

Allisonville Christian Church Creation Care Garden

Fellow: Noah Bates-Scott, Mentor: Kendall Nagy



**GREEN
CHALICE**

 Disciples Home Missions &
The Christian Church in Kentucky



Allisonville Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

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Community Need

- The cost of living crisis and attacks on nutrition programming has made malnutrition and poverty even worse in the state of Indiana.
- This has made the community need for fresh, nutritious food even more important.
- Allisonville Christian Church is addressing this need by operating a creation care garden that sends the harvested produce to multiple local food pantries and food kitchens.



→ Ministry Response - Action or initiative ←

The Allisonville Creation Care Garden is a ⅓ of an acre garden that grows a wide variety of produce while also exploring regenerative and sustainable agricultural practices.

- Abundant fresh produce goes directly from the garden to food kitchens and food pantries, helping to nourish our hungry neighbors.

Although I am a music educator, I have always enjoyed the environmental sciences, and this summer provided me with numerous opportunities to further explore regenerative agricultural practices while also getting to be hands on in nature. My mentor Kendall and I attended a seminar about healthy soil practices and no-till farming, and we received a state grant to implement this system alongside winter and fall cover crops to begin to build our soil health, and to be better stewards of the land.

Specifics

- The Creation care garden spans a third of an acre. Last year we installed a rainwater catchment system, and have used entirely collected rainwater for irrigation of the garden. We had ~90 pepper plants, ~130 tomato plants, ~15 squash and zucchini plants, as well as entire beds of cruciferous greens such as cabbage and collard greens. We also grew onions, garlic, basil, dill, okra, broccoli, melons, corn, beets, radishes, pole beans, and swiss chard.
- I have particularly enjoyed getting to watch the tomato plants that I transplanted on my very first day grow big and strong, and I enjoyed the little surprises while working, such as finding volunteer melons, or seeing special visitors such as cardinals and box turtles.



→ Collaborators and Partners

This summer's efforts would not have been possible without people such as my mentor, Kendall Nagy, who walked me through the process of how we do things in the garden, or the pastoral team at ACC, who welcomed me in with open arms and trusted me with this opportunity. I would have certainly lost my struggle against the weeds that grew faster than I could pull them if people such as Debbie Bonhomme, Janette Smith, Betty Kaiser, and so many other wonderful people that donated some of their time to help pull weeds or harvest the metric tons of tomatoes that our garden produced. The education about soil health that I received, as well as the cover crop seeds that were provided to us would not have been possible without the help of Kevin Allison, a soil health specialist with the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District. Our efforts to grow all of the produce would have also been futile without the vital work performed by Linwood Food Pantry and the Jesus Fellowship in Indianapolis, as well as the work of Second Helpings, one of the food kitchens that we send much of our produce to. Also I would like to give a huge shoutout to all the folks who risked poison ivy to help pull invasive species from the church property.



ACC volunteers helping with pulling Invasive species from the Church Property

Full Name

→ Impact and Ripples



After sending our Collard Greens in for a few weeks, I heard from one of our volunteers that took the produce to the food pantry that there were a few regulars that had requested we wait until the collards were a little bit bigger before we picked them. In this photo, the collard greens we picked after learning this are rather large.



Part of our rain catchment system that I installed last summer under the supervision of church member Larry Rahn. through the use of this 250 gallon tank and an addition 350 gallons of storage that collect rainwater from the church roof, we were able to avoid using city water to irrigate our crops this year, drastically reducing the church's water bill.



The garden before I began helping this summer



The garden after I began helping this summer

→ Impact and Ripples



The work that I did this summer helped to produce record amounts of produce from our garden, to the point that we were running out of crates to transport the produce after harvest, and were having to leave ripe fruit on the vines. This in turn helped to build community within the church, as the amount of work required for the harvest (which is the most satisfying part of the process) was drastically increased, resulting in large amounts of people from the church pitching in to help harvest in the mornings each week.

Spirit of God-Awe moments

I noticed the Spirit of God in multiple ways through my work this summer. The peacefulness in the early mornings while everyone was still asleep, but the birds were out, and the beautiful rays of sunshine creeping over the trees. The moments of quiet reflection and fulfillment while I worked in God's creation. Even some little things, like the beauty of the Butterfly's breath as it bloomed, or the tenaciousness of the volunteer honeydew that popped up in the pepper bed. I especially saw god in the enjoyment that other creatures got from the garden, such as the Eastern Box Turtle that found its way into the garden for a snack, or the birds, enjoying the shade and protection offered by the corn stalks. I also noticed the Spirit of God in the ways that the community showed up, to help harvest produce at 7 in the morning, or to drive the produce across town to deliver it to the food pantries. The garden helped to nourish our fellowship and faith while also providing physical nourishment for our neighbors.



Beloved Community

This fellowship has allowed for our gardening team to become more knowledgeable about regenerative practices, allowing us to become better stewards. This fellowship has also allowed for us to grow better connected to our community, and provided the impetus for more beautification efforts around our ministry site, as well as an increased interest in making the garden even better for next year. This program made it possible for ACC to entrust me with the garden, and to have more of a voice in how we manage the land and soil for future gardens. Because of this program, I have been asked to come back next summer, and I already have several plans for future projects and collaborations with the youth at my church and the congregation as a whole, such as collecting vegetable scraps from local restaurants for compost, building bat boxes to place around the ministry site, and the adoption of no-till practices for the next iteration of the garden.



Pastor Beau Underwood pitching in to remove invasive species from the church property.

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Thank you!

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Link to a virtual tour of the
garden here:
https://youtu.be/EmW_h22v9qA