



Worship Resources on Farm Worker Justice

developed by
National Farm Worker Ministry

This booklet contains materials that may be used alone— a simple prayer to open a meeting, as one element of a larger liturgy - or in combination to create a worship service on themes of farm worker justice.

The contents are organized in the following categories:

- Scripture Readings
- Prayers
- Responsorial Prayers
- Other Readings
- Quotes from Cesar Chavez

Scriptures Related to Farm Workers and Immigrants

Social Responsibility & Action

Deuteronomy 15:11: Open hand to poor.....
Proverbs 21:13: Hear cry of poor
Timothy (II) 1:7: Spirit of power
Psalms 41:1: Consider the poor
Psalms 82:3-4: Justice to weak
Luke 4:18-19: Good News
Isaiah 1: 13, 15-17: Seek Justice
Jeremiah 22:3: Do justice
Zechariah 7:8-9: Show mercy
Matthew 10:40: Receiving Me
John (I) 3:17-18: Love in deed, truth
Corinthians (I) 12:12-13: Body is One
Corinthians (I) 12:26: Suffering by All
Corinthians (I) 12: 12-27 Full verse
Philippians 2:4: Interests of others
Matthew 22:39: Neighbor as Self
Luke 10:27: Neighbor as Self
Romans 12:21: Good over Evil

Poverty & Standing with Poor

Psalm 112: 5-9: Righteous: Give to poor
Paul of Tarsus, 2 Corinthians 8 (tev): Help those in need
Isaiah 3:15: Grind faces of Poor
Deuteronomy 24:14-15: Pay wages
Amos 5:11-12: Trampling the poor
Psalms 72:2-4: Defend cause of poor
James 5:1-6: Riches have rotted
Luke 6:20, 24: Blessed are poor
Luke 16:19-31: Lazarus at Gate
Matthew 25:34-40: I was thirsty
Luke 1:52-53: Filled the hungry
Psalm 35:10 (or all): Deliver the weak
Jeremiah 9: 22-23: No glory in riches
Timothy (I)6:17-18: Rich, be generous

Justice (general)

Exodus 3:7-8
Amos 5:21-24: Justice roll like waters
Micah 6:8: Do Justice, Kindness
Ecclesiastes 4:1: Tears of oppressed
Isaiah 30:18: God of Justice
Isaiah 32:17: Effect of justice, peace
Isaiah 58: 6-11: Free oppressed
Psalm 72: 1-4: Defend poor; crush oppressor
Jeremiah 10:23-24: Steadfast love
Isaiah 16:3-5: Grant justice
Jeremiah 21:11-12 Execute Justice

Jeremiah 22:13,15-17: Woe to exploitor
Amos 5: 7-12: Those doing injustice
Hosea 10:12-15: Sow righteousness

Justice & Hospitality towards Immigrants

Exodus 12:49: Same law
Exodus 23:9 Don't oppress strangers
Exodus 23:12: Rest for alien
Numbers 9:14: Same law
Numbers 15:29: Same law
Deut. 23:7: Don't abhor Egyptians
Deuteronomy 24:14-15: Pay wages
Deut. 27:19 Don't oppress sojourner
Psalm 146:9: Sojourner watched over
Jeremiah 7:5-7: Don't oppress alien
Duet 10: 17-19: Execute justice
Deut 17: 19: Don't pervert justice
Exodus 22:21: Don't wrong stranger
Leviticus 24:22: One law
Lev 19:33-34: Love stranger as self
Ezekiel; 22:29-30: Stand in gap
Eph 2: 14-19: Break wall of hostility
Zechariah 7:9-10: Don't oppress alien
Peter (I) 4: 8-9: Practice hospitality
Hebrews 13:1-2: Entertaining Angels

Farmworkers

James 5:1-5: Laborers cry out
Timothy (II) 2:6: First share of crops
Corinthians (II) 9.10,12: God supplies seed; thanks

