

Exodus 23:14-17 – HARVEST TALK

1. Our own harvest festival has its Jewish roots in the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) celebrated in September or October. At this, families would build shelters out of greenery and branches, decorated with flowers, to remember that God had sheltered them and kept them safe on their travels in the desert. (SLIDE – modern tabernacle)

We're now going to build a shelter together to remind us of God's sheltering love during the past year and his promise to continue to be our refuge in the year ahead. (INVITE KIDS TO HELP - SLIDE)

Why have we done this? As we said, the shelter reminds us of God's sheltering love during the past year and his promise to continue to be our refuge in the year ahead. God has promised never to let us go or give up on us. He is our shelter.

Our Lord, in all generations you have been our home (Psalm 90:1, CEV).

Psalms 113 - 118 (the Hallel) are chanted during the days of the Feast of Tabernacles, climaxing in the 'great Hosanna' of praise, Psalm 117 which we're now going to do now (SLIDE/BIBLE p616 – side-by-side – TWICE)

Let's keep praising God by singing [619 Praise God from whom...](#) (explain)

2. So let's return to our shelter – we've made a good start, but we need to fill it! To do this we're going to think about the 2nd of the 3 Jewish festivals: the start of harvest was celebrated at the festival which Christians call Pentecost, when the first fruits of the land were offered to God in thanksgiving.

We're now going to fill the central 'harvest shelter' with a selection of different sorts of fruits to remind ourselves of the firstfruits which God's people offered at Pentecost. But we'll expand the definition of 'fruit' to cover any tinned fruit as well as tinned veg, even baked beans. So anyone who has any of these items, please come up and place these in the shelter... (INVITE PEOPLE UP: MUSIC IN BG) (SLIDE – 'Shelter')

Putting all this fruit reminds us that fruit has another meaning in the Christian life. What happened at Pentecost? (ASK) And what does the Holy Spirit help us to be like? (ASK)

God longs to see a harvest of good things in our lives and has given us the Holy Spirit to make this possible. The fruit of God's Holy Spirit is (ASK) love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22 – **SLIDE**)

Take a moment to think – which of these fruit would you like to grow more of?

3. Let's now think of our final harvest festival – the first one of the year, in fact. At Passover a sheaf of barley was cut as the first sign of the coming harvest and it became a 'cereal offering to the Lord'.

So now we're going to complete our 'harvest shelter' by adding in items linked to grain crops such as cereals, pasta, bread, and so on. This reminds us of the central place that bread still holds in our lives today and also that Jesus used this as an important picture of himself. What did Jesus say about himself to do with bread? (ASK)

[Jesus said:] I am the bread that gives life! (John 6:35 – **SLIDE**).

INVITE PEOPLE UP, MUSIC IN BG

As Christians this particular part of our 'harvest shelter' reminds us of Jesus and how he allowed himself on the cross to be broken, like bread, for us so that God could open up the way to mend a broken world. (**SLIDE** – matzos)

To remember this we're going to share some Passover bread (TAKE FROM SHELTER) – anyone know what this is called? Matzo. We're going to share this together, to celebrate God's goodness in giving Jesus - a vital part of this harvest thanksgiving service.

Thank you Jesus that you are the bread of life for us – HAND OUT BOWLS

4. To finish our talk, we're going to join in a harvest Psalm (67). On the final day of the Sukkot celebration (the Feast of Tabernacles), people used to make processions around the synagogue. You can walk round later, but we're going to celebrate instead by singing the words of Psalm 67 set to the tune of London's burning, so we can sing it in the round (explain): **SLIDES**

God has blessed us; God has blessed us
Blessed the whole earth; blessed the whole earth
Sing praise; sing praise
Learn of God's love; learn of God's love

God will guide us; God will guide us
Put all things right; put all things right
Sing praise; sing praise
Celebrate God; celebrate God

God is faithful; God is faithful
Gives the Harvest; gives the Harvest
Sing praise; sing praise
Worship God now, all his people

