

VT8 Update 10/25/25

[Robert Toney VT8 10_25_25.m4a](#)

VT8 Update 11/1/25

Hello colleagues! Over the past week or so, I have begun reaching out to stakeholders and supporters from like-minded organizations to build prototypes for my Reclaiming Creation Victory project. The main resource I've tapped into is Faith in Place (faithinplace.org), an organization first introduced to me by Dr. Anna Case-Winters and Dr. Ted Hiebert during my Environmental Leadership Ministry certification. Faith in Place leads and supports green initiatives throughout the city, partnering with churches and nonprofits—such as developing a large public garden on Chicago's West Side with Stone Temple Missionary Baptist Church. One of the “Green Team” managers I met while touring the site happens to be a fellow alum, so I reached out to him to discuss their potential management of my project. In the meantime, I've drafted a project plan titled Reclaiming Justice and revised my sermon, A Father's Call, which outlines my project design and conveys the theological message behind why I feel called to confront environmental and economic injustice. I'm currently pulling everything together on my website, including the final project portfolio: roberttoney.wixsite.com/roberttoneymdiv. Feel free to follow along and co-create with me—just be gentle, it's still a work in progress! Thanks! Rev. Rob.

VT8 11/8/2025

Good Morning Team! Over the past week or so, I've continued reaching out to stakeholders and peers to build prototypes for my Reclaiming Creation Victory project. A revelation I must share this week came after reflecting on the feedback from Dr. Valle and the insightful questions from Jacob, Lawrence, Lynette, and others. I revisited the chart from Day 3 of our in-session class and realized that my project scope may need adjustment. I believe stepping back into the “co-define” phase will help me gain greater clarity and make the vision more manageable. In my initial design, I imagined the project supported by three pillars: Theological Teaching, Environmental Awareness, and Economic Development. Though I still believe in this direction, I now recognize it was very much MY design. As I've spoken with peers, potential stakeholders, and investors, I've noticed they resonate with pillars two and three—but not always with the first. Not everyone shares my theological interpretation of Genesis 2:15, which I understand as humanity's sacred call to be “tillers and keepers of creation.” Even when they grasp the meaning, translating that belief into priorities like clean air on Chicago's South Side can feel abstract or secondary. In our current climate—when thousands of neighbors have lost access to nutrition programs right as winter approaches—solar panels and windmills “for God” don't always feel urgent. That

reality has humbled me. Inspired by Patrick Reyes's *The Purpose Gap*, I'm reminded that purpose grows not from what we design alone, but from what we co-create with our communities. And in the spirit of Lorenzo Lebrija's *How to Try*, I'm learning that faithful experimentation means being willing to fail fast, listen deeply, and let God reshape the process through relationship. So, by stepping back into "co-design" with key partners like Faith in Place, which I introduced in last week's update, I'm gaining new perspective on scope, collaboration, and community listening. My hope is that this project continues to evolve—not as my vision alone, but as a shared act of stewardship, creativity and imagination. Stay Blessed and Encouraged Y'all!

VT8 11/8/25 second update

After this morning's submission, I emailed Alderman, Rev. William Hall, who serves Chicago's 6th Ward, an MTS MDiv graduate and friend. We explored several design revisions for *Reclaiming Creation Victory*: 1) Phased Approach: dividing the three pillars into three project phases, shaping a longer-term vision that begins with theological education/ marketing—to create momentum around the idea of "Mankind as Keeper of Creation." This first phase would focus on re-tooling and re-educating the community from the pulpit and through neighborhood gatherings about "Theology of Creativity" and our God-given duty to nurture the incarnation of sustainable life around us. 2) Expanded Inclusion: For this opening phase, we aim to broaden the audience—engaging men and women, young and elder alike—to foster a cultural shift toward mutual care for one another and for the environment. We also want to be intentional about including community members with differing abilities, ensuring full participation and, as Angela insightfully noted earlier in my feedback, creating pathways that could connect to future green-career training opportunities for this segment of the community.