



## GROWING: Community & Covenant for Sustainability

### The Kairos Moment at St. John's Madeline Island

Adapted from the April, 2021, edition of St. John's UCC Madeline Island newsletter, *The Lighthouse*

In 2020, the Wisconsin Conference UCC encouraged us to do two things: One was to recognize the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day – invented right here in Wisconsin. (The daughter of Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, Tia Nelson, addressed the Conference annual meeting of the.) The other was to learn about a call to action about Earth and climate – the “Kairos Call to Action” – issued by the national UCC church.

One of the ways that we have responded to that call is to talk about what kind of commitments we are making to each other – as families, as congregations, as communities – to respond to the urgent state of the Earth and climate. We have begun a conversation about a “**Kairos covenant**” –

- “Kairos” – because it’s now or never
- “Covenant” – because somehow, some way, we’ve got to navigate a way to do this work together, in relationship with each other, in community

An exciting development in Madeline Island during the past year has been the rapid evolution of the effort on the part of many people substantial efforts to gathering, raising, and providing food to move all of us here on Madeline Island toward food sustainability. **Island Harvesters** was formed by many people familiar to the readers of *The Lighthouse* (see inset) – people with a special commitment to producing and living sustainably in this place.

#### Food Wagon participants\*:

- Little Footprint Farm - Michael & Sue Brenna
- Gould's Honey of La Pointe - Jon Gould
- Old Madeline Island Dairy - Cynthia & Michael Dalzell
- Diaspora Gardens - Regina M. Laroche & Jeff Theune
- Freak Farm (Farmhouse) - Gip Matthews & Lauren Schuppe
- Two Cedars Gardens - Jim Hansen & Renee Larson
- Madeline & Zak's Maple Syrup - Madeline Gould & Zak Whitaker
- Northwoods Forager - Samantha Dobson

\* This and additional info can be found at [www.miharvesters.org](http://www.miharvesters.org)



In many ways and across many years, people in the St. John's community have been working hand-in-hand with the wider Madeline Island community around issues of food and sustainability. Of course,

the support of the Community Garden is a direct forerunner of support for the Island Harvesters effort. In the past year, numerous St. John's members worked on the MRF committee report, which touched on factors related to local food sustainability, including reducing transport, reducing packaging waste, and using organic waste to replenish the soil.

In 2020, a big way that this came to fruition was by way of the Island Harvesters' Food Wagon. St. John's responded to the request from Island Harvesters for help establishing a way for growers on Madeline Island to bring their produce to consumers all summer long. St. John's contributed money for a portable farmstand (the Food Wagon) that was used to offer produce one afternoon a week in the St. John's parking lot. St. John's also helped publicize the effort and encouraged members of the community to shop there.

During a year in which COVID interrupted a lot of our normal routines – both for shopping and otherwise -- the Food Wagon proved to be “the talk of the town.” It has proved to be a concrete way to help all the members of our community make connections to others and to their food production efforts,. As one grower recalls, visitors to the Food Truck would say things like, “You mean all of this was grown right here on Madeline Island?” and “This is the most social thing that I have done all summer!” Another grower recalls that people were pleased with the large variety of produce both grown and foraged.

And it also helped people “connect the dots” about how local food production is a key part of both a healthy community and an effort to heal the planet, even to the point of “purchasing of food so nicely during a pandemic.”

