

Reflection One

Begin your reflective walk in the concrete Meditation Circle in the south garden.

Everything has its own voice.  
Thunder and lightning and stars  
and planets, flowers, birds,  
animals, trees, all these have voices, and they constitute  
a community of existence that is profoundly related.

- Thomas Berry



Sit or stand and take a moment to centre yourself. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat, if you like. With your eyes closed, listen deeply. What do you hear in the foreground? In the medium-ground? In the background?

Open your eyes. Note the position of the sun. Feel its warmth on your face or your back. Is there a breeze or a wind? Is it soft or insistent? Biting or wild? Does it carry an aroma? Floral, or herbal? Of humus, grass or spruce?

Reflection Two



Proceed to the front doors of the church and notice the “skin” of the building. Touch the bricks and feel their rough coolness. This is Tyndall limestone from Manitoba, and it is rich in fossils that date from 450 million years ago. Can you find a few?

The Garden is Rich

The garden is rich with diversity  
With plants of a hundred  
families  
In the space between the trees  
With all the colours and  
fragrances.  
Basil, mint and lavender,  
Great Mystery keep my  
remembrance pure,  
Raspberry, Apple, Rose, Great  
Mystery fill my heart with love,

Dill, anise, tansy,  
Holy winds blow in me.  
Rhododendron, zinnia,  
May my prayer be beautiful  
May my remembrance  
O Great Mystery  
Be as incense to thee  
In the sacred grove of eternity  
As I smell and remember  
The ancient forests of earth.  
- Chinook Psalter

Consider how life has continued to evolve, from the life in the an-  
cient seas to the present day life in the trees, flowering plants and  
creatures that make the garden their home, as well as in ourselves.

Reflection Nine

Take the mulched path through the south garden and stand directly in front of the Great Window facing south. The centre of the south garden is a meadow of indigenous flowering plants. Surrounding the meadow is a forest of beech along the east and west walkways, oak along the east-west portion of the south walkway and spruce along the south walkway to Sheppard. Spruce, cedar and redbud populate the south-east corner of the garden, as well as nannyberry, smoke bush, witch hazel, Saskatoon berry, and a variety of other shrubs.

Walk south on the mulched path and rest yourself against one of the large boulders. Feel it supporting you.



The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

- Wendell Berry

Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply and slowly exhale. Be aware of the scents in the air. Be still. Listen. Observe every sound. Feel every touch on your skin – the warmth of the sun or a soft drizzle, the movement of air— then just be. Here in the heart of this garden, life is striving and bursting around you— in plant roots searching out minerals and moisture, leaves industriously producing food from sunlight, blossoms morphing into seeds, insects and animals gathering sustenance. And yet, we experience a profound stillness, and begin to grasp that we, like the other Earth communities, belong to the land.



St. Gabriel's Garden  
Guided Sensory Reflective Walk



May the moments you spend in the garden with the  
plants, animals, birds, insects and the elements,  
deepen your awareness of your relationship to all you  
see, hear, smell, taste and feel and bring you peace.

Please return this guide to the guide house at  
the end of your walk. If you would like a take-  
away version, black-and-white copies are  
stored in the rear of the guide house, under the  
articulated roof.

St. Gabriel's Garden Ministry:  
garden@stgabrielparish.ca

May the peace you have felt among your relations  
in the garden infuse the rest of your day.

Reflection Three



Walk north to the lavender garden directly before you.

*So long as we are in touch with "wonder and awe" we recognize a "continuing revelation of the divine" in the smallest and largest forms within nature.* – **Matthew Fox**

Whether or not the lavender is in bloom, you can inhale its spicy fragrance by crushing a tiny pinch between your thumb and forefinger. Lavender is valued for its relaxation properties. If it is in bloom, drink in its gorgeous blanket of colour. Bend down and look closely at the flowers. Do you see bees, butterflies or other insects gathering pollen and nectar? Reflect on your reaction to the lavender.

