

Garden Angel Project at Unity Northwest Church

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by Rev. Greg Barrette, gbarrette@unitynorthwest.org

Last summer, the congregation of Unity Northwest Church, Des Plaines, Illinois, invited everyone in the northwest suburbs of Chicago to participate in a project to feed the hungry and the homeless. We sent out press releases that told the people, “Just drop off a few of your spare fresh vegetables at the church, and representatives from WINGS (Women In Need Growing Stronger) of Palatine and the Self-Help Food Pantry and Closet of Des Plaines will pick them up and distribute them to the needy in our community.”



In May, we distributed plants (donated by a local garden center) to our congregation. At the end of summer, we harvested a bumper crop! Our children, led by Rev. Diane Venzera, planted a huge garden behind the church that they had been tending and harvesting each week in anticipation of this project. Their Sunday lessons were about being good stewards of the earth, and taking responsibility for feeding those in need.

We wanted to share the wealth of this experience with our community and invited everyone to participate. Any Unity church or center can do this so easily. It will warm your heart and lift up your mind. It is so easy to feed the hungry! So much of the food collected by our wonderful local social service agencies is canned or processed, by necessity. We thought that we could each dedicate at least one vegetable plant and donate this healthier food to the hungry. We grew a container plant if we lived in an apartment, or at least one garden plant, if we had some land to do so.

Project Planning

The first thing to do is to contact garden centers and get donated plants. Pass these out in the spring. If you can have your kids grow a garden behind the church building, so much the better. Diane Venzera has a wonderful EarthCare curriculum that fits right in with this project. Then send out press releases and invite the greater community to participate. Finally, put out the marked baskets in the lobby and contact area shelters and food pantries to pick it up twice a week.

For more information, please call 847.297.0997, visit Unity Northwest's website at www.unitynorthwest.org, or contact Diane at dvenzera@gmail.com.

