The Work at Hand  By Carol Flinders

Any way you cut it, preparing a balanced and truly appetizing meal with unprocessed foods will take a chunk out of your day. If you’re trying for healthful breakfasts and bag lunches too, the plot only thickens.

So there we are. Impasse. Collision. Gridlock, to use the dominant metaphor for our age. Life really does militate against home-cooked wholesome meals – just as it does against friendships, marriage, parenting, and almost everything else that makes life worth living. It has to be like that, because the spirit of our time is to look only at the profit line.

It’s good to clear the air on this point, and recognize that if you choose to live a different kind of life, it will take some doing. Think of yourself, then, as a pioneer. Celebrate the small, solid gains you can make, and don’t dwell on the ones you can’t make yet. And take heart from knowing that you are not alone.

No one can tell you how to fit those seemingly nonexistent hours into your own life, for the simple reason that it’s your life. But I can tell you about some of the individuals I know who have managed to give priority to the kitchen, for whatever reasons and by whatever means, and about what has come of their choice.

Tragically, the turning point often comes when health – our own or that of someone we love – is threatened. Suddenly the games food advertisers play are no longer amusing. You find yourself angry now, seeing the damage they have done. Your priorities shift abruptly. And when you see that what you do in the kitchen might make the critical difference for someone you love, many of the subtler forms of resistance (“I’m being exploited,” “This is tedious,” or “But I cooked last night”) lose their force. Life, we realize, is very short.

The change can be less dramatic and more positive. A baby comes. You nurse him or her, because there’s no question today that it’s the best possible start you could give your child. At first, all the sitting still and rocking might send you into paroxysms of restlessness. But then something in you gives way, relaxes, and

Continued on page 14
Earth Ministry/WAIPL Staff
LeeAnne Beres, Executive Director
Jessie Dye, Program & Outreach Director
Chris Olson, Operations Manager
Jessica Zimmerle, Outreach Coordinator
Karin Frank, Outreach Coordinator

Earth Ministry Co-founders
Rev. Jim & Ruth Mulligan
Rev. Carla Pryne

Earth Letter Staff
Clare Josef-Maier, Editor
LeeAnne Beres, Assistant Editor
Rev. Jim Mulligan, Editor Emeritus
Jean Miller, Graphic Design

Board of Directors
Nancy Berry
Rebecca Cate
Rev. Steve Grumm
Frederica Helmiere
John McCoy
Tim Nuse
Dr. Kevin O’Brien
Dana Olson
Rev. Hunt Priest
Sr. Jo Ann Showalter, SP
Sarah Sullivan

Membership
Join Earth Ministry/WAIPL and add your voice to the growing movement of people of faith caring for creation! Membership includes a subscription to Earth Letter.

Individual Membership Levels:
$35 Individual
$60 Family
$100 Advocate
$250 Steward
$500 Sustainer
$1000+ Sacred Circle

Join at www.earthministry.org or www.waipl.org, by phone at (206) 632-2426, or by sending in the enclosed envelope. Please contact us for congregational membership information.

ABOUT US
Earth Ministry engages the religious community in environmental stewardship. We work in partnership with individuals and congregations to respond to this great moral challenge through education, modeling sustainable lifestyle choices, and organizing for social change through environmental advocacy.

Founded in 1992, Earth Ministry has a history of leading the way in caring for the environment from a faith perspective. Our Greening Congregations Program was the first in the country to help houses of worship implement sustainable practices, and our faithful advocacy program is on the cutting edge of empowering clergy and lay leaders to speak out on public policy issues.

Earth Ministry supports a growing network of congregations and has a national membership. While Earth Ministry is rooted in the Christian tradition, we actively engage all religious communities on climate and energy issues through Washington Interfaith Power & Light. Our programs and resources are available to all.

www.earthministry.org   www.waipl.org

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Psalm 34:8 says: “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Throughout biblical tradition, food has been a part and a representation of God’s goodness and plan for all creation. From the original provision of food in Genesis to Christ’s final sharing of the bread and wine, we read that God works in and through food.

Cultivating, preparing, and sharing food are all activities that instruct us in our faith when engaged intentionally. These activities teach us about our relationship with God and others. They connect us to our world and can lead us to lives of deeper love and service.

