



BETHLEHEM FARM

CARETAKER INTERVIEW RESOURCES



UPDATED FEBRUARY 2013



BETHLEHEM FARM MISSION STATEMENT

Bethlehem Farm is a **Catholic** community in Appalachia that **transforms lives through service with the local community** and the **teaching of sustainable practices**.

We invite volunteers to join us in living the **Gospel** cornerstones of **prayer, community, simplicity and service**.

VISION OF THE FUTURE

We envision the purpose of Bethlehem Farm to:

- + be a **center of reflection and prayer in the service of action**, inspired by the **Eucharist** and open to the **Spirit**.
- + **work with people and empower people** to address local needs, especially low-income home repair, but remaining open to God's call for us to other ministries.
- + **form a "contrast community"**¹ that chooses to build with God's plans in mind, rather than blindly following a culture that promotes pleasure, wealth, and power.
- + **pray** in both traditional and creative ways in order to foster spiritual growth, keep the focus on Christ, and mutually encourage one another
- + **encourage *metanoia*** in ourselves, our volunteers, and the community we serve, with emphasis on the Eucharist as a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God
- + **form an intentional Christian community** of trust, commitment, faithfulness, and challenge in the spirit of the Apostles
- + **be an authentic local community** that seeks to 'be the change we wish to see in the world'² and which, therefore, supports sustainable practices³
- + **embody genuine Catholic** beliefs to counter existing misconceptions regarding the Catholic Church and its people, letting our actions witness to our faith
- + **strive to be one Body in Christ** by pursuing ecumenical ventures and always giving a favorable interpretation to others' views as a sign of mutual respect⁴

¹ Models of the Church, Avery Dulles, S.J., in The Church Emerging from Vatican II, Dennis Doyle. p.32

² quote generally credited to Mohandes Gandhi

³ At Home in the Web of Life, 1995. a pastoral message on sustainable communities in Appalachia from the Catholic bishops of Appalachia. pp. 2,3,25,41-54

⁴ The Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius Loyola, 22



Putting the Bethlehem Farm Vision into Practice

by Eric Fitts

“What is the vision for Bethlehem Farm?” The question came again, this time in a conference call with an applicant considering joining our community. A smile creeps across my face: it’s dream time, a time to think with God’s plan in mind and to embrace the future with open arms!

I see our vision as a trinity, composed of three parts that complement one another. We strive to serve our local community, to transform our lives and the lives of the volunteers who join us for service weeks, and to engage in sustainable practices as stewards of God’s Creation.

We strive to be an authentic local Catholic Christian community. Our service within the local community naturally flows from our Gospel call to love one another. Fully one-quarter of the residents of Summers County live below the poverty line. We are always seeking ways that our gifts can best serve the local community, whether through low-income home repair, community gardening, working with other local nonprofits, etc. At the same time, we seek to learn from our neighbors the wisdom of working cooperatively with the land and the gift of hospitality, since we, too, are impoverished in one way or another.

We encourage “metanoia,” a radical change of heart and mind, in ourselves and in the volunteers that come through our doors on service retreat weeks. Following Christ is difficult in our self-centered culture. The Church has a vision for our common destiny, in which we care for the least among us, treat all life with utmost dignity, and exercise stewardship of Creation. It is a radical calling, a calling that requires us to die to our former ways of being and rise to something new and beautiful. Volunteers leave here with a new set of eyes and some bread for the journey.

We strive to infuse the teaching of sustainability concepts throughout our work while inviting our volunteers and wider local community to practice sustainability. We currently compost, garden organically, clean our house without the use of harsh chemicals, conserve electricity, use rainwater to flush our toilets, produce some of our electricity from the sun using solar panels, have chickens for eggs and keep bees for honey production and we hope to continue to grow in sustainable practices over time. By exploring alternative visions of a sustainable future, we seek to apply the Gospel to our present situation.



Responsibilities and Expectations of Caretakers

Unity: All members of the community are called to be one mind and one heart, to be of one accord and to support the actions, rules, and decisions of the community, to be one in love, support and respect of one another in the community. All conflicts are to be resolved in this spirit of unity.

Sharing: Because of this unity and accord, all members are called to share their gifts and talents with the community and to share their ideas, dreams, and visions, to contribute to the discussion and planning and to help the community reach the decisions concerning all aspects of the community life.

