



The **Good News** Digest

Issue 7 (October) : The Story Unfolding of One Green
Ash Tree in Open Lands, the Potential of Small Change



Black ash strawberry basket by Pokagon Band of Potawatomi tribal member Jamie Brown

Issue #7 is a celebration of nature and our church. Nature finds a way. So does our church. Thanks to those who help both in unseen ways.

Bill Falloon, Editor
Pastor Valorie Tatum

Finding Hope in the Open Lands

Why "Lingering Ash" trees matter. Surprise!--we have one lingering in the Open Lands, near our church.

By **Bill Falloon and Karl Persons** on October 1, 2026

I learn something every time I talk to our Open Lands arborist-in-residence Karl Persons.

Go ahead and laugh at my confession, but I'm not joking. Just this Sunday, he talked about one tree – an ash tree 8 inches in diameter. It is an amazing discovery. Here is a picture of it, and another that was planted as a seedling. For that reason, I give Karl the co-byline to this story.

Here's what he taught me. One tree may not look like much, but this surviving Ash tree is special. Very very VERY special. "Finding a living ash tree is pretty cool!" says Stephanie Adams, Ph.D. ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, Assistant Professor and Extension Tree and Landscape Plant Health Specialist, Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology at Texas A&M University and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



Now, the backstory. For the past few decades, North America's forests have been facing a quiet catastrophe. The culprit is the emerald ash borer (EAB), a shimmering green beetle

native to Asia that was accidentally introduced to the continent in the late 1990s. Since its arrival, this invasive pest has systematically decimated ash populations, killing hundreds of millions of trees across dozens of states and Canadian provinces. When the beetle moves through a region, it leaves behind a graveyard of brittle, bark-stripped skeletons, wiping out up to 99% of mature ash trees.

Yet, amid this ecological tragedy, a rare glimmer of hope has emerged. Walking through forests where every other ash tree has collapsed, researchers have discovered occasional, solitary ash trees standing tall, green, and completely healthy.

Forestry scientists call these remarkable survivors "lingering ash" trees. They represent less than 1% of the native population, but their existence is a biological breakthrough that could save the genus *Fraxinus* from total extinction.

According to Karl, "The Green Ash is most susceptible, the White Ash, then Black Ash, and least susceptible is the Blue Ash. A nearby nursery that the Village deals with, Possibility Place Nursery, gave two Blue Ash seedlings in 2015 to plant and observe. One didn't make it through the first winter and the other is growing very nicely." The planted Blue Ash is shown below in the Open Lands.



The Mystery of the Lingering Ash

A lingering ash is not just a lucky tree that the beetles happened to miss. It is a tree equipped with a unique genetic toolkit that allows it to fight back. Because North American ash trees did not co-evolve with the emerald ash borer, they generally lack the natural

defenses found in Asian ash species. However, due to natural genetic variation, a tiny fraction of native trees possess subtle differences in their chemistry and biology.

When scientists brought cuttings of these survivor trees into controlled laboratory settings, they discovered two primary ways lingering ash trees defend themselves:

Larval Compartmentalization: When EAB larvae hatch and begin chewing into a standard ash tree, they carve winding tunnels that destroy the tree's vascular system, cutting off water and nutrients. In a lingering ash, however, the tree's immune response triggers a rapid "walling off" of the tissue surrounding the intruder. The tree essentially grows a physical barrier around the larvae, trapping and starving them before they can cause fatal damage.

Chemical Invisibility: Adult female beetles rely on specific chemical scents—volatile organic compounds (VOCs)—emitted by ash foliage to locate places to feed and lay eggs. Some lingering ash trees produce significantly fewer of these chemical signals, making them virtually invisible to the pest.

Why Ash Trees Matter to Us

To understand why finding these resilient trees is so critical, we have to look at the immense value ash trees bring to our environment, communities, and economy. Ash trees are a foundation species, meaning they play a unique, irreplaceable role in the ecosystems they inhabit.

