

ELCA WORLD HUNGER'S

# COMMUNITY Gardens

How-To Guide



*Faith in Place, Chicago, Il.*

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**ELCA World Hunger**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



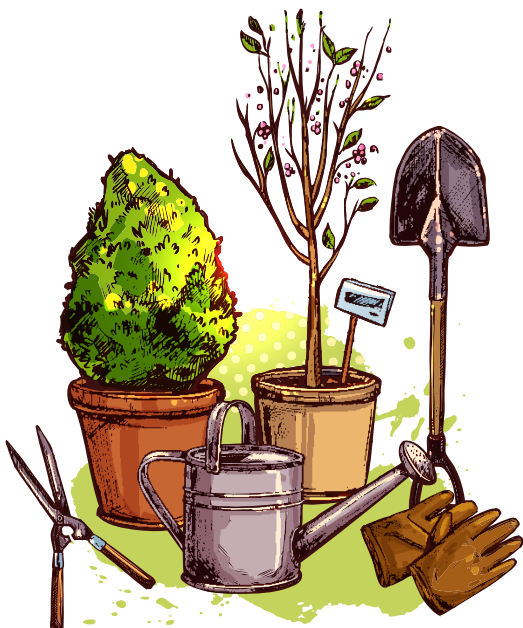
# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

**G**ardens are a special place to bear witness to God's creation. In planting, tending and harvesting we get to be a part of God's creative works. In Genesis we find God tilling in the soil: "then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Even Martin Luther had a green thumb and enjoyed being in his garden. "In a delightful garden, sowing, planting or digging are not hardship but are done with a zeal and a certain pleasure." (Luther's Works, Commentary on Genesis, 103)

*"I love gardening myself, and I talk about it especially with children, teaching them that what you do with your hands is part of your faith life."*

— the Rev. Moacir Weirich, Newark, N.J.

Gardening is a beautiful expression of God's diversity. Gardens exist on many scales, from large rural fields to small urban corners. They differ by regional climates, community needs and volunteer knowledge. This guide brings together wisdom from community gardens across the ELCA. Its purpose is to help you ask the right questions to create the unique garden project that is the best fit for your community.





"When things start growing, it is incredible to see the earth spring forth life in this way. There is an incredible energy from putting your hands in the soil and eating something you've grown. It's both satisfying and sacred."

– Sharon Magnuson, Chicago, Ill.

**T**he first section offers tips, suggestions and stories to help you learn more about each phase of a community garden: discerning your congregation's capacity, listening for the needs and assets of your community, articulating your vision, and leveraging the capacity of your land.

The second section digs deeper with ideas for using the land you have, including how to build raised beds and best practices for irrigation.

In the third section, prayers, blessings and ideas for Christian education can help you bring your garden "inside" and include it in the worship life of your congregation.

Let's start with the building blocks of a community garden: the community, the congregation, a vision and land. The image below shows how these relate. Crafting your vision starts with determining your community's needs and assets and your congregation's capacity. Your vision helps determine how you will use the land you have available to meet your community's needs, take advantage of the gifts and talents your community offers, and the best use of the time and talents of your congregation.







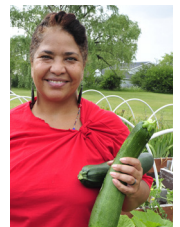
Community gardens can take a lot of forms. Asking a few simple questions before you begin will help you consider what sort of garden will work best for your community. In this section, we will cover questions to ask about the congregation's capacity, the community's needs and assets, a vision statement, and the land you have available.

## SECTION ONE: Getting Started

### PEOPLE

Who are the people involved in the garden? Who are the workers, the recipients, the people who will pray, the people who will share wisdom?

What makes a garden a *community* garden? Community gardens draw on the skills, gifts and other assets of your community and respond to the real needs of the community. In a community garden, listening is more important than planting. Dennis Murmyak speaks about uncovering the assets and specific challenges in the community of the Church Refugee Gardens program in Minnesota: "Refugees are a landless people, and most are from an agricultural background, but they end up living in crowded apartments in urban areas without much green space. When churches open up their land to gardens and to these refugees, it is a way to help provide food in a dignified way."





# LISTENING – TWO IMPORTANT RESOURCES

## Listening to the community

What is needed? Who will receive the produce? How will they receive it? Is there an organization in the community that we can partner with?

### Possible community partners

- Food bank – Where do they get fresh produce? What are the most popular produce items? Is there a distribution stream already available?
- Food pantry – Does your congregation have a food pantry that could distribute fresh food? Is there safe storage space for the produce? If not, is there another pantry that could use the food?
- Community meals – Could your garden supply produce to a local feeding program? Or would there be a need to distribute produce to people coming for a meal?
- Schools and universities – Could students or teachers use the garden as an educational component?
- Social service organizations – Are there refugees in your area who were primarily from a farming community? Is there a lack of available fresh produce (food desert or food swamp)? What are the human service needs in your area?

**Food desert** – an area without access to healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, due to a lack of available grocery stores, farmers markets, and other healthy food sources.

**Food swamp** – an area with an overabundance of unhealthy foods, such as fast-food and convenience stores, compared to healthy food.

How will your community garden be part of the food system in your area?

