

Order for an Earthkeeper Day Service

Call to Worship

The OT is a tapestry of stories featuring the land as an alternating promise & gift. The first five books describe the covenant relationship that unites God, His people & the land. But the gift of land doesn't come without conditions & responsibilities. Israel loses this gift when the people abuse the land, making it an object to be bought, sold & accumulated.

Our call to worship from **Psalm 37:27-29** tells us steady people are the glue that holds society together & keeps the whole world healthy & strong, including the land that sustains us.

Kidz Hymn: SoF 1624

For the first four months of this year, we'll be journeying through the story of creation & its centrality to our Christian beliefs regarding our human condition, the gift of salvation in Jesus, & our relationship with the Creator. Our Kidz Hymn for this month reminds us that everything was made by God & therefore belongs to Him: **Who put the colours in the rainbow? Who made seas & leaves & trees? Who made snow & winds to blow? God made all of these!**

KidzKorner

- Valentine's Day: its legendary beginnings
 - Priest in Rome + 1,500 yrs ago executed for refusing to be pagan & hiding Chrstns
 - Healed blind daughter, Julia, of jailor
 - Night before execution, wrote first Valentine card, signed "Your Valentine"
 - Julia planted pink blossomed almond at his grave, now symbolizes love/friendship
- In Europe, linked to advent of spring
 - Said to bring keys of roots so plants & flowers start to grow on this day
 - Birds said to propose to & to marry
 - First work in vineyards & fields begins

- In Slovenia, Zdravko is saint of good health & patron of pilgrims
- SAFCEI & earthkeepers' day
 - Reclaiming love & reverence for earth
 - Tree of love & life: Leaves bring healing
 - How can we love earth? Healing leaves!

Hymn of Adoration: LP 119

Our sin is rooted in the land & our disobedience concerning its fruits, but our salvation is also rooted in the earth. Incarnation & reconciliation are inseparable from the land because God became a man, born of the earth. Reconciliation is about right relations. In Christ, we see people reconciled to God, each other & creation. That is why creation's voice proclaims that "**Jesus is Lord!**" Why the sun, moon & stars declare it throughout the universe.

Prayer of Praise & Confession

Loving Father & Creator of all
we come to you today
deeply grateful for your creation.
As we look around us we are amazed
at the greatness & majesty
of all you have made.
Nature around us speaks of your greatness –
the vast expanse of the sky,
the mountains, trees, lakes & streams
speak of your great design.
You have given us such beauty
in the colours of the rainbow,
the beauty of flowers & fields.
Words cannot adequately express
the magnificence of all you have created.
We join in praise with the writer of the psalms when he says,
"O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth."

Forgive us, Lord of sea & sky,
that we have taken your creation for granted.
You have given us the run of the land,
the pick of the crop
& we have squandered these resources;
distributed these unfairly,
vandalised their beauty,
violated their purity.

Forgive us, God,
that we have taken your kingdom for granted.
You have given us the seeds of faith,
the fruits of the spirit,
and we have misused these resources;
displayed them rarely,
bestowed them grudgingly,
ignored them blithely.

Thank you, God,
that you are stronger than our destructiveness
& greater than our meanness,
that you give us a fresh start, a second chance.
Overwhelm us with the power
of your resurrected love.
Compel us with your challenge for change.
Lead us in the conquest
of our own limits & restrictions.
Drive us towards a new life
of peace, justice & integrity.
Help us to show our love & reverence
to you, our Lord,
by caring for all that you have created.
Amen.

Hymn of Illumination: SoF 1234

We lift our voices in praise & thanks to our Creator “**for the fruits of his creation**”, for his gifts to every nation, for our future needs in earth’s safekeeping – Thanks be to God!

Bible Reading

Two weeks ago, we saw how God separated the waters on earth from the waters in the sky. Earth lay as a “tear drop” resting in God’s palm, shimmering with potential in the newly created light of day. From this “tear drop” in the hand of God, we now read about his further act of creation in **Genesis 1:9-13** as He makes a place, rich in colour & diversity, for us to belong.

Sermon: The Gift of Land & its Management

(2nd reading from Jer 35:8-14 incl in sermon)

Offertory & Doxology: LP 241

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank God for the world he has made,
& for all his love & care.

For the warmth of the sun,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For the rain which makes things grow,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For the woods & the fields,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For the sea & the sky,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For the flowers & animals,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For families & feast days like St Valentine’s,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

For all your multifold gifts,
Father in heaven

we give you thanks and praise.

Bless these our tithes & offerings,
but a small portion of all you have given us;
may they be used prudently in service
to the honour & glory of your name. Amen

Prayer of Intercession

Creator God, land has become such an issue in our country, yet it is a gift from You with covenant responsibilities for care, equity & justice. Please guide us in wisdom through Your Holy Spirit that we may do Your will & see the opportunities for all, including future generations invested in this gift of land.

Father, we quarrel & complain endlessly about land, water & electricity. We pray that in Christ Jesus these issues may be settled fairly so that everyone will say the Lord has given us a space to belong & we will flourish in this land. We ask that, as farmers prepare the soil & plant their crops, they will reap a plentiful harvest that there may be food security for all. Show mercy & bless us through your gift of land, Lord, that Your blessing may be carried forward for generations to come.

In times of trouble, sickness, famine & drought, we pray, Father, that You will show us mercy. Protect us from evil, especially in & on the land, so we will know You are our God & that You dwell with us. This is our heart’s cry, that You will care for every piece of land & that Your eyes will rest continually upon it, protecting it from abuse, misuse & unfair exploitation. Pour out Your Spirit upon your people, let them love, serve & obey You in everything. Please show mercy & let us hear the wind of Your Spirit, the rain of Your love, & open the floodgates of heaven upon all life on earth.

Father, so much bloodshed still takes place in our land through crime & violence. Because of the blood of Jesus, shed for us, please do not remove Your presence from our land. Come & cleanse us & heal our land that we might bring You glory, honour & praise! Stir a hunger & thirst in people’s hearts to serve & to seek You. Pour out Your blessing on our people & the crops of our land. May Your Name be glorified as our land overflows with Your goodness.

Protect us from disease & physical injury. Heal our land & our people. Let it be said of our country- surely God is with them,

He is their protector, He cares for them & His favour is ever upon them. Let our praises be unto You for the goodness You bestow upon our land & our people! Amen.

Closing Hymn: LP 63

Pilgrims in this barren land, we await God’s blessings in His promised land; **Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah.**

Blessing

Benediction: LP 281

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Resources consulted:

“Run with the Horses” Chapter 1.1, Eugene Peterson
Season of Creation Vol 1 pp 18-23