



Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC Annual Report for the work of 2019

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 2019. It represents the time and energy of the staff at Lyndale (Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel, Matta Ghaly and Rev. Ashley Harness) 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.

The work of the Center for Sustainable Justice is multi-focal. It is both of Lyndale—and focused inward on Lyndale and it is incubated by Lyndale in order to be focused in the world. And, in many of its programming, it is focused so as to help Lyndale work in partnership in the world. As a way to help articulate this multi-focal nature of Lyndale, we have chosen to describe the work as “within Lyndale” “outside of Lyndale” and “both inside and outside of Lyndale.” We hope this is a clarifying move.

Within Lyndale

Social Justice Forum



There exist five justice teams, task forces and committees within Lyndale: Social Justice Committee, Racial Justice Task Force, Green Team (this is a SpringHouse-wide committee), Sanctuary-Supporting and Immigrant-Welcoming Task Force (this is a SpringHouse-wide committee) and Activistas. For the past two years, these committees have met together monthly in order to leverage the intersections of oppression and justice and to collaborate. These meetings, known as The Social Justice Forum, are also open to anyone who wants to become involved in the justice work of Lyndale and SpringHouse.

Each month, the Director of the Center for Sustainable Justice helps plan, support and facilitate the Social Justice Forum. It is in this context that all five teams have developed and done their work.



SpringHouse Cheyenne River Reservation Servant/Solidarity Trip

In July, a group of SpringHouse folx journeyed to the Cheyenne River Reservation as part of a solidarity trip with our colleagues in the Dakota Association of the South Dakota Conference of the United Church of Christ. Our focus was three-fold: support the work of their Horse Ministry which is a suicide-intervention program; to build genuine relationships with Lakota friends and colleagues; to study and learn about the present-day impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and reparations efforts. We were deeply moved and shared our spiritual and ministry insights during a joint SpringHouse worship service in September. Additionally,

we have carried many of our insights about ongoing impact of the Doctrine of Discovery into our justice work—particularly as it pertains to our racial justice reparation work and our efforts to become a climate justice congregation whose work is rooted in following the leadership of indigenous organizations.

50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising

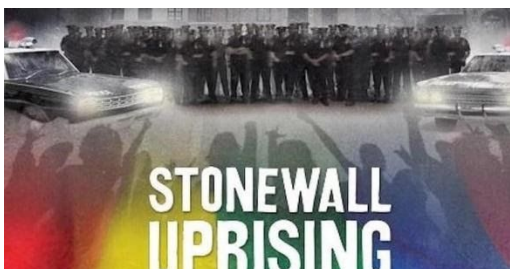


Minneapolis Pride Parade: As we have for many years, Lyndale marched in the Pride Parade in 2019. Our contingent was small—Elly Wagner and Kathy Hayden-- but they joined other United Church of Christ delegates (including folx from Mayflower, Olivet and Chapel Hills UCC) in marching and representing that God’s love is extravagant and made for all. (This was the case because Pride happened during the United Church of

Christ's General Synod in which Pastors Ashley and Rebecca were participating). Elly reports that the stickers which Pastor Ashley ordered were a huge success and that many approached them to get one. "The stickers were a real hit-many people came up and asked us specifically for them, and it was fun telling people they were really fabulous as we handed them out."



The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson: We showed the documentary about the life and death of Marsha P. Johnson, the transgender African American woman who, along with Sylvia Rivera, Miss Major and other trans+ women of color were the instigators of the Stonewall uprising at the end of June of 1969. This is an important part of LGBTQIA+ history and we were honored to remember her powerful activism and the debt owed her by the modern queer movement.



Stonewall Uprising: We also showed a documentary about the riot at the Stonewall Inn which sparked the modern-day LGBTQIA+ movement. This was done during Adult Education and included good conversation about the relationship between anti-LGBTQ police violence (against folk of all races and classes) in the Stonewall period and the police violence happening today.

Accessible Theology



We were joined by Allison Connelly as a ministry intern from Union Theological Seminary in New York City for a monthlong summer internship. Allison is a member at Lyndale and is in discernment about the exact shape of her ministry. During her internship, her focus was gaining worship-leadership experience and on disability justice, including leading a three-part series on Accessible Theology: Reflections on Disability.