While human dependence on the earth has become less visible in the developed world, our dependence on food has not. With supermarkets, refrigerators, and restaurants full of every type of food year round, it is easy to forget about the immense number of beings and processes involved in bringing us our daily nourishment. For millions of people in the developing world, finding and making food is the daily work of survival.

How we grow, purchase, and prepare food has the ability to either bring us closer to God, the earth, and our neighbors, or to alienate us from that which gives us strength. Join us as we explore just a few of the many ways our food choices affect our lives and the lives of others.

Blessings,

[Signature]
Earth Ministry relies on donations from individuals like you to make this important work possible. Join or renew your membership in Earth Ministry, sign up for monthly giving, or make a special gift at www.earthministry.org or by calling (206) 632-2426. Thank you for your support!

Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families: Advocating for Strong National Toxics Legislation

Earth Ministry/WAIPL has a long history of standing up for the health of children and families. One way we do this is by working to pass strong legislation to regulate toxic chemicals at the state and national levels. Two bills are currently in play in the U.S. Congress that would reform the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976.

If enacted as drafted, both the Chemical Safety Improvement Act (S.1009) and the Chemicals in Commerce Act (House Discussion Draft) would be worse than current law, and endanger public health and the environment. Both bills fail to protect pregnant women and children from toxic chemicals, weaken the review of new chemicals, maintain an onerous burden on the Environmental Protection Agency’s ability to restrict unsafe chemicals, and violate states’ rights to protect their citizens from toxic chemicals.

This last point is especially important, since Washington State has been a leader in banning certain toxic chemicals and requiring oversight. If these bills pass, Washington’s safe chemical policies will be preempted by weak national standards, rolling back protections crucial to safeguarding our most vulnerable citizens.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL staff and members met with U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell last fall to push for stronger national toxics legislation, and have been meeting with our U.S. Representatives in-state this spring. So far, we have met with Reps. Adam Smith, Jim McDermott, Dave Reichert, Derek Kilmer, Rick Larsen, Cathy McMorris Rodgers, and Suzan DelBene, with plans to reach out to the rest of the Washington Congressional delegation to urge them to protect our children from toxic chemicals.

Churches, Clergy, & Congregations

It was a very busy spring for Earth Ministry/WAIPL! Our staff and board taught classes or made presentations to Trinity Episcopal, Maple Leaf Lutheran, St. James Cathedral (Catholic), Skyway United Methodist, Magnolia United Church of Christ, University Temple United Methodist, University Lutheran, Bayview Retirement Center (Methodist), Sisters of Providence, University of Washington Wesley Club (Methodist), and JustFaith Ministries (Catholic) in Seattle; St. Stephen’s Episcopal and four other churches in Longview; Pacific Lutheran University’s GREAN Club in Tacoma; Kennydale United Methodist in Renton; St. Augustine’s in-the-Woods on Whidbey Island; and Trinity Lutheran College in Everett.

Through various outreach projects, Earth Ministry/WAIPL deepened our connection with Seattle Unity Church, Bishop’s Committee for the Environment of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice, Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry Interreligious Program, Seattle Tilth’s Food and Faith Initiative, City of Seattle’s RainWise Project, Acacia Foundation (Muslim), St. Leo’s Parish (Catholic) in Tacoma, Gig Harbor Covenant Church, Edmonds United Methodist, and Echos Lutheran Church in Bellingham.
Faith, Hope, Chocolate ... and Art!

Huge thanks to everyone who attended Earth Ministry/WAIPL's spring fundraiser Faith, Hope, Chocolate, and Art! Over 150 people enjoyed organic treats, sustainable wine, and local art at Alki Arts gallery in downtown Seattle on March 27.

Our keynote speaker was King County Executive Dow Constantine, who did a fantastic job of laying out the key environmental issues facing our region and how Earth Ministry/WAIPL has engaged the faith community to play an important role in addressing them.

Steve Sundquist, board member of one of our partner organizations and long-time Earth Ministry/WAIPL member, spoke eloquently regarding our efforts to stop the export of dirty coal from Northwest ports and gave his perspective on our effective work supporting church green teams.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL board chair Tim Nuse and Executive Director LeeAnne Beres rounded out our speakers, highlighting the vital role that our members play in our shared successes. Thanks to your generosity, we raised nearly $15,000 to support our ongoing environmental stewardship and advocacy efforts.

