**OGHS 2014 MINUTE for MISSION – Presbyterian Hunger Program**

**A Garden of Hope**

The health and vibrancy of any community is determined by how the less fortunate are faring. Across the country, Latino immigrants are the most food-insecure population, even as they contribute to the food system and economy that supports each of us.

For that reason, Huerto de la Familia (the Family Garden) provides Latino families in and around Eugene, Oregon, a place to connect with each other, their culture, and the earth by growing their own food. Through community gardening and micro-enterprise programs, funded by gifts you make to One Great Hour of Sharing, the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) partners with the group to empower those who are often overlooked.

“This program not only offers training and opportunity but it helps to empower them to move out of poverty,” says Sarah Cantril, the organization’s executive director.

Celia Ramirez is an example of what Huerto’s programs can do for families. An immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico, she is the mother of three children and cares for a relative with developmental disabilities. Before her involvement in Huerto’s community garden, Celia was struggling.

“Instead of getting something from the food bank, those who take part in our programs are able to grow food for themselves,” Cantril says. “Celia was able to feed herself and her three children and grow a surplus. She even began taking tamales to her job and selling them to co-workers.”

What started as a small garden became an additional source of livelihood for Celia. She did so well that she now drives to nearby farms to sell lunches to farm workers. She also served on Huerto’s board of directors, helping to recreate the group’s mission and envision a micro-enterprise program. Through that program, Celia learned how to separate personal finances from business finances and to develop a business plan to grow and enhance her new, small business.

“Another good thing about our program is you start to identify leaders in the community like Celia,” says Cantril. “She does so much, from being in charge of her kitchen at church to driving pregnant women to prenatal appointments to simply connecting others to their culture.”

There has not been a central area or meeting place for Latinos in the Eugene area. This can leave families and individuals feeling isolated and alone. Huerto de la Familia is not just a community garden, but it is also providing a place for their culture to thrive in a new setting.

“I remember Celia explaining to the children the importance of the Day of the Dead,” Cantril explains. “She described the ways the bread is decorated, why it is placed on the altar and brought to the gravesites. She connected these children and their families to their Mexican culture and an important traditional food.”

Your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing mean Celia and others like her are welcomed into our communities as God’s people—deserving of opportunity, love, and support.

**Please give generously.**