



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Confessions of a Gardener

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message

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Some of you know that I like gardening. And some of you followed my trials and tribulations with the rabbits and squirrels who, now devoid of human contact because of the pandemic, had taken over. They chewed my green beans down to the nub. They would wait until the last tomato was showing any signs of being ripe and just take that one off.

It was a battle all last summer. Nevertheless, I decided that I would plant a garden again this summer. After all, gardening is intrinsic to our whole understanding of God tending this good, green earth. The story of creation takes place in a garden that God gave to Adam and Eve in order that they might be those who tend the Lord's garden, this beautiful, lush, abundant life for everyone.

We also know that by Chapter 3 of Genesis things went terribly, terribly wrong, and people were excluded from the garden. And that God then planted a garden east of Eden, and that's where now we are supposed to toil and earn our bread by the sweat of our brow.

Well, my husband and I live east of the Edens, that's a highway here in Chicago. And I'm planting this garden with a clear open-eyed understanding that those rabbits and those squirrels multiplied in abundance over the winter, and that I can see evidence everywhere. It's really difficult that, in fact, the little bunnies are — they're just adorable — darn it! So it's hard to be angry with them.

But in working and trying this one more time, I'm reminded of a saying attributed to Luther, which is, he said that if he knew the world were to end tomorrow, he would plant an apple tree today. This is not somehow a misguided optimism, but a true and enduring hope based in the promise of God to be with us and to bring all creation to completeness. To return us to the kind of garden that was planted in the very beginning, where all creation and all things live in harmony with one another and find abundant life.

So, keeping an eye on the rabbits and the squirrels, but also in confidence that, in the end, God brings everything to completion, I planted a garden. When you're dealing with critters in your own garden, keep this in mind.

Be well, dear church.