

A HARVEST RESOURCE FOR CHURCHES

# TRUSSELL TABLES



If you love the idea of doing more around poverty and justice in your church why not consider recruiting or appointing a Trussell Church Ambassador volunteer who can take the lead in this area.

To find out more, including details of the training and support on offer from the Trussell Trust for these volunteers, please visit our website:

[trusselltrust.org/church-ambassador](https://trusselltrust.org/church-ambassador)

## FOREWORD

**We invite your church to make this Harvest a time of celebration and gratitude that includes people from all backgrounds, particularly people facing financial hardship.**

Churches play a key role in creating a more just and equal society, in which people do not have to turn to food banks to get the essentials they need. Churches can be places where everyone finds a home and we recognise the dignity of every human, made in the image of God.

There is a strong link between hunger and social isolation, so how can your church support people experiencing hardship at Harvest time and beyond?

Trestle tables are often used in many ways across the life of a church community, particularly to share food. This resource includes ideas for turning your trestle tables into a 'Trussell table' as part of your celebrations, as well as inspiring your congregation and guests to use their collective voice to call for change. **Remember there may be people in your church Harvest services who are experiencing hunger and**



# 1 IN 4

referred to our food banks experience severe social isolation, being in touch with people socially only once a month, or never.

**can't afford the essentials. So do plan how you will make immediate support available and accessible, or put people in touch with food banks or other local organisations.**

These ideas have been developed alongside people with lived experience of hunger and poverty, as well as together with church leaders. If you want any help to adapt these resources or to be put in contact with your local food bank, **please email us at [churches@trusselltrust.org](mailto:churches@trusselltrust.org). We would love to hear from you.**

## HARVEST IDEAS FOR CHURCHES

# TRUSSELL TABLES



### IDEAS BASED ON THE TIME YOU HAVE TO PREPARE

We know how busy church life can be and so the ideas below are designed to make use of the time you have available to prepare for your Harvest celebration:

1



2



3



PICK ONE

1

**WE HAVE 15 MINUTES**

to prepare...

a food bank collection table

2

**WE HAVE 1-2 HOURS**

to prepare...

a shared Harvest meal for your church community

3

**WE HAVE 4-5 HOURS**

to prepare...

host an afternoon of shared cooking and eating together with your wider community





15  
MINS

# FOOD BANK COLLECTION TABLE



## FOOD BANK COLLECTION TABLE TIPS:

- 1** Ask your local food bank **what items they need most** this Harvest and share this with your church community ahead of the service.
- 2** You could **decorate the table** with a table cloth, flowers or candles to symbolise how valued these donations are.
- 3** Arrange a **donation bag swap** during the service:
  - Give your church community bags to bring their Harvest donations in.
  - Invite people to place their bags together at the back of the church room at the start of the service.
  - Have a designated volunteer discreetly mix up the items in the bags so no bag is recognisable, making sure some bags hold a lot and some less. This is important so no one feels self-conscious about the amount they can donate.
  - During the service invite people to collect a bag and place the contents on the food bank collection table.
  - Invite people to reflect on the different amounts we each can give. There will be people in our community who can't give as much, but everyone has been generous. You might want to use the parable of the widow's mite in Luke 21:1-4 as part of this reflection, which not only pulls out the theme of the widow's generosity but also points to the injustice of the system being perpetuated by people with power.
- 4** During the service you could should one of Trussell Trust's Harvest video resources and encourage people to reflect on the biblical themes of justice and compassion. These can be downloaded at: [www.trusselltrust.org/harvest-videos](http://www.trusselltrust.org/harvest-videos). In response, you could ask people to consider the following question: 'Whilst donating food to people in need demonstrates our compassion as a church community, how might we use our collective voice to call for justice?'

Set up a food bank collection table to sit pride of place at the front of your church venue during your Harvest service.

This Trussell Table will help provide a focal point for your Harvest celebrations acting as a physical reminder of our gratitude to God for His provision as you collect offerings for your local food bank. to include people, and for opportunities to build new relationships and deepen existing ones.

KEY  
ASK

In September, we'll be launching a petition which will call on the UK government to guarantee our essentials and ensure the basic rate of Universal Credit covers our core costs such as food and bills.

**Ask your congregation to add their names here when it's live**

– if enough of us take action, we can demonstrate to MPs that we will not stand by as people in our society are going without the essentials and our collective voice will be impossible to ignore.

**Print the Guarantee our Essentials QR and link poster in the Next Steps section for people to scan and add their names to this petition.** (This QR and link will not be live until early September).

- 5** Once donations have been placed onto your food bank collection table you could use one of the Harvest prayers included at the end of this resource.

