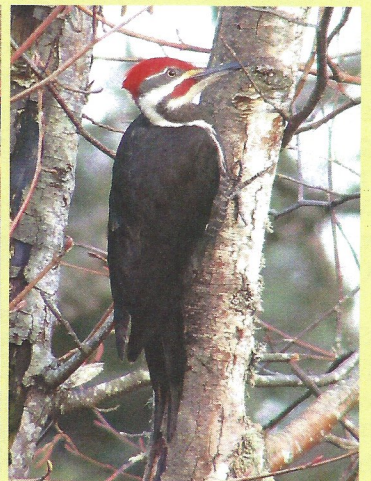
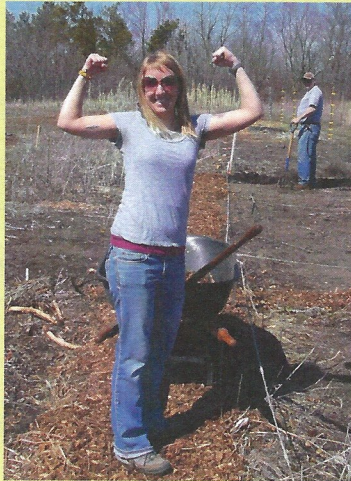


EARTH ALMANAC



Earth Education



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

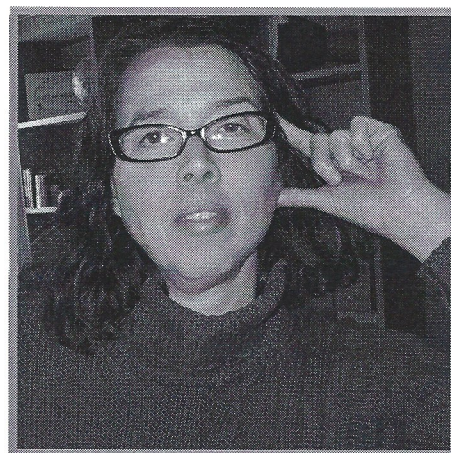
This winter has challenged us deeply. It came early and it looks like it intends to stay late. It has been unrelentingly cold. Not the usual cold but the I-can't-believe-how-cold-it-is cold. The snow, too, arrived early and has remained firmly in place – except when it hasn't. When it hasn't been snowing, the winds have played with the snow already here – sending it aloft and making travel a dangerous proposition. There was no January Thaw, no February Thaw even. And March arrived towing a string of days with temperatures well below zero. Lion, indeed.

Spring will arrive. But before we forget the extremes and the experience, let's review what we learned. This winter's lesson has undoubtedly been one of endurance and inner resilience. This might have been one of those winters experienced on the prairie like the one Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about in her children's book, *The Long Winter*. If you haven't read it lately, it's the book where the family nearly starves because train tracks become impassable and supply trains stop coming. Our family reads this book aloud each winter. This year's reading was especially poignant.

Our cupboards were and are full unlike how the Ingalls went into the winter of 18--; starvation or even hunger blessedly is not a reality our family

currently has to face. For us, what wasn't in the cupboards was right down the street at the store and we have the means to buy it. However, Ingalls' *The Long Winter* gives us all a little perspective though the challenge is not, for most of us, one of physical survival but one of a much more internal nature.

Predictable weather abandoned us this winter. It left us stranded in snow banks (more than I care to recount, thank you very much.); at work or school or in our homes. This winter has given us a lot of time with ourselves and brought us opportunity to be deeply in touch with our inner lives, our own internal struggles and triumphs perhaps becoming more accessible as the activities and distractions of our outer lives so often were stripped away this winter. When all the predictable breaks from the winter's harshness didn't arrive (generally counted-upon thaws or even just moderate temperatures for a few days), we have had to dig deeply for reserves, reserves that we may not have even known were there. The result? A new internal landscape sculpted from the stuff that makes us each a human able to withstand some adversity. It has been a great opportunity to cultivate inner resilience and adaptability and surprise ourselves with our newfound inner strength.



It's worth remembering how you managed this winter's grueling grind. That which you called upon from your depths will be needed as we continue to experience a changing climate and weather we don't recognize as "normal."

