

Ruth's Harvest

*A Service from
The Iona Community*



The Gleaners by Jean-Francois Millet (1857)

Opening responses:

Holy Spirit of God,

We invite you among us.

As we come to celebrate your harvest
and to pray for your justice

We also ask you to bring your peace.

So that the quiet place inside us may speak.

In stillness may we be at one with you. Amen

Silence

As we prepare for worship now,
our good lives can be tangled with thorns.

Thorns of failure and sadness.

Tangles of duties and demands.

Lord, cut away the thorns that wound and choke.

Free us to live and to grow in your light.

Prayer of thanksgiving:

God's world is an island of life and beauty –
formed of stardust, warmed by the sun.

Below us lies melting rock, above us stretches cold vacuum.

We live between: our home – this thin strip of soil, water and air.

In which we share our lives together.

Which is alive with the Holy Spirit.

Upon which Jesus lived, died and rose again.

From which God's harvest comes.

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.

What is harvest?:

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

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

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

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

What is God's harvest? Plough the fields and scatter:
a marrow on the altar and a tin of beans for charity?

What is God's harvest? God's harvest is justice lived out with joy:
food and fairness for today and tomorrow.

**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.**

Psalm

Bible reading

Quiet Music for Reflection

Prayerful Poetry

When I am stripped of power
When I am grieving
When I am a stranger
When I am humiliated

May I trust in your promised land
May I know your joy
May I meet you within and in others
May I learn that your harvest is for all

When I am powerful
When I am celebrating
When I am at home
When I am rewarded

May I trust in your promised land
May I know your joy
May I meet you within and in others
May I learn that your harvest is for all

Quiet music for reflection

Prayers of intercession

Ruth, Naomi and Orpah were destitute, in need of refuge:

We pray for an end to poverty.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Ruth was a foreigner, of the 'wrong' religion and race:

We pray for an end to war and the hatred that feeds it.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Ruth, Naomi and Orpah were women, with fewer rights than men:

We pray for an end to discrimination and the violence it feeds.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Boaz had power – land, money and authority:

We pray for all who hold power in our complex world.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Ruth, Naomi and Orpah were grieving:

We pray for an end to suffering.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Ruth found a home with Naomi and Boaz:

May we find community between us and a home with you.

Bring us your harvest of justice and peace.

Lord, just as Ruth did not seek charity but the right to harvest, we do not seek charity for our sisters and brothers who grow the world's food; stitch the world's clothes; mine the world's metals and yet remain poor.

We ask you for the justice of Boaz, in food and farming; in trade and finance; in human rights; in government and law; for women and men; for the natural world and for children yet to be born.

**We ask for your justice lived out with joy.
We ask for fairness written on our hearts,
That all may see a fairer world. Amen**

Time for Quiet Prayer

The prayers conclude with:

**Lord, we long for your harvest.
We are ready to work in your fields,
But only you can make your harvest grow. Amen**

Prayer of commitment:

We commit ourselves to the service of God and all his people in the words that Ruth said to Naomi (*Ruth 1:16, NIV*):

**Where you go, I will go.
Where you stay, I will stay.
Your people will be my people. Amen**

Blessing:

Holy Spirit of God,
may the space within that we keep for you
become ever deeper and wider.

May the busyness of our brains
and the cares of our hearts
give way to the light of your presence.

**O God, come home with us
this harvest time and evermore.
Amen**

