Food Justice at Harvest Time

What are we feeding ourselves? What impact do our food choices have on ourselves, each other and nature? What’s on your plate?

Mother Earth is experiencing another unprecedented hurricane and wildfire season, with climate emergency records regularly being broken across the globe. Harvest season has advanced. Food is a great connector and gathering around food remains an opportunity to bring together community, side by side, culture by culture. Waterspirit was glad to support federal legislation that would make permanent a summer food program for children created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic last year.

May this time of turning leaves help humanity contemplate how we might honor those who stewarded the land prior to colonialism and slavery. May we and our neighbors be intentional about how we might honor Mother Earth into a just, stable future, today.

The act of Decolonizing Your Plate is one way to honor the Indigenous ancestral lands upon which we live. The treaties championed by Indigenous ancestors were intentionally rooted in food sovereignty. Today’s Indigenous leaders teach us to engage in our food system and give thanks to the earth for such sustenance. The lands upon which ancestors lived in unison with Creation in reciprocity for thousands of years are in need of humans demonstrating gratitude. Starting with our own diets, partaking in food system changes can be empowering. Animal agriculture wreaks havoc on our systems, resulting in loss of fresh water resources, land degradation, deforestation, and air/water pollution yet, the uncomfortable detail remains: one in eight people still suffer from food insecurity.

Humans would benefit from being ready to lend our hands to local small farmers, ensuring the knowledge and re-skilling critical to sustainable communities evoked in the adage: no farmers, no food. This tending to Creation is therapeutic to humans in ways beyond study. What is stopping all of us from becoming local gardeners and farmers?

Thinking back to March 2020, where did your food come from? How did you find it?

I recall learning about a farm operation which was helping give bags of a variety of foods to cars utilizing a drive through process that would lead through a barn wherein the loading would take place. I have been engaged in community stewardship here for years yet barely learned about this opportunity. I wondered how everyone else not on social media might get enough food.

In Howell, New Jersey, a girl aged 9 cried out for help about her food insecure home that had been in such a state for over a year. Locally across the country there is a tremendous effort called Food Not Bombs which harnesses the power of humans into providing vegan food to vulnerable populations, necessitating the inefficiency of post farmers market waste.

Understanding that environmental racism, peak oil and our climate emergency are inextricably linked is of utmost importance as we see famine increasingly inflicting whole communities and countries. The protest of the UN Food Systems pre-summit by Corporate Accountability International and 300 other groups was meant to express frustrations of corporate imbalance created when small farmers lack local control over their production and water rights.

Reawakening to healing ourselves and reconnecting us with what is most sacred unites us to first generations and is sanctifying. Regenerative growth practices are taking place throughout Mother Earth. One such example is Earth Regenerators, led by Joe Brewer, Change Strategist for Humanity based in Barichara, Colombia. This reforestation project illustrates how communities can come together and foster land permanency in symbiosis with human longevity. These solutions when applied across all lands could cause a shift in where our fossil fuel laden planetary experience is presently headed. (continued on page 2)
Droplets

“We need to have a whole cultural shift, where it becomes our culture to take care of the Earth, and in order to make this shift, we need storytelling about how the Earth takes care of us and how we can take care of her.”

— Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

- Up to 48 bird and mammal extinctions have been prevented this year by conservation efforts since a global agreement to protect biodiversity, according to a new study in Conservation Letters.
- If the entire world’s water were fit into a 4-liter jug, the fresh water available to us would equal only about one tablespoon.
- Meditation promotes emotional health. A review of several studies by the NIH suggests that meditation may reduce depression by decreasing levels of inflammatory chemicals known as cytokines.
- Fungi function like the “internet of the forest”, helping plants communicate with one another using mushroom wires (mycelium) on the forest floor. Plants can send nutrients and electrical impulses to each other via mushrooms.

Braiding Sweetgrass’ author, Robin Wall Kimmerer, reveals a common form of appreciation amongst her field ecology students: singing. Showing gratitude is the most human we can be, and we express this gratitude in the garden through song. This is why music is a part of Waterspirit’s seasonal celebrations. Please join us on September 22 for Waterspirit’s Fall Equinox celebration and for our ongoing seasonal commemorations throughout the year.

May we celebrate our harvest through gratitude and giving to those in need of food this season and in all seasons.

— Rachel Dawn Davis, Public Policy and Justice Organizer

THIS MIGHT BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER!

Beginning in 2022, we will only offer our printed newsletter to readers who specifically request it. Please call us at (732) 923-9788 or write to us at water@waterspirit.org to let us know if you would prefer to continue receiving a paper copy of our newsletter rather than an electronic one.

