

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
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TRANSITION UNDERWAY AT CESRM

CESRM RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

This has been a year full of challenges, changes, and transitions for CESRM. We are currently in the process of reorganizing into an independent 501c3. Members of the CESRM Advisory Committee and SSND Earth Committee have formed a Future Planning Committee to work towards this end.

Three subcommittees are tackling the current work of the Future Planning Committee. The first is focused on legalities of transitioning to a 501c3 and writing the by-laws for our new non-profit. The second is working on writing a job description for a new Executive Director. The job description can be found at www.ssndcentralpacific.org/Partner/Employment-Opportunities. The third is exploring the possibilities of a name change, looking for something less cumbersome and keeping with the current scope of our mission.

While all this is happening behind the scenes, the Advisory Committee is working to keep CESRM's programming up and running as well. The garden committee is already brainstorming ideas for next summer in the Community Gardens, plans are well underway for our annual Winter Solstice Celebration, and our 11th Annual Earth Conference was held last month to rave reviews.

One thing we want to assure you of is that we will continue our strong commitment to the mission and ideals for which CESRM has always stood. When we come out of the other side of this process we will still be dedicated to Earth, sustainability, and community connectedness. We look forward to growing and collaborating with you all well into the future.



On November 27th, members of the SSND and CESRM communities gathered at Good Counsel to celebrate the retirement of CESRM Co-Directors Kathleen Mary Kiemen, SSND and Lisa Coons.

Lisa retired for health reasons earlier this fall after 10 years at CESRM and Kathleen Mary will retire at the end of the year after having worked the last 11 years at the Center.

The afternoon was filled with joy and tears as we honored and said thank you to two amazing women who have worked tirelessly to further CESRM's mission over the past decade.



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THESE ARE OUR TIMES

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN SSND, CESRM DIRECTOR

Advocacy has been a value and priority in the CESRM ministry since its founding twenty years ago. In the last 11 years as one of the Co-Directors of CESRM, I've had the privilege to highlight this value and priority in our CESRM newsletter. This article will be my last as Co-Director, so I take this opportunity to give thanks to SSND community and many of you who have supported all of CESRM's work, and especially those of you who collaborate with us in our Action Alert or who collaborate with others to advocate for good practices of sustainability.

Those of us more actively involved in advocacy know that educating ourselves on issues and following up with action can be daunting. Often months of action to promote a policy at the local state or national level comes to frustration when leaders prevent the passing of a bill we know would enhance our soil, air, water and thus enhance us humans.

But wonderfully, there are the victories, small as they might be. One example is the great work done by the people of Winona area. This November, the Winona County Board of Commissioners voted to pass a ban on any new frac sand mining, processing, storage or transport operations in the southeastern Minnesota county's jurisdiction. This step came after a 17-month grassroots organizing campaign by county residents calling for a ban, led by members of the Land Stewardship Project (LSP).

At the state level in the last years CESRM has joined in urging State Legislators to call for a moratorium on frac sand mining. Not completely successful at this, we are proud of the Winona area people for their work in preserving the natural resources of that Bluff area. We hope this will give other counties the courage to do likewise.

Because of our values of care for all peoples and all creation, I suspect that many CESRM friends are troubled by the elections. Even more, we can get discouraged. In the campaign we heard lots of rhetoric undermining immigrants, peoples of color, women, and Earth. We so hope this rhetoric is prevented from becoming action.

It can't be prevented unless people like us ban together to raise up our values and ask for actions that support those values. We cannot give up hope. Advocacy is needed now more than ever.

You may know this past written reflection by Clarrisa Pinkola Estes, "We were made for these times." I quote some of her words because I believe we again have these times:

"My friends do not lose heart. We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world now...I grew up on the Great

,Lakes and recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able vessels in the waters than there are right now across the world. And they are fully provisioned and able to signal one another as never before in the history of humankind...In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or unattended in the world. Do not focus on that. There is a tendency, too, to fall into being weakened by dwelling on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be. Do not focus there. That is spending the wind without raising the sails..."

