



FAITH matters

April 10, 2023

It's spring and we're in the 7-week Season of Easter that concludes on Pentecost. The fact that Easter Sunday coincides, more or less, with the arrival of spring complements our understanding of Easter's meaning. Out of the darkness and heart-wrenching sounds of Gethsemane and Calvary, out of the despair and silence of Holy Saturday, we awaken Easter morning to the miracle of Jesus' resurrection – the good news that "He is risen!"

Easter declares, once and for all, that God is in charge of the cosmos. Neither sin nor death, nor human complicity with evil can thwart forever God's good will for God's world. Jesus' resurrection to new life is God's promise to us and to all of creation that new beginnings are always possible with God. Because God raised Jesus from the dead we know that, through faith in him, God will raise us from death to life, too, and not just when we die physically, but *now*.

Our *Brief Statement of Faith* declares that "God is everywhere the giver of new life." Indeed, God is the Creator of all life and calls us to be stewards of all of creation. So, in this Easter Season and throughout the lovely summer and fall that we are blessed to enjoy in Northern Michigan, I urge you to watch for signs of new life all around you and to praise God for them. I urge you, too, to do more than just observe – I urge you to do something concrete as a steward of creation that will make a difference in the well-being of our planet.

I am a huge perennial flower gardener. During the pandemic, I took an online landscape design course and re-landscaped the front beds at our Suttons Bay home. I removed invasive shrubs (barberry and burning bush) and replaced them with native ones. This year I am creating a songbird garden in our backyard that will include host and nectar plants for butterflies and bees and will also provide insects and seeds for birds. At our cottage on Platte Lake, I continue to work on shoreline restoration by 'losing the lawn' in favor of native plants that will help sustain the fragile ecosystem. This year, I'm also going to turn an unused side yard into a mini-meadow.

My inspiration for this work comes from two New York Times best-sellers by Doug

Tallamy, professor of ecology at the University of Delaware: *Bringing Nature Home* (2007) and *Nature's Best Hope* (2019). A gifted writer, he makes a profound case for our personal role in saving our planet. By replacing invasive plants with native plants, we provide the resources required for the survival of wildlife and, in turn, our own survival as a species. His latest book launched the idea of creating a 'Home Grown National Park' on our property, however small, even in our patio pots and window boxes. His argument is that only this pro-active grassroots approach will make the difference in maintaining bio-diversity by restoring habitats. (He has a new version of *Nature's Best Hope* for 8-12 year olds. I just sent it to my grandkids who are that age. It's part of my calling as a steward of God's good creation.) Visit his website (homegrownnationalpark.org) and, when you've taken a first-step, put your property on the list of 'Home Grown National Parks.' It's free.

I heard about a similar endeavor out of Ireland where a recent 20-year study found that 56% of native plants are declining while non-natives plants are increasing.^[i] (In the US, 80% of plants in our yards are non-native species that cannot support the complex food-webs that comprise our ecosystem.^[ii]) *We Are the Ark* invites us to do individual 'Acts of Restorative Kindness' that will help heal creation and so provide the clean air, healthy food, and beautiful environments God intends. The website (wearetheark.org) has a wealth of straight-forward ideas as well as a map where you can add your ark.

In a world with so many over-whelming problems, this is one thing we can each do to put our faith into action. Happy Easter! Happy stewarding!

~Written by Rev. Margie Osborn

[i] <https://www.thejournal.ie/over-half-of-irelands-native-plants-have-declined-since-the-1950s-6013383-Mar2023/>

[ii] *Nature's Best Hope* p. 9.



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