

Grace Seeds Ministry Update

...news about *Share the Harvest* and more!



Dec. 20, 2013

Share the Harvest Thanksgiving Celebration!

It was a **wonderful** day! We gathered on Oct. 26th to offer thanks for a great season of growing and sharing. Here's what you missed if you couldn't join us:

- an excellent presentation by Dolly Foster on monarch butterflies! Thank you, Dolly! (Please see "Amazing Monarchs" article in this update for more info and to learn how you can help struggling monarchs.)
- a round of heart-felt thanks to each person who helped Share the Harvest grow this year!
- a thanksgiving meal featuring side dishes that made our mouths water!
- an introduction to Clarissa Sents, our Young Adult Volunteer!
- a closing litany, taught to us by Clarissa, that we prayed together in American Sign Language.

We are grateful to Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Oak Lawn for hosting us – and for everyone who helped set up and clean up! And thanks to all who brought food to share. Together, we made a feast!

Thank you to all!



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Note: Everything we have to share won't fit in this issue! For more information, visit: <http://graceseedsministry.wordpress.com>.

Amazing Monarchs: Problems, Solutions, Seeds!

The Problem: monarch populations are plummeting. Monarch butterflies make an epic migration (some more than 2,500 miles) each year. Monarchs living west of the Rockies migrate south to California. Monarchs living east of the Rockies migrate to a particular forest area in Michoacán, Mexico. At their historical peak population, **350 million monarchs** migrated to Mexico and were recorded living in butterfly colonies that covered up to 52 acres of trees. **Last year**, only **60 million monarchs** arrived in Mexico and occupied only 2.94 acres. **This year's** statistics are far more dire: as of mid-November, only **3 million monarchs** had arrived, occupying only 1.25 acres of the forest's trees.

About Monarchs:

Monarchs develop from egg to caterpillar (larva), to chrysalis (pupa) and finally emerge as the orange and black-winged butterflies we know and love to see in our gardens. In a single summer, four generations of monarchs can be produced. But not all monarchs have the same life span. Monarchs produced in the first three generations of the summer live for just a few weeks. But the fourth generation is different. They are born to migrate (see below) and live long enough to fly south, over-winter, then mate and lay eggs in the spring.

About the migration:

Amazingly, no individual butterfly makes the round trip from north to south and all the way north, again. **Here in Illinois**, a monarch that emerges from its chrysalis after Labor Day somehow knows to join the great migration southward before the first freeze. The flight will take the butterfly through cities and suburbs and out over the fields of the Midwest and further south. On they fly, through Texas...and finally to the monarch sanctuary in Mexico.

Causes of Monarch Decline?

Biologists, ecologists and others are putting the pieces together – but two causes seem certain:

Destruction of habitat: Milkweed! Monarchs must have milkweed plants to survive! Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed and it's the only food a Monarch

caterpillar can eat! In our own neighborhoods – manicured lawns and bushes dominate the landscape. Monarchs and other butterflies won't survive – let alone thrive – in areas where the food they need isn't present. It's not just in cities and suburbs where monarchs are struggling to survive. To farmers, whose crop yield is critical, milkweed is, indeed, a weed. In the 1990's, corn and soy growers began using an herbicide called glyphosate – eventually planting genetically modified glyphosate-tolerant corn and soybeans. Crop yields have soared but the introduction of the herbicide has contributed to a 58% decline in milkweed and an 81 percent decrease in monarch numbers in the Midwest from 1999-2010. (Source: Rendon, *Scientific American*) Deforestation in Mexico takes its toll, too. Though the Mexican government has now placed restrictions on logging in an effort to protect monarch habitat, problems persist.

Climate change: Extreme weather events (like drought) can do great damage to monarch populations. Hot, dry conditions can kill monarch larva. The limited number of milkweed plants that do grow are killed off – along with crops – by drought.

Not just Monarchs!

