

## FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE BEQUEST GRANT ON BEHALF OF SUN MOON FARM

*“It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how could [they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it?”*

*William Penn, 1693*

### **I. Overview:**

Sun Moon Farm is a community-focused organic vegetable farm in Rindge, NH. Megan and Craig Jensen, and their 8 year old son Fox, are the current stewards of land that has been continuously farmed since the 1780s and, for about 60 years, was home to The Meeting School, a radical Quaker boarding school. Sun Moon Farm feeds about 120 families each year -- half in the Monadnock area and half around a cohousing Community in North Cambridge -- but our real work is building a community of urban and rural friends that are not only interested in high quality vegetables but also in the story of their Quaker farmers, this specific land, and the changing environment that is affecting us all.

Sun Moon Farm offers a 20 week CSA season (from June through October), makes regular donations to our local food pantry, and then grows a good variety of winter greens (from November through April) in our unheated, passive solar greenhouses. Sun Moon Farm is the host site for a significant and innovative solar installation that provides power for several other small farms in the Monadnock region, stabilizing costs, dramatically reducing our carbon footprints, and transforming competitors into collaborators. Sun Moon Farm is also a founding member of The South of Monadnock Community, an intentional neighborhood “consistent with Quaker practices and principles that prioritizes purposeful, joyful living, peacework, place-based education and Earth stewardship, including diverse, sustainable agriculture and wild-space conservation.”

## **Why this project now, and will it engage with or benefit the FMC community? If so, how?**

It has been raining since about 8 AM and now, just twelve hours later, we have more than 2 inches in the rain gauge. With three months to go, 2023 is already the 3rd wettest year that New Hampshire has experienced in the past 125 years. Much of that rain came early in July and flooded a significant percentage of our fields. The first planting of radishes, carrots and beets all rotted in the ground. We missed several seeding dates for the late summer crops when we couldn't shape beds or push the seeder. And we lost about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our heirloom dahlias, a specialty crop that we have been cultivating for the past decade. After the rains, about 20% of our cultivated space was left fallow for the remainder of the season.

In 2021 our farm was even wetter. The average rainfall for July in Cheshire County is just about 4 inches but in 2021 our farm drowned under 19 inches of rain -- with even more rain following in the first week of August.

We understand that the climate forecast for our part of the world is for less frequent but more dramatic rain events. Rain like this is not beneficial to a farm like ours -- it is actually quite destructive. When water falls faster than our soils can absorb it we not only lose water that plants will need later but the rain also washes away the fertility that we've been slowly building in our soil, leaving us with depleted fields that cost more time and money to rebuild. We often have no choice but to continue working in heavy, swampy conditions, resulting in noticeable compaction and therefore more runoff and loss.

Our changing climate is also erratic and unpredictable. In 2022, between these two exceptionally wet summers, Cheshire County suffered through a drought which included a week of D3 (extreme drought) conditions. Our part of New Hampshire also experienced droughts in 2016 and 2020. In drought years, seeds germinate erratically (or not at all), yields are lower (and slower), and there are some crops that have to be abandoned entirely.

We understand that New England is a relatively climate privileged location but we are nonetheless experiencing dramatic changes. Small, community focused farming is not very profitable but without significant investment we worry that it

will not be *possible*. We will never be able to afford necessary investments in climate change mitigation by selling food in a way that continues to be affordable and accessible. Yet the farm and farmers are already carrying enough (or too much) good work and can't afford to take on more or new work to afford these investments.

We believe that the work of Sun Moon Farm is to be a prophetic witness about climate change, about community, and about how much Friends' testimonies have to say about our current moment. We need help in order to continue the work that we have felt called to carry. Friends at FMC can be continuously educated and inspired by the Spirit-led work going on at Sun Moon Farm through the weekly newsletter that we send out during the season, by visiting for work weekends, or joining in worship and fellowship at annual farm events.

### **How will this project deepen the spiritual life of FMC and reflect its testimonies?**

Peace, simplicity, integrity, equality and community are core values of Sun Moon Farm and guide many of the decisions about how we live on and work with this land. Sun Moon Farm is a place where Friends can experience these core Quaker testimonies -- where they can feel the Truth in their body as they weed carrots or plant garlic and where a shared pot of soup or bowl of salad can reflect how the whole world is allowing our existence.

### **How much is being requested, and what do you hope these funds will accomplish? Will you personally oversee execution or will it involve another organization or non-FMC persons? Over how many years will the funding be used?**

Sun Moon Farm is requesting \$60,000, over three years, to fund a transformational investment in Climate Change preparedness on our small farm. This plan would consist of three related but separate projects, each completed within one farm season and targeting a different aspect of climate vulnerability.

Year one would focus on mitigating the impact of future storms and rebuilding soils affected by previous storms. Specifically, we would cut long trenches around the most vulnerable areas of the farm and install subsurface drainage to direct water away from flood susceptible gardens. We would also do significant site work to bring vulnerable areas closer to level before adding significant fertility to the improved and rebuilt gardens.

In year two we would erect a new 30' x 96' high tunnel greenhouse. We know that covered spaces allow us the most control in both flood and drought years, make efficient use of any irrigation that we do employ, allow us to extend our growing season straight through the New Hampshire winter (thereby making the farm a bit more fiscally sustainable), and prevent some of the increasing climate related pest and pathogen damages (like downy mildew on basil and bacterial wilt spread by striped cucumber beetles). But greenhouses are expensive to build and to maintain and the runoff from a new impervious structure can exacerbate flood conditions. Sun Moon Farm would benefit greatly from a new tunnel but we know that this project has to wait until after we can afford to address drainage issues.

