



THIS HAS BEEN, SO FAR, a true and authentic Midwest winter. It has snowed, then snowed some more, then snowed again. Everywhere one looks there is white, and things such as grass and dirt are only vague memories buried under more than a foot of snow and ice.

The roof over our sunroom is now capped by a glacier: five to six inches of solid ice, frosted over by as much snow, clogging the rain gutters and sending icicles and dripping water into places it should never go.

Our driveway is taking on the appearance of a bobsled track. The walls of cleared snow on each side are so high and so hardened that there is no longer any place to push the new snow that falls, and thus there is just barely enough room for a vehicle to get through.

So to the uninformed it may seem a paradox that at least one person dwelling here is currently preoccupied with gardens and seeds and vegetables and flowers.

As the snow continues to fall and the bitter cold freezes everything in sight, Linda

Reflections
by the Pond

No. 428

January 4, 2010

collects seed catalogues and maps out plans for her spring planting. The gardens may be shrouded by a thick blanket of snow, the soil may be frozen hard, but already visions of growing things occupy her mind as she wears down pencils making her lists of seed orders.

As she makes her selection of seeds, she plots out the gardens for this coming year. The tomatoes, which didn't do so well last year, will be moved, and more will be planted than last year since there is canning to do. She decides which varieties of beans to order, and where they will be planted. Meanwhile she charts the timing of her plantings. As soon as the ground has thawed and can be worked, she will plant the early, cool weather crops: peas, lettuce, radishes. Around Good Friday she will plant several varieties of potatoes.

And so it goes until her gardens are filled with growing things to please both the belly and the eye.



Man and woman come together as one, and a family is formed. Later, they have a child, and another, and maybe three or four or more.

And around the dining room table and in pillow talk before slumber those small lives are organized and planned. They plant this seed here, and that seed there, and, because of their planning, things grow.

Men and women and families come together to form a church, and within that

fertile garden seeds are planted. Here there is careful planning and sowing, but there also is the less specific broadcasting of seed, scattered here and there throughout the body.

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes the things sown in
it to spring up,
So the Lord God will cause righteousness
and praise
To spring up before all the nations.

Isaiah 61:11

We're all planting and growing something. Some of us plant crops, some of us plant children. Some of us plant goodness and grace in the community, helping others, while some of us plant the hard truth that bruises before it restores. Some of us plant words and ideas that are woven into the lives of strangers, but some of us weave anger and hatred even into the lives of family and friends. Some plant evil. Some plant righteousness. Some plant disease. Some plant health.

"Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Mark 4:8-9



We're all growing something. No matter the climate or season, no matter our occupation or calling, we're all connected to the chain

of life. Grace flows down from God, into our hearts, and we plant its seeds in the soil around us—in our children, our family and friends, in the stranger we pass on the street.

We each decide which seeds to sow, and where to sow them. Just as Linda weighs multiple criteria in her seed selection—climate zone, type of soil, type of weather, amount of sunshine and rain—so we weigh the type and effectiveness of the seeds we plant in our family and in the family of God.

We each decide the time of planting, and the method by which the seeds will be sown. It does no good to plant lettuce seeds in the heat of August, nor is there any point in planting green bean seeds, or squash seeds in chilled soil. Likewise we sow our seeds responsibly, accurately, with God's purpose in mind.

Sow with a view to righteousness,
Reap in accordance with kindness;
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

Hosea 10:12

We each are responsible for the extending of what God has planted in our hearts. Life is a circle, and no less so in the economy of God. The Lord plants His seeds in us, causing growth, maturity, peace, joy; we then, from this bountiful crop, sow new seeds into the garden in which He has planted *us*. From that harvest comes forth new plants, new seeds which are planted or broadcast into ever new gardens and new harvests.

And so it goes on.

"For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart."

Jeremiah 24:6-7

*O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.*

*For he whom Jesus loved has truly spoken:
The holier worship which He deigns to bless
Restores the lost, and binds the spirit broken,
And feeds the widow and the fatherless.*

*Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him Whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.*

John G. Whittier

