

## Reflection: “A Small Garden”

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N.B. These sermons are made available with a request: that the reader appreciate that, ideally, a sermon is an oral/aural experience that takes place in the context of worship, supported and reinforced by readings, contemplative music, rousing hymns, silence, and prayer and that it is but one part of an extended conversation that occurs over time between a minister and a covenanted congregation.

Allen Avenue is one of many very small streets  
in the heart of downtown Toronto.

Real estate is at a premium here, so it's surprising to find a  
tiny garden in the middle of this densely packed urban  
roadway.

Yet here it is, a tiny parkette,  
nestled between two narrow row houses.

There's a little bench, and a modest garden.

A sign notes that it was named for Mrs. Francis Thorogood,  
who lived here from 1921 to 1976.

Right now, at the beginning of the season, the garden isn't  
much to look at.

There's a yellow Forsythia bush, and a few other plants I  
can't identify.

Hidden away and modest as it is,  
this garden's value could be completely overlooked.

Especially when you consider the sky-high monetary value of the houses right beside it.

Yet according to a sign in the corner of the park, Thorogood Gardens is part of the Butterflyway Project:

A network of gardens—encouraged by the David Suzuki Foundation—where pollinator-friendly flowers have been planted.<sup>1</sup>

The garden's Facebook page reveals that a few years ago, Echinacea, goldenrod, milkweed, aster, coneflower, hyslop and bee balm were all planted here by the local residents.

These plants provide nourishment for bees and butterflies—pollinators that are essential for the food chain upon which we all depend.

Tiny Thorogood Gardens provides an essential place of sanctuary and nourishment, for butterflies on their way.

Indeed it is thoroughly good.

For in its quiet, humble way, it allows the butterflies to keep going...to travel from park to park, flower to flower, as they continue their difficult journey.

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<sup>1</sup> David Suzuki Foundation: Toronto Leslieville Flyway.  
<https://davidsuzuki.org/take-action/act-locally/butterflyway/toronto-leslieville/>

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It strikes me that's exactly what we're doing every Sunday morning.

Providing a small space of sanctuary and sustenance for each other, as we strive to continue on, through what is an undeniably difficult season.

Not all of the butterflies will make the trip...some will fly further and faster than others...and it won't matter which butterfly is the "best" or the "strongest" or the "leader."

What will matter is that the species can survive...  
traveling its natural path of well being,  
in concert with other living things working in harmony.

Each butterfly upon each flower within each park,  
within one interdependent Whole.

This is the "sacred depth of nature."

The life-giving circle within a circle,  
of small, sustaining offerings...

Strung together like beads on a chain  
and nurtured from hand to hand...

To co-create the Web of Life.

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Isn't it true, that we all have but very small gardens?

We have limited time, limited energy.  
Perhaps limited courage....or limited understanding.

Each of us has particular strengths.  
Each of us has our share of shortcomings.

We may fear that the change or the healing  
or the shelter or the inspiration  
we can offer at this critical time is not nearly enough.

That what we can do is too modest...too meager.

Well, perhaps there's some truth in that.

Like Thorogood Gardens, we are so small as to seem almost  
insignificant in the Big Scheme of Things.

The Earth itself is but one of billions of planets...  
being warmed by billions of stars.

We have been raised on the message that bigger is  
better...that it's "all or nothing"...and that if we can't do  
everything all at once and do it perfectly,  
than we don't matter.

Well, those messages won't help the butterflies keep going.

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Leonard Cohen once said, “I always had the notion that I had a tiny garden to cultivate. [...]

The work that was in front of me was just to cultivate this tiny corner of the field I thought I knew something about...”<sup>2</sup>

To our eyes, Leonard Cohen had a large and impressive garden indeed.

But perhaps it was his awareness that in fact it was a *small* garden that allowed him to tend it with such love and care.

Perhaps our awareness of our limited time here on earth, our limited influence, our modest gifts, can allow us to give them away more freely.

To be generous with the good and small gifts we hold... so that others may continue their journey.

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<sup>2</sup> Leonard Cohen interviewed by Jian Ghomeshi, July 10, 2009. Reprinted in The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/jul/10/ghomeshi-interviews-leonard-cohen>