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Garden Earth and church gardens: creation, food, and ecological ethics

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**GARDEN EARTH AND CHURCH GARDENS:
CREATION, FOOD, AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS**

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have taught, mentored, and encouraged gardening in my life; and to the gardens as well, great and small.

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**GARDEN EARTH AND CHURCH GARDENS:
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(Order No.)

TALLESSYN ZAWN GRENFELL-LEE

Boston University School of Theology, 2016

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ABSTRACT

In order to address the full magnitude of the ecological crisis, communities need points of contact that provide enjoyment, build community, and foster “nature connection.” The ability of the local food movement to provide these points of contact has fueled its rapid expansion in the last decade; however, no study to date has examined the impact of direct involvement in the movement on the ecological ethics of local congregations. This study assessed the impact of a communal vegetable garden project on the ecological ethics of an urban and a suburban United Methodist congregation in the Boston area. The study used a participatory action ethnographic model as well as an Ecological Ethics Index scale to assess overall impacts as well as impacts in the areas of ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice. The study found impacts in all four areas, particularly within the suburban congregation, which integrated the project into the central identity and ministries of the church. The urban church had already integrated other food justice ministries into its central identity and ministry; the data also showed

impacts in the urban church context, particularly among the project participants. The main findings of the study revealed the influential role of supportive communities, and particularly of elder mentors, in fostering nature connection experiences among the participants. The church-based locations of the gardens, as well as the hands-on, participatory nature of the projects, increased Earth-centered spiritual awareness and practices as well as pro-environmental discipleship behaviors. The visual impact of the gardens in a church context increased awareness of issues related to food justice. The gardens functioned as a means of grace that connected the participants and the wider congregations to the land near their church buildings in new ways; the gardens provided a connection to concepts of the Divine in the Creation as well as enjoyable opportunities to share the harvest among the community and with hungry communities. In these ways, the gardens connected the congregations to the Wesleyan ideas of grace and inspired new forms of Wesleyan responsibility for social and ecological transformation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Eur J Soc Psychol	European Journal of Social Psychology
PLoS ONE	Public Library of Science One
J Env Psych	Journal of Environmental Psychology
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Int J Child Health Hum Dev	International Journal of Child Health and Human Development
J Community Psychol	Journal of Community Psychology
J Exp Soc Psychol	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
JSRNC	Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture
Proc Natl Acad Sci	Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Earth is in trouble. Despite political strategies that continue to deny the mounting destruction caused by climate change, the overwhelming majority of scientists and societies now recognize the urgency of our planet's – and humanity's – situation. The recent Paris Agreement¹ signals the widespread acknowledgment of the crisis: nearly two hundred nations came together to pass the first universal, legally binding global climate agreement in history. The rapacious addiction of the developed world to fossils, minerals, meat, cheese, and general consumption has created an enormous, interconnected cataclysm that poisons, displaces, and disintegrates human and ecological communities. Those willing to pay attention face an intimidating reality. Given the myriad ways in which this destructive, oppressive system has entrenched itself into the economic foundations of developed countries, what can any of us do to make the least bit of difference?

Until recently, climate impact analyses often overlooked the role of food and agriculture in the crisis;² but the past decade has shown dramatic advances in awareness regarding the foundational role of food in the problems and therefore in

¹ Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Adoption of the Paris Agreement*, by FCCC, FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1 (Paris: United Nations, 2015).

² For example, the widely viewed film *An Inconvenient Truth* avoided any mention of food or agriculture; *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim (Paramount Classics, 2006).

potential solutions as well. From individual neighborhoods to the United Nations, people have started to understand the ways in which capitalism embraced chemical fertilizer and surplus grains and thereby ushered the planet onto an industrial agriculture treadmill of toxification, displacement, urbanization, processed food, non-communicable disease, mental illness, alcoholism, and increasingly concentrated wealth.

People in the increasingly urban culture in the United States had become ever more separated from understanding the origins of their food. They had little knowledge about how food is grown or raised, how it is processed, how it is transported to the stores in which they shop, or the economics and politics driving the inaccessibility of local, healthy foods, particularly within the systematically marginalized communities that represent the global majority. This separation is one part of a general societal separation from nature exacerbated by cultural shifts such as industrialization, urbanization, and addictive technologies.³ We are only now beginning to understand the damaging effects of this loss, from community cohesion and mental health to the developmental foundations of empathy at the core of our individual identities. We need ways to reconnect with the Earth, we need ways to engage with the ecological crisis, and we need them now.

³ See Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008).

Human communities have faced overwhelming odds before. Biblical narratives provide many examples of the soul-destroying and world-annihilating power of empire. In order to find the courage and motivation to embark on the mission we must accept, we need support and we need hope. A growing local food movement has tapped into these overlapping health, safety, and justice concerns and spread throughout the United States and elsewhere. The movement unites farmers, urban communities, scientists, environmentalists, gourmet chefs, and religious organizations through a common theme: our communities and our planet deserve better than the results of industrial agriculture, and we are going to do something about it. Local farms and gardens have featured prominently in this movement, in schools, neighborhoods, rooftops, abandoned lots, public parks, and churches.⁴

Current scholarship correlates nature connection experiences, including school gardens, with increased wellness and community as well as pro-environmental behaviors.⁵ This study explored the specific ways in which church

⁴ Jennifer Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Book, 2012), 9-21, 307-14; Melanie L. Griffin, "A Growing Movement," *Sierra*, January/February, 2010. Cockrall-King provides a summary; Griffin notes the growing movement among churches.

⁵ Joe Hinds and Paul Sparks, "Engaging with the Natural Environment: The Role of Affective Connection and Identity," *J Env Psych* 28 (2008); Art McCabe, "Community Gardens to Fight Urban Youth Crime and Stabilize Neighborhoods," *Int J Child Health Hum Dev* 7, no. 3 (2014); Veronica Gaylie, *The Learning Garden: Ecology, Teaching, and Transformation* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009), 3-8.

vegetable gardens can provide a supportive context through which to reconnect with nature and increase awareness of and behaviors meant to address the underlying causes of the ecological crisis. The thesis of the dissertation is that a church garden (and, by extension, other gardens and Earth as a whole) can function as a means of grace, through which people can experience a healing and inspiring divine presence. In the context of a church community, the garden can integrate, provide insights into, and inspire discipleship toward: the provision of essential food; concern for Creation and community—including the most vulnerable members of the human community; and the development of ecological discipleship “on the ground” (literally and figuratively) as part of our role to work for the wellbeing of all biota and our common home, Earth. If church gardens can be shown to affect the ecological beliefs and behaviors of church communities, they could provide an important and hopeful point of contact between the actions of even small church communities and the vast burden of ecological restoration.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the research was to determine whether, to what extent, and in what specific ways a vegetable garden project has an impact on the ecological ethics⁶ of two United Methodist congregations. The study sought to explore

⁶ See John Hart, *Sacramental Commons : Christian Ecological Ethics, Nature's Meaning Series*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 217. Hart

contextual and logistical factors that hindered or enhanced the impact of the projects. It examined four different aspects of ecological ethics in order to distinguish these aspects of the existing ecological engagement of the two sites and to measure the impacts of the projects in these four areas. The study explored the effects of hands-on, interactive involvement versus passive involvement within the congregations. It also compared impacts during the project to longer-term impacts over time.

Research Questions

The study first sought to assess the general ethnographic and specifically ecological ethics contexts of the sites: what aspects of these congregational locations and identities might impact the garden projects; and, to what extents have these sites incorporated ecological ethics into the identity, spiritual life, and ministries of the churches? The study then sought to assess the development and impacts of the garden projects: How have the congregational contexts influenced the development and success of the garden projects? And, how have the garden projects impacted the ecological ethics of the congregations during the growing season, when the gardens are actively producing a harvest, both for the project participants and in the wider congregations? Lastly, the study sought to assess the long-term impacts of the

integrates ethical theory and practice by exploring ethical conduct in a particular context, as distinct from either applied or contextual ethics.

garden projects: did impacts measured during the growing season persist, diminish, change, or spread after the project had finished for the winter; did impacts differ between the two sites, or between participants and non-participants; and, what specific ecological ethics impacts, if any, did the projects yield?

The research project distinguished among four distinct but related aspects of ecological ethics: spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice. Current metrics of spirituality seek to establish spiritual “wellbeing” in relation to other factors, such as medical health.⁷ These measurement tools assess levels of connection with ideas such as “awe, gratitude, mercy, sense of connection with the transcendent and compassionate love” in daily life.⁸ This study applied these ideas to an ecological framework to assess the level of specifically ecological awareness incorporated into daily, congregational, and other spiritual practices.

Current psychological metrics of community building seek to assess the strength of a community and correlate its strength to the wellbeing of its members. These metrics assess ideas such as a sense of belonging, commitment, responsibility, reciprocity, and emotional and physical connection.⁹ This study examined these

⁷ T.P. Daaleman and B.B. Frey, "The Spirituality Index of Well-Being : A New Instrument for Health-Related Quality-of-Life Research," *Annals of Family Medicine* 2, no. 5 (Sept 2004); Lynn G. Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale: Overview and Results," *Religions* 2 (2011).

⁸ Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale: Overview and Results," 29.

⁹ H.M. Chipeur and Grace M.H. Pretty, "A Review of the Sense of Community Index: Current Uses, Factor Structure, Reliability, and Further Development," *J*

ideas in terms of nature connection: whether or not congregants included non-human creatures or ecosystems in their understandings of community, and how the human community engaged affective nature connection with the ecological community.

The study also explored “religiosity” as a component of ecological behaviors and practices, such as those related to food consumption and distribution. Prior studies have assessed “religiosity” as a measure of adherence to the beliefs and practices of a particular religion.¹⁰ This study uses the term “discipleship” instead of “religiosity,” in order to distinguish between overtly religious spiritual practices (prayer, worship) and other forms of pro-environmental behaviors, such as conscientious consumption of certain products due to ethical considerations. The “ecological discipleship” of congregants is assessed in terms of their adherence to practices that indicate awareness of issues of environmental destruction.

Lastly, the study assessed the levels to which ecological ethics have been incorporated into the congregants’ understandings of social justice. The concept of

Community Psychol 29, no. 6 (1999); D.M. Chavis and Grace M.H. Pretty, "Sense of Community: Advances in Measurement and Application," *J Community Psychol* 27, no. 6 (1999).

¹⁰ G.M. Vernon, "Measuring Religion : Two Methods Compared," *Review of Religious Research* 3, no. 4 (Spring 1962); C. Daniel Batson et al., *Religion and the Individual : A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

justice has traditionally excluded most or all non-human entities;¹¹ some ecological theologians have worked to expand the concept of justice to include a more holistic, ecological framework within which peoples of faith traditions have a responsibility to give each creature its “due.”¹² In addition, congregants may not perceive the connections between environmental destruction and vulnerable human populations, termed “eco-justice.” This study determined the extent to which congregants understood the connections between ecological discipleship practices, such as participation in the local food movement, and issues of ecological justice.

Method of Investigation

The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the ecological ethics of the two research sites over time. Research methods were approved by the Boston University Institutional Review Board. The study used a participatory action research approach, in which the investigator participated in the research project while simultaneously conducting the research. The research setting included two United Methodist congregations in the Boston area, one urban and one suburban. The population samples included project participants and non-participants as well as pastors and/or other staff in the congregations. The

¹¹ E.g., James A. Nash, *Loving Nature : Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon Press in cooperation with the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy Washington D.C., 1991), "Love as Ecological Justice," 162-91.

¹² *Ibid.*, 168.

qualitative research included observations and interviews; the quantitative research included an anonymous survey as well as some quantitative analyses of the interview data. Observations took place throughout the research period; survey and interview data was gathered at three time points: before the growing season and gardening had begun; in the middle of the growing season; and after the growing season, harvesting, and winterization had been completed.

In terms of the qualitative research, three settings were observed: Sunday morning worship; a Sunday adult small group; and the garden project itself. The interview questions explored issues of ecological spirituality, such as the theology of soil and garden-based ideas of worship; community, such as relationality within garden experiences and with the garden or harvest; discipleship, such as local food related practices and general pro-environment behaviors; and justice, such as awareness of connections and responsibilities to wider issues of fresh food, local economics, and hunger. The quantitative survey comprised two, ten-point scales: a control scale, to determine any impact of the survey itself, and an Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) scale, designed to measure various expressions of ecological ethics. The control scale consisted of a general religiosity scale; the EEI scale consisted of four subscales designed to assess understandings and behaviors in the areas of ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice.

The data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The observations and interviews were assessed for general trends, prominent themes,

unexpected findings, and interconnections among themes. Quantitative data and analyses were used to support qualitative findings. The survey results were first subjected to statistical analyses to determine significance. Scores for the control scale, the EEI, and each EEI subscale were then calculated as arithmetic means. Means were graphed to measure changes over time and differences between the project participant and non-participant subpopulations.

The findings of the research were also examined in light of current trends in ecological ecclesial spirituality; community, such as with gardens, ethnography, and nature connection; discipleship, such as environmental psychology analyses of pro-environment behaviors; and trends in ecological justice, such as ecocentric theology. The integration and comparison of these ideas was used to reflect on Wesleyan, ecofeminist, and other strands of ecological and ecojustice theology.

Rationale and Significance

Based on the current and growing interest in gardens as a method for individuals, neighborhoods, schools, communities, and churches to provide fresh, healthy food, foster nature connection and community building, and address issues of social justice, this study is justified as a source of new insights regarding the specific ways in which churches embrace, connect to, and embody garden-related aspects of the local food movement. The findings contribute better understandings of various dimensions of and opportunities for ecological ethics within

congregations. The study also sheds new light on the particular role of churches in this growing movement as well as additional strategies for churches to engage with the movement.

Role of Investigator

The investigator designed the study and its instruments using previously existing ethnographic, participatory action techniques as well as social research survey scales. The investigator gathered the observations, conducted the interviews, and collaborated with the pastors at each site to distribute and collect the surveys. The investigator conducted all aspects of data analysis.

Definition of Key Terminology

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as follows: “otherkind” refers to the natural, non-human realm on Earth¹³; “Creation care” refers to an approach to a Christian ethic of responsibility to care for the Creation based upon theologies of a divine Creator; and “ecocentric” refers to a non-anthropocentric approach to ecological ethics that prioritizes the intrinsic value of

¹³ E.g., James A. Nash, "Seeking Moral Norms in Nature: Natural Law and Ecological Responsibility," in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel, Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Daniel Cowdin, "The Moral Status of Otherkind in Christian Ethics," in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel, Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

nature and ecosystems.¹⁴ “Nature connection” refers to a human experience of the natural world that learns from nature and from human mentors “that childlike wisdom about where [we] fit, how resilient life is, and how [we] can help... better tend nature’s precious resources for our future generations.”¹⁵ In these United Methodist congregations, “trustee” refers to a member of a voluntary committee of laity who “supervise and maintain the property of the congregation to ensure that disciple-making ministries of the congregation are effective and that local legal requirements related to the property are satisfied”;¹⁶ the “sexton” is either a volunteer or (usually) an employee responsible for the cleaning, upkeep, and appearance of the church building under the supervision of the trustees. The “Church Conference” (or “Charge Conference”) is an annual meeting of the members of a congregation to “review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church.”¹⁷

¹⁴ See Suzanne C. Gagnon Thompson and Michelle A. Barton, "Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes toward the Environment," *J Env Psych* 1994, no. 14 (1994).

¹⁵ Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown, *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature* (Santa Cruz: OWLink Media, 2010), xxxvi-xxxvii.

¹⁶ UMC, "Board of Trustees," United Methodist Church, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/board-of-trustees>.

¹⁷ UMC, "The Charge Conference," United Methodist Church, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-charge-conference>.

Organization of the Dissertation

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter of the dissertation provides a review of literary sources that substantiate the study; the third chapter outlines the materials and methods of the research conducted. The study findings comprise chapters four and five: chapter four details the findings of the urban site and chapter five of the suburban site. Within these two chapters, the observational findings are presented first, followed by the interviews and then the survey data. The sixth chapter presents an analysis of the significant findings in light of current scholarship and theology. The seventh and final chapter presents concluding remarks for the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter describes the latest scholarship regarding the social ethics context of the ecological crisis and the ways in which the local food movement, and farms and gardens in particular, seek to address various aspects of the crisis. It explores recent findings in the efficacy of gardens as a strategy to connect, engage, and mobilize ecological and ecojustice ideas and behaviors. It relates these social ethics concepts with related theological concepts relevant to the study.

Review of Literature

The Ecological Crisis, Agriculture, and Local Food

The multidimensional ecological crisis now affects essentially all soil, food, water, and air on the planet. According to the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “changes in climate have caused impacts on natural and human systems on all continents and across the oceans,” resulting in major impacts on wildlife, biodiversity, crop yields, human health, and extreme weather

patterns.¹ Over time, the growth and spread of industrialism and capitalism have generated a maelstrom of ecological destruction, poverty, and violence that have finally jeopardized the viability of life on the planet. The World Wildlife Fund uses three main indicators to assess planetary health: the Living Planet Index, which examines trends in biodiversity; the Ecological Footprint, which determines the ability of earthly resources to meet the demands of consumption trends; and the Water Footprint, which specifically looks at similar supply and demand concerns for water. According to their analyses, in the last 50 years, non-human species populations have shrunk to less than half of previous sizes; our current consumption patterns will require 1.5 planets; and a third of the world already severely lacks sufficient water.²

The developed nations in the global north have contributed the vast majority of ecological degradation, but low-income countries in the developing world bear the brunt of these impacts. As climate impacts worsen, they increasingly harm and displace the poorest and most vulnerable human communities.³ Even in developed

¹ IPCC, *Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group 2 to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK: IPCC, 2014).

² WWF, *Living Planet Report 2014: Species and Spaces, People and Places* (Gland, Switzerland: World Wildlife Fund, 2014), 8-9.

³ Katherine Harmon, "Report: Climate Change Will Force Millions to Move, Prompting Tensions and Violence," *Scientific American*, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/news-blog/report-climate-change-will-force-mi-2009-06-10/>.

nations, some populations are more vulnerable to ecological and climate change impacts, as the IPCC also points out:

People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses... This heightened vulnerability... is the product of intersecting social processes that result in inequalities in socioeconomic status and income, as well as in exposure. Such social processes include, for example, discrimination on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability.⁴

The ecological crisis has snowballed out of control because of its seemingly inextricable integration with modern economics. As the World Wildlife Fund notes, so long as the major players prioritize profits over the social and ecological context in which economics operate, policies cannot uphold the health and wellbeing of the very foundation of our economies:

Sustainable development has figured prominently on the international agenda for more than a quarter of a century. People talk earnestly of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development. Yet we continue to build up the economic component, at considerable cost to the environmental one. We risk undermining social and economic gains by failing to appreciate our fundamental dependency on ecological systems. Social and economic sustainability are only possible with a healthy planet. Ecosystems sustain societies that create economies. It does not work any other way round.⁵

Everyone agrees: the developed world must act immediately and decisively in order to address this crisis. Unfortunately, despite decades of environmental and

⁴ IPCC, *Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group 2 to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 6.

⁵ WWF, *Living Planet Report 2014: Species and Spaces, People and Places*, 8.

ecojustice movements, most developed societies continue to respond too slowly to catch up with, much less turn around, the overall pace of ecological destruction. Initially hampered by capitalistic resistance⁶ and public apathy, efforts to address the crisis now face the challenge of how to motivate people who finally accept the urgency and magnitude of the issues but feel too intimidated and overwhelmed to begin. Clearly, we need more than raised awareness.

For the past several years, scholars have spent considerable effort to assess what motivates citizens into sustained, pro-environmental behaviors. People will respond when specific issues threaten their communities directly; but in order to transform the fundamental, interconnected issues underlying the ecological crisis, we need more than single-issue campaigns or even regular participation in existing ecological programs, such as recycling and energy efficiency. Populations need to understand the connections among the various aspects of the crisis as well as how individuals and communities can work to transform the system to something sustainable and restorative. They need to engage in a journey of increasing levels of investment and activism that embed more and more pro-environmental systems into the structures of local, state, and federal governments. In his book *What We*

⁶ For example, Zavestoski et al. show how governmental framing of climate related events in media coverage, such as the contamination of Love Canal, directly affects the extent of community mobilization; they argue for a need for alternative frames that empower communities: Stephen Zavestoski et al., "Issue Framing and Citizen Apathy toward Local Contamination," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 2 (2004): 259-61, 78-80.

Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming, Per Espen Stoknes

describes the frustration of those within the movement:

For more than three decades a host of messages from well-meaning scientists, advocates, and others have tried to not only bring the facts about climate change home but also break through the wall that separates what we know from what we do and how we live. But the messages are not working, sometimes not even for the most receptive audiences. This qualifies as the greatest science communication failure in history: The more facts, the less concern. Over the last twenty years, the messengers have encountered not only vicious counterattacks but also what seem to be impenetrable walls of psychological backlash or indifference. And in response to a sense of futility the messengers are, understandably, growing despondent and exasperated.⁷

Based on recent findings, Stoknes describes five “psychological barriers to climate action”: distance, doom, dissonance, denial, and identity. First, as mentioned, the effects of climate destruction feel not only physically distant but also embedded in an abstract future. Second, doomsday approaches tend to frighten people into avoidance and disengagement with the topic; and as for dissonance, people resist undesirable or inconvenient behavioral changes, such as concerning meat consumption or fossil fuel use. Denial offers a refuge from the fear and guilt associated with the first three barriers, which understandably drive people into defensive positions. Lastly and importantly, people want to believe in their underlying worth; we tend simply to reject ideas that challenge our professional or

⁷ Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 81.

cultural identity and worldview.⁸ Even positive approaches can cause more harm than good unless they build upon each other:

Sometimes doing a little bit – like cutting down on plastic bag usage – simply serves to relieve cognitive dissonance for larger excesses, like an extra plane trip to Thailand. Like all simple and painless behavioral changes, the value of bag reuse hangs on whether it can act as a catalyst for other, more impactful activities – such as truly green purchases and more vocal support for greener policies. Individual solutions are insufficient or even counterproductive unless they contribute to structural changes, too.⁹

These ideas create a self-defeating narrative that continues to reinforce resistance and inaction. Stoknes notes the ways people internalize the issue through concepts of sin, scarcity, despair, and self-hatred:

The new psychology of climate is less about what each of us can do to solve the problem and more about liberating us from some of the most debilitating side effects of the global climate messages. Messages telling me that I am to blame. That I must give up on all shopping and flying and otherwise reduce my sinful consumption before I can speak out about it. That the only answers involve sacrifice. That it is too late. And, finally, and devastatingly, that anything I can do doesn't matter.¹⁰

In order to address the crisis, we first need to address this narrative and replace it with something inspirational and motivating. Stoknes and others have

⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁹ Ibid., 89. Economist Gernot Wagner also discusses these ideas, particularly in regards to the transformation of wider economic systems: Gernot Wagner and Martin L. Weitzman, *Climate Shock: The Economic Consequences of a Hotter Planet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 80-90, 128-46; Gernot Wagner, *But Will the Planet Notice? : How Smart Economics Can Save the World*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 3-14.

¹⁰ Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action*, 89.

worked to identify strategies that actually *do* seem to penetrate this apparent resistance or indifference. Instead of information, fear, and guilt-based strategies, these researchers suggest a more positive approach; Stoknes identifies three main ideas: redefine the opposites of the five barriers as success criteria that help people connect to the issues and inspire people to action; focus on positive strategies; and work together in groups and communities. He argues that people should *enjoy* pro-environmental lifestyles and activities and experience them as community building celebrations of life and beauty.¹¹

Linda Steg and Jan Willem Bolderdijk also study these behavioral phenomena; they note that strategies that focus on spreading information or saving money tend not to engage citizens nearly as effectively as strategies that tap into an underlying need or desire to feel good.¹² Apparently, voluntary, pro-environmental behaviors elicit an actual “green glow,” in which people literally feel warmer and happier.¹³ To encourage more pro-environmental behaviors, we not only must make such behaviors cheaper and easier; we also must focus on reinforcing the normative

¹¹ Ibid., 90-1.

¹² J. W. Bolderdijk et al., "Values Determine the (in)Effectiveness of Informational Interventions in Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior," *PLoS One* 8, no. 12 (2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0083911>; J.W. Bolderdijk et al., "Comparing the Effectiveness of Monetary Versus Moral Motives in Environmental Campaigning," *Nature Climate Change* 3 (April 2013).

¹³ Danny Taufik, Jan Willem Bolderdijk, and Linda Steg, "Acting Green Elicits a Literal Warm Glow," *Nature Climate Change* 5 (January 2014).

sense of how good it feels to do the right thing.¹⁴ Others point out the intrinsic nature of the motivations in these recent studies, and they identify the need for more research on the potential of intrinsic motivators:

In the face of many urgent global challenges... understanding how to make positive behaviour change stick is one of the most pressing policy-relevant (but under-researched) questions in social science today... the inherent limitations of extrinsic incentives [serves] as an example to encourage a shift in current thinking about how to most effectively promote durable behaviour change... There is good evidence that people are intrinsically motivated to forge a more conserving and sustainable society.¹⁵

In short, these scholars suggest that people need to connect to the issue of the crisis in new ways that feel personal, communal, empowering, and hopeful. The local food movement offers a variety of opportunities for these kinds of connections. Food and agriculture policies lie at the heart of the causes and consequences of the ecological crisis. The combination of capitalism and industrial agriculture has resulted in a widespread, toxic food economy that relentlessly pours chemical fertilizers and pesticides onto consolidated monoculture farmlands; then it dumps the surplus grains into massive factory livestock farms and onto the global market, where it destroys local economies as it simultaneously generates the endless alcohol and processed junk food that have led to a worldwide epidemic of non-

¹⁴ Linda Steg et al., "An Integrated Framework for Encouraging Pro-Environmental Behaviour: The Role of Values, Situational Factors and Goals," *J Env Psych* 38 (2014).

¹⁵ Sander van der Linden, "Intrinsic Motivation and Pro-Environmental Behaviour," *Nature Climate Change* 5, no. 7 (2015): 612-3.

communicable diseases.¹⁶ The scientific and business communities continue to debate the benefits and drawbacks of industrial agriculture; despite mounting evidence of its damages as well as of the potential for sustainable agriculture and small farms,¹⁷ many still insist the world needs this approach in order to feed the planet and address climate challenges such as drought.¹⁸

In the last few years, various branches of the United Nations have reported on the connections between the industrial global food economy and world hunger, poverty, unemployment, habitat destruction, water shortages, and climate change.¹⁹

The Commission on Trade and Agriculture puts the matter quite bluntly:

[A]griculture is not only chiefly affected by global warming but also one of its driving forces... what is called for is a better understanding of the multi-functionality of agriculture, its pivotal importance for pro-poor rural development and the significant role it can play in dealing with resource

¹⁶ See Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Brian Halweil, "Can Organic Farming Feed Us All?," *Worldwatch Magazine* 19, no. 3 (May/June 2006).

¹⁸ Ar Townsend and R.W. Howarth, "Fixing the Global Nitrogen Problem," *Scientific American* 302, no. 2 (2010).

¹⁹ See UNCTAD, *Wake up before It Is Too Late: Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate* (New York: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2013); DESA, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights* (New York: United Nations, DESA Population Division, 2014); DESA, *Sustainable Development Challenges* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013); FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015: Meeting the 2015 International Hunger Targets: Taking Stock of Uneven Progress* (Rome: United Nations (Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, and World Food Programme), 2015).

scarcities and in mitigating and adapting to climate change... [H]unger and mal-nutrition are not phenomena of insufficient physical supply, but results of prevailing poverty, and above all problems of access to food. Enabling these people to become food self-sufficient or earn an appropriate income through agriculture to buy food needs to take center stage in future agriculture transformation... One does neither see the necessary level of urgency nor the political willingness, from the international community, for drastic changes. Priority remains heavily focused on increasing production (mostly under the slogan “more with less”). The currently pursued approach is still very much biased towards expansion of “somewhat-less-polluting” industrial agriculture, rather than more sustainable and affordable production methods. It is still not recognized that a paradigm shift is required.²⁰

Food and agriculture provide the foundation of human life; whether or not we have anything else, we all must eat. In the past decade, the local food movement has captured the vital significance of the role of food in transforming destructive energy and agriculture policies. In his recent book *Food Justice*, Robert Gottlieb explores the subversive connections between local farms and justice.²¹ Gottlieb aptly describes the concept of “food justice” and how it relates to a comprehensive understanding of all the issues from human trafficking to toxification and climate change:

While animal abuses have gained notable attention and are important, the food justice argument is more comprehensive and systemic... It focuses on the need to reverse the disappearance of small farmers or remedy the condition of exploited contract farmers and farmworkers, along with the need to craft a different way to relate to the land and grow food... From a food justice perspective, the lessons are clear: the exploitation and abuses of

²⁰ UNCTAD, *Wake up before It Is Too Late: Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate*, iii.

²¹ Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, *Food Justice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

the dominant food system have become a central battleground in how we grow and produce the food we eat.²²

The local food movement connects to each person for different but overlapping reasons, from urban communities seeking fresh food to gourmet chefs who want to support the local economy and create top quality cuisine. It cuts through political spin and polarization precisely *because* food rests at the heart of identity, community, culture, ethics, and spirituality. Jennifer Cockrall-King notes the ways in which its widespread appeal and potential continue to gain sustainable traction and momentum, particularly in light of rapid global urbanization:

[T]he urban agriculture movement wasn't happening in a vacuum. The more I learned about the desperate situation that we were in as industrial consumers, the more I grew to appreciate how revolutionary, subversive, and necessary the open-source, chaotic, decentralized nature of the urban-agriculture revolution seemed... the idea of food production within urban landscapes has gone from a fringe concern of a few academics, green thumbs, and countercultural gadflies to a real hands-in-the-dirt mainstream, social, environmental and economic revolution... this is a major turning point for how we design and use our urban spaces, how we feed ourselves, and how we treat our food producers and our planet.²³

Food offers people points of theoretical and physical connection, and these intimate interactions have long-reaching consequences. Society has recently started to realize just how disconnected from nature we have become as well as the many

²² Ibid., 37.

²³ Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution*, 17-21.

values of certain kinds of time spent in nature.²⁴ Gardens in particular offer access to nature and wildlife in otherwise disconnected settings, and garden related research has significantly increased in the past few years. The positive impact of gardens depends on how human communities communicate ideas of nature connection to younger generations.²⁵ Social scientists have explored the differences in pro-environmental behaviors between urban, suburban, and rural communities and children. As expected, rural communities do interact more with nature, which leads to a generally higher sense of land stewardship, conservation, and nature connection;²⁶ however, in one study, rural children tended to exhibit similar levels of pro-environmental behavior, regardless of the frequency with which they spent time in nature. Increased nature contact in urban areas correlated directly with more pro-environmental behaviors, as expected; but increased nature contact among rural children who lived and worked in agricultural contexts actually correlated with *lower* levels of ecological behaviors.²⁷

²⁴ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2005), 122-31.

²⁵ Claire Freeman et al., "'My Garden Is an Expression of Me': Exploring Householders' Relationships with Their Gardens," *J Env Psych* 32 (2012).

²⁶ Lincoln R. Larson et al., "Understanding the Multi-Dimensional Structure of Pro-Environmental Behavior," *J Env Psych* 43, no. 2015 (2015).

²⁷ Silvia Collado et al., "Effect of Frequency and Mode of Contact with Nature on Children's Self-Reported Ecological Behaviors," *J Env Psych* 41 (2015).

Clearly, children need certain kinds of nature experiences in order to translate those experiences into a relationship with the natural world that expresses itself in care and advocacy. Rural children in pastoral settings show increased preferences for outdoor activities compared to urban children; however, children also need to learn to love nature. In another study, Hinds *et al.* distinguished between cognitive and affective attitudes toward nature; they found that experiences that evoke empathy and affection for the natural world foster the formation of nature-based identities that correlate with more pro-environmental behaviors.²⁸ Despite the many benefits of gardens, from camaraderie to delicious food, they can do more harm than good for overall nature connection and advocacy unless they are handled in the right ways. Rebecca Johnson describes this tension in her urban garden experiences:

I stay in urban areas because I still prefer them, even with all the problems... where much progressive activism originates, where people of color increasingly live, and where fundamental change must be enacted if the natural ecology of the world is to survive... My father was a farmer, escaping his family in Tennessee at eighteen but not escaping the call of the soil and the imperative to grow food. I have a brother and sister. The three of us grew up under my father's insistence that we garden with him... At ten years old I felt like we had endless rows of green beans to weed and pick. I am the only one of my siblings to continue to garden in adult life, although I am still ambivalent about the cultivation of green beans.²⁹

²⁸ Hinds and Sparks, "Engaging with the Natural Environment: The Role of Affective Connection and Identity."

²⁹ Rebecca Johnson, "New Moon over Roxbury: Reflections on Urban Life and the Land," in *City Wilds: Essays and Stories About Urban Nature*, ed. Terrell Dixon (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 65-6.

Johnson articulates the ways in which gardens can connect us, to others, our history, and our sense of identity, at the same time that some garden experiences also alienate people from working with and for the Earth. Gardens have power, and we must focus the power toward community, wellness, and justice, and not only toward their ability to meet a bodily need. In one study, Gross and Lane determined that home gardens provide retreat, build community, and foster nature connection and place identity with the land around a home; they note that gardens provided evolving sources of meaning and connection over time. Gardeners focused on the importance of community as children, whereas adults cared more about a sense of ownership or identity and a place of retreat; elders moved back toward the importance of relationships and yet retained a sense of ownership and identity with the gardens.³⁰ Another study revealed that elders in particular relate to gardening “as a lifelong process, something learned over time, adapted to over the different stages of life and growing in importance over a lifetime.”³¹ People interact differently with gardens in different stages of life, yet gardens can meet the needs of each stage.

Horticulture therapy has rapidly expanded in recent years, particularly among veterans. Studies have shown that communal farms and gardens offer

³⁰ Harriet Gross and Nicola Lane, "Landscapes of the Lifespan: Exploring Accounts of Own Gardens and Gardening," *J Env Psych* 27 (2007).

³¹ Freeman et al., "“My Garden Is an Expression of Me”: Exploring Householders’ Relationships with Their Gardens," 142.

nature-based community and nature connection in powerful ways that address loneliness, stress, depression, anxiety, pain, aggression, violence, and crime.³² These gardens offer nature connection experiences that support the “biophilia”³³ claims of ecopsychology, which argue that humans need to interact with non-human nature in order to develop a proper sense of identity and empathy.³⁴ Studies from the past decade have not only revealed correlations between nature disconnection and mental and physical illness, but also positive impacts on mental and physical wellness as well as community cohesion and resilience.³⁵

One study found that people tend to garden both to connect with nature and to build community, but they do not usually connect their private yard gardens with

³² Howard Frumkin, "Building the Science Base: Ecopsychology Meets Clinical Epidemiology," in *Ecopsychology : Science, Totems, and the Technological Species*, ed. Peter H. Kahn and Patricia H. Hasbach (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 146-8.

³³ E.O. Wilson uses this term: Edward O. Wilson, *The Creation : An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), 63.

³⁴ Chellis Glendinning, "Technology, Trauma, and the Wild," in *Ecopsychology : Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes, and Allen D. Kanner (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995), 50-3; Paul Shepard, "Nature and Madness," in *Ecopsychology : Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes, and Allen D. Kanner (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995), 23-7.

³⁵ Frumkin, "Building the Science Base: Ecopsychology Meets Clinical Epidemiology," in *Ecopsychology : Science, Totems, and the Technological Species*, 142-54; Richard Louv, *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2011).

the rest of the natural world.³⁶ In order to help foster those connections, schools increasingly use gardens as a way to build “ecological intelligence,” which converges with social and emotional intelligence to generate significantly stronger empathic development.³⁷ Not all gardens have the same impacts;³⁸ in *The Learning Garden: Ecology, Teaching, and Transformation*, Veronica Gaylie describes the importance of proper mentoring in order for gardens to foster nature connection and ecological justice awareness. Gaylie asserts that with an approach of environment, community, and transformation, these gardens can affect basic ideas of identity, community, and what it means to learn for both students and educators:

Increasingly, it has become a professional and ethical responsibility to nurture attitudes that place nature at the center of learning. There is increasingly urgent interest among educators to integrate and develop hands-on learning resources that will engage youth in thought, discussion and action around ecological issues. Perhaps definitions of what it means to be “educated” need now include deeper awareness and sense of ethical responsibility for the land in ways that are also local and global, social and ecological knowledge... teaching in the natural world changes how people learn and how they teach... how does a small garden that promotes community and a sense of wonder prompt such a shift in perspective? The garden itself is a paradox in that it represents a simple, small, local solution to large, complex, global environment problems. Learning in the garden is

³⁶ Susan Clayton, "Domesticated Nature: Motivations for Gardening and Perceptions of Environmental Impact," *J Env Psych* 27 (2007).

³⁷ D. Goleman, L. Bennett, and Z. Barlow, *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 465-78.

³⁸ Heather Graham et al., "Use of School Gardens in Academic Instruction," *J Nutr Educ Behav* 37, no. 3 (May/June 2005).

immersion in dichotomy and difference as a bridge towards understanding and community.³⁹

Gaylie rightly points out how learning gardens must incorporate wider ideas of ecological justice and activism. Cockrall-King describes the ways in which the local food movement, and the urban garden movement in particular, subvert oppressive systems and nurture liberation; for example, she notes how permaculture techniques counter ideas of scarcity, toil, and domination, and instead offer abundance and freedom:

At first glance, permaculture techniques tend to yield wild, unruly, seemingly unkempt gardens, but designed correctly, they produce a tremendous amount and variety of food for a fraction of the effort of a traditional garden and with greater biodiversity... It is sometimes explained as reaping what you do not sow. It also acknowledges that modern life and sustainable living need to meet somewhere in the middle. Permaculture is sustainable not only ecologically, but as an activity it's a *sustainable* sustainable system.⁴⁰

Laura Lawson notes that although food gardens always increase during times of economic hardship, the recent surge in community gardens specifically seeks to incorporate these gardens permanently into the fabric of society. The wider local food movement reveals how gardens are not simply “nice” but “necessary,” not as a panacea but as a way to connect people to wider issues and strategies of

³⁹ Gaylie, *The Learning Garden: Ecology, Teaching, and Transformation*, 3, 8.

⁴⁰ Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution*, 310.

transformation.⁴¹ Cockrall-King also notes the wider symbolic significance of these farmers and gardeners in social and ecological transformation:

[T]he urban farmer or backyard food grower has taken up the mantle of what was once the small-scale farmer: a deliberate keeper of the open-source technology that agriculture has always been, a rebel stand against the artificial idea that corporate interests can fiddle a gene or two and claim ownership of a technology that has existed for longer than we can measure.⁴²

Indeed, the local food and permaculture movements frequently encounter social and governmental resistance. The guerilla gardening movement embraces the challenge; it claims access to farming the land as a basic human right that supersedes property or other rights. According to guerilla gardeners, communities must ultimately choose between gardening and war; each choice involves struggle and adversity, but gardens also build up even as they uproot. According to Richard Reynolds, even the densest cities can transform into garden cities; moreover, communities not only have the right but the moral duty to claim public and “orphaned” or neglected spaces for food growing and for natural beauty.⁴³

In summary, the local food movement has provided important points of contact for communities to connect with and address wider issues of ecological

⁴¹ Laura J. Lawson, *City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 287-302.

⁴² Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution*, 313.

⁴³ Richard Reynolds, *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Hand Book for Gardening without Boundaries* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 13-14, 44-9.

justice and devastation in positive and powerful ways. We now turn specifically to the role of churches in this movement.

Churches, Gardens, and Ecological Ethics

In recent years, churches in the United States and elsewhere have embraced ecological ethics into the heart of Christian identity.⁴⁴ Although churches have long worked on environmental healing and justice in a variety of ways, they have recently emerged in public discourse and awareness as a primary force of vision, activism, and change in the wider environmental movement.⁴⁵ Part of this momentum includes involvement in the local food movement, including gardens. Church gardens seek to reconnect people with one another and the soil as they also address issues such as hunger, isolation, and access to fresh food.⁴⁶ Tony Carnes notes the enthusiasm for the trend as well as the hesitancy among some Christians regarding the intense reverence for the Creation.⁴⁷ To date, no ethnographic or

⁴⁴ Ched Myers, "From "Creation Care" to "Watershed Discipleship": Re-Placing Ecological Theology and Practice," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 32, no. 3 (2014).

⁴⁵ Even evangelicals, who have the lowest percentage of environmentalists: Morgan Lee, "Not Just Pope Francis: Evangelicals Praise Paris Climate Talks," *Christianity Today*, 2015.

⁴⁶ Griffin, "A Growing Movement."

⁴⁷ Tony Carnes, "Back to the Garden," *Christianity Today*, 2011.

other sociological study of the ecological ethics impact of church vegetable gardens could be found.

While churches have been planting gardens, agrarian theologians have also been exploring the spiritual implications of soil, gardens, and local food. Norman Wirzba describes the ways in which plough-based agriculture moved humanity away from the natural rhythms of the seasons and the soil that literally grounded human communities in a sense of abundance within finitude. Wirzba urges human communities to rediscover how to connect with and love the land in order to find this lost rhythm and identity. Gardens in particular bring people down on their knees in humble, patient collaboration with the soil, the seasons, and the Creator. When humans tend the Earth in this kind of agrarian approach, rather than an agricultural approach, we understand the cycles of life and death, eternity and finitude as part of the Divine.⁴⁸

Ellen Davis has applied Wirzba's ideas to the agrarian writings of the Hebrew Bible. Through an agrarian analysis of the creation narrative in Genesis 1, the prophets, and the wisdom literature, Davis notes the ways in which the Bible calls the people of the Divine to tend, or shepherd, the garden of the Creation as the primary human vocation. She compares these biblical writings with contemporary agrarian writers such as Wendell Berry, and reveals how the Creation functions as

⁴⁸ Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33-41, 73-4, 114-22.

another participant in the covenant between humanity and the Divine. The Creation has moral agency in these texts, and expresses its divinity in particular through its perpetual, abundant provision of food. Davis reveals the agrarian foundations of biblical theology as well as their relevance for today.⁴⁹

John Hart writes of the importance of the commons in order to understand the divine, or sacramental, nature of the Creation. Like the guerilla gardeners, Hart reminds us that we can never divide up or separate ourselves from a sacred Earth; the sacramental nature of the Creation reveals an intent of sharing and connectedness. This connectedness translates into responsibility, not only to other human communities but also to all the Creation and future generations as well.⁵⁰

Shannon Jung specifically explores theologies of food; he suggests that a deeper spiritual connection with food and eating can help reclaim people's relationship with food, away from addictive and exploitative forces and toward the embodiment of sharing and abundance.⁵¹ Jung notes the importance of community in order for people to *enjoy* growing, preparing, and eating food as well as cleaning up afterwards; he also suggests ways individuals and congregations can incorporate

⁴⁹ Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 40, 32-4, 51-8, 60-2.

⁵⁰ Hart, *Sacramental Commons : Christian Ecological Ethics*, 139-53.

⁵¹ L. Shannon Jung, *Food for Life : The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8-9, 85-91, 101.

mindfulness of community and wider issues of justice into food rituals, such as grace and the Eucharist, as well as gardens and other aspects of congregational life.⁵²

Theologians and churches have also explored ideas of nature connection. Bruce Stanley has taken the main components of nature connection programs and applied them to congregational life, including outdoor worship and ceremonies throughout the natural and liturgical seasons. Stanley welcomes the input of other spiritual traditions, such as neopaganism, and articulates the growing interest in Earth-centered spiritualities:

The inclusion of creation in spirituality (or spirituality in creation) was contrary to the teachings of the church of Rome... this was part of the great rift between the Celtic church and the church of Rome. Today many folk who are committed to walking in the ways of Christ are fed up of this separation and want to find a spiritual path which engages their love of Christ and their love and connectedness with creation. Modern expressions of the ancient Celtic Christian faith enable people to do this in an authentic Christ-focused way, and this is from where my focus for New Forest Forest Church⁵³ stems. We have had guided meditation walks using the physical things around us as metaphysical and metaphorical aspects of our spiritual journey, we've looked at the wisdom of the Oak tree, and we've 'considered the birds' (and other animals), as Jesus put it to his disciples. We have looked at the concept of being 'led by quiet waters' and other sections of Psalms.⁵⁴

Although more conservative branches of western Christianity still view Earth-centered spirituality (and environmentalism) with suspicion, they are

⁵² Shannon Jung, *Sharing Food: Christian Practices for Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), e.g., 30, 130-2, 43-59.

⁵³ New Forest is the name of this particular Forest Church; thus, "New Forest Forest Church."

⁵⁴ Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* (Llangurig, Powys: Mystic Christ Press, 2013), 105.

nonetheless finding ways to connect to these ideas.⁵⁵ Wirzba's recent book *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World* directly confronts issues of escapist theology, nature worship, and the need for deep, sustained activism. He also articulates the need for the kind of affective nature connection that leads to dedicated ecological discipleship:

In Genesis we first discover God with knees and hands in the dirt, breathing into soil the breath of life that creates you and me, along with all the plants and animals and birds. God is a Gardener who loves soil and delights in fertility... it has become evident that more knowledge or information about the earth is not, by itself, going to be of sufficient help... [People] are going to need to appreciate and affirm [the Earth] as a miracle that is itself an expression of divine love. Put simply, as desirable as it may be to have information about the world, what we most need are capacities that will help us love the world.⁵⁶

Wirzba, Stanley, and others offer ways for Christians to venerate nature that nonetheless align with the central texts and teachings of Christianity. In fact, nature veneration has been shown to correlate with greater and more sustained pro-environmental behaviors;⁵⁷ thus, these strategies represent an important

⁵⁵ Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A.J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014). See also C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 43, 155-8.

⁵⁶ Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World, The Church and Postmodern Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 1-3.

⁵⁷ Bernard Daley Zaleha, "'Our Only Heaven': Nature Veneration, Quest Religion, and Pro-Environment Behavior," *JSRNC* 7, no. 2 (2013).

contribution to the overall challenge of how to engage Christians in the long and intensive work of ecological healing and transformation.

Wesleyan theology also aligns with many of these ideas and offers a useful framework for the integration of ecological ethics into Wesleyan churches. Wesley did express deep reverence for the presence of the Divine in the Creation, and he spent considerable effort to study the natural world and suggest a natural theology.⁵⁸ Wesleyan scholars have articulated how Wesley's own theological and practical commitments to the Creation as well as the Wesleyan conceptions of grace and responsibility provide a powerful foundation.⁵⁹ Wesley's theology always explicitly connected ideas of inner transformation with the outer work, or holiness "habits," of discipleship;⁶⁰ and these two interconnected processes also always relied on the presence of a human community, including spiritual mentors, for both support and accountability. Randy Maddox acknowledges that Wesleyan churches often struggle to retain this dual focus on grace and responsibility, despite its power

⁵⁸ For example, John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: A Compendium of Natural Philosophy in Three Volumes*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Lancaster, PA: William Hamilton, 1810); John Wesley, "The General Deliverance," in *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1771).

⁵⁹ John B. Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility : A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 50-5; Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 201-7; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace : John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 34-5, 58-9; Nash, *Loving Nature : Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, 80, 103, 26-9.

⁶⁰ E.g., John Wesley, "The Doctrine of Original Sin," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 560-1, 73.

and utility.⁶¹ John Cobb has urged churches to re-embrace the concept of sanctification in tangible ways in order to address the important issues of justice in our time,⁶² and James Nash applies Wesleyan ideas of grace and responsibility to ecological political activism.⁶³

More recently, scholars have continued to apply these ideas to ecological ethics and Creation care/environmentalism. Clive Ayre suggests “ecologies of grace” that incorporate ecological spirituality, stewardship, and justice to address human alienation from the Creation. Ayre explores ways in which the concepts of justifying and sanctifying grace offer relational and motivational applications for ecological ethics today:

[T]wo points from Wesley’s theology... may be noted. The grace of God does what people themselves cannot do, that is move them to God. Second, hope is located in the process of justification, of acceptance, rather than in the actual goal of transformation or sanctification. This is a faith that is based on relationship with Christ and which can therefore move forward to the promise of transformation. I would argue that the twin notions of divine initiative and of relationship are both of great importance in our approach to the need of the Earth and the way we deal with it in these dangerous times... Creation and grace are inter-related themes.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Maddox, *Responsible Grace : John Wesley's Practical Theology*, 192-202.

⁶² Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility : A Wesleyan Theology for Today*, 100-1, 30-3.

⁶³ Nash, *Loving Nature : Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, 192-221.

⁶⁴ Clive Ayre, "Divine Grace and Creation Care," in *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined: The Grace of God in Creation, Church, and Community; Essays in Honour of Norman Young*, ed. Sean Winter (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 143, 46.

In addition to basic concepts of discipleship, justice concerns feature prominently in recent garden, soil, or agrarian theological explorations as well. Davis in particular notes the ways in which an agrarian reading of the Bible reveals a subversive message of a small, local approach to food that resists the luxury, commodity, and surplus-based economies of empire. Davis points out how covenantal economies express humility, permanence, and abundance, as opposed to the hoarding and waste prevalent in ancient empires and today:

The ban on hoarding and manna that spoils overnight are symbols that touch us closely, living as we do in a culture of unprecedented hoarding, consumption, and waste. Our take is unlimited – the destruction already accomplished is staggering... Forty percent of the world's population lives in countries suffering from serious freshwater shortages, and irrigated agriculture accounts for a staggering 70 percent of water usage... thus endangering the food supply over the long term. We have incurred damage on a scale that bewilders us, that we cannot repair, and even worse, our currently dominant economies implicitly mandate that the damage continue. The manna story attests to the inherent difficulty of living with restrictions we do not wholly understand.⁶⁵

Davis also points out the ways in which imperial economies in biblical narratives exploit the land, women, and workers. She compares the situation to similar cases today, where modern imperial economics have concentrated land and wealth in the hands of a few, while vulnerable communities lose their ancestral farm and pasturelands and suffer both agricultural, urban, and sexual slavery as a result.

⁶⁵ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 75.

Just as in the Bible, exploitation leads to conflict, war, and exile.⁶⁶ In contrast, garden based or wilderness economics embody the abundance found through a permaculture approach to limits, community, and connection with the Creation.⁶⁷

African American scholars have also continued to explore the specific dynamics of Creation care and environmental activism for the ethnic communities in the United States that represent the global majority. Building upon decades of ecojustice writings,⁶⁸ Carolyn Finney points out the “whiteness” of public environmental narratives and highlights the unique and essential perspectives of non-white environmentalism:

For African Americans, to varying degrees, the everyday practices associated with environmental interactions are directly related to issues of African American identity and American history... This ideology can be at odds with thinking about and honoring the environment in the way that the dominant narrative of conservation and preservation is constructed... On the other hand, this way of thinking does not preclude a desire to care for, enjoy, and utilize the environment in a sustainable fashion. The ideas, thoughts, and solutions that arise from an African American experience of the environment are mediated by differential access, needs, privilege, and history.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 91-2, 105-7.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 67-79.

⁶⁸ For example, Robert D. Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice : Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005); Dianne D. Glave and Mark Stoll, *To Love the Wind and the Rain : African Americans and Environmental History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

⁶⁹ Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces : Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 4.