Labor

Isaiah 65:22-23: Not labor in vain
Mark 10:42-45: First is lastt
Genesis 2:1-2: God rested
Deuteronomy 24:14-15: Pay wages
Isaiah 5:1-7: Vineyard parable
Jeremiah 34: 8-14: Set slaves free

Strength & Survival

Corinthians (II) 4: 7-10: Afflicted not crushed

Hunger: Selected Biblical References

Luke 12:22-23, 29-31:Not Bread Alone
Isaiah 16
Luke 18: 1-8
Matthew 18:15-18: Tell it to the church
Ezekiel 34:25-31: Covenant of peace.....
Mark 11:15-17: Money Changers in Temple
Revelation 1:1-4: New Heaven & earth
Genesis 1:26-28: God the Creator
Matthew 6:24: Can't serve 2 masters
Amos 2:6-7: Trampling head of poor

Prayers

Confession

Leader: We believe in God,
Women: Whose breath gives energy for the struggle,
Men: Whose power goes beyond human weakness.
Leader: We believe in Christ,
Women: Whose solidarity accompanies all our deaths,
Men: Whose life frees us to the resurrection.
Leader: We believe in the Spirit,
Women: Who liberates us from powerlessness
Men: And brings us toward all truth.
Leader: We believe in God the Holy Trinity,
All: Whose grace upholds our being, whose unity call us to be the church and to live out the hope of the Kingdom.

Intercession

Leader: For the reconciliation of all people through the revolution of non-violent love...
Response: We pray, O God.
Leader: For churches and synagogues, that they may be humbled, reformed, united...
Response: We pray, O God.
Leader: For all poor and hungry, migrant workers, outcast and unemployed...
Response: We pray, O God.
Leader: For victims of discrimination, harassment and brutality...
Response: We pray, O God.
Leader: That farm workers may someday win the justice they seek...
Response: We pray, O God.
Leader: That with compassion and fidelity we may work for a better world...
Response: We pray, O God.
Pause for Personal Intentions... (Respond: We pray, O God.)
Leader: For the labors of those whose backs are sore from bending, whose lungs cry for air free of dust and poisonous fumes, whose labors enable us to eat...
Response: We pray, O God.

Praise

Bless the hands of the people of the earth,
The hands that plant the seed,
The hands that bind the harvest,
The hands that carry the burden of life.

Soften the hands of the oppressor and
Strengthen the hands of the oppressed.

Bless the hands of the workers,
Bless the hands of those in power above them
That the measure they deal will be tempered
With justice and compassion. Amen.

Possible addition: Bless the hands of those in this room as we deepen our understanding of farm workers and strive for a better world for all.

From a Hymn by Brian Wren

At the table of the world, some have plenty, some have none.
At the table of our God, all are plentifully fed.
Blow among us, Spirit of God, fill us with your courage and care.
Hurricane and Breath, take us on a journey of love.

Farm Worker Prayer by Cesar E. Chavez

Show me the suffering of the most miserable; so I will know my people's plight.
Free me to pray for others; for you are present in every person.
Help me 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 never tire of the struggle.
Let us remember those who have died for justice; for they have given us life.
Help us to love even those who hate us; so we can change the world. Amen.

Oración del Campesino en la Lucha -- Cesar E. Chávez

Enséñame el sufrimiento de los mas desafortunados; Así conoceré el dolor de mi pueblo.
Librame a orar por los demás; Porque estas presente en cada persona.
Ayúdame a tomar, responsabilidad de mi propia vida; Solo así, seré libre al fin.
Concedeme valentía para servir al prójimo; Porque en la entrega hay vida verdadera.
Concedeme honradez y paciencia; Para que yo pueda trabajar junto con otros trabajadores.
Alumbranos con el canto y la celebración; Para que levanten el Espíritu entre nosotros.
Que el Espíritu florezca y crezca; Para que no nos cansemos entere la lucha.
Nos acordamos de los que han caído por la justicia; Porque a nosotros han entregado la vida.
Ayúdanos a amar aun a los que nos odian; Así podemos cambiar el mundo.