Hang onto this experience.

Organically Yours,
Lisa
 lcoons@ssndcp.org



Our work is deeply enriched through the volunteer support and financial gifts made by supporters. We have many people to thank for their generous donations of time, talents and resources toward our work. We are grateful for how the following people and organizations have enabled and expanded our work over the past several months.

Your gifts make a difference – thank you!

Jim Ackil
 Kay Ackil
 Monika Antonelli
 Meghan Babcock
 Becky Bates
 Katie Boone
 Michelle Bridges
 Rosae Brown, SSND
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 Eleanor Coons-Ruskey
 Anika Cristwell

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 Becky Rossow
 Lynn Rozen
 Patti Ruskey

Lynn Russ
 Marlene Stein-Greiner &
 Jason Toupen Family
 Mary Tacheny, SSND
 Jason Toupen
 Jim Vonderharr
 Jeanne Wingenter, SSND
 Katy Wortel

Drummer's Garden Center

FARM BILL WOES AND HOPES

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN, SSND, CENTER CO-DIRECTOR

CESRM joins with many organizations and people to lament over the Agricultural Act (Farm Bill) of 2014 passed by congress earlier this year and signed by President Obama. Some celebrate that at least we finally have a bill that was passed. However, we feel that a bill that does not measure up to good farm and food policy is hard to get excited about. Although some helpful compromises were made to pass this bill, we quote Land Stewardship Project statement about it: "in its totality this legislation continues to perpetuate inequities in our food and agricultural system and falls brutally short in providing for stewardship of land and our nation's fiscal resources." In listing such inequities, LSP states that a "\$6.1 million cut was made from conservation funding, the largest ever since this item has been part of the farm bill in 1985."

Meanwhile, Network, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, states, that while the bill avoided "absolutely unconscionable cuts to nutrition assistance proposed under the House-passed Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act of 2013... we wholly denounce the idea that in order to cut the budget, we must look to our nation's vital safety-net programs for savings."

What can be done to strengthen a next Farm Bill will be the work of many organizations.

In our last issue of CESRM Newsletter, we shared our involvement in a venture with Land Stewardship Project and nine other organizations of northern Midwest states to articulate a new narrative on agriculture and food. Such a narrative has been created, and although it is not a public statement, its tenets will serve to inform the agricultural and food organizing and campaign work of these groups. CESRM will join these groups in using these tenets to guide our own involvement with



agriculture and food. Here are a few of those tenets:

- Healthy and safe food nourishes the land, our whole being and all involved in the community of life.
- Nutritious food is essential to life and everyone should have access to it.
- We are all trusted steward of the earth and have the privilege and responsibility to honor the natural and interdependent cycles of land, peoples, soil, animals, water and air.
- Diversity of crops, producers, practices and income is essential to the strength and resilience of land and economics.
- Farmers, ranchers and farmworkers play a critical role in our society and should be supported and valued so they can prosper and live healthy lives.
- Consumers and food workers play an important role in creating the sustainable agricultural and food system we want.
- The corporate-controlled food system damages us.
- Making these values and beliefs real in our communities, state, nation, and world will take a fundamental transformation of our agriculture and food production systems.

As a participant in CESRM's work, what do you think of these tenets?

How could the next Farm Bill be crafted to honor these tenets and make a fundamental transformation of our food and agricultural productive system? How can each of us be a part of this transformation?

It would seem that to create and pass a farm bill honoring these tenets would be impossible. Right now, we have no definite answers about the how to, but we can have hope that the venture will be accomplished, a hope described by Walter Brueggeman in *Sojourners* magazine December 2013 edition:

"Hope is a human act of commitment to and investment in the future. Hope is an act of human courage that refuses to cherish the present too much or be reduced to despair by present circumstances. Hope is the capacity to relinquish the present for the sake of what is imagined to be a reachable future. In the end, hope is a practice that bets on a vision of the future that is judged to be well beyond present circumstances, even if one does not know how to get from here to there."

