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# Harvest and Gratitude

A Multi-Faith Autumn Assembly

## About this assembly

A 12-minute whole-school assembly for autumn, drawing together harvest festivals and gratitude traditions across faiths. Lighter content than the other multi-faith assemblies — works well for younger children. Optionally bring in fruit, vegetables or bread to show. Best delivered between September and November.

## Opening — where food comes from

Hold up a piece of fruit or bread (or a picture). Ask: 'Where did this come from?' Take a few answers — children will say 'shop', 'tree', 'farmer'. Say: 'Right. Farmers grew this. Trees made this. The sun and rain helped. Many people worked to bring it to us. For almost ALL of human history — until very recently — people grew their own food. And every autumn, when the harvest came in, EVERY culture, EVERY religion stopped to say THANK YOU. Today I want to tell you about a few of those thank-you traditions.'

## Christian harvest festivals

'In the UK, churches and schools have held harvest festivals for hundreds of years — usually in September or October. People bring food to church, give thanks for the harvest, and sing hymns like 'We Plough the Fields and Scatter'. The food is then given to those in need — to charities, food banks, elderly people in the community. The idea is simple: we have plenty, others have less, let's share. Many schools still mark harvest each year — perhaps yours does too.'

## Sukkot (Jewish)

'Jewish families have a harvest festival called Sukkot — the Festival of Booths. For a week in early autumn, Jewish families build small open-roofed shelters in their gardens, called sukkahs. They eat meals in them, and sometimes sleep in them. Why? It remembers the time when the



Jewish people travelled in the wilderness for forty years, after escaping slavery in Egypt — when they had only temporary shelters. It is also a reminder: nothing we have is permanent. Be grateful for shelter. Be grateful for food. They share Sukkot meals with friends, family, and visitors.'

## Eid al-Adha (Muslim)

'Muslims have a festival called Eid al-Adha — the Festival of Sacrifice. It happens at the end of the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah. Muslims who can afford to share a sacrificial meal with others — traditionally giving away two-thirds of the meat to family, neighbours and people in need. The festival remembers the prophet Ibrahim's faithfulness to God. But the practical heart of it is the same as harvest festivals everywhere: share what you have. Especially with people who don't have enough.'

## Vaisakhi (Sikh)

'In April, Sikh communities celebrate Vaisakhi — both a harvest festival in northern India AND an important religious anniversary. Even today, Sikh families in countries with no farming nearby will gather in gurdwaras and share huge community meals — called langar. Anyone can come. Anyone can eat. The meal is free. It says: when food is here, no-one goes hungry. We share.'

## Thanksgiving and modern gratitude

'In America and Canada, families have a festival called Thanksgiving — usually in late November. Families gather, share a big meal (often turkey), and go around the table saying what they are thankful for. It started as a harvest celebration over 400 years ago. People who don't celebrate any religion still mark Thanksgiving — because saying thank you doesn't have to be religious. It is just a wise thing to do.'

## Closing — the act of thanks

'Across so many religions and cultures, autumn is the time we stop and say THANK YOU for what we have. Thank you for food. Thank you for shelter. Thank you for the people who grow what we eat. And — importantly — let's share with those who don't have enough. Today, when you eat your lunch, take a second. Just notice what's in front of you. Where did it come from? Who helped it get there? You don't have to follow any religion to be grateful. You just have to pay attention.' Optional ending: 'Maybe later today — say thank you to someone. To the kitchen staff. To a friend. To a parent. Just say it. They will probably remember it for a while.'

