



Pull a Weed, Plant a Tree

By Pastor Zach Washburn

Because our lives are so full, yet lack fullness

There are six raised garden beds in the back yard of the house we rent on Menlo Drive. When we moved in, during a July heat wave, they were occupied by tomato, asparagus, and pepper plants.

In the months since, we neglected those beds. Our inattentiveness did nothing to stymie life. They burst with flora - all manner and variety of plants. But that next year, they produced not a single thing to eat.

Many of our lives are like this. We are bursting with life, with a dizzying array of obligations, activities, and hobbies. Virtually everyone I know, in our church and in Corvallis as a whole, is incessantly busy with MEANINGFUL and INDISPENSABLE things to do. Like those garden beds, every square inch is occupied, every nutrient and resource utilized.

But where is the fruit? Where the abundance God promised His children? Where the thirty-, sixty-, hundred-fold results? Where the overflowing love, joy, peace, patience and the rest? Surely the answer is not a lack of activity on our part - after all, we must sleep sometime. Where would we put yet another plant anyway?

We are a few weeks away from the season of Lent, a time in which, over the centuries, God's children have prepared for the abundant, resurrection life of Easter by clearing away the weedy fruitlessness that perpetually invades their lives. Traditionally, disciples of Jesus have given something

up during Lent in order to identify with Jesus himself, who gave up so much on His way to the empty tomb. It is a season of clearing away, of emptying, of making space. A season of weeding.

But I have learned something about weeding in my years on this narrow globe. Each time I pull weeds in those beds, the same thing happens: the weeds come back. I don't invite them. I don't plant or water them or tend them in any way. I don't want them there. Nonetheless, there they are. The weeds always come back.

This, also, has been my experience of Lent. I have given up many things, pulled many weeds, over the years. I have given up dessert, Facebook, TV, eating during daylight hours. I have even given up speaking for days at a time. Each year, Lent ends, and the same weed comes back in the same place.

So, this year, a different strategy (and a more Biblical one - see *Isaiah 55:13* amongst many texts): **Pull a weed, plant a tree.**

Pull a weed, plant a tree. Go on with selecting, and eliminating, one of the many fruitless habits that carry the appearance of life but in fact merely take up space within our lives. But, instead of leaving empty ground which that habit will inevitably reclaim come Easter Monday (*Matthew 12:43-45*), **plant a tree.** Put something nourishing, something fruitful, in its place. Claim that bit of ground for *fruitfulness*. Plant something lasting, something perhaps so small as to be barely visible at first, but something that can grow and strengthen over time. Take advantage of Lent to instill some life-giving

discipline over the garden of your life, some discipline that will nourish you far beyond the next few weeks.

Furthermore, I exhort you not to engage in this alone. Find at least one person to tell about the weed you are pulling and the tree you are planting, at least one person who can pray for you and encourage you to persevere in the mundane glory of this effort. Perhaps share with your small group your respective plans, and take time each week to pray for one another.

I share the two weeds I hope to pull and the two trees I intend to plant, and then a list of ideas to get you thinking and preparing for this opportunity (see p. 2). Feel free to lift any of them as is, or modify them, or come up with something completely different. Whichever you choose, seize this chance to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, to cease using busy-ness as a cover for fruitlessness. **Pull a weed, and plant a tree.**

Please keep in mind that weeds are not necessarily wicked, or sinful, or even slothful. They are not necessarily something you have been doing wrong. Rather, a weed is anything that takes up space without bearing fruit.

Fat Tuesday Feast/ Ash Wednesday Service February 28

Join us in Olleman Hall at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, for a traditional pancake feast. We will then adjourn to the sanctuary for an early Ash Wednesday service to recognize the beginning of Lent.

