



Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC Annual Report for the work of 2018

As we continue to work together in the creation and work of the Center for Sustainable Justice, this report seeks to highlight our shared work in 2018. It represents the time and energy of the staff at Lyndale (Rev. Ashley Harness, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel and Matta Ghaly) and it represents many, many hours of faithful, strategic work by the membership and colleagues of Lyndale UCC.

Mission and Vision and Work of the Center for Sustainable Justice

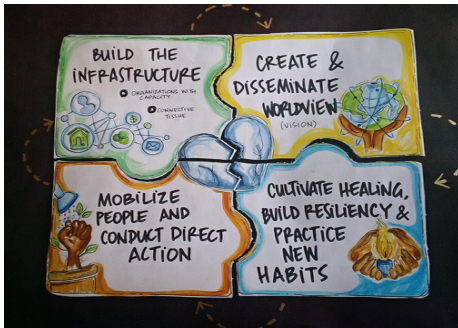
Lyndale United Church of Christ's Mission Statement:

Lyndale United Church of Christ is a growing faith community:

Deepening our questions and spirituality,
Embodying God's healing and love,
Building a more just world here and now.

Center for Sustainable Justice History, Mission and Commitments

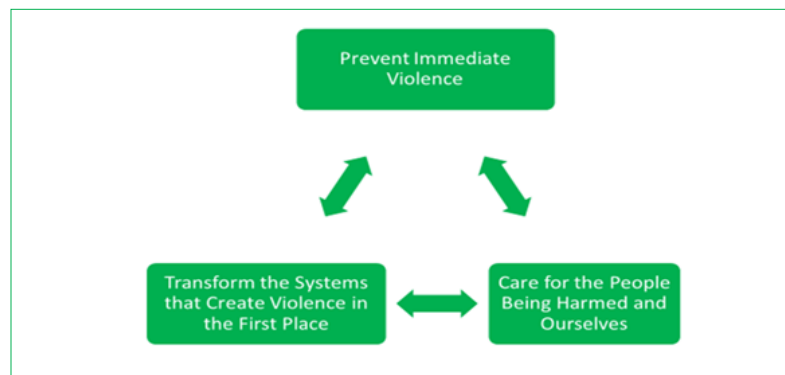
The Center for Sustainable Justice helps build the movement of religious leaders and communities working together on LGBTQ, racial, food and climate justice in the Twin Cities and across the Midwest. We do so rooted in an understanding that movements for justice are strongest and most successful when there is simultaneous work in four areas: 1. setting and sharing the vision of how the world ought be, 2. helping individual organizations work better and creating and tending the "connective tissue" between organizations, 3. mobilizing people for ethical spectacle, direct action and/or campaigns, and 4. cultivating healthy people (bodies, relationships, communities). This is illustrated below.



The Center for Sustainable Justice does work in all four areas with an emphasis on connecting and building coalitions among religious and spiritual people and organizations. Most of our work brings pro-LGBTQ people together to work on questions of racial, food and climate justice through deepening the web of relationships and the infrastructures of justice-making.

Additionally, the Center for Sustainable Justice works out of a "healing justice" framework. We are seeking a world in which there is no distinction between that which is healing and that which is justice.

The Center for Sustainable Justice seeks to act and live in ways that practice the cycle of Healing Justice with three intertwined and inextricable moves. As seen in the graphic to the right, we are called to prevent immediate violence (perpetrated by systems, by individuals, by communities); we must care for the people who are being harmed, including ourselves; and we must transform the systems that create violence in the first place.



Specific Center for Sustainable Justice program areas are:

1. Movement Building Convening

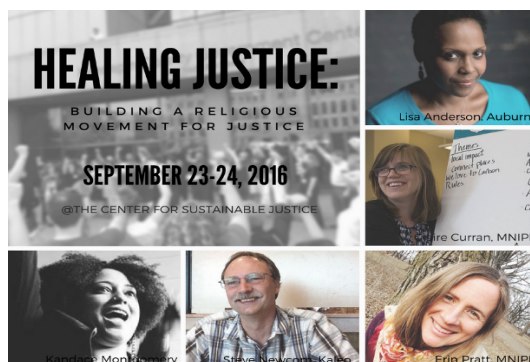
Because building a religiously-rooted movement for justice is at the core of our work, we understand that gathering people for the purposes of shared dreaming, storytelling, skills-building, relationship-building, healing, worship and action is critical work. In other words, we believe that in order to build a successful movement, the intentional gathering of people is necessary. Therefore, we take it as one of our responsibilities to provide an annual gathering of pro-LGBTQ religious people working on embodied racial, climate and food justice in the Twin Cities and across the Midwest.

