

Permaculture as a Means to Reconciliation and Environmental Advocacy  
in Central Oregon Churches

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Thesis II

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April 24, 2022

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts:

International Community Development

College of Behavioral Sciences

Northwest University

Author's Note —

This document incorporates material written for the following MAICD courses: Community Development, Culture Studies in a Global Context, Social and Environmental Justice, Fieldwork, Research for Social Change, Peacemaking and Reconciliation, Fieldwork, Program Evaluation

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>FIELDWORK RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<i>METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</i> .....	12
<i>INSPIRATION</i> .....	13
<i>RESEARCH BEGINS</i> .....	15
<i>NARROWING IN</i> .....	17
<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>THE PROBLEM</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>BIBLICAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<i>RECONCILIATION</i> .....	23
<i>JUSTICE</i> .....	26
<i>CONTEXTUALIZATION</i> .....	28
<i>COPOWERMENT</i> .....	30
<b>HANDBOOK</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>IMPACT</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 : A HANDBOOK AND GUIDE TO STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AS CHRISTIANS</b> ...	<b>43</b>
<b>PART 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>PART 2: THE BEGINNING</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<i>THE GARDEN OF EDEN</i> .....	50
<b>PART 3: OUR VALUES</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<i>OUR CALLING IN GENESIS</i> .....	55
<i>WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW- HOW THE CHURCH HAS RESPONDED</i> .....	56
<b>PART 4: THE DEFENDING ARGUMENT: FINDING COMMON GROUND</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<i>THE EVER-POLARIZING CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION</i> .....	62
<i>A NEGLECT OF OUR CALLING</i> .....	63
<i>WHAT'S THE POINT? WON'T THE EARTH BE DESTROYED IN THE END?</i> .....	65
<b>PART 5: A TANGIBLE STEP: PERMACULTURE GARDEN</b> .....	<b>68</b>

*WHAT IS PERMACULTURE?* .....68  
*THE LAND, MANPOWER, COMMUNITY, AND PRACTICALITY*.....69  
*THE POWER OF COMMUNITY*.....71  
*TYING IT ALL TOGETHER* .....72

**PART 6: WHERE TO START** ..... 74

*STEP BY STEP GUIDE*.....74

**CONCLUSION** .....81

**WORKS CITED (FOR HANDBOOK)**.....82

**APPENDIX 2: GRANT EXAMPLE**.....87

**APPENDIX 3** ..... 103

**APPENDIX 4**..... 105

**WORKS CITED (FOR GRANT)**..... 108

**COMPREHENSIVE WORKS CITED**..... 109

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental care is a global topic. It's a political conversation that divides the left from the right. It's an educational subject that can empower children to learn about conservation and stewardship, or it can be used to shame students to waste less printed paper. It is a controversial and confusing topic we are asked to support for the sake of our future, yet we cannot quite wrap our minds around it yet. Just the words environmental care can spike harmful conversations polarizing us from one another. As a global society, we cannot decide what to do. We cannot decide if global warming is real or not. We cannot agree on something, so therefore it must be a controversial topic. What if we could simplify? What if Christians could be the ones leading this movement?

Based on my research this past summer, I began to grasp this concept. As I began researching community gardens in Central Oregon in affordable housing, it led me to churches that were doing similar things but with a Permaculture model rather than a community garden. I looked into this more through interviews and observations. I was left with a resounding question that I could not get out of my mind. Why aren't churches doing this? This is where Christianity meets environmental care and where it meets stewardship. We must begin learning to hold conversations about controversial topics in meaningful ways. This is reconciliation work.

The American Evangelical Church historically has not emphasized environmental stewardship over the years. There is a lack of conversation surrounding this topic as well as a lack of action. For the church as a whole to invest in environmental stewardship, it needs to return to Genesis and understand the values and calling of Christians and start having conversations. Then we must begin implementing practical ways in which to actively practice the conversation being had. The church needs to take a step back from the controversial subject of climate change and realize that it's more than table talk conversation. The church was given a

calling in Genesis, it's as simple as that. By ignoring the conversation, we are polarizing the topic to the point that the church wants nothing to do with environmental care. We are neglecting reconciliation, love for our fellow brothers and sisters, and missing a big piece of who we were created to be. It's so much deeper than just environmental care. Taken from lessons learned from the qualitative research done in Bend, Oregon, this thesis will identify the core value system, challenges the church faces, and practical ideas like permaculture for the church to engage in environmental stewardship. Deeper than that, this paper will attempt to shift the mindset that has triggered the Christian community pushing them to reconciliation. Environmental care is more about reconciliation than anything else. The answer is always reconciliation. Finally, at the end of this thesis, there is a handbook directed at the Central Oregon community where I based my research. This handbook holds practical guidelines for a church, small group, or an organization for use in provoking meaningful conversations around the topic of calling and environmental care. It also encourages permaculture as means of action to pursue these concepts. In addition, it ends with an example of a grant proposal for those churches that would like financial assistance in this endeavor.

## **BACKGROUND**

As a result of studying Biology in my undergrad work, I became increasingly aware of how the impacts of the human race affect planet earth, far beyond the word 'climate change' that we have designed to encompass and represent that impact. I read books on it, we studied in depth the different carbon emissions, and we had discussions on what could be done. I have given presentations on how incoming solar radiation has three ways to go: it can be reflected into space, it can reach the earth's surface and be absorbed by the atmosphere, or it can be re-radiated

back to the surface. The idea is that some of that heat gets caught in the ozone layer where our carbon emissions are said to stagnate, and it creates the greenhouse effect. On a more scientific note, the ozone layer is quite fascinating actually. The ozone layer absorbs most of the longer wavelengths. We know these to be UVA, UVB, and UVC rays. Some of which we also know to be more damaging than others (Gillespie 3). We know UV-C is lethal and UV-B is very harmful to many life forms. Because of this, oxygen and other gasses absorb shorter wavelengths. This makes the "ozone [layer] our sole defense against the middle ultraviolet" (Gillespie 3). When these wavelengths get caught in the ozone layer, it creates the greenhouse effect that "is a natural phenomenon without which the Earth would be a far colder planet" (Incropera 23). One of the biggest greenhouse gasses is carbon dioxide, although there are others. In 2019, carbon dioxide accounted for about 80% of all US greenhouse emissions due to human activities (Mayer 61). On a bit of a different note, I also had classes that went in-depth on the controversial side of climate change from a biblical perspective. While learning all of the science behind climate change and the effects on the human race, I became increasingly aware of something. The vast majority of people I was surrounded by did not believe in climate change. This became a difficult topic to discuss with people about. They did not want to talk about the possibility of it not being a governmental fallacy. I started to feel alone believing I was the only Christian who chose to see both sides. I began to question if it was a sin to even think about matters such as these. It seemed so overwhelming. I grew increasingly quiet on this subject as I pondered these questions. As someone who deeply craves harmony, my soul wrestled just as deeply with how polarizing this topic became within the Christian community. It was so unsettling to me. So, while in this state of quietness, I did some biblical research on the creation story.

Christians love the story of creation. If you grew up in church, you likely have songs memorized about the seven days of creation. The Bible says that “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (ESV Genesis 1:31). There was no mistake with any part of creation. It was beautiful, extravagant even. He did not stop at simply one fruit tree or even one river. No, He said, “Behold I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit” Genesis 1:29). This bountiful life was all for us to enjoy in abundance. He created this garden in the middle of the Arabian Desert. How wild is it that there are flourishing trees and flowing rivers, and yet “when you left the garden, you found yourself in a desert, where everything was sun scorched. As a result, life was impossible outside the garden” (Hart). It was for us, His beloved creation. Our Father created this garden for us to enjoy. The “sacredness displayed in the garden is the central mystery of life: the ongoing eruption of that ever-renewable, ever- resilient, ever- expansive, every complexifying, and nurturing quality of life” (Habernam 25). And it does not end right there. If we continue reading in Genesis, Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to care for this paradise. In Genesis chapter 2 it says, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (ESV Genesis 2:15). This is where we get calling. The Lord didn't just put us on the earth to inhabit it, but also to work it. We were created to work; it is a good thing. Author of *Garden City* and pastor of Bridgetown Church, Mark Comer, says that it was not just an “ask” to take care of the land, but a theological mandate (Comer 52). This mandate is twofold, work it and take care of it. Work in the Hebrew language is *abad* which can be translated in English to work but is also sometimes translated to “service” (Comer 57). However, the word *abad* is also the same word used throughout the Hebrew Bible as worship. It seems that worship and work are interconnected and that *all* of life is worship. The next word- *shamar* is

usually translated as "take care", and that seems appropriate. It means to "watch over, protect, guard, police, and stand up for the creation. The first human was an environmentalist. We should be too" (Comer 58). The Pastor at the church I attend likes to say that these are active words, not passive which means simply cannot ignore them (Thompson).

The Lord also said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. So, God created human beings in his image. In the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1: 26-27). Let us dissect the word subdue and dominion. Consider these a job description of the calling above to work and take care of the garden. To subdue "seems to indicate there's an inherent wildness to the world. It's untamed. Out of control. In desperate need of ruling" (Comer 55). Dominion is often hard to understand in this context because sometimes it is equated with overpowering and carelessness. But through these two verses, we can understand dominion the way the Lord intended it. The key is that God created us in his image which means we bear his image. "We were designed, in a very real way, to show the world what God is like. So, when God gave us the command to rule over the earth, the expectation was to do so in a way that reflected His character" (Armstrong). It was not in our design to rule and conquer the Earth, but to work it and to take care of it.

We were also created to be cultivators. Our Father is the cultivator of life, and we get to partake in that because we bear his image. We "are cultivators by calling. Humans are here to maintain the fertility of the soil for ongoing life, to 'renew the face of the earth', as noted in Psalm 104, and to give glory to God. The ancients would have understood Wendell Berry: In talking about topsoil, it is hard to avoid the language of religion" (Rasmussen 200). It's all intertwined. Our relationship with the earth is correlated with our relationship with the Lord. We



cannot "dismantle dehumanizing and destructive forces such as racism, colonialism, classism, sexism, and ecological degradation and seek to cultivate conditions that enable right relationships within the Earth's web of life and with God" (Moe Lobeda 17). To be cultivators and image-bearers of Christ we need to seek the right relationships with the Lord and his creation. This does not mean we need to worship the ground as if it was God but "because of God's boundless love for creation and presence with and in it" (Moe-Lobeda 18).

I grew to love the creation story even more. It is one of the most beautiful parts of the Bible to me. And yet the more I looked into it, the more confused I felt. Our role as Christians seemed so clear to me in the creation story and yet why was I getting cold shoulders when anything around earth care was talked about? Why does it need to be something chalked up to some leftist "liberal" activism? That's not what I read in the Genesis creation account. I wrestled with the seemingly polar opposite views. The church versus science. Nowhere do the two coincide. Nowhere is there room for the other to be heard. It's a smothered candle. There had to be a middle ground. Why does this topic immediately have to end in a heated conversation when it seems so simple to me? I think the church has created earth care to be something that it does not need to be. It's very simple. It's a calling, and we need to do the best we can do to protect what has been given to us, regardless of climate change, people's opinions, or even what we think will happen to the earth when the Lord comes back. It seems to me that we've overcomplicated something that doesn't need to be. Nathan Aaberg in a podcast done with an organization called Circlewood wrestled with similar things as this and he created a blog called Whole Faith, Living Earth. The meaning behind this is that he believes a "whole faith will result in a living earth, but it was also a little bit of a jab that a lot of people might not have a whole faith" (Farming to Heal the Land Nathan Aaberg of Liberty Prairie Foundation" 7:50- 8:02). This

resonated with me as it matched exactly what I had been thinking about, albeit a bit harsh. We are missing out on a huge part of our calling as Christians and I intended to figure out where we have systematically gone wrong with the Christian Evangelical Church. Not saying that all Christians do not care about earth care, but as a whole, there seems to be a disconnect between our calling and the lack of actions from believers.

The point of this paper and even my whole pursuit is not to prove climate change is real or not. I have learned that this should not be the target of discussion to get people to listen. From an outside perspective, author Cynthia Moe Lobeda writes in *Resisting Structural Evils*, she questions Christians saying, “Christians claim that human beings are created “in the image of God”. Yet if global warming continues unchecked, we may be, in the words of Catholic moral theologian Daniel Maguire, “an endangered species”. How do we make sense of a human trajectory now aimed at destroying the creatures crafted “in the image of God”? (Lobeda 57). I can’t speak for everyone, but I can imagine that these words sound hurtful to you as well. This stung. If my relationship with Christ is being questioned based on how I act, I need to take a deeper look and question if this is true or not. Regardless of if Christians want to agree or disagree on Climate change, I want to believe we can agree on *some* things. For instance, if we are supposed to be taking care of the earth based on our calling, we are not doing a good job at it. First, In the Maldives, ocean acidification is threatening the ocean life and therefore our lives. “The Pteropods, for example, have translucent shells that are literally dissolving from the levels of acid in the ocean. As they die off, so do the small fish that feed on them, and the large fish that feed on the smaller fish” (Lobeda 52). Secondly, the “Louisiana industrial corridor, aka “Cancer Alley” is a stretch of the Mississippi River lined with petrochemical companies and oil refineries. The ground, air, and water along this corridor are so infused with carcinogens and

mutagens that the acres have been called a ‘massive human experiment’ (Lobeda 52). Carcinogen means cancer-causing. These are lives at stake. Louisiana ranks first in “per capita toxic releases into the environment” (Lobeda 52). Not to mention the demographics surrounding these polluted facilities constrain high concentrations of African Americans. This is a topic of conversation for later in this paper known as environmental justice. But these are our brothers and sisters in Christ that are being affected by pollutants. Finally, Nigeria is known to be one of Africa’s leading petroleum producers. Because of this, “they live daily with oil spills, gas flares, seepage from drilling, soot spewing from the methane gas failures...their aquatic life is decimated, their waterways are infused with oil, and their mangrove forests are destroyed” (Lobeda 53). Many of them suffer from skin diseases, asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia. These kinds of things are happening all around the world. This is far beyond the issue of climate change, it’s an issue of chemicals, pollution, creation degradation, disease, and death. These are all things I believe Christians care about.

## **PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Coming into the International Community Development (ICD) program I was already very passionate about the topic of earth care and realized the polarity of the topic in the Christian community. I was also very naive to problems like these. They are bigger than just one solution. It’s a systemic issue, deeply rooted in culture and history. In this case, it’s the American Christian Evangelical Church culture. So to say a lot of my views, perspectives, and values shifted is an understatement after time in the program. Coming in, I thought I knew what global conflict and social justice was. I thought I knew what poverty was and how to fix it. I quickly

learned how ignorant I was by the complexity of the issue. There are systems our society has in place, whether knowingly or unknowingly, that keep us in the same monotonous cycles of poverty.

