Volume 2, Q3, September 2022

ST. GABRIEL'S GARDEN

GROWING NEWS

About Our Garden Ministry

Our ranks were energized this summer by two new members: Emma Rudolf worked with our student volunteers and is now in Ireland pursuing her master's degree, and Jinny Yoon, who with her young daughter Alina, worked many hours planting and weeding. But sadly, we said farewell to Sr. Marie-Noelle of the Xavier Sisters, who moved into our neighborhood two years ago with her community and became integral to our ministry.

As well as caring for the garden, providing opportunities for parishioners to experience the joy and sense of well-being that engagement with nature can bring is also a mandate of the Garden Ministry. In late June, in collaboration with the Children's Liturgy, the children of the parish weeded, watered, and learned about the community garden plants while meeting some of the tiny creatures that live in the soil.

In July, the Garden Ministry collaborated with the Ministry with Maturing Adults, to provide the elders of the parish with a mini-garden retreat.

Engaging with nature is now even more attractive because of the inviting presence in the south garden of two new Muskoka chairs, built by Mary Jacobs and Peter Zuech, painted by Youth Group members Therese Celis and Czarina Reyes, working with designer Rachel McQuillan, and anchored by Neal and Pat Alberg.

As evidenced in two requests for a tour of the church and garden, St. Gabriel's unique vision has gained a reputation beyond our parish. This summer we gave a tour to Carrie Dohe (who brought "Bees for Peace" to Canada) and her research students, who work with faith organizations to build pollinator gardens. Since St. Gabriel's Garden is an established pollinator garden, they were interested in our experience.

A second tour was given to Ben Szoller, a PhD student in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Waterloo, whose thesis addresses how Catholic organizations teach about and advocate for food, the environment, and social justice. Ben was interested in learning more about the vision of St. Gabriel's church and garden.

In all of these encounters, we in the ministry also learn as we share and become increasingly aware that we are part of a movement towards a more mutually enhancing relationship with all of creation.

Spotlight on Pearly Everlasting

Anaphalis margaritacea

This perennial native plant, a member of the Aster family found in our South Garden, will bloom throughout the growing season, June to October. Flowerheads grow on individual, erect, cottony stalks, from 1-3 feet tall, but tend to be clumped together, creating a bushy appearance. The narrow leaves are grey-green to woolly white, and the globular flowers are named "pearly everlasting", because that's what they are — long-enduring, white, pearl-shaped dry bracts, arranged around a yellow centre.

The dried stalks with their pearly white heads are attractive in floral arrangements. On the plant, they provide food for Painted Lady and other butterflies. In folk medicine, pearly everlasting is used as a salve for burns.

Spotlight on the Garden

Of the five years since the beginning of the garden rehabilitation, this has been the most challenging for both the plants and the Ministry. A cold, wet spring provided excellent conditions for insects, fungus and rust to thrive and a hot summer further stressed plant populations. As a result, the peach and pear trees failed to fruit and the flowers in the south garden fell short of their display in previous years. For the first time, we sought the help of an arborist, who treated the plants with a spray of water, soap and copper. It has been a learning experience that hopefully will prepare us for next season.

On the other hand, blueberries were abundant, as were most of the flowers in the north garden - the hyssop, butterfly weed and daylilies, and, for the first time, there was a substantial fruiting of chums (a cross between a cherry and a plum).

Sadly, the lavender suffered substantial winter kill. This winter, it will be covered for protection and new seedlings added next spring.

The two new community garden boxes have added significantly to the garden's productivity. Substantial harvests of lettuce, kale, beans, carrots, herbs, radishes, onions, cucumber and peas, as well as haskap berries, cherries and red currants have been delivered to the Good Shepherd Ministries.

It has been gratifying to see how the sumac along the west side of the church has rebounded since the removal of "weed trees" from the area in the spring.

Embracing Transformational Change

Marlene Bourdon-King

As we enter the season of waning daylight, as our final crops are harvested, and the autumn palette begins to colour our world, it is prudent to ponder the power of change in our lives. Change is often something we humans have difficulty with. We like the familiar, and we tend to fear anything that disrupts that.

But keep in mind that Jesus was a disruptor! He introduced a massive change by his coming and fulfilling his mission of love, reconciling us with God, Our Father. Jesus emphasized the fundamental, yet paramount importance of our relationship with God, Our Creator.

Yet somehow, over the centuries, we lost touch with that simple yet profound truth … that we are all connected parts of God's creation — none of us more important than another, and each important to the whole. As our beloved late Fr. Paul reminded us, "the life and death of each of us has its influence on others". To understand that statement only in human terms is to decimate its meaning. As Brian Swimme and Fr. Thomas Berry, CP, illustrate with their work, the life and death of stars is also part of the cycle of life. The creative work of God began manifesting with the beginning of the universe, and is ongoing … it is only our human understanding that is having a hard time keeping up.

