

SABBATH OPENING LITURGY

This liturgy is designed for individual use. Before you begin, gather the following materials: a pillar candle, a tealight, a "sandbox" (tray or box of sand or dirt), a piece of paper (quarter sheet or so), a pen, a small lidded box, and something to light the candles.

BEGIN IN RELATIVE DARKNESS.

Here at the end of my week's labors I seek You, King of Heaven and Earth. Through this week You have sustained me through all my joys and trials. I come now to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.

LIGHT THE PILLAR CANDLE WHILE RECITING THE FOLLOWING LINE.

In the beginning, You created the heavens and the earth, and these You filled with all manner of goodness and life. I am the work of Your hands, the dust of the earth come to life by very breath of God. All good things come from You. I give thanks to You for the blessings of the week that has passed and for the ways that You have sustained me.

DECLARE THE BLESSINGS YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS WEEK.

AS YOU DO SO, LIGHT THE TEALIGHT FROM THE PILLAR CANDLE AND PLACE IT IN THE SAND,
REMEMBERING THAT YOUR VERY BREATH IS FROM GOD AND YOU ARE BUT DUST.

I praise You, O Lord, my Creator and my God, from Whom all blessings flow!

Even so, I now live in a broken world, for though You blessed us with great abundance at creation, we succumbed to temptation and seized that which was not ours to take, but belonged to You alone. Forgive me, O Lord!

REPENT OF ANY SINS THAT CURRENTLY STAND BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CREATOR.

How graciously You receive my repentance! Praise be to God!

And yet it is not only my own sin that brings me grief, but also the sins of my fellow man and the brokenness of the world. I come weary and burdened by the cares of the week. I come to cast all my cares upon You, O Lord, because You care for me.

WRITE YOUR CARES ON A PIECE OF PAPER.

I you trust You, loving Father, to carry these cares for me through this time of rest. I surrender my burdens now to You, that I may enter Your rest.

PLACE YOUR PAPER IN THE BOX.

I choose now to enter the rest that God in His great mercy has offered me. I commit to cease from my labors, vocational or otherwise, just as God ceased from His labors on the seventh day at the creation of the world. I commit to keeping this Sabbath holy, set apart for the Lord and not simply for my own pleasure.

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

Be now my rest, Lord God, King of Heaven and Earth.

SABBATH CLOSING LITURGY

I praise You, O Lord, King of Heaven and Earth, for You have sustained me through this time and given me rest. I thank You for Your gift of Sabbath and all that it has accomplished within me. You have reminded me of my place in creation and Your work of redemption. You have carried my burdens and reoriented my heart toward You. You have led me beside still waters and restored my soul.

As I come to the close of this Sabbath, my heart is saddened to see it go. This time of resting in You has awakened within me a longing for the glory to come, of which this time has been but a brief foretaste. I ache for the New Jerusalem, for the day of unbroken communion with my Creator, His people, and all of creation. I am reminded that we are but strangers and exiles in the world, awaiting the city prepared for us. As I await that final rest, grant that these longings may not leave me over-saddened, but rather sharpen my vision and ignite within me a joyful hope that will carry me through the week and stir the yearning hearts of others who do not yet know Your rest.

As I return now to my labors, I remember that I am but Your creature, and You have appointed me to the work of stewarding Your creation. I labor not in my own authority, but in the name of the King of Heaven and Earth, to care for Your creation. I answer to You for all the work of my hands.

You have led me beside still waters. You have restored my souls. Lead me now in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake, that I may serve You faithfully as I take up my labors once more.