

## ST. GABRIEL'S GARDEN



# GROWING NEWS

## About Our Garden Ministry

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kevin Benoit, and this issue of "Growing News" is my first as the Coordinator of the new Garden Ministry that will be continuing to care for the gardens at Saint Gabriel's. As you know, the Garden Ministry has been shepherded for the last 6 years by one amazing lady, Heather Bennett. This newsletter has already acknowledged how blessed both the Garden Ministry and St. Gabriel's Parish has been in everything that she did. But I have to add my voice, for in stepping into her role, I just can't praise her enough, and thank her, always, for the wonderful, caring energy she is giving to all of us. The legacy she started is now being passed down to the many different leaders comprising the new Garden Ministry.

Now let me introduce you to the aspects of the Garden and the ministry leaders that make it happen. In our "re-visioning" workshop last fall, we realized the ministry had outgrown its early format, and what follows are the "sub-committees" and the members taking responsibility for them.

### Outreach:

Eileen Prasad and Fiona Tantonio

### Administration and Recruitment:

Caroline Martin

### Newsletter:

Marlene Bourdon-King and Fiona Tantonio

### Zoom meeting hosting:

Marie Zuzek

### Construction and Tool Management:

Pat and Neal Ahlberg

### Earth Spirituality:

Bridget Baron

My job as Coordinator would not be possible without the help and support of everyone listed above. So I ask that the next time you meet any of them, to please thank them, for the time, effort, and planning

they have invested into the gardens for the parish and community to enjoy.

The direction and vision of the Garden Ministry is unified amongst all the leaders, and the numerous other members. Yet we still have two openings for leader positions: one responsible for Garden Care, and the other, for the Community Gardens. These are important gaps to fill. The gardens need your help and support to make this happen, for the blessings of our garden are not just for our enjoyment: the vegetables and fruits that the gardens yield go to the marginalized and needy in our community. If either of these positions appeal to you, or you know someone who would be interested, please contact me to get more information.

Of course, we always welcome new members. This is an excellent opportunity to connect, make friends, share and care with each other as we grow and travel upon the path that God has placed before us.

I invite you to enjoy the over 50 plants and many animals that call the gardens home. Take your time walking through the gardens. How many different plants can you count? How many different wild animals did you see? Did you notice the Cosmic Stations, the fresh air, and the sounds of the garden with the backdrop of the hustle and bustle of the city that surrounds it?

It is truly a place unlike any other in the community around it. So I invite you again to take your after-Mass and after-dinner walks through the garden. It is here for you and the community to experience and enjoy, a place for you to connect with the earth, and the creation with which God has blessed us.

**-Kevin Benoit, Garden Coordinator**



# Spotlight on the Garden

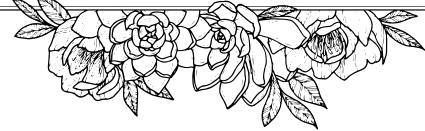
What is St. Gabriel's Garden to us in the Garden Ministry? It is more than a just a pretty face. In the last winter issue, Fr. Steve Dunn gave us a new perspective on the garden: "the garden as a place parable." A story parable delivers an unexpected message wrapped up in a story. A place parable delivers an unexpected message through the senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Fr. Steve writes, "... it's not meant to please you, but to tease you into seeing how much more significant a place it is than just to provide pleasure."

To us in the Garden Ministry, this small patch of land is our opportunity to discover in the depths of our being that we belong, creatures among creatures. Caring for the garden's plants, animals and birds is our tangible way of caring for the crucified Earth. Every hour we spend in the garden deepens our relationship with its creatures and the elements, and they become relatives. We discover that they teach us not only what *they* need in order to thrive, but what we need, even if at first, we ourselves were not aware of that need.

In "The Meadow Across the Creek," in *The Great Work*, 17, Thomas Berry wrote, "We can no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence. The world about us has become an 'it' rather than a 'thou.'" Lya Volering, founder of the former Eco-Community at Minsteracres, U.K., in her work with first nations in Chile and Guatemala, learned that "they understood creation is 'thou.'" After years of intimate living in the walled garden at Minsteracres, Lya came to refer to the garden as "she": "She is still teaching me to just be and take time for wonder. She asks us to be humble. She asks us to get rooted and experience the connectedness of everything."

Etty Hillesum, (*Etty: The Letters and Diaries of Etty Hillesum*), sitting in the sun one day reflected, "In the past, I took in the tree and the sun with my intellect. I wanted to understand how everything fitted together, I wanted to fathom that deep primitive feeling with my mind. In other words, I wanted to subject nature, everything to myself. I felt obliged to interpret it. And the quite simple fact is that now I just let it happen to me."

Editor Marlene Bourdon-King exhorted us to be disruptors, to transform our relationship with creation into one of a caring relative. (*Growing News*, Vol. 2 Q 4) It is in such intimate relationship with the garden that we are transformed and realize that we are part of creation and creation is part of us.