If you would like to save paper by receiving this newsletter via email, please make sure that your email address is up to date! If you do not currently receive our weekly e-mails, then we might not have your correct email address on file. Please write to us to update your address and stay in the loop.

Don’t miss out on these eco-spiritual updates from Waterspirit. Contact us today!

We depend on the generosity of water protectors like you!

Call, write, or visit www.waterspirit.org to learn more about how to support eco-spiritual programs and advocacy at Waterspirit. Donations can be made through our website or sent to our offices at 4 E. River Rd., Rumson, NJ 07760.
Waterspirit's founder, Sister Suzanne Golas CSJP, and current Executive Director, Blair Nelsen, meet at St. Michael Villa for Blair’s talk about soul care for the climate crisis.

We love our volunteers! Pat Murtha, Rusty Eidmann-Hicks, and Martha Eidmann-Hicks helped staff our table at the Rally for the Two Rivers’ Eco-Fest in Rumson, NJ.

Harriet Shugarman, Executive Director of Climate Mama, was honored with the inaugural Suzanne Golas, CSJP Award at this year’s Joys of the Sea fundraiser.

Waterspirit joins coalition partners NJLCV and NAACP in calling on Rep. Andy Kim to protect clean water without further privatization in the infrastructure bill. Clean water is a human right!

Youth activist Purva Bommireddy joined colleague Aarush Rompally from Bye Bye Plastic Bags New Jersey to give a Waterside Chat on the dangers of plastic pollution.
The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace implement a Land Ethic that promotes a covenant of peace with Earth. One of the ways that the Land Ethic is enacted is through the work of the Congregation’s ministries. Waterspirit regularly meets with its fellow ministries in the Eastern Region to mutually support their sustainability initiatives. Waterspirit’s Executive Director, Blair Nelsen, was recently selected to co-chair this group, known as Sustainable Peace Ministries.

Another way that the Congregation will be enacting its Land Ethic is through supporting the Laudato Si’ Action Platform. This international initiative is intended to unite the Vatican, Catholic organizations, and “all men and women of good will” in enacting the ecological principles of Laudato Si’ by developing Laudato Si’ Plans tailored for each region. This program will offer guidance, community, and recognition of progress as Catholic groups throughout the world take practical actions to safeguard a livable future. Waterspirit is eager to support the Sisters in this initiative, which will be officially launched worldwide on October 4 (the feast of St. Francis).

International cooperation for Earth continues through the Congregation’s work at the United Nations. Blair’s work at the United Nations is moving forward through the Faith and Biodiversity United Nations Coordination Group, the Climate Working Group of the Committee of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations, and Religious at the United Nations. At the recent open meetings on the Convention on Biological Diversity, Blair offered comments about the importance of tackling the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis simultaneously. She also called for the protection of marine habitats and coastal communities through an immediate, prolonged moratorium on deep-sea mining.

Honor and Memory

Waterspirit has beautifully printed honor and memory cards that help you honor your loved ones’ dedication to Mother Earth with a donation to Waterspirit. Each set includes a card to notify your loved ones of your gift as well as a response envelope. If you would like us to send you honor and/or memory cards, please contact us at water@waterspirit.org or (732) 923-9788.

In Honor of:
Fr. Terry Moran
From Ann Quinn

Abbey Koschak
From Susan Andrews

Frank & Gail Mertz
From Gail DeMaria, CSJP

In Memory of:
Francis B. Francois
Helen Margaret Coffey
Carol Freclose
Sally Jones
Jack Vaughn
Doris Mical, CSJP
Dick DeMaria
Veronica Thorse
Lil Ruszkowski
Mary Kennedy
Mary Ellen Haffley
Phil Golas
From Patricia Wall, CSJP

In Memory of:
Sally Jones
Jean McLaughlin, SSND
Rose Mueller
Mary Rossi
From Gail DeMaria, CSJP

A Special Farewell

We regret to inform you that long-time Waterspirit supporter, Mary Ann Jeselson, passed away on August 1, 2021. Mary Ann and her husband Stephen were dedicated volunteers who served on the Joys of the Sea fundraising committee for many years. They were also important contributors to Waterspirit’s long-range planning efforts which were crucial during Sister Suzanne’s transition into retirement. Please join us in wishing her loved ones comfort and strength.

