

"Come to the Table"

Liturgy for the 146th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia

Call to Worship

Leader: Welcome to the field of the Lord, where the margins are left unharvested for the weary.

People: We come hungry for the Bread of Life, thirsting for justice and peace.

Leader: Like Boaz, God invites us to draw near, to share the roasted grain, and to find shelter under divine wings.

People: Like Ruth, we come seeking grace, recognizing our need for community and provision.

Leader: We gather to worship the Creator who provides enough for all.

People: Let us dine with the Christ who feeds us, and the Spirit who teaches us to feed one another.

Call to Confession

When we read the story of Ruth and Boaz, we are reminded of God's ancient law: to leave the edges of our fields for the poor and the foreigner. Yet, we live in a world where food is often treated as a commodity to be hoarded rather than a gift to be shared. Trusting in God's abundant grace, let us confess our sins against God, neighbor, and creation.

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

God of the Harvest,

You have created a world with enough to feed every mouth, yet we confess that we have built systems of scarcity. We have harvested to the very edges of our lives, keeping the surplus for ourselves while ignoring the hunger at our gates. We confess our disconnection from the food we eat. We forget the hands of the laborers, the immigrants, and the farmworkers who toil in the fields. We turn a blind eye to food deserts in our own cities, and we participate in economies that exploit the vulnerable for cheap goods.

Forgive us, Lord. Soften our hearts. Teach us the radical generosity of Boaz. Open our eyes to the Ruths among us, and transform our tables into places of equity and welcome. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Hear the good news: God is the bread of heaven, given freely for the life of the world. In Christ, our scarcity is transformed into abundance. God forgives our hoarding, restores our souls, and invites us back to the table of abundant grace. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, fed, and freed!

People: Thanks be to God!

Scripture Ruth 2:8-16

Sermon “‘And Don’t Go Away from Here:’ Inclusion at God’s Table

Dr. Christine Luckritz Marquis

PEVA Business

Invitation to the Offering

Boaz told his workers to intentionally pull-out stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them behind for Ruth to gather. This was not an accident; it was an intentional act of structural generosity. As we collect our offering today, let us intentionally leave behind a portion of our harvest so that the vulnerable may be fed and God’s kingdom may be built.

Prayer of Dedication

Lord of the Gleaners, take these gifts and multiply them. Use our time, our money, and our resources to feed the hungry, to advocate for the oppressed, and to build a world where everyone has a seat at the table. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Breakout Session

Lunch Break

Prayers of the People

Leader: God of all provision, we bring before You the needs of a hungry world. We pray for the earth, the soil, and the rain. Teach us to be stewards of Your creation, that the land may yield its fruit for generations to come.

Lord, of the harvest,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who labor in the fields and factories today—for the migrant workers, the meatpackers, the truck drivers, and the grocery clerks. Grant them fair wages, safe conditions, and the dignity that Boaz showed to Ruth. Protect them from exploitation.

Lord, of the harvest,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who glean in the modern world. For families relying on food banks, for children who rely on school lunches, and for neighborhoods where fresh, healthy food is out of reach. Break the chains of systemic poverty and guide our leaders to enact just food policies.

Lord, of the harvest,

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the Church. May our faith be reflected in our food. May our grocery shopping, our voting, and our community gardens be acts of worship. Make our communion tables a reflection of Your heavenly banquet, where all have enough and none are turned away.

Lord, of the harvest,

People: Hear our prayer.

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Communion Invitation

Friends, this is not the table of any one church, but the table of Jesus Christ. Just as Boaz said to Ruth, "Come over here and eat some bread, and dip your morsel in the wine," Christ invites you today.

At this table, there are no foreigners, no outcasts, and no margins. Here, the Bread of Life is broken so that the world might be made whole. Come, for all things are ready.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (The Great Thanksgiving)

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: It is a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to You, God of the harvest. You spoke, and the fields brought forth grain. You scattered seeds across the earth and called it good, providing enough for every mouth and margins enough for every stranger. When we harvested to the edges and hoarded the surplus, You did not abandon us. You gave the law of the gleaners, that the poor and the foreigner might gather and be filled. You sent prophets to call us back to the open field and the shared loaf.

And so, we join our voices with the laborers and the gleaners, with all the company of heaven, forever singing to the glory of Your name:

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Leader: Holy are You, and blessed is Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Like Boaz at the threshing floor, He drew near to the outsider and said, "Come, eat, and be welcome." He fed the crowds on the hillside until all were satisfied, and there was more left over than when they began. On the night He was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His friends, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant, poured out for you and for many. Whenever you drink it, remember me."

And so, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

People: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Leader: Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of grain and vine. Make them for us the body and blood of Christ, that we who gather at these margins may become one body, gleaned from many fields and gathered into one harvest. Feed us here, that we may go and feed one another, until all are welcomed, all are dignified, and none are turned away from Your table.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are Yours, God of the harvest, now and forever.

People: Amen.

Prayer After Communion

Leader: God of the gleaners, we thank You that You have fed us at this table, not from our own harvest but from Your abundance. We came hungry, and You have satisfied us; we came as strangers, and You have named us kin. Now send us back into the fields of the world with full hearts and open hands. Let the grace we have tasted here spill over into every place of scarcity, that others may gather what we have been given the courage to leave behind. Strengthen us to seek justice, to honor the worker, and to make our tables wide, until the whole earth is fed at Your banquet of plenty. In the name of Christ, the Bread of Life, we pray.

People: Amen.

Benediction

Leader: Go forth from this place into the fields of the world. Do not harvest to the very edges of your life—leave room for grace and leave resources for those in need.

See the dignity in every worker.

Share your roasted grain with the foreigner.

And may the God of the harvest provide for you, the Bread of Life sustain you, and the Holy Spirit empower you to seek justice, this day and forevermore.