

*(Someone who has been involved in the garden through the summer might say a few words about the experience.)*

- \* It means celebrating the work of each day as an opportunity to show our love for God/Neighbour. The symbols are the gardening tools.

*(Someone might say a few words about the imminent task of readying the garden for winter rest.)*

- \* And it means being able to trust in God's promise of renewal and new life in the future. The symbols are the bulbs.

*(Conclude by reflecting on planting bulbs as a sign of deep trust in God that the chill of winter will give way to warmth and birth again in springtime.)*

### Litany of Thanksgiving

**One:** Our thanksgiving prayer starts with these words, which we're going to repeat after every part of our prayer: God of Life, we thank you!

**All:** God of Life, we thank you!

**One:** For the abundant harvest of our garden,

**All:** For the many blessings you have given us, God of Life, we thank you!

**One:** For the joy and fellowship of working and living in community,

**All:** For the chance to share and serve and transform our world, God of Life, we thank you!

**One:** For your promise of life renewed and the strength to trust,

**All:** For signs of hope in the shadow of hurting, God of Life, we thank you!

**One:** God of our past and present and future,

**All:** For your goodness and grace and constant care, God of Life, we thank you!

### Hymn

"For the fruit of all creation" (VU 227) or "As those of old their first fruits brought" (VU 518)

## 4. Winter Rest

*(After the final harvest, the garden will need to be prepared for winter. This may also be the time when bulbs are planted for spring.)*

### Putting the Garden to Bed – An Outdoor Ritual

#### Preparation

Invite participants to gather around the tools, boughs, etc. that they will be using.



#### Dedication for the Winter

**One:** As we dedicate this garden to God's care over the winter months, I invite you to respond to my words "God of renewal" with "Bring new life." Let us pray:

We gather here, O God, at the edge of winter. We gather with trust in your power to sustain.

God of renewal...

**All:** Bring new life.

**One:** We cut down the plants that have given us nourishment; we return them to the earth, to give it strength for the future.

God of renewal...

**All:** Bring new life.

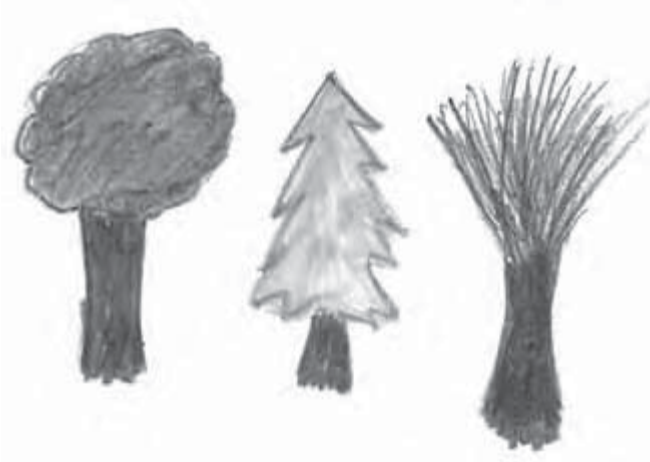
**One:** We plant a surprise: new bulbs for next springtime! In spite of the frost, we plant and we hope.

God of renewal...

**All:** Bring new life.

**One:** We cover the earth to shield it from winter's wind; we bind up our stakes and trellises and store them in safety.





God of renewal...

**All:** Bring new life.

**One:** And bless us in our labour here. Amen.

***Betsy Hogan** serves as minister of programs with the congregation of St. Matthew's United Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*

***Jackie Harper** is the United Church staff person for Family Ministries.*

God of renewal...

**All:** Bring new life.

**One:** Creator God, into your care over the months ahead we dedicate this place which has nourished our bodies and spirits. May its rest be restorative and strengthening: a constant reminder of your promise of new life.

