



The Circle

Volume XVII Issue 3 Spring 2008

Bless You, Bless Me...



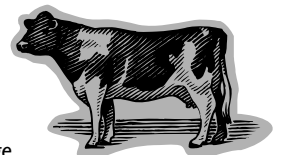
Bless you. Often times, it's a phrase spoken almost unconsciously after a person sneezes – as a reaction or a reflex. In our secular society, it is becoming merely a verbal remnant of the vast, ancient and multi-cultural/faith tradition of offering blessing upon one another, upon ourselves and upon the earth. Blessings were, and are to be, mindful acts. They are a conscious and deliberate acknowledgment to declare and honour the sacred nature of a person, creature, plant or landscape. When a blessing is said (or thought) with mindful intent, there is a connection made and energy is sent to the recipient, the blessed. Blessings can help us to form relationships among those with whom we share our world and have the power to shift our perspective and actions by providing intimate (even if momentary) connection. At present, nature is bearing a large brunt of our unconscious acts; from excessively high emissions to water pollution to habitat destruction. Our inability to see them as sacred water and land-bodies allows for their continued contamination and devastation. At the same time, people living in poverty, especially in the developing world, are paying the price of the lack of relationship Western society feels among our fellow human beings. If we truly felt empathetic connections with those in less privileged countries, could we still possibly feel satisfied or happy about our new purchases of sweat-shop clothing? Would we not protest seed patents and the co-opting of the food supply? Would we not eradicate human trafficking? If we make the deliberate choice and conscious act to bless the earth and its inhabitants, we are more likely to see their beauty, to cherish the diversity and have gratitude for all existence. We become *of* the earth, instead of on it: a conscious relationship is formed.



Bless me. When we do give deliberate blessings, they are often directed towards others as a way to say thank-you for a kind or meaningful act. But in our fast-paced lives, we often forget to pause and bless ourselves. Our minds and bodies work hard for

us all day, yet we often forget to acknowledge their presence (until something goes wrong). We forget to nourish ourselves properly, or rest when we are stressed or overexerted. We often push, push, push ourselves to the limit while failing to pause to pay homage or have gratitude for that which is allowing this to happen, for our mind and body: our sacred materials. How different would we feel if we began to include small self-blessing rituals into our daily routine? Something as simple as a stretch or a self hug can allow us to celebrate our sacred bodies. A poem or a moment of quiet can bless your mind. Beautifully, music is a way to bless both at once: putting on your favourite song and letting loose can uplift you from a tough day and refocus your brain into a more positive state of mind. But hands-down, the best way to bless oneself, each other and the earth all at once is by becoming conscious of what we put into our bodies – our food and drink.

Bless this food we are about to eat. Fewer and fewer people speak these words before a meal and many of us tend to ignore the kind of food we are ingesting. If we could see our minds and bodies as a blessing, we would eat the most nutritious foods we can in order to preserve our health. Food is our critically vital source of energy and nutrients for our bodies and minds, yet our culture continues to eat items that are full of empty calories, toxins, chemicals and all those other unpronounceable things listed in the ingredients. A feeling of love and care for yourself, of your body being a blessing, will inspire you to consciously examine each morsel you put in your body. At the same time, if we could consider our fellow human beings and animals as a blessing, we would honour those who have grown our food or sacrificed their lives for our nourishment. A trip to the local farmer's market can surround you with a cherished gratitude as you speak with the men and women who spent their energy harvesting their food or tending their farm animals with care. A care that they now pass on to you. An important connection is formed as you shake the farmer's hand; a mutual blessing – you bless the farmer for a



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good harvest and the farmer blesses you for choosing his or her food. Lastly, if we can feel the sacredness of the earth, we will acknowledge the blessing of her extraordinary bounty and not allow for our food production and corporate greed to destroy that natural fertility and generosity. Through food, the words "bless this food we are about to eat" can come alive and have a much deeper meaning that includes the land that held it, the farmer that nurtured it, and your body that will enjoy it.

