A Table in the Center

Rev. Amy Cantrell, co-director, BeLoved Asheville

At BeLoved Asheville, we believe in love. It is the way we live and breathe and, yes, eat together. Why? Because we believe that love put into practice is the most powerful thing in the universe. One way we practice love is by creating free farmers markets in forgotten places. Right in the center of our week is a table, which we think is rather perfect because we have a table-in-the-center kind of faith.

Right in the center of this deeply divided place, we gather people from the margins from the streets.

from the corners of trying-to-make-ends-meet and rock-and-a-hard-place.

Hands unfurl tablecloths

like flags to whom no one has pledged allegiance to support oppressive nations.

Beautiful patterns

embellish the tables and then

And then, the magic happens.

Baskets placed gently and in them

tomato, potato, eggplant, apple.

Onion, squash, zucchini, cabbage,

Cantaloupe, honeydew, strawberry, banana.

Eggs, milk, cheese and bread

until the baskets are brimming and

Everyone is fed.

The fingers start strumming strings

The unspoken prayers sing

Thank you, Jesus

Buddha, too. Allah your blessings

To include

Guadalupe, Oshun, ancestors,

Praise the Lord

Here is a market I can afford!

Echoing the ancient prophet

"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and

you that have no money, come, buy and eat!" Isaiah 55:1

And hands begin touching fruit

And embracing each other

Walls come tumbling down!

Reda and her beautiful smile and Muslim faith

Hugs Michelle, whose family has been here for

generations

Whose ancestors were made to toil in chains to forge

this country.

Laughs with Ms. Dorothy, whose people were born

in this land

and were forced to march

Trail of death brimming with tears

Land reserved for the leftovers of genocide to exist on the edges of their own (not owned) land stolen

from God, Great Spirit Herself

Ms. Dorothy teaches all about the purple green beans and heirloom tomatoes cultivated and shared by her

mother's mother's mother.

She shares hugs with Rev. Bill

Presbyterian clergy honorably retired

Who helps Walton, a young man whose dreaded hair

gently rests on his face

Lines in his skin mark like rivers tracing the paths of

home-less and poverty-full

He smiles serving elders and with glee takes an apple

and places it in his backpack.

This congregation

Far from pews and pulpits and hymnals

Sings around the table of plenty and justice with a

full plate heaped with love

And as the ancient word says,

"Good measure, pressed down, shaken together,

running over"

Overflows this table

In fullness

In joy

In right relationship

This table at the center

Is communion

That sets us all free.

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Hopeful action in hard times

Rebecca Barnes, coordinator for Presbyterian Hunger Program

As spring approaches, we also enter the season of Easter and hope for new life. In our work — uncovering and addressing root causes of hunger, poverty, environmental destruction, and now navigating a global pandemic — we need signs and reminders of hope.

There is reason to hope. The psalmist declares, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever" (Psalm 9:18), while the prophet writes, "For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease." (Job 14:7).

PHP partners also give us reason to hope as they share what they are doing to change this world for the better.

Hope comes from lifting up voices and preserving stories for worker justice, like Student Action with Farmworkers. Hope comes from a church living out its faith by nourishing others (literally and spiritually), like The Open Door. Hope comes from the connections people make with one another across boundaries, like Kathia and Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas as they build relationships and coalitions. Hope comes from the environmental justice transformations guided by the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization as they

converted one Superfund brownfield site into a community garden/neighborhood hub and another one to a 22-acre community park desperately needed in their urban area. Hope comes through free farmers markets and food justice in BeLoved Asheville.

The work of our national hunger concerns, outlined in the centerspread and shown in story throughout these pages, include foci of food justice, climate justice and worker justice with overarching principles of community-

listening and movement-building.

