

# EARTH ALMANAC



*Earth Education*



School Sisters of Notre Dame  
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

*center for*  
Earth Spirituality  
& Rural Ministry

Our Lady of Good Counsel Campus  
170 Good Counsel Drive  
Mankato, MN 56001-3138

507-389-4272 • lcoons@ssndcp.org

# ORGANICALLY YOURS

BY LISA COONS, CESRM CO-DIRECTOR



*Lisa is currently out on extended medical leave following heart surgery. While she continues to heal and grow stronger we take a look back at her inspiring words from Spring 2011:*

Oh the irrepressible life force of spring! We're surrounded by new growth emerging pushing through mud, last fall's forgotten leaves and reaching for the warmth of the ever-increasing strength of the sun. The birds are wild! Zooming from tree to tree, singing and frolicking, the birds are awakened to a new season of life and we, too, begin to feel the energy in us building. Children running down sun-warmed sidewalks and muddy backyards in bare feet, coats thrown aside – skipping along with the sheer joy of being alive. After the bone-chilling winds of winter, the gentle southern breezes are welcome relief as we turn our faces to the warmth of the sun, closing our eyes and soaking it all up. The daylight grows longer and our own sense of time begins to change. All of our senses awaken to this newness.

The sights and sounds of spring are astonishing in their contrast to the monochromatic landscape of winter from which we emerge each spring. Every year, I admit, I am surprised, overjoyed and even, at times, overwhelmed at this life force. I can't seem to get my hands in the dirt soon enough and yet I'm not quite ready to give up the quiet calm of winter. As spring days feature a balance in light and dark, we seek a balance in our lives too. Our creativity begins to stretch towards new growth just as new shoots begin their journey up and out of the soil. We shed our protective winter gear and our protective winter homes and we walk the neighborhood again perhaps even strolling – so unlike our winter pace – and from the house. Soon enough we will be seeking shade instead of sun but for now in these spring days, the sun calls us to step outside, perhaps to step outside our areas of comfort and into something new. Spring is a wonderful time to look inward. What beckons you this season? What are you growing towards these days? What roots are you sending out to anchor you?

We look forward to new projects, new endeavors, and new connections with you each spring here at the Center for Earth Spirituality. You can follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CenterForEarthSpirituality](http://www.facebook.com/CenterForEarthSpirituality).

Happy springtime to you!

Organically Yours,  
Lisa



## STAFF

### CO-DIRECTORS

Lisa Coons  
Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jim Ackil  
Jolly Corley  
Erica Idso-Weisz  
Amanda Mackie  
Melissa Martensen  
Henry Panowitsch

Paul Prew  
Ronda Redman  
Lynn Rozen  
Jim Vonderharr  
Jeanne Wingenter, SSND

# MORE ABOUT DIRT

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN SSND, CESRM CO-DIRECTOR

Some of us have the opportunity to travel in areas where land is farmed. In spring we see plowed fields of black dirt waiting to nurture seeds of many kinds. In summer we witness amazing growth of crops, and as fall arrives, we see harvesting. Then in Minnesota and other upper Midwest states, here comes winter. If snow hasn't covered those fields, we can see and may feel for the dirt so exposed to wind and cold...its precious topsoil being blown away for almost 8 months of the year.

At the CESRM Earth Conference this past November and in viewing the movie *Dirt*, participants explored the theme of Soil. Both events reminded participants about many issues concerning soil and many ways to nourish this important kin of ours. The question could be: why would we be concerned whether or not soil is nourished? A response is quite simple: healthy soil creates healthy food. Healthy food creates health for all species of this planet.

When nurtured, soil carries on a great biological activity in all its components. The keynote speaker called this a miracle. Other speakers called us to find ways dirt is being nurtured and ways we can insure this.

In this article I suggest we further explore one-way soil can be nurtured. This is the practice of a cover crop on soil once the fall harvest is completed. Now I understand that most of us will not participate in cover cropping activities, but nonetheless, if we know its importance, we can partner with others to help support it happening more.

Who knew so many folks who

attended the conference would be interested in the topic of dirt? You may find out that cover cropping is important for you to support.

Here is a simple definition of cover crops: it is a crop planted between main crops primarily to manage soil erosion, increase soil fertility, soil quality, water, weeds, pests, diseases, biodiversity and wildlife. In this article I list only few benefits that cover crops provide.

Among the many important components of dirt is nitrogen which can be depleted by the regular crops of soybeans and corn, major crops of farming in Minnesota. Cover crops stimulate nitrogen in soil.

As they also limit soil erosion, cover crops can reduce both the rate and quantity of water that drains off the field, which would normally pose environmental risks to waterways and ecosystems downstream. They can also support an increase in soil carbon sequestration. What a way to offset carbon in our climate change challenge!