1-2  
HOURS

# SHARED HARVEST MEAL



## SHARED HARVEST MEAL TIPS:

**1** Share the preparation of the meal amongst your church community. Write a list of the jobs that need to be done and give everyone the dignity of asking them how they would like to help rather than making any assumptions.

**2** You could arrange the meal as a **bring and share** where people can bring their own cultural or family dishes.

**3** Make sure you have **considered the appropriate health and safety requirements** for hosting a shared meal. This might include food safety certification, public liability insurance, as well as a range of food options to cover dietary requirements and allergies. If you want more information or guidance on health and safety you may wish to visit Ecclesiastical's website for support here: [www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-health-and-safety/](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-health-and-safety/)

Print out the **Conversation Starter resource** from the Trussell Trust website and include these on your tables to help spark conversations about food banks and hunger in the UK.

[www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/conversation-starters/](http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/conversation-starters/)

**4** These conversation starter cards will help guests around your table to:

- Discover stories from people who have used a food bank.
- Find out the facts about food bank need.
- Reflect on how the cost of living is pushing people deeper into hardship.

**5** Consider making a shared meal a quarterly or monthly event in your church? 26% of people referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network are experiencing severe social isolation. Bringing people together over a shared meal can help create a sense of community and belonging.

Plan a shared Harvest meal as part of your celebrations. Eating together around the table is about more than just sustenance, it's about connection, inclusion and community.

Think about people who might not usually be included around your table as a church community and how you might extend an invite to them. This might include people on the edge of church life or participants of your community projects throughout the week.

KEY  
ASK

Ask the people sharing your meal to **sign the petition** to help guarantee our essentials.

Print the Guarantee our Essentials QR and link poster in the Next Steps section for people to scan and add their names to this petition. (This QR and link will not be live until early September).

When

People are going without

It's time to

**GUARANTEE  
OUR ESSENTIALS**

the trussell trust / JRF





4-5  
HOURS

# COMMUNITY COOKING EVENT



This might be an event you could host with other churches in your area, or a Churches Together group. Joining together will help practically, and the more churches and community groups represented will also encourage civic leaders to attend.

Everyone invited should take part in preparing and serving the meal together. This can help to break down barriers and stereotypes, creating space for people to engage and belong together.

## COMMUNITY COOKING EVENT TIPS:

**1** Many of the tips for the shorter **Shared Harvest Meal** will be useful here. Remember to make sure you have **considered the appropriate health and safety requirements** for hosting a shared meal (see the Shared Harvest Meal tips). More information and guidance on health and safety is available on Ecclesiastical's website: [www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-health-and-safety/](http://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-health-and-safety/)

**2** Think about **capturing stories** (anonymously) and **themes of conversations**. A meal like this can trigger impactful conversations that could lead to change, so make sure there are ways for people to record important elements of people's stories, ideas and suggestions. Having someone responsible for this capturing can help. You could have a variety of creative methods, post-its or postcard art, and gather ideas in one place like a prayer tree or map of your area. You could set up a video blog area or photo booth to capture people and important words or ideas.

**3** Think about **where you can advertise this event**. Once community and civic leaders are committed to attending, can they advertise the meal in their venues and buildings i.e. the doctor's surgery?

**4** Suggested **running order** for the event:

- Welcome and introductions over teas, coffee and squash.
- Icebreaker to get people mixed up and talking (ask people to get into pairs and share how they felt arriving, then into bigger groups of 4-5 five people and find and 3 things in common with each other).

Use Harvest as an opportunity to host your wider community for an afternoon of shared cooking and eating together.

Think how you might connect with people in your local area who may be facing hunger and social isolation. Your local food bank might have suggestions of people who would welcome an invitation. You could also invite civic leaders, such as elected officials, police officers, head teachers, along to take part.

- Split into teams to prepare food, tables etc.
- Eat main course on one table, swap for pudding.
- If someone is facilitating capturing themes of conversations, have them gather themes together for a reflection at the end.
- Thank you, ending prayer/blessing and invite to the next event (see below).

**5** At the end of the event you may wish to **get a commitment from your congregation, community, and civic partners** to make this gathering a bi-annual event where the community comes together to listen to one another and discuss local issues. If these larger community meals continue, consider weaving into them other important events that can bring people together, such as Easter or bank holidays. Make sure you include your local food bank in any future plans.

# HARVEST PRAYERS



## **O LORD,**

what a variety of things you have made!  
In wisdom you have made them all.  
The earth is full of your creatures.  
They all depend on you to give them food as they need it.  
When you supply it, they gather it.  
You open your hand to feed them,  
and they are richly satisfied.  
This Harvest, we thank you O Lord for every provision.  
We pray for those who go without,  
That in your mercy you may provide.  
And when we have plenty, help us to share with those in need.  
O LORD of the Harvest we praise you  
And it is in Your Name we pray,

Amen!