With partners on the ground and across the country, we gain strength and hope. We give thanks to God for their witness, as they echo both psalmist and prophet in their daily struggle for justice.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING SPECIAL OFFERINGS

A note of gratitude from our partner, Awe Oku:

"Pine Ridge [Indian Reservation located in South Dakota] is the poorest or second poorest county in the country and unemployment can reach 92%. Everyone who participates in our organization lives below the poverty line, has been culturally marginalized by a system of educational and institutional oppression, and subject to deadly extractive industries contaminating our land and water and causing untold health issues.

Thanks in part to your support, we were able to fully fund our garden projects and establish family plots on tracts of land across the reservation. Workshops were held on hardscaping the garden area as well as education on plants for food sources as well as Lakota ceremonial and medicinal plants."

Your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing make this work possible. Please give generously, for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

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Organizing toward a localized and just food system as a Just Transition practice

Vivi Moreno, food justice organizer, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization Dale Asis, finance director, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Since 1994, the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) has been a primarily Latinx and People of Color-led frontline organization located in Chicago's southwest neighborhood of Little Village. Our mission is to organize with our community to accomplish environmental justice and achieve the self-determination of immigrant, low-income and working-class families.

The Little Village neighborhood is a resilient, working-class community. It's a predominantly Mexican and Central American immigrant community, and it's also home to one of the largest Mexican American communities in the Midwest. Little Village is also the place where over 76 industrial businesses are located. The businesses range from former coal power plants and steel manufacturing companies to giant e-commerce warehouses and other metal manufacturers. Because of the high number of manufacturing industries in the neighborhood, there is also a high amount

of diesel emissions, heavy truck traffic, lead exposure, proximity to "Superfund" sites (brownfield sites, or sites of past industrial use, with extremely high levels of contamination), proximity to hazardous waste and exposure to toxic releases into our waterways.

LVEJO's campaigns have stayed focused on improving air quality, holding companies accountable, making sure we have equitable access and decision-making power when it comes to our open spaces, and building leadership with youth in our community. One of our ongoing projects involving equitable access to open spaces is our halfacre community garden called "Las Semillas de Justicia" (Seeds of Justice). Thanks to eight years of community organizing, Las Semillas was transformed from a former brownfield site into a thriving community garden.

Since 2014, Las Semillas has served as a community hub with over 40 immigrant

allotment of garden plots and grow a large variety of vegetables, fruits and medicinal herbs. In 2019, our gardeners collectively grew and shared over 2,250 pounds of food — organic, culturally significant and sustainably grown crops. LVEJO also organizes cultural events, such as Dia de la Tierra (Earth Day), Dia de Las Madres (Mother's Day), Fiesta de la Cosecha (Harvest Fest) and a Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) community altar building. From May through October, the garden also hosts weekly community potlucks where the main course is prepared by a different family each week. Anywhere from 20 to 50 community members gather to relax, talk about community events and share resources with one another. The gardeners have turned the garden into a zocalo — a community hub where community members speak freely to share ideas. In these community discussions, reality comes out regarding the harsh living conditions many low-income, working-class families face: low-wage jobs and exploitative conditions, youth unemployment, ageism and being forced into retirement, people living with multiple disabilities, undocumented status and fear of reprisal.

families, which are provided with their own



Las Semillas gardeners with seeds.

Our ongoing conversations have led us to shift our urban agriculture work into work that takes into account community-wealth building and solidarity economies. As a result, LVEJO envisions a cooperatively owned commercial farm on land located next to Las Semillas.

From brownfields to green fields — continuing our legacy of Just Transition

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Farming hope

Rev. John Creasy, pastor, The Open Door Presbyterian Church, and executive director, Garfield Community Farm



In 2008, I became one of the pastors of a new church in urban Pittsburgh called The Open Door. For four years, a group of people worshiped in a church basement, and then a once-abandoned church building, praying that God would form us into a community centered on spiritual practices and missional service. Upon chartering, we had no plans to buy a building or do many of things that most church plants were doing to grow. Our church was focused on creating missional leaders in our context of the quickly changing East End of Pittsburgh. That same year, we began prayer walking and connecting with local organizations, churches and neighbors to discern the use of 3 acres of land in the middle of one of Pittsburgh's most impoverished neighborhoods, just one-tenth of a mile from our worship space. We were sensing that God might be giving us vision for food justice and ecological restoration on this land of invasive species and rubble. Those days of discernment, of looking outside of our walls and outside of ourselves, as a brand-new church plant, led us to create Pittsburgh's largest and now longest operating permaculture farm.

