

# SERVICE OF FAREWELL TO THE FARM

Church Writers Group  
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March 1999

Dear Friends:

We are a Church Writers Group living in the midst of the rural crisis. We deeply feel the anguish of those farm families who will have to give up farming and leave their homes. Lisa Faleide, one of our group, went through that experience during the drought of about ten years ago. Her poem that relives that loss is in the enclosed SERVICE OF FAREWELL TO FARM. All of us are very close to the problem through our families, rural ministry or the business of farming.

It came to us that there should be an occasional service of a "funeral" for the grieving persons who have lost the farm or at least have to leave the farm for other work. We are sending this service to you for use in your synod, diocese, district, institution or parishes.

We do not have the funds or the ability to print and send hundreds of copies of this service to individual parishes of several denominations. The need of the Service of Farewell to Farm is immediate. Therefore, we are mailing this liturgy to you who may be willing to let your parishes know that this is available by request from your headquarters. This method of distribution would reduce the number of copies needed.

We give you permission without charge to copy and use this service as long as you enclose the "Guide for Use of the Service of Farewell to Farm" with it. The guide can clarify and give ideas of how to use this Service. If you need to cut you could leave out HELPFUL TEXTS, HYMN SUGGESTIONS and FARM PRAYERS. Even though these parts are a convenience, the pastors can research this for themselves. Use and distribute this service in any way you see helpful to grieving people.

Sincerely in Christ,

Constance Berg  
Lisa Faleide  
Marvin Holje  
Steven Schou

## SERVICE OF FAREWELL TO FARM

GATHERING OF THE FAMILY IN THEIR HOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are gathered here to recall the purpose for which God created the human being; to confess our failure as a human race to fulfill God's purpose and to pray for hope that God's purpose and to pray for hope that God's purpose may be restored. Hear then the word of the Lord:

Read Genesis 2:7-8

Because God's good creation has become infected by sin we have not fulfilled the purpose for which God created us. The love we were meant to have for God's creation has degenerated into rebellion against God; the love we were meant to have for one another has degenerated into blaming, even those whom we love most. In our despair we cry out to God:

Read Psalm 88 or another lament psalm appropriate for the occasion

Hope and healing begin when we honestly confess to God all that we have done or left undone that has destroyed the good life God has given us, and turn to God in prayer.

Read responsively Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 32:1-5

Our Lord is merciful, and in his great love, God forgives us all our sins. As forgiven children of God we are a new creation. We live in the hope that God's purpose for creation may be restored and God's will may be done, on earth now, and in the kingdom of heaven forever. Hear the Word of the LORD:

Read the Parable of the Sower: Mark 4:3-9

LORD GOD, in your great love you made us your children and sent us out into the garden to till it and keep it according to your purpose. We have failed in your purpose, Lord God. We have failed because of forces beyond our control; we have failed because of our short-sightedness; we have failed because of decisions we have made that cannot be undone.

Restore to us your love, O Lord. Restore us in hope. Restore to us the dignity that was there at the beginning of creation when you made us tillers of the earth. Give

us courage now to go on with our lives; give us faith to believe you are with us in all that we do; help us trust that you are calling us and guiding us in new ways, and no matter where we are or what we do, your seed will bear fruit according to your will.

AMEN

HYMN "Lord of All Hopefulness"

MEDITATION

STORY SHARING TIME BY THE FAMILY

PRAYERS

Invitation to family members to pray out loud or silently

Almighty God, words cannot express all we feel today. We feel loss, anxiety and pain. Help us as we look to the future. Help us to hold on to the hope that you give us as we look ahead. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

HYMN "Praise and Thanksgiving"

BENEDICTION

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no person evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

POEM

### **Let Go: A Prayer of Relinquishment**

When I was hanging on to this farm  
With fingernails brittle from  
Three summers of drought,  
Muscles aching from trying to massage  
The pain of impending loss  
Out of my husband and from clinging to hope after hope,

God whispered, "Let go."

When I told myself to hold on  
Until I could figure out how  
My resourcefulness could save us,

How I could work harder, longer,  
Could be better, smarter,  
(though I raided my sons'  
birthday money to buy milk)

God said, "Let go. I will catch you."

