



Mt Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

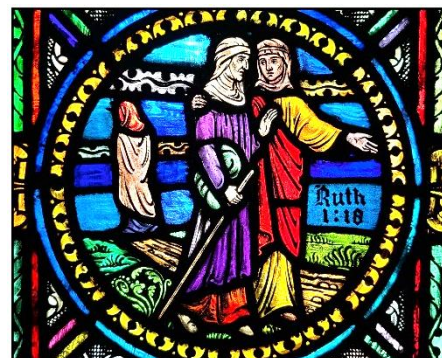
Making and Growing Followers of Jesus

August 13, 2026

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is hard to believe it is almost time for school to start again! This Sunday, we will celebrate our students from preschool to grad school. We are asking students to bring their backpacks (or whatever you use!) to the worship service this Sunday morning for a "Blessing of the Backpacks." This is also a tangible reminder for all of us to pray for our students. May God go with them every single day. May they find wonder and joy in their learning, and may they bring the light of Christ with them into every classroom!

This week, we are studying two windows you may have never noticed. They are on the side of the North (Dormont) transept, and they are the only two windows on the main floor that depict an Old Testament story—the Book of Ruth. In the first window, we see the widow Naomi with her two widowed daughters-in-law. Orpah is walking away in the distance, head down, but Ruth is standing beside her saying, "Where you go, I will go" (Ruth 1:16). In the second window, we see Ruth gleaning barley, as Boaz, the owner of the field, looks on.



Of all the Old Testament stories, why did they choose only the story of Ruth for the main floor? I like to think it is because of its direct connection to Jesus. In Matthew 1, in the middle of the genealogy of Jesus, you see this: "Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David" (Matt 1:5-6). Jesus was from the line of David, whose great-grandmother was Ruth. And Boaz, the "kinsman-redeemer," displays a foretaste of the redemption offered through Christ.

The story starts with "In the time of the judges..." This is a parallel story to all the dysfunction and tragedy happening on a grander scale in Israel. As awful as the situation was, the book of Ruth gives us a glimmer of hope. The widow Naomi feels hopeless – "Call me Mara" (which means bitterness), she says in Ruth 1:20. Yet God begins to bring redemption to her, first through her loyal Moabite daughter-in-law, and then through the kind and generous Boaz, who makes sure they have enough to eat. The story culminates with Boaz fulfilling the role of kinsman-redeemer by marrying Ruth, even though she was a foreigner. A kinsman-redeemer was a close male relative who would marry the widow to provide her protection and continue the family line. The final verses then connect us from this tiny story to the grand story of the whole Bible. God was faithful to Naomi and Ruth, and through Boaz, their story became part of the story of the Messiah, the ultimate redeemer.

Where do you fit in God's story? Where has God been faithful in the hard places of your life? Are you still waiting for certain tough experiences to be redeemed? As you prepare your hearts for worship this Sunday, take a few minutes to read through Ruth – it is only 4 chapters long. Ask God to remind you of the times He has brought redemption to your life. Take time to pray about any bitterness that still needs redeeming. And ask Him how He can use you as part of His redemption plan for others as well.

Blessings,
Pastor Carolyn