Dianne D. Glave has more recently described how African American approaches to environmentalism integrate the preservation and conservation strands that have tended to clash in white environmentalism.⁷⁰ She describes how gardens featured prominently in this blended and holistic approach:

[T]he African American community valued the productivity of women, which reinforced a commitment to work in the home and garden... African American women practiced gardening through conservation techniques including transplanting, diversification, and fertilizing... these entrancing gardens are “about the earth, about beauty, and about spirit.”⁷¹

Finney describes the fear that confounds many African American experiences of nature connection; she notes the courage and resilience of the African American community in continuing to claim an expanding place and presence in the environmental movement despite these pervasive elements of fear, for example, in the case of writer Evelyn C. White:

“I wanted to sit outside and listen to the roar of the ocean, but I was afraid. I wanted to walk through the redwoods, but I was afraid... For me, the fear is like a heartbeat... So pervasive, so much a part of me, that I hardly knew it was there...” Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary would label these reactions “trans-generational adaptations associated with the past traumas of slavery and ongoing oppression,” or Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS)... Forests, parks and other areas of great natural beauty are not exempt from the psychological ramifications of an American history steeped in oppressive tactics designed to diminish the humanity of one group of people because of the color of their skin.⁷²

⁷⁰ Dianne D. Glave, *Rooted in the Earth: Reclaiming the African American Environmental Heritage* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), 8-10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 123, 16, 25. End quotation cited from Vaughn Sills, *Places for the Spirit* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2010).

⁷² Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces : Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, 118-9.

Despite this traumatic history, Finney points to the transformational power within African American communities to claim and thrive in this culture and landscapes. She describes many of the exciting ways that these communities have creatively engaged with and spearheaded environmental initiatives, and in the process, these communities and leaders have diversified the sense of environmental identity in the United States:

From the green economy to “bees in the hood,” black people are redefining justice and environmental activism, challenging academics and policy makers to rethink and reframe environmental strategizing. While many seeds are being planted and taking root, guerilla greenies... have become the public faces promoting, explaining, and titillating our intellectual senses and our practical impulses to consider new ways of seeing and being green.⁷³

Bryant Terry has claimed this watershed moment in terms of soul food. Terry has helped the African American community reclaim its cultural food heritage and embrace the joy at the heart of environmentalism and ecojustice. He authors books on vegan soul food that capture the preservation/conservation ideas described by Glave in exciting and prophetic ways:

In many ways... the invisibility and marginalization of food from the African diaspora [was] a major impetus for writing this book. Because these riches have been hardearned, underacknowledged, and even exploited, using them wisely means coming to terms with the problematic narratives that surround them... More than anyone else, people of African descent should honor, cultivate, and consume food from the African diaspora. Afrodiasporic foodways (that is, the shape and development of food traditions) carry our history, memories, and stories. They connect us to our ancestors and bring the past into the present day. They also have the potential to save our lives.

⁷³ Ibid., 124.

As Afro-diasporic people have strayed from our traditional foods and adopted a Western diet, our health has suffered. Combined with the economic, physical, and geographic barriers that make it difficult to access *any* type of fresh food in many communities, the health of these populations across the globe has been devastated... and I would argue that the disconnect from our historical foods is a significant contributing force. While we continue to work for food justice – the basic human right to fresh, safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate food in all communities – we must also work to reclaim our ancestral knowledge and embrace our culinary roots.⁷⁴

Christopher Carter has used Wesleyan ideas of grace and responsibility to explore this aspect of the local food movement. He calls for black churches to integrate a deeper meaning of “soul food” into African American concepts of environmentalism and ecojustice:

For my community in Compton, and other predominantly black and brown communities in the U.S., I believe food justice is a life or death social justice issue... For those of us who are committed to a liberationist interpretation of the Gospel – who believe it is a part of our vocational calling to dismantle systems of oppression – we believe our communities should be centrally involved in any food justice movement... Thinking theologically about our food and where it comes from is the first important step in addressing structural inequalities of our food system. Whenever and wherever we eat, we should take the time to ask ourselves if the food on our plates enables or inhibits the collective flourishing of Creation. To confront food system injustice, I believe that Christians seeking a theology of eating should embody three virtues: *embracing our soul*, *justice for food workers*, and *care of the earth*. The second and third virtues – *justice for food workers* and *care of the earth* – can only be embodied if religious communities initially seek the first virtue of *embracing our soul*. The word “soul” has deep resonance within Christianity and especially within the African American religious tradition. Embracing our soul requires us to reflect upon our past and build upon the collective ancestral wisdom in order to forge a new future.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Bryant Terry, *Afro-Vegan: Farm-Fresh African, Caribbean, and Southern Flavors Remixed* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2014), 1-2.

⁷⁵ Christopher Carter, "Eating Food and Justice," *Reflections Magazine*, , 2014, 1-2.

Carter calls on European American churches to continue to learn how power and privilege contribute to unjust food and agricultural systems; he calls on African American Christians to apply liberation theology ideas and practices surrounding the culture of black soul and soul food:

I believe Euro American Christians will make long-term changes to their food politics and help subvert structural racism when they accept that their privilege perpetuates an inhumane and unjust system... It cements the notion that as a person of privilege one has the power and arguably the obligation to influence real change in our food system. For African American Christians... [t]he collective spiritual wisdom of the black church tradition compels us to take a theology of liberation seriously in all areas of our life – in this case, how we eat. We have to allow our notion of black soul – and soul food – to evolve. We need to recover the wisdom of our ancestral culinary identities so that we can recreate modern culinary identities that advance our goal of liberation. A more diverse understanding of soul food, one that embraces vegetarian, vegan, organic, and healthier ways of eating benefits our community while simultaneously helping us move beyond fixed social and cultural identities that have been detrimental to our survival. In this way soul food becomes a liberative tool that aids our community in our fight against the consequences of our oppressive food system. Indeed, for the sake of our own survival, black culture has never had a static definition of soul, and therefore we need not hang on to a static definition of soul food today... If we really believe that God desires all creation to flourish and our Christian vocation is to dismantle the systems of oppression that limit flourishing, then perhaps we should all take a look at our plates to determine if we are indeed feasting on oppression.⁷⁶

Carter brings together the ideas of grace and responsibility in terms of faith, community, justice, and transformation. He offers points of deep connection for African American churches to wider ideas of ecological spirituality and justice as he

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

also calls for the whole Christian community to work together for the healing of our bodies, our communities, and the whole Earth.

Conceptual Framework and Summary

In summary, the literary review above demonstrates a social context in which issues of food, gardens, and justice have simultaneously converged and expanded into an energized and multifaceted environmental movement in United States society and elsewhere; moreover, theologians have also explored these ideas in relation to biblical and social ethics. The social sciences have demonstrated the importance of positive, holistic, and communal experiences of nature connection in order to inspire pro-environmental behaviors that include awareness of and activism on behalf of issues of justice. Ecological theologies and ecclesial settings increasingly provide these kinds of nature connection experiences and points of contact with the wider environmental movement.

This dissertation applies these ideas of ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice to the specific context of church vegetable gardens. It explores the impacts of the gardens in light of the above concepts. In terms of spirituality, the study examines both liturgical ideas, such as new forms of Earth-centered worship, and theological ideas, such as of the soil, the Creation, and Communion. It examines community ideas, such as nature connection, kinship, compassion, and the role of human communities, mentors, and elders. In terms of

discipleship, it assesses the short and long term impacts of church garden projects specifically on the pro-environmental beliefs and behaviors of the participants and the wider community. Lastly, it assesses the efficacy of a prominently visible, hands-on garden project to raise awareness and activism in the context of churches that are already committed to social justice. The study explores the overall impacts in holistic ways as well as in these four specified areas in light of current research and scholarship.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction

This study followed two United Methodist congregations through the planning and execution of a vegetable garden project. The feasibility of urban and suburban church gardens has been demonstrated in a variety of contexts.¹ Communities at two different sites, urban and suburban, were followed for comparative purposes. A garden project was chosen because it provides a flexible project for a congregation in a variety of ways: it does not require large numbers of people to participate; it can be placed in many kinds of locations; it can be large or very small; and many vegetables require little work and can grow in varied conditions. Vegetable gardens also provide a more physically interactive garden experience than flowers, including not only tending but also preparing and eating the products of the garden. In short, vegetable gardens provide a hands-on, outdoor, nature-centered, community activity that can also provide opportunities for ministry and service as well as enjoyment. This chapter details the choice of research context, tools, and methodologies for data collection and analysis, as well as limitations of the study.

¹ Bryan K. Langlands, *Cultivating Neighborhoods: Identifying Best Practices for Launching a Christ-Centered Community Garden* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2014), xvi-xvii.

Research Approach

Participatory Action Research

This research used a participatory action ethnographic model, in which the researcher collaborated with the subjects of the study to design and carry out the project under investigation.² In this approach, the researcher cyclically intervenes and participates (i.e., with plans and actions) while simultaneously gathering data and forming reflections about the action itself and its impact (i.e., to observe and reflect). The action element involved addressing engagement with ecological ethics through design and implementation of a vegetable garden. This approach allowed the investigator to participate in the garden projects without leading them and thereby creating undue influence over the gardens and their impacts. It also allowed for a variety of data gathering methods in order to construct a holistic picture of the impacts of the gardens and the generalizability of the findings.

Positionality

The investigator was a member of the larger organization of the United Methodist Church and also had prior relationships with both sites. For the purposes

² For a complete description and discussion of participatory action research for dissertations, see Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 1-6.

of this research, the investigator represented an “insider in collaboration with other insiders” on the continuum of outsider/insider positionality.³ This positionality involves working collaboratively with a subset of the larger organization in order to explore opportunities for learning, growth, and transformation of individuals and of the larger organization. This research used co-learning and collective action modes of participation, in which the investigator and subgroup shared knowledge and ideas in order to set agendas, mobilize, carry out actions, and build understanding that could proceed without the presence or influence of the investigator.⁴

The investigator does not hold a position of authority (such as ordination or church leadership) in either church or in the larger denomination; however, the investigator has the authority of having been trained in seminary and as the principle investigator of the research. The investigator was younger than most of the garden project participants in the urban site and all of the participants in the suburban site. Members of the investigator’s family attended both congregations. A member of the investigator’s family initially participated in the urban garden project, but she moved away and ended participation before the garden was built or planted.

In this research, the investigator’s participation was limited to that deemed necessary for data collection purposes. The investigator initially offered gardening

³ Ibid., 36-8.

⁴ Ibid., 40-1, 47.

resources at each site: the Cool Harvest⁵ church garden resources created by Interfaith Power and Light; and a popular manual on gardening for small groups and in small spaces.⁶ The investigator attended and participated in, but did not call or run, garden meetings and workdays at both sites. During the final stages of harvest in the autumn, the investigator offered and then helped to coordinate an opportunity to learn local food preservation through lactofermentation (in the form of the Korean fermented cabbage called “kimchi”) at both sites on a Sunday before and after worship.

Research Sites

Demographics of Sites

In order to reduce variables between the two sites, both congregations were United Methodist and located in the Boston area. Both congregations included professors and students, including Boston University School of Theology students and both recent and longtime alumnae/i. Both sites had a predominantly Caucasian American ethnic demographic, with a mix of other ethnic groups, including primarily African American, Caribbean American, Asian, and Asian American

⁵ IPL, *Enjoy a Cool Harvest: Learning to Make Climate-Friendly Food Choices* (San Francisco: Interfaith Power & Light, 2012); IPL, *Sow a Cool Harvest: Faith Garden Ideas for a Cooler Planet* (San Francisco: Interfaith Power & Light, 2012).

⁶ Mel Bartholomew, *All New Square Foot Gardening* (Minneapolis: Cool Springs Press, 2013).

descent. Both pastors were Caucasian American men who had been appointed to these congregations for more than five years. The congregations both had a roughly equivalent mix of women and men, and both buildings had handicapped accessible entrances.

One site was urban and one site suburban. The urban site was located close to multiple prominent universities and had more students in the laity, more ethnic diversity, and a large young adult ministry. The pastor did not live next to the church; he and his wife were raising two, middle school and high school aged grandchildren, and he was planning to retire the year following the project. The church building had lost most of its associated land to the nearest university, although it had access to some unpaved (dirt or grass) areas around the building. The building itself was an historical landmark of the city, which restricted the ways in which it could be used or altered. It had recently lost its few parking spots to university renovations and its congregation relied on street parking and public transportation.

The suburban site had more families with young children, a larger Sunday school program, and more elders. It was located in an affluent suburb with restrictions about outdoor space aesthetic appearance of buildings and grounds. The pastor was in his forties, and he and his wife had divorced a few years prior to the project. The church building was located close to the center of town on a tract of

land with a parking lot for approximately 30 to 40 cars, nearby street parking, and a large lawn area. The parsonage was next to the church with its own yard area.

Access to Sites

The investigator had access to both congregations through membership in the United Methodist Church and through prior, multi-year relationships with the congregations, the pastors, and/or other United Methodist congregations who worshipped in the church buildings. Until two years before the research began, the investigator had been a full member for eight years of a small United Methodist congregation that met for two years in the urban site and that had occasional joint activities and worship services with the main congregation. The investigator was an affiliate member of the suburban site for two years prior to the research project. Both pastors were approached to ask whether these congregations would be interested in participating in the research project, which was described as a church vegetable garden, not necessarily on church property, which would be run and managed by the congregation and/or pastor (but not by the research investigator).

Research Samples

Data was gathered continually through observations, and periodically through interviews and surveys. Subjects for surveys and observations were people 18 years old and older who attended worship at the congregational sites; for the

interviews, subjects were people who indicated initial interest in the garden projects, and people who participated in the garden projects. The interviews and surveys were conducted at three separate time points: before the garden project had begun; during the height of the garden project; and once the garden project had been completed for the winter.

Ethical Considerations for Garden Project, Interview, and Survey Participation

All methods and texts of recruitment and data collection for this research were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Boston University.⁷ As part of the IRB approval process, the investigator completed a certification course for research with human subjects through the National Institutes of Health.⁸ All participants signed an Informed Consent Form that described the research, data collection methods, the voluntary nature of participation, and the option to withdraw from any part of the process at any time, including not answering all questions in either interviews or surveys.

Garden Project Participants

Recruitment for Garden Project

⁷ Protocol 2979E.

⁸ Certification Number 712176.

Because the investigator was not running the garden projects, participation in the projects was solicited by members of the congregation to one another. In the urban site, the investigator was invited to speak at the Sunday morning adult class about issues of local food for people of faith, as a way to introduce the idea of the garden project. At the suburban site, the Sunday morning adult class chose to read a book together over several weeks along the same theme, also in preparation for the garden project.⁹ In both cases, pastors and members of the congregation made announcements during Sunday worship inviting anyone interested in the garden project to attend informational and planning meetings. The investigator gathered emails of those who attended the meetings and started email threads for both groups in order to establish a medium of communication.

Characteristics of Garden Project Participants

Seven members of the urban congregation, six women and the male pastor, were consistently involved in the garden project; the ages of the participants ranged from twenties through sixties. Six members of the suburban congregation, three women, two men, and the male pastor, were consistently involved in the garden project; the ages of the participants ranged from forties through sixties.

⁹ Michael Schut, ed., *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread* (New York: Earth Ministry, 2006).

Interview Participants

Recruitment for Interviews

People who initially indicated interest in the project were invited by email, phone, or in person, to participate in interviews during each of the three data collection time points.

Characteristics of Interviewees

The research plan intended to include both garden participants and non-participants in the interviews, using slightly altered interview questions. Initially, it was unclear who would participate in the project before it had actually begun; moreover, not all interviewees were available for interviews at each time point. Scheduling interviews also took considerable effort, so interviews focused primarily on people involved in the project in order to gather as much information as possible about the impact of the project on the participants. Non-participant and moderate participant interviews were used for comparative purposes.

A total of 10 people in the urban site (nine women and one man, the pastor) and nine people in the suburban site (six women and three men, one of whom was the pastor) were interviewed. Both sets of interviewees consisted of a mixture of garden participants, garden non-participants, and people who were only slightly or moderately involved with the garden project; these people generally attended early

meetings and possibly helped set up the garden, but were uninvolved in planting, harvesting, or winterizing. Designation of interviewees' level of participation was based on a combination of their self-reported levels of participation and research observations. Table 3.1 represents the number of interviewees per time point and participation level for each site:

Table 3.1: Interviewees per Site, Time Point, and Project Level Participation

	Urban Site			
Time Point	Participant	Moderate	Non-participant	Totals
Pre-Garden	3	1	3	7
Mid-Garden	4	1	0	5
Post-Garden	4	0	0	4
All Interviews	6	1	3	10
	Suburban Site			
Pre-Garden	4	3	1	8
Mid-Garden	4	2	0	6
Post-Garden	5	3	1	9
All Interviews	5	3	1	9

Survey Participants

Recruitment for Surveys

Survey data intended to gather an overall sense of the ecological ethics of the worshipping congregation and gauge the impact of the garden project on the worshipping congregation over time. The investigator was invited by both pastors to announce the research project and the survey process to the congregation and to

place announcements in the church newsletter and bulletin. The investigator offered surveys to members of the congregation before and after worship for several weeks during each of the three data collection time points. Only people who attended Sunday worship were surveyed. Digital surveys were also emailed to people who requested a digital format. Participation in the survey did not require church membership or frequent attendance at the site.

Characteristics of Survey Participants

The survey asked respondents to indicate certain demographic information (gender, age) and whether they had participated in the garden projects. Tables 3.2-3.4 (below) show the distribution of surveys by time point; by participation in the garden project (G) or non-participation (NG) (surveys that did not indicate participation in the project were counted as non-participants); by gender as female (F), male (M), and those who did not indicate gender (NR); and by age, according to the groupings indicated on the survey. One survey was excluded because only the first page had been completed.

Table 3.2: Surveys Collected by Participation in Garden Project

Time Point	Urban Site		Suburban Site	
	Participant	Non-participant	Participant	Non-participant
Pre-Garden	5	14	15	11
	Total: 19		Total: 26	
Mid-Garden	5	18	9	12
	Total: 23		Total: 21	
Post-Garden	3	23	7	14
	Total: 26		Total: 21	

Table 3.3: Surveys Collected by Gender

Time Point	Urban Site			Suburban Site		
	Female	Male	No Response	Female	Male	No Response
Pre-Garden	12	5	2	13	10	3
Mid-Garden	15	5	3	11	7	3
Post-Garden	17	8	1	11	7	3

Table 3.4: Surveys Collected by Age Grouping

	Time Point	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	70 +	ND
Urban Site	Pre-Garden	5	3	3	1	3	3	1
	Mid-Garden	11	1	2	3	3	3	0
	Post-Garden	8	1	1	4	9	3	0
Suburban Site	Pre-Garden	0	5	4	3	9	4	1
	Mid-Garden	0	3	4	2	8	4	0
	Post-Garden	0	2	7	2	6	4	0

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected by the investigator in the form of interviews, observations, and open-ended survey questions. Quantitative data was collected in the form of anonymous surveys as well as quantitative analysis of some of the qualitative data. Interviews and Surveys were conducted at three separate time

points: before the start of the project, in the middle of the project, and after the garden had been completely harvested for the winter. The first data collection point sought to capture the ecological ethics context of the participants and congregations before the project could have a potential impact. The second data collection point sought to capture the ecological ethics context of the participants and congregations while the project was at its height of participation, and on the front of everyone's minds and awareness. The last data collection point sought to capture the impact of the project on the participants and congregations after a complete, seasonal garden cycle had taken place, and when the participants were no longer physically interacting with the garden or harvest on a regular basis.

Interview Measures

The interviews were conducted by phone based on the schedule preferences of the interviewees. The interviews consisted of a set of nine questions (see Appendices 2-7) and were fully structured, with additional questions of clarification. The questions were designed to explore the interviewees' experiences with gardening in the past as well as during this project, their understanding of the ethical value of the local food movement, and their incorporation of ecological ethics concepts (e.g., ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice) into these gardening experiences.

Observational Measures

Observations were made at both sites throughout the entire data-gathering period. The investigator took photographs and made notes by hand and on a hand held device. A combination of contexts was observed: the garden site, planning, and work itself; the worshipping congregations; small groups within the congregations; and post-worship congregational fellowship time. Observations took note of ecologically specific themes and activities in order to understand the context in which the research project was taking place as well as to observe any impact from the project.

Survey Measures

The surveys were given out to those attending worship at each site at the same data collection points as the interviews: before the garden began, in the height of the garden, and once the garden was completed for the winter. The surveys were self-administered. The survey consisted of a combination of multiple choice questions, Likert (numerical) scale questions, open-ended questions, and two quality control questions. The questions represented a control subscale (general Religiosity) and an Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) that utilized four Ecological Ethics Subscales: Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice. Some questions addressed more than one of these four concepts and were used simultaneously for

multiple subscales. (For the entire EEI, including answer options for each of the questions, please see Appendix 8.)

Response Rate and Population Sample

Each site had roughly 110 (overlapping but non-identical) worshipers per week. The surveys were handed out to approximately 115 people per site, per time point. An average of 22.6 surveys were returned for a response rate of 19.7% and a sample of 20.6% of the congregations. The demographic data indicates that the survey sample for each time point consists of an overlapping but non-identical sample of the congregations for both garden participants and non-participants. A total of 68 surveys was collected for all time points at the urban site and 68 at the suburban site as well.

The data was divided into subsets by garden participation. The first set of survey data asked respondents to indicate interest in garden participation, and the second two sets of surveys asked respondents to indicate actual garden participation. Based on the second two surveys, the surveys at the urban site captured an average of 66.7% of the garden participant population and 19.3% of the non-participants. The surveys at the suburban site captured 88.9% of the garden participants and 25.7% of the non-participants.

Religiosity Control Scale

Prior studies have assessed “religiosity” as a measure of adherence to the beliefs and practices of a particular religion.¹⁰ The five-question control Religiosity scale (see Figure 3.1) sought to establish the frequency and depth of church involvement, in order to generate a control scale with which to compare the Ecological Ethics Indices. Each question was given a range of multiple-choice answers except for Question 14, which provided space for listing of hymns:

Figure 3.1: Religiosity Scale

- Q3 How would you describe your spiritual life?
- Q4 How often, on average, do you participate in communal worship?
- Q11 How often do you participate in the Eucharist (Communion)?
- Q14 Please list your favorite hymn or hymns (list up to five hymns):
- Q23 How often do you say grace (bless food) before or as part of a meal?

Ecological Spirituality Scale

Current metrics of spirituality seek to establish spiritual “well-being” in relation to other factors, such as medical health.¹¹ These measurement tools assess levels of connection with ideas such as “awe, gratitude, mercy, sense of connection with the transcendent and compassionate love” in daily life.¹² The Ecological

¹⁰ Vernon, "Measuring Religion : Two Methods Compared."; Batson et al., *Religion and the Individual : A Social-Psychological Perspective*.

¹¹ Daaleman and Frey, "The Spirituality Index of Well-Being : A New Instrument for Health-Related Quality-of-Life Research."; Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale: Overview and Results."

¹² Underwood, "The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale: Overview and Results," 29.

Spirituality subscale is intended to assess the level of specifically ecological awareness incorporated into daily, congregational, and other spiritual beliefs and practices, such as spiritual experiences with and in nature. Questions provided multiple-choice answers, some of which included explicit references to the Creation. Question 17 was misinterpreted by too many people to be included, so it was excluded from the analyses. The Ecological Spirituality Scale (see Figure 3.2) consisted of the following 14 questions:

Figure 3.2: Ecological Spirituality Scale

- Q7 How often do you worship outside of church settings?
- Q8 How often do you meditate or pray outside of church settings?
- Q12 Please describe your understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist. In other words, what is the *main* point of the Eucharist ritual *for you*?
- Q13 Please describe your understanding of the *main* purpose of worship *for you*:
- Q15 Where do you most profoundly or intensely experience the presence of the Divine?
- Q16 What hymns do you like best that celebrate the Creation?
- Q17 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Churches should be sure to lift up the importance of caring for the Creation about once a year around Earth Day.”
- Q18 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Churches should integrate ideas of Creation care into worship every week, as an ongoing concern and priority.”
- Q19 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Our pastor should incorporate elements of Creation care into sermons with the same frequency that other issues of justice (racism, sexism, etc.) are addressed.”
- Q22 What do you feel can be considered “worship music”?
- Q24 If you say grace at meals, what elements do you *most often* incorporate into your blessing of the meal?
- Q26 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “The Bible offers many examples of celebration of the Creation and calls for the people of God to care for all the creatures of the Creation.”

- Q27 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "The Bible condemns nature worship, so we should be careful not to celebrate the Creation too much in worship."

Ecological Community Scale

Current psychological metrics of community building seek to assess the strength of a community and correlate its strength to the wellbeing of its members. These metrics assess ideas such as a sense of belonging, commitment, responsibility, reciprocity, and emotional and physical connection.¹³ Metrics designed to measure nature connectedness seek to gauge nature-focused enjoyment, empathy, identification with self, and responsibility. The questionnaire is designed to examine these ideas in terms of whether or not congregants include non-human creatures/ecosystems in their understandings of community. The Ecological Community Scale consisted of the following 10 questions (see Figure 3.3):

Figure 3.3: Ecological Community Scale

- Q12 Please describe your understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist. In other words, what is the *main* point of the Eucharist ritual *for you*?
- Q15 Where do you most profoundly or intensely experience the presence of the Divine?
- Q24 If you say grace at meals, what elements do you *most often* incorporate into your blessing of the meal?
- Q26 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "The Bible offers many examples of celebration of the Creation and calls for the people of God to care for all the creatures of the Creation."

¹³ Chipeur and Pretty, "A Review of the Sense of Community Index: Current Uses, Factor Structure, Reliability, and Further Development."; Chavis and Pretty, "Sense of Community: Advances in Measurement and Application."

- Q27 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “The Bible condemns nature worship, so we should be careful not to celebrate the Creation too much in worship.”
- Q29 Please describe who you consider to be members of the family of God (circle all that apply):
- Q30 Do you currently have any relationships with non-humans?
- Q31 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Environmental issues are important, but it’s more important to make sure we take care of the economy and people.”
- Q34 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement, describing a sermon by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism: “Humanity can be redeemed only if the rest of the Creation is redeemed as well.”
- Q35 In the Christian call to “love thy neighbor,” whom are Christians called to love?

Ecological Discipleship Scale

As noted above, religiosity relates to the beliefs and practices of a religion.

This research examined specifically ecological religiosity, and used the term “discipleship” in order to distinguish ecological beliefs and practices from ecological spiritual practices, such as prayer and worship. Ecological discipleship was assessed in terms of adherence to beliefs and practices that indicate awareness of issues of environmentalism and eco-justice. The survey sought to assess engagement in a variety of forms of ecological discipleship, particularly as related to food. Multiple-choice answers provided a range of commitment to ecological practices. The Ecological Discipleship Scale consisted of the following 11 questions (see Figure 3.4):

Figure 3.4: Ecological Discipleship Scale

- Q23 How often do you say grace (bless food) before or as part of a meal?

- Q33 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "Environmentally-friendly habits, such as recycling, are an essential, central part of Christian discipleship."
- Q36 How often do you eat meat?
- Q37 How often do you purchase locally grown produce?
- Q38 How much do you participate in your town's recycling program?
- Q39 How much time do you spend advocating for issues of ecological justice (environmental racism, mistreatment of Native American Indian peoples and lands, climate change, consumerism, urban fresh food, clean energy)?
- Q40 How involved are you in conservation of energy and renewable energy alternatives?
- Q41 What is your ideal form of transportation (if you could choose, issues of traffic, parking, and costs aside)?
- Q42 What kind of home would you ideally like to live in, if cost and distance were not a factor?
- Q43 How often do you use reusable options (mugs, water bottles, shopping bags, handkerchiefs, dishes, bulk food containers, dishcloths, napkins, etc.)?
- Q47 How often do you spend time outside?

Ecological Justice Scale

This research also focused specifically on concepts of ecological justice. Many Caucasian communities have not experienced the environmental racism of communities that represent the global majority, and therefore they may not understand or fully appreciate the eco-justice elements of ecological ethics.¹⁴ In addition, the concept of justice has traditionally excluded most or all non-human entities,¹⁵ although some ecological theologians have worked to expand the concept

¹⁴ Dianne D. Glave, "Rural African American Women, Gardening, and Progressive Reform in the South," in *To Love the Wind and the Rain : African Americans and Environmental History*, ed. Dianne D. Glave and Mark Stoll (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 192.

¹⁵ E.g., Nash, *Loving Nature : Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, "Love as Ecological Justice," 162-91.

of justice to include a more holistic, ecological framework within which peoples of faith traditions have a responsibility to give each creature its “due.”¹⁶ The Ecological Justice subscale measured the extent to which congregants understand eco-justice issues and the extent to which they include the non-human natural world in their conceptions of justice. Multiple-choice answers included options that incorporated concepts of ecological justice. The eight-question Ecological Justice Scale consisted of the following questions (See Figure 3.5):

Figure 3.5: Ecological Justice Scale

- Q24 If you say grace at meals, what elements do you *most often* incorporate into your blessing of the meal?
- Q25 If you say grace at meals, do you usually include the drinks in the blessings?
- Q26 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “The Bible offers many examples of celebration of the Creation and calls for the people of God to care for all the creatures of the Creation.”
- Q31 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Environmental issues are important, but it’s more important to make sure we take care of the economy and people.”
- Q35 In the Christian call to “love thy neighbor,” whom are Christians called to love?
- Q39 How much time do you spend advocating for issues of ecological justice (environmental racism, mistreatment of Native American Indian peoples and lands, climate change, consumerism, urban fresh food, clean energy)?
- Q44 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “The decision to recycle and eat less meat is a matter of solidarity with the poorer and more disadvantaged peoples of the Earth.”
- Q46 Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Native Americans¹⁷ were once treated badly by white settlers and

¹⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹⁷ Like Question 39, this designation should have read, “Native American Indians.”

European/US governments, but nowadays everything has mostly settled out fairly.”

Data Analysis

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to analyze the data. The research focused on qualitative analyses and used quantitative analyses as a way to validate the qualitative analyses.

Qualitative Analyses

The interview data was coded and analyzed by identifying common themes (repeated among multiple persons) and prominent themes (repeated or emphasized by one or a few persons). The themes were categorized in terms of their relevance to the scale categories of Ecological Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice. The themes were examined for relationships with each other to determine overlap and mutual influence; for trends over time; and for differences between subgroups (participants vs. non-participants; one site vs. another site). These analyses were used to identify consistent generalizations that could be used to construct a theory of the impact of the project on the participants and the congregations.

Qualitative Analyses of Interview Data

The responses for each interview question were examined for main points or themes. Each theme was summarized by a short phrase and entered into a spreadsheet. The themes for a particular question were then separated into initial responses vs. responses over time. These themes were also sorted in terms of relatedness to the four Ecological Ethics scales used in the survey (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice). The sorted responses were examined for repeated and prominent themes over time and in each of these four categories. Prominent response themes were also correlated with similar themes from other questions.

Qualitative Analyses of Observation Data

Research observations also sought to discern the ecological ethics context in which the projects would take place; to discern impacts of the project on the participants and congregations at the height of the project activities and engagement; and to discern more lasting impacts of the project once it had been completed. Observations focused on three main areas: the garden project, worship, and small groups. Gardening groups were observed from the initial meetings discussing the project, throughout the growing season, and through the final stages of winterizing the garden beds and processing the harvested food. Worship observations began a month prior to the beginning stages of the project and continued a month following the final stages of the project. Worship observations

included observations of weekly worship, post-worship fellowship time, and occasional post-worship lunches. Small group observations focused on on-site, adult, pre-worship small groups such as adult Bible study/religious education.

Qualitative Analyses of Open-Ended Questions

The EEI survey contained nine qualitative, open-ended questions. These open-ended questions provided opportunities for respondents spontaneously to incorporate concepts of the Creation, otherkind, and ecological justice into their answers. These questions sought to capture ecological beliefs and practices of congregants that might be missed by the restrictions imposed by closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions focused primarily on concepts of Spirituality, Community, and Justice. Responses to the open-ended questions were examined individually for ecological themes: inclusion of otherkind/Creation in concepts of community; inclusion of concepts of eco-justice and the local food movement in the Eucharist; and awareness/inclusion of ecologically and eco-justice themes in hymns and acts of worship. The open-ended questions consisted of the following (see Figure 3.6):

Figure 3.6: Open-Ended Survey Questions

- Q5: With whom do you worship regularly in community?
- Q6: How would you define worship? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered communal worship?
- Q9: How would you define prayer? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered prayer?

- Q10: How would you define meditation? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered meditation?
- Q14: Please list your favorite hymn or hymns (list up to five hymns).
- Q16: What hymns do you like best that celebrate the Creation?
- Q20: What kind of bread do you feel best embodies the most important purpose of the Eucharist? In other words, what should be true of the bread used in the Eucharist in order for it to represent what matters most about the Eucharist?
- Q21: What kind of juice¹⁸ do you feel best embodies the most important purpose of the Eucharist? In other words, what should be true of the juice used in the Eucharist in order for it to represent what matters most about the Eucharist?
- Q28: How would you define "community"? In other words, what must be true in order for someone to be considered a member of a community?

Quantitative Analyses

The quantitative data was subjected to statistical analyses in order to determine whether the quantitative data supported the conclusions suggested by the qualitative data analysis. Quantitative analyses were also performed on some of the interview and observation data. Scales that were incomplete were included in the data set; individual items not answered were excluded from analysis.

Quantitative Analysis of Survey Data

This research used the hypothesis that a hands-on nature connection project in the form of a vegetable garden would positively impact the ecological ethics of the

¹⁸ United Methodist Churches forbid all alcohol in their buildings, thus providing a safe space for alcoholics; grape juice is used in Communion: UMC, "Alcohol and Other Drugs - the United Methodist Church," United Methodist Communications, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/alcohol-and-other-drugs>.

participants and of the larger congregation; moreover, it hypothesized that higher participation levels in the garden project, participation over time, and specifically hands-on participation with the plants and the harvested food would have an increased impact. Conversely, people in the congregations who were not involved in the garden or participants who were less involved would experience less of an impact or no impact on their ecological ethics.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data. The survey questions consisted of numerical (Likert) scales, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Multiple-choice questions were translated into numerical data and combined with Likert scale questions to calculate scores for each of the individual scales (Religiosity, and Ecological Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice, or R, S, C, D, and J). The EEI Score was calculated as an average of the four individual Ecological Ethics Scales and consisted of 32 questions. One question was discarded because it was frequently misinterpreted.

The research originally intended to translate the open-ended questions into numeral data for inclusion in quantitative analysis of the EEI and subscale scores; however, these questions provided an opportunity for spontaneous inclusion of ecological ethics themes, which resulted in a low frequency of ecological ethics themes in the responses. The survey response rate was insufficient to handle the low frequency of ecological ethics themes in the responses to the open-ended questions; thus, these questions yielded a disproportionately large impact on the

EEI and subscale scores. Therefore, the nature of the open-ended question data excluded it from inclusion in the calculation of the scores.

These EEI and subscale score data were examined using measures of central tendencies and measures of dispersion. The data for each site were graphed over time, both as subscales and as the combined EEI score. Average scores were calculated for each site, for all surveys combined as well as for the two subpopulations of garden participants and non-participants. These averages were graphed to illustrate changes over time. The difference between average scores between the first and last time points was also calculated and graphed for all surveys and the same two subpopulations.

Quantitative Analysis of Interview Data

In addition to the qualitative analyses outlined above, the interview data was also subjected to quantitative analyses of central tendencies. Response themes per Ecological Ethics scale were tracked over time and converted into numerical values based on frequency of occurrence.

Quantitative Analysis of Observation Data

Worship observations included obvious mention of ecological themes in the bulletin and worship service as well as frequency of ecologically themed hymns. The

frequency of these occurrences was also tracked as numerical data for analysis over time.

Validity and Limitations

To assess the trustworthiness of the data and any inferences drawn from the data, the qualitative analyses were also subjected to validity evaluations, including concepts of investigator bias, politics, and generalizable findings.¹⁹ The quantitative analyses were subjected to measures of statistical confidence based on sample size and variance. The scope and limitations of the study were also analyzed.

Qualitative Validity Evaluations

Participatory action seeks to generate relevant, new, site-specific knowledge that achieves the goals set out by the research at the same time that it educates both the investigator and the participants.²⁰ The research was subjected to analyses to determine its efficacy for meeting these goals. Specifically, the research was subjected to dialogic, process, outcome, and catalytic validity analyses as well as an analysis of bias.

Dialogic Validity

¹⁹ Herr and Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*, 55ff.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

The investigator sought to represent the perspectives of all participants, for example, participants who expressed that they had not enjoyed or benefited from the project. The investigator also continually engaged in dialog with the pastors of each site as well as with other researchers in order to assess the validity of the research and its methodology.

Process Validity

This research specifically sought to gauge a process-oriented impact over time of both individual participants and the larger community. This research also gathered data cyclically over time, and drew from a significant and diverse representation of the participants.

Outcome Validity

In this case, the research involved assessing vegetable gardening as a potential tool for increasing the awareness of and engagement with ecological ethics in a congregation. The goal of the research was not for the congregational sites to create a garden successfully. The outcome of the study also did not depend on a successful increase of awareness or engagement of ecological ethics; however, there was an awareness and desire in the investigator and among the participants of the importance of ecological ethics, both individually and as a congregation; and this awareness was one factor that likely led people to participate in the research. In

other words, these two research sites were chosen because of a stated desire to begin a vegetable garden, so at least some of the participants took part in the project with the goal to build individual or communal ecological ethics, and these goals are related to but distinct from the research goals. To avoid confusion or pressure for the participants, the investigator repeatedly outlined the goals of the research and repeatedly clarified that the research goals did not depend on a successful garden project or project impact. For the purposes of this study, the methods used did address the original problem explored by the research.

Catalytic Validity

The research used a flexible approach to its goals and data gathering in order to capture transformation of the participants. The ecological ethics goals and roles of the participants included individual and communal learning and transformation; the research methods were designed to capture these goals and roles as well as changes in understandings of ecological ethics on the part of the participants. The investigator's positionality as an insider in collaboration with other insiders meant that the role of the investigator included both participation and other communal support. The research was designed to capture the transformation of the participants, which could not be separated from the transformation of the investigator. Transformation of the investigator's ecological ethics was also considered.

Democratic Validity

This study and its research tools took into consideration the possible benefits of the project to the congregation. Participation was open to anyone in the congregations, and the participants created their own democratic system of managing the garden projects. Distribution of project benefits is considered in the data analyses.

Bias

The investigator brought a bias in favor of local food initiatives such as gardening into the research project. The insider positionality of the investigator also gave the investigator a bias in favor of a successful vegetable garden project and EEI impact for each site. In order to address issues of bias in the data, the research included several different research methods, including both quantitative and anonymous methods. The interview process included repeating ideas back to interviewees to be sure of representing them accurately.

Quantitative Validity Evaluations

This study captured a certain percentage of each group studied: the garden participants and non-participants from each site. In order to determine the statistical significance of the quantitative survey data, the degree of variance,

standard deviation, and confidence was calculated for each scale in each set of survey data per site and time point (6 sets of data). The statistical significance of the difference over time in ecological subscales and EEI scores was measured with a paired t-test. In addition, sample size confidence was calculated in order to determine whether the survey responses from each subpopulation adequately represent each subpopulation. Based on sample size calculations, the surveys provide a sufficient percentage of each subpopulation to represent a sampling of each group; Table 3.5 shows confidence levels with indicated margins of error²¹:

Table 3.5: Survey Data Sample Confidence Levels. Surveys represent each subpopulation with at least 80% confidence.

	Urban Site			Suburban Site		
	Partici- pant	Non- partici- pant	Combined	Participant	Non- Participant	Combined
Confidence	≤ 85%*	85%	85-90%	90%	80%	85-90%
Margin of Error	≤ 15%*	15%	15%	15%	17%	15%

*Note: the Sample Size calculator was unable to accept samples of n=4 (the mean of the sample sizes for the second two data points of the participant subpopulation); instead, these calculations used n=5, so the actual Confidence and Margin of Error will be either slightly less than or equal to the numbers in the table.

²¹ Calculations determined using the online Sample Size Calculator:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>.

Limitations of the Study

Various limitations of the study are considered, including whether and to what extent findings are generalizable and the impact of surveys on survey data. Statistical significance in quantitative data analyses is also considered.

Group Analysis and Generalizable Findings

Group analysis uses ethnographic study of individuals not only to example people as individuals but also to study individuals as representative of particular groups.²² In this case, the populations studied included groups with entitativity within their denomination and congregation as well as the two subpopulations who participated in the garden projects.²³ This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine trends within the gardening participant and nonparticipant subpopulations as representative of both individual and group impacts over time.

In addition, although gardening is practiced universally, contextual research findings cannot necessarily directly transfer to other contexts. The main goal of this research was to explore the impact of the project in a particular context.

²² See Gary Alan Fine, "Towards a Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life," *SAGE Publications* 4, no. 1 (2003): 46.

²³ For social anthropology studies of group identity and change, see Brian Lickel et al., "Intuitive Theories of Group Types and Relational Principles" *J Exp Soc Psychol* 42 (2006): 28-30. Lickel et al. discuss various coherence levels of group identity (as an entity) and the ways in which group identity impacts individual identity.

Generalization to other contexts should take issues such as religious differences, demographics, and geographical location into account. Possible generalizable findings are discussed.

Survey Data and Survey Impact

Surveys have been shown to impact the thoughts and practices of those surveyed.²⁴ This survey included a control Religiosity scale as a benchmark by which to gauge whether the survey itself had a measureable impact on the beliefs and practices of the people participating in the survey process.

Summary

In summary, this research used a combination of interviews, observations, and surveys in order to gauge the impact of the vegetable garden projects on the participants and their congregations over time in terms of ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice. The research used a participatory action model and was approved by the Boston University Institutional Review Board. It included a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, analyses, and validity evaluations in order to capture as accurate a picture as possible of the impact of the projects and their potential for utility in other settings. The goals and limitations of

²⁴ Alix Peterson Zwane et al., "Being Surveyed Can Change Later Behavior and Related Parameter Estimates," *Proc Natl Acad Sci* 108, no. 5 (2011).

participatory action research were considered, such as the positionality of the investigator as an insider working with other insiders; the goals and limitations of small quantities of quantitative survey data were also considered.

CHAPTER 4: URBAN SITE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter details the qualitative and quantitative data from the urban site and presents the perspectives of the persons involved regarding the project, its impact, and specific ecological ethics concepts. The people involved in the project included the investigator, the participants, and the staff. The participants included general participants as well as someone who initially stepped forward to lead the project, referred to as the 'initial project leader'; the church sexton; and a participant who helped organize the project but did not want to lead it, referred to as the 'project organizer.' The staff included the pastor and the assistant pastor. The data includes observations, interviews, and surveys, separated into three time points: before the garden was built and planted; during the growing season; and after the garden had been winterized.

Members of the urban congregation began meeting in February of 2013 to plan the church garden project. The participants built and planted a vegetable garden in the form of two raised beds on the sidewalk on either side of the church sign at the front the building. The project faced urban logistical challenges, such as space and access to water as well as community cohesion in a transient congregation. The group did not develop a structured plan for tending the garden or for integration of the project and its goals with the rest of the congregation. They

instead relied on church staff to care for the garden, and the staff and others found spontaneous opportunities to distribute the harvest and integrate the project and its goals into the congregation.

The qualitative data (interviews and observations) showed some impact on the garden participants and staff, in areas such as awareness of urban gardening concepts, kinship with garden plants, and garden-related spirituality. The qualitative data also suggest some impact on the non-participants in the area of awareness of urban gardening concepts. Quantitative analysis of the survey data revealed no significant impact over time for either the garden participants or the non-participants.

Urban Site Observations

This section describes the findings of the observations for the urban site from before the garden was built and planted (pre-garden) through the harvesting season (mid-garden) and after the garden had been fully harvested and winterized (post-garden). Three contexts were observed: the garden project; a Sunday morning adult small group, called the Adult Forum; and church worship services.

The congregation expressed support for the garden project, through attendance at garden planning meetings and in conversations with members of the congregation. The garden participants planned and implemented the garden project itself by constructing and planting raised beds on either side of the church sign on

the sidewalk in front of the church. The initial project leader left for the summer, and none of the remaining participants stepped forward to lead the project. The remaining participants did not create a plan for watering, harvesting, or maintaining the garden. The raised garden beds dried out quickly, and watering the garden required either carrying water to the church or accessing the locked building to get water from inside the church. The care of the garden fell by default to the staff that had access to and regularly used the building.

The staff and other members of the congregation encouraged the congregation and the wider community to harvest the vegetables in a variety of ways, with some success. Once the gardens had been fully harvested, a staff member initiated a plan to replace the summer vegetables with autumn plantings, and the project organizer helped her plant edible, ornamental kale, which was also harvested and eaten by the congregation and possibly also by the wider community. At the end of the season, the project organizer also winterized the garden.

The investigator-led kimchi-making workshop took place after the growing season, and it was attended by a combination of participants and other congregation members. These participants helped serve the kimchi during fellowship time after worship two weeks later. Participants and members of the congregation mentioned enjoying the workshop and the kimchi itself. No one initiated a plan to replant the garden for the following spring, and the staff planted seasonal flowers in the garden boxes in the following growing season.

Worship services included regular mention of ecological themes in areas of spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice, particularly around Earth Day. The pastor and the sexton occasionally mentioned the garden and/or included the harvest during worship. The Adult Forum only rarely included ecological themes; it centered on specific weekly themes, and the discussion of the weekly themes rarely included ecological concepts.

Urban Site Pre-Garden Observations

This section details the garden project, small group, and worship observations prior to the planting of the garden. Between four and twelve people attended the planning meetings prior to the building and planting of the garden beds, with an average of approximately six people attending. The participants thoroughly researched possibilities for the location of the garden; for example, they explored sources of funding; they discussed potential sites in nearby parishioner yards, churches, and university spaces; and they also clarified restrictions on use of their historic building, city sidewalk space, and space around the church. They also considered the drawbacks and benefits of a location at the church versus a remote location. The initial project leader, project organizer, and sexton all attended the meetings and contributed to research for the project. Just before the garden was planted and built, the initial project leader withdrew her participation.

Worship services included ecological ethics themes, particularly around Earth Day. The investigator was invited to speak at the Adult Forum small group prior to the beginning of the garden meetings. No mention of the church garden was observed in worship or other meetings of the Adult Forum.

Garden Project Pre-Garden Observations

Prior to the start of the project, the investigator met with the pastor to discuss the potential of a garden. The pastor described both the positive potential for the project as well as possible challenges. He mentioned that a few church members had been discussing the idea of a garden for the past few years, and he mentioned that one of the church staff had also discussed starting a similar kind of project a few years ago. He also described the challenge of space next to the church, and he suggested a few possible garden locations in collaboration with university departments in neighboring buildings or with other local churches with more space.

The initial project leader called the first meeting for the garden project in early February of 2013. Interested members of the congregation gathered in the same space where the fellowship time occurred, and seven people attended. People stood in a circle to one side of the room, while the rest of the coffee fellowship continued around them. The space was also a transitional space between the sanctuary and the doors to the church, so people in the church were also coming and going from worship and other church related activities. Another group, the Young

Adult Group, gathered in that same space during fellowship time each week before leaving for lunch together. During the garden meeting, someone across the room announced the Young Adult Group was gathering to leave for lunch, so one of the people in the garden meeting left with them.

The initial project leader also announced and led the first few meetings, which included the project organizer and the sexton. At the initial five- to ten-minute meeting, people discussed possibilities for where the garden could go, possible problems with various sites next to the church building, and possible collaborative sites nearby, such as with another organization or in the project organizer's private yard, where she hoped to plant her own garden as well. The investigator gathered email addresses and volunteered to start an email thread for communication about the project. The investigator also communicated that she would be alternating worship attendance every other week between the two research sites so that the group could schedule meetings for weeks when she would be present.

In the week following the first meeting, the investigator began the email thread for the urban site garden project and included the Interfaith Power and Light Cool Harvest¹ church garden resource as an attachment. Throughout February and March, the participants continued to meet and discuss future meetings and ideas for the project over email; about six participants, sometimes including the sexton,

¹ IPL, "Sow a Cool Harvest: Faith Garden Ideas for a Cooler Planet."

explored seeds, seedlings, and locations for the garden, as well as ways to get the congregation and Sunday school children aware of and interested in the project. The group explored the possibility of combining small planters outside the church building somewhere with a larger plot at another church or in the project organizer's nearby yard. The pastor had notified the group via email that a nearby church was willing offer its land for a joint garden. The participants continued to volunteer, for example, to question the trustees about permissible use of the building or to contact the nearby church to set up the potential joint garden. The group decided to choose a location by the end of April. In email exchanges, three people, including the project organizer, indicated that planters by the church sign would probably work better than the other options, because they would be allowed, draw attention to the church, get plenty of sun, and could be more easily tended by more people. One participant handed out packets of seeds at an Easter morning congregational breakfast to raise awareness of the garden project in the congregation and to encourage gardening.

In April, attendance at garden project meetings ranged between four and seven people. The pastor confirmed via email that the church would help fund the cost of building raised beds by the church sign, and he advised not contacting the city to ask permission, but just going ahead with the project. The project organizer bought two raised beds, and the group decided to plant a garden in her yard in addition to the beds by the church sign. Participants continued to volunteer to

gather information about the various elements needed, such as soil, beds, seedlings, and seeds.

Small Group Pre-Garden Observations

The pastor invited the investigator to speak at the Adult Forum about issues related to local food and Christian ethics and in order to introduce the garden project. The investigator spoke at the Adult Forum on December 9, 2012, to a group of approximately 15 people. Many of the Adult Forum attendants responded enthusiastically to the presentation, and three people gave the investigator their email addresses to add to the email mailing list for when the garden project would begin. The topic for the Adult Forum was listed in the bulletin later that same day.

On May 19 (just before the gardens were built and planted), the Adult Forum hosted a speaker on the topic of St. Francis and “the spiritual nature of gardens, nature, and springtime.”² Other than this week, discussion in the forum focused on the specific topic and did not include ecological themes. One additional ecological ethics comment was observed in the Adult Forum in the months prior to the implementation of the garden project. On March 3, after the garden planning meetings had begun but before the building of the garden itself, the Adult Forum discussion on the topic “What is the Church?” included comments of the importance

² Scott Campbell, "May 19 Sunday Worship Bulletin" (Harvard Epworth United Methodist Church, 2013), 5.

of environmentalism and nature connection. In response to the question, “What is the nature of God’s presence in the world?” one person responded, “We should start with nature; it’s more incredible than anything we could give or comprehend.” No other ecological ideas were observed prior to the building of the garden beds at the end of May.

Worship Pre-Garden Observations

Both laity and church leaders included themes of ecological ethics, including food related ethics, during worship. Ecological themes of spirituality, community, discipleship, or justice activism were included in two of the four worship services observed in the two months preceding the first garden project meeting; for example, in January, a member of the congregation raised the issue of climate change and political activism against the Keystone XL oil sands pipeline during the time for congregational concerns and celebrations.

Garden planning meetings began in February and the garden was planted at the end of May. During the months of March, April, and May, including Earth Sunday on April 21, references to ecological themes were observed in five of the seven worship services attended by the investigator. The Earth Sunday service included Creation themed liturgy and preaching as well as an invitation to bring “Earth-friendly,” local and/or organic food to the monthly church potluck lunch the following week.

Urban Site Mid-Garden Observations

The prominently visible garden beds by the church sign raised the awareness of and interest in the project among the congregation; the location also inhibited the ability of the participants to care for the garden. None of the other participants took on official leadership of the project; the project organizer could not water the beds but she continued to care for the garden in other ways throughout the growing season and winterization process. The lack of official leadership impacted the cohesion of the participants as well as the integration of the garden project with the congregation. The staff and the sexton stepped forward to care for the garden and to find ways to share the harvest with the congregation, including in worship, and with the wider community.

