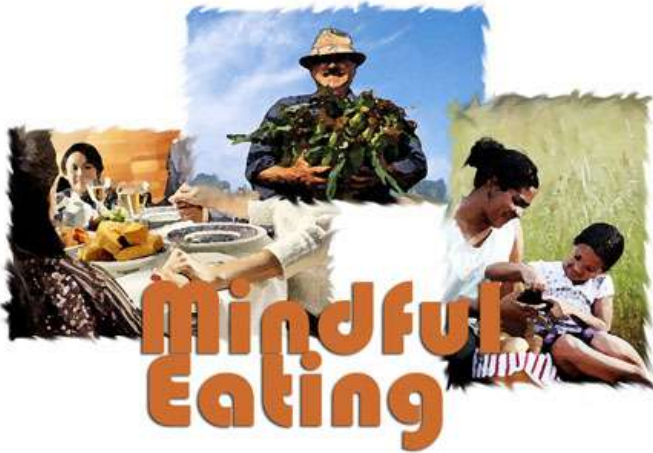


# Mindful Eating Coalition Mini History

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Presented January 11, 2015, by

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In the beginning there was Celebrating the Planet, a 2-year initiative begun in 2007 that explored a wide range of environmental issues. Many of us were feeling overwhelmed by what was happening to the interdependent web of all life. This initiative gave us a way to get involved, to take purposeful group action. Celebrating the Planet was also being studied by UUs nationally and the Statement of Conscience that came out of that discussion recommended: “Eat and serve energy-efficient food that is locally produced and low on the food chain.”

This led to the Locavores group, which set out to discover how to do just that – and to share that information with our congregation. We had food tastings during social hour and held as-local-as-possible potlucks. Reverend Gail calls our annual Fall Harvest event the Best. Church. Potluck. EVER! We built a Square Foot Garden at church and involved 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in planting, maintaining and harvesting it – they named themselves the Flaming Cauliflowers!

In 2009 our church took up another national UU study: Ethical Eating. After two years of exploring our relationship with food, The Ethical Eating Statement of Conscience was adopted at UU's national General Assembly and by our congregation. Part of the statement was: "Aware of our interdependence, we acknowledge that eating ethically requires us to be mindful of the miracle of life we share with all beings." We liked the idea of mindfulness. It is not judgmental but rather encourages us to think about our food choices from many perspectives. We also liked the idea of working together, so the Locavores and the Ethical Eating folks merged and became the Mindful Eating Coalition.

Over the years these groups organized an amazing array of events, coming at FOOD from many different angles. We publish a newsletter, and have sponsored movies, lectures, panel and book discussions, forums, service projects, cooking classes, tours, produce exchange, and two Klein Lectures – Ari Weinzwieg of Zingerman's in 2008 and Dr. Oran Hesterman of Fair Food Network in 2012. Our program topics have not shied away from controversy and vary widely, including genetically modified foods, health and nutrition, hunger, the federal Farm Bill, local farms and farmers, restaurant workers' rights, and animal rights (you gotta love a presentation entitled "Why we Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows").

In 2011 we decided to expand our service work in the community and reached out to Food Gatherers. They matched us with Farmer Bill Schmid, our neighbor on Maple Road, who donates a portion of his harvest to Food Gatherers as one of their faith-based farm projects. This fresh, healthy produce goes to the hungry of Washtenaw County, but Bill's own health issues were preventing him from continuing. In 3 years we have put in over 400 volunteer work hours per season, harvesting thousands of pounds of produce and generating several thousand dollars from sales at a roadside stand. Our volunteers include a beautiful cross-section of this congregation – Chalice and Women's Circles, YRUU & SGD classes - & this year included members of other faiths and foreign exchange students. We're digging potatoes & building bridges in the community! Please join us this spring as we head into our 4<sup>th</sup> season. Today we're hosting a forum, another in our "Meet Your Farmer" series. Cathy King, owner of Frog Holler Organic Farm, one of the oldest organic farms in southeast Michigan, will tell her family's story and share her philosophy on food and farming.

Beginning this month, we'll be working with The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice on a 3-month study of Food and Justice. We welcome you to join us at these or other upcoming events. In a larger sense, we are inviting you to join us as we examine how our values influence our food choices and how our food choices impact our fellow creatures and our home planet itself. Or, as Reverend Gail put it last Sunday, join us on this journey to bring our behavior and our values into ALIGNMENT.

Thank You.