Broad and open partnerships made the farm communal and accessible to far more than the people of The Open Door Church. Many who come to the farm don't know that we are a ministry of a church. Others are part of the farm's work precisely because we are a ministry of The Open Door. For us, as a church, the farm is our missional endeavor. It centers us as a faith community, directing our service in the world, teaching us, leading us, developing within us a way of being and a way of living. But we've worked to develop the farm with open hands. It is not ours to hold on to; it is a true community farm. This can be tough at times. The leadership structure of the farm is ever evolving and sometimes seems complex, but the land is owned by the church so that no one can take it out from under us. Church leaders unfamiliar with the farm don't understand why we own a 3-acre garden but no church building, and nonprofit leaders don't understand why we remain a ministry of a church and not a separate 501(c)(3). But for us and the hundreds of people we work with each year, it all makes total sense.

The farm exists as a means to bring hope, peace and an experience of restoration in our neighborhood. This only happens through open and broad sharing of the farm with our neighborhood, other churches and nonprofits. Over these years of farming, I have become most proud of the ways our 3 acres have grown beyond ourselves. Through our education work, partnerships and the thousands of relational connections we've developed, we know that justice-based ecological restoration and farming projects are happening all over the world. Volunteers and interns return to their faith communities and neighborhoods with vision for ecological restoration and food justice; dozens of projects have begun. Mission partners from around the globe have come to visit our farm and return to begin their own projects, such as the Central Mexico Food Forest Project. Neighbors all around the area have started their own gardens, growing their own healthy food and sometimes giving away the excess to local food pantries. In Virginia, a former farm apprentice now runs a permaculture-

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More than one story

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) brings students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers and build diverse coalitions working for social change. A big part of our work is sharing stories and building relationships, which we do through our documentary program, collecting oral histories with farmworkers in the southeast. Here is some of what we've heard from farmworkers over the past 25 years, narratives told in labor camp kitchens, on trailer porch stoops, and in small living rooms with fans whirring and children playing nearby.

There are stories of struggles and dreams, why people come and what they miss about home, what they like about farm work and what they want to change, how they carry on, and how they resist. These stories defy borders; they follow farmworkers from crop to crop, state to state and country to country.

There's more than one story of farmworkers, more than one dream, more than one hope for change.

"Something that I'd like to change ... the pay, the pay, for sure. You're like, this is hard, and they pay you so little. At 45 cents, you're like, I have to do 200 buckets of sweet potato to make \$100 And I imagine that, to do 200 buckets a day, you have to almost go without drinking water I don't know why farm work, which is harder, pays so much less."

-Yonatan, Garland, North Carolina, 2015

"Here I'm not able to speak Purépecha. I can hardly even speak much Spanish. I'm grateful for all the North has helped me with. It has its ups and downs The beadwork I do is a way for me to feel at home even though I am far away. I sit under the tree stringing each bead onto the threads that my aunt made with her own hands, looking up into the same sky that she might also be looking

at and creating a masterpiece that will be passed down from generation to generation."

—Noel, Reidsville, North Carolina, 2009

"I feel like the machine is going to cut my hand, but I just try to do my best. We don't really get anything to keep us safe. I just have to keep an eye on stuff and be careful."

—Mayra Cort, SAF Levante youth member, 2008

"I think it's better to study than to work because it's so hard I mean, school is hard but if you pay attention, it's not that hard. In farm work, I think you work harder, and it's outside, and it's hot ... and in school you're inside with the air and everything."

