

Liturgy for the Blessing of a Garden

Episcopal Campus Ministry and the Baptist Student Center
Southeast Missouri State University
909 Normal Ave.
May 11, 2022, 4 p.m.

Gathering

As the people arrive, each person receives a pencil and a slip of paper to write down their hopes and prayers. These prayers may be blessings and well-wishes for the garden and the ministries connected to it, or the person may choose to write something more personal, like a specific prayer for themselves or a loved one. Later in the service, the people may “plant” their prayers in the garden, where they will be covered with soil so that they may return to the earth and nourish new life and growth throughout the season.

Greeting

Presider: Blessed be the God of all creation:

People: **For in your goodness you make all things new.**

Presider: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Opening Prayer*

Presider: Let us pray:

Living God, you call us to be good stewards of our earthly home; strengthen us to care for your creation; forgive us when, through our greed and indifference, we abuse its beauty and damage its potential. Empower us through your Holy Spirit to so nurture and love the world that all creation sings to your glory. **Amen.**

The Readings

First Reading: Genesis 2:4–9, 15

Reader: A reading from the book of Genesis.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up – for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and

water the whole face of the ground – then the Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground, and breathed into the human’s nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the human whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then the Lord God took the human being and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Response: Isaiah 58:6–11

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, *Here I am.*

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

The Gospel: Mark 4:26–32

Presider: ✠ The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Presider: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

*A brief sermon or reflection may be given.
The liturgy then continues with the Prayers of the People.*

Prayers of the People**

Reader 1: Creator God, teach us to see you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for everything that you have made.
Give us the grace to perceive that we are
connected to everything that is.

[A moment of silence is kept.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: **We give you thanks, O God.**

Reader 2: God whom we love, we stand before you
with open and humble hearts.
In our imagination, allow us to see and hear and feel
the beautiful expressions of the earth

that speak to each of us —
Mountains, rivers, prairie, oceans,
Forests, meadows, trees, flowers,
and vegetable gardens.

[Silence.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: We give you thanks, O God.

Reader 1: God of love, show us our place in this world,
as kin to all the non-human creatures
with whom we share the earth.
They came forth from your hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence
and your tender love,
and not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

[Silence.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: We give you thanks, O God.

Reader 2: Saving God, we give thanks
for all human beings on the earth,
created from dust, yet crowned with glory,
those we know and those who are strangers;
those near to us and those far away;
all of us beautiful, all of us flawed.

[Silence.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: We give you thanks, O God.

Reader 1: God of abundance, we give thanks for the sun,
for water, for soil, for air,
on which our lives depend moment by moment.
In silence we are aware of our frailty,
our complete dependence
on our beloved Mother Earth,
who nurtures us and sustains our every breath.

[Silence.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: We give you thanks, O God.

Reader 2: Creator God,
we enjoy the abundant fruits of the earth,
Yet we acknowledge that we in the developed world
have often wasted the gifts of the earth,
taking more than our share,
leaving our sisters and brothers in other places
in poverty and need.
Renew our minds and transform us
into servants of the earth,
so that her richness and bounty will sustain
not only us, but generations to come after us.

[Silence.]

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord:

All: We give you thanks, O God.

The people may place their written prayers into the prepared rows dug in the garden.

The liturgy continues with the blessing.

The Blessing of the Garden

Presider: God of earthworms and compost,
God of fertilizer and dirty fingernails,
God of field and furrow:
In the beginning you created human beings in your image,
giving us a lush and abundant garden
to be our home together with you;
When we were lost and wandering in exile
you provided water and manna to sustain us;
By your prophet Jeremiah you urged your people Israel to build houses and plant
gardens, even when they were uprooted and far from home;
And in the fullness of time you sent your Son Jesus Christ
to scatter the seeds of your Word,
to proclaim the coming of your Kingdom,
and to give your blessing to all who hunger:

We ask your blessing now upon this garden, that it may faithfully provide food for
international students at SEMO who hunger for a taste of home.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

The written prayers are carefully tucked into the earth and covered with soil.

Presider: Creator God, bless this soil, that it may nourish the vegetables and herbs planted here, strengthening their roots and encouraging their growth by the prayers of this community.

All: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

A volunteer uses a watering can to sprinkle water over the garden bed.

Presider: Lord Jesus Christ, who gives Living Water so that none may be thirsty: Bless this water, the most basic necessity of life, that it may carry nutrients from the soil to the plants, making them healthy, green, and full of life.

All: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our comforter and friend, who brings near those who were once far-off: Bless the volunteers who will help tend this garden and also those who will receive its gifts, that their work may produce the good fruit of hospitality and friendship, bearing witness to your holy love, faithfulness, and service.

All: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Presider: We ask your blessing upon the students and faculty of Southeast Missouri State University and those who are gathered here today, that their commitment to education may lead them to an ever-deeper sense of wonder at the world you have created, and inspire them to serve and protect this earth which you have called good.

All: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Presider: We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ the Sower, who plants in our hearts the seeds of mercy and loving-kindness. **Amen.**

Benediction and Dismissal***

Presider: Beloved children of God,
you were made for this earth,
and this earth was made for you.
Go forth to love and serve God in creation,
knowing in your deepest heart
that you are blessed from the beginning of time.

In the name of the Holy One
who called all things good.
Amen.

Presider: Go in peace. Christ is with you!

People: Thanks be to God.

*Special thanks to Mark Buhlig and Points on the Wheel
for providing the lumber for the garden boxes.*

Liturgical Sources

* **Opening Prayer** adapted from “Collect for Environment Sunday,” in *Creation Care Prayers*, The Church of England Environment Programme. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/9-prayers-leeds-diocese.pdf>.

** **Prayers of the People** adapted from “Prayers of the People to Care for Creation,” written by Karen Turner for the Diocese of Toronto, Earth Sunday 2018. <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/SOC-Additional-Resources.pdf>.

*** **Benediction** adapted from “Creation Care Benediction,” by Kellyann Wolfe. <https://outoftheearth.wordpress.com/2017/07/13/benediction-original-blessing-creation-care>.

The Blessing of the Garden written by Joshua Paul Smith. Christ Church Cape Girardeau, The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. May 10, 2022.