Fidelity to the Church: Community membership is open to Christians of deep personal faith who are open to the Catholic tradition. We are a community called to acknowledge and express our faith and commit themselves, thereby, to membership and mission for the sake of God's Kingdom in history. This mission includes the proclamation of the Kingdom by our words and lives and a living witness to that Kingdom to all the community members, to the volunteers and to the low income people of the area.

Prayer: All members of the Community are called to share in all exercises of community prayer, usually including periodic days of reflection and other prayer experiences. Prayer is essential to the growth of the community; therefore, it will always be a central part of the spirit of the farm. Community members must have a desire to grow with the community.

Simplicity: All members of the community are expected to strive for a life of simplicity according to the call of the Gospel. This involves a lifestyle of sharing and requires a spirit of detachment from possessions, clothing, money, food, alcohol, and other related things. The day-to-day living out of this call will be done on both an individual and a community basis which will be decided by the community itself.

Work: All members of the Community are expected to share in the work of the community and to be responsible for the work assigned them by the community according to their talents and abilities.

Chastity: Bethlehem Farm affirms that sexuality is God's good gift to humankind. We understand that single Caretakers come to the farm and may fall in love. We encourage those community members to prayerfully discern how each relationship can support their vocation and bring them closer to God. We support a lifestyle of chastity for single volunteers and married couples. Bethlehem Farm Caretakers are expected to refrain from any exclusive or intimate interactions with volunteers during group weeks. These expectations are consistent with the Biblical witness and the needs of the community.

Accountability: All members of the community are called to be accountable to each other, both individually and collectively. We must be mindful of the responsibilities placed upon us by the community and to be accountable for those responsibilities. Community members are to openly and honestly challenge and be challenged by each other in a way that offers the opportunity for growth as persons, Christians and community members.



Caretakers Can Expect:

Mutual support and affirmation from all the members of the community.

A share in the decision making of the community according to the experience, wisdom, talents, knowledge and type of commitment of the member.

To be evaluated openly and honestly in a community of compassion, trust, and growth.

Reasonable use of the material goods of the community, including such things as automobiles, food, and other things as the needs arise.

To be invited and to openly invite others to live the Eucharist to follow the example of Christ by sharing in this meal together.

The intangibles are more difficult to express precisely, yet in some ways are more important for the formulation and growth of the community than any of the more tangible items listed above.

Joy and Peace in Community together with the other gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Thanksgiving - We are thankful for God's call to live and serve in the community and for those with whom we are called to serve - community members, volunteers and the people of the area - and thankful for the many aspects of community and most of all for the presence of God in our lives in community.

Gift/Sacrifice - We are a gift to each other and are called to die to self and be willing to give of ourselves to each other. We do this by striving to love unconditionally.

Enrichment - As nourishment for one another we must read and pray so that we might be enriched in order to enrich others in our community.

Healing Presence - All of us are wounded and in need of healing. All members of the community are called to be "Wounded Healers" who minister with compassion, openness and honesty.

As a community, we are called to expect God to work powerful miracles in us and through us as we allow ourselves to be changed.



CARETAKER COMPENSATION

Stipends are paid on the last workday of each month. Caretakers may request an advance on a stipend for emergency use. The Director will review the request and determine if the advance will be granted.

Caretaker stipend structure (net amounts):

First 18 months: \$125/mo

After completion of 18 months: \$250/mo

After completion of 36 months: \$375/mo

After completion of 60 months: \$500/mo

Travel Stipend: \$250/fiscal year

Retirement Contribution Match up to 20% of stipend beginning at 12 months

Training & Development Funds: \$500/fiscal year

There is an additional \$50 per month dependent stipend for each child of a Caretaker couple.

Stipends can also be supplemented by the repayment of student and other loans up to \$100/mo when deferment of loans is no longer possible. Loan repayment is solely for loans that existed before the Caretaker started interviewing with Bethlehem Farm and must be approved by the Director before the Caretaker's start date.

Medical Insurance

Bethlehem Farm provides medical, dental and vision insurance, valued at ~\$400/mo (in 2012). Bethlehem Farm will cover all out-of-pocket expenses (deductibles and co-pays) for the medical insurance, as long as the claim is covered under our plan. Caretakers handle all out-of-pocket expenses for dental and vision.