Three years of Movement-Building convenings:

In October of 2016, our gathering was entitled *Healing Justice: Building a Religious Movement for Justice*. It was very well-received with 125 people attending and relationships forged which have already resulted in deeper collaboration across Native and Non-Native communities, with supporting the ongoing work of Sanctuary across the region—particularly work led by immigrant groups, and the deepening of work around embodied justice. Here is what was said about *Healing Justice*:

We know that justice work is sacred work. And building intersectional movements for justice that take seriously racial, LGBTQ, economic, climate and food justice all at once is critically important.

But we cannot build justice movements that are populated with broken bodies, traumatized bodies, exhausted bodies. We must find a way to heal, build resiliency and practice new habits... personally, communally and as an earth-body.



In October of 2017, we hosted our second Movement Building Convening entitled *Sacred Places, Sacred Stories: A Reclamation Journey into Healing Justice* which gathered over a hundred religiously-rooted justice seekers together for story-telling, eating and action. Here is what we said about it:

As we seek to be spiritually and religiously-rooted people doing the work of justice, it is important to name the realities of what oppression has sought to destroy: our very bodies, the land, our stories. But, too often, we only tell the stories of the death-dealing, the stealing, the destruction and we forget to name and claim the resistance, the healing, the reclamation.

Sacred Places, Sacred Stories: A Reclamation Journey into Healing Justice is an opportunity to both name the context of colonization-- of bodies, land and stories-- that White Supremacy has wrought and tell the stories of successful healing, resilience and resistance.

Over the course of three days, we heard from Black, Native, white, queer, cisgender, straight, Christian and traditional activists, artists and storytellers as they witnessed to the ways in which bodies and land can heal and

both transform and be transformed. It was a time of resilient community justice-making, sacred ceremony and delicious food. A brief film about the gathering is on the Center for Sustainable Justice's website:

<http://www.lyndaleucc.org/justice/>



In December of 2018 and January of 2019, the Center for Sustainable Justice hosted its third annual gathering dedicated to healing our bodies, spirits and land. This gathering was entitled *#SilentNoMore: Resisting Conquest, Liberating Bodies* and focused on the context and consequences of toxic masculinity as well as the resistance and resilience needed to transform our justice movements toward healing and wholeness. It was planned collaboratively with the Native-non-Native partnership called Healing Minnesota Stories, the Brethren-Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance and the Kaleo Center for Faith, Justice and Social Transformation by Black, Native, white, straight, queer, young, old, survivors, storytellers, Jewish, Christian, traditional leaders and organizers. Instead of an open gathering, *#SilentNoMore* was designed as a smaller, leadership-development gathering/training with each sponsoring organization inviting five to ten of their leaders in order to form a multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-gendered, multi-generational gathering.

Through story-telling, ritual and “fractal-ing” exercises (moving from the internal to the interpersonal to the institutional to the systemic, and back again) we engaged these basic understandings:

- Toxic Masculinity is a desecrating product of the interlocking systems of oppression (kyriarchy): White Nationalism, Patriarchy and Capitalism. By desecrating, we mean that toxic masculinity seeks to destroy the sacredness of bodies, land and stories. And by product we mean that toxic masculinity emerges from the logic and practice of white nationalism, patriarchy and capitalism. In other words, as we name and engage toxic masculinity, we must consciously recognize that racism, anti-semitism, misogyny, rape culture and commodification/objectification are all present and at work within toxic masculinity.
- Toxic masculinity seeks to desecrate all bodies, not just female-identified and/or genderqueer bodies. The ways in which toxic masculinity functions is different depending upon the target.
- Our resistance and resilience is sacred work—a kind of re-sacrilizing that which has been desecrated. It requires interrupting that which is being harmed, healing that which has been broken and transforming the systems which have caused the harm in the first place.