## People in our community to talk to:

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## Listening to the congregation

Who will be responsible for the garden?  
What skills can people bring to the garden?

### Possible congregation partners

- **Congregation council** – How might the garden fit into the overall vision of the congregation's ministry?
- **Children and youth ministry** – Could the garden be a teaching tool for learning about God's creation or serving God's people?
- **Property team** – How might the people who care for the building and grounds see this as a part of their ministry?
- **Older adult ministries** – How can the garden draw on the wisdom of adult members of the congregation?
- **Environmental team** – Does your congregation have a team engaged in "greening" your congregation?

## People in our congregation to talk to:

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## Get to know your gardeners.

If there are people in your congregation who already garden, they can be wells of information.

## Gardeners in our congregation:

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## COMMUNITY'S NEED

Everyone has a favorite vegetable. Use these questions to make sure your community's staples are represented in your garden.

- Who is in your community?
- Is your area a food desert, a food swamp, or a neighborhood with lots of healthy options for food?
- Is there a pantry or food shelf that you could partner with in order to get the produce to the people who need it?
- Is your congregation starting a food ministry with the garden? How are you telling people about it?
- Are there people in your community that do not have access to green space? Could this be a place to share with them?
- What do the members of your community eat? Is that on your list of plants?
- Should there be an educational aspect to the garden? Could the garden be a place where people learn about the benefits of healthy eating?



## CONGREGATION'S CAPACITY

Even the most low-maintenance plants need someone to plant them. Even the most low-maintenance volunteers need something to do. These questions will help you consider your potential level of volunteer involvement. Learning what your "people power" will look like is an important first step.

- Do you have a team to lead the garden? Is there a gardener on the team?
- Is your congregation enthusiastic? Will there be enough volunteers to make it successful?
- Is there a solid group who has committed to this ministry?

- What does the funding look like for the garden? How much of it is internal (for example, from offerings on Sunday) and external (for example, from grants or donations from the community)?



## WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

A purpose will focus the congregation and provide clear reasons for why it is embarking upon this endeavor. This will allow the members to be centered in the "why" of the project so that they can get to the "how." The first step happens long before you break ground. Now that you have listened to the community, craft a vision statement that coincides with what you heard.

One common thing we heard from gardeners across the ELCA is that the community garden is a ministry, not just an activity. Community gardens are spaces to build community and experience firsthand the amazing wonder of creation and our dependence on God. "Gardening is depending on the basics. You are dependent on water, light, sunshine, warmth and weather. It's the basic celebration of the wonders of the world," one gardener said.

*"We grow everything!  
We try to do plants that we  
know our neighbors want -  
a lot of greens, tomatoes,  
cucumbers and beans, snow  
peas - then we salt and  
pepper the garden with  
other things like okra or  
eggplant."*

*- Susan Holty, Milwaukee, Wis.*







## FUNDING

Starting a garden will require an initial financial investment and some on-going financial support. Initial costs include site preparation and tools. On-going costs include seeds, seedlings and water. Section 2 will help narrow down the specifics of these costs. It is important to know what financial resources are available.

- What financial support can the congregation provide?
- Will plots be gardened by outside community members or members of a specific group? Check with other community gardens or the leaders of the specific group to see if they charge a fee for water use.
- Ask garden-supply and hardware stores if they will donate materials to your site.
- Grants
  - Community foundations
  - Community groups interested in food justice or community agriculture
  - Thrivent Action grants

### Potential funding sources:

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*"If your garden is a community garden, it is involved with the community. We went to a local hardware store and asked if they would be willing to make a donation. They were happy to help! When you are building the garden, ask for support from your local businesses!"*

—Rev. Moacir Weirich, Newark, N.J.



## SPACE

Do we have the space for a garden? Do we need to look elsewhere for a site? (Section 2 includes questions to help you consider space usage.)

Be sure to consider how the space you choose will help your garden embody your vision. If your vision includes education, are there spaces available for group conversation? If your vision includes involving differently abled people in the community, will your space make it easy for them to gain access?

Remember, sometimes the most important thing a community garden can offer is space. If you have the land available, consider offering plots to people so they can grow what they need. This can also help ensure that the space your team has to care for is manageable.

### Possible garden sites:

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# Summing up

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## Community's need

Everyone has a favorite vegetable. Use these questions to make sure your community's staples are represented in your garden.

- Who is in your community?
- Is there a group that would benefit from the fruits of your garden?
- Is there a pantry or food shelf that you could partner with to get the produce to the people who need it?
- Is your congregation starting a food ministry with the garden? How are you telling people about it?
- Are there people in your community that do not have access to green space? Could this be a place to share with them?
- What do the members of your community eat? Is that on your list of plants?
- Should there be an educational aspect to the garden? Could the garden be a place where people learn about the benefits of healthy eating?

## Congregation's capacity

Even the most low-maintenance plants need someone to plant them. Or, on the flip side, an eager volunteer corps can be disengaged if there isn't enough for them to do. These questions will help you consider your potential level of volunteer involvement.

- Do you have a team to lead the project? Is there a gardener on the team?
- Is your congregation enthusiastic?
- Is there a solid group who has committed to this ministry?
- What does the funding look like for the garden? How much of it is internal and external?