The world views poverty as a material issue. It is defined by different measures that "show that there is not enough food, housing is inadequate, there is no access to healthcare, there are too many people relative to resources, there is not enough income, no one has savings, and so on" (Myers 64). Poverty does have a big expression of a lack of materials. It is a direct outcome. However, I do not think it is addressing the heart of the issue. "If our understanding of poverty focuses on its material manifestations, so does our response. If our understanding of poverty and its causes are social or cultural, then our response tends to focus on changing social structures or addressing cultural causes of poverty" (Myers 64). Our response has to be more than just solving a material issue. The problem is deeper than that. It's like this; "If I am professing love for my neighbor by feeding the poor and sheltering the homeless, and yet am ignoring the systemic factors that have made them hungry and homeless, am I loving neighbor" (Lobeda 57). We seem to be putting a band aid on these issues but are ignoring the reason someone fell into poverty in the first place.

Likewise, when I entered the ICD program I thought I had the topic of earth care all figured out. I knew how to have conversations on climate change and our calling as Christians. ~~But~~ I quickly realized I did not. I realized that maybe it's more simple than we are making this conversation. What if the topic needs to be reintroduced in a new light? If it's such a roadblock for the church, it needs a fresh start. I needed to figure out what the pushback was and where there was a disconnect. I knew the church needed to put aside prejudices about climate change that are consumed in politics and opinions because that might have more to do with wanting to

be right and proving the other wrong than it does with our calling as Christians from Genesis. If we simply start recycling more or reducing our carbon footprint as a church, that is wonderful, yet the change has to be bigger and deeper than that. We have to take a look at the heart of the issue and diagnose why the Church in a general sense is not doing more. Is there a lack of understanding? Are we not teaching our calling from the pulpit? Or, are we being ignorant of the calling altogether? This is what I ventured off to dissect.

## **FIELDWORK RESEARCH**

### *Methodology: Qualitative Research*

I conducted my fieldwork in Bend, Oregon. The method of research I used is called qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell explain qualitative research as focusing on how people view, experience, and seek to understand their life (Merriam and Tisdell 15). It is different from quantitative research in that quantitative research is more about numbers and quantity.

Qualitative research is "data with a soul" (Brown). Brene Brown argues in her TED talk that you can't simply do quantitative research by itself because it's based on control and prediction. What she learned is that studying connection cannot be based solely on control and prediction.

Connection is all about a sense of worthiness, and that is a hard thing to control and predict. She says the best data to collect is people's most vulnerable parts of ~~them~~ and their struggles. The data is connected to the deepest parts of people's souls. To help a group of people better understand how to understand their life, you have to immerse yourself as an observer (Merriam and Tisdell). That's the best part about qualitative research. I got to immerse myself in a culture,

learn about it, and help people understand their life better. Qualitative research allows space for relationships first, and then change. So that's exactly what I did. I immersed myself in Central Oregon's garden culture. In addition to qualitative research, I used action research. It is great for finding solutions for problems people face in their everyday lives because "it uses continuing cycles of investigation designed to reveal effective solutions to issues and problems experienced in specific locations and localized settings" (Stinger 1). As you will learn based on my research, there was a definite flaw in the 'garden system' of Central Oregon. It took time for me to realize "that generalized solutions, plans, or programs may not fit all contexts or groups" (Stinger 6). I needed to come up with a different solution to investigate further.

### *Inspiration*

Leading up to my research experience, two examples of great research were very formative for me. The first was Dwight Conquergood and the other was Seth Holmes. Conquergood noticed an issue in the health system including sanitation in the Hmong refugee camps. The way he approached this was by spending time with the Hmong people and understanding their culture. He found a "high level of cultural performance is characteristic of refugee camps in general" (28). He was struck by the richness and frequency of performative expression (29). The more time he spent there the more he grew to understand this is a cultural issue because they have a lot of extra time for their traditions at home and that is shown in how they spend their time at the camp. On a deeper level, this was a way for them to cultivate their culture that was taken from them. They came together as people who suffered a lot of trauma and "through performative flexibility they can play with their new identities, new strategies for adaptation and survival" (29). Conquergood took the time to understand that Hmong people were

suffering from the trauma of displacement and struggling to find their cultural identity. But they were able to "fall back on the performance of their traditions" (29). By studying this, he came up with a plan. Conquergood came together with the Hmong people as well as a local Thai employee from the International Rescue Committee where they designed and directed a health education campaign that used the idea of wealth of performance. They came up with skits and different scenarios using Hmong traditions of proverbs, storytelling, and folk singing to bring awareness to the health problems the Hmong people were experiencing in the refugee camps. Conquergood had a way of seeing an issue and entered their world before he did anything else. He was able to create awareness for the Hmong people that would be culturally relevant to them. He viewed their culture of performance as richness and saw the deep beauty involved in their culture. His approach encouraged me to let go of my own ideas when entering fieldwork and listen, observe, and soak everything in from a wide lens before narrowing in on anything.

The second formative example of research was Seth Holmes in his book *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*. He demonstrates an approach of qualitative research that can be ethnographic or span over different cultures as defined by Meriam and Tisdell in *Qualitative Research*. What struck me about Holmes is that he crossed the borders and lived and breathed the exact air of those he was researching. He chose the US-Mexico migration and their social, political, and health issues (Holmes 3). He was advised not to go and study this issue because it is a very dangerous location, but still, he went. After a while, he came back and began fieldwork. He worked to find someone who could help him. He found a lady who gave him permission to live and work on a berry farm. He gave up everything and left to live in a shack and work on the berry farm that had rough labor conditions. He would spend the day "picking berries with the rest of the people from the camp, slowly getting to know migrant workers and other farm

employees and observing and interviewing migrant clinic workers and other area residents" (Holmes 5). Holmes did the hard work of finding connections, he crossed the border and left everything to live with the people, and he risked his life living in dangerous conditions people advised him not to do. In his first year of fieldwork "over five hundred people died in the Tucson Sector of the border alone" (Holmes 8). Many of the people he worked with explained "their daily lives in terms of sufrimiento (suffering)" (Holmes 8). It seems a little crazy for him to leave his whole lifestyle behind and by choice put himself in harm's way. But he says that he "realized that an ethnography of suffering and migration would be incomplete without witnessing firsthand such an important site of suffering for Latin American Migrants (Holmes 9). He understood that to study migration he needed to understand suffering because that's what they were experiencing and the best way to do that was to experience it himself. I am challenged by Holmes' approach to ethnographic research. He lived the part and I wanted too as well.

### *Research Begins*

When I first started out, I wanted to see where creation care was already occurring. I was led into the non-Christian sector, but this was still useful because it gave me a baseline of what was already happening in Bend, Oregon. This led me to community gardens. I started out doing a lot of research on food deserts in Bend as I quickly learned there were more community gardens in these locations. First, a food desert is a "geographical area where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance" (Food Empowerment Project). There are currently two food deserts in the Bend area according to the USDA-created Food Access Research Atlas (Food Access Research Atlas). Living here in Bend, it is hard to believe that these exist even in a city. Transportation is a leading cause of food



deserts. Most of the time transportation is the reason people cannot get to a grocery store. It takes several bus stops and takes too much time because they don't own a car. A study done for Congress by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture said that "about 2.3 million people (or 2.2 percent of all US households) live more than one mile away from a supermarket and do not own a car" (Food Empowerment Project). As I researched more about this, it became evident to me that community gardens were very useful in Bend, especially in the area where a food desert is. At this point in my research, I figured I would create a proposal to a church near a food desert to start a garden. If this is a need, I thought the church would be a fantastic place to do this. In one sense it would be very practical because churches usually are located in a community and they have land. Secondly, I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to work towards solving the problem from a systemic approach rather than a band-aid fix. It would get the church involved in earth care and provide space to talk about why earth care is important for Christians.

As I continued to learn about food deserts, I looked into who else was doing community gardens. That led me to the Environmental Center and OSU extension program. This was a very interesting time of research because one person led me to the next. I quickly learned how interconnected all these people were. I hit a roadblock with the Environmental Center because they mainly focused on education for students with their gardens. They led me to the OSU extension. This is where I learned a lot about the history of agriculture in Oregon. Back in 1862, President Lincoln signed a bill that "established a network of agricultural experiment stations" which is how the Oregon Agriculture College Extension Service was born in 1911 where "agents were stationed in counties and began developing programs to meet local needs" (Our History). The program has turned into Master Gardeners, Master Woodland Managers, Master Watershed

Stewards, Master Food Educators, and more. They go into places like affordable housing complexes and teach things like gardening (Ahern). This led me to a conversation with Housing Works which is one of the biggest affordable housing companies in Central Oregon. At this point, I had visited several different gardens at affordable housing complexes, as well as around town. I had the opportunity to talk to the Resident Director for Housing Works. They have over 30 different complexes in Bend. I asked if they have any community gardens in their complexes and what their specific challenges and struggles are with the gardens. I learned that they perform a study about every 3 years to survey the residents on what they want to see more of or less of. The study that was last done showed a big desire for a space to grow food and plants, especially among the Latino population. I found this very interesting because most affordable housing units are apartments and there is not a lot of space to grow. This study confirmed that there was a desire for community gardens, but there is just a flaw in the system. There needs to be some way to make the gardens more sustainable for years to come. From here, I interviewed a couple of other people that work for different affordable housing companies and eventually was led to some churches that had gardens on their property. This was the turning point in my research. At this point, I had learned two main things. Many people in affordable housing have a need and desire for gardens, but there is a flaw in the system.

### *Narrowing In*

Each interview led me to the next which helped me narrow down where I was headed. Next, I interviewed the pastor at Nativity Lutheran. They have two different gardens. The first garden is a prayer garden. It is open 24 hours to those in the community. They have an alcoholic anonymous group that met there during COVID. There is a circular path called a Labyrinth. People come in and pray as they walk the maze. It takes about an hour to walk through. They

also provide the space for free funerals in the garden and plant some flowers in recognition of the person during the funeral. Their second garden is a permaculture garden. Permaculture is the combination of the words Permanent and Agriculture (Bloom and Boehnlein). It is an adaptation of land management that flourishes in natural ecosystems. It's a sustainable and harmonious approach to farming that draws from how a natural ecosystem would work and makes it sustainable for humans. There are herbs, berry bushes, and fruit trees that flourish with minimal maintenance. Most of the things grown are edible and can survive the heat of the summer and the cold winters. It was beautiful there and full of life. This was also open 24/7 for the community to come and get food and enjoy the garden. Nativity has such an awesome ministry that meets the needs of the people in South Bend. Permaculture is perfect for Central Oregon. There is such a short growing season in a high desert so that season needs to be very strategic. But permaculture? That's a different story. It uses less water which is practical for Central Oregon because of the droughts that inflict Central Oregon in the summer months. The plants are working together providing ground cover that's necessary for cooler months as well as shade of the trees above from the summer sun. I realized a community garden is just not as practical as permaculture for this context.

I left Nativity Lutheran in awe. It was the most beautiful intertwining of nature and church I have ever seen. It made me ponder a couple of questions very hard for a couple of days. Those questions were, "Why aren't Christians at the forefront of the environmental care movement"? And more specific to my fieldwork, "Why don't more churches have a community garden?" A permaculture garden seems to fit perfectly. It can serve the community, build connections with the community, the church usually has property, there is probably at least one person in a congregation that loves to garden if not many, and it can begin a huge conversation

about our calling as Christians to be earth keepers. As I pondered all these thoughts and had several conversations with people, I decided to move a little bit in a different direction, more towards creating some sort of booklet/ curriculum for a church. It is an urge to the church to start having conversations about calling and earth care and also a way to take action by starting a garden. So, after this, I switched gears to permaculture gardens instead of community gardens and began researching churches and interviewing pastors from here on out.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As I got more and more on track with where I was headed, I knew I needed to enter more of the church sector. At this point, I understood what could be done about environmental care with the church, but I needed to figure out why other churches were not doing anything. I needed to find out what the pushback was. After seeing Nativity Lutheran's garden and heart for the topic, it seemed so obvious that other churches needed to be doing this too.

My research questions were-

1. What do you think our calling in Genesis is in regard to creation care?
2. How do you think the Christians Evangelical Church is responding to this calling?
3. Do you think the church is doing enough, not enough, or too much?
4. If you say the church isn't doing enough, what do you think the holdup is?
5. How would your church respond to doing a project or starting a ministry that has to do with earth care?

As I was interviewing pastors I got several different responses to these questions. There was an overarching consensus that we as Christians should be good stewards of the earth. One pastor told me they didn't believe the responsibility was on the church, it's just individual responsibility (Welch). Another pastor told me that they think a lot of Christians "have a problem with earth stewardship because they just think that we are here temporarily, and the world is not our home and there's just not a huge concern for it" (Crockett). Lastly, a lot of Christians get into big arguments over the topic because global warming is such a polarizing topic, they wouldn't even know where to start with the conversation (Keller). From these conversations, I realized that the church is not well equipped to talk about this topic. Maybe, they don't understand the importance of our calling as Christians. It seems like everyone believes it is a calling, but no one is doing anything about it. So, I decided to write a handbook for Christians to go through in a small group setting that would create a space for conversation on the topic of earth care and provide practical actionable steps for a church to start a permaculture garden. But I think the deepest issue was that there is not an understanding that environmental care is about reconciliation, and it is an important aspect of worship.

## **THE PROBLEM**

Based on my research interviewing pastors and people in the church, it seems there are several main problems with why the church has not taken a stance on the issues. In addition, there is a general problem that encompasses the Christian Evangelical Church as a whole. Growing up in the church, I have seen these common themes repeatedly. Although, I didn't have words for it until now. The overarching problem is that in Genesis 1 we were given the

responsibility to care for every living thing and quite frankly we have neglected that issue.

Douglas Hayhoe, author of *Creation as a gift* suggests that “only within biblical Christianity can this approach be fully appreciated, as one that motivates us both to give thanks and give ourselves to the care for a creation that is under serious threat” (Hayhoe 93). As I continued with interviews, I had yet to understand that if this is our calling as Christians then why is the church not taking adequate steps forward in creation care? These are some of the answers I received from pastors and some staff of churches:

1. There are other more important issues to be dealing with in the scheme of eternity such as poverty, missions, or different ministries.
2. They would not know where to start.
3. The earth will be burned in a fire when Jesus returns so what's the point?
4. It always ends up in conversations around climate change and never in a good way.

To address each of these issues it seemed necessary to have something to give a church that covered each of these issues. So, I thought about writing a book at first, but it didn't seem interactive enough. There had to be a way to inform the church of the importance of environmental care for Christians. I concluded that curriculum was the best option. Not only did it have the space to give information on how to start, but it also created space for a very important discussion on the topic.