Garden Project Implementation Observations

In May, the group decided in meetings and through email discussions to gather on the Monday of Memorial Day weekend (May 27) to build and plant the beds by the church sign, as well as to plant seeds in the ground and buckets of tomatoes along the ramp rail. The initial project leader volunteered her spouse to get wood and help build the beds. On May 22, the initial project leader emailed the group to communicate that her spouse had decided not to provide wood or to help build the beds, so the investigator provided the wood, hardware, and tools to build

the boxes. Other participants brought soil, power and gardening tools, landscaping fabric, seedlings, and seeds. Five people came, including the project organizer, and they assembled the garden beds by the church sign on the sidewalk and planted the seedlings as well as some seeds in the beds, on the ground by the accessibility ramp, and in buckets along the ramp by the front of the church building. One participant took several photos, and people noted how attractive the beds looked on either side of the sign. The project took about three hours, and around six different people, including people coming or going from the church and passersby, stopped to look at, discuss, or help with the garden during that time. The participants had varying experience with gardening; they discussed and demonstrated ideas about sustainable agriculture, planting techniques, seedling arrangements, and possibilities for the additional beds in the project organizer's yard. The issue of watering the gardens was raised, but no plan emerged for ensuring the garden did not dry out (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Planted Garden Beds – Urban Site (Used with permission; 5/27/13)



In June, three participants communicated via email about the garden; they expressed relief that the city had not requested that the beds or planters be removed, and they discussed possibilities for sharing the first lettuce harvest with the church during the monthly potluck lunch as well as possibilities for making plans to get the garden watered regularly. The initial project leader reported that the assistant pastor had offered to water while coming and going from the church during the week, and that she had responded to the assistant pastor that the issue needed to be clearly defined. One participant offered to water on an upcoming day that she would already be at the church but indicated that she would otherwise not be available to water regularly.

Garden Project Maintenance Observations

In mid-June, a participant suggested after church that some vegetables were large enough to harvest, and two participants and the investigator harvested kale and shared it with others during fellowship time. At that time, one participant remarked that the plants needed water, but no plan was made to water them. The investigator offered the kale to people during the fellowship time; three non-participants declined to try raw kale, and approximately six others tried or enjoyed eating the kale and discussed its preparation and health benefits; these people also expressed enthusiasm at eating vegetables from the church garden. At the potluck lunch on June 30, the assistant pastor discussed watering the garden with the investigator; the assistant pastor indicated that the initial project leader would be gone during the summer, and she said she would tell the other people working in the church office to feel free to water the garden. No garden lettuce was evident during the lunch.

In July, no emails or other communications were observed regarding the garden or its maintenance, such as watering, harvesting, or addressing the dryness of the beds and researching strategies to improve soil water retention. The investigator was not able to visit the site during August, and no communications were observed regarding the garden project. In September, the garden bed appeared alive and to have been almost fully harvested. The buckets of tomatoes

appeared harvested, dry, and possibly dead; the seeds planted by the rail did not appear to have sprouted (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3):

Figure 4.2: Garden Bed – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 9/8/13.)



Figure 4.3: Tomato Planter – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 9/8/13.)



The assistant pastor contacted the group via email and offered to replace the remaining vegetables with more attractive plants. She then contacted the investigator by phone, and she agreed to use edible plants such as kale for the purposes of the research project. During that phone call, the assistant pastor reported that the garden looked uncared for, and expressed a strong hope that the group wanted the church to appear inviting and nice to anyone coming to the building. She also expressed frustration that no leadership had emerged to take responsibility for the garden; she reflected that her job included general hospitality,

so many tasks fell to her by default. She also reported that she and others had watered and harvested vegetables and that she had regularly encouraged people to harvest as well.

In mid-September, the assistant pastor and the project organizer harvested the remaining vegetables and replaced the plants in the beds with ornamental kale. During the monthly potluck in late September, a non-participant inquired about the kale; she and the project organizer announced during lunch that people should harvest and eat the kale. She asked people to water the garden if they came by the church, and she also put a sign on the boxes that read “Please Help Yourself!” and included a food-related picture, so that people would know the kale was edible (see Figure 4.4):

Figure 4.4: Autumn Kale with Sign – Urban Site. (photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 10/6/13.)



In October, the garden kale appeared to have been somewhat harvested.

In November, the soil had receded and the plants appeared to need more soil.

One plant had been uprooted and left next to the bed on the sidewalk (see Figure 4.5):

Figure 4.5: Uprooted Kale – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 11/3/13.)



In discussions after worship, one participant offered to fix it up and plant the kale more deeply. By late November, the kale appeared mostly harvested. The investigator emailed the group to offer to host a kimchi-making workshop at the church and use some of the remaining kale from the garden. Two people responded enthusiastically to the idea of the kimchi-making workshop, which was scheduled for mid-December.

In early December, the project organizer removed the last of the kale and placed evergreens over the beds. She also included a decorative wooden sign that read, “The Garden Is Resting for the Season.” She notified the group by email and included a photo of the garden, saying, “I came by early this morning to uproot the last of the cabbages, but all was frozen solid! Also laid a few evergreens on top and put a sign there to announce the resting time”³ (see Figure 4.6):

Figure 4.6: Winterized Bed – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee 12/8/13.)

³ Project Organizer, *Email Communication to Harvard Epworth United Methodist Church Garden Group* (December 8, 2013).



The kimchi-making workshop was postponed until January due to weather.

Small Group Mid-Garden Observations

The Adult Forum small group did not meet throughout the summer. In the autumn, no additional topics or comments related to ecological ethics were observed in the Adult Forum. In July, the sexton mentioned to the investigator that she had encouraged the Young Adult Group to take two tomatoes from the garden to

include in their picnic on a beach, and she reported that the tomatoes had been delicious.

Worship Mid-Garden Observations

In the six months between the implementation and final winterization of the garden project, ecological themes were observed in two out of six worship services attended. During one of those services, the sexton preached about resisting violence against women and against the Creation, and she used the church garden as an example of a response to the call to care for the Creation. She also lifted a prayer of thanksgiving for the garden during the time for congregational concerns and celebrations. The pastor also mentioned having used tomatoes from the garden in a children's sermon at an additional worship service (see Question 2, page 119 below).

Urban Site Post-Garden Observations

The participants and members of the congregation reflected gladness that the garden project had taken place, and the pastor referred to the project during a sermon. Participants and other members of the congregation attended a kimchi-making workshop and later shared the kimchi with the congregation during fellowship time. No one stepped forward to continue the project for the coming spring.

Garden Project Post-Garden Observations

As mentioned above, the kimchi-making workshop was postponed until January. The sexton had invited other members of the congregation, including the Young Adult Group, to participate in the workshop. In early January, the investigator, the sexton, and two additional participants brought the materials needed to make kimchi to the church. Eight people participated in the workshop, including a Korean member of the congregation and a member of the church youth as well as members of the Young Adult Group. The workshop attendees helped set up a table and find bowls and utensils in the church kitchen. The workshop was set up in the fellowship room area, so everyone coming and going from the church doors and the sanctuary could see it was happening (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8):

Figure 4.7: Kimchi Workshop 1 – Urban Site: Participants are making kimchi with Korean and youth congregation members. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 1/5/14.)



Figure 4.8: Kimchi Workshop 2 – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee.)



Because of the postponement, no garden kale remained to be included in the kimchi. Four workshop attendees, including the sexton and a garden participant, took kimchi home for personal use; the investigator took the remaining kimchi to be shared with the congregation after fermentation.

The group decided via email that the investigator would bring the kimchi to the fellowship time after worship two weeks later, and the sexton and another participant offered to bring lettuce and rice to eat with the kimchi. Both of them enthusiastically described enjoying eating the kimchi at home, and the sexton shared a photo of her kimchi with the group, saying, “I’m eating the kimchi with

homemade Korean tofu dumplings! Here's my Instagram-ready pic of tonight's dinner!"⁴ (see Figure 4.9):

Figure 4.9: Participant Kimchi – Urban Site. (Photo used with permission.)



Members of the congregation also enjoyed trying the kimchi during fellowship time, including participants and the pastor (see Figure 4.10):

Figure 4.10: Kimchi During Fellowship Time – Urban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee.)

⁴ Sexton, *Email Communication to Harvard Epworth United Methodist Church Garden Group* (January 18, 2014).



As of the end of February, no participants or staff had initiated plans for the garden in the coming year. The following year, staff and members of the congregation planted seasonal flowers in the boxes and watered them.

Small Group Post-Garden Observations

No mention of ecological themes was observed in the Adult Forum after the garden project had ended.

Worship Post-Garden Observations

The kimchi-making workshop took place in January, after the garden project had finished. During the three months following the garden project, ecological themes were included in four of the six worship services observed. In one service, the pastor included ideas of growing local food in his sermon, and he referred specifically to the vegetables in the church garden as an example of choices that promote life. The other ecological references were not central to the worship service; for example, during the time for concerns and celebrations, a member of the congregation raised a prayer of thanksgiving for an energy efficient building that helped the environment.

Urban Site Interviews

Interviews were given at the three time points: before (pre-garden), during (mid-garden), and after (post-garden) the garden project. As judged by later participation levels, the seven pre-garden interviews included four garden participants and three non-participants. The pre-garden interviews were conducted in the time window after garden planning meetings had begun but before the garden was constructed and planted at the end of May. Interviews were conducted based on participation and availability of the interviewees. Because it took considerable effort to schedule participant interviews, no non-participants were interviewed after the pre-garden set of interviews.

The interviews revealed a commitment to ecological ethics within the congregation, consistent with a congregation interested in a garden project. In the pre-garden interviews, the respondents expressed investment in ecological ethics, including the areas measured in the surveys: personal habits (discipleship), social activism (justice), nature connection (community), and spirituality. The respondents showed impacts in each area as well: spirituality, such as garden-related theology and liturgy; community, such as kinship with the plants; discipleship, such as private garden projects and incorporation into other congregational ministries; and justice, such as raised awareness of urban garden possibilities and ministries.

Four people were available for multiple interviews over time: the project organizer, two project participants, and the pastor. The assistant pastor and the sexton were each interviewed once, at the mid-garden and post-garden time points, respectively. Questions are included below in both garden participant and non-participant forms.

Question 1: Environmentalism and Creation Care

The respondents all began with strong commitments to ecological ethics. They reported varying impacts of the garden project on their ecological ethics in terms of awareness and behavior.

Question 1 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Do you consider yourself an "environmentalist," or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?"

Five of the seven people initially interviewed either embraced the label of environmentalist or noted that they did not reject the term, even if they were not sure if it applied to them. Any resistance to the term stemmed either from a sense that they should be involved in more activism to be worthy of the term, or from a kind of extremism associated with the term. Three people expressed that they tried to have environmental personal habits but did not participate in environmental activism enough to have earned the label of environmentalist:

Interesting. I own the label of environmentalist... I'll own that label – you can slap it on me – if you'll listen to my message, to what I have to say. I think the word slightly turns people off sometimes, they make assumptions... without really understanding who I am and where I'm coming from. It shuts down dialog sometimes.⁵

I wouldn't describe myself as an extreme environmentalist, because of lack of time or other things on my plate... I think I should call myself one, but not an activist. It's important in our daily living and how I educate my kids, and I have an appreciation for it; it's just my [lack of] time, but I do appreciate people that do [activism].⁶

⁵ Interviews were confidential; names of interviewees are withheld by mutual consent. Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, "Dissertation Interviews: Compiled Transcripts" (Boston University School of Theology, 2016), 14. Transcript file available upon request.

⁶ Ibid., 20.

One person rejected the term; she noted that it can alienate people, and she expressed a preference for the integration of ecological ideas into the rest of life:

I don't like the word "environmentalist"; I'm also resistant to the word "Christian," although I consider myself both. They carry unfortunate and exaggerated stereotypes... I have been working on behalf of the environment professionally for two decades, but I would never use the word "environmentalist" to describe myself. And there isn't another word I use; it doesn't need a label, it's something we should all do, like brushing our teeth. "Environmentalism" suggests life on an extreme edge... there's a judgment there, and I don't like it.⁷

Question 1 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Since beginning this project, do you consider yourself more of an "environmentalist," or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?"

Five of the six mid- and post-garden interviewees reported that the garden project had raised their personal awareness about issues such as growing food, compassion for the plants in the heat, or spiritual connections to gardening. Three respondents mentioned that the prominent location of the garden raised both participant and congregational awareness about urban food and nature connection and ministries. During the mid-garden interviews, the pastor described this awareness:

Because of where it is, I have to think about it every day – I have to walk right by it when I come in... It's made me more aware of the seasons around me; I find myself thinking when it rains, well, that will be good for the church

⁷ Ibid., 18.

garden; or when it's hot, I need to throw a bucket of water in there. Having it so front and center has made me more connected... It reminds me of the fragility of life, the importance of caring for one another, the interdependence of things living on this planet. ...I feel I think probably a greater kinship with the environment through this medium.

In the last set of interviews, the pastor also included ideas of food specifically:

It's the first time I've done... a [church] vegetable garden; we've had flowerbeds at other churches that I've helped to take care of. It reminded me of some things I don't always think of in the city... where food comes from, and that it doesn't grow in grocery stores; it reminded me of the need to care for the sources of production of food. I also appreciated the sort of hospitable way in which it was done, to make it available to passersby... it was a good reminder for me in a number of ways of our connection to the Earth that can easily get forgotten in the city.⁸

One participant also spoke of the impact on her plans for the future. In her mid-garden interview, she described general awareness of the source of food:

Seeing the garden in front of the church was a great reminder not just of the environment but of food and how people are fed – where our food comes from.⁹

After the project, this participant included ideas of the impact over time and into the future:

Having it out front there, which I'm so glad we did, instead of in someone's yard, I think that was the best thing we did overall; because it's a reminder every time you see it. It reminds me of the fact that we can actually grow our own food. It inspires me. It puts thoughts, especially toward the end of the season, about next year: what can I do next year? You look at what's growing, what's doing well; it's like seeds of thought for the next season. Watching something from week to week is a reminder of just how amazing it is that

⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁹ Ibid., 51.

plants take sunlight, and water, and dirt, and turn it into food. And the fact that it was right there – you couldn't miss it – you could watch the progress without going out of your way. It reminds you of how amazing the Creation is.¹⁰

The project organizer, who reported no impact, allowed later (in response to Question 2, page 118 below) that the church garden project may have inspired her to plant her own garden this year. She suggested reasons for the lack of an impact, such as already having her own garden and the lack of group cohesion:

I feel like I'm pretty much the same as I've been for a long time; I'm a gardener and I do my own garden... Personally, I don't feel like I've been changed; and that's possibly because there wasn't that much real connection among the people who were doing the project. People seemed interested at the outset, but I didn't have the sense of a cohesive group that might have elevated our levels of concern... That's not to say I don't think it was worthwhile or valuable. I love those little boxes in front of the church... They exhibit to the community at large that this is a community that cares about growing things and sharing them outside our community.¹¹

Question 2: Garden Experiences

All respondents were questioned about previous experiences gardening at the time point of their first interview. All respondents had previous experience with gardening; differences with this garden project included primarily communal and spiritual aspects.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹¹ Ibid., 48.

Question 2 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables. Was it a positive experience for you, neutral, or negative? Why and how?"

Of the ten total respondents, nine described positive gardening experiences, three of which were described as "very positive." Seven of these responses also included descriptions of the community, such as grandparents, wider family, and wider community, who played an important role in these positive experiences, which occasionally included hard work or frustration:

My grandfather was a gardener, and I remember going to their house, and he had these amazing gardens. I remember as a kid spending time in his gardens. My parents didn't have a garden at my house where I grew up. My grandfather's garden was my connection.¹²

This is something I've dreamed about all my life, to garden... The first time we were able to have a garden at our house was three or four years ago. Ever since, we try every spring to plant some things... I grew up in Sao Paolo, an urban city... I lived on the 14th floor of an apartment building, but it was full of plants... On the weekends we would go to the mountains... we had a few things but not really a vegetable garden; a lemon tree, an herb plot... In Brazil, people are accustomed to grabbing things out of the wild; we had a lot of mango trees growing around, so we were comfortable eating from the natural trees in the area, and also other things, like chamomile and other things that would grow in the wild. We would get it and make tea out of it; we did that all the time.¹³

My grandfather had a garden, and he was just three miles from us... I got pretty tired out picking blueberries for him – he had about a hundred big blueberry bushes. That was pretty tiring in the hot sun and all that, but I also really appreciated being able to eat the food that he had grown and that I had helped with. He always grew lots and lots of tomatoes and my grandmother

¹² Ibid., 15.

¹³ Ibid., 20.

would can and can and can. She would also freeze a lot of the vegetables that he grew, so throughout the year I would get to eat vegetables from my grandfather's gardening. That was really wonderful. Since I've moved to Boston, as an adult I had a community garden plot down on the Charles with some of my housemates... And now I get to garden at home... This recent stuff has been a very positive experience, except for the little roadblocks, with the seed sales not going well last weekend – this is developing into something that might be a business.¹⁴

The one respondent with negative experiences, who did not participate in the project, also described the impact of family on her “limited” experience:

I'm not much of a gardener. My family was into gardening and landscaping, and it was like a religion to the point that as kids we were discouraged from playing on the lawn because it was perfect; not just enjoying grabbing a tomato and eating it; I was punished once for that. There was a strange family dynamic around gardening – I'm a little bit gardening averse. My association with gardening is that it is rigid and unpleasant. My parents didn't come from much money, so when they had nice things, including a garden, it was precious to them. How things look really matters to them – a value I completely reject... I don't think it's that important.¹⁵

The sexton also noted the influence of a grandparent's garden, and that her parents had not gardened successfully and had felt a sense of shame.

My grandfather had bees and he had a garden, a flower garden and a vegetable and fruit garden. Mostly vegetables; he especially liked asparagus, so we had a lot of fresh asparagus when I was a kid; so it's always been a treat for me... He taught me how to pick carrots once, and he would take us into the flower garden and teach us the different parts of a flower by pointing to it, which is a lot better than a textbook, I think. And he had us stand in the garden and observe bees from the apiary... and he would explain how the bees cross-pollinate and the genetic benefit from that. My Mom's got a black thumb, too, and she's pretty ashamed of that, because Grandpa was so good at growing things. She had a failed tomato attempt. But now that I've been at church and talking to [another garden participant]... I think I understand

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18-9.

why my Mom's attempts failed, and she should have picked an easier vegetable.¹⁶

Seven of the nine people interviewed currently had some kind of berry patch, fruit grove, or vegetable/herb garden in a yard, community garden, or rooftop.

Question 2 (Mid- and Post-Garden Project): "Please compare your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables, with this current project. How was this project different? Was it a more positive experience for you, neutral, or more negative? Why and how?"

In the urban site, two of the three participants expressed positive differences between the church garden and other gardening experiences, such as a greater sense of community:

It gave me a reason to connect with people... I felt like [the project organizer] and I talked a lot about our gardens. It started conversations with people that I might not have otherwise. It was a stimulus to creating friendships and starting conversations with folks. That was nice, to connect with folks in the gardening and learn some things. In the past, I had a community garden plot, but it was more solo, more on my own. So this was different, definitely a catalyst to starting conversations with folks after church, and being more friendly and relational.¹⁷

Most of my other gardening has been just me. I did do a community church garden a few years ago with someone, but we worked on it at different times; so I have limited experience in actually any kind of communal garden project. Even though I could have participated more – and I wish I had – I still liked the communal aspect of it; multiple people cared about what happened with the garden, and if we did it again... maybe if we had a signup, where you

¹⁶ Ibid., 93.

¹⁷ Ibid., 53.

knew who was doing something when, or a group thing on Sundays before church... I really liked the communal aspect of it, as opposed to my personal gardening in the past; I have grown food, but I didn't have as many people to be excited about it. It felt very different. At least for me, I'm more likely to do something like that if I have the social aspect, the social benefit, along with it, building community.¹⁸

The project organizer expressed disappointment that the garden had not built more community. In her mid-garden interview, she also suggested the church project may have influenced her decision to plant a garden at her own house:

It wasn't as engaging overall as my own garden was; partly that was due to the inconvenience of trying to get to the church, and not having a sense that other people were involved on a regular basis. There wasn't the kind of teamwork that would have made that feel different. Maybe I could say that this summer, I had much more of a garden on my own than I've had for quite a few years. I don't think I could probably attribute that to the church project, but maybe there was some spillover.¹⁹

In her post-garden interview, she expressed frustration at the inconvenience and at the lack of leadership and organization among the participants:

It was off site for me, and therefore much more awkward to think about even getting to. I did some leg work at the beginning... that sort of came to nothing... and I kind of threw up my hands after that... so I went ahead and did my own garden in the yard. ...I knew I wasn't going to be over there on a regular basis; it's too difficult to find a place to park and get inside to get the water. We had a long, dry spell; that was really too bad. I don't know who watered it – maybe the staff threw water on it from time to time; but there was nobody to my knowledge that agreed to tend it on a regular basis. I thought that was too bad, but I wasn't willing to be that person, either. It must have been disappointing to see a project start and not have people follow through; but [the staff] rose to the occasion and did take care of it.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

The staff responses mirrored the participant responses. The pastor also described positive differences between this garden and other garden experiences, including both the spiritual aspects and the opportunity to minister to the wider community. In his mid-garden interview, the pastor described feelings of kinship and compassion for the garden:

This was manageable; it was small enough that I didn't have that overwhelming pressure of needing to weed – I hate having to decide what to weed – that decision-making is not relaxing for me. But I did feel a kinship with these little boxes and the tomato buckets – one of the things that happened from time to time was that people would use the tomato buckets as trash receptacles; I found myself being very indignant at their disrespect for a growing plant and a food source. So I would fish trash out of the bucket. In general, I had a positive feeling about them being there, at the same time that I had an increased sense of responsibility, and I worried about them more – like raising grandkids. I felt more of a sense of community obligation and responsibility not to let them reflect badly on our stewardship.²⁰

In his post-garden interview, the pastor specifically reflected on the spiritual and wider community aspects of this garden experience:

One of the things that was positive about this was the intentionality with which the whole project was connected to our faith story... In previous flower gardens, you talk about the beautification of the building or the grounds but this was a very intentional effort to relate our faith to our ecology, and I appreciated that about it. That's more positive. And it kind of happened subtly; it wasn't something that banged you over the head; but it was there, I saw it every day when I went in and out of the church... I did use the tomatoes for a children's sermon at one point, too, and then gave the tomatoes to the kids to take with them. It was connected with what we're trying to teach our children, too, about God's provision... One of the things that surprised me a bit was the respect of passersby... I thought there would be more folk walking by who would just grab a tomato, but for better or worse, that didn't happen very much... They ripened and had to be harvested

²⁰ Ibid., 46-7.

before they went to seed; I think there was a respect for not pilfering from someone else's garden. Nobody vandalized anything.²¹

Like the project organizer, the assistant pastor expressed both positive elements as well as frustration at the lack of leadership and plans for caring for the garden as well as the logistical difficulty of watering the garden compared to a home garden:

The only [gardening] experience I've really had was at my home... It was right there, easy to get the hose out. This one was an ordeal... It wasn't an easy thing to water and tend it... It wasn't bad or different... I think that because there was not a clarity of roles of who was responsible, it was easy for people to feel that they weren't responsible, or everyone was responsible... It is curious to me that no one wanted to have it at [the project organizer's] house, where she volunteered to take care of it... This has been great, it's planted a seed. We got those boxes built; regardless of what happens, there were good things, and people took food home.²²

Question 3: Garden Participation

Respondents combined an interest in building relationships and community within the congregation with other interests specific to gardening and food-related awareness and ministries. All but one respondent described some personal, general, or logistical aspect or idea that could be improved upon in future or that they wished had developed differently.

²¹ Ibid., 82.

²² Ibid., 55-6.

Question 3 (Pre-Garden): “Why did you decide [not/to] participate in the church garden project [and what do you hope to get out of this project personally]?”

Six of the seven pre-garden interviewees described wanting to build community and relationships with others in the church, both for themselves and for the benefit of the congregation. Five people specifically mentioned wanting to provide fresh produce or gardening opportunities to others, or wanting to support more stewardship of the Creation:

I’m sure there are people that don’t have their own property and don’t have the place to have a garden, so that’s why I really like the idea. I just want to be supportive of that, and I also like the community feel of it. That’s what I hope to get out of it personally. Sure it’s nice to have your own fresh vegetables, I suppose that is the main reason, but in the summer it’s so cheap to buy some of these things anyway, so I do like the community idea of it a lot.²³

It’s an opportunity to make a contribution to maybe demonstrate to others what can be grown in a city, to be able to connect with other people who are interested in working with the earth. The garden appealed to me because I’d really like to get my hands back in the dirt again – as a group thing. I always found it was very Zen – very healing.²⁴

I’m considering participating because it feels like a good thing for a church to do – another way to engage with the planet, the people, serving neighbors – a powerful new direction the church could go. Personally, I’m hoping to explore that as another way to serve.²⁵

Three people mentioned a love of gardening, and one participant specifically described a desire to explore its spiritual aspects:

²³ Ibid., 13-4.

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

²⁵ Ibid., 19.

I think I decided to participate partly because I'm interested in this spiritual connection to the natural world – I'm really kind of interested in that. I've always understood it environmentally but I'm just coming into the understanding of the spiritual side of it now, later in life – this project gave me an opportunity to understand how they're connected.²⁶

Question 3 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "Now that the gardening has [begun/ended], are you glad you decided [not/to] participate in the church garden project? What do you feel you [are getting/got] out of this project personally?"

The three garden participants interviewed all reflected either gladness or no regret at having participated in the project; and they all mentioned satisfaction at building community with others in the congregation. Each mentioned regrets: not participating more; wishing for more group leadership and cohesion; and wishing for the idea to spread more:

I felt a little bad that I wasn't able to be as involved as I had wanted to. I moved, there was a lot happening... I'm definitely glad that I participated and got to know people in the church a little better. I wish I had had more energy to put into it over the summer; I kind of blinked and it was over. But I'm definitely glad I did it, and that I got to know some of the other folks. I think it was a big idea in the beginning, and there were big expectations. But I think in the end... I'm just glad I got to know people a little better. It maybe wasn't the outcome I was expecting, but I think things still happened.²⁷

One participant included some of the ways the harvest had been used in her response; first, in her mid-garden interview:

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁷ Ibid., 53.

Yes, and I think it's a great thing to do. I think it's a great group project, and I wish that more groups would do this kind of thing. Helps build relationships within the church, helps people to get to know each other. And I did have some kale one day. It was good – exciting. Very local, very fresh.²⁸

And again, in her post-garden interview:

The connection with the other people involved is probably the main thing that I got out of it. I was thrilled that you came to make kimchi... to see the variety of people – and it was a small group, but [it included] a young woman – and he's Korean, the man that was working on it – I don't remember – this was so cool. I thought, this is what life should be like. You're not doing things by yourself. It hardly seems like work when you're talking with other people... Interesting mix of people you don't see at other times.²⁹

The sexton particularly appreciated the wider community aspects of this particular garden:

I was actually really happy to see those beds go up – we did it! We actually did it! I think for me, the biggest satisfaction was knowing that people who walked by were eating the vegetables; particularly because we have people who sleep on our steps, and I imagine that a lot of the people who were taking [vegetables] were the ones who sleep on our steps; unhoused people maybe don't get a chance to have fresh vegetables that often; it really makes me happy that they have something nutritious to eat, for free.³⁰

The staff also reflected a mix of gladness and regret; they expressed gladness for the accomplishments of the project for the church and the wider community, and they also expressed regret at the logistical and organizational challenges. In both later interviews, the pastor included a desire to continue the project, were he not retiring:

²⁸ Ibid., 52.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 94.

If somebody said to me, shall we do this again, I would say, by all means, let's organize it a little differently so that we share the responsibilities, but I think it's been a good and positive thing for me and the community. I enjoy it – the reminder of our connectedness; it's hard in the city, sometimes, unless you're really intentional about it, to appreciate our connection to the earth. We pave everything over; I see the trees and flowers in people's gardens; but to have that sense in being personally connected to something growing from the earth is difficult to establish in the city; it reminded us of our common mother in a way that I don't always take time to appreciate.³¹

My own awareness of our connection to the Earth was increased, and I'm glad for that. I was a little frustrated that we didn't have better teamwork in terms of taking responsibility in caring for it; it felt like some of it was just left to the church staff by default, without anything being decided about that, and that meant basically to me, because others on the staff didn't really view that as their responsibility, and I felt a sense of obligation about it... I could have done something to set up a rotation, and I didn't. If we were going to do it again, we've learned that lesson now; I hope they do it again; I think we ought to make it a community garden and available to people to help themselves... It would be fairly easy to set up, and then nobody would be overburdened.³²

Despite frustrating elements, the assistant pastor expressed no regret about the project overall:

I wouldn't say that I have regrets. I feel good that I didn't insert myself into the process and rescue it. I'm glad the [kale] is out in front now; I think it looks pretty. I'm not disappointed with the results.³³

³¹ Ibid., 47.

³² Ibid., 83.

³³ Ibid., 56-7.

Question 4: Dirt, Soil, and Earth

The interviews included both positive and practical or unpleasant ideas and associations. Over time, participants included fewer practical or unpleasant ideas in their responses. Neither of the staff participated in mixing the dirt and planting the garden.

Question 4 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth."

Five of the seven pre-garden interviewees described enjoyment when interacting or working with dirt along with unpleasant or practical considerations. For three people, the idea of dirt evoked past memories of playing or gardening:

I think back to that garden my father started on the hillside in Delaware. I just remember huge clods of very rich soil... I was very comfortable with dirt. I do tend to wear gloves now because I can't stand to get it under my fingernails; you can injure yourself, and I need my hands to do other things, like painting; I even like the smell of it – it's something that's appealing to me. Not quite the same as bread dough or cookie dough, but along those same lines – pleasure.³⁴

Microbes, worms; I think about digging my hands into it. Soft, dark, rich dirt that I can scoop up and run through my fingers.³⁵

Fun – play fun, not gardening fun, that's work. I think of my daughter dipping a new sneaker carefully into a giant mud puddle – we laughed. When we picked strawberries with my aunt in Florida in the middle of winter. I never

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ Ibid., 12.

minded getting dirty. It's fun, so long as it's not associated with the work of gardening. I have a lot of fun with my kids.³⁶

A vital part of growing food. I guess I also wonder about what was in the dirt before, because just growing your own food doesn't mean it's going to be safe or healthy, depending on what that dirt is like.³⁷

Four people also described a sense of reciprocity with dirt as the foundation of life:

I just think about who we are and where we are; nature itself – we depend so much on the soil to live and survive, and that's where you start and that's where you go back to. It's like the foundation of who we are – connectedness – you're connected to the soil, even though as a biologist we know that it's cycling all the molecules, and you feel like it's part of who you are.³⁸

I think about life; I think about life coming up, and sort of roots – that there's a life above ground, and a life below ground – it feels very grounding thinking about dirt, soil, and earth... I think that's why I like working the garden on Saturday mornings – you get your hands dirty, and it's like *life* – where things start.³⁹

Question 4 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth."

Although two participants initially included practical or unpleasant ideas in their responses, both of their post-garden interviews included only positive ideas of gratitude and connection:

³⁶ Ibid., 19.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

³⁹ Ibid., 16.

It's the absolute necessary ingredient for producing our food; I guess I've gardened enough not to be grossed out by dirt on my carrots. It is totally amazing... I'm sure we don't know everything about what's in there – all the microbes, minerals – we don't know what's in there; but it's all working together to produce food.⁴⁰

It feels good to me; it feels like something that belongs in my hands. It's not foreign; touching the dirt, touching the earth brings me into a closer, more intimate connection with nature. I don't mind having my hands in the dirt, although I do tend to wear gloves. Working with the dirt was just fine.⁴¹

The pastor first reflected on both nature connection and practicality:

Certainly the mystery of the nourishing Earth; that there is the potential for sustaining life in that, and it's wondrous to me that a little seed can yield all of the amazingly different forms that emerge. Sometimes dirt is a nuisance – when you track it across your carpet; there is that ambiguous relationship with it... I think this garden made us all more aware of those connections than we would have been.⁴²

In his last interview, the pastor focused on spiritual ideas and nature connection:

When you put those words together, there's a kind of a richness; [it] brings my old Testament professors to mind; Harold Beck... loved to talk about the earthiness of the Hebrew scriptures; they were really grounded in the soil; the word Adam – adamah – speaks to the earth; there's that deep sense of connection to the Creation that dirt and soil bring to mind. One of the other places I think of is our back garden in Maine, where we have this deep, rich soil that our flowers grow in, and our raspberries and blueberries; there's a very positive connection to things.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., 90.

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Ibid., 47.

⁴³ Ibid., 83.

The assistant pastor had only one (mid-garden) interview, and her response included only negative associations:

Dirty is part of dirt, but that's what I think about; grime; I'm going to get my clothes or my hands dirty. Dirty in a bad way. I hear people talk about holding the earth in your hands, and falling through your fingers, and I'm like, 'really?' It has resonances of dissecting an earthworm to me; it's like, no.⁴⁴

Question 5: Growing Local Food

Participants cited health, societal, and awareness reasons for growing food. Two participants mentioned that the project had further educated them about gardening ideas and possibilities. The staff and the sexton also included spiritual benefits of food gardens in their responses.

Question 5 (Pre-Garden): "Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?"

Six of the seven pre-garden respondents, including three of the four garden participants, described gardening as a transformative experience that teaches important life lessons:

It makes you realize about process: that food is a cycle, and it's work, to sustain ourselves; it's also very nourishing, it tastes amazing. It reminds people that it's not just there – understanding what goes into it – what goes into that tomato... Since I've started growing vegetables... I can't go back to my old ways; now I know what a really good tomato tastes like or really good

⁴⁴ Ibid., 57.

chard; when I go to the grocery store, I look at produce very differently now.⁴⁵

It's almost like we live in such an artificial world and society... it's just knowing that you can do it – you can go back to basics, you can get what you need from the earth without having to go to a supermarket. It's just a sense that going back to what we actually need, and how much our life is far from that basic need... It's just a time for me to see if I had to go back to a very simple life, I would be able to do it and be happy.⁴⁶

Six respondents, including all four participants, also described the taste, health, and safety benefits of gardening and growing pesticide-free food:

The less chemicals like pesticides or herbicides that we ingest, the better; so if I grow it myself I know what I put on it or don't put on it; and also, the fresher something is, the more nutrients you get from it.⁴⁷

Four of the seven respondents, including two of the four participants, also mentioned wider social ethics benefits of gardens:

No question. If you're talking in terms of individual basis, as opposed to mass agribusiness, I think it is good. It's very good for people to see how something starts, to have the awareness that you have a little seed you can hold in your fingertips, put it in the earth and nurture it, and it can turn into some lush, green plant with a fruit or veg on it that you can eat. How miraculous is that?⁴⁸

I know a lot of people don't have that experience – they eat what's in front of them, not really knowing what goes into it. I'm also excited with the church garden in particular, I think it would be exciting at some point – in my vision – to do harvest meals with the church from the garden. I think that would be

⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

so fun, a whole meal that just comes from the garden from the church; it would make me really happy to share that with the church community.⁴⁹

Question 5 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?"

After the garden had begun, two of the three participants described a greater awareness of gardening ideas:

Everyone has to eat; seeing the boxes in front of the church has made me much more aware; when I'm anywhere now, I think – oh, there could be a vegetable garden here. When you see an empty space, or a space with grass, you realize how many places a garden could be, and would look good, and add to the beauty of the setting.⁵⁰

One participant also reflected reluctance to harvest from the church garden:

I think it's beautiful; I love watching stuff grow... I fully intend to do it next year, and I learned things, so I will do it differently... I like the way that kale looked in the church garden; I wouldn't mind some of that in my garden. I never thought of cooking that kind, I wouldn't know how to prepare it, but that's a whole other thing. I did get a couple tomatoes... [The pastor] said to take them, that he had had enough; so I took them home and they were good... They were really good. I almost felt a little guilty taking them, because we were supposed to share them with the community, but no one else was taking them.⁵¹

The sexton and the staff described spiritually transformational aspects of gardening. The sexton reflected on humility:

⁴⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

It makes you more aware of the world in which you live, and how dependent you are on other organisms, when you actually participate in the growing of it: the soil, the bees, God for providing the water through rain. It's a totally different experience from walking into a grocery store and picking whatever you want. You can feel like the master of the universe when you do that; but when you actually grow something, you have to collaborate with God. It's not all you when you're a gardener.⁵²

The assistant pastor reflected on the theological and practical ideas of scarcity and abundance:

We've lost our connection with where our food comes from; because of that, we've abdicated our capacity to provide out of a place of plenty. Losing the connection has helped increase our perspective of the world as a place of scarcity, rather than of plenty... That gets back to my environmentalism as a spiritual discipline or practice; it's impossible to grow something and not be just blown away by nature.⁵³

In his first (mid-garden) interview, the pastor also reflected on the theological significance of food gardens in terms of awareness and gratitude:

Absolutely; I think we should do it again... One of the things that growing our own garden does is to remind us of that relationship with the Earth and with the God who blesses us in this way. Things don't grow in packages.⁵⁴

In his post-garden interview, the pastor explored garden-based theology further:

I think it takes us back to our roots; that's always good. We get so disconnected when we live in paved over worlds and enclosed concrete boxes, it reminds us that we are people of dust, and to dust we will return – it's not a bad thing, to situate us. It cuts through some of the idolatry of the self in a way, and I don't mean to wax too theological here, but it's easy to

⁵² Ibid., 95.

⁵³ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 47.

forget from whence we come; it's a subtle reminder when you're growing a garden, that we're connected to the Earth in a vital way.⁵⁵

Question 6: Congregational Impact

The respondents agreed that the garden had positively impacted the congregation; they described two main kinds of impact: the tangible impact of eating or sharing some of the harvest, and the visual impact of a sidewalk garden in a prominent location for both churchgoers and people in the wider community.

Question 6 (Pre-Garden): "Do you think this project will benefit the whole church? If so, how?"

Four of the seven pre-garden interviewees felt the project would or already had positively impacted the whole congregation, through raised awareness of urban local food and its spiritual connections:

I think it's been helpful to the church for this group to say, we know it's going to get vandalized, and that's part of our purpose... It's so cool – what a neat thing for the church to be doing – for us to act, and let go, and let it be what it is, and hope for the best. I think it's a really good thing.⁵⁶

I'm convinced it will; I think it's important to living well. Your relationship with God is important to living well. Being in the moment as much as you can be. Being in your physical place, meaning, knowing your earth, your yard, what you can grow from your soil, eating your own efforts/labor, is part of living a good life; this is going to expose people, including me, who might not

⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 10.

otherwise have focused as much on place and being self-sustaining in a place – I think it will help open that door to us.⁵⁷

Five respondents mentioned that the impact on the congregation would increase with more interaction with the garden, for example, if it ends up in a visible location, or if the congregation can share in the harvest:

Depending on where it takes place, I think it could affect everyone, or only a few. For it to affect as an example to the whole church, people would need to be aware of it and have access to it in a way that they could actually see what was happening.⁵⁸

Right now it's hard for people to get – there's no tangible product. When the first head of lettuce comes up, you have the ingredients to make salad, people will realize, we grew this, on the table – it changes the conversation. Right now it may be a little too abstract for people – but when we put seeds in the ground and nourish them and hope they come up – I think that's when it will start to feel more real.⁵⁹

Question 6 (Mid- and Post-Garden): “Do you think this project [is benefiting/has benefited] the whole church? If so, how?”

Three of the six people interviewed after the garden had begun specifically mentioned the visual impact of having a garden out in front of the church on both the congregation and the wider community. Respondents spoke of the impact in terms of raised awareness for nature and food growing and/or sharing opportunities in the city. Four of the six interviewees specifically mentioned the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

potential for the garden to have a greater impact should it continue in the future and should the church become more organized or invested in it:

Everybody could see it on the way in or out, and whenever any subgroup of a church has a soul-enhancing experience, it makes the whole church better, because people talk about it, people share their experiences... People were worried that people were stealing food; but if people took food and ate it, we should be happy about that. I like putting the signs – ‘Help Yourself!’ It nourished our souls to feel like we were sharing something. If people took the food because they were truly hungry, that’s meeting their most basic need. If they tried it because they thought oh, it’s been a long time since I picked a tomato; or, I’ve never picked a tomato! I think it could have that experience of knowing that food can grow in all kinds of places, and they might think of doing it themselves.⁶⁰

One participant also reflected on the role of the demographic nature of the congregation in the implementation and future of the project:

I think it has lots of potential... A lot of the people here are transitional; there’s a middle demographic that is missing; you have a lot of folks just out of college, who know they are going to be here a short time – they kind of come and go; and then the folks who’ve been there for a long time, and they really know the ins and outs. What’s missing is that middle – those folks who are done with college, not really transitional, trying to plant some roots in Boston, starting families; that’s missing... The garden project had a lot of energy in the beginning, but... it didn’t feel like it was ever taken on as a big project... people couldn’t connect. But I think it has a lot of potential for the church. The fact that we’re so urban, too – how to tackle that issue, space. It will be interesting to see what happens in the future – if someone continues it.⁶¹

The sexton also discussed role of the demographics of the community in the project; she reflected that the garden not only raised awareness of eco-justice issues

⁶⁰ Ibid., 90-1.

⁶¹ Ibid., 53-4.

and urban fresh food, but that these ideas connected with her past memories of her grandfather's garden and with her spiritual journey:

I think it did. For the same reason it benefited me, in that it raised awareness of eco-justice issues; and with regard to the maldistribution of food in our society... We have two churches: the Young Adult Group, and the others, and they don't always integrate. It would be cool if the people in the Young Adult Group might want to get involved with helping [the project organizer] expand the garden, because it would give her a chance to interact with us... Looking back, I wish I'd paid more attention to my grandfather's lessons in the garden... At his memorial service, I talked about how he taught me how both death and life have a purpose, which was a very important concept to me when he died. He talked about how decaying plants and animals enrich the soil... Grandpa taught me that death was a part of life, and we couldn't have life if it weren't for some death; death of organisms enriches the soil so we can eat, and we depend on this cycle of life so we can survive... it's okay for me that Grandpa died, because death is not something to fear or shun, but it's part of life.⁶²

Question 7: The Harvest

The respondents expressed hope that the vegetables would be shared within the congregation as well as with people who are hungry or people in the wider community. People within the garden group, congregation, and wider community all needed encouragement in order to harvest and eat the vegetables, some of which went to each of those groups.

Question 7 (Pre-Garden): "What do you expect or hope will happen to the food that is grown, and why?"

⁶² Ibid., 96-7.

Six of the seven people initially interviewed hoped the whole congregation would have an opportunity to eat the harvest somehow, such as at one of the monthly church lunches. They expressed hope that an opportunity to share with the whole congregation would provide a celebration as well as raise awareness about the garden itself and inspire people to eat healthy food. Six of the seven also expressed hope that the vegetables could be used in the church's food ministries, donated, or would help feed the wider community around their church. Two respondents also noted that they hoped the vegetables would be eaten and not go to waste.

That we give it to people in the community that need food. I volunteered for a while – more than a year – at Casper, which is a wet shelter... Fresh produce was never there. By some chance if things were about to spoil at the grocery store, they might donate it... you couldn't get fresh vegetables. The stores don't like to serve poor communities because the margin is so small. If you're lucky they'd have some orange tomatoes and some old iceberg lettuce. I'm hoping we can supplement the needs of the community around us. After a big old feast to celebrate all our own good food.⁶³

I hope it's eaten – we don't let it sit on the vine – it turns over. My first hope is that it's eaten by the people of the church. My second out would be that we would use it in outreach... it would be really nice to use it in the ministry that we do with the sandwiches for the homeless. I've participated in that a couple of times and it's a powerful thing – to add this element of, what's in your sandwich – we grew – would be pretty cool... and to be able to hand that sandwich to someone and know, those tomatoes, that lettuce – I grew that just for you – that would be really nice. I hope that we share it – that's my biggest goal – that we share it with those in the community, and if there's enough, beyond ourselves.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

I guess a lot depends on what kind of size of harvest there would be; it would be nice to distribute it somehow to people who may not have access to fresh produce, for example, food bank, food kitchens, food pantries... It might be nice to have some kind of display or use in one of the community lunches so people could see what happened from the group growing food.⁶⁵

Question 7 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "What [do you expect or hope will happen/was done] with the food that [is/was] grown, and why?"

The urban interviewees had mixed knowledge about what had happened to the harvested vegetables. Of the six later interviews, one participant mentioned enjoying having them at the after worship fellowship time, and the pastor reported that several people in the congregation had taken some. In her mid-garden interview, the project organizer continued to express hope that the vegetables were not going to waste and concern for taking responsibility for the garden:

I haven't given it any thought; if I happen to notice in another week or two that it was frosted and looking bad, I would probably take it upon myself to pull it out... I would hope that people would take it... My expectation would be that one of us, some of us, maybe just me, would uproot it and cover the beds for winter... I had hopes that the church people would eat it, think of plucking a tomato on their way out. We are spread around, few of us are living near and would be walking by in the middle of the week... But at the very least, that some of us church people would benefit by using the vegetables that were grown.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 50.

In her last interview, she reported that she had taken tomatoes while pulling up the plants to winterize the garden, and mentioned that she was surprised and pleased that the garden had not been vandalized:

I was surprised it wasn't vandalized; I had a shop for eight years, I was always repairing things... I got two tomatoes at the end of the summer, when we were pulling the plants out. [The pastor] said to take them; he said he'd had plenty.⁶⁷

The sexton recalled that she had mentioned the garden in her sermon (see Worship Mid-Garden Observations, page 103 above) as a way to illustrate the concept of a biblical call to care for both the people and the land together:

I wasn't aware of [the harvest] in fellowship time; but I definitely mentioned it in my sermon at the end of July. I was reading this commentary... [which] drew a parallel between Hosea's wife Gomer and the land; and how she was abused, and the land was abused... when they saved the land in the Hebrew Bible, they're talking about both the people of Israel who live on the land and the land itself... It was the end of Hosea where the hope appears, where it talks about water, a spring of water flowing up in the land... new hope is envisioned through nature, an image of nature. So I [preached] about how part of our response to Hosea can be taking care of the land, making sure we're good stewards of it... We've heard this text of terror, what do we do about it? One of the possible responses I offered was to participate in the church garden and to honor the land in that way.⁶⁸

The pastor again described using the tomatoes in a children's sermon to illustrate the idea of sharing (see Question 2, page 119 above); he reflected that people had needed to be encouraged to pick the vegetables, so he continually invited people in the church and in the wider community to harvest them:

⁶⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 98.

I picked some of it; parishioners took some of it home from time to time; and some of it rotted. It may well be that some passersby helped themselves as well... I invited [the homeless people who sleep on our steps] at different points during the summer to help themselves to the garden... The way that it worked out, was that it became an opportunity for spontaneous hospitality. We didn't grow enough that we could sustain people's hunger or anything like that; it became an opportunity for gift giving.⁶⁹

Two participants specifically expressed reluctance to harvest the vegetables out of a desire to leave them for others that might need them more; one also included thoughts for the future of the garden and its importance in the visible image of the church:

I didn't harvest any for myself; I thought, maybe somebody needs it more than I do... I liked having it in the fellowship time, because then everyone felt like, whoever wanted to could have some... It's a great thing for a church to do... People might be looking, and look at the garden, and say, oh, what is this place? And notice that it's a church... we have so many people walking by, that's a big thing here... One thing I might do for the future, say next year, is actually have a signup schedule for watering. One of the reasons I didn't commit was because I didn't know what I was doing every Tuesday; but if I could have even just signed up as a substitute... I think it's great that the homeless people ate some. If you want to reach out to the community... you give something. Every time you give something, and don't ask anything for it, people realize that the church can be a place where their needs can be met.⁷⁰

Two participants also mentioned enjoying the kimchi-making event as a way to connect people in the congregation to the ideas behind the garden itself. The project organizer also expressed regret that she had not participated:

⁶⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 91.

[The kimchi] seemed like a nice follow up to the whole idea, even though it wasn't the actual kale from the actual garden... I'm sorry I didn't get to taste the kimchi, I had to leave quickly after church... I could smell it, though.⁷¹

Question 8: Garden Associations

The interviewees expressed positive feelings associated with gardening as well as acknowledgment of its challenges. Over time, some included additional ideas about theology or community.

Question 8 (Pre-Garden): "If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden."

All of the seven pre-garden interviewees described feelings of peace and joy associated with nature and gardening; three people included ideas of meditation or spirituality:

I just feel like there's a component of hope. You do something, hoping you're going to see a product. It's exciting.⁷²

I feel free, because I'm outside, and I like that feeling of being in one place, not rushing around, and I also like the way I'm thinking a lot of times without realizing that I'm thinking. I'm not reading, I'm not trying to be intellectual or figure anything out, but while I'm doing physical labor, my mind is just kind of thinking about things in a leisurely way... And also, I like the physical part of it – that you're moving, bending, squatting – you're moving.⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., 88.

⁷² Ibid., 21.

⁷³ Ibid., 14.

Five of the respondents described interactions with the dirt and/or plants that brought them pleasure:

The first word I'd say is, relaxed. There's a certain sense of meditation to it – because it can be kind of repetitive... I look forward to it every week. I do it early Saturday mornings, and I really look forward to it – my phone is nowhere near me, I'm totally unplugged, I'm down in the dirt getting dirty – I love that, too – you come home with dirt under your fingernails... I see a lot of pavement all day, and so to know that I have this 20x20 little plot of earth... it's my little place to de-stress, get my hands dirty, and plant new life, and nourish the earth. Therapeutic. Living in the city, it has become pretty important. I didn't know that when I started – how important it was going to be.⁷⁴

It's complicated. I really enjoy being able to grow fresh, wonderful, nutritious, delicious food. I don't always know the best way to take care of it so it won't get attacked by bugs or slugs, or whatever. But I want to grow food organically, not use pesticides, or herbicides, and all that stuff... I talk to the plants, too, both [my gardening partner] and I do that... Words of encouragement and admiration.⁷⁵

Four people also included some of the frustrating or unpleasant aspects of gardening, such as hard work or failed efforts, which nonetheless did not detract from the overall positive physical and spiritual experience:

Generally, I love the idea of it; I love to see shoots and things coming up. I find in later years that it is very tiring and I don't have anywhere near the stamina that I used to have. It's much harder than it used to be; I'm pushing 70 and other things have worn me down a bit... Apart from the physical discomfort, I still like being out there very much... Meditative. Close to nature. I ruminate – I can think about things – maybe even be in prayer – certainly not deeply, but other things go away, and it's just you and the plants, you can focus outward.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

I felt like it was the right thing to do; like when you're faced with the option to tell the truth or to lie. When I planted blueberry bushes, even though the deer ate them all... it felt good.⁷⁷

Question 8 (Same as Pre-Garden): "If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden."

In later interviews, one participant began to include spiritual and theological ideas in her responses. In her mid-garden interview, she described feelings of spiritual connection:

I feel closer to nature and closer to God. It lets my mind be free. I'm observing all the wonders of nature, which to me is the beauty of Creation, and the complexity of it, too. In my head, I think it's harsh to see a bird eat a worm, but really, it's the complexity of nature.⁷⁸

In her post-garden interview, she reflected additional ideas on spiritual connection:

Even though we're not controlling a lot of it, we have some contribution; so we can feel some tiny bit of creator in ourselves. We planted these seeds, we put these plants here, and look at how they're doing. We're connected to the Creator.⁷⁹

The sexton explored the spiritual value of gardening for her personally:

Because I have a history of killing plants, unintentionally, I feel anxious; I'm afraid I'm going to hurt them... I feel like I need to shadow [some of the garden project participants], they know what they are doing. I would like that.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 91-2.

