

SABBATH OPENING LITURGY

This liturgy is designed for home/family use. Generally the head of the household will lead. Before you begin, gather the following materials:

- *one pillar or tall taper candle*
- *a tealight or other small candle for each person*
- *a "sandbox" (tray of sand or dirt)*
- *a piece of paper (quarter sheet or so) and writing utensil for each person*
- *a small lidded box to put the pieces of paper in*
- *something to light the candles with*

WE BEGIN IN RELATIVE DARKNESS.

Leader: Here at the end of our week's labors we seek You, King of Heaven and Earth.

People: Through this week You have sustained us, O Lord, through all our joys and trials.

Together: We come to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.

THE LEADER LIGHTS THE PILLAR CANDLE WHILE READING THE FOLLOWING LINE.

Leader: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and these He filled with all manner of goodness and life.

People: We are the work of His hands, the dust of the earth come to life by very breath of God.

Leader: All good things come from Him. Let us now give thanks to Him for the blessings of the week that has passed and the ways He has sustained us.

WE DECLARE THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED THIS WEEK, LIGHT
OUR TEALIGHTS, AND PLACE THEM IN THE SAND.

(As each person comes forward and declares their blessings, they light a tealight from one of the main candles and place it in the sandbox, remembering that our very breath is from God and we are but dust.)

Leader: Praise Him from Whom all blessings flow!

People: Amen!

Leader: But sadly, we now live in a broken world, for though God blessed us with great abundance at creation, we succumbed to temptation and seized that which was not ours to take, but belonged to God alone.

People: Forgive us, O Lord!

Leader: Let us now take a moment in individual prayer to repent of any particular sins that currently stand between us and our Creator.

WE REPENT OF OUR SINS QUIETLY IN INDIVIDUAL PRAYER.

Leader: How graciously He receives our repentance!

People: Praise be to God!

Leader: Yet it is not only our own sin that brings us grief, but also the sins of our fellow man and the brokenness of the world.

People: We come weary and burdened by the cares of the week.

Leader: Let us cast all our cares upon the Lord, because He cares for us.

WE WRITE OUR CARES ON A PIECE OF PAPER.

Leader: Will you trust the Lord to carry these cares for you through this time of rest?

People: We will.

Leader: Then come and surrender your burdens now to Him, that you may enter His rest.

WE PLACE OUR PAPERS IN THE BOX.

Leader: Do you now choose to enter the rest that God in His great mercy has offered us?

People: We do.

Leader: Do you commit to cease from your labors, vocational or otherwise, just as God ceased from His labors on the seventh day at the creation of the world?

People: We do.

Leader: Do you commit to keeping this Sabbath holy, set apart for the Lord and not simply for your own pleasure?

People: We do.

Leader: We thank you, Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, for You have lovingly given us Your holy Sabbath, in memory of Your work of creation and redemption. It is You who have made us, You who sustain us, You who have redeemed us, and You who make the Sabbath holy.

People: Be now our rest, Lord God, King of Heaven and Earth.

A note about disposing of the papers in the box: Some reading this have immediately thought of ceremonially burning the papers, as is sometimes done with written sins at Easter services. However, these papers do not represent sins or other bad things. Generally, they are good things that it is right for us to care about. The idea is not for us to rid ourselves of these things, but rather to trust God to care for our responsibilities while we obey His command to rest. It is therefore recommended that the papers simply be thrown away, without reading them and without ceremony, after the Sabbath is ended.

SABBATH CLOSING LITURGY

Leader: We praise You, O Lord, King of Heaven and Earth, for You have sustained us through this time and given us rest. We thank You for Your gift of Sabbath and all that it has accomplished within us.

People: You have reminded us of our place in creation and Your work of redemption. You have carried our burdens and reoriented our hearts toward You. You have led us beside still waters and restored our souls.

Leader: As we come to the close of this Sabbath, our hearts are saddened to see it go. This time of resting in You has awakened within us a longing for the glory to come, of which this time has been but a brief foretaste.

People: We ache for the New Jerusalem, for the day of unbroken communion with our Creator, His people, and all of creation.

Leader: We are reminded that we are but strangers and exiles in the world, awaiting the city prepared for us.

People: As we await that final rest, O Lord, grant that these longings may not leave us oversaddened, but rather sharpen our vision and ignite within us a joyful hope that will carry us through the week and stir the yearning hearts of others who do not yet know Your rest.

Leader: As we return now to our labors, we remember that we are but Your creatures, O Lord, and You have appointed us to the work of stewarding Your creation.

People: We labor not in our own authority, but in the name of the King of Heaven and Earth, to care for Your creation. We answer to You for all the work of our hands.

Leader: You have led us beside still waters. You have restored our souls.

People: Lead us now in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake, that we may serve You faithfully as we take up our labors once more.