

What's Brewing | Forest Hills Scripture Garden

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Joyce Blair, Blake Rosbury, Blake Smith

Blake Smith 00:27

Hello Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is your host, Blake Smith. And I'm here for another episode of What's Brewing, where we ask the questions What is mission? And ... Why does it matter? I am really excited today to be able to have two guests with me. One who has been a longtime friend of mine and happens to share my name, which there are not many of those in the world. So it's good to be here with Blake Rosbury, but also with Joyce Blair, who is the co-founder of The Forest Hills Scripture Garden. She co-founded that with her husband Dave. And so I've also had the opportunity to enjoy the garden at some meetings, being in the Louisville area. And I can say that, I think that's the correct pronunciation, though I've been up in the Midwest long enough, my wife has tried very hard to get rid of all of my southern accent, but I can still say Louisville. So anyway, we're, I'm, again, I'm here with Blake Rosbury and Joyce Blair. And I'm just so excited to be with them. Welcome Joyce and Blake.

Joyce Blair 01:42

Welcome to you and we're glad to be able to participate.

Blake Rosbury 01:47

Glad to be here.

Blake Smith 01:49

Great. I just appreciate you guys taking the time to do this. It is such a beautiful garden. And hopefully our listeners will get a chance to get a sense of what it's all about. And maybe will check it out online and even, if they're passing through Louisville, get a chance to go and experience the beauty of that. So I want to take a few minutes before we really get started talking about the garden and let you guys tell a little bit about yourself. We like to let our listeners get to know our guests. So Joyce, if you don't mind. The Southerner in me says, "ladies first." So if you would tell us a little bit about yourself...

Joyce Blair 02:27

I'd be glad to. I grew up in Modesto, California. I've been a life member of the RLDS/Community of Christ Church, part of that Northern California district as a child. As time passed, I became very active in church activities and was an active worker at Happy Valley, being a counselor, a lifeguard, a campfire leader. And that stood me in good stead over the years and other districts as well. I graduated from Graceland College in time, and went on to Ohio State and eventually graduated from Iowa State in Ames, where I met my husband and we have spent a lifetime of active working in the church and pursuing our professional careers and parenting our children and living the good life. I did want to say, in addition to being a mom, which I felt like was probably my main call in life, I did have an

opportunity to pursue some of my professional interests that I was actually trained for in college, I was a home economist and was a direct role in the production and research behind the GE microwave guide and cookbook. For a long time, it was packaged inside of every microwave oven as a part. And in addition to that, I became a food, professional food stylist. And I traveled all over the world, servicing food articles for editors around the country and magazines and that kind of thing. And then went on as a part of, since it was very seasonal, I went on and took off a very seasonal job of preparing the garland of roses for the Churchill Downs in the Kroger Company for 27 years, even got to meet the in person, the Queen of England one day. And so I've had kind of a interesting career and I think the Lord has been with me every step of the way, opening doors that I couldn't have actually opened for myself. So that's pretty much where I'm coming from.

Blake Smith 04:39

But that is absolutely fascinating. So California, Ohio, Iowa ...

Joyce Blair 04:45

Wilmington, Delaware to Kentucky.

Blake Smith 04:48

Oh my goodness. And how did you end up in Kentucky?

Joyce Blair 04:52

Well, we ended up and David was a research scientist for the DuPont Company, inventing instrumentation to solve industrial problems around the world. And a problem came up at the neoprene plant in Louisville, Kentucky. And it took about five years to resolve and basically involved inventing some new instrumentation to control the process of which our congregation benefited from as a money making project over the years, being the world's supplier of those parts, and made in one of the Sunday school classrooms in church. But anyway, as it turns out, we moved from Wilmington, Delaware to Louisville and he was at one point was the pastor of the congregation for a while and I pursued my professional career, in addition to mothering, and wonderful friends in the congregation. I'm still here and here we are.

Blake Smith 05:50

Wow, again, fascinating. And the food, and roses, and microwave cookbooks. Oh, my goodness, what a background. I did not realize. That's fantastic. Well, thanks for being with us here today. Joyce, I look forward to hearing more about the Garden as we continue. But before we do, Blake, how about you?

Blake Rosbury 06:09

I met my wife Lori at Graceland University. We've had two or three stops. We've had the Kansas City. We've had Kirtland. And, I took a position for the church and Louisville in 2004. Our children are grown up. And that's allowed me time pursues various interests. And the last couple of years I've worked closely with Joyce, particularly in outreach and planning areas of the garden. She's still the main designer, I have absolutely no talent in that area. But in addition to the garden, I have a couple other things that we really enjoy. We are engaged in a small group in Lexington, Kentucky. Maybe we can learn about that a little later and some more broadcasts. And also I'm engaged in a group called Love

Transformation Project that's actually on the web. But that's a fascinating group that seeks to transform the culture of our city, Louisville, in ways of peace and equity. Lori and I have done a variety of things with them, but we're very active in feeding the homeless downtown every week. So that's an adventure where we pop up tables and supply food and hopefully give the people a meal and some connections to make life better for them.