Monarch butterflies aren't the only insects being affected by habitat loss and climate change. Wild bees, other butterflies and other pollinators are also declining as their food sources are eliminated and as they struggle to cope with changes in climate. But...we can do something about it!

Solutions (for our own backyards)

- **Plant milkweed!** Find space in your backyard (in pots or in ground).
- Plant pollinator friendly native plants.
- Learn to collect butterfly eggs and provide safe place for them to hatch.

Resource to Learn More and Share:

www.monarchwatch.org

Milkweed Seeds!

Thanks to Dolly Foster – we have Milkweed seeds to distribute to our Share the Harvest gardeners and growing partners! Contact us for seeds at graceseedsministry@gmail.com

---Article by Linda Wygant

Rejoice! A Litany* in ASL

by Clarissa Sents

(Clarissa led us in this litany on Oct. 26. Here is her reflection on the prayer.)

We live by the sun

We move with the stars

We rejoice in all life.

We eat from the earth

We drink from the rain

We breathe from the air

We rejoice in all life.

We share with the creatures

We have strength through their gifts

We rejoice in all life.

We depend on the forests

We have knowledge through their secrets

We rejoice in all life.

We have the privilege of seeing and understanding

We have the responsibility of caring

We have the joy of celebrating

We rejoice in all life.

We are full of the grace of creation

We are graceful

We are grateful

We rejoice in all life

We chose this litany for the Thanksgiving celebration for a number of reasons. It presents a very humbling picture that unites us with creation. In no way does it suggest that humans are superior to the earth and its creatures, but rather that we depend on one another. “We share with the creatures, we have strength through their gifts” and “We depend on the forests” are some examples. Furthermore, this litany ties in perfectly with the mission of Grace Seeds.

As our (still developing!) web presence on Word Press says: **“At Grace Seeds Ministry we believe that all good that grows is rooted in God’s grace: the wonder and mystery of God’s love poured out for the whole world. Transforming despair into hope. Hate into love. Brokenness to wholeness. Surprising us with joy. God’s grace: inviting us into new life and community. Daring us to risk the invitation and the journey. God’s Grace: that calls our names, claims us as beloved and sends us into the world sustained by what**

Jesus offered through the bread and cup.

God’s Grace: that never stops asking and inviting:

“What will you do with your one, wild and precious life?”*

We promote peace and justice and stewardship because we are called to care for this earth and all life that dwells here.

“We are full of the grace of creation, we are graceful, we are grateful”- this is the root of our call. This earth is a gift, and as the litany says, “We have the responsibility of caring, we have the joy of celebrating”. It is our joy and our call, to promote behaviors and attitudes that will sustain all of creation!



Ok, so it’s a cool litany. Now, you may be wondering, what’s the big deal about “saying” this litany through American Sign Language (ASL)? Another area of passion of Grace Seeds is that of being inclusive and open to learning from other cultures. Deaf culture is one that is often overlooked in today’s society, but it is a beautiful culture to learn from. We typically view deafness from a medical perspective; meaning that we see it as something that is broken or abnormal. This is, in fact, a way that we often view any other cultures. I am reminded of the quote that “The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other Cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit.” (Wade Davis) By performing this litany in another language, we are challenged to learn about another culture and are also humbled by our inability to communicate with as much ease as the native speakers. Sign language is a beautiful form of communication that shows us a different interpretation of our world. Thank you to everyone who participated in this litany and embraced its message!

***Litany source:**

www.letallcreationpraise.org/liturgy/litanies

****Mary Oliver, *New and Selected Poems***

Thank You Notes!

from Linda Wygant

We give thanks! For the thousands of pounds, hundreds of bags, dozens of crates, and countless boxes Share the Harvest growing partners filled and delivered this season!

Thousands of people ate fresh, healthy produce; savored the flavors of summer, and had the opportunity to taste the best from your gardens – thanks to the love, time, and energy invested in Share the Harvest this year!