I'm focused... I find it interesting that I have felt focused when tending plants, because I really only find that awesome focus when I'm doing something like singing. That's probably a really important observation for me, because singing is what I do to stay spiritually healthy. I wonder if adding some gardening to my routine might do me some good.⁸⁰

The project organizer increasingly reflected on the important role of community in gardening. In her mid-garden interview, she included thoughts on the leadership of the church garden:

I guess the one thing that might have really saved it is if one person had been willing to be the chairperson and manage it; and I made it clear that I didn't want to be in charge; and [the initial project leader] probably said that too – she was moving – and so it became the kind of thing where it was really hard, other than these email chains, it was hard to know who was doing what. I had the sense that most of the people were waiting to be led with what to do, rather than saying, here's an idea, I'll take charge of it.⁸¹

She later reflected on the nature of gardening alone versus with communal support:

I had more support in the old days... and I've been widowed... I've had less enthusiasm for it since I have been single, because that's something we always did together... Actually, I find it much more of a lonely task to do it myself; I think that's not good and that's not right, but that's how I feel. I'm much better if I have a friend out there with me. It's a lot harder to do it myself; I don't have half the energy or the enthusiasm. Something about doing it alone took the heart out of me to do the gardening I used to. I'll still do it – I still have satisfaction when it comes out right; but the actual doing of it, there's something very different when I do it myself... I don't think we're meant to do it alone. Throughout civilization, they've been communal activities, growing and preparing food.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid., 98-9.

⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

⁸² Ibid., 88-9.

The staff included a mix of pleasurable and unpleasant aspects of gardening.

The assistant pastor enjoyed observing the plants:

I like the process. It's really nice to be outside... my Dad's a gardener; he's almost blind, but he has an amazing garden... It's not my love, but I love watching things grow, particularly if you do things from seed, but even with small plants.⁸³

The pastor admitted to frustrating moments in his mid-garden interview:

On my best days, I feel that sense of peace and connection. Some days, you know the way this worked out this summer, and I'm rushing to get somewhere and I notice the plants are wilting, and I rush up to get some buckets, I've felt the burden of that responsibility. But for the most part, it's given me a sense of joy and peace.⁸⁴

In his post-garden interview, the pastor focused only on the pleasant and therapeutic aspects of gardening, such as relaxation and stress relief:

I think it kind of gives way to a mindlessness, in the best sense of the word. I had a fellow in a previous congregation who had been a high powered executive in Westinghouse, and in his retirement, he liked nothing better than to come into the church and volunteer to fold bulletins and stuff envelopes; he used to say, it gives me such pleasure to do a task that allows me to relax into the moment and do something repetitive. In some ways for me, gardening can be like that; I'm able just to relax into the moment, without having to worry about things that normally crowd in on my mind. There's a meditative quality would be one way to put it.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 84.

Question 9: Gardening as Worship

The interviewees all responded that gardening was or could be an act of worship, for example, in the ways it connects people to the Divine, the Creation, and important spiritual life lessons. Over time, the participants began to explore more specific practical and theological ideas about gardening and worship; in contrast, the pastor also grew more specific but became more reserved about gardening as worship.

Question 9 (Pre-Garden): "Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?"

In the urban site, all six of the pre-garden interviewees believed that gardening could be considered an act of worship. Five respondents described gardening as a way of connecting with the Divine, and three of those responses included ideas of connection to the Earth or life in general:

It is very sacramental and sacred. It connects us with being rooted and grounded, literally. It teaches us to trust something greater than ourselves – there's only so much we can do, and then we have to let go and trust. It's such a gift to have produce from your garden – joy and gratitude. Those are all elements of worship.⁸⁶

Oh absolutely... I just feel that way – connected, close, and by tending plants, we know we put the seed in the ground and water it and watch it and weed it; but we know – or should know – it's not us that is making it grow. It has

⁸⁶ Ibid., 11.

life of its own, and it doesn't come from us – we can help it happen, but we don't make it happen. It's "other."⁸⁷

Three people explored the potential of the idea, particularly in the reciprocal relationship between gardener and garden as an important aspect of the potentially worshipful nature of gardening:

I think yes; I think it's just like if you think about worshiping God as taking care of each other, and that's also part of taking care of other lives, even though you're going to eat it, it's part of nurturing something and being aware of how we're all kind of connected.⁸⁸

Question 9 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?"

As mentioned above, four people at the urban site (three participants and the pastor) were interviewed at multiple time points, so they had an opportunity to reflect on this question over time. Interestingly, three of them answered in a definitively affirmative way initially, but their answers became more complex over time, including concepts of intent, service, and connection with the Divine. One participant initially gave a general answer:

I think it can, because anything that I do that is not wrong or harmful can be an act of worship. And for me, anything when I'm outside in nature, I can definitely be worshipping.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14.

She later began to explore other elements of spiritual life, such as service:

Yes, it can, because I feel like whether you're doing it for – if we're talking specifically about growing food, more than flowers – if you're doing it for yourself, or for someone else, or both – doing it for yourself is an act of worship because being healthy mentally and physically is the way God wants us to be, and if it's for someone else, then an act of service is an act of worship.⁹⁰

Another participant initially described the prayerful nature of gardening. She later explored additional theological ideas:

The sense of caring for something that's growing, recognizing that you are not the one that's causing it to grow: you're a steward and an enabler. You're setting them up, so they can be expressions of holiness, nature.⁹¹

The one participant who did not initially answer in a definitively affirmative way became more affirmative over time. In her initial interview, she began to consider the idea:

So interesting – I have never thought of it as an act of worship... But maybe that's why I'm so interested in the garden for [the church]: it's pushing me beyond my comfort zone a little... I've always considered it more like my connection to the Earth... I am earth, and earth is me, so here I am nourishing the Earth and nourishing myself... Where does God come into that; that's a whole new thing. Yeah, I think it could... rebirth, renewal, all those things. I would be so interested in seeing how. I don't think I know how at the moment; I think I would be really interested in seeing how.⁹²

Her later interview began to explore possibilities for communal ways to garden with worship in mind.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁹¹ Ibid., 89.

⁹² Ibid., 18.

I've always sort of gardened by myself, so to think of gardening with a group as an act of worship; I see that as a possibility. I'm thinking about when you go to church every Sunday; what would it be like to go to the garden every Sunday, be there with garden gloves. It would be interesting. I think it could be an act of worship. I think that the idea of connecting yourself to something beyond ourselves – you can definitely get that from gardening, the idea that there are greater forces out there than us.⁹³

The sexton explored ideas of spirituality and discipleship, as well as communal and gender dimensions, of gardens and food preparation:

Worshiping God in our everyday lives has a lot to do with following God's commandments... to care for the Earth and the creatures in it... it transforms us into the likeness of Christ. If we're showing love towards others, or toward plants, we're doing what God would have us do... I told [a Korean colleague] I had made my own kimchi, and he got so excited. I think I'm going to make it again during the summer. I looked it up later; I learned that Korean women learn how to make it from their mom and grandmas, and they learn by watching and tasting, and it's been referred to as a female bonding activity. I really liked that quality where we had you and [older women and youth in the workshop], so there were women of all ages taking part in that. I really enjoyed that element of it.⁹⁴

The pastor initially responded positively and included ideas of kinship with otherkind:

Oh, of course. I mean, any time that we put ourselves in a position to receive the blessings and bounties that God bestows upon us with intentionality, that's an act of worship, of course, to the extent that we are able to appreciate being connected. Worship is all about connecting with God. We can worship by ourselves, but the best worship is where we gather together and share the experience. You remind me that we can – it might sound too touchy feely, but I think we do commune with other living things, and I feel a sense of identification with that tomato plant that's out there, and maybe together we worship God.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 99-100.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 48.

His later interview began to explore more details about the nature of worship and gardening in terms of the value of intentional worship experiences:

I don't know whether it's gardening, or whether gardening is the conduit to worship; and I don't know whether that's too fine a distinction... the pieces that are missing for me... confession, absolution, being called, being sent. I'm more comfortable with understanding it as prayer, communion, connection; which can be a form of worship, but I think I'd want to define worship a bit more rigorously.⁹⁶

The assistant pastor explored the ways in which gardens integrate with spiritual formation and ministry.

It depends on how you define worship, but if you define it as honoring God and learning more about God, and celebrating as co-creators of God's realm, it seems gardening falls right into all those things. Already I'm thinking of liturgy you could use to plan a whole worship service with people out in a garden.⁹⁷

Urban Site Surveys

Surveys were distributed at the three time points (Pre-Garden, Mid-Garden, and Post-Garden). In the survey data graphs below, these time points are labeled "Before," "During," and "After." The data was further separated into two sub-populations by self-reported participation in the garden project as indicated in a question at the very top of the survey; surveys with no response to the question about participation were grouped with the non-participant subpopulation. The

⁹⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 58.

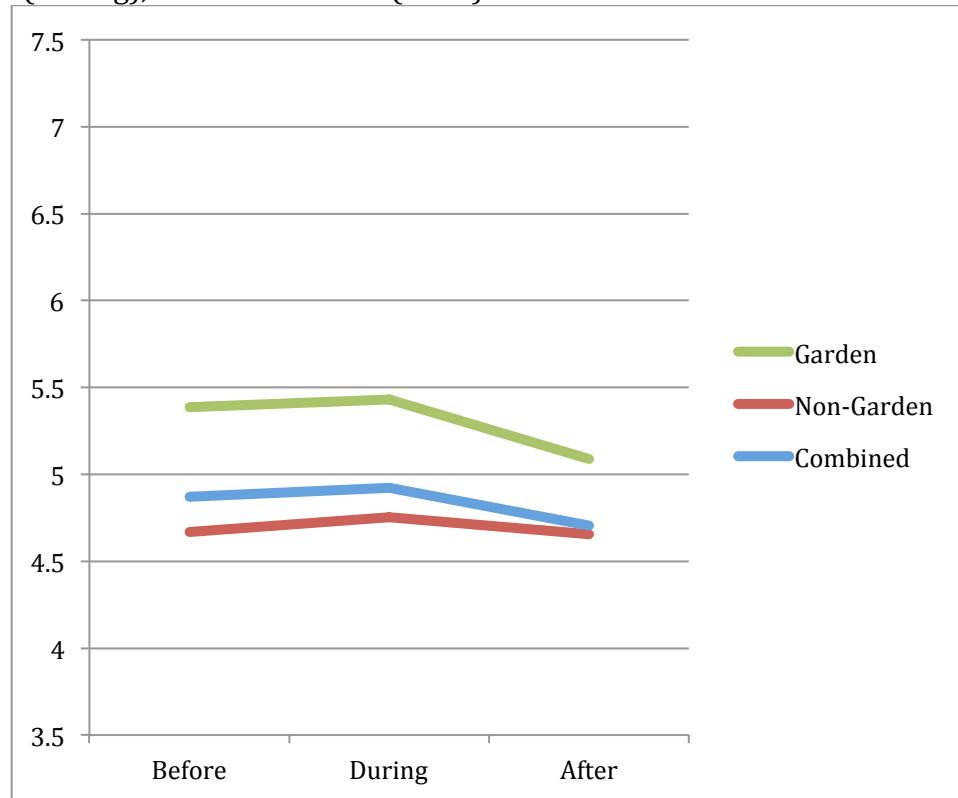
graphs below show data for the participants (“Garden”), the non-participants (“Non-Garden”), and the combination of all surveys (“Combined”). The data represents the arithmetic mean or average for the control Religiosity scale and for the Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) as well as for each of the four subscales: Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice.

The data analysis was affected by a low response rate; for example, variations in the open-ended questions and in the participant subpopulation resulted in exaggerated impacts on the overall mean; thus, the open-ended questions were excluded from further analysis. The subpopulations were examined only for general trends. The survey data showed no significant change over time for either the garden participants or for the rest of the congregation. The control (Religiosity) scale also showed no significant change over time, indicating no significant impact of the survey itself. The garden participants scored higher than the non-participants on each subscale (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice), but not on the control scale (Religiosity).

Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) Scale

The Ecological Ethics Index (EEI), which represents the combination of the four ecological subscales (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice), was slightly higher among garden participants than non-participants. The EEI showed no significant change over time (see Figure 4.11):

Figure 4.11: Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) Over Time – Urban Site. The EEI used a 10-point scale. Significance was measured with a two-tailed t-test for the garden participants ($p=0.6$), non-participants ($p=0.9$), and the combination of both ($p=0.44$). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Separation of the EEI by subscales also showed no trends over time for garden participants, non-participants, or the combined surveys. Smaller garden participant subpopulation sample size may have caused greater variability in the scores as compared to the non-participant subpopulation (see Figures 4.12-4.14):

Figure 4.12: Garden Participant Subscales Over Time – Urban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).

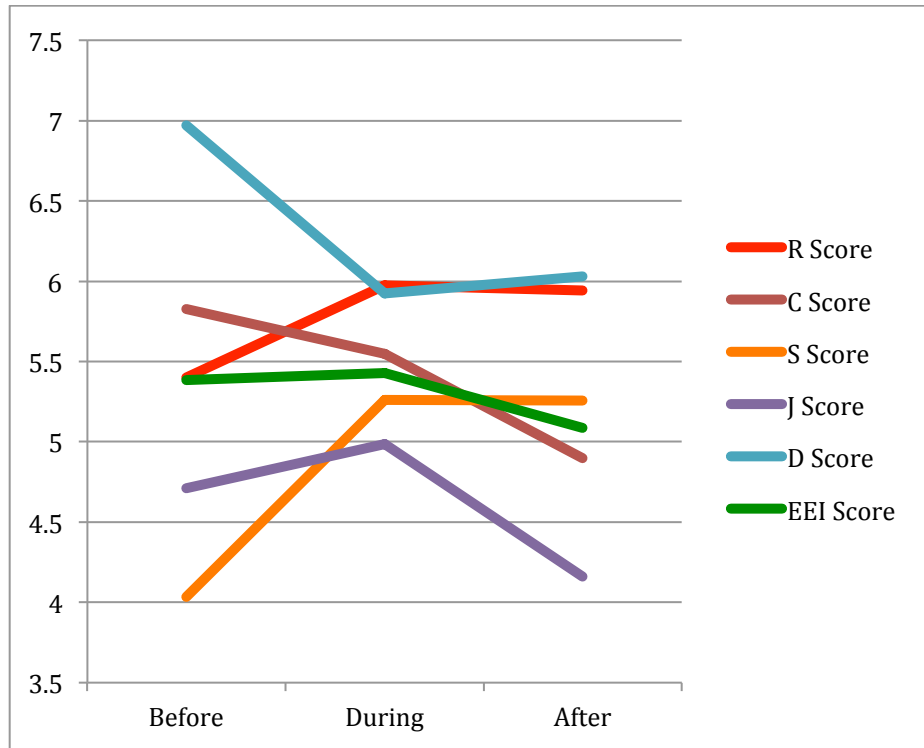


Figure 4.13: Garden Non-Participant Subscales Over Time – Urban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).

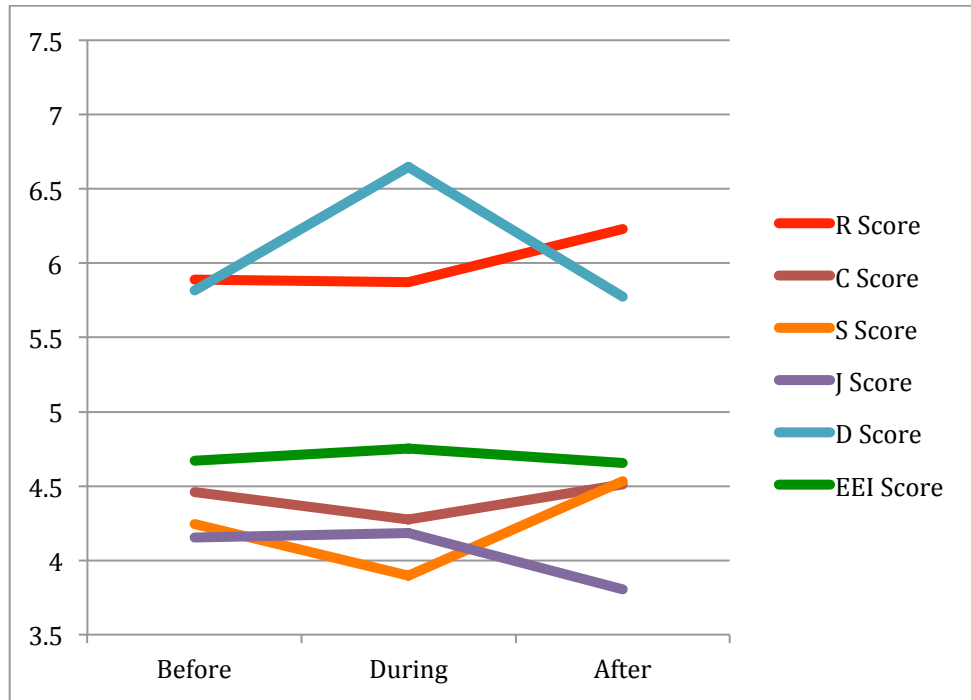
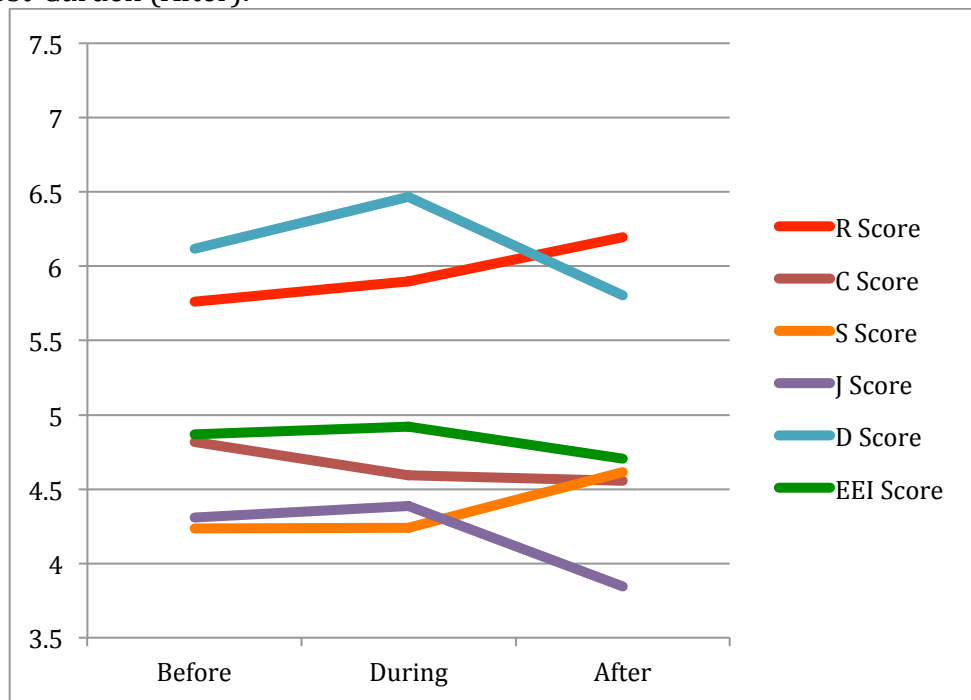


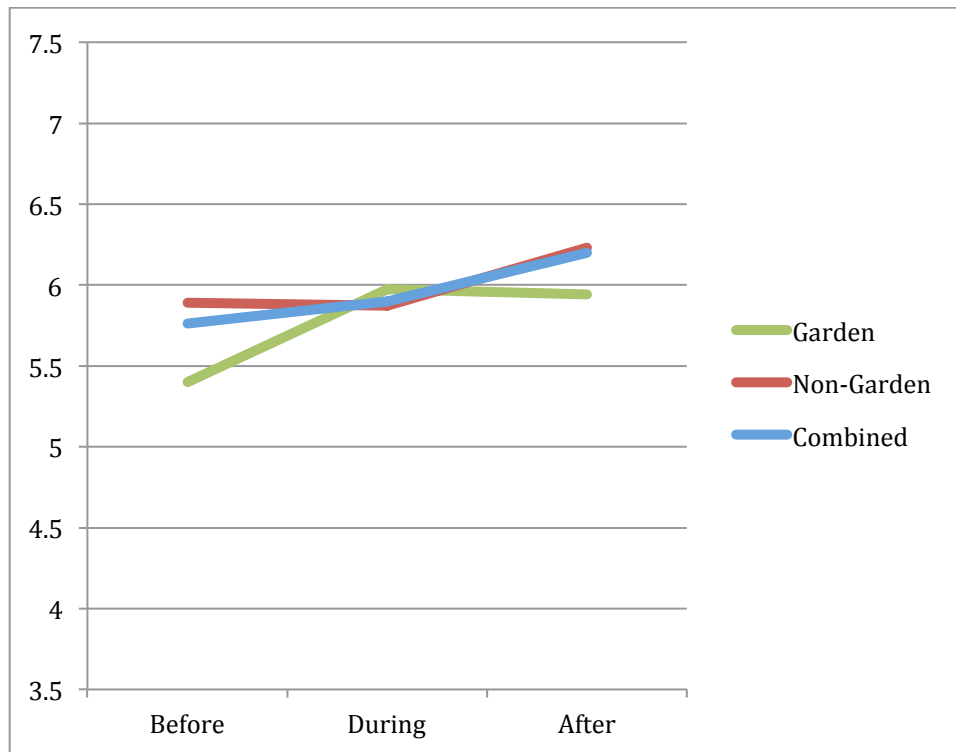
Figure 4.14: Combined Survey Subscales Over Time – Urban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Control Religiosity Subscale

The Religiosity (R) subscale was designed to measure whether the survey itself had an impact on the congregation over time. Average R scores were calculated for each subpopulation (garden participants and non-participants) as well as for all surveys combined. The Religiosity subscale showed no significant change over time; based on statistical analyses, the slight upward trend of the mean values over time does not represent a significant (replicable) change (see Figure 4.15):

Figure 4.15: Religiosity Scores Over Time – Urban Site. The Religiosity subscale also used a 10-point scale. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After). Significance was measured with a two-tailed t-test for the combined survey participants ($p=0.3$).



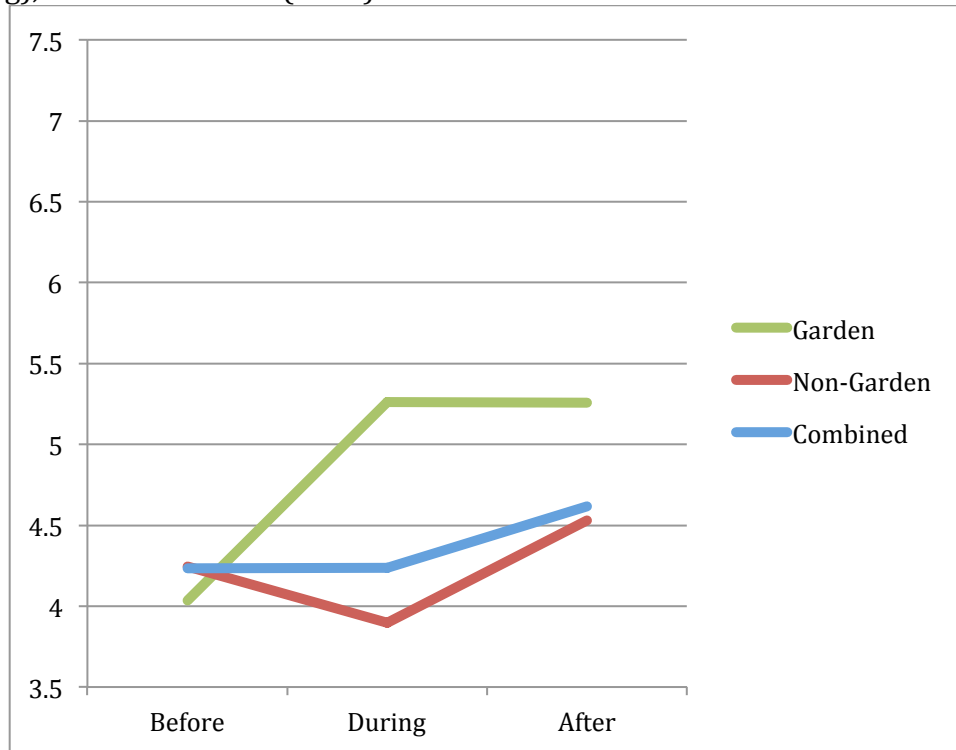
Ecological Ethics Subscales

Although the statistical analyses determined that the changes over time were not significant, the four subscales (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice) were also graphed individually. In looking at general trends, the garden participant subpopulation consistently scored higher on each scale.

Spirituality Subscale

Average Spirituality (S) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The S subscale showed no significant change over time (see Figure 4.16):

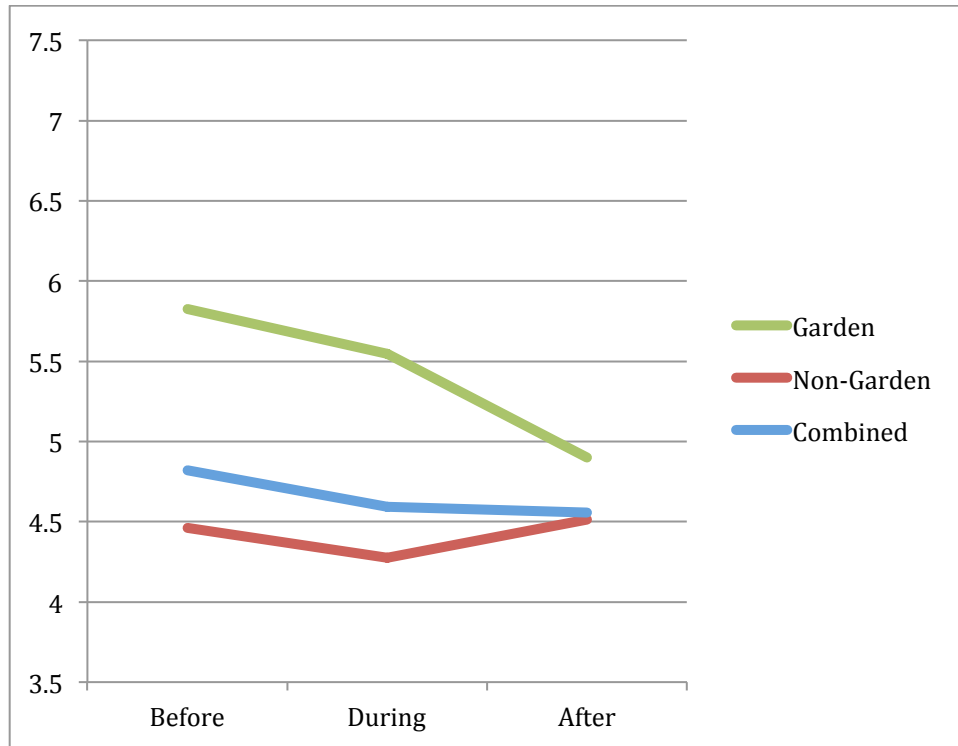
Figure 4.16: Spirituality Scores Over Time – Urban Site. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Community Subscale

Average Community (C) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The C subscale showed no significant change over time (see Figure 4.17: Community Scores Over Time).

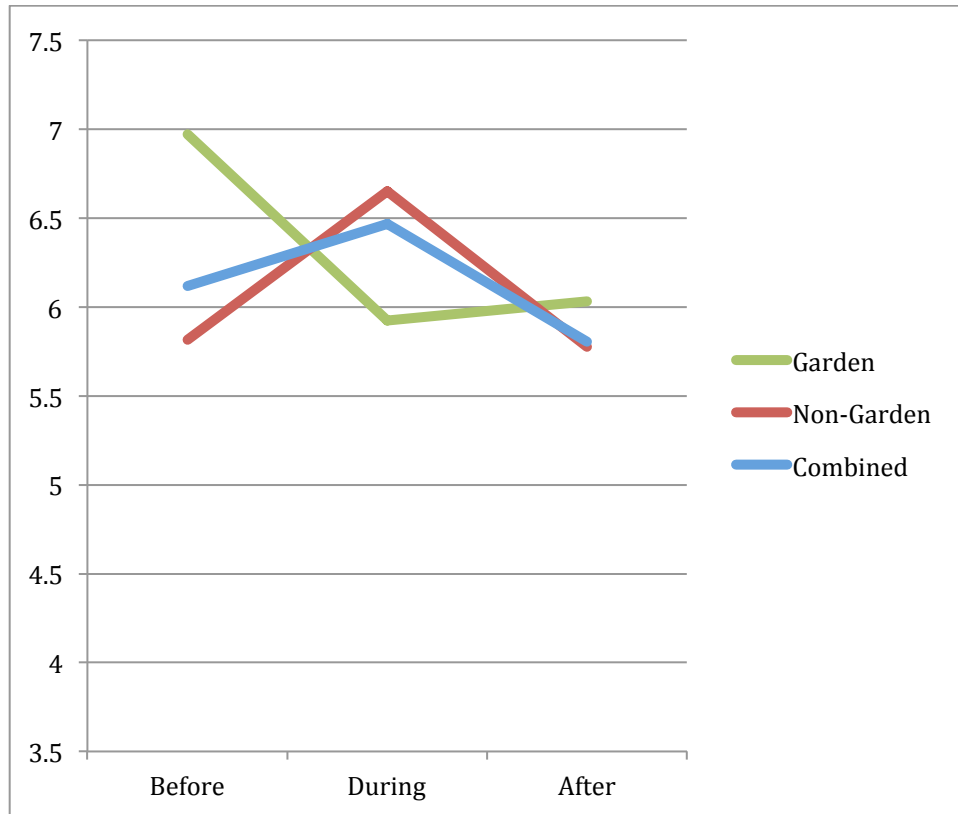
Figure 4.17: Community Scores Over Time – Urban Site.



Discipleship Subscale

Average Discipleship (D) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The D subscale showed no significant change over time (see Figure 4.18: Discipleship Scores Over Time):

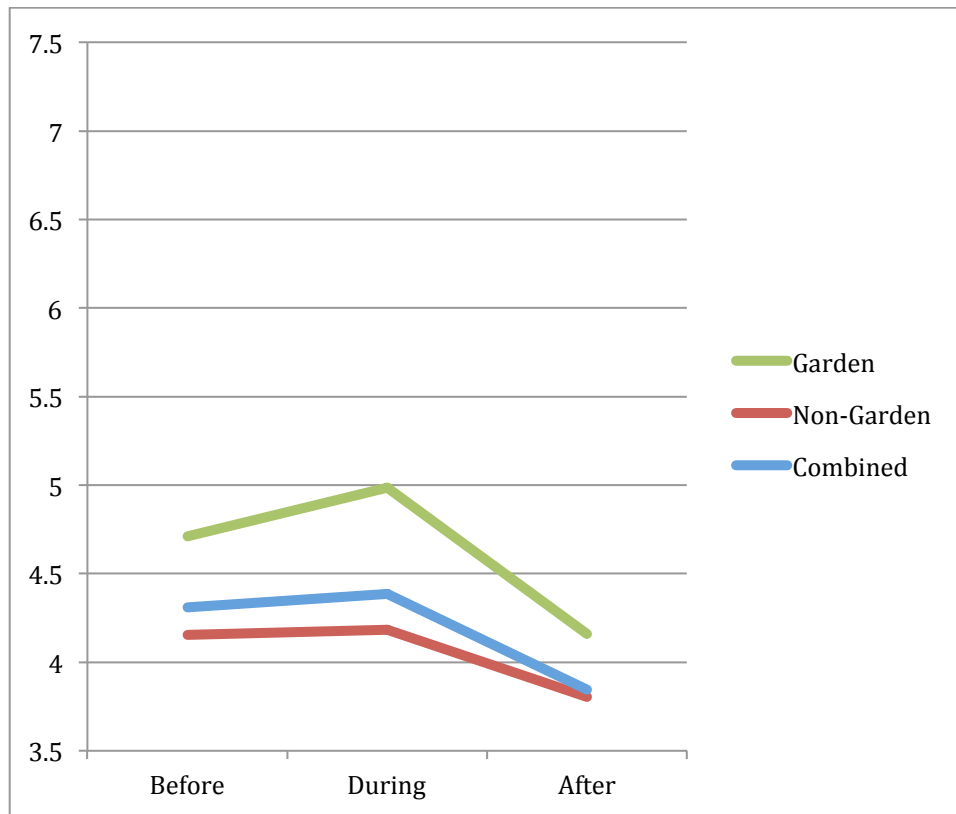
Figure 4.18: Discipleship Scores Over Time – Urban Site.



Justice Subscale

Average Justice (J) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The J subscale showed no significant change over time (see Figure 4.19: Justice Scores Over Time):

Figure 4.19: Justice Scores Over Time – Urban Site.



Conclusion

The data reveal the garden project to have taken place in the context of a congregation already committed to ecological ethics in a variety of ways. The community expressed ideas of ecological spirituality, such as reverence and awe for the Creation; of ecological community, such as kinship and connection with the Creation and otherkind; of ecological discipleship, such as commitment to ecologically sensitive energy, waste, and consumption practices; and ecological justice, in terms of urban fresh food, urban gardening, and political activism.

The project faced several logistical challenges, including the transient and less cohesive nature of the congregation itself, inconsistent leadership, space and location issues, and easy access to water. Nonetheless, the qualitative data also reveal impacts on those who helped with the garden (participants and staff) in all four areas. In the area of ecological spirituality, these participants showed some increase in awareness of the connections between gardening and spirituality, such as the uniquely transformative quality of gardens as a spiritual discipline; they also explored not only theological ideas but also ideas about practical ways to incorporate gardening and its related concepts into the worship life of the congregation. In the area of ecological community, the participants showed some increase in awareness of nature and gardens in urban areas as well as kinship with the plants and the benefits and challenges of shared communal garden projects. The participants occasionally incorporated the harvest into fellowship events in the congregation. In the area of ecological discipleship, the participants showed some impact in terms of changes in their own behaviors and plans regarding private garden projects. The participants occasionally incorporated the harvest into congregational ministries such as the Young Adult Group. In the area of ecological justice, the participants showed some impact in terms of awareness of the source of food, urban fresh food and garden possibilities, and possibilities for helping feed hungry communities. The participants integrated the gardens into the homeless ministry of the congregation.

Based on the observations and interviews, the wider congregation also may have experienced some impact from the garden project. The incorporation of vegetables from the garden and references to the garden in several sermons may have impacted the ecological spirituality of the congregation. The highly visible location of the garden, along with the distribution of the harvest to individuals and during fellowship time, may have raised congregational awareness in the area of ecological community; specifically, it may have provided some urban nature connection as well as introduced people to new foods and food possibilities, such as the kimchi. The proximity of the garden to the steps where unhoused people regularly slept may have impacted the congregation in the area of ecological justice by raising awareness of urban gardening possibilities for feeding hungry communities; in addition, the integration of the idea of the church garden with other ideas of justice during a sermon may also have raised congregational awareness of the connections between gardening and justice.

In summary, some of the participants expressed only positive feelings regarding the project and its impact on the congregation; and several expressed disappointment and regret that the project had not resulted in a cohesive gardening community within the church to care for the garden, build community, and continue the garden into the future. Despite the logistical challenges the participants faced, the project appears to have had some impact on the people who participated and may also have had an impact on the wider congregation.

CHAPTER 5: SUBURBAN SITE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter details the qualitative and quantitative data from the suburban site and presents the perspectives of the persons involved regarding the project, its impact, and specific ecological ethics concepts. The people involved in the project included the investigator and the participants, which included general participants, as well as: the pastor; the lay leader; a member of the trustees, referred to as the 'trustee'; a person who had not joined the church, referred to as the 'non-member'; a moderately involved member whose connection to gardens involved cooking, referred to as the 'cook'; an elder member who grew up on a farm, referred to as the 'retiree'; and a member with an engineering perspective, referred to as the 'engineer.' The data includes observations, interviews, and surveys, separated into three time points: before the garden was built and planted; during the growing season; and after the garden had been winterized.

Members of the suburban congregation began meeting to plan the garden project in February of 2013. The participants built and planted a vegetable garden in the form of four raised beds on the church lawn between the driveway to the parking lot and a main road. The project faced suburban logistical challenges, such as restrictions on aesthetic use of space and use of water. The group included church leaders such as the pastor, a trustee, and the lay leader. The lay leader, the

non-member, the trustee, and the engineer led the group to develop a structured plan for building the garden, watering and tending the garden, and integrating the project and its goals into the life and ministry of the congregation.

The qualitative and quantitative data reveal impacts on the participants and on the congregation. The qualitative data (interviews and observations) showed impacts on the participants in areas such as garden-related theology, including ideas of soil and growth; connection with nature through gardening, including kinship with the harvest; garden-related ecological practices, such as purchasing and trying local vegetables; and awareness of justice issues, such as the potential for suburban gardens to address hunger and provide fresh food. The qualitative data also suggest an impact on the non-participants; specifically, the project became centrally integrated into the life and ministry of the church, such as in the stewardship campaign, the reports of the annual church conference, and the Sunday school. Quantitative analysis of the survey data revealed an impact over time for both the garden participants and the non-participants; the survey data supports the findings of the qualitative data.

Suburban Site Observations

This section describes the findings of the observations for the suburban site from before the garden was built and planted (pre-garden), through the harvesting season (mid-garden), and after the garden had been fully harvested and winterized

(post-garden). Three contexts were observed: the garden project; a Sunday morning adult small group, called the Adult Class; and church worship services, including the post-worship fellowship time. In the post-garden time point, the investigator was also invited to observe the annual church conference meeting.

The congregation expressed support for the garden project, through attendance at garden planning meetings and in conversations with members of the congregation. The garden participants planned and implemented the garden project itself by constructing and planting four raised beds on the lawn to the left of the driveway that leads to the church parking lot at the back of the church. Four people emerged as joint leaders of the project: the non-member, the engineer, the lay leader, and the trustee. Other regular or moderately regular participants included the pastor and approximately four other church members. The participants created a rotating schedule for watering the garden regularly until hoses on timers had been set up. The participants and pastor harvested the vegetables weekly and incorporated them into the Sunday morning worship and after worship fellowship time. Once the garden had been fully harvested, the participants replaced the plants with autumn crops such as kale and winterized the garden with mulch and winter wheat. By February, participants had initiated discussions about the coming growing season and begun to plan the garden again. The garden included a plot specifically for Sunday school children and youth in its second growing season.

Worship services regularly included ecological ethics ideas and themes. Participants placed the vegetables on the altar during worship. The pastor regularly mentioned the garden during worship and included the harvest liturgically. The participants also decided to use the garden as the theme of the annual stewardship campaign, including during the Laity Sunday and Stewardship Sunday worship services. The investigator-led kimchi-making workshop included kale from the garden; the participants placed the kimchi on the altar, and the pastor included the kimchi in the liturgy. The following September, the participants and staff integrated the garden project with the Sunday school curriculum using the theme “Connect with Creation.”¹

The members of the Adult Class frequently used or discussed ecological ethics themes. The pastor introduced the idea of the garden project to the group in the autumn before the project began: he led a discussion of a book on the theme of food and ecological ethics.² The lay leader also arranged a viewing for the whole congregation of a film on the topic of global politics and agriculture. During the project, the Adult Class continued to use and discuss themes related to ecological ethics.

¹ See page 191 below for more details and citation.

² Schut, *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread*.

Suburban Site Pre-Garden Observations

This section details the garden project, small group, and worship observations prior to the planting of the garden. Between four and twelve people attended the planning meetings prior to the building and planting of the garden beds, with an average of approximately eight people attending, including church leaders such as the pastor, the trustee, and the lay leader. The pastor attended the meetings but did not participate in the planning or research of the garden. The participants thoroughly explored issues of aesthetics, trustee approval and funding, location, size, and gardening method. They considered the benefits and drawbacks of various sizes, such as elder accessibility and quantity of harvest for sharing with food ministries.

The pastor led the Adult Class in a food justice-related book study³ in preparation for the project; in addition, the lay leader also led the class later in another garden-related, ecological spirituality and justice book study.⁴ All of the main garden participants also attended the Adult Class regularly. Worship services regularly included ecological ethics ideas and themes.

Garden Project Pre-Garden Observations

³ Ibid.

⁴ Matthew Fox, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint for Our Times: Unleashing Her Power in the 21st Century* (Vancouver: Namaste Publishing, 2012).

In October of 2012, following the pastor-led book discussion series on ecological food ethics, the pastor invited the investigator to meet with members of the congregation to introduce and explain the garden research project. The investigator met with four people, including the trustee and the non-member; the investigator introduced the *Square Foot Gardening*⁵ book and provided the Interfaith Power and Light Cool Harvest⁶ church garden resource. The trustee expressed a desire to get approval and funds from the trustees.

In February of 2013, the trustee called another meeting for anyone interested in the garden project to meet with the head of the trustees. Seven participants, including the pastor, discussed logistical issues such as: cost, location; size of the beds; possible vandalism; fencing; continuation after the research project has ended; plant choices; and sources of seeds and soil. They also discussed spiritual and community ideas, such as using the garden to connect with nature and faith as well as including elders and children or youth in the congregation. Two weeks later, the lay leader announced a meeting to continue planning the project, and nine participants attended, including the pastor. The group decided to build four beds, two of which would be double height to be accessible to elders, surrounded by a fence, on the church lawn to the left of the driveway into the parking lot behind the church. Attendees also discussed ideas for creating communal space inside the

⁵ Bartholomew, *All New Square Foot Gardening*.

⁶ IPL, "Sow a Cool Harvest: Faith Garden Ideas for a Cooler Planet."

garden for meditation or fellowship. The investigator gathered email addresses and started an email thread.

In March, the non-member, the engineer, and the lay leader jointly assumed leadership of the project, with the input and support of the trustee and the retiree. The three leaders each purchased copies of the Square Foot Gardening resource and used it as a guide, initiated detailed email discussions, and planted stakes in the ground for the future garden. Their emails also included references to the spiritual importance of the project as well as its connection to related Adult Class themes, such as the life and thought of Hildegard von Bingen.

In April, the participants met to make final decisions about details such as size and soil composition. The trustee reported that the project had been approved and funded, contingent on the participants' commitment to maintain the garden for an attractive appearance. The group continued to meet weekly; they jointly ordered materials to build the beds, decided on soil composition, and planned a workday to build the beds and fill them with soil. In early May, two participants notified the group via email that they would not be able to participate regularly in the project; both also mentioned that they had the sense that enough people were participating to make the project a success.

Small Group Pre-Garden Observations

Before the start of the garden project, the pastor initiated a book study in the Adult Class on the book, *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread*,⁷ which examined issues of food and sustainability in light of justice concerns and the Christian faith. The pastor introduced the book in the September church newsletter: “The first Sunday morning Adult Study this year will be on a subject that is close to my heart... We will be looking at spiritual implications of the food industry and the way we eat.”⁸ In January, the lay leader began another series on the book *Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint For Our Times*,⁹ which emphasized the saint’s reverence for and defense of the Creation in light of ecological and garden-related ethics for people of faith. Both book studies took place over approximately two months.

Worship Pre-Garden Observations

Worship services regularly included ecological themes or ideas; for example, a children’s sermon on the idea of faith as an adventure used the illustration of hiking in nature. Prayers often included the Creation or otherkind. The Ash Wednesday supper included a vegetarian, organic soup. Another week, a sermon and children’s sermon focused on the image of a river and the importance of clean

⁷ Schut, *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread*.

⁸ Eric Dupee, "An Adventure of Faith" (Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, September, 2012).

⁹ Fox, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint for Our Times: Unleashing Her Power in the 21st Century*.

rivers. Of seven pre-garden worship services observed, four included ideas or themes relevant to ecological spirituality, community, and discipleship. The lay leader also presented a film to the congregation after worship, on issues of food and agricultural justice.¹⁰

Suburban Site Mid-Garden Observations

The people who had stepped forward to lead the project continued to lead in various, complementary ways throughout the process of building, planting, tending, harvesting, and winterizing the garden. Various participants address challenges such as fencing, pests, watering, and harvesting before the vegetables rotted. They also found ways to include the whole congregation in the garden, such as regularly sharing the harvest. The pastor continued to participate and mention the garden in worship, and he welcomed the inclusion of the harvest on the altar table; he also found ways to incorporate the harvest in various parts of the worship services (described more fully in worship observations below).

The pastor also worked with the participants to design the annual stewardship campaign around the theme of the garden. The participants helped plan both the Laity Sunday and Stewardship Sunday worship services and activities around the theme of the garden project. At the end of the growing season, two

¹⁰ *The Global Banquet: Politics of Food*, directed by John Ankele and Anne Macksoud (Maryknoll World Productions, 2011).

participants attended a kimchi-making workshop using kale from the garden; the participants placed the bowl of kale on the altar during worship, and the pastor incorporated it into the worship service as well. The participants later helped share the kimchi with the congregation during fellowship time.

Garden Project Implementation Observations

In mid-May, seven participants helped construct the beds, mix the soil, and fill the beds, including the pastor. The Sunday school had donated herbs and flowers to plant as well. The non-member led the group in singing the 'Inch by Inch' Garden Song.¹¹ Several people commented about the beauty of the compost, the soil, and the prepared beds. The pastor led the group in a prayer blessing the earth, the workers, and those would eat "the fruits of the garden."¹² The following Sunday, members of the Sunday school worked with some of the participants to plant more herbs in the beds.

The non-member coordinated a second workday for one week later, to buy more seedlings at a garden center and plant the rest of the garden. The non-member and the lay leader (along with the investigator) chose seedlings at a nearby garden center and discussed choosing certain plants based on how they would be used. The investigator suggested planting Holy Basil, which the others had not heard of but

¹¹ David Mallett, *Garden Song*, David Mallett (Washington, DC: North Road Records, 1978).

¹² Quotation from suburban site garden project observation field notes.

decided to include. They returned to the church and planted the seedlings along with two other participants and the pastor. The group discussed ideas for a possible sign and decorations. The lay leader led the group in a prayer that focused on gratitude to the Creator, the blessings of the garden, and the Christ-like leadership of the pastor.

Garden Project Maintenance Observations

In late May, the non-member announced during worship that the children were invited to help harvest vegetables from the garden to be served during fellowship time after church. She needed to set up inside the church, so the investigator offered to help the children. Five children came to the garden and harvested and tasted different kinds of lettuce; the children tried to determine whether they could distinguish the different kinds of lettuce by taste. The investigator offered the lettuce to people during the fellowship time, and about ten people ate the lettuce; one person declined. Several people expressed enthusiasm over its beauty and taste, and all the lettuce was eaten.

In June, five participants stepped forward to ensure that the garden was watered, through email communication and scheduling. The pastor lived next to the church and watered it when others were unavailable. The non-member, the engineer, and the retiree took turns coming to the church to water the garden during the first few weeks; they took those opportunities as individuals to add

additional vegetables to the garden in some of the empty areas. They also engaged in a lengthy and humorous theological exchange about why the pastor's carrot seeds did not seem to be sprouting.

Meanwhile, the engineer researched and then constructed a low, circular fence around the garden; he emailed the group to report on the new fence. He noted that the Sunday school director and the youth group had helped install the fence, and he added that he could not have managed the project without their help. He also mentioned that two or three different passersby had stopped to compliment him on the garden and offer well wishes. When the plants had taken root, the non-member emailed the Sunday school director to invite her to encourage the teachers to take the children and youth into the garden to harvest the vegetables. She suggested they might like to make tea together with the Holy Basil; she also encouraged them to say a prayer while they were out in the garden. The pastor noted that he had included mention of the garden in the church newsletter.

Throughout June, the participants (including the pastor) continued to add plants and discuss garden related theology in email exchanges; for example, the retiree jokingly noted that she had planted additional carrots: "Shh, don't tell [the pastor], I prayed over them."¹³ She also shared a garden-related meditation reading.

¹³ Retiree, *Email Communication to Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church Garden Group* (June 11, 2013).

They complimented the engineer repeatedly on the fence, and the lay leader added an angel garden ornament to the garden.

In July, the trustee reported to the group that he had successfully worked with the church landscaper to set up hoses on timers so that the garden would be watered automatically. One evening, the landscaper's assistant disconnected the hoses for both the lawn and the garden; the trustee carefully undid and rearranged the hoses properly over the course of several hours, so that the garden would not dry out. Another day, the town complained about water use for the garden, and the trustee again spent several hours demonstrating that the problem was with the water meter, not the hose system.

The pastor reported to the group that bugs were eating the lettuce; he and the retiree had been brainstorming ways to address the pests and asked for suggestions. He also noted the abundance of ripe vegetables and his intention to incorporate them into the upcoming children's sermon. The group debated various remedies, and the non-member took the initiative to plant competitor companion plants as well as to amend the soil. She reported to the email list that vegetables had been included in communion: "For those not in church today, along with bread and wine we had vegetables for communion! It's a good thing we have a flexible pastor."¹⁴ She also expressed amazement at how the vegetables were growing and

¹⁴ Non-Member, *Email Communication to Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church Garden Group* (July 7, 2013).

encouraged the group to “marvel”¹⁵ at the garden and at the new trees the trustee had worked to get planted.

In August, the pastor initiated another thread describing the vegetables that were ready to harvest. He also suggested focusing the annual Stewardship Campaign on the theme of the garden:

I had an idea that I wanted to float to you all. I’m wondering if we can use our garden experience as a basis for a yearlong emphasis on stewardship this year and particularly for our annual pledge campaign. We could link what it takes to produce a harvest of vegetables with what it takes to produce a harvest of fruits of the spirit, service, financial health, etc. Just as we tend the garden, how do we tend our own lives so that our lives produce good things. Maybe the pledge campaign culminates in a potluck lunch after worship. We could call it something like “God’s Harvest,” or something more catchy. This is just a seed of an idea, but I think we could do something really special with it. It could tie together our concern for the environment, our desire for community, strengthening our connection to God and more.¹⁶

Six participants responded either positively or enthusiastically about the idea, and three people added additional theological explorations. The retiree noted that she had been unable to tend the garden lately due to two surgeries.

In September, the investigator observed five people, including participants and non-participants, visiting the garden after worship and harvesting vegetables to eat. The garden appeared to be producing a steady stream of vegetables and to be partially harvested (see Figure 5.1):

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Eric Dupee, *Email Communication to Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church Garden Group* (August 9, 2013).

Figure 5.1: Garden Bed – Suburban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 9/15/13.)



In late September, the pastor again initiated an email thread about the Stewardship Campaign; he called a meeting to discuss how to implement the idea in terms of congregational involvement, theological concepts, and worship. In October, the pastor and five participants, including the lay leader and the engineer, met and decided to incorporate Laity Sunday into the theme as well. They also decided to invite garden participants to speak in the weeks leading up to Stewardship Sunday, and they planned to use garden vegetables and include vegetarian, organic foods in the potluck lunch on that day. They additionally planned to replace the harvested vegetables with winter wheat and kale the following Saturday.

Following the meeting, the engineer created a garden and ecological ethics-themed stewardship bingo game for the congregation and sent it to the email list for input, and three people offered input. The lay leader researched garden winterization methods and emailed the group to notify them of the workday details.

