



Alabaré Church Resources

Harvest Sermon Resources



Harvest, Seeds of Hope

Introduction

Within this pack several resources are offered to your church community:

- Page 1 Exploring the theme of nurture and its place in the mission of Alabaré
- Page 2 Exploring nurture through watching the film 'Grow your Own'.
- Page 5 Exploring the Harvest Biblical biblical texts in ways that connect with the film
- Page 6 Resources for toddlers & young children using the book 'Oliver's Vegetables'.
- Page 8 Liturgical resources for inclusive worship
- Pages 4 & 7 Related Alabaré case studies appear throughout the resource materials

Introduction to the theme of Nurture

Nurture, the space to grow with support, is a crucial element of each person's development. Similarly, nurturing crops is a crucial aspect of life that we remember especially when keeping the Harvest Festival.

At Alabaré providing opportunities for nurture is central to supporting people as they move towards a more fulfilling life and this includes our commitment to providing space for spiritual growth. The term 'Spirituality' is notoriously difficult to define. The Royal Society of Arts report, *Spiritualise*, is helpful in that it does not specifically define the term spirituality, yet gives it greater definition.

The report promotes the idea of touchstones. I interpret this to mean that when a person is occupied with something that brings greater depth to their experience then they are on common ground with or 'touching' spirituality. Three important spirituality touchstones are creativity, the natural world and community.

Those who are on the margins of society are often isolated. Creativity, community and a connection with the natural world all mitigate against such feelings of being alone. Being creative, entering into and engaging from within a community, together with experiencing the beauty in nature all contribute to creating hope.

In this resource pack I wish to place alongside the biblical resources for Harvest the resource of film. Exploring this media can flow from an exploration of the biblical texts or lead into an exploration of the texts. It may also tie in with use of the other resources introduced later.



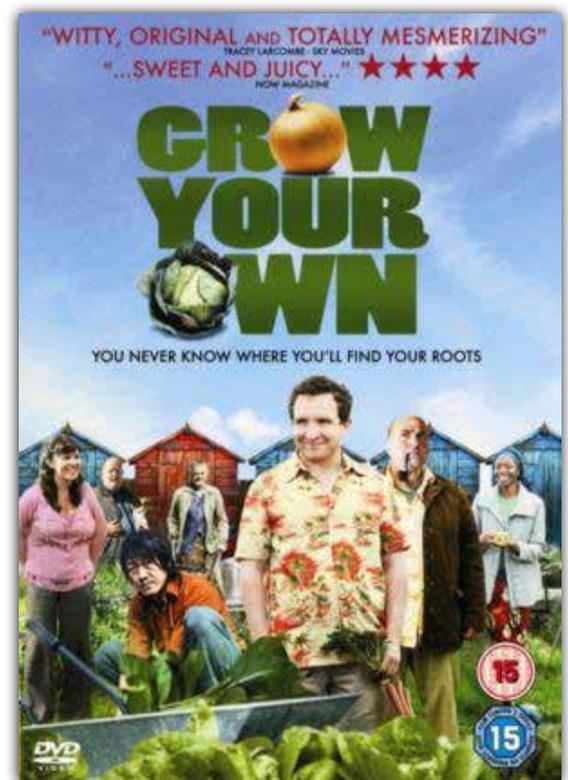
Investigating 'Grow Your Own'

I have chosen to investigate the film, 'Grow your Own' as it explores how nurture takes place within a community, in the context of the 'controlled' natural world. Creativity is present too in how crops are encouraged (the greenhouse growing of melons is one humorous demonstration of a creative approach). Through the reflection below and the use of questions I hope to stimulate thinking around nurture and harvest in your community.

The setting is an allotment on the edge of Bootle (Liverpool). It is a semi-industrial landscape that is quite bleak. We hear in the film that an allotment is a 'rustic oasis in the industrial desert'. Many have sought God in the desert within the biblical narrative and subsequently (eg the Desert Mothers and Fathers). In the film three displaced immigrant families, some seeking asylum, are placed there as a means of enriching their experience of contemporary British life. Here, people are invited out of the bewildering experience of being displaced.

Questions around belonging emerge in a way that will be familiar to many people who are on the margins of society. Miriam and her son George were trafficked and complain at being 'stared at, observed'. On the arrival of a new family from China with a silent father, Kung Sang, one of the white British allotment-holders comments, '[the] invasion's started'. Other terms that exacerbate feelings of exclusion are voiced: 'gypos' and 'good fences make good neighbours'. In the midst of this a lone voice cries, 'we should be welcoming these people'.