STAFF

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Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND,
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Katie Boone
Cara Gorman
Erica Idso-Weisz
Kirsten Markiewicz
Melissa Martensen
Paul Prew
Lynn Rozen
Jim Vonderharr
Jeanne Wingenter, SSND

Why do I Volunteer with CESRM?

BY MELISSA MARTENSEN

I can still remember my first interaction with the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry, I was bringing my 3-year-old daughter to a "Sprouts" gardening class. As I stepped into the gardens the first thing I saw was one of the sisters wearing a "Stop the War" t-shirt. I thought to myself, "Wow, *this* is the place I need to be."

It was that fall that I attended my first Earth Conference (the Center's third) on local food. I left that day feeling inspired, empowered, and energized to make positive changes in my life and in my community. I thought to myself, "Wow, *this is* the place I need to be; I need to figure out how I can be here more often."

I began volunteering at the Center and am now helping to organize my third Earth Conference (the Center's eighth!). It's my second year

as a member of the SSND's Earth Committee, and I still get a smile on my face every time I drive up the hill and see that big red barn.

It was the Center's dedication to social and eco-justice causes, which are so close to my own heart, that grabbed my attention, but to be honest it is the women I get to work with that keep me coming back. The Center's Co-Directors and the School Sisters of Notre Dame are some of *the* most courageous women you will meet anywhere. I leave every meeting I have with them holding my head just a little higher, feeling just that much more proud to be a woman with a voice and the ability to enact positive change on the world around me.

The Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry plays such an important role in our community and works to affect change from the ground



up: one gardener, one canner, one concerned citizen at a time. I am both humbled and honored to play even a small role in making all they do at CESRM a reality.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Sustainability Expo

April 5, 2014 • 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Centennial Student Union Ballroom, Minnesota State University, Mankato

- Build a resilient sustainable community
- Create a better future together
- Learn new skills
- Have fun!

The Sustainability Expo is a free event. It is being hosted by the MSU Environmental Committee, SSND Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry, and Transition Mankato. The all-day event will consist of informational tabling, speakers, reskilling workshops, music, vendors, kid friendly activities, and FUN!

The Community Gardens at Good Counsel

will open in mid-April. If you need a space to garden, please contact Lisa at lcoons@ssndcp.org or 507-389-4272.

Yes you CAN! Re-skilling Workshop – Canning Jams

Saturday, June 14, 10 AM – Noon

We'll start with the basics - how to safely can using the water bath method. It's hands-on so you get it on the action and you get a jar or two to take home. This class is intended both for beginners and folks who might want to brush up on their skills. Fun for friends or family to do together, too.

Summer Solstice Community Celebration

Saturday, June 21 in the newly reconstructed Red Barn! Mark your calendars and watch for details as the time nears.

Come Check Out our Library!

The CESRM library is full of wonderful books on a wide variety of topics. "Come Check Out our Library" is a new feature of the newsletter that will spotlight just a few of the vast array of books you can find on our shelves. Intrigued? Stop on by and check us out for yourselves! The library is adjacent to the CESRM office, which is located in the SSND campus on Good Counsel Hill.

Open: Monday–Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.

THE CENTER FOR EARTY SPIRITUALITY AND RURAL MINISTRY'S **REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE**

This recipe is from author Sharon Astyk who writes about food, fracking, foraging, and lots of other stuff at on Science Blogs. <http://scienceblogs.com/casaubonsbook/>. She is the author of a number of books including *Independence Days*, *Nation of Farmers*, and *Depletion and Abundance* available in to checkout from the CESRM Resource Library.

Chocolate-Banana Bread Pudding

Note, this recipe probably won't actually improve your health, but it will turn stale bread and over-ripe bananas into a tasty dessert.

Enough stale bread to cover a 9 inch pie pan in two layers, cut rather thick (a bit less than a loaf, for most sized loaves)

- 2 over-ripe bananas
- 1 tablespoon of vanilla or banana extract
- A couple of handfuls of chocolate chips or to taste
- A sprinkle of nutmeg
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups of milk or vanilla soymilk

Take the bread slices and cover the bottom of the pan. Break off pieces to make sure the whole thing is covered. Slice the bananas on top of the bread, and sprinkle the chocolate chips on top of the bananas. Layer on the rest of the bread, again, breaking it to make the pieces totally cover the top. You can sprinkle any crumbs around the edges. Beat the eggs, add the vanilla, nutmeg and the milk, and mix thoroughly. Pour over the bread mixture. Use your fingers to sort of squish any bread that isn't getting wet down into the milk mixture. Bake 35 minutes at 375°. Serve with whipped cream or ice cream, if you are feeling decadent.



