

Scottlea Organic Community Garden and Outreach Initiatives



In 2018, Scottlea Presbyterian Church in St. Catharines created a community garden as a form of outreach to benefit both the church itself and the wider community. We built twenty raised beds which were distributed between twenty families. This ministry has blessed many potential gardeners, allowing them to grow and enjoy organic fresh vegetables, and through these, nourish their bodies, minds, and souls. Gardening teaches

people God's values, for it is an essential truth that the fruitful life of vegetables requires commitment; vegetables need people to take care of them, and pour out their time and love upon them. God has blessed Scottlea with wonderful opportunities to build trust and make friendships with the wider community through communal events, such as a community meal and a garden concert BBQ. Our next step in this garden ministry is to continue to learn about the connectedness of humans, plants, and other animals in the web of God's life, as we learn how to grow vegetables organically in a nature-friendly way and share them with people in need in our community.

As part of our organic community garden project, we also cultivate Korean sweet potatoes in an eco-friendly way. In the beginning of February, still winter-time, we offer each family in the congregation a sweet potato seed in a small container, so that they may grow the vines hydroponically. We then collect the young vines each family have grown at home with love, and transplant them into the soil right after Victoria Day.



Shiitake mushrooms that grow on oak logs are another organically grown healthy flavonoid food. We grow mushrooms from

120 oak logs and provide them to mushroom lovers and people fighting cancer or other illnesses. This year the profits from those gifts of sweet potatoes and mushrooms enabled us to offer honorariums to our committed music volunteers who share their music and teaching talents with children from the



community. We also make tasty and healthy pizzas from the sweet potatoes and Shiitake mushrooms for our fellowship following the service. This year we pray to donate more fresh food to Community Care of St. Catharines for needy people.



As God’s answer to a long period of prayer, on September 21, 2019, we finally started to offer a music ministry reaching out to children. The music program is named **“COMETIC” (Community Open Music Education Training In Christ)**, which our devoted music



coordinator Linda devised. The main purpose of the project is to offer free music lessons to children from low-income families to feed their hunger for music. During the first Session, which ended in December 2019, we were able to offer piano lessons to six children, ukulele lessons to nine, and drum lessons to two. These music students then performed at our 60th anniversary and Christmas concert, even though they had only just started their music lessons. We invited the children in the music program and their parents along to the church for a traditional Christmas pageant which needed a good number of people – an amazing result for such a small congregation. The second session of our music program started January 11, 2020, and God has now brought us more than twenty-three children. Our ukulele teacher, Lauren, generously offers another class for adults. Every Saturday, the church is full of the energy and spirit of learning, teaching, the joys of children’s playing, and fellowship of parents of children because of music as God’s gift. We pray and hope to raise more funds or obtain music grants so that we can offer violin lessons to other children on our waiting list who are hoping to join our program.





An ESL conversational class is another outreach ministry we hold every Monday. People who speak English as a second language have a wonderful opportunity to practice their spoken English with native speakers. All the people in the class have blessed opportunities to get to know and understand one another in free spirit, openness and trust. There are around ten to fifteen people: half are non-native and the other half are native speakers. Rev. Anita Van Nest leads the class from her

experience as an ESL teacher with kindness and respect for all. Her smile from the heart makes a distinctive difference for non-native speakers in the class.

We pray to Jesus and God, the Source of all being, energy, and love, that God continues to energize, inspire and empower Scottlea to bless people both in the community, and in the church through our prayers, outreach ministries and activities.