

Thoughts from the Garden – July 2016

His eyes twinkle with delight as he experiences a kind of miracle for the first time. Wonder and awe shine through his expression as he approaches this newness with a profound gentleness. I've seen this experience before – in the preschooler's amazement at her sprouting seed, in the nine year old who reaches under a chicken to discover an egg, in the second graders who find a treasure chest of insects under an overturned rock, in the high school students who hold a baby bunny for the first time. Each occasion catches me off guard, and I get in touch with my own wonder and delight at the little and big sparks of creation all around me. One of the gifts of my work is that I am constantly exposed to children who are discovering and exploring, curious about everything, and overflowing with wonder. This particular moment of amazement was unusually poignant. I saw, without a doubt, the enchanted eyes of a four year old gazing back at me across a just-laid and quite warm chicken egg. However, those eyes belonged to a man just three days short of his ninety-fourth birthday.

Howard is a regular visitor to the garden, and his warm smile and twinkling eyes are a welcome treat as he comes rolling down the pathway in his motorized wheelchair. On this afternoon before his birthday, Howard was helping me to keep the chickens occupied by throwing them some of their scratch grains as I refreshed their water and checked for eggs. I came out of the coop with a small basketful of eggs – one very freshly laid. I placed the warm egg in his hands, and he held it with the tenderness of a mother beholding her newborn child. "A chicken just laid this egg?" he asked me with amazement clearly discernible in his voice. I wondered at his wonder and delighted in his delight. His wisdom – his innate knowing that this egg was indeed profound - didn't escape me. I marveled, too, at our home, that after ninety-four years of living on this earth, Howard is still experiencing new and amazing things. If I were to pause for a moment and notice, I imagine how many I would encounter.

Howard's reaction drew my attention to the many times I collect the eggs from the coop without an awareness of how truly amazing that is. It reminded me of how many little miracles I experience every day. Every freshly-laid egg, every opening bud, every bumblebee in flight, every fluffy white cloud, every wholly unique child, every raindrop and snowflake and seed, every breath, and every life is cause for wonder. What is it that masks these miracles for me so that I fail to see their sacredness? How do I clear my eyes so that I, too, can be amazed? How might I recognize all the times I am experiencing something brand new and allow myself to be surprised by the simple beauty of it all?

Howard and his egg are an invitation for me to marvel at the small wonders that make up my days, to treat them with reverence, to give thanks, to be amazed.