In native forests, ash trees provide vital canopy shade that regulates forest floor temperatures and moisture. Their nutrient-rich leaves drop in the autumn, feeding forest streams and supporting unique communities of insects, which in turn feed native birds and amphibians. Dozens of native insect species rely exclusively on ash trees to survive; when the ash trees die, these species face extinction as well.

In urban areas, ash trees were heavily planted for decades to line city streets and shade suburban yards. Their loss has stripped neighborhoods of cooling shade, driving up the "urban heat island" effect and increasing municipal energy costs. Furthermore, removing millions of dead, hazardous trees from public parks and power lines has cost cities and homeowners billions of dollars.

Beyond ecology and urban planning, ash holds deep cultural and economic significance. It is a prized hardwood, famously used to manufacture baseball bats, electric guitars, tool handles, and high-end furniture due to its strength and flexibility. For Indigenous peoples, particularly the Wabanaki nations of the Northeast, the black ash tree is central to creation histories and the sacred tradition of basket-weaving. The loss of these trees threatens to erase a vital piece of living cultural heritage.

Cultivating the Future: Breeding for Resistance

An individual lingering ash tree cannot save a forest on its own, but its DNA can. Organizations like the US Forest Service, the USDA APHIS, and university research teams

are working together on initiatives like the Trees in Peril program to unlock this genetic potential.

Field biologists and citizen scientists track down confirmed lingering ash trees and collect small twigs, called scions. These scions are grafted onto rootstocks to create genetic clones in protected research orchards. Scientists then cross-pollinate these survivor clones with one another.

The results of these breeding programs have been incredibly promising. Researchers have found that the second-generation offspring of lingering ash parents show significantly higher levels of resistance than their parents. By stacking these defensive traits through selective breeding, scientists are creating a new generation of native ash saplings that can openly coexist with the emerald ash borer.

The ultimate goal is to establish seed orchards capable of producing thousands of resistant seeds, allowing conservationists to actively reforest devastated woodlands.

How You Can Help

The fight to save the ash tree is a race against time, and everyday citizens play a vital role. If you live in an area heavily impacted by EAB and notice a mature, entirely untreated ash tree that is thriving while all surrounding ash trees have died, you may have found a lingering ash.

Forestry researchers rely heavily on the public to map these survivors. By using mobile apps like TreeSnap, you can upload photos and GPS coordinates of healthy ash trees directly to scientists. Your observation could provide the very genetic material needed to restore North America's forests for generations to come. Lingering ash trees prove that nature has the capacity to adapt—it just needs humans like the Open Lands Angels to help cultivate the cure

Karl's Update

Karl Persons met with Kim Shearer of Morton Arboretum on Monday, September 28th, in the East Section of the Open Lands just north of the Church. Shearer came to our little Arboretum to further examine the "Lingering Ash" that revealed itself two weeks ago in the East Section of the Open Lands just north of the Church,

The tree has been named the tree *Schatzie* – a German word that means *Treasured One*. Shearer found Schatzie worthy of propagation and further research. Additional personnel from Morton Arboretum will become involved.

In 2003, after EAB (Emerald Ash Borer) was determined to be the culprit of Detroit's dying Ash trees, we took Ash Trees off the Village planting list. In 2003 we donated 7 Ash Trees in the Open Lands, just north of the Church, for Trap Trees for Morton Arboretum's EAB Survey Team. The Trap Trees were girdled and sticky material wrapped around the tree above and below the girdled area hoping to capture an adult beetle, but none were captured. The trees died from girdling and were cut down in December of 2006.

When the bark was shaved off in January EAB larvae were found. The first find in the South Suburbs. This series of events led to a Press Release, Delimitation Survey, Regional EAB Identification Workshop, a Senator Durbin Press Conference, and a visit from Washington Department of Agriculture officials.

Rainbow Scientific conducted a study on 200 Ash Parkway trees from 2007 to 2014 to find out what insecticides worked at what rate. We hosted a symposium for 150 people from 4 states in 2012. Hazel Crest removed over 2100 Ash trees, including 3 near the parsonage, and replanted with a large variety of trees.

Hazel Crest instituted a program in the Open Lands to let some Ash seedlings grow with the thought being that after some number of generations the native American Ash trees should develop a resistance to the EAB from Asia.

