



## Harvest Thanksgiving 2024

Dear Friends,

My late cousin Bob took this amazing photo from his farm, looking west across the fields to my childhood home, Poplar Place. For me, this image evokes the sound of a breeze rustling the leaves, the smell of freshly cut hay, the taste of sun-kissed homegrown vegetables, the feel of a calf's tongue licking my fingers, and the sight of fluffy clouds dancing across sky. Only in hindsight do I realize how very rich we were, despite not having much money.

Besides doing the basic chores, my parents never worked on Sunday. Instead, after the morning chores, breakfast and clean up, my dad would polish his shoes, dress in a jacket and tie, and put some money in an envelope. My mom would fuss with my hair, make sure that we all looked put together, and get us out the door to church. The afternoon would include a nap and then a drive through the countryside, perhaps with a stop to visit some folks. And after dinner and chores, we would once again return to church for Evensong.

I was often the only child there, and I loved it. The farmers and townspeople all kneeling in the dimly lit church made a huge impression on me. Whether it was a good or bad year in farming or business, unfailingly the people gathered, offered their thanks, prayed for their needs, and donated their money. "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we give thee" was both an attitude and an action – gratitude turned into generosity.

Christ Church Cathedral is rich in its long heritage, beautiful sacred space, welcoming community, amazing music, meaningful liturgy, thoughtful preaching, gentle pastoral care, strong support of community ministries, and so much more. And we are spending the generosity of generations who have gone before us to rebuild the steps and close the financial gap between what we financially require and what we receive in donations. This action is not sustainable.

When my dad put money in an envelope every Sunday, in both lean or prosperous times, he was giving thanks for all God's blessings and ensuring that my generation, and the ones to come after me, would experience the riches of the church that had nurtured his faith – a lesson that I learned and still follow.

May Harvest Thanksgiving be an opportunity for us to reflect with gratitude on our riches, remember those who have built the structures that support our faith, and be generous in all ways so that those who come after us may also be blessed.

With deep gratitude and in Christ's love,

The Very Reverend Beth Bretzlaff  
Dean