

center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

FALL 2015

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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STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE

ORGANICALLY YOURS

BY LISA COONS, CESRM CO-DIRECTOR



Conversation 1:

“Hey, thanks for bringing us all these vegetables.”

“We grow them just for you.”

{Incredulous} “Really?”

Conversation 2:

“I took all those tomatoes you brought to us and made 2 giant pots of chili. Everyone in the house ate that night!”

Growing and delivering vegetables to our local homeless shelters is a gift to us in so many ways. From early spring when high school crews helped prepare the garden beds to planting the seedlings and sowing seeds that produced early vegetables and into the abundant summer and fall harvests, our community gardens at Good Counsel provide needed sustenance for those who get to eat the vegetables as you can see tell from the stories above. However, our gardens also nourish the community members who get to work in service of others growing this needed food – others they will never meet, never have a conversation with, never hear their stories. The family with teens who dedicated their summer to tending and harvesting from one of the large plots were eager help ensure vitamin rich food got to those who can’t often afford it and to infuse some kindness into our community. Rewarding for everyone involved? You betcha!

The Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry has been a busy place this summer. We served as a hands-on classroom both for our intern, Minnesota State University graduate student Meghan Babcock and for the children she worked with in our Kids’ Peace Garden class. We taught community members how to can some of the summer’s abundance for winter eating. Our tool library has been a revolving door of food preserving equipment. Volunteers have been working in our library to get the stacks catalogued and input into the amazing online catalogue, *Library Thing* where folks can see our library holdings from anywhere and contact us to check out. We’ve recruited and nurtured other volunteers as they make this place and our work together a priority in their lives – giving their time, increasingly rare for people to find. In countless ways, we’ve been connecting and educating folks in our community and beyond this area to the importance of keeping our Earth in their sights and on their list of commitments. We’ve been planning, plotting and organizing for activities, workshops and events coming this fall and winter.

We think you’d agree that as we near our 20th Anniversary as a ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, we are strengthening connections in our regions and creating hope for a better future!

We hope you can join us soon as together we continue our journey. If you want to contribute to our work in any way, we are grateful for that as well!

Organically yours,



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AN INVITATION

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN SSND, CESRM CO-DIRECTOR

Do you like invitations?

See if you will be among those who accept this one. In an encyclical letter titled, On Care for Our Common Home Laudato Si, Pope Francis writes: “In this Encyclical, **I would like to enter into dialog with all people about our common home.**”

For those unfamiliar with Pope Francis or the meaning of an encyclical letter, we offer these comments. Pope Francis is the present leader of the world wide Roman Catholic community. An encyclical letter is a statement issued by a pope about some significant life challenges. It is used to denounce attitudes, values and actions that oppress or destroy life and to announce those attitudes, values and action that support life. In the Catholic tradition an encyclical letter has power.

We at CESRM believe that this latest encyclical concentrating on our home, Earth, is to be proclaimed and **we hope it has power**. CESRM has always claimed a mission to promote Earth and right relationships among all its members. We haven't needed an encyclical to continue this mission.

However, because we have been founded and supported by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, a religious community of the Catholica tradition, we are excited that this leader of faith has

joined many others to articulate the grave challenges we are facing regarding our home. This invitation empowers us to continue this commitment and we hope it inspires many others.

In this brief article we could never outline the entire insights shared in the encyclical, but we hope that some themes we highlight will spark your interest and you will join us in accepting the invitation to dialog with Pope Francis and others about our home Earth. Even more we hope you can be encouraged to continue acting on behalf of Earth.

The encyclical does denounce a number of attitudes, values and actions that have absorbed our lives and diminished Earth. Here are some quotes:

- “Sister Earth cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods which God has endowed her.”
- “Regrettably many efforts to seek concrete solutions to environmental crisis have proven ineffective not only by powerful opposition, but also because of a more general lack of interest.”

Then, topics like pollution, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and global inequality are confronted and explored.