## **GOD OUR FATHER,**

During this season of Harvest we pray for all of those in our country and in our local community who are facing hunger at this time.  
We thank you for the work of the food bank network. May you bless and sustain all those who respond in acts of loving service to the needs of their local communities.

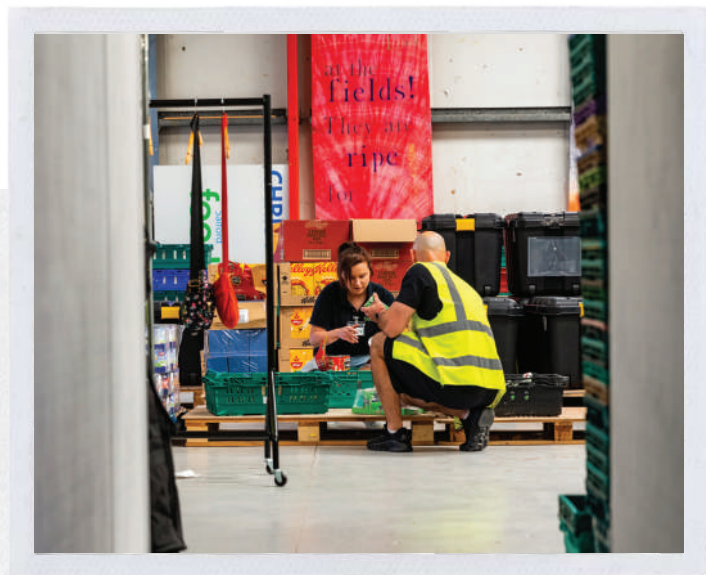
We know Lord that you are a God of justice. May your Spirit guide us then, to have a voice to call for, and the strength to take action for a country without the need for food banks.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen.



# NEXT STEPS



We are incredibly grateful for your support and donations this Harvest. Ongoing support from churches like yours is vital in helping us in the fight against hunger and poverty locally. Together we can end the need for food banks in our area.

Here are some other ideas for how your church can join us in this mission:

## SET UP A REGULAR DONATION BOX

If you haven't already got a regular donation box for your local food bank, you might want to consider setting one up:

- Ask a member of your congregation to take responsibility for organising this and taking the donations regularly to the food bank. They could also share news from the food bank with the congregation and make appeals for donations.
- You could commit to sponsoring one particular item that the food bank particularly needs, and ask your congregation to donate this. For example, could you be a 'Juice church' or a 'Milk church'. Building a theme to the donations might encourage people in your church to give and build a sense of partnership with your food bank into the future.

## APPOINT A TRUSSELL CHURCH AMBASSADOR

Trussell Church Ambassadors are volunteers who can help your church congregation to continue to engage with the injustice of hunger and poverty in your community and the wider UK. They will receive training, support and resources from the Trussell Trust national team and empower your congregation to:

- Support your local food bank
- Use their voice to call for change
- Build community with people who have experience of hunger and poverty

To find out more, including details of the training and support on offer from the Trussell Trust for these volunteers, please visit our website: [trusselltrust.org/church-ambassador](https://trusselltrust.org/church-ambassador)

## SIGN UP FOR MORE CHURCH RESOURCES

Visit the Trussell Trust website to sign up for news, events and resources especially for churches as together we seek to end the need for food banks: [trusselltrust.org/church-updates](https://trusselltrust.org/church-updates)

Or get in touch via email at: [churches@trusselltrust.org](mailto:churches@trusselltrust.org)



# GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS

## HELP GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS. UNIVERSAL CREDIT DOESN'T ADD UP.

Universal Credit should support any one of us when we face hard times, but the shortfall between the support it provides and our living costs is forcing people to go without essentials and pushing people to food banks.

This isn't right, which is why we're calling on the UK government to ensure that the basic rate of Universal Credit covers our core costs such as food and bills.

We need your help.

In September, we'll be launching a petition which will call on the UK government to guarantee our essentials, ensuring the basic rate of Universal Credit covers our core costs.

### IF YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE:

Please add your name to the petition. If enough of us take action, we can demonstrate to MPs that we will not stand by as people in our society are going without the essentials and our collective voice will be impossible to ignore.

### IF YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES:

When the petition is live, share the petition during your church notices, and on social media, urging your followers to take action to help guarantee our essentials.

### IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR:

Run our receipt activity with your congregation or community group to build understanding and empathy of what it's like to go without the essentials because you do not have enough income. Ask your food bank for the materials for this activity.

Visit [trusselltrust.org/harvest](https://trusselltrust.org/harvest) and download the campaign QR poster