Many Faiths, One World

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans stood up for clean air and clean water at the first Earth Day, sparking the larger environmental movement. Now, more than one billion people in 192 countries around the globe participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world.

Earth Day is also a truly interfaith event. Every major faith tradition has a statement on caring for creation and we all rejoice in the coming of spring and the renewal of life.

This year, Earth Ministry/WAIPL joined with Seattle University to host Many Faiths, One World, an interfaith Earth Day gathering. Nearly 100 attendees heard how faith puts us in touch with the natural world in a unique “round robin” small group format.

In these small groups, Muslim scholar Tarek Dawoud, Orthodox Rabbi Avi Rosenfeld, Earth Ministry/WAIPL staff member and Roman Catholic Jessie Dye, Zen Buddhist Jason Wirth, and Swinomish tribal leader Ray Williams each shared what their religion teaches about caring for the Earth. We found that all of our faiths, in unique ways, challenge us to live out a healthy relationship with our larger world.
Washington Interfaith Power & Light in Washington, DC

Earth Ministry/WAIPL staff traveled to our nation’s capital in early May for the national Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) conference and lobby day. Over 75 religious leaders from 40 states around the country participated, and LeeAnne Beres and Jessie Dye represented Washington State.

The theme of this year’s conference was *Telling Your Story: Climate Change is a Moral Issue*. Research shows that storytelling based on moral values moves people to act for social change more effectively than policy arguments. Conference participants focused on telling faith-rooted stories of our families, neighbors, and communities in pursuit of climate protection and the common good.

LeeAnne and Jessie led a session on how to write and publish a successful creation care OpEd as a way to share religious leaders’ stories in local newspapers.

On lobby day, all of the state leaders went to Capitol Hill to tell these stories. LeeAnne and Jessie represented you, our faith communities and members, when they met with the Washington State Congressional delegation.

With our U.S. Representatives, Earth Ministry/WAIPL advocated for clean air and climate protection through the EPA industrial carbon regulations, and development of clean renewable energy through federal tax credits for wind, solar, and geothermal projects.

Our staff also met with Washington’s Senators in support of public lands – thanking them for their leadership in funding outdoor recreation and conservation projects through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and for preserving the President’s ability to designate national monuments under the Antiquities Act.
Do All to the Glory of God  
By Clare Josef-Maier

After fifteen years as a vegetarian, I married an omnivore. He is not just any omnivore, but a chef whose love of food includes a passion for various animal meats. I will leave you to imagine the negotiations that ensued in our home, especially when we began to talk about how we envisioned raising children.

I have watched over time as food has become an increasingly anxiety-producing and contentious topic in the United States. In my urban environment, one can make no assumptions about their neighbor’s eating preferences or restrictions.

This I do know: If a restaurant menu doesn’t have vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options, it is behind the times. Labeling in grocery stores has become increasingly specific as demand has risen – “Organic,” “Produced in the U.S.A,” “Cage free,” “Free range,” “No corn syrup,” “Hormone free...” Opinions about food are strong.

But while all of this may seem to have exploded in the last decade, even in the earliest years of the Christian community, food was controversial. In Romans 14, Paul writes:

Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister... For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.

The context of Paul’s letters was different than our world today, but the message to people of faith is the same: resist judgment, seek to serve the higher good, and make an effort to create peace within your community. We are called to step out of the social rat race of food politics. This does not mean we don’t engage the issues, of which there are many. It simply means that we do so with love, grace, and an eye to mutual edification.

This must be as true for us individually as within community. I am confident I am not alone in giving myself a hard time about doing the “right thing” when it comes to food. But maybe I can’t afford to always buy organic produce, and maybe I just really love a good frozen pizza from time to time.

Whatever is within our means or proclivity as food consumers, it is likely not a precise match to our best intentions or hopes. But we are a people who are justified by grace – moved by love and mercy, we do the best we can with what we have.