## Physical capacity of the land

Some plants like a little shade; others require full sun. Some will grow with no supervision; others need a little handholding. These questions will help you think through the quality of your land.

- What is your soil capable of growing?
- What is your water supply like? Do you need plants that require more or less water?
- Does your plot have a lot of sun exposure or shade?
- Planting seeds or seedlings?
  - There are two questions to consider when deciding between seeds and seedlings. 1) Does the vegetable transplant well? 2) Is your growing season long enough to for the vegetable to mature if planted from seed? Depending on the length of your growing season, long-season plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, might do better if started inside or purchased as seedlings, whereas shorter seasons plants, such as peas and summer squash, can sprout from seed quickly.
  - The seed packet is a good source of information on whether the plant would do better if started inside.
- How much space do you have for the garden?

*"Gardening is depending on the basics. You are dependent on water, light, sunshine, warmth and weather. It's the basic celebration of the wonders of the world."*

*– Sharon Magnuson, Chicago, Ill.*



You've got a vision.  
You've got excited people.  
You've got funding,  
and you've got space.  
Now it's time to figure out  
how best to use these!

## SECTION TWO: Planning before planting

### SPACE

Plants need a few basic things to thrive: good soil, warm sun and fresh water. Here are some questions to help you think about how to give your garden the best.



### LAND

- Where is the garden going? Will it be on your church property or somewhere offsite?
- Is there unused land around your building?
- What about a nearby vacant lot?
- Could you repurpose part of your parking lot?
- What about an unconventional space like your roof?
- Does someone in your congregation have land they could offer?
- Could you rent space from someone?
- What about "virtual gardening"?

**Our available land is:**

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**Virtual gardening** – The members of Christ the King Lutheran Church in White Bear Lake, Minn., wanted to start a community garden, but it would take time to get their site ready. While they were waiting for their space to be ready for a garden, they asked, “What can we do in the meantime?” Instead of physically sharing a space, they opted for spiritual community and a virtual garden. Members of the congregation made space in their own gardens for vegetables for a local food shelf. “Put a tomato pot on your deck or patio. There are different ways that a little bit of space can really make a difference,” says Bea Jones, a member of the congregation and a representative of the Mission and Social Concerns Ministry at Christ the King.

## IN THE GROUND OR RAISED BEDS

Should you plant in the ground or build raised beds? Raised beds require more initial effort than planting in the ground, but if your soil quality is poor or if your gardeners will struggle to work at ground level, then raised beds may be a good choice. You might also consider a mixture of in-ground and raised beds.

### Soil testing

If you want your garden to be in the ground, the soil must be tested. Check the appendix for resources to help with soil testing. Local universities and colleges will sometimes do soil testing for a small fee. They may also provide seeds!

### Accessibility

Who will be gardening? Will they be able to easily work in the ground or do they need the height advantage of a raised bed?

## How to build a raised bed

- 1 Decide on the dimensions of your beds. Common sizes are 4 feet by 6 feet and 4 feet by 8 feet. A good maximum width is 4 feet, which allows easy access across the bed.
- 2 Clear the area and lay out markers where the beds will go. Leave enough space between beds for easy movement of people and tools, such as wheelbarrows. Mulching the path between beds prevents having to weed the path.
- 3 Cut the lumber to the desired length and build the basic frame. Use two screws to hold frame in place for now. Using a level, adjust blocks under the frame until it is level.
- 4 Cut a 4-inch by 4-inch post to 10 inches higher than the desired height of your bed. Sink a post at one corner of the frame and screw the frame into it. Repeat at all corners.
- 5 Attach additional boards to bring the frame up to the desired height. Cut off any remaining post that sticks above the boards.
- 6 If your bed is longer than 8 feet or higher than 18 inches, you may want to add cross bracing to keep the sides from bowing out. Cut half-inch aluminum flat stock the width of your beds. Drill a hole in each end and attach to posts at either side of the span.
- 7 Fill the beds with soil.



*Note: Once your beds are filled, refrain from stepping in them. This will compact the soil and make it harder for plants to grow. It may be helpful to have a “spanner board,” a sturdy board that is just wider than the bed. You can lay this across the bed and use it to hold buckets while planting or weeding, as a step if you need to step in your bed, or as a seat while weeding or tending the bed.*

## WATER

Water is both the most important resource for your garden and your most significant regular expense. A little planning early on can reap benefits in healthy plants and less water usage, which is good for the environment and your budget.

*"We decided to cut back on watering our lawn and got rid of some of the grass. We planted fruit trees, and then we got rid of every blade of grass on our lawn. We found that with being careful, everything can be water efficient."*

*– Rick Knapp, Santa Rosa, Calif.*

- Make watering zones! Put plants together that require the same amount of water, and if there is a part of your garden that will get rain runoff, put your thirstiest plants there.
- Plant early in the season when it is still cool so that your plants will have strong roots when the hottest part of the summer comes and they will not require as much water.
- Capture water in a rain barrel to water your plants.
- Get rid of the lawn. Lawns cost a great deal to maintain, and turning your lawn into gardening space provides a different type of green space.
- Clean plants over a water collector and use that excess to water your plants.
- Bio-intensive gardening can also help reduce the amount of water your garden will need. See the appendix for some resources on bio-intensive gardening.

