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The garden at The Rock / La Roca started in 2007 in some empty lots behind Arlington Elementary on North Limestone. The school and school system were very supportive of our work. The garden started with a simple purpose: the pastor likes to garden and the food would go to the folks in the neighborhood, especially those who struggle putting food on the table.

Very quickly, though, other purposes, plans, and blessings emerged. The church learned that there is very little access to fresh garden produce for the poorer elements of the community-- fresh food is simply priced too high for them! The church learned that there were many gardeners and a few organizations who had the same passion to get good food to hungry people. The church and neighborhood were blessed as people came out of yards and off porches to work in the garden! Young and old, black, white, Hispanic, African... it has been a beautiful thing! We thought we were growing vegetables. Turns out we were growing so much more!

Fast forward to 2010: things have really grown! The Lexington Fayette County Urban Government allows the church to use some plots, and has made grant money available to expand the harvest. The community groups, churches, and individual gardeners got together to make it the biggest year we have ever had. The downtown Farmer's Market donated produce through the efforts of Faith Feeds. First United Methodist put in a 10,000 sq. ft. garden. The Rock La Roca had about 2,500 sq. ft. A dedicated volunteer came in to supervise and organize. On Monday nights, after receiving the harvest from churches, the Farmer's Market and individual gardeners, the church hallways looked like a produce stand!

Each week of the harvest season, we got fresh food to about 300 people! This was distributed by way of a Monday night Service, as well as visits to shut-ins or people we knew were having a hard time. We were also fortunate to join partnerships with Seedleaf and host a few canning events which help us provide fresh food to children and families who come to Monday night meals.

The pastor tells the story of how he heard that a refugee family was eating in shifts-- half ate one day, the others ate the next day. The pastor knew there was no reason for that to happen, and the purpose of the garden is to make sure that no one on the Northside who needs the food will have to go hungry!

Our purpose to provide fresh food to families in need will continue. We are excited to see what new partnerships will emerge in 2011. The support from LFUCG Grants this past year will help us build our garden this summer and provide even more food than ever to families in need.