



About Our Garden Ministry

Blessed with stunning fall weather, we were able to schedule both a garden clean-up day in September and a “put the garden to bed” day in October, as well as our usual mid-week garden care mornings. Between these events, we also hosted a blueberry raffle, a fun and fund-raising event missing from our schedule since 2019. This year four blueberry crisps, chock full of berries grown in St. Gabriel's Garden, were baked by GM members Eileen Prasad and yours truly and raffled after each of the masses. Thanks to the generous participation of our parishioners, \$440 was raised for the work of our ministry.

The major endeavour this fall, however, was succession planning for the Garden Ministry in the wake of my retirement as Coordinator of the Garden Ministry at the end of the 2022 growing season. Change Management Consultant and GM member, Mary Jacobs, was an invaluable advisor and coach who guided us through a process that resulted in personal leadership commitments. Kevin Benoit assumed the position of Garden Ministry Coordinator, supported by the leadership team of Bridget Barron, Carolyn Liggayu Martin, Eileen Prasad, Fiona Tantonio, Marie Zuzek, Marlene Bourdon-King, Neal Ahlberg and Pat Ahlberg.

This team has supported me and St. Gabriel's Garden with their effort, ideas, creativity, generosity, joy, tears, and love over the six years of my tenure and I am confident that under Kevin's leadership, they will care for our beloved garden and each other in the years to come.



I can't say that I am sorry to let go of the reins, or even that I have mixed feelings. This past year has made it very evident that, given my age, lighter duties are now necessary. So, I am thrilled that care of the garden is passing into such capable, enthusiastic, and committed hands. And, I am overjoyed that I am still able to be where I love to be -

among the hyssop and the butterfly weed, the Cardinals and the Mourning Doves, the squirrels, the bunnies, the butterflies, the worms, the listing apple tree, and the sentinel spruce. The gorgeous forest/orchard/flower beds/vegetable garden that is St. Gabriel's Garden fills me with awe and wonder on a scale to last a lifetime.

- Heather Bennett

An Ute Prayer



Treat the earth well.

It was not given to you by your parents,
it was loaned to you by your children.

We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors,
we borrow it from our Children.

- Found on: <http://www.sapphyr.net/natam/quotes-nativeamerican.htm>

Spotlight on the Garden

Gojis and Cardinals

On one of my rounds through the north garden, I noticed asters lurking among the goji berry shrubs, looking benign and lovely, yet taunting me from their safe outpost among canes that sport two-inch thorns. But I was not in the mood to entertain their theft of nourishment from the gojis. I prepared for battle. Slippery fabric on jacket, pants and hat-check; heavy gloves that covered my wrists – check; hand pruners – check. In full concentration, I gingerly wove my arm through the sharp canes and cautiously clipped one aster at a time.

In doing so, I noticed that two goji shrubs had raided the haskap berry bed. Extricating them would be challenge of a different kind. If attacked vigorously, goji canes can act like whips embedded with tacks. Stooping to remove the intruders, I became aware of a change in the soundscape. A persistent “Peep, peep” vied for my attention. “Hello, Mr. Cardinal,” I answered with delight. “Good to hear you. Where are you?” I stood and searched in the direction of his greeting. “Ah, there you are!” He was in the cherry tree among the large burnt-yellow leaves, but hard to distinguish in his molting coat of muted shades. In the fall when molting, cardinals may have bald patches and their new feathers, often tipped with grey, give their coats a subdued appearance that helps them blend into the fall foliage. Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that they also exchange their distinctive spring mating call for a mere, “Peep, peep.”

We chat while I chop up the goji canes into the wheelbarrow. “Where is Mrs. Cardinal,” I ask, though I know she is nearby, keeping a low profile. I wheel the barrow to the west walkway. Cardinal flies ahead and greets me from a tall sumac with another, “Peep, peep.” Mrs. Cardinal swoops in at shoulder level and together they flit from branch to branch beside me as I walk along, chatting. When we reach the south wall of the church, we say our goodbyes. I wonder if that point marks the end of their territory since I cannot remember seeing them south of it.

St. Gabe's Garden is their home, and I am endlessly grateful for their welcome and their companionship.

- HB



Spotlight on the Northern Cardinal



One of the most commonly depicted birds on Christmas cards is the Northern Cardinal, likely due to the male's brilliant red plumage, and the fact that this bird stays, neither migrating nor molting to a dull plumage in winter, but rather donning its most brilliant red by midwinter, in time for spring mating. So, it provides a welcome splash of vibrant colour in gardens and at backyard birdfeeders, where sunflower seeds are its favourite food, though Cardinals tend to be ground foragers. Both male and female birds sport a jaunty head crest, and bright black eyes in the mask-like accents (black on the male, and charcoal grey on the female) that frame the short, broad, bright orange triangular beak. It seems amazing that they can blend into their surroundings, but they can!

The Cardinal's whistle is distinctive, and the female sings a series of whistled and trilled phrases when she is on the nest, in “conversation” with her mate. The young fledge early (after 9-11 days, whereupon the male will feed and protect them), so the female can produce up to three clutches of eggs per season. Cardinals like to nest in dense shrubbery, often near the ground. Because they are relatively heavy, long-tailed birds, they also have distinctive flight, flapping then gliding to produce a dipping and rising flight path, rather like a shallow wave—a pattern not conducive to long distances. Cardinals are very territorial, and both males and females will “fight” even their own reflections for lengthy periods of time to protect their domains. We've seen one outside the Gabriel Room, steadfastly protecting his turf.