So, as Paul so perfectly writes, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Clare Josef-Maier is the editor of Earth Ministry’s newsletter, Earth Letter.
The Answer is Goat Cheese  By Chris Olson

What’s the best way to liven up a staff meeting? The answer is goat cheese. The staff of Earth Ministry LOVES goat cheese. We were all gathered for a staff meeting in early April when we suddenly remembered a block of goat cheese left over from our spring reception Faith, Hope, Chocolate…& Art! Within thirty minutes, we had reduced this block to a mere shadow of its former self; its demise was accompanied by a large package of crackers and three jars of tasty toppings, including blackberry honey, guava jam, and homemade tomato marmalade.

For a short time, five individuals took a few moments out of our hectic schedules to simply enjoy one another’s company as we gathered around the table. I believe this is when food is at its best – when it goes beyond simple nutrition to feed both body and soul.

As people of faith, shared meals are an integral part of our faith practices and traditions. I grew up Lutheran in Wisconsin, where church potlucks left me with colorful memories of spaghetti hot dish and Jell-O speckled with canned fruit. Love is the not-so-secret ingredient in all these meals. With friends and family, we experience laughter, stories, and moments of understanding. A chance for deeper human connection lives within the fuzzy skin of a peach, a salty bowl of popcorn, or a glass of cold milk and fresh baked cookies.

Sowing, cultivating, harvesting, preparing, and sharing food are all spiritually rich activities that – when done intentionally – teach us about our relationship with God, others, and creation. Faith communities around the country increasingly are engaging their members in issues of food justice and sustainability. Climate change, pesticide use, and degraded soils are on the growing list of challenges straining our planet’s food system. Our consumption choices make a difference, and are amplified when we share them within our community.

As a part of your food journey, Earth Ministry invites you to take action by organizing an “At the Table Sunday” with your congregation.

Caring for All Creation: At the Table is a useful guide from Earth Ministry that includes worship aids, education materials, and specific actions congregations can take to understand the biblical and ecological importance of food. The culminating activity is a church-wide potluck featuring locally grown or organic foods.

By sharing a healthy meal together, we celebrate both our community and the fact the food on the table is a gift from God. As people of faith, we must remember that God works in us and through us to bring justice to creation. What better way to do that together than to eat, to pray, and to love.

Chris Olson is Earth Ministry’s Operations Manager.

You can purchase the At the Table resource for $15 by calling the Earth Ministry office at (206) 632-2426.
God blesses all creation with nourishment that is naturally good (Psalm 104). We can rediscover healthy, joyful eating when we eat foods produced in harmony with God’s natural systems. But in conversations about food justice, one may wonder: What can I do to make a difference?

Earth Ministry recognizes the challenge of acting in faith and translating values into a way of living. In this guide, we have compiled some hands-on suggestions for making sustainable food choices in daily life. Each section (In the Kitchen, In the Backyard, and In the Community) includes multiple levels of action so that each of us can start small and move on when we’re ready.

Here are some concrete ways to help us to more fully live out the call to justice in our food choices:

In the Kitchen

Stage One

• Take a look in your pantry or cupboards and identify items that you use frequently over time. These may include ingredients such as sugar, maple syrup, baking goods, and spices. Choose a handful of these and commit to buying them organic and/or fair trade next time you need to restock them. Although these things seem small, they will provide you with better health all year long. These are also great items to purchase fair trade because their production often includes worldwide markets with prices that can vary greatly, affecting the wages of farmers. Buying fair trade ensures that farmers receive a living wage.

• Commit to eating more foods that are sustainably harvested, such as seafood from Seafood Watch’s “green list” (see www.seafoodwatch.org).

Stage Two

• Eat seasonally. Take advantage of smaller grocery stores and farmers markets that stock in-season produce, or eat out of your own garden. Discover the rhythm of the year by making and eating traditional seasonal foods like pumpkin pie in the fall and fruit salads in the summer.

• Notice the items you purchase on a weekly basis such as milk, juice, or fruit. Like pantry items, these can also be a great starting place for buying organic. Since you consume them regularly, you’ll be getting the most health bang for your organic buck.

Stage Three

• Take advantage of the rich food traditions of the past by cooking interesting meals at home. Hundreds of years of eating from the land have brought humans an incredible knowledge of how to prepare food. Pick out new recipes from cookbooks or ask relatives and elders in the community for tips on making their favorite meals.

