



ST. THOMAS'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ROGATION LITURGY FOR DISPERSED PEOPLE

Scripture, Poetry, & Prayer

Spring 2021

About This Liturgy

This liturgy originated in spring 2020 as one response to the social isolation necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic. It is intended for use outdoors, individually or with a small group, in your neighborhood or a nearby park, to help you praise and celebrate God's gift of creation. Begin with the **Opening** (page 2) and end with the **Closing** (page 10); in between observe any or all of the stations, if and as you encounter them. The possible stations (numbered not to suggest an order, but to make them easier to find in the text below) are:

1. **Tree** (page 3)
2. **Bird** (page 4)
3. **Flower** (page 4)
4. **Bee or Other Insect** (page 5)
5. **Squirrel or Other Animal** (page 6)
6. **Vegetable Garden** (page 7)
7. **Grass** (page 8)
8. **Water (Pond, Stream, Puddle, Birdbath, Rain)** (page 9)
9. **Sky** (page 10)

About Rogation Days

“Traditionally, these are the three days before Ascension Day on which the litany is sung (or recited) in procession as an act of intercession. They originated in Vienne, France, in the fifth century when Bishop Mamertus introduced days of fasting and prayer to ward off a threatened disaster. In England they were associated with the blessing of the fields at planting. The vicar ‘beat the bounds’ of the parish, processing around the fields reciting psalms and the litany. In the United States they have been associated with rural life and with agriculture and fishing. The propers in the *Book of Common Prayer* have widened their scope to include commerce and industry and the stewardship of creation. ... The term is from the Latin rogatio, ‘asking.’” (*An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, edited by Don S. Trout and Robert Boak Slocum, Church Publishing, 2000) “Rogation Sunday” is traditionally observed on the Sunday before Ascension Day, which is the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

About the Sources

Included here are prayers from The Episcopal Church *Book of Common Prayer 1979* and *Book of Occasional Services 2018* (both Church Publishing) and from *God's Good Earth: Praise and Prayer for Creation* by Anne & Jeffery Rowthorn (Liturgical Press, 2018). Psalms are from the *Book of Common Prayer 1979*, and other scriptures are New Revised Standard Version.



OPENING

One Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

All Glory to God for ever and ever.

SCRIPTURE Song of Solomon 2:10-13

My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;

for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.”

POEM *Wedding Poem* by Ross Gay

Friends I am here to modestly report
seeing in an orchard
in my town
a goldfinch kissing
a sunflower
again and again
dangling upside down
by its tiny claws
steadying itself by snapping open
like an old-timey fan
its wings
again and again,
until, swooning, it tumbled off
and swooped back to the very same perch,
where the sunflower curled its giant
swirling of seeds
around the bird and leaned back
to admire the soft wind
nudging the bird's plumage,
and friends I could see
the points on the flower's stately crown
soften and curl inward
as it almost indiscernibly lifted
the food of its body
to the bird's nuzzling mouth
whose fervor
I could hear from
oh 20 or 30 feet away
and see from the tiny hulls

that sailed from their
good racket,
which good racket, I have to say
was making me blush,
and rock up on my tippy-toes,
and just barely purse my lips
with what I realize now
was being, simply, glad,
which such love,
if we let it,
makes us feel.

PRAYER O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to recognize your gracious hand in all your works, that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of the One through whom all things were made, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**
(*Book of Occasional Services 2018, 96*)

1. TREE

SCRIPTURE Matthew 13:31-32 Jesus put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

POEM *When I Am Among the Trees* by Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.”

PRAYER Blessed are You Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who did not leave anything lacking in Your universe, and created in it good creatures and good trees, to give pleasure to humankind with them. **Amen.** (Jewish blessing for blossoming fruit-bearing trees)

2. BIRD

SCRIPTURE Genesis 1:20-23 God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

POEM A Bird, came down the walk *by Emily Dickinson*

A Bird, came down the Walk -
He did not know I saw -
He bit an Angle Worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then, he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass -
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass -

He glanced with rapid eyes,
That hurried all abroad -
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought,
He stirred his Velvet Head. -

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers,
And rowed him softer Home -

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,
Leap, plashless as they swim.

