

Heaven and Earth Growers



"The purpose of Heaven and Earth Growers is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share grace and fellowship through education, protect the environment with organic endeavors, and take responsibility to the community by sharing our bounties."

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Share the Harvest by Rev. Linda Wygant, Grace Seeds Ministry

Upcoming Calendar Events:

- ◆ **March 3, Club Meeting at 9:00 a.m. Topic: Planning the church gardens and container gardening.**
- ◆ **First Day of Spring, March 20**
- ◆ **April 8th Easter**
- ◆ **April 14 (Second Saturday of April), Club Meeting at 9:00 a.m. Topic: Craig Happel will give a talk on composting and the importance of worms.**
- ◆ **April workshop: Making an English trough. Watch for the exact date for this project.**
- ◆ **April 28—Last day to sign up for Golden Meadows garden plot.**
- ◆ **May 5, Club meeting at 9:00 a.m.**
- ◆ **Sunday, May 6th, Heaven and Earth Growers will put on a High-Tea for EPC, Noon to 2:00 p.m.**
- ◆ **Topics and dates are subject to change.**

Share the Harvest, a project of Grace Seeds Ministry, began last June on the southwest side of Chicago and in close by south suburbs Burbank and Oak Lawn. The project's initial start-up goal: to share God's bounty from our gardens with brothers and sisters in our communities who otherwise would not be able to regularly afford fresh fruits and vegetables. And to help gardeners grow in their faith as we learned more about hunger and poverty, and God's call to respond with direct action in our own neighborhoods and communities.

Here's a statistic that inspired Share the Harvest last year. According to an article published on July 5, 2006, in the Chicago Tribune, "Illinois leads the Midwest in deep poverty – a family of four living on an annual income of \$9,675 or less – according to a recent Heartland Alliance report." The number of persons living in deep poverty has "skyrocketed in the six-county area" surrounding Chicago. This number includes 381,733 children, women and men who are our neighbors in Cook County.

Last year, Share the Harvest built a network comprised of four churches and several other

partners who faithfully contributed vegetables from their gardens. We delivered fresh, delicious produce to several food pantries and to a homeless shelter. Boxes of tomatoes, peppers, collard greens, and much more were shared. We can't wait to grow more this year!

The dream is to grow Share the Harvest's ministry each year – to add more partners and to expand this sprouting network's ministry of hospitality and hope. Here's an acronym – with some explanation – that I hope says more about Share the Harvest's ministry goals:

Share the Harvest, a project of Grace Seeds Ministry, partners with faith communities and other groups to help them:

S – Start gardens! We provide technical and educational resources to help our partners get gardens going and growing. These gardens may be plots at places of worship, may be located in backyards, in community garden settings, nursing homes and in many other places!

H - Hear about and respond to hunger and poverty issues -- in our own neighborhoods and around the world. Share

the Harvest growers pledge to share the best of the bounty from their gardens with Share the Harvest partners: food pantries and other groups and organizations that distribute our delicious, fresh vegetables and fruits to our neighbors in need of fresh produce.

A - Activate and expand outreach and partnerships with others who are seeking to plant seeds of hope and hospitality in their communities. George Fox, English founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers), said this: "God is always expanding our boundaries outward." Share the Harvest continues to expand its ecumenical and interfaith relationships: to partner with--and serve with--all who seek to share God's love with our brothers and sisters who are hungry.

R - Reflect critically and theologically on our commitment to live our faith. Share the Harvest provides liturgical resources for worship and also provides leadership for adult education classes, workshops, and retreats. All these resources are designed to help participants make connections

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between what we say we believe and the way we live in the world: particularly our relationship to the rest of God's creation and the way we use our God-given resources (food, money, time, etc.). Share the Harvest also regularly publishes a newsletter that includes prayers, reflections, and other resources to stimulate and inspire our growing in faith.

E - Envision, Dream and Celebrate together

at a Thanksgiving worship service and feast in October as we let our gardens go fallow for winter. Other possibilities for growth and fellowship: canning parties, soup-making parties, recipe swaps, and more!

I'm grateful to Jan for including news about Share the Harvest in your Heaven and Earth Growers newsletter! We'll let Share the Harvest know about you when we begin publishing our newsletter for the season. Blessings on your growing and sharing this year!

Rev. Linda Wygant
Grace Seeds Ministry
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Mustard seed faith have we, O God, small and yearning to grow.

EVEN IF YOU DO NOT GARDEN, DON'T FORGET TO SIGN UP IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH FOR ONE 20' X 20' GARDEN PLOT WITH THE ELMHURST PARK DISTRICT. WE WILL USE THIS LAND FOR OUR GROWING AND EVENTUAL HARVEST GIVING TO THOSE IN NEED. ALSO, CONSIDER SOME PRODUCE FROM YOUR OWN ORGANIC GARDEN. TOGETHER WE CAN SHARE WITH THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY.

Spring garden to do list:

- ◆ February: Start your summer garden seeds indoors now. Information on when its safe to set out, relative to a frost, go to www.organicgardening.com and click on the Seed Starting Chart; or come to a club meeting for discussion.
- ◆ March 17th: Plant peas and sweet peas on St. Patrick's Day.
- ◆ March: Plant your salad greens in a cold frame; it's also a good time to feed evergreens.
- ◆ First Day of Spring, March 20th.

H&EG Club News



Cabin Fever?

All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today.
Author unknown

Rev. Linda Wygant came to talk at our February 3rd club meeting. We appreciate her time traveling in the sub-zero weather, and information on her Share the Harvest. Thanks too, for her article on the front cover. I'm sure we will continue a strong relationship, and perhaps work or donate some of our harvest to her program.

Please sign up now for a garden plot at golden Meadows park. Even if you do not garden, we can use the space for our growing and giving. The Elmhurst Park District charges \$26.00 to a resident for a 20' x 20' plot. Please consider donating a plot to our harvest giving. All plots are distributed via lottery, so we really do not know how many plots we will have in total.

At the upcoming **March 3rd** meeting, we plan to discuss the church yard and gardens. We will decide on the working date for the children's garden. Work may begin on this project as soon as the ground can be worked, usually in March or April. There has been discussion on the addition of containers placed in the front of the church by the entrances. Please bring your thoughts and ideas to this meeting. We will also continue to talk about the children's garden and perhaps some field trips for them to a local farm this early summer.

The **April 14th meeting** will include Craig Happel and his advice on composting, and the importance of worms in the garden.

The **April workshop** will be on making an English Trough, or a container known as hypertufa. The recipe for making one contains sand or perlite combined with cement and peat moss. The containers, bowls, stepping stones or whatever you end up making, are lighter in weight than concrete and have a vintage look. Please consider what you will use as a mold. The mold, wrapped in plastic, could be a bucket, bowl, carton, etc. Watch for more information on this neat project.

On **Sunday, May 6th** the H&EG members will host a High Tea. Watch for more information about this event. **Meetings for Heaven and Earth Growers are held the first Saturday of the month, unless indicated. All are welcomed.**

Heaven and Earth Growers

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Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.