

# St. Alban has a good thing GROWING

## *Church establishes a community garden*

Story and photos By Ted Brown

This spring, members of Saint Alban the Martyr Anglican Church in Glen Williams embarked upon a unique means of extending the fellowship of the church.

They have established a community garden.

The project, funded by a \$4,800 Trillium Grant that was approved late last year, has resulted in the construction of four raised gardens, each measuring 4x10 feet, located on land behind the church hall.

The gardens have been planted with various vegetables, and the hope is to use the produce to supplement the church's Food for Life program, a weekly food ministry that provides vegetables for families in need.

The concept was suggested by Fr. Aaron Orear, rector at St. Alban, who received his inspiration from a missionary trip to Cuba in 2009 with a group of teens, when he was the curate at St. Jude's Anglican Church in Oakville.

"The purpose of the trip was to take a youth group with me to the little parish of Santa Maria Virgen in Itabo, Cuba. We were there to help establish some gardens around the church, which would be used to provide food for nearby villagers," said Orear. "The rector of that church, The Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado Del Carpio, was in charge of the project, and with her husband Gerardo, they had already turned the churchyard into gardens.

"The nearby house had been converted into a medical building, so the church was able to buy the back yard of the property for virtually nothing, and our group helped build the raised beds for more gardens," said Orear.

In addition to providing food, the project was also designed to be an educational program, to help people learn how to grow their own food, as well as preserve it by canning.

Fast-forward to this spring and Orear's vision at St. Alban was becoming a reality. After the church received the \$4,800 Trillium grant, he was contacted by Dan Harmer, a local retired teacher and avid gardener.

"He said he heard we had a project, and wondered if we needed any help getting it together," said Orear. "Naturally I said 'Yes'. Sandy Gillians, one of our church members, also volunteered and the pair of them have been working on it.

"There are four beds, 10x4 ft.," said Orear. "They're a soil-less planting medi-



*Bishop Griselda Delgado Del Carpio, the bishop of Cuba, blessed the planting when she was visiting St. Alban in the Glen, April 22. Photo courtesy St. Alban's in the Glen*

um, marked for square foot gardening. Each square foot holds either one large plant (like a tomato plant), four medium ones (like Swiss chard), nine small (beets) or 16 very small (carrots or onions). The group use planting guides to keep the plants organized."

The Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado Del Carpio has now become Bishop Griselda Delgado Del Carpio, the bishop of Cuba, and when she was visiting Canada in April, she visited St. Alban to bless the gardens.

"The garden is named St. Mary's Garden, in honour of Bishop Griselda's former parish, Santa Maria Virgen, in Itabo," said Orear.

"These are the launch beds," said Orear. "We'll use these to test and build our volunteer base, then expand to another location or two for a fall planting and for next year.

"For volunteers, we're looking at two sources," said Orear. "After the bishop's

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