Many people have difficulty grasping that the whole journey of the universe, just as the journey of any life form, is a question of balance between creative and destructive forces. We can grasp the life cycle of a plant, insect, or animal, because its scope is manageable. But to understand human "progress" as a destructive force in our collective life cycle, endangering the balance of the very planet that makes our survival possible, is much harder for us to accept.

For instance, a recent article in EarthBeat — Stories of Climate Crisis, Faith and Action cited a study reporting that "in 12,000 columns by US Bishops between 2014 and 2019 — the period directly before and after Francis' encyclical on the environment — only 93 (0.8%) mentioned climate change, global warming, or their equivalent at all."*

*"Study: Most US Catholic bishops kept silent on Francis' climate change push" by Daniel R. DiLeo, Sabrina Danielsen, Emily E. Burke, Religion News Service Leaders. Oct 19, 2021

To engage with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* would be disruptive. It requires change. We at St. Gabriel's are very fortunate to be associated with the Passionist order, which is committed to environmental responsibility, and supports the work of the Garden Ministry and EcoTheology. In his instituting the month of September as "The Season of Creation", Pope Francis has provided an annual reminder of our dependence upon and responsibility for God's great gift of a vibrant and ongoing Creation.

Consequently, in this season of transformation in nature, is it not incumbent upon each of us to embrace our own transformation, to change what we can to restore the balance necessary for life, and restore our relationship with creation? Can we realize that our individual and collective actions impact on wider aspects, and have influence beyond our daily routines? Thus, our political engagement, embracing clean and sustainable energy, practising the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), working for social justice including truth and reconciliation with our indigenous brothers and sisters, requiring responsible behaviour from our corporations — particularly those in the Global South — all affect that balance. Even small individual actions, cumulatively, create momentum for positive change, because the destruction of existing behaviours can make space for a new creation.

And so, it is important to remind ourselves that while change is hard, it is also necessary for growth. Indeed, change is inevitable, for when something stops growing, it stagnates and dies. Change is universal and has been occurring over our entire history: we can look back and see how humans have changed, growing in understanding of concepts once incomprehensible.

We are part of that history, and how we accept the changes demanded of us in our time will determine not only how the future will look, but also how the future will view us. Can we reconcile our relationship with all of God's creation? Can we understand that it is a necessary part of our reconciliation with God?

Blueberry Crisp Raffle

Because of this year's Bumper Blueberry Harvest, the Garden Ministry is pleased to share the bounty by holding a

Blueberry Crisp Raffle
October 15th and 16th
Tickets: $2 each, or 3 for $5.

Tickets will be sold BEFORE all the masses that weekend.

Each winner's name will be drawn and announced at the end of each mass, so the winner can collect their home-baked treat right away!

2022 Season of Creation Prayer

Creator of All,
From your communion of love
your Word went forth to create
a symphony of life that sings your praise.

By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth
to bring forth a diversity of creatures
who praise you in their being.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

You called human beings
to till and keep your garden.
You placed us into right relationships with each creature so that we could listen to their voices,
and learn how to safeguard the conditions for life.
But we turn in on ourselves
and away from our co-creatures.

We close our ears
to the counsel of our fellow creatures.
We fail to listen to the cries of the poor
and the needs of the most vulnerable.
We silence the voices of those who hold
the traditions that teach us to care for the Earth.
We close our ears to your creative,
reconciling and sustaining Word
that calls to us through the Scriptures.

We lament the loss of our fellow species
and their habitats that will never speak again.
We grieve the loss of human cultures,
along with the lives and livelihoods
that have been displaced or perished.

Creation cries out as forests crackle, and animals alike flee the fires of injustice
that we have lit by our unwillingness to listen.

In this Season of Creation,
we pray that you would call to us,
as from the burning bush,
with the sustaining fire of your Spirit.
Breathe upon us.
Open our ears and move our hearts.
Turn us from our inward gaze.
Teach us to contemplate your creation,
and listen for the voice of each creature
declaring your glory.
For "faith comes from hearing."

Give us hearts to listen for the good news
of your promise to renew the face of the Earth.
Enlighten us with the grace
to follow the Way of Christ
as we learn to walk lightly upon this holy ground.
Fill us with the hope to quench the fires of injustice with the light of your healing love
that sustains our common home.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim
good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Season of Creation begins on September 1, the Day of Prayer for Creation, and ends on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. This year's theme is "Listen to the Voice of Creation," and the urgency of doing so is symbolised by the Burning Bush.

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