

1st October 2020

Harvest

**"I'll sing you my October song; oh, there is no song before it.
The words and tune are none of my own, for my joys and sorrows bore it."**

Mike Heron, October Song

The words above, from *The Incredible String Band*, the 1996 debut album by the band of the same name, came to mind as I turned my calendar today. For many churches, October contains a Sunday for a Harvest Festival. In a rural setting such as mine, it's not hard to see the fruits of the harvest – fields of grain, acres of potatoes, wide expanses of sprouts, kale and cabbage. In a fishing village, the harvest of the sea is obvious too.

In urban settings, however, a direct link to harvest isn't so obvious. So, back in the 1960s, a minister friend in Glasgow was attempting to make that link with a class of Primary School children. He showed them a packet of fish-fingers and was carefully explaining that fish-fingers were *actually* fish in the first place; the fish had been caught at sea; sometimes the seas could be stormy; the fishermen who bring us *this* harvest are very brave because their job can be dangerous. The children were enraptured. My friend warmed to his theme. "Can you think of anyone else whose work is dangerous?" he enquired. A hand shot up. "Yes," he asked an enthusiastic child, "and who do you think has a dangerous job?" Quick as a flash the response came ... "Injuns! 'Cos they're always getting shot by cowboys!"

My friend swiftly moved on from Wild West movies to the jobs of miners, farmers, fruit-pickers, truck-drivers, factory-workers, shopkeepers and a host of others who work hard on our behalf, and some who have to cope with dangers to do so. A class of city children got to appreciate harvest in a different way, just as many of us have been doing during this pandemic, realising that there are many more people – our harvesters – working on our behalf than we might ever have thought possible.

This October, if we're not in our churches as normal to celebrate harvest, let's hope we can still sing an October song, and give thanks for the wonder of God's world and the workers who, experiencing Mike Heron's "joys and sorrows", bring in a harvest for us all.

A prayer for today

Creator God, in the joys and sorrows of our world, we pause and give thanks. Amen

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