• Make more of your own food. Practice preparing some things that you would normally buy pre-made like pie crust, bread, or soup broth, and learn how to make them yourself. Making soup bases can be a fun activity with older children and will allow you to create your own homemade broth for the months to come. Broth can be prepared in large batches and stored in the freezer until you need it. Then just add some pasta and vegetables to make a complete soup.
• Increase your meat-free meals by two or three a week. Take this time to try out those new vegetarian recipes you’ve been eyeing or learn about the vegetarian basics – you may be surprised the expansive array of options eating lower on the food chain can provide.

**In the Backyard**

**Stage One**

• Learn more about how and where your food was produced by reading labels, asking your market manager, and researching brand names and parent corporations. Check out [www.ecolabels.org](http://www.ecolabels.org).

• Visit with a local, organic farmer on their farm or at a farmers market near you and let them tell you about their work! They’ll be happy to tell you about their care for the land.

**Stage Two**

• Grow your own organic food in your backyard or in a planter box. The *Simply in Season Children’s Cookbook* is a wonderful resource for getting your family’s very own garden started. This fun picture book will give you tips on planting and cooking with your newly grown food all year, and provides prayers to go along with your meals.

• Start composting. Composting is easy to do – it reduces the load of organic material in landfills, provides healthy fertilizer to you, and keeps backyard ecosystems full of the nutrients you want in your food. Put yard waste in a compost pile and kitchen waste in a worm bin (see below).

• Start a worm bin for appropriate kitchen waste (fruit and veggies only!). Worm bins show how quickly God’s creatures can help return waste to soil that then nourishes the growth of more food. Use the finished product in your garden. Worm castings are among the best fertilizers available, and they are all natural.

**Stage Three**

• Begin to think of your community as your backyard.

• Look for ways to live out justice in food and faith decisions within your congregation. For example, you could ask your church to purchase organic bread, wine or juice for communion or the sacrament, or to serve organic and fair trade coffee after worship services.

• Start a gardening club during your or your child’s school’s recess time that invites any interested people to learn about how to grow their own food. You can then share the harvest at the end of the season. Make sure to involve the principal early on since their buy-in will help with the success of your work.

• Bring your new commitments to your school. Ask your school to look into Slow Food’s “Garden to Table” projects and “Slow Food on Campus” program ([www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)). Both create partnerships between schools and local food producers. These programs bring local, eco-friendly, delicious food to students and financial support to small farmers.

In the Community

Stage One

• Learn about food and agricultural issues in your area. What type of agricultural goods are specialties of your region? Does your area have any organic or family-owned farms or co-ops? Partner with an organization, such as the Community Food Security Coalition, which is working on assuring healthy, abundant food for all communities. Check out their website to learn more about their work: www.foodsecurity.org.

• Part of being educated about food issues in the United States is learning about the Farm Bill. This bill is discussed by Congress every six years. As the Farm and Food Policy Project explains, “Our water quality, health, food affordability, and rural employment opportunities are all related to the Farm Bill.”

• Read Food Fight by Dan Imhoff, a discussion of the U.S. Farm Bill and its implications.

Stage Two

• Take action on local issues. Commit to writing your favorite restaurants and food stores to request that they buy from local farms or stock organic products. Since you are one of their customers, they will want to know your preferences.

• Find out who represents you! To learn the names of your U.S. Senators and Representative in Congress, go to www.senate.gov and www.house.gov. These websites offer to “Find Your Senators or Representative” simply by entering in your address or zip code. When your elected official’s name pops up, the websites also give you contact information and links to their respective home pages.

Stage Three

• Take action on the issues about which you are passionate. Call or write to your elected officials and ask them to support a farm bill that strengthens local and environmentally-sound agriculture.

Stage Four

• Hold a Harvest Fair backyard gardeners to share and swap their bounty with one another. This can also be a time to share stories regarding what grew best and what didn’t work out as well in the garden that season. This will enhance a stronger community and congregation, strengthening the network of knowledge about best growing practices in your region.

• Host a seed or plant start exchange in the winter or spring. An exchange party can encourage congregation members to try something new and further knowledge and sharing in your community.