In late October, the investigator was photographing the garden and observed the lay leader and a non-participant with his child come to the garden and harvest and taste several kinds of vegetables, including tomatoes, beans, squash, cucumber, beets, and basil. The lay leader discussed ideas for the garden next year, and suggested that the automatic watering system had actually caused the participants to forget about the garden more. She brainstormed ideas for encouraging people to harvest the vegetables more regularly.

The following Saturday, five participants helped replace the plants with kale and plant winter wheat. The lay leader led the group in a prayer to bless the soil and the plants as well as the ministry of the gardeners and the church (see Figure 5.2):

Figure 5.2: Blessing of the Autumn Crops – Suburban Site. (Photo used with permission.)



The pastor sent a letter to the congregation introducing the theme for the Stewardship Campaign, including the Stewardship Bingo activity (see Appendix 1: Garden Themed Stewardship Bingo):

This year's campaign builds on our experience of having a church garden in order to enrich our understanding of Christian stewardship. Rather than focusing on the need of the church to receive, the experience concentrates on

the way we use our time, talents and financial resources, in order to bear fruit for Christian ministry.

Enclosed is an activity with which I hope you will have some fun in the weeks leading up to pledge Sunday. Our garden took the form of four, square, raised beds. Therefore, we're incorporating squares into our campaign with "Crawford Stewardship Bingo." There are activities for people of all ages... Bring your completed bingo sheets to worship on Pledge Sunday.¹⁷

In November, the group helped set up and clean up after the church potluck lunch on Stewardship Sunday; the lay leader made soup and added a label so people in the congregation would know it was made using kale from the garden. The investigator emailed the group to offer to host a kimchi-making workshop using some of the remaining kale, and the lay leader and non-member both expressed a desire to attend the workshop. The gardens continued to produce kale and the winter wheat had sprouted (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4):

Figure 5.3: Late Autumn Crops: Kale – Suburban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 11/16/13.)

¹⁷ Eric Dupee, "Seeds of Stewardship: Growing through Giving" (Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, October 27, 2013), 1.



Figure 5.4: Late Autumn Crops: Winter Wheat – Suburban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 11/16/13.)



In December, the lay leader and the non-participant joined the investigator and two other non-participant members of the congregation in providing ingredients and preparing the kimchi before worship. The investigator harvested some of the remaining kale to include in the kimchi. The attendees expressed hesitation about using the kale because they had assumed it was only ornamental; however, the investigator assured them that it is safe to eat and found a website confirming its edibility. After mixing the cabbages and kale together, the lay leader and non-member both expressed enthusiasm about how pretty the kimchi looked. The investigator suggested it might go on the altar as had the other harvested vegetables; the non-member checked with the pastor, and the lay leader found a pretty, clear bowl to use so that people could see all the colors of cabbage. After worship, the same group of attendees mixed in the remaining ingredients in the kitchen area next to the area used for fellowship time, and several people observed and expressed enthusiasm about the kimchi (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Kimchi Workshop – Suburban Site. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 12/8/14.)



Each workshop attendee took some kimchi home, and the investigator offered to bring the remaining kimchi for fellowship time in two weeks. At that time, the investigator served the kimchi during fellowship time after worship, and members of the congregation enjoyed trying the kimchi. No further mention was made of removing the remaining kale, but it was later removed by participants and replaced with winter wheat.

Small Group Mid-Garden Observations

The Adult Class did not meet during the summer. Some series were unrelated to ecological ethics directly. No mention of ecological ethics themes was observed in the discussions. In November, the engineer began an Adult Class series on a book

about simple living and frugality, including some ideas of ecological ethics. During the discussion, members of the class raised ideas of ecological ethics, including garden-related themes, such as community nature connection, discipleship practices, and justice:¹⁸

Farming communities have a real sense of helping each other; the cycle of life and nature is always in their minds, as part of survival. As we get away from that kind of living, we think we don't need the community. Society thinks this. If it weren't for a spiritual community, I wouldn't be thinking about this.

We are insulated from the natural world, but we just 'think' we are – it is not sustainable. It causes cyclones in the Philippines, and 10,000 people die. Our meat and oil addiction contributed to them. They aren't next-door neighbors, so it's harder to care. And we burn out, and make excuses.

God doesn't expect us to be all things to all people; but to do our part. We need to reduce our footprint. We don't want to be paralyzed so that we do nothing.

Worship Mid-Garden Observations

Ecological ethics or the idea of the church garden was included either as a central theme or a part of the liturgy in six of the nine mid-garden worship services observed. In July, vegetables from the garden had been placed on the altar; the pastor called attention to the vegetables during the time for announcements. As planned in his email (see Garden Project Maintenance Observations, pages 174-5 above), the pastor used the vegetables to illustrate the children's sermon and then

¹⁸ Quotations from suburban site Adult Class observation field notes.

brought them down to include as part of the Eucharist. Vegetables from the garden were evident on the altar on four of seven mid-garden worship services observed.

In August, the pastor preached about gluttony and changing eating habits; he noted ecological ideas such as vegetarianism. One communal prayer tied together the ecological ethics of eating for the whole planet, including otherkind.

O God, we ask that you take these gifts and use them to feed all of Creation – to produce seed and grain, filling humans and animals alike, and to restore wholeness in the places where malnourishment exists.¹⁹

In September, the pastor preached about nature connection and the importance of spiritual communities of mutual support and accountability to experience the fullness of the Divine. At the end of October, the lay leader led a Creation and Garden themed worship service. The sermon and children's sermon focused on specific events and memories from the church garden and tied them into theological ideas of growth, sharing, and working with our hands. In her sermon, she spoke of how the garden provided a sacred space, developed lay leadership in new ways, and had given the church a new presence and identity in the wider community as well:

We never really had a plan for the purpose of the garden or what we were going to do with its harvest... I think about the times we gathered in prayer around our four little raised beds... [We] came together as a community, worked in ministry together, prayed together, and grew in faith together... Because we were outside our church walls in the neighborhood, [a neighbor] had the opportunity to speak to a group of open and inclusive Christians who

¹⁹ Eric Dupee, "August 4 Sunday Worship Bulletin" (Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, 2013).

took the time to listen... [and members of another church were asking], what was a garden doing in the middle of a church lawn?? ... I usually came to the garden in the early evening, often just before sunset... The space felt set apart and holy... I could... listen for that 'still, small voice.' ... In one of the most surprising lessons... our group [came] together as a stewardship ministry team... And no one had even asked us to serve on a committee... The lessons from the garden make me believe [God's] call is best discerned within a community of faith, given time and space set apart to listen for the Holy Spirit and nurtured by the joys, talents and passions in our lives.²⁰

In November, several garden participants reflected on the connections between supporting the church financially and their experiences in the garden project during a dedicated Stewardship Moment. The pastor continued to encourage the congregation to participate in the Stewardship Bingo game leading up to Stewardship Sunday in mid-November. On Stewardship Sunday, an easel display board had been set up in the sanctuary for the congregation to attach their bingo sheets, and approximately 20 sheets were attached. A globe was placed on the altar and used in the children's sermon to illustrate how care for seeds and the garden reflects how we work with God to "hold the whole world in our hands." The choir announced that the Adult Class had requested the Creation themed anthem. The pastor's sermon and other songs and prayers also reflected an integration of ecological ethics and financial support of the church.

²⁰ Laura Myers, "Laity Sunday Sermon: Surprising Lessons from the Garden" (Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, October 27, 2013), 3, 4, 5.

In early December, the non-member and the lay leader placed the bowl of mixed kimchi cabbage and garden kale on the altar table (see Garden Project Maintenance Observations, pages 179 above) (see Figure 5.6):

Figure 5.6: Kimchi On Altar – Suburban Site. A church couple renews their wedding vows. The kimchi can be seen on the altar table in the clear bowl that allows the mixture of cabbage and kale colors to show through. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 12/8/13.)



The pastor used the kimchi in the children's sermon to illustrate the idea of waiting as God prepares things slowly over time (see Figure 5.7):

Figure 5.7: Kimchi Used as a Children's Sermon – Suburban Site. The pastor is holding the bowl of mixed kale in his left hand. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 12/8/13.)



Suburban Site Post-Garden Observations

Following the end of the growing season, the ways the impact of the garden project had integrated into the whole church were particularly evident in the various reports at the annual Church Conference in January. In February, the participants began to plan another season for the garden. In the second growing season, the participants further integrated the project with the rest of the congregation by including more children and elders. The participants also further incorporated the project into church ministries, such as the Sunday school program.

Garden Project Post-Garden Observations

In January 2014, the pastor invited the investigator to attend the upcoming annual Church Conference, where the lay leader would speak about the garden project. The day of the conference, an easel had been set up with photos documenting the garden project (see Figure 5.8):

Figure 5.8: Church Conference Garden Poster – Suburban Site. The poster chronicled the garden project from the time the garden beds were set up through the late autumn plantings, including the kimchi workshop and moments of prayer. (Photo by Tallessyn Z. Grenfell-Lee, 1/26/14.)



The garden project was included in six separate sections of the report booklet for the conference: the Pastor's Report, the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, the Report of the Church Council, the Lay Leader statement, the Report

of the Finance Committee, and the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees.²¹ During the conference, three participants spoke about the garden project. The lay leader spoke of the abundant blessings the garden had provided throughout the season:

From when we set up the beds and through the growing season, there was such abundance; even in the fall and winter, when we went to put the garden to bed, we still had kale and cabbage, and then we learned how to make kimchi. It was a whole season of wonderful things.²²

The non-member described the reciprocal ways in which the project had connected her to nature and the community:

The first word I thought of when thinking of the garden, was 'tending' ... I realized that I was tending to the Earth, tending to myself; and tending to the community. I was tending to the Earth, with my hands in the dirt, handling these little tiny seedlings and putting them in the dirt, surrounded by the smells of soil and plants; watering the plants; and just surrounded by beauty. I was tending to myself - feeling the calm and peace, communing. Feeling that quiet, and that focus. And I was tending to the community - both outward and inward community: our church, in the food we ate; and also the wider surrounding neighbors... It gives back to both body and soul. It gives back with the food it provides, and with exercise from being out there; the nutrition and taste. I remember thinking all the cucumbers were gone, and then, surprise, there was one more cucumber hiding under the leaves - and it was a big one! And it gives back to our souls; the feeling good inside myself, and up, and out of myself.²³

²¹ Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, *Report of the 2013 Annual Special Charge (Church) Conference* (Winchester, MA: Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, January 26, 2014).

²² Quotation from researcher observation notes, Crawford Memorial Untied Methodist Church Conference, January 26, 2014.

²³ Quotation from researcher observation notes, Crawford Memorial Untied Methodist Church Conference, January 26, 2014.

In February, the non-member and the engineer initiated new emails to the participants to begin planning for the garden for the upcoming season. Interested former participants and newcomers met in early March, and the cook reported that she was starting several plants from seed for the first time, in order to contribute them to the garden. The group planned and planted the garden for a second season, including the seedlings the cook had sprouted, and they gave the children and youth one of the four beds for their own use.

In September, the Sunday school used the theme “Connect with Creation” for their curriculum and kick-off event:

In the spirit that we come ‘to the garden,’ glory in our earth's ‘rocks and rills,’ and love ‘all creatures great and small,’ this year's Christian Education theme will be ‘Connect with Creation.’ Our Rally Sunday will feature treasure hunts; games; crafts and will feature a ‘petting zoo’ with some pretty unusual creatures (‘Hi there, giant snake!’ ‘How are you doing Ms. Wombat?’). Rally Sunday also provides an opportunity for parents to register their children for the coming year of Sunday school and talk with their child's teachers. Please join us in exploring all the wonders of God's creation and glorying in its beauty and perfection.²⁴

The lay leader later contacted the investigator to report that a new member had listed the garden as the reason they had decided to join the church.

Small Group Post-Garden Observations

²⁴ Eric Dupee, "Rally Sunday at Crawford" (Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church, September, 2014), 1.

No mention of garden or other ecological themes was observed in the Adult Class in the two months after the garden project had ended.

Worship Post-Garden Observations

Ecological ethics themes were included in two of the four post-garden services observed, such as minor liturgical themes or a sermon on the beauty and value of humanity as part of the beauty and value of the whole Creation. The non-member later emailed the investigator to report that the harvest had been on the altar or incorporated into worship every week of the growing season. In addition, in the spring, the church held one of their Sunday worship services outside on the lawn by the garden and included ideas of the garden in the service and liturgy.

Suburban Site Interviews

Interviews were given at the three time points: before (pre-garden), during (mid-garden), and after (post-garden) the garden project. As judged by later participation levels, the eight pre-garden interviews included seven garden participants and one non-participant. The pre-garden interviews were conducted in the time window after garden planning meetings had begun but before the garden was constructed and planted at the end of May. All eight pre-garden interviewees were available for further interviews over time. The last set of interviews took place after the garden had been winterized and before the planning began for the next

growing season. The lay leader did not have a pre-garden interview, but she interviewed at both later time points.

The interviews revealed a commitment to ecological ethics within the congregation, consistent with a congregation interested in a garden project. In the pre-garden interviews, the respondents expressed investment in ecological ethics, including the areas measured in the surveys: spirituality, such as general Creation care themes; general nature connection (community); personal habits (discipleship); and social justice awareness but not political activism (justice). Over time, participant responses revealed impacts in each of the four areas as well: exploration of garden-related theological ideas and worship practices (spirituality); nature connection and kinship with the garden and the harvest (community); garden-related practices, such as new foods and the incorporation of the garden into church ministries (discipleship); and awareness and practices related to ecological justice, such as suburban fresh food possibilities and connections to the local food movement (justice).

Question 1: Environmentalism and Creation Care

The interviewees expressed a commitment to ecological ethics, particularly in the form of personal habits. They reported impacts from the spiritual and communal nature of the project, which led them to consider gardening techniques, foods, or spiritual concepts that they had not previously experienced or considered.

They also described a raised awareness of general ecological ethics themes and the adoption of new ecological habits.

Question 1 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Do you consider yourself an "environmentalist," or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?"

At the suburban site, more people expressed a preference for the term "Creation care." Of the eight interviewees, four people specifically chose the term; one person embraced both labels as equivalent. Only two people accepted the label "environmentalist," which seven of the eight respondents described as more invested, activist, or extreme. Like the urban site, these respondents expressed some regret that they were not worthy of the label. The non-member reflected on personal habits, activism, spirituality, and kinship with nature:

I've never thought about the title of environmentalist. It seems like someone that goes out and is being proactively active. I'm more of a passive carer of the Creation... I understand it as being God's Creation, but that's not the language I use to describe it. But when I'm out in nature, I'm amazed by its beauty and variety, and I'm certainly thankful to God. I try to live lightly on the land, in terms of recycling, and I try to keep my thermostat low... One thing I have is some kind of weird emotional attachment to trees; I get very upset when I see trees getting cut down... but I'm kind of a hypocrite, because I don't want to use chemicals, but I have on occasion used chemicals in the back yard.²⁵

²⁵ Grenfell-Lee, "Dissertation Interviews: Compiled Transcripts," 24-5.

The pastor also reflected on activism and compared environmentalism to other justice-related issues:

I don't see myself as particularly activist in terms of being an environmentalist. I care about Creation and I want to live my life in ways that are environmentally friendly... I believe it's necessary for me to live with integrity, to have concern and care for Creation as part of my life, just like something else, like racial justice, or economic justice.²⁶

The engineer spoke of connections between personal habits and wider societal ethics:

I rather like the notion of 'invested in caring for Creation' terminology, because it really does put it in the right perspective. I make my living as an engineer, doing things that impact the environment; I'm not one of these tree huggers, but I really am very strongly for responsibility and accountability in terms of what we do and how it impacts. And I think, quite honestly, we've kind of missed the boat... There's not anywhere near enough people who understand how the things we do collectively impact, from recycling, to wanting bigger roads so we can take trips anywhere we want... Society has not figured out a good way yet to put the true cost of what we do into it, [which] would alter our habits somewhat.²⁷

The trustee also spoke of pragmatic considerations:

I'd like to think I'm environmentally sensitive... [but] the LEED [certification process], I don't believe it actually creates good environmentalism. A strict adherence to everything may not be the best way to live a balanced life. Like I say, I'm more of an eight than a ten. Sometimes the movement goes too far, moves beyond the practical.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 22.

²⁷ Ibid., 27.

²⁸ Ibid., 32.

Question 1 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Since beginning this project, do you consider yourself more of an "environmentalist," or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?"

Out of the nine post-garden interviews, seven people felt the church garden project had affected their ecological ethics in some way. These respondents described a raised awareness about where food comes, the challenges of growing food, and ideas of growing our own food. In his mid-garden interview, the trustee spoke of raised awareness, despite not having regularly interacted with the garden plants:

This project has absolutely affected me, made me more environmentally aware. Did I ever go weed? No, sadly; I thought I would. I think we're all caught up in this as a visible example of being more connected to the environment. We're not an agrarian society and I'm certainly no farmer... I didn't necessarily connect [environmentalism] with food and that kind of thing. So this has been enlightening in that regard.²⁹

And in his post-garden interview, he spoke of the benefits for the whole church and his hope for its continuation in the future:

I'm looking forward to next year, to either expanding or thinking about the things that we could improve on... this shouldn't be a one shot deal. I feel very strongly about that, because not only did it create a few vegetables, and that was cool; but it really brought people together, people you wouldn't expect to come together- [the retiree], [the non-member] was brand new – it did a great thing. And it produced some vegetables; but it made us aware; it gave us a focus for the year; it created the stewardship campaign.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., 70-1.

³⁰ Ibid., 121.

The engineer also spoke of raised awareness, as well as learning and the importance of hands-on involvement:

On a very practical level, I feel like I learned a lot... but maybe even more, I feel like being involved in this got me thinking a little more about how each one of us individually and how we as groups and then even society as a whole have to interact with the natural world. I'm more conscious of both our impact and our need to be good stewards, to be respectful; not to take advantage, or abuse, the environment... Doing the garden was something a little new for me. I think just physically being out there, being engaged with it... You were there, physically, rolling up your sleeves, actively engaged, instead of just passively looking at it, or looking at whatever's around you.³¹

Seven respondents indicated that the project had exposed them to new ideas and/or led them to continue to learn on their own. The lay leader indicated that the project had inspired her to try to learn to garden on her own:

I really don't have a lot of experience with [gardening]. I enjoyed [the project], so I'm interested in finding out more about it, and even just at least taking care of my own little yard and my own little space in a more environmentally careful way. Just two weeks ago, I went to a little class at the Malden Library, an evening presentation about gardening.

Five people indicated a new awareness of the impact of their own actions and/or described new practices they have begun as a result of the project. The cook described more mindfulness of environmental ideas:

We're buying [a member of the congregation] a couple of gift certificates from [the garden center] so she can plant something in memory of her Dad, as an alternative to the charities that were mentioned in the obituary; we thought a living memorial might be a good thing... [The garden project]

³¹ Ibid., 112-3.

makes me pause and think more about natural things, and growing things, and where it all started.³²

In his mid-garden interview, the pastor described an increased awareness of the ethics of food growing:

[The non-member] and I were out one day looking at some of the vegetables, and thinking about whether we needed to enrich the soil, and how to do that without using poisons. [The project] increased my awareness of the challenges that maybe confront us on a larger scale in terms of how do you ethically provide food for so many millions of people, and how do you do that while trying to be environmentally friendly.³³

In his post-garden interview, the pastor spoke of including more ecological ethics in worship, as well as a raised awareness of personal habits:

I've always included care for Creation in liturgy in some respect; maybe not every Sunday an explicit thing, but I've noticed that more recently, it's been more on my mind, I've been more intentional about including it in worship services in various ways. Last Sunday, [I used] a prayer of confession about how many people in the world don't have access to clean water, and how many kids die every day from the related diseases... It's put Creation on the front burner, so to speak. On a personal level, I have been more conscious in my own food choices, what am I buying, is it locally grown, seeking out different foods... Before we had the garden, I would buy kale infrequently; but our little thing with kimchi and utilizing kale has me thinking more about what things I could be eating.³⁴

Three people indicated a raised awareness of nature in general or an increased kinship with plants, including ideas about the spirituality of Creation care.

³² Ibid., 138.

³³ Ibid., 58.

³⁴ Ibid., 100-1.

The non-member described the specific impact of gardening with a church community:

I've been growing some vegetables and herbs in my own garden, but there's something about doing it communally with others, and the sharing of it... Doing it with a church community as opposed to any other communal garden focused more on the God and Creation aspects, the stewardship. I'm not always in my garden thinking about God when I'm planting the tomatoes; but when the church is right over there, you see how planting tomatoes has a connection to what is important to me in being a good steward of the Earth.³⁵

The two people who reported no impact also gave explanations; one of them had not participated in the project, even though she fully supported it. The retiree reflected that she had grown up on a farm, so the experience was not new; however, she also mentioned new spiritual experiences and learning new foods as a result of the project:

I grew up being conscious of the environment, and I grew up on a farm; [the project] probably didn't change [my commitment] a lot... It was nice to be involved with more people. I was there when [the pastor] prayed, that was a good communal experience. I wish I had been there for making the kimchi, because I don't know what it is, and I've been reading about it since.³⁶

Question 2: Garden Experiences

The respondents generally had limited gardening experience as adults, although the retiree had grown up on a farm, and a few of them were growing or

³⁵ Ibid., 105-6.

³⁶ Ibid., 119.

had grown vegetable or herb gardens in the past. They expressed satisfaction at the ways this project provided unique communal and spiritual experiences.

Question 2 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables. Was it a positive experience for you, neutral, or negative? Why and how?"

Eight of the nine responses included an assessment of gardening expertise in their responses, in addition to descriptions and enjoyment levels. Five respondents including the cook, the engineer, and the trustee, described their experience as either "limited" or "very limited." The non-member and the pastor said they had "some" experience gardening, and the retiree had "considerable" experience from having grown up in the country with a large garden. Seven people described formative community-oriented experiences, such as with wider family and large gatherings. The engineer described his grandparents' farm:

We lived in an apartment complex, but my mother was from a farm family in Wisconsin... We used to spend the whole summer out there, working on the farm, and that included a lot of gardening.³⁷

The non-member had experienced gardening through her grandparents as well as her parents and others:

I had two pivotal experiences as a very young child; my father lived through the depression, and my grandparents had a big vegetable garden, and it was wonderful to be able to get the vegetables; plus, they had lots of fruit trees,

³⁷ Ibid., 27.

and it was wonderful. Then my family took a vacation to an island on the Saint Lawrence River... The community on the island had a huge vegetable garden; as guests, we were able to go pick what we wanted. I was probably ten; it had a big impact on me.³⁸

Two people lamented not having inherited what they described as a kind of genetic ability in their grandparents to grow food successfully. The trustee noted that his mother's attempts at gardening had failed, and he had not been included in his grandmother's garden:

My grandmother was a great gardener... she could make anything grow. I think I got the genes from my mother; [she] also had a garden in our backyard. It was pitiful. We built a swimming pool instead... I would see [my grandmother] three or four times a year. I didn't work with her in the garden, but I could see the fruits of it, and she was always talking about it.³⁹

Another participant also noted that gardening had not been passed down from her grandparents:

My parents weren't gardeners at all. My grandfather was; I knew he had a green thumb. He had a small yard and garden in Lynn. He could grow tomatoes like unbelievable. So I always felt like it should be in my genes, but it sort of wasn't.⁴⁰

Six of the nine interviewees also described current gardening or landscaping projects, four of which included vegetables or herbs.

Question 2 (Mid- and Post-Garden Project): "Please compare your previous experience,

³⁸ Ibid., 25.

³⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

if any, gardening fruit or vegetables, with this current project. How was this project different? Was it a more positive experience for you, neutral, or more negative? Why and how?"

All eight participants described positive differences between the church garden and other experiences, particularly the benefits of having worked together with a group, such as sharing responsibilities, learning new things from one another, and from the experience in general. The trustee felt more involved than he had with either his grandmother's or his wife's garden:

It was a sense of contributing to something by being the chair of the trustees and getting the vote to support this... and to set up the [hoses on] timers... It was more a sense of feeling like I was part of something. [My wife's] herbs are hers, not ours. I was always a bystander in my grandmother's garden... I've been marginally more involved in the growing aspect of this garden; I felt good about that.⁴¹

Three people included ideas of the wider community. The engineer appreciated the opportunity to learn from others and witness or interact more with the neighborhood; he also began to explore more witness possibilities:

Frankly, I was interested in this as a way to get exposure and a little bit of learning without it having to be all my responsibility... What stands out for me is private back yard versus community involvement, community engagement... Every one of the times I was out there, checking the fence, picking a tomato; every one of those things created a memory, a thought to connect back to the group in our church. And every time, there was somebody walking by. It presented a new face for the church to the public... This weird thought goes through my head, which hasn't occurred to me before; but how would our church be perceived – maybe as a bunch of

⁴¹ Ibid., 71.

weirdoes and crackpots – if we set up a tent on the lawn, put up some folding chairs, and held occasional services on the lawn.⁴²

The cook also described the ways the garden had raised awareness in the church and the wider community; she indicated that the project had inspired her to plant her own garden as well:

As I happened to be leaving church on Sunday morning, someone walking on the street actually climbed up over the wall to see what was going on... Wherever you are on the scale of environmentalism, when you see something like this in an unexpected place, it draws your attention, and makes you feel really good, and makes you think about the way you eat or whether you could grow something you didn't think you could grow. It stops the world for a minute... This year, because of being so busy, I got a late start; and I might have just said, I'm not going to do it this year. But it was in my mind because of the church garden, so I did go ahead and plant my herb garden this year.⁴³

The non-member particularly appreciated the opportunity to grow or try new foods with others; she also mentioned worship aspects:

Some of the things we were growing, I had never grown before. It was very surprising. The cucumbers and squash were just so funny; you'd think you'd found them all, and then you'd look from a different angle, and there'd be this ginormous cucumber... It helped me stretch in my gardening. I did make tea out of the holy basil one day with [the pastor and some friends]. It had a great flavor, very perfumey and light. That's why it's fun to do stuff with other people. And how it grew into other things, like the making of the kimchi, and bringing in vegetables and saying, can we put this on the altar today? And [the pastor] saying yeah, sure, go ahead! And sharing it with people at coffee hour; and having them actually take lettuce home.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 113.

⁴³ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 107.

The lay leader again described how the project had enabled her to start gardening and explore new spiritual ideas:

I haven't really done other gardening. I don't even know why. It felt like it was going to be too much work. The idea of learning about gardening, with other friends in my church family, and seeing how we might experience this in a spiritual way, was really interesting to me... Sharing [the harvest] with people at church was fun. Doing it together, all the responsibility wasn't on one person.⁴⁵

In total, five people mentioned the spiritual aspects of this garden. The pastor noted the practical and spiritual benefits of the community experience:

One thing is the explicit spiritual grounding. I've spent a few times praying in the middle of those four beds... I've never done that before in relation to gardening. The other piece is the community aspect. I went into it knowing it was a community garden, and I was hoping it wouldn't be me having to oversee every little thing; so I consider all that good. Future gardens will feel different to me. If I were to do a garden on my own after this, I would research it more. I would approach it more like this garden was approached. And I do think I would be more conscious of the spiritual. I would see it more as a spiritual discipline that can help me be in touch with the Divine, as opposed to just a utilitarian exercise because I want fresh vegetables... a spiritual process, in which perhaps I can experience the Spirit.⁴⁶

Question 3: Garden Participation

In general, the interviewees participated in the garden out of a desire to build community with other members of the congregation and to provide fresh produce to the congregation and elsewhere; there was also considerable interest in learning more about gardening and in nature connection or stewardship. In later interviews,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 138-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 102.

the participants all reflected on ways the project had built community within the group as well as for the larger congregation and in the wider community in sometimes surprising ways. They also described what they had learned from the experience and expressed satisfaction at the success of the project as well as an increased awareness of nature connection and ecological responsibility.

Question 3 (Pre-Garden): "Why did you decide [not/to] participate in the church garden project [and what do you hope to get out of this project personally]?"

Six of the seven pre-garden respondents indicated a desire to build community and relationships with others in the church. The engineer also expressed hope for his daughter to get involved:

Honestly, to spend time with my family and people with mutual interest. I'm hoping [my daughter] will find it something she has at least some interest in.⁴⁷

Four people also expressed a desire to learn more about gardening, such as the cook:

Anything that involves food, I'm there. I'm hoping to learn something that perhaps might make my own garden experience more successful... I'm willing to do some of the grunt work of planting and weeding, but only under someone else's direction, because I don't want to kill anything. I'm excited that people will perhaps be willing to cook with some things that they might not have tried before.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 39.

In contrast, the non-participant had stepped back from the project due to a lack of knowledge:

To be honest, I haven't gone to the meetings because I don't know anything... If people need it tended to, I can help. I think it's a cool idea, but I don't have much to offer.⁴⁹

Question 3 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "Now that the gardening has [begun/ended], are you glad you decided [not/to] participate in the church garden project? [What do you feel you [are getting/got] out of this project personally?"

Everyone who participated in the project expressed enjoyment and satisfaction at having been part of the garden, particularly in terms of building relationships, learning, and connecting with nature. All seven participants included ideas of community building, and six of them, such as the lay leader, also included learning about gardening or foods as well as the enjoyment of connecting with nature:

I'm very glad I decided to participate. I learned a little bit about gardening and that it wasn't so intimidating... I learned that I sort of liked digging around in the dirt. That was all fun. And I liked being part of the small group of people that was involved from the beginning to the end; the times that we were together, making the kimchi together, all of that was a nice bonding experience. And then especially when the group carried on in terms of planning and leading the stewardship campaign this year. That was a really valuable and neat experience, a different experience for the church than the usual way, where a committee comes together and plans it. This was a more exciting, invigorating way to do the stewardship campaign; and it just grew

⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

out of this group of people that just stayed together throughout a season to do the garden.⁵⁰

The trustee connected the project to the Adult Class and reflected on the spiritual benefits of the garden project for the church as well as for their presence in the town:

We're reading *When Spiritual but not Religious Isn't Enough*,⁵¹ and [the author] points out that when we do something [in nature] on our own, we can feel good; but when we do it as a community, it's more in the nature of the Divine. So I'm part of something... The biggest thing [about the garden] was the effect on the church. I enjoyed that there were older folks, newer folks, even [an elder] who didn't have the stamina to go out and do some of this stuff, but he had a lot of good ideas... And now it's gonna be the cool thing to do, with the good feelings we got from the rest of the town – what is that Methodist church doing?⁵²

The engineer also reflected on raised awareness for both the church and the wider community:

It was kind of a subtle thing, which I didn't appreciate at first, the outward connection that [the garden] had. You'll never know who, walking by, seeing the beds, watching the plants grow, got a little bit more appreciation... I got a better appreciation that there were things we could be doing, a sense of awareness of responsibility, of connection, to Creation.⁵³

Although two respondents included ideas of enjoying the vegetables in mid-garden interviews, none of the post-garden interviews included direct references to

⁵⁰ Ibid., 139.

⁵¹ Lillian Daniel, *When "Spiritual but Not Religious" Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Suprising Places, Even the Church* (New York: Jericho Books, 2013).

⁵² Grenfell-Lee, "Dissertation Interviews: Compiled Transcripts," 71, 122-3.

⁵³ Ibid., 114.

enjoyment of the food itself. The pastor articulated the more general sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that five others also mentioned:

To be honest, it's fantastic to have achieved this as a community. I mentioned this in the Adult Class; the UU church has been talking about it for a long time and hasn't been able to. Someone told [our youth minister], "There must be some good things going on at that church." For me as a leader, it's something I can feel good about... [and] doing it in the church context made me more intentionally reflective about it.⁵⁴

The non-participant and the cook both also expressed regret that they had not participated more; the cook described other kinds of communal satisfaction:

I absolutely regret that I didn't participate. I'm not a lover of getting dirty and sweaty, [but] I'm interested in learning more from others... Every time I drove by it, it gave me a lift to see it. Isn't it great that we had so many weeks of talking and planning, and all of a sudden, wow, we really could do this!⁵⁵

Question 4: Dirt, Soil, and Earth

The respondents initially described positive ideas or memories, including a sense of reciprocity, and practical or unpleasant ideas or memories associated with dirt. Over time, more people spoke of enjoyable interactions with dirt, and some began to include spiritual ideas in their responses.

Question 4 (Pre-Garden): "Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth."

⁵⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 75, 133.

Of the eight initial interviewees, three people described enjoying interacting with dirt, and four people included positive ideas such as reciprocity:

I think about how it gives life, and even though it gets under my fingernails, I try to wear gloves, but I end up taking them off. I just really like it. I just like digging in it; I just like the way it smells and the way it feels.⁵⁶

Four people also included practical or unpleasant ideas about dirt. The pastor initially only included such concepts:

I think of worms and rocks, because whenever I've tried to dig in New England, you always hit rocks. I think of strong soap for getting clean.⁵⁷

The engineer incorporated practicality with reciprocity:

I've got a master's in geotechnical engineering for soils and rocks and 38 years of experience with dirt and rocks... I think of it both as a construction material and an ecological material, a source of all living plants, what supports us, what sustains us. They are related; I'm an engineer, but I really feel it's critical that we do things such that we don't destroy the environment.⁵⁸

The trustee combined practical and theological concepts:

I've never focused on vegetable gardening, but I've cared about wine for many years, and part of that is soil conditioning. You bury the vines; you go out and just like a good religious person, you've got to prune the vines. As you drop the grapes and leaves on the ground, you plough them under, because they are enriching the soil.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 27-8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 34.

The retiree focused on a memory that included practical and spiritual elements:

When my father bought the place where we lived in Michigan, the first thing he did was go out in the ground on his hands and knees, and put his hands in the dirt. He was so thrilled to own this, this was his farm, and he blessed the dirt. Kids nowadays should get more dirty; their immune systems would be stronger if they played in the dirt more.⁶⁰

The cook spoke only of unpleasant ideas and experiences:

I don't like that feeling of my hands in the dirt. I respect it, I love it, I don't want to do it. It's an icky feeling; I associate it with summer and heat, drippy, sweaty; I hate that feeling. It may not be the dirt's fault, but I associate the two.⁶¹

Question 4 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth."

In later interviews, more people described enjoying working or interacting with the dirt: six respondents included these ideas, as compared to three respondents in the pre-garden interviews. The three people who had participated least in the garden, the cook, the trustee, and the non-participant, gave the same answers in later interviews. The non-participant described garden-related ideas of reciprocity:

I guess because my mind is on gardening, I think of the nutrients that are in the earth, that enable things to grow that are planted in it.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁶¹ Ibid., 39.

⁶² Ibid., 148.

The lay leader reflected on how the project had provided her with enjoyable nature connection opportunities and built her sense of nature connection at other times:

I didn't have much experience with getting my hands dirty. I enjoyed getting my hands dirty and digging around in the dirt. It was interesting to learn about the mix we had to use... I enjoyed the whole experience being a little closer to nature than I usually am, having more contact with dirt and plants. I enjoyed being out and walking around the pond, and looking at things. This was more interactive for me than usual.⁶³

The engineer spoke positively of exploring new knowledge of and interactions with dirt:

I was learning so much, listening to people, reading the gardening book. It's given me more appreciation, because it's another hands-on, hands in connection with the soil, a different frame of mind. It was different because it was with the intent of growing something, as opposed to building something. Why should it be different? But it is different.⁶⁴

The non-member also spoke of how dirt had provided an important personal connection for her to the garden project:

I really enjoyed seeing the different colors of [the soil mixture]. I went up to New Hampshire to get the compost for it. I drove up to a camp with a big compost heap, and they said I could have some, so I dug all that and put it in plastic bins, and they were so heavy, and carrying it around in my car, and trying to get it out. That was fun for me, to bring compost from a place that I love to the church garden.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 139-40.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 114-5.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 107.

The pastor's answers changed the most over time. Although his first response had included only practical ideas, in his mid-garden interview, he began to reflect on ideas of nature connection and discipleship:

I think of – I guess the word is 'mystery.' This is an interesting question, because I can't remember if I would have viewed the soil this way, but now I see it's a lot of living stuff. It's not just dead. I think my understanding of soil and dirt is a little more expansive... I feel like I don't think I probably get my hands dirty enough. I think I want to be engaged in activities that put me in touch with dirt and soil more.⁶⁶

After the garden project, the pastor expanded more on theological ideas:

I think of life, of richness and nesting. A seed goes into soil and that soil is going to provide hydration, and nutrients, so it's almost like the womb for seeds, for life to exist. I think there's a strong connection with death. I routinely bury people in the soil... I'd be perfectly happy if my body goes into the earth and decays and becomes food for insects and part of the cycle of life. I think of life, and nurturing, and womb type things.⁶⁷

Question 5: Growing Local Food

Initially, approximately half of the eight respondents spoke of justice ideas related to increased awareness of the source of food or support for the local food movement. Three people included spiritually transformative benefits of gardening. In later interviews, all nine of the respondents referred to justice-related themes, and seven people described gardening as spiritually transformative. Respondents also spoke more about the health, safety, and taste of garden vegetables.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 103.

Question 5 (Pre-Garden): "Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?"

Of the eight initial interviews, five people described benefits related to wider issues of social justice. The trustee referred to a session of the Adult Class, including local food and wider issues of industrial agriculture:

We know the agribusiness is a bad thing. It controls things, it hurts people, it hurts small farmers. The book that we read this fall, I found that all the authors were all part of a small farming family and then left it... We complain about immigration, yet we ask these people for a very small amount of money, we hurt them, we hold them back, so they will go out and work in the sun for very small wages and no healthcare to create vegetables. The best way to grow food is a small farm cooperative that we were introduced to, and [some members of our congregation] are involved in those. [My wife] is scared of how much food will flow into our house; there's only two of us.⁶⁸

The retiree focused on the health and safety benefits of vegetable gardens:

It's better to eat vegetables, and it's better to have fresh vegetables and vegetables that don't have a lot of pesticides on them.⁶⁹

Three people described ways that gardening can be transformative. The engineer reflected on awareness of the source of food as well as community building benefits:

It's a wonderful thing to do on two levels. The first is that it makes us appreciate a lot more how we're related to our environment, where our food comes from, that we take for granted. Second, it creates opportunities for communal interaction, which I really think we're missing in our society right now. Doing a church garden is different from sitting around talking in the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 34-5.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

Adult Class; we're doing something and having communal interaction at the same time.⁷⁰

The pastor reflected on the ways gardening can teach important life lessons:

The process of growing food is good for the soul. It teaches us something about the nature of reality, the whole idea of what Stephen Covey calls the "law of the farm."⁷¹ You can't cram for everything, not everything is fast or immediate. If you want good tasting food, you have to prepare soil, and water, and weed, and wait, and tend to things. A lot of life is like that.⁷²

Question 5 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?"

In the later interviews, the responses included significantly more ideas of spiritual transformation, nature connection and community building, health and safety, and wider issues of social justice. Whereas initially, five respondents had included ideas of social justice and awareness in their answers, in later interviews, all nine respondents included these ideas. The cook had initially focused on issues of food waste and personal enjoyment; she later included wider issues:

The natural thing is not going to the store and buying it. The natural thing is growing it yourself, and not, for example, buying raspberries from Chile in the middle of January, but going with what grows in your area.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁷¹ Pastor is referring to Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (New York: Fireside, 1994).

⁷² Grenfell-Lee, "Dissertation Interviews: Compiled Transcripts," 23.

⁷³ Ibid., 135.

Initially, four people had included ideas of nature connection in their responses; in later interviews, seven people included such ideas. The non-member described the ways the garden had built community and nature connection, including ideas of abundance and spirituality:

It's fun, that surprise, to see how it changes every day. There was one ginormous zucchini, we put this big old zucchini on the altar. It was so big that nobody wanted to take it home! My friends were there [helping], and so I took it home and we used half of it for the three of us, and made a summer stir-fry. And the other half, which was a lot, a gallon sized zip lock was filled to the brim, and I froze it. And then when we had a potluck at the church, I used it in a casserole, and had a zucchini casserole to bring. It was nice to bring it full circle; and so much of it to feed us three, and then to come back to the church.⁷⁴

Concepts related to ecological discipleship also increased over time, such as the health and safety benefits of local food gardens. In the pre-garden interviews, four people mentioned such concepts, whereas eight of the nine interviewees included such ideas in the later interviews. In addition, before the project, three people had mentioned the ways gardening is spiritually transformative; in later interviews, seven respondents included this idea. The pastor mentioned ideas of spirituality, discipleship, nature connection, and justice:

It's a spiritual discipline; it brings us into connection with Creation, and therefore, the Divine... It encourages a sense of justice, to know the work involved in preparing food, and all the things that can go wrong. When farmers, whether here or in other countries, deal with drought, it's a serious thing.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid., 109-10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 103-4.

Two people also reflected on differences between flower and vegetable gardens. In his post-garden interview, the engineer initially expressed one view, but then he began to explore ideas of intimacy and kinship in vegetable gardens:

The truth be told, I'm not sure that I see a big difference between growing vegetables and growing flowers; I would think we did equal value if we planted a whole yard full of beautiful flowers people could cut, and take home, and put on their table, and bring a little brightness into their lives. It's the growing, not the food. But the food gives us something very tangible; it's just cool to take a tomato home, and be able to wash it off and cut it up, and have it for supper. Tending a vegetable garden requires a little more diligence and care; food is a little more basic, elemental part of our lives maybe than the flowers. You have a different connection... I did lots of work on farms, but it was a production activity. Going into this little garden was pretty personal; you saw the zucchini vines, and the carrot tops; you kind of watched them. I will say this: there is something a little different about watching a tomato, or a zucchini kind of grow, day by day. You want to see, when does it get to the point where it's ripe enough for me to pick and eat.⁷⁶

Question 6: Congregational Impact

The respondents initially suggested that the garden project would build community within the congregation and raise awareness about local food growing both within and outside the congregation. In later interviews, the respondents reflected on the ways the project had built community and raised awareness for the participants and within the wider congregation, such as through the stewardship campaign and in the uniqueness of having a vegetable garden on a church lawn.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 116.

Question 6 (Pre-Garden): “Do you think this project will benefit the whole church? If so, how?”

Four of the eight respondents suggested that the project would build connectedness in the congregation. The pastor expressed hope that the congregation would have opportunities to connect with the project:

My expectation is that people who do the gardening will share their experience. So even people who don't get involved in the gardening itself, hopefully will have opportunities to contribute. Maybe someone who can't actually garden because they're not physically able could contribute seeds, or help out financially, or have some way of supporting the project. And I think people who just don't get involved will somehow potentially benefit from the people who do get involved sharing. The project could bring about good energy.⁷⁷

The trustee reflected on the investment of the church in the project:

This is a community thing, and even the people who won't be directly involved, will never offer any advice, weed – even they will have a sense of pride about what we did... Who knows, maybe we'll have canned carrot something or other to sell at the church fair. You wait and see, there will be somebody who steps out of the woodwork, once they see it growing: “I have 55 bell jars, I'm bringing them to the church and we'll boil them, because my grandmother told me how to do this.”⁷⁸

Two people mentioned the unique and hands-on aspect of the project. The cook spoke of shared excitement:

It will be exciting; everyone will be running out there, “what came up, what grew?” I just think that adds a level of excitement to being there. People are not just showing up for church because it's a habit, it's something that might

⁷⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 35.

make people really excited about being there every week, because there's something new to discover: "Wow, that wasn't up last week!"⁷⁹

Another participant particularly hoped the children would share in the experience:

When people actually see that it's growing and vegetables are coming, I think that the children will like it a lot... It's really good to do something physical that we can all participate in, as opposed to intellectualizing about stuff in a class, or watching the trustees last year getting the new boiler; we don't participate in that... I planted bulbs and pansies outside the back door, and [two members] told me that the nursery school kids were enchanted watching the flowers grow.⁸⁰

Three people mentioned that the visible nature of the garden would add to its impact. The engineer compared the project to other visible ministries:

It will give everyone in the church some increment of feeling that the church is an active place, the church is a place that's visible to the community... I always get a great deal of pride when I see the Mission of Deeds truck parked in our parking lot... I take a measure of pride that a group I'm part of and believe in is doing something.⁸¹

The non-member spoke of the benefits and challenges of a new and visible garden ministry:

Everybody will know right away what that means, it's very visible, as opposed to some of the other good work we do [that] the wider Winchester community doesn't see. This will be right out there. We're going to do something different. I think that will be really cool, and it will bring up all kinds of interesting conversations and relationships in the church, and maybe some conflicts, which I think is all good grist for the faith mill.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁸¹ Ibid., 28.

⁸² Ibid., 26.

Two respondents also suggested that the project would raise awareness in the congregation about the local food movement for people of faith. The retiree spoke of historical connections:

If it's a success, [the congregation] would all enjoy coming together and celebrating the harvest. It's been an important thing in this country since it was founded. Maybe it will get people to buy locally, help raise awareness about local food or products.⁸³

Question 6 (Mid- and Post-Garden): "Do you think this project [is benefiting/has benefited] the whole church? If so, how?"

While only two people initially suggested that the project might raise awareness about issues of justice, five of the nine later respondents described impacts such as awareness of the local food movement, and seven respondents referred to the integration of the project with the annual stewardship campaign. The lay leader reflected on these impacts:

It got people thinking about the importance of eating local food and growing your own food. And I think it was interesting for people to see how the stewardship campaign grew out of that. Everybody felt involved in the stewardship campaign more than they have in the past, just through filling out the bingo cards and thinking about different ways of caring for the Earth and being stewards of God's Creation.⁸⁴

Before the project began, three people had suggested that the visibility and nature of the project would create an impact on the congregation. Subsequently, five

⁸³ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

people spoke of the impact of such a prominent project on the congregation. The retiree spoke of the church presence in the wider community:

When I was watering, people would stop by on the sidewalk and ask about it. I noticed during the week, people walk through the church parking lot and through the lawn; nobody I recognized. Several times, mothers would bring their children down to the garden, showing it to them. It brought interest of others to our church. It changed the way the community sees and interacts with our church; maybe they think we're putting our money where our mouth is. It shows that we're doing things.⁸⁵

During and after the project, more people noted the ways in which the project had built community in the congregation. While four people suggested such an outcome before the project, eight people later described ways in which people had come together or been drawn more closely into the congregation. The cook reflected on the central involvement of the non-member as well as the unusual nature of the project itself:

It's a cool thing for a church to do. It's unusual and something that would spark people's interest; it's pushing the boundaries of stewardship for a church not just to talk about money. And it might be something that would [draw in] a person who was looking to get involved... I don't remember how connected [the non-member] was before, but she certainly made herself an integral part of the project and really connected with a lot of people because of it.⁸⁶

The trustee also reflected on the ways the project had built community with non-participants and how the pastor had seen the potential of the project:

You had the old-timers like [the retiree] coming together with [the lay leader] and others, and [the non-member] just walks in and says, "I'll do it!"

⁸⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 136.

This is what a community is supposed to be about. And you've got people on the sidelines, like [elders] opining about when they were kids on the farm; and the kids got into it, too. I think next year, the kids will get into it even more. This is a beautiful community focus; it became the stewardship campaign. We don't have a dummy for a pastor. [The retiree] is not a well person; for her to volunteer to do the watering, to go exert herself, you know she wanted to do it.⁸⁷

Prior to the project, three people had suggested that tangible experiences with the garden or harvest could have an impact on the congregation. Later, three respondents reflected specifically on the spiritual impacts from these kinds of experiences, such as during worship and fellowship time. The non-member reflected on the positive attitude of the congregation and the pastor:

Even if people are chuckling and laughing at us for putting bowls of stuff on the altar, they really enjoyed it. It's really brought pleasure to people; and they were in there eating lettuce when we had a big bowl of lettuce, picking it up and chomping it, sharing stories. It was good. And kudos to [the pastor] for participating, supporting, going out there and doing watering a lot himself, tending; and then being so open, "yeah, let's put it right up here," giving it a front and center spot whenever we walked in with something on the altar or wherever.⁸⁸

The pastor spoke of the congregational impact and motivation to expand the project into additional opportunities for ministry:

It broadened our understanding of the concept of stewardship and I think it helped people to get to know each other; [the non-member], for example, was pretty new to the congregation when it started. All of a sudden, she's jumping in, interacting with people, taking a leadership role. It gave people a sense of accomplishment and purpose. And it also has the potential to give us a missional or outreach possibility. My sense in talking with people is that we feel good about sharing the food at coffee hour and incorporating it in

⁸⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 109.

various ways in the church, but now that we've done it once, we've seen that we can grow the garden, there's a sense to be more intentional and thinking about how we can share it with people, perhaps hungry people. I think it has that potential of being an outreach vehicle for us.⁸⁹

Question 7: The Harvest

Before the project, the interviewees expressed hopes that the harvest would be shared with the congregation, as a way to celebrate and raise awareness of the project, and with the wider community, such as through food ministries. Later, there was little knowledge in regards to its use in food ministry, and many respondents expressed a desire to share the harvest in those ways in future seasons. The respondents remembered the incorporation of the harvest into fellowship time, worship, and church meals.

Question 7 (Pre-Garden): "What do you expect or hope will happen to the food that is grown, and why?"

Seven of the eight pre-garden interviews included ideas of sharing the harvest with the congregation and/or in outreach or ministry opportunities. The trustee reflected on the idea of its inclusion in the annual and well-known Christmas fair:

I hope we do something that makes it [reflective of our identity], like somebody decides to can something and it's featured at the fair. That would

⁸⁹ Ibid., 104.

be a very “[our identity]” thing, because it’s outreach to the community. It’s not one person saying, I’m going to take my carrots and go home. That’s not the goal. Maybe some of it ends up at the food pantry that we’re part of... It’s going to enrich the community in more ways than one.⁹⁰

The retiree spoke of the harvest as a way to raise awareness:

I hope that we can contribute to an urban food pantry, and I think we should celebrate and consume some of it... I’ve learned kale is one of the most nutritious vegetables, and I didn’t know how to cook kale, so I’m learning new things. Maybe this kind of awareness can become part of the congregation, instead of eating burgers and fries.⁹¹

Question 7 (Mid- and Post-Garden): “What [do you expect or hope will happen/was done] with the food that [is/was] grown, and why?”

During and after the project, seven of the nine respondents noted that the gardening method had produced a different kind of harvest from a large, farm garden approach. This smaller and steadier method affected how the harvest had been used as well as plans for the future; the pastor reflected on possibilities in his mid-garden interview:

My thought was that we would have a basket out by the road, where we would invite people to take stuff. We never actually did that; when I pictured it, I pictured all of a sudden, there’d be all these vegetables, and we’d have an abundance, we’d pick them, put them in baskets, do various things with them. The reality was, the garden comes in little by little. I’d go out there and there might be one ripe cucumber and a few ripe tomatoes, and it didn’t seem like there was so much that it made sense to put out a basket. That’s still a goal of mine, to make it visibly open to the community that we want to share these vegetables with anybody who wants to come along and take some... But it

⁹⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁹¹ Ibid., 31.

was our first year, and we are finding some ways to share the vegetables. If we had a much larger garden, I like the idea of having meals in the church using vegetables from the garden; having potlucks, or inviting community members in.⁹²

All nine interviewees mentioned either taking only a small amount, taking only what was leftover, or taking something specifically to share with the church or a food ministry. The engineer described the experience of eating the harvest:

[I] was going by there several different times, just stopping to look, make sure it wasn't too dry; and later in the season, seeing if there was a big ripe tomato that I was going to get before some critter got it. And just taking that home and enjoying it... It tasted better... you sat and you had the tomato, and you enjoyed it, because you felt like you and others *had* had a hand in creating it, growing it.⁹³

The cook reflected on her reluctance to harvest any for personal use:

I didn't [take any]; I didn't feel like I should. If this happens again, and there's a bigger garden; if you saw a giant row of steak tomatoes and you decided to take two or three for a meal, I would feel more comfortable doing that. Or we could put on the church website that the beans are ready, anyone who wants to pick beans today. That's probably something to be discussed.⁹⁴

The trustee described how the gardening method helped ensure the future of the garden:

There were bigger hopes for a larger harvest and the ability to do some outreach... I think people were kind of amazed that it wasn't as much work as it might have been; and so with that, I think a few more boxes will probably be purchased, and there may be some dedicated crops so there would be something else planned.⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid., 62.

