

Creation: A Relationship Of Respect

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*First Week of Lent
Wednesday March 9*

Scripture

Psalm 126:4-6

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses of the Negev.
May those who sowed with tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reflection

Rogation is a seasonal tradition in the life of the church. The word comes from the same Latin root as interrogation and simply means “to ask.” It is a fitting name because asking is exactly what we do when we begin the planting season. Farmers, gardeners and everyone who is mindful of the food supply chain are invited to pray as the planting season begins. The prayers involve dedication of the human labours to God’s glory and a request for God’s blessing upon the work and the crop itself. The practice was present in Europe before Christianity was widespread, but as Christianity became the dominant religious expression in the region, many previously existing practices took on new meanings.

Many Canadian Anglican communities celebrate Rogation Sunday every Spring, on the Sunday before Ascension Day. As we begin the planting season, we pray for God’s blessing upon our work and the plants and fields we nurture.

Rogation is an act of humility. Asking for God’s blessing upon the growing season is an opportunity to remember and express our reliance upon God’s grace, and upon the interconnected relationships of the created world. It is an invitation to ask for that which we cannot provide on our own.

Prayer

*Almighty and merciful God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: Bless, we beseech thee, the labours of thy people, and cause the earth to bring forth her fruits abundantly in their season, that we may with grateful hearts give thanks to thee for the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Collect for Rogation Days, Book of Common Prayer*

Rogation service celebrates growing hope

We drove southwest from Winnipeg along highways and country roads, along fields green with spring planting. After about two hours, the endlessly flat eastern prairie vista opened suddenly below us to reveal the Pembina River Valley. There, nestled at the bottom was our destination, was the small white church of St. Luke's, Pembina Crossing. A large white tent had been erected behind it to hold the more than 100-member congregation gathered from parishes in the valley, from the Morden area, and from Winnipeg to celebrate Rogation Sunday together. Rogation Sunday is celebrated on the fifth Sunday of Easter, though it is not part of every church's calendar. In Pembina Crossing, this year it was moved to June 9 to accommodate other schedules. I was invited to bring greetings and gratitude from PWRDF. This special gathering was asking for particular blessings on a large field of newly sprouted canola, and a small calf that together represent the "Anglican Grow Hope" project in the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Now in its second year, Anglican Grow Hope has brought together urban and rural parishes in an effort to raise funds for the PWRDF account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) with the goal of ending global hunger. Last year, this effort raised \$14,588 in addition to the regular donations to PWRDF from the diocese. The Rev. Chris Lea led the worship service.

Rev. Chris Lea, also the farmer who donated the land and is growing the canola crop, led us in worship. During his homily he described a recent visit to Ethiopia, the people he had met there, especially the children, and the difference that CFGB supported food security programs were making in their lives. Nancy Howatt, a local cattle farmer who is donating the proceeds from the sale of the calf to Grow Hope, spoke about her recent visit to Haiti and how that experience has affected the way she views the relative abundance that surrounds her in Canada. Both Chris and Nancy movingly recounted the hospitality and generosity they experienced from those they visited who, out of their scarcity, shared so abundantly.

The Rev'd Cathy Campbell has been instrumental in connecting rural and urban parishes in the Diocese as they raise funds for Anglican Grow Hope.

Together we asked for God's blessing upon the canola seeds and sprouts, upon the calf and his mother, upon the farm machinery and the farm, and upon PWRDF, the Foodgrains Bank and the Grow Hope project. And then, we asked God's blessing on the country feast that awaited us following the service. Because as the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, said when launching PWRDF's 2013-2016 Fred Says food security campaign, "It all begins with food."

This Rogation Sunday together we prayed, "Loving Creator God, we acknowledge you as the source of growth and abundance. You provide us with food for body and spirit. With your help we plant our crops, and by your power they produce our harvest... In your kindness and love, make our work fruitful. Grant favourable weather to make these fields productive... Loving Creator God, be gracious to us and bless us, and make your face to shine upon us."

Read the whole story on our website at <https://pwrdf.org/rogation-service-celebrates-growing-hope/>