

**“HOW DOES YOUR LIFE
GARDEN GROW?”**

April 18, 2021; 9:00 am online; 10:am in Person
Psalm 8 & 19
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

“Spring Song” by Lucille Clifton

the green of Jesus
is breaking the ground
and the sweet
smell of delicious Jesus
is opening the house and
the dance of Jesus music
has hold of the air and
the world is turning
in the body of Jesus and
the future is possible

Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory
in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your
enemies,

to silence the foe and the avenger.

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?^[c]

⁵ You have made them^[d] a little lower than the
angels^[e]

and crowned them^[f] with glory and honor.

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their^[g] feet:

⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,

⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 19^[a]

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³ They have no speech, they use no words;

no sound is heard from them.

⁴ Yet their voice^[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his
chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation
of my heart

be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

GARDENS AMONG US

A few weeks ago, I was struck by something I read in our local paper, The Chaffee County Times. Local Historian Suzy Kelly shared a quaint picture and article and about the “Lettuce Days” of Buena Vista.

Most folks around here know (or learn eventually) that “**Head lettuce was king**” for several decades in this area, and that we live and move and have our being—even right here at CUCC—in the midst of what once were *abundant* lettuce fields.

Head lettuce, started with seeds from New York, of all places, grew like *crazy* in this climate, giving Buena Vista almost a “gold rush-like boom” for several decades!

Literally, next door to us at The Meadows, where *these* days we like to camp out, ride horses and enjoy music festivals, *thousands* of lettuce heads were grown every year.

By 1918 there were over 400 acres of lettuce in this area.

Ice Lake, where I love to pray and bird-watch with my dogs and find sanctuary, was a pivotal piece of the lettuce endeavor, too. It seems ice was needed for the lettuce industry to thrive.

So, ice was harvested in huge chunks and housed every year, in order to ship the lettuce far away from Bewnie in railroad cars and later trucks. Did you know ice could be “harvested?” Neither did I, till we till we moved here and started to learn about this quite amazing piece of local life, “back in the day!”

We have been growing things for a long time around here. As such, it’s “in our bones” and in our soil. We have earth, the soil, planting and tending living things and nurturing growth, as part of our “collective DNA.”

Nowadays, we continue to grow hay and many other delicious food crops locally. And, we tend, nurture, conserve and protect *natural* places as well, so we and our progeny and the people who

“get to live here” *after* us can enjoy feeding their spirits and caring for their souls and families in this beautiful place, for many, many years to come. We hope!

Churches were “planted” many years ago in this area, too, and it’s been fun to dig up so much local history with Suzy Kelly and other historians during this time of celebrating our own congregation’s 141-year Anniversary.

MADE TO GARDEN?

That all has led me to pay close attention to these articles and pictures wherever we find them. I have a deep curiosity about our regional, geographic, social and communal history, and feel that delving-into that as a congregation helps us to know who we are.

Helps us consider our vision and purpose, and reaffirm our identity and character, as we connect in strong bonds across the ages—looking at past, present *and* future—all!

So, I made sure to save this particular article about head lettuce and read it carefully. Then, suddenly, I was struck by the last paragraph!

*“It was about this time that the County Relief Administration began **requiring** that every family that was on the relief rolls must plant a*

garden. *In the years following this order, 200 gardens were planted.”*

Whoa! REQUIRED?! An order?! Oh my! That doesn't sound like things we like to hear—especially these days! Isn't that government overreach?! I *had* to know more about this. So, I wrote to Suzy and she suggested some resources to explore this matter of the “Required Gardens” in more depth. I'll share with you what I learn in the coming weeks.

“*Required* to plant and grow a garden.” mm! If you were being *helped* by the community with food, you were *expected* to return the favor, to add to the communal food supply. Be part of the collective solution. Contribute what you could—with God's help, of course. For it would take God's help with the sun and rain and strength to grow a garden.

I think that sounds like the Early Church—as told about in the Book of Acts.

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. All their possessions. (Acts 4:32)

What would that be *like*?! Being told you “must plant a garden.” Were you required to share the

bounty afterwards? Were you “checked up on” and scolded if you forgot to water or weed? Could you get demerits if you claimed the soil was too rocky and broke your tools?

I, for one, am not big on gardening. Though, I *do* love to be outside—even playing in the dirt. What if you didn't really know *how* or *like* to garden? Were you still commanded to, even if you didn't have the “skillset?!”

