

Environmental Stewardship at Brook Hill Collecting Rain in God's Garden

-Submitted by Chris Judd

Brook Hill United Methodist Church is responsible for the stewardship of ten acres of the Tuscarora Creek and Monocacy River Watershed at Yellow Springs, Frederick County, Maryland. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church remind us "All creation is the Lord's and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings."

Well, that's great doctrine – but what are we going to do about our abuse? We have a lot of roof and a lot of parking lot. We are where we are, but now it's time to salve the scar.

Brook Hill UMC enlisted the support of the Chesapeake Bay Trust to create an extensive rain garden to capture the runoff from roof and asphalt.

More than a thousand square feet of this garden now capture the pollutants that would otherwise flow into our streams and eventually the Chesapeake Bay.

Volunteers flowed into the "garden-to-be" in May. There were teams for holes, teams for planting, teams for mulching, teams for watering and most importantly, teams for refreshment.

Hundreds of perennials, shrubs, trees, grasses and ferns joined the Watershed that day.

And now for the rest of the story...

Perhaps you recall the rainfall history of June/July/August? If not, then you must live in a condo. Environmental Stewardship was put to a task far beyond its original commitment. A rota was quickly established to nourish these new plants three times a week throughout the "Summer (whose name must not be mentioned)". In our community, "Rain Garden" became synonymous with "Miracle Garden". The plants thrived – thought they had died and gone to Costa Rica.

Much of the credit for survival and the resulting great Autumn garden goes to the strength of the native plants selected for the garden. These plants know and are adapted to our local conditions.

Our plans call for additional rain gardens to more completely capture the runoff, educate the community and enhance its beauty.

