



ST. GABRIEL'S GARDEN GROWING NEWS

Volume 5, Q4, Winter 2025

About Our Garden Ministry

This instalment has a bittersweet purpose: after serving faithfully as our Coordinator for three years, and shepherding the ministry and the garden we care for through many challenges, Kevin Benoit is passing the torch of leadership to Caroline Liggayu-Martin, who has generously agreed to take on the position.

Kevin has been a stalwart steward, championing the Garden's needs, providing guidance to new recruits, offering genuine leadership to current members, and organizing countless "Join Us in the Garden" events to keep the "Garden of Weeden" at bay. Endlessly optimistic, supportive, and faith-fuelled, Kevin has truly embodied the Garden Ministry's purpose: to heed the Passionist response to "the Passion of the Earth" in caring for our corner of creation as manifested in our beautiful outdoor Sacred Space.

Despite how daunting that call can be, and how easy it would be to allow oneself to be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the task, Kevin never succumbed to setbacks. He simply focussed our attention on what we *could* do next to mitigate difficulties, and thus, the garden continues to grow and thrive. We will be forever grateful for his generosity in blessing us with his time, energy, expertise, and vision. Our "thank you!" seems but a small gesture, but as Kevin has always done, we will continue to hold him and his family in our prayers for his personal intentions and blessings.

At the same time, we welcome Caroline into the role of Coordinator. Caroline has been a member of the Garden Ministry since its beginning over a decade ago, and has held many leadership roles over the years, which make her ideally suited to assume the reins of leadership. Her kindness, willingness to learn, organization, joyful demeanour, determination and resilience will provide us with faith-filled leadership as we look forward to the next phase of caring for St. Gabriel's Garden.

Finally, we would be remiss if we failed to say a fond farewell and thank-you to Fr. Dennis, who was like a "silent partner" in our Garden Ministry work. Fr. Dennis could often be found outside in the early morning, helping with harvesting cherries. He was never asked...he just showed up and demonstrated how a little can do a lot! Here are some members of the Garden Ministry helping to celebrate Fr. Dennis, thank him for his contributions, and wish him well in his new assignment. We will certainly miss him!

We also could not enjoy the success we do were it not for the support of the Office Staff. Sr. Malou serves as an excellent liaison between our Ministry and the others she is involved with, as well as the Parish administration, and we are indebted to her for her advocacy. Marilyn and Helene at the front desk are always accommodating in helping get our announcements out and inserts into the bulletin, and we appreciate their support. And we are always delighted by the spiritual reinforcement that Fr. Paul's inspiring homilies provide, reminding us that the Garden Ministry is indeed doing God's work. Thank-you to everyone for your collaborative support!



From the left front around the table to the right front: Kevin Benoit, Fr. Dennis, Caroline Liggayu-Martin, Benedick Badenas, Elizabeth (Liz) Quillam, and Eileen Prasad.

Spotlight on the Garden

As we enter the winter season, it is fitting that we look back on the year we are leaving, and take stock of achievements and blessings.

Because of the watchful eye of GM member Bridget Barron, we were able to make impressive headway in clearing several parts of the garden from the noxious invasion of “Dog Strangling Vine”. We have effectively eliminated its presence in four areas: the pollinator garden, the blueberry patch, the lavender garden, and the goji berry section in the North Garden. Of course, vigilance will be necessary, but this much progress is cause for hope!

Generous donations of parishioners continue to bless us. We now have more plants in our Donation Garden thanks to early summer additions from Marie Deans, and summer and fall donations from Angela Convertini. The flowering plants from their gardens (which include daisies, echinacea, hostas, stone crop, and black-eyed Susans) will enhance the beauty of our perennial garden. We are very grateful! As well, we have a new—and much-needed—large metal Garden Shed to store our equipment. We respect this donor’s request for anonymity, but wish to express our extreme gratitude for this wonderful gift.



We were once again able to run very successful fund-raising events, offering books, lavender sachets (from our Lavender Garden), as well as home-baking and jam (using fruit from our Garden). We very much appreciate the parish’s enthusiastic support in these endeavours.

We are also grateful, after a challenging 2024 season, to report a record-breaking cherry harvest! As always, we are fortunate to be able to share the bounty of our Garden with the Good Shepherd Ministries downtown, to help feed the homeless.

We have attracted some new members to the important work of the Garden Ministry, and here introduce Andrew Chibeu, who will be taking on Spirituality Leadership in our Garden Ministry work. Of course, we are always in need of more hands to lighten the load in both garden work and leadership roles. For instance, we will need someone who has garden experience to help supervise our Summer students as they begin their tenure in the Garden.

There are many and varied jobs that need people to fill them, and it need not mean a major commitment of time or energy. If you feel the Holy Spirit urging you to see what gift(s) you possess that might be of use to the Garden Ministry, don’t be shy! We are friendly and supportive—AND extremely excited and grateful to welcome new members!!

Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrims of Hope

As The Jubilee Year comes to a close, we felt it fitting to include, once more, the beautiful prayer of our beloved late Pope Francis. In the midst of this blessed season of light-in-darkness, let us remember that we are celebrating the Gift of Hope, represented in the long-awaited birth of Emmanuel, “God With Us”.

The picture of the (somewhat incongruous) Easter Lily is a testament to the wonder of hope. This lily, an “altar lily” that was transplanted into our garden, was not expected to survive. Not only did it survive, it bloomed IN AUTUMN! What a fitting symbol of this issue’s theme of hope!