Blake Smith 07:44

You have found lots and lots to do since moving down there to Louisville I see.

Blake Rosbury 07:51

Yes, so you kind of put yourself on an adventure and say, Where's the Spirit gonna guide me so? I have not been surprised. I've been surprised at the number of chances.

Blake Smith 08:08

So a little bit of Seventy sneaking out there out of you Blake Rosbury.

Blake Rosbury 08:13

Not until three more years, Blake. I'm 67. [Blake: I got it.] I'm I'm still employed by by vocationally for a large healthcare firm here in town.

Blake Smith 08:30

Okay. So imagine what you'll do when you're fully retired. Wow. And it's if I'm if I'm hearing correctly, it looks like it sounds like you've almost been down in Louisville long enough to pick up a little bit of an accent. Is that that possible?

Blake Rosbury 08:48

Well, I'm still in training. There's the issue, or Lexington group meets in a town called Versailles, which is spelled exactly like the French word most often pronounced as Versailles. So I've made the rookie mistakes there and have been permanently labeled as an outsider.

Blake Smith 09:12

I get it. We have a town here in south of Chicago in the Chicagoland area, which some call Bourbonnais. But if you talk to the locals, it's Bourbonnais. So I get, I get that. Well, let's get to talking about the garden. But I want to start by asking what is a scripture garden? Well, maybe

Joyce Blair 09:40

I should be the one to tackle that one. A scripture garden? Basically, most in most places in the world. Features notable plants mentioned in the Bible, often their meditative reflective spaces, and some notable examples. scripture of famous scripture gardens in the world would be the Yad Hashmona in Israel, the Elgin Cathedral Gardens in Scotland, the Jardin du Louvre in France, or the biblical garden in Warsaw, Indiana, USA, Shinjuku Gyoen in Japan and others. And so this is a real thing, like a scripture garden is a category of a garden. Often, like I say meditative reflective spaces, often open to the public. And, in Louisville, our scripture garden is diverse, is divergent from that pattern, in that we're in a zone that is not conducive to growing those particular plants that were grown in the Holy Land. And

so we do not, our scripture garden does not feature olive trees and the things that Christ mentioned in the Bible. In contrast, we're basically a peaceful place, meditative place, featuring scriptural passages on bronze plaques mounted on stones and nestled among the plant material along the pathways, so that people can develop a relationship with the Creator of all in a peaceful setting. So that's what our scripture garden is like. I want to ask you about the inspiration for the garden, if I remember correctly, it has a little bit maybe to do with your daughter and her love of scripture gardens. Yes, it does. And I don't want to monopolize the conversation at all. But our daughter was a physician, and her husband were both physicians here in Louisville. And the driving force behind the garden was her unexpected passing, and the desire to pick up a few of her life interests. In her travels abroad, she has specifically sought out scripture gardens in other countries, and thought Louisville would be a very fitting place for that idea to take flower. But she didn't actually have time to pull that off during her lifetime since she passed away at age 34. But she had promoted it among her circle of friends, and in our congregation, and elsewhere, and the family actually thought it would be fitting in her honor to bring that to life.

Blake Smith 12:38

That's great. That is really good. And so she was she was world traveled and had been to some of these that you mentioned,

Joyce Blair 12:45

visited probably most of these gardens that I mentioned to you.

Blake Smith 12:48

Wow. So what else brought you to the point? I mean, obviously, that's a significant inspiration. Is there anything else that kind of was in the works that brought you to make this a reality there in Forest Hills?

Joyce Blair 13:03

Well, yes. And once again, I'll I was in on the beginning, so, I'll field this particular question. Since the family and Darcy's husband had an interest, we presented the idea to the congregation. We were living in another town Charleston, West Virginia at that point. And surprisingly, to us, the congregation had already considered developing a peace garden, on their own grounds. And so they were very receptive to the idea of developing a scripture garden in cooperation. And so they were very willing to set aside the land for that purpose. And a lot of the congregation had a big part in volunteering labor in the constructive phase, contributing financially, always being a part of input into the design and creation of the garden, like typical ideas that were important to them, is they really wanted the sidewalks to be wide, very easily accessible, handicap accessible. And that made perfect sense to us. And so we made sure that happened. Other things along the way, they wanted to have some input into the scriptural passages that were selected. And that was totally along our line, and so members of the congregation submitted their favorites, and ones that they thought this was always designed as a outreach for the community. And so they wanted it to be something that the community could relate to, as well. And so we have maybe 20 or 30 relatively lengthy, in some cases, passages that people can reflect on as they walk through.

Blake Smith 14:55

What year did this start?

