

<p><b>Theme &amp; Passage</b></p>	<p><b>Open Your Eyes</b> <b>John 4:27-38</b></p>
<p><b>Welcome</b></p>	<p>Last year's text for the year was 'Taste and see that the Lord is good' (Ps. 34:8). <i>How was this verse significant for you in 2017?</i></p> <p><i>What did God teach you in 2017?</i></p>
<p><b>Worship</b></p>	<p>Spend some time with our verse for the year ahead (John 4:35b) Lectio Divina style (read several times pausing for quiet reflection in between readings). Let this lead into a time of sharing and prayer.</p>
<p><b>Word/ Read &amp; Reflect</b></p>	<p>Now read the verse in context (verses given above).</p> <p><i>'Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest' Can you hear the excitement in Jesus' voice? The usual expectation in planting and reaping is a waiting period. It is true of a natural harvest, and usually true of other kinds of harvest. Most things take time to develop, to come to fruition. But look, it's all happening so fast. A conversation at a well, a testimony shared and BOOM - the crowds are flocking to Jesus, soon to be declaring their faith in Him as their Messiah. There are times and seasons like this. Usually we hear of it in days past (like the Wesleyan and Welsh revivals) or abroad (such as Muslims turning to Christ in the Middle East) and yet today there those in our nation who are discerning a harvest.</i></p> <p><i>Do you see signs of a Harvest in our day in the UK? What about in our own locality and places of work?</i></p> <p><i>How do you respond to this personally? Be honest. What anxieties do you have about it?</i></p> <p><i>What does Jesus ask the disciples to do concerning the Harvest (v 35b)? Why is this important for them and for us? How do we act on this?</i></p> <p>Jesus says that his food is to do the will of the one who sent him (v 34). Clearly he sees what is happening to the Samaritan folk as part of this, and he wants his disciples to share in his vision and work, and to be sustained in the work just as he is. <i>Consider how we are drawn into Christ's work and find our sustenance in it.</i></p> <p><i>How does a church prepare for and respond to a harvest situation? What might need to change for us? Give some time to thinking this through and sharing your ideas.</i></p>

	<p>Later in the conversation, Jesus states that those who reap are reaping what others have sown (v 38). This is true, even in a time when people are responding rapidly to the gospel. There is always the work that has gone before - sometimes decades or even centuries before. <i>Why is this an important truth to remember?</i></p>
<p><b>Working it out</b></p>	<p>Use the Covenant Prayer below to make your commitment to God in the year ahead as a group:</p> <p><i>Creating and redeeming God, we give you thanks and praise.</i></p> <p><i>Your covenant of grace was made for our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.</i></p> <p><i>We come this day to covenant with you and with companion disciples:</i></p> <p><i>To watch over each other and to walk together before you in ways known and still to be made known.</i></p> <p><i>Pour your Spirit upon us. Help us so to walk in your ways that the promises we make this day, and the life that we live together, may become an offering of love, our duty and delight truly glorifying to you - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.</i></p> <p><i>This day, we give ourselves again to the Lord and to each other</i></p> <p><i>to be bound together in fellowship, and to work together in the unity of the Spirit for the sake of God's mission.</i></p>