

# RESOURCES

## APPENDIX A: PRAYERS, BLESSINGS AND WORSHIP AIDS

### CALLS TO WORSHIP

THE CALL TO WORSHIP DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION TO GOD. IT REMINDS US WHY GOD IS PRAISEWORTHY AND DESERVING OF OUR WORSHIP.

1. This is the day that the Lord has given us through which we may experience the wonder of life and the created universe. Today we are being encouraged to think about and to celebrate through our worship the meaning of community. Let us, in prayer together, ask for the help and presence of God's Spirit.

2. When God chose a people and a place, God bypassed the great nations and peoples and chose the smallest of all nations, Israel. Coming to earth in flesh, God chose not a palace, but a stable. God came not in kingly greatness, but in the smallness of a babe. Our Lord looked not to councils and people in positions of power for the disciples, but to people of the land --those who fished, tax collectors and people of small stature. God continues to make a covenant with people gathered in small places.

3. We come together to worship God on this day set apart. God has blessed us with the returning season of spring, a time to plant and share in a new miracle. Let us together offer our praise and gratitude and seek God's guidance.

### OPENING PRAYERS

OPENING PRAYERS SET THE STAGE THAT THE DIRECTION OF THE SERVICE WILL TAKE, THANKING GOD THAT HE IS HERE WITH US.

1. Almighty God, all knowing, all seeing, we thank you for the blessing of countryside and open space, for trees and hills, lakes and rivers, for fields and their harvests; for caring neighbors who know us by name and who enter into the joys and sorrows of our lives. Help us to make responsible use of our blessings and the advantages we have in country living. Help us to make our community also a communion. As you renew your earth, renew us, so that we will fulfill your perfect intention for our lives; so that we will become new creations in Christ in whose name we pray. (R. Amen.)

2. Great and eternal God, creator and provider, we offer our thanks for this season of spring and the new life in the soil that is appearing before our eyes. We praise you that the seasons are constant; that after winter's rest, there is resurgence of life. May your spirit so touch our lives today that we may face life with new joy and hope; where we are able to take part in planting gardens or in forest renewal, may we be guided by your Spirit to act according to your will. (R. Amen.)

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## OPENING PRAYERS (CONTINUED)

3. Creator God, we continue to praise you for the glorious goodness of your creation as we go about daily growing, planting, and harvesting the gifts your bounteous creation provides. Make us aware that the noble task of being a steward of your creation is a holy way of life that enables us to participate in the deepest mysteries of life. In the cyclic pattern of planting, nurturing, and harvesting we participate in the life, death and resurrection of your son, Jesus Christ. We ask now that just as Jesus unconditionally gave up His life on the cross, so, too, may we give one hundred fold in stewarding your gift of creation. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. (R. Amen.)

4. O God of earth, sky and sea, of all creation; God of outer space and inner spirit; God whose fullness is revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. We come to you with humble and contrite hearts as we realize all that you have done for us and are doing still. We are moved to awe and wonder as we experience the constant renewal of the earth. Our lives are made meaningful as we learn to live in harmony with your will. Hear this our prayer in the name of Jesus.  
(R. Amen.)

5. Lord God, Creator Father, Healing Redeemer, Nurturing Mother: We come to you in a time of great need for our rural community. Heal the earth of the scars of our exploitation. Heal us, your people, as we struggle to live humbly and simply as stewards of soil and community.

We ask you to fill us with renewed hope in you and trust in one another. Make us faithful to your word. Bless and honor what we do so that our action here today may be fully for your honor and glory. We ask this through Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (R. Amen.)

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

THESE SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES CAN BE USED TO HELP DESCRIBE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD AND CREATION.

### **Christian Stewardship Begins with Earth Stewardship**

When God created all things, human creatures were accorded the status of co-creators with God, and the special creation of a "helper" in the task of caring for the garden (Genesis 2:20-22). God placed the human creature in the garden "to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Today, faithful Christian stewardship begins with awareness of our responsibility to till the earth, make its productive powers flourish, and to keep the earth and protect its God-created life systems.

### **Creative, Caring Earth-Stewardship Brings Shalom**

The biblical concept of shalom or "wholeness" is at the heart of Christian earth stewardship. God views each act of the creation, according to Genesis 1, as "good," but the created order in its wholeness is "very good." Today, faithful Christian stewardship strives to maintain that God-created wholeness by working for the health (wholeness) of each creature and by protecting the unity (wholeness) of earth's ecosystems.