Here is what folx were saying about *#SilentNoMore*:

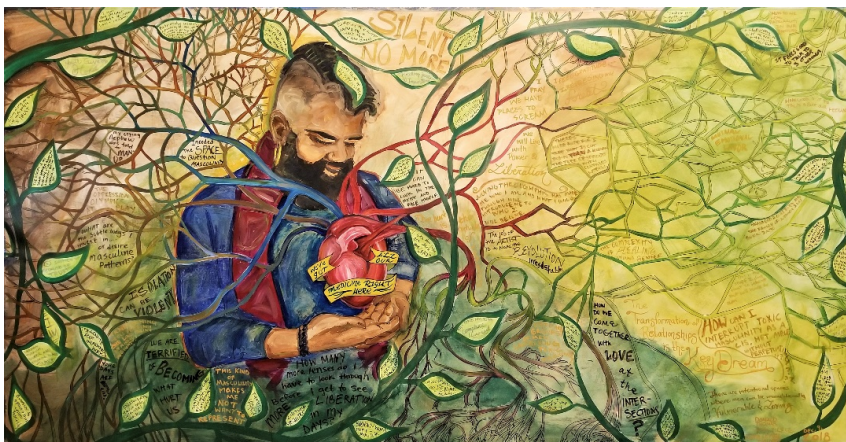
We've got all our medicine right here... Resilience work is sacred

How can I interrupt toxic masculinity as a cis, het male without perpetrating it anew?

How do we come together with love at the intersections? Toxic masculinity seeks to desecrate all bodies.

I had the feeling of being known and not just seen.

As a way to capture the experience, given the fact that engaging toxic masculinity invariably brings up experiences of trauma such as sexual abuse and assault, we chose not to have a videographer. Instead, we worked with Nell Pierce, Donald Thomas and Olivia Levins Holden—an artistic collective to be our graphic note-takers. Below are their two creations coming out of each of our two gatherings.



2. Poor People's Campaign



In 2018, one of the centerpieces of the work of The Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale was all of our work on the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign. Both Lyndale UCC and The Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale were sponsoring organizations for the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel served on its Steering Committee. Planned in collaboration with the

national Poor People's Campaign (which included some forty local and state-wide campaigns around the country), the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign organized around the Four Pillars of Economic Justice, Racial Justice, Climate Justice and a Peace Economy. During the Forty Days of Action between May 13 and June 23, 2018, there were six rallies which drew close to 1500 people and six actions, some of which included non-violent direct action.

In each of these actions, dozens of Lyndalians and several of our SpringHouse partners participated.



The first week focused on Economic Justice and on blocking a bill in the legislature known as Pre-emption which would have made it illegal for local jurisdictions to pass \$15/hour minimum wage laws (and outlaw plastic bags and many other issues). After having been trained in non-violent direct action, twenty folx, following the organizing and lead of the \$15Now Coalition, Hmong Americans for Justice and CTUL, occupied the office of the author of the Pre-Emption bill with the message that Pre-emption is poverty. Thirteen people, including Lyndalians Fred Smith and Joe Bunce

were arrested for putting their bodies in the way of injustice. Their action was followed by an outdoor rally that drew over 200 folx, even in the rain, as we joined thirty other states in calling for economic justice. In Washington, DC over 100 people were arrested.

The second week of action focused on Racial Justice and spotlighted the broken, unjust and cruel immigration system. There was a rally of some two hundred people at the Minnesota State Capitol on Monday in which Rev. Dr. Rebecca served as the emcee and on Tuesday morning, faithful protesters, following the organizing and lead of MIRAc (Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee) stopped deportations at the Whipple Building at Fort Snelling. During the rally and action, there were street theatre presentations which put ICE on trial.



The primary message for both the rally and action was this:

“We are here to stand with the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee as we all put ICE on trial. We do so because The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operate immorally. ICE functions outside the bounds of morality and legality.

“ICE chases people down as if they are hunting animals and they terrorize individuals, families and communities with impunity. Pregnant women, children recovering from surgery in hospitals, veterans who have served in the US military, fully protected DACA recipients, and even US citizens have been arrested and deported by ICE. ICE arrests people on private property without warrants, they torture immigrants with mental health issues by putting them in solitary confinement, families pay unjust fees just to communicate with their loved ones in ICE jails, and ICE has separated hundreds if not thousands of immigrant children from their parents at the border and all across the country. DHS is now promising to criminally prosecute immigrants and asylees who are fleeing violence in their countries, threatening to separate even more families. Every day brings another heinous attack against our immigrant relatives and kindred and we must resist those attacks.