Pull a Weed	Plant a Tree
I spend several hours a week running and walking. Usually during this time I listen to podcasts - interviews, talk shows, lectures, etc. I will pull this weed.	Instead, I will plant a tree of worshipful listening. I will listen to worship music or sermons, or to nothing at all so I have the chance to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit.
I spend about two hours a day on the internet, reading social, political, and religious commentary, plus keeping up with professional basketball. I will pull this weed.	Instead, I will plant a tree of prayer. I will pray in solitude at least half an hour each day. Since I struggle to stay focused when praying alone, I will write during this time in a prayer notebook.
Further Weeds to Pull...	Further Trees to Plant...
Perhaps you have a near daily habit of purchasing coffee or alcohol, or going out to eat. Pull this weed.	Instead, plant a tree of observant generosity. Carry what you would have spent on food and drink in cash, and look for opportunities to give that money away to people behind you in a checkout line, or on the street, or by taking a colleague or neighbor out to eat.
Perhaps you have a weekly ritual of movie night. Pull this weed.	Instead plant a tree of hospitality. Instead of zoning out the world and watching something on Saturday evenings, invite someone in - a brother or sister from church or a neighbor in your community. Offer them food, learn about them, pray for them.
Perhaps you have a regular habit of watching the evening news (or reading the news). Pull this weed.	Instead, plant a tree of study. Each day, read a chapter from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John (Mark and Luke together add up to 40 chapters, equivalent to the 40 days of Lent). As you read, note one thing you learn about Jesus and one thing Jesus wants of you as His disciple. In doing so, commit yourself to the belief that God's words are more important than the latest top story.
Perhaps you spend quite a bit of time each day on social media, being a little bit connected to many people. Pull this weed.	Instead, plant a tree of intimacy. Three times a week, get in touch with someone you know, learn everything you can about how they are doing, and pray for them. (If you can't think of anyone, call one of the prayer households in the bulletin for that week.)
Perhaps, on weekends, you sleep in and/or enjoy 'lazy mornings'. Pull this weed.	Instead, plant a tree of devotion. Join the prayer group at 8:30 and then take advantage of Sunday School to learn more of God's Word.
Perhaps you have an unused room in your house - the 'guest room' or 'workout room' or 'unusually large closet'. Pull this weed.	Instead, plant a tree of service. Spend Lent cleaning out and refurbishing the room so you can invite a friend in need, or a foster child, or an international student, to live with you.

Sunday Night Gatherings

Each Sunday we meet at church at 6:30 p.m. The gatherings rotate between Pizza & Prayer (shared dinner and a focused time of prayer, no expectation to pray out loud), Missionary Support Group (praying and encouraging one another as we seek to share about Jesus), and Dialogue (questions and discussion about a topic of interest). This smaller group setting might be a great way to bring a friend to church. Here's the schedule for the next few weeks.

February 19: Pizza & Prayer

February 26: Missionary Support Group

March 5: Dialogue on Wealth

March 12: Pizza & Prayer

Search Team Update

On January 22, a pastoral resident search team was elected. Members are: Mark Edwards, Rachael Johnson, Marta McCracken, John Robertson, Skip Rung, Michelle Schultz and Pastor Zach. Tim Eby is the Session liaison to the group. They started meeting; an update will be shared next month.

Membership Class 3/11

What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ and a member of the church? Come find out on Saturday, March 11. We will meet at Calvin from 9 a.m.—noon. Talk to Pastor Zach for more information and to let him know you are coming.

Getting to Know ...

Editor's Note: As a church family, we enjoy worshiping together on Sundays and meeting in many small group settings. But often we don't have time to learn more about one another outside of the church setting. This new column will give people an opportunity to share a bit about themselves that we may not know. You may discover you want to go ask more questions! This month features our newly ordained elder, Rebecca Walker, and Callie and Aaron Newton. Callie is on the leadership nominating committee and Aaron was just ordained as a deacon.

Rebecca Walker



Rebecca and her husband Rod moved to Corvallis in July 2011. She started attending

Calvin in September 2014 after looking at lots of websites and listening to sermons. She visited Calvin, met with Pastor Marc Andresen, and decided to stay. She says, "I was looking for a small, sincere church that loved studying God's word. I found it!"

Rebecca is part of the Adult Sunday School teaching team and attends the

Precepts Bible study. As a newly elected Elder, she shares, "I am excited about the opportunity to mature in my own faith, serve God and share my love for the Bible with others."

The Walkers have a Border Collie named Abby and two cats, Mick and Maisie. Rebecca has a BA in Latin from the University of Texas. She enjoys reading, hiking and gardening. Her favorite Bible verse is 2 Tim. 1:12 (which is also found in her favorite hymn, I Know Whom I have Believed). "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."

