

Congregational Highlight:
Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lafayette
Pastor at the Root of Dynamic Local Food Programming

You'll have to search a long-time to find a member of the clergy with more passion for Congregation Supported Agriculture than Pastor Dan Senter of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette. His commitment and leadership is reflected in the diverse food access programming the church engages in. The congregation has a strong CSA (weekly produce delivery program), is active with a food pantry, and leases office space to the regional gleaning program, the Urban Farmers.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church has been part of a weekly produce partnership CSA, typically taken to mean Community Supported Agriculture, for 4 years. The number of households participating in the program and picking up produce at Our Savior Lutheran currently is approximately 40. About half of these are members of the congregation and half live in the neighborhood. The project began as an interfaith, multi-congregation CSA project with pick-ups at Temple Isaiah. This was a dynamic program including frequent tastings and cooking demonstrations that served to build community. However, as Senter says, "it was labor intensive, so we recycled it." When the program wound down at Temple Isaiah, Our Savior's Lutheran stepped up to keep the momentum going.

What makes Our Savior's Lutheran Church's Community Supported Agriculture program special? First, they have partnerships with two farms one Riverdog Farms provides vegetables, and the other Frog Hollow Farm provides seasonal fruit. (LOGOS: Riverdog and Frog Hollow)

Secondly, they have an ongoing commitment to promote the farms they partner with to the local community. For example they participate in the Sustainable Lafayette Earth Day by 'tabling' to promote CSA subscriptions passing out brochures and recruiting members to the produce box program.

Each of these elements stems from the excitement Dan has for supporting local food and farmers. The congregation's food justice work has included hosted guest speakers, educational forums, advocacy and sermons. He preached on the interconnections between creation care, supporting organic farmers and the broader Gospel on several occasions as the church was getting ready to launch the program in 2013. One sermon described helping people see the holy trinity in a CSA box. Dan's says, "CSA is the gateway drug of this issue" of supporting sustainable food. Dan is hands-on and can be seen stacking produce boxes on a pick-up day. However, now the program is running strong and Dan reports it doesn't require a lot of time from him or congregational volunteers.

Where does this strong program go from here? They are looking to increase the support for their farm partners by having members from neighboring Lafayette Christian Church also pick-up at their site. The team is considering partnering with the Interfaith Sustainable Food

Collaborative to offer SNAP (formerly known as 'food stamps') redemption and cash incentives to low-income people that want to be part of the CSA's.

Working to serve the low-income families will build on the work the church has already been doing to support the Hillcrest Congregational Church pantry serving families in need in nearby Pleasant Hill. Dan and other congregants also regularly harvest fruit with the regional gleaning groups, the Urban Farmers, a collaboration that includes the group's office being located on-site at Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

If your congregation is interested in starting a Community Supported Agriculture project get in touch with the Aspen with the Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative team at 707 634-4672.

Dan's Edited Version Below:

Steve feel free to use or modify me edits as you please.. .thanks for including us!!!

Dan

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You'll have to search a long-time to find a member of the clergy with more passion for Congregation Supported Agriculture than Pastor Dan Senter of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette. His commitment and leadership is reflected in the diverse food access programming the church engages in. The congregation hosts two very strong CSA programs that provide weekly fruit and vegetables to the local community, collaborates with local sustainability organizations and leases office space to the regional gleaning program, the Urban Farmers to provide nutritious fresh fruit to county food organizations. Even coffee hour reflects a commitment to a more just food shed as the congregation utilizes Big House Beans for all their events that provides job training for those transitioning out of the prison system.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church has been a Community Supported Agriculture partner for the past 4 years. The number of households participating in the program and picking up their weekly box of produce at Our Savior Lutheran is approximately 40. About half of these are members of the congregation and half live in the neighborhood. The project began as an interfaith, multi-congregation CSA project with pick-ups at the local Temple. This was a dynamic program including frequent tastings and cooking demonstrations that served to build community. However, as Senter says, "it was labor intensive, and ran out of steam, so we scaled it down a bit and re-launched it on our site."

What makes Our Savior's Lutheran Church's Community Supported Agriculture program special? First, they have partnerships with two farms, Riverdog Farm provides vegetables, eggs and meat while Frog Hollow Farm provides seasonal fruit. (LOGOS: Riverdog and Frog Hollow)

Secondly, they have an ongoing commitment to promote the farms they partner with to the local community. For example they participate in the Sustainable Lafayette Earth Day by 'tabling' to promote CSA subscriptions passing out brochures and recruiting members to the produce box program. For two years the church hosted a public Earth Day Festival with speakers from both farms, a liturgy and music that celebrated the deep connection to the gift of land.

Each of these elements stems from the excitement Dan has for supporting local food and farmers. The congregation's food justice work has hosted guest speakers, provided educational forums, advocacy work and sermons. He preached on the interconnections between creation care, supporting organic farmers and the broader Gospel on several occasions as the church was getting ready to launch the program in 2013. One sermon described helping people see the holy trinity inside a CSA box. Dan's says, "Joining a CSA is like a gateway drug on this issue". A CSA supports a sustainable local food shed, connects you to the seasons, the farmer, labor rights, environmental issues, and even the spirit of the land. Dan is hands-on and can be seen stacking produce boxes on a pick-up day. However, now the program is running strong and Dan reports it does not require a lot of time from him or congregational volunteers.

Where does this strong program go from here? They are looking to increase the support for their farm partners by having members from neighboring Lafayette Christian Church also pick-up at their site and hosting more tastings on site. The team is considering partnering with the Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative to offer SNAP (formerly known as 'food stamps') redemption and cash incentives to low-income people that want to be part of the CSA's.

Working to serve the low-income families will build on the work the church has already been doing to support the Hillcrest Congregational Church pantry serving families in need in nearby Pleasant Hill. Dan and other congregants also regularly harvest fruit with the regional gleaning groups, the Urban Farmers, a collaboration that includes the group's office being located on-site at Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

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