Blessings are sacred acts that send energy to others, to the earth and to ourselves as a way to give thanks and acknowledge the presence of every being. As you walk down a street or amid the stalls at a farmer's market, or when you sit at the dinner table or stand in front of a mirror, bless the people and nature that you pass, the food you ingest and the body you see. Bless you, bless me, bless this circle of life!



On Our Shelves...

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life by Barbara Kingsolver

Eat locally. Barbara Kingsolver took these words to heart when her family decided to move from Tuscon, Arizona to her husband's farm in the southern Appalachians. In this book, Kingsolver writes about her family's first year on the farm as they experience the struggles and satisfaction found in the planting, tending and harvesting of their own food. Throughout the course of the year, the Kingsolvers meet and dialogue with local farmers to share ideas and produce. In North America, we have become so cut off from the people who grow and provide our food and Kingsolver reveals the necessity to regain that connection. She also weaves together a thorough yet accessible big picture of how we ended

up so disconnected— from multi-national agribusiness, seed patents, pesticide use, the rampant abuse of animals, draining of the water table, etc. all to have whatever we want, *now*. In January, strawberries might taste like sawdust, be genetically modified, ripened over thousands of kilometres on a CO₂ emitting truck, but we're eating strawberries in January, darn it! Amid Kingsolver's stories, her husband, Steven L. Hopp also provides readers with the facts about the economic, cultural and nutritional consequences of failing to eat locally. Kingsolver's oldest daughter, Camille, writes for the book as well, revealing her own passion for food and providing us with mouth-watering recipes. As local food is beginning to emerge in national consciousness, this superb book provides a fascinating look at the personal journey of one family who decided to bless their bodies and community by eating food that they grew themselves and bought from local farmers.

Preserving the Harvest

The harvest season will soon be upon us! The tradition of preserving fruits, herbs and vegetables has numerous benefits for the earth, our health and our relationship to what we eat. This is the perfect time of year for preserving, as farmer's fields and gardener's patches bring forth abundance. Canning, pickling and drying can deepen our relationship with the food we eat and also provide us a sense of accomplishment and security as we head into winter. These titles cover some basic preserving methods and are easy to follow:

Available at Your Local Bookseller

Root Cellaring: The Simple No-Processing Way to Store Fruits and Vegetables

By Mike Bubel, Storey Publishing, 1991

You don't actually need a cellar to benefit from the techniques in this book – a dark, cool space, such as a closet will do.

Four Season Harvest: How to Harvest Fresh Organic Vegetables from Your Home Gardens All Year Long

Eliot Coleman, Published by New Chelsea Green

This book provides strategies for lengthening your garden's growing season in organic, earth-friendly ways.

How to Store Your Garden Produce: The Key to Self-Sufficiency

Piers Warren, Published by Chelsea Green Publishing

The following books are available at the London Public Library.

Preserving Summer's Bounty : A quick and easy guide to freezing, canning, preserving and drying what you grow

Edited by Susan McClure and the Staff of the Rodale Food Center
St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Preserving Fruits & Vegetables

By Carol W. Costenbader, Storey Publishing, 1996.

Jams, Jellies & Preserves : Make Beautiful Gifts to Give (or Keep)

By Linda Ferrari, Prima Publishing, 1996.

The techniques discussed in this book include freezing, clamping, hanging, drying, bottling, pickling, and fermenting.



The Circle will be closed for summer holidays from the Canada Day to the Civic holiday long weekends (30th June - 5th August). Please hold all library returns until we re-open in August. Thanks!

By Christina Baldwin

Calling the Circle: the First and Future Culture

Calling the Circle is a helpful resource guide for groups such as The Circle Women's Centre. It includes suggestions such as listening and speaking from your heart, establishing goals, and solving problems in a respectful manner.

Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest

Life's Companion is a book to help people find who they truly are and to develop deeper relationships with the earth and others. It promotes reflection, silences and acceptance to sustain a spiritual life.

Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives Through the Power and Practice of Story

This book describes the importance of writing stories. It explains

how to practice this in our own lives and the nature of story. Stories can achieve both personal knowledge of the self and maintain our organizations.

By Ann Linnea

Deep Water Passage: A Spiritual Journey at Mid-life

This book captures Ann Linnea's journey kayaking the perimeter of Lake Superior at 43 years old. The journey took 65 days and 1200 miles, often times with harsh weather. Although it was a physically exhausting experience, Ann found the journey was spiritually arousing and inspiring.

Teaching Kids to Love the Earth

This book consists of a collection of 186 activities for children and adults to explore the earth with a sense of wonder. It encourages curiosity, sharing, passion and appreciation for the earth.

"Get Fresh...Eat Local"

London-Middlesex Creates a Local Food Guide



For all of you who have recently been inspired by books like *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year in Local Eating* or Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year in Food Life*, the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture, in collaboration with other London & area organisations, have made finding and purchasing local food easier than ever before. "Get Fresh ...Eat Local" is a free guide to area farms, markets and other suppliers that takes the guess work out of finding local meats, vegetables, fruits, syrups and honey. Included in the guide is a large map that spans from Parkhill to Glencoe to Putnam with area producers clearly marked, along with their contact information, hours of operation and supply list. "Get Fresh...Eat Local" also includes a calendar guide to vegetables & fruit's seasonal availability, a section on "why buy local?" and some tips for doing so, rounded off by some fun farm facts. For example, did you know that "last year enough apples were grown in Middlesex County to make more that 15 million apple pies!"

For a pdf version of the Get Fresh...Eat Local map visit www.healthylivinginfo.ca/news.php#farmmap



Despedida Sheila- Buen Viaje!

This June, Planning Circle member Sheila Horrell will go on a year's hiatus from her very busy life (what isn't Sheila involved in!?) and travel to Peru to live and work in solidarity with women in the city of Chiclayo. Sheila's trip was facilitated through her involvement in Seeds of Hope, an Ursuline project that seeks to forge connections between women in Canada & Peru. To keep us up-to-date on her adventures, Sheila will write about her experiences on her blog (online journal) at: <http://sheilahorrell.blogspot.com>. Farewell Sheila— Safe Journey!

Our Deepest Gratitude

The Circle wishes to express our heartfelt thanks for the many years of service, wisdom, time and efforts so generously given by these beautiful, dedicated women. The Circle was able to continue spiralling because you held our energies during our time of transition.

Our blessings go to each of you as you journey on to your next endeavours.

Planning Circle:

Cheryl Ebel, Ardath Finnbogason-Hill, Pauline Maheux, Pat Mooney & Jean Walmsley

Editorial Circle:

Kelly Guitard and Linda Woodard

Planning Circle

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Sheila Horrell
Brenda Hutton
Paula Marcotte
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Kim Young Milani
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Margie O'Connor
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Jennifer White

The Circle Staff

Holly Burns
Mandy Leung
Miranda Payne
Kim Young Milani

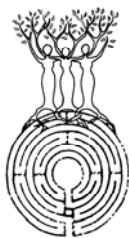
Upcoming Events at The Circle...



Open Circle...ritual, spirituality, activism and the mystical experience of women gathered to reflect on the sacred in our lives. Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia, 7:30 p.m. Members: free, Non-members: \$2. **All Women Welcome!**

25 June
24 September

Mid-summer Night's Enchantment
Being a Blessing on the Earth



Celebrating Maiden, Mother & Crone: A Red Tent Ritual

Saturday 21 June, 8:00 pm

Over a decade has passed since Anne Diamant wrote *The Red Tent* and gave us a gift. Beyond religion, race or creed, the story of the Red Tent stands as a powerful symbol of women gathering in community to hold and celebrate the sacred feminine. The Circle will symbolically erect a Red Tent as an invitation for women and girls to gather and share how maiden, mother, and crone lives in each of us and celebrate the life cycles with ritual and a labyrinth walk. Come into the tent with us and re-member.

