



# The Garden View

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF VILLA RICA FIRST UNITED METHODIST AT THE GARDENS



July 2020

## Our Unique Growth

By: Bonnie McClure

I've always personally struggled a little with the parable about Jesus leaving the ninety-nine. I understand it, in theory, and I am grateful for it, as there have surely been times in my life when I was the one lost sheep. But I guess the piece that was difficult to understand was what it means for the continued progression and growth of the ninety-nine, when Jesus is always chasing after lost sheep.

But I finally got the ninety-nine story in full perspective through a late sprouting strawberry seed. It may be that strawberries naturally have a longer germination period or that the kinds of seeds I got this year had a special coating to help you see the seed easily that may have interfered with sprouting, but long after all my other seedlings had healthy sprouts growing, there was not a single strawberry green to be seen.

Of course, I value the tomatoes, broccoli, spinach, and even the snapdragon flowers I planted just as well. I was excited to see them grow. I have cared for them tenderly. I am proud of their progression. But every morning, the first place I look is the strawberry seed containers to check for any new growth. They are on my mind, day and night. I am concerned for their well-being. I am wondering if they are receiving the water, sunlight, and sustenance I have provided them. I am anxious to see the growth I know they are capable of.

The story of the ninety-nine is not about Jesus favoring the lost sheep or loving him any more than the rest of his obedient sheep, just as I value my thriving snapdragons the same as my slow moving strawberries. It is about the love and faithfulness Jesus has for all, without exception, and the unique work He pours into each of us, according to our individual needs.

My spinach and broccoli have more growing to do, but I've got to get this strawberry plant off to a good start. Jesus wants to get us off to a good start, too. He meets us exactly where we are, and rejoices when we are brought into the fold.

Luke 15:3-7 NIV

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

