

JUSTICE AND CREATION FELLOWSHIP STORY



Fellow: Karyssa Fugarino

Mentor: Rev. Dr. Chris Wilson



THE NEED

Prior to the introduction of the Green Chalice Intern, Saint Andrew went through the process of writing a land acknowledgement. As part of that promise the church chose to pursue finding an intersection between climate justice and intentional understanding of the Indigenous communities removed from this land. In that process an indigenous climate activist was consulted. The direction indicated through this conversation decided the direction of the internship.



THE SOLUTIONS

The first step indicated to us by our consultant was that we had to know what was on the property before we could decide how to best approach it and work with it.

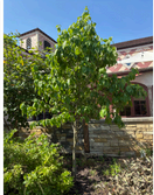
THE MAP

Because of the size of the property, for us to be able to do any identification work, we had to have a clear map of the land. We decided to subdivide the land into sections to reflect preexisting boundaries and make communication regarding the land more streamlined.



THE SYSTEM

I designed a system for organizing identification information on the plants present in each section of the property. Because of the eventual goals of the church and its mission surrounding creation care, the system emphasizes information on the historical uses of the plants and their role--whether positive or negative--on the local ecosystem.

Circle Patio				
Behind church building. Zone Extends from parking lot to the back patio entrance. Zone is subdivided into 12 sections.				
Name	Scientific Name	Image	Description	Gardening Notes
Peony	<i>Peonia</i>			Perennial. Species currently in the rhizome.
Iris	<i>Iris</i>			Only native if I. virginica.
Sweetspire	<i>Itea</i>			
Lily				
Daisy				
Oakleaf Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>		Leaves resemble those of oak trees.	Native to Southeastern region.
Redbud				
Spruce				
Pine				

THE CATALOG

I was tasked with cataloging all of the memorial plants on the Church property. To do this I worked with some long-time church members to identify the plants and then I compiled information on them. Doing this ensures these plants remain untouched by future landscaping and ecological projects.



CLIMATE JUSTICE EDUCATIONAL TRAIL

A long-term project that we started this summer was the creation of an eco-justice education trail on the church property. Due to weather, we unfortunately were unable to begin construction. However we have successfully planned the route the trail will take, and will use some of the resources I discovered during this fellowship to inform the information present. Ideally, when this project is completed, the church will have a trail that allows people to physically reconnect with nature, while simultaneously learning about climate justice.



THE PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

Church Partners

I worked with the Saint Andrew Group for Ecology (SAGE) and the Saint Andrew Indigenous Discussion group to inform my duties as a fellow. Furthermore, my mentor, Rev. Chris Wilson, worked closely with me to identify the primary needs for the church surrounding creation care, guiding my projects.

Resources

I identified a variety of sources over the course of the summer that educated my work and hopefully will help the church in the future. Some of these sources include:

- KU Ethnobotany department and database
- Conservation of Biodiversity in Native Prairie Communities in the United States
- Braiding Sweetgrass

Be The Neighbor

As a church, we had the honor of hosting some Be The Neighbor groups over the summer. I co-lead a Be The Neighbor activity with Rev. Wilson that focused on climate change and eco-justice. I gave a short presentation on the scientific, sociological, and religious implications of climate change and then led the participants in gardening work.

THE CONNECTION AND IMPACT

BE THE NEIGHBOR MISSION GROUP

The post made by Northway Christian church about their time with us:

Day Two - Northway's Youth Mission Trip with Be The Neighbor in Kansas City, MO.

Today is all about embodied care and ecological justice in action. Our group leaned into the theme of being in the land—not just walking on it, but walking with it.

Photos from the day: hands planting native flowers, youth journaling during devotional walks, and shared meals under open skies.

Hands-On Stewardship We got our hands dirty restoring garden beds and clearing trails. Every weed pulled was a prayer for renewal.

Devotional Walking We practiced spiritual enjoyment beyond the building—walking the land with intention, listening to its stories, and honoring its sacredness.

Advocacy in Action We talked about how justice isn't just local—it's global. From composting to climate marches, we're called to leave the world better than we found it.

"We're not just visitors here. We're caretakers. And that changes everything."