Possibility Place Nursery gave us two Blue Ash seedlings to observe as they grow. One of the seedlings didn't survive the first winter but the other seedling is growing into a nice tree, until nearly destroyed by a falling Siberian Elm in the July 27th windstorm.

And now in 2026 finding a Green Ash tree that was born after 2007 that is resistant to EAB is coming full circle. Karl notes that "a Schatzie Ash Cultivar in Nursery Production would be icing on the cake."

The Village of Hazel Crest and its 53 acre Arboretum has been in the middle of EAB for over 20 years, and now finding a Green Ash resistant to EAB is a special moment indeed. "Statically going full circle from a tree problem to a natural solution doesn't happen in one's lifetime," says Karl. "To find a solution (a tree named Schatzie) in the same area that we found EAB in the South Suburbs 19 years ago is truly a miracle"

The Story Doesn't Stop There*

***BONUS: This part of the story comes from [The importance of strawberry basketry in Potawatomi culture - Potawatomi.org](#) and is shared below.**

Yes, nature, God and art are connected. Just ask one of our indigenous American ancestors, the Potawatomi tribe. Pokagon Band of Potawatomi tribal member Jamie Brown created the black ash strawberry basket you see on the front cover of *The Good News Digest*. How beautiful it is, like the Ash tree itself. It is housed in Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center collections.

For thousands of years, the Nishnabe have made baskets out of black ash trees and porcupine quills. One of the most-used images in basketry is the strawberry because of the cultural significance of the fruit.

"The Potawatomi word for strawberry is *demen*, which is directly translated as 'heart berry,'" said Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center Director Kelli Mosteller. "The teachings I have been told are that strawberries are a gift from the Creator. In the

summer, our ancestors could step outside of their lodge, and this fruit that could take care of them would be growing.”

Mosteller said strawberries are used during monthly full moon ceremonies. The berry symbolizes womanhood and the transition into the role of caretaker. They are also beautiful and taste great, so it is no wonder that Nishnabe artists use this motif in a variety of art, including applique and beadwork.

“There are things that have a cultural relevance that people take the time to replicate in a decorative way,” Mosteller said. “You just don’t often create something just for the sake of it being beautiful; it has to have a deeper meaning to you or your community.”

Strawberry baskets are also used to show off the skill of the artist. They are complex to make because of the intricate detail. “It’s really an accomplishment to be an artist who can get to the level of making a really good strawberry basket,” she said.

Many Potawatomi artists create strawberry baskets using bark from the black ash tree. Black ash basketry is a regional art because the tree grows primarily around the Great Lakes.

“Like most things, black ash basketry started with a utilitarian purpose. We needed baskets to carry and store things,” Mosteller explained.

“As we moved into a trade era and people could go buy whatever storage container they wanted, it transitioned from utilitarian, where you would get a lot of things like pack baskets and store baskets, into more decorative baskets. Nishnabe artisans go through a lifetime of constantly honing the craft and skill to really become true artists, still harvesting the black ash in the traditional way.”

Historically, people would cut down a black ash tree using an ax and then harvest the strips of bark. It is important to find the right tree without too many knot holes. Each ring is a strip of the bark, so the basket maker must pound it to get the moisture between the rings to release “until it’s pulling off like string cheese,” Mosteller said. The more an artist pounds the bark, the sturdier the strips will be.

Today, some basket makers use synthetic dyes, but many still use traditional dyes. They harvest certain flowers and plants, dye the bark strips, and then weave them together to create the basket.

“I’ve often heard, ‘If being Indian was easy then everyone would do it.’ Doing things in the right way — the way you’ve been taught — is much more challenging, but important because it has much more meaning,” Mosteller said. “That’s why buying things that are labeled true Indian made and not buying things that are knockoffs and replicas is important. They are expensive, but they should be because people spend many, many hours working on these baskets.”

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma, has many strawberry baskets in its collection made from porcupine quills and black ash. Mosteller

has purchased a few like these for herself, most recently from artists at this year's Gathering of Potawatomi Nations in Walpole Island, Ontario, Canada.

