

harvest festival

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[caption id="attachment_3133" align="alignright" width="300"]

Bramley apples from Neil's tree[caption] "The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1) Its so long ago that we had a harvest festival service at my church I almost cannot remember it. The origins of harvest festivals probably go back to pre-Christian times in the British Isles, but the church I grew up in always had one and I seem to remember we had them at primary school too. Over the last decade or so the idea has died a death, as everyone has become more and more cut off from the land. The harvest festival was officially at the early more liturgical service, but at all three services food was being collected for food banks. I have some [concerns](#) about these. These are not the ones in the article from the newspaper I love about the fact that its Christians who run food-banks. My concerns are that welfare state is being superseded by *ad hoc* volunteering. This may surprise US readers, but I, along with many of my fellow citizens regard a welfare state as a mark of a civilised society. [We had a US type system before the second world war and it didn't work.] In either case there is a danger of dependency. As one person put it once food banks are established you cannot get rid of them- in one sense it doesn't matter who hands you the can. Another concern I have is that the food is not fresh or necessarily healthy (although the reasons for that are perfectly valid). What has really surprised me is who the recipients of the food are. UK's Channel4 news has run some reports on this and in many of the households receiving food at least one person is working and many are middle class. People have been squeezed by the recession, benefit cuts and falling wages but also rising energy and food prices. This is going to get [worse](#). It may be even more problematic than the previous link suggests since I'm not sure the report on which the article is based assumes energy and food prices are going to rise. Despite my qualms about food-banks we donated some food. As Douglas Alexander (shadow foreign secretary) put it at Greenbelt 2012 when challenged about helping a church in his constituency get a food-bank off the ground, if there is a need we should help meet it. There has to be a better long term solution to this. We need to raise wages for the lowest paid, create meaningful employment (I *know* I'm trying to find a job and failing) and we will need some method to allow people to cope with much higher and continually rising energy prices. I am certain we will have to introduce [TEQ's](#). We need to encourage people to grow their own food when at all possible (there was a great example of this in the transition film 2.0 film from the US). This week I passed a local evangelical church and saw people carrying in food suggesting they were having a harvest festival service, the weekly service on BBC radio 4 was a harvest festival service and Radio 4 thought for the day was based around this idea. However I still think this important remembrance is falling out favour. Growing enough food in a post oil, climate damaged world with more people in is going to be tough, there is an estimate we need to double food production by 2030. Over the next decade we really will learn to appreciate our harvests *and* harvest festivals. Neil Basically a repost with some updating.

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