

How Did We Get Here?

A History of The Land Faith Community

In the 1980s the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church began purchasing parcels of land throughout the Denver-Metro area for the future development of faith communities. Today, the final remaining property to be developed is 9.5 acres located on Powhaton Rd and what will one day be Exposition Avenue. Over the years, many hands from Hope have been involved in caring for this undeveloped property included Rev. Margaret Hankins, Jim Hankins, Dick Hanson, Norm Bledsoe, and Ron Skarka.

In September of 2013 a small team organized by Rev. Stephanie Price requested a \$5,000 grant from the New Church Development Committee of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church to explore the feasibility for a new faith community on this property. The proposed vision for the new faith community is to draw people together from all walks of life to engage in food, faith, farming, and community. Known as "The Land," this new faith community will create a space for people to engage in community transformation through a spiritual community that nourishes sacred relationships with the Creator and all of creation. This original visioning team included Becca Boone, Reuben Gregory, Greg Laudenslager, Rev. Don Bird, and Rev. Stephanie Price.

Then, on April 2, 2014, the team presented the findings of the feasibility study to the New Church Development Team. These findings included a full schematic of The Land, information regarding demographics of the surrounding neighborhood, a mission and vision statement, research on other local agricultural faith communities, and an outline for programmatic faith development in specific phases. The feasibility study reported that while an agriculturally-based faith community was a viable model for this particular property in Southeast Aurora, our dependency on the developer for utilities combined with the stagnation of the surrounding neighborhood development determined that our would be most effectively launched in 3-5 years. For various practical reasons, we imagined that the planting of this church was 7-10 years into the future.

In October of 2014 Rev. Stephanie Price was approached by Amy Behres from the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union about the possibility of a group of Somali-Bantu Refugees farming on the property while the project waited for the neighborhood development to begin. To further investigate this possibility, a phone conference with Libby Tart Schoenfelder, a Senior Planner with the City of Aurora, was scheduled to discuss alternative sources of water to irrigate the property. It was during this phone conference that we learned that the new concept for Melcor's surrounding development was Community Gardens and Orchards and that the property development timeline was being moved up to the Spring of 2015.

Soon after this phone conference The Land team, represented by Greg Laudenslager, Ron Skarka, Rev. Don Bird, and Rev. Stephanie Price, gave a preliminary presentation to the City

of Aurora Planning Team. The concept of a faith community gathering community in for agricultural practice was received with great enthusiasm and support. The City of Aurora encouraged the team to begin the pre-application process so that development could take place parallel to the development of the Sandy Creek Neighborhood Development. Since this meeting our team has completed our Pre-Application Meeting with the City and is preparing for the next steps in the entitlements process.