Awesome Apple Pie

You probably don't need another recipe for apple pie but this one really is awesome! Making use of honey and maple syrup for its sweetness, we like it for its localness.

- 5-7 large apples, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup maple syrup (I use ½ cup honey, ¼ cup maple syrup when I am being frugal)
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons corn starch mixed with ¼ cup apple water
- Pie crust

Cook apples in water until apples are soft but not mushy. Drain water and reserve ¼ cup. Stir sweetener and cinnamon into apples and heat to a boil. Mix corn starch with apple water and stir into the apple mixture until thickened. Remove from heat. Pour into pie crust (If you want to get really wild you can sprinkle the top of apple filling with raspberries, blueberries, mulberries, or currants for a little flavor surprise.) Cover with another crust, slit the top a couple of times and bake for 30-40 minutes at 350° until crust is browned.



A CALL TO SOLIDARITY WITH EARTH

BY JEANNE WINGENTER, SSND, CESRM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Peak oil and energy consumption, greenhouse gases, ozone layer depletion, global water crisis, destroyed wetlands and deforestation, global climate change, monoculture and loss of biodiversity, malnutrition and hunger, genetically modified foods...the list of challenges facing Earth today seems unending and daunting.

But Thomas Berry, cultural historian and ecotheologian, reminds us that we can't ignore those challenges because "we will go into the future as a single sacred community, or we will all perish in the desert." Berry also says that "the deepest cause of the present devastation is found in a mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the human."

In other words, just as we humans have basic rights to life and happiness,

so does Earth; and we must uphold those rights or, as Berry says, we will all perish.

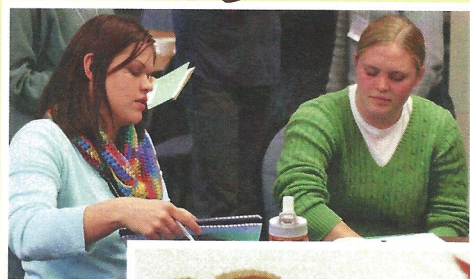
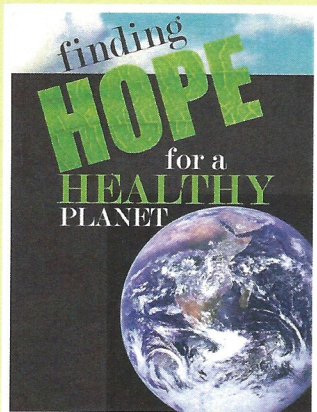
Deeply conscious of the fact that the very future of Earth itself is at stake, the School Sisters of Notre Dame have articulated a call to solidarity with all creation in some of our formal documents – "acceptance of our responsibility for the earth and its people...establishing a right and just relationship with all creation... reversing those personal and communal choices which exploit the earth...living more simply, responsibly and sustainably with one another and with all of creation."

But such statements need ongoing inspiration and motivation to put those words into action, creativity and resources and programs to keep the message alive and contagious. That is what I believe is the goal and

function of CESRM, the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry. With educational and spiritual enrichments such as the annual Earth Conference, seasonal Earth celebrations, workshops and skill-building classes; through the collaboration and education and interactions in the community gardens; through advocacy and networking, seeking systemic change on issues of sustainability on the local, state and national levels; and through a vast library of resources on subjects ranging from Earth spirituality to organic gardening, poetry and prose, CESRM strives to promote a profound recognition of the spirit of human solidarity and kinship with the community of life on Earth and, as stated in the Preamble to the Earth Charter, "reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life and humility regarding the human place in it."

8th Annual Earth Conference

November 9, 2013



Photos by
Melissa
Martensen