⁹³ Ibid., 117.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 136-7.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 127.

Respondents had mixed knowledge of how the harvest had been used. Seven respondents positively described the inclusion of the harvest at fellowship time, and seven respondents also specifically mentioned the kimchi:

I just remember a couple times there were fresh vegetables – I can't even remember what they were – put out at coffee hour; it was nice for people to see the fruits of the labor of the people who did participate, and they got to enjoy it. And I had some of the kimchi that was made. And that was neat, to try something different. I've never even had kimchi before, but now that I've heard of it, I happened to notice it in a jar at Trader Joe's, that you can actually buy it – it broadened my horizons a bit.⁹⁶

The retiree referred to her prior hopes that the harvest would be used in a food ministry; she also remembered the soup the lay leader had made for a church event:

I'm not sure if anybody did anything for the [soup kitchen]. That's what I thought would have been nice. I don't think we had enough to feed thirty people. For the fair, somebody made soup with something from the garden; I remember it saying "with kale" or something "from the garden." So that was good.⁹⁷

Six people remembered the ways the harvest had been incorporated into worship. The non-member reflected on the way the pastor had welcomed what she and the lay leader had brought into the sanctuary; she also explored theological implications:

[Communion] would have been impossible for some people to do, and probably a little bit of a stretch for him; but, "hey, let's try this, why not?" He did it on the spur of the moment, because it was up there next to the bread;

⁹⁶ Ibid., 148.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 120.

'this is just as much a part of a Communion meal as that one,' consecrate it, and hand it out... Every time we put something up there, he would at least mention it, draw people's attention to it, whether in the announcements or in prayers. [The lay leader] and I started bringing it right into the sanctuary; we would be standing there with a bowl of something and a puppy dog look on my face, "look what we have from the garden! Can we put it in the church?" After the first couple times, we'd just walk in ourselves and arrange it on the altar... I started to think, why are flowers on the altar? People put them there in memory of somebody; but the vegetables are not in memory, they are the now. They are growing, just picked; they are more relevant than flowers.⁹⁸

The lay leader also specifically remembered the ways the harvest had been included in worship and what it had meant for her theologically:

The times that I particularly liked were when the food ended up on the altar table. There were quite a few Sundays where whatever we had harvested was on the table, or in Communion, or when we had the kimchi there; all of that was really special. One of the first times, I took an Instagram picture and instagrammed it... When we brought the kimchi out and put it on the worship table, I thought it was really important to do that, because it's like thanking God and praising God for his Creation, and the abundance, our daily bread.⁹⁹

The pastor was able to list the various ways the harvest had been used, including at the soup kitchen; he reflected on the sharing based approach of the participants and on the variety of ways he had incorporated the harvest in worship:

I used it in Communion at least once. I'd have a bowl or two of vegetables as people came up to receive Communion, so people could take a tomato or a bean or something. I used the kimchi in the children's message... It was a celebration of having great food to eat, Creation, the willingness to share. People genuinely wanted other people to enjoy the vegetables. For me, I wanted to incorporate it into our worshipping life however it made sense... A lot of people in the congregation weren't involved in the garden at all. Having it there for Communion raises awareness and appreciation. My hope was to

⁹⁸ Ibid., 110.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 141.

broaden people's understanding: we talk about the bread and the juice as being a part of Creation that we use and we share, that's what Jesus supposedly had on that last night; but maybe we can use other parts of Creation to communicate the same thing. It was partly to broaden people's understanding of Communion, and what we're doing in Communion.¹⁰⁰

Question 8: Garden Associations

All of the respondents associated gardening with positive feelings such as joy, peace, or satisfaction; some respondents also acknowledged difficult or frustrating aspects of gardening. Over time, answers included references to the benefits of a communal and/or spiritual gardening experience; in addition, the respondents included more nature connection ideas, including kinship with the plants.

Question 8 (Pre-Garden): "If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden."

Initially, seven of the eight respondents described the feelings associated with gardening in spiritual terms, such as joy and/or peace. The non-member spoke of its unique, reciprocal effects:

It's like a meditation, breaking the train of everyday thought. Because I focus, I get out of myself and I focus on the here and now, and other things melt away. There are some tasks you do idly, and your mind wanders to lots of other places; but when I'm in the garden, it's actually a focusing thing, and that becomes a wonderful meditation. And it's a feedback loop: I give to it, and it gives to me.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 104-5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 26.

The pastor mentioned the importance of not having technology while gardening; he also acknowledged its frustrating aspects:

I find it peaceful. When I've gardened in the past, I've done it in silence, without iPods and music blaring or anything. So I've found it sort of peaceful and meditative. There are moments of frustration, when you're digging up weeds and the root snaps, or futzing with fences. But mostly, I would say peaceful.¹⁰²

Three others also included unpleasant or difficult aspects of gardening. The cook also described positive feelings of excitement despite the anxiety she associated with gardening:

There is a certain amount of apprehension, because I don't know what I'm doing, so I'm always worried. It's mostly that I've spent all this money for little seedlings, and I'm going to kill them... Then, once things start to grow and I actually start to cook with them, and it seems like maybe it's going to be a success, it's the total opposite. It's just joy. When I find a recipe that calls for fresh herbs, there's a little person in me jumping up and down, saying, "Oh, great, I get to go out and cut some herbs!"¹⁰³

Three people specifically mentioned the satisfaction associated with the hard work of gardening. Three people also specifically mentioned the pleasure of being in nature or interacting with the dirt. The engineer spoke of yard work as an opportunity to connect with and care for nature; he also reflected on his hopes for the church garden to provide a nature connection experience for the children:

I know so many people who think mowing the lawn on Saturday morning is a chore, but I love it, I look forward to it. I get to get out there, appreciate it, feel like I'm taking care of the trees and the shrubbery. There's a certain satisfied tiredness after you've been out raking the leaves, or digging in the shrubbery,

¹⁰² Ibid., 24.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 41.

like you've accomplished something, reconnecting with nature, in my own little way... It's connected to being a kid and spending all those summers on the farm. It's hard work, but I loved it. Think about what you give to your kids, if you can help them gain that kind of recognition and appreciation. If I have any sadness, I don't think my kids have gotten as much of that as I had when I was a kid. That's another thing I hope [this project] will do for the church: give all our kids, the younger generation, an opportunity to see that this can be fun, and educational, and rewarding all at the same time.¹⁰⁴

Question 8 (Same as Pre-Garden): "If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden."

In the nine later interviews, three people specifically mentioned the benefits and pleasure they had derived from the communal aspect of the church garden. The engineer reflected on the lack of stress from shared responsibility as well as the community building in the church and with the wider community:

Because it was a group activity, and because it was a collaborative effort, it didn't feel like a stress. It didn't feel like a demand. It felt like it was something enjoyable that I could do... It [also] felt like another dimension of creating connectedness among our people and, to a lesser degree, to the community. I've heard other people say that they were out there watering, and people would stop and talk. To me, that's incredible.¹⁰⁵

As with the pre-garden interviews, four respondents in later interviews again reflected on positive associations with gardening despite its frustrating or difficult aspects. Whereas three people had identified ideas of outdoor nature connection in the initial interviews, seven of the nine later responses included these ideas.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 118.

Throughout the study, the trustee focused on the importance of community building for the congregation; in his last interview, he again focused on this idea, recalling a spiritual moment in the garden:

It was about the people. The connection I had was with the people. There was that day [the lay leader] asked us to pray, and we all held hands. It is always about the people, the community. That was the special part.¹⁰⁶

Three others described feelings of connection to the garden itself. In her mid-garden interview, the lay leader described both individual and communal spiritual experiences:

I had two different kinds of experiences, I'm realizing now. When we were all together, planting the garden, and even when we were winterizing the garden, that was all fun and educational. And then there were times when I would go to the garden by myself, usually in the evening, and it was very peaceful. There was something about having the circle surrounding the beds; opening the gate and stepping inside there, it was very peaceful and calm. I would look first to see if there was anything I could pick; but I would use the time there to try to be quiet, and pray, and reflect, and try to shut out the noise around me... It was sort of sacred. Those plants were growing there, and we had actually grown them, and it was really a special feeling when I was there by myself.¹⁰⁷

The non-member had initially focused on the meditative aspects of gardening; in her later interview, she further explored her connectedness to the plants:

I feel connected to the Earth, to living things, like I'm caring for something. And that brings me beauty, pleasure, and joy. It gives a lot to me, even in the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 81.

activity of taking care of it; but then, in the appreciation of it, all the beauty, walking out and seeing something different every day.¹⁰⁸

The pastor also began to explore concepts of kinship with the plants, as well as spiritual ideas:

This might be weird; but it's almost like having a pet. You grow attached. When you see an eggplant coming in, you want to go down and see its progress, like having a kid I guess. (Laughs) You're invested in it. Obviously, it's a little different... It's a relationship, and you're tending to the relationship. It's satisfying to catch up with an old friend, it's satisfying to have that relationship; and that's the God piece. Then you think, where's the distinction between having a relationship with the eggplant and the beans, and with God? Because God is in the mix there.¹⁰⁹

Question 9: Gardening As Worship

Prior to the beginning of the project, the Adult Class had read a book that explored the importance of human communities in creating intentional worship experiences.¹¹⁰ Initially, five of the eight respondents allowed that gardening could count as worship under certain circumstances. Over time, the respondents' answers grew more definitively affirmative, and they began to reflect on whether gardening could be inherently worshipful.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 63.

¹¹⁰ Daniel, *When "Spiritual but Not Religious" Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Suprising Places, Even the Church.*

Question 9 (Pre-Garden): "Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?"

All of the initial eight responses used qualified language in regards to gardening as worship, such as "It could" (four people), "I think so," "I guess," or "I'd have to say yes." The cook spoke of the importance of intentionality in worship:

I would have to be more intentional about thinking that way; in other words, when I go out to cut my herbs or plant my herbs, I'm not necessarily thinking about it that way. But if I *were* thinking about it, about tending the soil, tending the plants, what we're doing every Sunday when we worship is we're tending to each other. And sometimes you're receiving from other people, and sometimes you're giving to other people; and the plants are receiving the water, nutrients, love and care from us, and then they're giving back many, many times over when we harvest them. So it certainly is an act of worship, but I have to say honestly that I'm not always thinking that way. But it is that tender loving care; hopefully what we're doing every Sunday, tending to each other's needs so we can grow and flourish.¹¹¹

The non-member reflected on the newness of the idea for her, as well as the role of community in worship:

I would have to expand my definition of worship. I think it could definitely act as a form of prayer. Maybe, because worship for me means something more communal. I think of a worship service, or bowing down to worship someone... Can dance be worship? Yes. Can cooking be worship? Yes. So, can gardening be worship? Yes. I had to get to it. If you come to it with a sense of celebration, and a communal aspect. I've never used that term to describe something I do as an individual alone; but I just haven't thought about it too much, because if I'm dancing around by myself in a praiseworthy way, it's worship, I guess.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Grenfell-Lee, "Dissertation Interviews: Compiled Transcripts," 41.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

The pastor expressed interest in exploring these ideas through the garden project:

I guess off the top of my head, I would say that I see worship as sort of intentionally focusing on God, expressing praise and gratitude; so I think that if the act of gardening is viewed by the gardener as an expression of praise or an expression of gratitude to God, then yes, I would say that it is an act of worship. But I don't think gardening in itself is an act of worship; it's the intention that you bring to it that could make it an act of worship. But I don't know; I might have to think that through a little bit... I guess I will say that even if it is subconscious, yes, I will say that [it is an act of worship]. This brings up what I'm really excited about and interested in this, because this may expand my understanding of worship, or of what gardening can really be.¹¹³

Question 9 (Same as Pre-Garden): "Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?"

In the later interviews, three people gave similar qualified affirmative answers as before: the pastor, the non-participant, and the retiree. Five respondents gave much more affirmative answers than they had in the initial interviews, using terms like "Yes," "Of course," "Sure," and "Oh, gosh, yes": the engineer, the cook, the non-participant, the trustee, and another participant. (The ninth interviewee, the lay leader, gave definitively affirmative responses in both her mid-garden and post-garden interviews.)

Respondents continued to explore concepts of intentionality and community. The engineer reflected on its potential:

¹¹³ Ibid., 24.

To me, worship is not the place, it's more the state of consciousness. If you go to the garden and your mind is totally occupied with where the kids have to go next, how you're going to pay the bills, what's falling apart with your neighbor – I don't see a whole lot of worship in that. But if you go there and you let your mind reflect on the plants, and the Creation, our responsibility, and our connectedness; to me, that's worship. That's reflecting on and stopping to appreciate, and feeling that increment of responsibility for what God's given us.¹¹⁴

The trustee compared worshipful gardening with attending an indoor worship service:

For [others in the group], there's no question that it was. For me, it's the music, being together in community, being part of the choir. I'm lost when I'm just sitting in a pew... Just to show up and go home afterwards, I'm not sure that's worship for me. So is gardening worship? Absolutely, for people who are closer to the land than I am, getting their hands dirty; that's important. But any time the community comes together, there is worship; so certainly the garden has been. But did I get a worship experience out of it? When we all held hands in there, yes; but watering: not so much.¹¹⁵

The non-participant explored ideas of intentionality and suggested ways in which gardening could be inherently worshipful:

I think worship usually has a component of a presence of mind that you're worshipping; you're intentionally connecting, or you're open for that connection to the Divine. So if you're gardening with that in your mind, it can be very worshipful. There's probably an element of that connection to the Divine that's happening for the gardeners, even if it's not in your presence of mind at the moment; you're still getting that, it's still happening.¹¹⁶

The lay leader described all of her gardening experiences as worshipful:

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 112.

The way I experience it as worship is feeling connected to Creation, and the seasons, and the cycles; and also sharing what we harvested during worship, and being thankful and grateful for that; and also the times either when I was there by myself in the quiet, and being in that space; or when we were there as a small group, and laughing, and having fun, and praying. Those were a lot of different ways that I saw it as worship.¹¹⁷

The pastor continued to explore ideas of community and intentionality over time. In his mid-garden interview, he explored various aspects of worship:

It may be that having the vegetables with Communion is part of that. Why bring vegetables into Communion? Our gardening is an act of worship that might as well be part of the Sunday gathering for worship... When I think about worship, I think of it as a time to express gratitude, and I think gardening can promote gratitude. Worship is a time of paying attention to God; I think that gardening can provide that, be an opportunity to pay attention to God. Worship is praising God. Is there an element of praise in gardening? I think it's possible... Do I think worship is a particular thing that has sort of boundaries, that isn't in opposition to things like gardening and experiencing God in nature, but is its own sort of thing? I guess I don't have real clarity on that.¹¹⁸

In his last interview, he explored ideas of community and worship with otherkind:

I struggle with ideas of individual worship acts. I want to say that worship takes place within a community. I'm not sure if it has to be within a community, but if a person alone says grace before a meal, I don't have a problem with calling that worship, but I'd rather call it a person saying a prayer... which is great, but it's not worship. I haven't settled this question for myself... Although in one sense, I can view nature as community, and animals as community, I don't think that the squirrels have gathered to worship. I'm open to change and correction on this, but right now, I'm going to say I think it has to involve humans... Obviously I haven't figured it out yet for myself; something about coming together with some intention, but maybe intention isn't necessary; or maybe it's a different kind of worship.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 143.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 105.

Suburban Site Surveys

Surveys were distributed at the three time points (Pre-Garden, Mid-Garden, and Post-Garden). In the survey data graphs below, these time points are labeled “Before,” “During,” and “After.” The data was further separated into two subpopulations by self-reported participation in the garden project as indicated in a question at the very top of the survey; surveys with no response to the question about participation were grouped with the non-participant subpopulation. The graphs below show data for the participants (“Garden”), the non-participants (“Non-Garden”), and the combination of all surveys (“Combined”). The data represents the arithmetic mean or average for the control Religiosity scale and for the Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) as well as for each of the four subscales: Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice.

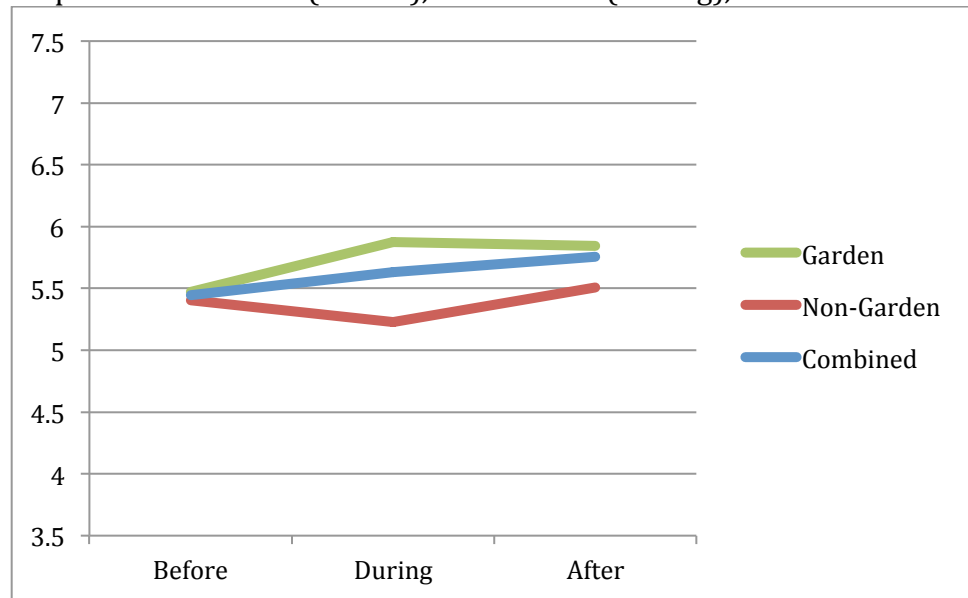
The data analysis was affected by a low response rate; for example, variations in the open-ended questions and in the subpopulations resulted in exaggerated impacts on the overall mean; thus, the open-ended questions were excluded from further analysis. The subpopulations were examined only for general trends. The survey data showed significant increases over time for both the garden participants and for the whole congregation. The control (Religiosity) scale showed no significant change over time, indicating no significant impact of the survey itself. The garden participants scored higher than the non-participants on each subscale

(Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice), but not on the control scale (Religiosity).

Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) Scale

The Ecological Ethics Index (EEI), which represents the combination of the four ecological subscales (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice), was slightly higher among garden participants than non-participants. The EEI showed an increase over time for both participants and non-participants (see Figure 5.9):

Figure 5.9: Ecological Ethics Index (EEI) Over Time – Suburban Site. The EEI used a 10-point scale. Significance was measured with a two-tailed t-test for the garden participants (Garden; $p < 0.05$), non-participants (Non-Garden; $p = 0.18$), and the combination of both (Combined; $p < 0.05$). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Separation of the EEI by subscales showed a trend of increasing scores over time for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys; no increase was observed for the Religiosity (R) subscale (see Figures 5.10-5.12):

Figure 5.10: Garden Participant Subscales Over Time – Suburban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).

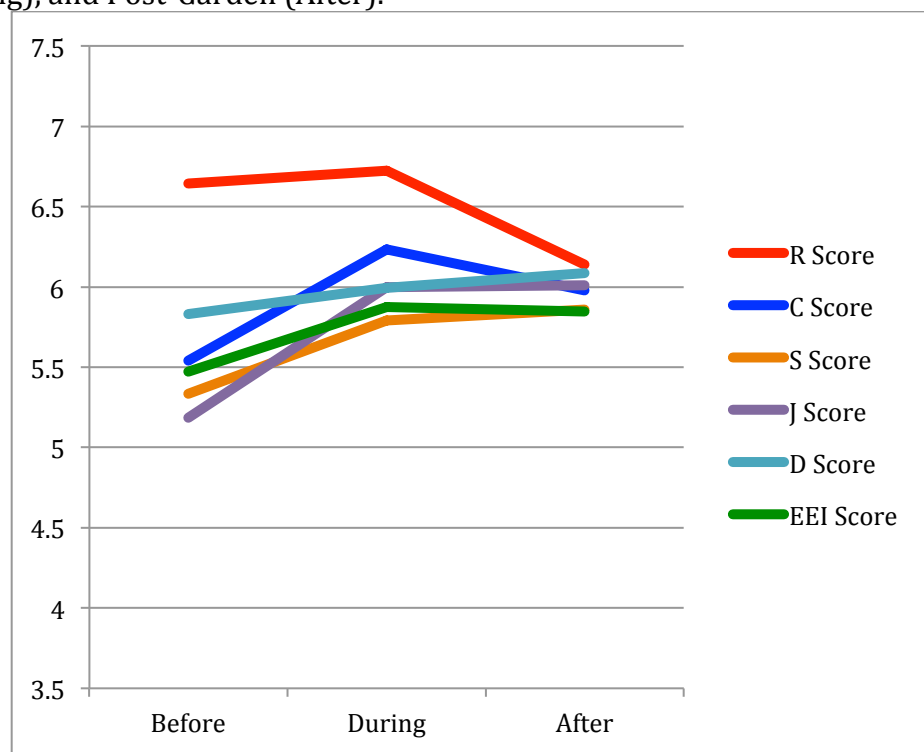


Figure 5.11: Garden Non-Participant Subscales Over Time – Suburban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).

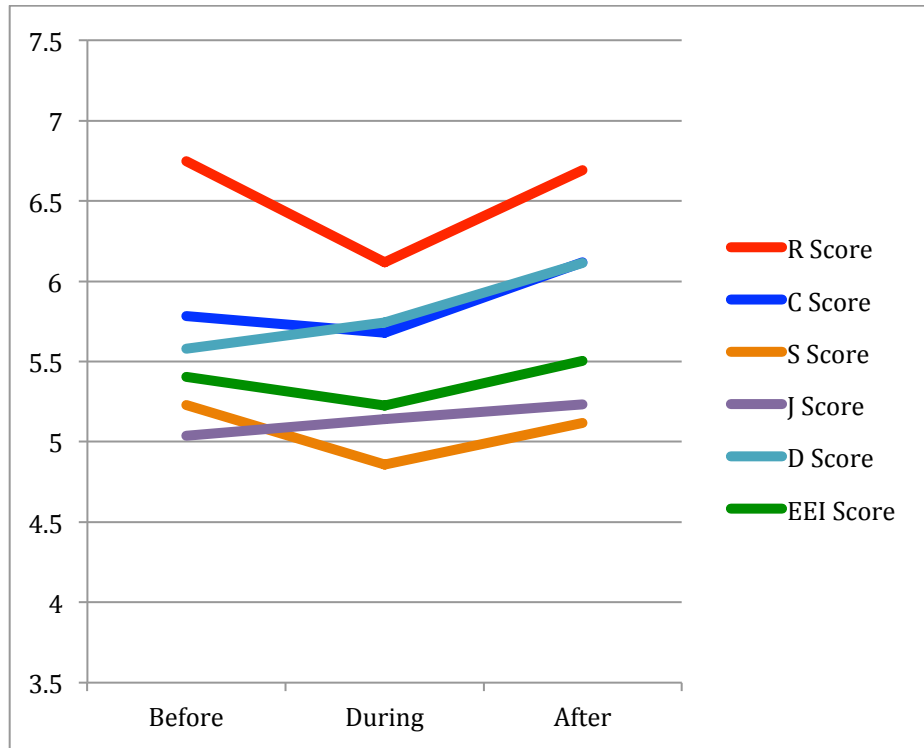
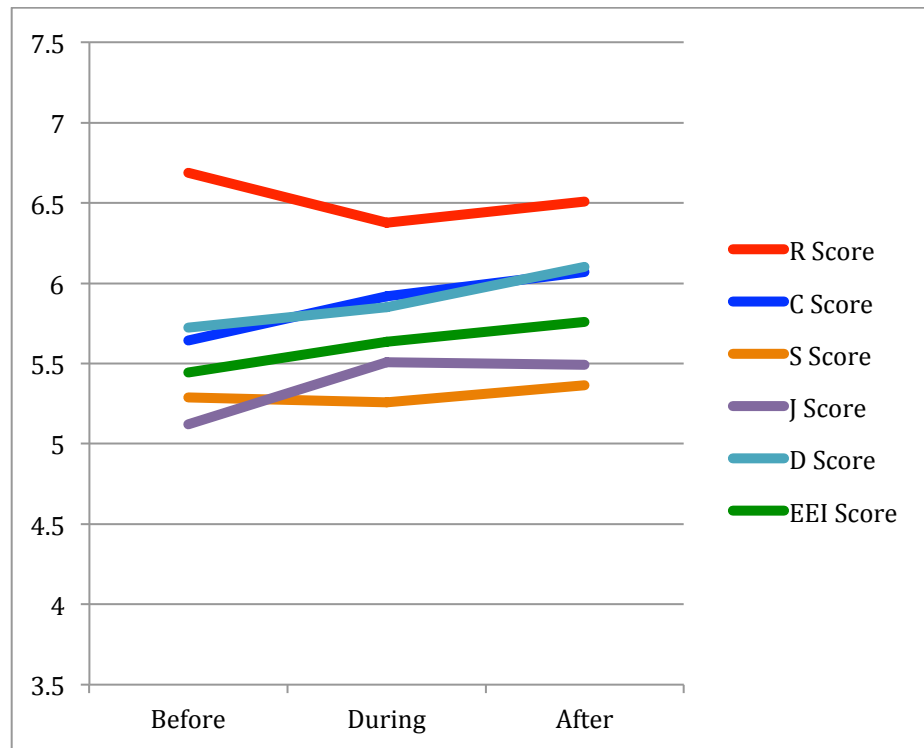
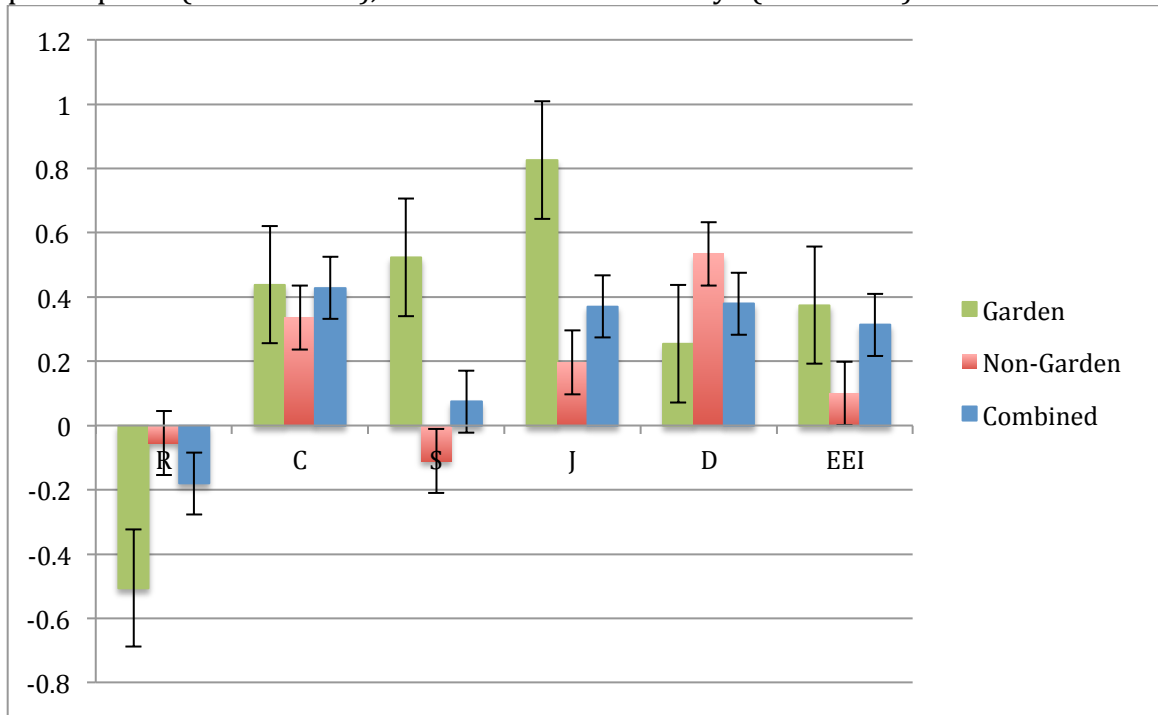


Figure 5.12: Combined Survey Subscales Over Time – Suburban Site. The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



The impact was also measured by calculating the difference between the post-garden and pre-garden scores for each subpopulation and for the combined surveys, for the EEI and for each subscale. The overall increase in the EEI = 0.31 for the combined data: 0.1 for the non-participant subpopulation, and 0.37 for the garden participants. Increases in the subscales were higher among the participants in the Spirituality (S) and Justice (J) subscales; increases were similar in the Community (C) subscale; the non-participant subpopulation showed the largest increase in the Discipleship (D) subscale and no impact on the Spirituality (S) subscale. The difference in the Religiosity (R) subscale over time is non-significant ($p=0.6$; see Figure 5.13):

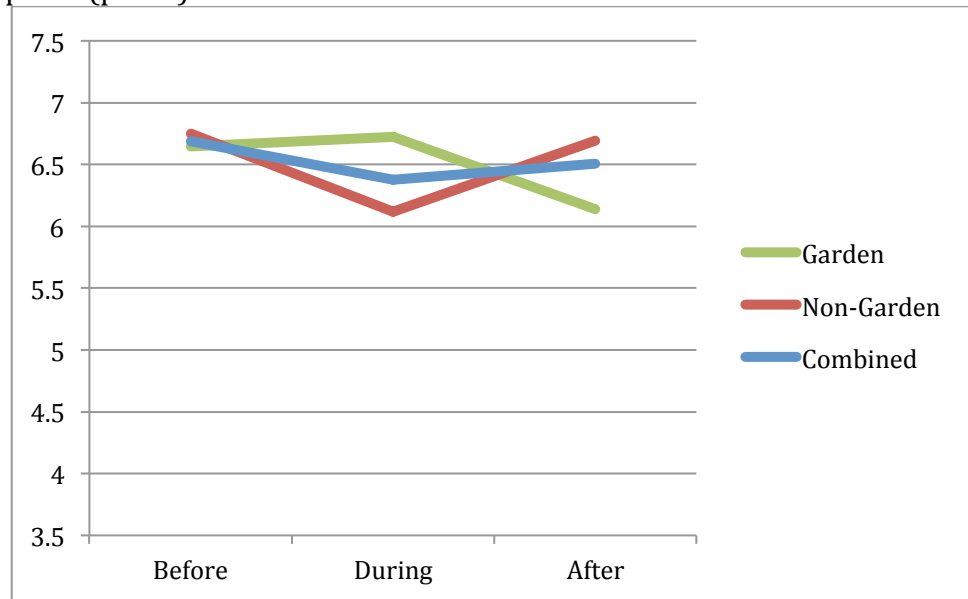
Figure 5.13: Calculated Difference (Post-Garden - Pre-garden) - Suburban Site. Differences are shown for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined).



Control Religiosity Scale

The Religiosity (R) subscale was designed to measure whether the survey itself had an impact on the congregation over time. Average R scores were calculated for each subpopulation (garden participants and non-participants) as well as for all surveys combined. The Religiosity subscale showed no significant change over time; based on statistical analyses, differences in the mean values over time do not represent significant (replicable) changes (see Figure 5.14):

Figure 5.14: Religiosity Scores Over Time – Suburban Site. The Religiosity subscale also used a 10-point scale. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After). Significance was measured with a two-tailed t-test for the combined survey participants ($p=0.6$).



Ecological Ethics Subscales

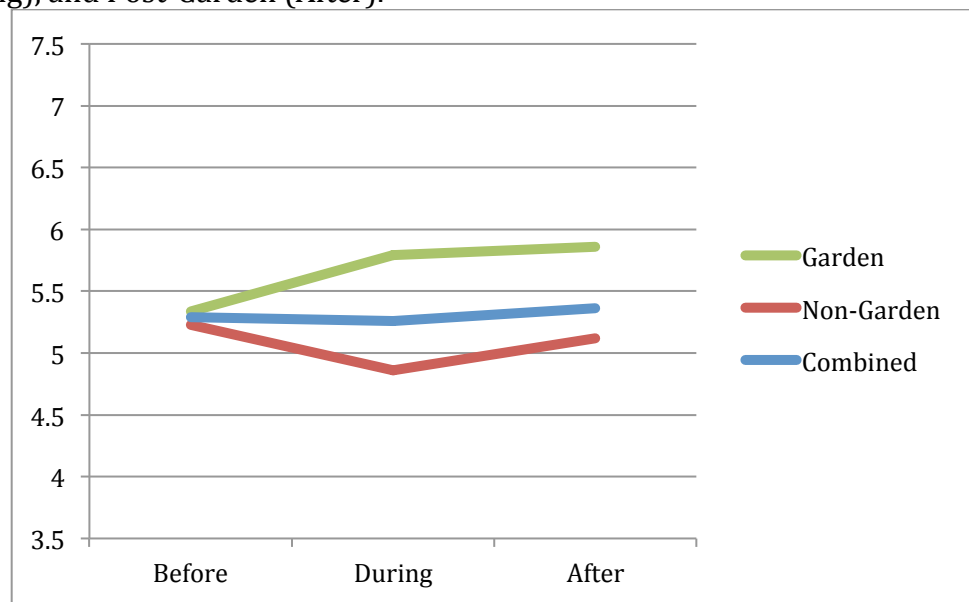
The four subscales (Spirituality, Community, Discipleship, and Justice) were also graphed individually. In looking at general trends, the garden participant subpopulation consistently scored higher on each scale.

Spirituality Subscale

Average Spirituality (S) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The S subscale showed an increase

over time in the participant subpopulation, but not in the non-participant population or the combined congregational surveys (see Figure 5.15):

Figure 5.15: Spirituality Scores Over Time – Suburban Site. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).

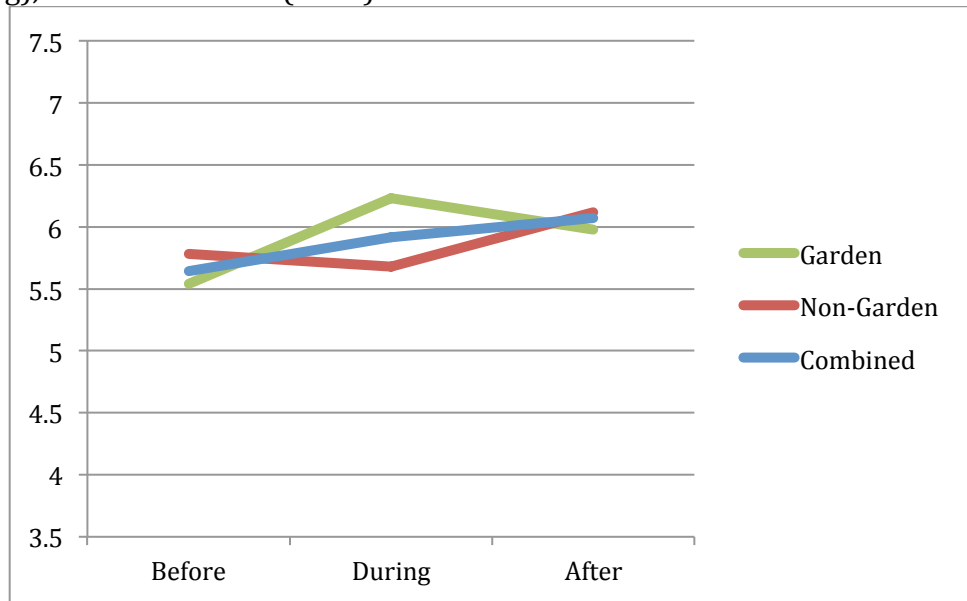


Community Subscale

Average Community (C) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The C subscale showed an increase over time in both subpopulations (see Figure 5.16: Community Scores Over Time).

Figure 5.16: Community Scores Over Time – Suburban Site. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden),

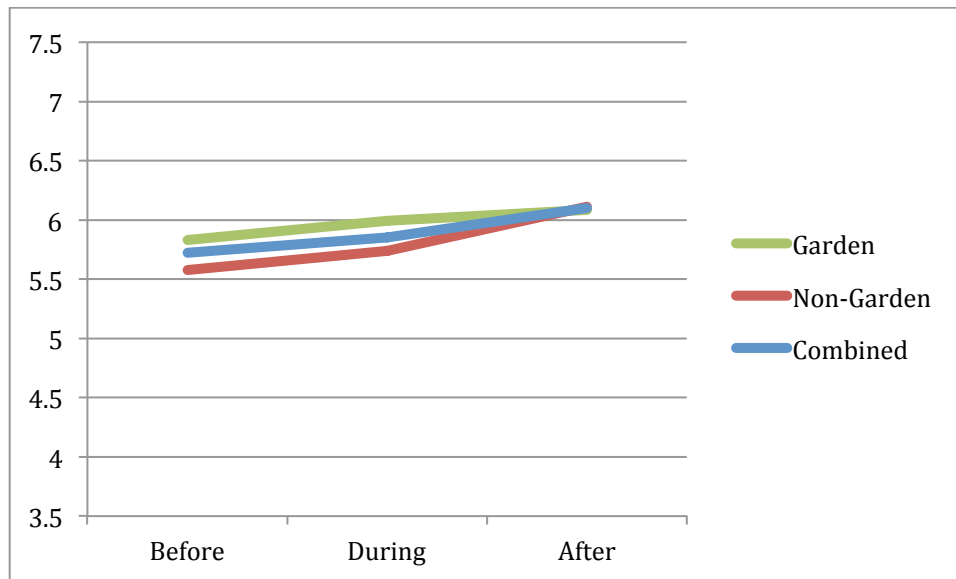
the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Discipleship Subscale

Average Discipleship (D) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The D subscale showed increases over time in both subpopulations (see Figure 5.17: Discipleship Scores Over Time):

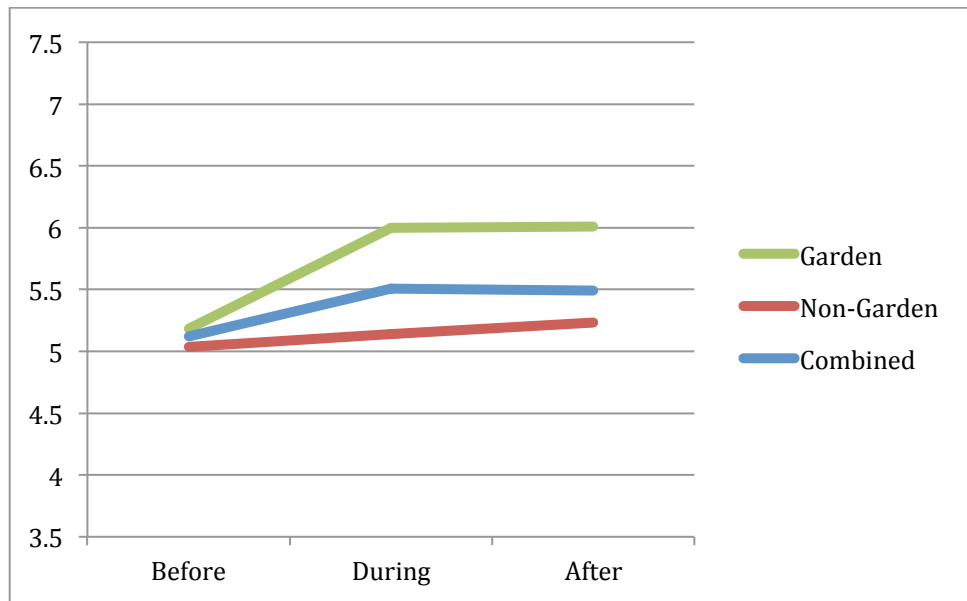
Figure 5.17: Discipleship Scores Over Time – Suburban Site. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Justice Subscale

Average Justice (J) scores were also calculated for garden participants, non-participants, and the combined surveys. The J subscale showed increases over time, particularly in the participant subpopulation (see Figure 5.18: Justice Scores Over Time):

Figure 5.18: Justice Scores Over Time – Suburban Site. Changes in the arithmetic means are shown over time for the participant subpopulation (Garden), the non-participants (Non-Garden), and the combined surveys (Combined). The arithmetic means are shown for each time point: Pre-Garden (Before), Mid-Garden (During), and Post-Garden (After).



Conclusion

As at the urban site, the suburban data reveal the garden project to have taken place in the context of a congregation already committed to ecological ethics in a variety of ways. (Further comparisons of the two sites will be reserved for Chapter 6.) The community expressed ideas of ecological spirituality, such as reverence and awe for the Creation; of ecological community, such as kinship and connection with the Creation and otherkind; of ecological discipleship, such as commitment to ecologically sensitive energy, waste, and consumption practices; and some ecological justice, such as support of urban fresh food and the local food movement.

The suburban garden project also faced logistical challenges, such as the initial need to water the garden regularly as well as suburban aesthetics

requirements and limitations on water use. The group addressed the watering needs jointly, and the trustee resolved the issues relevant to the town. The data reveal impacts on both participants and non-participants in the garden in all four areas. In the area of ecological spirituality, the participants showed increases in awareness of the significance and possibilities for gardens in church settings, such as the uniquely transformative quality of gardens as a spiritual discipline and the possibilities for spirituality in garden settings. They also explored both theological ideas and practical ways to incorporate the harvest as well as gardening in general and the garden itself into the worship life of the congregation.

In the area of ecological community, the participants showed an increase in enjoyment of nature interactions, such as with dirt, the vegetables, and the garden, and an increase in awareness of gardening as an approach to nature connection. The participants incorporated the harvest and the garden into various fellowship events in the congregation.

In the area of ecological discipleship, the participants showed impacts in terms of changes in their behaviors and plans regarding private garden projects; incorporation of garden-related ideas into other forms of discipleship, such as food choices; and community building and investment in both the group and the larger congregation. The participants incorporated discipleship concepts related to the harvest and the garden into the stewardship campaign and children/youth ministries in the congregation. In the area of ecological justice, the participants

showed impacts in terms of awareness of the source of food, urban fresh food and garden possibilities, and solidarity with farming communities. The participants occasionally integrated the harvest into the ministries and outreach of the congregation.

Based on the observations and interviews, the wider congregation also experienced an impact from the garden project, particularly through the stewardship campaign. The incorporation of vegetables from the garden and references to the garden in worship may have impacted the ecological spirituality of the congregation, particularly through the two worship services that focused on the garden project in terms of lay leadership and stewardship. The highly visible location of the garden along with the distribution of the harvest to individuals, during fellowship times and during church events, may have raised congregational awareness in the area of ecological community; specifically, it may have provided some suburban nature connection opportunities as well as introduced people to new foods and food possibilities, such as the kimchi. The stewardship campaign encouraged ecological discipleship in a variety of ways and may have introduced and encouraged commitment to ecological practices. The visibility of the garden on a church lawn may have impacted the congregation in the area of ecological justice by raising awareness of suburban gardening ministry possibilities for addressing hunger and fresh food deserts; in addition, the integration of the idea of the church garden with other ideas of justice during sermons and through the stewardship

campaign may have raised congregational awareness of the connections between gardening and justice.

The survey data generally support the findings of the qualitative data. The surveys demonstrate impacts on the ecological ethics of the garden participants as well as some impacts on the non-participants, particularly in the Community, Discipleship, and Justice subscales, but not in the Spirituality subscale. In summary, the project impacted the participants in all areas of ecological ethics studied and also impacted the wider congregation to a lesser extent.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Introduction

This chapter explores the implications of the findings in Chapters 4 and 5 in terms of the prominent themes that emerged from the garden projects at both sites. It compares the findings from the two sites in terms of contextual differences and how these differences may have impacted the progression of the garden projects as assessed by qualitative and quantitative analyses. This chapter then situates the ecological ethics themes from the two contexts and from the impacts of the projects in a Wesleyan framework based on the theological ideas of grace and responsibility. The data was examined for recurring themes and ideas that elicited the most energy and investment, both for the individual participants and within the congregation. The two sites showed considerable overlap in terms of the prominent themes that emerged from the participants' and congregational experiences of the garden projects. Areas of notable difference are discussed.

The prominent themes from both sites emerged as representative of ideas from each of the four ecological ethics categories explored in the surveys (spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice). Themes related to community, such as nature connection ideas, as well as themes related to spirituality, such as garden-based theology and liturgy, provided a foundation of support, healing, and energy that reflects the Wesleyan concept of grace. Similarly, the themes related to

discipleship, such as learning and trying new garden-related ideas and practices, and justice, such as awareness and practices to address hunger and access to fresh food, provided tangible manifestations for the Wesleyan concept of responsibility. Practical and theological implications are explored, as well as limitations and possibilities for future research.

The implications of the impacts of the project are also discussed in terms of current scholarship and trends in the areas of ecological spirituality, such as garden-based ethics; community, such as garden-based nature connection and mentoring; discipleship, in terms of similar projects; and justice, particularly with regard to agricultural and local food movement awareness and activism.

Discussion

Although the survey utilized four subscales based upon a distinction among the spiritual, communal, discipleship, and justice aspects of ecological ethics, these categories were not initially used to analyze the interview and observation (qualitative) data. Instead, the qualitative data was examined for common, recurring, and prominent themes as well as for changes over time. After multiple iterations of identifying these themes, the four ecological ethics subcategories emerged naturally as a useful way to distinguish among different aspects of the contexts and impacts of the projects.

The church-centered context of the garden projects provided opportunities for ecological spirituality that might not have occurred in other garden contexts. The participants explored garden-based theologies and liturgies and found ways to include the congregation in these ideas. The church-centered context also provided a unique kind of community garden experience compared to private home gardens, school gardens, or individual community garden lots. The importance of the community, in terms of the relationships among the members of the congregation, could not be separated neatly from ideas of nature connection and relationality with the garden or its plants and harvest. In addition, the interviewees and others in the congregations integrated current garden-related experiences with important past experiences involving wider family and others. In terms of ecological discipleship, the garden project provided the opportunity to engage in and encourage ecological practices related to gardening and fresh food for the participants and the congregations, such as tending the garden, eating fresh food, and learning more about growing food. The visibility of both gardens and their association with churches provided an opportunity to raise participant, congregational, and wider community awareness about the possibilities of food growing and access to fresh food as an issue of justice. The existing ministries at both sites enabled the participants to incorporate the project into justice-related efforts as well.

After continued analysis of the prominent themes in these four areas of ecological ethics, the connection emerged between the specific ways in which the

project impacted ecological ideas of discipleship and justice and Wesleyan concepts of responsibility. Both sites showed a strong commitment to a responsibility-oriented approach to the projects, such as the desire to raise awareness as well as to share the harvest with hungry communities. Once the connections with grace had emerged, the prominent themes in the areas of ecological spirituality and community were re-examined. The prevalence of ideas of communal nurturing and bonds as well as spiritual ideas of healing, nourishment, growth, and transformation correlated with Wesleyan concepts of grace.

The prominent themes and these ecological connections will be explored in more detail below in combination with the survey findings. Specific connections will be explored in terms of the garden as a means of grace.

Comparison of Urban and Suburban Sites

Although the two sites had many features in common, such as denomination and racial demographics, the contextual differences between the sites had important impacts on the projects and their integration into the congregations. The projects had similar impacts at the two sites in many ways; notable differences are described below.

Comparison of Congregations

As noted by three people at the urban site (the pastor, the sexton, and another participant), this site faced an interesting challenge for community building because of the high rate of relocation, particularly among the young adults, who made up a significant percentage of the congregation. The sexton even noted that the congregation functioned as if it contained two different churches. She worked to include the young adult group (YAG) in the garden project in a variety of ways over time; for example, she picked tomatoes and included them on a YAG picnic outing, and she specifically invited the YAG to participate in the kimchi workshop. Young adults did participate throughout the project, although they did not participate all together as the YAG.

The urban site also faced architectural challenges to community building. The building blended with the buildings of the area so that it was not obvious that it was a church (rather than another university department). The large sanctuary had stained glass windows and a high ceiling, which provided a good space for music but also lent a sense of distance and anonymity compared with smaller sanctuary spaces. Moreover, only the choir and worship leaders used the front of the sanctuary; the congregation came in from the back and left out the back into the fellowship room area. This back-oriented movement created a sense of distance in the worship space. The urban site had found ways to work around these two challenges, such as the formation of the YAG and the post-worship fellowship time. Nonetheless, the transience of the community impacted the project directly when several people

moved away in the spring, including the initial project leader as well as two young adults who had helped build the garden beds and had put the sign on the beds inviting people to harvest the vegetables. After its construction, the garden needed regular watering and tending; in addition, the raised beds dried out quickly. Because the project had no real leadership, the issue of keeping the garden from drying out was raised but never addressed by the group. They did not create a schedule, invite the YAG or the congregation to help, invite the staff to help, or explore alternative soil compositions to retain water. The pastor and the assistant pastor both supported the project in theory, and together they ensured that the garden received adequate water and that the vegetables were harvested. The pastor continually invited the homeless communities who used the church and the members of the congregation to harvest the vegetables; he also included the vegetables in a children's sermon.

Prior to the project, the pastor had noted that several people in the congregation had suggested a garden project in the past, so he felt confident that the congregation would embrace the project; indeed, three of the participants had extensive garden experience. Later, the project organizer, the assistant pastor, and the pastor all expressed disappointment or frustration that the group had not formed a cohesive plan or leadership in order to ensure the survival and aesthetics of the garden; however, none of them expressed surprise at the outcome. As the project organizer suggested, the group may have come together differently with

more leadership, either by members of the congregation or by the staff. They also agreed that the project would have had a greater impact on the participants and the congregation if the participants had come together in such a way.

Despite the challenges, all of the people interviewed expressed overall gladness about the project in interviews. Investigator influence must be taken into consideration, because the congregation had a strong culture of supporting students. Some participants may have wanted to support the work of a graduate student more than they wanted to plant a garden. In the heart of a city, this congregation already participated in a variety of ministries that connected them to the immediate needs of the surrounding community. The congregation had a strong outreach and justice-oriented identity and they were not necessarily seeking so much as willing to support a new garden ministry.

In contrast to the urban site, the suburban site had a much less transient community and a comparatively low percentage of students. The congregation had many families with children, comparatively large Sunday school and youth group programs, and many adults with grown children. Although the congregation had smaller groups, none of them functioned like a separate church; instead, the congregation functioned more as a single, cohesive unit.

The building itself sat back from the road as a contained identity and presence near the center of town. The architecture and lands created a sense of membership in the town at the same time that it preserved the boundaries of the

congregational identity and presence. The sanctuary also was comparatively smaller and had large, plain glass windows through which to view the trees and lawns outside. Although the space was less ideal for music, it created a more intimate feel. People entered the sanctuary from the Sunday school rooms or parking lot on one side as well as from the front doors on the other side; in addition, the congregation had to walk past the front of the sanctuary to get to the fellowship area after worship. These movements created a sense of unification, or coming together, between the front and back of the sanctuary.