There was a lot of thought put into this decision. I wrestled with creating more of a book structure because this journey was done by myself and was very personal. As I learned more about what was going on with the earth, I became very overwhelmed. There were lots of emotions involved. It was a lonely experience, and I did not want that for anyone else. It needed

to be something for a group so there would be support. When I took my class on Social and Environmental Justice we talked a lot about the Kubler - Ross Grief Cycle (Gregory). There are five stages of grief. When we experience grief we first experience some sort of denial, this can be shown in confusion or avoidance. Next is a stage of anger, leading towards a stage called bargaining. This can look like struggling to find meaning. This leads to depression, and finally a step toward acceptance. We were warned going into the class we would likely feel all of these and go through this internal turmoil because of the reality of the state of the earth that we might have been oblivious to our whole lives. This class indeed brought out all of the feelings in that cycle, oftentimes different ones each class session. Oftentimes different ones each week when we met. I say this because learning about the environment and bringing light to a subject that has been unexposed can be very difficult. In learning this, I decided it was important that others not go through the same. This is the reason I created a curriculum for a group to go through. I do not believe we were meant to go through life alone. We often,

Underestimate the power of community as a powerful force that sustainability needs.

Some people have done some careful research about social infrastructure and social infrastructure can be the difference between whether people are alone and facing a difficult situation or whether they can act together. (Farming to Heal the Land 24:25-24:48)

There is power when we go through things together. This is a very biblical idea as well; we are called to walk in community. Throughout scripture we see people worshiping together (Deuteronomy 26-27), and people eating together and having a feast (Exodus 12-13). There is a reason we aren't supposed to do things alone. We are all so different and bring different pieces to

the puzzle. We have different giftings and talents. If we were all the same, what would even be the point? So, with that, it needed to be a discussion for a small group to go through because one person could not do it alone. One person could not change a church's thinking or start a garden. It also needed to be a small group experience because people might share their opinions and thoughts more readily. Because this can be a hard topic in the church there needed to be a safe place.

## **BIBLICAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

There are so many aspects to biblical community development. Community Development comes from different angles in order to create a holistic approach. It's so much more than finding a problem and creating a solution to fix it. To do community development well, we have to take a look at the whole picture. This includes the context, how to empower people through the process, and which avenue of development would bring the most reconciliation is equally important. It can be counterproductive to move forward with community development before assessing these different aspects because we care about the people and their well-being more than the finish line. Below are some of the key elements that play into community development and how they relate to my project.

### *Reconciliation*

Reconciliation relates to community development in so many ways. There are so many aspects to reconciliation including reconciliation of humanity to God, of humans to other



humans, humans to the community, and then humans to the environment. Without the fourth part, we are missing out on a whole piece of the puzzle that was intended for us (Myers 144). When sin entered the world, all four of these relationships were broken. However, that is not how the Lord intended us to live, we were created to be whole and completely reconciled. Myers says, "God's goal is to restore us and God's creation to our original identity and purpose, as children reflecting God's image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful relationships" (Myers 82). Most people are constantly working towards every form of reconciliation except for one. They are working to better their relationships with those around them, become closer to the Lord or are in search of something "more", and working to improve their community by serving. However, reconciliation of us to the environment seems to be neglected. It is so easy to notice an issue and turn a blind eye to it. As Christians, we need to do more than look at something we are drawn to, we need to look deeper and seek understanding from what the Lord is asking of us (Lederach 9) This issue is a bigger deal than simply climate change. I believe we are turning a blind eye to our callings as Christians. Let us not merely look at the issue, let us have a vision much deeper than what we see.

Reconciliation is one of the biggest parts of my project. There is a tension currently between earth care and the church, and that needs to be addressed through reconciliation. Anything that causes unrest or is not how God intended something when it was created can and needs to be addressed through reconciliation. According to my research this past summer, the church does not understand the weight of our calling to stewards of the earth, or they do not know how to do so. Reconciliation can look like many things, but it is "a holy path, toward revelation" (Lederach 14). We get to participate in reconciliation. It is the greatest gift we were

given when Jesus took it all to the cross. Reconciliation cannot be talked about without keeping in mind where it first started. The “vision of reconciliation cannot be conceived or sustained without the particular life of the God whom Christians confess, the living God of Israel who raised the crucified Jesus from the dead” (Katongole and Rice 42). We are invited to participate in reconciliation and by doing so we “seek a more sustainable, systemic restoration so that our communities, both local and global, reflect the kingdom of God” (McNeil 21). We can begin to restore the relationship between man and earth by starting to have conversations that have been neglected for too long. After that, we can take action by starting a permaculture garden. Permaculture gives the perfect opportunity to live into our calling of being good stewards. While we live

In a wasteful, consumerist manner that depletes our resources and doesn't leave future generations much to work with, permaculture is about building resilience and using only what we need and what we have access to—in other words, living within our ecological means. (Bloom and Boehnlein 11)

Permaculture is a way of restoration. It's how we can put reconciliation into action. Permaculture provides a practical way to live in our ecological means and restore the church's relationship to the beautiful earth we have been given.

There was a qualitative study done in Cuba where permaculture was found to be a religious movement where it

Met both the spiritual and material needs of individuals. This environmentally engaged religious movement promotes the idea that the Earth is alive and is therefore worthy of reverent care, and this care extends to humans through the growing of food produced within the permaculture systems using ecological methods. (Caraway 5)

There is something so beautiful about gardening. The first garden was where humans were first created, a garden similar to a permaculture garden. It was rich with food for Adam and Eve and yet Adam and Eve were not expected just to take from the trees, but also to work it and keep it. It was a symbiotic relationship where both sides were to give, and also receive. We are all “valuable and beloved members of God’s creation. We should return to the ‘inescapably necessary work of restoring and caring for our farms, forests, and rural towns and communities (Bilbro139). This is what reconciliation looks like between humans and earth.

### *Justice*

There is an aspect of stewardship that is deeply intertwined with justice which is a big part of community development. We are unaware of what we are doing to the earth. Part of this can be boiled down to ecological illiteracy. Perhaps we simply were not taught. Ecological literacy is “the ability to ‘read’ the language and realities of Earth’s life-systems and how they interact with human factors are equally key to the life of faith” (Moe-Lobeda 130). Cynthia Moe-Lobeda describes how she fell into this category saying she “journeyed through life ecologically illiterate” (Moe-Lobeda 130). It is very common to go through life unaware of our life systems and how it relates to our faith life. This is essentially moral oblivion, where we are not aware of what we are doing to the earth. We do not have the privilege to live in this oblivion. We were not created to treat “the gift of Creation as simply a commodity, then we could consume it the way we consume a gift box of chocolates. But because it carries promise, it must be conserved until the time of fulfillment” (Neff 36). We have to become ecologically aware, understanding better the damage we can be doing to living systems and how they relate to the life of faith.

Additionally, environmental justice needs to be addressed because of how much it correlates with poverty and racial justice. Forrest Inslee in a podcast done by Circlewood said,

"It's not something we always link to climate change and yet we absolutely must link to climate change. There are groups of certain demographics that are more impacted by the changes happening in the world than others and to ignore that is injustice" (A Hope and Hard Truths: Feeling Guilty with Forrest and James 11:24- 11:42). In a lot of cases, "communities consisting primarily of people of color continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the nation's air, water, and waste problems" (Bullard 24). This is known as environmental racism. This is just like any form of injustice that needs action to be reconciled. In a lot of scenarios, the places that exhibit the most poverty are places where people of color live. There was a study done by the Department of Sociology at the University of California that used data from an innovative state racism index to argue that,

Systematic racialized inequalities in areas from housing to employment increase outdoor airborne environmental health risks in neighborhoods. Results of multilevel analysis in over 65,000 census tracts demonstrate that tracts in states with higher levels of state-level Black-white gaps report greater environmental health risk exposure to outdoor air pollution. (Alvarez 1)

On top of that, housing policies have disproportionately exposed Black communities to environmental pollutants. These policies have isolated them from resources like healthy food options and green spaces. Black people are "79% more likely than whites to live within neighborhoods where industrial pollution is heavily concentrated" (Johnson et al 204). Think about the "toxic wells in Dickenson County, Tennessee, Coca Cola plants in North Birmingham, Alabama, and the water crisis in Flint, Michigan (Henderson 134). Our brothers and sisters are being mistreated and it's all so intertwined with environmental issues. In addressing these environmental issues, the church is also addressing poverty and racial issues. It's all connected.

The church has to care about environmental issues if they are going to care about poverty. It comes down to this, "If we fail to recognize the injustice that is damaging our neighbor and hence fail to address it, are we not defying the call to love" (Lobeda 57).

### *Contextualization*

Contextualization was a term introduced at the beginning of the program. It is a foundational element in Community Development. It is described as "the practice of designing programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place, and time" (Inslee). It explores culture in a holistic manner in which each culture is worthy of respect and beauty. The point of contextualization is to build relationships and hear the voices of the culture before actually stepping into development. It's about hearing people's voices instead of assuming what the specific needs are of a culture. There is culture all around us. Culture is more than the boundaries of ethnicities and religions. In *Cultures and Organizations*, Hofstede describes manifestations of cultures as the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede 6). It involves a value system, heroes, rituals, practices, and symbols (7). It's a collective experience that is shared with a group of people in the same environment. It is also a biblical concept. Many people referred to Paul as a contextual theologian. Each of these letters were "case studies in the contextualizing of the gospel in ways that intersect the concrete lives and cultures of his hearers" (Flemming 89). No two letters were the same. Each one fit perfectly with the culture and the context of the group he was addressing.

One of my first experiences with contextualization was on a Biology Program trip to Tanzania. We worked with Convoy of Hope observing their sustainability project in local

schools. They would go into schools and start gardens, chicken coops, and they also taught classes to young children on how they could take seeds home from their school garden and teach their parents how to garden. The plan sounded ideal; perhaps too good to be true. As we spent time there we grew to understand they created a very difficult task for themselves. While they meant well, it most likely was not going to be successful. The people they were working with were from the Masai Tribe who are historically nomadic. Livestock is their way of life, so they continually travel with them to new pastures. Encouraging these kids to help their family start gardens seemed to be a great idea, but it would not be sustainable because the people are always moving. This is an example of poor contextualization. There was a lack of time invested in understanding what the Masai tribe wanted and needed to improve their community. Where this style of growing gardens and sending seeds home with kids would work in one culture, it was not the answer for the Masai culture. This would have been an imperative time for Convoy of Hope to ask the essential development questions from Myers in his book, *Walking with the Poor Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. These include, “What’s a better future? What are the goals of transformation? What is the process of change? What is sustainability? In what essay do we need to think holistically” (Myers 173)? I would even add one; “What is the culture we are working with, and have we studied it to understand it well enough first to implement a development plan?”

Throughout my project contextualization played a huge role. I started off studying community gardens and found they were difficult to make sustainable and beneficial in Central Oregon. They also were hard for me to justify the amount of water used when Central Oregon is often in a drought. Droughts are very common in Central Oregon, “In general, records of the last 100 years show a drought cycle occurring about every ten years in the Deschutes Basin” (Bend).

And as things keep progressing it “brings an even greater level of uncertainty, with the latest research predicting more frequent and intense drought cycles, as well as potential loss of mid-elevation snowpack” (Bend). At the time I was doing fieldwork, we were in a drought. The Deschutes River dammed at Wickiup early causing lower water levels. When permaculture was presented to me as an example, Nativity Lutheran had switched from a community garden to a permaculture garden. The Pastor of the church told me the water they used to water the lawn and community garden used to be used  $\frac{2}{3}$  more water than that of their current permaculture garden. A permaculture garden made more sense for the high desert and high-altitude climate of Central Oregon which suffers from ongoing droughts. On top of that, permaculture made more sense for the context of the church. Nativity Lutheran's head gardener says their garden is low maintenance and it is a lot less work than the community garden was. Therefore, more of the church is willing and wants to participate (Guthrie). Permaculture works in such a way that brings harmony between different ecosystems. Some plants provide shade from the hot sun, others provide ground cover projecting the root systems and locking in moisture. I imagine it's a lot like what the Garden of Eden would have looked like. A permaculture garden will work better in the context of a Central Oregon Church better than a community garden ever would have. Through contextualization, I was able to figure this out instead of pressing my own ideas.

### *Copowerment*

The word copowerment was a term introduced to me through the ICD program. It is a “dynamic mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other” (Inslee). The point of copowerment is not that both parties are bringing the same things to the table, but that each party is bringing their strong suit. They are both bringing something of value. In the *Art of Leadership*, Kuenkel describes it as "Networks

[that] are not about command and control, but about connectivity and creativity. They extend beyond conventional structures and boundaries, linking like-minded people in distant corners of the world" (270). There is so much beauty when people are bringing what they do best and bringing it without competition- rather empowerment on both sides- copowerment. The concept is a beautiful one. It's so critical in community development because, "Over time, people, cultures, and communities respond internally to how they are treated externally. Tell someone they aren't valuable or important and, in time, far too many of them begin to believe it" (Bryant 15). Building people up is perhaps one of the best things we could ever do.

I believe copowerment is a biblical idea as well. It is referred to as a community. The concept began in the very beginning when God created mankind. After He created man, He decided that "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:18). God did not want Adam to have to do life alone. Nor was that how the human race could have reproduced. This is our first sign of copowerment. There is a very realistic and scientific basis for this example. Man cannot procreate by himself, and so in a mutually beneficial way, where a man and a woman bring what the other cannot and the world benefits. However, it is more than that. This is not to get into gender roles by any means, but men and women have different giftings, and God knew this because he created them. A man by himself could not accomplish alone what he could with a woman.

Copowerment was an important concept I kept in mind throughout my research and project. It is a very important aspect of starting a garden as well. Starting a garden has to be a group effort. It is easier and better that way. The church is full of different people with different talents. One person is going to be very good at raising finances for the garden, whereas another ~~one~~ will be better at getting their hands dirty in the soil and planting seeds. Still another person is



socially more inclined so they will be better at community engagement. Neither job is better than the other, but it's in allowing people to use their gifts and talents, which is where a successful garden will unfold. The whole goal of a church starting a garden was not for one person to start it and run it. The goal is to bring the community together by providing a place for people to come and gather food, to work together with hands in the soil leading to conversations about life, and to start conversations within the church about our role as Christians to be earth keepers. It's the start of a permaculture garden, but even deeper it's about conversations and people.

## **HANDBOOK**

The handbook at the end of the book holds a unique tool for the church. It can be used by the church as a whole or as a small group teaching pool. The handbook has 2 purposes. The first one is to start the conversation. Because the church isn't even talking about environmental care, stewardship of the earth, or our calling as Christians, this provides a place to start. It is complete with 6 sections. Each section has scripture, and/or academic articles and books to support each small group session. It is then followed by a set of questions that are intended for discussion and a final question for each individual to ponder throughout the week. The second purpose of the handbook is to provide a practical step-by-step approach on how to act on this knowledge. It is one thing to sit and discuss it (which is great) but it is another thing to act upon it. That's what this is all about. The practical approach is a permaculture garden that the church can start and run. The handbook gives details on how to approach starting permaculture, how to implement it, and ends with an example of a grant for any church to follow for help financially funding the garden. The handbook was written for the context of Central Oregon; however, the concept remains the same for the American Evangelical Church. As I mentioned, at the very end there is

an example of a grant. It is written from a church pursuing financial assistance to get a garden started on their land. This gives churches going forward an idea of finances, as well as a skeleton example of a grant. It is free to be changed and adapted for the benefit of the church.