PRAYER Holy Immortal One: No sparrow falls without your knowing it; nothing dies but is remembered by you; nothing comes into being that you do not see. Give us courage and resolve to build up the common good, holding fast to the hope of a new creation in which all shall dwell eternally, through Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior. **Amen.** (*Book of Occasional Services 2018*, 104)

3. FLOWER

SCRIPTURE Matthew 6:25-33 Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, 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.

POEM More Than Enough by Marge Piercy

The first lily of June opens its red mouth.
All over the sand road where we walk
multiflora rose climbs trees cascading
white or pink blossoms, simple, intense
the scene drifting like colored mist.

The arrowhead is spreading its creamy
clumps of flower and the blackberries
are blooming in the thickets. Season of
joy for the bee. The green will never
again be so green, so purely and lushly

new, grass lifting its wheaty seedheads
into the wind. Rich fresh wine
of June, we stagger into you smeared
with pollen, overcome as the turtle
laying her eggs in roadside sand.

PRAYER O Holy God of Earth and Sky, in your strength each flower gives out its sweet-scented perfume, delicate color, the beauty of the whole universe revealed in the tiniest thing. Glory and honor to God the Giver of life, who covers the fields with their carpet of flowers, crowns the plains with harvest of gold and the blue of corn-flowers, and our souls with the joy of contemplating the Holy God of earth and sky. O be joyful and sing to God: Alleluia! **Amen.** (Metropolitan Tryphon, in *God's Good Earth*, 28)

4. BEE OR OTHER INSECT

SCRIPTURE Psalm 104:25–29

LORD, how manifold are your works! *
in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Yonder is the great and wide sea
with its living things too many to number, *
creatures both small and great.
There move the ships,
and there is that Leviathan, *
which you have made for the sport of it.
All of them look to you *
to give them their food in due season.
You give it to them; they gather it; *
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

POEM The Humble-Bee (excerpt) by Ralph Waldo Emerson

BURLY, dozing humble-bee,
Where thou art is clime for me.
Let them sail for Porto Rique,
Far-off heats through seas to seek;
I will follow thee alone,
Thou animated torrid-zone!

Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,
Let me chase thy waving lines;
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,
Singing over shrubs and vines.

Insect lover of the sun,
Joy of thy dominion!
Sailor of the atmosphere;
Swimmer through the waves of air;
Voyager of light and noon;
Epicurean of June;
Wait, I prithee, till I come
Within earshot of thy hum,—
All without is martyrdom.

PRAYER O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (Collect for Stewardship of Creation, *Book of Common Prayer 1979*)

5. SQUIRREL OR OTHER ANIMAL

SCRIPTURE **Job 12:7–10a** 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.

POEM **Happiness** by *Jane Hirschfield*

I think it was from the animals
that St. Francis learned
it is possible to cast yourself
on the earth's good mercy and live.
From the wolf who cast off
the deep fierceness of her first heart
and crept into the circle of sunlight
in full wariness and wolf-hunger,
and was fed, and lived; from the birds
who came fearless to him until he
had no choice but return that courage.
Even the least amoeba touched on all sides
by the opulent Other, even the baleened
plankton fully immersed in their fate—
for what else might happiness be
than to be porous, opened, rinsed through
by the beings and things?
Nor could he forget those other companions,
the shifting ethereal, shapeless:

Hopelessness, Desperateness, Loneliness,
even the fire-tongued Anger—
for they too waited with the patient Lion,
the glossy Rooster, the drowsy Mule, to step
out of the trees' protection and come in.

PRAYER Almighty and everlasting God, Creator of all things and Giver of all life: Let your blessing be upon this and all animals. May our love and care for them reflect your compassion and safekeeping of all creation. Grant them health, peace, and safety. Strengthen us to love and care for them following the good example of Francis of Assisi, through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.** (*Book of Occasional Services* 2018, 105)

6. VEGETABLE GARDEN

SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 8:7-10 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

POEM Ode to Dirt by Sharon Olds

Dear dirt, I am sorry I slighted you,
I thought that you were only the background
for the leading characters—the plants
and animals and human animals.
It's as if I had loved only the stars
and not the sky which gave them space
in which to shine. Subtle, various,
sensitive, you are the skin of our terrain,
you're our democracy. When I understood
I had never honored you as a living
equal, I was ashamed of myself,
as if I had not recognized
a character who looked so different from me,
but now I can see us all, made of the
same basic materials—
cousins of that first exploding from nothing—
in our intricate equation together. O dirt,
help us find ways to serve your life,
you who have brought us forth, and fed us,
and who at the end will take us in
and rotate with us, and wobble, and orbit.

