

FARM & FAITH PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT

Hayes Barton United Methodist Church participates in an initiative of RAFI USA (Rural Advancement Foundation International) called the Farm & Faith Partnerships Project. The project connects faith communities with farmers of color to create food-based partnerships.

This is accomplished through a CSA. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a production and marketing model whereby consumers buy shares of a farm's harvest in advance. Consumers become CSA members by paying an agreed amount at the beginning of each 8-week growing season. There are three, 8-week seasons: spring, summer, and fall/winter.

This upfront payment helps buy the seed and other inputs needed for the season and provides the farmer an immediate income to begin the season. This allows the farmer to concentrate on good land stewardship and growing high quality food. In return for their membership fee, consumers receive a variety of freshly picked, organically grown vegetables every week. **It's a WIN for the farmer, a WIN for the consumer, and a WIN for the earth!**

How does this benefit the earth?

RAFI, through a partnership with the Soil Health Institute and A Greener World, certifies that the farmers who participate in the program use regenerative farming techniques. "Certified Regenerative farms maximize soil health while mitigating the negative impacts on humans and livestock. Unlike most food labels, AGW's certifications ensure independent trained auditors visit every farm in the program to verify they're meeting the standards."

In short, regenerative farming uses natural means to improve the health of soil and restore our land. Vegetables grown in soil that is rich in nature's own nutrients are healthier for people and planet!

The United Methodist Social Principles (pp. 17-18) state, "We support local and family farms and appreciate their value in feeding the vast majority of the world's population... We endorse measures that protect the continued operation of local, family, and communal farms... We urge farmers, large and small, to engage in sustainable practices that preserve the integrity of the food chain, ensure that farmworkers and other laborers are justly compensated, and protect the natural environment."

Learn more about RAFI-USA's Farm & Faith Partnership Project here: <https://www.rafiusa.org/programs/cttt/farm-and-faith-partnerships-project/>