When tears large enough  
To collapse dams  
Rolled down my sons' cheeks  
As we told them we had to  
Leave the farm  
And I wailed a lament deep enough  
For years of echoes,

God murmured, "Rest now. I will cradle you."

When we made our plans  
For a life after farming,  
Packed up our belongings  
In a grain truck,  
But hesitated at the threshold,

God said, "Open the door. I will accompany you."

Listen.  
God is the God of all geography,  
Not just this place,  
Not just this piece of land  
Not just this household.  
Close the door. Let go of the doorknob.  
Fall into God's arms to weep  
And when you are emptied of every tear,  
Take God's hand and hear,

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you,  
Even unto the ends of the earth."

**By Lisa Swanson Faleide**

*Poem above reproduced with permission from "Sing Out New Visions," edited by Jean Martens, copyrighted by National Council of Churches, 1998. (Available from Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1-800-328-4648. Product code 69-9791 6-0001-0597-5.) If this poem is used in print form it must be accompanied by the author's name and the copyright information in this paragraph.*

## WALKABOUT THE FARMSTEAD AND THE HOME

### LUNCH

Gracious God, you have given us many friends and neighbors and family to help us through the bad times. We pray for understanding in this time of difficulty and we look to you for a sense of peace as we struggle in our livelihood. Be within us to refresh us; be around us to protect us; be before us to guide us; be above us to bless us and beneath us to hold us up for you are the one true God who reigns above all. Amen.

### GUIDE FOR USE OF THE SERVICE OF FAREWELL TO FARM

The loss of the farm or farming is like a death of a loved one. Grief is a major response to a loss. Most will feel a sense of failure, shame and anger even though circumstances were against them. Let them know that their feelings are normal. Without a resolution of this loss they will find it difficult to get on with life after the farm. Grief is a gift from God to heal the mourner.

Do what fits the family and is comfortable for you. It could also be used at the closure of a mainstreet business or when a long term worker who has to move to find work. This guide suggests some options and clarifications of the liturgy. Since there are many activities that could be done to say farewell to the farm, a planning meeting with some of the family is needed.

SERVICE OF FARWELL TO FARM is a project of a North Dakota Church Writers Group. All have farm backgrounds, have or are serving rural parishes and know parishioners or family who are struggling to stay on the farm. The group consists of : Constance Berg of Grand Forks, Lisa Faleide of Maddock (she and her family once had to leave their farm due to drought), Rev. Steven Schou of Granville and Rev. Marvin L. Holje of Minot. Together they recognized a need for a "funeral" to leave the farm behind. If you wish to contact this Writers Group, write Marvin L. Holje, 105 28<sup>th</sup> St. SW, Minot ND 58701-3359 or call 701-839-1138.

### GATHERING OF THE FAMILY

The definition of family is up to them. You have to limit the number for this intimate worship at home. The guests might include some non-related friends. Keep in mind the older generation that once lived on this place. Use a special room of the home. For many farm families that might be the kitchen.

### MEDITATION

This is a time to explain something of the nature and process of God's healing grief so the family understands that how they feel is normal in a loss. Your words will

help lead them into the story sharing time.

## STORY SHARING TIME FOR THE FAMILY

You need to help the family share their stories of life on the farm and hopes for the future. One thing that could be done is to have each member bring some small memento of the farm to take along with them to their new home. This could be a stone, tool, picture, letter, poem, etc. to put into a nice box. This ritual could be a “Show and Tell” to bring forth memories and feelings to share.

## THE LORD’S SUPPER

*Holy Communion may be celebrated in the place where the family most commonly eats dinner. The bread that the family normally uses for meals, whether homemade or from the store, should be used. The wine may be homemade also, but if none is available the pastor can bring communion wine from the church. The family may sit around the table in the places they normally take for meals together. If it’s practical the members of the family can pass the bread and wine around the table and commune each other.*

*The following is a sample Eucharistic prayer. There is also a good one in the Lutheran Book of Worship Occasional service Book, page 84.*

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of the universe. You have created us and all living things, earth and sea and all their creatures, sun and rain and all that you make to grow from them. You have given us seed to sow upon the earth so that you may feed us with grain, fruit, bread and wine, food for our bodies and nourishment for our souls.