Despite being named “Northern”, these birds have a limited Canadian range, found only in the most southerly regions of Ontario, a bit of Quebec, and along the southern coast of New Brunswick, as well as Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. We are fortunate to call them residents of St. Gabe's Garden.

- MBK



Fruition & Transition

by Marlene Bourdon-King, Editor

This marks the last issue of the second volume of "Growing News", the Garden Ministry's newsletter, which evolved out of a need to share information with the parish (and wider community) about the Ministry and its work, to celebrate the developing garden, and to raise awareness about our collective responsibility to care for the Garden of Creation, this planet Earth.

It seems impossible that 16 years have elapsed since the present church was "new", and that we are now at the end of the 6th season of the Garden's reclamation (from the so-called "Garden of Weeden" that had largely overtaken the grounds, particularly the south garden). Under the leadership of Heather Bennett, the stewardship of the Garden Ministry members, and the support of Parish to bring in professionals to collaborate with us along the way, we are now at a place where we can see the fruition of the original vision: to establish a sacred space on both sides of the south-facing windows of the indoor sanctuary.

But with growth necessarily comes change, and we find ourselves in a period of transition. After six years of incredible dedication at the helm of this Ministry, Heather has come to realize that the job has outgrown her capacity to continue with the "status quo". The current model has clearly become unsustainable, and so, (as outlined at the beginning of this issue) in anticipation of a well-deserved retirement from leading the Garden Ministry, Heather arranged a Transition Workshop, where active Ministry participants could examine what has been, and explore how we might re-envision our operating model, to be able to maintain what we've accomplished, and continue to sustain it as we imagine future growth. To that end, we gathered, in a hybrid of in-person and virtual attendance, on a Saturday afternoon in early October, to undertake the hard work of this necessary transition.

We were very fortunate in having Fr. Steve Dunn, one of our resident Passionists, begin our deliberations with an overview of where we started, and where we've arrived. As always, we were blessed with his profound and inspiring presentation, and with his permission, we share that with you here. We expect that you, too, will find what Fr. Steve had to say provided valuable context, and showed where we've yet to go...



Why the Garden?

by Fr. Steve Dunn, CP

It occurs to me that the Garden, which you care for so generously in your Ministry, is like a parable.

We know from Jesus' approach to parables, that they end up giving us a message we probably did not expect.

But the Garden isn't a story parable... it is a *place* parable.

Let me compare it to another *place* parable: the first Cosmic Station at Port Burwell: a woven ball, symbolic of Planet Earth, centred in a hexagonal deck, with Lake Erie in the background. (*pictured below*)



Here's the unexpected message: it's not only meant to *please* you....

But to tease you into seeing how much more significant a place it is than just to provide pleasure

That's what we had in mind with the Garden ... it has so much more meaning than a pleasing landscape.

But we -- collectively, the parishioners, the Passionists and you -- had to *establish* the parable: make the place fit the message. (like building a deck in a natural spot that had an unobstructed view of Lake Erie.)

Very briefly, here's how it went:

WE (*the Passionists, the gardeners and the parishioners*) tried a cosmetic look



and, though it was beautiful, we knew it wasn't enough.

WE found we needed to change our *planting* to favour permaculture...

WE made the gardening experience a community experience...

These and other transitions were significant, and took time...

... I think you can fill in many other details of how, after 16 years, we *now* have a garden that is truly a *parable place*: stunningly *pleasing* – and also: Teasing both the gardeners and the parish community into a feeling for the sacredness of the Earth. -- In a sense, *evaporating* the impressive wall of glass connecting church and garden – and reinforcing the unexpected messages of the Parable:

We discover in the Garden, as Indigenous Peoples always have, "all our relatives."

We discover that both communities; church and garden, are *sacred*.

Most importantly, WE discover that both communities are inviting us to be open to *mystery*, hidden there, in our *experience* of the sacred Earth:

In the Garden; we discover the *mystery of life and growth* in our careful tending of the soil –

In the Church; we discover *mystery in the belonging, believing, and becoming* of the parish community.

And now you, the *tenders of the Garden*, can have the satisfaction and joy of having brought that *parable into reality*, and we thank you sincerely. Now too, you can celebrate the participation of so many people in the work of establishing the *Garden as a place parable*—and especially today—Heather's contribution.

Additionally, as you discern the next steps of leadership and organization – we are all aware of the increasing need for the Garden, as climate change threatens -- all around us.



After such a presentation, how could we fail?

After such all-encompassing commitment by Heather Bennett over the past six years, how could we not honour her with finding a way to keep her (and our) dream alive?

We have indeed developed a model that we hope will itself evolve into what it needs to become. We now have members taking responsibilities in many carved-out roles: Garden Ministry Coordinator, Administrator, Outreach, Recruitment, Ministry of Earth Spirituality, Newsletter, Construction, Community Garden Care and Meeting Management. Beyond Heather's initial explanation, we will more fully introduce the team in future issues, as this model continues to "become itself".

However, knowing that one person has almost single-handedly managed all of this on her own, we owe Heather Bennett an unfathomable debt of enormous gratitude for her inspired vision, boundless energy, undeterred diligence and relentless perseverance. May God Continue to Bless You, Heather, in all you do!



We wish everyone in
Our Passionist Family of St. Gabriel's
All the Joy, Peace, and Love
this Blessed Birth brings –
Emmanuel – God With Us!

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