Joyce Blair 14:58

Okay, well, our daughter passed away in 1997. And so probably she actually passed away on New Year's Day. And during the spring months, there were several conversations with the congregation and building committee in reference to whether this might blend in with their mission. And since they were receptive, it was decided that we would move ahead with this plan. And so during that year, plans were developed for actually several different designs and the congregation was a part of selecting the final design. And then we moved ahead in the construction phase of the hardscape. Actually, the largest architectural detail in the garden is a large pergola that was designed by a landscape architect in Washington, DC, Angie Barns, and then the landscape materials themselves were put together by a horticulturist in the family, my sister, Virginia, Leith-Ledger of Annapolis, Maryland. And so the congregation had input into all of that. And so it was all put together and the dedication was the following Memorial Day weekend in 1998.

Blake Smith 16:20

Wow. So 26 years, 26 years, right?

Joyce Blair 16:24

Yeah. 26 years, this thing has been serving the neighborhood and the congregation and the greater community of Louisville for all kinds of events, like, once there was even a police officer, very loved in the community, that was killed in the line of duty on one of the major highways here. And there was a candlelight memorial in the garden. And hundreds and hundreds of people came throughout the evening and night, I think till maybe 2 or 3 am. To honor him. And, this garden has played a real role in community activities over the years.

Blake Smith 17:06

So in 26 years, has anything changed in the garden? How has it evolved? How was it? How was it changed over the years?

Joyce Blair 17:14

Well, it hasn't. The basic plan has not changed. But it was designed as a low maintenance garden. And we have experienced with all these plants over the years, and some of them have been not as low maintenance as we had hoped. So we have changed a few out. But more importantly, the changes are: There have been opportunities for people in the congregation and neighborhood to put trees in place in honor of their loved ones, or have their name inscribed on a brick or a passage that is particularly meaningful to them, or their name, maybe carved into one of the stone benches that are available for people to rest on around the garden. And so I think probably the major changes have been memorial trees, memorial plaques, memorial benches. But with that said, it is not intended to be a sad place, per se, it's basically a peaceful place. And I think most visitors find it very, very comforting. People tell us all the time that they're just getting so much good out of it.

Blake Rosbury 17:55

To paint a picture here of just the physical layout. The garden itself is about half an acre. It is huge. And one big benefit is the Forest Hills congregation is in a residential neighborhood in a small city called

Forest Hills of about 200 houses. So just to give you an idea, we have lots of foot traffic, particularly in the milder months. So we are really blessed with the ability to have contact with people as they go through the garden, which is again right next to the church. So just a beautiful setup to provide community outreach.

Blake Smith 19:19

Well, it truly is a beautiful setting. So it's open then all of the time for the public day and night.

Joyce Blair 19:25

It's open 24/7. And, it's lit from dusk till dawn, and people can come and go it will and I think it's a safe place. In fact, the city of Forest Hills is, has funded all kinds of surveillance not just to the garden but they have had police protection that they own their own cars and stuff and they cruise around the neighborhood and I think people feel very safe there. We have had over the years, maybe one incident of kind of vandalism, not a big deal that out of 26 years, we think that's a pretty good record.

Blake Smith 20:04

That's a really good record, I was going to ask, do you, you find that the community is respectful of the space and, and kind of protective of it even?

Joyce Blair 20:17

I would say yes. Including being responsible to remove animal waste and you know, all kinds of things. They don't pick and carry off the flowers, they don't, as a rule, dig up our plants and plant them in their own yards, or anything like that. And people are telling us, they're just getting a lot of good out of it. And I think they want it to continue to exist. So we're trying to make that happen.

Blake Smith 20:44

You know, my mind didn't even go there about transplanting the plants to their home grounds. I was thinking about vandalism to it, but, boy, you've got a veritable nursery there. Quite a number of options for beautifying your own lawn if somebody wanted to do that so. Blake, you said a half of an acre. How large is the whole church property?

Blake Rosbury 21:09

Tough question. Maybe 10 or 15 acres.

Joyce Blair 21:12

It's not small. It's probably at least three or four residential lots. [Okay] and has a little creek going through it. And it's very, to drive by, it appears to be very park-like this, the setting of the whole church. And this garden is just a small section, this half acre garden is just one small section of the total property.

Blake Smith 21:35

Okay, I thought I remembered it being a large property that was just peaceful in and of itself, because even though it's a residential area because of the expanded space, I like that description of park-like. I think that's that would be accurate to what I remember as well, it was yes, but a really peaceful place to have the meetings that I was attending, just because there was a lot of space to go out and be in nature. So that's a blessing to have that as well. Do you have any idea of how many species of plants and trees you have in the garden? Obviously, some things self-plant, but I mean ...

