

A Liturgy for Outdoor Ministries Sunday
July 14, 2013
Dwight Liles

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us worship the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

**People: Let us worship the one who walked in the cool of the day
through the Garden of Eden, seeking fellowship with Adam and Eve.**

Leader: Let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

**People: Let us praise the Savior who walked the open roads of Galilee and Judea,
who was tempted in the wilderness,
and who often withdrew to lonely places
away from the cities and the crowds to pray.**

Leader: Let us experience the Holy Spirit.

**People: Let us experience the still, small voice of pure silence
that Elijah knew to be the very presence of God,
and the guiding hand that led Paul and Silas
to their place of ministry in Macedonia,
the Spirit who even today guides and leads God's people,
at all times and in every place.**

Leader: Let us worship our God!

People: Yes! Let us worship our God!

Call to Confession

We are sinners, just as the people of God who wandered in the wilderness of Sinai. We lose our way, we test God's patience, we forget God's commands, and we ignore God's love. We are the lost sheep that the Good Shepherd seeks to find in rocky crags and along dangerous cliffs. We long for the shelter of God's forgiveness, the green pastures of the Shepherd's fold, the still waters of peace over which God's Spirit hovers. Let us confess our sin and our wanderings to the God who calls us home.

Prayer of Confession

O God our Creator, we are your people who need your forgiveness. We have wandered from your path, we have done that which we should not do, we have left undone that which we should do. Forgive us, and rescue us from our waywardness. Bring us into the green pastures of peace and forgiveness promised to those who confess their sins to you and seek your restoration. We ask this in the name of our good Shepherd, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Our God leads us into the promised land of amazing grace. Because of God's love, Jesus Christ came and walked this earth, gave his life, and conquered death forever by his resurrection. Because of God's great love, you are forgiven!

Prayer for Illumination

O God, as everything in heaven and earth is open to you, as the trees of the field lift their limbs to you, as the waves rise and fall at your command, as the mountains rise to declare your strength and the valleys kneel before your majesty, so open our hearts and our minds, make us to hear and receive your Word, to respond to it and apply it to our lives, that we might be always found doing that which pleases you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of the People/Intercession

God our creator, you made this earth to give us joy and sustenance, to cause us to lift our eyes and ears, our hearts and lives to you. Today we thank you for the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies, and we especially thank you for the work of outdoor ministries, for those who have answered your call to serve in such ministries, to be counselors, teachers and leaders in camps and conferences and retreats, and to be caretakers and directors of the facilities where these ministries are done. We also thank you for those who attend these events and who find life-changing experiences with you through attending. We pray your blessing, your joy, and your love upon these, and upon all people everywhere. May we all be drawn to you as we look and listen and experience with wonder all that you have created, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Suggestion: After the phrase, “the facilities where these ministries are done”, it would be appropriate to add a specific reference to facilities within the local presbytery or synod which are used by members thereof. Example: “. . . facilities where these ministries are done. Especially today we pray for Crystal Springs Camp, all who experience you through its ministry, and all who serve to make that ministry possible.”)

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-31 or Psalm 19

(One could say that God invented outdoor ministry when God created this world for us to experience. God’s original message of love to us is through the universe God created for us.)

Gospel: Mark 6:30-31 or Luke 5:15-16

(Jesus recognized the need for his disciples—and for himself—to come away from the pressures of life and just be with God. Jesus often chose to seek God in God’s creation.)

New Testament: Acts 16:13-15

(Paul presented the gospel to a group of women who had gathered at a place of prayer outdoors, outside the bustle of the city, by a river, a place where God’s creation was clearly seen and heard and experienced. Outdoor ministries make it possible for us to experience the gospel and God’s creation today as well.)

Offertory Sentence

James 1:17 (NIV) says: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Let us give

ourselves to the one who has richly given us all things to enjoy, as we present our tithes and offerings on this Lord's Day.

Offertory Prayer

O God, you have given us so much. You have given us life and breath, you have given us sun, moon and stars, wind and rain, the earth and all its bounty. We can give nothing to you but ourselves, our time and talents, and a token of that which we have received from you. We give you what is already yours. Still, we offer it with hearts of thanksgiving, and ask that you use it for the kingdom of your love. We ask this in the name of your son and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Charge & Benediction

May you go from this place with new eyes and new ears, able to see in God's creation new evidences of God's glory, power, and love with each new day. And as you go: "May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand." In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.