Gardens Built by Love

Faith-Based

Community Gardens

Karla Winham

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Breton Books
Tompkins Institute
Faith & the Common Good

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Bounty and Blessings

A Preface

With limited resources, places of worship can help the communities around them develop and heal. They can nourish people and accompany people. They can be models of what it means to walk gently on the earth.

Cultivating and harvesting food are unifying acts. Karla Winham examines faith communities that are indeed helping to cultivate and to harvest. Her study includes small faith communities with modest means.

Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, meeting houses and other places of worship need not be large or prosperous to show leadership. In fact, a time of decline should be a spur to look outside for partnerships and opportunities.

The agenda: simply to help, and to provide a place and platform for new projects and new possibilities.

Faith communities seem to be at their best when they do not try to act alone. The most successful examples discussed here intentionally looked for outside collaborators. They may have even helped to set up new organizations. The new organizations in turn brought in people from outside their membership.

Places of worship that have a broad view of their community – a community of more than members, a community of partners, a community of people who care -- are better equipped to show both leadership and love.

Although willing to let go of some things, and to work with new people, the successful places of worship also incorporated the work of growing food, building community and caring for the earth directly into their congregational culture – including their prayers and meditation. It was not an adjunct commitment or merely a side project. It was a spiritual commitment.

Start small. Recruit champions. Branch out through partnerships. Do the early work of building basic leadership structures that will last. Link the gardens and the community work to your spirituality. Those are key take-aways from Karla's inspiring and incisive study.

Karla's project emerged from her applied research in Cape Breton University's Master of Business Administration program. CBU's MBA is unique: It focuses on community economic

development. It works with living laboratories, actual communities. It attracts students from around the world.

Faith groups have historically been leaders in community development in this part of Canada. Starting in the 1920s, the "Antigonish Movement" crossed denominational lines and got clergy and laity involved in starting study clubs, credit unions, co-operative businesses, and public libraries. They even struggled to give Cape Breton its own university. Knowledge was power. The liberation of economically depressed communities was the message and the motive.

CBU's Tompkins Institute was named after Father Jimmy Tompkins, one of the catalysts of that movement. The institute's founder, Father Greg MacLeod, was trained as a philosopher. But he was really a businessperson. He started many non-profit enterprises and investment experiments. In the process, he cultivated other leaders.

He advocated "action research."

And so does Karla Winham. Her work is practical and incisive. It sets the stage for more applied research and more experimentation through trial and error. It involves grassroots leaders.

Karla's work is also a motivator for faith communities: Shake off your weariness. Start small and look for a few partners. Your faith's values include feeding the hungry, bringing together the generations, caring for creation and accompanying people, not just your members.

Community gardens are about growth in many forms. They are a form of development and a form of ministry. They can bring bounty and blessings.

Tom Urbaniak, Ph.D.
Director, Tompkins Institute – Cape Breton University
Chair of the Board, Faith & the Common Good

Abstract

This research examines the enabling conditions and reported impacts of community gardens hosted by faith communities. Community gardens are one way for faith communities to demonstrate good stewardship of their land and contribute to local food security. In the context of declining membership and financial hardship, faith communities might be concerned about their capacity to take on such a project. Through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document review, ten Canadian faith-based community gardens were studied to identify factors contributing to their success. The results highlight that community gardens and faith communities are mutually beneficial. Faith communities can provide many prerequisites for community garden development, and the presence of a community garden provides exposure and neighbourhood connections for the faith community. Based on participants' experiences and the existing literature, recommendations are made regarding best practices for faith communities considering community garden projects, with particular emphasis on sustainable leadership structure.

Community Gardens and Places of Wonder

A community garden can be defined as “a collective space where people gather together to grow fruits, vegetables and flowers” (Food Banks Canada, n.d.). Establishing a community garden on their property is one way for a faith community to reach out to their neighbourhood, demonstrate good stewardship of their land and contribute to local food security. However, with many faith communities facing declining membership and financial hardship, there may be concerns regarding the impact of such a complex outreach project on the congregation. The objective of this research is to investigate characteristics of faith-based community gardens in Canada, and to provide guidance for faith communities that are considering community garden projects in the context of these unique concerns.

Literature Review

Community gardens are becoming increasingly popular in Canada and throughout the world; it seems almost every city has at least one. However, the concept of community gardening is not new. In the late nineteenth century, urban businessmen began providing garden allotments for their workers in order to maintain a healthy workforce; social reformers saw this system as a way to address urban and rural poverty (Wilson, 2012). With the economic hardships and food shortages brought on by the World Wars and the Great Depression, community gardening made a resurgence in North America through the "victory gardens" movement (Draper & Freedman, 2010). The current community garden movement started in the late 1970s with the formation of the American Community Gardening Association and various "guerilla gardening" groups that started gardens on vacant city lots. This movement seems to be more sustainable than previous gardening movements, mostly because it has more of a grassroots and research-based approach (Birky, 2009).

According to Food Banks Canada, a community garden is "a collective space where people gather together to grow fruits, vegetables and flowers" (Food Banks Canada, n.d.). It might consist of allotment plots, where individuals grow food for their own use, collective plots where crops are tended and shared amongst a group, or a hybrid of these types. Studies have shown many benefits to community gardens. They are beneficial for individuals' physical and psychological health, whether in an urban setting (Soga et al., 2017) or a rural setting (Sanchez & Liamputtong, 2017). Community gardening has positive effects on stress levels (Genter et al., 2015) and helps address emotional and mental health issues in refugee populations (Hartwig & Mason, 2016). Furthermore, these health benefits are amplified throughout the community, as the gardens become centres for participation and empowerment (Alaimo et al., 2010). Mcilvaine-Newsad & Porter (2013) have suggested that community gardens offer environmental justice and food security in response to an unsafe, unsustainable food system.

Arguably the most important benefits of community gardens are social, as they provide a "third space" for communities to gather and new social bonds to form (Santo et al., 2016).

They have been said to build "community capital," which includes social capital (through shared management and networking), economic capital (through cheaper, healthier food), eco-

logical capital (through provision of green space and waste reduction efforts such as composting) and human capital (through shared learning) (Hancock, 2001). Organizations that sponsor community gardens benefit from connections to other community organizations and resources (Lanier et al., 2015). As people come together for the common purpose of growing food, they learn how to work together for the good of their community (Lanier et al., 2015). In fact, the social aspect of community gardening has been found to be the greatest motivating factor to participate (Mmako et al., 2019).

Despite all these benefits, community gardens are not without challenges. In a large survey of community gardens in the US and Canada, four major challenges were revealed: land access, funding, maintaining participation, and access to materials, particularly water (Drake & Lawson, 2015). If these four challenges could not be overcome, gardens did not tend to last. Garden management is also a challenge that impacts a garden's effectiveness; how a garden is organized affects how well it reaches those it is intended to help. A study of gardens that strove to address food insecurity found that donation-style gardens (where volunteers grow food to donate to others) tended to "reinforce structural inequalities, creating a paternalistic 'us and them' mentality" (Furness & Gallaher, 2018). Therefore, it is important that the people affected by community gardens are not just consulted, but included in decision making, especially if the organization sponsoring the garden is made up of people from outside the neighbourhood (Santo et al., 2016).

Considering all the benefits of community gardens, it's not surprising that faith communities would consider developing gardens on their property. With access to land, water, some willing volunteers and potential funding, faith communities can overcome some of the challenges that community gardens face. According to Faith & the Common Good (The Green Rule: Ecological Wisdom from Faith Traditions, n.d.) "each religion and spiritual philosophy has a long-standing tradition of ecological stewardship." This means that most faith communities are encouraged by their spiritual teachings to engage in activities that preserve, protect and make responsible use of the natural world. Furthermore,

most faith communities are compelled by their spiritual teachings to care for the poor in their midst, and many of them are looking for new ways to reach out into their communities (Rusaw & Swanson, 2004). Since community gardens have the potential to improve food security while contributing to social capital and caring for the environment, they are a good fit for faith communities that have available space.

While faith communities desire to reach out to their neighbours, they are also struggling with their own organizational health. With so many competing priorities and social opportunities available, faith communities are facing declining membership, financial stress and a loss of younger generations (Elkington, 2011). The strategies and suggestions available to help address this are numerous and diverse, with different approaches embraced by different denominations. In a study of church closures, Anderson et al. (2008) conclude that churches in decline behave as "minimalist organizations" that tend to limp along in a weakened state rather than dissolve. Those that can adapt to the changes around them may revive to a healthier state, but this usually involves some alteration of their identity (Anderson et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, there is no one method or set of criteria for measuring the organizational health of a faith community. Some use the concept of the organizational life cycle (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018) in their discussion of change and renewal, but there is very little academic research that addresses organizational health or vitality specifically regarding faith communities. However, topics such as employee engagement in companies, volunteer commitment in nonprofit organizations and organizational health are more commonly addressed in the secular, business literature, and researchers have suggested that these secular organizational theories can indeed be applied to faith communities. Kang and Jaskyte (2011) found that factors affecting innovation in churches were similar to those in secular organizations, and Rudowski (1986) suggests that insights from secular organizational theory can help faith communities enhance their ministry.

The following observations seem pertinent to a discussion of faith communities' organizational health and engagement in their neighbourhoods. In the business literature, there is evidence that engaging employees in programs of community service or corporate philanthropy has a positive effect on organizational pride and morale (Veleva et al., 2012), enhances corporate culture and co-operation (Branson, 2013) and increases employees' intention to stay with the company (Jones, 2010). Vecina et al. (2013) found that commitment (through identification with the organization's values) and engagement (through meaningful tasks) were both important for non-profit volunteers. Extending these concepts to faith communities, it seems reasonable

to wonder whether community outreach activities such as community gardens might enhance some members' engagement in the faith community, improve congregational morale, or other qualitative changes that could lead to better organizational health.