We give thanks for donations of seeds, pots and seedlings! We'd never have gotten started without you! Thank you Elim Christian Services, Irene and Bruce Haugen, Marge Vander Wagen, and Laura Svik and volunteers & residents at Cantata!

We give thanks for hands and hearts that built, tilled, dug, planted, tied up, nurtured, watered and weeded all those plants in all those gardens...all summer long!

We are grateful for those who picked, sorted, boxed, and bagged the bounty and for those who loaded their cars and trucks and helped deliver your gifts to our food pantry partners.

We give thanks – to each Share the Harvest Coordinator who spread the word to our partners about how to grow and give!

We are thankful for our food pantry partners – who received our gifts and made sure they were distributed to pantry guests.

We thank partners who provided space for us to hold Grace Seeds programs and who donated the use of copiers, audio-visual equipment, and more!

And we're grateful for churches, groups and individuals who gave monetary gifts to support our growing ministry this season! You made it possible to keep expanding our programs and to say "yes" to the opportunity to welcome Clarissa, serving with us 16-hours per week via the Young Adult

Volunteer Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

And we're thankful: for water, for sun, for soil. We're grateful for bees and butterflies and other pollinators – for each partner in creation that helped bring the season's bounty to the table!

Thanks be to God!



The communion table at Grace Community Christian Reformed Church, filled with gifts to share!

Who We Are! What We Do!

Grace Seeds Ministry is a growing ministry! We celebrate and cultivate God's gifts of abundance and hospitality. We seek to live out God's call for justice, reconciliation and peace.

Share the Harvest is a "transplant" out of the Grace Seeds Ministry "greenhouse"! Share the Harvest grows fresh produce to share with hungry neighbors. The project is a direct, hands-on response to poverty in our neighborhoods. Share the Harvest teaches and inspires partners to share God's hospitality, treat creation with care, and seek God's justice.

For more information, contact Grace Seeds Ministry at 773-495-7865 or graceseedsministry@gmail.com. See our Facebook page: "Grace Seeds Ministry"!

Note: For a complete listing of our growing partners and food pantry partners – please visit us at: graceseedsministry.wordpress.com.

Recipe and Reflection

by Clarissa Sents

Ethiopian Lentil Bowl

(Recipe from: *Simply in Season* Cookbook)

2 C. Dried Red Lentils (sorted and drained)
2 large Onions (finely chopped)
1 head Garlic (peeled and mashed)
3 T. Tomato Paste
½ tsp. Paprika
1 tsp. Salt
½ tsp. ground Ginger
¼ tsp. Pepper
3 C. Water
¼ C. Lemon or Lime Juice

Cover lentils with water and soak 30 minutes. Drain.

In a soup pot, sauté onion and garlic in 3 tablespoons oil until golden.

Mix in tomato paste and paprika. Add remaining seasonings and half the water. Stir well and then add the rest of the water. Stir again, cover, and bring to a boil. When the water boils, add the lentils, lower the heat, and cook until lentils have softened, 20-30 minutes. Add lemon/lime juice and serve hot.

Reflecting on Recipes

As many of you may know, coming to Grace Seeds has opened my eyes to a whole new way of experiencing food. I've read books, watched documentaries, and had meaningful conversations with many people about this thing that sustains us. Food unites us with the earth and with each other. The need to eat humbles us and allows us to nurture one another. We fellowship together over food. We break bread at communion as a symbol of our humanness and humility in honor of Jesus' sacrifice.

Food is a defining characteristic of each unique culture, and yet it is something that we all share as humans.

Just as food is a symbolic, unifying reminder of our human life on earth; we at Grace Seeds would like to celebrate this in our very own cookbook. It is our hope that this cookbook will include recipes from each and every one of our growing partners, pantry partners, and friends!

One difficulty I have encountered in this project is making it accessible to our hungry neighbors visiting food pantries.

