

Moravians Women's Association

Devotional Paper

April 2015

With God in the Garden

A garden can be a place of healing. Few of us would disagree with that. I have just read a thesis on "Healing Gardens" written in 2002 by a student at the University of Virginia. Whilst she puts forward a holistic approach to healing there is non mention of God. How can that be? In our first paper in September we established that many of us feel closer to God in a garden than anywhere else. A true healing garden provides a place for stimulation –mental, physical **and** spiritual. Such gardens are often found in the grounds of a hospice or hospital. They offer an environment that provides for restoration, meditation and are a sanctuary for all. They can also appeal to the five senses for example: lavender for its beautiful scent, running water for its tranquil, therapeutic nature, spiky firs and rose petals soft to the touch, bright vibrantly coloured flower heads and tasty herbs and vegetables good enough to eat.

Throughout the ages people have turned to gardens for their healing nature. The remains of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, if they ever existed, have been lost in the mists of time but, according to legend, Nabuchadnezzar 11 built them to please his wife Queen Amytis. They were constructed to heal her feelings of homesickness and remind her of the mountainous landscape she had been used to in her homeland.

The Chelsea Flower Show 2014 sported a large figure head made entirely of flower heads in a garden dedicated to Nelson Mandela who died last year. He was not always the great pillar of society he became, but he knew well the therapeutic nature of gardens. He often turned to gardening during his long years of imprisonment on Robben Island. The authorities supplied him with seeds, initially of tomatoes, chillies and onions and in his autobiography he records that being the custodian of a small patch of earth offered him a tiny taste of freedom. Later, when he was moved to Pollsmoor, his gardening skills enabled him to manage a garden of nearly 900 plants. He even provided most of the vegetables eaten week by week by prisoners and wardens alike for Sunday lunch.

As we know, Jesus ministry was one of healing in every sense of the word. There are numerous examples of healing –mental (Mark Ch 1 v 23-27), physical (Mark Ch7 v 31-35) and spiritual (Mark Ch 2 v 8-12) although in many ways they overlap in their deeper analysis. Like the people of Jesus' day we still look to Jesus for healing. There were numerous herbs, plants and flowers mentioned in the Bible used for healing, many of which are still used today. But it is a completeness of healing that Jesus offers – that of mental, physical and spiritual healing.

For Discussion

1. How many more examples of Jesus healing can you list?
2. Olive oil, pomegranates, almond and aloe were all used in biblical times and are still used today for their healing powers. Share what you know about them. How many more healing plants do you know?
3. If you are still thinking of making a garden in your church grounds you may like to embark on a "Healing Garden".

Diane Thornton