## IRRIGATION

What type of irrigation will you use? Drip irrigation loses less water to evaporation and reduces the risk of plant damage by keeping water off the leaves. Hose irrigation allows more flexibility in how much you can water each plant.

### Tips on water conservation

- If you use a hose, purchase a nozzle that can easily be shut off to reduce waste. Regularly check the hose and spigots for leaks.
- Choose native plants – they already understand the soil, sun and water of the area.
- Mulch the area in order to reduce water loss and cut down on weeds that will use up your water.

## SUN

Sunshine is a free resource, but if you don't have it, you cannot replace it easily.

- Choose a sunny spot for the garden. If you build raised beds, orient them so that the long side is south facing to maximize light exposure for the whole bed.
- Consider how much sun your garden does or does not get as you are choosing plants. Some need full sun, while others are happier with some shade.
- If possible, you may want to arrange your beds so that some have more sun and others have more shade. This will allow you to grow different varieties of plants.

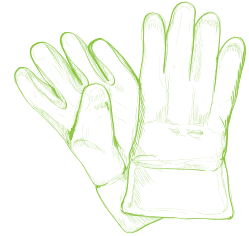




## SUPPLIES

The following is a list of basic supplies you may need. Ask gardeners in your community to offer their tips and suggestions. You may be able to borrow some of these things or receive them as donations from stores.

- Hose and nozzle
- Shovels
- Trowels
- Gardening gloves
- Hoes
- Rakes
- Buckets or bags for harvesting
- Seeds and seedlings



## GARDEN ON PAPER

Now that you've worked through all these questions, use paper to sketch out a map of your garden. Start by outlining the available sunlight and the water availability. Use your drawing as you start to think about plant selection and layout.

## PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Make sure that the congregation knows about this new endeavor and that other people who may be interested know about it as well. This can help find volunteers or create partnerships with other organizations. Consider such resources as:

- Bulletin announcements, newsletter articles, temple talks, however your congregation normally shares information.
- Bulletin boards at farm and garden stores
- Community gardening organizations
- Signs and announcements at farmers markets
- Social media – community Facebook pages, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- Local media



## ✓ TIPS AND CHALLENGES

Every garden is different, but some mistakes are the same. In the list below, experienced community gardeners share tips to try and challenges to be ready for.

*"The garden will need to change and evolve, and you might fall on your face. It's OK if you fail; you just can't give up. Do a 'lessons learned' conversation the first year and give opportunity for everyone's voice to be heard."*

– Katharine English, Chicago, Ill.

- ✓ Ask about donations from businesses in your area for supplies and soil. Ask about vacant plots of land and see if you are able to rent. Remember, community gardens start with listening.
- ✓ Be creative! Every garden is going to look different, and there are many ways to make a community garden part of your ministry. Think outside the (flower) box!
- ✓ Form a core gardening team to supervise the ministry.
- ✓ Take it slow! There might be tons of enthusiasm the first year, but remember to start small and then you have plenty of room to grow.
- ✓ A well-planted garden is a well-planned garden. Make a budget for the garden and research what the garden is going to cost. Draw out your garden on paper and solicit feedback on your plans before buying anything.
- ✓ The easier you make it for people to access and use the garden, the more people will participate. Think

intergenerationally! How can children be part of the garden? Older adults? Young families?

- ✓ The first couple harvests will be challenging, but with every harvest the process will get easier. The soil gets more nutrients from your plants, and you will discover new ways to integrate the garden within the life of your congregation.
- ✓ Get people excited! As you are starting to plan the garden find places for everyone to be involved, and as more people get their hands dirty, the more support the garden will have to grow.
- ✓ Water will be vital the first year, but do not let the expense deter you. After the plants are settled, they will require less water.



*"We had children who wanted to help with the garden, but they started pulling up plants instead of weeds. We found a simple solution with forks and spoons! We placed forks next to plants and spoons next to the weeds."*

– Susan Holty, Milwaukee, Wis.



Your garden can be more than just a place to grow food. This section explores some of the many ways a community garden can enhance your congregational life.

