

Friday Gathering
GOD'S HARVEST: OUR THANKSGIVING

PRELUDE

WELCOME & INTRO

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, Spiritual Formation Director

IN REMEMBRANCE IN TIMES OF NATURAL DISASTER (New England, Hawaii, Morocco, etc.)

O God, you divided the waters of chaos at creation,
in Christ you stilled the storms, healed the sick, and repelled evil forces.
We pray to you to tame the forces of earthquakes, floods, wind, and fire,
that shock and destroy our homes and lives across the world.
Keep us from calling disaster your justice.
Help us, in good times and in distress,
to trust your mercy and respect the power of nature.
Fill us with compassion for ourselves and others,
that we may face our troubles together,
and turn to you for strength and guidance, this day and all days. Amen.
(silent moment)

OPENING WORDS

Leader: God's world is an island of life and beauty –
earth below, sky above, warmed by the sun.
We live in between and share our lives together,
where Jesus lived, died and rose again,
and from where God's harvest comes.

All: God, we thank you for our home on earth.
We thank you for our lives together.
We thank you for your love and care.
We thank you for the harvest. Amen.

MY HARVEST THANKS

There are grains I have not seen
and wheat that has not grown.
The fields are full and empty too
growing tall and bearing fruit
falling over and crumbling down.
And the grain I have not seen
is not yet planted,
a seed not sown
in a season yet to come.

But for now, there are
grains yet to grow
and seeds yet to sow.
And then, I'll walk along the rows
and thank the seed for growing so,
giving life and tables full.
My harvest thanks is more than this
and enough for now. © *Rebeka Maples*

OUR OPENING PRAYER

Holy Spirit of God, we welcome you among us.
As we celebrate your harvest and pray for your justice, we ask for your peace.
Come into this quiet moment, as we lift our lives to you,
filled with loss and sadness, responsibilities and demands...
(silent pause)

**Lord, release us from the stress in our lives.
Free us to live and grow in your light. Amen.**

SONG “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” UMH 139

A BIBLE READING **Ruth 1:11-18**

Reader 1: But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has turned against me!” At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”

But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

WHAT IS HARVEST?

Voice 1: What is harvest? Harvest is a time of hope:
We have bread, warmth and shelter for tomorrow.

Voice 2: What is harvest? Harvest is a time of fear:
Our crops have failed, jobs are lost, a hard winter is to come.

Voice 1: What is harvest? Harvest is a time of plenty:
We receive with joy all the good gifts from God.

Voice 2: What is harvest? Harvest is a time of empty shelves:
We work the fields and factories but now go without.

Voice 1: What is God's harvest?
We plough the fields and scatter the seed.

Voice 2: What is God's harvest? God's harvest is justice lived out with joy:
Food and fairness enough for today and tomorrow.

Voice 1: What is our harvest thanks?
**For good harvests, we bless you, Lord.
Where harvests fail, we cry out to you, Lord.
When we are full, inspire us to act.
When we are empty, fill us with your holy spirit.
This is our harvest thanks. Amen.**

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

It is harvest time - what does that mean for you?
What is God's harvest and how do you show your thanks?
(silent moment)

SONG

"Great is Thy Faithfulness"

UMH 140

OUR HARVEST THANKS

Lord of the harvest, just as Ruth found home, we pray for all who –
grow the world's food, stitch the world's clothes,
mine the world's metals, and yet remain homeless...

**We ask you for justice –
in food and farming, in trade and finance,
in human rights, in government and law,
for the children, for the world, its people and its harvest...**

We pray for all creation.

We ask for fairness in all places,
that all may know your harvest of justice and peace...

We pray for the world's struggles to combat disease, for health workers and their families,

for all those in our lives, our churches, and our world, we lift our prayers to you...

These are our prayers. This is your harvest.

Show us how to lead your people. Show us how to be your people. Amen.

SONG

“Come, Ye Thankful People Come”

UMH 694

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Leader: With our prayers, we commit ourselves to the service of God and all people, in the words Ruth said to Naomi:

All: Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay.

Your people will be my people.

Leader: When I am stripped of power,

When I am grieving, when I am poor, when I am a refugee:

**All: May I trust in your promise, may I know your joy,
May I meet you in others and learn that your harvest is for all.**

Leader: When I am powerful, when I am celebrating,

When I am at home, when I am rewarded:

**All: May I trust in your promise, may I know your joy,
May I meet you in others, and may I show that your harvest is for all.**

May we respect the life of all you have made:

**May our spirits be strengthened by using only what we need,
and may we use our strength to help those who need us. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN

“Now Thank We All Our God”

UMH 102

BLESSING

May our love for God become ever deeper and wider.

May the busyness of our lives and the cares of our hearts
give way to the light of God.

May God’s harvest be our thanksgiving.

POSTLUDE

SOURCES:

Service adapted from “Ruth’s Harvest: Worship resources for Harvest” by Tim Alred, (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pubs., 2013).

Prayers adapted from

Sue Ellen Herne, Mohawk, 20th cent., BOW 558;

Edward Tyler, Prayers in Celebration of the Turning Year;

Rebeka Maples, Eber & Wein/Poetry Nation, PA, 2023