—Senayda, John's Island, South Carolina, 2011

"I moved to the U.S.A. when I was 24 years old. It took me four days and three nights through the desert. One suffers a lot walking. My daughter also crossed the desert walking. Personally, I wouldn't do it again."

—Carolina, New Zion, South Carolina, 2015 "Look, in reality we come here with hope, but I am realizing that there are a lot of people that run into very bad luck, and they return to their countries the same way they arrived in the United States. You come looking to make money. And this is a lie because you come to suffer worse than in your own country You leave your family behind suffering just to come to make money here in the U.S., and it is not true, how you imagine it will be."

—Miguel, Burlington, North Carolina, 1997

"We work together as a family. Because we're here as a family and all five of us are always together. I wasn't able to [study] but maybe [my son] will continue studying. And that's my legacy . . . what I'm going to leave to him."

—Francisco, Hendersonville, North Carolina, 2010

"Just keep on trying. Keep looking up. Keep looking ahead, because if you don't aspire to something more, you're going to stay put right there."

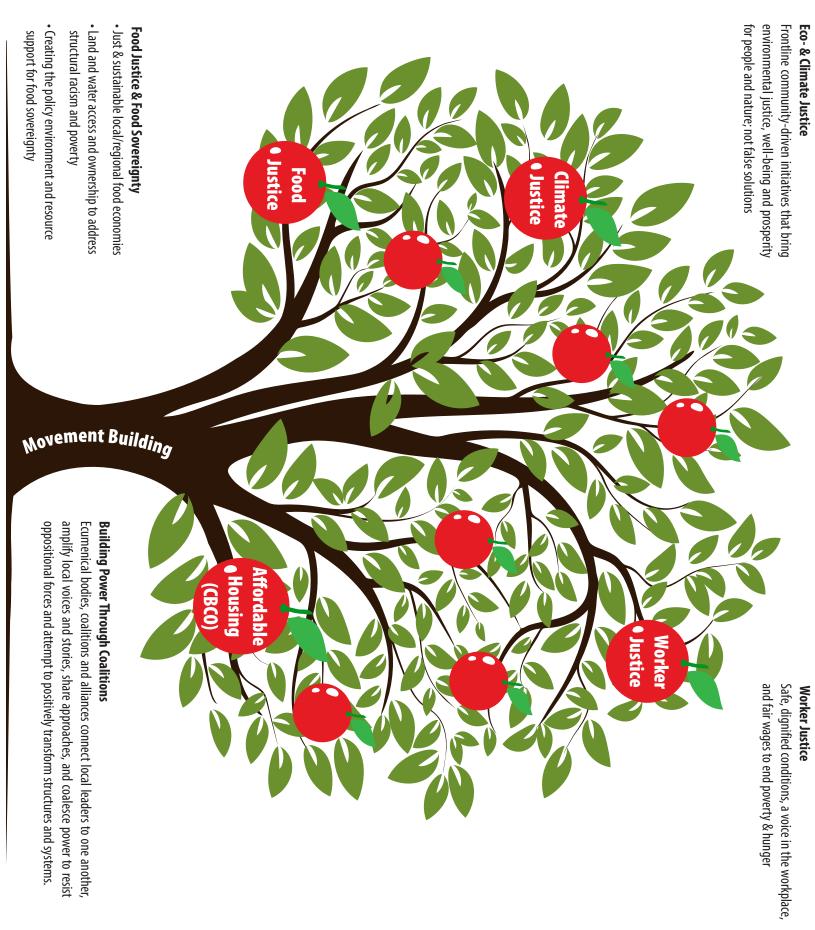
—Griselda, Denmark, South Carolina, 2013



Griselda with her family.