Being benevolent to one's neighbourhood is not new; faith communities have engaged in various types of outreach for centuries. However, the current literature about community engagement suggests that there may be ways of working with the community that are more beneficial than others, for both the community and the organization (or faith community). In a systematic review of the literature, Bowen et al (2008) describe a continuum of community engagement. The least involved stage, transactional engagement, refers to "giving back" to the community through activities such as philanthropy and volunteering. Communication is one-way, from the organization to the community. Much of the traditional charitable activity of faith communities falls into this category. The next stage, transitional engagement, is characterized as "building bridges" through dialogue and shared learning between the organization and the community. Trust between the organization and the community grows over time, but the interaction is still largely controlled by the organization. For example, faith communities that welcome community groups to use their space, consulting regularly to accommodate their needs, may be practicing transitional community engagement. The most involved stage is called transformational engagement. This type of engagement has a goal of "changing society" through two-way communication and shared control of the process. Community leadership is encouraged and supported in defining problems and designing solutions. A faith community that partners with a non-profit organization to create a new social enterprise might be an example of transforma-

THREE TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS

DIMENSION	TRANSACTIONAL ENGAGEMENT	TRANSITIONAL ENGAGEMENT	TRANSFORMATIONAL ENGAGEMENT
CORPORATE STANCE	"Giving Back" Community Investment	"Building Bridges" Community Involvement	"Changing Society" Community Integration
COMMUNICATION	One-way	Two-way	Two-way
NUMBER OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS	Many	Many	Few
FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION	Occasional	Repeated	Frequent
NATURE OF TRUST	Limited	Evolutionary	Relational
LEARNING	Transfered from firm	Transfered to firm	Jointly generated
CONTROL OVER PROCESS	Firm	Firm	Shared
BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES	Distinct	Distinct	Joint

Figure 1: Community Engagement Behaviours (Bowen, F. et al., 2008, p.14)

tional community engagement. Faith communities may be involved in several stages of community engagement at once through different projects. A brief description of these three types of engagement behaviours can be seen in Figure 1.

There is no comprehensive data about community gardens in Canada, or how many are hosted by faith communities. There are community garden networks in many major cities that can be easily found through an internet search and offer excellent advice about starting gardens. Additionally, there are faith-based organizations such as A Rocha and Faith & the Common Good that focus on environmental issues in relation to faith communities. This research examines in more detail the facilitating factors and key characteristics of successful community gardens started by faith communities. What has helped these gardens develop and thrive? How have the community gardens affected the faith communities? How can a community garden be beneficial to both the faith community and its neighbourhood?

Methods

In this study, qualitative semi-structured observation of cases was conducted to examine the enabling conditions and reported impacts of community gardens located on faith community property. Data for the study were collected from September through November 2019 and consisted of 1) semi-structured interviews with community garden participants, 2) review of documents and records, 3) semi-structured interviews with faith-based organizations and 4) presentation of initial findings to a focus group for feedback.

Recruitment of participants

Most of the subject gardens were identified by soliciting recommendations from faith-based organizations (FBO) that support faith communities developing community gardens. These organizations included Faith & the Common Good, Diaconal Ministries Canada and Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Two gardens were identified through the researcher's personal knowledge of the gardens. Selection criteria for cases included community gardens in Canada that had been in operation for at least three years and were located on the property of a faith community (rather than sponsored by the faith community in a different location). This allowed for exploration of the interplay between the faith community and a well-established garden community. Once gardens were identified, individual subjects were recruited by email contact with garden coordinators, administrators and clergy listed on the faith community's website, or through the FBO's contacts. A list of participating community gardens is in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of one to four participants from each of the 10 gardens that met selection criteria. Multiple participants were interviewed from all but two of the gardens to bring forth as many themes as possible. Where possible (in 6 of the 10 gardens), a clergy member was included as one of the participants, to give a unique perspective on theology and leadership as it pertained to the gardens. Eighteen individual interviews were conducted by telephone; one of these had two participants. One in-person group interview was conducted for three participants from a garden that was local to the researcher. Interviews lasted from 30 to 75 minutes. An interview guide for participants is included in Appendix B. Semi-structured interviews

were also conducted with employees from four organizations that support community gardens – Faith & the Common Good, Halton Environmental Network, Hamilton Community Garden Network and Just Food Ottawa. Three of these were conducted by individual phone interview and recorded for note-taking and review. One organization (Just Food Ottawa) answered questions by email only. An interview guide for organizations is included in Appendix C. One semi-structured interview was conducted with a participant from a faith-based community garden that closed after two years, to provide insight on what had caused its closure. Seven of the gardens provided documents for review, including reports, photographs and grant applications. Several participants also offered additional information by email. Before contacting organizations and recruiting subjects, a research ethics application was submitted to Cape Breton University's Research Ethics Board, with ethics approval subsequently obtained.

Data analysis

All interviews were audio recorded. Notes were taken during interviews and through subsequent review of recordings. Data obtained from multiple participant interviews and document review were aggregated into single case summaries for each of the ten gardens. Interview notes and case summaries were reviewed and thematically analyzed for a variety of factors related to the gardens' purposes, impacts and enabling factors. Identification of themes started during the data collection period, which helped to ensure saturation of data. Interview notes were reviewed against the themes to ensure consistency. Cases were examined for patterns among variables such as size of faith community, leadership model, stated purpose and reported impacts. Initial findings were presented at a meeting of Faith & the Common Good on December 3, 2019 for verification and feedback.

Findings/Observations

Description of subject gardens

The gardens studied ranged from just 6 garden plots to over 160. Although individual garden plot sizes varied from small 4 x 8 foot boxes to large 15 x 15 foot gardens, overall size was expressed by number of garden plots rather than total acreage. This is because the number of plots was considered to be more directly related to the number of people the garden could serve. The faith communities that housed these gardens also varied in membership size, from fewer than 50 members up to 700. However, a larger faith community did not in any way correlate with a larger garden.

Most of the gardens consisted primarily of allotment plots for individuals who were not members of the faith community, although a few faith community members used the gardens as well. Half of the gardens had at least some plots that were designated as donation gardens for local food banks or meal programs. There was just one garden that is currently only open to faith community members, and one that was used only as a donation garden for its associated meal program.

Figure 2 summarizes the size, distribution of garden plot types in 2019 and size of faith community for the ten gardens studied.

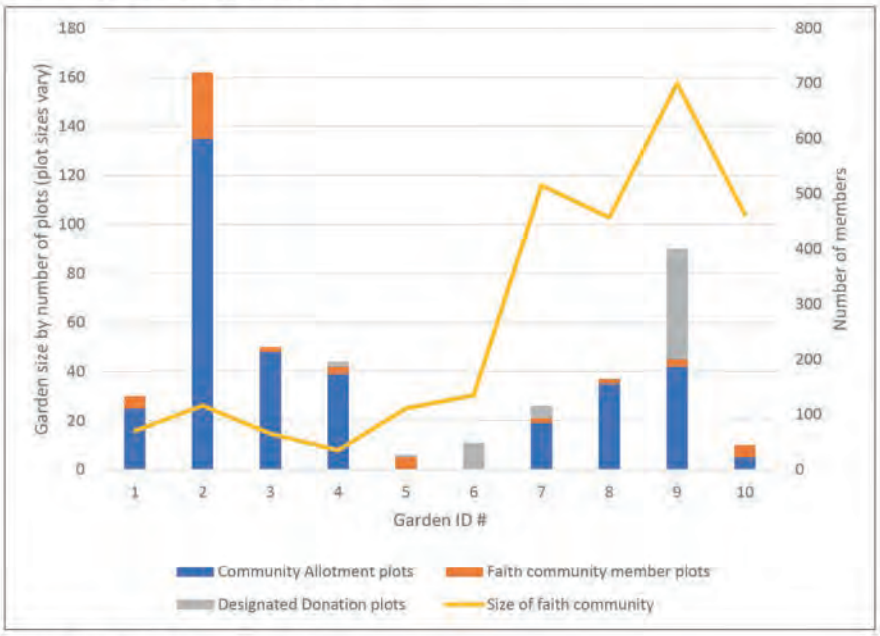


Figure 2. Subject Garden Profiles

Themes from the Research

Several themes and observations emerged from the data. These findings are discussed in the sections below.

Mission/purpose of faith-based community gardens

Most of the community gardens studied did not report a formal mission or vision statement. The majority reported several intended purposes because there were multiple participants involved in the garden development process; as one subject stated, the garden was "a convergence of interests." When asked about the intended purpose of their gardens, responses fell into four main themes. Numbers of gardens reporting these themes are summarized in Figure 3.

Practicing environmental stewardship

Four of the gardens reported environmental stewardship as one of their purposes. Responses varied from "being good stewards of the land" and "using our space responsibly" to "reducing our ecological footprint." These responses all reflected the theme of using natural resources wisely and sharing with those in need.

Community building

Seven faith communities reported community building as a primary motivation for starting their garden. Most of them discussed the concept of "reaching out" to their community. For some subjects, this meant providing a way for the faith community to get to know their neighbours. For others, the focus was more on creating a new community of like-minded individuals from the local area, or helping the neighbours connect with each other. Building relationships was the overarching theme for these gardens.

Figure 3. Community garden mission themes

Food production/food security

Production of nutritious food for the local community was a focus for seven of the gardens. For example, "to provide a place for neighbours to grow their own healthy food" meant making space for individuals to grow safe, culturally appropriate vegetables. Others were more concerned with growing and donating healthy food to local food banks or meal programs, in order to "help those that cannot provide for themselves." The unifying feature of this theme was the focus on producing fresh food for those who lacked adequate access in some way.

Raising our profile

A few of the faith communities reported that one intended purpose of the garden was to make them "more visible in the community" or to be "a faithful presence." However, this was never identified as a primary motivation. In contrast, several other faith communities were quite clear that their garden was never intended to be a tool of evangelism or numerical growth for the congregation.

Key Factors in Community Garden Development

When asked about the most important conditions or prerequisites for starting community gardens, gardeners and support organizations reported four key factors. To develop and maintain a community garden, a faith community must have a suitable physical location, basic gardening knowledge, adequate funding and excellent leadership.

Physical location considerations

A location with adequate space, sunlight and consistent access to water was an important prerequisite. Visibility from the road was also reported as a key factor in the success of those who wished to maximize their community contact.

Gardening knowledge

Knowing what to plant, when to plant it, how to care for it and when to harvest was also critical. Some gardens with allotment plots ensured this by pairing up new gardeners with those who were more experienced. Many faith communities reported a wealth of gardening experience within their congregations. Those who didn't have such a resource obtained knowledge through support organizations, community garden networks, local universities and horticultural clubs.