At the same time, Pope Francis announces values and wisdom from Earth and the Catholic tradition that would help us support and enhance life for all members of this home. He puts care

for creation as a priority for people of faith when he states:

“If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize

that their responsibility within creation, and their duty toward nature and the Creator, are an essential part

of their faith. It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognize the ecological commitment which stems from our convictions.”



He calls us to recognize the quality of life all species need, and offers thoughts on what he calls “integral ecology,” in which strategies for solutions demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to any excluded, and caring for all Earth members.

Francis ends the letter with two prayers. We quote part of one:

“Bring healing to our lives that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty not pollution and destruction. Touch the heart of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor. Teach us to discover the worth of each...to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature.”

One may not agree with every idea or solution shared in this letter. That will be the purpose of dialog: to search together and to address the great challenges of our time and that of future generations. CESRM offers three cheers to Pope Francis and all spiritual leaders, organizations, and peoples who seek and act in right relationships with all of life. We accept the invitations to continue being involved in helping our common home thrive, and to do what Thomas Berry calls this “**Great Work of our time.**”

PARTNER WITH US ON OUR GOOD WORK

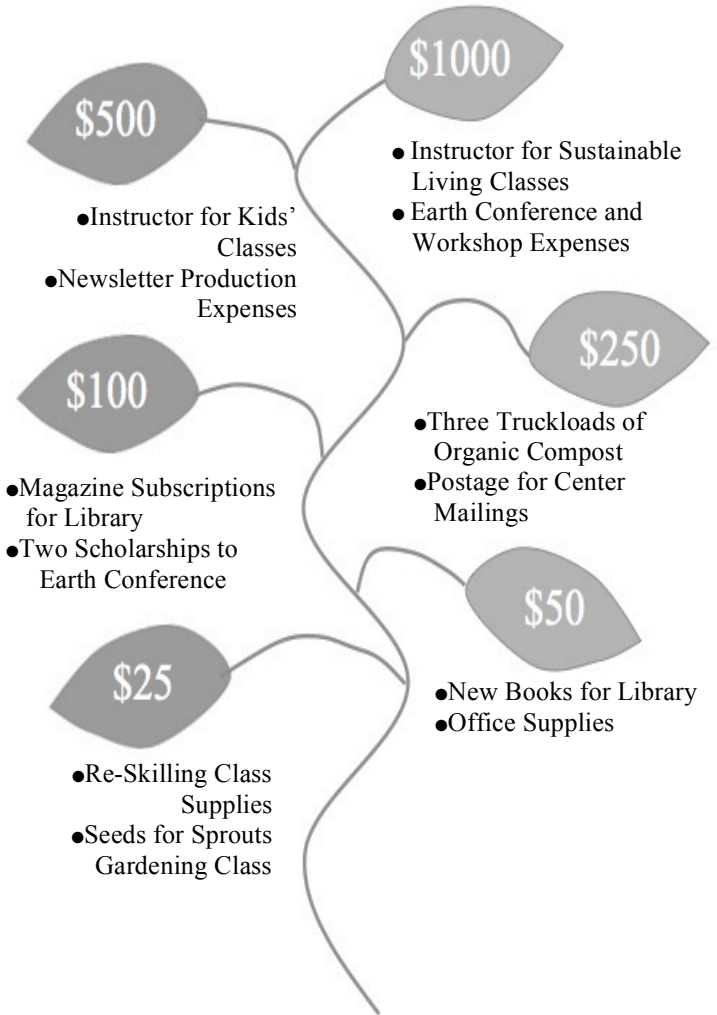
BECOME A CESRM SPONSOR!

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 the 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 |
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Name _____

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH CESRM

Volunteer Positions, Internships and Service Learning Opportunities Available!

Our Center is always grateful for the time and talent generously shared by volunteers. Join a team of positive people who care about the future of our earth and want to work for change. Add to your resume and make new friends in the process!

Webmaster/Technology Expertise

We need a website! (I mean, really, can you believe we *don't* have one?) We are looking for the perfect technologically savvy person to design and code a simple, easily navigable website for our organization. Hours are flexible, but would entail a time commitment at the beginning of the project.