The hope and the prayer behind this project is for a change. The church as a whole needed to be addressed. When the church doesn't participate in something that we are called to do, it is either ignoring the problem or simply is unequipped on how to approach the issue. This is likely the case with all "hot topics" like systemic racism. We see the church taking both approaches. Neither is right, however. Neither, I believe, is how Jesus would have wanted us to act. This handbook will be given to several different churches and parishioners that attend churches in Bend, Oregon and surrounding cities such as La Pine and Redmond. These are churches where I was able to interview pastors and parishioners. Several have expressed interest in starting a group similar to a bible study group or Sunday school. Some also expressed interest in starting their own group of people from the church but meeting in a different capacity like a book club.

## **IMPACT**

The impact I had from this experience is a difficult one to put into words. From start to finish of this research, project, and paper, it is nothing like I expected. It's so funny when we think we have a plan, and it ends up going a different way. But that's what community development is. At the core, I learned what community development was firsthand. I got to see a problem and find a way to approach it differently. In a way, I see it as some distortion of the way God created us to live. This distortion "bends relationships in ways that create the myriad expressions of human poverty in its material, social, and spiritual forms" (Meyers 64). We are

"relational beings intended to live in just and peaceful relationships with each other, with their environment and with God" (Myers 64) and when that is distorted, there is a deficit in something we were created for. I first saw distortion in our relationship with the way the Lord intended our relationship with the earth to be like, and I got to partner with Him and work to find a solution. His ultimate goal is to "restore us and God's creation to our original identity and purpose, as children reflecting God's image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful relationships" (Myers 82).

Although I am not sure where I am exactly headed in life, I know it has something to do with reconciliation. If there is one thing I have learned for sure in the process, it can be summed up by Parker Palmer. In his book, he refers to this Quaker saying "let your life speak". After 30 years of figuring out what was meant by this saying he learned what it meant for himself. It meant "faithful both to the ambiguity of those words and to the complexity of my own experience: "Before you tell yourself what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent" (Palmer 3). I know one of the greatest values I can represent is reconciliation, and that is what I intend to do. Whether it is with and through permaculture, or some other means that the Lord leads.

Oftentimes the reconciliation work is messy. It's not straightforward. It may not be the work everyone wants to do or is willing to do. I might not even want to. However, I believe it is one of the greatest things I can do. In his book *Unclean*, Beck explains the difference between sacrifice and mercy as, "sacrifice... marks off a zone of holiness, admitting the 'clean' and expelling the 'unclean. Mercy blurs the distinction, bringing clean and unclean into contact" (Beck 2). The Pharisees were disgusted that this man, Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God

who would come and take the sins of the world and have contact with sinners. Jesus on the other hand was breaking down those boundaries of unclean or clean by sitting and spending time with what some would call outcasts.

One of the most interesting things about 'disgust', is that we did not have the emotion of disgust when we were born. Babies do not question what they should or shouldn't put in their mouths, they just do it. As we grow, we understand what disgust is and we shape our own view of it. We end up avoiding certain objects that bring us disgust and while doing that we allow disgust to, "create and monitor boundaries, [and this] disgust also motivates physical and behavioral responses aimed at pushing away, avoiding, or forcefully expelling an offensive object" (Beck 16). This is the heart of what Jesus was getting at. Jesus understands that, "disgust and contamination regulates how many Christians reason with and experience notions of holiness, atonement, and sin" (Beck 4). Jesus did not let uncleanliness or messiness get in His way, and neither should we.

With this one simple act, Jesus reverses our incorrect thinking that I was convicted of while reading this book. Jesus did not become unclean or contaminated while sitting with the unclean, but he was showing us how to do it better. So much of what we have been taught goes against this. We understand that a pollutant is a more powerful force when it comes in contact with a pure substance. However, coming in contact with Jesus purifies. Jesus is inviting us into a "world without fear of contamination" (Beck 30), and this is done with mercy. As Christians, we will always be fighting against disgust and will be tempted to withdraw and separate ourselves. But this is not the life Jesus is calling us. He came to the earth to be an example of the exact opposite. Being okay doing the "unclean" or the nonconventional work is something I have a

huge desire for. It can promote reconciliation the best, even reconciliation of man to their creator. In my opinion, that's the best thing I could ever do.

## **CONCLUSION**

The American Evangelical Church in general has not emphasized environmental stewardship over the years. There is a lack of conversation surrounding this topic as well as a lack of action. Based on the qualitative research done this summer the reason for this is the church does not know how to talk about environmental care, and the church does not know what actions to take. We tend to get so wrapped up on the topic making it a political conversation forcing people to pick sides when this is a calling placed on all those who profess Jesus as their Lord. The church needs to take a step back and take a look at the calling in Genesis as it is clear and a very beautiful calling. The handbook following this will provide the space to step back and take a look at that calling. From there, it provides steps on how to act on that calling through permaculture. Reconciliation, contextualization, empowerment, and justice are all such important aspects. No longer can we be a church that puts environmental care on the back burner. Let us be good hearers and better doers.

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**APPENDIX 1 : A Handbook and Guide to Stewardship of the Earth as Christians**

Stewardship: A Beckoning Back to the Garden

This is for Leaders, Pastors, Jesus-followers, Earth-lovers, and Changemakers of the Christian  
Evangelical Churches in

Author's Note:

This document incorporates material previously written for the following MAICD classes: Social and Environmental Justice in Development, Fieldwork, Social Enterprise, Community Development, Funding and Grant Writing, and Peace and Reconciliation.

## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the *Handbook and Guide to Stewardship: A Beckoning Back to Eden*. You might have read that and wondered what stewardship and Christianity have to do with each other. However, you're not exclusively to blame for that. It has not been the narrative the Christian Church has been putting off. If you look through scripture and at the heart of Jesus, the two words are entirely intertwined. Below will hold the breakdown of how we can and need to go about changing the narrative for now, and for the future going forward. You may also ask, why this needs your attention and even the attention of a handbook. Through conversations I have had with pastors, different church staff, attendees of churches, and through observation, I have seen a deep consensus that the church is not living up to our calling. I find it interesting the church can have three services on Sunday, have the best children's ministry, and even serve the homeless once a month, but still, be missing out on reconciliation as a whole. You see, there's more than just one message of reconciliation. There's a reconciliation of humanity to God, of humans to other humans, humans to community, and then humans to earth. Without the third part, maybe we are missing out on a whole piece of the puzzle that was intended for us (Myers 144). Figure 1 (below) shows the broken relationships we all experience as humans due to the sin in the world. It is because of the sin that is in the world. I believe a lot of Christians understand

this concept but are missing the broken relationship of self to the environment. By participating in all forms of reconciliation we are shaped and molded into who the Lord intended us to be. A well-respected author, Meyers, explains this by saying, “God’s goal is to restore us and God’s creation to our original identity

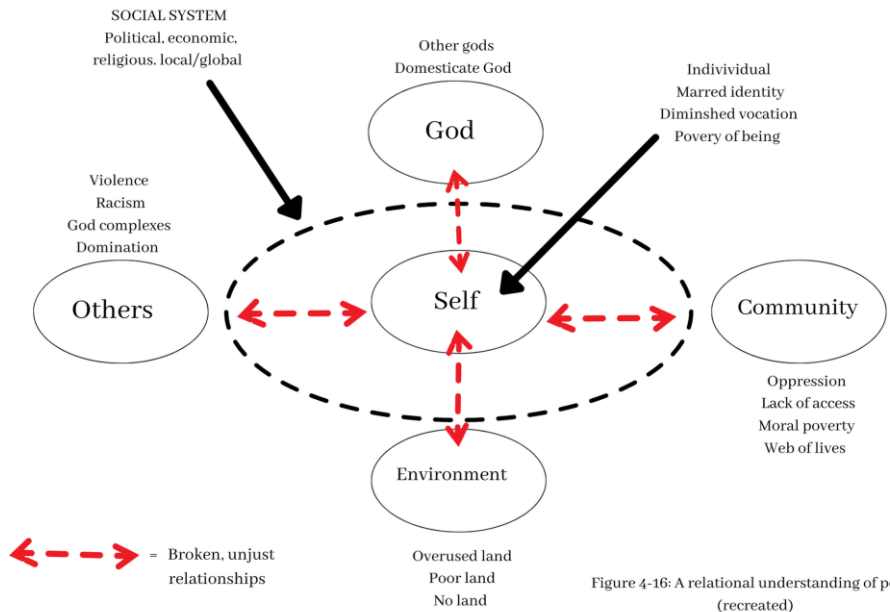


Figure 1: Source- Walking with the Poor by Meyers

and purpose, as children reflecting God’s image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful relationships” (Meyers 82). He wants us whole and completely reconciled. All four aspects. Whole and reconciled. I argue that they are almost intricately intertwined. By engaging in earth care we get to participate in the other forms of reconciliation. In this guidebook, you'll learn how they are all intertwined, how the Christian Evangelical Church in Central Oregon might be missing it, and how to actively participate.

Your first question is likely: "Why"? And honestly, that is also understandable. This will all be covered throughout the next 6 parts of this handbook, but for now, here's a sneak peek. In short, we were called to earth care when the Lord God created the earth and then mankind shortly after. After he called His creation good, he gave mankind the job of tending and caring for the earth. God’s people were given a job. I hope this does not trigger thoughts of climate

change because we are not even referring to climate change. For a lot of people, words like environmental care and stewardship can be triggering. It elicits thoughts of government, science, and heated conversations. I'm asking you right now to lay that down. This is not a handbook to encourage Christians to participate in the global warming movement. No, that would be missing the whole point of this. This is far more than that. Please lay that down. My prayer for each of you reading this is that you would allow the Lord to open your heart to see His heart. His heart can be simplified to this: We were given one of the most beautiful gifts- the earth. He looked upon everything he had created "and behold, it was very good" (ESV Genesis 1:29) With this gift, the Lord asks His creation to "work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). We are called to care for it out of the same love He created the earth with. It is our privilege to take care of what we have been given despite what is going on with the world with global warming. We are to tend to the earth and to keep it.

There is a lot to cover in this handbook so buckle up. I had the opportunity to do some research this summer on gardens in the Central Oregon area. I started out studying community gardens. As I got deeper and deeper, I discovered several things. The biggest thing I wrestled with was why the church wasn't more present in the environmental sector. The only environmental message I have honestly received from the church was that of the creation story and a self-inflicted message to stay away from the topic because it leads to heated conversations about global warming. I switched gears a little bit. I spent countless hours researching our calling in Genesis. I came across issues including but not limited to pollutants and degradations, and at that point the light bulb illuminated. There is a polarization effect going on between earth care and the church. It's written all over. This leads to an avoidance of talking about the earth all together. Which knowingly or unknowingly leads to neglect of our calling. So, I started

interviewing pastors, churchgoers, and church staff. I asked about their thoughts on the environment and if their congregation has a natural inclination to take care of the earth. The general consensus was no. It simply isn't talked about, nor did I find that many people I talked to have any idea where to start because of how touchy the topic was. So that's how this handbook was born. Consider it an encouragement and push to the church to get more involved. Not out of pity, but because it is one of our greatest callings. We can get more involved by beginning to have the conversation about earth care in a safe place, and from there we can take action. One way the church can get in involved is to start their very own permaculture garden/ food forest. It is incredible how similar this style of garden is to the Garden of Eden. The church can make a difference, and it starts here with beginning the conversation and acting on it. Let us be great hearers and better doers.

There are 6 different parts of information in this handbook. Each one is intended for a different setting because there is a lot to digest between each one. This handbook is designed for a small group, Sunday School topic, or as a topic for the whole church to experience together. Each part is to be read together and then broken up into smaller groups for questions and discussion. The part ends with some thoughts to ponder and a place to jot down these thoughts. The part you are currently reading is the first section designed as an introduction to prepare you for the next five parts. The second part will go through the topic of Genesis, where it all started. We will talk about the beauty of the Garden of Eden and all that the Lord intended the Garden to be. The third session will cover the calling in Genesis to tend and care for the Earth and what that looks like as Christians. In Session 4 we will discuss how polarizing talk about Earth care can be in the Christian community. This session creates space to have a peaceful conversation and why climate change does not need to separate Christians any longer. Session 5 lays out a tangible way



for the church to participate in earth care through Permaculture. It is an introduction to why permaculture could be a great way to participate as a church based on research that has been done in Central Oregon. Lastly, session 6 gives the steps on how to start a permaculture garden and where to go after reading this handbook.

If you're reading this, thank you. This is an incredibly important conversation for the church to be having. The church has such an important role in Earth care. Not everyone needs to be environmentalists, however, I do believe that if we call ourselves Christians, we need to be an advocate and take care of the gift our Father gave us. We don't need to go and change the world; we just need to start making small steps towards reconciliation of the earth. Right now, that looks like beginning the conversation. So, let's dig in deep and be open to what the Lord wants to show us.

# GUIDED DISCUSSION 1

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. What is your first thought after reading this introduction?  
Are these new thoughts to you?
2. Do you believe that taking care of the Earth is spiritual?
3. Do you think the Church has a role in Earth care? Why or why not?

# REFLECT

Take time as you're going about your daily tasks to ponder this session. Have you ever thought about environmental care? Do you truly think the church has a role here?

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**PART 2: THE BEGINNING**

*The Garden of Eden*

If you have the ability, please listen to the song *Eden* by Jervis Campbell. Read the lyrics as you listen. If you do not have the ability to listen, simply read them and ponder the words.

Born and raised in the darkness  
Still my soul did sing  
Out of a hope that brought tomorrow  
Over love that covered me  
In the times I've felt the farthest  
Still your love did cling  
Oh by faith my feet were grounded  
Couldn't defy your gravity  
  
You're the bones inside my body  
You're the fire that fills my lungs  
You're the reason I'm still standing  
You're the strength to carry on  
And I wanna know you like you it were Eden  
Like it's only the two of us  
Oh I wanna walk among your presence  
I want to feel your fullest love (Campbell)

I hope this song put some words and imagery to picture what it was like in the Garden. Just you and your Creator. If you did not listen to it as a group, I would encourage you to go home and listen to it. Imagine what it would be like to be in the garden with our Lord. Walking with Him. What a beautiful picture.