"The quill baskets we brought back from Walpole Island were made by a woman in Ontario. She passed away about three or four months ago. She was one of the very few who still worked in quill basketry," she said. "A lot of these skills are dying off. Just like with our language a lot of these people who work in this art are dying, and younger generations are not picking it up. If we have the elders there and we aren't using them as a resource, that's on us."

Small Change Can Make a Big Difference

The ideas discussed inside church can be taken outside the church. All we have to do is listen to one other, brainstorm, and accept the challenge.

By **Bill Falloon and Pastor Valorie Tatum** on October 1, 2026

Hazel Crest Community United Methodist Church has an opportunity to turn everyday pocket change into meaningful support for its ministries through a community "Round Up for Change" program. Just an idea; what do you think?

If you happened to be in church a couple of weeks ago, Karen Person mentioned the donation of \$1600 from the Berkot's Superfood "Rounding Up" change program for patrons of this local supermarket chain.

What a blessing! It got me thinking, particularly when Barb Gbur gave a recent sermon, and asked the question, "How do you know if God is speaking to you?" During the sermon, she told the story of a recent encounter when a man walked up to her while she was filling up her car at a gas station.

She felt as if God was talking to her and advising her on what to do with this encounter. The advice was not to give this man any money. Afterwards, she was wondering if God was really talking to her or if she was just talking to herself. If I remember the sermon correctly, she then advised the man where he could get more meaningful help at our church. I told her after church service that she – and perhaps God – realized this man needed much more than pocket change.

These lessons in church are coming full circle. I've applied these stories to the outside world and have come up with an idea. Admittedly, I have copied this idea from all the larger businesses that ask me to "round up" on a daily basis.

I have no problem rounding up for Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) or Berkot's, particularly when Karen lets me know that money does flow back to our church. Or, when I know that RMHC runs local chapters and houses that provide free or low-cost lodging near hospitals for families of seriously ill children.

But when money is tight, the idea is simple: why not instead round up for our church. Ask church members and participating local businesses if they would collect spare change or invite customers to round their purchases up to the nearest dollar. The additional pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters would then be donated to the church – above our normal tithing and offerings – to support programs such as the food pantry, possible ideas such as youth tutoring, community wellness outreach, and much-needed improvements to church facilities.

A small personal experiment demonstrates the potential. Over two weeks, after listening to my fellow church members and Pastor Tatum and an inspired Eddie Rogers Jr. at Kickback 2026 asking all of us to “apply” what we learn as Christians inside the church and take it outside the church, I personally collected \$12.90 in change from my own car over a couple of weeks. If that amount were collected every two weeks for an entire year, it would total approximately \$335.40. If 100 church members achieved the same result, our combined contributions could reach \$33,540 in one year.

This estimate does not include donations collected by local stores, restaurants, service stations, and other businesses. Even if individual contributions were smaller—or participation varied throughout the year—the combined total could still provide significant financial support for our church. Perhaps we can make it happen.

Large national “round up” checkout campaigns have demonstrated that small donations can produce remarkable results when many people participate. Hazel Crest Community United Methodist Church can apply that same principle – asking local businesses that we support if they would support us. A customer may barely notice rounding a \$9.63 purchase up to \$10, but the accumulated 37 cents becomes much more powerful when combined with thousands of similar transactions.

The program could begin with a small group of church members and a few trusted community businesses. Collection containers, checkout signs, and regular reports could show participants exactly how their change is being used. A few coins may seem insignificant, but when a church and its community work together, small change can create lasting change and benefit.

How can checkout charity help my organization? Academic researchers Lauren Dulam, Assistant Professor, CCPA Public Administration and Policy, Binghamton University, State University of New York, and Ruth K. Hansen, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater; Director, Institute for Nonprofit Management Studies, have some interesting thoughts.

“Retailers select and run checkout charity campaigns, so if you have a good relationship with a local store or restaurant, you could ask them if this might be a good fit. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind” they report. “People who were familiar with the organization gave more, so take the opportunity to share the good work you’re doing. As Booker T. Washington said, one of the great rules of fundraising is to make your work known.”