Event Planning Committees

Enjoy our events? Help make them happen! Duties include brainstorming, planning, and implementing.

Needed immediately – Winter Solstice Planning Committee Members

Contact:

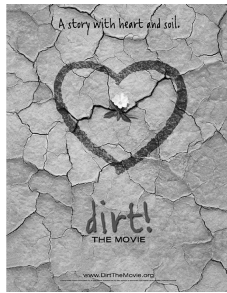
Lisa Coons
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UPCOMING EVENTS

“Dirt: the Movie” public screening! 7 pm, Wednesday, November 4. This documentary film brings to life the environmental, economic, social and political impact that the soil has. It shares the stories of experts from all over the world who study and are able to harness the beauty and power of a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with soil. Location: Our Lady of Good Counsel Conference Center.



10th Annual Earth Conference, “Soil: Holy Ground, Wholly Alive.” November 7, 2015, 9 am -3:30 pm. OLG Conference Center. *See article on next page for more information.*



Winter Solstice Celebration Monday, December 21st, 4 – 8 pm. In the midst of the hectic holiday season, plan some time for simplicity. Welcome back the sun with a sunset snowshoe hike on Good Counsel Hill, a delicious hearty meal,

seasonal reflection, and a bonfire. Free will donations gratefully accepted.

VOLUNTEER STORY

BY JEANNE GROEBNER

As I began to think about retirement, I envisioned spending some of my time doing volunteer work. Over the past several years I have attended numerous classes, presentations, and events hosted by CESRM and found them to be energizing, stimulating, and enriching. Each year I look forward to the Annual Earth Conference and have been excited to see the attendance increase as more and more individuals find a place for like minded people to gather to learn and share ideas that will make a difference. I decided I would like to become more involved if I could.



As my retirement date approached, I reached out to Lisa and asked what I could do to help and my volunteering vision became a reality. I feel I gain far more than I am able to give. Each time I enter the building on the hill on my way to the library, I am greeted with a smile and a warm welcome. I feel the wonderful positive energy that resides within the walls. As I leave, my hope is that I take a bit of that great energy which surrounded me and redistribute it after I depart.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of CESRM and hope my contribution will help in some small way.

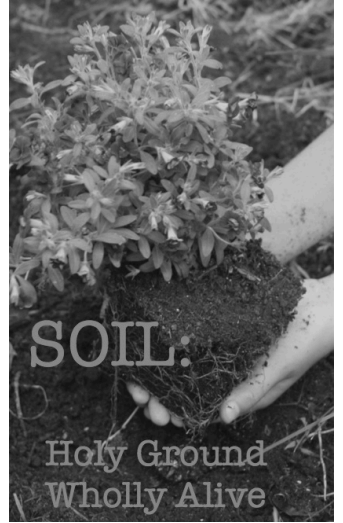
10TH ANNUAL EARTH CONFERENCE

When the suggestion of “soil” came for our 10th annual Earth Conference theme, I have to admit, my first thought was, “HOW are we ever going to get people excited about dirt?” It’s not something most of us ever even consider. It’s just hanging out down there. Doing its thing.

Oh, and our whole lives are dependent on it.

With that thought, I recognized again the relationships that are foundational to our Earth family. I am dependent on the billions of microorganisms that make up our soil. They – not so much on me, and it occurred to me that this vital part of our living Earth is essential to life. We come from it and we will return to it.

So, yes, we enthusiastically embraced the theme of SOIL for our conference! It is after all, the United Nations International Year of Soil.



We are bringing you farmer, poet, activist, and educator Audrey Arner who will travel across the prairie soils of western Minnesota to our river valley soil to present our keynote address, “**It’s All Holy Ground.**”

Our day rounds out with panels to inspire practical ways you can dig in deeper and take care of the soil. And, true to our roots, we will include time for reflection, good food and good conversation.

Join us November 7th, 9 am-3:30 pm for “Soil: Holy Ground, Wholly Alive!”

