

A SERVICE FOR ROGATIONTIDE

(an old idea with a modern relevance)



Here is a simple idea for keeping Rogationtide, making it more relevant to our present environmental crisis. It was originally about asking God (Latin - rogare - to ask) to bless the crops. Rogation Days are the three weekdays before Ascension Day, but many churches have observed Rogation on the preceding Sunday.

Traditionally a Rogationtide service is held outside. Our services are often too static, and isolated from the environment. So it is good to move outside, into God's creation. And such a service is good for all ages - the children especially will love it. Being on the move keeps our attention from wandering, and the message can come across much more effectively.

We celebrate God's wonderful creation. We remind ourselves of how much we depend on the crops in the fields and farm animals for our food, as well as remembering so many other blessings. But it is also a time to repent of the harm we have done and are doing to our planet: our neglect and exploitation of our environment; our treatment of our fellow creatures, so that many are now facing extinction; above all, global warming and climate change, largely man-made. As Christians we cannot shrug our shoulders, and carry on as if nothing is happening. We human beings are responsible for planet earth. God has placed it in our hands. We must repent and with God's help we can and we must change our ways.

Canon Brian Davis

ORDER OF SERVICE

[Begin in Church]

Introduction

We need to re-connect with the natural world about us. Our modern way of living insulates us from the changing seasons, from heat and cold, and from where our food comes from. And we have our centrally heated homes and air-conditioned cars. Our worship ought to re-connect us with the natural world, God's creation. It is our failure to remember we are made from the dust of the earth, and to dust we will return, that has caused the crisis that humanity faces today. Creation is crying out because of the harm we have inflicted on her. So let us begin by giving thanks to God, our creator, and remember, as Martin Luther said "The Gospel is not only found in the pages of the Bible but is written in the trees and the flowers, in nature all around us."

Bless the Lord all you works of the Lord:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord you heavens:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord you angels of the Lord:
bless the Lord all you his hosts;
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

From the Benedicite CW

All Sing:

1. We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand:
he sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

Reader 1: William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury 1942-44

"The treatment of the Earth by man the exploiter is not only imprudent, it is sacrilegious. We are not likely to correct our hideous mistakes in this realm unless we recover the mystical sense of our oneness with nature. Many people think this is fantastic. I think it is fundamental to our sanity."

Reader 2: Job 12. 7-10

“...ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.”

Prayer:

Dear Lord and Father, we are sorry that we so often forget that all creation belongs to you, and that you have made us responsible for its wellbeing. Forgive us for the damage we have inflicted on our mother earth, and on our fellow creatures - like the birds and the animals, and so much wild life. Help us in this hour of crisis, to turn to you, to change our ways and in humble love and service to cherish your whole creation.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

[Move out into the church yard, and if possible find a nearby stream, well or river. And if none of these are possible, just have a bucket of water handy!]

Station 1: Near Water: a Stream, Well or River

Bless the Lord sun and moon:
bless the Lord you stars of heaven;
bless the Lord all rain and dew:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord you springs:
bless the Lord you seas and rivers;

bless the Lord you whales and all that swim in the waters:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

From the Benedicite CW

Reading: John 4. 13 & 14

Jesus said: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Prayer:

Lord we thank you for water which is so precious.

Water to cleanse and revive us. Without water we cannot survive. We remember those who struggle to find water every day. Those living in areas of the world affected by drought often caused by man-made climate change.

But we also thank you for the water of life that Jesus gives us. That inner spring in each one of us, filling us with hope and peace; giving us the will to love and serve one another, especially those who have so little.

Lord fill us with the water of life, now and always.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

All Sing:

1. We thank you Lord for water, to wash our dirt away;
We drink it when we're thirsty: we need it every day.
So help us not to waste it, but learn to do with less;
for land without fresh water becomes a wilderness.
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

[Walk to another part of the churchyard looking across the fields, to ask God's blessing on fields and meadows, and on farm animals.]

Station 2: Looking Out Across the Fields (preferably with farm animals in view)

O let the earth bless the Lord:
bless the Lord you mountains and hills;
bless the Lord all that grows in the ground:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord all birds of the air:
bless the Lord you beasts and cattle;

bless the Lord all people on earth:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

From the Benedicite CW

Reading: Deuteronomy 11. 13-15

If you will only heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today—loving the Lord your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul— then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; and he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill.

Prayer:

Grant favourable weather, temperate rains and fruitful seasons, that there may be food and drink for all creatures.

Hear us, good Lord.

Bestow your blessing upon the lands and waters, and all who work upon them, to bring forth food and all things needful for your people.

Hear us, good Lord.

Prosper all who care for the earth, the water, and the air, that the riches of your creation may abound from age to age.

Hear us, good Lord.

Lord, we ask your blessing on all farm animals, that we rely on for so much of our food; bless the farmers and all those who in charge of these wonderful animals; may they care for them, and enable them to have stress free lives.

Hear us, good Lord.

CW & BD

All Sing:

2. We thank you Lord for meadows, for hedgerows and for trees;
Your wonderful creation should bring us to our knees;
to ask for your forgiveness - we've treated it as ours;
we've poisoned and polluted, and lost the bees and flowers.
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**
3. For animals and birds, Lord, we give you thanks and praise;
Providing us with nourishment in many different ways.
The pigs and sheep and cattle, you place them in our care;
They are our fellow creatures, both here and evr'ywhere.
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

[The third station could be in another part of the churchyard, which is fairly wild and uncultivated - asking God to bless “the wild, free places of the planet.”]

Station 3: Near a Wild Uncultivated Place

Bless the Lord all birds of the air:

bless the Lord you beasts and cattle;

bless the Lord all people on earth:

sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord all winds that blow:

bless the Lord you fire and heat;

bless the Lord scorching wind and bitter cold:

sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

From the Benedicite CW

Reading: Luke 12. 24-27

Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

Prayer:

Lord help us not to destroy but to protect the wild, free places of this planet, which are a precious haven for so much wild life, flora and fauna. Help us see the harm that we humans have done in the past, and work together to bring back from certain extinction many species of wild life.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

All Sing:

4. The wild, neglected places where many creatures thrive;
They need us to protect them, and help them to survive.
Our countryside is home to all creatures great and small;
Without our strong protection we soon will lose them all!
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

[Moving out of the churchyard, walk down the village street into a cottage garden, to ask God's blessing on all our "digging, sowing, and planting".]

Station 4: Near Gardens, Allotments or Orchards (or even standing in a garden)

Praise be to you, my Lord, for our sister Mother Earth, who gives us her fruits in due season

Praise him and magnify him for ever

St Francis

Reading: Genesis 2. 8-10

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man 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. A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches.

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for our gardens and allotments, for the digging and planting, for the growing and the harvest; through all this may our faith be renewed by your Spirit which brings new life and hope, and may we be inspired to care for all your creation.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

All Sing:

5. Our gardens give us pleasure; we plant and see things grow;
the flowers, shrubs and roses all make a splendid show.
Help us to love this planet, as much as our own plot;
to care for and improve it - or we will lose the lot!
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

[Walk down the street, and stand near a house or cottage]

Station 5: At a House or Cottage

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give thanks and praise

Reading: Colossians 3. 13 - 14, 17

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Prayer:

Remember, Lord, your mercy and loving-kindness towards us.
Bless this good earth, and make it fruitful.
Bless our labour, and give us all things needful for our daily lives.
Bless the homes of this parish and all who live within them.
Bless our common life and our care for our neighbour.
Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

All Sing:

6. Around us now are houses and everyone a home,
And one is special to us, wherever we may roam.
May they be full of caring, security and peace;
where all may find a welcome, and love will never cease.
All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.

[Walk down the street to stand outside a working farm (or drive to a farm), to ask God's blessing on our farms, and all who work on the land.]

