

# Streams

No. 43 Winter '12 A Newsletter of Crystal Spring Center for Earth Literacy

## *In the Beginning...*

If we open our window into that weathered crevice where memory stores sound, we might hear the scratch of a small kindergarten chair scraping across hard linoleum floor...a floor that remains intact to this day. There's magic in the words *in the beginning* when those words fall upon a child's ear. A story invites the child into the deep secrets of our world with all her creatures. In listening to the tale the veil of mystery lifts, if only for awhile.

Our adult attention is not drawn forth with such delight. Surely, the very living of that Story has taught us that every beginning is born in an ending, the pathos of birthing and dying. That is a guiding principle of our creating universe, form ever relinquishing toward greater complexity, beauty and truth.

Crystal Spring hovers in such a moment. Of course, the overarching geological and cultural expression of this place is reshaping itself in the greater arc of climate change and the end of the industrial era. But the close-in story is the one to be told in this issue of Streams. Down the Providence Highway in May, 1949, to this rural town came two Dominican Sisters. Mr. and Mrs. James Toner, with a profound understanding of an economy of "enough," handed over the deed to their summer home with its sprawling landscape to the Sisters. Within one month the house was summer home to boarders from our academy.

When September came, a dozen postulants arrived to begin their novitiate. Over the years classrooms were added to the house, then a school and convent built. A variety of ministries have been housed in the buildings. No matter the ministry or service, learning and spiritual fulfillment were foundational to the program. Today only the original Toner homestead with the two classroom extension, sitting on 42 acres of registered land, remains in the care of the Dominican Sisters. Yet, the sense of "novitiate" is as vital as it was sixty years ago. Today we are a learning center for the 21st century. The kindergarten room is adorned anew in preparation for the program that will become another beginning story as the New Year arrives.

To be a vital energy in the 21st century we must join with those who are shaping the alternative structures that will sustain life as the old order crumbles. In a world slowly coming to understand the meaning of peak oil, we recognize that the creative shaping of the structures that will sustain us must be local efforts. We are learning the discipline and the limits of the land. Our human projects can no longer serve only human needs but must foster relationships with all beings, plants and animals, water and soils of a place. Progress and prosperity must become the cultivating of bioregional communities, the folding in of human work with the flowering and flourishing of all life forms.

*continued*

## *In the Beginning... continued*

In 1996, a small non-profit, Red Tomato, Inc., was founded in southeastern, MA., their office located in Stoughton. The organization was established on behalf of local farmers and local growers in order that the precious produce coming from the soils of New England could find its way into both small retail and major food suppliers in this region. The small family farms might become again the sustaining source of local nourishment, local economy, local community, and local fulfillment.

The accountability of non-profits is changing as their founding mission statements must now interact with a sweep of social and ecological challenges. In the past, most were instituted to serve human needs. Now that global warming, the collapse of a world order, the depletion of natural systems threaten the well being of all life, their purpose is emerging into a broader encounter and presence within a home place. In the deepening understanding of charity and service, Crystal Spring and Red Tomato meet.

Previously, the search for truth, goodness and beauty were thought to be exclusively religious values. In the face of unparalleled diminishment we are all awakening to recognize them as human values. The mode and manner of Crystal Spring's presence transforms internally and externally. Our future work will be grace-filled participation with the efforts, dreams, and vision of broader human community.

The mission of Red Tomato is connecting farmers and customers through marketing, trade and education. They passionately believe that family farms locally based, ecologically sound, and tied to a fair trade food system is the way to better our world. The values of our two small non-profits are in harmony. Our shared geography and shared vision draw us together. We're making a few simple changes to open up spaces and close in others. Compatible and companioning, Crystal Spring anticipates:

- a regionally focused program that enhances human-Earth relationship
- a re-creation of our own ministry as we engage with a generation manifesting key skills for the present and foresight for the future
- a regionally appropriate culture in all of its aspects.