Funding

Funding sources are summarized in Figure 4. At the very least, all gardens required enough financial support to obtain access to water. Most also needed additional funds for infrastructure and materials such as lumber, soil, fencing and tools. All of the gardens received financial and in-kind donations from individuals and/or local businesses to assist with their development and maintenance. Common gifts-in-kind included donations of soil, compost and seedlings. Half of

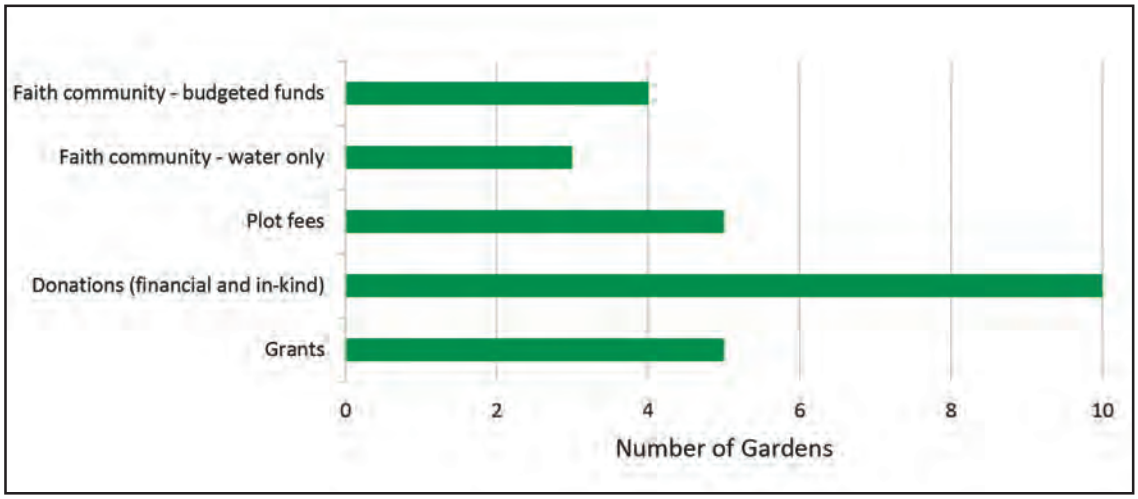


Figure 4. Community Garden funding sources

the gardens had accessed grants, and half of them charged a nominal annual fee ($10-$30) for garden plot rental. Most of the gardens had some level of ongoing support from the faith community – four were included in the annual budget, and three were supported through provision of water only.

Leadership

A "champion" to drive the process forward was critical for the development of community gardens, but also for their ongoing operation. These leaders need to communicate the vision for the garden project and maintain enthusiasm when the work gets hard. Support organizations recommended a team of at least three people to fill this role because of the volume of work to be done and varied skills required. The leadership team requires skills in volunteer management, administrative ability, and strong communication skills. Community connections and partnerships are also very helpful.

On further examination of the leadership structure of the gardens, three distinct models emerged:

COMMUNITY-LED GARDENS

These gardens have a coordinating committee made up of community members, with some (minimal) representation from the faith community. This leadership model was used by the four smallest faith communities in the sample, with fewer than 100 regularly attending members. All of these gardens reported "building community" as one of their core purposes. Two of them were community-led from the start, and two (over 10 years old) had started out with a different structure but transitioned later to community leadership.

MINISTRY-LED GARDENS

These gardens are managed under the mandate of an existing ministry team or committee of the faith community. Garden coordinators are all members of the faith community, and the ministry team takes responsibility for succession of leadership. Three of the largest faith communities in the sample used this model (membership 400+).

INFORMAL STRUCTURE

The remaining three gardens did not have a formal leadership structure or ownership under a faith community ministry. They were organized by one or more members from the faith community but had no distinct plans for succession of leadership. Two of these three gardens were less than 5 years old and did not include allotment plots for community members. They all cited "food production" as one of their core purposes and included plots for donation to food banks or meal programs.

Common pitfalls

Interviews with support organizations revealed the following possible reasons for closure of community gardens after some initial development:

- Lack of organizational capacity: Some garden projects had good intentions but a lack of planning, resulting in infrastructure being built that didn't meet the community's needs. Some gardens failed due to difficult group dynamics around decision-making. Sometimes garden projects failed to launch because there was not adequate leadership and volunteer coordination; others started but suffered from a loss of knowledge and confidence when the original garden coordinators moved on.
- Lack of volunteers: Particularly in aging congregations, finding enough volunteers for physical tasks was sometimes an issue. Sometimes volunteers became disillusioned by the work involved. This is less of an issue in allotment gardens where each member cares for their own plot.

• Inadequate gardening knowledge: This often led to unrealistic expectations about the time and energy involved. Gardening involves routine tasks and varying levels of time commitment depending on the season. Advance planning for maintenance schedules is not possible without some knowledge of what tasks will be required when.

• Resistance from the faith community: This was not common, but congregations sometimes have concerns about insurance/liability issues and vandalism. Sometimes faith communities lack the will to take on another project if they are already very busy.

• Loss of land: Through development of the land, loss of permission or closure of the faith community.

Community Garden Impacts

Many positive impacts were reported. General categories included benefits for individual gardeners, for the faith community and for the broader community. Themes are summarized in Figure 5. Numbers indicate how many gardens reported benefits relating to each theme.

Highlights: Benefits for individuals

• All of the gardens reported that the gardeners made new social connections – they met new people they would not otherwise have met and built relationships with fellow gardeners.

• Half of the gardens reported that immigrant and refugee gardeners were able to use methods and plant crops from their countries of origin, allowing for cultural expression and shared learning with other gardeners.

• Several gardens noted that gardeners were empowered by growing their own crops, because it carried less stigma than getting food from food banks.

• Three gardens hired youth through the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Highlights: Benefits for faith communities

• All ten gardens reported positive social impacts on the faith communities. This was expressed through comments such as “the garden provided opportunities for relaxed conversation,” “new connections made,” and “opportunities to interact and build relationships.”

• 60% reported improved confidence, congregational pride, or a renewed sense of hope in

their faith community as a result of the garden, even for those not directly involved.

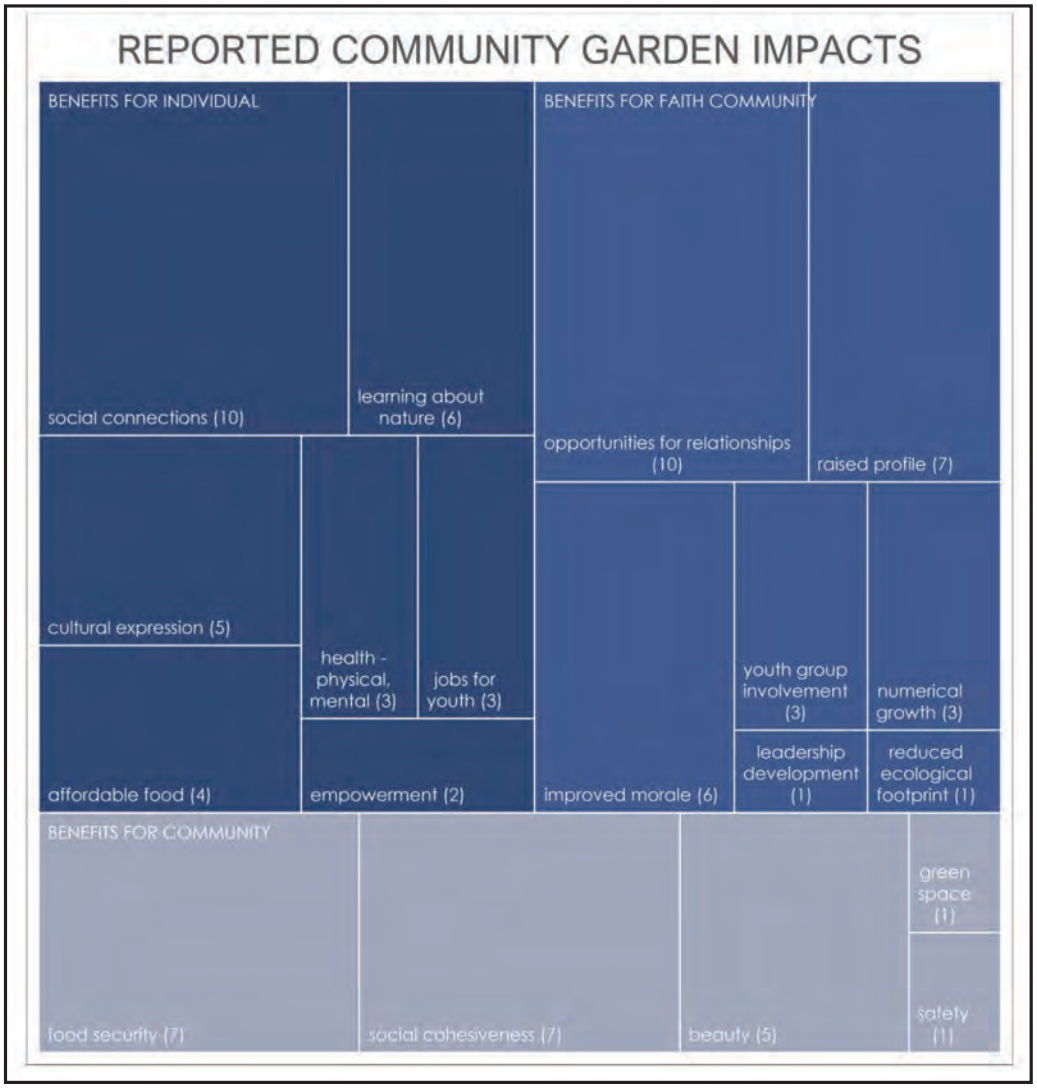
• Three of the gardens reported numerical growth in their faith communities through people attending services or participating in programs. Most of the faith communities (70%) noticed that they had become more well-known in the community.

Highlights: Benefits for the broader community

• Most of the gardens reported a sense of improved social capital in the community. This was reflected in answers that referred to "a community of mutual support," "neighbours getting to know each other better, and "reduced cultural barriers."

• Most of the gardens provided some food for local food banks and meal programs, which contributed to the availability of fresh, nutritious food in the community.

Figure 5. Community garden impacts



• Half of the gardens had received appreciative comments from passers-by about how the garden beautified the neighbourhood.

Photo: Glenwood Drive Community Garden, before & after

Discussion and Implications

Faith communities can help provide key prerequisites

One goal of this research was to determine what factors are required for the development of community gardens. Land, funding, leadership and garden knowledge were identified as necessary prerequisites. In many cases, faith communities have ready access to at least one of these factors, making them ideally suited to hosting community gardens.