Reflection Four

Immediately north of the lavender garden is the blueberry patch. Berries ripen here from early July to the end of August, depending on the variety.



What Does the Earth Desire?

*“I will put it in just a few short sentences...  
To be admired in her loveliness,  
To be tasted in her delicious fruits,  
To be listened to in her teaching,  
To be endured in the severity of her discipline,  
To be cared for as a maternal source from whence we come,  
a destiny to which we return.  
It's very simple.”*

- Thomas Berry

Pick a single blueberry. Admire its perfect roundness, the dusty blue of its skin and its star-shaped calyx. Slowly savour its taste. The large ones are sweeter; the smaller ones, tarter. Reflect on your responses to your encounter with the blueberry.



Reflection Five



Proceed east of the blueberry patch to the small donation garden created by parishioners with surplus plants from their own gardens.

*The glory of gardening: Hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.*  
– **Alfred Austin**

Enjoy the variety of plants, each thriving in its new home and offering its own particular beauty. Take the time to offer your gratitude for Earth, the plants, and the generosity of those who shared them.

Reflection Six

Walk over to the main north garden bed, directly in front of the office windows. Keep your eyes open for the resident chipmunk, scurrying about. Designed as an urban orchard, it is home to cherry, mulberry and apple trees as well as a variety of fruit-bearing shrubs, including haskap, goji and red and black currants.



Most of the flowering plants here are also edible, including daylily, butterfly weed and hyssop. Proceed to the west end of the beds. You will notice a large patch of thick-leaved plants in the centre of the bed. This is comfrey, a companion plant for the apple tree in its midst. As its leaves decay, they both nourish the apple tree and deter pests that could harm it. Comfrey leaves are harvested for compost four to five times a season and applied to all the fruit trees in the garden.

*The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.*

- Wendell Berry



Take some time to sit on one of the logs and reflect on how Earth nourishes us, the wisdom of nature and the harmony that exists in creation.

Reflection Seven

Head south on the west walkway along the building to the structure covered with mosaic tiles. The mosaic, created from the Murano glass tiles that made up the mosaic above the doors of the old church, was repurposed to celebrate the “Rise of the Flowers,” that period in the formation of our planet that gave rise to the abundance and beauty of plants that cover the earth today. Observe, on the south side of this building, the rudimentary, but effective rain-water harvesting and storage system used to hand-water the community garden and sections of the south garden, especially during times of drought.

*We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers; we are not listening to the wind and stars. We have broken the great conversation. By breaking that conversation, we have shattered the universe.*

- Thomas Berry

Water is essential to the complex eco-system that is this garden, from the communities of nematodes, insects and crawling lifeforms in the soil, to the communities of plants, of mammals— like moles, mice, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits and foxes, and of birds—like cardinals, robins, chickadees, warblers and finches. Without water, none would survive and, at the top of the food chain, neither would we, the most dependent animal on Earth.



Reflection Eight



Continue on the walkway as it turns east towards the meditation circle. The raised wooden beds form the community garden in which vegetables and herbs are grown

for the Good Shepherd Ministries. It is a gathering place where, in non-pandemic times, children and youth of the parish are invited to plant and tend seeds and seedlings and where parishioners and walkers can follow the progress of the burgeoning plant life.

The Sheltering Tree

*Hey! Learn to hear my feeble voice.  
At the center of the sacred hoop  
You have said that I should make the tree to bloom.  
With tears running, O Great Spirit, my Grandfather,  
With running eyes I must say  
The tree has never bloomed  
Here I stand, and the tree is withered.  
Again, I recall the great vision you gave me.  
It may be that some little root of the sacred tree still lives.  
Nourish it then  
That it may leaf, And bloom  
And fill with singing birds!  
Hear me, that the people may once again  
Find the good road, And the shielding tree.*

- Black Elk

Consider our dependence on Earth to feed us and the dependence of other Earth communities on us to ensure that they have access to food.

