

# Pathways Retreat

June, 2014

# Rhythms



## Stations of Restoration

Following our Stations of the Cross and Stations of the Resurrection, we have Stations of Restoration.

Paul wrote that “the whole creation has been groaning in travail” and longing for restoration (Romans 8.22). Our land longs to be restored. For this to happen, we need to remove invasive plants and create space for native plants. This is continuous hard work--causing me to groan, too, especially when Multiflora rose fights back and leaves me wounded as well as tired.

According to the state district forester with whom we consult, we have a “huge problem” with non-native, invasive plants. Aggressively spreading Norway maple, Tree of heaven, Siberian elm, Autumn olive, Asian honeysuckles, Privet, Oriental bittersweet, Multiflora rose, and Garlic mustard displace native plants.



Take Garlic mustard, for example. Introduced from Europe to the U.S. for food, this plant, now escaped from gardens, is a noxious or injurious weed that quickly invades and overtakes native plants. Because it starts to grow in late winter, produces a chemical plant suppressant, over-shades other ground vegetation, and is not eaten by insects and animals in the U.S. as in Europe, native plants can't compete with Garlic mustard. This pernicious plant reminds me of thorns that Jesus spoke of that choked to death one's desired plants (Mark 4.7).

Since 2007 we have been working to remove invasive plants. Now that our 14 acres of woods is placed in the state Classified Forest program, this is required in our stewardship plan to restore our environmental settings for native flora and fauna to be reestablished. All of this to renew this piece of God's Creation at Pathways.

**Tidbit:** These girdling cuts will kill Norway maple, White mulberry and other unwanted trees to create dead snags for wildlife and permit light and space for desired trees to flourish.



### Station 1



Invasive brush and trees cleared in 2007



Wildflower meadow flourishing since 2009

### Station 2



Understory dominated by dense invasion of Privet, Bush honeysuckle, and White mulberry



Once cleared, viburnum shrubs, trillium, ferns, Mayapple and other native ground cover emerge

### Station 3



Front of woods cleared of White mulberry, Bush honeysuckle replaced with Sweet gum, Sugar Maple, and Serviceberry trees, and Winterberry shrubs

### Station 4



Paw paw, Sugar maple, Canadian hemlock and American hornbeam trees now grow in place of removed Tree of heaven and Multiflora rose thicket

### Station 5



Low area cleared of white mulberry and being planted with serviceberry, red twig dogwood, and bald cypress

### Station 6 (on new land)



Clearing Siberian elm, Multiflora rose and Bush honey suckle to create a wildflower meadow with an edge of various dogwoods, American plum, Serviceberry, and eastern red cedar

### Station 7 (on new land)



Dense thicket of Autumn olive to be replaced with prairie grass, forbes and a patch of blueberry bushes

While we have planted over 600 trees and shrubs, it's amazing that desired plants mysteriously appear on their own. As Jesus said, "the earth produces of itself" (Mark 4.28). Once we remove invasive plants, native plants emerge as they have light and space to grow. This work of restoring creation invites us to tend our own growth by removing invasives from our lives so what's desired can flourish.

**Invitation:** We need help. If individuals or groups want to assist with this continuous restoration work, call me at 202-0048 or email [steveforpeace@gmail.com](mailto:steveforpeace@gmail.com).

--Steve Thomas,  
Land steward, budding arborist, and board member

Pathways Retreat is a spiritual retreat center in the city limits of Goshen, Indiana, offering rest, reflection and renewal with God.

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