set one up. Give a member of the church responsibility for taking donations regularly to the food bank. They could also share news from the food bank with the congregation, fostering a sense of partnership.

Church Ambassadors



Could you commit to do more for your local food bank, as a Church Ambassador? Ambassadors across the UK encourage their church to

support their local food bank, use their voice to call for change, and build community with people who have experience of hunger and poverty. To explore this please sign up at trussell.org.uk/join and make sure you complete the fields saying what your role is in your church.

Get in touch

To share your Harvest successes, or ask any questions, please email the team at churches@trussell.org.uk

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Harvest appeal



Help support your local food bank this Harvest

Donations will go towards providing food parcels for local individuals and families facing hardship. In gratitude for all the gifts God gives us, let's show compassion and give what we can.

Donate food



Donate an item or two from the shopping list, ensuring we can provide food for people facing hardship in our community.

Donate money



Help the food bank to cover the costs of storing and distributing food, as well as developing sustainable projects.

Shopping list

Tinned meat/fish

Tinned veg/fruit

Cooking sauces

Coffee

Milk (UHT or powdered)

Cereals

Fruit juice (long-life)

Urgently needed:

We're collecting food for:

Charity details: