

center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

WINTER 2012

EARTH ALMANAC



Earth Education



a ministry of

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Central Pacific Province

center for
Earth Spirituality
& Rural Ministry

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STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS, CREATING HOPE



THE PAST FEW MONTHS have given us the opportunity to welcome hundreds of you to events at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry. Two of those events – our 6th Annual Earth Conference and the Winter Solstice Celebration – brought together a wide community of people to share in learning and ritual. We want to give you a brief glimpse of what those two gatherings were about.

Our Earth Conference theme “Claim the Commons: We’re in it Together!” brought together thinkers and learners to begin the process of considering “the commons,” or all that we share. This is not an easy thing for us to consider since for most of us, as keynote speaker Mark Schultz pointed out, we must first begin to SEE the commons. What are the commons? Human knowledge,

cultural traditions, seeds, land, air and water, the internet, our streets and sidewalks are but a few examples of the long list of “commons.” And once we’ve recognized all that is “ours” to share together, we may begin thinking and acting differently in and on behalf of the commons. For example, I have begun to regularly stop, bend over and pick up trash on the sidewalks where I find myself. After all, it is MY sidewalk as it is everyone else’s so I feel moved to take care of it so that I and others can enjoy the view a little more. This is just a tiny example of how my thinking about the commons and my place in them has changed.

In December, we followed up to the conference theme by celebrating the commons with our Annual Winter Solstice Celebration. This event seems to appeal to more and more people each year as an opportunity to pause in the hectic holiday season and just BE together for an evening. Perhaps more of us are beginning, by necessity or by choice, to define our lives less and less in terms of material stuff. Shifting our focus from consumer culture can open a surprising amount of space in our lives – space for more togetherness, more celebration, more community and more time, things we all want. Our Winter Solstice Celebration – with a shared meal and

ritual, fire dancers and winter bonfire (and new this year, a sunset nature hike) – has become a built in “break” for some each December and for others, they’ve just discovered this enriching community celebration. In either case, this one evening spent together in community leaves participants filled up on many levels!

We have many workshops and events, films and books to share all year ‘round and the winter is no exception. The coming months allow us time to gather and learn together how to live better, more spiritually connected lives aligned with what we know we need to do. We offer Re-Skilling workshops to gain knowledge, experience and confidence to do some of the time-honored work of caring for ourselves well. Our lending library is open and stocked with books, videos and DVDs to fill your cold winter and chilly spring nights. And in March, we will begin a five-week discussion course on Food, Ethics and Sustainability. Join us for an evening or more as we all embark on the journey of living as if the future of the planet mattered.

Organically yours—
LISA lcoons@ssndmankato.org

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ✓ **Bread-baking! Reskilling workshop**, Thursday, February 2, 6 p.m.
- ✓ Join us for **organic, butter-topped popcorn and a movie** – “**The Economics of Happiness**”
Wednesday, February 15th, 6 p.m.
- ✓ **Homemade Non-toxic Cleaners Re-skilling workshop**, Wednesday, February 22, 6–7 p.m. Save money. Live Better.
- ✓ **Garden Series** – “**Making Self-watering Grow Boxes,**” Wednesday, February 29, 6–7:30 p.m.
- ✓ **Garden Series** – “**Growing Mushrooms,**” Hungry for Change/Reskilling workshop, Saturday, May 5, 1 p.m.
- ✓ “**Hungry For Change: Food Ethics and Sustainability**” - **a six-week discussion course.**
6 p.m., Wednesdays, March 21– April 25. Limited to 10 participants - Cost is \$30–\$40
(This fee covers the cost of the book in addition to the course. More if you can, less if you can't.)
- ✓ **Cheese-making Workshop**, Wednesday, March 7, 6 p.m. Limited seating. Please RSVP attendance.

CREATING A BETTER FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEM

BY KATHLEEN MARY KIEMEN, SSND, CENTER CO-DIRECTOR



THERE IS AN OLD ADAGE, if an idea is worthwhile, it should be repeated. Believing this adage, as a title to this article, I copy one of the workshop titles of our last Earth Conference.

That workshop was one way for participants of the Earth Conference to:

- understand the connection between food and farming,
- understand why this connection is so important to all of us,
- be informed about a way we can create a better food and farm system in our country. The way suggested was to support good revisions to our U.S. Farm Bill 2012.

The dictionary describes the **farm bill** as “the primary agricultural and food policy tool of our federal government.” The comprehensive bill is passed every 5 years or so by the the U.S. Congress and deals with both agriculture and all other affairs under the purview of the United States Department of Agriculture. The current farm bill is known as the **Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008**...It is known that farm bills can be highly controversial and can impact international trade, environmental preservation, food safety and the well being of rural communities...The subsidy program mandated by the farm bills are the subject of intense debate both within the U.S. and internationally.

Because the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry is deeply committed to promoting better sustainable practices on the land and wants to support those who provide healthy food, we believe in a good farm bill. We believe a good farm bill is about us. We believe we have a responsibility to make it the best it can be. Therefore, we commit our-

selves to work hard to insure that the farm bill of 2012 protects values we hold. We invite, you, our members to join us.

Because Land Stewardship Project is a reliable resource and dedicates some of it staff to promote proposals to the farm bill that are good for small family farmers, we often depend on them and the organizations with whom they collaborate to provide us with information and actions we can support.

Stay tuned for this information which we will include in our future communications via emails, our advocacy network and our Facebook page. To join our advocacy network, contact: Kathleen Mary Kiemen at kkiemenssnd@yahoo.com.

For more information now about Farm Bill 2012, contact LSP: www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_federal_policy.html.

Healthy food and sustainable farming go hand and hand. Let us support both! – Adam Warthesen, LSP

BOOK REVIEW:

Reviewed By Monika Antonelli, Board Member

Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now

BY MARGARET WHEATLEY AND DEBORAH FRIEZE.

Walk Out Walk On documents people changing the world for the better without money or experts, by using what they have, with the skills they have. The authors, Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, invite the reader to select a community that attracts them and be pulled into a place where beliefs and assumptions can be challenged and changed. In each of the country chapters, the reader is taken on “Learning Journeys.” In South Africa we are advised *to start anywhere and follow it everywhere*. We learn that problems do not exist in isolation and that everything is interconnected. This understanding is applied

to Joubert Park, a crime-infested urban park which is later transformed into a vibrant community space filled with people, music, art and vegetable gardens. In Brazil we are invited to play a thirty-day game called *Txucarramãe or Warriors Without Weapons*. Here we learn the transformational power of play, by joyfully working ten-hour days alongside community members, turning a decaying building into a place of beauty. The Elos Institute, based in Santos, Brazil, describes this work as “helping people recover their ability to dream and find the will to realize these dreams with others.” At the

Kufunda Learning Village in Zimbabwe we learn about creating arborloos, sanitary outhouses used to transform human waste into nutrient rich soil. Once an arborloo is filled, a fruit tree is planted at the site, correcting the problem Zimbabwe experiences of widespread soil erosion. Wheatley and Frieze clearly demonstrate that another world is possible and their book, *Walk Out Walk On*, provides us a blue print for creating that world. This book and many others are available from the Center’s lending library. *

BOOK REVIEW:

Reviewed By Melissa Martensen

The Rhythm of the Family, BY AMANDA BLAKE SOULE AND STEPHEN SOULE

In our fast-paced technology driven culture many of us are finding ourselves wanting to get back to a simpler, nature-centered lifestyle. Amanda Blake Soule's new book *The Rhythm of the Family* does just that. She and her husband, Stephen, have put together a book focusing on the rhythm of the seasons, utilizing both essays and a variety of projects to reconnect readers with the natural world.

The book is broken into monthly chapters with recipes, crafting, and outdoor activities designed to foster a bond with the world around us. From January's creamy potato soup and February's sprouts in a jar to June's sewn picnic roll and on into making dyes from vegetables and plants in November they offer a myriad of opportunities for connecting to our mother Earth the whole year through.

The book is truly a family venture, with projects created by their children (like their son Calvin's wooden block postcard displays) but is accessible to people of all ages whether they have children or not. Ideas such as going on a seasons walk (a meditative walk on the first day of each season, focusing and truly noticing the changes around you) or taking a eucalyptus scented bath are activities that can be enjoyed by all.

The book is filled with stunning photography, pulling the reader into the Soule family's life in coastal Maine with a sense of warmth and beauty. Simply flipping through the book and looking at the photographs will instill a sense of peace, a desire to slow down, and love for all that we have been given by nature.

The Rhythm of the Family is not only an enjoyable read, it is an instrument we can use on our own life's journey to strengthen our relationship with the world around us. Check this book out yourself from the Center's lending library. ✱

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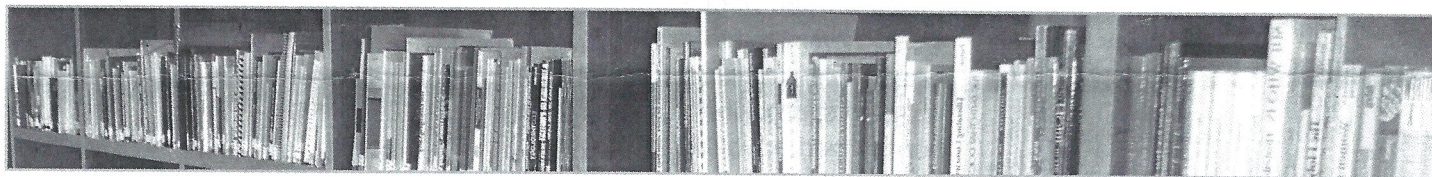
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BOOK REVIEW:

Reviewed By Paul Prew, Board Member

Making A Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights, BY BOB TORRES

While pursuing my Master's degree at Minnesota State University - Mankato, I recall gleefully antagonizing my vegetarian friend by exclaiming, "Mmmm, dead animal flesh," when biting into my beef burrito. For many of you, reading "Making a Killing," will stir up the same sort of contrarian reactions. Hopefully, like myself, you will begin to see the world differently.

There are two significant strengths to Bob Torres' book. First, it provides a solid foundation to understand, not only our relationship with animals, but the fundamental problematic underlying our contemporary society. Second, the book challenges environmentalists to contemplate their own ideas, tactics and orientation.

Torres situates the exploitation of animals firmly in the commodification process within our contemporary capitalist society. Animals are not viewed as fellow sentient beings, but as commodities we can use as we please for clothing, food, and other purposes such as entertainment. The focus is on the value the animal provides for the seller, and the wealth it creates when sold as a commodity. By viewing animals as commodities, we can hide the reality of what is going on in the production process of animal confinement and the disassembly process of the slaughterhouse. Every relationship, whether it be between people and animals or between people themselves, is subjugated to the profit

motive of capitalism. Both animals and people suffer as a result.

I challenge you to read the book, but do so with an open mind. Torres discusses the difficulty that faces vegans and vegetarians in a meat-centric society. Our assumption is that eating the flesh of other sentient beings is a fundamental given within the structure of our society. Torres reminds us that slavery, segregation, and sexism were also foundational taken-for-granted assumptions at one point in our history. According to Torres, speciesism is simply another "ism" whose time has come. ✱

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

Eating more sustainably means eating more locally. The trick in winter is having multiple ways to enjoy some of the easily grown and stored food – things such as sweet potatoes, turnips, and winter squash. One of our favorites is winter squash since it can be easily stored for months in a cool closet, a basement or under a bed in a cool bedroom. Baked squash with some butter melted on it and drizzled with maple syrup is delicious for a side dish but in the following recipes squash takes a delectable center stage!

CURRIED SQUASH SOUP

1 butternut squash, peeled and cubed (save the seeds to toss with olive oil and salt, roast in the oven and serve with soup)

1 c. chopped onion
5 cloves garlic, minced
4 c. chicken or veggie broth
1 bay leaf
½ tsp. salt
1 can coconut milk

2 T. curry powder
2–3 T. chopped fresh cilantro
4 tomatoes, chopped

Saute onion and garlic in olive oil until tender, Add squash cubes, bay leaf and broth. Simmer until squash is soft. Remove bay leaf and puree cooked veggies. Stir in coconut milk, add spices and tomato. Simmer until tomato breaks down. Serve with roasted squash seeds to eat out of hand or sprinkle on top!

WINTER SQUASH ENCHILADAS (or Burritos)

Filling:

Corn Tortillas (or flour tortillas for burritos)
5 lbs. of winter squash (any variety)
2 c. diced onion
3–5 garlic cloves, minced
8 ounces cream cheese (optional)
2 tsp. chili powder
1/8 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. each - oregano, coriander, cumin and salt

Sauce:

¾ c. diced onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ tsp. each - cayenne pepper (opt.), black pepper, salt
1 tsp. chili powder

1 tsp. cumin
2 c. tomato sauce
¼ c. minced fresh cilantro

Cook squash (cut in half and turn upside down on a cookie sheet – bake until easily pierced with fork or cut into pieces and steam, for example) and mash a bit.

Heat 2 T. olive oil in a large skillet and sauté onion and garlic until tender. Stir in cream cheese until melted. Add cooked squash and spices and stir to mix well.

In another pan, saute onion and garlic until softened, add tomato sauce and spices and heat briefly.

Put some filling in a tortilla, roll up and place in a baking dish seam side down. Cover with sauce, sprinkle with cheese, if desired, and bake until heated through and cheese is melted.

THANK YOU!

*Thank you!
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and organizations
who have contributed time,
talent or resources toward our
work in the past few months.
We are grateful to each!*

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Monica Wagner, SSND
Jeanne Wingenter, SSND

MSU Newman Center students –
Brandi, Cristina, Diana, Valerie

Scenes from our 6th Annual Earth Conference

"CLAIM THE COMMONS WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER!"



Photos by Melissa Martensen

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! 7TH ANNUAL EARTH CONFERENCE, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2012