Joyce Blair 22:14

Well, you are in luck, because I did look it up. [Okay] We actually have a big fat binder with a little hand folder for every single plant that's in there. And there are 96 species in there. And multiples of most like big drifts or, you know, rows of hedges of, you know, visual barriers for one of the things that the designer did in putting this garden together, she used the kind of Japanese idea of not being able to see everything at once you kind of go around a corner or go around some shrubs and say, Oh, I didn't even know this existed. And there's a whole new, maybe an archway garden down to the creek or maybe another passage that you didn't even know was there. So it's a nice surprise.

Blake Smith 23:05

That's, that's really neat to hear that that is an intentional part of the garden, because I remember, when I just in preparation for our conversation today, I went and watched the video, the walking tour of the garden, and I found myself thinking, oh my gosh, they've done so much since I was there. And then I saw that it was a 2020 video. And I'm like, wait a minute, I was there after that. I think there were probably parts that I didn't see something always new to discover. That's [Joyce: exactly] an exciting point. Well, on that note I would, I've heard you mention a couple of things. But there are some unique features about the garden things that are there that are intentionally so one, of course would be the Japanese style is a unique feature of the garden. But I think there's also some historic tree plantings and things like that. What kind of unique features are there in the garden that that are unique to your garden?

Joyce Blair 24:12

Well, let me speak to the historic trees because there was a neighbor. One thing I wanted to say from the very onset, the neighbors in the community were very interested in this coming to their neighborhood. And they were very supportive. And one of the neighbors that lived a couple of blocks from the church itself and the property used to stroll over about every day, while it was in its construction phase to kind of monitor the progress and his name was Stan Lamaster. And one of his hobbies in life was collecting seeds from interesting species of trees and shrubs around the world in historic spots, like from the birthplace of Joan of Arc or maybe on the grounds of the Washington Capitol in Washington, DC or other historic spots around the world actually. And he would nurture and grow these in his backyard. And when they got up to be transplantable stages, he would put them in other significant places, not only in the scripture garden, but around town. I know Ballard High School in town has a collection of historic trees from Stan Lamaster the garden. Also, there is a brochure that visitors to the garden could pick up and look at. And in that brochure, there's a section on historic trees with a kind of a plot plan. And all the, a little description of each of the number of trees. There are like 11 or 12 of those historic trees. And a lot of families have told me that it's been fun for them to take their children around and locate these trees. And they do have metal numbers on them. So you could

identify them. And then they could show the children, teach them about that particular specie, identifying its bark, its needle, its cones, its, you know, specific thing, and it's been really a good thing. And so people tell me, 'Oh, yeah, that's so that particular tree is over there, you know, on this part of the church property.' It's not all just right in the church, the scripture garden, per se, it's on the church grounds per se. So they're spread out. There are a lot of other features in the garden as well. And I kind of made reference before, to the fact that there are bricks outlining some of the sidewalks with people's names on them. And those of people have, it wasn't a money making projects, but I think people are signed up to have their names put on a brick. And these are people in the congregation, neighborhoods of individuals, neighbors that wanted to be remembered, relatives, former patients, co-workers at work, you know, whatever people that somebody wanted to remember with a brick. And so those are there. And there are a lot of blank bricks still there. And we're able to take names of people who would like to have their name, show up on a brick and have it put on maybe like once a year, we might choose to do that.

Blake Smith 27:21

But is there a contribution associated with the brick?

Joyce Blair 27:24

There will be. There is a fee, but it's not necessarily an income producing thing. It's basically the cost of the work to have it done.

Blake Smith 27:36

Very good, very good. So you've also got the pergola which is central, there's a very nice fountain in the center, I believe.

Joyce Blair 27:47

Yes. And we're just in the midst of changing that fountain out in honor of one of our church members from the past, Cheryl McGraw's mother. And we're just getting all of those details together. Now, the new fountain is just so totally cute with little birds. And speaking of birds, people might not know that we have a weatherproof container filled with bird food out in the garden for parents to lift the lid off and let their children scatter birdseed, either in the feeders or onto the ground or something as kind of a joyful thing to do. So people tell me they think that's fun.

Blake Smith 28:27

Yeah, so you've got educational components, interactive components, it's healing. It's...

Joyce Blair 28:33

And, let me tell you one other thing that I thought was so neat, there was a woman in the neighborhood who had been a teacher and at the outset of COVID, schools were out for a while here in Louisville. And during that period of time, she offered to take clusters of children into her backyard and teach them nature lessons and other crafty kinds of things and things that she thought would be helpful for them. And so one of the things she used to do is walk this leave these little groups of children down to the scripture garden, and she would teach them nature lessons there, how to... where this, where you could find the seeds to how you propagate plants, everything has its season, and it's you know, goes along,

according to an eternal plan. And one of the things I thought was so nice is that she had these little children pick up stones on some of our walkway, our gravel pathways, and they would take them back to her house and as a craft project, they would paint them with little messages like, "I love you" or, or just a little message and next time they came, they would hide these in places in the Scripture garden for other visitors to find later, and people told me they had so much fun discovering these little messages on the rocks.