And here comes the last sentences and I think the punch lines:

*"It is that there can be no despair when you remember why you came to Earth, who you serve, and who sent you here. The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours. They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here. In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall: **When a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.**"*

We are the ships, and we can and we must leave the harbor to create right relationships for all.

I pray us continued courage, peace, and joy in doing this.



We cannot give up hope.

Advocacy is needed now more than ever.

PARTNER WITH US ON OUR GOOD WORK

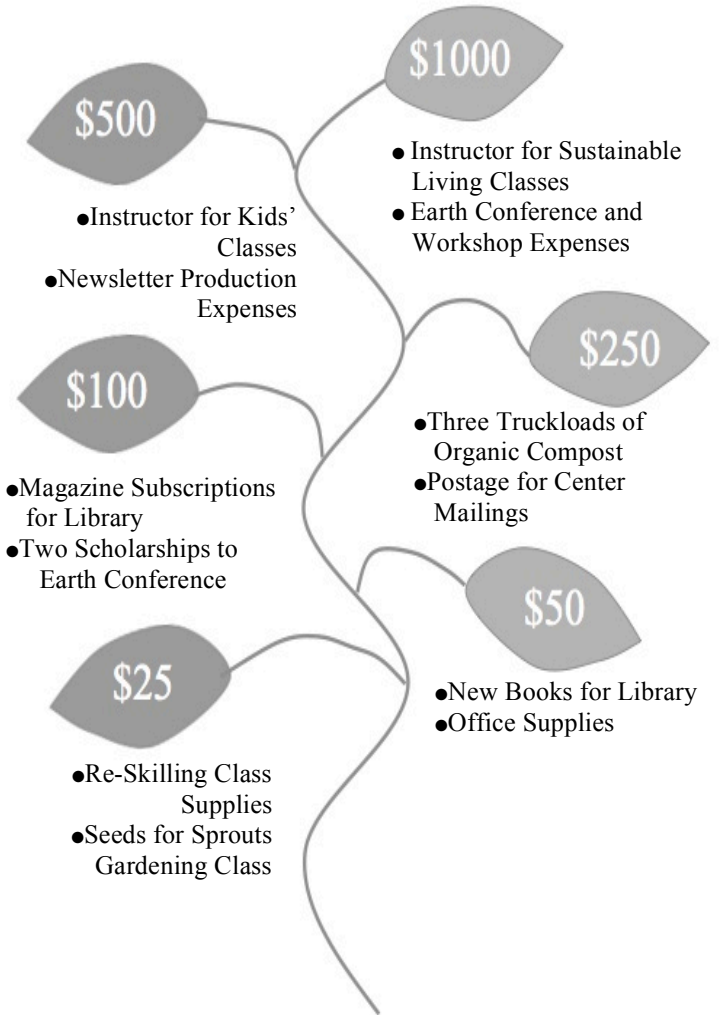
BECOME A CESRM SPONSOR!

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!

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YES, I WANT TO BE A CESRM SPONSOR!

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SHARING THE STORY OF SEED

BY MELISSA MARTENSEN



Bruno Borsari addresses the participants of the 11th Annual Earth Conference

kids outside and get their fingers in the dirt. They are *our* seeds for the future,” he said. In his closing remarks he encouraged participants to save their own seeds and to trade seeds with other gardeners. It’s a small step we can all take to strengthening the diversity of the seed pool in our own communities.

After the morning’s presentation participants joined in a silent reflective walk outside on the Good Counsel grounds and in the Community Gardens. They then shared in a locally grown, sustainably sourced lunch.

In the afternoon Borsari was joined by Gustavus Aldolphus professor James Dontje on a panel that focused on challenges seeds are facing today. When looking at the so-called benefits of a GMO seed, Borsari said we need to ask ourselves, “not what is the monetary cost of growing an acre of corn, but what is the *environmental* cost?”

Dontje spoke of the myth that GMOs are needed to feed the world’s growing population. “Famine is not a problem of

production,” he said, “it is a problem of distribution.” Giving people back sovereignty over their own food production can alleviate the issues of distribution. When people have control over their seeds and are growing traditional crops they will have more food choices, and *healthier* food choices, he explained.

