

## Gathering:

Call to Worship dialog (Based upon Psalm 85 with a word from Isaiah 55)

Let us gather together and hear what the LORD will speak.

The words of the LORD are like rain on the earth,

**where muddy furrows have no choice but to sprout and grow.**

Today the LORD speaks *Shalom* - blessing, wholeness, peace

**to all those belonging to God,**

**who do not chase their own tail like a foolish pup.**

Still, God will rescue those who have not lost their sense of awe.

**Even our land is filled with God's glory,**

**the soil is alive with creative power.**

Loving grace will shake hands with faithfulness

**Justice and peace will greet each other as old friends.**

Faithfulness shall germinate and grow from the land,

**justice and righteousness shall shine on us from Heaven.**

To be sure, the LORD will yield all that is good

**and our land will yield a harvest.**

God has spoken the future - Righteousness goes before the LORD

**and makes a road to our hearts, sustaining us with peace.**

This service was written for the 2007 Rural Ministry Conference by Tim Koester who is Wartburg Theological Seminary student and former Nebraska farmer. Permission is granted by Wartburg Theological Seminary's *Center for Theology & Land* for the use of this service or any of its components in congregational worship. We simply request that you cite the CTL as the source and contact us ([ruralmin@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:ruralmin@wartburgseminary.edu) or phone 563-598-0273) so that we may know you plan to use it.

## Confession and Absolution

P: The Word of the LORD is true. Grace shines down on all people and rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous. We gather now to confess our failings, not to guarantee prosperity, but so that we might be turned back to God and be healed. Hear our petitions, gracious creator, for failing you, one another, and the good creation you have given.

Lord God you have called and gifted us to bear fruit in the world

but instead of Love

**we yield indifference to the poor, the hungry, and all those who are powerless.**

Instead of Joy,

**we develop hardpans in our hearts, by overloading them with work and worries.**

Instead of Peace,

**we cultivate thorns of mistrust and violence that lead nations into war and congregations into division.**

Instead of Patience,

**we stampede toward technology, feeding on efficiency instead of relying on the unhurried pulse of nature.**

Instead of Kindness,

**we shovel accusations upon our neighbors, burying the truth under piles of gossip.**

Instead of Goodness,

**we erode the earth and fail to conserve and protect what You have created good.**

Instead of Faith,

**we sow seeds of doubt and we wilt in the sun by neglecting to put our roots in Your word.**

Instead of Gentleness,

**we mow down our enemies with harsh judgments and cutting words.**

Instead of Self-Control

**we milk the creation dry so that we might be full.**

Lord we confess these failings as individuals and as a community

**Forgive us loving God and stand us upright after the storm so that by the power of your Spirit, we might yield a bountiful harvest for you in this world.**

In the waters of baptism, we were all joined to the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, that we might be dead to sin and alive to God. In the name of Christ, your sins are forgiven. Let us rejoice and make a joyful noise to the LORD! **Amen.**

Praise song: (possible themes, celebrate God's creation, goodness, forgiveness.)  
(During this time, the rogation elements may be brought forth)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you**

Prayer of the day:

Lord God, creator and giver of all good things, you bless us with soil, water, seed and sun to bring forth grain to feed a hungry world. We praise and thank you for gift of life and the delicate web of relationships that binds us to all living things. Teach us to live within the steady rhythm of planting and harvest, celebrating the miracle of life from death each year. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

**Word:** LESSONS FOR THE DAY

Sermon

Hymn of the day

Prayers

A: Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs  
(pause)

A: Almighty God, unite your church so that with one voice, it may proclaim the Good News to a world in need of forgiveness and healing, Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A: Empower leaders of the church, of the nations, and of rural communities with the gifts of the Spirit so that they may serve with self-giving love, Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A: Guide the decisions of governments around the world to seek peace and justices for all and grant that we, as citizens of nations might be empowered to speak for the voiceless ones, Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A; Bring courage to those who bear the burdens of stress at work, strained relationships, loneliness or illness.  
(Pause) Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A: Teach us that we do not exist on this earth alone but in deep connection with all of your creation. Thank you for the gifts of sowing and reaping, of spring calves and newborn lambs. Give us wisdom to be good stewards of all you place in our care, Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A: Sustain our hope for the future. We especially pray for all those leading or presenting at this conference. May your Spirit guide their words to empower all who hear them to minister in new and creative ways to your people.  
Lord in your mercy,

C: **Hear our prayer.**

A; Remembering your eternal promises, into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray trusting in your mercy; through you Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen**

Sharing of the Peace

**Meal:** USE AN APPROPRIATE SETTING OF YOUR CHOICE. THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER MAY INCLUDE WORDS OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE LAND, FOR ALL CREATION, AND FOR GOD'S SAVING ACTS IN HISTORY.

**Sending Rogation blessing** (For the RMC Conference, we brought in a large tractor tire to represent human industry and we used large glass bowls to hold representations of the other elements. However, be creative! Have farmers drive implements to the church and go outside to stand on the land you speak blessing to. Some churches take the congregational worship to a farm and hold the rogation service there.)

P: For thousands of years, believers have gathered to seek the blessing of God at the time of spring planting so that the earth might sustain their lives and grow their families. Today we participate in this ancient ritual with new perspectives and experiences while still acknowledging our dependence on the gifts of the Creator for our survival. In addition to the three traditional elements of seed, soil, and water, we add human industry, also a gift from God, whose importance to agriculture is more connected than ever.

Prayer for the Soil

P: Creating God, out of the ground you formed living things. We give you thanks for the creative power that covers the earth and for the new life it births each spring. We thank you for the feel of mud between our toes, for the smell of black earth, and for the intricate cycles of life that never cease beneath the surface. Bless this soil and all soil that is planted or grazed. Empower us to be wise stewards of its use and protectors of its fertility. In the name of the one who gives us new life, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A: **Amen.**

Prayer for the Seed

P: Author of Life, in your wisdom, you speak creation into being through every seed, every flower, every spore. We are in awe of the simple complexity that powers a shoot to push out of the ground. Nourish and protect these seeds and all seeds so that the mystery of resurrection might once again sprout and grow to yield a harvest of abundance for all people. Teach us again the profound mystery of planting in faith, caring with love, for the hope of harvest. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A: **Amen.**

Prayer for the Water

P: We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and in the waters of baptism, you wash away our sin and call us to new life. We praise you for the smell of the earth after a refreshing rain, for the sweet satisfaction of drinking well water on a hot summer day, and for the moisture that sustains both plants and animals. We pray Lord that the rains would come when they are needed so that crops will thrive and the harvest will be abundant. In the name of Christ our Lord.

A: **Amen**

Prayer for Human Industry.

P: Loving God, in your image you created humanity, male and female you created them. You have gifted us with minds that are capable of dreaming, building, exploring, and discovering. We have designed machines that ease our burdens and increase our abilities. We have uncovered some of the mysteries of life. Bless us and guide us, O Lord, so that we may wisely use the gifts of science and reason in the service of all creation and not just for selfish ends. We dedicate this equipment and all agricultural equipment and technology, along with those who create it, to your purpose and ask that you grant protection and safety to those who use it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

A: **Amen**

Final blessing and benediction

P: (To the congregation) Now may God, who sustains our future with hope, bless all of you in your time at this place. May the good news of Jesus Christ come to you as a refreshing rain, may the Holy Spirit root you in the firm and fertile soil of the Word, and may the face of God shine on you with grace

✝ and mercy for a new day.

Sending Hymn