**Explore the Theme — Breaking Ground / Ground-breaking**

a poem, a ploughman’s reflection on his labor, & a book aiming to inspire a post-pandemic future

*for other “Explore the Theme” postings visit: [https://www.shcj.org/explore-the-theme](https://www.shcj.org/explore-the-theme)*

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**All the Years of Breaking Through the Soil**

Carol Bialock RSCJ

All the years of breaking through the soil, 
gasping for growth, 
straining to height and aroma and juice, 
heavy with effort, 
sweating it.

And when the glory came 
and I breathed free and opened full, 
strange how only then did I know 
it was all gift. 
I hadn’t 
done anything.

It was sun and rain and earth and air, 
I had only to rest in 
light, water, soil, 
only trust and surrender 
only be still 
to flower into beauty.

**Breaking Ground: Charting Our Future in a Pandemic Year** by Anne Snyder, Susannah Black, et al; [https://amzn.eu/0Q58tLD](https://amzn.eu/0Q58tLD)

In response to the upheaval of a pandemic year, a new book grew from the seeds of a public, inter-disciplinary conversation between June 2020 and June 2021, *Breaking Ground* is “a record of human beings striving for humility before an onslaught of uncertainty and rapid adjustment—humility that is the necessary soil for hope to seed a more intelligent and humane future.” This collection of essays includes “voices from the spheres of politics and policing, education and journalism, medicine and business, theology and science, philanthropy and technology, and the family and household too....

[Its writers ] “have been animated by an encounter with a God who is alive and redeeming yet.”

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**How much has to be done to a field** before its bed is fit for sowing! Ploughed twice perhaps; cultivated first one way then criss-cross; dragged twice; chain-harrowed and rolled; the couch burnt. **Does the general public realize** that all this is done to that field seen from the road, looking so silent, so deserted, as if no one ever went near it? **Does the man on the road know** that it has to be scratched and beaten and turned over like a rug, and scorched and burnt and knocked about? **Does he know** that before we can live even by bread alone, before bread can begin at all, all this must be done? I did not, when I was a man on the road and in the train. *The Worm Forgives the Plough* by John Stewart Collis

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**What soil have you labored to break through in your life? How has it been ground-breaking for you or others?**