***Read Genesis 2 with emphasis on verses 5-17***

Let's start in the beginning. When the Lord created the Earth, He did not hold back. If you think about it, how many different types of fruits and vegetables do we get to enjoy? We don't only have apples, but we have citrus fruits, exotic fruits, small, tiny grapes with different flavors, and gigantic jack fruit. We also get to enjoy hundreds of different types of flowers and watch each bloom in different seasons. He really gave us more than we could have ever hoped or dreamed on our own. He said to Adam and Eve, "Behold I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit" (Genesis 1:29). He created a forest of food just for Adam and Eve. What a gift. With each intricate plant he created, He had us in mind. The Earth was a gift that God created for mankind. Ultimately each part of His creation reflects His character and His beauty. This gift of beauty, love, and provision is for us, His beloved, for our delight.

The Garden of Eden almost has a mysterious sense to it. You see, Genesis 2:8 tells us that "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East". From the work historians and geologists have done, we can make an informed estimation that the Garden of Eden was located near the Fertile crescent which surrounds the Arabian Desert. The "garden was separated from the outside

world. There was life inside the Garden. Trees flourishing and water flowing. However, when you left the garden, you found yourself in the desert, where everything was sun scorched. As a result, life was impossible outside the garden” (Orthodox Art Journal). Such a bountiful life existing next to a desert is a little mysterious. He created a space that brought life, abundance, and sustainability for us to enjoy. All for us. Our Father God “created a beautiful, bountiful garden of abundance for all creatures to enjoy. The sacredness displayed in the garden is the central mystery of life: the ongoing eruption of that ever- renewable, ever- resilient, ever-expansive, every complexifying, and nurturing quality of life” (Haberman 25).



Figure 1: Source- Crossway ESV Study Bible

The Garden is often imagined as a paradise. As it brought such life near a desert. “The earliest translations into Greek used the word *paradeisos* which comes from the English term “paradise”. The word translated to Hebrew means a royal park. The “abundance in the garden is conveyed by the observation that it contains every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (ESV Study Bible Commentary). This place was paradise. Full of abundance and life. What a place to imagine. It’s hard to compare it to anything today.

So, the Garden is this beautiful place intended for mankind to enjoy. But it’s also more than that. He was there, in person. In the Genesis account, “God placed us humans and gave us the task to cultivate it. There He walks and talks with us. It is a place where God has placed us and given us a task. It is where we are in intimate communion with God (Orthodox Arts Journal). The bible says that Adam and Eve could hear the sound of the Lord God walking the garden in

the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:11). Not only was the Garden a paradise, but it was also an intimate place where God walked in and with His creation. Such beauty to behold in all of its splendor.

Now most of us probably know how the story ends. The great divorce. Adam and Eve disobeyed what God had set before them and it led to some pretty big consequences that changed the scope of history for mankind. Whether we were all intended to live in the garden or not, we will never know on this side of eternity. But the detail and passion that our Lord put into creating our earth is the whole point. He did not take it lightly. We were given all the earth to enjoy but were also given responsibility.

# GUIDED DISCUSSION 2

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. Have you ever given the Garden of Eden much thought? How do you picture the Garden? Take some time to describe the garden in detail. Feel free to draw it if that helps.
2. If God put so much detail and beauty into creating the Garden of Eden what do you think that says about His character? And what do you think that means when He created you?
3. What do you think the responsibility is for us as believers?

# REFLECT

Take some time this week to think about what was discussed as a group. Reflect on the second question. What do you really think it says about God with the detail He put into His creation? Is it hard to believe he did that with you in mind?

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## **PART 3: OUR VALUES**

### **Read Genesis 1**

#### *Our Calling in Genesis*

Now that we have established how intricate the Lord created the earth for his creation to revel in, we can discuss our role and responsibility with it. After God created the Earth, he rested from all that He had done. Genesis 2:5 says that “for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.” It was at this point that the Lord God formed man and breathed in the breath of life from His very own nostrils. Mankind was created.

He then asks mankind to do two things,

1. “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1: 28)
2. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

These are some of the first two things mankind was asked to do. Fill the earth, have dominion over it, work, and keep the Earth. As God's people, it is not a question that we should be taking earth stewardship seriously. It is an act of love and obedience. Author and pastor of Bridgetown Church, Mark Comer, says that it was more than an “ask” but a theological mandate (Comer 52). Because we were created in His image and therefore bear His image, “We were designed, in a very real way, to show the world what God is like. So, when God gave us the command to rule



over the earth, the expectation was to do so in a way that reflected His character” (Armstrong). It was not in our design to rule and conquer the Earth, but to work it and to take care of it. We were created to be cultivators and mimic and reflect the very essence of our Lord. Our Father is the cultivator of life, and we get to partake in that because we bear his image. We “are cultivators by calling. Humans are here to maintain the fertility of the soil for ongoing life, to ‘renew the face of the earth’, in the phrase of Psalm 104, and to give glory to God. The ancients would have understood Wendell Berry: “In talking about topsoil, it is hard to avoid the language of religion.” (Rasmussen 200). It’s all intertwined. Our relationship with the earth is correlated with our relationship with the Lord. We cannot "dismantle dehumanizing and destructive forces such as racism, colonialism, classism, sexism, and *ecological* degradation and seek to cultivate conditions that enable right relationships within the Earth’s web of life and with God” (Moe Lobeda 17). To be cultivators and image-bearers of Christ we need to seek right relationships with the Lord and his creation. This does not mean we need to worship the ground as if it were God but “because of God’s boundless love for creation and presence with and in it (Moe-Lobeda 18). However, we need to seek out how to protect the beautiful gift of the earth that was given to us. Our calling is clear, it is not an option. Our Father gives good gifts but also expects us to take care of them. THIS IS our act of worship to our Father.

### *What’s Happening Right now- How the Church Has Responded*

As we are digging into our calling as Christians to be good stewards of the earth and taken time to understand our Father's heart for all of His creation, it's time to look at what's going on right now in the Christian world. I, personally, come from a history of churches that have not discussed the Christian’s response to earth stewardship from the pulpit. While this does not mean that they don’t care about the earth. The church I grew up in and others I have attended over the

years tell the creation story and the beauty of it. They even do a wonderful job taking care of the grounds around the church. But the message of creation care as Christians-I have not heard. Perhaps it isn't on the same level as war, poverty, or even the pandemic so it is not addressed from the pulpit. But why would we neglect at least touching on it if it is one of our callings? Why is it that it has never been spoken at least once in all the years and sermons I have listened to? It could be this self-determined level of which injustices are worse than others and environmental injustice is lower than poverty. However, I believe by working on environmental injustice, we are also working on the other injustices our world faces. We can dive even deeper in our pursuit as humans, and even work towards issues like poverty through environmental care. We can call people further into reconciliation. They are very intertwined. Just think about it- if we were stewarding our earth better, there could be more food for the poor. To take it one step further, environmental stewardship could address injustices such as racism. Perhaps this goes to show that teaching environmental issues is more than just about taking care of the earth, it is about our brothers and sisters experiencing racism. In a lot of cases, communities consisting primarily of people of color continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the nation's air, water, and waste problems" (Bullard 24). Think about it, we have all even seen places of poverty or at least seen pictures. So often we see pictures from kids in Mexico living in or around trash and scavenging for something to eat. Those experiencing poverty are forced into places like that. Where there is no food, trash is abundant, and sickness runs rampant because sanitation levels are low. The people that are living like this are typically people of color. That is a poverty issue, racial issue, and environmental issue. It's all so connected. Working on one problem starts the ripple effect of helping other problems. But it all starts in the church. We need to be having these conversations.

With all this in mind, I took some time to perform some interviews, because I figured if I hadn't been in a church that advocates for creation care, I wonder if this is just the consensus. I took the time to sit down and have a conversation with several pastors, church staff, and churchgoers to hear their take on earth stewardship, if their church is actively pursuing the calling, and if they have any hesitations. I purposely reached out to churches of several different denominations, including Lutheran, Community Bible, Non-denominational, and Antioch to name a few. I came in with several questions, but also space for a real conversation to happen. The main question I started with was, "What do you think our calling as Christians are concerning creation care based on Genesis?" And honestly, I heard the resounding same response over and over. To summarize this response, it is the idea that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of what we have been given, but that they do not think the Church as a whole is doing a great job at it. I heard things like

- “I think we've been called as Christians to be good stewards of all that God gives us and I think that ranges anywhere from finances to our food. It's one of those things where I think sometimes we have to determine what is my responsibility as a Christian and what is the Church's role. Sometimes they overlap, sometimes they don't. (Welch)
- “ I think our church \*\*could get on board with doing something around earth stewardship like a garden, but I don't think there would be enough people to physically get involved because it's not something we have done before” (Kasari)
- “I think most Christians have a problem with earth stewardship because they just think that we are here temporarily, and the world is not our home and there's just not a huge concern for it” (Crockett)

- " It's not the main concern for our church. I don't think we would know where to even start" (Keller)

These thoughts resonate throughout my interviews. There is an understanding of the calling, but not a lot of action or knowledge in how to act as a church. There is some wrestling for the church to do. Is this a main concern for the church? Does it need to be? Do we believe this is what our Lord is calling us to do? Based on our calling in Genesis, I would argue yes. I believe that as the church, we do not know how to navigate this calling. And not to blame anyone. Looking back through history, I don't believe it is the narrative we have been putting forward. But it seems like something needs to change. I do believe that most Christians want to honor God. I don't believe people are purposely neglecting it either. Maybe we just need to explore what this could mean. As a church. There is a lot of emphasis on the church as a whole. This can be a personal endeavor, and it probably should be. It is important to find out what environmental stewardship looks like for you. However, there is so much power in the community. I know it is not an easy task to shift an entire way of thinking. It takes momentum and a community to bring about change. Scripture portrays community highly, "As iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17) and there is an emphasis on the body of Christ working together, serving together, and loving one another (Romans 12:3-13). There is so much power when the body of Christ comes together, and for that reason, I believe the Church needs to get involved for change to occur.

There was one interview that changed everything for me. The pastor was giving me a tour of the premises as they have a lot of ministries going on. He walked me through their prayer garden and then their food forest/permaculture garden. It was a little oasis that had tons of fruit trees growing, edible flowers, and herbs. The community is welcome 24/7 to both the prayer

garden and the food forest. They are encouraged to pick and take the food home. Different groups from the community come and have meetings in their prayer garden. It is a place where I saw the church, community, and environmental stewardship meshing in the most beautiful way. As we walked through it the pastor turned to me and asked me “Does it feel like Jesus has been here”? I had never seen anything like this. It seemed like a practical solution to the question I have found myself asking over and over. Why is the church not more proactive in earth care? Should we not be the ones on the forefront as it was a calling given to us in Genesis? The garden is low maintenance. They hardly have anyone working it (mostly because the head gardener had an injury) but it still is growing, producing, and fulfilling its purpose regardless of someone working in it. That is how permaculture works. This will be discussed in full later but in short, permaculture stands for permanent agriculture. The ecosystems work together in harmony and not deriving nutrients from the soil. It was a lot like what I imagine the Garden of Eden looking like. Trees of fruit flourishing left and right. There was not an irrigation system set up, nor rows of mono-crop lettuce. A permaculture garden is also super "Central Oregon friendly" if you will. Central Oregon is a high desert. Think dry and high altitude where there is currently a drought (Cureton). To be good stewards of the earth and fulfill this calling wholly, we need to be good stewards of water, especially here in this part of Oregon. A permaculture garden uses  $\frac{1}{3}$  less water than the lawn that used to be there (Kramer). It's low maintenance for the church. This is such a perfect way for a church to come around our earth stewardship calling, bring in the community, and be resourceful. There will be a lot more discussion about permaculture later, but I think it's important to ask the question, “Why is the Church not being more proactive in earth care”? We need to find what the hesitations are behind why the church is not proactive and see what and if anything is already working for churches that are actively pursuing this.

## GUIDED DISCUSSION 3

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. Have you ever thought about taking care of the Earth as a calling?
2. Do you think the Church as a whole is doing a good job of fulfilling this calling? If yes, what are some ways you see that happening? If not, why do you think the Church is missing this?
3. Do you think your church would be willing to make some changes to make earth care a priority? Whether that is a permaculture garden or not. Brainstorm what that could look like.

## REFLECT

Continue to think about what it would look like for your church to actively take part in Earth care. What do you think this could look like? Do you have any hesitations? Take some time to jot down your thoughts.

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## **PART 4: THE DEFENDING ARGUMENT: FINDING COMMON GROUND**

### *The Ever-Polarizing Climate Change Conversation*

While the topic of environmental stewardship has seemed to be far from most pulpits, it is also widely debated within the church. According to a study performed in 2019 that involved 1,000 pastors, about half of the pastors believe that global warming is real, and the rest do not (Banks). This makes it hard to discuss when the floor is so divided. We get so caught up in whether climate change is real or not. I have been part of and witnessed some very heated discussions on the topic of climate change. Honestly, I knew a lot of facts. I was a biology major for my undergrad and knew a lot about the subject. For some reason, I always left the conversation feeling very empty. Maybe I was missing the point? Since then, I have spent a large amount of time diving into this subject going back into Genesis and asking the Lord to reveal His heart on the subject. I've also spent time asking other believers. The answer I got was not what I expected. Maybe it's not all about climate change. Maybe it's about our hearts. Maybe it's just simpler than I ever thought. Friends, as we head into this next part I am going to ask you once more, if you've been a part of heated discussions on the reality of climate change and feel empty as well, maybe there's more to learn. Let's throw our facts aside, opinions, and just simplify. We know one thing to be true, our calling in Genesis. Let's just grow in that.

One argument that came up over and over in some of the interviews I had was why we need to take care of the earth when the Lord is going to return, destroy it, and take us all up to Heaven (Crockett). I found this to be true within the conversations of believers I've had also. Let's dive in.

*A Neglect of our Calling*

Let's put it in perspective. Our Earth is suffering in many different ways by exploiting the use of pollutants and toxins. Our groundwater has toxic chemicals in it harming our soil and animals. The use of fossil fuels is at an all-time high which pollutes the very air we breathe. We are producing a ridiculous amount of trash and are not sure what to do with it all. To put it in perspective, "The volume of trash that the U.S. residents generate has doubled in the past forty years...The United States has only 5 percent of the world's population but generates 19 percent of its wastes" (Pellow 100). Beyond that, our landfills "release toxic chemicals into our environment. The EPA estimates that 75 percent of landfills in the United States are currently leaking" (Clawson 147). The chemicals that leak cause irreversible damage to our groundwater with some of the most toxic chemicals leaking such as dioxins, lead, DDT, and PCBs (Clawson 147). These are some of the deadliest chemicals that are polluting our earth now because we did not sustainably dispose of our trash and now we know the Earth is suffering the results. This is just one example of how we are not stewarding our Earth well and causing it more harm. The pollution we are causing "is not a victimless crime — it's intentionally hiding God from others, and the act of making our earth less desirable is blinding others to the goodness of God" (Mattson). We are responsible for the damage we are causing. The Lord did not create a beautiful world for us to not care about the little things.

