

Give thanks to the Lord

Greetings to you this harvest season,

I must say that as soon as I wrote the words 'harvest season', I realized that the meaning of that phrase has changed significantly in the past generation or two. We live in the age of international transport, including the transport of people and of fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes and bananas and apples and cucumbers and a cornucopia of other fruits and vegetables are on the move.

At one time, of course, the success of the harvest in Canada was an important measure of how well families would eat in the approaching winter. At one time the only food available to sustain families and communities were the fruits and vegetables harvested in fields and orchards nearby.

But so much has changed. Today the harvest continues 365 days a year. We have melons from Brazil in December, tomatoes from Mexico in February, apples from New Zealand in March, and so many other well-travelled fruits and vegetables besides. Our crisper drawers bulge, our wagon tracks overflow, and we delight in the abundance of God's creation.

But of course this also raises questions in terms of our *bond with* creation and our *care of* creation. How closely are we bound to creation if we cannot put our hands in the soil where our vegetables grow, or if we cannot walk through the orchards where our fruit is harvested? How can we care for creation if we do not know how the earth is treated in the production of our food, so far away? These are important questions for those who understand the creation as a gift of God entrusted to our care, vital to our being.

All of this may remind us, also, that there are many places in our world where the "one hundred mile diet" remains a fact of life – not by choice but of necessity. Places around the globe where women and men and families continue to depend for their lives on the harvest that comes from surrounding fields. In Malawi, for example, the success of the maize crop each year is the difference between life and death for many. In the absence of rain, the crops fail, and hunger spreads.

The good news for Malawi in 2014 is that this year's maize crop, harvested in May and June, was plentiful, so that the number of food insecure people in that country is

over...

expected to drop from last year's level of 1.46 million. At the same time, of course, we know very well that one year's successful harvest will not transform that impoverished country or provide the breadth of resources needed to help its people flourish.

Our celebration of Harvest Thanksgiving is just that - a time to celebrate the gifts of the land and the bounty that crosses our tables by God's grace. But our celebration is tempered by our distance from the land, by our frequent ignorance concerning its care, and by the realization that there are so many who live with so little.

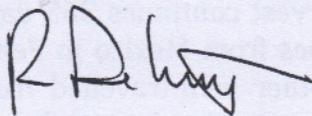
In this season of gratitude, as we are reminded of God's generosity toward us in Christ Jesus, we are also invited to inhabit God's generosity in relation to others.

Enclosed with this letter you will find an envelope for your Thanksgiving offering. This offering will go to support the work of Tidzalerana Club in Blantyre, Malawi, a program for those with various disabilities, and their caregivers. Our gifts help to support the club's weekly activities, to provide transportation to appointments, to supply mobility aids, and to encourage skills training.

Each one of us is encouraged to give as we are able, with gratitude.

A Happy Thanksgiving to you all.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilynne Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

"There is more beauty than our eyes can bear, precious things have been put into our hands and to do nothing to honor them is to do great harm."

— Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*