The solution amidst the growing diversity of ethnicity is to ensure a surface uniformity by insisting that all paint their allotment sheds the same colour. Rules are enforced that highlight the divide between those who belong in the community and those who are on the margins. When it comes to attending and voting at allotment meetings those who do not have British residency are not permitted to participate whilst decisions that directly affect them are made.



Questions for reflection

? Whose voice is not heard in your community? How much potential harvest do we miss out on as we don't welcome or nurture diversity within community? How might we remedy that?

There is a creative sharing of growing knowledge amongst the children. George shares his expertise around preparing the soil with the newly-arrived Chinese children. He generates hope through sharing his knowledge of cultivation. Whilst helping the children begin to work on their plot he notices their father is not very 'present' or engaged. He says, 'my mother was on tablets. This is much better.'

Further encouragement comes towards one of those in the indigenous community through a humorous scene that is built around the giving of medical advice. By chance one of those seeking asylum reveals that he is a doctor and assists one man who is suffering as he is taking too many, and more importantly, incorrect tablets.

? What is our pattern of supporting those on the margins? Do we seek out what we can do for them or do we ask how they can use their skills to help us to learn? How do we recognise and harvest the wisdom and gifts that children offer?

The mystery of planting and the wonder of new plants appearing is captured beautifully. Wisdom is shared, 'All you do is wait and see [...] it takes some time'. This idea of waiting and even 'letting go of control' captures how it is with developing a sense of new community and the sense of healing that comes from working in tandem with the natural world.

Kung Sang gradually reveals how he and his family arrived in the UK within a transport container. He is beset with grief for his wife died during the journey. He first buries her photo and necklace in his plot (of sacred ground?) and secondly some seeds from China. He nurtures the seeds with careful watering. At this point in the film we have a set of shots that indicate the passing of the days and nights and with sun and rain. As the seeds begin to grow into 'shark fin' melons (the flesh of the melon is a poor person's substitute for the delicacy of shark meat) he gradually begins to speak and become a father who cares for his children both physically and practically. Nurturing family affection is once again possible.

? How has an experience of preparing the soil, learning expertise from others and nurturing plants enriched your life? Is there a parallel to the nurture we give to plants and the nurture we offer and receive within the faith community? When we come alongside people in an activity how does this connect with the telling of personal stories?

Sharing hospitality is modelled by Miriam and George who, on winning a raffle, create an impromptu party. Whilst they are reprimanded for this by John, the allotment council chair person, it is a turning point within the sense of the allotment community growing closer. Likewise Kung Sang cooking shark fin melon soup is a time for grace and the marginalised offering hospitality to the other.

? What is your experience of community being built through the sharing of hospitality around home-grown food? How might this connect with harvest celebration? How often do you receive as well as give?

Kung Sang reveals that 'if you challenge authority, things get worse'. He is busy with confronting his past, especially his journey to England in a container. Within this section Kenny encourages Kung Sang with his desire to learn to read English.

Alabaré - Our stories

? How can you help support the nurture of people so that they can tell their stories and develop new skills? (or indeed be open to your own nurture?) How is the prophetic voice heard from the margins in your community?

As part of the Alabaré Life Conversations programme the home for Young People 'The Orchards', is a hub of communal creativity when it comes to gardening. At the rear of the property is a beautiful old-fashioned conservatory that in the late spring through to early summer is full of small pots showing tender green shoots. Here tomato plants are being nurtured. Eventually these will be sent out to the satellite homes of the service in Calne and Trowbridge.

The connection with nurturing plants and sharing the produce resonates with Alabaré's spirituality touchstones of connection with the natural world, creativity and community. It is whilst staff work alongside the Young People that conversations of depth about meaning in life happen.



Nestling in a protected hollow on the edges of the Bristol Channel is a communal garden space. Here young children play safely. Parents watch over them whilst getting out a picnic at one of the tables. In one corner there is a space for hens. It is here that one of the residents of Andrew House finds peace and tranquillity. The connection with the natural world in this space, caring for the hens and the regular harvesting of eggs that are then used in making meals has had a profound effect upon this person and his rehabilitation.

Linking the film with the Biblical Texts

I encourage you to connect film and biblical text and suggest some activities step by step below. The Harvest readings for this Year A of the Common Lectionary are:

- Deuteronomy 8. 7-18 and/or 28. 1-14
- Psalm 65
- 2 Corinthians 9. 6-end
- Luke 12. 16-30 and/or 17. 11-19
- Liturgical resources for inclusive worship

Activities

Stimulate your individual or communal learning.