This article was excerpted from Earth Ministry’s Caring for All Creation: At the Table resource, available for purchase at www.earthministry.org/resources/publications/CFAC/at-the-table.
On a one-acre vacant lot in the heart of Berkeley, CA, Urban Adamah (the Hebrew word for “earth”) is growing a new model of food and faith. This fellowship program for young adults is raising up a new generation of Jewish leaders and justice-seekers through the merging of Jewish practice, sustainability, and social justice.

Founded in 2010, Urban Adamah is the sister program of Adamah, a six-acre farm and fellowship program founded a decade ago in Connecticut. More than 600 young adults have gone through Adamah’s program and 100 through Urban Adamah.

Urban Adamah’s lot has raised beds, greenhouses, an aquaponics system, teaching tents, and meditation spaces, all constructed primarily from recycled and sustainable materials. It is also home to chickens, bees, and milking goats. The humble farm produces over 15,000 pounds of food each year, of which over 90% is donated to community members through a weekly Free Food Stand. The program is growing – it will soon be expanding to a nearby 2.2 acre lot.

Program participants live in community in a rented house within biking distance from the farm. In this kibbutz-like setting, participants spend three months doing much of the work of running the farm. An intense program of work, study, and spiritual practice is designed to prepare the fellows for lives of leadership and justice work.

As a part of the program, the fellows volunteer at local social justice organizations focusing on sustainability, poverty, and food security. They learn about environmental studies, food systems, and hands-on agricultural practice as well as issues of justice and poverty, leadership skills, and Jewish values and practice.

The farm is guided by the three core values of ahava (love), chessed (compassion), and tzedek (justice). Urban Adamah also practices the mitzvot (commandments) of bal tashchit (do not waste), shmita (letting the land rest), pe’ah (leaving the corners of the field for the poor), and tzaar ba’alei chayim (preventing cruelty to animals), teaching and living out traditional Jewish values on a 21st century urban farm.

On the farm, food and agriculture are matters of both social justice and spirituality. Life is structured around Jewish and agricultural rhythms of time. Jewish practices of Shabbat, kosher, and blessing foster intentionality around consumption, and Jewish prayers and holidays are based on agricultural and seasonal rhythms. Mornings on the farm begin with a reflective gathering modeled on the traditional morning service, and evenings end in reflection and study.

Urban Adamah also serves as a community gathering space and environmental education center for Berkeley and the surrounding community. The farm hosts youth programs and camps, Shabbat and holiday celebrations, and workshops and public programs on sustainability and urban farming.

Judaism, ecology, and social justice intertwine at Urban Adamah. This creative and thriving program presents a model that inspires the way people of faith engage food today, and the way we pave the path for tomorrow.

Karin Frank is Washington Interfaith Power & Light’s Outreach Coordinator. To learn more about Urban Adamah, visit www.urbanadamah.org.
In the city of Gonaives, southwest of Port au Prince, Haiti, seventeen orphan children are hard at work tending a big organic garden in their yard. The name of the project is *Ti Jaden Lakay*, which is Creole for “my home garden.”

Lost to many communities in this impoverished country are the skills to raise food, let alone restore an ecosystem. But under the watchful eye of Djemson Jeudy, an EarthCorps graduate who worshipped at Quest Church during his time in Seattle, the children are learning how to prepare soil, plant seedlings, and harvest a healthy crop. Where hunger stalks so many, basic gardening knowledge has been washed away by flood waters or died with elders in catastrophic earthquakes.

The children of *Ti Jaden Lakay* are awakening to the power of the land to feed them. Djemson has trained young adults from the community to be the leaders of gardening teams, and these youth are building productive vegetable patches around the neighborhood. Gardening in Gonaives is to feed hungry children, teach life skills, and begin to heal broken hearts through the regenerative power of seeds in planting season.

A world away in Bellevue, WA, Holy Cross Lutheran recently received Earth Ministry’s Founders Award for using its legacy orchards and bountiful grounds to build a garden to support the local food bank.

In a truly interreligious partnership, Muslim community members have joined with the Earthkeepers team from Holy Cross to plant, tend, harvest, and deliver healthy food for less fortunate neighbors. Gardening at Holy Cross is an act of worship and a sacrament connection to God’s creation – the P-Patch is blessed by the pastor each year during rainy Northwest spring services. Throughout the season, volunteers from many local groups help compost, weed, and care for the orchard. For Holy Cross, gardening is a way to build interfaith friendships and provide real help to neighbors in need.

