Dear friend
Many thanks to Judith for this week's service.

v 42 of the reading from Matthew's gospel suggested this week's hymn, recently recorded by Wells Cathedral choir, to sing to, ‘Christ is our cornerstone’:

https://youtu.be/gPM9U0jqfzw

Clearly the vineyard referred to in the passage from Isaiah had failed to produce good grapes. Here is an 8-part motet extolling the virtues and potential hazards of good wine. Although the theological component is rather minimal, singers may like to join in with, ‘Vinum bonum et suave’ by Lassus, sung by Ex Cathedra, directed by Jeffrey Skidmore:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_TZXb7yWe0

We are in the season of harvest festivals, and I am very pleased to include a setting of ‘To Thee O Lord our hearts we raise’ by Prof George Odam, written for Bath Abbey choir (director Dudley Holroyd), when his son Tim was head chorister and sang the treble solo. George recorded the anthem with a cassette recorder on his lap and recently transferred it to an mp4 file, so the sound quality isn’t perfect, but it gives an idea:

https://tinyurl.com/y3s9balm

Finally, continuing the harvest theme from Martin, just as relevant now as when it was written, ‘The Isley Brothers 1976 - Harvest for the World’. Thought-provoking song about feeding the world's population against a backdrop of continuing inequality and armed conflict. Just a note that there is a two-minute meditational prelude before the song begins:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysFBT63OfC0

May you have a rich spiritual harvest!
Chris

Sunday 4th October – Trinity 17

In our devotion to the needs of others, O God, let us not neglect the wisdom of your counsel. In the midst of our work let us not lose sight of your great purposes. In our path of service let us not snatch the management of the world from your hands. *(Florence Nightingale)*

CONFESSION We confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbour. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. Restore us, for the sake of your Son, and bring us to heavenly joy.
May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Common Worship)

COLLECT Almighty God, you have made us for yourself**,** and our hearts are restless till they find our rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

READINGS Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:9 -17; Philippians 3:4*b*-14; Matthew 21:33-end

REFLECTION Here is a story, told by Jesus to an audience of 'chief priests and elders of the people.' These are well versed in the scriptures, and recognise immediately Jesus' almost word for word quotation from Isaiah, likening the land of Israel to a vineyard, a gift of love from God. This wonderful gift, as from a loving father to his beloved children, is totally rejected by the workers in the story. The parable, culminating in theft and murder demonstrates that greed and indifference has taken over – the workers feel no love or loyalty towards the landowner. The listeners' reaction is simply to condemn the violence and greed, but Jesus makes his point: God is prepared to give another chance, to other people, who will yield good fruit in his kingdom. God's enduring love turns death and disaster into one of redemption, a solid foundation for future hope. It's easy, listening to a story about villainy, to cast ourselves in a good light – we'd never do that, would we? Such stories are not easy – they are warnings, but warnings founded in the yearning of God for his people – the people he loves - to make his kingdom flourish and grow.

PRAYERS *Great God, your love has called us here as we, by love, for love were made. Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed. We come, with all our heart and mind, your call to hear, your love to find. (Brian A. Wren)*
Christ our friend, you ask for our love in spite of our betrayal. Give us courage to embrace forgiveness, know you again, and trust ourselves in you. *(Janet Morley)*

Lord, we pray for those we love, for our families and friends, and for those we *ought* to love – those we find difficult or demanding. We pray for the sick and suffering; for those with Covid19 or suffering its after-effects. We continue to pray for Bishop Peter, and for all who are undergoing treatment or tests for different health problems. In a moment of silence, we bring those who are in our minds before you now.....

We pray for the world – for all who are in desperate need, whose names we may never know. Grant them hope and peace, we pray.

We pray the **LORD'S PRAYER**

We share the **GRACE**

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, See I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. (Isaiah 28:16)