Speaker Dianne Wilson, co-director of Dream of Wild Health, also talked about the idea of food sovereignty on the second panel. She spoke of DWH’s work recovering knowledge and access to indigenous foods for Minnesota’s Native Community. “Our food is at the center of our culture,” Wilson said. “When we are eating these foods we are remembering food not as a commodity, but as our cultural legacy.”

Organic farmer Carmen Fernholz was the final panelist of the afternoon. He shared his personal journey to owning his farm and many of the projects taking place there. One project Fernholz highlighted is the use of cover crops to create healthy micro-environments where bugs and mice that eat weed seeds can thrive.

Keynote speaker Bruno Borsari opened his presentation at the 11th Annual Earth Conference, *Story of Seed: Blueprint for Life*, by stressing the importance of seeds to everyone everywhere because, “as my grandma said, ‘if you don’t eat, you’re gonna die!’”

Borsari, an agronomist from Winona State University led the conference’s 100+ participants on a humorous and informative journey tracing the history of seed. From the early work of seed saving Russian botanist Nikolai Vavilov to the current work being done just down the road at Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, IA, Borsari stressed the importance of keeping a diverse population of seeds available. “Diversity is the hope for the future,” he said.

Children are another hope for the future, Borsari said. He encouraged everyone to, “get the



During table discussion conference attendees share their thoughts on the keynote presentation.

After the traditional awarding of the door prizes, the conference ended by reflecting on the words of Muriel Rukeyser, “Not all things are blest, but the seeds of all things are blest. The blessing is in the seed.”

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!

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COMMUNITY MOVIE NIGHT REVIEW: GMO/OMG

BY NICOLE SOLEY, CESRM INTERN

The smell of fresh popcorn filled the air at Good Counsel Hill as many gathered for the film showing of GMO OMG, a film about the widespread use of GMOs in today's food production. It was fitting then that the popcorn we served for the event was non-GMO, organic popping corn from the St. Peter Co-Op. Additionally, we served the popcorn in coffee filters so that waste could be composted. This is one of the reasons I love working with CESRM: the people are earth conscience enough to eat popcorn out of coffee filters for the sake of composting.

The film, produced by Jeremy Seifert, began in Haiti. After the earthquake, Monsanto donated a massive amount of seed to 10,000 rural farmers. They protested. They knew that with the acceptance of the donation, they would be accepting an unsustainable, costly, unreliable agriculture that depended on round up, GMOs, and inputs in order to create a moderately successful crop. Instead of accepting the donation, they committed to burning the seeds. This was where Seifert's quest for answers about GMO began. He wanted to know why a place that was obliterated by disaster and poverty, would reject a donation of seeds.

In the documentary, Seifert embarks on a national and international journey on a quest to find answers. His two sons are important figures for the film; he wants to know what he and his family are eating.

A GMO is a transgenic organism, where a gene from one organism is spliced into the DNA of another organism or crop. Many simplify this idea and say that this process is similar to selective saving of seed, but Seifert warns that this is untrue: you cannot combine two organisms naturally.

The film uncovers many of the flaws in our food system with a focus on GMOs. Ninety percent of corn, cotton, sugar beets, and canola are genetically modified. The use of GMO crops has increased the need for pesticides and herbicides and has not increased yield. GMO crops are unsustainable. It discusses the flawed government practices that allow GMO foods to exist, unlabeled, on our grocery store shelves. The film brings to light the industrial take overs that have occurred with large chemical and seed companies like Monsanto and DuPont making it so that if our food is not organic, it most likely is made from GMO crops in some way, shape or form.

Additionally, the studies that say that GMO foods are safe, are studies that are funded by these industries themselves. Whereas studies that have contributed to the banning of GMO crops and foods in other nations are rejected by the United States. Seifert's documentary calls attention to the truths that may be hidden under a blanket of eroded topsoil, money, and tons upon tons of roundup ready pesticide.