Prayer on the wall at Centro Comunitario de Atencion Migrante y Necesitado in Altar, Mexico.

Heart of Jesus full of love and mercy, I watch over my sister and brother migrants. Have pity on them and protect them; they suffer mistreatment and humiliations on their way, looked on as dangerous by most, and marginalized for being foreigners. Help us to respect them and appreciate their dignity. Touch with your goodness the hearts of we who see them pass by. Take care of their families until they return home, not with broken hearts but with their hopes fulfilled. May it be so.

Oración por Mis Hermanos Migrantes

Corazón de Jesús lleno de amor y misericordia, quiero pedirte por mis hermanos migrantes. Ten piedad de ellos y protégelos, pues sufren maltratos y humillaciones en su caminar, son señalados por la mayoría como peligrosos, y marginados por ser extranjeros. Haz que les respetemos y valoremos su dignidad. Toca con tu bondad el corazón de cuantos les vemos pasar. Cuida a sus familias hasta que regresen a sus casas, no con el corazón roto sino con sus esperanzas calmadas. Así sea.

Table Prayers

Gracious God, we join our hands in prayer
giving thanks for the food on our table.
We give you thanks for life and all that we receive from your hands.
Keep us mindful of the hands that prepared these gifts
and especially the hands of farm workers who have made this bounty possible.

Open our hearts to the awesome opportunities of life your love presents.
May this food sustain us as we join you, our sisters and brothers
in creating a humane and just world.
We pray in your holy name. Amen.

O God of freedom, like Moses before us we pray, "let my people go."
Let all people go to the fullness of life that you have promised.
Let those with power learn to exercise it justly.
Let those who harvest this food be fed as we are fed.
Nourish us well with this food.
May it strengthen us for the journey ahead so that we may
break the chains of slavery,
yielding a rich harvest of justice.
Like Moses, may we help your people find freedom.
Amen

Prayer for Immigrants

Dear God, every day, men, women, and children
are making the perilous journey north
across the U.S. border - a border established by people, not by you.

We pray, God, for your help in tearing down
the borders we have built around our own hearts,
that we may see you in each person,
and that we may learn to love and welcome
each of your children as members of one people, one world, one God.

Prayer for Immigrant Workers

Why, O God, do our neighbors have to risk their lives
to come and work in our yards, our hotels, our fields?
Why, O God, do we ask the most
vulnerable to endure the hardship and abuses
of field work which we will not do ourselves?
Why, O God, do we allow the pursuit of profits
to outweigh the pursuit of fairness.

O God, have mercy on us.

Prayer of Dedication

O God, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others;
Open my ears that I may hear their cries;
Open my heart so that they may not be without succor;
Let me know be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong;
Nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich.
Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places.
And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of
peace for thee. Amen.

Alan Paton, South Africa

O God of Peace and Love, Renew our minds and our wills that we may sow love instead of hatred, Peace instead of violence, Equality instead of dominance.

O God of Mercy and Justice. Forgive us when we turn into pieces, forgive us when we say we love you, but do not feed your people. Forgive us when, for the sake of so-called security and development, we make life for others a series of torture, misery and death.

O God of Song, Dance and Tears of life, Enable us to work with love. Enlighten us to walk with faith. Empower us to peace with justice. Praise and thanks to our God. Hope and Peace to all! Amen.

Blessing

Go out into the world in peace.

Have courage.

Hold on to what is good.

Share what you hold on to.

Strengthen the faint-hearted.

Support the weak and oppressed.

Help the suffering.

Act justly.

Use your power well to help the powerless.

Love and serve God, acting together and rejoicing in the power of the Spirit!

Amen.

RESPONSORIAL Prayers

Leader: The earth is full of your riches, O God.

People: You raise grass for the cattle and vegetation for our use, producing bread from the earth and wine to gladden our hearts, so that our faces gleam with oil and bread fortifies our hearts.