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## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

### **Earth Stewardship Is a Vital Part of the Christian Life**

Throughout Scripture, there are indications of the special responsibility of the human creature for the continued wholeness of the earth. Noah's efforts on behalf of the beasts (Genesis 6-9), Joseph's conservation plan in the face of famine (Genesis 41), Solomon's wise dominion growing from his knowledge of nature (1 Kings 4), various provisions for Israel's use of the land (Exodus 23, Leviticus 25), and Jesus' concerns for the physical as well as spiritual wholeness--these are all reminders of our need to acknowledge our creatureliness in gratitude and exercise our stewardship in love.

### **The Earth Lies Polluted**

"...under its inhabitants, for they have ... broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24). The covenant God made with the whole earth after the flood (Genesis 9) is set in the context of Noah's obedience to God's natural laws. As Hosea makes clear, the neglect of our responsibilities to the earth are indistinguishable from our other transgressions, in God's sight.

### **The Earth Is Good**

"For everything created by God is good" (1 Timothy 4) and therefore is to be cherished. And beyond the grateful acceptance of each creature as a blessing from God, we are called to behold that the interdependence of the created order, the ecosystems that make up God's world, are all together "very good" (Genesis 1).

## QUOTES

QUOTES CAN BE USED AS A RESOURCE FOR PUBLICITY OR FOR REFLECTIONS AND HOMILIES. THE FOLLOWING QUOTES ARE EXAMPLES THAT HAVE BEEN USED IN PREVIOUS RURAL LIFE DAY CELEBRATIONS.

"All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents."

- **Pope Francis: "Laudato Si"**

"Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land."

- **Pope Francis: "Laudato Si"**

"While the farmer holds title to the land, actually it belongs to all the people because civilization itself rests upon the soil. Those who labor on the earth are the chosen people of God."

- **Thomas Jefferson**

"To own a bit of ground, to scratch it with a hoe, to plant seeds and watch the renewal of life -this is the commonest delight of the race, the most satisfactory thing a person can do."

- **Charles Dudley Warner**

"We must move from the idea that the world is one big factory, and that farmers are just a cog in that food producing machine."

- **Dean Freudenberger**

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## QUOTES (CONTINUED)

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends the other way."

- Aldo Leopold

"In the earliest writings we find that the prophet and scholar alike have lamented the loss of soils and have warned people of the consequences of their wasteful ways. It seems that we have forever talked about soil stewardship and the need for a land ethic, and all the while soil destruction continues, in many places at an accelerated pace. Is it possible that we simply lack enough stretch in our ethical potential to evolve a set of values capable of promoting a sustainable agriculture?"

- Wes Jackson

"To accept the idea that land is not just a resource for humans, that it has rights and we are bound by responsibilities to it, will drastically change our way of being here."

- Joe and Nancy Paddock and Carol Bly: "Soil and Survival"

## HOMILY OUTLINES

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIONS AND SCRIPTURE READINGS THAT MAY BE USED TO PREPARE A HOMILY FOR A RURAL LIFE DAY CELEBRATION.

### **Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church by Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004**

**Chapter 1- I.** God's Liberating action in the history of Israel--God's gratuitous presence and the principle of creation and God's gratuitous actions

**Chapter 6, I.** Biblical Aspect--The duty to cultivate and care for the earth

**Chapter 10, IV.** A Common Responsibility--The environment, a collective good, and the environment and sharing of goods

See:

[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)



## HOMILY OUTLINES (CONTINUED)

### **Laudato Si by Pope Francis, 2015**

God's masterful creation is not only good, but it works like clockwork, as "everything is connected."  
(§91)

This harmonious connection certainly exists in nature, but a central point of *Laudato Si* is that human activity has an impact--and is in turn impacted--by our natural environment. In other words, there is a fundamental link between mankind and creation. (§66)

Our Holy Father illustrates how certain farming techniques injure not only natural ecology--through pollution and deforestation--but also human ecology--by disrupting rural communities and forcing family and proprietary farmers out of business. He suggests alternatives that are sustainable, working in harmony not only with nature but also healthy patterns of human living.

Thirdly, Pope Francis reminds us that we are created for relationship: a relationship with God, with our fellow human beings, and with the earth.

Finally, Pope Francis calls all of us, especially those living in rural communities, to a spiritual renewal: a conversion of heart and mind, that recognizes our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change.

See:

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

### **Scripture Readings**

#### **Saint Isidore**

Readings for May 15, Saint Isidore's feast day, are suitable for this celebration and are listed below. However, if a liturgy takes place on a Sunday, the readings of that Sunday are to be used.

Genesis 1:25 and 2:25

Psalms 26:4-5

Romans 12:9-12

II Thessalonians 3:8-12

I Timothy 4:15-16

James 5:7-10

Matthew 6:19-20

Philippians 4:4-7

Hebrews 10:12-14

#### **Old Testament**

Isaiah 32:15-20 (#831.2) The effect of justice will be peace.

