

A Liturgy for National Farmworker Awareness Week

March 29, 2015

Joy Warren

Call to Worship

Leader: Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good

People: His steadfast love endures forever!

Leader: Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord, or declare all his praise?

People: Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

Leader: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting,
and let all the people say,

People: Amen! Praise the Lord!

(adapted from Psalm 106:1-3, 48)

Invocation

God of justice, we pray you would meet us in this place. Fill our hearts with a sense of community, of kinship, of your love and grace. We gather before you in gratitude for placing us in this earth, this planet of life-sustaining gifts. Bless us with the wisdom to care for it and each other properly. Blow your Spirit afresh among us and receive our offering of praise. Amen.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

(www.nfwm.org)

We are workers, God, just like you.

**But we confess that our work is not always done in a manner
that affirms and honors each other.**

Our work is not always done in a spirit that is pleasing to you.

**We confess that, on some occasions, we have blindly bought goods made by people
who are paid too little or work in unsafe conditions.**

We admit that we have failed to end an unjust system

**in which some workers have jobs that provide good wages, health insurance, sick leave,
a pension, paid vacations, and other benefits, while others have jobs that do not.**

**Creator God, help us to build a new world out of the ashes of the old,
a world where all workers are valued;**

one where those who clean houses are also able to buy houses to live in;

a world where those who grow food can also afford to eat their fill.

**And a world where those who serve us in stores, schools, nursing homes,
and many other places are also served by us.**

**It will be a world where all workers everywhere
share in the abundance that you have given us. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Our God is a God of grace and transformation. When we ask, God will give us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary. Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

If I say, "fruits and vegetables," what do we think of? Those are things our parents and our doctor are always telling us we need to eat, right? But let's imagine we are the children of farm workers in the United States. Fruits and vegetables would tell us where our families would be working, where we would be living and maybe going to school. Vegetables might mean we are living in North Carolina for the spring, summer, and early fall where our family is picking different vegetables that are in season. Fruits might mean we are living in Florida for the late fall and winter where our family is picking and packing citrus fruit.

Can you imagine starting school in North Carolina and then having to move to Florida and change schools? They might not be learning the same things, and it would be hard to leave friends and teachers we know for a new place. Some farms don't have rules about keeping children from working, so it might be possible we would have to go to work in the fields with our families if they are not able to make enough money for us to eat and have a place to live. Then we would not be in school at all, and maybe we wouldn't learn to read and write. Not having an education really limits what we can do in our lives. There are people who farm the land all over the world, and if it were not for them, we would not have food to eat.

The Cumberland Presbyterian denomination has churches in countries around the world, and although we may have different cultures and languages, we have at least one thing in common: we have to eat. So every time we sit down to eat a meal, let's be thankful that God gave us a world that produces food for us to eat, and let's pray for the people who help bring it to our tables. Let's pray that farm workers around the world have their daily bread, too.

Let's say a prayer together, ok?

Dear God, thank you for creating the earth where food grows and the sun and rain that help it to grow. Thank you for giving gifts to farmers to know how to bring the food from the ground. Help us to always be thankful and help us to know how to help protect the people who harvest the world's food. Amen.

Prayers of the People *(United Farm Workers Prayer - <http://nfwm.org/2009/05/prayers/>)*

Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so I may know my people's plight.

Free me to pray for others, for you are present in every person.

Help me to take responsibility for my own life, so that I can be free at last.

Grant me courage to serve others, for in service there is true life.

Give me honesty and patience, so that I can work with other workers.
Bring forth song and celebration, so that the Spirit will be alive among us.
Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will never tire of the struggle.
Let us remember those who have died for justice, for they have given us life.
Help us love even those who hate us, so we can change the world. Amen.

Litany of Commitment

(www.nfwm.org)

- Leader: Are we the people who live for others?
Whose human relations are charged with forgiveness?
People: With God's help, we will be that people!
- Leader: Are we the people who walk the second mile when one mile would do?
People: With God's help, we will be that people!
- Leader: Are we the ones who turn the other cheek?
Who give the shirt off our backs when our coat is gone?
People: With God's help, we will be that people!
- Leader: Are we a community recognized and known by our love?
People: With God's help, we will be that people!
- Leader: When the poor of the world ask us for bread, do we give them a stone?
When they ask us for fish, do we reach them a serpent?
People: Never! God help us, never!
- Leader: Do we care only for those who care about us?
Do we serve only those who will tell us how grateful they are?
People: No, God help us; never.
- Leader: Are we the people who thirst for a justice that promises cannot slake?
People: Yes, we are that people!
- Leader: Are we the people who are restless enough to make peace?
Who are strong enough to be gentle, and gentle enough, to resist violence?
People: With God's help, we will be that people!
- Leader: Are we the ones who take seriously our titles:
"Salt of the earth," "Light of the world," "Leaven of our society"?
People: Yes, we are the ones!

Invitation to the Offering

(www.chavezfoundation.org)

Cesar Chavez said, "When we are really honest with ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So, it is how we use our lives that determine what kind of people we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving do we find life." Let us contemplate Chavez'

words as we consider what we will give of our time, talents, and resources during this time of offering.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Creator God, you are indeed the God of life. Bless our offerings that they may be life-giving and life-sustaining in your kin-dom here and yet to come. Bless our hands, our feet, our voices that we may be advocates for justice everywhere we go and people would know we are yours by the way we live our lives. Amen.