In the heart of the Northwest’s largest city, Seattle Tilth has been working with backyard gardeners and faith communities for more than three decades to increase access to healthy food for all God’s children. Sharon Siehl, Director of Garden Programs for Tilth, believes that urban gardening makes an impact on larger food systems. Home gardeners can conserve water, reduce pesticides, and use organic techniques to produce healthy and abundant crops.

To increase access to high quality, nutritious food, Tilth’s Just Garden Project can build up to 10 gardens for low-income
families in a single weekend. On any given Saturday, dozens of volunteers swarm garden sites, set up, build, dig, plant, and celebrate. Sharon points out that churches often have a great deal of unused land that can be turned into productive patches, which can serve as a way to build stronger communities though cooperative efforts.

Since its founding, Earth Ministry has been encouraging houses of worship around the region to create small garden projects as part of our Greening Congregations program. Gardening is good for us. Growing vegetables, raising chickens, and planting fruit trees helps make communities and families healthier and more resilient. These activities can be acts of worship, a way of connecting to the great gifts of abundance we have received from our Creator.

Gardening also heals the wounded heart, to the extent that there is a vibrant field of treatment for many psychological disorders called “horticulture therapy.” Gardening feeds hungry children and lonely neighbors. It creates interreligious bonds by joy and success in a shared activity.

At a time when destructive industries sacrifice a healthy environment for short-term profit, gardening is a way that faith communities can pull together so that every family can thrive with good food and good health. Together, we grow and deliver food that is fresh, affordable, and safe for us and our planet.

Volunteers harvest apples from the Holy Cross Orchard Gardens for donation to the Hopelink Foodbank

We stand in awe, as neighbors and friends from all parts of God’s green earth, to revel in the mystery of the seed and the life that comes from fertile soil year after year.

---

*Jessie Dye is Earth Ministry/WAIPLE’s Program & Outreach Director.*
Continued from page 1

your very reckoning of time alters. The present moment takes on an amazing luminosity.

When the date you’d set to go back to work arrives, you may well let it pass. All that can wait; more is going on here than you’d anticipated. And as you begin to give your child solid foods, you balk at anything but the purest and most wholesome. After all, that’s what you’ve been giving your child up to now! You buy your first natural foods cookbook, and you’re on your way. Short on money, maybe, and a little apprehensive, but quite certain, deep inside, that you’re on the right track.

Whatever the actual turning point, something stops you and turns your attention inward – puts you in touch with your deepest beliefs and desires, so that for a time, the contrary and conventional messages from outside can’t penetrate. With this inward shift there come, inevitably, ideas on how to change, too.

Of all the things we said in our Laurel’s Kitchen cookbook, I don’t think any subject brought more appreciative response than the section on working with one-pointed attention – sanctifying ordinary work by the state of mind you bring to it. Any work you do for a selfless purpose, without thought of profit, is actually a form of prayer, which unifies our fragmented energy and attention and calms the mind. In the words of a monk of the seventeenth century, Brother Lawrence:

\[
\text{The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.}
\]

The approach may be catching on. Only last week, I read of one homemaker’s discovery that eggs are cooked to perfection after three Hail Mary’s. “I use the boiling time,” she adds, “to place myself in touch with earlier generations of cooks who measured their recipes with litanies, using time to get beyond time.”

We are so oppressed by time these days — by “hurry sickness” and all its side effects. At moments of deep concentration, though, we are lifted clear out of time, and for a few minutes the stress of the day slips away. This may be why a very absorbing activity — chess, or fine needlework, or writing poetry — can leave us refreshed. Kitchen work, when it is undertaken in the spirit of Brother Lawrence, can heal and restore us in exactly the same way.

“I don’t know, really, what changed,” reflects my longtime friend Beth Ann. “I just know that one evening I walked in there grim as usual, determined to get it over with, and instead I found myself relaxing — accepting that I was there and willing to do it as well as I possibly could. And ever since then, it’s been completely different.

“You know, partly I think it’s the food itself. If you watch, so much beauty passes through your hands — of form, and color, and texture. And energy, too.” Abruptly her hands flew up in the air as if an electric current were passing between them. “Each grain of rice, each leaf of kale, charged with life and the power to nourish. It’s heady, feeling yourself a kind of conduit for the life force!”