Genesis 1:11-12 (#851.1) Let the earth produce vegetation and seed-bearing plants.

Genesis 1:26-2:3 (#846.1) Fill the earth and subdue it.

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15 (#846.2) God took Adam and settled him in the garden to cultivate it.

#### **New Testament**

James 3:13-18 (#832.2) May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 (#852) God will provide bread to eat.

#### **Gospel**

Matthew 5:1-12a (#835.1) The Beatitudes.

Matthew 13:1-9 (#855.1) The sower went out to sow seed.

Mark 4:26-29 (#855.2) While the sower sleeps, the seed is sprouting and growing.

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## HOMILY OUTLINES (CONTINUED)

### **Biblical reflections from the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, Columbia, Missouri**

#### **We Care for the Earth Because God Owns It (Psalm 24, Leviticus 25)**

Christians believe that "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it," as the Psalmist declares. We respect the property of another, and use or enjoy God's creation, only to God's glory, not our own. We do not pretend to the rights of ownership, "for the land is mine," says the Lord, "and you are strangers and sojourners with me."

#### **Covenant and Creation (Genesis 6-9)**

In the story of Noah, the first of God's covenants extends to the whole created order. The promise of God's continued blessing, first made in the Genesis story, is set in the context of an interdependent household or "oikos", a Greek word from which our "ecology" is derived. So long as the human creature (represented by Noah) protects the welfare of the other inhabitants of the ark, God sees to it that the needs of all creatures will be met.

## INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

INTERCESSORY PRAYER IS THE ACT OF  
PRAYING ON BEHALF OF OTHERS.  
CHOOSE 4-6 THAT YOU FEEL FIT BEST  
WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.

#### **Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

1. God made people stewards of creation. We pray that we may always work to protect what God has made, we pray to the Lord...

2. For all who work the land, that they may derive a just livelihood for themselves and their families, we pray to the Lord...

3. For nurturing the rural way of life, its values, and its traditions, we pray to the Lord...

4. For the health and safety of those who work to provide food for all people, we pray to the Lord...

5. For people who love the land and care for it well, making farming sustainable for future generations, we pray to the Lord...

6. For strategists, planners, policy makers and advisors, offering new ways to grow food and care for the land in changing times, we pray to the Lord...

7. For seasonable weather, good growth and good yields, so that there may be abundant harvests to feed hungry people, we pray to the Lord...

8. For health and happiness in the home life of all farmers, and for families to work together with love, respect and harmony, we pray to the Lord...

9. That God's creation may be revered by our use of materials for food, clothing, housing, artistic expression, and goods for human service, we pray to the Lord...

10. That the talents, customs, and gifts of all cultures in this nation and throughout the world will be respected and nurtured, we pray to the Lord...

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## CLOSING PRAYERS

CLOSING PRAYERS THANK GOD FOR BEING WITH US AND ASK HIM TO CONTINUE TO INSPIRE AND PROTECT US AS WE LEAVE.

1. Lord, we go now as a community of believers going into a larger community. Community is more than contact; it is caring, compassion, concern, comforting, celebrating, conversing, communion and service. Community is always becoming and never complete. Two or more share life together, risking to show pain, loneliness, fears, anger; receiving understanding, support, encouragement and relationship. Community involves risking error for another's sake, losing oneself for a greater cause, responding to a need for enhancing the qualitative character of human life. We go now, O Lord, to build the kind of community that can be called the Kingdom of God on earth. (R. Amen.)

2. God, may we go forth resolved to care for your earth and your people. We thank you for our rural life and rural community. We thank you for daily challenges and difficult decisions. Help us to be your witnesses today. Give us your spirit of love and power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (R. Amen.)



3. Lord, it all began with little things: one breath of life, a tongue of fire within a bush, one small stone in a shepherd boy's hand, a voice in the night, a teenage girl who said "yes", a small point of light in an eastern sky, a little cup of wine, a crumb of bread, a rusty nail, a shot of joy in the early morning. Your power lies in the simple, the humble, and the small corners of life. Your voice is found in the species that disappears quietly and in the river that sinks into the sand before reaching the ocean. Let us go and share with others your message and the glory of the "little things". (R. Amen.)

## MUSIC SUGGESTIONS

THERE ARE MANY MUSIC SELECTIONS THAT WILL WORK WELL FOR USE IN A RURAL LIFE CELEBRATION. THESE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES.

