

## It starts with ONE small step

Corinne Calder

God certainly changed the trajectory of the road that He had me walking along during 2020. The new decade saw me lost, without purpose and disconnected from my neighbours.

Add an unprecedented pandemic!

What could God do with this?

Lockdown changed the dynamics of all our lives. Regulations meant we needed to find connection with our neighbours isolated behind walls.

Use of social media chat groups exploded, helping navigate a strange pandemic world, while attempting to maintain some sense of support and community.

Life at home was on hold, but the distress of knowing that many were going daily without food was very disturbing, with the expanded unemployment figures already at 42.3%, and very little relief in sight.

God hears the cries of the hungry, but He needs us to respond to be His hands and feet.

Through the numerous social media chat groups, a food drive was established. Ordinary people, neighbours, strangers, friends and family from all over the Bay delivered in excess of R500K worth of food over a six-month period.

It was distributed predominantly through schools, where staff identified families in dire circumstances.

And it all started with ONE loaf of sandwiches!

I was in a unique position to facilitate the receiving and distribution of food parcels, using church premises.

It soon became clear this was not a sustainable intervention.

It raised some uncomfortable questions. How could I enjoy a meal of my choice on a daily basis, while knowing that others would go to bed hungry?

God's reply. Teach people to grow their own food!

I was led to the Gardens of Faithfulness programme in late 2020. It states: "we have been challenged to join hands and enable, empower and equip at least one million households to grow their own vegetables.

"This initiative, under the prayer covering and guidance of the team from Farming God's Way, encourages and teaches members of the community to plant and grow their own fresh vegetables in a 1m x 2m garden."

Challenge accepted! I planted my first vegetable garden in September, strictly following the instructions and shared this with my domestic worker, Ntombekhaya, who joined me by planting a garden at her own home. We were both blessed with abundant harvests.

"The one who manages the little he has been given with faithfulness and integrity will be promoted and trusted with greater responsibilities. But those who cheat with the little they have been given will not be considered trustworthy to receive more." Luke 16:10

Early 2021, I plant again and so does Ntombekhaya, but we double our garden areas.

What now? How do we each become involved in making a difference in our communities?

Back to those social media chat groups, to share the vision of Gardens of Faithfulness.

"We use what resources are available in the poorest of areas: manure, wood -ash, cut grass and plastic bottles to establish a sustainable garden. We secure and supply a "starter seedling kit" for R10 which includes: 10 beetroot, 10 spinach, 10 spring onion seedling plugs plus 25 beans/pea seeds. That's 55 plants for just R10.

Knowledge and skills are provided through practical training sessions and/or videos; while a firm foundation in biblical principles form part of the implementation and continued support process.

No formal education is required.”

An unprecedented number of people have risen to the challenge. My neighbours have supported their domestic workers, gardeners and staff employed in their businesses to start this journey.

In addition to connecting schools with the team at Farming God’s Way over the past four months, I have had the privilege to distribute almost 450 “starter seedling kits” to be planted in homes across the Bay.

There are obstacles.

Goats. Cows. No fences. Theft. No land. Lack of water. Apathy.

However, we serve a God with solutions.

Neighbours have allocated land on their own properties for staff to be trained and harvest their crop for their homes. I teach on the verge at my home or via chat groups.

Schools have become involved, with land being allocated to establish gardens and teach the next generation and their parents.

Churches and businesses have made space available on their properties.

How different the hunger crisis would look if every unemployed person or worker is given the privilege to be skilled, guided and encouraged so they can feed their families and go out and teach their own neighbours.

Covid lockdown did indeed highlight the plight of the poor, but it has also provided an opportunity for people to share their resources and to find alternatives solutions.

These words of Mother Theresa are poignant: “There is hunger for ordinary bread, and there is hunger for love, for kindness, for thoughtfulness, and this is the great poverty that makes people suffer so much.”

Will you help plant a garden? Will you learn and then teach another?

Love, kindness and thoughtfulness will bring hope and healing while sharing the Gospel with our nation.

The team of volunteers is growing.

It is a simple, sustainable, affordable and – without a doubt – a life changing-initiative for all involved.

And it started with planting ONE garden!

Lord, we give You honour and praise for the good work You have started amongst us. We ask for Your continued guidance. Amen.

<https://www.farming-gods-way.org/gardens/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/114016218689663/>

**Corinne Calder**

**Wife of a Methodist Minister**