



Report of 2013-14

Dedicated to Rural Ministry Education, Care of Creation, and Retreat Hospitality

Reflections on 2013

The first quarter of 2013 started slowly, but then the year got very exciting. In the end we had a 9% increase in guests over 2012 and financially we set another user revenue record.

This past year we enhanced our concept of “**Place as Teacher**”, our philosophy that the Land and a place can teach important lessons regarding community and culture. We had our first **Care of Creation Fellowship** a program developed by Board Member, Dr. Mary Hess. Luther seminarian **Jason Clifton** joined us for the summer. Jason brought a passion for the Land and deep experience through previous work with Heifer International. He **developed creative learning activities related to our place, increased the productivity of our gardens, oversaw our lambing season, designed and installed a Peace Garden, and coordinated the redevelopment of our Discovery Center.** Jason’s presence was truly a blessing to SHF and we look forward to the next Fellowship.

Rural Ministry and Rural Life Education

In May 2013, we held **Rural Ministry 101**, a continuing education event for new to rural clergy. Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl was the featured presenter. In the fall we held a course called **Exploring Town and Country Ministry** for the MN Consortium of Theological Schools. Our Executive Director team taught the course with Dr. Alvin Luedke of Luther Seminary, St. Paul. Enrollment for the course was the highest in years. In June, we hosted a **delegation from South Africa**, In addition to building relationships, planning was done regarding our continued work in **agricultural and rural development in Zulu villages.** Our Executive Director continues to work with **The Rural Church Network of the United States and Canada (RCN)**, and Luther Seminary on educational projects for rural ministry. The RCN continues to work on resource development for small town and rural congregations to be delivered through their website. **Our Executive Director was elected President of the RCN** at their annual meeting in September. Our Executive Director also attended the **annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society** in August. In February 2014 we had our **1st Annual Pitchforks and Hay Theological Retreat.**

Spiritual Connections

In 2013 we saw an increase in personal retreats **including** increased use of the stone cottage. **Our Associate Director, Margaret, has been involved in more** mentoring and spiritual direction **especially with clergy. She has entered into a** training program to be certified for Spiritual Direction. **Our new** Peace Garden and Peace Pole **provides a meditative location on our grounds** to contemplate peacefully.

Additional Education and Advocacy

Associate Director Margaret continues to coordinate First Call Theological Education for the SW MN Synod of the ELCA. She also continues to conduct a number of **summer bible study retreats** for various women's groups. We had four **Common Ground Youth Events** again this year. Other opportunities which have become annual events include a **home-schooling conference, Gustavus Adolphus student retreats, VA Chaplains retreat** and programs for 2 area pre-schools. The **University of Minnesota Philosophy Camp “Lives Worth Living”** was a success and expanded for 2013. The **Minneapolis Star Tribune** ran a feature article on the program with a video on their website.

Many Thanks

We greatly appreciate the support, prayers, and participation of the congregations of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. **Thank you and we hope to see you at the Farm in 2014.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Dr. Mark Yackel-Juleen

Executive Director