FROM OUR MINISTER

Dear Friends,

Both our current manse and the last one we lived in were built on former farmland. The road name here gives it away. And our previous one was in a road that was built on farmland in the 1960s, where our old circuit bought one of the plots and specified how the house was to be built, so that it conformed to Methodist rules for manses.

Nevertheless, I feel detached from farms and farming – well, apart from all the creepy-crawlies that visit the current house, which some locals have told me are a sign of the land's previous use!

And, of course, I'm a city boy at heart. Born and raised in London, studied in Bristol and Manchester. I haven't exactly lived close to the means of food production, only to its sale and consumption. My parents remembered some farmland in our part of London when they were young, but the idea seems absurd to me. By all means judge whether it is wise to be so removed from the process of production, but my situation is echoed by millions today.

And it Is curious to me when I drive through Rogate and Trotton to Midhurst and witness the fields being harvested. Although in that area, you could be forgiven for assuming from the crops that people lived on a diet solely consisting of pumpkins!

All of which makes Harvest Festival something that requires a leap of the imagination for me every year. We plough the fields and scatter? I've never done that.

Harvest for me is a time to remember some of the big themes of faith. The goodness of God in creation. God's generous love in providing all we need. God's concern for justice for those who are denied the basics.

Alongside these, I remember the great metaphors the Bible uses of agricultural life to teach about the life of faith. The fruit of the Spirit ('harvest of the Spirit' in some translations). The harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few, as Jesus said of the call to mission. Or the text I shall be using at our Harvest Festival from Paul: 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.'

But these big themes need to be more than things I play with in my mind. They may need to start there, but they need to travel to my heart, my hands, and my feet.

Which big themes of harvest inspire you to action?

Your friend and minister,

Dave Faulkner