If a cover crop is so valuable, why aren't more people who farm committed to this practice? Here are some challenges:

- Even though the farmer may wish to help conserve the soil, the cost of a cover crop can outweigh the profitability of its harvest.
- Machinery for regular seeds may not be adapted to planting cover crop seeds
- In Minnesota and upper mid-west states, the cover crop must be hardy to survive winter.

Fortunately, some of these

challenges are being addressed.

One big project is being done by the University of MN agriculture

departure in a program titled Forever Green. The Forever Green Initiative brings together researchers from multiple departments including plant breeding, agronomy, food science and economics to create these crops. The goal is to develop new high value crops that sustain the soil and water while offering profit to those who farm them.

During the past legislative session and now, CESRM joined other groups like Land Stewardship Project to persuade legislatures to grant 1 million dollars annually toward this initiative. At the Governor's Water Summit in February, several issue sessions focused on cover crop as a one solution to clean water. The latter led to environmental groups hosting a tour of this project's development at the St Paul campus April 19. Governor Dayton, along with a number of legislators present at this gathering, acknowledged the value of this initiative.

The good news is that the 1 million dollar grant is presently in the Senate Budget. To help insure that it stays there, contact your Senator to endorse support for cover crop research. For more information about cover crops, google Forever Green/University of MN.

**We all need clean water and good soil. Let us continue to find ways to support these kin of ours.**



# PARTNER WITH US ON OUR GOOD WORK

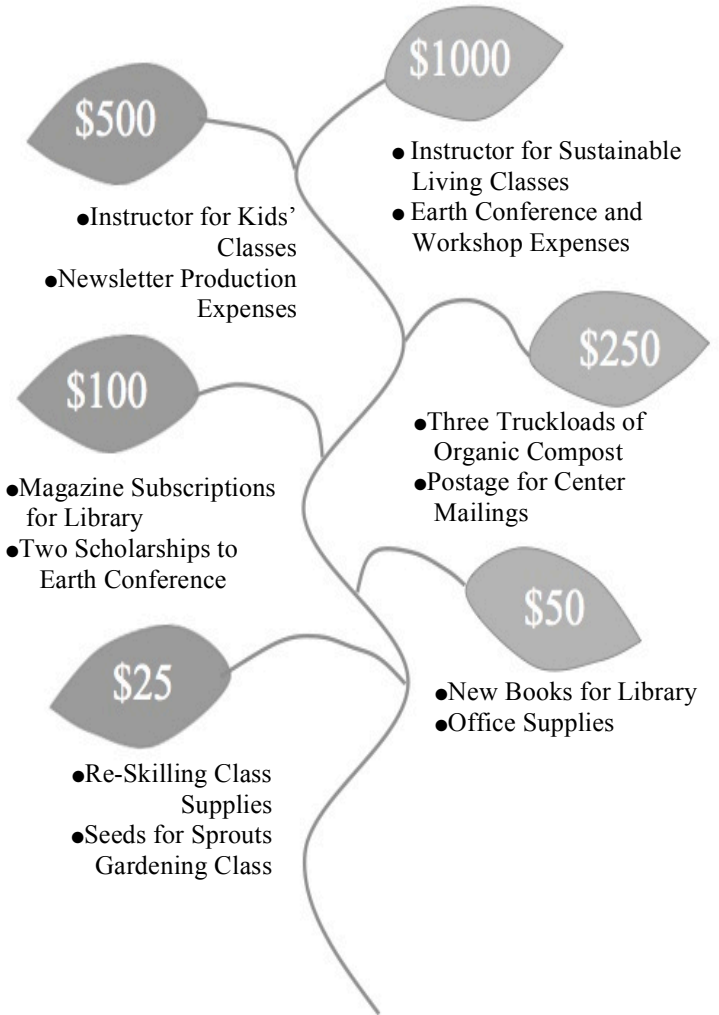
## BECOME A CESRM SPONSOR!

Through outreach and educational programs the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry touches the lives of hundreds of people right here in the greater Mankato area. You can become an integral part of the work CESRM is doing in your community by becoming a CESRM sponsor. Every donation large or small will make a difference.

Our organization needs your support. We work in the local community to educate about Earth issues you care about. We re-connect people to the natural world and their desire to do better. We reach children, elders and everyone in between. We provide a perspective on Earth care, climate issues and community resilience that is unique and much-needed. We work at the grassroots for systemic change, nurturing others and inspiring their growth. We do some good. We know you do, too. We believe that together we can do better.

We invite you to help sponsor our work and make a donation today! Choose your level and know what ever the amount, large or small, you will be aiding CESRM and making a difference in our community.

Donations made through the Sponsorship Program will go to CESRM's general budget fund. We are deeply rooted and sustained by your support. Thank you!



CUT ALONG LINE

### DONATION PLEDGE CARD – RETURN TODAY!

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CESRM

RETURN IN ENVELOPE PROVIDED

YES, I WANT TO BE A CESRM SPONSOR!