The Jubilee Prayer

*Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled in our
hearts by the Holy Spirit reawaken in us the
blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.*

*May your grace transform us into tireless
cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth, when,
with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.*

*May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread the joy and peace
of our Redeemer throughout the earth.*

*To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and
praise for ever. Amen.*

Franciscus



We Are a People of Hope

by Marlene Bourdon-King, Editor



As we enter the Christmas Season, celebrating of the Birth of Jesus, the long-promised Messiah, we cannot help but be uplifted by the joy of this event. The birth of any baby is joyous for any family, but the birth of THIS baby, one whose coming had been awaited for centuries by God's Chosen People, was more than special. His arrival was miraculous in every way. Just as God gave us the hopeful gift of Emmanuel (God-With-Us), we give gifts to those we love, and share our good fortune in the generosity of the spirit of Christmas, hoping to elicit joy.

As we are often reminded in Sunday homilies, We Are a People of Hope. Just as the people of the Old Testament hoped for the coming of the Messiah, we too hope for the Second Coming of Christ. The events of what we now call Holy Week plunged the apostles to the brink of despair; in the midst of those overwhelming and terrifying experiences, hope in Jesus all but vanished...but the coming of the Holy Spirit rescued them from their fear and reticence, making way for renewed hope. We know that by the submission of Jesus to the Cross, we were redeemed from our sin, and with his Resurrection, Jesus conquered death, confirming our hope in God's plan for us—to join him in eternal life. Because of Jesus, we are a people of hope.

Recently, science has begun to examine hope, not just as a religious virtue (as with faith and charity), but as a measurable phenomenon. The last issue of "Growing News" drew upon



Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *The Reciprocity of Nature*. In this issue, another book, entitled *The Story and Science of Hope* and aimed at a children's audience, inspired this reflection. The title is so intriguing! Who knew there could even be a science associated with hope? But there it was...a picture book written by Andrea Curtis, illustrated by Ana Suarez, and published by the Canadian company, Groundwood Books.

Endlessly fascinating, the book examines the multifaceted character of hope. Defining hope as something much more than a wish or a dream, it describes hope as an action (as in the mission of Jesus). It points to the history of hope (as in our Salvation History). And it reveals that hope is a science that has been studied for the last 40 years or so, by scientists called "Hope Theorists". They developed a way to measure hope in human beings by questioning their motivation and belief in achieving what is hoped for, and then measuring the impact of the "hope scales" on physical reactions. As research has continued, these scientists have discovered more sensitive and complex ways to measure hope. A short while ago, Chinese researchers found, through the use of MRI imaging, where in the brain they believe hope originates, in "the bilateral medial orbitofrontal cortex, above your eyes and a few centimeters inside your brain." This part of the brain is involved in problem solving and planning for the future.

Beyond the physical ramifications of hope, the book outlines other ways in which hope operates in the world. It shows how hope is a practice—not only through goal setting, but also in being able to talk about hope and explore its meaning in one's life. It reveals that hope can be learned, and cited "Hope Studies Central", a research unit at the University of Alberta, where a school-based program has been created for exploring and expressing hope.

Teachers use hope-based activities to “build hope muscle” in kids. And probably everyone knows someone who, faced with a dire medical prognosis, has maintained optimism and hope that recovery will occur—and it does! So, hope is also good “medicine”.

Like most good things, however, hope does not just arrive, full-blown and effective. Hope is hard. It requires nurturing, lots of difficult work and perseverance. But the great thing about it all is that (on the other side of the “medicine” coin) hope is “catching”...it inspires people, and therefore, hope is powerful. Hope can even be revolutionary: Jesus was a revolutionary, and his mission was—and is—definitely a message of hope. In the end, the book illustrates that, undeniably, hope matters.

Over a decade ago, when the outdoor sacred space of St. Gabriel's had gone its own way and become “The Garden of Weeden”, there were parishioners who believed that the garden could be reclaimed, and hoped that it could be so much more than an eyesore and overwhelming problem. Through belief in that hope, the Garden Ministry was formed, aligning our vision with Passionist Thomas Berry's vision of “The Passion of the Earth”. Through hard work and perseverance, through seasonal diligence and dogged determination, and through actively recruiting more people to participate in the care and development of the garden space, the St. Gabriel's Garden has become a testament to the power of hope. Look out the south window of the indoor sacred space to see the proof that hope works!



Even though we believe in the hope recited in the Apostle's Creed, in the midst of cataclysmic natural and human events, hope can seem elusive. But if we let go of the fear and despair these events so easily enkindle, even without going to Holy Scripture, we see evidence of hope all around us: in the birth of a child, in recovery from illness and injury, in reconciliation with those we have hurt or been hurt by. Beyond the human realm, we see hope in creation: in the sunrise, in the rain, in buds waiting on winter branches, in the first glimpses of green in spring, in new generations of wildlife in summer, and in the harvest and seedpods of the autumn. The everlasting cycles of nature all point to the hope God has built into his Creation, and into us, who are part of that Creation.

The stories of our Salvation History have proven that hope can change the world. Let us not forget that Hope still has that power. Hope impacts us individually, and inspires action. And thus, Hope changes the world!



Our Christmas Wish

God's Gift of Redemption
came in the most unexpected way—
to a humble virgin who said “YES” to
God's plan for her, setting into motion
His plan for our redemption.

May we, in the midst of our celebrations
with loved ones and friends,
Remember this great gift of Love—
embodied in a tiny baby—
who brings us Joy, Hope, and Peace,
and reminds us that
God is always at work.
We are a People of Hope,
because God Is With Us.

*The Garden Ministry Wishes You All
a Season of Love and Joy, and
A New Year full of Peace and Hope!*



“Growing News” is the newsletter of the St. Gabriel's Garden Ministry, published quarterly, at the turn of each season.

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