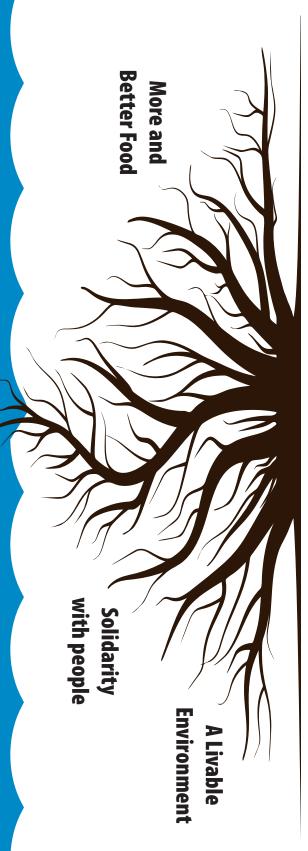
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PC(USA) National Hunger Concerns



PHP's three priorities are the foundational roots, people power is built in the trunk to provide nutrition, and the fruits are food, worker, housing and climate justice.

Together with congregations and partner groups around the United States, we work for food justice, worker justice, climate and eco-justice, affordable housing, and a movement powerful enough to realize these things.



Our approach is faith-based and can be described with the acronym L.A.M.B.:

LISTEN: Listen to directly-affected, frontline communities and groups accountable to them to educate ourselves and Presbyterians around the country

MEND: Return wealth and opportunities to marginalized communities and groups struggling to build a just and sustainable world free of hunger, poverty, oppression and environmental racism ACCOMPANY: Encourage Presbyterians to accompany and contribute to strategies, campaigns and advocacy efforts based on those frontline perspectives and critiques

BUILD: Invest in relationships and movement building to increase the capacity to effect change

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Panning out with Kathia Ramirez to build a U.S. food movement

Andrew Kana Bartlett, associate for national hunger concerns, Presbyterian Hunger Program



Kathia Ramirez holds up a USFSA flag during a sociodrama at the national assembly in Bellingham, WA.

Have you ever seen a movie that starts with a bird's-eye view of a person at their desk or in their bed? Then the camera rises straight up and you travel through the ceiling and you're looking down on the house, the neighborhood and soon the city as the camera goes up, until gradually you see planet.

Kathia Ramirez is kind of like that. I'll Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA). explain.

Oaxaca, Mexico. She has been reclaiming her indigenous Zapotec identity and continues to learn about their knowledge and practices. After hearing that her greatgrandmother was a town medicine woman in Oaxaca, Kathia became interested in herbal medicine as well. After graduating in the whole state, the country and then the 2013 from Mount Holyoke College, Kathia joined up with the Farmworker Support Committee/El Comité de Apoyo a los

Kathia is the food justice coordinator Kathia was born and grew up in Los at CATA, which was founded in 1979 Angeles, although her roots are from by migrant farmworkers and is a long-

term grantee partner of the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP). She coordinates the Food Justice Program, which includes community gardens where farmworkers, former farmworkers, and other immigrant workers and their families produce food.

Kathia reminds us, "Farm work is really invisible. During the growing season, farmworkers sometimes get to the fields as early as 5 a.m. and go home as late as 9 p.m. — a 16-hour day." She knows that addressing this and other challenges that immigrants face, along with the challenge of changing our food system into one that

is equitable and sustainable, requires many people and groups working together at local, national and international levels.

Focusing in, here is a shot of Kathia acting in a sociodrama (mística) about transforming the food system at the latest assembly of the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA). The USFSA is a U.S.-based coalition of food justice, anti-hunger, labor, environmental, faith-based and food producer groups that works to uphold the right to food as a basic human right and to connect local and national struggles to the international movement for food sovereignty.

Imagine the camera rising up to look down on her and, rising farther, soon the three small CATA offices in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland come into view.

Now it gains altitude so the view includes the United States as well. CATA is a member of the national USFSA as well as the Food Chain Workers Alliance, which campaigns for better conditions and the rights of workers throughout the food chain.

Farm work is the most dangerous and lowest-paid occupation in the whole country. "Farmworkers labor long hours to earn more money," Kathia says, "despite the toll it takes on their bodies, which can later lead to long-term illnesses. Common health risks are work-related musculoskeletal disorders and exposure to pesticides."