- |                                 |                                |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25  |



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_



# VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

BY JIM ACKIL

After moving to North Mankato from Illinois 11 years ago I found myself without a sunny place to garden in our new yard. I learned about the Community Gardens at Good Counsel, met Lisa Coons, the co-director of CESRM, and have been gardening there ever since.

Gardening at Good Counsel is a favorite thing for me to do. I so much like to spend time there. I am grateful to the School Sisters of Notre Dame for sharing the land, water, and barn with the community gardeners. Like any successful community activity, the gardens depend on its members to work together to maintain and enrich them. And so with Lisa's encouragement, I became a volunteer in support of the gardens.

There are lots of ways that volunteers help. A short list includes: planting and caring for the food shelf garden plots, maintaining the garden paths, caring for the barn and tools, watering the flowers, helping with the children's garden, maintaining membership records, organizing social activities, sharing educational materials, mentoring new gardeners, and helping others.

All gardeners are required to contribute service to the gardens, and others are welcome to help too. Gardening should be an Earth friendly activity, allowing gardeners to grow beautiful plants and healthful food, while caring for Earth, its soil, water, and air. Our gardeners pledge to use techniques that are beneficial to that end, including using organic gardening methods, no pesticides or nonorganic fertilizers. Additionally, only hand tools are used, no mechanical tillers. And, composting and mulching are utilized to enrich and protect the soil.

Last year Lisa formed a Garden Advisory committee to help with the garden operations. Lynn Rozen, Danielle Gustafson-Sundell, Kirsten Markiewicz, and I serve on that committee. Any of us can be contacted for additional information about the Community Gardens, or folks can just stop up at the gardens and check things out.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Community Day of Service and Friendship in the Gardens

**Saturday May 14, 9:30 – 2:30**  
**Community Gardens**  
**Good Counsel Hill**

This is our annual get-together day to help prepare the barn, tools, and gardens (including food shelf plots) for the season.

You need not be a Community Garden Member to come and enjoy some time outdoors and camaraderie with like-minded people. All are invited and welcome to attend!

Come when you can, stay as long as you are able. We will break for lunch at 1:00pm, bring a sack lunch and enjoy the day!



### Kid's Summer Gardening Classes

Summertime is the perfect time to get the kiddos out and into the garden! We offer classes for children of all ages. This is a great opportunity for kids to have fun learning about gardening and getting their hands in the dirt!

#### Little Sprouts

Ages 3-5  
Wednesdays 10-10:45am  
\$46 per 5 week session

#### Kids' Peace Garden

Ages 6-12  
Thursdays 6-7:15pm  
\$50 per 5 week session

Register through Community Ed:  
[www.mankatocer.com](http://www.mankatocer.com) or 507.387.5501

# THANK YOU

Our work is supported and enriched by the volunteer support and financial gifts made by so many! For their donations of time, talents, and resources towards our work, we offer a giant THANK YOU to the following people and organizations. Your gifts make a difference and ensure a local impact to the issues you care about!

Jim & Kay Ackil

Rebecca Bates

Annette & Kay Fernholz SSND

A.J. Filipovitch & K.A. Brynaert

Charles & Diane Hunter Frost

Carol Ann Gosse SSND

Paul & Rachel Mueller

Doug Nopar

Kathleen Spenser SSND

Jerry Stump

Mary Tachney SSND

*In honor of SSND Julibarians*

Hy-Vee: \$1000 grant for  
community garden

*In memory of*

*Laurie Ann Pengra:*

Charles & Mary Draper

Sara Leadholm

David Pengra

Charlene Roberts

Albert Roggow

Frank W. & Teresa Stampf

*In memory of*

*Thomasin Sergot SSND:*

Anonymous

Dresen Restorative Dentistry P A

Dr. Ronald & Jane Clappier

Kenneth & Bernice Markwardt

We would like to extend a special thank you to outgoing Advisory Committee members **Paul Prew** and **Lynn Rosen**. Both have served the maximum number of terms allowed. We appreciate all the hard work and dedication they have shown over their many years on the committee. We look forward to continue seeing them both around the Hill in different volunteer capacities!



## PAPAL ENCYCLICAL: A LAYPERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

BY MELISSA MARTENSEN

I'm going to be honest, before last year I didn't even know what a Papal encyclical was, but when I heard Pope Francis was publishing a letter on climate change, my interest was piqued. When I started to hear people talk about what a powerful document it was, I decided I needed to read it for myself.

My first question – where does one go to get a copy of a Papal encyclical? Rome? The local Catholic Church? Turns out the answer is much simpler, you can get it on amazon.com.



