

A Liturgy for National Farm Workers Awareness

March 27, 2017

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Call to Worship

Leader: For once we were darkness, but now in the Lord we are light.

People: Let us live as children of light!

Leader: The fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

People: Let us live as children of light!

Leader: Everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
for everything that becomes visible is light.

**All: Sleepers, awake!
Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!**

—based on Ephesians 5:8-14

Call to Confession

Psalm 23 paints a pastoral picture of the good shepherd, green valleys, still waters, and a prepared table. Too often we focus on comforts for ourselves and our families while ignoring the struggles and needs of others. Are we trying to limit the work of the Good Shepherd? Are we stingy sheep?

Prayer of Confession (unison)

Merciful God, you created the world and all that's in it. You made good things come from the earth that sustains our very lives. Forgive us when we try to hoard your gifts, when we deny some of your children seats at the table. Forgive us when we overlook those who tend your earth, when we participate in systems that deny farm workers basic human dignity. Turn our eyes to what we try to leave invisible, and give us tools to work for your justice, for your beloved community. (Pause for silent prayers) Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Our Good Shepherd, Jesus the Christ, often used agricultural parables to explain the kingdom of God. Even as we have sinned against the laborers in the fields, Jesus calls us to join the work. Jesus calls us—individually and as the Church—and equips us for our own planting and harvesting work. Thanks be to God for mercy and the continual call to kingdom building work!

Prayer for Illumination

Gracious God, as we ask today to be children of light, let us not turn from the dark places. Open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, our hands, to see what is illuminated by the light. Give us courage to see and to act faithfully in order to spread your light. As we hear your word today, open our ears that we may hear collectively you calling to us. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- 1 Samuel 16:1-13
- Psalm 23

- Ephesians 5:8-14
- John 9:1-41—In verse 41, Jesus tells the Pharisees that now that they say they see, their sin remains. For Christians who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, are we truly blind to the injustice suffered by farm workers, or are we living sinfully by ignoring it? Surely many people in the congregation will be blind to issues faced by those who work in the fields. As our denomination and local organizations work to educate the public about the dangers of pesticide exposure, sexual abuse, malnutrition, and poor education (just to name a few), how long can we claim to be blind? As it is becoming more and more “hip” to talk about farm to table produce, eating local, and organic labels, the public discourse continues to “turn a blind eye to” the bodies who bring the produce from the earth to the table. Lift up any involvement your church or our denomination may have with farm worker ministries. You may want to mention organizations supported by our denomination, such as National Farm Worker Ministry, Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, and Project Vida.

Prayers of the People

O, Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Today we lift up the man laboring in the fields for the food we eat.

He is tired, his back is breaking from repetitive motions, squatting, bending, plucking, stuffing.

He has no insurance and no time or money for medical care.

He has a room at the end of the day he shares with eleven other men.

He misses his family.

He sends them all the money he can each week.

Bless him, Lord, and the works of his hands, with dignity in our eyes.

We lift up the mother, expected to trade sexual favors

for the opportunity to work a day of hard labor pulling tobacco leaves.

Every day she is poisoned by abuse, by toxic doses of nicotine and pesticides.

Bless her, Lord, and the works of her hands, with dignity in our eyes.

We lift up the children, working in the fields instead of going to school.

They are playing on rusty field equipment and broken down trailers.

They are moving from Florida to North Carolina, from Texas to Michigan,

following your seasons, harvesting the fruits of the earth...lemons, oranges, plums, apples.

They are little hands that feed us.

Bless them, Lord, and the works of their hands, with dignity in our eyes.

While they all work in dangerous environments,

working against weather and all manner of nature, separated from friends and family,

we fight over their rights and deem them illegal, undocumented, or unauthorized

while we eat the food they bring to our tables.

Send your Spirit to intercede for us, Lord,

that we might use the gifts you give us to advocate for the humane treatment

of those who work so hard for so little,

those who sacrifice their very selves trying to find their daily bread.

Bless us all, Lord, and the works of our hands as we attempt to live as children of light. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Many of us have been given much and have much to share if we will. As we enter into a time of offering, let us all examine the resources we have that we might offer to the kingdom of God. What might we set aside that would free us to offer more? Let us worship God with our tithes and offerings.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God, we thank you for all your good gifts to us. Please accept these gifts we offer today—those we physically offer and those we offer in our hearts—and use them to expand your light in this world. Help us receive in humility the offerings of those who labor in the fields around the world. These things we offer in the name of Jesus the Christ, who offered nothing short of his life for us. Amen.

Benediction

May you go from this place
and not take for granted the blood, sweat, and tears represented on your dinner plate.
May you always have enough,
and may what you have not be taken by force from anyone.
Now, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.