

Celebrate the Harvest!

Building the Shelter

The centre piece of the Festival of Shelters (called Sukkot in Hebrew) is the construction of a simple temporary shelter. Jewish families construct such a shelter outside their homes which stays up for the whole week long celebration of the Feast. In warmer climates families will live in the shelter for the whole week. By tradition the roof of the shelter must have gaps so that the stars can be seen. This is intended as a reminder of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

The Feast of Shelters lends itself to all age worship; building a den has got to be a great way to celebrate a religious festival! To build the Shelter you will need a range of materials and volunteers of all ages. Explain that they are like an Israelite household building their shelter for the festival together. The frame of a small family sized tent or a gazebo is ideal for the framework of the Shelter. Blankets would be fine for the walls and use scatter cushions for the interior. Try to cover the roof with leafy branches such as willow and myrtle. Use string or clothes pegs to hang fruits and flowers around the shelter. The traditional harvest gifts can also be placed in and around the shelter. Have a small table inside with an (unlit) candle or a Jewish menorah, some bread and wine, fruit and flowers.

Preparing for the Harvest

The service outline suggests that a very simple shelter could be constructed as part of the Harvest service itself. In some churches that may be inappropriate or difficult to do. As an alternative building the Shelter can be a very useful all age activity for the Saturday before the Harvest Service.

- Preparation for the Harvest festival can be a busy time of decorating the church with flowers and harvest arrangements. Constructing the Shelter can make this an all age activity providing that flower arrangers and children can agree working boundaries! Invite some additional people to provide refreshments so that preparation for the Harvest becomes an enjoyable all age activity.
- Constructing the shelter (called a sukkah in Hebrew) might be an activity for children and helpers at the Harvest supper itself. For example, where facilities are suitable children could build the Shelter during the evening. They could then invite the adults to process into church to see the Shelter and have a very short service of hymns and prayers to anticipate the Sunday Harvest service.

Around the Service

Plan a congregational treat either as part of the service itself or just before or afterwards. The Feast of Shelters was a celebration of the fruit harvest so enjoying the fruits of the harvest is an important part of the celebrations. The form this takes will depend on the congregation and setting, but plan something that will be genuinely enjoyable for the full range of people in the congregation. It should also be special – not something you usually do – and should include good food and drink.

At any of the suggestions below it would be possible to make use of the activities provided in the [Service Outline](#) which you decide not to use during the actual service. This might include the fruit tasting, the Building the Shelter sketch or the word search (see below). Also make available the Week of Celebration take home sheets (see below)

Here are some ideas:

- Turn a normal coffee time after the service into *The World Café*. Serve a selection of Fair Trade filter coffees and teas, fairly traded fruits from around the world, Fair Trade chocolate and so on. If the young people in church have made use of the TeenTalk resources within Giving in Grace then they may well have considered the possibility of running a fair trade stall. Talk with the youth leaders to discuss the options for developing this idea with the teenagers. Arrange tables and chairs as a café and add good music or perhaps some drama depending on the talents of church members.

- The Harvest service outline suggests constructing a Shelter in the church as a focus for the service itself. If this idea does not suit either the style of worship or the ethos of the church then consider building the Shelter in the church hall or meeting rooms where light refreshments are normally served. Encourage people to stay for some refreshments after the service. Provide some simple information explaining the design of the Shelter or better still have some children or young people ready to explain it.
- Provide a breakfast before the usual service time, perhaps linking together the congregations of two morning services. The food should be something easy to lay on e.g. croissants or doughnuts and with an emphasis on fresh fruit and drinks. Read the Bible passage from Leviticus 23:33-43 and explain the significance of this Jewish festival and the practice of building shelters.
- Join together for lunch after the service. Ask everyone to bring food which is as colourful as possible to share. Ask some in particular to bring different fruits or foods from around the world.
- Hold a traditional Harvest Supper over Harvest weekend and enhance it with reference to the Festival of Shelters. A shelter is an obvious decoration but consider also some fruit and other food from around the world and the use of leafy branches which are waved during the processions at the Feast of Shelters.