I'm not saying Christians are to blame for this by any means. I just believe we can do better. We have all failed, even "Adam had the first crack at it, and he failed... and "next God called Abraham and his family to take another shot, but tragically, they failed too" (Comer 45). However, despite all this, "God's original intent was always for human beings to rule over the world" (Comer 45). Despite Him knowing we would fail over and over again, he still allowed us



to rule over the earth. He invites us in. He's looking for partners in His work. He has been since the beginning. And if you have a partnership, you also have ownership.

Additionally, part of the root of this problem could be ecological illiteracy. People can be easily oblivious to it if they do not know they are personally a part of the problem. It is something you have to be aware of and convicted of. Many people, especially in the United States, do not see all these issues we are facing as a real problem. We are unaware of the damage we are causing, and the long-term effects this is having on ourselves as well as our future generations. If people knew the harm we were causing we would be on track to stop living in the cycle of unknowingly harming the earth we live in. Ecological literacy is "the ability to 'read' the language and realities of Earth's life-systems and how they interact with human factors are equally key to the life of faith" (Moe-Lobeda 130). Cynthia Moe-Lobeda describes how she fell into this category saying she "journeyed through life ecologically illiterate" (Moe-Lobeda 130). It is very common to go through life unaware of our life systems and how it relates to our faith life. This is essentially moral oblivion where we are not aware of what we are doing to the earth, that our "practices mean life and death for people thousands of miles across the globe and threaten Earth's life systems then we must develop tools to understand the impact of what we are doing" (Moe Lobeda 131). As Christians especially, we do not have the privilege to live in this oblivion. We were not created to treat as if "the gift of Creation were simply a commodity, then we could consume it the way we consume a gift box of chocolates. But because it carries promise, it must be conserved until the time of fulfillment" (Neff 36). We have the privilege of

being aware of our Earth and doing something about it because it is the Lord's creation. He has given it to us to steward well until the day He returns and restores it fully.

This also does not mean we all need to go become farmers and tend to the land in that sense. Although that is wonderful. It means this,

You are a modern-day Adam or Eve. This world is what's left of the Garden. And your job is to take all the raw materials that are spread out in front of you, to work it, to take care of it, to rule, to subdue, to wrestle, to fight, to explore, and to take the creation project forward as an act of service and worship to the God who made you. (Comer 66)

*What's the Point? Won't the Earth be Destroyed in the End?*

Some Christians have a hard time believing we don't need to take care of the earth because it is our temporary home so there is not a point in improving the state that it is in. This is true to an extent. The Bible is clear that "grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1:24). It also says we should not be absorbed in the world because "this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). However, just because the Earth will not be how we know it today does not make an excuse for us to neglect our calling to take care of the earth because, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20). This is not an excuse to neglect our calling.

A lot of people just say "it's all gonna burn" so what's the point? I even experienced that in some of my interviews. If that were true, then what's the point of anything? Work, family, rest,

beauty? If it's all going to be destroyed. Why would we be put here to do all the things we do and experience a world of such beauty just for it to be burned? Mark Comer the pastor of Bridgetown in Portland claims that it is a warping of what Peter said. Here's what he said, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything were done in it will be laid bare" ( 2 Peter 3:10). Comer argues that it is an incorrect use of the context. In this case, Peter is retelling the flood story. In the paragraph, right before this, he was talking about the flood wiping out the earth. That story, as we all know, goes like this: "The earth was not destroyed in the sense that it was completely wiped out. It was simply wiped clean. It was a global restart" (Comer 240). Peter continues talking and says that everything on the earth will be *heurisko* in Greek meaning, "exposed, found, uncovered" (Comer 240). So basically, when that day comes fire will cover all the injustice and baggage of the world "and the earth will be found, seen for what it really is, what God intended it to be all along" (Comer 240). It will be a renewal of all things when God makes all things right on Earth. Since creation, we were created, held together, and reconciled to God, and "we see again that we are woven into, rather than set apart from, the tapestry of creation" (Murchison 33). We are a part of it, we cannot run away from it.

# GUIDED DISCUSSION 4

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. Have you seen or been a part of conversations on the topic of climate change? How have they ended up?
2. Do you feel a deep hurt for the Earth after reading some of those statistics? Do you think that's what the Lord intended? Do you think He knew it would be this way?
3. What do you think the Lord thinks about how the earth is being treated?
4. Have you caught yourself questioning what the point is in taking care of the earth? Does letting go of the negative stigma from the church about earth care and climate change sound difficult to you?

# REFLECT

Spend some time praying about the Lord's heart for the earth. Write down what He gives you or what you believe to be true based on his words, promises, and messages of love.

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## **PART 5: A TANGIBLE STEP: PERMACULTURE GARDEN**

Does starting a garden at your church sound crazy? I can understand why, but I'm here to tell you it's not. The potential of a garden at a church is phenomenal! On top of that, it's very practical. As I did my research this summer I was trying to find a solution. But I wasn't originally. I was studying community gardens and their impact on lower-income housing. However, as I dug deeper, I started asking the question of why the church wasn't doing something like this. It seemed like a perfect ministry for a church. They usually always have land and it's usually surrounded by the community. There seemed to be such a need and desire for them. As I investigated further I realized it was more than just a ministry opportunity, but an opportunity for the church to start talking about earth care. As we are now. It was completely missing, yet something so important to our walk of life. The farther I got into community gardens, the more I realized churches can do even better. There is nothing wrong with some raised beds full of lettuce and tomatoes. I think that's a wonderful thing. But for the sake of spirituality, community engagement, and practicality, permaculture is the way to go. Permaculture reminded me so much of the Garden of Eden. That was practically the very first food forest.

### *What is Permaculture?*

It is important to understand that Permaculture was started in the mid-1970s and is often defined by the words permanent and culture (Alonso and Guiochon Chapter 1). It is a,

Way of life that's ahead of its time while also taking us back to how our ancestors lived, sustainability and within their ecological means...permaculture gives us the tools and techniques to live sustainably while still having our needs met in a lifestyle rich with healthy food, comfortable housing, and renewable energy and resources. (Bloom and Boehnlein 11).

It is such a regenerative design. Doesn't that sound spiritual? Permaculture is a way of living in our calling to be stewards. The problem is that "Ever since humans developed agriculture, we've been transforming the planet and throwing the soil's nutrient cycle out of balance," (Sarah Yang) said Ronald Amundson, a UC Berkeley professor of environmental science, policy, and management. Additionally, "In contrast to living in a wasteful, consumerist manner that depletes our resources and doesn't leave future generations much to work with, permaculture is about building resilience and using only what we need and what we have access to—in other words, living within our ecological means" (Bloom and Boehnlein 11). Permaculture is such a beautiful way to be stewards of the earth we have been given, practice active environmental care, and bring it all to the church. How marvelous would it be to have a permaculture garden in the back of the church? A place for people to meet, a place for the community to come and get fruit and herbs, and a place that looks and feels as if Jesus were there. God is everywhere, not saying He isn't. There's something sacred about returning to the garden where He first walked on the earth.

### *The Land, Manpower, Community, and Practicality*

This may seem like a crazy idea. Again, having a garden at church is one of the most practical things a church can do. For example, a church typically has a good amount of land. A lot of that is a parking lot, a lawn, or just unused land. A permaculture garden can fit in a space

as little as a quarter of an acre! As stated earlier, it's perfect for Central Oregon. It uses 1/3 less water than a normal garden which is sustainable for Central Oregon (Guthrie).

Permaculture focuses on 3 values that the church can agree with Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Shares.

1. Earth care is about being good stewards of what we have been given. It's about working with the earth and the ecosystems the Lord already created.

Additionally, it is, “to help, or at the very least to do no harm” (Bloom and Boehnlein 14)

2. People care is another important value in permaculture. In a lot of the developing world, we see people's basic needs not being met. By helping make sure people’s needs are met, we can also meet other needs such as spiritual needs and even help them become better stewards of the earth too (Bernard)
3. Fair Shares have a lot to do with sharing the produce and the garden. A lot of this is about sharing with the community and allowing them access to the garden. This can be scary for some churches to allow the community to come onto the property at all times. Chris Kramer, the pastor of Nativity Lutheran, addressed this when I asked if his congregation gets antsy about this at all. He responded by saying, "No, we have to just keep asking

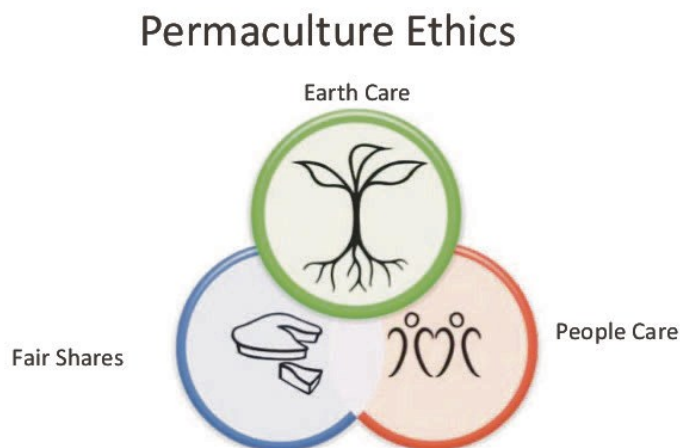


Figure 3  
Source: Adapted from *Incorporate Permaculture Practices into Your Business* by *Green Energy Time*

ourselves what Jesus would do. That is the question that drives most of our decisions here at Nativity Lutheran and we pray that for other churches as well" (Kramer).

As you can see through these 3 values, the heart behind permaculture all fit in perfectly with the church and Christianity.

### *The Power of Community*

The reason I am encouraging a church to start this type of garden as opposed to an individual one is because of the power of community. In community, there is encouragement, support, and prayer. There are different people with different giftings. To make this garden work there needs to be many people on board. Ideally, the whole church would be for it, but I am trying to be realistic. I was interviewing the Resident Director for an affordable housing company, John Baldwin. He was telling me about the success and failures of many gardens that they have had at different affordable living complexes. He told me that even where the desire is high among residents to have a garden on site, it can be neglected and lead to failure. The key was having dedicated people that had specific roles. Oftentimes this meant another organization needed to come in and help out such as the boys and girls club (Baldwin).

We see the power of community all over the Bible. People worship together (Deuteronomy 26-27), people eat together and have a feast (Exodus 12-13). It's all over scripture. From the very beginning, God knew we needed people. Take Adam, he was very alone. Then God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:18). We were not created to do things by ourselves. On top of that, it is just better when we have all types of different people, from different backgrounds, races, and ages. We were all created differently and therefore bring something unique to the table. There is such goodness when the body of Christ comes together to serve Him. That is why there is a need for



the church body to create a garden together. Someone will be better at the physical labor of planting things, another better at the finances, and someone else at the planning side of things.. That is just how the Lord created us. If we were all good at everything, there would be no need for each other. Clearly, that is not what the Lord intended.

*Tying it all Together*

In summary, permaculture is a powerful tool that allows us to participate in the reconciliation of ourselves to the beautiful earth God created for us to enjoy. It gives us the opportunity to partner with Him. It carries the values He instilled in us to take care of others and to be stewards of this great green earth. Finally, it creates the freedom to allow people to utilize their many God given gifts and talents within the church body as a whole.

## GUIDED DISCUSSION 5

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. What are your initial thoughts regarding permaculture?
2. Can you picture your church doing something like this? Why or why not? Are there hesitations?
3. What role do you picture yourself playing in the start-up of a permaculture garden?
4. How do you think your community will come together and benefit from this garden?

## REFLECT

Take time this week to dream. Dream of what a garden at a YOUR church would do for the people of the church, the community, and the earth. Do you have hesitations or does it give you chills to think about? Jot down everything.

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## **PART 6: WHERE TO START**

There is so much to be said about Permaculture. I could write another paper with a complete guide on how to start and fund a permaculture garden. Or a whole book rather. However, this will be a very simplified step-by-step guide for beginners. I have read several in-depth books on permaculture, and it can be super overwhelming. This will also cover some ideas on how to get some additional financial help and engage the community. I will leave some recourses that will be of future use for some people who want to take charge of this ministry. For now, this is a very simplified guide on how to start. The problem is, "Many of us get stuck between wanting to act and taking action. The uncertainty of the uncharted path ahead can be daunting. Sometimes it feels as if circumstances are conspiring against us, and we find ourselves riveted in place" (Kelley and Kelley 119). Let us not get caught in limbo. Let us be action takers and world changers. Also, look at all the people in the church. I'm sure there is a handful of people that love gardening, people that have written grants before, and people that have businesses that do pavement removal. This is why we do it in the community. We work together.

### *Step by Step Guide*

1. Meet! Create a time to host a church meeting.

By starting the conversation and going through the handbook, you are already halfway there! Getting the church together will help get an idea of what strengths are available and talk through finances and the plan. You will need someone who will want to take on the role of "Head Gardener". This person is someone who typically loves to garden and has a heart for it. They will acquire more volunteers to help. This is also a great time to brainstorm how to engage the

community. This may be a meet and greet in the garden once it's up and running or walking through the neighborhoods advertising with flyers.

2. Finances

Beginning a church garden will take some fundraising unless the church has some money put aside for this. I talked to the “head gardener” at Nativity Lutheran told me that they were able to start their garden with a \$10,000 donation they received (Guthrie). She now does a fundraiser to raise about \$1,500 each year. This covers things like mulch and tools. The community contributes to that because they also benefit. I will attach an example of a grant written for a church asking for \$10,000 to start a garden. This will give you an idea of how to address the finances and make headway on writing your grant application if that's the way the church wants to go.

3. Identify the land

Now it's time to decide where you want the garden! Maybe it's in the back, or the very front.

Starting with a quarter acre is a great place to begin and then if the opportunity arises for more land you can always expand at a later date. One thing to keep in mind is a place that already has soil will be easier and less pricey than

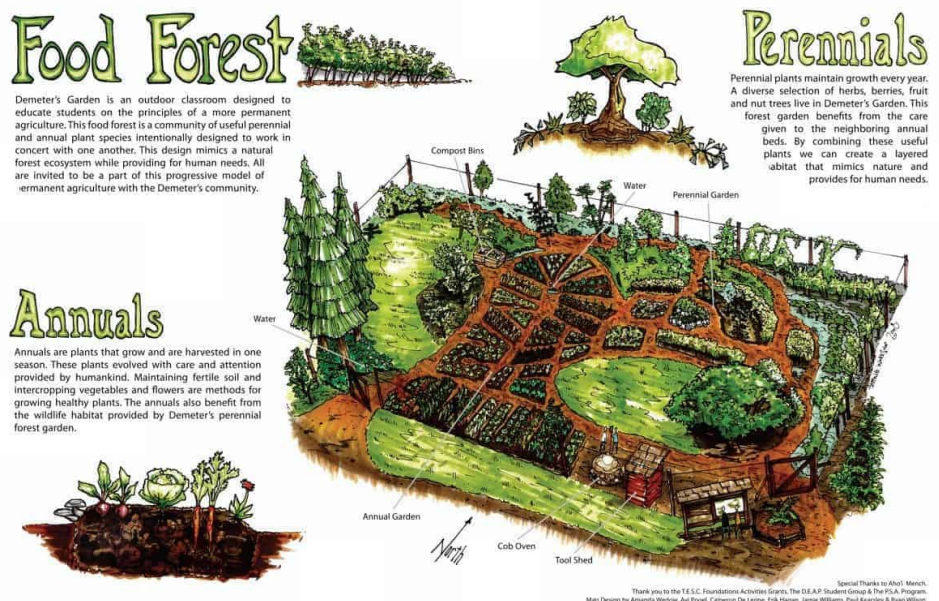


Figure 5  
Source: What is Permaculture by Brian K

where a concrete parking lot was.