Land

The availability of land was one of the main drivers for creating a community garden at several of the faith communities in this study. Beacon United Church in Yarmouth, NS, was interested in having a more diverse and ecologically sustainable landscape, while Trinity Church of the Nazarene in Ottawa also recognized the benefit of having less lawn to mow in summer. These faith communities and others were looking for ways to steward large pieces of unused land more responsibly by sharing it with their neighbours. Centretown United Church in downtown Ottawa didn't have a large plot of land but had planter boxes that had been left empty by the loss of trees to ash borer disease. In all these cases, the faith community saw their space as an asset that could be put to better use, providing an opportunity to

> *"If a church has property, this is a wonderful way to love your neighbour." —Anna-Marie Geddart, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Winnipeg*

Photo: Centretown/Centre 507 garden beds, before & after

reach out to their community. Next to the Crown, religious institutions are some of the largest land-owners in Canada. Although not all properties will provide the ideal conditions of sunlight, water and soil health for gardening, there are many that are uniquely suited to it and whose neighbourhoods would be enriched by a community garden.

Funding

Funding is required even for the simplest of community gardens. Even those without much infrastructure need access to water for at least part of the season, whether it is through a municipal water supply, a pump or a rainwater collection system. The wish-list of items that community gardens might choose to spend money on can be quite long – lumber for raised garden beds, soil amendments, sheds, animal fences, tools and machinery. For some gardens these expenses might even be essential for the operation of the garden. For example, the Glenwood Drive Community Garden in Truro, NS, wouldn't have any harvest at all without proper deer fencing, and the Centretown/Centre 507 Garden in Ottawa needed stumps removed and new, uncontaminated soil brought in before they could safely start growing food. Some community gardens choose to charge annual fees to gardeners in order to support these infrastructure expenditures, while others are determined to offer plots for free. Faith communities can provide the backing of their non-profit organization status, which is required for most grant applications. They are often willing to help with fundraising events and take up offerings from the congregation. Some faith communities include their gardens in their annual budget, while others contribute simply by providing a fresh water supply. Either way, faith communities are ideal partners to provide some of the funding required to set up and maintain a community garden.

Gardening knowledge

Knowledge about which crops to grow, how to tend them and when to harvest is essential for any gardener. A community garden is likely to attract at least a few people who have some experience growing food. However, the level of gardening knowledge present in a congregation can vary widely from one to the next, and the faith community's desire to start a garden may be born out of factors other than a love of agriculture. There is nothing inherent in faith communities that gives them a greater knowledge of gardening. However, in cases where additional expertise is required, faith communities have access to a variety of resources to educate themselves. Some have received support from horticultural societies and garden clubs that use their space for meetings. Others have recruited knowledgeable individuals from local universities and colleges to help. Many cities and provinces have extensive community garden networks that provide coaching, consultation and even funding. There are also several faith-based organizations that are focused on environmental stewardship and community outreach. A (non-exhaustive) list of community garden how-to guides is provided in Appendix D. With the resources available online and through local support organizations, the required knowledge to start a community garden should be accessible to all faith communities.

> *"The team was very fortunate to recruit Dr. Brian Ure, a neighbour from Old Ottawa South and a retired expert in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables from Agriculture Canada. Brian's presence on the team is like having our own "Ed Lawrence" to advise us."*
>
> *–Centretown/Centre 507 garden report 2016*

Leadership

The final essential ingredient in starting a community garden is a champion who will drive the development process forward. Once the garden is established, ongoing leadership must also be provided. The idea for a garden often starts with an individual, but support organizations recommend convening a group of at least three people to take ownership of the project. Faith communities might already have supportive leadership structures such as committees dedicated to community outreach to take on this role. They might also have pre-existing partnerships with other faith communities or organizations that can help provide leadership and volunteers. Whether it is entirely from the congregation or comprised of neighbours from the community, a team approach seems to work best. A community garden can even provide a way for people with diverse interests and passions to work together for a common cause.

To summarize, adequate land, funding, knowledge and leadership are essential for starting a community garden. Faith communities can contribute several of these factors simply by virtue of their real estate holdings and organizational structure. Where there are gaps in these key factors, there are many resources and strategies that faith communities can use to ensure the success of their gardens.

Trinity Church in Ottawa formed an initial leadership team of individuals from the community with one representative from the church. These leaders all had different motivations for starting a community garden. One was interested in producing their own organic food for health reasons. Another wished to connect people with the food system in a way that would be educational and help improve local food security. Still another wanted to create community and get to know their neighbours. Finally, the faith community's aim was to use their land for a greater purpose and connect the congregation with its community. Each of these brought different strengths and abilities to the team and were able to support each other through the development process.

Community Gardens Build Relationships

One thing that is clear from this research is that community gardens do indeed build community. However, they don't all do it in the same way, and faith communities considering starting gardens can be intentional about which community they are trying to build. Some gardens bring together like-minded neighbours who might not otherwise meet, building a whole new community of support. Others may be more effective at knitting together members of the faith community in a shared project. The mission or purpose of the garden, even if it isn't overtly stated, seems to have some impact on which community benefits the most. Some gardens set out with a specific goal of "community-building," while others are more focused on producing food for the hungry. Not surprisingly, to a great extent the reported impacts fall in line with the mission of the garden. (Admittedly, this could be partially attributed to confirmation bias as participants are more likely to report impacts they hope to see.)

> *"There are tons of kids in our neighbourhood. The gardeners have built relationships with the kids, and they've been learning. . . . there's less vandalism. . . they were even making fires behind our bushes, so we put a fire pit in! The kids have gone from throwing our tomatoes to learning how to love nature. And if you don't love something, how can you take care of it?"*
>
> *—Anna-Marie Geddart, Jubilee Mennonite Church, Winnipeg*

All the gardens in this study reported positive social impacts for individual gardeners and for the faith community, regardless of whether this had been their initial intent. The social benefits for individuals (such as making new friends) and for the faith community (such as intergenerational cooperation and improved congregational morale) might occur any time a group of people are brought together to work on a common project. A faith community can use this knowledge intentionally to bring various groups together to work on the garden. For some, this means including people from the neighbourhood, other community groups or other faith communities to build ties outside the congregation. For others, this

> *"About half the gardeners are from the congregation or Elim [Christian retirement community] and half are from the community, including 3 gardeners who demonstrate their excellent East African farming techniques." —Bustani Garden report, 2019*

may mean building fellowship amongst its own membership by including groups of people who don't normally work together. Faith communities have found that gardens are ideally suited to intergenerational cooperation; much of the physical labour of spring and fall clean-up can be done by youth groups, while retirees may have more available time for the ongoing tasks of watering and weeding. The sense of community that comes from the shared effort of gardening can be a uniting force for congregations that struggle with division between different generations and groups.

While all gardens reported social benefits for gardeners and the faith community, only those which stated that their mission was "community-building" and included allotment plots for community members reported social impacts for the neighbourhood as a whole. These included benefits such as neighbours caring for each other, learning about different cultures, and getting to know neighbourhood teens who were previously causing trouble. Many of the gardens with community allotment plots reported a greater understanding of different cultures through newcomers who were able to grow and share some of their native foods and gardening methods. Faith communities that wish to learn about and strengthen ties with their neighbourhoods can choose to structure their gardens so that the surrounding community is welcome.

> *"In a faith-based community garden, the produce is the by-product of the garden. We're trying to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but in a not-in-your-face way. There was a man at the garden who lost a dear friend and we could just tell that he was really down. It just so happened that a group of pastors came to the garden that day. As a group, they prayed for him and he was really appreciative. That's how we touch people through our garden."*
>
> *—Fred Heslinga,*
> *West Highland Baptist Church, Hamilton*

Opening a garden to community allotment plots does help to build social capital in the neighbourhood, but encouraging community leadership of the garden takes this communitybuilding a step farther. Four of the faith communities in this study chose to organize their gardens this way. Although this study could not distinguish differences in impacts between allotment gardens that

were led by the church and those that were led by the community, the literature supports a community-led structure as the most transformational approach. Knowing that a community garden can indeed be expected to form and strengthen relationships, a faith community can tailor their mission and leadership structure accordingly, facilitating the level of engagement to which they feel called.

Leadership Structure is Important

Community gardens require teamwork and communication, even if they are mostly comprised of allotment plots gardened by individuals. There is usually communal infrastructure to build and maintain, and many resources like soil and compost are less expensive if they are shared. Coordination of these tasks and purchases requires leadership. As previously mentioned, the intended purpose of a community garden may affect its preferred leadership structure, and different leadership structures seem to be associated with different outcomes. By comparing the leadership styles encountered in this study with the literature about levels of community engagement, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, it should be noted that some of the gardens in this study had not established a formal leadership structure at all. They had been developed and are still being managed by one or two individuals who were passionate and knowledgeable enough to recruit the necessary funding and volunteers. These are mostly relatively new gardens, less than five years old. The leaders in each case expressed concerns about who might take over if they no longer did the job. Beacon Community Garden in Yarmouth, NS, experienced the unfortunate difficulties of being forced to adopt a new structure in response to a leader's health crisis – the type of disruption that can't be foreseen but might be avoided with advance planning. Some clergy expressed the opinion that ministries come and go according to a congregation's gifts and interests, and therefore their community gardens are not expected to last indefinitely. While this is true, a participant from Faith & the Common Good made the point

that she's "never seen a community garden close because the need for it went away," but she has seen several close because the leader left with no provisions for succession. Faith communities can take steps to ensure that the investment of time and effort they've made in starting a garden does not get lost unnecessarily, and that their garden will continue to benefit the broader community as long as it is needed. Faith communities in this study used a few different structures to provide sustainable leadership and succession planning for their gardens.

Ministry-led (in-house)

One option is to develop and manage a community garden through a pre-existing committee or team within the faith community, such as a "missions committee" or "outreach team." This offers the benefit that the garden is viewed as a direct ministry of the faith community, perhaps making it easier to gain acceptance and participation from the congregation. Succession of leadership is ensured, because managing the garden is one of the expected roles within the committee or team. This model was found more commonly in larger faith communities (more than 400 members) with a more extensive volunteer pool and perhaps even staff dedicated to community outreach. This is an effective and sustainable way to manage a community garden, especially one with a transactional goal such as provision of food for other community programs. However, while gardens organized "in-house" can strengthen neighbourhood ties if allotment plots are included, the community development literature suggests they may be limited in the amount of trust they can generate. Many of the gardens described a very diverse group of gardeners from the local community, including single people, families, new Canadians, elderly people and those struggling with low incomes. Without these various neighbourhood voices involved in decision-making, ministry-led gardens run the risk of disempowering the people they are seeking to help by doing things "for" instead of "with" the community. If a faith community is interested in serving a more relational, transformational role within their neighbourhood, a community-led garden might be a better choice.