Blake Smith 29:57

Every piece of the story you tell just it draws me in more and more. I just love these interactive pieces and the invitational nature of it. And it's so exciting to hear the kinds of things that you're doing.

Joyce Blair 30:13

There's one more thing that is kind of unique. To the scripture garden is not original with us, we copied the idea from the Longwood Gardens outside of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. But each year for a number of years, we would put up our Christmas tree in the garden, and we would ahead of time can make ornaments for the tree that were edible ornaments for birds and wildlife, like corn on the cob and suet, and bird seed stuff, pine cones, and all kinds of different edible ornaments for birds and wildlife. And then at the special day, we would invite the community in and they would meet each other and tie these ornaments on and we would have a few Christmas carols, and we just thought we were having so much fun. And it was a great opportunity to meet new people. And actually, some of the schools in the area picked up that idea and use the instructions that we passed on to them to repeat it at their own school grounds. So Oh, and it was featured in the newspaper even one time, the Louisville Courier Journal one year. And so that was another activity that turned out to be a kind of a blessing that people could bring their friends in from other neighborhoods to look at.

Blake Smith 31:28

So this sounds amazing, but it also sounds a little overwhelming. I mean, this can't be done by just a couple of people, right? And obviously, there's got to be some significant costs to maintaining this at the level that it has been. Can you tell us a little bit about kind of the resources that are required to maintain the garden and how you handle that?

Blake Rosbury 31:57

So we estimate, depending on the year, we're some somewhere between spending \$10,000 to \$12,000, in the past, and that is raised through a grant from the congregation, from donations here and their neighbors. We're certainly concerned about the ability to fund that in the future. So we're trying some new things like in our welcome boxes to the garden, we have instructions, and we have QR codes so the people that visit the garden, which of course, we're not there all the time when people visit, and pick up on the QR codes and can contribute via that mechanism. That said, we try and use as many volunteers as possible. Not everyone is capable of doing some intense garden work. So we do have to find contractors for skilled things. But we've really been blessed, especially this year, we had a family in the church, where basically, their employer allowed their workers two days of volunteer work. So we had a group of 10 or 12 volunteers from this company, come and do amazing work with I think it was 12 cubic yards of mulch. And, they worked like beavers and just provided a tremendous blessing and doing the work that we would really strain to do ourselves.

Blake Smith 33:35

So do you guys typically have a lot of volunteers from the community that mix community and congregation?

Blake Rosbury 33:47

Well, you know, we try and do as best we can. One of the big challenges that we have is we know a lot of these people from the community kind of by face. And we're trying to develop a contact list of those that we can call on for tasks. Another thing that we need to do more carefully is cultivate continued events where we can meet people and add to our contact list to find out their needs as well as what they want to do. So in the next week, we're actually planning a scripture garden open house. So we hope to draw more crowds of people where we can interact with them, wherever they want to ask us about hydrangeas or talk about health or whatever their conversation is. We're hoping to draw bigger crowds where we can have more of a mixture, develop contact lists, and just deepen relationships with those passers by in the community.

Joyce Blair 34:51

There are things going on, just adding to what Blake has said. There are a lot of unique things that people can do in the garden that people don't ordinarily think of. For example, medical community is telling us that they're looking for peaceful places for people who are struggling with mental health issues, to come and draw and paint. And we think the scripture garden is a very fitting site for that kind of activity. Already, people can bring their easel or their pencils and pads of drawing paper or their paints in their canvases, and sit there and try to capture nature in a very peaceful setting. And we would like to promote that, as well as other activities, they're just all kinds of things people can actually contact the church and reserve the garden for their private events, either birthday parties or renewing the vows of their parents marriage, or whatever it might be, they can reserve the garden for a private event. And there are lots of other things that people could do in the garden that don't oftentimes just, you know, come to mind.

Blake Smith 36:10

Well those are great segues into the next question that I want to ask because I'm hearing a lot of community connections. And I'm wondering what other kinds of community connections have been created as a result of the garden?

Blake Rosbury 36:29

So we hear just many, many stories of people passing by saying, "We love your garden," "I'm working through some issues with a loss or working through grief." So we hear many individual stories, they're kind of hard to collect, because it's kind of a passerby type situation. We really feel like we're part of this small Forest Hills Community. Joyce has mentioned some Christmas events, where people have come and they've enjoyed the garden. Last Christmas, we probably gave tours to over 50 people about the garden. We ran into an editor of a local magazine, and he was able to give us some publicity here recently about the garden. We are really proud of our relationship with the city, and that the city recognizes the value of the garden of the community. The city of Forest Hills has a Mayor Council form of organization. And the mayor says we're all in this together. So we're just really enthused about

creating a neighborhood that's desirable. And some people even though they don't necessarily attend, consider the Forest Hills church, their church because it is a building in the community that facilitates so much community building.

