

This issue's letter is from Revd Andrew Smith

Dear Friends,

I love this time of year. As we say farewell to what has been a pretty glorious summer, we turn towards Autumn and the first chilly nights of winter, to the “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.” Trees are ablaze with crimson and russet leaves, sunsets take on a coppery glow, and golden fields of corn have been harvested, ready for the colder crisp months ahead. Autumn is a season where abundant growth and verdant life reach their peak, and recently we have celebrated the fruits of our labours with joyful Harvest festivals and gatherings, giving thanks to God for the richness of his Creation and the many blessings he showers upon us. Each year I find the rhythm of the seasons deeply reassuring – the way that sowing leads to reaping, and that life continually renews itself in God’s good order. There is indeed much to be thankful for!

Yet I wonder how often we pause, in the midst of our daily routines, to notice those blessings and to give thanks for them. At Harvest we gather together as a community to offer our gratitude, but gratitude is not meant to be confined to one season or one service in the year. And one of the simplest and most profound ways we can cultivate thankful hearts is through the act of saying grace before meals.

It’s such a small thing, really – just a few words spoken before we tuck in – but it can transform an ordinary moment into a sacred one. Grace reminds us that food is not merely the product of human effort or supermarket shelves, but ultimately a gift from God’s hand. It reconnects us with the God who provides for our every need and invites us to receive His gifts with humility and joy. In a world where it’s all too easy to rush or take things for granted, pausing to give thanks centres us again in God’s abundance and care. At theological college, we were encouraged to say grace together before every meal, and so I got into pretty good habits during training. I wish I could say I’ve been conscientiously keeping it up, but unfortunately it’s a habit I really should work a bit harder on maintaining!

I sometimes hear people say that grace feels old-fashioned, or that it's difficult to find the right words. But grace doesn't need to be elaborate. A simple "Thank you, Lord, for this food, and for all your blessings" is enough. What matters is not eloquence, but the depth of gratitude in our hearts. And perhaps we might go further: why not say grace not just at Sunday lunch or family gatherings, but also in the quiet weekday meals, the hurried breakfasts, the midweek suppers? The more we practice gratitude, the more we discover how deeply God is present in the ordinary fabric of our lives. Let thanksgiving be a daily rhythm that draws us closer to God. And as we give thanks for the food on our tables, may our gratitude overflow into lives marked by generosity, kindness, and care for others – so that God's abundance may be shared by all.

With every blessing,

Andrew