

# Harvest 2019

## Informal service

Season for  
**change**

This worship service focuses on the four seasons, as a way to reflect on the seasons of change in our lives and the lives of others around the world. It requires some setting-up, and those taking part should be able to move around four parts of the worship space.

- Set up four 'seasons' in different areas of the worship space
- Decorate each area with the suggested items
- Include instructions for participation for each season – there is a printable set below.

### Winter

Your winter space could include snow clothing - warm coats, gloves, scarves - as well as a sled and/or a pair of skis. You could also add a duvet, some firewood and a few novels.

Provide tea lights on a fireproof surface and tapers to light them safely.

### Spring

For your spring area, you could include a seed tray, some organic compost, a bowl of organic seeds and gardening implements, as well as a few compostable wet wipes, for muddy hands.

(To find seeds for autumn sowing, you might find this or similar websites useful: <https://www.organiccatalogue.com/seeds/featured-seed-ranges/autumn-sowing-and-planting/>)

### Summer

Evoke feelings of summer with sunglasses, hats, buckets and spades, shorts and t-shirts, swimming costumes and sports equipment, plus a picnic blanket, pens and a basket of blank postcards or sticky notes.

### Autumn

Set out a collection of organic fruit and vegetables, a spade, some wellies and some compost. Arrange a school uniform, with school books and pens. Plus some organic bread and organic grape juice.

You may wish to organise some music to be played in the background, as those gathered engage with the four installations. After 20 minutes, ask the musicians to start to play and sing one of the songs from the opening worship, as a way of gathering the group together.

## Opening words

Welcome to worship. Today we are focusing on the seasons of change in our lives and the lives of others around the world.

After our opening worship, you will be invited to go on a journey, pausing at the four installations on display to help you reflect upon each of the four seasons.

Of course, not all parts of the Earth experience four seasons in the way we do. While we get to enjoy the colours of the autumn leaves, others are experiencing the first glimpses of spring.

Other places don't have autumn and spring: they have a wet season and a dry season. And in some places they have what is called the hunger season, when they hope they have enough food to last until the rains come again.

Different parts of the planet experience different seasons. We are all in different seasons of our own lives.

## Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

## Time of worship

*Suggested songs for sung worship:*

Desert Song (Hillsong – United)

Seasons (Hillsong – The Peace Project)

Seasons Change (United Pursuit – Simple Gospel)

Celebrate (Rend Collective – As Family We Go)

'God Whose Love Is Everywhere' (Timothy Dudley Smith, widely available including Ancient and Modern 091 and Complete Mission Praise 1177)

'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'

(Thomas Ken, Isaac Watts tune of Old Hundredth)

## Prayer

Jesus,  
we thank you that you are the same  
yesterday, today and forever,  
the one constant in our changing lives.  
Whatever season we find ourselves in,  
help us to follow you.

Give Sabbath rest to those who are feeling drained.

Plant seeds of hope in those who are feeling discouraged.

Nurture and refresh those who are feeling dry.

And reap a harvest of our full potential  
that we might better serve and glorify your name.

Guide us now as we spend time  
reflecting on the seasons of your wonderful creation  
and on the seasons of our lives  
and of your children around the world.  
In your name we pray,  
Amen.

## Sending instructions

Hear now this promise of God:  
'As long as the earth endures,  
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
summer and winter, day and night,  
shall not cease.' Genesis 8:22

Make your way to any one of the seasons. Then move clockwise to the next one when you are ready.

We have 20 minutes - so you can spend five minutes at each one if you so choose. If you feel drawn to spend more or less time at each one, that is OK too.

You may wish to sit in quiet prayer before or after you have completed the circuit, if you take less than 20 minutes.

Invite God to speak, inspire and change us in this season for change service.

We will gather back together when the musicians/band begin to sing.

## Time of sharing

What has God been saying to us?

Do you have a favourite season? Why?

What has changed as a result of our worship today?

Do we want or need to make a pledge to God? To someone else? To Christian Aid?

Give everyone who wants to a chance to speak, as time allows.

## Closing song

Song suggestion: 'God in such love for us lent us this planet' (Fred Pratt Green – widely available, including Complete Mission Praise 0832; Hymns & Psalms 343; Rejoice & Sing 085 and Singing the Faith 727)

## Season of Change blessing

(Saying the words in capitals and bold together)

May the God who woke earth out of its slumbers

**EVER CREATE NEW LIFE IN US**

May the God whose seed fell on a cross of death

**EVER CREATE NEW LIFE IN US**

May the God whose brightness is our path to hope

**EVER CREATE NEW LIFE IN US**

And may the God of harvest

**SEND US OUT AS PROPHETS**

To reap justice

Proclaiming that this year of the Lord

Is the Season for Change

**IN ALL WE SAY**

**IN ALL WE DO**

**IN ALL WE ARE**

**NOW AND FOREVER**

**AMEN**



# Winter

Season of rest and renewal  
leaves decompose,  
replenishing the ground with nutrients.

Season of storms and strong winds  
trees are stripped bare, left vulnerable,  
exposed to the harshness of the elements.

Season of death and decay  
when hope can seem a long way off  
and the only thing that grows is doubt.

How do you experience the season of winter? As time for duvet days by the fire with a good book or watching the forecast for signs of snow in anticipation of snowball fights and snowmen?