Panning out farther, in the lower right of the screen we see the island nation of Cuba, where Kathia represented CATA at a meeting of the People's Agroecology Process, which emerged from an Agroecology Encounter hosted by a member group of the USFSA.

Going higher, South Africa comes into view. There, Kathia (in the middle with light blue headband) joined a farmer from Mississippi, farmworkers from Florida and Washington, and a food justice advocate

from New York — all members of the USFSA — to learn from and strategize with South Africa's Surplus People Project and food sovereignty practitioners from all over the world.

PHP has learned from Kathia, CATA, and partners around the U.S. and world that we are stronger together and it is only a movement — made of individuals, congregations, mid councils, communitybased organizations, nonprofits and broad coalitions — that has the capacity to move our communities, nation and world toward compassion, peace, equity and sustainability. To get at the roots of hunger and poverty in the U.S., PHP joins these partners to dig into the interrelated justice issues of race, gender, food, agriculture, labor, environment and climate.

Thanks to the trust and generosity of Presbyterians, PHP financially supports CATA and many local, state and regional groups, as well as national coalitions like the

Food Chain Workers Alliance and USFSA. These alliances connect local leaders to one another, they amplify local voices and stories, and they provide leadership development opportunities. National alliances help cross-fertilize successful approaches and enable the development of coordinated strategies to resist the bad and build the good. This includes Congregation-Based Community Organizing coalitions, which have an amazing track record in battling homelessness and increasing affordable housing in our country.

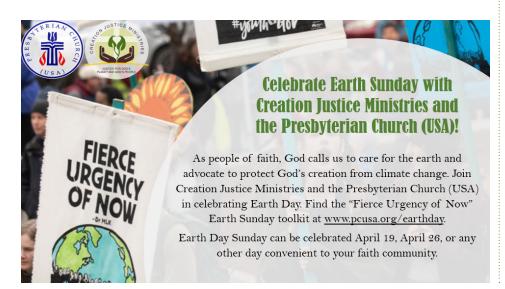
Beyond financial support, PHP also collaborates to help strengthen these formations, while always deferring to grassroots, frontline and membership organizations that know the realities and solutions the best. The goal is certainly to build power. But as important, the ultimate aim — which transcends material gains or even winning or losing — is to build the relationships, the spirit of community and the love needed to turn the tide.



Hosted by the Surplus People Project, Kathia joins representatives from around the world to strategize on workers rights and food sovereignty in South Africa.

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Reminders & Resources





Celebrating 20 years of Joining Hands

In 2020, the Joining Hands initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program is celebrating 20 years of challenging global systems that generate hunger, poverty and injustice. Learn how Joining Hands is making an impact!

www.presbyterianmission.org/together-justice/20-year-joining-hands

Earth Day is April 22nd

Interfaith Climate Prayer

We Hold the Earth

We hold siblings who suffer from storms and droughts intensified by climate change.

We hold all species that suffer.

We hold world leaders delegated to make decisions for life.

We pray that the web of life may be mended through courageous actions to limit carbon emissions.

We pray for right actions for adaptation and mitigation to help our already suffering earth community.

We pray that love and wisdom might inspire my actions and our actions as communities. . .

so that we may, with integrity, look into the eyes of siblings and all beings and truthfully

say, we are doing our part to care for them and the future of the children.

May love transform us and our world with new steps toward life

El Día de la Tierra es el 22 de abril

La bendición climática

Sostenemos la tierra

Sostenemos hermanos y hermanas quienes sufren de tormentas y sequías intensificadas por el cambio climático.

Sostenemos todas las especies que sufren.

Sostenemos líderes mundial delegados a tomar decisiones por la vida.

Rezamos que la red de la vida se pueda reparar a través de acciones valientes en limitar la emisión de carbono

Rezamos por acciones correctas en ajustacion y mitigación para ayudar nuestra comunidad mundial que sufre

Rezamos que el amor y sabiduría enspire mis acciones y nuestras acciones como comunidad...

para que podamos, con integridad, mirar a los ojos de los hermanos y hermanas y todos los seres y en verdad

digamos, estamos haciendo nuestra parte para cuidar de ellos y el futuro de los niños

Para que el amor nos transforme y el mundo con nuevos pasos hacia la vida.