In case you didn't know, food pantries don't usually stock things like molasses, ginger, oils, etc that most of us have lying around. Many of these things are required for any sort of cooking. How can we make this project more accessible? We need your help!

(See the next page for a list of "essential" items that food pantries stock and to read about an upcoming recipe challenge!)

In the meantime, please send those recipes our way! Email to graceseedsministry@gmail.com, message to Grace Seeds Ministry on Facebook, or give Linda or Clarissa a copy of your recipes.

Note: Thank you to everyone who has already submitted recipes! We've got the beginnings of a great collection! The recipes we've received look (and taste!) delicious. We've already begun posting some of them on our **Facebook** page. Keep checking back to discover a new recipe each week! Beginning Jan. 15, you'll be able to access our ever-growing, electronic cookbook here: graceseedsministry.wordpress.com. We hope you'll visit...and keep visiting! Our cookbook will keep expanding – with your help!

A Recipe Challenge

by Clarissa Sents

Ingredients for the Challenge:

Here is a list of the Greater Chicago Food Depository's 18 Core Items:

Fresh Produce, Cereal, Rice, Pasta, Pasta Sauce, Macaroni & Cheese, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Tuna, Stew, Beans, Soup, Canned Fruit & Vegetables, Shelf-stable Milk, Hamburger Patties, Bread, Fresh Eggs, and Fresh Milk

Take a look at this list. Do you think that you could easily create a tasty, home-made, nutritious meal for your family using only these items? You could make hamburgers, using bread as buns, but wouldn't have any cheese or condiments. I really like to make simple things like pizza and pancakes, but this list wouldn't provide me with flour! Even if I used a mix, I would probably need to add oil, which isn't on the list either. I noticed that many of the items on this list would be a form of processed food. If I wanted to cook, from scratch, it could be a challenge! I would find myself very limited in my choices if I could only consume items on this list.

For many of us, this "Recipe Challenge" isn't really a challenge at all. Not if we are among those who have access to a virtually limitless variety of foods. Those of us who can afford to shop at grocery stores can pick and choose from hundreds and hundreds of options, while those who visit food pantries often don't have very many choices at all.

This is a very real issue for so many people right here in our communities. Let's come together and see if we can create some great meal options from items on this list.

If you need to cheat and use one or two other ingredients, please do! Let's build a cookbook that includes healthy recipes that transform these Core Items into meals all families will savor! Copies of your recipes will be shared with guests visiting our food pantry partners! So let your creative juices flow!

GCFD: Taking on Hunger!

A couple of weeks ago, Linda and I had the privilege of touring the facility of the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD). Many of you know that this is a wonderfully active organization in our community that delivers tons and tons of food to hungry people in Cook County, day after day. Last year alone, they delivered over 66 million pounds of food which equates to about 150,000 meals a day! It was an honor for us to tour their facility and speak with Anne Smith, a new staff member who works in fund development.

The warehouse at GCFD is incredible- it has over 12,000 square feet of refrigerator space and they use several forklifts to move food around the warehouse. Seeing a giant, 100 cubic-foot palette full of Froot Loops gives a whole new meaning to the term "buying in bulk"!

My favorite part of the tour was learning about the Chicago Community Kitchens program. This is a 14-week program for unemployed or underemployed adults in Cook County that prepares them for a career in the food service industry. The students prepare over 2,000 meals a day for local meal programs. At the end of the program, the students are each placed in a two-week internship in a local commercial kitchen. The students are all tracked and eligible for job assistance within one year of graduation. It was so cool to see how GCFD not only works to relieve immediate hunger, but they also have programs targeting long-term solutions and individual empowerment.

Clearly, GCFD is doing wonderful work in Chicagoland. However, it makes me stop and think why hunger is such a huge problem and if it will ever be solved. GCFD is undoubtedly making a huge mark in alleviating hunger in our community, providing immediate relief to hungry individuals while also striving to promote long-term solutions. *What can we as Grace Seeds and as individuals do to address the issues surrounding hunger?*