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JOIN US

CALL FOR SUMMER SERVANTS

Ready to take your Farm experience to the next level? [Apply](#) to be a Summer Servant! The priority deadline is **February 15th**.



REGISTER FOR ADULT AND FAMILY WEEKS

Adult Week: July 28 - Aug 3
Family Week: Aug 4 - 10

Send us your [paperwork](#) and \$50/person deposit to reserve your spots today! The priority deadline is **February 1st**.

[Check out the new videos on our YouTube channel!](#)

GROUNDBREAKING! by Eric

The moment we have been waiting on for months has arrived! After lengthy delays (due to extensive power outages resulting from the summer Derecho wind storm and Superstorm Sandy), the electric company has finally switched our power line from one that runs directly through the build site of the Caretaker Residence to one that runs a safe path around the site. Excavation of the basement can now begin - **in fact, it may be taking place as you read this newsletter!** [Click here to donate now as we break ground on this critical project.](#)



We have come a long way, but we still have \$228,000 to go to fund the Caretaker Residence project. Many of you have begun to donate to the project - thank you for your contributions! A couple dozen friends, led by strong support from the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, Iowa, have also come forward to offer us low-interest loans to cover this gap, so that construction may begin. We'd love to erase those loans over the next two years with [your help](#).

There are many exciting pieces of this project - from the super-insulated SuperiorWall foundation and SIPS framing, to the rainwater harvesting system for garden and orchard irrigation. [Click here to check out all of the sustainable design features](#) we hope to include. The cool thing about these features is that **they will make Bethlehem Farm more resilient and result in lower maintenance and operating costs for the building.**

[Donate now to sponsor these sustainable design features!](#)



CAN'T MAKE IT TO ADULT OR FAMILY WEEK?

If you are at least 18 years of age but can't make it to adult or family week, consider coming on one of our May College Weeks (May 12 - 18 & 19 - 25). The garden needs a lot of hands at this time of year, and we still have spots to fill!

Questions? Contact Laura at volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net



It is not an easy task to plan, design, fund, and build a sustainable home that 10-20 people may live in at any given time over the next 50-100 years. There are a lot of factors to consider, and it takes a lot of stamina and perseverance to keep such a project going in the midst of an already busy schedule. But it is easy to find motivation as well:

- When I envision how many future communities of Caretakers and Summer Servants will be fostered by this new construction;
- When I envision the new ability to grow our family, to welcome new Caretakers, and to say "yes" to more requests from Summer Servants;
- When I envision group week participants filling the entire retreat house and all of the beautiful life that will flow from this project ([click here to view our newest video](#) and see what I mean);

I find the strength to go the distance and do it the right way, even when it is demanding.

[Get the latest project updates](#), or [click here](#) to help make this vision a reality!

WE GOT A HIGH TUNNEL (WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS) by Bridget and Eric



Inside the high tunnel

The Farm was happy to host students from the University of Dayton's ETHOS (Engineers in Technical Humanitarian Opportunities of Service-Learning) program in May and October, who helped us erect our new high tunnel! A few summer Farm crews also moved the project forward. The high tunnel is a 20 by 48-foot passive solar-heated greenhouse that will help us to achieve year-round food production, composting, and poultry housing. We can grow more food by extending our growing season further into early spring, late fall, and winter. It is currently well-stocked with winter greens, herbs, and onions. We are using row covers and cold frames inside the high tunnel for added layers of protection from the cold. As the January groups can attest, there is no match in taste

and quality for greens and roots harvested in winter.

A high tunnel is only one of several options, including cold frames, row covers, low tunnels, and many more, for protecting winter crops from extreme cold temperatures. Several of these structures are simple to build and appropriate for backyard gardeners. If you would like to learn more, we recommend Eliot Coleman's books, such as [Four Season Harvest](#) or [The Winter Harvest Handbook](#).