 $A dapted \ from \ faith climate action week. or g$

A Table in the Center, continued from p. 1



BeLoved Asheville's director prepares samples at the farmers market-style food pantry at a seniors' center.

Every week, we set up tables in the middle of one of the poorest ZIP codes in our community where over 65% of people

make \$15,000 a year or less in income. In the same ZIP code, great wealth is extracted and made off of a large tourist economy. Right next to high-rise hotels and luxury condos where thousands sleep on pillows fluffed by people rendered invisible and afraid of evil immigration policies, human beings sleep by laying their heads on benches, behind dumpsters, in doorways and on blankets carefully stretched over concrete.

BeLoved Asheville brings people from all walks of life together to rewrite the story of food insecurity to the miracle of loaves and fishes multiplied. Together this community is dreaming up new practices in food justice, changing policies while we plant community gardens in gentrified landscapes and food deserts, using food to fight for immigration justice, and building sustainable practices into creating just village communities of deeply affordable homes that create equity and shared food economies.

Visit belovedasheville.com or Facebook @ BeLoved Asheville.

Farming hope, continued from p. 4

based nursery called Blacks Run Forest Farm. The nursery not only works for ecological restoration but gives a 10% reparations tithe on all of their income. Other interns have gone to work in public policy, as activists for climate justice and as farmers on much larger farms. All of this to say that a long and steady commitment to God's work of peace and restoration brings hope and change far beyond our expectations.

This kind of work takes great patience and steadfastness over many years. At about the 12-year mark, we are still beginners in understanding our soil, our trees, our systems of restoration and systems of abundance. We are still learners in our neighborhood, still developing trust, still developing ears to hear and eyes to see how God is at work in the people and places around us. But this farm has given us hope and we pray God would continue to use us and the farm to bring hope throughout our neighborhood and our world.

Organizing, continued from p. 3

LVEJO believes that its community work falls into Just Transition practices. "Just Transition is a long-term vision, a unifying a set of place-based principles, processes and practices, a shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable, redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there." Just Transition also envisions a different, healthy and sustainable reality that diverts from one of constant unsustainable extraction and harm to our neighborhood.

For the past 15 years, as part of a Just

Transition vision, LVEJO organized to clean up and consequently convert a former Superfund site. LVEJO's organizing campaign was able to force the responsible parties to clean up the brownfield site and reimburse the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the clean-up work². Eventually the Superfund site was converted into a 22-acre park, La Villita Park, and on Dec. 14, will be 2014, the park officially opened. Overnight, the park conversion doubled the amount of public park space in the neighborhood.

As part of the organizing to transform La Villita park into a community-driven park space, LVEJO involved hundreds of community volunteers and have drawn numerous community maps to determine which amenities Little Village residents needed most. Community members eventually decided they wanted to dedicate

the northern and southern portions of the park to agricultural uses to grow local and organic food.

In February 2020, aligned with LVEJO's Just Transition vision, the Chicago Park District approved LVEJO to have full access and stewardship of the land. In 2020, LVEJO will begin to establish a community-managed worker-cooperative farm, a bilingual "Escuelita Agricola" (informal agricultural school) and an Urban Agriculture Youth Program. LVEJO envisions an urban farm cooperative that will create a multi-stakeholder community producing healthy, organic food; viable jobs for the community; and the transformation of brownfields into green, ecosystem-rich spaces.

- 1. climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition
- 2. epa.gov/superfund/what-superfund

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Give Us Your Feedback

The PHP Post encourages feedback! Submit letters to the editor, articles, ideas, or suggestions to *jennifer.evans@pcusa.org*.

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Or you can write "H999999 Hunger" on your check and send to: PC(USA) Box 643700 Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Thank you for your continued support!