## SECTION THREE: Congregational activities

### WORSHIP

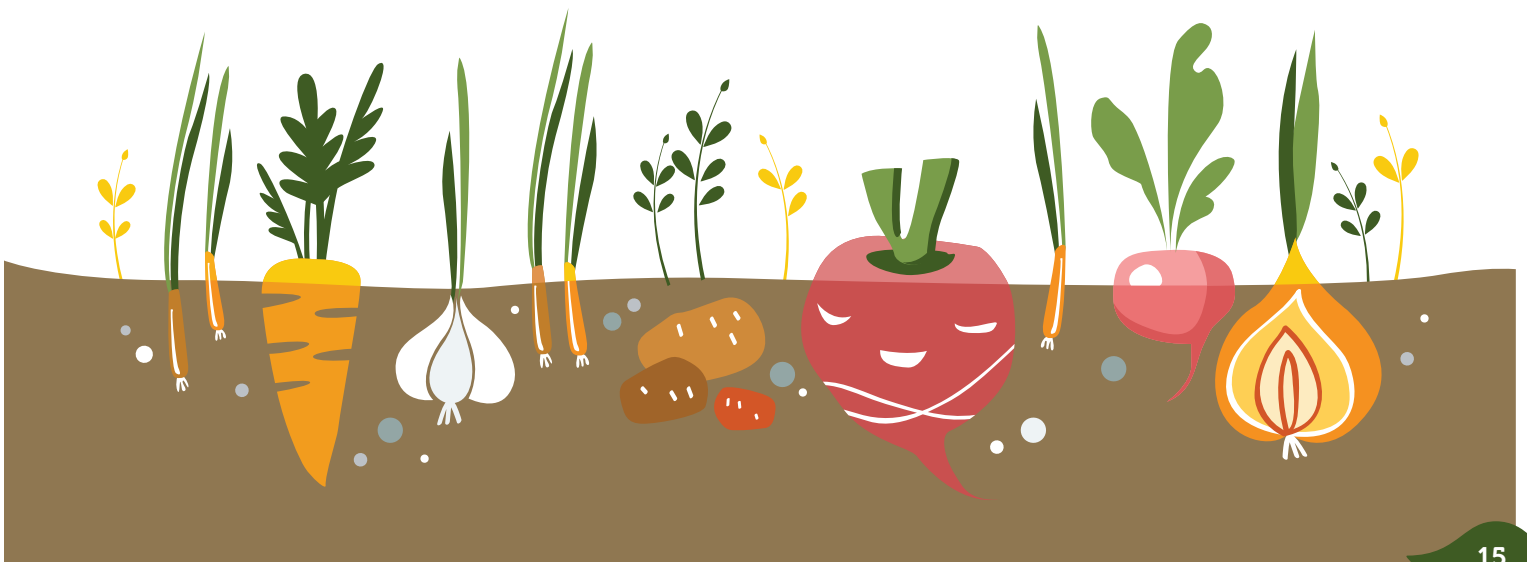
*"Bless the Lord, all his works,  
in all places of his dominion.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul."*

– Psalm 103:22

The garden can be a wonderful place to give glory to God and to reflect on God's continuing creative presence. Worshiping in the garden can grow not just produce but also your spiritual life.

*"It is important to harness the spirituality for the long haul because this is not a project that will be completed overnight. Create a devotional series or educational series to keep the spirituality aspect connected to the garden."*

– The Rev. Jason Bense, Sacramento, Calif.



# Special services

## SERVICE OF STARTING, PLANTING OR HARVESTING

Consider hosting a special service of starting, planting or harvesting of the garden. If your gardeners include people outside your congregation or the produce is going to support another organization, this is a great way to bring the groups together.

### Order of service:

#### Gathering hymn

Opening prayer: God of abundant praise, the mountains and hills, the trees and the valleys ring forth with your glory. Your words are like rain and snow on the hills, they nourish and provide and do not return until they have brought forth the fruit of your harvest. Today we gather to glorify your work of creation as it is seen and known in this garden. We give you thanks for all that will be nourished and glorified here. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

#### Reading of Scripture:

Starting: Psalm 65:5-13

Planting: Genesis 1:9-13

Harvesting: Isaiah 65:21-25

#### Homily (optional)

**Starting:** Blessing of the land  
God of all beginnings, at the dawn of creation your voice rang out over the cosmos, and life took form. Earth and seas, sun, moon, and stars, plants and animals, fish and birds, and humans created in your image. You called us good and appointed us as caretakers of your good creation. Today we gather to glorify the work of this garden. It is a blank canvas for your creation. Make it a place where the bounty of

your goodness is known and felt. Bring forth sun to shine on it, and rain to nourish it. Make it good soil for sowing and for reaping. Bless those who gather to dream of the potential of this land, who learn about seeds and plants, sunlight, water, and seasonal patterns, the needs and wants of our community and our neighborhood. Bless those who will till this land. Bless tillers and shovels, compost and hoses, carpenters and laborers, and all who will work with their hands to turn this patch of ground into a place of abundance. And bless those who await the bounty of this harvest. May they be nourished in their waiting and blessed in the receiving. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Planting:** Blessing for the time of planting  
Lord, you taught the disciples that from the tiny mustard seed grows forth a mighty bush. We ask your blessing this day on these tiny seeds, that they may bring forth a harvest of plenty. May the soil into which we plant them be good soil, able to bring forth harvest one-hundredfold. May the sun bring them nourishment and the rains refreshment. Bless these hands that will plant them, that will weed them, that will water them, and that will one day, in your good time, bring from them the harvest. And bless the mouths that await the taste of this good bounty. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**Harvesting:** Blessing of the harvest  
God of abundant blessings, throughout history you have promised your people that harvest would always follow planting, that reaping always came after sowing. We give you thanks for the abundance of this harvest. We thank you for the sun that shone on it, the waters that refreshed it, the hands that worked it, the tools that tilled it. We ask now that this harvest be a blessing on those who receive it. May their stomachs be filled and their hearts be nourished. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**



**Closing blessing:** As you go from this place, may you be refreshed by the wonder of God's creation. And may God, the creator, Christ, + the seed of new life, and the Holy Spirit, the nourisher of creation, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

## Closing hymn

*"Kids came to the garden outside of the church and they found a caterpillar. They were so excited and were showing it around. Later we prayed about creation and mentioned the caterpillar, the potential it represents."*

—Rev. Moacir Weirich, Newark, N.J.



