

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6 NRSV

The emphasis here is on the fact that it was God that brought growth to people/communities
Also that neither Paul nor Apollos is the better leader—they did different things
Both were important and both have value

In fact, Paul goes on to say...

So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:7-9 NRSV

Paul continues on in this chapter—but changes his example

He begins talking about the importance of a foundation built on Christ
That is of absolute importance—having a solid foundation is crucial to the building

But contrary to the point of the passage,

Today I want to focus on the first 4 words, *“I planted, Apollos watered...”*

We know that it is God that causes growth

But we have a part in all of that

Plants in the garden need tending unless they are in a natural habitat that gives them everything
Tilling the ground—planting—water—fertilizer—weeding—pruning—etc

In the life of the early church—Paul and Apollos nurtured their spiritual lives

We know they visited churches and wrote letters

The letters were infrequent and circulated among the churches

They taught them and offered correction when needed

They took apprentices, like John Mark who traveled with Paul and Barnabas for a time

They traveled throughout the area—sharing the good news

Wherever they went people gathered to hear them and began meeting after they left

So I've been thinking about this... *“I planted, Apollos watered...”*

It's pretty clear that there is a strong human involvement in doing the spiritual life

While it is God that makes things grow—we're responsible for our part

What does it mean to “plant” and “water”?

I don't have a very green thumb—twice people have given me plants, which I killed

Both of them at a later time gave me a fake plant! I also got fired from “plant sitting”!

Christmas 2005 we gathered as a family to celebrate—drew names for gifts

My nephew Jonathan gave me a plant—didn't he know I kill plants?

But he did know and researched a good option for me because plants are his thing!

“Pothos takes neglect, low light, and poor watering practices with ease.”

It is still living and thriving—my success story

While very tolerant, it does take my care—watering about once a month

Last fall it got very lanky and wasn't looking too good

I gave it a “hair cut” and moved it into the window

Now it is thriving again!

I was intrigued by the idea that early Quakers had a “Nursery of Truth”

I discovered this in my reading about Publishers of Truth, which we talked about last Sunday

Early Quakers were Publishers of Truth and shared their message widely

Christ has come to speak to the people and all people directly, without priest or king
There was a strong missionary impulse to tell this good news everywhere—Valiant 60 and more
Numbers of Quakers grew dramatically
Because of their radical message, many were put in prison and suffered greatly
The expansion continued to the Americas as early Quakers came with their message
Again they were passionate and determined, although not always well received
Mary Fisher Dyer was one of those early missionaries who faced rejection and death in the colonies

Those traveling to the Americas came by ship and often stopped in Barbados
While there is a dark side to the Quaker presence in Barbados
It also became known by Friends as the “Nursery of Truth”
It was a logical resting place with less persecution than in England and the colonies
The Nursery of Truth was a community, training ground and sending point for Quaker missionaries
This place of respite became a place of preparation

For us today, what does it mean to be a Nursery of Truth

Before we can be either Publishers of Truth or Nurseries of Truth
We have to be Communities of Truth
Truth is most solid with the 3-legged stool—Faith Community/Scripture/Direct Listening
It is within the Community of Truth that we provide the best Nursery for Truth
Where we as a community can nurture people stepping into their place among us
But we need to be intentional about it
And just like plants—they require our care and attention

I spent Memorial Day weekend up at Quaker Cove at a retreat with speaker Ruthie Severance

I was sitting beside her pastor when she brought the first message of the weekend
He had no idea she could do that and had never asked her to bring the message at home
He commented that the “cat was out of the bag now” and he would ask her in the future
But someone noticed and asked her to be the speaker for the weekend
She did an excellent job
Do we notice those who are sitting among us and give them opportunities to follow Leadings?
Or to explore the possibility of a Leading? Or maybe, just a wondering?
Do we make space for people to do a less than stellar job at something?
Because, face it, most of us have stumbled—how else do we learn?
When that happens, do we grace it?
When I have done poorly—the support of my community makes the difference

NWYM has asked us to complete the sentence “Because of Northwest Yearly Meeting...”

My answer is “...I was born physically, spiritually, and professionally”
NWYM has been a nursery of truth for me—they birthed me in many ways
Early on in Christian Endeavor when I prepared and gave lessons as a kid in middle school
In high school, I taught preschool and kindergarten Sunday School classes
I was a leader in the church youth group
I was the youth superintendent for the Portland Area youth groups
They sent me to Iowa for a Leadership Institute along with a bus load of youth from NWYM
In college I was on the Friends Youth Exec, planning youth events
I also travelled—Carol Landaas found a bulletin where I spoke at Friends Memorial

I was a Youth Ambassador at Marion Friends Church one summer
I spent a year in Bolivia, first as a Med Tech, then as a helper with Wycliffe Bible Translators
At Reedwood I was part of a team that led worship at nursing homes
After Don Green died, there was a shuffling of responsibilities
 Kent agreed to be clerk of education if I would agree to be Sunday School superintendent
I was presiding clerk at Reedwood
I initiated an evening service at Reedwood
 All of that was before I went to seminary and asked the question about pastoral ministry
 And the rest is history!

In NWYM I have been on the Board of Evangelism, an Elder, the Administrative Council,
 Assistant Clerk—and for one YM I stepped up to be the clerk
 A Pastor at 3 churches—Mt View, Spokane, North Seattle

I owe much to NWYM for nurturing me

Are we intentional to do the same? To be Nurseries of Truth? Places where people can find their voice?

“A nursery of truth then is a place where we are truly invited to grow, our ideas are challenged, and where we are invested in the work of becoming apprentices of truth within communities of truth.” Wess Daniels

It starts with noticing!

I think we need to get comfortable with failure

 Both as the experienced leaders and those stepping into new roles

 If we don't ever try, we never fail—but we never grow either

We need to be willing to experiment and try things—they won't all work—many will work

We must take a chance on people

We must mentor people—a good mentor will give enough handles without controlling mentees

 As a young person, I also found I needed to pursue a mentor—and still do

For me, an important thing is to just jump in and do it—try it—like speaking Spanish for me

We need safe places where we can try out our ideas, receive push back but not squelch them

 We need to be challenged and do the work so that our knowings are stronger

What do you need in order to flourish in our “Nursery of Truth”?

As we begin the process of creating a new yearly meeting or association or grouping of churches

It is imperative that we nurture this new thing and let it take root

It hasn't been planted yet—we are holding the seeds in our hands

 As we gather this week, we will till the soil and plant the seeds

At home, I ask that all of you bathe this process in prayer—prayer like a constant fine mist

We want to be birthed in the joy of creating a new thing with God's Leading

 Christ centered Quakers open to following Leadings, welcome to everyone

Creating a healthy Nursery of Truth will be essential to that process