It also turns out that this particular encyclical is very easy to read. I honestly didn't know what to expect – would it be heady dialogue filled with references to Church doctrine of which I had no knowledge? The answer is no. This encyclical is written like Pope Francis himself is sitting down to chat with you about his beliefs on climate change.

These beliefs draw a clear line in the sand – climate change is undeniable and humans are the root cause of the problem. What makes this letter different from other writings on the subject is how Pope Francis connects both

the scientific and spiritual aspects of climate change.

He speaks of the term “Integral Ecology,” the idea that everything is closely interrelated, we can not speak of care for Earth without also speaking of caring for each other. “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and one social, but rather with one complex crisis... Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

This is such a powerful idea. We humans are so interrelated with nature that we cannot hope to fix the problems of climate change without also looking inward and asking deep, hard questions of ourselves.

In his conclusion Pope Francis speaks of having an “Ecological Conversion.” That as spiritual people we must acknowledge our deep connection to the world around us: “May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture [a] sublime fraternity with all creation.”

This letter from Pope Francis is as powerful as it is accessible. You do not need a background in Catholic theology to understand and appreciate the ideas expressed throughout the letter. It speaks to a vision of the future to which anyone who feels the deep spiritual connection with Earth can relate.

## Spring Pea, Bacon and Radish Salad

*Recipe from Chef Deborah VanTrece*

4 Tablespoons mayonnaise or whipped avocado  
1 Tablespoon honey  
1 teaspoon lemon zest  
3 cups fresh peas, blanched  
6 slices Applewood-smoked bacon, cooked and chopped  
1 cup shaved radishes  
3 chopped green onions  
¼ cup fresh mint  
Salt and white pepper to taste  
6 poached eggs (optional)

In a medium bowl combine mayonnaise, honey, and lemon zest thoroughly. Salt and pepper to taste. Add the remaining ingredients, except eggs. Toss gently. Taste to see if it needs additional salt and pepper. On a serving plate, make a bed of salad, top with warm salmon croquettes and serve.

Suggestions: add a poached egg, make extra dressing to drizzle on the croquettes, or add mint sprigs for garnish.

## Grilled Asparagus and Spring Onions With Lemon Dressing

*Recipe by Dave Muller & Lana Porcello*

1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest  
1 teaspoon finely grated Meyer lemon zest  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
1 tablespoon fresh Meyer lemon juice  
1 tablespoon whole grain mustard  
¼ cup olive oil, plus more  
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper  
2 large bunches thick asparagus, trimmed  
2 bunches spring onions, halved if large

Prepare grill for medium-high. Whisk lemon zest, Meyer lemon zest, lemon juice, Meyer lemon juice, mustard, and ¼ cup oil in a medium bowl to combine; season dressing with salt and pepper (if you don't have Meyer lemons, use regular lemons in their place).

Place asparagus and spring onions on a rimmed baking sheet and lightly drizzle with oil. Season with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Grill, turning once, until lightly charred and crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Serve drizzled with dressing.

\* If not grilling, sauté on stovetop over high heat.

## BOOK REVIEW: DIRT, THE ECSTATIC SKIN OF THE EARTH

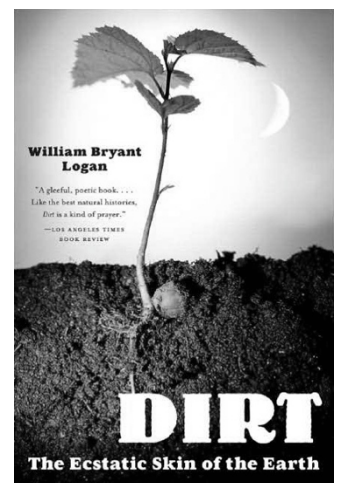
BY LALANDE HENNEN SSND

For some readers dirt may not be a pleasant topic to discuss. The word may even surface feelings of disgust. After reading **DIRT, The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth** by William Bryant Logan, your feelings may shift dramatically.

Logan traces dirt through its evolutionary process. He shares historical facts, scientific truths, legends, poetic excerpts, anecdotes, biographical experiences and common sense, all exposing the mystery of soil. The delightful, reflective and graphic journey with Logan teaches us that there is nothing static about dirt. Throughout the chapters we learn of simple, yet complex everyday practices of give and take going on all the time right under our feet. We build soil; we take from soil. We humans contribute and we destroy. The author shows us how to be intentional about what we do with dirt.

By reading **DIRT, The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth**, the author helps us find lessons in humility and hospitality. The reader will learn something about the mystery of soil, without fully understanding how all the components of soil interact. The soil accepts everything that the human community gives it. Then the dynamic of change is set in motion as the elements of dirt bring balance and harmony by their interaction with one another.

I came away from reading this book not only with new information about soil, but with a deep reverence for soil. I am awed by a better grasp of the living quality of soil and the lessons soil has to teach us, the human community.





# SPRINGTIME IN THE GARDENS