The garden group at the suburban site also included the pastor, a trustee, and the lay leader from the beginning. Although the pastor and trustee did not lead the project, they both ensured its success in different ways. The trustee secured the financial support of the board of trustees, and the pastor continually found ways to incorporate the project into the congregation. In addition, the participants had considerably less garden knowledge and experience than at the urban site; several people identified the opportunity to learn more about gardening as a primary reason for their participation in the project. The structural support of the pastor and the trustee may have provided more of a foundation for the other participants, particularly the inexperienced participants, who stepped forward to lead the project.

Although the suburban site participated in a variety of ministries, both in the town and in poorer neighboring towns, its building was not plugged into its ministries. The church was situated in a fairly affluent suburb, so it needed to seek

out opportunities for ministry; need was not already sleeping on its doorstep. The engineer pointed out repeatedly how tangible evidence of ministries, such as the Mission of Deeds truck in the church parking lot, created a sense of satisfaction and pride for the congregation. Unlike the urban site, it was not inherently evident that this church was reaching out to people in ministry.

Several people at the suburban site noted the newness, risk, or unusual nature of the garden project. Congruently, many also spoke of the ways in which the project had fostered interaction with the wider community and provided a visible example of the ministries of the congregation. The participants celebrated the idea that they could do something visible right on their own property that also raised awareness, gave food to hungry people, and provided outreach to the wider community at the same time. In addition to the ministries that involved traveling to neighboring towns or cities, they could participate in this project every Sunday on their way in and out of church, and they could enjoy the time spent outside and the delicious harvest at the same time.

In summary, the project progressed differently, probably for a number of reasons. The general demographic cultures and identities of the congregations likely played a role in the different outcomes. The urban site had already recognized the immediate needs of the students and the homeless communities at their door, and they had created programs for both these communities that had become integrated into the central identity of the congregation. While many people at the urban site

supported the garden project, the differences in community cohesion and existing site ministries likely impacted the long-term success and integration of the project into the congregation. The suburban site participated in many ministries, but the garden project provided a unique opportunity to use the grounds in a visible, educational, and enjoyable way. The support of the church leadership and a greater sense of community cohesion probably also played a role in the long-term success and integration of the project into the central identity of the congregation.

Comparison of Survey Data

Several features of the survey data indicate that the survey successfully functioned to measure the ecological ethics of the congregations over time. First, the control religiosity scale showed no significant change; second, the garden participant subpopulations consistently scored higher than the non-participants on the ecological subscales; and third, the suburban site data showed an impact, whereas the urban site did not. These findings support the findings of the qualitative data. A higher response rate could have provided additional data; for example, the data could be examined for impact on specific questions within the subscales.

If the suburban site ecological subscales are examined only for trends, the greatest impact appears in the area of ecological justice, followed by roughly equivalent impacts in the areas of spirituality and community. The smallest impact, although with large variation, was found in the area of discipleship. These results

support the qualitative data that describe a great deal of raised awareness, such as of the connections between food ethics and social justice, as a result of the garden project. Interestingly, the non-participants show the greatest impacts in the areas of community and discipleship, and even possibly show a greater discipleship impact than the participants. These results may reflect a situation in which the garden participants already engage in more food-related discipleship practices than the non-participants; moreover, the stewardship campaign bingo activities may have encouraged new discipleship practices among the non-participants. The visible and tangible impacts of the garden and of the harvest in worship may have contributed to the inclusion of otherkind in concepts of community for both participants and non-participants. The participants also show a spirituality impact, which may reflect the moments of prayer in the garden as well as the ways in which the participants increasingly incorporated the harvest into the worship services. Because the non-participants were less centrally involved in these new worship ideas, they may not have experienced the same kind of spiritual impact. It is also possible that the survey was not sensitive enough to capture the impacts on the spirituality of the non-participants. A higher response rate would provide more confidence in the impact on both subpopulations and within the subscales. Additional survey time points would provide data on the long-term impacts of the project after the first season.

Ecological Spirituality

Based on the observations, interviews, and surveys, both sites had already integrated ecological spirituality into worship. The ecological spirituality generally consisted of liturgical concepts of the presence of the Divine in the Creation and the Christian responsibility of Creation care. The garden projects brought new and tangible forms of ecological spirituality into the congregations, such as the presence of the harvest itself as part of the liturgy and, at the suburban site, worship events in or next to the garden. The visible and living presence of the gardens next to the church buildings also generated exploration of garden-related theology.

Garden Spirituality and Prevenient Grace

Before the project, the interviewees already expressed garden experiences in terms that reflect Wesleyan concepts of prevenient and sanctifying grace. They described ideas of meditation, calm, peace, focus, and movement that gardens always make available to us. They included concepts of joy, excitement, wonder, awe, and the miraculous nature of gardens, and they connected these ideas to the Creation in a wider sense as well. Gardens provide a connection to the Divine and offer grace in the form of healing, peace, hope, and joy.

Over time, many participants began to explore additional ideas related to gardens and spirituality. Participants incorporated the harvest into the worship service as a means for the rest of the congregation to experience the prevenient

grace of the garden. The pastors used the harvest in children's sermons and during Communion as another way to enable the rest of the congregation to experience this kind of grace; in other words, the congregation experienced the Divine in a particular way through the sharing of the harvest during worship. Because the vegetables were both alive and interactive in the service, it enabled the congregation on some level to see how otherkind can participate in a worship service and even bear the image of Christ in the Eucharist. This incarnational theology of otherkind stretched the ecological spirituality of the participants who helped make it happen as well as the congregations.

Wesleyan theology also applies concepts of divine grace and incarnation to the Creation. In three volumes, Wesley explores the divine wisdom and perfection in the diverse parts of the Creation with great respect and fascination, from salts and soils to the largest creatures and the cosmos. He asserts that the Creation represents the primary and superior way in which humans experience Divine wisdom and presence:

In short, the world around us is the mighty volume wherein God hath declared himself. Human languages and characters are different in different nations... But the book of nature is written in an universal character, which every [person] may read in [their] own language. It consists not of words, but things, which picture out the Divine perfections...¹

¹ Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: A Compendium of Natural Philosophy in Three Volumes*, 31.

Wesley clearly spent considerable time studying, cataloging, and marveling at whatever creatures he could find, and he presented his project both to “humble the pride of [humanity]” and to “display the amazing power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator, to warm our hearts, and to fill our mouths with wonder love and praise!”² He believed that people of faith must study, understand, and care for the Creation in order to experience the fullness of Divine grace. The experiences of these congregations reflect a theology consistent with the application and expansion of these Wesleyan ideas.

Garden Spirituality and Sanctifying Grace

The interviewees described the ways in which gardening can spiritually transform people and teach important life lessons about humility, patience, and the wonder and mystery of the Creation. Over the course of the project, participants increasingly explored the ways in which gardens and soil embody the Divine and transform the gardener. The pastors and some of the participants spoke of gardening as a spiritual discipline that transforms people, as described by the urban site sexton, into the likeness of Christ. The urban site pastor spoke of the idolatry of the self and the way gardens break through established modes of thought and present alternative wisdom. Several participants began to speak of communing or even worshiping with the plants. The suburban site pastor began to explore

² Ibid., v.

theologies of the soil as a womb that connects us to all life and to cycles of death and resurrection.

The garden project enabled the participants to experience the transformation of the land outside their building in a way that transformed them as well. Partly because the garden was associated with and situated next to a church, the wider purpose of the garden, beyond simply growing food, automatically and continuously presented itself. The garden automatically integrated itself into the sense of the church as a spiritual community, so to some degree it was seen as sacred space with sacred life growing inside it. The very visual impact of the garden, therefore, provided another kind of sanctifying grace to the congregation and the wider community in which gardens and vegetables can be seen as sacred.

This transformation to sacred space was seen in both sites. In the urban site, the sterile city sidewalk changed dramatically as a result of the garden; respondents particularly mentioned that the garden made it more evident that the building was a church building. The garden extended the sense of the sacredness of the inside of the building out the doors to claim and proclaim the sacredness of the city sidewalk as well, as a living part of a living church. In the suburban site, the garden also transformed the relationship of the congregation with its grounds. The garden participants prayed multiple times in the garden, purposefully including a garden bed within the circle of joined hands. Many participants noted the ways in which prayer and the presence of the church nearby created a different kind of spiritual

awareness in and of the garden. This awareness led the congregation to new forms of outdoor, garden-centered worship. The suburban site had previously used the grounds as a congregation twice a year: a sheltered area close to a side door was used as an outdoor part of an annual Holy Week service; and the annual Easter egg hunt used the grounds immediately surrounding the church. The garden was placed in an area that had no such purpose or use. The garden created an opportunity for the congregation to hold Sunday worship outside on the lawn for the first time, in full view of the community. The garden was considered not only the inspiration for but also an actual part of the worship service in its own way.

Other churches have also recently begun to explore new concepts of outdoor worship, including garden-related worship. In his book *Forest Church*, Bruce Stanley speaks of the growing desire and potential for outdoor worship among Christians in both urban and non-urban locations. He advocates a flexible, ‘permaculture’ approach that captures some of the elements experienced by the suburban participants:

Forest Church isn’t bound by location; it’s as possible in the city as in the middle of nowhere... The aim isn’t to *go into* nature as if it is something separate from us, the idea is to let the barriers drop; to *be with* nature.³

Stanley also includes Forest Church rituals and activities for each natural and liturgical season. The spring equinox section encourages groups to plant a garden

³ Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals*, 13.

together; he notes the importance of garden ritual: “You may also like to introduce a moment of prayer or ceremony to draw links between the activity and God’s Spirit in nature. You might like to go further and do a Spring Equinox ritual during the gathering.”⁴

The garden project affected the suburban site’s understandings of the possibilities and potential for Sunday worship. They continued to experiment with ways to involve the whole congregation in intentional spiritual experiences with the harvest and the garden itself. The related sense of kinship or communion with the plants and harvest is explored in the next section (see Ecological Community, page 268).

Grace and Gardens

Other authors have also noted the theme of grace in gardens. In *The Pull of the Earth*,⁵ Laurie Thorp describes a long-term ethnographic study of an elementary school garden project in a poor rural community. She struggled to find a word powerful enough to describe the impact of the garden, until she settled on the concept of grace:

To say that [the school] was badly in need of... a point of pride was a start. But I am not convinced that pride was only half of the story. The garden created a space... for us to feel graced. Wounded as we all were, there was a

⁴ Ibid., 111.

⁵ Laurie Thorp, *The Pull of the Earth: Participatory Ethnography in the School Garden* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006).

reason, finally, to give thanks: a moment's reprieve. I present this interpretation early in my story because I think this state of gratefulness was a critical element to the foundation for the success of the garden. The teachers, staff, and children were able to view their world through a new lens because of the garden. They were able to feel blessed rather than cursed.⁶

Gardens represent and provide grace in many contexts, depending on the needs of the community. Gardens for veterans, such as the Veterans' Sanctuary outside of Ithaca, NY, provide solace, healing, employment, and purpose. One veteran had been struggling with fear, guilt, and despair before helping found the sanctuary; he describes elements of prevenient and sanctifying grace:

If you're feeling bad... and you're suicidal, you feel very alone and gloomy, anything that keeps you strapped into this world – into the living – is good. I can't go nowhere because the beets need watering and the chickens need to be fed... just starting with this real simple basic stuff, like good nutrition and collaborative projects and trying to recreate the village that has been destroyed.⁷

As with these examples, the theological ideas explored by some of the garden participants over the course of the project included ideas of healing from fear as well as transformation; the urban pastor spoke of the "idolatry of the self," and others also spoke of ideas of humility and letting go of control. The suburban pastor and the urban sexton included ideas of death, soil, and the connection of all life. Norman Wirzba also discusses these theological ideas as an important source of grace in agrarian theological thought:

⁶ Ibid., 21-2.

⁷ Stephanie Westlund, *Field Exercises: How Veterans Are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities* (New Society Publishers: Gabriola Island, BC, 2014), 54.

If our lives were properly directed to fulfilling God's intention in creation, death would not appear as the ominous reality that it has become... [or] severing the connection between our life and all other life... In both cases it is our arrogance, the tenacious hold on our self-importance, that prevents us from submitting to the greater grace of life's processes and love's intentions.⁸

Wirzba's concept of the "greater grace of life's processes and love's intentions" we experience through gardening correlates with the ideas of grace described by the veteran, school, and church garden participants. As Wirzba notes, this experience of grace impacts our understandings of life and death, and therefore our experience of community as well.

Ecological Community

Based on the observations, interviews, and surveys, both sites had a sense of the importance of nature connection. The sense of ecological community consisted of outdoor and nature-related activities by small groups, such as the urban site Young Adult Group or the suburban site Youth Group. One of the aims of the project was to examine the impact of the project on the sense of otherkind as members of the community. The participants at both sites decided to place the garden projects in prominently visible locations specifically to foster nature connection among the whole congregation and in the wider community. The gardens brought new and tangible forms of ecological community to the congregations, such as regular opportunities to interact with the plants and soil. The gardens had an impact on the

⁸ Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*, 121.

sense of nature connection and kinship with otherkind in both sites. The human and non-human elements of the community acted as means of grace in the garden projects.

Garden Community and Prevenient Grace

As mentioned, the prominently visible locations of both gardens created a visual impact for the participants, congregations, and wider communities. In addition to the spiritual impact of the church locations, the gardens also fostered a sense of nature connection in both the urban and the suburban contexts.

Participants described a greater sense of awareness of connection with nature, both with the garden and in a greater awareness of other urban and suburban communal gardens as well. The presence of living creatures with whom the participants had a continual, physical relationship created a tangible connection with the garden, the plants, and the land by the church. Even the non-participants and the wider communities had a sense of that physical, nurturing relationship by virtue of the nature of the project as a vegetable garden.

The urban project had the advantage of a location immediately by the church doors, so that every person who came and went from the church passed directly by the garden beds or planters. The suburban project had the advantage of a fenced in enclosure with a center among the four beds, an arrangement that created a sense of separation from the rest of the space. As a result, participants described 'going in'

the garden; the lay leader in particular found a sacred space for individual spiritual meditation and nature connection inside the fenced in enclosure. The participants described the garden beds and the plants inside them in terms of affection and gratitude. In these ways, the presence of the living gardens acted as a source of prevenient grace to the people who saw them and interacted with them.

Stanley also discusses this important, relational aspect of what he calls 'Forest Church.' For Stanley, many Christians may require a shift in understandings of the instrumental value of otherkind to a sense of its intrinsic value in order to experience the fullness of outdoor worship. His descriptions reflect ideas similar to those expressed by some of the participants:

The call to participate with nature encompasses Forest Church; it's not an option within it... Have you ever asked a natural space for its permission for you to enter? I've seen the idea incorporated into Druid rituals... there is value in pausing before you enter to put yourself in the right frame of mind, slow down, open yourself up to the possibility of participating, respectfully, and asking for God's help in aligning your spirit with God's, uniquely active in the environment you're about to enter.⁹

People also connect with gardens as a way to connect with cultural identity and history. Thorp describes the way immigrant children connected to the school garden and its associated food preparation more than to other aspects of the school day: "Andrea, a recent immigrant from Haiti, stubbornly refused to leave the kitchen each time we cooked; much like music, cooking requires no translation – she was

⁹ Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals*, 55.

home again – chopping and dicing were her mother tongue.” Immigrant communities in the Seattle area also found comfort in growing vegetables from their home countries together.¹⁰

Garden Community, Kinship, and Sanctifying Grace

In addition to the simple presence of the gardens, the interaction with the gardens over the course of time also had a transformative impact. Over time, participants described a greater awareness of nature connection in general and the importance of reciprocal relationships of mutual care with the plants and the soil. Some people in each site developed kinship with the plants, even comparing them to children or pets. Some also noted that the project had given them a greater sense of awareness of the impact of weather on the plants, particularly in the urban site where automatic water systems were not set up. Participants also increasingly described positive connections to the soil.

Some people in each site also began to explore the differences between flower gardens and vegetable gardens; the different and often more nurturing relationship with the vegetables seemed to confer more kinship and a stronger sense of the sharing embodied in the Eucharist. A few people also noted the cultural significance of the harvest historically. In exploring the relationship between

¹⁰ Jeffrey Hou, Julie M. Johnson, and Laura J. Lawson, *Greening Cities, Growing Communities: Learning from Seattle's Urban Community Gardens* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 90-1.

humanity and the rest of the natural world, Wirzba also connects humanity, the soil, and the harvest with an incarnational theology of the Eucharist:

[Food] carried immense symbolic power since [its] consumption was the concrete act in terms of which social relations, work life, geographical identity, and religious ritual came together... Offering to God the firstfruits of the land and herd signified profound thanksgiving and dependence on God... As we share in Christ's body and blood and as we share the gifts of creation that are under his lordship, we herald the kingdom of God... The whole of creation is one lavish feast to which the creator invites us all.¹¹

Wirzba uses patriarchal, hierarchical theological ideas that match the theology expressed by some of the participants, although most expressed more egalitarian and inclusive concepts. Some participants spoke of connecting to the Divine through the plants and the harvest; the suburban pastor in particular noted the presence of God somewhere in his relationship with the vegetables, and he described feelings of friendship or parental care for the plants. The suburban non-member and the urban pastor spoke of similar ideas that developed more strongly as a result of the garden project. Stanley suggests that these friendship or kinship feelings and relationships play an essential role in understanding our individual spiritual identity as well as in developing the sense of the Divine in the natural world. He recommends that churches foster these relationships as a way to experience the transforming power of the Divine:

[Our connection to nature] is about being aware of the attraction and pull we can feel at a deep soul level towards elements of the natural world. The

¹¹ Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*, 183-4. Wirzba uses the term "firstfruits" as it is used, e.g., in Deut 26:1-2.

exploration of that attraction can become a dialogue, and odd as it might seem, these conversations, with an element of nature such as a tree or rock or waterfall or bird can be illuminating, surprising, and enriching... In some ways our sense of self can be extended to include those elements of other people [that] make us more whole or balanced. I suggest that something similar can happen with nature in which you'll find mirrored every element of your soul and every element of God's eternal power and Divine nature.¹²

In the ways Stanley and the participants describe, interactions with gardens, particularly spiritual interactions, can transform humanity's sense of identity and value in positive and healing ways. These powerful ideas confirm the nature connection research in the field of ecopsychology that argues for humanity's inherent need for nature connection in order to develop proper emotional attachment and individual identity. Studies continue to demonstrate the negative mental and physical health impacts of the loss of nature connection, and recent studies also reveal the benefits of nature connection to address and heal these same symptoms. If nature connection experiences affect humans in such elemental ways, it makes sense that these experiences would not only build self-esteem or expedite physical healing; they would also have the potential to address serious trauma or bring hope in dire circumstances, such as with veterans or following genocide.¹³

Wesley also expresses kinship with otherkind in several of his writings. In his three-volume work on natural philosophy, he created an extensive field guide in

¹² Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals*, 69.

¹³ Several books now detail these data; Westlund presents a good synopsis in her book on veterans and nature therapy: Westlund, *Field Exercises: How Veterans Are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities*, 1-5.

which he describes hundreds of creatures in intimate detail. He reflects on shared characteristics with humanity, such as the nurture of young, and he describes a shared Divine image among humanity and all parts of the Creation. Moreover, Wesley suggests that the Creation represents the original and primary Word of God, and its creatures call to humanity for kinship and care with a Divine voice. The ideas of friendship and kinship experienced by the participants reflect concepts similar to those expressed by Wesley:

Proof of a wise, a good and powerful Being are indeed deducible from every thing around us... the fabric of a world, and the fabric of a mite, may be found equally striking and conclusive... And how many thousand kinds may there be... which we cannot see... Yet to all these we must believe God... has adorned them with beauty equal at least to any thing our eyes have seen. ... Even the actions of animals are an eloquent and a pathetic language. Those that want the help of [humanity], have a thousand engaging ways, which, like the voice of God speaking to [our] heart, command [us] to preserve and cherish them.¹⁴

Wesley felt strongly that humanity should learn about and respect the whole Creation, and he used his own studies to create resources for others to appreciate the wonder and theological importance of the natural world. Wesley was trying to reveal and encourage the ways in which connection to the Creation helps humanity access a primary source of Divine grace; in his own way, Wesley was trying to be a nature connection mentor.

¹⁴ Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: A Compendium of Natural Philosophy in Three Volumes*, 312-3.

Gardens and Elders

Another important aspect of gardening for the participants lay in formative past experiences with gardens. The vast majority of the interviewees spoke with great detail and intensity about childhood gardening experiences with grandparents, wider family, or other communities. These experiences formed vivid memories with long-reaching impacts on the lives of most of the participants and non-participants. Importantly, negative garden experiences also created vivid memories and long-reaching impacts, such as exclusion and stress from parents or grandparents. For the most part, the interviewees described highly positive formative experiences that not only taught them about gardening but also other life lessons, such as positive ideas about the integration of life and death, and the human responsibility to care for the land and its creatures.

Given the prevalence and intensity of these memories, it should have come as no surprise that a primary goal for both projects centered on building community in the congregations. The participants overwhelmingly listed this priority as a primary reason for their participation in the projects and for the potential benefits of the project to the wider congregations. Over the course of the projects, participants also reflected at length on the ways in which community had been built or not built among the participants or in the congregations as a result of the projects. Many people continued to express a desire to include a mix of generations in the projects,

and several people noted the incidents where elders and young adults, youth, or children were involved together.

In processing the data, it became clear that these church garden projects offered a unique opportunity to recreate the mixed generation, communal garden experiences that had been more common in the New England area and elsewhere in the past. Many of the respondents noted that their parents had not gardened and described the ability to garden in genetic terms, as if some people have a 'green thumb' and others a 'black thumb,' where they accidentally kill plants or fail at gardening. Several described a sense of disappointment or even shame associated with failed gardening attempts. In the urban site, several participants of different generations expressed a desire to foster intergenerational community building around the garden project. The urban project organizer expressed disappointment that a more cohesive group gardening experience had not developed, and she noted the importance of community in growing and preparing food as well as eating. In the suburban site, many participants came into the project with little gardening knowledge or experience, and yet the garden was able to provide a space for regular intergenerational interactions that expanded in future seasons. Several participants particularly noted the investment of the elders with physical challenges to walk down the hill and into the garden, or the increasing involvement of the children and youth.

In later reflections on these observations, it became evident not only that church gardens offer a unique opportunity for garden-related intergenerational experiences, but that these experiences represent something fundamental to our identity as humans. The experience of learning from a grandparent in a garden, whether a wild or a cultivated plot, reaches back through time as far as humanity goes. The garden and the elders offer nourishment of the body as they simultaneously honor the individual identities of the young. The elders and the garden teach lessons of bodily health and movement, the importance and value of hard work, and the interdependence, connectedness, and miracle of all life. These experiences form the identities of children and youth in unique and powerful ways; they may speak to the deepest yearnings of our hearts.

Because these past garden experiences have such a deep impact on children's identity and future investment in caring for the Creation, they also act as means of justifying and sanctifying grace. Over time, these intimate nature connection experiences lay a foundation on which children form an identity based upon connection with otherkind. Other intergenerational nature connection experiences might also provide the means for an ecological form of grace. Through later experiences with otherkind, people reconnect with elders from the past and experience the presence of their elders in their own identities as well as in the other creatures. Future gardening or other Creation care activities become a way to honor the Divine as experienced in the intergenerational, interspecies memories.

Nature connection programs have long valued the role of mentors and elders. In *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*, prominent nature connection mentors Jon Young and others describe and demonstrate in detail the unique and powerful role of mentors in fostering respect and kinship with the natural world. The authors dedicate an entire two pages of acknowledgements to elder mentors alone. Young ends the book with a description of the impact of this kind of mentoring and its implications for societal transformation. His words mirror the kind of grateful and salvation oriented language used in religious communities:

Has someone said this to you lately? "How do I thank you enough for saving my life?" Or... "How do I thank you for saving my child's life?" Over the past twenty-five years, I have heard this a lot. So have many of my friends who are skilled Coyote Mentors... Soon after founding my first Coyote Mentoring experiment with young people, I was joined by an amazing elder named Ingwe, who had grown up among the Akamba tribe of East Africa.... Ingwe quickly wove strands of his culture around my little network of sprouting nature kids. He began to call them his grandchildren and identified himself as the Grandfather... The children and adults began to thrive in this new environment. They developed inner quietness, a calm presence, a lust for adventure, deep curiosity and that twinkle in the eye that says so much...¹⁵

He later speaks of the contrast between the nature connection mentoring community and the wider culture, and reflects on the importance of these elders and mentors in order to heal society. Young compares nurturing children within a community of mentoring elders to the biblical image of sowing seeds on fertile soil:

Gradually it became clear to me that although Coyote Mentoring holds great power, culture deeply impacts any learning journey... many children today

¹⁵ Young, Haas, and McGown, *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*, 489-90.

are suffering from nature separation. Many species supporting this global village are suffering too, as are the environments that support them... Coyote Mentoring is to the child what water is to the seed. To thrive, the young sprout also requires the support of a nurturing environment, good soil... we can choose to take the dried, cracked elements of our culture and influence them with what we call cultural mentoring. If you use coyote mentoring tools in the absence of a healthy culture, it is the equivalent of watering a seed and dropping the sprout on pavement. You might get lucky... But ask any farmer, and they'll tell you it's better to prepare the soil, and anticipate the needs of the growing seedling as it matures to a productive part of the ecosystem. Cultural Mentoring does just that. A circle of mentors forms a cultural basket to hold all the necessary elements to nurture the village. Together they engender healthy children through Coyote Mentoring, and they create a healthy, vibrant culture that repeats for generations, gaining power over time, revitalizing both humans and their ecosystems. This is a Regenerative Mentoring Village.¹⁶

Young's Regenerative Mentoring Village describes the same kinds of experiences and relationships reflected in the vivid memories of the interviewees during the garden projects. Thorp also noted this dynamic in the school garden:

Together with the rhythms of the garden, I made space for "that moment" that we all long for. Tragically, our students are starved for these "moments" with a patient elder. This is how wisdom is passed down through the generations. It seems that we are obsessed with moving ahead as fast as we can with very little concern for the wisdom of our elders... I [asked the children], "Is there anything else you want to tell me about the garden?" A tiny person looked me in the eyes and earnestly replied, "That you helped us plant the garden." The food, cooking, and friends were all mentioned as important components, but someone older and wiser made the circle of learning complete.¹⁷

Church communities usually have such circles of cultural mentors that help nurture, teach, and support the next generations. The ideas that have evolved in the

¹⁶ Ibid., 491-3.

¹⁷ Thorp, *The Pull of the Earth: Participatory Ethnography in the School Garden*, 44.

nature connection community apply directly to the powerful ways churches can combine religious and nature mentoring; moreover, the rituals, mythologies, music, dancing, and fellowship experiences in the nature connection community constitute a form of religious culture and expression. These wilderness skills communities already embody Forest Church in their own ways, and Stanley integrates their tools and wisdom in his concepts of Forest Church.

Eden and the Divine Elder

In her book *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, Ellen Davis reveals the deep integration of soil and land with the practical and religious identity of the Hebrew people. She further demonstrates the politically subversive agenda of biblical narratives about land, including the Creation narratives in Genesis. Davis argues that these agrarian perspectives not only reveal the ancient Hebrew mindset, but they also encourage and advocate such a mindset as a socio-political critique of empirical powers and policies that commodify and destroy both the land and its peoples. Issues of ecological justice will be explored in later sections; in terms of ecological community, Davis' arguments support the idea that the prophets, Genesis narratives, wisdom literature, and other passages could be viewed in terms of nature connection, elders, and mentoring:

The essential understanding that informs the agrarian mind-set... is that agriculture has an ineluctably ethical dimension... food production entails at every stage judgments and practices that bear directly on the health of the earth and living creatures... For an agrarian reading of the Bible, it is

instructive that the sages treat agriculture as a primary realm in which God's wisdom is needed and utilized by humanity... [T]he biblical and theological tradition holds up God's action and perception as the model for our own.¹⁸

Drawing on Wirzba, Walter Brueggeman, and Wendell Berry,¹⁹ Davis goes on to describe an agrarian reading of Genesis 1, which disrupts concepts of human hierarchy over nature and in which the Divine and the Earth emerge in the role of what could be described as mentors or elders who teach humanity how to garden with the "plant seeding seed" and "tree-fruit seeding seed" plants listed in verse 29 at the end of the poem:

[T]he Bible begins with a picture of life flowing from... a fountain that is *with* God. Genesis 1 represents the earth as the primary acting subject, second only to God... Life created in God's image is meant to conform, with other forms of life, into a single harmonious order... By following this poem's carefully ordered representation of God's intention for the world, we may discern that the most essential activity befitting humans created in the image of God is to secure the food system that God gives to sustain all creatures... Immediately following their creation in/as the image of God and the charge to exercise mastery among the creatures, there comes this concluding notice about the food supply.²⁰

Davis' agrarian analysis supports the idea of an ancient role of nature connection elders and mentors for which humans still yearn today. In Genesis 1, the

¹⁸ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 22, 35, 49.

¹⁹ Davis uses, Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age.*; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982). She also uses various works by Wendell Berry, but for this particular argument, Wendell Berry, "The Responsibility of the Poet," in *What Are People For?* (New York: North Point, 1990).

²⁰ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 58.

Divine nurtures the Creation into being with the tender care of a shepherd-gardener for the land and flock. In verse 26, the Creator then elevates the Creation to the role of mentor through the invitation to co-create humanity in the shared image of the Creator and the (male-female, fruitful) Creation. In verse 29, the Creator mentor invites humanity to share in the abundant, permaculture Creation overflowing with food and beauty:

26 And God said, "Let us make humankind as our image, after our likeness, that they may shepherd the fish of the sea and the birds in the sky, the livestock and all the wild animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground. 27 So God created humanity in the divine image, in the image of God they were created, male and female they were created. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the Earth and conquer it. Shepherd the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole Earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the Earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground, everything that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant for food." And it was so.²¹

In terms of mentoring, Davis' analysis reveals the Divine as a shepherd-gardener; the Creation also holds this mentorship role for humanity. The Divine urges humanity to learn this role within the Creation as a way to embody the Divine image and live out the Divine purpose. Interestingly, the narrative in Genesis 2-3 reveals a different kind of elder/mentor experience for humanity, in which humanity pushes back against divine limits and ends up expelled from the garden;

²¹ This translation is a compilation based on Davis' translations of verses and terms. *Ibid.*, 54-9.

in terms of mentors, this chapter evokes some of the negative memories expressed by the interview respondents. In stark contrast to the highly positive memories of grandparents as garden mentors, several interviewees spoke of garden experiences of failure, shame, stress, or exclusion. In addition to the people who spoke wistfully of elders with a 'green thumb' that they had not inherited, some also described their parents' embarrassment and frustration at failed garden attempts. One person spoke of the stress, rules, and perfectionism of her parents' garden; she had not felt either included or mentored by them. The trustee described feeling like a bystander in his grandmother's garden, and he noted the greater satisfaction from his involvement in the church garden. The suburban pastor described working hard without a sense of ownership, agency, engagement, or fun as part of the process. These memories reflect failed mentorship by the elders of the community.

In some ways, the second and third chapters of Genesis also reflect a failed nature connection mentor garden experience that results in a disrupted relationship with both the mentor and the Creation. The first mentoring mistake occurs immediately after the Divine elder places the newly formed man into the garden, when the elder lies to the man regarding the consequences of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The lie leads the humans to choose instead the mentorship of the serpent, who tells them the truth about the tree. The text admits that the serpent is the smartest creature, and the serpent even reveals the elder's motivation behind the lie: the elder does not want to share divine power and

wisdom with the humans. In this particular way, this elder does not want to mentor and encourage the growth and development of the humans and is unable to learn from the humans.

Terrence E. Fretheim discusses these concepts and also suggests that the placement of the story at the beginning of the biblical canon has generated an exaggerated and often erroneous sense of its interpretation and import:

Readers... have given this text a level of significance found nowhere else within the [Old Testament]... Canonical placement has given to this text a certain theological stature (as with [Gen 1-2]). Moreover, frequency of reference does not provide an absolute criterion for determining theological importance... We can only decry the elevation of this story into a dogma.²²

Fretheim notes that the serpent explains the truth more fully to the humans and thus gives them a motivation to disobey the limits set by God:

The serpent, then, is correct in saying the humans would become like God(s), knowing good and evil, and that eating in itself would not necessarily mean death in at least some sense... It claims that God has not told them the full truth about the matter, that God keeps something back. In this, the serpent acts not as a deceiver but as a *truth-teller*... The serpent makes it sound as if God's motivation is self-serving; the humans will become like God... The issue of knowledge thus becomes at its deepest level an issue of *trust*... Can the man and the woman trust God even if God has not told them everything, indeed not given them every possible "benefit"?²³

Despite evidence of a defensive deity here and elsewhere (e.g., Gen 11:6), Fretheim argues that the underlying message of the chapter points to different ways of acquiring knowledge; trusting the elder to provide knowledge in its proper time

²² Terrence E. Fretheim, "Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

²³ *Ibid.*, 361.

results in benefits and wholeness for the Creation, whereas rushing to knowledge disrupts relationships and wellbeing.²⁴ Yet other scholars have noted the consistent ways in which the Bible portrays the Divine as subject to very human traits, such as insecurity, defensiveness, capriciousness, correctability, and even cruelty. James L. Crenshaw argues that attempts to explain away divine sin ignore the fullness of the text in favor of idolatrous focus on certain understandings of theodicy:

The tenacious illusion that the deity must conform to human standards of justice and mercy... produces a shallow, self-serving piety that cannot be sustained. To the extent that mortals set limits and impose them on the deity, they have constructed an idol... a cruel streak exists in the biblical depiction of God. The overwhelming evidence permits no other conclusion.²⁵

Crenshaw goes on to describe various scholarly interpretations of divine cruelty, including David Penchansky's concept of the "insecure monster-God in Genesis 3."²⁶ Penchansky explores various traditional interpretations of divine behavior in the passage; he argues that full examination of the text supports a fallible, limited, and punitive Divine figure:

One has to drop any notion that YHWH/Elohim has all power and all knowledge. If the fruit of the two trees gave nourishment and divine abilities to the 'elohim [god or Gods], perhaps YHWH/Elohim planted them in the garden for his and the others' convenience. A firm threat, he thought, was sufficient to keep the humans away. It didn't turn out as planned, and the 'elohim resorted to "plan B" by driving the humans out of the garden, denying

²⁴ Ibid., 364.

²⁵ James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 179.

²⁶ Ibid.; c.f. David Penchansky, *What Rough Beast? Images of God in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 5.

them access to fruit from the Tree of Life, and thus keeping them in a position inferior to that of the divine beings. YHWH's placement of the trees was a colossal blunder, one he tried to rectify by banishing the couple. YHWH forbade them to eat the fruit, under threat of death, but this turned out to be an empty threat. And when the threat didn't work, he ejected them from the garden. I find this reading most helpful in understanding the theology of the passage. It fits most fully with the portrayal of the serpent in the narrative.²⁷

Penchansky goes on to describe the godlike qualities of the serpent; he concludes with the idea that this fallible deity represents the fallibility of powerful Israelite and other leaders, and he suggests that we miss the full, subversive value of the story if we try to explain away the concept of a fallible Divine:

The structure of the story is seditious because it is a movement from transgression to punishment and at the same time a movement from... innocence to knowledge... The character of God is seditious, particularly when placed within the book of Genesis, whose editors were radical monotheists. This God demonstrates the character flaws of insecurity and jealousy... He blusters in anger against the humans because of his own fear of competition. This is not a flattering portrayal. To undermine the character of a nation's chief or only deity is to undermine all the nation's institutions of authority that are thought to have been granted by divine sanction.²⁸

If we take seriously the idea that humans are created and called to a vocation that involves a certain kind of relationship or connection with the Creation, we can view this story through a lens of nature connection mentoring. The divine elder's lie corrodes the trust of the mentor relationship and leads to another mentoring error in the expulsion of both humans from the garden. Instead of loving patience, the elder reacts with authoritative, punitive anger at both the serpent and the humans.

²⁷ Penchansky, *What Rough Beast? Images of God in the Hebrew Bible*, 8-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

Really, the elder throws a tantrum. From a nature mentoring perspective, the real curse in the story comes not from leaving an idyllic garden but from the lack of trust, care, education, and inclusion on the part of the elder.

The humans in the story experience the same kind of failure, shame, stress, and exclusion described by the interviewees who described negative experiences of parent or grandparent gardens. In light of Davis' and Wirzba's compelling analyses that reveal how nature connected farming and herding represent the primary human vocation, these parallels of nature mentoring between the interviewees and the biblical texts reveal the vital role of these elders for all humanity. In a sense, each of us will always be seeking for true mentors in both our elders and their gardens until we somehow find them; and in finding them, we also find healing, hope, freedom, and transformation – in other words, salvation.

Ecological Discipleship

In Wesleyan theology, the concept of grace intertwines inseparably from the concept of responsibility for continual growth and transformation of individuals, communities, and society. Based on the observations, interviews, and surveys, both sites had already integrated ecological discipleship into certain areas of individual and church life. Other than justice-related discipleship, which will be addressed in the following section, the ecological discipleship generally consisted of reducing waste, such as recycling programs and reusable dishes; energy efficiency initiatives;

and some awareness of and commitment to healthy and vegetarian food options. Many of the participants were involved in current garden projects of some kind. The garden projects offered new opportunities for ecological discipleship to the participants and the congregations, such as opportunities to support the garden project itself, try new local foods, and share in the harvest or other related activities, such as the kimchi. The data showed both individual and communal effects on ecological discipleship.

Garden Discipleship and Community Support

Despite a focus on responsibility, Wesleyan theology acknowledges the difficulty of individual, communal, and societal transformation. It offers an approach to transformation based on the idea of slow and steady progress in the context of a supportive community. In such a community, people are encouraged to adopt new habits that will spread holiness over time and integrate permanently into the identity and lifestyle of the individuals, community and, eventually, of society.

As mentioned above, both sites relied on the presence of a supportive community in order to allow the garden project to succeed. In the urban site, the group might have participated more in the watering and harvesting of the garden if leadership of the project had emerged differently; nonetheless, the combined efforts of the participants and the staff enabled the garden to be planned and built, and the harvest shared with the congregation and the wider community, including the

homeless community. At the suburban site, the group evolved differently and included church leadership from the beginning; moreover, several group leaders shared the work of planning and executing the project as well as its incorporation into the life and ministry of the congregation. Both projects revealed the importance of the supportive community and of leadership in building holy habits among small groups of people of faith.

In the suburban group, several participants expressed anxiety about their limited knowledge and experience gardening; the support of the group and the leadership enabled these participants to learn together, share the work, and successfully execute the project. Even without a large group helping, the dedication of the staff at the urban site and of the trustee at the suburban site enabled both gardens to continue to get watered even in the face of frustrating or difficult logistical challenges. The dedication of the staff and participants also enabled the sharing of the harvest with the congregations and with hungry communities, as well as the planting of the autumn crops and winterization of the gardens.

From a Wesleyan perspective, we cannot expect discipleship without first establishing a context in which people experience grace. Discipleship arises naturally out of grace. For Wesley, all the good intentions in the world will never inspire people to discipleship compared to a true understanding of grace; and we experience this powerful grace through humanity and through the rest of the Creation. Wesley's approach combined internal transformation with new behaviors

and “holy habits,” which are inspired and supported by a community of peers and mentors.²⁹

Small communal gardens can provide these human and ecological means of grace that inspire greater ecological discipleship. The expanding horticulture therapy movement has shown the power of gardens to help people not only to heal but also to grow. Westlund describes how farms and gardens for veterans lead to healing as well as intergenerational mentoring for ecological education and practices. Participants repeatedly mention several key elements of the gardens: the importance of working with their hands in nature; the importance of the other human participants; and the sense of value in growing healthy food that nourishes bodies as it also contributes to the positive transformation of society.³⁰ Importantly, school gardens also show significant impacts on healthy eating habits among children. Thorp notes how this immediate impact surprised the school staff:

I’ll never forget one of the naysayers in the building grumbling, “If it isn’t Ragu, they won’t eat it.” After four years, I can state without exception that I have yet to find a child who won’t eat something they have grown. When children are connected to the sacred act of growing food to nourish themselves, they always participate in the ritual with gusto. If they grew it and cooked it, they’ll eat it.³¹

²⁹ Randy L. Maddox, “John Wesley’s Precedent for Theological Engagement with the Natural Sciences,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44, no. 1 (2009): 43-4; Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today*, 54-5, 100-1. Maddox explores the theological and historical significance of Wesley’s naturalist writings.

³⁰ Westlund, *Field Exercises: How Veterans Are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities*, E.g., 64-7, 103-4.

³¹ Thorp, *The Pull of the Earth: Participatory Ethnography in the School Garden*, 31.

Children may experience this discipleship impact more quickly than other groups; if so, programs that involve children, whether in schools, churches, or other kinds of communities, become that much more important.

Ecological Discipleship and Transformation

Several participants acknowledged the challenges and difficulties associated with gardens or with these projects in particular, such as logistical difficulties with water or carrying heavy soil. At the same time, several people also described the satisfaction of gardening and of these projects, and part of the satisfaction derived from the labor involved in the projects as well as the sense of working on behalf of the group or congregation. Many people noted a sense of pride at the visible evidence of the successfully built and planted beds, which communicated an active, caring, and interesting community within the church. Several also noted the different appreciation and satisfaction from eating or sharing vegetables that they or people in their community grew. The garden-related acts of ecological discipleship impacted the identities of the participants and the congregations and created a stronger commitment to garden-related ecological discipleship.

During and after the project, participants described how the project had inspired them to grow more food on their own; buy, prepare, and taste new kinds of local foods; and directly interact more often with the soil. They also sought opportunities during the project to involve elders and children or youth in

intergenerational ways, such as in the garden itself and in the kimchi workshop. In the suburban site, the participants further integrated the garden project into the rest of the congregation through the stewardship campaign, including the bingo activity to encourage specific examples of ecological discipleship. They further involved the youth and children in the future by giving them one of the garden beds and through the theme of the Sunday school curriculum the following year.

Part of the hypothesis of the research project involved the potential impact of a hands-on, interactive nature connection project. Several participants noted the importance of the visibility of the garden and of the harvest itself in encouraging ecological habits. Interestingly, participants and non-participants at both sites showed a much stronger interest in sharing the harvest than in taking the harvest for personal use. Respondents described various reasons for their reluctance: they felt they hadn't participated enough in the project; they wanted the food to go to others who might need or appreciate it more; or they were more reluctant because of the small, piecemeal harvest (instead of a one-time, larger harvest). At the same time, the participants and congregations enthusiastically embraced the harvest when it was shared with the whole community, such as in Communion or fellowship time. The suburban trustee purposefully did not take any garden vegetables during Communion, because he wanted the vegetables to go to others; his desire to share the harvest with others extended even into the communal sharing moments. The non-member took the large zucchini home and then made a casserole with it to

share at another church event. A non-participant at the urban site made the 'Help Yourself' signs to encourage others to harvest from the gardens.

Perhaps because people were reluctant to harvest as individuals, it became a challenge fully to harvest and share the vegetables. The small size of the plots may have reinforced a sense of scarcity among the participants and the congregations, who were so determined to share with others that some of the vegetables may have spoiled. Over time, at the encouragement of others, and through specific sharing moments, the participants and the congregations became more willing to eat the vegetables. The trustee at the suburban site did not take any vegetables during Communion, but he later ate some of the vegetables at fellowship time, including the kimchi. The project organizer at the urban site took tomatoes when the pastor assured her that he had taken enough. The discipleship moments of harvest sharing led away from the idea of scarcity and toward an idea of abundance.

Other garden projects also describe these kinds of transformations, such as the school garden and veterans' gardens described above. One veteran describes the importance of community and compares the slow healing process to compost:

"The Earth has things built in that no matter what we do, it can slowly heal itself and fix itself," he said, suggesting that the Earth provides a model for veterans' own healing and recovery... "I don't know if I'd do it if it was just me out there. It's too overwhelming... Using a tool, even a simple hoe or shovel, is therapy... Some of my friends that come out – the vets – sometimes they're not so into it [at first]... But then you catch them smiling and laughing,

and they come back... It's empowering... There are not many fixes, and gardening's not a fix but it's an effort. It gives you a fighting chance."³²

Some interviewees noted the contrast between communal gardening and individual community garden or yard plots, and between family gardens and the church garden. Although people also described the pleasure found in moments alone in a garden, communal gardens offer community building and mentoring opportunities that contribute significantly to the transformative effect of gardens. Community gardens often work to overcome architectural, language, and cultural communication barriers in order to build community and sustainable ecological gardening methods; for example, a community garden for mostly Asian American immigrants first functioned more like a collection of individual gardens; the participants primarily wanted to save money and used every inch of space. Over time, the volunteers and garden manager encouraged spaces for communal gatherings, offered educational workshops, and interpreted pesticide policies and warning labels.³³ Impacts on ecological discipleship tend to reflect the participants' understandings of how gardens fit into larger issues of social justice and transformation that usually accompany United Methodist initiatives. Ideas of ecological justice will be now be discussed.

³² Westlund, *Field Exercises: How Veterans Are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities*, 66-7.

³³ Hou, Johnson, and Lawson, *Greening Cities, Growing Communities: Learning from Seattle's Urban Community Gardens*, 89-91.

Ecological Justice

Wesleyan understandings of responsibility connect discipleship ideas of holy habits with societal transformation. Based on the observations, interviews, and surveys, both sites had already integrated ecological justice into certain areas of individual and church life. The ecological justice at the urban site included opportunities to support or engage in political activism, such as against the Keystone XL oil sands pipeline; and charities or non-governmental organizations working on ecological justice issues within communities, such as Heifer, International.³⁴ Both the urban and suburban congregations participated in food ministries to hungry communities in the area.

In addition to providing a natural, living presence and sacred space, the food gardens also created a visual impact that raised awareness about important ecological justice issues, such as the connections between food and socioeconomic justice as well as possibilities and strategies for growing local food and supporting the local food movement. The data showed individual and some communal effects on ecological justice.

Garden Justice and Awareness

³⁴ For more information about the political campaign against the Keystone XL pipeline, see: 350.org, "350.Org: We're Bulding a Global Climate Movement," accessed December 5, 2015, 350.org. For more information about Heifer, International, see: Heifer International, "Heifer International | Charity Ending Hunger and Poverty," accessed December 4, 2015, <http://www.heifer.org/>.

Many respondents described a heightened awareness as a result of the garden project, in a variety of areas. Many people spoke of a greater understanding of the source of food and the challenges farmers and societies face to feed communities without the use of chemicals. People often described the importance of the idea that food does not come from stores and the separation our society has from the sources of our food. The project raised awareness among many of the participants of the connections between small gardens and larger issues of agriculture, fresh food, and solidarity.

Many respondents also spoke of raised awareness regarding the possibilities for urban and suburban food gardens. Participants spoke of a heightened awareness of other garden spaces and of the potential for gardens in other locations. Several people spoke of greater interest and motivation to garden or to expand existing gardens. At the suburban site, two people noted how the garden had inspired another church and an elder housing area to consider similar projects.

Several people also mentioned a greater awareness of individual and collective impacts on environmental issues. They expressed hope and motivation to continue and to expand the ways they and the congregation could take responsibility for this impact. In the suburban site, the stewardship bingo activities encouraged the rest of the congregation to make similar connections in terms of awareness and responsibility.

The veterans' gardens offer interesting case studies for intersections between gardens and social justice. Many accounts describe how the veterans eschew power tools or machinery whenever possible; partly, they particularly appreciate the therapeutic effects of working with their hands and the sounds of nature, but they also often feel unsafe outside or around loud noises and machinery, which can act as post-trauma triggers. In addition, several accounts describe the ties between the economy, fossil fuels, and the war, and the veterans not only wanted to reject the oil-based economy, but they also wanted to help build a healthy and strong alternative economy based on local agriculture. One veteran noted that the garden tapped into her desire to help and serve her country:

In the end, it comes down to why vets joined the military in the first place. "We wanted to serve our country. We wanted to serve our communities," [she] said. And this desire to serve is still strong amongst many veterans. "We just want to do it the right way this time."³⁵

The veterans' desire to serve arises from the same ideas as the sense of purpose associated with Christian responsibilities to justice. One veteran remarked on the ways the garden both provided healing and raised awareness for the veterans:

A sense of safety is lacking for many veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress, and it's something most savor when they find it... "I just go out there alone and shovel in the wheelbarrow for a few hours and feel great about a lot of things... And I think Gandhi had a lot of wisdom saying something about everyone should have a hand in the food production because they'll respect it

³⁵ Westlund, *Field Exercises: How Veterans Are Healing Themselves through Farming and Outdoor Activities*, 98.

more, have a stronger connection to the Earth and be grounded. You really quickly understand how much work goes into garlic and how much to respect it... You totally look at food in a different way when you start growing your own.”³⁶

These gardens provide tangible ways to build ecological justice for wounded and marginalized communities and lands and contribute to the transformation of society in holistic ways.

Some of the church garden participants spoke of the differences between flower and vegetable gardens. They all valued flowers for a variety of reasons, including ideas of attracting pollinators, beauty, and building community; over time, they also tended to appreciate the ways in which food addresses an immediate need and fosters more intimate interactions than flowers. The children involved in the ethnographic school garden study came from households experiencing chronic hunger and lack of access to fresh food. Thorp describes this aspect of the project: “[T]heir bodies were starved for nutritious food. It was not simply a matter of taste with these children; it was a matter of hunger.”³⁷ Immigrant community gardens also function as important food sources for hungry communities.

For some communities, flower gardens can become subversive and liberating for precisely these reasons. Alice Walker’s essay *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens* describes the ways in which African American women have used quilting, poetry,

³⁶ Ibid., 54-5.

³⁷ Thorp, *The Pull of the Earth: Participatory Ethnography in the School Garden*, 31.

song, and gardening to express the universal, deep need for creativity. Walker's mother labored in the fields during the day; flowers became a means of community connection, storytelling, mentoring, and claiming the power to co-create beauty in the world:

[W]hen, you will ask, did my overworked mother have time to know or care about feeding the creative spirit?... [M]y mother adorned with flowers whatever shabby house we were forced to live in. And not just your typical straggly country stand of zinnias, either. She planted ambitious gardens... that bloom profusely from early March until late November... Because of her creativity with her flowers, even my memories of poverty are seen through a screen of blooms... I remember people coming to my mother's yard to be given cuttings from her flowers; I hear again the praise showered on her because whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden. A garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity, that to this day people drive by our house in Georgia... and ask to stand or walk among my mother's art.³⁸

While fresh vegetables may also embody art, Walker's essay reminds us that part of justice awareness includes addressing hunger, and another part involves beauty for its own sake. Her mother worked in the soil all day, and yet she was still able to work in the soil for pleasure and freedom. The aesthetic role of gardens can cut through paternalism or privilege and reveal the subversive gifts of the Creation.

Garden Justice and Activism

³⁸ Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," in *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 406, 08.

The garden projects also provided some opportunities for direct actions to address food-related issues of ecological justice. Respondents at both sites expressed specific interest in using the gardens to feed hungry communities and communities with less access to fresh food. In the urban site, the gardens were made explicitly available to at least two different homeless communities that used the church building and steps. The group also made the decision to risk vandalism and place the garden along the sidewalk; despite a few empty soda cans in the tomato bucket planters, the participants expressed relief and gratitude that the gardens had not been vandalized. They also expressed satisfaction and pride at having decided to take such a risk in order to make the garden more accessible and available to others. In the suburban site, the harvest was incorporated into existing food ministries at a soup kitchen and food pantry; over time, the food was more fully incorporated into these ministries; the site also increasingly involved the children and youth as a way to help both build nature connection and raise awareness of these ecological connections and responsibilities.

