

## **Sermon: “A Garden of Delight” (Laurel & Jane)**

There’s magic here. In this place. In all living and growing things. Tending that magic is a good and sacred thing. Whether it’s the teachers and volunteers helping our young people to blossom or everyone who’s working on the literal garden, there are so many ways that we tend to a world of mutual flourishing together.

Today we’re recognizing two big things we’ve been working on this year: one is revamping our Religious Exploration program, and the other is revamping our outdoor garden space. Both have been infused with an attention to what we value and how to live out those values more fully.

In the case of religious exploration, we wanted to shift away from having Sunday school classes during services, because that required that both kids and parents be separate from this worship time together. It meant that anyone who might want to support our kids’ programming had to choose between teaching and worship, which isn’t a choice we want people to have to make.

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It also meant that kids were never part of services and could easily make it all the way through Coming of Age without ever really having been in this space. So now we have RE before services on a regular schedule to make it easy for kids and families and other volunteers to make RE part of their normal life. We value our youngest members and parents, so the hope is that these changes make their participation in church life easier and more holistic.

The second big project has been planning to reconfigure our outdoor space. You might remember that there used to be some gigantic bushes in front of the church that basically obscured the whole front of the building. Those were removed before we started the repairs to the steeple and that left us with the opportunity to rethink how we use our outdoor space and what it means.

I will say, I’ve been sort of baffled by the number of townspeople who have been surprised to learn I’m the minister of this congregation because they thought the church was closed. Do you remember when a car hit the telephone pole on our corner and everyone on Facebook was talking about how it was “next to St.

Luke's" as if we didn't exist?

Like keeping your lights on on Halloween, my hope is that these new garden plans will be an invitation to the wider community, a signal that we are here and there is room for those who need a place. My only request to the garden committee as they made their plans was that we make the outdoor space more usable, since Covid made us so aware of not having functional outdoor space.

We have done so much this year. Thank you to Colleen and all our teachers and volunteers who've helped rebuild our RE program and thank you to all of you who have been helping weed and plan and rebuild our garden. There's magic in this place.

Jane is going to go into more detail about the values embedded in the design that she and the garden committee have been working on so diligently this year, and we'll have some time to answer questions.