PRAYER O God, creator and source of life, we thank you for the gifts given from your abundance and through the work of human hands, by which we are blessed with nourishing food. Pour your blessing on all farms and gardens on the multitude of fruits, grains, and vegetables rooted in their soils. Pour your blessings on those who work the land in love and reverence, that the earth may yield its wealth and that all your children may be fed. We ask all this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Community of the Sisters of the Church, in *God's Good Earth*, 141)

7. GRASS

SCRIPTURE Psalm 104:1, 10-16

Bless the LORD, O my soul; *

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness!

you are clothed with majesty and splendor.

You send the springs into the valleys; *

they flow between the mountains.

All the beasts of the field drink their fill from them, *

and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them the birds of the air make their nests *

and sing among the branches.

You water the mountains from your dwelling on high; *

the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works.

You make grass grow for flocks and herds *

and plants to serve mankind;

That they may bring forth food from the earth, *

and wine to gladden our hearts,

Oil to make a cheerful countenance, *

and bread to strengthen the heart.

POEM Song of Myself, 6 by Walt Whitman

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;

How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,

A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,

Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

[Stop here for short excerpt, or continue for complete selection.]

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,

And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,

Growing among black folks as among white,

Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,

It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,

It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,

It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,

And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,

Darker than the colorless beards of old men,

Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

PRAYER Great Spirit God, we give you thanks for another day on this earth. We give you thanks for this day to enjoy the compassionate goodness of you, our Creator. We acknowledge with one mind our respect and gratefulness to all the sacred cycle of life. Bind us together in the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and one another. *Amen.* (TEC Liturgical Materials Honoring God in Creation and Various Rites and Prayers for Animals)

8. WATER (POND, STREAM, PUDDLE, BIRDBATH, RAIN)

SCRIPTURE Revelation 22: 1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

POEM The Peace of Wild Things *by Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

PRAYER God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water—the waters on the earth, and under the earth, the water above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet’s water, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us; through Jesus Christ, source of living water. *Amen.* (*Book of Occasional Services 2018, 92*)

9. SKY

SCRIPTURE Genesis 9: 12-16 God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

POEM the earth is a living thing by Lucille Clifton

is a black shambling bear
ruffling its wild back and tossing
mountains into the sea

is a black hawk circling
the burying ground circling the bones
picked clean and discarded

is a fish black blind in the belly of water
is a diamond blind in the black belly of coal

is a black and living thing
is a favorite child
of the universe
feel her rolling her hand
in its kinky hair
feel her brushing it clean

PRAYER O God, from whom all good proceeds: You established your covenant with all creation. Guide us and all your people, that we may walk upon the earth in righteousness and peace, and honor you in our kinship with all your creatures; through our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.* (*Book of Occasional Services 2018, 96*)

CLOSING

SCRIPTURE Psalm 74:15-16

Yours is the day, O God, yours also the night; *
you established the moon and the sun.
You fixed all the boundaries of the earth; *
you made both summer and winter.

POEM **Eagle Poem** *by Joy Harjo*

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear;
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We are truly blessed because we
Were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,
Like eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.
We pray that it will be done
In beauty.
In beauty.

PRAYER Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** (Collect for Vocation in Daily Work, *Book of Common Prayer* 1979)

One Let us bless the Lord.

All *Thanks be to God.*



ST. THOMAS'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH & DAY SCHOOL

830 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511

Church: (203) 777-7623 ♦ www.stthomasnewhaven.org

Day School: (203) 776-2123 ♦ www.stthomasday.org

The Rev. Keri Aubert, Rector ♦ k.aubert@stthomasnewhaven.org