Community-led

Some of the gardens in this study were community-led right from their inception, and a few adopted this structure after more informal beginnings. This sometimes took longer to get started, as time was spent having community meetings to gauge interest and form an organizing committee. Once established, these gardens were managed by a small committee of gardeners who shared duties and rotated on and off the committee as necessary. These gardens were typically started by very small faith communities (less than 100 members) with few available volunteers, making community involvement somewhat of a necessity. By seeking out leadership and skilled individuals from the neighbourhood, these faith communities solved their problem of low volunteer numbers while empowering the community to act on their own behalf. These small faith communities have (perhaps inadvertently) stumbled upon the princi-

The Glenwood Drive Community Garden in Truro, NS has developed into its own community of likeminded people, some from other faith communities and some professing no faith at all. Many of these gardeners are committed to working together to improve food security in the area. They have contributed their harvest at "Spare to Share" (pay-asyou're-able) markets, planted plots for food bank donations and participated in events for Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The garden has participants from the local family resource centre, employment skill development agency, community workshops and daycare centre. By creating a new community centred around gardening, the church has indirectly increased its reach to many different individuals and organizations.

ples of asset-based community development that are still relatively new to many. The shift from a 'transactional' model (e.g., the charity and relief work that has historically dominated faith communities' efforts) to a more 'transformational,' participatory approach may help to reduce the likelihood of developing unhealthy power dynamics as it allows relationships of trust to be built. It is in these trusting relationships that people can have conversations about faith without the impression of ulterior motives.

Although a community-led approach may require the faith community to relinquish some control over the project, this shared control also leads to shared benefits and learning. The faith communities in this study all maintained a significant presence on their community-led garden committees and worked hard at maintaining and building relationships with the gardeners. A community-led structure lightens the load for leaders from the faith community and can allow new connections to be made with other local resources.

Resources about community development principles, including asset-based community development, can be found in Appendix E.

Arms-length leadership

Another possible structure that several gardens are considering is to transfer leadership of their community garden to an associated non-profit organization separate from the faith community. The two non-profits in this study are both downtown drop-in and resource centres that were established by the faith communities to support ministries operating from their buildings. They were formed in partnership with municipal and provincial government departments and other local organizations and faith communities.

Centre 507 is a drop-in centre created by Centretown United Church in downtown Ottawa, in partnership with the City and several other organizations. The gardens in the church's planter boxes are used solely to provide food for the Centre 507 daily meal program. These gardens have been managed primarily by two individuals since their origin five years ago, and they are hoping to transfer some of this responsibility to Centre 507 in the future. This would allow for succession of leadership and access to the Centre's volunteer pool, which is important for a small and aging faith community.

Neither of these gardens has fully made this leadership transition yet, so it is difficult to comment on how effective it might be. Where the nonprofit organization structure already exists, this arms-length approach could potentially provide significant benefits. Managing a community

garden through a non-profit with paid staff could allow for smooth succession of experienced, dedicated leadership. It would also allow the garden to access the organization's (presumably larger) volunteer pool, which may be particularly important for small and aging faith communities. The level of community engagement and faith community involvement in such a garden would be determined by the mission of the garden and the composition of the non-profit's board of directors. Partnership with government departments and other non-profit organizations could allow faith communities to significantly extend their impact in the community, beyond gardening to food security, housing and various social services.

Jubilee Community Garden in Winnipeg started about 15 years ago as a church-run garden with a mission to grow organic vegetables to share with the neighbours. After several years, when the church was looking for ways to immerse in community ministry, they opened the garden up to the neighbourhood and adopted a team-led (church and community) structure. Since then, a non-profit resource centre was established at the church in partnership with the city and local housing authority, and there are now plans to transfer responsibility for the garden to this faith-based organization.

To summarize, the leadership structure of a faith-based community garden has implications for its long-term sustainability and for the community impacts it can expect. It is unlikely that a community garden can function indefinitely by relying on the efforts of one or two volunteers without any plans for leadership succession. While ministry-led, in-house management is simplest and allows faith communities the most control over decision-making, it usually isn't feasible in very small faith communities with few volunteers. Furthermore, especially where faith community members come from outside the local neighbourhood, this structure runs the risk of perpetuating inequalities in the community, because it may not include diverse perspectives from the users of the garden. Community-led gardens, on the other hand, give most of the ownership of problems and solutions to the gardeners. In this case the faith community serves a supporting role and may define limits as the land-owner if necessary, while the community provides most of the leaders and volunteers. This type of leadership structure requires great skill in managing interpersonal dynamics, but the relational benefits are more likely to be shared throughout the community. Finally, a garden that is run at arms-length by a non-profit organization may have the best likelihood of consistent leadership and might be able to provide both volunteers and significant community involvement. It is possible for a garden to transition from one leadership model to another as its mission and conditions in the faith community change.

Community Gardens Benefit the Faith Community

Congregational morale

One thing that was clear for every faith community in this study was that they felt their community gardens were worth the effort it took to get them started. A theme that came up repeatedly was that the gardens provided "opportunities" – to have conversations with neighbours, to learn about the community, to meet people from different backgrounds, to have contact with nature and to demonstrate faith in action. Because gardening has so many benefits, it also provides the faith community with opportunities to address a variety of big issues such as mental health, poverty and environmental preservation, to name a few. Often the big problems in the world seem overwhelming – people of faith are accustomed to giving money to development organizations or praying for societal issues, but these responses can seem very remote. To be able to do something tangible in their own back yard, and to meet the people who are affected by these efforts, can be a great confidence-builder for a congregation. Many of the faith communities reported a sense of gratification at providing something of value to the neighbourhood. Some said it even gave a feeling of hope and growth to their declining church.

> *"I think within the church, people are just pleased to see something positive. We did have a decline, but now it's back on the growth side. The garden, amongst other things, was one aspect of showing growth and promoting hope within the church. It gives a sense of positive accomplishment and contributing to the community."*
>
> *—Nicole Larouche, St Timothy's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa*

Outward-facing faith

Most faith communities are increasingly aware that an insular, inward-focused attitude is not well received in our society and can limit the faith community's influence. However, they don't always know how to demonstrate a more outward-looking stance. Community gardens are a visible signal that a faith community is interested in interacting with its neighbourhood. The "development and enhancement of societal legitimacy" is known to be a primary

> *"We noticed immediately that many passersby are very interested in this garden – we have met many of our neighbours by simply being in our church front yard by the garden."*
>
> *Bustani Garden report, 2019*

benefit for organizations that engage in their community (Bowen, F. et al., 2008). However, beyond just "looking good" to the neighbourhood, clergy also reported that their community gardens had helped to focus the congregation's attention on community outreach and environmental stewardship. The benefits are not just for the sake of an elevated reputation. With a more outward-looking attitude, faith communities are able to make new connections and extend their reach in the community. This has the potential to deepen the fellowship and faith of members within the congregation as well as providing opportunities to demonstrate faith in practical ways.

Cultural understanding

Another benefit to faith communities is the opportunity to enhance their cultural awareness. Most of the community gardens in this study reported having gardeners who were newcomers to Canada or from a different cultural background than the majority of the congregation. Some of these participants planted crops with which other gardeners weren't familiar, allowing for the sharing of knowledge and techniques, not just around gardening but also around food and cooking. Some faith communities hosted meals featuring food from the community garden. Overall, the act of growing food together provided opportunities for conversations and relationship-building between people with very different backgrounds and experiences. Especially in communities with a high number of new Canadians, having these relationships leading to greater cultural understanding is essential for a faith community that intends to reach out to its neighbourhood.

> *"There was a guy lying on the steps of the church, and he started yelling at me for picking the tomatoes. I introduced myself and explained what I was doing, then I went and sat with him at lunch in the drop-in centre. So there's opportunities to stop and talk and learn about people that I never would otherwise. . . Being right out on the street where people are coming and going from work. . . ."*
>
> *—Brian Ure, Centretown/Centre 507 Garden*

Challenges for Faith-Based Community Gardens

Even after clearing the hurdles involved in establishing a community garden, the challenges may continue. Several gardens reported issues with managing difficult personalities, theft of produce and minor vandalism in their gardens. These problems were overwhelmingly accepted as part of the process of community ministry, and in some cases were viewed as opportunities to identify and address real needs in the community. Many expressed that their community garden was not reaching its full potential because the neighbourhood gardeners and the faith community did not interact enough to benefit from each other's fellowship. Some suggested that being able to clearly demonstrate the positive impacts of the garden and linking the garden's activities more clearly to spiritual teachings could help faith community members to become more engaged. This could increase acceptance and support of the gardens even when difficulties were encountered.

Integrating faith community and gardener community

For gardens with a large proportion of local community members it can be challenging to integrate the gardeners into the fellowship of the faith community. Some of the gardens in this study make a concerted effort to build bridges between the gardeners and the congregation.

Faith communities invite gardeners to their special events, and gardeners invite the congregants to help out during spring set-up and maintenance days. Some hold harvest meals, picnics or outdoor worship services. The most effective opportunities for fellowship and conversation seem to occur during the act of gardening itself. For this reason, some faith communities make sure that a small number of plots are always reserved for members of the congregation, so that those relationships can be maintained.

Measuring impacts

None of the faith communities in this study started community gardens for the purpose of attracting new members. They recognized that many of the community garden's benefits to the faith community and the neighbourhood are intangible and relational. However, this means they are very difficult to measure and report. Most community gardens, if they attempted to track impacts at all, stuck to simple, countable metrics like number of gardeners or quantity of food produced. Some had annual year-end surveys to help guide their activities the following year. Although organizers would like to be able to easily demonstrate the impacts of their gardens, only a few engaged in regular reporting back to their congregations or to the broader community.

Most agreed that telling stories of individual gardeners would be the most effective way to

share information with the faith community and to build support amongst those who are not already involved. An example of this is the Community Garden Storytelling Project, a video series and research report produced by the Region of Waterloo Public Health. For faith communities looking to evaluate their community gardens with more objective metrics, the Farming Concrete Data Collection Toolkit from New York City might offer some measurement solutions. Links to these and other resources are available in Appendix F.

Relating community gardens to faith

In general, the community gardens in this study are not seen as a core feature of the faith community's activities. They are usually described as being important to the people who are most involved in them but are just one aspect of the faith community's outreach. While most garden organizers were able to draw some connections between their statements of faith and the purpose of their community gardens, the links were quite generalized. A participant from Faith & the Common Good suggested that faith-based community gardens are most effective when they become a part of the culture of the faith community, rather than a project driven by a few people. While this research did not attempt to determine how this could be accomplished, some ideas were suggested. Themes about gardening and the environment could be woven into spiritual education and worship services to help people make these connections. Some gardens could be structured to allow for quiet, "sacred spaces" where individuals or small groups can meet for reflection and meditation or prayer. Congregations could be enriched by using the community garden to deepen their personal faith.

