

MISSION 4/1 EARTH:

50 Great Days

Outside the Gate: A Liturgy for the Sixth Sunday of Easter During the Fifty Great Days of Mission 4/1 Earth May 12, 2013 Rural Life Sunday

[Acts 16:9-15](#) • [Psalm 67](#) • [Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5](#) • [John 14:23-29](#) or [John 5:1-9](#)

*The American Protestant custom of observing Rural Life Sunday on the Sixth Sunday of Easter has its roots in the ancient custom of “Rogation Days”—from the Latin word **rogare** “to ask” (In modern day English we find the root in the word “interrogation”). In the days between Easter 6 and Ascension Thursday, Christians in farming communities would “ask a blessing” on their fields, their seeds, their farm animals and their own labor, that their planting would flourish, and result in a good harvest. It was a joyful, hopeful time of community prayer for the land. Your congregation may want to think about taking part of this service outside; the “Teaching Moment” could happen in the garden, for example, or the service could be followed by a picnic in a local park. See attached article for more information and suggestions for Rogation Days.*

GATHERING THE PEOPLE (Acts 16: 9-15)

One: Outside the city gate a farmer rises early
so that there will be eggs and bacon and cereal and milk on our tables.
As we gather today to give you thanks,

Many: We ask a blessing on the farmer.

One: Outside the city gate a resort owner throws open the windows
and a housekeeper changes the bed
so that we might rest in the shade of the tree which grows beside living waters.
As we gather today to give you thanks,

Many: We ask a blessing on the resort owner and the housekeeper.

One: Outside the city gate a road crew patches over the wear of winter
so that we will be safe as we travel past field and forest and stream.
As we gather today to give you thanks,

Many: We ask a blessing on the road crew.

One: Outside the city gate a migrant worker bends over a field
so that our bodies will be nourished with nutrient rich food
from the soil of the earth.
As we gather today to give you thanks,

Many: We ask a blessing on the migrant worker.

One: On this Sabbath day we honor those outside the gate

by river, field, mountain, forest and ocean.

In this place of prayer we give thanks, O God of All Creation

Many: **And ask a blessing on all who care for your Creation.**

A PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Come, Lamb of God, light our path as we gather today.

Open the gates of our minds and our hearts

that your word may penetrate to the depth of our being.

Lead us to the river of the water of life

And refresh us for the work you have set for us.

Sit us down under the tree of life

And let us rejoice in the diversity of its fruit and witness to the healing of nations.

Show us your glory, Sovereign One

as we come to worship you. Amen.

A SONG TO HONOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Perpetual Praise!

Here in This Place

Be Still and Know

Sing! Prayer and Praise # 1 or

Sing! Prayer and Praise # 5 or

New Century Hymnal # 743

A TEACHING MOMENT (OR TIME WITH CHILDREN)

Preparation: *Purchase seeds, peat pellets and small, biodegradable cups. Purchase seeds with a short germination time so children can see results week by week. Before worship prepare individual cups, pouring the water over the pellets so they are ready for planting.*

Teach about the ancient tradition of three "Rogation Days", which fall between the Sixth Sunday of Easter and Ascension Thursday. In these few days between Easter 6 and Ascension Thursday Christian agrarian communities would prepare for planting: the people would gather by the fields and walk their boundaries, praying for the soil, for the seeds, for the blessing of a good harvest. In the context of prayer, the planting would begin.

Tell the story of "Rogation Days"; Talk about the risks involved in planting and our reliance on God to provide. Talk about patience and waiting on God.

Invite children and other congregation members to plant a few seeds in each cup. Bring them to the center of the sanctuary so that the congregation can create the perimeter (or walk it if your worship space allows) and ask for God's blessings.

Offer a prayer or use the following petitions as well as some of your own.

PETITIONS (Using *More Than We Can Ask*, Sing! Prayer and Praise # 81)

Bless the land, Creator God;

bless pavement and open field,

rocky cliff and desert sands,

forest floor and ocean bottom.

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless the water, Creator God;
bless crystal streams and deep blue oceans,
dancing waves on the lake and swirling eddies and rising tides.

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless the air, Creator God;
bless gentle breezes and powerful gusts,
hurricanes and tornadoes
and the silent stillness after a great storm.

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless the animal kingdom, Creator God;
bless house pets and forest dwellers and residents of the desert,
bless four legged and many legged and the winged ones,
bless the furry and the sleek and the scaly.

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless our neighbors, Creator God;
Bless the factory worker and the farmer,
the CEO and the waitress,
the over-the-road trucker, the computer analyst,
the unemployed and all your children.

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless these little seeds we have planted, Creator God,
and all that grows upon the earth.

Bless us with desire to care for your earth so that
your bounty will increase and
all may share it!

Hear, O hear our prayer...

Bless us, O God,
let appreciation of your creation
expand beyond our imaginings. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Holy One, too often we seek after the peace that the world gives.
We strive for financial abundance and positions of status and power.
We look for salvation in the gleaming metropolis
with its busyness and its skyscrapers and its burgeoning populace,
or in the evenly furrowed rows of fertilized farmland,

and we relinquish our lives to a reality of our own creation.
Forgive us.

Show us again the river of the water of life in country and city.
Lead us to the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations and
Sink our roots there, into the soil of your creation.
Remind us that before industry, before economy, before agriculture,
before all the systems of our own creation, there was your Creation.
Turn us back to you, Source of Life. *(a time of silence)*

Words of Assurance

Before industry, before economy, before agriculture,
before all the systems of our own creation, there was Love.
There is still Love.
God's love for us knows no beginning and no end.
Give thanks, for we are a loved and forgiven people. **Amen.**

Invitation to Offering

We look around at the bounty of God's creation and give thanks.
All that we have and all that we are is a gift from the author of generosity.
May we be as generous, that the work of this ministry will be a blessing to others.

Prayer of Dedication

We come before you again to ask a blessing,
God of Grace, not only on seed and soil but on our tithes and offerings.
Bless and multiply these gifts
that your abundance might be recognized in this place and beyond its gate.
May the fruits of our labors strengthen your church and
truly be for the healing of the nations. Amen.

Benediction: Psalm 67

One: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make God's face to shine upon us,
that His way may be known upon earth,
Her saving power among all nations.

**Many: Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.**

One: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for God judges the peoples with equity
and guides the nations upon earth.

**Many: Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.**

One: The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

**Many: May God continue to bless us;
 let all the ends of the earth revere the God of all Creation.**

HYMN SUGGESTIONS:

We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky TNCH # 563

God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending TNCH # 565

Living the Jubilee Sing! Prayer and Praise # 152

(For Rural Life Sunday, you may want to replace the word "harvest" with "crop" in each verse to reflect the risk and hope of the entire planting cycle.)

Outside the Gates: Service Prayers for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, during the Fifty Great Days of Mission 4/1 Earth was written by the Reverend Jill K Warner, Pastor of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Aberdeen, SD. Other Mission 4/1 Earth materials may be found at <http://www.ucc.org/news/mission-for-one-earth-website.html>



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