

A Liturgy for National Farm Workers Awareness

March 25, 2018

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Call to Worship

Leader: The hour is now—God calls us to worship

People: We hear the call like we hear the dinner bell—time to stop what we're doing.

Leader: Come from the fields, come from your homes, come from the streets.

People: We come hungry like we come to the table. We come!

Leader: Come to the house of God! Come all of you!

People: We come in gratitude, we come in praise, we come!

Call to Confession

All of us eat to survive. We go about our days: buying food at grocery stores, whizzing through drive-thrus, gathering with family and friends at local restaurants. We hardly really think about what we are eating, and we almost never think about the hands that brought the food from the earth. In gratitude for our daily bread, we have much to confess.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, in your marvelous world you created all that is needed to sustain life. We often take more than we need without thinking of the harm we do to the planet in the process, without thinking of those who do not have enough, and without thinking of the dignity of farm workers who harvest the food we enjoy. Forgive us, God, for our lack of mindfulness which leads to our lack of action. Farm workers, who feed the world, are often invisible to us. But we should know better. Help us see them, God, and help us treat them with dignity.

(silent prayers) Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Our Good Shepherd taught us to pray for our daily bread. We can learn this lesson again today, knowing that our brothers and sisters in the fields, orchards, and dairies are the hands and feet through which we receive this sustenance. Let us turn from our sinful habits of willful ignorance and care for those through whom God has cared for us.

Prayer for Illumination

Gracious God, as we read your word today, send your Spirit to open it for us in new ways that we might understand what it means for us as your people in this particular place and time. Amen.

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- **Micah 6:8**
- In God's case against the people, we see God is not pleased with our offerings if we do not act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. What might it look like to apply this verse to the condition of farm workers in our local area or in a more global context?
- What does it mean to act justly? It means to speak truth to power, persist, risk, have courage. It means to march, to fast, to sing, to pray, to cry, to stand with, to make space for other voices, to write cards and letters, to call representatives, to non-violently oppose injustice.
- What does it mean to love kindness? It means to speak words of truth and not slurs of derision, to outlast hate, to face intimidation with determination, to have courage. It means to march, to fast, to sing, to pray, to cry, to stand with, to make space for other voices, to write cards and letters, to call representatives, to non-violently oppose injustice.
- What does it mean to walk humbly? It means to let your life speak, to keep walking, to gently refuse to give up, leave, or stop your walk because it is uncomfortable, to have courage. It means to march, to fast, to sing, to pray, to cry, to stand with, to make space for other voices, to write cards and letters, to call representatives, to non-violently oppose injustice.
- As a covenant community, how do we commit to act justly, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God? Do we seek out God's justice in the scriptures? Do we practice kind language and gestures with each other? Do we allow our community to discuss issues of justice without labeling each other as political in a negative way? Do we have a safe space among us for self-correction? When we share the peace of Christ with one another, do we truly feel safe and at peace with one another?
- You may want to mention current work/needs of organizations supported by our denomination, such as National Farm Worker Ministry, Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, and Project Vida and/or other organizations in your geographic area. (Part of the sermon suggestions comes from Julie Taylor's "A Litany on Micah 6:8 for Farm Worker Justice." Taylor is the Executive Director of National Farm Worker Ministry, www.nfwm.org.)

Prayers of the People

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

We pray today for farm workers.

We pray people and systems would treat them with dignity.

We pray for those who came forward in the United States
and registered legally with the government

who now fear for their families being torn apart through deportations.

We pray our local, state, and federal lawmakers could see them as brothers and sisters
and treat them with compassion as they discover a way forward.

We pray for those whose hands are in the dirt every day, pulling out the food we eat, only to go home empty with nothing for the table at home.

We pray that farm workers have access to clean water, enough food to eat, safe housing, education for their children, safe working conditions, proper healthcare, and places for worship.

We pray you would remind us the earth is yours
and all that is in it when we have conversations about property and boundaries.
We pray that your law, written upon our hearts, would help us
as we continue to reform the laws of our lands
so that we may help in the building of your kingdom now as it is in heaven. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Farm workers harvest what the earth offers to us. Let us examine our hearts and give back to God with particular thought for those whose vocation it is to make God's promises of sustenance a reality for us all. Let us offer our time, talents, and resources to God in thanksgiving.

Offertory Prayer

Gracious God, you supply our needs for survival and sustain us through your love. Please receive these offerings of our hearts and help us be faithful in following through on our promises. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

And now receive this benediction:

May you go from this place
having received courage through Christ
to act justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Worship Arts Suggestions:

A Poem--"Legacy"

I promise you not a moment will be lost
as long as I have heart & voice to speak & we will walk again together
with a thousand others & a thousand more & on & on
until there is no one among us who does not know the truth:
there is no future without love.

—Brian Andreas

Liturgical Movement--

"Let Us Break Bread Together"

include movement suggestive of the repetitive harvesting work of farm workers