Case Study: Beacon United Church Community Garden
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

Background

Beacon United Church in Yarmouth, NS, is typical of many churches in Canada these days. Built in the 1960s, it has a huge building and lots of land. But the size of the congregation is dwindling, and the members are looking for responsible ways to use their assets. Over a decade ago, Stephen Sollows and the church's stewardship team recognized the large environmental footprint of their church and started trying to reduce their carbon emissions in many ways. They upgraded heating systems, reduced drafts, changed lighting, upgraded appliances and turned off things like hot water heaters in sections of the building that weren't regularly used. They succeeded in reducing their energy consumption by almost 50% over about eight years. The community noticed; Beacon United Church was nominated for (and won) the Divert NS Mobius Award in 2014 for their green initiatives!

During this time, the stewardship team also turned their attention to the lot next door owned by the church. Although many felt the sprawling lawn was attractive, they realized that it wasn't the most productive use of the land and was not good for their environmental footprint. Several suggestions were made, such as planting trees as a carbon sink, but no action had been taken yet.

In 2012, in the midst of these conversations and changes, Les Barber moved to Yarmouth and

started attending the church. He noticed the big vacant lot and wondered if it might be suitable for a garden. Although he didn't have direct experience with community gardens, he had often admired one at a church in his old hometown. He thought it was a great example of a way to use extra land while helping people out. When he mentioned this to the minister's wife, she was very enthusiastic, and helped him go speak to the church council to propose the idea. They were a bit nervous at first, but Les said, "I'll just take a wee piece of land and try it…if it doesn't work the first year, we can just plow it right back up." When he assured the council it would not be any cost to the church, they agreed to let him go ahead and plant some potatoes and sunflowers to sell at the end of the season. He ended up with a great harvest, which won over the whole congregation. It was a low-cost way to achieve energy reduction targets and build community – all positives!

Growth

In order to prepare for a larger community garden, Les and Stephen decided to have the land plowed up. This is when they discovered what was lurking in the soil. Apparently, a building had burned down on the site 50 years ago and it had become a dumping ground for brick, stone and other debris. They spent all spring picking out over 20 truckloads of debris. Ultimately, they decided to lay down cardboard and build garden beds over top of it. Les built 36 four-by-eight-foot garden beds arranged in the shape of a cross, "to keep the right theme." The town donated 3 truckloads of compost. Although there was plenty of verbal support from the congregation, Les did most of the physical work, spending up to eight hours a day building beds, filling them with soil and levelling pathways. By the end of June, every garden bed was complete and had been claimed by a gardener from the community.

The church is committed to offering the garden plots at no fee for the gardeners and has included the garden in its annual budget. In addition to smaller donations, the garden has received some bigger items such as a gazebo that was converted into a garden shed. Les says there never seems to be any shortage of donors when people see a need in the garden: "Two years ago I asked about planting some fruit trees in the garden. A lady came up to me and asked, 'What's the cost of the fruit trees gonna be?', so I told her; next thing you know, she gave a cheque right away for the fruit trees." The garden has also received occasional grant funding for example a grant from RBC that helped them build a "rain mitigation garden" – and gets a student each summer with a grant through the Canada Summer Jobs Program.

Over the years, the garden continued to expand. There are now over 160 garden plots. In 2019, there were 45 people from the community and 6 church members using the garden. Con-

sidering the average weekly attendance at church services is around 38 people, this is a considerable outreach. Many gardeners have multiple plots, and some choose to donate their harvest to the food bank, although there are no specific donation plots mandated by the church. The gardeners come from all walks of life and all over the county. Often, people will come to garden and then find out about another church program. Stephen says, “We’ve got people who are gardeners, bridge players, come to the support groups and come to the community dinners. They see Beacon as a place that is comfortable and safe for them to come to. It’s important to be able to provide those kind of surroundings for people.”

One of these gardeners is Launa Sherritt. She has been using the Beacon Community Garden for about five years now and had previous community gardening experience before that. Out of the nine garden plots she tends, she gives most of her food away. In 2019 Launa decided to take the summer student under her wing and provide direction for what needed to be done. She supervised his work every day, and together they upgraded the composting system and got lots of maintenance done. She even made sure he went with her to the Monday morning coffee hour to meet folks from the church. Launa herself is not a church member but does attend their services. She serves on the garden team and actively promotes the garden, distributing announcements to other churches and local news outlets to recruit new gardeners. To her, the garden is a place where people with shared interests can come together. Although some have more experience than others, everyone is helpful; she says, “There’s nobody who wouldn’t help if you asked.”

Organization

The garden had no formal organizational structure at the start. The Church and Community Team officially provided oversight, but since they didn't have any specific garden knowledge, they were happy to let Les take care of it, and he was happy to do so. With permission from the church, Les decided what to build and rarely asked for any help. He assigned plots to new gardeners, and they signed paperwork with the church secretary. However, after several years of growth, things became difficult to keep up with. There were occasional mix-ups with plot assignments. Managing the garden paperwork, waiting list and communications was taking up more of the secretary's time than anticipated. Les thought he was doing ok with managing compost and watering systems and doing regular maintenance, but after a few years it became difficult to keep up. When Les had a stroke in 2018, it was clear that he had to hand some responsibilities to other people.

Stephen got to work recruiting people to form a garden team. It was surprisingly difficult to get people to commit to this, when they had been accustomed to someone else organizing everything. However, with clear expectations laid out and persistent follow-up, a team was eventually formed. It was important that the team was mostly community members; the church wanted the gardeners to know that the garden is a community-owned resource and its activities aren't solely dictated by the church. Most of the team members had not had a lot of experience working with committees, so some time was spent establishing processes to get things done. The garden team now has six members, meets monthly and has established roles (for example, only one person who assigns garden plots). Les and Launa both serve on the garden team, as well as the minister.

Managing Challenges

The Beacon Community Garden has encountered challenges that are typical for many community gardens. Although it has a fence for deer, the gate is not locked, so anyone can enter the garden. Les said there has been some minor vandalism (such as kids pulling up all the carrots and leaving them lying around). However, this is very rare. There was talk at one point about putting up cameras, but they decided against it. As Les said, "This is a community garden. And we can't watch all the time!" Once, there was an incident of ongoing theft in the garden. When they discovered who was stealing people's harvest, Launa realized it was a woman who had no income and had grandchildren to bring up. She said, "Wouldn't it be better if we tried to give her some food rather than drag her out of the garden?" They were then able to talk with her, make sure

she had enough to feed her kids, and encouraged her to come work in the garden and become a part of the community. The garden now keeps a basket of free produce outside the gate, where gardeners can share their excess harvest. The community knows it is available for anyone who needs it, and it always gets taken.

As with any diverse community group, there can be conflict between gardeners. People have different ideas of what is "clean" and how a garden bed should be cared for. Some people are more concerned about weeds than others, and some will complain about what other people are growing or how they're managing their gardens. As Stephen put it, "You do run into situations where what's important to one person isn't important to others – for example, they pulled up the fig trees when runners from them showed up in people's garden beds – those are hurts. But that's to be expected when you have a diversity of people, of crops. . . and just the logistics of doing gardening itself, there's a lot of things going on."

Communication can be a challenge, especially when there isn't clarity around who has responsibility or authority to make decisions. There were a few incidents where people's seedlings got pulled out because a garden plot was mistakenly assigned to two different people. Now that the garden has a garden team with only one person responsible for assigning plots, these mix-ups are less likely to happen. Also, with clear expectations and rules that each gardener signs in the spring, conflicts between gardeners are minimized. Beacon Community Garden only allows new gardeners to have one plot in their first season. If they manage it well and clean it up in the fall, they can apply for multiple plots the following year – but those who don't clean up in the fall may not get their plot back the next season. It has happened, but it has been very rare that Les has had to ask a gardener to leave.

By far the biggest challenge encountered by Beacon Community Garden was the fact that it grew so rapidly without clear plans for shared leadership. It was also hard to get people to step up and do the physical work involved, especially as the garden got bigger. Les said, "You need long-range planning. Stay small to start. Keep it under control. I spread it too fast, I know that now. It worked, but it was a headache. You always need to have a backup plan. Even if you think you can handle it, if something happens you need to have a plan." Stephen also observed that having the weight of the garden on one person's shoulders was too much. Although they have now successfully transitioned to a community-led team structure, it would have been preferable to have a cohesive team from the start instead of one person doing it all.

Benefits

Despite these minor challenges and lessons learned, the gardeners and the church have seen great benefits from Beacon Community Garden. Stephen says "The social impact the garden has on people is amazing. You'll see people from millionaires to people who have nothing" gardening together there. Although some people are very independent and prefer to just come and do their gardening, most are very sociable. Les says "It's quite the get-together for a lot of people! People bring things in to dress up the garden – someone donated a bench where people can sit and talk. People from the park across the street will come in and tour the garden too." The church members who garden there enjoy the opportunities to have social interactions with sectors of the community that they wouldn't normally encounter. Launa also commented that she's made some wonderful friends there. And when someone goes away, they just have to tell a few other gardeners and they will help out to maintain things during their absence.

The garden provides a tremendous learning experience for many, especially those who have never had the opportunity to garden before. Les remembers helping a woman get started in her garden, and "before long she was swinging around her harvest hollering, 'I got a radish!'. It's amazing to see how excited people get when they discover they can actually grow something." In addition to Les, there are other retired gardeners who take extra time to help those who are new to gardening. There are also folks who really like to experiment with growing different things. At one point, they had a tree that produced cherries, apricots and plums, all on one tree! They've grown fig trees, olive trees and gingko trees, none of which are native to Nova Scotia. Often, people will see what someone else is growing and decide to try it themselves. It's an ongoing learning experience for everyone involved.

Beacon United Church recognized that the garden would have an impact on the community, but they really didn't know who might come join. With an enormous building and 25 classrooms, the church is heavily used by the community – they've hosted schools, daycares, support groups, dancing clubs, food groups, bridge clubs, scouts & guides. With only 116 members on the books, the building and land is of limited use to the church membership, but it is obviously of great use to the community. Last year there were about 50 community groups that called the church home. The garden has become part of that mix of people; many will come to garden and then find out about another program, or vice versa – there is crosspollination between programs. Stephen says, "Those people aren't necessarily going to become members of our church – we're not a church that proselytizes to get members. But the most important ministry is to engage

with community and make sure the community can use us." In this way, the garden has grown the church, by getting it involved in the community even more.