## SENDING SERVICE OF GARDEN BLESSING

On Earth Day, or around the time of starting, planting or harvesting the garden, consider finishing your service outside with a special sending service of blessing for the garden.

Friends in Christ: Today we give thanks to God and we seek God's blessing as we gather to bless these garden plots to the praise and glory of God.

A reading from Psalm 104:14-21.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir

trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney. You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O Lord our god, ruler of the universe. You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you. We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth, of things seen and unseen.

You stretched out the heavens like a tent; you divided the day from the night; you appointed times and seasons for work and rest, for tearing down and building up. You blessed your people through all generations and guided them in life and death, in sowing and reaping.

We give you thanks, O God, as we ask blessing on this garden and on those who tend it.

Bless these tools for the working.

**We give you thanks, O God.**

Bless the water for the nourishing.

**We give you thanks, O God.**

Bless the sun for the shining.

**We give you thanks, O God.**

Bless the soil for providing.

**We give you thanks, O God.**

God of creation, you spoke life into the world and called all the universe good. Then you turned this good earth over to us for our care. Bless those who care and nurture this piece of your earth. May this our work be a reflection of your good work in us. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Sending hymn

### Dismissal:

Go in peace, be seeds of hope for the world.

**Thanks be to God.**



## OTHER WAYS TO REMEMBER YOUR GARDEN IN WORSHIP

### Intercessory prayer

Regularly pray for the garden during the Prayers of the People. Pray for the garden itself, for those who garden it, and for those who will enjoy its bounty. God, our good gardener. We ask your blessing on our community garden. May the sun shine brightly on it, may the waters fall softly over it. Bless the hands that work in it, (especially ...). And bless those who await its harvest, (especially ...). Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

### Offering harvest

During harvest, bring some of the harvest up with the offering plates during the service to show the congregation the wonder of God's blessing in produce.

### Hymns from Evangelical Lutheran Worship dealing with creation

- 245 Creator of the Stars of Night
- 266 All Earth is Hopeful
- 267 Joy to the World
- 307 Light Shone in Darkness
- 329 As the Sun with Longer Journey
- 412 Come, Join the Dance of Trinity
- 447 O Blessed Spring
- 555 Oh, Sing to God Above!
- 556 Morning Has Broken
- 679 For the Fruit of All Creation
- 680 We Plow the Fields and Scatter
- 684 Creating God, Your Fingers Trace
- 690 We Raise Our Hands to You, O Lord
- 693 Come, Ye Thankful People, Come
- 726 Light Dawns on a Weary World
- 731 Earth and All Stars!
- 733 Great Is Thy Faithfulness

- 735 Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth
- 739 Touch the Earth Lightly
- 771 God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens
- 824 This is My Father's World
- 837 Many and Great, O God
- 838 Beautiful Savior
- 876 Let the Whole Creation Cry
- 879 For the Beauty of the Earth
- 881 Let All Things Now Living

*"There was a woman who came to the garden during a summer barbeque and came up to the table I was at. She said, 'This is a church that really sees people. It doesn't just feed my body, it feeds my soul.'"*

*—Susan Holty, Milwaukee, Wis.*



## BLESSINGS

### Blessing of the seeds

Unless a seed falls to the earth and dies, it will produce nothing. But when it dies and is buried in the earth, it can bear much fruit. Bless now these seeds, so small and insignificant, yet within them new life awaits. Bless the soil that will hold them. Bless the sun that will shine on them. Bless the water to nourish them. Bless the hands that will tend them. Bless us as we wait in good time for the coming of the harvest. Amen.

### Blessing of the tools

God, at the creation of the world you called us to be caretakers of your good earth. Bless now these tools that aid us in our work. Bless the shovels that help us to dig. The buckets that

help us to carry. The hoses that transport water. Bless rototillers that enrich and aerate this good soil. Bless hammers and nails, saws and screwdrivers that brought together the boxes and trellises to support the coming harvest. And bless the workers who labor with these tools. Keep them safe in their labors and strong in their working. Help them to be enlivened in service to you. Amen.

### Blessing of the soil

In the parable of the sower, seed were sown on rocky soil, in pathways, among weeds, and in good soil, and only in the good soil did they flourish. May the soil that we garden be good soil. May it be rich and fertile. May the sun shine on it, may the rains wash over it, and may from it come a harvest of blessings. Amen.

### Blessing of the hose

Water is the lifeblood of God's creation. In the beginning, God's voice spoke over the waters, calling forth life, in which God took delight. God brought water from a rock to the Israelites in the desert. In the Jordan, God's own Son was baptized in water. And through the waters of baptism we receive new life. Our bodies, and the bodies of all things that contain life, need water to thrive. We ask blessing now on these hoses that bring the waters of life to our garden. May they bring water in the proper amounts so that the plants tended here will be refreshed by the life-giving gifts of water. Amen.



## OTHER WORSHIP RESOURCES

### [letallcreationpraise.org](http://letallcreationpraise.org)

A website of resources to help congregations celebrate God's creation. It offers tips for preaching, Scripture references, ideas for decorations, worship themes and more.



