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Dear friends,

Our harvest activities this year showed the thankfulness and generosity of our villages. As it always does, St. Mary the Virgin Parish Church looked absolutely stunning, being beautifully decorated. It truly is a little gem of a church. The harvest service included the baptism of Denise Williams, who first became involve with the church there through approaching me with her husband to be Kevin about the possibility of being married in the church. That was over two years ago and now they are both involved with the church in a number of ways. Our thankfulness to God at his generosity to us can be expressed in so many ways. We symbolically give at harvest time, but we are called to give our time, talents and resources at all times.

St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church was also beautifully decorated. Added to the flowers were the gifts brought to our services for the Junior School and also the wider community. This year, thanks to the initiative of Sue Cruse, we joined Harvest for the Hungry. Items could still be brought in for distribution locally. We gave the option for people to bring in pasta, flour, sugar and rice. Sue than organises the packing of these into special boxes to be shipped to orphanages in Bulgaria. Twelve items were placed in a box and we sent twenty four boxes. The Junior School children were quick to tell me that was 288 items. Considering we had never undertaken anything like this before, this was a fantastic effort. My mother Phyl's service was the day after Harvest Sunday, and we left all the food items on display. Harvest was her favourite time of year, as she knew how much God had given her during her life. Our harvest display showed how much God had given us, and how we can give back to him by helping others.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> we had a confirmation service at St. Giles Mountnessing for our Benefice and the Benefice of Margaretting, Mountnessing and Buttsbury. Even Bishop Laurie

was amazed that there were twenty two candidates. Alan and Gill Beach and Denise Williams worship at Fryerning. Sarah Booth and Sheila Walters were from the Ingatestone congregation. Added to these were Christopher Churchett, Ben Clarke, Michael Denton and Lauren Evans, all in Year 6 at the Anglo European School and regulars at Ingatestone, with Christopher, Ben and Lauren in the choir. They have all undertaken courses to understand the calling God has upon their life. As the Bishop said to each of them, "Christ claims you for his own". These good people know all that God has done for them and will do in the rest of their lives. This is a wonderful time of year for a confirmation service. Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2006 we will have the confirmation in St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church. One candidate has already approached me. If it applies to you, please consider being confirmed this coming year. If you want to, talk to any of this year's candidates to get their appreciation of the courses. We can be flexible. It is important for people to give this commitment to God and be able to fully share in the communion service. God gave so much to us through Jesus and continues to gives so much to us through the Holy Spirit.

Remembrance is a time when we recall all that so many gave to us all. I am delighted that fund raising for the new War Memorial means it will hopefully be in place for next year. The existing War Memorial will continue to be used. But we will also have a prominent reminder in the centre of the village. As looking at the churches should remind us of all God has done for us, so the War Memorial will remind us of the sacrifice of so many.

The season of Advent recalls us to get ready spiritually as well as materially for Christmas. The birth of God's Son and all that can potentially mean for us all is something we should always remember. Confirmation is accepting that reality. At Harvest we give our gifts to show our gratitude to God and to help others. On Remembrance Sunday we remember those who gave their lives. God is so generous to us. Our response of thankfulness should be to give of our time and talents and resources.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*