

Final Grant Report Abbey of the Arts

Earth as Our Primary Monastery

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INTRODUCTION

When writing the application for the Abby of the Arts Earth Monastery Grant, I had expected to hold the Yoga and Art retreat at the beginning of autumn. Upon returning to Utah, I found the garden thriving and the late summer work in the garden took precedent over designing a retreat. This past year the garden expanded by fifty percent and late in the summer it was obvious we needed to make preparations to expand the garden yet again for the coming year's growing season. Therefore, late summer and early autumn were spent harvesting and cleaning out existing garden beds, preparing ground for new beds, planting fruit trees, and laying irrigation. The Yoga and Art retreat eventually took place in November, when the garden was put to bed for the year and there was time for reflection before the holiday season.

I deeply appreciate the gift of time and support that Abby of the Arts offered me as I pursued this project. The opportunity to do this work was greatly dependent upon the partnership of such a visionary organization. I think the quote by William Bryant Logan best describes the experience of hospitality offered me by the Abby of the Arts, which I have then in turn been able to offer others, "Hospitality is the fundamental virtue of the soil. It makes room. It shares. It neutralizes poisons. And so it heals. This is what the soil teaches: If you want to be remembered, give yourself away." This is the role of Hospitality Grounds Community Garden. It is a third space where people may gather and experience the virtue of the soil.

DEFINING THIRD SPACE

Culturally we apply the term, "third space", to places that are neither a person's home nor their

office, they are a third space because they are where people gather and build community. This cultural third space is most easily identified when we think of the TV shows *Cheers* and *Friends*, where the pub and the coffeehouse became gathering places of community and identity. Spiritually speaking, the following concepts describe Sacred Space, particularly identifying how Third Space is Sacred Space. “Sacred spaces are places that invite authenticity – they bring out our genuine self; they invite our genuine self to be present and connect; they are what Celtic peoples called “thin places” in the veil between heaven and earth. For Celts and later Christians sacred places can be grouped into at least three categories, and some sacred places fit into all three:

- The Historical – Holy Memory Places. Places where a significant historical event, in the story of encounter with God, took place.
- Psychological – Solitary Places. Places that invite prayer; free from distraction where people can spend time with God.
- Incarnational – Activity Places. Places where it is evident that God is active among humankind. Places that “touch heaven”.

Third spaces are sacred spaces because they choose us, they pull us in – we do not select them. They by definition are the ordinary made extraordinary because of the life presence within them. These places have a liminal quality (they occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold) and through this they speak to mystery, and to the heart through varying states of consciousness. They offer comfort and safety; and they are local and universal at the same time – [like gardens] they are contextual to the community that is global.”¹

Leading up to this grant work I studied third space as an ecclesiology that explores postmodern spaces and faith community development, particularly as it informs my passion around the birth and formation of a healthy spiritual community that embraces a core value of radical hospitality. I believe the foundation of a healthy spiritual community lies in the discernment of individual and community identity. It is in first being hospitable to ourselves, by developing an understanding of the marginalized parts of our own identity, that we may be radically hospitable to those who are on the margins. I believe it is in this definition, of third space as sacred space, that we



Monks, artists, and gardeners

¹ Sheryl Kujawa – Holbrook, 2014 Ministry Developer’s Conference Las Vegas, Nevada.

find the identity of the monastery, and therefore the earth as our primary monastery when we meet in the garden.

The energy this project has generated is rapidly attracting new and interested community gardeners. Those gathering desire a fresh expression of community, seeking to avoid what they describe as ‘disenfranchised experiences’ around community gardening. My studies of Christian community formation have led me to firmly believe that identity is at the core of the spiritual community health. As I am further drawn to serve as a community developer, I know that I must work to provide opportunities for discernment of individual identity and gifts, and bring awareness to how individual strengths build community. I believe this is a foundational step to becoming a healthy and vibrant spiritual community.

MISSION OF HOSPITALITY GROUNDS

The mission of Hospitality Grounds Community Garden is multifaceted, encompassing community building through a greater awareness of our interconnectedness with our neighbors as well as with the marginalized in our community. The community garden challenges the binary that exists between the church and the world. This is a false binary that confines the Divine to the church building and the people there in, and all that is outside the church as belonging to the profane. This binary fails to encompass all of creation as belonging to the Divine, and claiming the sacred in all that exists. This identification keeps humanity from seeing the earth as sacred space.

