

CULTIVATING & LETTING GO

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE BUNDLE

1. **SERMON-PLANNING GUIDE**
(Offering guiding questions, inspiration, and thematic structure for the RCL, Year C texts)
2. **CULTIVATING & LETTING GO BRANDING BUNDLE**
(Logo files and graphic templates to help you share this theme on and offline)
3. **LETTING GO: A SERVICE OF HEALING & WHOLENESS**
(Including liturgy & poetry for a full order of worship)
4. **LETTING GO WORSHIP MEDITATION FILM**
(Imagery inspired by our theme that can be integrated into our Healing & Wholeness service)
5. **CULTIVATING & LETTING GO COLORING CALENDAR + DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET**
(A simplified coloring calendar and devotional booklet with prompts, prayers, and coloring for you to complete at your own pace week-by-week)
6. **POETIC PRAYERS ON CULTIVATING & LETTING GO**
(For you to adapt for worship or use as-is)
7. **6 NEW VISUALS** (Inspired by the gospel texts listed in the Focal Scriptures section)
8. **9 NEW COLORING POSTERS** (inspired by the Hebrew Scriptures in the Focal Scriptures section)
9. **INTERGENERATIONAL ART INSTALLATION CURRICULUM**
(To guide you in creating an easy installation that builds each week)
10. **EASTER BANNER DESIGNS** (inspired by our Easter theme, "A New Creation")

ABOUT THE THEME

Cultivate (verb): to prepare and use for the raising of crops; to foster the growth of; to improve by labor, care, or study; to refine; to further; to encourage.¹

"Faith is a place of mystery, where we find the courage to believe in what we cannot see and the strength to let go of our fear of uncertainty."

—Brene Brown, **The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are**

Lent is a season of spiritual gardening, of inviting God to unearth in us what lies fallow, what needs to be tended, and what needs to die for new life to emerge. This year, our lectionary offers us images and stories with themes of earthiness and grit.

¹ Definition by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

FOCAL SCRIPTURES

We're approaching these scriptures (RCL Year C) with these guiding questions:

1. In this text, what is being cultivated and what is being let go?
What are the characters cultivating and letting go of?
2. In light of this passage, what is God cultivating in us and what are we being called to let go of?

1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

- Luke 4:1-13 (*Jesus in the wilderness*)
- Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (*The Israelites settle in the wilderness*)

2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

- Luke 13:31-35 (*Jesus as a mother hen*)
- Psalm 27 ("I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" v. 13)

3RD SUNDAY IN LENT

- Luke 13:1-9 (*Parable of a fig tree with no fruit*)
- Isaiah 55:1-9 ("Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" v.1)

4TH SUNDAY IN LENT

- Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (*Parable of the prodigal son*)
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 ("So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away" v. 17)

5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

- John 12:1-8 (*Mary anoints Jesus' feet with precious oil*)
- Isaiah 43:16-21 ("I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" v. 19)

HOLY WEEK

- Luke 19:28-40 (*Jesus' entry into Jerusalem*)
- Luke 22: 39-46 (*Jesus prays at the Mount of Olives*)
- Psalm 22 ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" v. 1)

WHY WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT THIS THEME

“As we studied this year’s lectionary texts together as a team, we discovered a common thread of earthiness, of stories incorporating agrarian or natural elements. The word ‘cultivate’ quickly emerged for us; when we started fleshing out the meaning of this word, we thought of the work of the gardener. Cultivating requires effort, energy, intention, care. At the same time, the gardener teaches us that cultivating also necessitates patience, waiting, relinquishing control, letting go. Since Lent is traditionally a season when we give something up as a means for spiritual growth, we liked the idea of refining our Lenten focus on what God is cultivating in and through us, and also what we are letting go of to allow space for something new to grow. Our creative process has been energized by approaching scripture and the Lenten season through these lenses of cultivating and letting go.

—LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

There’s a grittiness to this theme that I feel incredibly drawn to. ‘Cultivating’ makes me think about the ways we are intricately tied to creation and how just as the land needs tending to, so do our hearts, minds, and spirits. For me, this theme points to the messiness of self-reflection, the need for difficult work in our individual lives and corporate structures to bring about peace and restoration. I think the inner and outer work of cultivation leads us to letting go. It leads us to a place where we can loosen our grip on the things that keep us separated from God and one another, and welcome the resurrected life we were meant to live.

—LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

I am excited about how this theme and these texts lend themselves to a blend of creation imagery and independent action. I am looking forward to exploring this intersection in the visuals and coloring pages this season!

—HANNAH GARRITY

For me, the words ‘cultivating’ and ‘letting go’ are incredibly rich. They feel like an invitation into that liminal space where I am invited to work on myself, to stand with God and be honest about who I am, what I need, and how desperately I long to be a Christian—and that all feels in character with the spirit of Lent. Thus, I have grown increasingly excited about this series because of its inherent honesty. I am excited about the possibilities for conversations around renewal and growth, rest and creativity, change and new life. I am also excited about the tangible nature of this theme. I hope the series will inspire pastors’ preaching and teaching. A congregation could spend half of Lent focusing on the art of letting go, and then half of Lent focusing on the art of cultivating; or you could spend each week thinking of one way to let go in order to cultivate new life. No matter how you do it, I think these words lead us to spiritually rich ground in authentic and holy ways.

—SARAH ARE

CULTIVATING & LETTING GO

POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING A SERMON SERIES

- For each week, develop your own “Cultivating _____ & Letting Go of _____” statements. You can interpret these statements as either what God is cultivating in you, and/or what you are cultivating and letting go of this Lent.
- For the first three weeks of Lent, you could focus on cultivating, then, in the last 3 weeks, focus on letting go.
- You may wish to refer to Brené Brown’s “Guideposts for Wholehearted Living” that she outlines in her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*. You could preach on a different guidepost each week.
- For each week’s “letting go” statement, you could focus on a particular fear (ex. Letting go of. . . the fear of failure, the fear of abandonment, the fear of losing control, etc.).

IDEAS FOR WORSHIP & PROGRAMMING

- Host a service of Healing & Wholeness using our “Letting Go” liturgy to create space for members to let go of the intangible things that hurt and harm us.
- Use our intergenerational curriculum to create an art installation that builds and changes throughout Lent, bringing the Cultivating & Letting Go theme to life.
- Commit your congregation to **practices of Creation Care** and offer educational programs on how to be better stewards of the earth.
- Use our banner designs to create stunning paper lace banners to install for Easter Sunday and display throughout the Easter season.
- Install “Letting Go” and “Cultivating” walls (perhaps using chalkboard similar to “**Before I Die . . . walls**”) for members to add what they are cultivating and letting go of throughout Lent.
- Partner with a local community garden or farm to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to food insecure populations. Or, better yet, start a community garden on your church grounds to provide bounty to others.

ABOUT THE LOGO

“There’s this moment as winter is reaching its end when the dead branches sway in the growing warmth of the sun, and I wonder, will these trees find new life? Will leaves and flowers begin to bud from these dead limbs, ushering in the spring—or will winter never cease? As we discussed the theme, what emerged for me visually was this moment when the limbs of trees seem suspended between the harsh cold of winter and the vibrancy of spring. These reaching branches need tending, water, and sunlight to grow, and this logo is meant to image that parched posture. The letters of ‘letting go’ are stripped bare to recall a returning to self and a letting go of that which keeps us from God and one another.” —LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN, DIRECTOR OF BRANDING

LOOKING AHEAD

We’ll be releasing a small bundle of resources for Easter under the theme, “A New Creation.” In this, expect a Easter logo bursting with flowers and foliage, and resources that celebrate the fruit and bounty God cultivates in us and all of creation.