## PRAYER WALKING THE GARDEN

Use the garden as a place of meditation. Identify a series of places within the garden that people can stop and pray. These could be as simple as a small sign. You could also place benches in some spots for longer times of meditation. Create a simple map to lead people through the stations. For each station, offer a few words of guidance for reflection and meditation.

Entering the garden: A prayer for beginnings  
God of the dawning, as I enter now into this garden of your creation, may this time of prayer enrich me and grow within me a deeper knowledge of you. I pray for all who are entering into new beginnings, (especially ...). Amen.

Near the tools:

I pray for workers. For those who use these and other tools for the building up of God's creation. (Especially ...).

Near the water:

I give thanks for the water that nourishes this garden and for all water that nourishes the planet. For rivers and streams, oceans and aquifers. (Especially ...).

Near a plant I like to eat:

God, I give thanks for the rich flavors that nourish us. Especially for [this plant]. Bless those who will one day consume it that it may be as nourishing and enjoyable to them as it is for me.

Near a plant I don't like to eat:

God, you created us all unique, with different strengths and gifts, tastes and preferences. Bless [this plant] that I do not like. I give thanks for all who do like it and for the uniqueness of your creation.



Near a plant that looks healthy:  
I give thanks for places of abundance.  
Especially ...

Near a plant that looks sick:  
I pray for all those in need of special care. The  
ill, the grieving, the poor, the afraid, especially ...

Looking up at the sky:  
I give thanks for the sun that shines and the  
night of rest. May the garden be a place of both  
working and resting. And help all to find a  
balance of rest and work in their own lives.

Near the compost pile:  
God of resurrection hope, bless this compost,  
for from it comes the nourishment for the year's  
garden. Thank you for all the places where we  
experience resurrection hope. Especially ...

## CLASSES

Cooking classes and gardening classes are great supplements for the garden. You could invite congregation and community members to learn gardening skills. You could teach cooking classes using fresh ingredients from the garden. You could share recipes in your congregation's newsletter or Facebook page. The options for learning are limited only by your imagination.

### **Trinity in Nampa, Idaho: Garden is a living classroom**

In Nampa, Idaho, Trinity Community Gardens made their garden a classroom through classes and resources. They created a community garden guide, "Growing to Feed Many," written by their master gardeners, started food preservation classes, and created a recipe book inspired by the food from their food pantry. The Rev. Meggan Manlove says, "The thread between communion, food preservation classes, gardening crop-walk event, and soup suppers are all about relationships around the table. That is where Jesus was crossing boundaries and widening the kingdom."

## FOOD PANTRY

Partnering with a food pantry in your community allows people who need the food to get it. Also, by donating fresh produce to a food pantry, people are getting more nutrients for a healthy diet and healthy life.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

### Exploring Luther's theology of creation

Use Luther's Small Catechism as a starting point for conversation about God the creator and how we are a part of God's good creation.

Learning objectives

- We are co-creators with God, and that gives us a loving responsibility to the earth.
- We are all beloved creations of God.



**Read together the teachings on The Creed from Luther's Small Catechism.**

### The 1st Article, on Creation

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

*What is this?*

// I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property – along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true. //



Questions for conversation:

- What is your favorite part of God's creation?
- What does it mean to you that God created you, yes you, together with all that exists?
- What are some things that God "daily and abundantly provides"? How are they provided? [Example: Milk that comes from cows, farmers who care for the cows, sun and rain for grass to feed the cows, factories that process and package the milk so it reaches us safe to drink, store employees who sell the milk, etc. All of these people are part of God's creative action in bringing us milk to drink].
- Pick something that God "daily and abundantly provides" and write a prayer of thanks for all the things that come together to bring that provision to you. Get as creative as you can.
- Think about your own life. How are you a part of God's "daily and abundantly providing" for someone else?
- Do the same exercise for the garden. What various parts of God's creative action come together to grow food in the garden?

## Gardening as a spiritual practice

### » Learning objectives

- Spirituality can be cultivated in many areas of our lives, including physical tasks.
- God is in our labor and so God is in our gardening.

Gathering question: As a group, share some spiritual practices you already engage in. How are they helpful to you in cultivating your spirituality?

Often when we think of spiritual practices we tend to think of things like prayer, meditation, maybe writing, even coloring is becoming popular. These are all wonderful activities and great ways to deepen our spirituality, but what about the more restless among us? Did running make your list? Or baking? Or deep cleaning?



Many religious orders practice “pray and work” (the Latin “ora et labora” means “pray and labor”), a practice that combines contemplation with action. This practice sees prayer and work as partners that one can help us deepen the other.

### Try this out!

Pick a simple task, something fairly simple and repetitive, like weeding, planting seeds, raking leaves, etc. Set a fixed amount of time that you will work on the task. This will be dependent on your amount of time, but between 10 and 30 minutes is a good amount of time to start. During the time, try to remain silent and focus only on the task at hand. Use the task as a focus point to quiet your mind. If your mind starts to wander, draw it back to quiet by redirecting your attention to what you are doing.

When the time is up, come back together as a group and discuss the following questions.