Year three would focus on drought preparedness. Specifically we would cut a small collection pond (or possibly two) to make use of the water diverted by the year one project. We would purchase a pump and invest in an irrigation plan that could deliver water to areas most affected. In year three we would also hope to purchase a small piece of equipment that would allow Sun Moon Farm to transplant vegetables even through drought conditions, allowing us to stay closer to that year's proposed farm plan.

**Is this a local proposal, elsewhere in the U.S., or international? Or for FMC itself?**

This project would be for Sun Moon Farm in Rindge, New Hampshire -- about 60 miles from Friends Meeting at Cambridge -- and for the benefit of friends both near to the farm and near to Meeting.

**Who will carry out this project, both short-term and long-term if**

**applicable? What are the roles, who will be doing them, and will there be adequate support?**

Sun Moon Farm is owned and operated by Craig and Megan Jensen. They are a strong and willing couple that has a lot of experience working together, working on this land, and working through complicated, multi-year projects.

While much of the physical work and all of the project management will be carried by these Friends, Sun Moon Farm has experience hiring out work that requires equipment or expertise that they do not have. There are parts of this project for which we expect to hire professional help.

Monadnock Quaker Meeting has recognized the work of Sun Moon Farm to be a public ministry and Craig has a ministerial support and accountability committee (currently composed of MQM members Jackie Stillwell and Eleanor Cappa).

## **II. Use of Funds**

**Does this proposal advise keeping some or all of the bequest for FMC's capital or budget use?**

This proposal is for a relatively small portion of the bequest funds. Sun Moon Farm does not believe that it has enough information to offer any additional advice as to how the remainder of the bequest funds should be used. Sun Moon Farm would be interested in talking more broadly about how our work is funded and what additional radical commitments we could make if funding allowed.

**Is this the only funding for this project or is it part of a larger effort?**

The farm is not seeking reimbursement for the labor that we would expect to contribute to this project and that would be a significant commitment by Sun Moon Farm. This request would cover all of the requisite funding for this project.

**Is it ongoing after these funds are depleted?**

This proposal is for a project that would be completed in 3 years but would benefit the farm for decades with only minor continuing costs (new greenhouse plastic

every 5 years, new irrigation lines every 3 years, etc..).

**Is this funding for a start-up, a program already up and running, or is this for an expansion?**

Craig and Megan Jensen started Sun Moon Farm in 2011 on land that has been continuously farmed since the 1780s. This request is to help make it possible that a farm might continue here for many, many more years.

**If being given to an existing program, what portion of that budget will this represent?**

Sun Moon Farm's annual operating budget is approximately \$90,000. For the past two seasons our CSA program, which makes up about 85% of our total sales, has run on a 'pay-as-led' model that was inspired by NEYM's approach to program funding. We are committed to making our food, and the community around it, available to all who ask for it but this does leave Sun Moon Farm particularly vulnerable in an industry that is already financially precarious.

For the past 13 seasons we have aimed to pay our family \$24,000 for 12 months of full-time and physically hard work. We have never paid ourselves more than \$27,000 and we have often paid ourselves significantly less. When the budget is tight -- as it often is -- we don't know too many options other than reducing our own pay or reducing our investments in soil health. Neither of these are sustainable strategies. We believe that a commitment to simplicity is important. We also know that our financial reality is often challenging, isolating and at odds with Quaker ideas about integrity and equality.

**If an existing project, are members and/or attenders at FMC already engaged with this project, and if so, how? Are community members welcome to become involved and how?**

Sun Moon Farm is a very open project and property. Both local and city friends often join us for work days on the farm or at our weekly potluck dinners. Others

come up for our annual Summer Barn Party or the Winter Solstice Worship that we host in our barn. Each season we share our house with two or three young friends who are interested in learning more about farming and community living. Over the past few years we've hosted YAF retreats, a campout for QVS fellows, a weekend for the Prophetic Climate Action Working Group as well as secular groups including the Audubon Society and local school visits. There are many opportunities for FMC members and attenders to engage with this project -- including purchasing a farmer delivered CSA share and talking to their grower every week when he is in Cambridge!

### **III. Budget**

Sun Moon Farm believes that it has enough relevant experience with projects like this, and has made enough recent inquiries, to propose a realistic estimated budget. We would intend to get more exact, with quotes for the work which we would intend to hire out, before any money was committed. The year three portion of this project would be of significant benefit to Sun Moon Farm but naturally sits behind the year one and year two priorities. The imprecision in that estimate reflects the distance from now until groundbreaking as well as unknowns that the year one investment might reveal.

#### **Year One: \$20,000**

1. Trenching and Drainage Tile Installation (hired out) \$8,000
2. Terracing and leveling existing garden spaces (hired out) \$4,000
3. Purchase a Sun Moon Farm appropriate, ground driven manure spreader \$5000
4. Soil tests and Manure \$3000

#### **Year Two: \$20,000**

1. Site Work (hired out) \$3000
2. Ledgewood Farms 30' x 96' gothic-style high tunnel, plus endwall construction, plastic, tunnel irrigation: \$16,000

3. Trellis clips, lines and ground cloths: \$1,000

**Year Three: \$15,500 - 24,500**

1. Collection Pond (hired out) \$6,000-12,000
2. Irrigation pump and filtration \$1500 -3,000
3. Dedicated solar electric \$1500- 3,000
4. Delivery (irrigation lines, manifolds, drip and fittings, etc.) \$3,000
5. Waterwheel style transplanter \$3500

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We are grateful to be invited to engage with Cambridge Friends' efforts to make just use of resources and to support Earth stewardship and climate preparedness in New England. Craig and Megan welcome questions, more conversation and further discernment about this proposal. In love and light.

Craig and Megan Jensen

Sun Moon Farm

121 Thomas Road, Rindge NH 03461

[sunmooncraig@gmail.com](mailto:sunmooncraig@gmail.com)

603.899.2806