The garden is now well known in the community, and the church is also well known for its community involvement. As Stephen puts it, "Any community group you have within a church structure grows your church. The church supports the community, and I think the community supports you too – not necessarily by attending your facility, but that's not what it's all about."

"I can't say I've never seen anyone in the community garden without a smile on their face, but I'd say it's very seldom. It's a happy place to be. And in many of these people's lives, there are not many happy places to be. That says volumes to me. If that's all that we do, that's enough."

Future Plans

The Beacon Community Garden might have reached its maximum physical size, but that doesn't mean there aren't dreams for further development and improvements. There are plans for a new rainwater collection system from the large roof of the church, additional pollinator gardens and beehives, a better system of compost management from church food waste and raised garden beds for people with disabilities. Some of these projects will require funding through grants, fundraising and donations. And some of these dreams might take many years to be realized. As Launa said, "I read a quote once: 'Who plants the seed beneath the sod and waits to see, believes in God.' That says it all, doesn't it? You gotta have patience."

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to examine the enabling conditions and reported impacts of community gardens hosted by faith communities. This required an emphasis on the particular needs and challenges of faith communities. These gardens are just one aspect of a faith community's activities and need to be balanced with other responsibilities such as worship, spiritual education, fellowship and pastoral care. Underlying this for many faith communities is a context of declining membership and financial concern. Although there are many resources for groups starting community gardens, none account specifically for the challenges faced by faith communities. This research attempts to address that gap.

The results highlight that community gardens and faith communities are mutually beneficial. Many of the factors that are necessary for starting a community garden can be provided or supported by faith communities. From the faith community's perspective, community gardens are well worth the effort. Regardless of mission, size or leadership structure, all the faith communities in this study saw their garden as an asset. Some of the advantages included increased opportunities for interaction with neighbours and with each other, enhanced congregational morale and confidence, and a higher profile in the community. For faith communities that strive to serve their neighbours and be more outward-facing, the relationships and connections made are both a means to greater impact and an end in themselves. It should also be noted that commonly-held fears about vandalism, theft and misuse of land were rarely realized, and were unanimously seen as minor occurrences.

Another key finding is the importance of leadership for the sustainability of a community garden. There are several ways to ensure ongoing leadership. While an in-house, ministry-led garden may have better buy-in from the faith community and therefore more congregational volunteers, a community-led structure is more practical for small congregations and may lead to greater community-wide impacts, according to the literature. Either way, a clear plan for succession of garden leadership is necessary if a faith community wants its garden to last beyond the passion and availability of its initial champions.

Recommendations

Although every faith community is unique, the experiences reported in this study can be mined for advice to recommend some best practices for faith communities considering a community garden.

West Highland Baptist Church in Hamilton, ON has enough space to offer two gardens with different administrators: the 1.5 acre "King's Garden," where church members grow and donate thousands of pounds of food to the Neighbour to Neighbour food centre each year, and a community garden with 45 plots available for rent by local community members.

• Clarify the garden's intended purpose early in the process – The faith community should engage in discussions and discernment about why it is considering a community garden and what outcomes it expects to achieve. Knowing that gardening together will provide many opportunities for interaction, the faith community should consider which relationships it hopes to foster. A garden focused on fellowship within the congregation will be organized differently than one that is expected to enhance connections with the surrounding neighbourhood, and one that is focused on maximum food production may operate differently than one that is primarily for learning.

• Involve all stakeholders - Ideally, representatives from all of the groups the garden is intended to serve should be involved in its creation whether that includes various groups of congregation members, individuals from the community, or staff from local food programs. This is particularly important for faith communities that hope to build relationships with and empower their neighbours. In practice, this may involve hosting a series of community meetings to establish a working garden committee.

The Glenwood Drive Community Garden took several years to get established. After first dealing with drainage issues on the land, they hosted a "local foods" dinner in partnership with Select Nova Scotia to gauge the community's level of interest. They shared their idea through the Truro Farmer's Market, met with Truro's Communities in Bloom Committee, and held a community meeting to establish goals and leadership for the garden, all before they ever broke ground.

• Establish a sustainable leadership plan that aligns with the garden's purpose – Although some of the gardens in this study have managed to survive without plans for leadership succession, this approach isn't recommended beyond the first few years. Faith communities starting community

gardens should think beyond initial start-up, making intentional decisions about leadership structure that are in line with the garden's intended mission. The organization of a garden doesn't need to be highly formal, but it should be clear how decisions are made and what will happen if the current leader becomes unavailable. Certain leadership structures seem to be more common in certain types of gardens. Gardens that are solely for food donation are well suited to a ministry-led model, especially in larger faith communities with many potential volunteers. However, if the focus is on community relationship-building, a community-led structure may be more appropriate. A garden organizing committee of at least three members is recommended.

• Establish clear rules and expectations for gardeners – Every organization and community group deals with differences of opinion and personality conflicts. However, many issues can be prevented by having clear guidelines for behaviour that are agreed upon when individuals join the community garden. This also allows the faith community

The garden leaders at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church work hard to keep the congregation informed about the Giving Garden. They have produced poster boards, videos and slide presentations to highlight the impact of the garden and thank the congregation for their support.

to set some reasonable boundaries to protect their other activities – for example, to ensure adequate parking spaces and a quiet atmosphere during worship services. Some sample garden agreements can be found in Appendix G.

• Use a variety of methods to integrate the garden and the faith community – Familiarity will certainly be established between people who meet each other regularly in the garden, but that doesn't mean the faith community will automatically embrace all the gardeners. Planning meals, picnics and other events where gardeners and the congregation can interact will help to provide opportunities for relationships to form. Consistent communication, including some basic metrics and gardener's stories, can help maintain the congregation's interest and participation in the garden. For those most involved in the garden it may seem obvious, but it is important to remind the faith community regularly about how their community garden is helping them fulfill their broader mission.

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations to this research. The faith communities and gardens studied do not comprise a representative sample, and there was no direct comparison between faith based and non-faith based gardens. Although attempts were made to include a variety of faith traditions, all of the established gardens in the study were from Christian churches. Because the recruitment method asked for established gardens, there was little direct information about gardens that may have failed and what challenges they faced. Furthermore, the opinions of garden organizers may not be representative of the whole congregation or broader community.

The community development literature suggests that an asset-based, community-led initiative (transformational engagement) will have greater impacts than one led solely by an organization. In contrast, many faith communities have traditionally used a charity model (transactional

engagement) in their community outreach efforts. Because this research was not designed to capture all of the impacts of faith-based community gardens on the broader community, it did not find appreciable differences in impacts between those that were ministry-led and those that were community-led. It would be interesting to investigate whether existing principles of community development hold true for faith communities, and to what extent faith communities are using an asset-based approach in their outreach efforts.

This research represents a starting point for this and many other lines of inquiry about faith communities, community gardens, food security initiatives and community development efforts. Some garden organizers expressed an interest in learning more robust methods of evaluating and communicating the impacts of their gardens. Staff from faith-based organizations wondered how community gardens could be more fully integrated into the theology of faith communities. Some were curious about how faith communities can partner with other organizations in their community outreach. These are all good questions for future research.

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Appendix A
List of Subject Gardens

Community Roots Garden - Jubilee Mennonite Church — Winnipeg, MB

Beacon Community Garden – Beacon United Church — Yarmouth, NS

Glenwood Drive Community Garden – John Calvin Christian Reformed Church — Truro, NS

Trinity Community Garden - Trinity Church (of the Nazarene) — Ottawa, ON

St Tim's Church Garden - St Timothy's Presbyterian Church — Ottawa, ON

Centretown/Centre 507 Community Garden — Centretown United Church — Ottawa, ON

The Giving Garden - Maranatha Christian Reformed Church — Cambridge, ON

Athens St Community Garden - Immanuel Christian Reformed Church — Hamilton, ON

The King's Garden - West Highland Baptist Church — Hamilton, ON

Bustani Community Garden - Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church — Surrey, BC

Appendix B
Interview Guide for Garden Participants

Each major topic area will be discussed with each participant. Primary questions and follow-up questions will be used as guidelines to direct the conversation and assure that topics are well covered.

Overall history/timeline of the garden project:

Tell me the story of how your community garden came to be.

—Why did you decide to start a community garden (instead of something else)?

—Where did the idea come from? Who drove the process?

—How long did it take to go from the first spark to a functioning garden?

Mission/purpose of the garden:

What is the stated mission/vision of the garden?

—Was this determined from the start, or did it develop gradually?

What is the mission/vision of your faith community?

—How was this considered in the development of the garden?

Process of garden development:

How did you build support for this project in each step of planning?

—If there was resistance, how did you overcome it?

How did you determine if this would be feasible (technically, financially)?

—How did you access funding, if needed?

—How did you recruit volunteers? How many were needed?

What were the costs involved in starting the garden?

Who were the influential people in driving the project forward?

—Was it clergy, church leadership, congregants, partners from the community….?

Maintenance of the established community garden:

How is administration of the garden organized now?

—How are decisions made? By whom?

—How are conflicts managed?

How do you determine whether this organization is working effectively?

—Have you had to make changes to this structure? Describe.

—How do you ensure that the garden will be sustainable?

How are the garden and the faith community linked, formally and informally?

—What do others in the faith community say about the garden?

Impacts of the community garden:

What have been the impacts of the garden on those it is intended to serve?

—Direct/indirect, Positive/negative — please explain

—Which (if any) of these impacts were intended/expected?

—Have you measured/quantified these impacts?

What have been the impacts of the garden on the faith community?

—Direct/indirect, Positive/negative – please explain

—Which (if any) of these impacts were intended/expected?

—Have you measured/quantified these impacts?

Did you plan in advance for evaluating impacts? How?

—What metrics did you choose to track? Why?

—Were they qualitative/quantitative evaluations?

—What are the results of these evaluations?

How do you communicate the impacts of your community garden?

—How often? —To whom?

What would be helpful for you to know about the impacts of your garden?

Final questions:

What resources helped you develop and maintain your community garden?

What would you change about how your garden started/how it operates now?

Who else should I talk to about your community garden?

Are there records I could access about your garden (meeting notes, grant reports, etc.)?

Is there anything else you'd like to share that I might have missed?

Appendix C
Interview Guide for Faith-Based Organizations

What information is usually requested by faith communities starting a community garden?

—What gaps are there (if any) in the assistance/resources you are able to provide?

How long does it usually take a faith community to get their garden project launched?

What prerequisites seem to be most important in the successful launch of a garden?

