



Abundant Life Garden Project:
**An interactive Scripture-based instructional program offered to parishes,
teachers, families and others who seek to share the ministry of
Episcopal Relief & Development**

Children's Chapel Edition

Lesson Four—Soil

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Gather in the Lord's Name

Children might be asked to sit or stand in a circle. A prayer table might be placed in your worship space, furnished with an attractive display of soil from your neighborhood.

(Leader's prayers are **boldface**; children and others' lines are in *italics*.)

Leader: **The Lord be with you!**

Children: *And also with you!*

Leader: **Thank you, Lord, for this time together. Bless us as we give thanks for the gift of land of all varieties, and bless those who work the soil to provide food for themselves and for us. Amen.**

Leader: **Now, I will read several prayers about soil. Since many important gifts of life come from the land itself, please respond to each of these prayers with, "Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil."**

(The leader might ask children to practice "thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil" before continuing.)

Litany of Thanks for the Gift of Soil

We share this time to remember that is it through the gift of soil that we have life on earth.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

We thank you for the creation of rocks, topsoil, clay, silt, sand, peat, chalk and loamy soil. We thank you for the wind and the rain to transform rocks into soil for our use and nourishment.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

We thank you for valleys and mountains, for deserts, rain forests, and tundra. We thank you for prairies and swamps, savannas and coastlines, canyons and riverbeds.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

We thank you for the soil that nourishes our crops, soil that filters our groundwater, and soil that holds water for our future use in creek beds, lake beds, and river beds.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

We thank you for soil that allows us to grow our food and upon which we build our homes.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

Help us, Lord, to make wise use of the gift of soil.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

Be with those who work the land, cultivate it, and who grow food for themselves and for us.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

Help us, O Lord, to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, just as soil receives the free gifts of water and wind.

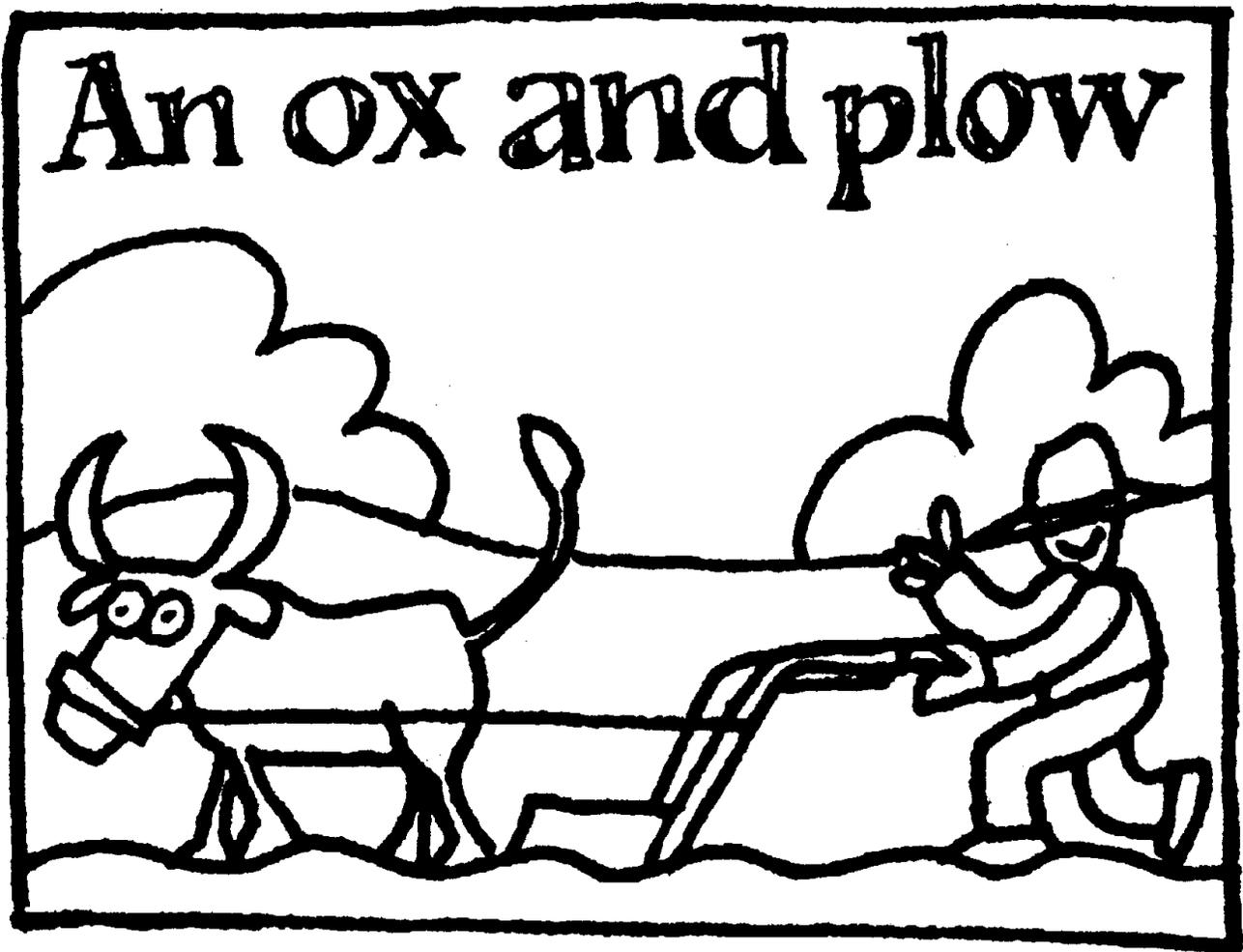
Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

Help us O Lord, like the soil, to weather the storms that change us, that turn us into something different, that may even displace us.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil.

