



A Short Service of Reading and Reflection
August 22, 2026

Worshipping the God of Nature¹

Preparing

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.²

Prelude: Adagio in E – Frank Bridge

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—³

**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.⁴**

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 #4):

Stars and planets flung in orbit,
Galaxies that swirl through space,
Powers hid within the atom,
Cells that form an infant's face:
These, O God, in silence praise you;
By your wisdom they are made.

**Skies adorned with sunset splendor,
Silent peaks in calm repose,
Golden fields awaiting harvest,
Foaming surf and fragrant rose:
Earth, it's bounty clothed with beauty,
Echoes all creation's praise.**

**Life in wondrous, wild profusion,
Seed and fruit, each flower and tree,
Beast and fish and swarming insect,
Soaring bird, rejoicing, free:
These, your creatures, join in chorus,
Praising you in wordless song.⁵**

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 Exodus, chapter 1 verse 8 through chapter 2 verse 10.

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 124.

- 1 If the Lord had not been on our side,
let Israel now say;
- 2 **If the Lord had not been on our side,**
when enemies rose up against us;
- 3 Then would they have swallowed us up alive
in their fierce anger toward us;

- 4 **Then would the waters have overwhelmed us
and the torrent gone over us;**
- 5 Then would the raging waters
have gone right over us.
- 6 **Blessed be the Lord!**
 Who has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.
- 7 We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler;
the snare is broken, and we have escaped.
- 8 **Our help is in the Name of the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.**

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

Listen to the word of God from Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-8.

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 363, "Lord,
Whose Love in Humble Service."

The people continue standing as the liturgist continues:

Listen to the gospel according to Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20.

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: As Pants the Hart – Healey Willan

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.**

The cantor and people sing (to the tune of Hymn #4):

**Humankind, earth's deepest mystery,
Born of dust but touched by grace,
Torn apart by tongue and color,
Yet a single striving race:
We in whom you trace your image,
Add our words to nature's song.**

**Gracious God, we bring before you
Gifts of human life alone,
Truth that throbs through song and story,
Visions caught in paint and stone:
These, O God, we gladly offer,
Gifts to praise the Giver's name.**

**Christ, the Word before creation
As creation's final goal,
Once you came for earth's redemption;
By your Spirit make earth whole.
Then, O God, the new creation
Will your praise forever sing.⁶**

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.⁷

Amen.

Organ chimes

Blessing

Postlude: Postlude – William Mathias

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.⁸

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.

August 29: Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Romans 12:9-21; and Matthew 16:21-28.

September 5: Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 149; Romans 13:8-14; and Matthew 18:15-20.

¹ Inspired by a liturgy originally developed by Rennie Schoepflin.

² Elizabeth Barrett Browning

³ *Steps to Christ* Chapter 1, “God’s Love for Man.”

⁴ Psalm 145:15-16.

⁵ *The New Century Hymnal* (1995).

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⁷ Adapted from Philippians 4.

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