Their recommendation: your retail partner might place a small standee with the name and mission of the organization on top of the self-service checkout machines. Remember, people make up their minds in a very short time—usually about five to 10 seconds—so use images and keep your message short, sweet, and memorable. Make the most of the campaign by raising awareness of your nonprofit outside the store, too. Use whatever PR or marketing channels your organization has available—emails, advertising in digital or print media, billboards, etc.

Their helpful tips: Make sure potential donors know their money will actually support your work. Transparency is important. Businesses need to show customers that while they run the campaign, customers fund the donations and can get a tax deduction if they save their receipts. They can include this on the register display or on the PIN pad or train cashiers to share this information.

Across the country, they noted in their research, more than half of the public they surveyed participate in checkout charity. These campaigns have raised hundreds of millions of dollars for charitable organizations—\$749 million in 2022, according to Engage for Good. Understanding who engages in this form of giving and how to maximize fundraising through these campaigns can be a win-win for nonprofits and communities.

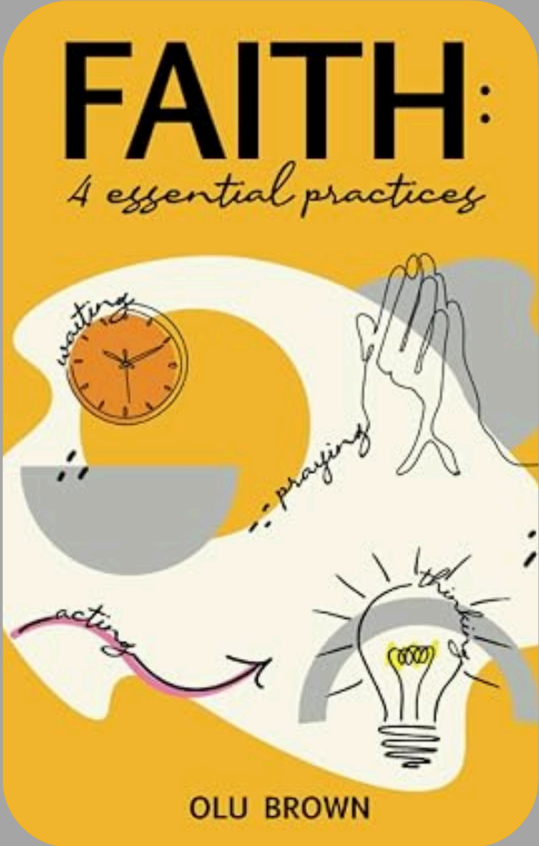
The Peace of Wild Things

By Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

"The Peace of Wild Things" first appeared in Berry's 1968 poetry collection *Openings*. It has since been reprinted in his collected volumes, including *Collected Poems 1957-1982* and *New Collected Poems* (2012), which is where many readers find it now.

Wendell Berry died on August 31, 2026, at age 92. His daughter, Mary Berry, confirmed that he died at his home in Port Royal, Kentucky. He was born August 5, 1934. He was a poet, novelist, essayist and farmer, known for writing about farming communities and the costs of industrialization. The Berry Center asked that, in place of flowers, people donate to it or to a similar organization working in their home place in his memory.



FAITH:
4 essential practices

OLU BROWN

Hazel Crest Community UMC
Thursday Evenings @ 6pm on Zoom

October 15	Chapter 1: Waiting
October 22	Chapter 2: Praying
November 12	Chapter 3: Thinking
November 19	Chapter 4: Acting

BIBLE STUDY



Led by Pastor Valorie Tatum

You can support Hazel Crest Community United Methodist Church in several easy and meaningful ways. Financial contributions can be made electronically by using zelle at HAZELCRESTUMC@gmail.com, or by visiting our website at hazelcrestumc.org. If you prefer to give in person, you are always welcome to do so during our worship services. Contributions can also be mailed via personal check, cashier's check, or money order payable to:

Hazel Crest Community United Methodist Church

17050 South California Avenue

Hazel Crest, IL 60429

Thank you for your generosity and continued support.