IDENTIFICATION PROJECTS

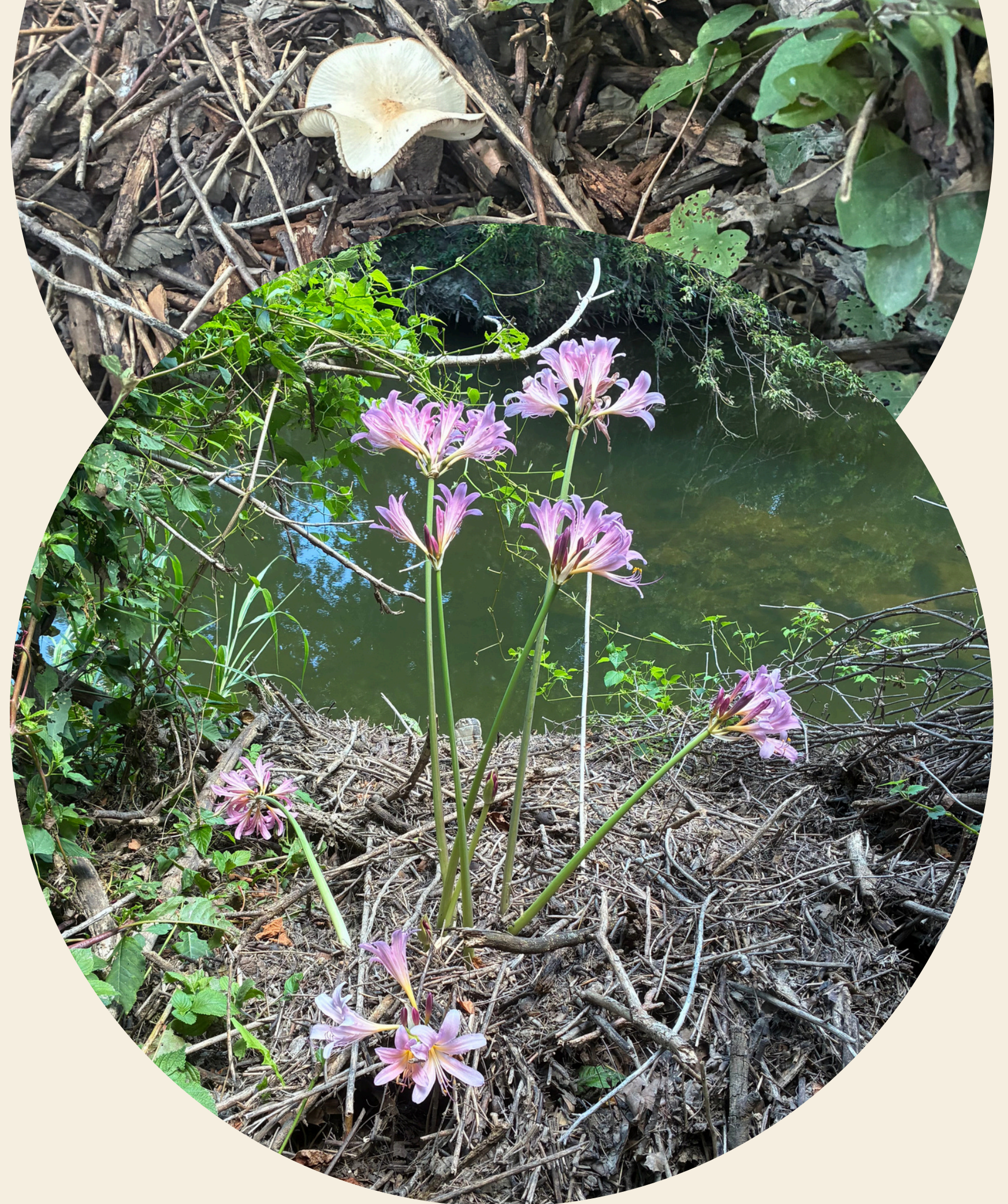
Over the course of the fellowship, I created a map of the property, outlined and begun to implement an identification system for the plants on the property, found reliable sources for the church to use in the future, and catalogued all of the memorial plants on the property



THE PRESENCE OF GOD

One thing I was continuously awed by were the variety of species I came across while working on the grounds. There were baby rabbits, monarch butterflies, massive native mushrooms, and beautiful flowers. Seeing these species reminded me of how miraculous the diversity of living things is and how awesome the specific interactions of different elements in an ecosystem are.

I was also aware of the presence of God at multiple moments during my work with Be The Neighbor. Specifically, I explained the medicinal uses and biological function of one of the plants to one of the participants and she lit up in interest. It was truly incredible to see people be amazed and interested in nature.



An aerial photograph of a church building with a brown tiled roof and a prominent steeple. The church is surrounded by lush green trees and a parking lot. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text. The text is centered and reads: "THE CHURCH" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, followed by a paragraph of text in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The background shows the church's architecture, including a large arched window on the left and a steeple on the right. The parking lot in the foreground has several spaces marked with white lines and wheelchair symbols. A few people are visible walking on the sidewalk near the church entrance.

THE CHURCH

In many ways, creation care was already a central focus at Saint Andrew. Nevertheless, I believe the work I did during this fellowship aided the variety of groups present in the church to have a shared system and a clear path for future eco-justice work. I truly hope the church continues their mission to realize their promises in the land acknowledgement after my fellowship comes to an end.