#### 4. Mapping it out

Design time! Remember the basics.

We want to create an ecosystem that works together and not against. Each plant is strategically placed. Look at Figure 5. You want taller trees to act as a canopy, and then herbs covering the lower ground level, and ground cover to even cover below that.

An example of a shrub layer could be a berry tree and an example of the ground cover could be sweet potatoes or strawberries. It's all so

perfectly designed to protect each other as the ground cover will protect the soil from the cold winters and the tall trees will act as a canopy to protect the rest. You might also think about a tall bench to work at and places to sit and enjoy the beauty. Figure 4 above gives an example of what the garden design could look like. However, there is no right or wrong design. In this example, you can observe the different layers of plants, the water source, composting section, and tool shed. This is a very established garden; it can be a lot simpler than this! The point of this design is to make connections between plants as see which ones will benefit the other.

#### 5. Climate

Here in Central Oregon, we are a zone 6 based on the USDA Zone map. However, there are many microclimates in between. For example, Bend is 3-5, and about 15 miles south in Sunriver

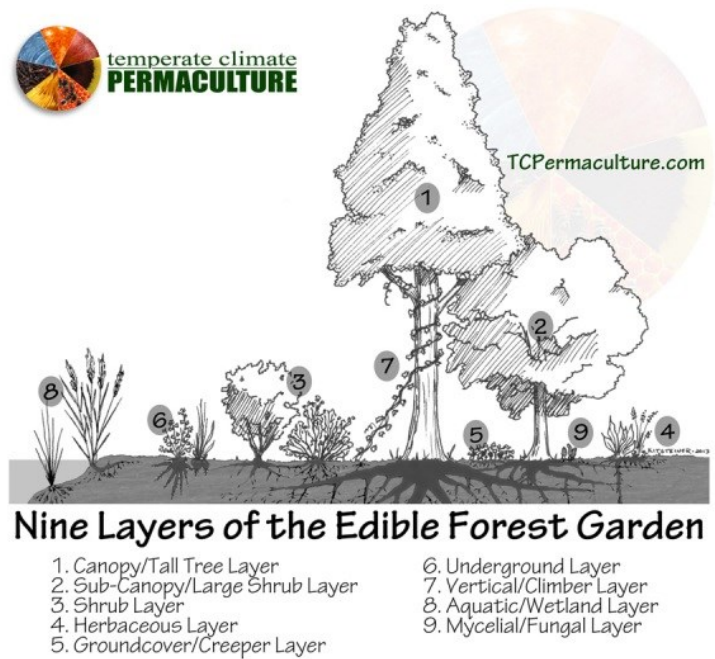


Figure 5

Source: Nine Layers of the Food Forest Guilds by Andrew Author

they are 3-4. This will help determine some plants that would thrive here (Gardening in Central Oregon's Climate)

## 6. Soil

There are 2 big parts with soil health. Those include pH level and macronutrients. Most nutrients are most available at a pH of 6.3 to 7.0 and most plants will like the pH between 5.5 to 7.0. Depending on if your soil above or below the pH range you can add things in such as Eelgrass or kelp mix and other additives to even out the pH (Blackmore 20). As for macronutrients, you might know about the big 3 known as Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potassium. Nitrogen "fuels growth and leaf production in plants. Phosphorous helps plants to flower and produces fruit and seeds Potassium helps to make plants more resistant to environmental damage and diseases" (Bloom and Boehnlein 130). These are all super important in soil care and upkeep.

The best suggestion I have here is to take a soil sample and send it in for testing. This will cost some money but give you a lot of answers about the health of the soil and where to go from there. Oregon State Extension program has some great recourses and recommendations in how to take soil samples and where to have them tested (Soil Testing in Deschutes County). There are ways you can do your own pH tests as well as taking your own soil samples, but for starting your garden sending in a soil sample would probably be the best way to go.

In the early stages, you can consider some soil-building plants. These are specific plants that are helpful in the beginning stages because they help create better conditions for other plants that will take their place one day. They are nitrogen fixers and adaptive species that can help

build fertile ground, especially when if you're starting with the bare ground (Bloom and Boehnlein 137). Some of these that will be successful in the Central Oregon zone include,

*Medicago sativa*: Alfalfa

*Petroselinum crispum*: Parsley

*Trifolium pratense*: Red clover (Bloom and Boehnlein 137)

#### 7. Composting

This is a super important aspect of permaculture. It's all about harnessing energy that's already there such as the sun and enzymes. The plants use it to break down and create organic matter. This could be a great way to get the rest of the community and church congregation involved as they can bring their food scraps and participate in the regenerative process. Worms are great to add as they speed up the process because they are nitrogen fixers and will add in their own organic matter to the soil (Blackmore 24-28).

#### 8. Water

Drip irrigation would probably be the best. Central Oregon has many canals coming off the Deschutes River for irrigation in the whole area and so that is one source that could be looked into. Carol from Nativity Lutheran she said they spend less than \$100 a month on water and they only irrigate from April to October. It is about a third of what they paid to water the lawn that was previously there (Guthrie)

#### 9. Volunteers and continued meetings

Now that we have a birds' eye view of some of the major aspects that go into starting a garden, we need the manpower. The startup will be different than upkeep and will need more help. But as the garden becomes more and more established it is nice to have some sort of weekly schedule for people to come in and weed. This could be a Saturday morning fellowship

event completed with some coffee and fellowship. It is not super necessary, but it is good to have regular upkeep, so it doesn't become too overgrown. Nativity Lutheran says that the head gardener does most of it and was injured as could not weed or anything for several months this last growing season. It was a bit overgrown but nothing crazy. This goes to show that you don't need to be in the garden every single day to make it successful. Ideally, as the community surrounding the church becomes more aware and involved, many of them will volunteer some time as they reap the benefits and realize the worship in it. What cool conversations can come from literally working the land together!

I hope this gave you a good idea of where to get started and how to move forward. This is no easy task, yet so very worth it. It will take a lot of people, strength, and resiliency. But the Lord is so for environmental stewardship and community. There are many different steps towards environmental stewardship you can take, but this one is one of the coolest in my opinion. Returning to the garden in such a tangible and intimate way. Stay strong and connected, friends. He will lead you as you embark on this journey. Below are a couple of recourses that are helpful for those of you that want to dig deep into permaculture.

### ***Further Recourses***

Practical Permaculture by Bloom and Boehnlein

Human Permaculture by Bernard Alonso

Permaculture for the Rest of Us by Jenni Blackmore



## GUIDED DISCUSSION 6

\*\*These questions are designed to be discussed in small groups. The following questions can bring up differing views, so please be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions.

1. Does all this information excite you or make you feel overwhelmed?
2. What role do you think you could play in the garden?
3. How can you encourage other churches to take similar action?

## REFLECT

Draw a picture of what you can imagine your church's garden looking like. Imagine yourself sitting in the garden. What do you see? How does it make you feel? Does it feel like Jesus is/was there?

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## CONCLUSION

I hope in taking the time to read this Handbook, discuss, and ponder everything you were challenged and encouraged. This was such an important message to talk about. Environmental Stewardship is our calling as Christians and was given to us as a biblical mandate. In participating in this calling, we get to love others and mirror the image of God. I pray that this idea of stewardship will help your body of Christ come together. Permaculture is one of the best ways I have seen a church participate in our calling and so that was the basis of this handbook, but there are other ways as well. I cannot say it is the best way, but it is a very practical way and fitting to the Central Oregon area. We can work together and participate in one of our greatest callings.

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## **APPENDIX 2: GRANT EXAMPLE**

Grant Proposal: A Community Garden to improve the surrounding community of Boulevard Park Church and to begin the conversation of our calling as Christians to be Earth Stewards

This is an example of a grant proposal for funding to add in a Garden at Boulevard Park Church. It is proposed to Global Seed Planters that has a mission of stewardship and spreading the gospel to the entire world. I hope this will be helpful to read over and imagine just swapping out your church's information for Boulevards as well as who you will be writing the grant to. For Central Oregon, the OSU extension program could be a great option to try. They have funded the startup of several community gardens around Bend Oregon.



Boulevard Park Church  
1822 S 128<sup>th</sup> St  
Seattle WA, 98168  
info@bpcburien.org  
(206) 243-2600

18 August 2021

Diane Brask, Founder and Executive Director  
Global Seed Planters  
PO Box 107  
Sandstone MN, 55072

Dear Diane Brask with Global Seed Planters,

Thank you so much for taking the time and effort to read this enclosed proposal. Boulevard Park Church (BPC) is requesting Global Seed Planters to consider funding and joining our journey to create a community garden. We are requesting \$10,000 to begin a community garden at the BPC in Burien WA. This will be accomplished by tearing up concrete from the far East side of the parking lot, putting in handmade beds to grow to produce in, and providing fencing to enclose the entire garden. Burien is one of the most diverse and poverty-stricken cities in the greater Seattle area <sup>1</sup> and is actually considered a food desert <sup>2</sup> and would greatly benefit from a garden. The second aspect of this project will be the start of a new conversation for Boulevard Park Church about Earth care. As Christians, we have a responsibility to take care of our earth and so this will start a class where the values and calling as Christians will be discussed.

We are so thankful for the consideration to grow the Burien area in gardens but as well as spirituality. We hope and pray you will deeply consider assisting us.

You can reach us at (206) 243-2600 and can email me at [bud.diener@bpcburien.org](mailto:bud.diener@bpcburien.org) for more information regarding our church or proposal.

Thank you,

Paster Bud Diener  
Head Pastor  
Boulevard Park Church

---

<sup>1</sup> Seattle diversity

<sup>2</sup> See SECTION 2 The Problem for more info

Grant Table of Contents

SECTION ONE: Summary.....90

SECTION TWO: Our Story.....91

    The topic of Funding.....91

    Overview of Boulevard .....91

    Mission Statement .....92

    Vision Statement .....92

    History of BPC .....93

    Beneficiaries .....93

    Program/ Ministries .....93

    The Problem .....94

    Your Interests.....95

    Outcomes/ Vision of Project .....96

    Need/ Goals .....96

    Methods of Evaluation.....97

SECTION THREE: Financial Matters .....98

    Project Timeline .....98

    Costs .....98

    Budget .....99

SECTION FOUR: Structure.....99

    Methods of Sustainability .....99

    Organizational Structure .....100

    Board/Staff.....101

    The argument of Investment .....101

APPENDIX 3.....103

    501 (c) 3 Status Documentation .....103

APPENDIX 4.....105

    BPC Finances .....105

WORKS CITED .....108

**SECTION ONE: Summary**

1. Application Date: TBD
  2. Boulevard Park Church
    - a. 1822 S 128<sup>th</sup> St  
Seattle WA 98168  
[info@bpcburien.org](mailto:info@bpcburien.org)  
(206) 243-2600
  3. ID#: 91-0583890
  4. 501 (c) (3) nonprofit
  5. Pastor: Bud Diener
    - a. [Bud.diener@bpcburien.org](mailto:Bud.diener@bpcburien.org)
    - b. (206) 243-2600
  6. Jessalyn Welch
    - a. (206) 370- 4073
    - b. [Jessalyn.henry15@northestu.edu](mailto:Jessalyn.henry15@northestu.edu)
  7. Total Requested: \$10,000
  8. Operating Budget:
  9. Project Budget \$20,000
  10. Fiscal Year: January 1- December 29
  11. Purpose of Funding Requestion:
    - a. Boulevard
  12. Signature of Diane Brask.
-

## **SECTION TWO: Our Story**

### TOPIC FOR FUNDING

I grew up in this church and they do a great job at serving their community, however, there is one area they lack greatly. There is a message that is not shared enough in this church, let alone in the American Evangelical Church. That is the message of our calling as Christians to tend to the earth and to keep it. In Genesis, it says, "Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (ESV Genesis 2:15). It's our job as Christians to take care of the earth and community gardens are a very tangible way to do that. A church is a super reasonable spot for a community garden for so many reasons. First, the church is usually already in a community or neighborhood, they have land, and they have people in the congregation that are already gardeners or know how to garden. On top of that, there is often some sort of need for those experiencing poverty around them that would benefit from a garden or at least the community a garden would provide. For this reason-a church is a perfect location for a community garden. BPC will be putting in the rest of the finances from our ministry's budget. We have created a new budget for our community garden ministry. We are asking for assistance to join us but not to provide all of the finances.

### OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATION

Boulevard Park Church is a non -denominational church in Burien, Washington that serves their area well. They have lots of wonderful ministries such as VBS, Youth group, soccer camp, etc. Their mission statement is "Boulevard Park Church exists to glorify God throughout the world by helping people become mature disciples of Jesus Christ" (Boulevard Park Church).

On top of this, their vision statement is to "Reach the world with the life-changing message of Jesus, connect believers with God and others, mature in them godly character, equip them for a lifestyle of worship and service" (Boulevard Park Church). Boulevard Park is applying for a grant to start a community garden for a couple of different reasons. We as Christians need to be having the conversation about earth care, it would provide a perfect opportunity for the community of Burien to come together, and a food source for those experiencing poverty in the Burien area.

Boulevard Park Church (BPC) is a registered 501c3 and is a suburban church in the middle of Burien WA. The area is very diverse and mostly surrounded by the middle to lower-class population. It is neighbors to SeaTac WA which is one the most diverse cities in Washington (Seattle Times). This would be a wonderful place for a community garden. There are property, a lot of Jesus-loving people, and people who love to garden. It's a wonderful setup to serve the community with a garden as well as a way to start having conversations about our calling as Christians to be caring for the earth.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Boulevard Park Church exists to glorify God throughout the world  
by helping people become mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

## VISION STATEMENT

- Reach the world with the life-changing message of Jesus
- Connect believers with God and others
- Mature in them godly character
- Equip them for a lifestyle of worship and service

## HISTORY OF BPC

Boulevard was planted in 1921 and was first known as First Presbyterian Church of Downtown Seattle. In the year 1980, the congregation voted to have Presbyterian taken out to better fit their beliefs. It was then that the church left the United Presbyterian denomination. In 2105 the name officially changed and became a non-denominational church.