International and Inter-ministry Cooperation for Earth
Waterspirit’s return to in-person activities has been cautious, enacting love for our neighbors by strictly following CDC guidelines in our high-transmission county. Our first in-person activity in 15 months was our participation in the Rally for the Two Rivers’ Eco-Fest in Rumson’s Victory Park on June 5, 2021. This family-friendly festival gathered the Rally’s coalition partners to teach visitors about watershed stewardship. Waterspirit’s staff and volunteers guided visitors through a public ritual called the Climate Ribbon Project, asking them which bodies of water they love and would not wish to lose to climate chaos. Rachel Dawn Davis (pictured below) also conducted several read-alouds of the beautiful children’s book *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom.

On August 10, we welcomed community members back into the sanctuary in Rumson for weekly Meditation for Earth. Attendees meditated along with the new YouTube video that Abbey Koshak posts every Tuesday at 12:15 p.m. ET. Given the prevalence of the Delta variant in our area, masks and social distancing are requested regardless of vaccination status.

You can find Waterspirit at the Wind & Sea Festival at Baysshore Waterfront Park (Port Monmouth, NJ) on September 18 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. We will use fun games to teach visitors about stormwater management. Waterspirit will also host a workshop on contemplative seasonal practices at the Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education’s 5th Autumn Outdoor Conference. As the fall continues, Waterspirit will call for volunteers to engage in nonpartisan Get Out The Vote activities. If you are interested in helping, you can sign up for our Rapid Response Team to learn more.

With patience and safety, Waterspirit will continue to offer high-quality programming that builds community while incorporating the lessons learned during these months of online programming. Thank you for your continued support during these challenging times. Please make sure that you are signed up for our weekly emails in order to get the most updated information on our activities.

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**Happy News and a Warm Welcome!**

Changes in season also bring changes to Waterspirit, and we are very pleased to announce that our Programs and Communications Consultant, Abbey Koshak, and her husband Devin are expecting their first child this month. We can’t wait to welcome the newest water protector to the world and are sending blessings and love to the new parents during this special time.

**INCOMING TIDE**

*(continued from back cover)*

**Winter Solstice Celebration:** December 21 at 7 p.m. Please save the date and check our website for updates.

**Rapid Response Team:**
Ready to care for Creation in your community? Join Waterspirit’s Rapid Response Team to take action with other like-hearted advocates for earth. Learn about our current efforts to champion a Green Amendment, the WATER Act, and more. [Sign-up here.](#)

**Meditation for Earth**
Please join Waterspirit for a “Meditation for Earth” on Tuesdays at 12:15 PM ET. We read a short blessing, followed by an excerpt from Hal Borland’s *12 Moons of the Year*. Then we lead a simple meditation followed with silence, for a flourishing Earth. The meditation and silence last approximately 30 minutes. There are two ways to meditate for Earth with us: 1) In-person in the Sanctuary at Rumson Presbyterian Church; 2) Online on [our YouTube channel.](#) All of our meditation videos are filmed by our Programs and Communications Consultant, Abbey Koshak, with loving care.

Please check Waterspirit’s website for updates on programming and events, including registration instructions and COVID-19 safety measures.
Waterspirit’s Fall Equinox Celebration
This transition into Autumn, when the light is diminishing, is calling us to align with the changes occurring in the natural world and kindle our inner light of wisdom and courage. Through our strength of will and singularity of focus we can bring our light to illuminate times of darkness. All of nature is heeding the call to go within and find the illumination inside. It is time to enjoy the blessings of the harvest and to abide in gratitude for the abundance the harvest has brought. Live music provided by Joseph Alton Miller.

Waterspirit’s 10-Step Eco-Anxiety Support Group Informational Meeting
Waterspirit’s eco-anxiety peer support group uses the Good Grief Network’s “10 Steps to Personal Resilience and Empowerment in a Chaotic Climate” method. This program is open to the public worldwide. This informational meeting that will outline what this 10-step support group entails, explain the course’s suggested donation, and answer any questions you might have prior to committing. Online on Zoom.

Live Streams: An In-Person Writers’ Gathering with Nancy Bryan
How can we express our gratitude to the rivers, ocean, creeks and estuaries—the watery world around us? How can we say thank you? We will look to literature for inspiration and to our own imaginations and memories during our time together. Let’s discover the glimmers of our individual experience through fast writing exercises and sharing. Come have fun—no experience in creative writing necessary—all are welcome! Suggested donation: $25. All proceeds will benefit Waterspirit.

Waterspirit Nature, Spirituality and Action Book Club
Join us in discussing our next engaging read! Please check our website for more information.

Wednesday, September 22
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, September 28
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 2
(rain date: October 3)
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Monday, November 22
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

All times listed in ET.