Hospitality Grounds Community Garden seeks to be a sacred space of radical hospitality, providing opportunities through the gathering of community for people to develop compassion for one another and the earth. There can be no better place than the garden, the root of sustainable life, as the locus from which to understand reconciliation of ourselves, our community and humanity with the earth. Nourishing an earth cherishing consciousness begins with the hospitality of the table. It is in the cultivation, preparation and sharing of abundant harvest that we have the opportunity to discover and explore our interconnectedness with one another and all of creation. The earth as a monastery is the source of spiritual and physical sustenance simply stated - it is putting food on the table.

Through the garden we hope to teach an earth cherishing consciousness, and an awareness of the earth as our primary monastery, understood through compassion – compassion for oneself, our neighbors – those local and global, and for the earth as our present and future home. It is in compassion that we might rediscover the power of story. Humans need story to survive, thrive, and create change – this is one of the great offerings that myth and faith bring to human lives. It is through compassion, which cultivates curiosity, and invites us into the beauty of mystery, that we hear the story of our interconnectedness.

The garden is a creative space; each person's bed is an individual creative project as well as the larger creativity and connection of the gardening community in spatial design, maintenance, and visioning

new growth. Hospitality Grounds is a project that brings more earth awareness and spiritual direction to the parish and larger community, by bringing the ministry of the church outside into direct contact with the earth, deconstructing the false binary that exists around sacred space.

PROJECT

The Earth Monastery Grant was used to provide opportunities for gardeners at Hospitality Grounds Community Garden, in Park City, Utah, to discover their own deeper identities &



spiritual connection with the earth and in this develop a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. To expand this work, making it more accessible to future gardeners and individuals contemplating a gardening experience, I worked with the garden committee to design and build a website for Hospitality Grounds Community Garden that fosters a greater connection between the community gardeners and the earth as our primary monastery.

Painting for the first time in her life!

In the project development time leading up to the launch of the website I actively worked in the garden with the gardening community, and then led a day retreat designed, with clergy Mother Claudia Giacomina and Deacon Sandra Jones, to invite the gardeners to reflect on & record their gardening experiences through yoga, art & story; writing meditations, prayers and blessings for the cycle of the liturgical gardening season that are now website content. Development of a website for Hospitality Grounds was a vital next step in the inter-faith ministry of the garden as a third space community. It now serves not only as a location from which to share information but also as an extension of the garden itself, particularly in the dormant cycle of the growing



season, as people have time to reflect on their gardening experiences. In its own way the website is a garden bed of its very own, it is a contemplative and creative space, which will continue to grow and blossom as the years go by. The new website, like the garden, nourishes contemplative awareness and presence to creation, and connects spiritual and gardening practices with awareness for the earth. The Hospitality Grounds Community Garden website may be viewed at: <http://www.hospitalitygrounds.com/>

The focus of the half day Autumn Restorative Retreat was Soul Care. The design of the retreat brought individuals into contact with the earth and their own body through yoga, art, meditation



Savasana...our body is our soul's garden

and reflection. We began with ninety minutes of yoga led by a local yogi and organic nursery entrepreneur, which concluded with a meditation during savasana designed to foster an awareness of the body as the garden of the soul. At noon a vegetarian lunch was served, prepared by a local chef & gardener, and accompanied by a

second meditation. An invitation to art and reflective space was extended following lunch, led by spiritual director and Episcopal priest, Mother Claudia Giacoma. The retreat concluded in the afternoon with an offering of creative response and a closing Eucharist celebrating the season.



The retreat gathered gardeners as well as non-gardeners interested in supporting the mission of the garden, and

those seeking retreat. Through the retreat money was donated and then gifted to the local battered women's shelter, Peace House, to assist them in preparation of their Thanksgiving meal. For the past couple of years Hospitality Grounds has donated a portion of the garden harvest to the Peace House each week; through the Autumn Restorative Retreat we learned of the Peace House's love of our garden, and their desire to build gardens at their new facility for the women, that will be constructed in the coming five years. The director shared that they have an issue with keeping in touch with the women from the shelter once they return to the local community, because they lack a



Offering of Creative Response

gathering space, and that they look forward to the new facility as it will extend their program options as well as housing capacity. A seed was planted during this time, inviting the administration of the Peace House to garden at Hospitality Grounds in the coming season, with the women who have left their facility. This would offer the Peace House a gathering place and program to continue follow-up contact with the women who've returned to the community. In the coming month the garden committee will reconnect with the administration of the Peace House, in hopes that they are looking forward to joining the garden for the 2015 season!

FINANCIAL REPORT

Website – Creation of logo, Professional design consult, Site hosting fee	\$800.00
Retreat – Materials, instruction, meal	<u>\$200.00</u>
<i>Total Grant</i>	<i>\$1,000.00</i>