Joyce Blair 38:15

A lot of times, I'm always there working in the dirt. And people come by and talk to me even though I'm totally filthy, and don't look like someone you would really want to talk to. And one lady said, "Oh, I saw you over here working. And I wanted to let you know that I lived down the street about three or four blocks, and I am the primary caregiver for my husband through a terminal illness that he is working through. And I want to let you know that I am bonkers busy from early morning till night. But when it gets dark, and the house is quiet, I walked down here to the garden. And it's peaceful and lit. And it's the first time I can think all day." Then another pickup one day, screeched up to a halt as I was working there. And the owner got out and said, "I'm just thought you ought to know that my wife and I have a handicapped daughter. And we bring her here in her wheelchair. And a lot of your plants are labeled. And she's learning all the names of these plants. And this is her favorite place to come. I just thought you ought to know. Bye!" he jumps in and roars off.

Blake Smith 39:29

So you're ready to call 911 You think you're gonna be assaulted or something?

Joyce Blair 39:35

Another day, I was working out there and a lady came by and said, "Oh, I see you out here working. I was just taking a walk. Do you need any help? I can help you do this. Oh, I can lift that I can go fetch this. I could do that." And she said she introduced herself and said that she was husband was a office partner of one of our church members years ago, and she knew that family attended the church there. And she always had a warm spot in her heart for our congregation. And so if there's anything she gave me her name and phone number, if there's anything I could do to help you just give me a buzz. So nice of her.

Blake Smith 40:18

So this is such a blessing, it sounds like, to not only Louisville at large and the community, but the neighborhood there, folks who have kind of taken ownership and feel like they're a part of it, because it's part of them. That is such a neat expression of mission for me, I think.

Joyce Blair 40:42

I can't tell you how many people have told me that many of the pictures in their photo album, their family photo albums were actually taken in the garden, like at the Easter egg hunt, or their child's graduation from elementary school or high school or whatever. And now their adult children live elsewhere. But, when they come home to visit the parents, they want to go back to the garden and connect. I say it's like that some night.

Blake Smith 41:12

And what an honor to your daughter, who was the inspiration for this to her legacy to live on through that. That's kind of exciting. So as you're planning the garden, and now of course in Community of Christ, we talk about Christ's mission. How do you see this fulfilling Christ's mission in your community?

Blake Rosbury 41:36

To me, it's all about building relationships. It's the conversations, it's the uplift. It's improving the neighborhood. There are just so many God moments that occur there. One of the wonderful things that I would summarize, you've heard it in Section 163 (Doctrine and Covenants). "Open your hearts to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers and all nations desperately seek a future of hope for their children do not turn away from them, or in their welfare resides or welfare."

Blake Smith 42:17

I love that passage.

Blake Rosbury 42:19

So to me, I just, I just see the children. It's just wonderful.

Joyce Blair 42:28

Speaking of, and going off of Blake's comment there, I love to see the parents bring the children. And during the first part of COVID, when a lot of the dads in the neighborhood were working from home, it was not the moms bringing the kids, it was the dads. And, they were teaching them little lessons in the garden, and they were maybe playing hide and seek behind some plants or whatever. And they were really developing this relationship with each other that I think is so important that if they had been in an office building someplace, they might have missed some of that.

Blake Smith 43:03

Wow, the possibilities of this garden just are endless, right?

Joyce Blair 43:07

It is endless. It is totally endless. And one of the things I think the Lord has really blessed us, even though weather is always a component, and it's irritating when you plan to work. And it turns out to be a rainy day. But the truth of the matter is, the Lord is really providing a lot of opportunity in every, just in so many different ways that some we haven't even imagined yet. Some with people who have things have borne fruit that we don't even know about.

Blake Smith 43:38

I have to say, I mean, and I love gardens. And I just never thought about all of the possibilities that could take place in outreach and ministry and healing and education and all those things that we've mentioned, through a garden. So, it's just so impressive and exciting for me. You guys have had, you've already told some stories, but I'm interested to know is there a favorite story if you had to choose one favorite story that's come as a result of these last 26 years with the garden? What would that story be? What's what's one that really just stands out for you?

Joyce Blair 44:24

Well, I don't I'm sure Blake has a couple he wants to mention at least one. But one that I will never forget was, happened about 25 years ago. And it was a day when the wood that was going to build the pergola was delivered to the roadside. And one of our church members Bill Poor was in his professional life. He was with University of Louisville, and one of his responsibilities was helping recent immigrants in the United States get acclimated to the Louisville community and he was able to hire a team of Cuban workers to come over to the church, on the very first day that they were in the United States. They had arrived in Louisville the night before. And these men were so thrilled to be in America, and to be working on the first day that they arrived here that they were singing their little hearts out. They were lifting those pieces of wood singing these songs as they were carrying them into play, sticking them in the holes, making them sure they were standing up straight, going get more. They were thrilled to death. And it did my heart good to see [Yeah] They were so happy with that.

