

Faith is a growing thing

Every year, spring seems like a miracle to me. Long months of cold weather had started to create some discontent and cabin fever within the four walls of our small home but on May 3 the open air and smell of earth had my three children smiling happily and laughing.

My kids, with trowels in hands dug a small hole and planted our "newborn" (my daughter's word for our red pine seedling). There was a tiny squabble as to who would get to pour the water, but a quick compromise was met as both my 4 and 7 year old tipped the bucket together.

Then they quietly, and reverently began to place stones around the base of the tree, "for protection," my 7-year-old explained. My family was not the only one to plant a tree last week.

People from over 100 faith communities in all counties of the Upper Peninsula and even into Wisconsin took part in the EarthKeepers Tree Project, an interfaith initiative to plant 12,000 red pine seedlings with help from faith communities and organizations throughout the U.P.

Thank you to the bishops and faith leaders of 10 denominations, the Superior Watershed Partnership, the Cedar Tree Institute, the local conservation districts, and the hundreds of pastors and lay people who volunteered time and commitment to make this project happen. It took a lot of hard work and some faith in each other, but we did it.

After our tree was planted, my kids wanted to plant more. The spring winds and warm sunshine kept us outside most of the day. My husband brought out the small pepper, onion and tomato shoots that had been started indoors and we talked about how nice they would all taste in late summer salads.

The miracle of planting a seed and watching it grow into something beautiful, something nourishing, had begun in our backyard. It's because of hard work and faith that EarthKeepers has seen many seeds come to fruit over the years, household hazardous waste, e-waste and pharmaceutical collections, education on wise energy use and protection of Upper Peninsula rivers and streams.

Next year one of our hopes is to launch



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AT A GLANCE

The EarthKeepers Initiative is a collaborative effort of ten traditions: Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist Church, Unitarian Universalist, Baha'i, Jewish, Zen Buddhist, Quakers. Kyra Fillmore serves as communications coordinator. Chairs of the EarthKeepers Vision Council are Paul Lehmborg and Gail Griffith. Greg Peterson serves as media specialist. The Cedar Tree Institute and The Superior Watershed Partnership, both Marquette-based nonprofits, continue to provide counsel and logistical support.

the Interfaith Garden Initiative, bringing folks together to plant seeds of faith whether it be to fill food pantries with fresh vegetables, offer places of solace to pray and meditate or places of serenity to promote healing.

Just as a small tree seedling can bring a family together on a spring day, a community garden can allow folks from all religions and walks of life to come together to experience the mystery of the cycle of life. Maybe it can allow us to grow a little closer with each other and give us time to marvel at the beauty around us. Maybe it can offer food and peace to those less fortunate. Maybe it will allow us to see miracles. I will leave you with this vision of people planting trees and vegetables and flowers, of laughter and cooperation, of warm sun and dark earth. I'll plant this seed.and have a little faith.

Editor's note: Kyra L. Fillmore is the EarthKeepers communications coordinator for faith communities who organized the distribution of over 12,000 trees in the Upper Peninsula during the past several weeks.