



Blue stem grass (Turkeyfoot)
Andropogon gerardii

rcwms

Resource Center *for Women & Ministry in the South, Inc.*

A Liturgy for the Bluestem Tour of Homegrown Preaching Conference

Composed by Callie Swaim-Fox and Kaley Casenhiser

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Opening sentence

Leader: Praise the Holy One in the beauty of earth.

Response: Come, let us listen to the land.

Leader: Together, let us recite the Jubilate. *(adapted from NKJV)*

Jubilate Psalm 100

*Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before God's presence with a song.
Know this: God is one;
The Spirit has made us, and we are God's;
We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.
Enter God's gates with thanksgiving;
go into their courts with praise;
give thanks to God and call upon God's Name.
For the Lord is good; God's
mercy is everlasting;
and their faithfulness endures from age to age.*

Reading

An excerpt from "Who Will Be the Messenger of this Land?" by Jaki Shelton Green

Who will be the messenger of this land?
who will help this land to
remember its birthdays, baptisms
weddings, funerals, its rituals
denials, disappointments
and sacrifices

we are their messengers
with singing hoes
and dancing plows

we are these messengers
 whose ears alone choose
 which spices
 whose eyes alone name basil,
 nutmeg, fennel, ginger,
 cardamom, saffron
 whose tongues alone carry
 hemlock, bloodroot, valerian,
 damiana, st. john's wort these
 roots that contain
 its pleasures its languages its secrets we
 are the messengers
 new messengers
 arriving as mutations of ourselves
 we are these messengers
 blue breath
 red hands
 singing a tree into dance.

Ritual Time of Prayer

Leader: At the beginning of this Homegrown Women's Preaching Festival, we take time aside to hold space together and learn, feel, and pray in Bluestem Conservation Cemetery.

At this time we invite everyone present to find a natural element (e.g., stick, leaf, stone) in the surrounding area that they can hold onto while they pray, remembering the concrete, physical beauty of creation.

We turn to you in prayer, God, saying

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

We thank you for the living land we stand on. We build on the wisdom and memories of those who have nurtured this land before us. Out of this history of collective wisdom, rose the vision of Bluestem Conservation Cemetery. Together, we extend respect to all the inhabitants, human and non-human, of this land across the generations, and for the hard work and commitment of the Bluestem staff and volunteers who made this dream of green burial in this region a reality.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

As we care for this land, remind us of all who have known and been known by it. Keep on our hearts and minds the original inhabitants of this land, particularly the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation and all other indigenous peoples for whom this land is sacred. Let us not lose sight of the violence colonialism and slavery enacted in this region and country. The soil remembers and we commit to remembering her stories when we gather. Strengthen us to live what we speak and to support the indigenous people living in this region today in reciprocal relationships.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

Draw near to all who will be buried here and comfort the families who will grieve them. Wrap your loving kindness around all visitors and souls that will witness, remember, and rest in this place.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

Remind us of our divine interconnectedness with each other and the earth we share. Let us dig deep in holy soil to conserve, heal, and attend to God's wisdom in creation.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

With our bodies, we pray for all those who long or lament. For all those in any kind of need and for all those mourning or feeling alone. I invite you to share your intercessions aloud or silently at this time.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

We stand together in gratitude for all the gifts of this life and for all we cherish and celebrate. I invite your prayers and intercessions aloud or silently at this time.

Creator and Conservationist, hear our prayer.

Now, we bring to your earthen altar these natural mementos of dust, soil, clay, and stem. As we carry them, may they carry all our prayers spoken aloud and those in our hearts. Hold them, and us, Creator God.

Silence & Offerings

At this time, all participants are invited to bring forward the earthen item with which they were praying. When compelled, they can then leave it in a designated shared space in the clearing where it will rest along with others' objects and prayers.

Think of a word or phrase that embodies your prayer right now and say it aloud or silently as you return your item back to the earth.

Song

“Bless the Lord, my Soul” (Taizé)

Bless, our God, my soul.

And bless God’s holy names.

Bless, our God, my soul.

Who leads us into life.

Closing Collect

From Daily Prayer from the Corrymeela Community by Padraig O Tuama

God of the ground,
whose body was — like ours — from dust, and
who fell — like we fall — to the ground.

May we find you on the ground
when we fall.

Oh, our falling fallen ones, may we find you, so that we may inhabit our bodyselves.

Amen.

Blessing

To Bless the Space Between Us “On Passing A Graveyard” by John O'Donohue (adapted)

May perpetual light shine upon
The faces of all who rest and will rest here.

May the lives they lived
Unfold further in spirit.

May all their past travails
Find ease in the kindness of Carolina clay.

May the remembering earth
Mind every memory they bring.

May the rains from the heavens
Fall gently upon them.

May the wildflowers and grasses

Whisper their wishes into light.

May we reverence the village of presence
In the stillness of this silent field.

Dismissal

Leader: Praise the Holy One in the beauty of earth

Response: Come, let us listen to the land.