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 toward 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 Ackil
Monika Antonelli
Meghan Babcock
Dr. Rebecca Bates
Mary Bertrand, SSND
Ann Besser
Michelle Bridges
Rosae Brown, SSND
Donna Casella
Eleanor Coons-Ruskey
Jolly Corley
Dee Czech
Kathleen Felt
Lynette Friesen, SSND
Diane and Chuck Frost
Jeanne Groebner
Danielle Gustafson-Sundell
Tom Hager
Jonathan Hardwick

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Kim Kringael
Les Laidlaw
Vicki Laruhn
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Sara McCabe
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Paul Prew
Lynn Rozen
Patti Ruskey
Nicole Soley
Mary Tacheny, SSND
Jason Toupenca
Jim Vonderharr
Jeanne Wingenter, SSND
Terry Wolf
Drummer’s Garden Center
Freisen’s Family Bakery
and Bistro
Full Circle Organics
Hy-Vee Downtown Mankato
St. John’s Catholic Church
of Belle Plaine
Tandem Bagels
The “Y’s” Encore Youth
Program

And a final thank you to S. Dorothy Olinger, SSND.

She held our Center in a special place in her heart and volunteer life. She passed this summer. We will miss her tenacity, resilience, and patient tutelage so much! Her influence will continue as we embody her spirit of generosity and love for our Earth home.



COME CHECK OUT THE CESRM LIBRARY

The CESRM library is full of wonderful books on a wide variety of topics.

“Come Check Out the CESRM 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.

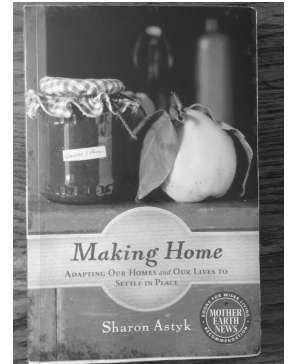
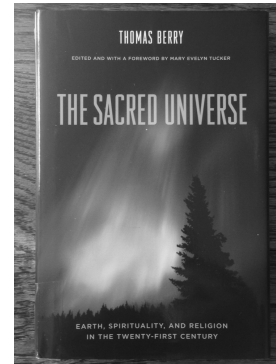
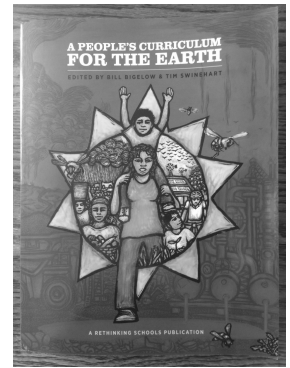
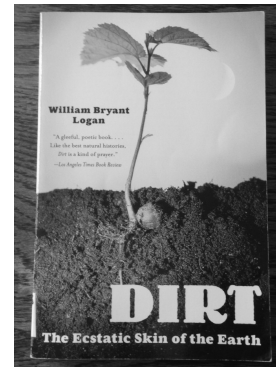
Intrigued? Stop on by and check us out for yourselves! The library is adjacent to the CESRM office, which is located in the SSND campus on Good Council Hill. We're open Monday through Friday 8am to 5pm.

Rather browse online?

Our Volunteers have been working to get our library catalogued online at librarything.com. Currently about two-thirds of our books are listed, with more being added in the weeks to come.

You can find us at:

<https://www.librarything.com/profile/CenterforEarth>

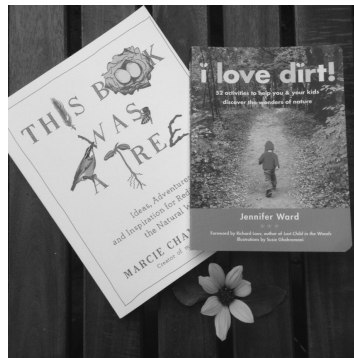


BOOK REVIEW: RECONNECTING WITH NATURE

BY MELISSA MARTENSEN

Both *I Love Dirt* and *This Book was a Tree* tackle the same topic – How, in our world of ever increasing technology and busy schedules, can we foster a connection between the natural world and ourselves and our children? – but approach it from different angles.