“As people of faith, as targeted communities and co-conspirator communities, we stand against the inhumanity and immorality of ICE and for a just immigration system because we affirm the Creator’s sacredness in humanity and in creation.”





On June 4th, the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign partnered with Honor the Earth, MN350, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, the Youth Climate interveners and hundreds of religious-rooted folx to say No to Line 3. We delivered over 500 clergy signatures to the Governor's office and to the Public Utilities Commission ahead of the PUC's decision about whether to grant a certificate of need to Enbridge for their Line 3 replacement. Although the PUC

did end up granting that certificate of need, there remains much good resistance work to be done. Much of the relationship built around this action and the organizing that has been going on will continue and we will certainly be asked to continue to stand with the Water Protectors in resistance to Line 3.



On June 11th, Rev. Rebecca was one of fifteen arrested in civil disobedience in support of the \$15/Hour Minimum wage in St. Paul. (They called themselves the 15 for \$15) Following the lead of the \$15Now Coalition, the Hmong Americans United for Justice, CTUL and others, the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign asked religiously-rooted folx to put their bodies on the line in support of a living wage in St Paul and to advocate for \$15/Hour with "No Carve-Outs" for personal care attendants, tipped workers or youth workers.

(In December of 2018, the St. Paul City Council voted to adopt \$15/Hour with no carve-outs. There were many gifted activists who should receive credit for this decision and the actions of the Poor People's Campaign helped to frame the moral narrative about the deep connection between living wages and ending poverty.)

On June 18th, about a dozen members of the Lyndale community supported the Center for Prophetic Imagination, the Catholic Worker Movement, Black Visions Collective and MPD150 in staging a funeral at a grave constructed inside Mayor Frey's office for all of those killed by police. Focusing on the report called *Enough is Enough*, produced by MPD150, this action called for no new police in Minneapolis and, instead, building toward a city with no police and where safety and Beloved Community mean focusing resources toward schools, mental health support and housing among other things. No More Police is a powerful movement and this report is an invaluable resource to help us understand why and how: <http://www.mpd150.com/report/>



(After the Poor People's Campaign, a coalition entitled Reclaim the Block emerged which included many of the MNPPC activists. In December of 2018, Reclaim the Block worked with several colleague organizations to successfully lobby the Minneapolis City Council to begin to move public safety monies away from exclusively police budgets into mental health and housing services and non-armed, non-police emergency responders.)

There were some beautiful short videos produced to highlight each week's theme and action. This film is one brief example. <https://www.facebook.com/mnppc/videos/2035359786712492/>

3. Facilitate and Convene MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing)



The Center for Sustainable Justice is a key member of the Steering Committee of MARCH and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel serves as facilitator of the MARCH table.

MARCH is an open coalition of explicitly pro-LGBTQ faith leaders from diverse communities, religious institutions, and spiritual traditions which is building a movement of people of faith and conviction and spiritual and religious communities as partners in the spiritual, moral, political work of dismantling white supremacy and other intersecting oppressions in solidarity with movements for justice led by frontline communities. MARCH works to build a connected community of congregations, spiritual traditions, and faith communities working to leverage their resources in solidarity with movements for collective liberation rooted in intersectional racial justice that are led by Native, Black, and Brown communities, and by the communities most impacted by the systems of oppression we seek to change.

MARCH works in the following areas:

Sacred Solidarity Network:

MARCH has been hosting its third cohort of eleven congregations as part of what has become a very important network of welcoming, multifaith congregations. The first and second years included twelve congregations (Jewish, UUA, Christian) who concurrently participated in retreats, trainings and monthly check-in calls hosted by MARCH and led their own education, action and worship programs within their welcoming congregations around dismantling white supremacy and building racial justice.