TAKING THE FARM ON THE ROAD

by Moira

We celebrated Bethlehem Farm's golden birthday on December 8, 2012! 135 guests joined us at St. Ignatius College Prep in Chicago to eat, drink, share stories, and bid on the 40 fabulous silent auction items donated by friends of the Farm. Father Tom McQuaid of Catholic Relief Services celebrated Mass with us to kick off the evening. Volunteers Sheila Canavan and Yulissa Villasenor shared their experiences of the Farm, and board member Adam Fischer gave a shout-out to all the good people who make Bethlehem Farm possible. The program concluded with the premiere of [a new video](#) about the cornerstones of Bethlehem Farm, produced by Holy Cross Brother Nich Perez.



Having fun at the Benefit!

Benefit Bingo kept the crowd mixing and mingling while people placed bids and explored new developments at the Farm through our educational displays. The evening raised a grand total of **\$16,188.18**, all of which will be going directly to the construction of the new Caretaker Residence. **Many, many thanks to all of our sponsors, silent auction and beverage donors, volunteers, organizers, and participants!** We are blessed to have such wonderful and supportive friends. We look forward to hosting you at our new residence!

NEW WHEELS ON THE FARM

by Colleen

After several years of faithful service (and great lessons in tractor troubleshooting), we sold our donated John Deere tractor in October. Katherine and I then spent many days hunting for a good used tractor, which we will use for mowing the pastures and plowing snow off the driveway, among many other farm chores. We happened to find a good, lightly used Kubota tractor of just the right size, features, and horsepower for our needs, and we got a good deal on it too. (Perhaps because the dealer did not actually expect to make a tractor sale to two young women and a two-year-old?)



In any case, three of us have been busy learning to operate our new tractor so that we are ready for winter plowing. Our neighbor Mark has generously donated his time to help us learn how to take good care of this investment, which should last at least 20 years. While we have a healthy respect for the dangers of using a tractor, we must confess that it is pretty fun to drive this one (with the seat belt on, of course). We are confident that we will find many jobs in the ensuing years for which a dependable tractor comes in very handy!

THE HAND OF GOD

by Matt

God is Love. That simple premise, articulated in the first letter of John in the New Testament, was a radically new interpretation of God from any previous Earthly understanding. In saying "God is Love," John leaves us free to substitute the word Love for God. Jesus' mission, and the mission that he calls us to, is to bring about the kingdom of Love on Earth.

It is clear from Jesus' teachings that he saw everything—even Earthly events that are overlooked by most of us every day, such as the birds being fed and the fields being clothed with beautiful flowers—as miracles from God. If God clothes the fields and feeds the birds, then won't God do the same for you? That's where the Love of the community comes in. If the intricate systems of God's Creation work in such beautiful harmony that they all prosper together, then shouldn't that same Love and care be at work in the interactions of a human community?

God does not promise to feed the sparrows for 40 days of Lent and after Easter go back to His own business; nor does God promise the field on New Year's Day that it will be clothed with flowers and then come springtime forget or give up. Love is not seasonal. God's love is always present, and as lovers of God we must strive to follow His example.

I have never seen the hand of God physically appear and work a miracle in my presence; however, I have on countless occasions witnessed the hand of Love in the form of a community member reaching out in a moment of need. For me, community is a vehicle for Godly and Loving miracles.

The other day, I happened to mention that I only have one and a half pairs of wool socks - so that on laundry and drying days I have no warm socks. Almost immediately, a fellow caretaker pulled out a pair of new wool socks and gave them to me. On a recent winter morning, the entire community woke up and found a fire burning in the wood stove, because one person had gotten up early and decided to warm the house a bit for everyone. These are everyday miracles of Love in community.

So what are the needs in your community? Does someone need socks? A hot meal? A conversation over a cup of fair trade, organic coffee? A strong back to fix a gutter or scrape ice? These may seem like small things, but they are the threads of Love that weave together a community. What can you do to further the kingdom of God today?



This article is made possible by a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute.



If you have questions about this newsletter, or would like to submit an article for a future publication, please contact Mariana at caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net.

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