You see, I have nothing against gardens, but I never learned much about plants, as others in the family were the garden-lovers. I didn't (okay, still don't)—even enough to know which are the *good* plants and which are the weeds!

So, when I do help with yard-work, I make sure Clarke or someone points out *exactly* what I should be leaving there to grow and what to be pulling out!

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

And, so, as I usually do, I pondered that whole notion for awhile—of the “Gardening on Command.” For these few weeks leading up to Earth Day. What would it be like to be required to grow a garden? And, aren't we all kind of doing that in and with our lives, actually?

Aren't we *all* planting, growing, tending and nurturing seeds, ideas, feelings, things that grow, things that don't—with our very existence?

I believe that living a life *is* growing a garden. And, that we *all* do it—even those of us with the worst black thumbs!

It's both/and. Spiritual or metaphorical *and* physical and actual. I *love* that we have a Community Garden at our church. And, that it's truly a *community* endeavor—a collaborative effort that benefits many—between the congregation and the wider community.

It's headed up by a woman from the community, who coordinates with the church volunteers and staff to register people, make donations, assign the “plots”—a.k.a. raised boxes; work out the watering, arrange for the “magical goat manure,” spread the word and the magic, and celebrate the bounty!

It also was “seeded”—literally—by an “In the Mud Grant” from our regional church family—the Rocky Mountain Conference. They *loved* that we were seeking an In the Mud Grant literally to get “in the mud!”

It's also a joy for my family, because we live next door. And, we get to watch people come around all summer long—tend their plots, converse across the rows, watch for invaders, exult in the bounty and exclaim with joy and awe when the plants grow taller than the fence!

Karen Bowers, dearly beloved one of our congregation, who passed away recently, *loved* to tend her boxes every day! Especially this past year of isolation—she was out there. Sometimes in the heat of the day.

One day after watering and weeding her plot and probably everyone else's too—just to be helpful—I found her sitting on the swing looking pretty *peaked* and I was worried. I thought she might have heat-stroke from gardening!

A friend of mine convinced her 80-something mother who lives alone outside of town, that she would enjoy a plot and getting out of the house, and socializing and making new friends. Sure enough, it was Karen—known by her rich Danish accent!—who greeted her often and made her feel most welcome. Extravagant Welcome might mean inviting to the Garden!

ALL IN THIS GARDEN TOGETHER

We all plant and tend gardens. With our very lives. We are all growing gardens, every day, even if we never set foot or hands in actual dirt.

Every seed of an idea we plant; every watering of someone else's ideas; every group effort to come together, build boxes, run water lines, till the soil, tend the sprouts and buds, and converse and check-in on one another across the rows.

Every episode of putting our heads together to problem-solve about the bugs and the deer and the bunnies (in humane ways!)-ALL that is the tending to the Garden that is our communal life. The Garden of Humanity.

We plant, nurture and grow a Garden as a congregation. As a family. In our community outreach through clubs and service projects where we help others who have less.

All of Creation is our Garden—a supreme Gift given to us—our ancestors and our descendants—to plant, grow, honor, restore, protect and preserve.

The Psalms and prayers—heard today and any

day—remind us how God created the Universe and how we see God's presence, glory, breath and life everywhere we turn. They also remind us how with that supreme Gift comes unlimited and eternal *responsibility*. “Having dominion over” the earth, as in Genesis, means CARING for creation in all ways we possibly can.

How will OUR garden grow? What will we plant? How will we tend the seeds and sprouts, ideas and possibilities? In our own hearts and lives, and in our collective spirits and spreads—tended with love of and for the Divine and one another?

Garden Song [Pete Seeger](#), [Arlo Guthrie](#)

Inch by inch, row by row
Gonna make this garden grow
Gonna mulch it deep and low
Gonna make it fertile ground

Inch by inch, row by row
Please bless these seeds I sow
Please keep them safe below
'Til the rain comes tumbling down

Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones
We are made of dreams and bones
Need a place to call my own
'Cause the time is close at hand

Grain for grain, sun and rain
Find my way in nature's chain
Till my body and my brain
Tell the music of the land

Plant your rows straight and long
Season with a prayer and song
Mother Earth will make you strong
If you give her loving care

Inch by inch, row by row
Gonna make this garden grow
Gonna mulch it deep...