To be sure, everyday cooking ends up feeling more prosaic than this. Yet I suspect that what Beth Ann was groping to say has to do with an ancient, almost wordless truth. Long before institutionalized religions came along — and temples and churches — there was an unquestioned recognition that what goes on in the kitchen is holy.

Cooking involves an enormously rich coming-together of the fruits of the earth with the inventive genius of the human being. So many mysterious transformations are involved — small miracles like the churning of butter from cream, or the fermentation of bread dough. In times past there was no question but that higher powers were at work in such goings-on, and a feeling of reverence sprang up in response. I wonder sometimes whether the restorative effects of cooking and gardening arise out of similar — though quite unconscious — responses. . . .

Perhaps, though, the real point is not so much to find the holy places as to make them. Do we not hallow places by our very commitment to them? When we turn our home into a place that nourishes and heals and contents, we are meeting directly all the hungers that a consumer society exacerbates but never satisfies. This is an enormously far-reaching achievement, because that home then becomes a genuine counterforce to the corporate powers—that-be, asserting the priority of a very different kind of power.

Reprinted from Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread. Carol L. Flinders is a co-author of Laurel’s Kitchen and The New Laurel’s Kitchen cookbook. She has also written several books exploring theology, mysticism, and gender.
Reverend Fletcher and Elizabeth Davis were among Earth Ministry’s original members when the organization was founded in 1992. Moved by an abiding faith, the couple has committed their lives to creation care. They strive to live sustainably in their private lives, inspire their faith community, and work to advocate for responsible environmental policies.

For both Fletcher and Elizabeth, care for creation is built upon sound theology and active exploration of the natural world. For Fletcher, the seeds of stewardship were sown in childhood experiences in the wilderness, followed by his education in natural sciences. Later, as an ordained Episcopal priest, his environmental theology was inspired by a rector he succeeded whose own concern for creation was profound. In Elizabeth’s life, an encounter with the divine on a backpacking trip deepened her faith and gave a “vivid reality to those creedal words” of God as Creator of Heaven and Earth.

These two eco-stewards have long strived to live lightly on the earth. They enjoy a mostly vegetarian, organic, and unprocessed diet; and, as avid recyclers, the couple produces only one container of trash a month! Elizabeth is also an expert at navigating public transportation, utilizing the bus, ferry, and train. When the stress of driving is removed, she cherishes the quiet time her commute provides.

Along their journey, Fletcher and Elizabeth’s passion for the environment has enriched their communities. Their outreach has ranged from leading youth backpacking trips and creating community coalitions to assisting two parishes through Earth Ministry’s Greening Congregations process.

Fletcher, now retired, volunteers as the Associate for Environmental Stewardship at St. Augustine’s-in-the-Woods on Whidbey Island, WA, and Trinity Parish Church in Seattle, WA. He finds great delight in witnessing people “uncover the relationship between their lifestyles and the health of the only planet we call home.”

Elizabeth has also taken the lead in reaching out to faith communities in the area, forming the South Whidbey Coalition of Greening Congregations working together on projects like public forums, restoration projects, and celebrating Earth and Ocean Month.

This couple is not only a powerhouse in the church, but in the legislature as well. Elizabeth is the chair of the Natural Resources Committee of the League of Women Voters of Washington. She explains that advocacy is a central component of her calling for stewardship, and is essential to mitigate pollution and move forward with sustainable solutions. She hopes her life as an advocate encourages and empowers others to become advocates too.

Fletcher and Elizabeth have witnessed creation care evolve from something seldom discussed in the church to a mainstream faith value. Their passion makes a significant positive impact while inspiring others to do the same. Elizabeth concluded simply, “Caring as I do about God’s good creation, how could I not do all that I am capable of to take better care of all that has been given to us? My motivation is from God, and my hope comes from the good people I know doing this work and from the progress I see all around me.”
From My Kitchen

PRESERVED CHILDREN

Take one large field, half a dozen children, two or three small dogs, a pinch of brook and some pebbles. Mix the children & dogs well together; put them on the field, stirring constantly. Pour the brook over the pebbles; sprinkle the field with flowers; spread over all a deep blue sky brown, set away to cool in the bath tub.