1 Read one or more of the Harvest texts (try and include Psalm 65) and ask:

- What strikes me about this passage?
- Why was it written?
- How might it be important today?
- How might I respond?

2 You may wish to explore:

- What you enjoyed
- How you were challenged
- What new insight you have
- How you might live differently in light of your learning

3 • What connections have you made between text and film?

- How can your learning feed into local mission?



Story: Oliver's Vegetables

This is a tremendous story to use within a group for toddlers and young children at Harvest time. I suggest ways below to explore it and a way in which it might be enriched by activity.

Oliver only eats chips. His mother commissions his grandparents to include other vegetables in his diet. On a visit to his grandparents Oliver discovers all sorts of other home-grown vegetables and eats them with great delight.

'Are they good?' he is asked. 'No' he replies. 'They are delicious!'

The story is a wonderful exploration of identifying and tasting vegetables, learning how to prepare them, and a celebration of the variety of tastes available.

Exploration of the story

It would be good to ask a question, such as:

- 'I wonder where you are in this story?'
- 'What is it like to discover a new food?'
- 'Do you know any stories about Jesus and sharing food together?'

You might wish to re-identify the vegetables Oliver found and ate. You might have a blind feeling of each vegetable and a blind tasting with willing volunteers.

A visiting activity based around Oliver's Vegetables

Plan a group visit to a garden with a large vegetable patch or to the local allotments. Find a willing volunteer who can convey their love of gardening. Identify the vegetables from their leaves.

If possible buy some similar vegetables and enjoy preparing and eating them together. Choose from: carrots, spinach, rhubarb, cabbage, beetroot, peas, and of course potatoes-made into chips!

Making Connections:

- In your life.

For parents/carers who watch the film *Grow your Own*, and read *Oliver's Vegetables* alongside the biblical texts, the experiences are designed to connect. You may wish to explore:

How do I share and use my learning in my parenting/caring?

- With Alabaré Chaplaincy

Mini Case Studies

Cooking at the Andover Foyer

Work is done within Alabaré to teach adults how to cook nutritious meals on a limited budget and using food boxes. Alabaré promotes healthy eating as an essential element of wellbeing. Bev our chaplain in Andover does this with young people who attend the Little Junction Drop In. We hope that the young people have learned how to access food parcels, source food that is a staple for most kitchens, how to add to it local seasonal vegetables, menu planning, and the fun of cooking and eating together.



Chaplain Pierre served for many years with the Royal Navy, including a posting to the royal household. Pierre is a chef who still loves to feed people. He brings this skill to his chaplaincy work. Pierre regularly gathers colleagues and residents from a number of the Veterans Homes in South East Wales for a superb meal. Through this he builds community and creates a convivial space where people explore questions about life and faith. This is a specific way of working with Alabaré's Life Conversation materials that affords opportunity for spiritual nurture.

Oliver's Vegetables by Vivian French and Alison Bartlett

- Publisher: Hodder Children's Books (3 Aug. 1995)
- Language: English
- ISBN-10: 0340634790
- ISBN-13: 978-0340634790

Resources for an inclusive Harvest Liturgy

In this section are included several resources to enrich your public worship or to use within a toddler /children's group.

Opening prayer of praise

For food, glorious food

And those who provide it

Let us praise God

For the smell of freshly-baked bread

For butter and honey, jam and cream

Let us praise God

For colourful carrots and bendy bananas

For peppers, peanuts and perfect pears

Let us praise God

For sizzling sausages and bacon butties

For crunchy apples and seedless grapes

Let us praise God

For food, glorious food

And those who provide it

Let us praise God. Amen.



Psalm 65

Directions: this may be read slowly in short portions with images on a screen. It may then be re-read encouraging people to act out the words. It might be worthwhile practicing this beforehand. Following the reading the leader may ask: 'What does the psalm tell us?'

A Harvest Song of Praise

Thank you God for tiny seeds

To plant in the soil

Thank you God for sun and rain

Which help our seeds grow strong

Thank you God for plants that grow
To give us food to eat

Thank you God for fruit and veg
Which give us 'five-a-day'

Thank you God for all our food
Thank you scrumptious God.

Tune: 'Thank you Lord for this fine day' from Simply Harvest Pack copyright Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education which I have adapted. This may be used as an action song, where we become the seed that turns into the plant, which we then eat.

Musical Resources may be found at:

http://www.rscm.com/wp-content/uploads/ResourcesAndInfo/SBS/HarvestCreation_revJan13.pdf

If you have any questions about this pack or would like to find out more about Alabaré's work please email clt@alabare.co.uk - our team will be happy to help.