

**Our Mother's Gardens:
Becoming Who We Are**

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Maple Grove UMC

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Genesis 1: 1-2, 11-12, 29-30,

In the beginning when God created^[a] the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^[b] swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

I only really started gardening during COVID. Before the shops closed up in March, I bought silk flowers and once the earth warmed got my hands in it. I found myself longing to go home from work and get to work in my garden. I wasn't good at it, but the worse things became in the world, the more solace I took there.

I'd never understood that, before, even though I was born into a horticultural family and I am only realizing now, how replete our scriptures are with gardens.

From the beginning through the prophet's promise of gardens when the people return from exile to Jesus' parables about the trees and seeds and of course, he prays in the garden, gets arrested there, buried in another, then, risen, is mistaken for the gardener.

Scripture ends with the Book of Revelation the promised garden of our own resurrections... We will dwell in these gardens each in their turn, this summer.

But let's start with our own stories. Some of you grew up on farms. All of us are a just few or more generations removed from them. We may have owned the land, or perhaps worked it, some of our ancestors were enslaved to it.

My mother's father, Chauncey came from generations of farmers, and started off as one. One day he said, he was out in the field and he saw a cloud up in the sky that formed 2 big letters: "P. C. " *Preach Christ*, he thought, and headed to seminary. Later, when parish life was hard he'd realized that he was probably being told to *Plant Corn*.

They weren't paid much, and everywhere, he and grandma put in a garden.

The lettuce was lush, the corn was way over my head, and there were strawberries and blackberries, tomatoes and cucumbers, peas and beans, and melons that grew right out of the compost pile.

It was non-stop weeding, and the produce filled their larder and was sent home with us, canned by Grandma for the winter.

My mother didn't plant for food, but for beauty. I marveled at how she could get a few marigolds to become a sea of gold. Geraniums and peonies thrived.

Like grandpa, mother was steady, she knew what was required for each thing to become what it was meant to be to bring forth the beauty within.

In a sense, I have lived my lifetime in others' gardens.

But while I have grandpa's spade and my mom's tools, I lack their skill. I want to become like them, good stewards of God's earth and people.

But, and perhaps you are realizing it too, hopefully at an earlier age than I, that we have to trust our own learning, and growing. Trust the work that God, our steward, has begun in us.

To trust the earth, cared for, will be bountiful. To trust the word of Jesus Christ, well shared and honestly confessed will take root from generation to generation. To trust God's goodness to be revealed in my life, in yours. To take in those words of Joseph Campbell, *the privilege of a lifetime is being who you are*

A nurse, named Jennifer Worth, who worked as a midwife in England in the 1950s a series was created from her books called *Call the Midwife*. She found herself planted in an unfamiliar place and she didn't think she could cope. But she learned: *That is to trust in oneself. Some might call it confidence, others name it faith. It makes us brave, it's the thing that frees us, to embrace life itself.*

To embrace life itself, to bloom and grow, to live and to fade in this gorgeous garden.

I know it can be hard. This year has been hard, confining, and the ground can be rocky or so full of clay the fields can seem unyielding, our gardens unwieldy with too much work.

But still, life is coming forth. Your life is unfolding beyond the confines. And if we trust this life in us, the life perhaps evident in our mother's gardens, we will make mistakes in our gardens, and we will learn, how to steward the families into which we are born, the communities where we've been planted and those with whom we share this earth that we might all bloom and grow together. Amen