



A Short Service of Reading and Reflection
July 18, 2026

Worshipping the God of Nature¹

Preparing

Prelude: Humbly I Adore Thee – David N. Johnson

The pastor says:

Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures. In the beautiful words of the psalmist—²

**The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.³**

We join in reading the bold type.

Amen.

The pastor briefly shares announcements.

Inviting

The liturgist continues:

God commands the morning and guides dawn to its place;
God holds the corners of the sky
and shakes off the last few stars. All things are touched with color;
the whole world is changed.

**All nature declares the power, wisdom, and majesty of our God.
Let us come boldly into God's presence with thanksgiving and praise.**

Amen.

The cantor sings and the people join on the second verse (to the tune of Hymn #2):

To you, O God, all creatures sing,
And all creation everything
Sings your praises, alleluia!
Your burning sun with golden beam;
Your silver moon with softer gleam:
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

**Your wind that blows the tempest by,
Your clouds that sail across the sky,
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Your morning rises with a song,
And lights of evening sing along:
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!⁴**

Praying

The liturgist continues:

Oh, God! Where shall we go from your Spirit?
Where shall we flee from your presence?

**If we ascend to heaven, you are there!
If we make our bed in hell, you are there!
If we ride the wings of the dawn and flee across the oceans,
even there your hand shall lead us,
and your right hand shall hold us.**

Let us make our confession unto the Lord:

Lord, we walk in falsehood, and our feet hasten to deceit.

We place our confidence in earthly knowledge,
and pridefully trust our own understanding.

We pray for contrite hearts.

We put our trust in money, and call wealth our security.

We neglect the poor, the sick, and the unlovely.

We pray for lives given to service for others.

The believers pray in silence.

We know that the whole of creation groans as in the pains of childbirth
because of our sin.

**We treat the creatures of your nature with indifference
and exploit the bounties of your good earth.**

We pray for that spirit which unites all creation.

We contemplate our sin and God's grace.

Forgive us, O Lord, and grant us your tender mercies.

We had heard of you with our ears;

but now our eyes have seen you.

**Therefore, we will be quiet,
comforted that we are yours.**

Amen.

*The liturgist may remind us of special blessings, needs and concerns, and
then says:*

I invite you to kneel as we pray.

Our holy Guardian God, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Strengthen us, Lord God, by the grace of your Holy Spirit.

Grant us inward power and strength,

and empty our hearts of all needless anxiety and care.

We pray silently.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The congregation sits.

Listening

The lector says:

Listen to the word of God from Genesis, chapter 28, verses 10-19a.

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

After a period of silent reflection on the reading, the pastor says:

Please join in reading from Psalm 139.

- 1 Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
- 2 you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 3 **You trace my journeys and my resting places
and are acquainted with all my ways.**
- 4 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
- 5 **You press upon me behind and before
and lay your hand upon me.**
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
- 7 **Where can I go then from your Spirit?
where can I flee from your presence?**
- 8 If I climb up to heaven, you are there;
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
- 9 **If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,**
- 10 Even there your hand will lead me
and your right hand hold me fast.
- 11 **If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me,
and the light around me turn to night,"**
- 12 Darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

**23 Search me out, O God, and know my heart;
try me and know my restless thoughts.**

24 Look well whether there be any wickedness in me
and lead me in the way that is everlasting.

After a period of silent reflection on the Psalm, the lector says:

Listen to the word of God from Romans, chapter 8, verses 12-25.

Lesson from the New Testament

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

After a period of silent reflection on the reading, the cantor says:

Please stand and join me in singing ____ stanzas of hymn 557, "Come, Ye Thankful People."

The people continue standing as the liturgist continues:

Listen to the gospel according to Matthew, chapter 13, verses 24-30 and 36-43.

Lesson from the Gospel

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

Offering

After a period of silent reflection, the liturgist continues:

Please be seated.

Loving God, Source of all goodness:

The earth is yours and all that is in it,
the world, and everything that lives in it.

**The sunshine and the rain that gladden and refresh the earth,
the hills and seas and plains,
all speak to us of the Creator's love.**

Your love is written on every opening bud,
on every spire of springing grass.

**We offer ourselves to you, O God--
our worship, our faith, our hope, our love.**

Amen.

If you wish to contribute financially, you may give at the doors to the sanctuary after the service, or you can visit lasierra.church and click on “give.”

Offertory: Jesu, Word of God Incarnate – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozar

Considering

After a moment of grateful reflection, the homilist prays:

Open our hearts and minds
by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read
and your Word is proclaimed
we may hear with joy what you say to us today.

Amen.

Homily

Affirming

The liturgist and people say:

We praise you, our Creator and Redeemer,
maker of heaven and earth and holy time.
You brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt and affirmed the Sabbath—
sign and source of liberation and rest, of renewal and fulfillment.

You called prophets and rulers to proclaim and enact justice.
You became human and lived with us as Jesus of Nazareth—

announcing grace, granting freedom, ministering to the poor;
empowering women, breaking down barriers, building community;
suffering, crucified, risen, and glorified;
ministering now and forever on our behalf.

You called the church to proclaim your love—

to accept all people, to practice reconciliation, and to embody hope.

You preserve our past—

keeping rich memories alive,
making the past present in new ways,
and ensuring that nothing good is ever lost.

You draw us toward our future—

**presenting new possibilities of grace, new challenges for action,
and new opportunities for joy.**

We look forward to your redemption of history—

**to the defeat of death, to the end of enmity,
and to the ultimate triumph of love.**

We join the cantor in singing (to the tune of Hymn #2):

**Your flowing waters, crystal clear
And melodies for you to hear,
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Your fire bountiful and bright,
Remembering your warmth and light:
Sings your praises, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

**To you, O God, day after day,
Your planet earth in every way,
Sings your praises, alleluia!
As savory fruit and fragrant flower
Show forth your glory and your power:
Sing your praises, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!⁵**

Responding

The pastor says:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.

Have no anxiety about anything,
but in everything by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding,
will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.⁶

Amen.

Organ chimes

Blessing

Postlude: Psalm XIX – Benedetto Marcello

The pastor says:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in Christ, do.

And the God of peace will be with you.⁷

Alleluia! Amen!

Upcoming Texts

Visit <https://lasierra.church/liturgical-service/> to view upcoming texts and participants, download this liturgy, watch online, or sign up for our email newsletter.

July 25: Genesis 29:15-28; Psalm 105:1-11, 45b; Romans 8:26-39; and Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52.

August 1: Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17:1-7, 15; Romans 9:1-5; and Matthew 14:13-21.

¹ Inspired by a liturgy originally developed by Rennie Schoepflin.

² *Steps to Christ* Chapter 1, “God’s Love for Man.”

³ Psalm 145:15-16.

⁴ *The New Century Hymnal* (1995).

⁵ *The New Century Hymnal* (1995).

⁶ Adapted from Philippians 4.

⁷ Adapted from Philippians 4.