We remember your Son Jesus who showed your mighty power among us by breaking twelve loaves of bread and feeding 5000 men; filling six jars of water and pouring out wine for the wedding guests. We remember your Son Jesus, who invited the poor, the lame, and the blind to come to him: who welcomed even little children to sit with him in his kingdom.

We remember how, on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks; broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: “Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.” Again after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

Lord Jesus Christ, as you were lifted upon the cross for our sake, so we now lift this bread and cup in thanksgiving to you for all your blessings. Fill us with your Holy

Spirit so that we may follow you as you lead us from this holy table. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed together.

The family members commune one another.

## WALKABOUT THE FARMSTEAD AND THE HOME

This is like going to the cemetery for burial and committal in order to bring a closure to the loss. Pastor and family may plan ahead what they might do on this walkabout. It could bring up more stories or just let the family silently have their private feelings and thoughts. It would seem appropriate to have a prayer before going in for lunch.

## LUNCH

This is a very important thing to do. It's "the lunch" after the funeral. It is a time to relax and enables a return to a more hopeful feeling. Ask the family to prepare foods and drinks that are special to them. It might be popcorn. If it is summer, the fellowship eating could be a picnic outside.

Pictures might be taken after lunch. The pastor could snap the pictures. If they don't have a camera, ask them to buy a disposable one.

## HELPFUL TEXTS FOR THIS SERVICE

Ps. 8, Ps. 23, Ps. 121, Ps. 137

Mt. 5:1-12, Mt. 6:25-34, Mt. 7:7-12, Mt. 8:23-27, Mt. 10:26-31, Mt. 11:28-30, Mt. 13:44-45, Mt. 28:16-20

Mk. 12:41-44

Jn. 13:1-16, Jn. 14:25-27, Jn. 17:13-26, Jn. 20:19-23

Ro. 5:1-15, Ro. 8:18-39

I Co. 13:1-13, II Co. 4:7-18, Php. 4:4-13, Heb. 11:1-12

Jas. 1:2-4, I Jn. 3:1-3, Rev. 3:19-22, Rev. 21:1-7

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

For the Beauty of the Earth (LBW), Great is Thy Faithfulness (WOV), Precious Lord, Take my Hand (WOV), Amazing Grace (LBW), Beautiful Savior (LBW), How Great Thou Art (LBW), Healer of Our Every Ill (WOV), Day By Day (WOV), O God, Our Help in Ages Past (LBW), My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (LBW), He Leadeth Me (LBW), Abide With Me (LBW), What a Friend We Have in Jesus (LBW), Thy Holy Wings (WOV), Praise and Thanksgiving (LBW)

LBW – Lutheran Book of Worship

WOV – With One Voice

## FARM PRAYERS

Oh, Lord, we thank you for the chance to gather to celebrate our heritage, to celebrate our life and to celebrate the future. We are anxious and feel loss, but we are hopeful in your love. Bless us in our transition, bless our church, community and this land. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Gracious God, we regret our loss. Our loss of the land, of our lifestyle and what is familiar to us. But at the death of our Lord Jesus, you also experienced deep loss. Grant us hope for the future, peace for today and good memories of yesterday. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Almighty God, you alone can know what we feel when our words are too painful to speak. Help us today to go out into the world in peace. Help us to have courage as we face tomorrow. Help us support the weak, the suffering and all people as we serve you. Help us to forgive others and ourselves and ease the pain of anger. We rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### USE OF THIS SERVICE OF FAREWELL TO FARM

The Church Writer's Group does not have the money to send this liturgy to all the rural parishes of the Great Plains. Not every parish needs it. This service should be distributed soon. Therefore, they are sending copies of this service to Synod, District, Diocesan offices and institutions. If they sense a need for it in their area, the Writers give their permission, without charge, provided that the guide is included, to make it available to the parishes which could use it. This liturgy can easily be adapted to any denomination.