It can be a hard season for many, if they worry about affording fuel bills, or are afraid to go out because of slippery pavements and are left feeling isolated and alone. It is difficult to feel left out and isolated at any time of the year, and in any season of life.

Consider a time or season of your life when you have felt lonely, isolated or excluded. Bring those feelings to God in prayer, trusting that he is the 'Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.'  
(James 1:17)

Pray for those who are feeling excluded in our society today. And pray for those who are excluded from participating in society around the world. People like Mathi and Kasthuri, in the photo above

Mathi, Kasthuri and their friends – and millions more people in India – are from a social group called Dalits. Many other people think they are superior to Dalits.



They don't want to talk to them. They don't let them live in the same area. They don't think it's important to respect their rights. Sometimes, people are even violent to them.

Traditionally, Dalits are from poor communities; they are expected to do work that other people think is too hard or too unclean. Instead of being grateful, other people exclude Dalits from things they need. It's harder for them to get healthcare, go to school, or get a job that uses their real skills. It's wrong.

But Dalits are made to live separately from other people. If you never meet or speak to someone from another group, you probably have no idea what their life is like.

*Light a candle and pray for all experiencing the darkness of loneliness, isolation and exclusion in our community and around the world.*

# Spring

Was ever a thing so aptly named as the season of spring?

It is the launchpad for nature to burst into life, it suggests an energy and hope that many of us long for, would that we could all walk with a spring in our step!

Take a seed from the bowl and hold it in the palm of your hand.

Imagine its journey from seed to shoot and stalk, stretching always towards the light of life.

*Holding the seed in your hand, consider Selvi and Kasthuri's story*



Selvi, shown above with her mother, Kasthuri and Mathi on the the steps on their home, opened her home to Kasthuri and Mathi, a mother and child who had been excluded from society and from their community in India.

Kasthuri was born into India's Dalit community. She's faced prejudice all her life: no rights, no security, no voice. When she was ostracised by her family for marrying against their will, and later abandoned by her husband, she was excluded even from her own community.

Selvi is from the higher Thevar caste. 'Normally, someone from her community wouldn't even hand a cup of water to a Dalit person', says Kasthuri. Sharing a home with them would be unthinkable. But Selvi is determined to change the world around her. She explains, 'I want to break any form of slavery and exploitation of women, whether it is due to caste, class or gender.'

*Plant your seed in some compost in the seed tray, giving thanks for Selvi and the love she has planted by welcoming Kasthuri and Mathi into her life.*

## Prayer

God of change  
Your Spirit plants a seed in our hearts  
We know it is there  
But we cannot see it beneath the soil in which it grows,  
dark and warm.  
You nurture growth within us  
But the seed cannot be seen.

We give you thanks  
For spirit-filled seeds  
Like Selvi  
Willing to plant seeds of justice  
Not counting the cost  
Not knowing what the fruit will be  
Not poking at the soil impatiently.

Teach us to trust in you  
To do as you would have us  
And grant, in this season of change  
That we may become the fruit for which your  
creation longs.  
Amen.

# Summer

Summer is about long days and evenings. Barbeques and picnics – and, for those who can afford it, holidays.

In this season of change from summer to autumn, take a moment to remember the best of summer.

Take a postcard or sticky note from the basket. Write a prayer of gratitude for what you enjoyed most about summer. It could be the long rest, strawberries and cream, watching the flowers bloom, visiting relatives, playing late into the evening light.

Give thanks for summer, and for the times of flourishing in your life and our community. Give thanks for this time of flourishing in Kasthuri's life.



Kasthuri and her friends have formed a women's farming collective. They were given land by Kasthuri's friend Selvi, and are supported by Christian Aid – whose local partner provides training, seeds and help with getting the crops to market. Kasthuri and her friends are flourishing together!

'Alone, as a woman, I couldn't do this' says Kasthuri, 'but together, the five of us, we can be successful. If one of us is sick and cannot work, the others compensate, we work as a team, in solidarity... I have no words to explain how happy I am to be here with my son.'

## Prayer

Thank you, God of joy,  
For the summer sun  
For long days  
For evenings spent outside  
For picnics and barbeques  
For food foraged from the hedgerow  
For fun and games in the park  
For vibrant colours woken by the sun

Thank you, God of forgiveness,  
That you give us the opportunity to begin again  
Help us to live in your Seasons of Change  
And to be the fruit of your blessing.  
Amen.

# Autumn

Take an item of clearly marked organic food.  
Sit and reflect on the item.

What is its story?  
Where does it come from?  
Where might it end up?  
Is it helping to create a more just world?

Harvest time is coming.  
Five women chat and laugh as they tend rows of organic tomato plants, which are already loving the hot sunshine. Together they will gather and sell their fresh organic produce, helping them to break free from a life of extreme poverty in India.

Organic produce is not only healthier for those eating it  
It is also so much better for those harvesting it  
And for the earth that supplies it  
no longer filled with farming chemicals  
but tended and restored with reverence and care.

*On a small table, have a loaf of organic bread and a glass of organic grape juice.*

Taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Come – share God’s goodness  
Go – share God’s goodness with all creation

Take a little bread and a sip of juice, giving thanks for the goodness of all creation.