### **Songs inspired by Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 2015.**

#### **"Be Praised My Lord"**

by Teresa Cobarrubia

To Listen:

[www.teresacobarrubiayodermusic.wordpress.com/2015/09/05/song-be-praised-my-lord-laudato-si/](http://www.teresacobarrubiayodermusic.wordpress.com/2015/09/05/song-be-praised-my-lord-laudato-si/)

#### **"Laudato Sii, O Mi Signore"**

by Kevin Mayhew

Sheet Music Available at:

[www.kevinmayhew.com/hymn-of-the-week.html](http://www.kevinmayhew.com/hymn-of-the-week.html)

To Listen: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSpyKsPiUhs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSpyKsPiUhs)



## MUSIC SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)

### **Examples from the United Methodist Rural Fellowship (lyrics from a rural perspective put to well-known music)**

#### **"A Hymn for the Rural Community"**

Tune: "Finlandia" by the Rev. Ed Kail

This is your land, O God of all creation,  
The land by which you gave us daily bread.  
This is your land, and all eyes look to you, Lord,  
From your good earth by grace we all are fed.  
This is your land, you let us make our homes here,  
And we enjoy the blessings 'round us spread.

This is your land, but only as a trust, Lord.  
We are your stewards, here to do your will.  
This is our land, but not as our possession;  
Though we may tend it, our place of earthly labor,  
Our land to love, conserve, preserve and till.

You give us life on farms, in towns and cities:  
All bound together, one community.  
But sin and pride and greed for wealth and power,  
Threaten that life, destroy our unity.  
Our rural life is sacrificed to idols;  
To gods of war and prosperity.

Let righteousness roll down like living waters,  
And justice like an ever-flowing stream.  
Let us be neighbors, caring for each other,  
Working together to preserve the dream.  
A life on farms, in rural towns and cities,  
God's land and ours, community redeemed.

#### **"Praise and Thanksgiving"**

Tune: "Morning Has Broken" by Albert F. Bailey

Praise and thanksgiving, now we would offer, For all  
things living, created good;  
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard, Hay from  
mown fields, blossom and wood.

Bless, Lord, the labor we bring to serve you, That  
with our neighbor we may be fed.  
Sowing or tilling, we would work for you, Harvesting,  
milling for daily bread.

You are providing food for your children, By your  
wise guiding teach us to share.  
With one another, so that, rejoicing, With us, all  
others may know your care.

Then will your blessing reach ev'ry people; Freely  
confessing your gracious hand.  
Where all obey you, no one will hunger; In your love's  
way, you nourish the land.

#### **"God of the Fertile Fields"**

Tune: "My Country 'Tis Of Thee" by Georgia Harkness

God of the fertile fields, Lord of the earth that yields  
our daily bread;  
Forth from thy bounteous hand, Come gifts thy love  
has planned;  
That we through all the land be clothed and fed.

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## MUSIC SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)

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We would thy stewards be, holding in trust from  
thee, All thou dost give; Help us in love to share,  
Teach us like thee to care, That earth may all be fair,  
and all may live.

As grows the hidden seed, to fruit that serves our  
need, thy kingdom grows, so let our toil be used,  
No gift of thine abused, No humblest task refused,  
Thy love bestows.

### Other Music Resources

#### Worship Fourth Edition (GIA)

All Creatures of Our God and King  
All Things Bright and Beautiful  
Before the fruit Is Ripened By the Sun  
Earth and All Stars  
Father, We Thank Thee  
For the Beauty of the Earth  
For the Fruit Is Ripened By the Sun  
For the Fruits of This Creation  
For the Healing of the Nations  
Gift of Finest Wheat  
God Whose Farm Is All Creation  
How Lovely Are Your Works, O Lord  
Let Saints on Earth in Concert  
Lord of All Hopefulness  
O Blessed Are Those Who Fear the Lord  
Those Who Love and Those Who Labor  
What Does the Lord Require

#### Glory and Praise Third Edition (NALR)

All My Days  
Anthem  
Come to the Water  
Dwelling Place

Earthen Vessels  
Glory and Praise to Our God  
In Praise of His Name  
In the Day of the Lord  
Jesus is Life  
Like a Sunflower  
Lord, Send Out Your Spirit  
Mountains and Hills  
One Bread, One Body  
Peace Prayer  
Praise the Lord, My Soul  
Son of David  
Speak, Lord

#### Gather Third Edition (GIA)

Blessed Be God  
Canticle of the Sun  
Glory and Praise to Our God  
God of All Creation  
Harvest of Justice  
I Want to Praise Your Name  
In Praise of His Name  
Morning Has Broken  
Nature's Praise  
Spirit Blowing Through Creation  
The Stars Declare His Glory  
To God with Gladness Sing  
We Praise You  
Wind Upon the Water

For more help, or to look up hymns see:  
[www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org)

Suggestions from The United Methodist Hymnal and  
the Lutheran Book of Worship are available upon  
request by contacting Catholic Rural Life at  
[Info@CatholicRuralLife.org](mailto:Info@CatholicRuralLife.org).