

A Liturgy for National Farm Worker Ministry Awareness Sunday

Call to Worship (responsive)

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

We come today to be renewed and refreshed by God's word

Come, all who have no money; come, buy and eat!

We are here today to feed upon God's holy word.

Why do we spend our money on something which is not bread? Why do we labor for that which doesn't satisfy?

We are here today to receive the bread of life that will nourish us in our walk with God in the week ahead.

Listen carefully today. Delight in God's presence in this time of worship.

We are here today with open hands and open hearts, seeking God.

Prayer of the Day

During this time of worship, we pray that your Holy Spirit would come and dwell among us and with us. Reveal yourself to us in scripture and prayer. Speak to us now so that we may be moved into action in the world on behalf of those who are weak and abused. Receive our words of praise and thanksgiving and give us hearts of compassion. In the name of the Compassionate Christ we pray. Amen.

Call to Confession

Today is National Farm Worker Awareness Sunday. The reality is that many, if not most of us rarely consider the people who are responsible for harvesting the foods we eat. We just go to the grocery and choose from a wide selection of tasty produce. We rarely consider the sacrifices that go into our Sunday lunch or Friday night dinner. The reality is our foods are harvested at a great cost and we have much to confession in that regard. Let us pray to the One who is always on the side of the oppressed, the forgotten, and the abused.

Prayer of Confession (responsive)

We rarely take the time, O God, to give thanks for the hands that pick the fruits and vegetables that we enjoy each day. Bring them to our minds and - ***Forgive us, O God.***

We seldom give thought to the living conditions of those whose labor feeds our bodies.

Bring them to our minds and - ***Forgive us, O God.***

We fail to stand up for the farm worker laboring in the fields under oppressive heat, little to no shade and precious little water. Bring them to our minds and - ***Forgive us, O God.***

We refuse to speak out for justice on behalf of those who are abused and enslaved in fields because they are very often out of sight and out of mind. Bring them to our minds and -

Forgive us, O God.

Bring them to our minds, O God, during this time of confession. May we see their faces.

May we feel their rough, cracked hands. May we smell their sweaty, dirty clothes. May we encounter their vacant eyes. May we see them as your precious children, and do whatever we can to bring them to dignity and wholeness. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Today is a new day. God makes all things new to those who are truly repentant. God is calling us to new ways of thinking and acting on behalf of all God's beloved children wherever they may be found. So let us rejoice and be glad in this good news. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Your Holy Word, O God, is the true bread of life. Feed us now as the Scriptures are read and proclaimed, so that we might be strengthened to live Your Holy Word in the world. Amen.

Scripture Text Suggestions

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

James 5:1-5

Luke 10:17

Matthew 22:37:40

Children's Message

Supplies: A bowl of fresh fruits and vegetables, making sure you include tomatoes
Begin a conversation about the produce that you've brought with you to worship. Ask them their favorite fruit or vegetable; if they've had a garden or fruit trees; if they've ever harvested vegetables.) *Picking vegetables is a hot, dirty job, right? But the hard work is worth it because of all the tasty food we get to eat. If you don't have a family garden or visit the local farmers market, then probably the vegetables and fruits you enjoy at home come from a grocery store. THOSE vegetables and fruits are grown on HUGE farm, with lots and lots of workers, who get paid very little money. For example, a Florida tomato harvester gets fifty cents for every 32 pounds of tomatoes picked. That's not much, is it? A worker would have to pick 2.25 TONS of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday. Plus – farmworkers are often times treated badly and abused by those who employ them. So today, in worship we are remembering the people who pick the foods we eat and enjoy everyday. We are giving thanks for them. Plus we are collecting a special offering to help support organizations who speak up for the farmworkers to help improve their pay, their living conditions, and their lives. Let us pray now for farmworkers.*

Prayer: We pray today for all the people who work hard to plant and harvest the tasty and nutritious foods we eat and enjoy. Bless them with health and strength. We pray that the farm owners would treat their workers fairly and with respect – paying them good wages, providing clean and safe places to live, and safe working conditions. Bless our gift of money today that it might make their lives better. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith (unison)

We believe that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; for we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. We are convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Offertory Sentences

We are immensely blessed with all that we need and most of what we want – food, clothing, shelter, family & friends, and meaningful work. In thanksgiving for all these blessings we offer back to God what we have received. Let us continue in our worship through the giving of our tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

You have indeed blessed us abundantly, Gracious God, for which we are grateful. Take now this offering and our lives and use them to bring hope and healing to a hurting world. For it's in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, because we are not strong enough to pray as we should, you provide Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit to intercede for us in power. In this confidence we ask you to accept our prayers.

- For the workers who harvest the food that comes to our tables, may they have a living wage;
- For exploited workers who are enslaved in the fields with no visible means of escape;
- For the farm owners, that they would treat their workers with respect and dignity;
- For the organization that work on behalf of the farmworkers, that they would have the strength and finances to do the important work of advocacy and support. In particular we pray for National Farm Worker Ministry today that you would give them boldness and wisdom as they work for fairness and justice.
- For the church that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit to be in solidarity with the workers, and offer whatever means of support that we can.

O God, in your loving purpose answer our prayers and fulfill our hopes. In all things for which we pray, give us the will to seek to bring them about, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Benediction

We have been in God's presence today. Let us go from here to be the presence of Christ in the world. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Suggested Hymns

Called as Partners in Christ's Service
Christ for the World! We Sing
Christ, You Call Us All to Service
God of Grace and God of Glory
Help Us Accept Each Other
Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service
Rise Up, O Saints of God!
This Is My Father's World
We All Are One in Mission