The school garden study noted how school gardens provide tangible examples of integrated, cross-curricular learning, such as through physical education, health, science, and economics. In fact, gardens both reveal and address central issues of social justice and transformation. Davis also points out the ways in which ancient and modern small, local farms inherently subvert imperial systems that exploit people, women, and the land. An agrarian reading of the Bible reveals

how biblical authors critique imperial, trade-based food economies, such as in ancient Egypt, where Hebrew slaves built silos for surplus grain. These exploitative food economies inevitably involve slavery, abuse of women, and damages to the land. In contrast, the biblical writers hold up a “manna” economy, that respects limits, finitude, and the value of sharing:

The ban on hoarding and manna that spoils overnight are symbols that touch us closely, living as we do in a culture of unprecedented hoarding, consumption, and waste. Our take is unlimited – the destruction already accomplished is staggering... Forty percent of the world’s population lives in countries suffering from serious freshwater shortages, and irrigated agriculture accounts for a staggering 70 percent of water usage... thus endangering the food supply over the long term. We have incurred damage on a scale that bewilders us, that we cannot repair, and even worse, our currently dominant economies implicitly mandate that the damage continue. The manna story attests to the inherent difficulty of living with restrictions we do not wholly understand.³⁹

Davis demonstrates how food economics reveal the justice or oppression in societies then as today. The Garden of Eden represents a central biblical example of abundance, permaculture, and humanity’s role as a shepherd-gardener.⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, Wesley incorporated concepts of justice into his ideas of grace and responsibility as well. He advocated for agricultural policies that would help feed hungry people instead of cater to the luxuries of wealthy elites, and he spoke out adamantly on issues of animal cruelty. Wesleyan ethicists have drawn upon his ideas and Wesleyan theology to explore issues of ecological justice for

³⁹ Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 75.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40, 32-4, 51-8, 60-2, 78.

many years.⁴¹ Recently, Christopher Carter has applied Wesleyan ideas to issues of animal rights and African American soul food culture. Carter connects the food concepts of soul with issues of justice and care for the Earth, and he calls on European American Christian communities to understand how the food economy perpetuates injustice among communities that represent the global majority. At the same time, he calls for African American Christian communities to liberate soul food culture from oppressive habits and paradigms and embrace its own dynamic, ancient values:

Christians seeking a theology of eating should embody three virtues: *embracing our soul, justice for food workers, and care of the earth...* For Euro-American Christian communities, reflecting on the past requires identifying the historical injustices that still languish within the American food system... African Americans specifically, and black and brown folk in general, have been systematically denied access to land, agricultural technology, government subsidies and insurance, and labor protection in the form of agricultural unions... For African American Christians, embracing our soul requires that we challenge habits of black food culture that are destructive to our goal of liberation. The collective spiritual wisdom of the black church tradition compels us to take a theology of liberation seriously in all areas of our life – in this case, how we eat. We have to allow our notion of black soul – and soul food – to evolve. We need to recover the wisdom of our ancestral culinary identities so that we can recreate modern culinary identities that advance our goal of liberation. A more diverse understanding of soul food, one that embraces vegetarian, vegan, organic, and healthier ways of eating benefits our community while simultaneously helping us move beyond fixed social and cultural identities that have been detrimental to our survival. In this way soul food becomes a liberative tool that aids our community in our fight against the consequences of our oppressive food system... By fully

⁴¹ Notably, Nash, *Loving Nature : Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*. Nash utilizes Wesleyan concepts such as grace and responsibility throughout, and he specifically references Wesley in pp. 126-9.

embracing the legacy of African American soul, the black church leaves room for our definition of soul food to deepen.⁴²

Bryant Terry has been working on just this project for several years. His books on vegan soul food combine African, Caribbean, and Southern recipes with songs of blessing and words of encouragement. He reminds his readers of the whole foods at the heart of suppressed African food culture:

Because these riches [of ingredients, flavors, and cooking techniques] have been hardearned, underacknowledged, and even exploited, using them wisely means coming to terms with the problematic narratives that surround them. There is a notable failure to acknowledge that the modern world is indebted to ancient Africans... More than anyone else, people of African descent should honor, cultivate, and consume food from the African diaspora. Afro-diasporic foodways (that is, the shape and development of food traditions) carry our history, memories, and stories. They connect us to our ancestors... They also have the potential to save our lives. As Afro-diasporic people have strayed from our traditional roots and adopted a Western diet, our health has suffered. Combined with the economic, physical, and geographic barriers that make it difficult to access *any* type of fresh food in many communities, the health of these populations across the globe has been devastated...⁴³

Terry situates his work in the eco-justice context of the systematic exploitation, marginalization, and suppression of his community. He speaks words of resurrection and hope for a holistic and liberating approach to food, including strategies for growing food and plugging into the local food movement:

Delicious as they are, these dishes do not stand alone – they are supported by culture, tradition, and memories. In fact, even the African Heritage Diet Food Pyramid emphasizes gardening, spending time with family, and building

⁴² Carter, "Eating Food and Justice."

⁴³ Terry, *Afro-Vegan: Farm-Fresh African, Caribbean, and Southern Flavors Remixed*, 3.

community around the table. When I reflect on my childhood... I think fondly of gardening with my family, growing collards, mustards... I treasure my grandparents' home-cooked meals... And I maintain the core values that came from harvesting, sharing, preparing, and cooking meals with community. With all that in mind, I invited Michael W. Twitty... to enrich my recipes with some gems about garden-to-table cooking... I see this book naming and solidifying a new genre of cooking and eating... extending farm-fresh, compassionate food to include foods of the African diaspora.⁴⁴

In another project, Terry joined Anna Lappé to write a book specifically designed for urban communities interested in learning about food justice, safety, and how to create simple, healthy food in urban areas.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, African American communities from Los Angeles to Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago have spearheaded the urban farming/gardening and guerrilla gardening movements to reclaim unused or public lands as gardens.⁴⁶

These justice efforts overlap to address community cohesion, safety, health, employment, access to green spaces, access to fresh food, and sustainable, local economics. Church gardens provide possibilities for solidarity as well as liberation. In *Cultivating Neighborhood: Identifying Best Practices for Launching a Christ-Centered Community Garden*, Bryan K. Langlands describes how such gardens help churches connect with wider communities and, in some cases, address and help heal

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁵ Anna Lappé and Bryant Terry, *Grub: Ideas for an Urban Organic Kitchen* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

⁴⁶ See Reynolds, *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Hand Book for Gardening without Boundaries*, 65-77; Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution*, 139-58, 227-82.

issues of racism. He notes how one garden evolved from the joint work of four predominantly African American or European American congregations in North Carolina. Over time, this particular garden provided space for interracial and intergenerational mentoring and community building and grew to embody the ideas of healing and radical hospitality for the community.⁴⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the projects at both sites reflect impacts in beliefs and behaviors related to ecological ethics in ways that represent the Wesleyan concepts of grace and responsibility embodied in the theology and praxis of the congregations. The locations of the sites likely impacted the communal cultures and therefore the ways in which the project progressed at each site. The urban site was already heavily integrated into ministries that addressed the needs of its nearby community, including homeless communities and university students. The suburban congregation had fewer immediate opportunities for such doorstep ministries, and the garden project offered a unique, on-site opportunity to build community, connect with nature, and engage regularly in such a ministry. It affected the central identity of the congregation and became an integral part of their future worship, congregational life, outreach, and ministries.

⁴⁷ Langlands, *Cultivating Neighborhoods: Identifying Best Practices for Launching a Christ-Centered Community Garden*, 22-42.

The data from the projects also revealed prominent investment in garden-related ideas of cultural memory and intergenerational mentoring. These concepts reflect not only current trends in nature connection mentoring programs but also biblical ideas concerning the vital importance of nature connection elders as mentors to guide each generation. This kind of mentoring serves to situate communities in ethical frameworks that prioritize ecological wellness, knowledge, humility, compassion, and justice. The local food movement currently connects gardening to these ideas in various ways, including the urban fresh food movement, school gardens, and veteran sanctuary gardens.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Conclusions for areas of ecological spirituality, community, discipleship, and justice are first treated separately, followed by overall conclusions.

Ecological Spirituality Conclusions

The garden projects revealed an interest and enthusiasm for outdoor and garden-based spirituality at both sites. Although the sites acknowledged the newness and even risk involved in exploring these new forms of ecological spirituality, neither site expressed concerns about nature worship, pantheism, or experiencing the Divine through a garden. The wider congregations supported the new ways in which the participants integrated the garden and the harvest into the spiritual and worship life of the congregations. The gardens provided a non-threatening entrée into new ideas of ecological spirituality that drew upon existing outdoor worship practices and resonated with the churches' interests in nature connection and desire to minister to others. The study concludes that these congregations reflect and represent an important transitional moment within a strand of Christianity that is beginning to embrace and explore more regular and integrated approaches to outdoor and garden-based spirituality. This transitional moment arises out of a combination of motivations related to ideas of grace and

responsibility; nature-connected spiritual practices recognize gardens and other outdoor spaces as means of grace through which the community can experience spiritual transformation, which provides the foundation for practices that address ecological issues in society.

The main spirituality concerns people expressed reflected a commitment to intentional spirituality within a human community of support and accountability, to support and augment individual spiritual experiences. This concern reflects the ways in which these congregations combine ideas of grace and responsibility inseparably; both sites continually connected positive individual and group garden experiences and benefits with ministry and justice concerns. Ecological spirituality has not been set up as an idol that will heal and fix each person and the world, but rather a means of healing and growth to help people understand the Creation and our responsibility in it and to its marginalized and oppressed peoples.

Ecological Community Conclusions

In terms of community and nature connection, the project revealed the ways in which church gardens can help people connect with the outdoor spaces near their buildings and elsewhere in new ways. Both sites noted the startling or attention grabbing aspect of church gardens as well as ways these gardens fit into the larger local/fresh food movement. Gardens provided a flexible means of nature connection for churches in different settings with different land access. The physical

interactions with the plants and the harvest also provided nature connection opportunities and fostered a sense of awe, kinship, reciprocity, humility, and responsibility. The pastors made these incarnational connections explicit in the ways they incorporated the harvest into the Eucharist or other worship-based sharing experiences. In summary, nature connection with the gardens and their harvests fostered a sense of Divine kinship and transcendence; the gardens provided a means of prevenient and sanctifying grace.

The church gardens prioritized community building as a central goal of the projects, both for the participants and for the congregation. Although the participants regularly spent time alone meditating in or tending the gardens, the garden and harvest experiences of human connection addressed a specific human need reflected in their vibrant memories of family or communal garden experiences. In particular, the participants cherished the intergenerational aspects of community building, particularly with elders and children or youth. These results reflect the ancient, primary role of humanity as eco-centric communities of shepherd-gardeners who pass along this wisdom from elders to each new generation.

Nature connection communities and programs recognize the vital role of elders and mentors, just as churches honor elders and mentors in support and spiritual formation of future generations. Church gardens allow elders in their communities to expand the role of religious mentor in order to include aspects of gardening and other kinds of nature connection. Elders who are lonely or who

cannot easily garden otherwise can find ways to participate in the projects and feel valued. These gardens also provide opportunities for children and youth today to experience these formative, garden-based relationships that were common a generation ago.

Ecological Discipleship Conclusions

The garden projects required a certain amount of work over the course of many months. The participants spoke of the satisfaction and pride associated with these and other gardens, in the general sense of a completed project as well as the specific satisfaction found in the harvest or the beautiful outcome of the garden. The participants also particularly noted the pride associated with the visibility of the gardens as tangible evidence of the discipleship of the church. The garden projects offered new opportunities for ecological discipleship that built knowledge and new habits among the participants, such as growing, tasting, and preparing local foods; in the suburban site, the new knowledge and habits spread to the rest of the congregation as well.

Consistent with the Wesleyan model of discipleship, these responsibility impacts require both leadership and communal support in order to take hold and spread; moreover, participants were inspired to more discipleship through the pleasure of sharing the harvest, both with the congregation and with hungry communities. The ecological and faith communities together provide the grace from

which acts of responsible discipleship arise. In the suburban site, the garden location provided a convenient space for individual, group, and congregational discipleship. In contrast, the urban site had to choose between a visible location that most of the congregation as well as the wider community would see and more easily access, or a parishioner yard with easier logistics and more opportunities for small group community building and mentoring. The suburban site did not have to consider such a tradeoff, partly because their location offered no such immediate access for the hungry communities associated with other ministries of the church. These logistical, communal, and justice related issues factored into the group's initial decision to build garden beds in both locations; with additional leadership and support, the two sites may have offered additional discipleship and other benefits. In summary, supportive contexts enable church gardens to build and spread new forms of ecological discipleship that overlap with and contribute to the communal, spiritual, and justice impacts.

Ecological Justice Conclusions

The garden projects created both a visual impact and enabled activities that raised the awareness of the participants and the wider congregations regarding the source of food, local foods, and food growing opportunities in urban and suburban areas. These congregations already generally understood many of the connections between the local food movement and wider issues of fresh food access and justice

for farmers and communities around the world. The gardens served to build and strengthen the awareness of these connections and reinforce ideas of impact and responsibility for individuals and church communities. By nature of its location and existing ministries, the urban church was able to offer the harvest to hungry communities in at least three different ways on a regular basis; and both sites prioritized this goal of the garden projects.

Given the demographics and location of the suburban church in a fairly wealthy, predominantly European American suburb, the congregation had to make more of an effort than the urban congregation to connect with communities experiencing certain kinds of injustice. In addition to involvement with programs to address hunger in the local schools, the congregation participated in food ministries and other ministries with communities in need in the wider area and globally through the United Methodist connexion. This project offered the congregation an opportunity to use the land around their building to work for social justice directly and in tangible ways. The land and the hands of the participants grew the food that was shared at the soup kitchen and in the food pantry. This project provided an opportunity for the suburban congregation to transform their grounds into an area that joined with the ministries inside the building in working for socio-ecological transformation and liberation.

Recommendations

Church Garden Praxis Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, church vegetable garden projects are recommended as a method to increase the ecological ethics beliefs and practices of local congregations. The openness and initiatives of the pastors fostered and encouraged the exploration of ecological spirituality among the participants. Churches offer unique possibilities for ecological spirituality that do not focus on individual healing or piety at the expense of social transformation. Garden vegetables offer useful and non-threatening opportunities to explore theological ideas ecocentrically, such as Communion and abundance. Garden-based worship experiences should be used to try to incorporate ideas of Creation care into the central spiritual identity of the congregation. They should also be used to promote the exploration of ecological spirituality by small groups in the church, including adult groups and religious education programs. Ideally, churches would integrate ideas of ecological spirituality into any outdoor projects, events, or experiences, and they would expand these outdoor activities in the process.

Regarding ecological community, urban and suburban areas do not have the same access to wilderness spaces as rural and wooded areas; moreover, the presence of the community and the boundaries of the project can serve to relieve fears people may have about outdoor spaces. Gardens can provide opportunities for nature connection even in completely paved areas or inside buildings. Vegetable

gardens in particular offer important nature connection opportunities that easily connect to ideas of spirituality, discipleship, and justice. Churches often participate in shared meals and food ministries; moreover, churches also already provide a culture of intergenerational mentoring. A vegetable garden can integrate into existing food-related activities and foster intergenerational, nature connection mentoring. Churches should also try to connect with existing nature connection programs and communities in order to build relationships with the wider community as well as to explore ways to expand nature connection and mentoring in churches.

In addition to nature connection in general, congregations should find ways to experience shared garden meals. Instead of planning a special meal, these congregations integrated the harvest into existing communal meals in a variety of ways. Over time, a garden could expand and include a planting strategy to provide for a harvest meal; however, the ways in which the congregations in this study integrated the harvest into existing meals evoked communal experiences similar to what the participants had remembered from childhood. These sites shared the harvest during fellowship time after worship, which prompted additional storytelling and intergenerational community building. These meals helped reinforce ideas of abundance, particularly because including the harvest required little work and the harvest was used to augment other food offerings.

In order for the projects to have the desired impact, church communities need ecological discipleship resources, such as knowledge, leadership, and practical support. It is important that the project give the participants and the congregation a sense of abundance, rather than scarcity; for example, adding clay and compost to the urban church's raised beds might have addressed the issue of the beds drying out quickly. Without the issue of water access and constant water needs, the garden might have left the staff, participants, and congregation with a greater sense of abundance and less frustration. A garden should provide delicious vegetables and meaningful intergenerational experiences with relatively little effort.

Neither church chose to use the Interfaith Power and Light resources¹ that were provided, but they listened to the ideas and advice of people in the congregations and at the local gardening stores. I recommend that local churches find ways to support one another for all three of these purposes. Even small gardens require some maintenance, and laity often cannot tend a garden throughout the week; moreover, active laity often already spend considerable time in other ministries. Both sites used the Square Foot Gardening² approach, which requires comparatively little care and enables a steady harvest throughout the growing season. Churches in rural areas may desire larger gardens and could benefit from the holistic, ecocentric theory and comparatively little work involved in

¹ IPL, "Sow a Cool Harvest: Faith Garden Ideas for a Cooler Planet."; IPL, "Enjoy a Cool Harvest: Learning to Make Climate-Friendly Food Choices."

² Bartholomew, *All New Square Foot Gardening*.

permaculture garden techniques.³ Participants from other church garden projects might be able to facilitate the process for an interested congregation, particularly if the congregations already have some kind of relationship with each other. Churches should also develop relationships with local garden centers and gardening communities. Ideally, churches with successful garden projects could support other churches in their local area in setting up their own garden projects. Collaborative projects can work, but trying to use space in which the community is already physically and psychologically invested is also recommended, such as the land, building, or rooftop of the church. The physical presence of the garden impacts the identity and behavior of the congregation in important ways, both internally and in the wider community.

These churches come from a tradition that prioritizes social justice, and both congregations already had some investment in ecological justice; nonetheless, the garden raised the awareness of the participants and the congregations about garden-related issues, such as the potential for urban and suburban gardens to feed hungry communities, the challenges facing farming communities, a deeper understanding and appreciation for the sources of food, and individual or group responsibilities and impacts on these issues. The vastness and intractability of the

³ Regional permaculture networks can help individuals and organizations set up permaculture gardens and farms, e.g.: PINA, "Permaculture Institute of North America," Permaculture Institute of North America, accessed January 5, 2016, pina.in; PINE, "Permaculture Institute of the Northeast," Permaculture Institute of the Northeast, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://northeastpermaculture.org/>.

oppressive socioeconomic systems and structures that cause the widespread oppression and destruction of the ecological crisis can easily intimidate and overwhelm people. Churches already rely on a model of mutual support and accountability combined with collective impact, which enables congregations to learn, change, and work together over time on otherwise daunting justice issues.

Communities cannot fully experience grace in the absence of responsibility. Participants alluded to this idea in their reflections on gardening as worship and the specific value of intentional, communal spirituality as compared to individual acts. Participants noted the impacts of the garden that arose specifically from its context as a church project, situated near a church, and unfolding with a group of church people. As soon as people see a church with a vegetable garden, the brain takes the next logical step that *all churches should* have vegetable gardens, not (just) because of the spiritual, communal, or discipleship impacts, but because of the obvious justice implications. The garden connections and impacts in these four areas of ecological ethics reinforce each other because grace and responsibility reinforce each other. Without one of the four areas of ecological ethics, the import and impact of the garden diminish considerably.

Because of the synergistic effect of these four aspects, churches should use gardens concertedly to further ecological ethics in all four areas. Churches should explore ways to incorporate nature and the outdoors into the central spiritual identity of weekly worship. They should prioritize nature connection with an

honored circle of elders and mentors. They should continue to promote and facilitate ecological habits for the church, individuals, and in their communities. And they should seek specific ways to raise awareness and activism regarding issues of ecological justice. Gardens offer flexible yet powerful access to all of these goals.

Recommendations for Further Study

Some impacts of the projects may take more time to emerge; additionally, some impacts may decrease over time without the reinforcement of the garden or its integration into the congregation. Additional observations, interviews, and surveys of these two congregations at later time points could determine longer term impacts and explore the ways in which the impacts were lost, maintained, or increased.

This study focused only on two congregations, and both congregations resided in the Boston area and belonged to the same denomination. Future studies on the impacts of church vegetable gardens could follow additional church sites in order to compare different regions, demographic and ethnic groups, and denominations. A large enough pool of combined survey data would allow for more rigorous statistical analysis of impacts for each of the subscales as well as the individual questions within the subscales. Ethnographic studies could correlate contextual differences with specific impacts or lack of impacts. These data could

determine which kinds of initiatives had the greatest and most lasting impacts on the ecological ethics of the congregations.

Currently, church-based summer camps provide the main source of nature connection, mentoring, and spirituality for Christian churches in the New England area. These camps increasingly use gardens as part of the church campground experience. While these camps provide important, intergenerational nature experiences for children and adults, churches should not rely on campgrounds as the sole or even primary source of ecological ethics. Most church children, youth, adults, and elders do not participate in these programs; moreover, isolating nature experiences to summer camps compartmentalizes them when they should be integrated into the central identity of congregations. Future studies could examine the impacts of vegetable gardens in church campground settings as well as explore “Forest Church” approaches to integrate successful outdoor/campground ideas and practices into congregational life. Campgrounds succeed in creating meaningful nature experiences primarily because these experiences are *fun*. Singing around campfires is *fun*. Churches looking to explore nature connection grounded in both ritual and justice may find inspiration and resources as well as collaborative partners in church camp programs.

The vivid garden memories of the interviewees, both positive and negative, provided a fascinating look into a common cultural phenomenon of the past. Although gardening is making a comeback, examination of these memories and their

particular religious and cultural significance as well as impacts on later gardening experiences would preserve important cultural knowledge and reveal more detail about the potential and influence of these elder mentors and communities of mentors.

Final Thoughts

When I was a child, I spent considerable time at my grandparents' house in Brooklyn, New York, where my Italian grandfather occasionally showed me his garden in the back yard. I vividly remember his enthusiasm when he taught me about the grapes, tomatoes, peppers, and fruit trees. He told me all about how his family would make the wine every year: the first cask was weak, for women and children; the second cask was the table wine; and the thick, final cask was the cooking wine. He explained how his mother would dry tomatoes, carefully turning them just a little over time as they baked in the sun. These memories stand out in my mind partly because of the great energy and excitement my grandfather shared with me. His words and actions connected me to my ancestors and cultural history. I watched carefully as he demonstrated techniques for tomato stakes and grapevines against the stone garage wall. I tasted the sweet, juicy grapes and tomatoes he gave me. I learned about food and patience, family and history in my grandfather's garden.

My Korean parents-in-law gave me another precious opportunity for watching and tasting. Their garden utilized every possible inch of their Vancouver yard in truly beautiful, creative ways. Whenever I indicated the slightest interest, my parents-in-law would carefully explain exactly how they had encouraged their trees to produce Asian pears, built a greenhouse out of scraps, or created three different kinds of compost. Summer meals at their house always included garden vegetables, but we also picked a bumper crop of kiwi from the balcony vines at Christmastime. And my mother in law carefully showed me how to make kimchi so I could later teach my own children. She said she couldn't tell me – there was no recipe, there were no measurements; she had to show me, because it was 'in her hands.' The only way to learn how to make kimchi properly was to do it together – where I could watch, touch, and taste.

This research reconnected me to these memories and situated them in a context of the powerful combination of faith, nature, food, and elders. As Davis so clearly illustrates, this combination represents the heart of what it means to be human and thus the heart of our faith tradition. Just as they did not isolate humanity from the rest of nature, the biblical shepherd-gardeners did not draw sharp distinctions between garden and wilderness. The voice of the Divine Elder Coyote Mentor arises out of our relationships of watching and tasting with one another and the Creation around and within us: a voice of grace, healing, and transformation for the whole Earth.

Crawford Stewardship Bingo

I LOVE GOD'S WORLD

	I	L	O	V	E
	G	O	D	'	S
	W	O	R	L	D
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

- Goals:**
1. How many lines can you complete - horizontal, vertical or diagonal? (Hint - 12 possible)
 2. How many squares can you add to Crawford's total?

- Rules:**
1. Each "I Love God's World" activity on the attached list has a Bingo number (example L4). If you complete that activity, put a sticker on the appropriate box on the Bingo board.
 2. If you complete an activity with the letters L, O or D, you get to add two stickers in two different columns (example, L4 in the first column and also L4 in the fourth column).
 3. The first column can have Bingo number that begin with I, G or W; second column L or O, etc.
 4. If you get more than one activity for a particular box, just put two stickers in that box.

- Results:**
1. Please bring your bingo board to the Consecration lunch after the 10:45 service on Sunday, November 17, so we can see who has the most lines completed, and how many squares we completed as a congregation.

Appendix 1: Garden-Themed Stewardship Bingo – Suburban Site (page 2 of 3)

**CRAWFORD STEWARDSHIP BINGO ACTIVITIES
I LOVE GOD'S WORLD**

FOR KIDS (and young at heart)

- I1 Eat fresh fruit for snack
- G2 Help pick up after coffee hour
- O5 Help set the table at home
- V3 Say grace before a meal
- D4 Be kind to someone at school
- L4 Attend Sunday School
- E5 Say hello to a visitor at church on Sunday (or any other time)
- S4 Say a bedtime prayer
- D3 Learn a new hymn
- O3 Learn the names of the four gospel books of the Bible
- W5 Help buy and then eat a fresh vegetable
- O2 Bring one item for the food pantry
- V5 Send a get well card to someone who is sick
- S2 Help your parent put the groceries away
- L1 Attend Youth Group (middle or high school)
- L2 Pick up your room without being asked
- D1 Read a book for half an hour instead of electronics
- W3 Help sort outgrown clothing to give to Goodwill
- G4 Bring extra books, games and toys to church for Fair
- E1 Read a bible story at home
- S1 Make an extra contribution to the Sunday school collection plate
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____

FOR ADULTS (and kids who want more challenge)

- O3 Tithe one Sunday: put 10% of your weekly gross income in the offering plate
- L5 Buy three fresh fruits or vegetables
- D4 Attend the Consecration Lunch (Nov 17)
- S5 Call or visit a shut-in
- D2 Cook and/or serve at the Dwelling Place
- G1 Cook a meal for someone who is shut-in or ill
- W3 Help in planning next season's church garden
- V3 Help bake apple pies for the faire
- I2 Volunteer time at the church faire
- E4 Donate an item for the Fair luncheon
- L2 Donate some items for the Thanksgiving Baskets
- V1 Acknowledge a stranger in a public place

[MORE ON BACK OF SHEET]

Appendix 1: Garden-Themed Stewardship Bingo – Suburban Site (page 3 of 3)

- S2 Participate in a church music group, committee or board
- D1 Attend an Adult Sunday School Class
- G5 Make a flower donation for Sunday Worship
- W4 Help with coffee hour (every six weeks)
- O5 Say hello to a visitor at church on Sunday (or any other time)
- G4 Donate two items for the food pantry
- G1 Learn to cook an unfamiliar food item or dish
- S3 Send a card to a shut-in
- V4 Bake something from scratch
- O4 Bring someone to church
- L5 Do something kind for a stranger
- S1 Turn off the water while brushing my teeth
- D4 Use cloth napkins instead of paper
- V3 Turn off the light when leaving the room
- G5 Cook a fresh vegetable
- W4 Try a new vegetable.
- E3 Pick up some trash that isn't yours.
- D1 Recycle all my paper, glass and plastic for a day
- R5 Walk somewhere instead of driving.
- W2 Say grace at a meal.
- L2 Pray about my Crawford pledge for 2014.
- E1 Read instead of watching TV – 2 half-hour times
- G3 Bring my own bags to the grocery store.
- W5 Shop at a farm stand or farmer's market.
- R3 Donate money or an item to a charity or to the church faire.
- V5 Wait until the dishwasher is full before running it.
- E5 Turn down thermostat at night and when not home
- L1 Eat a meatless meal
- I2 Cook a meal from fresh ingredients – not frozen, canned or a mix
- V1 Hang up clothes to dry instead of using the dryer
- I4 Bring something organic or nut- and gluten-free to coffee hour
- O1 Shop locally in my home town instead of mall or mega-store
- L3 Resist buying something you want and contribute that amount to Crawford
- V4 Thank a Church School teacher and offer to help with a class
- E3 Read II Corinthians 9
- I3 Make a contribution to your IRA
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____
- ___ [Other – make your own] _____

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PRE-GARDEN PROJECT) – PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Do you consider yourself an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Please describe your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables. Was it a positive experience for you, neutral, or negative? Why and how?
- 3) Why did you decide to participate in the church garden project, and what do you hope to get out of this project *personally*?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit the whole church? If so, how?
- 7) What do you expect or hope will happen to the food that is grown, and why?
- 8) If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (MID-GARDEN PROJECT) – PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Since beginning this project, do you consider yourself more of an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Please compare your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables, with this current project. How was this project different? Was it a more positive experience for you, neutral, or more negative? Why and how?
- 3) Now that the gardening has begun, are you glad you decided to participate in the church garden project? What do you feel you are getting out of this project *personally*?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit or is benefiting the whole church? If so, how?
- 7) What do you expect will happen to the food that is grown, and why?
- 8) Describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (POST-GARDEN PROJECT) – PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Now that the growing season for the garden project has ended, do you consider yourself more of an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation, than you were before this project, or even before it ended? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Please compare your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables, with this current project. How was this project different? Was it a more positive experience for you, neutral, or more negative? Why and how?
- 3) Now that the gardening has ended, are you glad you decided to participate in the church garden project? What do you feel you are getting out of this project *personally*?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit, is benefiting, or has benefited the whole church in some way? If so, how?
- 7) What was done with the food that was grown, and why?
- 8) Describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PRE-GARDEN) – NON-PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Do you consider yourself an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Please describe your previous experience, if any, gardening fruit or vegetables. Was it a positive experience for you, neutral, or negative? Why and how?
- 3) Why did you decide not to participate in this project?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit the whole church? If so, how?
- 7) What do you expect or hope will happen to the food that is grown, and why?
- 8) If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (MID-GARDEN PROJECT) – NON-PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Since beginning this project, do you consider yourself more of an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Now that the garden project has begun, how do you feel about this project? Do you think it’s a good idea, a neutral idea, or a bad idea? Why?
- 3) Now that the gardening has begun, are you glad you decided not to participate in the church garden project? Why or why not?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit or is benefiting the whole church? If so, how?
- 7) What do you expect or hope will happen to the food that is grown, and why?
- 8) If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (POST-GARDEN PROJECT) – NON-PARTICIPANTS

- 1) Please describe yourself in terms of environmentalism. Now that the growing season for the garden project has ended, do you consider yourself more of an “environmentalist,” or, if you prefer, do you consider yourself someone who is more invested in caring for the Creation, than you were before this project, or even before it ended? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- 2) Now that the garden project has ended, how do you feel about this project? Do you think it’s a good idea, a neutral idea, or a bad idea? Why?
- 3) Now that the gardening has ended, are you glad you decided not to participate in the church garden project? Why or why not?
- 4) Please describe what you think about when you think of dirt, soil, or earth.
- 5) Do you think growing food, such as vegetables, is a good thing to do? Why?
- 6) Do you think this project will benefit, is benefiting, or has benefited the whole church in some way? If so, how?
- 7) What was done with the food that was grown, and why?
- 8) If you garden, describe how you feel when you garden.
- 9) Could gardening ever count as an act of worship? Why or why not?

APPENDIX 8: ECOLOGICAL ETHICS INDEX SURVEY

Scale-related questions and the scoring of their answers are indicated in red. Scales: R = Religiosity (non-ecological); D = Discipleship; C = Community; S = Spirituality; J = Justice. Q = Quality Assurance question. Negative signs indicate a question with negative scoring. All scores were translated to a 10-point scale.

Quality assurance questions (indicated by a Q) were included to confirm the quality of the data, by confirming that the participant is paying attention to the questions and not answering randomly (questions 32, 45). Demographic data includes gender and age (Questions 1 and 2). Open-ended questions are marked as OE.

Do you plan to participate *in any way* in the vegetable garden project? Yes No

(Time Point 1 only)

Did you participate *in any way* in the vegetable garden project? Yes No

(Time Points 2 and 3)

- 1) Please provide the following information: Gender (Male/Female/Prefer not to say) **Demographic**
- 2) Age (circle one): 18-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 70 or older **Demographic**
- 3) How would you describe your spiritual life? **-R**
 - a. Very Active
 - b. Average
 - c. Slightly Active
 - d. Not Very Active
 - e. I do not consider myself to have a spiritual life.
- 4) How often, on average, do you participate in communal worship? **-R**
 - a. More than once per week
 - b. Once per week
 - c. A few times a month
 - d. Monthly
 - e. A few times a year
 - f. I generally do not participate in communal worship activities.
- 5) With whom do you worship regularly in community? (List all examples.) **OE**

- 6) How would you define worship? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered communal worship? **OE**
- 7) How often do you worship outside of church settings? **-S**
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - I do not generally worship outside of church settings.
- 8) How often do you meditate or pray outside of church settings? **-S**
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - I do not generally meditate or pray.
- 9) How would you define prayer? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered prayer? **OE**
- 10) How would you define meditation? In other words, what must be true in order for an activity to be considered meditation? **OE**
- 11) How often do you participate in the Eucharist (Communion)? **-R**
- Weekly or More Than Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Annually
 - I generally do not participate in the Eucharist.
- 12) Please describe your understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist. In other words, what is the *main* point of the Eucharist ritual *for you*? (Please circle only one.) **S, C; e will be scored 10 or 0 based on whether or not the non-human Creation can participate in the definition.**
- To remember Jesus' suffering and death to save the world from sin
 - To experience the presence of the resurrected Christ in the Church
 - To connect the congregation with other Christians around the world
 - To experience the connection within the congregation and between the congregation and all of the Creation
 - Other (please describe)
- 13) Please describe your understanding of the *main* purpose of worship *for you*: (Please circle only one.) **S; e = 10; others = 0; f will be scored 10 or 0 based on whether or not the non-human Creation can participate in the definition.**

- a. To confess the sins of the past week (or other span of time), accept forgiveness, and find the strength to resist sin and be faithful to Christ in the coming week (or span of time)
 - b. To gather a community together in order to share traditional and meaningful prayers and songs
 - c. To meet like-minded people with shared values and interests, and spend time together
 - d. To encourage members of a church community to be able to go out and continue to do God's work in the world
 - e. To connect you and others with a transcendent source of life, love, healing, inspiration, purpose, or meaning
 - f. Other (please describe)
- 14) Please list your favorite hymn or hymns (list up to five hymns): **R: scored based on ability to list up to 5 hymns; S: scored on frequency of Creation care theology in hymns.**
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
- 15) Where do you most profoundly or intensely experience the presence of the Divine? (Please circle only one.) **S, C: d = 10; e will be scored 10 or 0 based on whether or not the non-human Creation can participate in the definition.**
- a. In church worship
 - b. In close human relationships
 - c. Through art, music, dance, poetry, or other art form.
 - d. In an outdoor setting (ocean, forest, mountain, stars, etc.)
 - e. Other (please describe):
- 16) What hymns do you like best that celebrate the Creation? **S: scored based on ability to list up to 5 hymns.**
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

17)Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
“Churches should be sure to lift up the importance of caring for the Creation about once a year around Earth Day.” S

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

18)Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
“Churches should integrate ideas of Creation care into worship every week, as an ongoing concern and priority.” S

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

19)Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
“Our pastor should incorporate elements of Creation care into sermons with the same frequency that other issues of justice (racism, sexism, etc.) are addressed.” S

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
strongly disagree strongly agree

20)What kind of bread do you feel best embodies the most important purpose of the Eucharist? In other words, what should be true of the bread used in the Eucharist in order for it to represent what matters most about the Eucharist?
OE

21)What kind of juice do you feel best embodies the most important purpose of the Eucharist? In other words, what should be true of the juice used in the Eucharist in order for it to represent what matters most about the Eucharist?
OE

22)What do you feel can be considered “worship music”? (Circle all that apply.)
S: circling d = 10; or, e will be scored 10 or 0 based on whether or not the non-human Creation can participate in the definition.

- a. Songs about Jesus, God, and biblical stories
- b. Songs about general religious ideals, such as love, redemption, or forgiveness
- c. Instrumental music
- d. Nature sounds (animals, waves, wind, etc.)
- e. Other (please describe):

- d. I regularly participate in online advocacy, make phone calls, and write personal letters regarding these issues
- e. I am heavily involved in and help organize political campaigns on issues of eco-justice

40) How involved are you in conservation of energy and renewable energy alternatives? **D**

- a. I am not very involved in alternative energy and conservation
- b. I try to keep my heat low and turn my lights off whenever possible
- c. I have significantly weatherized my living space, and I try to conserve energy by actions such as lowering my heat, turning off the lights, avoiding air conditioning, turning down the water heater, and/or eliminating “ghost” power drains
- d. I have conserved energy and heat as much as possible in my living space, use energy efficient appliances, and I have purchased alternative energy credits and/or installed alternative energy sources for my home

41) What is your ideal form of transportation (if you could choose, issues of traffic, parking, and costs aside)? **-D**

- a. I prefer to walk, bike, or use public transportation whenever possible, although I would need to use a small, efficient car when necessary
- b. I would prefer a mixture of public transportation and driving my car
- c. I prefer to drive, but I prefer a smaller, more efficient car
- d. I prefer a roomy, more comfortable automobile, but I try to get a more fuel efficient model
- e. I prefer a roomy, more comfortable automobile, but I don't really focus on fuel efficiency when choosing what to buy

42) What kind of home would you ideally like to live in, if cost and distance were not a factor? (Use these descriptions as approximations of your ideal.) **D**

- a. I would prefer a large, roomy house outside of the city, with a multicar garage, high ceilings, and a big, beautiful lawn
- b. I would prefer a modest house with enough bedrooms for my family and enough space in the yard for kids to play
- c. I would prefer a smaller living space, a simple style of living, few electronics and low carbon footprint
- d. I would prefer a small living space with a carbon-negative footprint, high efficiency appliances, composting toilet, space outside or on roof for growing food, no television, and maybe one small computer.

- 43) How often do you use reusable options (mugs, water bottles, shopping bags, handkerchiefs, dishes, bulk food containers, dishcloths, napkins, etc.)? -D
- a. I always use reusable options unless absolutely unavoidable
 - b. I use mostly reusable options, but I occasionally use disposables
 - c. I use a reusable and disposable options about equally
 - d. I occasionally use reusable shopping bags, coffee cups, or water bottles, but mostly I use disposables for the convenience
 - e. I almost never use reusable options

- 44) Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
 “The decision to recycle and eat less meat is a matter of solidarity with the poorer and more disadvantaged peoples of the Earth.” J

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
strongly disagree									strongly agree

- 45) For quality assurance, please circle “b” below. Q

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

- 46) Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
 “Native Americans were once treated badly by white settlers and European/US governments, but nowadays everything has mostly settled out fairly.” -J

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
strongly disagree									strongly agree

- 47) How often do you spend time outside? D

- a. I generally do not spend much time outside
- b. I spend time outside every week or so for a little while
- c. I commute and/or exercise outside several times a week, but I am usually listening to something on headphones
- d. I commute and/or exercise outside several times a week, and I enjoy greeting people I meet along the way
- e. I make a point of spending time outside nearly every day, just to relax or play

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Curriculum Vitae
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EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Theological Ethics, Boston University School of Theology, 2016
(expected) Dissertation Title: "Watching and Tasting: Creation, Food,
and Ecological Ethics Impacts of Church Communal Vegetable Gardens"
- M.Div. Boston University School of Theology (Ethics), 2004
- M.A. Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology, Harvard University,
1999
- B.Sc. Department of Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May
1996

CERTIFICATIONS

- 2015 PermaVitae Zertifikat: Holzer'sche Agroökologie; Schwerpunkt:
Wasserhaushalt (*Holzer's Agroecology; Focus: Water Balance*)
- 2015 PermaVitae Certificate: 10 Day Seminar; Holzer Permaculture,
Beekeeping, Forest Gardening, Urban Gardening, Wilderness Culture,
Project Planning
- 2012 National Institutes of Health Certification: Protecting Human Research
Participants
- 2010 Boston Theological Institute: Certificate in Science and Religion,
Religion and Ecology Track

PUBLICATIONS

Book Chapters

- Forthcoming "Earth as Community Garden: The Bounty, Healing, and Justice of Holy
Permaculture," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and
Ecology*, J. Hart (ed.), Jon Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- 2016 "The Missing Link: Creation Empathy as the Foundation of Christian
Mission – A Wesleyan Ecofeminist Perspective," in *Ecology and
Mission*, Edinburgh 2010 Missionary Conference Series, , Oxford
Centre for Mission Studies, K.J. Kaoma (ed.), Regnum.

- 2010 “James A. Nash, Ecofeminism, and Getting Our Hands Dirty,” pp. 44-47 in *James Nash: A Tribute: Environmental Ethics, Ecumenical Engagement, Public Theology*, Ministry for the 21st Century Series, N. Faramelli and R. Petersen (eds.), Boston Theological Institute.

Journal Articles

- 2011 Grenfell-Lee, T. Stemming the Downward Spiral: How Just War Theory Could Prevent Ecologically-Based Conflicts, *Journal of Faith and Science Exchange*, R. Petersen (ed.), Vol. 7.
- 2010 Grenfell-Lee, T. It Takes a Village: Social and Ecological Justice in Hume’s Relational-Skeptical Ethics, *Journal of Faith and Science Exchange*, R. Petersen and C. Randall (eds.), Vol. 7.
- 2000 Yoo AS, Cheng I, Chung S, Grenfell TZ, Lee H, Pack-Chung E, Handler M, Shen J, Xia W, Tesco G, Saunders AJ, Ding K, Frosch MP, Tanzi RE, Kim TW. Presenilin-mediated modulation of capacitative calcium entry. *Neuron*. September; 27(3): 561-72.
- 2000 Song S, Grenfell TZ, Garfield S, Erikson RL, Lee KS. Essential function of the polo box of Cdc5 in subcellular localization and induction of cytokinetic structures. *Molecular and Cell Biology*, January; 20(1): 286-98.
- 1998 Lee KS, Grenfell TZ, Yarm FR, Erikson RL. Mutation of the polo-box disrupts localization and mitotic functions of the mammalian polo kinase Plk. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*. August 4; 95(16): 9301-6.

Scientific Patents

- U.S. 8,080,368: “Novel Compositions and Methods for the Identification, Assessment, Prevention and Therapy of Human Cancers.” Issued December 20, 2011; Inventors: Clark, Edwin; Grenfell-Lee, Tallessyn; Lu, Karen; Hartmann, Lynn; Brown, Jeffrey L.; Bast, Robert C., Jr.; Mills, Gordon B; Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Cambridge, MA.
- U.S. 7338758: “Compositions and methods for the identification, assessment, prevention and therapy of human cancers.” Issued March 4, 2008; Inventors: Clark, Edwin; Grenfell-Lee, Tallessyn; Lu, Karen; Hartmann, Lynn; Brown, Jeffrey L.; Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Cambridge, MA.

Other Publications

- 2012 “The Way We Are Created: Eco-feminist Explorations of Body Hair,” Feminism and Religion Blog

(<http://feminismandreligion.com/2012/05/29/the-way-we-are-created-eco-feminist-explorations-of-bodily-hair-by-tallessyn-grenfell-lee/>), May 29; previously published in: Anna Howard Shaw Center Newsletter, Vol. 26, Issue 1, Fall, 2009.

- 2012 “We’ll Have a Green Christmas... Together!” Feminism and Religion Blog (<http://feminismandreligion.com/2012/12/12/well-have-a-green-christmas-together-by-tallessyn-grenfell-lee/>), December 12.
- 2012 “What Do Kids’ Birthday Parties Actually Celebrate? Alternatives for Raising the Next Generation,” Feminism and Religion Blog (<http://feminismandreligion.com/2012/01/17/what-do-kids-birthday-parties-actually-celebrate-alternatives-for-raising-the-next-generation-by-tallessyn-zawn-grenfell-lee/>), January 17.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- 2014 Paul and Auburn Carr Scholarship in Science and Religion, Boston University School of Theology
- 2013 Dempster Graduate Fellowship, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church
- 2012 Doctoral Springboard Funding for Contextual Research, Boston University School of Theology
- 2011 Paul and Auburn Carr Scholarship in Science and Religion, Boston University School of Theology
- 2010 Hester Ann Beebe Fellowship, Boston University School of Theology
- 2010 Mark Chriesman Tyson Scholarship Fund in Social Ethics, Boston University School of Theology
- 2009 William and Anna Lowstuter Fellowship, Boston University School of Theology
- 2009 Jacob Sleeper Fellowship, Boston University School of Theology
- 2008 Edgar Sheffield Brightman Fellowship, Boston University School of Theology
- 2001 – 2004 Scholarship for Merit, Boston University School of Theology

INVITED TALKS

- 2015 “Permaculture Economics,” Basel Business School, Basel, Switzerland, Oct 21.

- 2011 "Protestant and Wesleyan Ecological Ethics," Religion and Environmental Issues Panel, Interfaith Center, Suffolk University, Boston, MA, April 5.

CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

Conferences Organized

- 2013 "Disaster and Resilience: Congregations as Resource and Refuge," 3rd Annual Theology Conference, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, March 23. Presentation: "A Changing New England: Storms, Preparedness, and Relief."
- 2012 "Kinship with the Creation in Congregational Ministry," 2nd Annual Theology Conference, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, May 5.
- 2011 "A Time to Sow: Crafting Environmental Ministries of Healing and Justice," 1st Annual Theology Conference on Ecological Congregational Ministry, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, January 29; Presentation: "Is It Too Late for our Planet? (Yes and No...)."

Panels Organized

- 2012 "Hunger and Real Food in an Age of Global Industrial Agriculture," Convener, Environmental Ethics and Theology Interest Group, Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, January 7; Presentation: "What is Real Food in the Promised Land?"

Papers Presented

- 2010 "James Nash: Teacher, Mentor, Inspiration," Environmental Ethics and Theology Interest Group, "Life Contributions of Jim Nash," Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, San Jose, CA, January 7-10.
- 2010 "James A. Nash, Ecofeminism, and Getting Our Hands Dirty," Boston Theological Institute Faculty Ethics Colloquium and Massachusetts Council of Churches Event, "James Nash: A Tribute to Environmental Ethics, Ecumenical Engagement, and Public Theology," Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, MA, April 21.
- 2004 "Jesus Can't Play Rugby: Religious Parody and Christic Respect in Subversive Subculture," Christ in Contemporary Cultures Conference; Gordon College, Wenham, MA, September 28-30.

Posters Presented

- 2001 "Pharmacogenomic Markers for Ovarian Cancer," poster presented at: The Molecular Basis of Cancer: Signaling to Cell Growth and Death; Keystone Symposium, Taos, NM, January 9-14.

Panel Discussant

- 2002 "Selecting Siblings: A Tissue Match for an Ill Child?," "Intellectual Property Rights," "AIDS Vaccine," and "Transgenic Animals & Xenotransplantation" sessions, Bioethics 2002: Facets of Humanity; Fifth Annual National Undergraduate Bioethics Conference; Boston University, Boston, MA, March 22-23.

Moderator

- 2016 Encountering ETI: Aliens in *Avatar* and the Americas, Breakfast with an Author Discussion, Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada, January 7-10.
- 2014 Leadership: Women and Power Dynamics, Small Group Discussion; Women in the World Conference, Boston University, Boston, MA, March 26.

CAMPUS EVENTS

Presentations

- 2012 "A Passion for Ecology and Justice," Vocation Panel Discussion, Theology House, Boston University, October 11.
- 2009 "The Way We Are Created: Eco-feminist Explorations of Bodily Hair," Anna Howard Shaw Center, Boston University, Boston, MA, October 22.
- 2004 Sexual Identity and the Church Panel Discussion, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, April 23.

Panels Organized

- 2012 "Miss Representation: A Discussion of Gender, Media, and the Intersectionality of Oppression," Boston University, Boston, MA, February 15.
- 2011 "What's Faith Got to do with it? A Conversation about Race, Gender, Economics, Social Justice, and the Occupy Wall Street Movement," Co-convenor, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, November 16.

2010 "Earth Day Forum: Community Connections to Ecological Spirituality and Justice," Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA, April 22.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Co-Instructor

Boston University School of Theology

The Boston University Ethical Tradition, Spring 2012.

History of Western Ethics and Social Philosophy, Fall 2011.

Christian Ecological Ethics and Political Issues, Fall 2010.

Harvard University Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology

Introductory Molecular Biology Laboratory, Spring 1998.

Teaching Assistant

Boston University School of Theology

Christian Social Ethics, Spring 2011

Harvard University Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology

Molecular Genetics of Neural Development and Behavior, Fall 1997

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2012 – 2013 Dissertation field research on nature connection and pro-environmental beliefs and behaviors in local congregations, Boston University.

2001 – 2002 Role of the frontal lobe in mediating the relationship between spirituality and health, Dr. Jensine Andresen, Boston University.

2001 – 2002 AIDS orphans, the AIDS Vaccine Initiative, and the role of intellectual property in issues of drug delivery and international law, Dr. Jensine Andresen, Boston University.

2000 – 2001 Identifying genetic markers for resistance to standard chemotherapies in ovarian tumors, Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

1998 – 2000 Molecular basis of Alzheimer's disease, Dr. Rudolph E. Tanzi, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School.

1997 – 1998 Molecular markers of cell division in yeast, Dr. Raymond L. Erikson, Harvard University.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2009 – present Society of Christian Ethics
2002 – present American Academy of Religion
2009 – present Faculty Ethics Colloquium, Boston Theological Institute
2008 – present Doctoral Student Association, Boston University School of
Theology
1998 – 1999 Society for Neuroscience

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Committees and Working Groups

Theology Student Association, Boston University School of Theology: founder;
president (2008 – 2013); member (2014 – present)

Environmental Theology and Ethics Interest Group, Society of Christian Ethics
(2009 – present)

Monetary Policy Group, Society of Christian Ethics (2010 – present)

Animal Rights Group, Society of Christian Ethics (2016 – present)

Women's Caucus, Society of Christian Ethics (2010 – present)

Student Caucus, Society of Christian Ethics (2010 – present)

Religion and Ecology Group, American Academy of Religion (2013 – present)

Sacred Worth (LGBTQ Advocacy) Student Association, Boston University School of
Theology (2010 – 2014)

Religion and Ecology Group, Boston Theological Institute (2009 – 2012)

Environmental Task Force, Massachusetts Council of Churches (2009 – 2011)

Green Vision Committee, Boston University School of Theology (2009)

Community Related

Creator/Manager, Inclusive Language Hymn Database: revised several hundred
public domain hymns for use by progressive Christian congregations (2005 –
present)

United Methodist Church, Member; Diaconal Candidate, 2011 – present (1987 –
present)

Local Event Organizer/Participant, 350.org (Climate Change Activism) (2009 –
2012)

Local Event Organizer/Participant, Sustainability@BU (2009 – 2012)

TEACHING AREAS

Ecology: Ecological Ethics, Ecofeminism, Sustainability, Ecojustice, Nature Connection

Ethics: Social Ethics, Philosophy, Religion, Theology, Feminism, Queer Studies, Conflict/Peace, Political

Religion: Christianity, World Religion, Comparative Religion, Ecumenism

NONACADEMIC WORK

2003 – 2010 Minister of Music/Music Director, Cambridge Welcoming
United Methodist Church, Cambridge, MA

LANGUAGES

French: Intermediate reading, writing, speaking

German/Swiss German: Beginner reading, writing, speaking