

Urban Green Team

It's a green oasis in the gritty city—a restful “Peace Garden” on the grounds of The First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, NY. The building of this garden along with other efforts of the congregations active “Green Team” have helped the congregation expand its understanding of the “priesthood of all believers” to include the “priesthood of all living things” according to associate pastor Rev. Beth Waltemath.

Five volunteers transformed a concrete lot into an urban garden, which is now used as a training ground for urban gardeners. The space has been designated an Urban/Backyard Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation because of the intentional inclusion of water sources and roosting places for songbirds, as well as the sole use of organic fertilizers and weed or pest controls and the abundant native species.

The Green Team has added a composting program to the gardening, feeding and children's ministries. The children's Sunday school adopted earthworms in the garden and learned how they compost soil. Along with composting leftover food from church events, the team encourages members of the church and of a neighboring congregation to bring their scraps to the bin. In addition to sharing the compost bin, the church works its neighboring congregation to support a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program. The CSA provides clients of the church food pantry with local produce each week, and the church plans to begin distributing the food in reusable canvas bags.

The Green Team has partnered with other ministries in the church and local neighborhood residents to raise awareness about creation care as well, including hosting movies on environmental issues, promoting petitions and letter-writing for green legislation, and communing with harvest cycles and each other with retreats and community dinners that respect

the earth and its seasons of bounty. “Through small greening efforts one step at a time, we have experienced the depth of God’s love through the detailed care with which God tends to creation,” said Waltemath.