Week of Harvest celebration sheets

The Festival of Shelters lasts eight days. Here are some ideas turn your harvest into a week of celebration. Try as many as you want – on your own, with your family or friends, in a house group or anywhere.

Monday

Sing a favourite song which thanks God for something.

Tuesday

Send a postcard to someone you are thinking about. Pray for them as you post it.

Wednesday

Try a kind of fruit you have never had before.

Thursday

Collect different kinds of leaves. Stick them on a background to make a picture thanking God for trees and all the good things we get from them. *(At the Festival of Shelters today, Jewish people take branches of date palms, myrtle and willow along with citron fruit and wave them in four directions.*

Friday

Read Matthew 6:24-34 – or get someone to read it to you. What does it make you want to say to God?

Saturday

Build a den – inside or outside. Sit in it to eat a meal. *Eating in the Sukkah, that is the shelter, is an important part of the Festival for Jews. Some also choose to sleep in it.*

Sunday

Have a special breakfast with plenty of fruit or fruit juices. Read the bible passage Lev 23:33-43 and say a thank you prayer to remember God's goodness in provision for us and to thank him. This simple prayer could be used with children:

*Thank you, Lord for giving us food.
Thank you, Lord for giving us food.
Our daily bread,
We must be fed,
Thank you, Lord for giving us food.*

Word Search

The fruit word search can be used in a variety of ways for both adults and children. Use it before the Sunday service, in Sunday School, as an activity at the Shelter after the service or at a Harvest supper and so on. The first page is for photocopying, the second page has the answers.



Find the fruit

At harvest, we can celebrate the amazing variety and amount of fruit God has given us. There are 30 fruits hidden in this wordsearch. We've given you the names of 25. Can you find them all and find the extra five fruits?

G	K	O	R	Y	R	R	E	B	W	A	R	T	S
Q	U	I	N	C	E	L	M	A	J	P	A	N	I
U	M	A	N	D	A	R	I	N	O	L	E	M	W
A	Q	L	V	M	U	T	L	A	S	U	P	T	I
X	U	O	T	A	M	O	T	N	I	M	N	N	K
T	A	R	A	N	R	P	I	A	B	O	R	A	C
O	T	T	A	G	E	A	A	Y	M	B	I	R	E
C	I	T	R	O	N	P	S	E	G	I	F	R	W
I	S	D	E	G	P	A	L	P	A	L	E	U	O
R	C	A	O	L	R	Y	E	D	B	B	T	C	L
P	O	M	E	G	R	A	N	A	T	E	J	D	I
A	Z	S	R	E	H	R	P	T	Y	R	R	E	V
K	U	O	L	E	T	C	H	E	R	R	Y	R	E
E	G	N	A	R	O	O	G	I	S	Y	A	F	Y

- | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|----------|----------|
| apple | apricot | banana | bilberry | carob |
| citron | damson | date | grape | guava |
| kiwi | kumquat | lemon | lime | mandarin |
| mango | olive | orange | papaya | pear |

Preach Exodus! Harvest



pomegranate

quince

redcurrant

strawberry

tomato

Find the fruit – Answers

The shaded squares show where the 30 fruit names start. The five extra fruits are:

cherry
melon
plum
raspberry
fig

G	K			Y	R	R	E	B	W	A	R	T	S
Q	U	I	N	C	E		M	A		P	A		I
	M	A	N	D	A	R	I	N	O	L	E	M	W
	Q		V	M			L	A		U	P	T	I
	U	O	T	A	M	O	T	N		M	N	N	K
T	A			N	R	P		A	B	O	R	A	C
O	T			G		A	A		M	B		R	
C	I	T	R	O	N	P	S	E	G	I	F	R	
I		D		G	P	A	L	P		L		U	O
R		A		L	R	Y		D	B	B		C	L
P	O	M	E	G	R	A	N	A	T	E		D	I
A		S					P	T		R	R	E	V
		O					C	H	E	R	R	Y	R
E	G	N	A	R	O					Y			Y