I Love Dirt: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature by Jennifer Ward has an emphases on slowing down and observing the wonders of the world around us. Activities such as cloud gazing, listening to the wind, and sketching tree branches encourage us to engage all of our senses while learning a deeper appreciation for our environment.



such as putting out food for non-migratory birds serves to get us outside as well as providing nourishment for our animal neighbors.

This Book was a Tree: Ideas, Adventures, and Inspiration for Rediscovering the Natural World by Marcie Chambers Cuff uses a more hands on approach, with projects and scientific explanations, to connect and bring us back to nature.

Building a terrarium or a sundial will have a deeper association to the world around us when we understand the water cycle or the rotation of the Earth. The book also has upcycled craft activities such as turning an old book into a nature journal or making nesting balls out of yarn and fabric scraps.

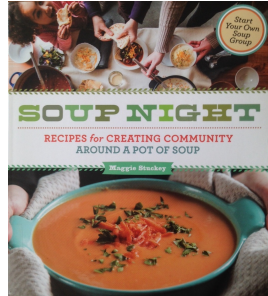
The book is broken up into four sections, one for each season, so there can be no excuse when the weather turns cold for staying indoors. Activities

Both books offer such varied ideas that something is bound to appeal to everyone, from the most seasoned nature-lover to those of us just beginning to take the first steps out into our beautiful natural world.

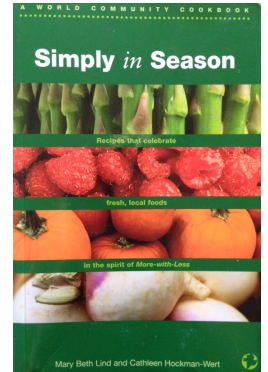
REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE

We all need a little inspiration to continue cooking real food. After all, most recipes start with the words, “Open a can of...” Cans are great in a pinch but the best tasting and most nutritious foods are prepared in our kitchens with real ingredients that are still brimming with life. We have many inspiring cookbooks in our Center Library and these can be checked out for your use.

From the cookbook, *Soup Night: Recipes for Creating Community Around a Pot of Soup*, we feature a recipe that will taste great on a chilly fall night but lends itself for any season because the ingredients can change as the harvest does. Substitute frozen or canned green stuff for winter preparation.



From the cookbook, *Simply in Season: Recipes that Celebrate Fresh, Local Foods in the Spirit of More-with-Less*, we feature a recipe that is perfect for autumn and its abundance of pumpkins and butternut squash. It can be made with or without the hot chili peppers to suit your family's palate.



Cream of Anything Green Soup

- An onion, 2 cloves of garlic (or more) and enough olive oil to saute them in
- Several cups of chopped fresh green vegetable (broccoli, spinach, kale, chard, collards – or any combination).
- An equal amount of good soup stock (chicken or vegetable)
- A pinch of your favorite herbs
- Sour cream or coconut milk – a dollop to top each bowl
- A sweet red pepper, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

Dice the onion and garlic and saute in olive oil until soft. Add the chopped veggies and continue sautéing. After a couple of minutes, add the herbs, salt, pepper and broth and simmer until the veggies are very tender. Puree if you want to – or not. Stir in red pepper mince. Ladle into bowls and add a small dollop of sour cream.

Liberian Pumpkin

- 2-3 cups pumpkin or butternut squash (peeled and chopped in 1 inch cubes)
- 1 onion (chopped)
- hot chili peppers (chopped) or hot pepper sauce to taste

In large saucepan sauté in 2 tablespoons oil until onion is translucent. Cover and cook until pumpkin is cooked, 10 minutes.

- 1 cup chicken, beef, or vegetable broth

Add and cook for 10 minutes.

- 1 cup browned sausage
- salt and pepper to taste

Add and cook uncovered until liquid is absorbed. Serve with rice or noodles.