Blake Smith 45:49

To know that it was built with such joy. Wow.

Joyce Blair 45:51

Yeah, I mean, it was totally amazing.

Blake Smith 45:57

That's great. How about you, Blake?

Blake Rosbury 45:59

I guess for me, I'm just challenged every day, because as you can tell, Joyce has so much enthusiasm, and drives for such beauty in the garden. I just, I'm amazed and I just I can't keep up with all her ideas. At age can I tell Joyce? Yeah, she will be 86 years young here in a few minutes. And her late husband, Dave, and Joyce planned everything out so well in the late 1990s. And now we've got to transition that more to congregational care. So we're trying very hard to establish a group called Friends of the Garden. So these are people that have had a real commitment over the years. They may not even live in this area. But they can get together. And it's really important to have a group that does a lot of planning and visioning and fundraising, separate from just the maintenance, because just the maintenance itself can be overwhelming, Trust me. So it's a continual work. I just feel blessed that the Blairs have invested in this and have provided so well with their planning into the future, it's going to be a challenge. It's a lot of work for a relatively small congregation. But it's a pretty amazing work that we're about.

Blake Smith 47:38

Is that transition of leadership already in progress, or is that something yet in the future?

Blake Rosbury 47:44

Well, we're trying.

Joyce Blair 47:48

We set aside January 1, 2024, as a transition day, and that is in name only, is probably going to take at least a whole year to work through the details. But it is definitely in the works. And it is alive and well. And it's definitely happening. And we definitely do not want this to be a Blair thing. We want it to definitely be a community thing. And outreach. And it's not even a church thing. It is a community thing. And I think that is the message that I would like to underline one or two times, because I think it's really critical in our denomination denominational picture as far as growth into the future.

Blake Smith 48:34

I appreciate you bringing up that Joyce. But I want to say from a listener's perspective, from the outside looking in, it is so apparent that that has been the case, even since its beginning, just the joy you have, of course and the ownership of that. But it has sounded from the very beginning that that has been a mantra even to make this for the community in the congregation that hasn't been about wasn't about you or your husband. And that I think adds to the blessing of the whole. But I also want to say that I can tell your excitement for this garden. So I'm wondering, how easy is this transition for you to pass off?

Joyce Blair 49:20

Well, actually, as a saint as an 86 year old person. I never seem to get used to the idea of missing my friends who are passing on ... my husband, my family members, close friends. I just, apparently I'm a very slow learner and just don't get it. And this garden has been extremely helpful to me, like connecting with the larger universal plan. And to me, people I know that people worship in different ways, and I actually get a lot of good out of nature. To me I could, it looks like an eternal plan, everything is has its season, everything is, in order, nothing anybody is going to say or do is going to change that it's, you know, the flowers are still going to come up in the spring, the things are still going to happen according to their God given plan. And I think that's a very comforting thought.

Blake Smith 50:25

And, and passers by are probably still going to catch you on your knees getting your hands dirty. As long as you're able, and the garden is growing,

Joyce Blair 50:36

that's I would love to, I would love to like bow out of the more administrative responsibilities because I, as an 85, or six year old, and really it challenged and things keep changing all the time. And I would really like to, you know, kind of say, Enough. And then but I would I don't think there's ever going to be a time that I'm not going to want to deadhead flowers and weed things and plant new stuff and, you know, participate in that part of the ongoing care.

Blake Smith 51:10

So Blake, I know that you don't have any problem with the administrative side. And you kind of hinted at the beginning, however, that the green thumb, part of it might be a bit of a challenge. Do you have a right hand person with a green thumb?

Blake Rosbury 51:26

I've been trying to provide some assistance for Joyce. She has a helper that has been with her for a number of years. And we have some more prospects that are doing some work that are skilled. So the work continues as best we can.

Joyce Blair 51:47

And one thing, let me just add here, and I know Blake will want to continue. But this garden was always envisioned as a low maintenance garden. And over the years, we've learned a few things. We all initially planted low maintenance plants, but some of them still were more maintenance that we felt we wanted to do. So we have changed those out. And we're getting to the point now that we're planting ground covers and leaving open spaces and using flowering shrubs rather than things that need to be deadheaded. And just from a landscape point of view, we learned a few lessons that are very helpful on helping us minimize the workload of a day to day maintenance. And then we're hoping to form a little garden club because there are so many people that have stopped by the garden and said, "I would love to come and help here so that I could learn a few things that I you know, would carry over into me taking a little better care of my own garden at home." And so I'm thinking if we could develop a list of friends of the garden who might want to come over from time to time and give us a hand by way of learning techniques. And then I think that would be a good thing. for them and for us.