For the foreseeable future this unity of the human with its environment will certainly be the context for all the various activities of Religious Orders. No matter our services of the past, teaching and healing, social reforms and religious activities, none of these will succeed apart from the larger context of the natural world...which brings us back to that scraping of the kindergarten chair on linoleum.

We begin anew. Once little hands stuffed work sheets and crayons in two rows of boxes nailed securely to the wall just below the windowsills in the classroom. Now an impressive array of books are stashed and stored ~ books by food writers, policy makers, volumes about retail practices, nutrition, and integrated pest management toward recovery of the once prolific apple orchards of the northeast.

We will always be novices in an evolving Universe. The generosity of James and Mary Toner requires that we remain ever open to the needs of the times. There are deeper visions than ours unfolding. Our story's just a snippet, really, yet incredibly significant in the tale of this place.

Winter Solstice eve families will gather on the long night to experience the dark and quiet of winter. Children will light their lanterns and go forth to seek the light. In the seeking they will become deeply aware of the indestructible light within. The beginning and end of all our human endeavors rest in the cosmological order pouring forth from that Light. Blessed be our moment of grace.

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**Winter Solstice Celebration**  
Wednesday, December 21, 4:30 – 6:30pm

A multi-cultural celebration of the winter solstice! Families gather together on the longest night of the year to experience the dark, quiet of winter, and the indestructible light within. The celebration will include a simple family 'picnic' dinner, a puppet show, and a lantern walk and song.



Please note: Winter Solstice is surely the moment when we begin to understand all story is the Story the Universe tells of itself. We remember we are born of a star. Over the years so many of you have come to enter this ritual as we acknowledge the darkness, not just in its seasonal mode, but more in the profound shift of the very functioning of our Planet. While this celebration is particularly for our home school families, you are welcome to join the lantern walk at 6:30. Then, come into the house for warm cider and conversation as we renew friendships. Please let us know if you plan to join us for the walk: [cryspr@comcast.net](mailto:cryspr@comcast.net)

**Green Reel – Winter 2012**  
**Films for Sustainable Living**  
Sunday Evenings, 7pm



- Jan 8 ~ Deconstructing Supper
- Jan 15 ~ Dirty Business
- Jan 22 ~ Bag It!
- Jan 29 ~ Economics of Happiness
- Feb. 5 ~ Waterlife
- Feb.12 ~ Journey of the Universe

**All films shown**  
at  
**Congregation Agudas Achim**  
**901 N. Main Street, Attleboro**  
**Rt 95 – Exit 5**  
**Rt 152 & Toner Blvd**

*Free and Open to the Public*  
*For more information: 508-298-9450*

***Coming Home to Place***

People everywhere are inspired to join in the collective efforts that seek a new beginning. This requires a new way of thinking, a new participation. Respect for Nature's economy stirs in the work of local farmers, land conservation, food systems, human initiatives everywhere. Our Board of Directors risks the way forward in forming our transition into the next articulation of the gift given by the Toner Family. We are all one in *the great work* of our times.

\_\_\_\_ Please accept my gift as my participation in the human initiative

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Our gracious thanks to you who are present in all that creates and is Crystal Spring*

**As We Carry On into 2012**

**Home School Program**

**Tracks**

**January 17<sup>th</sup> – March 13**

(8 sessions + a break)

9:30 – 11am

***Do animals AND trees leave tracks?***

The winter and the thaw invite us to see, feel and taste how trees, animals and water conspire in the winter freeze.

Learn what they love about winter in the heart of the sugar bush. Tap your own maple tree...then boil down some sap to celebrate a syrupy spring equinox!

Cost: \$45

*Folks have called to ask about the holiday booknook open house, about winter soups and harvest bread baking classes. We've had inquiries about mindfulness meditation classes and practice. Participants in extended programs have asked if they can fill in calendars for retreats and the like. We thank you for entering into this time of transition with us, our moment of living Earth's pathos of birthing and dying, beginning and ending to begin again. When Spring appears from Winter's night, Crystal Spring programs will manifest anew in, with and through the collaborative energy and center we are becoming. Check our website to connect to the links that show the larger arc of our work.*

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