Station 6: Near a Farm, or Visit a Farm

The earth has yielded its harvest;
God, our God, has blessed us.

You visit the earth and water it;
you make it very plenteous.

You soften the ground with showers;
and bless the increase of it.

You crown the year with your goodness;
and your paths overflow with plenty.

The meadows are clothed with sheep;
the valleys stand so thick with corn,
they shout for joy and sing.

cf. Psalms 65 & 67

Reading: Isaiah 28. 23 - 26

Listen, and hear my voice;
Pay attention, and hear my speech.
Do those who plough for sowing plough continually?
Do they continually open and harrow their ground?
When they have levelled its surface,
do they not scatter dill, sow cumin,
and plant wheat in rows and barley in its proper place,
and spelt as the border?
For they are well instructed; their God teaches them.

Prayer:

Lord, you give us this good earth,
yet we take your generous gifts for granted.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you give us this good earth,
but we squander its rich resources.

Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you give us this good earth,
but we fail to share your bounty with all of your children.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

All Sing:

7. To gather in the harvest machines now lead the way.
We reap the fields with combines, we bale the new mown hay;
But it is God who gives us inventive skills and drive;
Which lighten daily labour and give us fuller lives!
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**
8. Then why are people starving when we have food to spare?
We need to work for justice, to show our love and care.
While millions have so little, inspire us all to give;
And help us live more simply that they may simply live!
**All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.**

Prayer:

Let us ask the God of creation to send a blessing upon us.
Upon the rich earth send a blessing, O Lord.
Let the earth be fruitful and its resources be hallowed.
We ask in faith: **we ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

Upon human labour send a blessing, O Lord.
Prosper the work of our hands;
may all find dignity and just reward in their work;
free the exploited and oppressed.
We ask in faith: **we ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

Upon the produce of the earth send a blessing, O Lord.
Guide us into a sustainable future,
and give us the will to share the fruits of the world.
We ask in faith: **we ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

Upon the seas and waters send a blessing, O Lord.
Teach us to cherish the water of the earth,
and to conserve the seas, lakes and rivers.
We ask in faith: **we ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

Upon aid agencies send a blessing, O Lord.
Where the earth is parched and the well has run dry;
where war brings want, and children go hungry;
where the poor cry out for bread and for justice,
give hands to care and heal, and compel us to be generous.
We ask in faith: **we ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

We ask you to hear us, good Lord,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

CW

*[If the service ends here - use the Blessing at the end of the next Station.
Or Return to church - standing in the churchyard again:]*

Station 7: At a Churchyard

We remember all those who had gone before us: we benefit from the labours of our ancestors, as others we hope will benefit from our labours when we have gone. Let us hope we leave God's creation in a better state than we found it!

In this churchyard we are surrounded by reminders of death. But the Spirit of God brings hope and new life. We see it in the natural world about us, in the trees and grass. God's Spirit is at work in creation - in new born lambs, the spring flowers and in the lush green hedge rows.

O people of God bless the Lord:
bless the Lord you priests of the Lord;

bless the Lord you servants of the Lord:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Bless the Lord all you of upright spirit:
bless the Lord you that are holy and humble in heart;

bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

Reading: Philippians 4. 4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

All Sing:

9. We stand here with reminders of those who've gone before;
the folk who lived and worshipped but now we see no more.
O God of love you show us that death is not the end,
With Jesus as our Saviour, our Teacher, and our Friend.
All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
then thank you, Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.

The Blessing

**May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is the source of all goodness and growth,
pour his blessing upon all things created,
and upon us his children,
that we may use his gifts to God's glory and the welfare of all
peoples;
and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with
us, and remain with us, now and always. Amen**



This service will need adapting to local requirements - it will work very well in a small village. Perhaps a town parish could have an outing to the countryside and join up with a village congregation.

Much of the material comes from the Anglican worship resource, Common Worship (CW), other prayers are by me. Readings are from NRSV. "We plough the fields and scatter" - verses 2 to 10 are by me except verse 8 which is anon.

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