In the second half of 2018 and extending into 2019, the Center for Sustainable Justice is the fiscal agent for a grant from the First Universalist Foundation to support the process of gathering and publishing the curriculum and pedagogical tools for the Sacred Solidarity Network. Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel serves as an advisor and support person to the curriculum writing process done by Rev. Dana Neuhauser who was hired as the Sacred Solidarity Network organizer and curriculum writer using the First Universalist grant.

Educational Events

Understanding that the work is always a balance of deepening knowledge, inspiring action and rooting spiritual practice, MARCH hosts regular educational opportunities ranging from Sabbath Practice as Radical Witness to Discomfort and Disruption trainings to Relational Organizing. In 2018, the Center for Sustainable Justice helped sponsor Carin Mrotz, Executive Director of Jewish Community Action, in a training exploring How Anti-Semitism and White Supremacy Support One Another.

Mobilization and Direct Action

MARCH understands that mobilizing pro-LGBTQ religious people for action is critical. In the last several years, MARCH has built a mobilization network (using a listserve, Facebook, Twitter and Signal) of congregations and religious leaders who have been present at marches, protests and events ranging from the Two-Spirit camp at Standing Rock to Rev. Dr. William Barber's Revival in the Twin Cities to the Capitol to protest the killing of Philando Castille. Most recently, dozens of MARCH-affiliated congregations and religious leaders participated in the Minnesota Poor People's Campaign at the behest of many MARCH leaders who were

involved in the Minnesota Poor People’s Campaign Steering Committee. This involvement included participating in four non-violent direct actions in support of the passage of \$15 Minimum wage, to stop deportations for a day and to call for a Minneapolis City Budget that redirected funds toward education, mental health and community development and away from increasing and militarizing the police.

CommunityWell

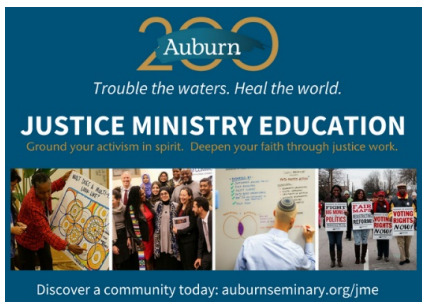
MARCH members have begun the work of framing what repair/reparations work might look like and how we might more concretely help support LGBTQ and pro-LGBTQ people of color and indigenous (POCI)-led organizations and transfer resources and money from predominantly-white congregations to them. They began mapping the resources of MARCH member communities and the needs of several POCI-led organizations with which MARCH members have relationships. To date, there has been support for leadership development in the Black Visions Collective (a queer and Black collective) and for individual POCI queer organizers in the Twin Cities.

Multifaith Worship Opportunities



MARCH is first and foremost a multifaith coalition and, as such, seeks to speak and act in religiously-rooted ways in all that it does. Additionally, it provides multifaith worship opportunities on a regular basis. One powerful example of this is that on the first anniversary of the Inauguration, MARCH hosted a week-long series of worship opportunities called the Week of Spiritual Resistance and Resilience. This week included Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Yoruba worship and meditation opportunities that reached hundreds of folx across the Twin Cities.

4. Justice Ministry Education project with Auburn Seminary



Justice Ministry Education (JME) spiritually activates and practically prepares leaders to face the biggest moral challenges of our time with faith-rooted justice work.

“I have grown in my own self-awareness and rootedness as an organizer and a beloved child of God.” – JME participant 2017

Equal parts direct experiential learning, 150 hours of field work, and facilitated learning in small groups, individually, and within local movements, JME transforms your leadership across five areas of learning,

growth, and practice:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Faith-rootedness | The practice of justice work | Role discernment and knowledge of self |
| Self-care and communal care | Accountability and relationship building. | |

Participants who complete the program are awarded a Certificate of Justice Ministry Education (1 unit) from Auburn Seminary. The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted the pilot cohort of this program in the Twin Cities in 2017 with Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel as its supervisor. The program has expanded to more than a dozen sites around the country. The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted its second cohort in the Fall of 2018 in the Twin Cities with Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel as its supervisor and Rev. Canon Peg Chamberlin as its assistant supervisor.

5. Religiously-rooted Justice Education



The Center for Sustainable Justice participates in a variety of programs to help teach and prepare the next generation of religiously-rooted justice leaders. In 2018, we helped train over a hundred UUA leaders through the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice's program entitled, *Love Resists Through Partnerships: Building Relationships at the Grassroots*; hosted *In this Moment, Acting in Faith: A Gathering of Deeply Flawed People Creating Justice* for thirty-five members of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ; and presented to twenty-five MSW students training to collaborate with religious communities in their work.