Caretakers are expected to have medical and dental check-ups before arriving at the Farm.

Use of Bethlehem Farm Vehicles

Caretakers have access to Farm vehicles for personal use, in consultation with the community, unless needed for business use within a 300-mile round trip.

Room and Board

Caretakers receive their own bedroom on the second floor of our log retreat house. Plans are in the works to build a separate Caretaker Residence for greater privacy when we are hosting groups. When Caretakers are residing at the Farm, all food is included, within certain parameters.



Bethlehem Farm Caretaker Description

Definition

With the supervision of the Bethlehem Farm Director (or his/her designee) and accountable to the Caretaker Community, Caretakers serve as service retreat leaders, coordinate work sites, interact with volunteer groups during their visit to Bethlehem Farm and assume other roles and responsibilities as needed by the community.

General Duties & Responsibilities

- Participates in Caretaker meetings
- Plans prayer as assigned
- Coordinates work sites as assigned
- Maintains upkeep and repair of buildings and farm grounds
- Interacts with adult & youth volunteers, participating in all aspects of group weeks as a role model
- Maintains professional boundaries
- Performs regular self and group evaluations with the guidance of Community Facilitator
- Upholds Christian standards and values as described in “Responsibilities of Community Members” in the Bethlehem Farm Community Handbook

Work site Duties and Responsibilities

- Teaches basic construction skills to volunteers
- Supervises volunteers at work sites
- Plans daily work schedules and completion of work at work sites
- Maintains and ensures safety at work sites
- Builds and maintains positive rapport with families
- Responsible for the pickup, use, and return of all materials equipment, and supplies associated with the work sites
- Maintains lists of all materials used while on site

Qualifications

- Willingness to work under a variety of situations and weather conditions
- Ability to follow directions and work well with others
- Basic knowledge of construction tools and the safe use and proper care of them
- Open to collaborative ministry with volunteers and the people of the area
- Open to living a close committed community life
- A person of faith open to the Catholic tradition
- Some experience in youth/young adult ministry
- A working knowledge and belief in Catholic social teachings
- Open to prayer, simplicity, and living in community
- Desire a minimum of a one year commitment



Overview of Caretaker Roles

Animal Husbandry: responsible for regular care and feeding of all Farm animals

Auto Mechanic/Maintenance: responsible for the general maintenance and purchasing of Bethlehem Farm vehicles

Community Facilitator: responsible for conflict resolution, conducting Caretaker check-ins

Community Outreach: responsible for the coordination of community night events, community development, and public relations

Development Officer: coordinates fundraising efforts, donor relations, grant writing, and grants management

Director: responsible for all administrative aspects of BF and its programs including supervision of Caretakers and volunteers; serves as the Board's liaison to the Caretaker community in the implementation of the mission of the Farm and is accountable to the Board for the decisions and actions of the Caretaker community.

Farm Gardener: responsible for the planning and maintenance of the Farm Garden

Facilities Manager: responsible for the upkeep and repair of Farm buildings and grounds

Hiring Coordinator: responsible for the coordination of possible Caretaker and Summer Servant applicants

House Manager: coordinates the use and upkeep of the farm house, meal preparation, and planning, and oversees daily chores of the facility. Also responsible for supervising home crews and maintaining a clean and healthy home environment.

Newsletter Editor: responsible for creating and coordinating 2-4 BF newsletters per year and facilitating other bulk mailings

Office Manager: responsible for the management of the Farm office including bookkeeping, correspondence, and administrative support

Project Coordinator: gives direction to fellow Caretakers in their role as work site coordinators, and is responsible for projects of the farm and coordination of worksite assessment, implementation and documentation

Retreats and Spirituality Coordinator: provides for the spiritual growth and direction of the Caretaker community, leads Caretakers in offering retreat opportunities for youth or adults

Social Worker: assists Bethlehem Farm clients and in utilizing local social services

Storehouse Mgr: responsible for storehouse operations and cottage industry management

Sustainability Coordinator: coordinates existing sustainability efforts, researches innovative ways to pursue sustainability, and helps educate Caretakers and volunteers about sustainability

Volunteer Coordinator: serves as a liaison between Bethlehem Farm and the volunteer groups



Web Manager: Updates and maintains Bethlehem Farm website and other media as needed