What barriers have you witnessed to this process?

—What factors might cause a community garden to close, or fail to be opened, after some initial planning?

What impacts have you witnessed from faith-based community garden projects?

—How do you think faith communities might benefit from developing a community garden on their property?

Do faith communities usually plan ahead for measuring and communicating impacts of their garden projects? Do you think this would be valuable?

—What methods/frameworks (if any) might you recommend for this purpose?

Is there anything else you'd like to share that I might have missed?

Appendix D
Community Garden Resources

There are many guides and toolkits available online for those wishing to start a community garden. Each of the following provides guidance in all the basic requirements, with a slightly different focus.

• Edible Community Garden Guide — Faith & the Common Good — includes good chapters on planting and harvesting, as well as information about the skill set required for volunteer teams. This and other resources at: https://www.faithcommongood.org/community_gardens

• 10 step guide to starting a community garden — Hamilton Community Garden Network — includes an appendix about benefits of community gardening (could be used to make the case to hesitant congregations) as well as handy startup worksheets.

http://www.n2ncentre.com/hamiltoncommunity-food-centre/community-garden-networking-program/

• Why Every Church Should Plant a Garden.. and How — A Rocha — provides rationale for Christian churches to start gardens, as well as a detailed manual. This and many other community garden resources can be found at: https://arocha.ca/get-involved/green-living-resources/#gardeningtips

• Garden Guide — Just Food Ottawa — includes detailed information about pest control and specific vegetable profiles. Can be found under the "resources" tab at: https://justfood.ca/community-gardening-network/gardening-workshops/

• Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit — Food First NL: descriptions of garden committee roles and tips for writing grant applications. http://www.foodsecuritynews.com/best-practices-toolkits.html

• Community Gardens Toolkit — Food Banks Canada — Includes a questionnaire for getting started, and a chapter on safe food handling guidelines
https://www.foodbankscanada.ca/Our-Work/NationalPrograms/Gardens-and-Growing-Program.aspx

• Creating a Faith Based Community Garden — Christine Sine, Mustard Seed Associates - includes resources about spirituality and gardening
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54c685b3e4b0f8fbaf030c60/t/5665d7420ab3773ff632d5cb/1449514818548/Community+Gardening.pdf

• Community Gardening 101 — Food Share Toronto — detailed information on everything from organizational planning to gardening equipment, fundraising and community relations. This and many other resources can be found at: https://foodshare.net/resources/printable/

Appendix E
Community Development Resources

Publications — Asset-Based Community Development Institute — This website has a wealth of information about ABCD. There is a topic section for Faith Based Organizations. The "Theological Reflection" by Al Barrett gives excellent Biblical background and rationale for Christian churches using asset-based approaches in their community outreach. https://resources.depaul.edu/abcdinstitute/publications/publications-by-topic/Pages/default.aspx#_abcdbasics

Systematic Review: Engaging the Community — Network for Business Sustainability — Written from a business perspective, this document and accompanying web page outline main strategies of community engagement (transactional, transitional and transformational) and provides recommendations for best practices. https://www.nbs.net/articles/systematic-review-engaging-the-community

The following organizations offer resources and training on a wide variety of community development topics:

Christian Community Development Association https://ccda.org/

Tamarack Institute https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityengagement

Appendix F
Impact Measurement Resources

Farming Concrete Data Collection Toolkit — Design Trust for Public Space, New York City - This toolkit includes step-by-step instructions to measure a wide range of indicators such as harvest count, compost production, healthy eating and beauty of the garden. The website also includes instructional videos on use of the toolkit. https://farmingconcrete.org/barn/data-collection-toolkit/

Community Garden Storytelling Project — Region of Waterloo Public Health — A study "built upon stories of community gardening in Waterloo Region as told by gardeners themselves." The report can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BgrR8iVdpYrf-2uac07DqiZKx4KT89za/view

Videos from the project here: https://sites.google.com/view/community-gardens-ca/about-us/benefits-of-communitygardens?authuser=0

Measuring Social Value — Carleton Centre for Community Innovation - Provides background information and suggested methods for measuring and reporting the social impacts of activities. A good introduction to "measuring the unmeasurables." https://carleton.ca/3ci/wp-content/uploads/Social-Metrics-Primer-Sept-20-final-2.pdf

Sample Annual Gardener Survey: *Community Roots Garden, Winnipeg*

2019 Community Roots Garden Evaluation

"Come Grow With Us"

In order for the garden committee to create the ***best possible experience*** for all those involved in gardening, it is important that we receive ***feedback*** from those involved. Please take ***4 minutes and 22 seconds*** (I promise it will not take any longer than that!) to provide us with this valuable information.

1. Please list two things that you enjoyed most about this gardening season at Jubilee.

2. Please list anything that you did not enjoy or wish could be done differently in the future.

3. If you answered the question above, please list recommendations that you have in order to address your concerns and ways we can work towards possible positive changes in the future.

4a. Did you attend any of the garden evenings?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

4b. If you answered yes, how did you enjoy them? If you answered no, what held you back from attending?

5. Any other feedback you have for the garden committee?

Awesome! You are all done! I told you it wouldn't take more than 4 minutes and 22 seconds. And if it did, then good for you-you are an overachiever! Thanks for doing that. We really appreciate it!

Appendix G
Sample Garden Agreements

BUSTANI COMMUNITY GARDEN

MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT
TimB Mar 3/16

Bustani Community Garden aims to enable members to:

- **Develop an inclusive community;**
- **Foster a spirit of openness, sharing and cooperation;**
- **Learn about organic intensive gardening, grow healthy crops, and enjoy the produce of the garden.**

Full Name: _____ **Address:** _____

Phone Number: _____ **Email address:** _____

***For statistics only*: How many people will participate in caring for the plot and benefit from the produce?:** _____

Declaration:

1. I understand that Bustani Community Garden (BCG) is owned and operated by Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church (FCRC) at 9165-160st, Surrey, BC. I understand that the BCG Coordinator is the designated representative of FCRC regarding all BCG matters. I understand that, if my application is accepted, I will be assigned 1 plot for 1 season.

2. I promise to learn and follow best organic gardening practices in my plot, including:

- **No use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers;**
- **Composting garden waste;**
- **Making use of our growing season appropriately;**
- **Using water wisely.**

3. I will respect my fellow gardeners, and cooperate with them in all respects including:

- **Ensuring my plot is kept neat at all times;**
- **Ensuring BCG and personal equipment is properly cared for;**
- **Assisting others with gardening tasks as I am able;**
- **Assisting BCG with common tasks such as cleanup.**

4. I understand that neither BCG nor FCRC is responsible for my actions. I agree to hold harmless BCG and FCRC for any liability, damage, loss or claim that may occur in connection with the use of the garden by me or by any visitor to my garden plot.

5. I will pay an annual membership fee of $20, due March 30th of each year, payable to the Coordinator.

6. I understand that if I do not adhere to the above guidelines, BCG has the authority to withdraw my garden privileges and reassign my plot; also, my membership may not be renewed.

I have read and I understand the above declaration.
Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Please submit this form with payment in cash to the Coordinator.

Garden Application Form 2017

Please return completed form to: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Garden Rules and Gardener Responsibilities

The vision for the Glenwood Drive Community Garden is for it to be a place of beauty, fellowship and peace for growing, learning, eating and having fun. By joining the membership of the Garden, you are agreeing to help make this vision a reality. The standard plot fee is $20 per plot, and each household may use up to three plots per year. (Inexperienced gardeners must start with one plot.) If you return the following year, you will be guaranteed the use of the same plot(s) as long as you let the garden coordinator know before March 1.

It's important to use and care for your own plot to the best of your ability, never forgetting that different people have different gardening abilities, and that's OK! Please keep the weeds down in your plot and the area surrounding it, so that weed seeds don't spread to your neighbours' plots. Plant tall crops only where they won't shade neighbouring plots. Don't pick anyone's crop without their permission. Please respect the surrounding residential neighbours. Take note that church services are held each Sunday from 10:30 – 11:30 am and from 7:00 – 8:00 pm (so maybe those aren't the best times to run the rototiller ☺). Please, please, please don't waste good food – if you grew more than you can eat of something, consider swapping with other gardeners, or donate it to the Food Bank.

The Glenwood Drive Community Garden is committed to using organic gardening methods, avoiding synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. If you are struggling with invasive plants, insects or diseases, please contact the garden committee for recommendations on how to treat them in an organic manner.

There are a number of important events in the life of the Glenwood Drive Community Garden that you should plan to be part of. There are parts of the garden that belong to and are used by everyone, and these events are ways that everyone can contribute to the care and upkeep of these parts. The Garden officially kicks into gear in the spring on Victoria Day week-end with a work party to till plots, erect the deer fence, tidy up the winter mess and start planting. Throughout the summer, there may be other work parties when jobs need doing, or jobs may be posted on the garden's bulletin board to be done by whomever is willing and has time. There's a final work party around mid-October to prepare the garden for winter. Plan to commit around 5 hours over the course of the year to help out with communal garden tasks.

There are also fun things that take place throughout the year, like pancake breakfast fundraisers, potlucks, gardening classes, preserving classes, and outdoor church services. You will be invited to all of them. You can also feel free to organize your own garden-related events – if indoor facilities are required, the church can be made available to you.

Some other communal responsibilities include cleaning up liter if you see it, and informing the garden committee as soon as possible if you notice any damage to the garden property, including the deer fence. (Especially the deer fence!)

Sometimes we make a commitment to a group and life happens and we can't follow through. If you have to abandon your plot for any reason, please let the garden coordinator know. If you haven't planted anything by July 1, your plot will be considered abandoned and will be reassigned.

Your failure to fulfill the responsibilities outlined here weakens the community and the garden experience for everyone. If this is the case, you may not be guaranteed a garden plot the following year should you wish to return, especially if there is a waiting list of others who would like to use it.

from Gardens Built by Love

"The garden has now developed into its own community of likeminded people, some from other faith communities and some professing no faith at all. Many of these gardeners are committed to working together to improve food security in the area. They have contributed their harvest at Spare to Share (pay-as-you're-able) markets, planted plots for food bank donations and participated in events for Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The garden has participants from the local family resource centre, employment skill development agency, community workshops and daycare centre. By creating a new community centred around gardening, the church has indirectly increased its reach to many different individuals and organizations."

To what extent does this experience reflect that of other faith communities? What makes a leadership structure for a community garden effective? What are some models and practical resources for places of faith wishing to host community gardens? Karla Winham's study suggests some answers to these questions.

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