

EARTH CARE REFLECTION

September 2022

By John MacDuffie

In the recent prolonged dry spell which grew pretty hot, my wife Betsy was to be away for a few days. She asked me to water the flowers she had growing in large pots at her lakeside cottage and my oceanside home, the beds she nurtures at her winter home and our church's parish house in the village. She impressed me with the urgency of the need to care for these lovely reminders of the bounty and care of God.

So on those few days of her absence I did my best to slake the thirst of these plants which we make dependent on our care because we put them into places in which they are vulnerable to severe weather conditions. I saw them keep their vibrant colors and straighten their fragile stems and in general, thrive as, surely, God planned that they should.

Just before this time, we had received four of the summer visitors who come here in their legions to Mt. Desert Island. These visitors, arriving within a few days of each other, were special. One was my grandson; the other was Betsy's (each of us having separate offspring with our late spouses.) Each young man, a recent college graduate, brought a girlfriend. We naturally expected that each young couple had some plans for hiking, climbing, biking, swimming, or otherwise enjoying the natural beauties of this island and its national park. But almost at once we learned that no, this was not the case. They came to visit us – as one young man put it, to “hang out with Grandpa.”

So hastily but willingly we rearranged our own plans for the times of these visits, and suggested meals we could share, things we could do together. As may be imagined, during these times there was conversation! Initially, it took the form of questions we asked to bring forth information from them which greatly interested us – their plans, their hopes, their goals in life. And as we listened, and continued in dialog with these exceptional young adults, we saw that they were engaged, immersed, and stimulated by the opportunity to bring forth the beauty, vitality, and energy that was inside them.

Could we be forgiven if we felt we had been watering flowers which were thirsty, fragile, vulnerable in a way, and eager to receive a needed stimulus which could enable them to bring forth beauty, strength, and hope for a world waiting and longing for relief?

John MacDuffie is a graduate of Gould Academy, Bates College, and the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology. He served churches in Ohio and Maine for over 50 years, including a decade as Manager of Pilgrim Lodge. John is father of four, grandfather of six, and great-grandfather of one. His hobbies are all related to boats, and in retirement he serves as Treasurer of three non-profits including the Somesville Union Meeting House.