When I think about the film and the realities it unveils for the future of life on our planet, I think about the scene where Seifert and his sons play in the cornfield. In order to safely run through the rows of corn, they must suit up in full body protective gear. Resembling aliens on a strange planet, the father and sons enjoy hours of playtime in the GMO cornfield. I think of the joy the boys and father must have experienced while running through the corn in their metallic, non-breathable suits. I imagine the smiles on their faces. I experience joy from watching this scene from the happy music and their joyful interactions. The saddest part, to me, is that I cannot see their smiles; their happiness is hidden by gas masks.

Sweet Potato and Black Bean Enchiladas

2 large sweet potatoes, cut into small cubes
 1 ½ c of black beans
 1 medium onion, chopped
 2 T garlic
 1 (4 oz.) can of green chilies
 2 t coriander
 2 t cumin
 1 t chili powder (add more for desired heat)
 2 (12 oz.) can of green enchilada sauce
 1 jar of salsa verde
 Olive oil
 Corn tortillas

Instructions:

Sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil until translucent. Add in the sweet potato and cook until tender. Add in the black beans, green chilies and spices, cook together. Put about 1/3 cup of filling into each tortilla and wrap. Place tortillas in a 9x13 cooking dish. Pour enchilada sauce and salsa verde on top of enchiladas.

Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. Serve with sour cream or non-dairy alternative and cilantro. ENJOY!

Drop-Biscuit Pear and Dried Cherry Cobbler

Recipe from: Bon Appetite

Pear filling:

6 med Bosc pears (~3 lb.)
 peeled, cored, cut into ½” pieces
 1 c dried tart cherries
 ⅔ c (packed) brown sugar
 2 T all-purpose flour
 2 T fresh lemon juice
 ¼ t ground cinnamon
 ⅛ t kosher salt
 pinch of ground cloves

Topping

2 cups all-purpose flour
 2 t baking powder
 1 t kosher salt
 ¾ c + 2 T sugar
 ¾ c chilled unsalted butter,
 cut into pieces

Vanilla ice cream (for serving)

Preparation:

Pear Filling: Preheat oven to 400°. Toss pears, cherries, sugar, flour, lemon juice, cinnamon, salt, and cloves in a large bowl. Transfer to a 13x9” baking dish.

Topping and assembly: Whisk flour, baking powder, salt, and ¾ cup sugar in a medium bowl. Rub in butter with your fingers until a coarse meal forms. Gradually mix in ½ cup hot water until a soft wet dough forms (a few lumps are okay). Drop clumps of dough over filling; sprinkle with remaining 2T sugar. Bake until filling is bubbling and top is golden brown and cooked through, 40–45 minutes; let cool. Serve with ice cream.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Winter Solstice Celebration

In the midst of this hectic holiday season, plan in some simplicity! Join in community to honor the ancient tradition of celebrating the sun's return.

Wednesday, December 21, 2016

Good Counsel Hill

4:30 Snowshoe Hike

5:30 Light Supper & Winter Poetry Share

6:30 Seasonal Reflection

7:00 Bonfire near the Orchard

\$15 - \$30 sliding scale donation

(no one is turned away for inability to pay)

rsvp by Dec. 18th to centerforearth16@gmail.com

2017 Reskilling Festival

Saturday, March 18, 2017

9:00am – 3:00pm

Lincoln Community Center

VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

BY MACEY PAGE

Working with CESRM on this year's Earth Conference was a privilege that I feel so incredibly grateful to have had. I see this place on the hill and the conference as a one-of-a-kind true gem of a community space here in Mankato.



As someone who tends to be a little timid with big dreams, I found meeting with this wise, empowered group of women to be very humbling and inspiring. It was beneficial to step into a group both welcoming and compassionate, yet strong enough to hold people accountable to be effective in planning a great event.

Deepening my understanding of environmental advocacy and communing with this shared passion has both taught and reminded me a lot about my spiritual self and what I am capable of. My time there has me considering more often what effect all of my actions take and how I might go about local change in hopes for a much larger collective impact and brighter tomorrow.

11TH ANNUAL EARTH CONFERENCE

