



Tree Planting Service
*in Honor of the
5th Anniversary of Laudato Si'*



INTRODUCTION

LEADER:

Over the course of human history trees appear both in myth and sacred stories. Scripture recalls many types of trees: oaks of righteousness, cedars of Lebanon, almond, fig and olive trees, a tree of life and a tree of knowledge, the trees at Mamre where God visited Abraham.

Trees are a living metaphor for our own spiritual journeys. From seed to sapling to towering giants, rooted on the earth and reaching to the sky, they serve as home to any number of earthly creatures and microsystems. Indeed, trees inspire, delight and serve as invaluable reminders of the order of things. Trees engage our imaginations and offer joy to our spirits.

We are just now discovering the enormous potential trees hold in healing the climate catastrophe. Scientists agree, reforestation and the planting of new trees is a critical climate change solution¹.

[Pause]

Let us pray:

God of Wonder, as we gather together to bless the earth and celebrate the potential of the tree before us, we pray that it may serve as a living witness to our commitment to heal our common home through long-lasting, bold changes. Grant us the courage to continue to take this stand for the sake of the goodness of your creation, and the inspiration and delight it provides us. Through Christ, your Son, our Lord:

ALL: Amen.

READING *Psalm 104: 1-2, 10, 12-13, 16-17, 31*

READER:

The response is: Praise the LORD, my soul.

ALL: Praise the LORD, my soul.

LORD my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and majesty.

ALL: Praise the LORD, my soul.

He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.

The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.
He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

ALL: Praise the LORD, my soul.

The trees of the LORD are well watered,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
There the birds make their nests;
the stork has its home in the junipers.

ALL: Praise the LORD, my soul.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works —

ALL: Praise the LORD, my soul.

BLESSING OF THE SOIL

LEADER:

I invite you to raise your hands and bow your heads as we bless the soil before us:

Creator Spirit, bless this soil and the nutrients it holds. May the life teeming within it spring forth. We honor your cyclical creation, Oh God, and pray for the humility to revere and respect this soil for the nourishment it provides. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

ALL: Amen.

1. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6448/76>

RITUAL AND SONG

In procession, participants either use a communal shovel to take turns throwing earth over the roots of the tree, or individual participants toss a handful of soil over the roots of the tree. While the ritual is completed, participants are led in song:

Touch The Earth Lightly

SHIRLEY ERENA MURRAY

TONY ALONSO

1. Touch the earth light - ly, use the earth
 2. We who en - dan - ger, who cre - ate
 3. Let there be green - ing, birth from the
 4. God of all liv - ing, God of all

gen - tly, nour - ish the life of the
 hun - ger, a - gents of death for all
 burn - ing, wa - ter that bless - es and
 lov - ing, God of the seed - ling, the

world in our care: gift of great won - der,
 crea - tures that live, we who would fos - ter
 air that is sweet, health in God's gar - den,
 snow and the sun, teach us, de - flect us,

ours to sur - ren - der, trust for the
 clouds of dis - as - ter— God of our
 hope in God's chil - dren, re - gen - er -
 Christ re - con - nect us, us - ing us

chil - dren to - mor - row will bear.
 plan - et, fore - stall and for - give!
 a - tion that peace will com - plete.
 gen - tly, and mak - ing us one.

CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER:

As we close, I invite you to pray together with me:

ALL: God of the Universe,
You made the heavens and the earth,
So we do not call our home merely “planet earth.”
We call it your creation, a divine mystery, a gift from your most blessed hand.
The world itself is your miracle.

Upon this tree may your stars rain down their blessed dust.
May it and us be blessed with rain and sunshine.
Grant us humility that we might become more human,
That we might mend our rift from your creation,
That we might then know the sacredness of the gift of life,
That we might truly experience life from your hand.
For you planted humanity in a garden
And began our resurrection in a garden.
Our blessed memory and hope, therefore, lie in a garden.

Thanks be to God,
Who made the world teeming with variety,
Of things on the earth, above the earth, and under the earth.

Thanks be to God
For the many kinds of plants, trees, and fruits
That we celebrate.

For the centipedes, ants, and worms,
For the mice, marmots, and bats,
For the cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers,

We rejoice that we find ourselves eclipsed by the magnitude of generosity and mystery.

Thanks be to God²

Amen.



2. Adapted from “Blessing of the Land or Garden” in *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne and Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove (2010).