

A Green Testimony *by The Rev. Dr. Stephen Drakeford*

A number of years ago, I realized that the Gospel of John was an earth-friendly gospel. Right from the outset, John 1:1 is an echo of Genesis 1, placing Christ as Creator in creation. The emphasis continues in John 3:16, where the original Greek is “God so loved the *cosmos*...,” which expands our understanding of God’s love in sending Jesus beyond humanity to all of creation.

And finally, in John 20, I was delighted when I realized that the resurrection so clearly takes place in a *garden*. We know well the encounter and lovely dialogue between Jesus and Mary. It is in the garden that Jesus speaks Mary’s name and she realizes that she is known. As we read this story, we in turn imagine Jesus speaking our names. We are known.

I am taken that the setting is a garden. If John 1 echoes the “in the beginning” of Genesis 1, then it is natural that John 20 echoes The Garden of Eden of Genesis 2. The garden is key to understanding the fullness of the resurrection. I was raised to think that Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection was for humanity. I don’t recall any preacher pro-claiming that Jesus act of salvation was for all of creation. The resurrected new Adam appears in a garden — understood as the resurrected earth. Reconciliation is for all of creation, as Paul reminds us In Colossians. The wholeness of it all.

No wonder Mary first thinks Jesus is a gardener. God’s intention for humanity was that we would be the gardeners of God’s good creation. Jesus, the new Adam resurrected and standing in the garden causes me to remember God’s first commandment: to tend God’s earth.

I write this testimony in the dead of winter. I can’t wait to put my hands in the soil again. I look numerous times daily at the dormant earth for signs of the tulips and daffodils I planted in the fall. Jesus’ resurrection appearance in the garden reminds me that my love of my garden and the earth is deeply spiritual and part of my salvation. In the garden, Jesus speaks my name and I am known. Ah, the wholeness of it all!

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How Do Your Gardens Grow? Some Actions for Earth Day

Proclaiming the Resurrection in our **Home Gardens:**

-  Planting native pollinators welcomes other creatures into our gardens.
-  Growing some of our food links us to our first calling.
-  Limited space? Grow edible flowers like calendula and nasturtium, and herbs like thyme, basil and oregano in a pot on the balcony or windowsill to add colour and spice to your salads.

Proclaiming the Resurrection in our **Church Gardens:**

-  Growing and sharing food with our neighbours brings restoration to our communities.
-  Planting native species around our churches creates a haven for bees, butterflies and other pollinators.
-  Go to www.toronto.anglican.ca/creationcare for a toolkit on starting a garden at your church.

Proclaiming the Resurrection in our **Heart Gardens:**

Gratitude for the gifts of creation moves us to:

-  Take action to protect creation.
-  Advocate for people of colour, who bear the brunt of environmental degradation.
-  Advocate for Indigenous peoples, whose lands we continue to exploit.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, Creator of all, Gardener of the new creation, by your resurrection, enable us to be worthy servants of your creation, growing, caring for, and protecting the garden of your world. Amen.