Leader: The earth is full of your riches, O God. How manifold are your works! In wisdom you have wrought them all—the earth is full of your creatures.

People: The earth is full of your riches, O Lord.

Litany for a Harvest of Justice

Leader: As people of faith, we believe in the dignity and diversity of all human beings and the wholeness of the earth.

People: Amen.

Leader: Together in our faith traditions, we proclaim that compassion is stronger than hate.

People: Amen.

Leader: We choose to live in just and peaceful communities built from trust and respect.

People: Amen.

Leader: We believe that faith can conquer fear and that our greatest joys lie just beyond our fears.

People: Amen.

Leader: We promise as a community today to build healthy, welcoming communities not with barriers, but with bridges.

People: Amen.

Leader: We pledge to support and protect our brothers and sisters, documented and undocumented, who labor in the fields and who come together to work to provide a better life for themselves and their families

People: Amen.

READINGS

"Young people say, 'What good can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?' They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. but we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us? When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers [and sisters] with that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.'"

-- Dorothy Day (Loaves and Fishes Harper & Row, 1963)

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you NOT to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

-- Marianne Williams

"One of these lessons I have learned is that there exists a chunk of responsibility to fight for justice this is mine alone, and I can either accept that responsibility or run from it. It is no one else's by my own."

—Leone Jose Bicchieri, farmworker organizer

Quotes from Cesar Chavez

"What do we want the church to do? We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us. We ask the church to sacrifice with the people for social change, for justice and for love of brother and sister. We don't ask for words. We ask for deeds. We don't ask for paternalism. We ask for servanthood."

"We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the non-violence struggle for peace and justice you also find that people give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love."

"Every time we sit at a table at night or in the morning to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations..."

“I have met many, many farm workers and friends who love justice and who are willing to sacrifice for what is right. They have a quality about them that reminds me of the beatitudes. They are living examples that Jesus’ promise is true: they have been hungry and thirsty for righteousness and they have been satisfied. They are determined, patient people who believe in life and who give strength to others. They have given me more love and hope and strength than they will ever know.”

“It is ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables, and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves.”

“Perhaps we can bring the day when children will learn from their earliest days that being fully man and fully woman means to give one’s life to the liberation of the brother who suffers. It is up to each one of us. It won’t happen unless we decide to use our lives to show the way.”

“It is possible to become discouraged about the injustice we see everywhere. But God did not promise us that the world would be humane and just. God gives us the gift of life and allows us to choose the way we will use our limited time on earth. It is an awesome opportunity.”

“Our opponents in the agricultural industry are very powerful and farm workers are still weak in money and influence. But we have another kind of power that comes from the justice of our cause. So long as we are willing to sacrifice for that cause, so long as we persist in non-violence and work to spread the message of our struggle, then millions of people around the world will respond from their heart, will support our efforts...and in the end we will overcome.”

“The road to social justice for the farm workers is the road to unionization. Our cause, our strike against table grapes, and our international boycott are all founded upon our deep conviction that the form of collective self-help which is unionization holds far more hope for the farm worker than any other single approach, whether public or private. This conviction is what brings spirit, high hope and optimism to everything we do.”

“Non violence is not inaction. It is not discussion. It is not for the timid or weak...Nonviolence is hard work. It is the willingness to sacrifice. It is the patience to win.”

“We’re going to pray a lot and picket a lot.”

“Jesus’ life and words are a challenge at the same time that they are Good News. They are a challenge to those of us who are poor and oppressed. By His life He is calling us to give ourselves to other, to sacrifice for those who suffer, to share our lives with our brothers and sisters who are also oppressed. He is calling us to ‘hunger and thirst after justice’ in the same way that we hunger and thirst after food and water: that is, by putting our yearning into practice.”

“When we are really honest with ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that belong to us. So, it is how we use our life that determines what kind of people we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of humanness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice. To be truly alive is to suffer for others. God help us to be truly alive!”

(adapted from Cesar Chavez, March 10, 1968)