




An outdoor, midweek, celebration of harvest

## The Gift

for Creation Time 2012



Photo: Solar panels on Caloundra Uniting Church, Queensland, Australia

Photo of wind farm: [Chrishna](#) 

*This resource is suitable for any ecumenical gathering of about 20 or 30 people. It draws inspiration from the ancient Feast of Tabernacles. It connects to [Re-imagining harvest](#), a new form of Harvest Festival service and possible eight day community event (part of CTBI's 2011 Creation Time resources).*

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Choose an outdoor meeting place, known to your people, preferably where there is a diversity of plants and wildlife.

Advertise the event for a time around 5/6pm on a suitable weekday in August/September (possibly as a weekday event within the *Re-imagining Harvest* 8 day festival).

Some volunteers arrive earlier in the day, erect a 'shelter' and prepare a barbecue.

The shelter can be made of natural materials like a bender made of willow, or could be a tent or gazebo which is decorated with natural materials, like branches, fruit, berries etc. The shelter does not have to hold all the people but can be symbolic.

### The event

The barbecue is lit well before people arrive, so that it is hot to receive food at the starting time.

People bring food for the event, together with one special 'gift', which is something they have made or grown and which they will give to someone else. (Organisers may find it helpful to have some spare gifts available for people who have come without anything).

While food is cooking the people are invited to **Share the Gift** as follows:

Music plays, preferably live and acoustic, but without singing. People stand or sit in a circle with the gifts they have brought.

One person selects a person to receive the gift they have brought and simply walks slowly across the circle and hands it to them in silence. The recipient takes the gift and then gives their own gift to another person in the same way. As each person gives their gift so they leave the circle. This continues until all the gifts are given (the last person can give theirs to the first person who returns to the circle for this purpose.)

### When the giving is complete this prayer is said by a leader

*O God, we offer these gifts to one another as a token of your great gift to us in creation. We thank you for the sun that rises faithfully each day, for the rain that nourishes the soil and the amazing beauty and complexity of the life that surrounds us and on which we depend. Thank you for all those who work the land, toiling with you, that we might share in your riches and sustain our bodies. We present ourselves, creatures of earth, made in the image of God and ask this day that we might always remember your graciousness to us. Amen.*



A reading, song or other prayers of thanksgiving for creation can be used at the end of this as required. It could then lead to a time of folk dancing, if there is a caller available, and eating from the barbecue, and to any or all of the following activities:

- **Working clay** – particularly appropriate for including children. Invite people to work clay on the theme of creation, create a scene together
- **Storytelling** – a group of 5/6 people forms, moves into a space, and each is invited to tell a short story or anecdote about ‘when I was 9’
- **Music** – if possible, invite someone who plays an acoustic instrument to contribute to the evening. Have one or two ‘spots’ where people listen and appreciate the music.
- **Meditative walk** - invite people to walk around the perimeter of the site slowly and quietly, taking time to observe and reflect on the natural world. Suggest that some might like to do this barefoot as a way of connecting with the earth. Foot-washing might be appropriate at the end.

The evening might culminate as dusk falls with people standing together and joining in this prayer, to be said slowly with people moving appropriately at each verse.

### **The Prayer of Six Directions**

*We face East  
The place of the rising sun  
New life in our hearts  
And hope for the future*

*We turn South  
To the light  
That warms our homes  
And nurtures the plants*

*We turn West  
Place of the going down,  
Evening  
And the friends that gather*

*We turn North  
To the cold and the ice  
The testing of our hearts  
And the refinement of the soil*

*We bend down to touch the earth  
Cradling in our fingers  
The earth  
Whose intricate life sustains us*

*We reach up to the sky  
In a cry to God  
Creator of the heavens and the earth  
Let there be peace*



## Reading

This reading can be used if required

Psalm 65 v1a, 9-13 Good News Bible:

*O God, it is right for us to praise you...  
You show your care for the land by sending rain;  
you make it rich and fertile.  
You fill the streams with water;  
you provide the earth with crops.  
This is how you do it:  
you send abundant rain on the ploughed fields  
and soak them with water;  
you soften the soil with showers  
and cause the young plants to grow.  
What a rich harvest your goodness provides!  
Wherever you go there is plenty.  
The pastures are filled with flocks;  
the hillsides are full of joy.  
The fields are covered with sheep;  
the valleys are full of wheat.  
Everything shouts and sings for joy.*

## Historical note on the Feast of Tabernacles:

This ancient Hebrew feast came to form one of the three great occasions when all the people went up to Jerusalem for celebration. Its origins probably lie in the gathering of the fruit harvest (it is also called the feast of 'ingathering' - see Exodus 23 v16) when all the people would go out to the fields and camp outside under shelters as they worked together on the harvest. Later the feast also became overlaid with remembrance of the wilderness wandering (Leviticus 23 v42-43) and with the reading of the law (Deuteronomy 31 v10-13, Nehemiah 8). As a result it became the greatest feast of the year. This celebration recalls the Feast of Tabernacles in the building of a shelter, the sharing of food and the sense of celebration at harvest time.

## Further resources

Further resources for prayers and songs can be found at [www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/creationtime) (Additional Resources), at <http://seasonofcreation.com> . See also the full [Re-imagining harvest](#) resource.