Blake Smith 53:00

Excellent. I want to ask you one real quick question that wasn't on our list Joyce. And that is you've mentioned the term "deadheading." And so for our listeners who might not know what that is, what is dead heading?

Joyce Blair 53:13

Well, deadheading is something really simple. Flowers come out there in their bed stage. They grow to the point that they're fully developed, and then they start wilting. And then they dry and they hang there as if they're dead. And we come along and they kind of look a little bit unsightly sometimes on the plant. And so deadheading is you come along and you pick those off. And so that the plant looks like it's still fresh and alive rather than having all these little drooping spent buds.

Blake Smith 53:43

Well, I just thought we might want to clarify that. {Yeah.} In case somebody didn't know.

Blake Rosbury 53:48

Unexpected things come up with electrical or with irrigation. We went over this week, and we found water squirting about five feet up into the air. And to deal with that. So you know, we, Joyce and the Blair family started this project when there were many more members of the congregation. So the caution that I would give is, it would take a large congregation and quite a bit of commitment to do a garden of any size. But let's think of it this way. The churches that I believe will be successful are part of the community and will reflect the community not be bound by drive in and drive out relationships that we might have. So what is it that is unique about each congregation and their community involvement that would lead to building relationships among the community. It may not be a large garden, it may be a small garden, it could be something else. But I think the important lesson here is there are ways to engage the community and increase mission by each congregation.

Blake Smith 55:10

Well said, well said, I would like to ask, and I'd asked both of you, Joyce first, and then Blake, as the one who's coming in to lead the Friends of the Garden, what's your greatest hope for the garden going forward?

Joyce Blair 55:26

I would love to see it continue to exist. And I know with our own congregation, in Forest Hills with our membership, aging and diminishing in size, it would be a challenge for them to maintain this all by themselves. So I think the community involvement that Blake talked about is probably critical. I would actually hate to see the garden. The distance dismantled, and it become grass again. There's just so many features there that have had a lot of blood, sweat and tears to make them exist. There are a lot of beautiful Scriptural passages that what on earth would we do with those big plaques and things, there are lots of people's ashes there, there lots of special things there. I just hope that it's possible for us to come up with some kind of venue that's attractive enough to outsiders, that they want to make sure that it exists too. And people are telling me in the Forest Hills community, at their meetings, and I've attended a few that they want it to exist, so that I think that's a good beginning step.

Blake Rosbury 56:41

For me, to add to what Joyce would say, more stories, more visitors, more creative ways to assemble and develop relationships. We live in an age where it's hard to attract people to buildings, especially to come inside the buildings. So it's always been my hope that through outreach that we can do, that we can get beyond the walls of our congregation and meet people at neutral places where they feel free to discuss their lives, and how the garden and other things can touch them.

Blake Smith 57:27

Very good. Well, we always like to ask at the as we near the end of our episodes, if there's anything that you would like to share that I haven't asked. Is there anything that we've left out?

Joyce Blair 57:41

I can't think of anything. I think I think you pretty well covered it from my perspective. Oh, one thing I will say that. In our summer garden opening is going to be happening on June 1, one of the things that we're having is a photo contest for people to submit their original photos. And we have some purely fabulous photos from the past even, like hummingbirds hovered over things or bees like things or flowers that that just like world class, tree peonies, there are, you know, and roses with petals falling on people's shoulders, and you know, all sudden things like that. But I think this little photo documentary kind of thing would be very encouraging to people to, you know, be able to have a photo album, you know, that they could thumb through.

Blake Smith 58:41

Absolutely. Anything from you, Blake,

Blake Rosbury 58:45

I'm enthusiastic about the garden, and moving forward and outreach in general. That's what I love to see.

Blake Smith 58:54

Well, that's fantastic. Guys, thank you so much for taking the time to share your story and your passion. Joyce, I can't say thank you enough for, through your passion and creativity and design and all of that enabling all of these pieces that we've talked about today that have come out of that garden, how exciting and encouraging that is for all of us to find ways that we can make our passion come to life and connect with the community. So thank you for that. And thank you for being here. Blake, thank you for your connection and helping with the tech side for today. And also for being willing to step into that role and keep the Friends of the Garden moving forward and keeping that legacy alive. I just, again, I've been there on a couple of occasions and I know how beautiful it is. And I hope to get back there again at some point. So thank you guys for being here. And, thank you to our listeners for being a part of this What's brewing episode we hope that you have been inspired and that if you're on the road and traveling through the Louisville area that maybe you can make a stop off at the Forest Hills congregation and enjoy the Forest Hills Scripture Garden that we've been talking about today. If you'd like to learn more about the forest tilled scripture garden, we'll put the link to their website in our show notes. But I would encourage you, at least if nothing else to go on to their site and take a few minutes to do the walking tour of the garden that is a video there on the site. Whatever you do, find your passion. Find a way to make it connect with mission and be about God's work. Thanks for joining us. We hope you have a great day.