6. Theological and Biblical-Rooting

All that the Center for Sustainable Justice does is rooted in and committed to theological and biblical reflection. In blogs, worship, sermons, through social media and implicitly and explicitly through each of its programs, The Center for Sustainable Justice seeks to draw from and craft liberatory and honest theology and Biblical interpretation. Many of these sermons can be found on the Lyndale UCC website (such as here:

<http://www.lyndaleucc.org/sermons/advent-4-preparing-to-sing-the-world-right-side-up/>) or the Center for Sustainable Justice Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SustainJustice/>

7. Religiously-rooted Direct Action



Given the political climate in our country and the pressing need for religiously-rooted resistance work, The Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale and many, many Lyndalians participated in countless protests and direct actions beyond the Poor People's Campaign. Two examples which represent ongoing work emerging from the Poor People's Campaign are shared here. On June 30th, over a dozen Lyndale members joined with 30,000 others in downtown Minneapolis to protest the Zero Tolerance policy of the Trump Administration and the policy of family separations. Entitled Families Belong Together, this march coincided with hundreds of marches

around the country. Many of us were wearing "Abolish ICE" t-shirts to advocate for the abolishment of Immigration, Customs and Enforcement, an agency that was created in the wake of 9/11 and has been used for a whole host of abuse and violence against refugees and immigrants.



In September, as continuing resistance to the Line 3 project, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light and Healing Minnesota Stories partnered with Honor the Earth to create a blessing ceremony and action at the Headwaters of the Mississippi. Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel and her daughter, Shannon participated in the action.

Our Staff

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and currently serves as the Director of the Center for Sustainable Justice. She is the author of *Carnal Knowledge of God: Embodied Love and the Movement for Justice* (Fortress Press, 2017) and of *To Do Justice: A Study of Welcoming Congregations*, *A Time to Build Up: Analysis of the No on Proposition 8 Campaign and Its Implications for Future Pro-LGBTQQIA Religious Organizing*, *Preventing Sexual Abuse: A Course of Study for Teenagers* (Pilgrim Press, 1996) as well as numerous articles and sermons.

Voelkel is a theologian, pastor, trainer, and movement-builder who specializes in coalition and collaborative partnerships across movements for justice. She is a graduate of Earlham College, Yale Divinity School and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. She can be found at www.RevDr.RebeccaMMVoelkel.com.

Rev. Ashley Harness

Rev. Ashley Harness is a United Church of Christ minister and a communications strategist with over a decade of experience in non-profit media work. Currently Harness is pastor at Lyndale United of Church of Christ. She provides confidential training and counsel to religious leaders seeking to use social and traditional media as a pulpit through Auburn Theological Seminary's digital organizing and media teams. She is a graduate of Brown University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Matta Ghaly

Matta Ghaly, CSJC (they/them) is the new Center for Sustainable Justice Ministry Intern at Lyndale UCC. They began in December of 2018 and will serve through the summer of f2019 focusing on spiritual practices, support of the justice committees both inside and outside of Lyndale and in Lyndale's worship life. This internship is through Luther Seminary. Along with a passion for congregational ministry, Matta feels a deep call to the@logical education and serves as adjunct faculty for Islamic and Quranic Studies at The Chaplaincy Institute in Berkeley, CA. They are spiritually replenished through religious life as a vowed member of the monastic Community of Saint John Cassian (CSJC) and a dervish at Ateshi Ask (Fire of Love) Sufi Community.

Budget for The Center for Sustainable Justice

		2018	Notes
SOURCES OF SUPPORT			
Grant sources		35,500	Carpenter Foundation, UCC New and ReNewing Grant
Individual donations		5,000	
Conference Registrations and Collaboration		4,000	
TOTAL SOURCES		\$44,500	
EXPENSES			
Conference and Gatherings		\$14,000	
MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing)		\$3,500	
Community Actions		\$1,000	
Operating Expenses / Overhead			
Director's Salary		22,000	
Office Equipment & Supplies		1,000	
Printing & Postage		2,500	
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$44,000	