Aaron & Callie Newton

Callie writes: We've lived in the Corvallis area (Albany, then Corvallis and now back to Albany) since February 2013. We got married in 2013 as well, and our parents and extended family are all back in Arkansas, where we're from. We don't have any kids yet - except for the furry kind: Boone, a Boston terrier; Carlie, a lab-pit mix; and Mocha, a Holland Lop rabbit.

We both have degrees in journalism; Callie from the University of Missouri (2008) and Aaron from the University of Central Arkansas (2010). I worked in newspapers for several years, and for the past four I've worked in marketing for OSU. My job is to promote the University and the College of Forestry to attract top students and keep alumni and donors interested and excited about what's going on here! Aaron went back to school in 2015 and is studying Construction Engineering Management. He will complete an internship this summer with P&C Construction and will graduate in 2018.

When we have free time, we like to be outside. Together we enjoy rock climbing - mostly bouldering (climbing small rocks, not very high off the ground without a rope). Aaron also plays guitar and

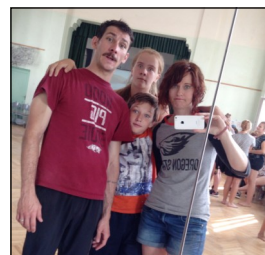
would like to take up woodworking (when he has time). I like to cook and bake, read, write, practice yoga and knit and cross stitch (I just taught myself how to cross stitch - so fun!). I'm also planning on running the Corvallis half marathon this year, even though I have a love/hate relationship with running.

I think our first visit to Calvin was in September 2013. We've been members since November 2014. We found the church when we moved into a house down the street. The garden lured us in and Paula Hewitt (who happened to be home from Ireland) made us stay. ☺

At Calvin we have helped with Pioneer Club, VBS, worship team, missions committee and traveled to Latvia the past two summers to teach English.

Callie was on the pastor search team that called Zach and is currently on the leadership nominating committee. She says, "I like serving on the nominating committee because some of my spiritual gifts are administration and discernment, so it's a good fit."

A final word from Callie: "I'd like to



THANK the congregation of Calvin for allowing us to serve. I grew up going to a Southern Baptist school where I was hurt and felt judged by other Christians. While I continued to love and learn about Jesus, I never thought I would be part of a church like this. Attending, serving and being part of the Calvin family have helped heal those hurts and taught me so much about grace and love and forgiveness!"

A few words from Aaron: For me, attending Calvin is like getting a minor in theology. I've never attended a church that is so focused on scripture and digging into it, trying to figure out what God has been telling us all these years.

When I was approached to be a deacon, I thought about my uncle Ronnie. He was a deacon at his church in rural eastern Arkansas for around 20 years. He was an entirely selfless man, though not without his flaws of course, who focused on helping out those around him. He passed away in December 2015. While I now know that being a deacon is more than just serving people (it's being involved in their lives, growing relationships and gaining a greater understanding of God's word through service), I still think the gold standard is my uncle. I wish he could've seen me be ordained. I hope I can live up to the example he set for me.

Asante Kids Update

Dear Asante sponsors and other supporters,

We want to tell you how amazed and grateful we are for the success of the Asante Kids program. We have been providing school fees for 14 years now. There are over 100 children in the program. Four excellent students are ready to graduate from advanced studies in high school and go on to University. Several of our kids have graduated from University or have earned a certificate and are now employed.

God has blessed this effort and enabled your faithfulness. Three children who were living in horrible conditions are now in new housing because of the generosity of donors. However, many children are still coming to school hungry with nothing to sustain them through the day. In the next few weeks the Asante team will be sharing with you a proposal to provide food for those children.

Thank you for sharing the love of Christ with these children.

The Asante team: Judy Kraft, Kim Oxsen, Vanessa Washburn

Life at Calvin



Left: Pastor Gerald Mwebe, from Streams of Life Church in Uganda, visited in December. Below: Thanks to your generosity, Pioneer Club and Youth Group prepared 72 socks of love filled with supplies that were delivered to the Corvallis Homeless Shelter last week.



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Return Service Requested

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Office Hours

Monday-Thursday, 8:30—1

Friday, 8:30—12

Sundays at Calvin

8:30 Prayer in the Prayer Room

9 a.m. Sunday School for all ages

10 a.m. Worship