Help us, O Lord, to always stay firmly rooted in You, our foundation and our source.

In Christ's name, Amen.



Proclaim and Respond to the Word of God

Leader: **Listen to a story told by Jesus....**

“When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ‘A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.’ As he said this, he called out, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’” —Luke 8:4-8



In order to grow any kind of plant, you need good soil. The soil must have water, fertilizer, and even air in it. Before anything can grow, it needs to be churned up and turned over. It may need to be broken up so that seeds will have a chance to break through the dirt to get to the light. Then, the weeds that threaten to choke the seedlings will need to be pulled away. This all takes lots of work and careful attention to the soil.

We are like soil. “Seeds for growth” can be planted in us, but how well they grow depends on what kind of “soil” we are. Before this growth can take place, we also need fertilizer – food. We need water and air. We need someone to take care of us and keep the weeds away. We need someone to work with us and make us into better “soil,” just like a farmer works with his soil to get ready for new growth.



Our whole world is like soil. Before new growth can take place, we need to prepare. We need to make sure this growth is cared for and given all it needs to flourish. Helping any kind of growth in our world takes a lot of work and a lot of helpers.

People in the country of Malawi, in Southeastern Africa, must work hard with their soil to feed themselves and their children. Their soil often gets too much rain – or not enough. They have needed help in working their soil.



Friends in the Episcopal Church have helped people in six villages in Malawi work better with their soil. People in Malawi have learned how to put mulch on their soil to protect it from too much sunlight and rain. They have learned to put compost on their soil to give it the nutrition it needs. They have learned to plant trees on their soil to keep it from washing away.

Making better soil in Malawi helps the people feed themselves and their children. Making better soil in Malawi helps the people and their children grow and provide new life to the world.



Questions for Discussion

- What did people in Malawi need to have “good soil”?
- How were they helped?
- How does better soil in Malawi help the whole world?
- How are we like the soil in this story?
- How well do we receive the seeds sown in us?
- What are our birds, rocks, thorns and our water?
- What do we grow from the gifts we are given?

Prayers for the People, Prayers for the Passing of the Peace

Leader: **Now, we will pray to seek and serve others through the gifts and abundance we enjoy. Please respond to each of these prayers with the words, “We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.”**

The Lord be with you!

And also with you!

Help us to remember the stories we have heard today, and help us to remember your Word.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us to bring healing to this hurting world. Help us to act as Jesus to those in need.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us to be the arms and legs of Christ in the world today and every day. Help us to share what we have with others.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us to especially to share your hope, your care of each and every person in this world, and your Kingdom of Heaven, so that all will have abundant life in you.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

We also pray for those in need in our own community. You may name them or pray for them silently, if you wish.

(Please pause so that children and leaders may freely make their own intercessions.)

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of soil. Help us to know how best to use the gifts of land given us, and bless those who work the land to grow food. Help us use our land generously and to be mindful of those in need of land. Help us to always use our land in peace and to remember You who gave it to us. In Christ’s name, *Amen*.

In Christ’s Name, *Amen*.

Passing the Peace, Passing Our Gifts

The peace of the Lord be always with you!

And also with you!

(Children should greet each other and their leaders with a handshake or other appropriate gesture.)

One or more songs might be sung. These might include:

- For small children, “We are a part of all creation” (#131 in *My Heart Sings Out*, ed. Fiona Vidal-White)
- For older children, “God the sculptor of the mountains” (#130 in *My Heart Sings Out*, ed. Fiona Vidal-White)

Offertory

If time allows, children might now spend time thinking, acting or planning a response to the scripture, prayers, and story presented. Below are several possible responses.

- Use the last page of this module as a coloring sheet for young children to color and take home to their parents.
- Draw a picture of how God gives us life through the gift of soil.
- Draw pictures to go with the Litany of Thanks for the Gift of Soil; display them in your church, school or camp
- Take a good look at the soil around your parish building, school, camp, or home. How could you best use this soil? What could you do to be a good steward of it?
- Plan and hold a fundraiser to give the gift of good use of soil to others in need. A gift of \$180 will provide a garden to one entire family, along with training in how to best use the soil.
- Plant a community garden. Learn how to best use your soil. Make wise use of the produce and share it with others in need.

Children might share their pictures, ideas, or other gifts by placing them on the altar as they return to the celebration of Holy Eucharist with their families.

This page may be used as a coloring sheet for young children. Please feel free to make copies for children to color and take home to their families.



Artwork Courtesy of The Rev. Jay Sidebotham for Episcopal Relief & Development