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**DEVON CHURCHES RURAL FORUM WORKSHOP Saturday 12th October 2019**

**A Year of Rural Worship: God in Farm, Field and Village.**

**Traditional Farming Festivals**

**January**

**Plough Sunday**

Plough Sunday is the time to celebrate the long hours of tilling and preparing before the seed can be sown. It is a celebration of the hard labour of the winter feeding of cattle and sheep and of milking in freezing parlours. Beyond that it is the time to celebrate the mystery of land and soil itself and all that keeps it in good heart. It is the festival of human labour. Associated with the festival are the tools of our work: the plough, the spade, the milking churn, the feed bucket and the muck fork. In medieval times the communal plough was often kept in church. At the end of the Christmas season when there was no work, and therefore no wages nor free meals, the ploughmen would haul the plough around the parish begging for silver and threatening to plough up the garden of any who refused!

***Service Suggestion can be found on the internet***

**Wassail**

Wassail means ‘Be in Good Health!’.

Traditionally, the wassail is celebrated on the 12th night after Christmas.

Celebrating wassail in the local orchard involves reciting incantations and singing to the trees to promote a good harvest for the coming year.

There are plenty of resources on the internet.

**February**

**Candlemass**

The spring season is a time to celebrate childlike innocence, exploring, wonder, the asking of questions and the pursuit of truth and justice.

It is also a time to remember and give thanks for those who are our spiritual midwives, nurturers and mentors.

Be present to the moment, looking for God in all things.

Practice gratitude and appreciation, realising our dependence on God’s goodness. It can also be a time for fasting as part of spiritual preparation for the cosmic events of Easter.

**Activity: Wandering**

Rediscover delight and enchantment in God’s creation by immersing all your senses in the experience of wandering.

Travel somewhere natural where you can spend half or a full day on your own.

Wander or walk with no clear destination; to where the mood takes you, where inspiration leads.

Be playful, present, alert

Leave unnecessary gadgets behind.

Dress in quiet, natural fabrics.

See if you can fast for this period

Don’t speak unless spoken to by something you encounter. You’ll know what I mean if you keep yourself open to the possibility.

Then have a conversation with it.

Begin with a walking exercise where you give your full attention to your sense of sight, hearing and touch in turn. Give about 10 minutes to each.

Find a spot sometime during your wandering to just sit still for ages.

Be aware of the bird language around you. Not to identify the bird species but to listen to the bird conversation. Is it just background chatter? Can you hear young calling for food, males fighting over territory? Can you hear alarm calls spreading as you approach, telling other animals that you are coming – or better still, if you are quiet enough, you might be aware of birds highlighting other animals moving in the landscape.

If at any time you are captured by an awe-inspiring view or experience, hold the moment and be present.

It is good practice to tell the story of your day or to journal when you get back

**May**

**Rogation Sunday**

It was originally about asking God (Latin - ***rogare*** - to ask) to bless the crops. Rogation Days are the three weekdays before Ascension Day, but many churches have observed Rogation on the preceding Sunday.

Traditionally a Rogationtide service is held outside. Our services are often too static, and isolated from the environment. So it is good to move outside, into God’s creation. And such a service is good for all ages – the children especially will love it.

See web site: <https://greenchristian.org.uk/a-service-for-rogantiontide-booklet/>

**August**

**Lammas First Fruits of the Harvest**

Lammas –the old harvest festival of Lammas, loaf mass, when the first bread was baked from the beginning of the harvest

The autumn season is the time of midlife, of responsibility and maturity. The time of harvest when we reap what we have sown.

As the leaves fall we realise how little we can be sure of, we face our aging and have a midlife crisis. The cold nights and darkening of the year are accompanied by a dark night of the soul when we can feel God is nowhere to be found. Yet even when the end is not in sight it is a time for going on with our uncertainties and learning a new trust.

**IDEAS**

* Corn Dolly making. Make a corn wheel
* Short Lammas service and prayers for a good harvest season (See Order of Service Sheet)
* Break bread and drink wine with friends.
* Bake bread – different types.
* Bake a wheat sheaf loaf.
* Decorate the altar and house with grains such as barley, oats and wheat -- also fruits and veggies.
* Begin gathering and drying herbs, flower, grains or seeds.
* Make oils now with fresh herbs.
* Bless your growing gardens.
* Harvest foods from your garden (or visit a farmer’s market for a fresh, local harvest).
* If your garden is abundant, share the harvest with friends, or with a food bank.

**Childrens Activities:**

* Bake bread- display at harvest festival
* Take the kids for a tour of a bakery (call ahead, of course, and make arrangements).
* Visit a “pick your own” farm. Blueberries are ripe this time of year and are a traditional Lammas food! Plus, the kids will love berry picking.
* Start brewing a batch of beer or mead.
* Make a harvest collage. Includes seeds, pictures of bread and corn. Create a prayer or chant to write on the page.
* Make a seed or corn necklace.
* Educate yourself on honeybees, their declining numbers, and why they are so very important to future harvests.
* Find a historical farm that you can tour. Explain to your kids where food really comes from!
* Share your harvest with the animals that share our earth.

**Remember LOAF** – **L**ocally produced, **O**rganically grown, **A**nimal friendly, **F**airly Traded

**September – the bounty of God’s provision**

**Harvest**

**Green Communion – A Rocha**

Green Communion is a communion service that celebrates the wonder of God’s earth. It is an opportunity to express our gratitude for it through songs, prayers and praise and to recognise our responsibility to care for it. See A Rocha web site.

**October**

**National Apple Day (21st October)**

Apple Day is a celebration and demonstration of the diversity and richness of nature, as well as a stimulus and a sign to the fact that we are able to influence the changes taking place around us.

This annual event, dedicated to apples, orchards, and local attractions is celebrated throughout England on one of the October weekends.

Look out for locally organised Apple Days e.g. National Trust, Community Orchard Groups.