## BENEFICIARIES

The church will benefit from this as well as the community. The church will be able to serve and get to know the community. They will also better understand what earth care is and how to do this well as Christians. The community will benefit because it will bring them to the church to meet people as well as to hopefully encounter Jesus. It will also be a food source for those that need food.

## PROGRAMS/MINISTRIES

Boulevard has a wide variety of ministries. They have a men's, women's, youth, kids, and grief share, and missions. Within each category, there are many inside. For example, within women's ministry, they have Women's Fellowship circle, MOMlife, and Women's study at a couple of different times. These different ministries reach out to each phase of life a woman might be going through. The ministries of BPC run deep and wide and they serve their congregation this way very well.

## THE PROBLEM

There are two main problems. The first is that the church isn't talking about environmental earth care enough. A community garden would bring the topic to the church enabling them to have meetings or Sunday school about the topic. In Genesis, it says, "Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). It's our calling, and it's as simple as that. We get so caught up in whether or not climate change exists, but instead, let's just simplify it! Let's just start the conversation. And a community garden is a way of doing that.

The second problem is that Burien suffers from a lot of poverty. It is neighbors to SeaTac WA which is one the most diverse cities in Washington (Seattle Times). This area is also middle to lower-class income families. There are so many families surrounding the church struggling with poverty. A garden would support the problem, providing food for these families. And even on top of that, it would give emotional support. Struggling with poverty is difficult. Having a place, they can go and give people who care (BPC) would give emotional support to lots of people. This poverty considers Burien to be a food desert because there is no grocery store in close walking distance besides a gas station. A food desert is a "geographical area where residents access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance" (Food Empowerment Project). A lot of low-income families are affected by this issue, especially when they don't have cars to travel to a store. This makes it extra difficult because they have to take a bus or several buses just to get groceries. A report was prepared for Congress by the "Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, about 2.3 million people (or 2.2 percent of all US households) live more than one mile away from a supermarket

and do not own a car" (Food Empowerment Project). The problem is there, and we can do something about it.

## YOUR INTERESTS

I am writing to Global Seed Planters because I see BPC's mission to start a community garden lining up with your interests. Although most of your work is done beyond the USA, I think this project aligns perfectly. Additionally, a lot of the work done by GSP is done in rural areas but bringing your knowledge into an urban setting would be very powerful. Your mission as Global Seed Planters is "transforming lives and communities through strategic partnerships that empower and equip local leaders to be an expression of the love of Jesus in some of the neediest, overlooked, rural regions of the world" (Global Seed Planters). And your vision is to see the day when every person is transformed by the love of God. What better way of doing it than the partnership with BPC? You help develop communities and teach them how to garden. The need is there, and GSP knows the power and benefit of a garden.

You can see the people affected all over the town. The houses are worn down, there is little community engagement and no community gardens. The people don't even have a grocery store nearby besides a gas station which does consider this to be a food desert. The families are affected because they have a difficult time getting to a grocery store. If they don't have a car, a family member is forced to take a bus or several buses just to get groceries. A community garden would supplement this a little bit and give support to these people experiencing poverty.



## OUTCOMES/ VISION OF PROJECT TO ADDRESS ISSUE

The vision of this garden is to supplement the food of the people surrounding BPC to help in the longer than desired treks to the grocery store. This will help families get fresh fruit and veggies with less effort. The second vision of the garden is to bring a sense of community. A garden brings people together. Physically but also emotionally. If the community knew there was a church that cared enough to open up a garden for the community, and they knew others were struggling too, it would bring the community together. This can be a place of physical but also emotional support.

The outcomes include a physical garden, BPC starting the conversation of environmental care in meetings, and some families getting support. This can happen in the first year. The goal is at least 3- 5 families in the surrounding area coming to check it out and engage in the project. Over 5 years a garden is considered more stable, and it will be producing more food. This gives the capability to feed more families and by then the community will know about everything happening. After 5 years the goal is to have 20 families coming to the garden, and a handful attending church with BPC.

## NEEDS/ GOALS

Goal 1: For Boulevard Park Church to start having the conversation about how to be good stewards of the Earth.

Goals 2: For a section of the gravel to be ripped up and the finances to be provided for beds, soil, seeds, etc., and for volunteers to step forward to make this possible.

Needs:

- Volunteers and support from the congregation

- Soil
- Wood for the beds
- Seeds
- Word to get out to the congregation and the community
- Water source and drip system piping
- Fencing
- Gravel/pavement to be ripped up
- Congregational meeting regarding the why and value system behind the garden

Objective: For the community garden to be used as the conversation starter about Christians taking up their calling as an Earth keeper and to bring the community together and serve them well.

#### METHODS FOR EVALUATION

The community garden can be evaluated in 2 ways in the beginning. I'd like to say it can be evaluated by the produce it grows. However, after 1 summer it won't be super developed. I think after a couple of years it can be fully evaluated this way. For the first year, it needs to be evaluated based on produce but also another way. The other way will be by a survey of the community, the congregation, and the grant giver. This will be a great indicator if the garden is meeting the needs of the people and if it's doing what it needs to be doing.

## SECTION THREE: FINANCIAL MATTERS

### PROJECT TIMELINE

Assuming we can get the finances, the goal is to start plating in May 2022. Several things need to be done in the meantime,

1. June 2021: City application, insurance, and contractor quotes
2. July-September 2021: Funding. Church Sunday School class begins to discuss earth care as Christians.
3. October 2021: Rip up concrete on Eastside while the ground is not frozen yet
4. November: Have a team-building wood bed and another team putting up fencing around the garden area
5. January 2022: Set up beds in the fence line. Begin informing the community of the project and availability of the garden to them
6. February 2022: Prepare the soil. Gather seeds, tools, pest control, soil food, etc.
7. March 2022: Install Drip system.
8. May 2022: Start plating seeds
9. After June 2022: Further projects once the garden is running include compost, greenhouse, handicapped beds

### COSTS

1. Ripping up concrete: \$1,500-2,000
2. Materials for building beds: \$ 300 per bed x 20 beds = \$6,000
3. Materials for fencing: \$2,000- 4,000
4. Tools, soil, etc.: \$2,000- \$3,00

5. Installing drip irrigation: \$1,500- \$2,500

## BUDGET

As you can see a garden can be spendy. A lot of these prices are maxed out depending on quotes and labor. I do believe there are a lot of knowledgeable people in our congregation who can help do a lot of this work to eliminate some labor costs. We as a church are putting in the same amount of money to the pot. If we do happen to have some remaining money after, the left-over money will go towards the extra projects <sup>3</sup> mentioned above.

## SECTION FOUR: Structure

### METHODS OF SUSTAINABILITY

My plan for making a sustainable garden for a church is a two-fold proposal. The first is volunteer force which creates accountability and the second is multiple donors instead of just one.

The first step is having a volunteer force. This will include a head gardener as well as several people from the church or community that sign up for days of checking in on the garden, making sure the watering system is working correctly and picking up produce. The head the gardener will do a seasonal check-in (4 times a year) with the church leaders to talk about how the garden is serving the community and what they can do better. The church will annually check in with the church about it at the annual meeting and review its importance and values. This accountability and having consistent workers will help keep it sustainable.

---

<sup>3</sup> Further projects talked about in Section 3 under the timeline

The second part of sustainability will be to have multiple donors. This ensures the finances will be there to start the garden, if problems arise, and for maintenance throughout the years. No one person/ organization wants to do it by themselves, they want to know others are contributing to the pot. This could include the church itself, another organization, or members from the congregation/ community. These 2 factors will help make the garden sustainable for years to come.

A garden is meant to get better over time. As there is more knowledge, more recourses, and even better-fertilized soil it will improve. The effectiveness of the garden over 5 years will include producing more food, more beds to grow food in, and more people in the community on board and aware of it. The volunteers to back this up and accountability will help make sure the garden improves over the years

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

There are 6 paid staff that includes the Senior Pastor, Youth Director, Director of Women's Ministry, Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Worship and Care, and the Administrative Assistant. On top of that, so many people serve on the Board of Elders, Trustees, Deacons. And Deaconess, that are not paid. And also, many volunteers make each of these pastors' jobs and ministry leaders possible.

The structure begins with the Pastor and other paid staff. There is the board of elders under him and including him along with trustees and deacons. There is always accountability between the board as well as with the congregation. The congregation always has a big say and votes on matters.

## BOARD/STAFF

On top of the paid staff, many other people make up "unpaid staff". The congregation's vote and are a part of all decisions in this church. They have regular meetings with the church to bring up big decisions and new things happening. The Finances are openly talked about. The Board includes the Board of Elders. They are elected by the church and serve the church for a term of time. They have regular meetings of strategic planning for the church, development of the church, and discuss financial matters. Deacons and Deaconesses are those that lead the church in service and love. They do a lot of the hospitality, greeting, helping members of the community financially, and helping with things like funerals. The trustees are those that care for the facility and grounds and organizational matters of the church. They help ensure the care of the recourses that God has provided the church. There is also a group that is called the missions team. They are overseas he missions the church supports and brings new support options to the church and board of elders.

## ARUGUEMENT OF INVESTMENT

As clearly shown, Boulevard has wonderful ministries for its congregation. But not a lot of ministries reach the community which is something important to BPC as stated in their vision. Number one of their vision statements is to "Reach the world with the life-changing message of Jesus" (Boulevard Park Church). Because they are located in such a diverse and middle to lower-class location, a community garden would thrive here. In my Fieldwork research have performed here in Bend I have that by a study done by Housing Works that showed Latino population is a big population of the residents of affordable housing (John Baldwin). This means there is no space for gardens. And in the study, showed that a garden was highly desired especially among the Latino population. I equate this to the area that BPC is in because it is so diverse and there

are a lot of apartment complexes around or small houses that do not have much property around them. A community garden would thrive here. BPC has a good amount of land (yes, some gravel would need to be taken out) and they are in the perfect location. A community garden provides locals with a place to grow food and even produce from where they are from. It provides a place for community building and brings people to the church. It is an incredible place to meet people and show them, Jesus.

For the church's benefit, it gives them a way to explore the calling of Christians to be earth keepers. It starts opening up the conversation. I believe the church needs to be doing more in this area. And a garden provides space to talk about this in the process of building it. A garden is also such a wonderful place to encounter the presence of Jesus. No wonder why God put Adam and Eve in the most perfect garden ever.

APPENDIX 3

501c3 STATUS DOCUMENTATION

BOULEVARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF KING COUNTY A B  
1822 S 128  
SEATTLE, WA 98168

Internal Revenue Service  
EP/EO Disclosure Desk  
P.O. Box 2350 Los Angeles, CA 90053

Person to Contact:  
F. Mirafior or L. Barragan

Telephone Number:  
(213) 894-4232

Refer Reply to:  
90-314

Date:  
May 07, 1990

RE: 91-0583890  
BOULEVARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF KING COUNTY A B

Gentlemen:

This is in response to your request for a determination letter of the above-named organization.

A review of our records indicates that the above-named organization was recognized to be exempt from Federal income tax in January 1964, as an organization described in Internal Revenue code section 501(c) (3). It is further classified as an organization that is not a private foundation as defined in section 509 (a) of the code, because it is an organization described in section 170(b) (1) (A) (i).

This letter is to verify your exempt status and the fact that the determination letter issued on January 1964 continues to be in effect.

If you are in need of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at the above address.

We appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

*Helicia C. Mirafior*

Disclosure Assistant



DETACH BEFORE POSTING



STATE OF  
WASHINGTON

Nonprofit Corporation

## BUSINESS LICENSE

Unified Business ID #: 601153110

Business ID #: 001

Location: 0001

BOULEVARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KING COUNTY  
BOULEVARD PARK CHURCH  
1822 S 128TH ST  
SEATAC, WA 98168-2903

TAX REGISTRATION - ACTIVE

REGISTERED TRADE NAMES:  
BOULEVARD PARK CHURCH

This document lists the registrations, endorsements, and licenses authorized for the business named above. By accepting this document, the licensee certifies the information on the application was complete, true, and accurate to the best of his or her knowledge, and that business will be conducted in compliance with all applicable Washington state, county, and city regulations.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vicki Smith".

Director, Department of Revenue

STATE OF WASHINGTON

UBI: 601153110 001 0001

**APPENDIX 4**

BPC Finances

Boulevard Park Church				
FY 2020 Financial Report				
Summary of Transactions for Fiscal Year 2020				
	CHURCH	**** TRUST AND SPECIAL ****		
	GENERAL	FAITH	OTHER	TOTAL
	BUDGET	PROMISE	T & S	
	*****	*****	*****	*****
	*****	*****	*****	*****
BALANCE				
7/1/19	\$499,640.70	\$22,955.72	\$186,469.24	\$709,065.66
	-----	-----	-----	-----
RECEIPTS:				
TITHES & OFFERINGS	\$841,557.07			\$841,557.07
EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS	\$20,371.20			\$20,371.20
INTEREST & STOCK CHANGE	\$9,579.59			\$9,579.59
RENT-OTHER	\$35,074.37			\$35,074.37
DESIGNATED ITEMS		\$77,241.54	\$491,976.40	\$569,217.94
	-----	-----	-----	-----
SUBTOTAL - RECEIPTS	\$906,582.23	\$77,241.54	\$491,976.40	\$1,475,800.17
	-----	-----	-----	-----
DISBURSEMENTS	\$923,025.08	\$49,232.40	\$150,485.68	\$1,122,743.16

	-----	-----	-----	-----
BALANCE				
6/30/20	\$483,197.85	\$50,964.86	\$527,959.96	\$1,062,122.67
	=====	=====	=====	=====
Cash Balances				\$232,016.43
in Bank 6/30/20	Morgan Stanley			
	Savings			\$740,229.04
	Checking 6860			\$64,550.54
	Checking 9692			\$57,403.74
				-----
Total Cash in				\$1,094,199.75
Bank				
Transactions not				\$32,077.08
cleared				
Cash in Bankless				\$1,062,122.67
Transactions not				=====
cleared				
CAPITAL				
PURCHASES				
from 232				
Improvements in				\$1,211.67
Quiet Room				
Christmas tree				\$165.14
Heating control				\$5,573.73
system				
Chair Dollys				\$660.00
Monitor for				\$103.37
DVR				
Remodel:				\$12,113.59
Architects				
Remodel: other				\$7,848.47
costs				
The roof on Bell				\$12,597.09
Tower /				
Chimney				-----

Sub-Total - Capital Purchases				\$40,273.06
Facility Improvement Fund from TS11				
				-----
(TS11) Sub-total				\$0.00
Strategic Capital from TS29				
Remodel Brick House on 20th				\$118,582.95
				-----
(TS29) Sub-total				\$118,582.95
				=====
TOTAL				\$158,856.01
Sale of Brick House at 12625 20th Ave So				\$454,294.80
INCOME from rental properties to TS11 & TS 29				\$8,845.31
(259)				

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