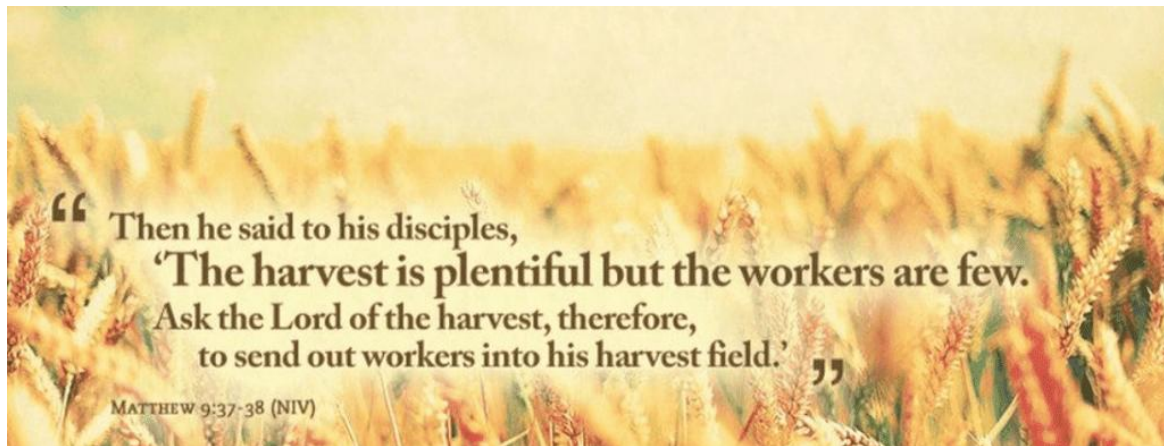


The Ember Days of Summer, a chance to ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest.



By Revd Mark Ackford on 23/06/2026



Every so often, the Church invites us to pause not because something dramatic has happened, but because time itself has turned. The light changes, the fields shift, the weather moves, and the human heart is asked to notice. Ember Days belong to this quiet wisdom. Traditionally they are quarterly days of prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving, kept on a Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday near the turning of each season, in a sense spring, summer, autumn, and winter are gathered up and offered back to God. In a world that often treats time as a commodity to be managed, Ember Days teach us to receive time as a gift to be sanctified.

This week we celebrate the Ember Days associated with Summer, these Summer Ember Days due to when they happen within the church year have also become associated with Vocation and Ordination.

Vocation begins with listening. Before anyone can say, “Here I am,” they must first recognise that God is speaking. Ember Days create space for that recognition. Their rhythm is deliberately modest: a little fasting, a little abstinence, a little more prayer, a little more attention. Yet this modesty is part of their power. They remind us that the voice of God is often heard not in noise or pressure, but in stillness, hunger, gratitude, and surrender. These Ember Days help us ask the basic vocational question again: “Lord, what are you asking of me now?”

Historically, the Summer Ember Days became closely associated with ordination as in the Western Church, ordinations often took place on or around those days, for example we will be heading to Christ Church Cathedral for the ordination of Heather as our Deacon on the 4th of July a week after this year’s Summer Ember Days. This was not accidental. The Church surrounded the choosing and sending of ministers with fasting and prayer, echoing the pattern of the Acts of

the Apostles, where the Church prayed, fasted, laid hands on those called, and sent them out for the work of the Gospel.

This tradition says something important: ordination is never merely a private achievement. A priest or deacon is not self-appointed; he is called, tested, formed, prayed for, and sent by the Church. Ember Days remind the whole Christian community that vocations to ordained ministry are nourished by the prayers of the faithful. When we pray for vocations, we are not watching from the sidelines. We are participating in the Church's discernment and mission.

Over these Summer Ember Days can I ask you to choose to make one intentional act of prayer: make that intention clear by praying for those preparing for ordination, for ordinands, for bishops who ordain and the national and diocesan vocations teams who discern, for priests and deacons already serving, and for those quietly wondering whether God may be calling them. As these days invite the Church to respond with faith: by asking the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest.

The name "Ember" evokes something small but alive: a hidden heat, a glow that can be fanned into flame. That is a fitting image for vocation. A call may begin quietly. It may seem fragile. It may need time, patience, and the oxygen of prayer. Ember Days teach us to tend that holy fire in ourselves and in one another.

I end with a prayer.

Lord of the harvest, bless your Church with generous hearts and holy vocations. Strengthen those preparing for ordination especially our sister in Christ Heather, sustain priests and deacons in their ministry, and give each of us courage to answer your call. In every season, teach us to pray, listen, and serve. Amen.