

## Ministerial Musings

*"Help us to be the always hopeful gardeners of the spirit" -May Sarton*



As part of this sabbatical, I took part in a retreat called "Journey Toward an Undivided Self" [based on Parker Palmer's "A Hidden Wholeness" (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker>)]. I fully expected this column to be a note reflecting on that experience. But as I write on a sunny, warm spring day, I find myself reflecting on the conference center setting instead.

The Pearlstone Center grounds function as an educational farm. There are cultivated areas with a couple of acres of vegetables; perennial plantings of fruit trees, herbs and vegetables; and an animal pasture that's home to some goats and chickens. The focus is on sustainability and stewardship, all done within the tenets of the Jewish faith.

There is a tradition that we are saved - that the time of the messiah will come - that we will attain wholeness - when there is cooperation among three sustaining aspects of life: family, home and land. In an article about the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, Shoshana Friedman says that "health, well-being and, ultimately, collective redemption will come from home, family and land being part of a sacred system where each feeds the others." Such an idea is not unique to Judaism - this is very much in tune with our Unitarian Universalist values and our Ministry for Earth (<http://uuministryforearth.org>).

I've heard it said that sustainability is hard; that ethical eating is just a big guilt-trip; that it won't make that much of a difference anyway. But those few days at the Pearlstone Center (<http://pearlstonecenter.org/our-animals/>) brought the whole idea of "earth-justice" more clearly in focus and drew it closer to my heart. It is a call to do what we can in our small sphere to heal ourselves, our community and the wider world. We need to support small local farms and food producers. And we have to fight legislation that favors monopolistic agribusiness. These are huge issues and it is a lot to take on - and we can't all go back to the land.

I'm planing to start first at my own table, in my own home, with my family and my community. This year we are skipping the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share and instead tending to the small garden at the Parsonage and taking advantage of the very fine farmers' markets in our area. I'm hoping you, too, will take advantage of the life-affirming opportunities that summer offers to connect with our food and our world.

A few more weeks remain in this sabbatical time... fields are no longer fallow as the season of planting and growth begins. I'll take that as a sign - may we all be blessed with warm sun, nurturing rains and loving companions on our journeys!

In the faith, with hope and love,

--Susan

Reverend Dr. Susan Veronica Rak