



## Pastor's Page



### “Harvest Crunch”

Two Suffolk farmers were comparing the merits of their respective scarecrows. “My scarecrow was so scary this year ...the first one said, “that the birds didn’t steal any seeds at all” “That’s nothing” the second farmer said “my scarecrow was so scary this year that the birds brought back the seed that they’d stolen last year!!” For many of us I suspect that the world of seeds and scarecrows, farms and fields is far removed from our everyday experience. Henry Alford’s harvest scene where “All is safely gathered in, ere winter storms begin” is beautiful poetry but hardly reality for supermarket city dwellers like us. So what should harvest mean to us today?

Firstly it is a timely reminder of God’s provision for our lives. As Psalm 145 says; *“The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing”*. In the bible, ancient Israel celebrated two harvests a year – the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) at the end of the wheat harvest and the feast of Tabernacles in autumn marking the end of the agricultural year when all was gathered in (Deuteronomy 16) Harvest is a time to thank God for all that he provides for us. If we have food in the refrigerator, clothes on our backs, a roof over our head, a place to sleep, we are richer than 75% of people in this world! Are we grateful to the Lord for all of this?

Secondly, harvest provides a poignant challenge to us to consider those who are less well off than we are. Farmers in our own country, many of whom earn less than £11,000 a year, struggle under difficult conditions and often lose out to supermarkets in selling their produce. People in the developing nations who are suffering due to current trade laws which, in Claire Shelley’s (Christian Aid) words, “are stacked against the poorer nations and prevent them from coming out of poverty” . Nations where harvests regularly fail, where water supply is polluted and disease is rife. How can we begin to make our harvest theirs too? Jonathan Langley the media development officer for BMS world mission explains how ‘development’ as opposed to charity is the way forward. Using the analogy that *“if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime”*. BMS are committed to training people in the developing world, setting up agricultural projects educating folk and supplying the expertise to assist people in running their own businesses. And all of this needs money and people to resource it, and this is where we can help. God cares for people, *body and soul*, their physical and spiritual health and so the Harvest Appeal today to help those in Burma is one way that we can get involved in this work and share the blessings that God has bestowed on us.

Thirdly harvest reminds us of the universal principle of sowing and reaping. We sow in hope and reap in joy. Perhaps now is the time for a spiritual harvest, a time to gather in all those who are ready to trust Christ. When carrying out his mission to preach the good news, Jesus (Matthew tells us) had compassion on the crowds observing that they were like “sheep without a shepherd”. Then turning to his disciples he said; **“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field”** (Matthew 9:37) Let’s pray this prayer recognizing that we are part of the answer.

8<sup>th</sup> October 2006