Gather in the Merici Lounge. Free Will Donation, Free Parking. RSVP to 519-432-8353 x28288 or circle@uwo.ca



The Sophia Series—IWIL Lecture **Christina Baldwin & Ann Linnea Coming of Age**

Wednesday 15 October, 7:30 pm
Brescia Auditorium, Free Will Donation

Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin are pioneers inviting their peers to claim elderhood and younger generations to claim purpose. Teaching together since 1991, their partnership has generated original work in the areas of circle process, vision quest, and story. They come to share their story of integrating ancient skills and ceremony with the demands of women's leadership today. Ann and Christina will share their knowledge, questions, and personal journeys in the context of this groundbreaking time for women.

For more information: www.iwil.ca or 519-432-8353 x28288

More Than Just a Book Sale Saturday 29 November, 10am-3pm

Brescia Auditorium. Free Parking. Books to Donate?: Please drop them off at The Circle or call 432-8353 x28288

...at Brescia

Thursday 19 June

When Opportunity Knocks...Are You Ready?

Leadership Conference for Women sponsored by IWIL;

8:30am– 2:30 pm, \$49.00 or \$29.00 for students. Conference speakers divided into 2 streams. *Stream A*—designed for young women interested in gaining skills in marketing themselves, negotiation & networking. *Stream B* is designed for mid-career women seeking to further develop their leadership abilities, building successful teams & creating a vision for an organization. Info & Registration: www.iwil.ca or 519-432-8353 x28293

...and beyond

14 June- Your Life, Your Way...Starting Today! The Essential Workshop for Professional Women Wanting More Out of Life. Facilitator: Gail Barker; 9am-4pm, Idlewyld Inn, \$179, registration deadline: 7 June. Info: 519-245-8928 or info@stellarcc.com

19 June - In Good Company CD Launch, 8pm, Aeolian Hall, \$10, featuring a fabulous compilation of London musicians, CD produced by Louise Fagan. Tkts: 519-672-7950

18 September - Take Back the Night, Peace Gardens (York & Thames St.), 6:45pm, Rally-Speakers-March. After Party—Alex P. Keaton

Girls LEAD (Leadership Education and Development) Summer Camp Program

Session 1: July 7th-11th, Entering Grades 3 & 4

Session 2: July 14th-18th & 21st-25th, Entering Grades 5 & 6

Session 3: Aug 5th- 8th & 11th-14th, Entering Grades 7 & 8

Info & Registration - www.iwil.ca, lead@uwo.ca, 519-432-8353 x 28037

Thursday 23 October

Breakfast for Bursaries -Wendy Mesley, Award Winning Broadcast Journalist, London Convention Centre, 7am - 9am, \$65/ ticket Info: www.brescia.uwo.ca/giving/breakfast_2008.html, 519.432.8353 ext.28009

20 September - Radical Amazement: A Hopeful Response to the Ecological Challenges of Our Time. - with Judy Cannato.

9am-3pm, Bessie Labatt Hall, King's UC, \$65, \$50 (seniors) & \$30 (students). Info & Reg.: 519-432-3781 x567 or networkministries@csj.london.on.ca

18 October - Playing in the Field of the Unlived Life: A woman's workshop, facilitated by Mary Hamilton. 9am-5pm,

London Chambers of Commerce. 244 Pall Mall St. Info: Mary Hamilton, 519-433- 2160 *An experiential workshop for women interested in deepening their self-awareness through exploring the nature of the body-soul connection.*

WomenSpiritSong is searching for a Choir Director

WomenSpiritSong, a non-auditioning, female choir, is looking for a new Director. Our unique choir sings about social justice, nature and the feminine. Having recently released our CD -'Cycles'- we are excited to continue sharing our music with the London community. The right candidate will possess not only a love of this style of music but also enjoy a facilitator's approach to conducting. and preferably have experience working in collectives. To inquire, please contact: WomenSpiritSong@gmail.com