- How did it feel to work on a task in silence?
- What did you notice as you were working?
- Was it hard to stay focused? What sort of things drew your attention? How did you refocus yourself again?
- If you have practiced silent prayer before, was it easier or harder while doing a task? Why or why not?

## The garden as a sacred space

### » Learning objectives

- In creating a garden, we create community spaces and God has promised to be in the midst of our gatherings.
- Learn about biblical passages where gardens were the setting and discuss how that enhanced the story.

- Sacred means to connect with God, so in the midst of a garden we are connecting to God in the act of gardening and in being present in the green space.

Gathering question: Pick a Bible story and describe the setting of the story. For example, if you picked the baptism of Jesus, you might describe the Jordan River, how the ribbon of water cut through the landscape. You might describe how out of place the crowds looked in the barren wilderness. Be as detailed as you can be without describing the story itself. Have the other members of the group try to guess the story you’re thinking of based on the setting. Then switch until everyone in the group has had a chance to give a description.

When we read the Bible, we don’t often give a lot of thought to the setting of the stories. It’s easier to get caught up in the action of the characters or the flow of the story. But the Bible often used place to help develop meaning. For example, in the story of Jonah, instead of traveling to Nineveh, Jonah set off for Tarsus. Tarsus wasn’t just in the wrong direction, for the first listeners of the story, Tarsus would have been on the far edge of the known world. It was literally as far away as you could go. From our context, it would be like being called to go to the next town over, and instead setting out to Mars.

In this study, you are invited to look at three passages of Scripture that take place in a garden. For each of the passages, you are invited to discuss the following questions:

- Describe the setting. Where were the parts of the description that everyone visualized the same? What differences did people imagine? How did listening to other’s descriptions change your own image?
- Why do you think this story takes place in a garden? Is the setting important to the story? Why or why not?



- How would the story be different if it were set in a different location like an urban shopping district, a suburban neighborhood or the wilderness?



**Passages to read and discuss:**

**Genesis 2:5-15** – The creation of humanity

**John 18:1-11** – Jesus is betrayed by Judas

**John 19:40-42, 20:11-18** – The burial and resurrection of Jesus

## OTHER EDUCATION RESOURCES

### [lutheransrestoringcreation.org](http://lutheransrestoringcreation.org)

Lutherans Restoring Creation is a grassroots organization of Lutherans who seek to make earth keeping an integral part of the life and mission of the church. Their website is a great resource for advocacy work and theological resources regarding creation care.

## INTERGENERATIONAL GARDENING

The garden can be a great place for people of all ages to come together to learn about God's creation.

*We have a summer program for youth which has started to reach out to the community by passing out fliers and talking to businesses. Most of our surrounding community are senior citizens, and now we have interaction with them. At our market we have a senior's day with discounts, live music, and we partnered with local businesses to sponsor transportation for them. The garden is becoming a destination for people in the neighborhood to get to know each other."*

*– Jeanine Hatcher, Detroit, Mich.*





## Congregation garden buddies

Gardening skills have traditionally been passed down through generations. If you have seniors in your congregation who have experience with gardening, pair them with a child who wants to learn. Or if your Sunday school students have been learning gardening skills in class, pair them with a senior to show what they know.

## Sunday school in the garden

Creating education opportunities is a great way to get kids interested in the garden. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Have classes adopt a section of the garden to work as a Sunday school class.
- Serve snacks in Sunday school that come from the garden.
- Have Sunday school students make snacks for fellowship hour from the garden.
- Ask the children and youth of the church to create artwork for the garden, like plant signs or signs with verses from the Bible.







## SECTION FOUR: Appendix of resources

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### Soil testing

- [pcusa.org/resource/gardensafegardenwell/](http://pcusa.org/resource/gardensafegardenwell/)

### Irrigation

- [irrigationtutorials.com/](http://irrigationtutorials.com/)
- Drip Irrigation: <https://goo.gl/IXY3FQ>
- [extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C1027-12](http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C1027-12)

### Food and Hunger Connections toolkit:

- [download.ELCA.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Food\\_and\\_Hunger.pdf?\\_ga=1.14223091.518637534.1430315672](http://download.ELCA.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Food_and_Hunger.pdf?_ga=1.14223091.518637534.1430315672)

### Water conservation links:

- [popularmechanics.com/home/lawn-garden/how-to/g559/9-water-conserving-tips-for-summer-gardening/](http://popularmechanics.com/home/lawn-garden/how-to/g559/9-water-conserving-tips-for-summer-gardening/)
- [themicrogardener.com/ten-water-saving-tips-for-your-garden/](http://themicrogardener.com/ten-water-saving-tips-for-your-garden/)

### Biointensive gardening

- [www.rootsimple.com/2009/10/lets-get-biointensive/](http://www.rootsimple.com/2009/10/lets-get-biointensive/)
- [homeguides.sfgate.com/design-biointensive-garden-35377.html](http://homeguides.sfgate.com/design-biointensive-garden-35377.html)

### “Growing to Feed Many: How Trinity Community Gardens, Inc. gets more food from less space”

- Book resource from a community garden that tells their story and gives tips on how to start.
- [trinitycommunitygardens.com](http://trinitycommunitygardens.com)







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