

Viola odorata
(Sweet-smelling German Violet)



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The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Song of Solomon 2:12-13a (NRSV)

Connecting the Old and the New

People in Bible times, like the writer of the Song of Solomon, looked forward to springtime and the flowers that would again appear. Our ancestors, many of them in Europe, felt the same way about the plants in their area. Hopefully we will be able to care for our environment in such a way that we also will be able to share some of the beauty of God's creation with our children.

Children at the turn of the century benefited from learning songs their ancestors had sung in the old country. Many attended church schools and publishing houses blended heritage songs with new ones in their books. One such book was Lieder-Perlen published in 1894 by Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis, Missouri. Grandparents sang their favorite songs with children and one such song was "Komm, lieber Mai", a song about the renewal of the earth in the month of May.

112. Komm, lieber Mai.

1. Komm, lieber Mai, und mache
die Bäume wieder grün,
und laß uns an dem Bache

Come, dear May and make
The trees green again.
And for us on the stream banks let

die kleinen Veilchen blühn!
Wie möchten wir so gerne
ein Blümchen wieder sehn!
Ach lieber Mai, wie gerne
einmal spazieren gehn!

The little violets bloom.
We would oh so gladly
See a flower again
Oh dear May, we would love
To go for a walk again.

2. Komm, mach es bald gelinder,
daß alles wieder blüht;
dann wird das Flehn der Kinder
ein lautes Jubellied.
O komm und bring vor allem
uns viele Rosen mit!
Bring auch viel Nachtigallen
und schöne Kuckuk mit!

Come, make it milder soon
So that all will bloom again;
Then will the pleading of children
Become a loud song of jubilee
Oh come and above all bring
Many roses, too!
Bring also many Nightingales
And lovely Cuckoos, too!

Lieder-Perlen. (1894). St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House.

We remember hearing and singing this song. We felt the joy of the past and the present as we sang. We live in a nation of many cultures. How fortunate are those children who learn more than one language and thereby retain memories and ideas impossible to retain for those who know only one.

At the turn of the century a great majority of children still had a rural background. They were able to go outside and find violets and roses and hear native birds sing. Memories and experiences such as these need to be provided for present-day children.

The Bible is filled with stories that God's people told and retold. In the Song of Solomon the writer speaks of the coming of spring and the singing of the turtledove. The German song spoke of European Cuckoos and Nightingales. Each culture remembers, shares, and adapts the same important ideas of hope and God's care in new situations.

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They were stories and songs that assured each generation of God's continuing presence in people's lives and in creation in general. What stories and songs are being shared in today's families?

Dear God,

Thank you for those who have shared stories and songs of your presence throughout history with us. Thank you for those in our family and neighborhood who know and recognize wild and garden flowers and can help us learn more about your beautiful creation. Help us to share stories and songs of your love with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Things to Try

- Ask members of your family about nature songs they sang as children. What stories do they have to tell about the songs?
- Learn about nature songs in another language that have been meaningful to relatives or friends.
- Take a walk in a park, nature preserve, or rural area with an older person. What can they tell you about the plants and animals you see? How do they think some things have changed since they were younger? Enjoy the animals and plants of the area. Make a list of old and new things seen or heard.
- What can we tell others about God's continuing presence in our lives and creation in general? Tell others about God's presence in our world today.