

Opening prayer:

We gather to praise you,  
God of Naomi and Ruth.  
Gather us together as a  
worshipping community  
that loves you and loves  
one another. Move us to  
be of one accord devoted to  
the redeeming work made  
visible in the sacrificial  
death of your son. Amen.

Pastoral prayer:

You command us to  
hear, O Lord, and we do  
not always want to listen.  
You tell us that you are  
the only God, but we run  
after other gods. You call us  
to love you completely:  
with our heart, our soul,  
our mind, our strength.  
We find excuses that distract  
us. Then you command  
us to love our neighbor.

Surely you do that mean  
that literally, or surely you  
want us to love the neighbor  
who does not require any-  
thing and who loves us  
with baked bread and  
clean fence lines. We

Had rather give to the  
mission work, for the  
weather than to deal  
with our own personal  
mission field - within our-  
selves and near us.

You say you will set  
people free, but do not take  
away my crutches and tell  
me I can be free. You lift  
up the bowed down, but  
don't they deserve to be bowed  
down? Eternal Rules, even  
as we honestly question and speak  
with you, we believe enough  
to recognize the absurdities  
of our situation. You build  
us up time and again.  
Your patience seems to have  
no end. Help us to commit  
our heart, mind, soul, and strength  
to you and risk loving others  
as we know you love us  
and as we should love  
ourselves. Amen