Do you dare to meet the garden? Are you willing to be transformed by it, to open yourself to "discover," as Fr. Steve writes, "as Indigenous Peoples always have, 'all our relatives'; that both communities, church and garden are *sacred*; that both communities are inviting us to be open to *mystery*, hidden there, in our experience of the sacred Earth?"

- HJB



## Earth, Teach Me

Earth teach me quiet  
~ *as the grasses are still with new light.*  
Earth teach me suffering  
~ *as old stones suffer with memory.*  
Earth teach me humility  
~ *as blossoms are humble with beginning.*  
Earth teach me caring  
~ *as mothers nurture their young.*  
Earth teach me courage.  
~ *as the tree that stands alone.*  
Earth teach me limitation  
~ *as the ant that crawls on the ground.*  
Earth teach me freedom  
~ *as the eagle that soars in the sky.*  
Earth teach me acceptance  
~ *as the leaves that die each fall.*  
Earth teach me renewal  
~ *as the seed that rises in the spring.*  
Earth teach me to forget myself  
~ *as melted snow forgets its life.*  
Earth teach me to remember kindness.  
~ *as dry fields weep with rain.*



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

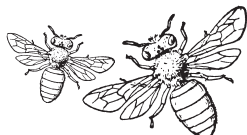
Editor - Marlene Bourdon-King  
Design - Nikki Malunas  
Garden Ministry Coordinator - Kevin Benoit  
Banner Photo Credits: Bridget Baron

To get involved or to leave a comment,  
please email [sgpgardenministry@gmail.com](mailto:sgpgardenministry@gmail.com)





# Spotlight on Bees



One of the earliest signs of life in the spring garden is the arrival of bees. As soon as there are flowers, the bees are there, tending to their mutual needs. There are hundreds of species of bees, each with its own specialty. This unassuming insect, seen everywhere, has “made the news” in recent years, though not because of a “good news” story. Instead, people have learned of the devastating impacts of insecticides, hive disease, habitat loss, and climate change on the bee population around the world. These facts have forced us to realize just how dependent we are on bees for much of our favourite and most familiar foods.

At first glance, this might seem an exaggerated statement. It's not. Most people know that bees, as they collect nectar to make their own food stores, are responsible for pollinating flowers. But bees don't just pollinate flower gardens. They pollinate our food crops, too! Most of the fruits and nuts, as well as many of the vegetables that we regularly consume are the result of insect pollination, done mostly by bees. Certainly, without bees, we would have no honey, and also no chocolate (!), because the trees that produce cocoa beans are absolutely dependent on bee pollination.

Aside from their contribution to our well-being, bees are fascinating social creatures, capable of communicating to each other with elaborate “dances”, regulating hive temperature with their wingbeats, and organizing themselves into many sustainable systems for their collective survival. As well, though many fear them, bees are not aggressive. They only sting when they perceive threat to themselves and therefore their hive, because they die once they use their sting.

All the wonder of Creation is abundantly displayed in this very small, very industrious, very fascinating insect. “Bee” aware of their gifts to us!

- MBK



**Thematic of the Stations: Cross and Creation**

## Introducing "The Stations of Our Cosmic Earth"

As has been mentioned in previous issues, the Passionist Order focuses not only on the Passion of Christ, but also on the Passion of the Earth. Just as Christ suffered and died for our sins, we are now witnessing how the Earth is suffering, and many of its life forms dying—in this analogy—because of human sinfulness: greed, neglect, over-consumption, lack of awareness, and indifference.

At the former Passionist Retreat Centre at Port Burwell on Lake Erie, a series of stained glass panels were commissioned by artist Carolyn Delaney to depict how the Cosmos came into being over millennia. These panels present a vision of the ongoing process of Creation, illustrating a coexistence between faith and science. You may have encountered them in the reproductions on the plaques scattered throughout the South Garden. For some, they may answer nagging questions. For others, they may provoke probing questions. Certainly, for all, they provide opportunity for thoughtful reflection and contemplation.

When Port Burwell was sold, the panels found a new home in the chapel of the monastery wing of the first St. Gabriel's Church built on the original site. When that church was demolished, the garden plaques were created from them, but the panels themselves went into storage. Recently, they have emerged, now displayed in the South window of our present church's sanctuary.

The first one, pictured above, and seen on the far left as you look out the sanctuary window, is the thematic of the stations: Cross and Creation. The symbol of Christ's suffering lies on the ground (as a wooden cross did at the retreat centre), surrounded by the plants and flowers of the suffering Earth. Just as Christ's suffering redeemed us, can we, through sacrificing our convenience and changing our wasteful, neglectful behaviour, redeem the Earth?

We will continue to introduce you to these panels in upcoming editions of this newsletter. The panels provide a constant reminder that God's creation continues to unfold around us, allowing us to partake in “the wonder of it all”. - MBK

