

## Rural Life Sunday Worship Ideas

For the best description of Rural Life Sunday in the United Methodist Church go to [The Book of Discipline](#), Paragraph 265.3

Go to [The United Methodist Book of Worship](#) page 430 for worship ideas including scriptures, hymns, a responsive prayer and other suggestions.

Rural Life Sunday can happen the day voted on at annual conference, a day in the spring at the time of planting, Earth Day, the time of county or state fairs, at the time of harvest or other times that fit the traditions in your local church.

Ideas from [Creative Ways to Offer Praise](#), by Lisa Flinn and Barbara Younger, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1993

Page 21, "An Outdoor Dismissal"

Closing a worship service by going outside into God's world can remind worshipers of their connection to creation. Singing the last verse of 'This Is My Father's World' or hearing the words of a psalm while standing under the sky is both appropriate and reverent.

For a closing prayer outdoors, Psalm 148 works perfectly as it calls on all creatures and elements of creation to praise God. For an outdoor benediction, consider Psalm 121:8, Isaiah 40:3-8, or Genesis 9:12-16. Hymnbooks and Christian songbooks are filled with music that is enriched by an outdoor setting.

In years gone by, when farming and rural life created a common bond among parishioners, blessings of the animals and blessings of the crops were a part of church life. Rogation Day was a time to bless the spring planting. Rogation Day still holds meaning in today's world where the home garden often replaces the family farm and where the concern for the environment creates a common bond among all Christians. Celebrate Rogation Day, traditionally held forty days after Easter, by asking an outdoor blessing on the earth, the seeds and their harvest, and the efforts of the farmers and gardeners who work the soil of the earth."

Page 27-28 Have a "Garden Bounty Table" where produce, flowers and other things harvested are shared. A donation could go to a special offering. Hold a celebration close at the end of harvest, maybe Thanksgiving time.

Page 29 Use baskets to collect the offering.

Page 38 Make hymnal Surprises. "For the Beauty of the Earth" or "This Is My Father's World" on the page of the hymn have a small pressed flower, leaf, or blade of grass.

## Worship liturgies ideas.

Here are a few ideas from the book Gentle Rain on Parched Earth Worship resources for rural settings edited by Philip Liebelt and Noel Nicholls, The Joint Board of Christian Education, Melbourne 1996.

### Call to Worships

Leader – The earth belongs to the Lord, and everything in it:

People – The world belongs to the Lord and all who dwell in it.

Leader – the Lord looks upon the earth

People – and fills it with his blessings.

Leader – while the earth remains there will be seedtime and harvest;

People – summer and winter, day and night will never cease..

Leader – Our help is in the name of the Lord

People – who made heaven and earth.

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### Affirmation of work

Leader – These hands were made for working: in the soil, in the home, in the sheds, in the kitchen.

People – Breath of God, live in me.

Leader – These hands were made for caring, in the home, in the church, in the community.

People – Breath of God, live in me.

Leader – These feet were made for working, carrying the load of daily chores.

People – Breath of God, live in me.

Leader – Steel-capped boots of tattered slippers, well-worn runners, muddy gum boots, all proclaim the work of daily living.

People – Breath of God, live in me.

Leader – Work and worship, caring and praying, coming together in daily living, fulfill the purpose of your creation, O Lord, our God.

People – Breath of God, live in me.

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### Prayers

#### “Offering”

Generous God, your creation is seen in the night sky, the trees and the light of the morning grass. We hear your world in the bellow of homecoming cows, and the rumble of milk tankers.

With these gifts we offer we recall that you created us also with skills to make our living. We thank you for our life and work, which we dedicate to you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Rev. Brian Cole Heytesbury Uniting Parish, Victoria Page 82

### “Blessing of the Harvest”

When the field was ploughed and the seed was sown there was an expectation of harvest: the harvest has been gathered in and life has been sustained. When the kitchen garden was dug over, planted with seed of lettuce, carrot, corn and zucchini, there was a mouth-watering expectation of the crop. The crop has been sampled, savored and has nourished our bodies. With pride, with satisfaction, with gratitude, and with hope of future crops we bring our gifts and ask God’s blessing on the fruits of our labor and, we give thanks to God for his bountiful goodness. Bless this food, O God, a sample of our harvest. May those who savour its goodness be blessed in body and in spirit. May it be to us a sign of future hope. May it be to you a sign of our gratitude. Through Jesus Christ whose name we glorify. Amen.

Rev. Pam Wyley, Lake Bolac Uniting Parish, Victoria, Page 82

### “God’s Presence in Daily Life”

In the summer’s heat, shade me.

In the dried up hills, water me.

In the harvest work, sustain me.

In the big decisions guide me.

In the autumn cold, warm me.

In the rain and wind, revive me.

In the slush and mud, encourage me.

In the lonely hours, be present and stand by me, O Lord, I pray.

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### Other ideas of ways for preparation pages 105-106

Have a group from a variety of farming areas

The groups choose a particular activity in preparation for worship.

- Prayers of praise and confession using a set of slides. The group was to choose from the slides and base their prayers on these.
- Writing a song. The tune chosen was “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore”. The verses they wrote needed to fit the meter of that tune.
- Banners – with paint and large sheets of paper – using words/images relevant to their home area.
- Prayers of the People - under the headings of World.

A workshop like this could be conducted in a local parish situation or with a group of parishes from a region.