Outside of Lyndale:

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. Rebecca 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. Our primary focus is building a movement of people of faith and conviction and spiritual and religious communities focused on dismantling white supremacy. In recent years we've become increasingly aware of the ways in which white supremacy is woven with anti-Semitism and our focus has broadened.

Our methodology is to work as partners 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:

In the first half of 2019, MARCH hosted 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 2019 (and continuing into the first half of 2020), MARCH hosted what it called the SSN Lab. After three years of cohorts, we heard that the graduates wanted a space for case-study and practice. SSN Lab is a monthly, two-hour time for a congregation to present how they are applying the knowledge and methods learned in the cohort experience and how that application is going in the life of their congregation. Thus far, the presentations have been very well received and the opportunity to partake in this praxis process has been invaluable.

Additionally, the break from doing a new cohort has allowed us the opportunity to evaluate the curriculum we've been using in the Sacred Solidarity Cohort and to formalize and finalize it for publication. 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 2020, there are plans to help sponsor or co-sponsor a series of events on the weaving of anti-Semitism and white supremacy.

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 have participated in protests and rallies for immigrant justice and indigenous-led climate justice.

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. Additionally, as part of Lyndale's work around the 1884 fund, we have voted to use half of that fund to go to the CommunityWell as a concrete sign of our commitment to reparations work.

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. In 2019, MARCH supported the vigils around the Tree of Life Synagogue massacre.

Both within Lyndale and Outside Lyndale

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

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:

- Here is what folx were saying about #SilentNoMore:

Resilience work is sacred

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.

[illegible]



In December of 2019, we reconvened those who had participated in #SilentNoMore for a ritual of burning the prayer ties we had made during our gathering earlier in the year. Each person had prayed with the prayer ties in their own way during the year and then gathered to release them. The power of deep relationship- built in shared strategizing, action and religious practice- has the power to heal the world.

Liturgical Direct Action

GOOD FRIDAY: STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Friday, April 19th 4:00- 6:00 pm

Join ICOM, Healing Minnesota Stories, Lyndale United Church of Christ and the Racial Justice office of the Minnesota Council of Churches as we walk the way of Jesus' crucifixion from B'dote to the Fort to the Whipple Building along the path of modern crucifixion.

Start at Historic Fort Snelling, 200 Tower Ave, St. Paul

One of the methodologies of the Center for Sustainable Justice is that of liturgical direct action. We believe that Christian and multifaith liturgy is a form of embodying our deepest dreams and prayers. For Good Friday in 2019, CSJ partnered with Healing Minnesota Stories and the Interfaith Committee on Immigration to host over one hundred folx for a Good Friday: Stations of the Cross.

Within Lyndale, we connected it explicitly with our Lenten theme of Healing Justice.

Here is a description of the service.



Our Good Friday service was what we hope will be the First Annual Walk for Justice and Stations of the Cross at the Historic Fort Snelling, B'dote and ended at the Whipple Building. It wove the ways in which modern crucifixions are so often echoes of historical ones. At the beginning we confessed: "Too often, Good Friday in Christian churches has been an opportunity to perpetrate crucifixion. Too many of our Jewish kindred have been murdered in the name of Jesus on this day. Too many have been abused in a distortion of the "ritual" of Good Friday. Too often, Good Friday's remembrance of Jesus' execution has resulted in the torture of

others."



We continued: “before we can fully claim any joy; before we know resurrection, we must face into the reality of Good Friday. Pain, suffering, abuse, oppression... These are the all-too-present realities of our day. Crucifixion happened and it continues to happen. But today, we name and claim the ways in which Jesus’ crucifixion is a moment of God’s radical solidarity with all who are oppressed, wounded and experience violence. We name and claim God’s willingness to experience in God’s body what it was to be executed by the Powerful of the world, executed in the same way that countless people and the planet suffer at the hands of Power today. Good Friday does not valorize crucifixion, it does not celebrate violence. Good Friday condemns all that would break or injure God’s precious creation.” And then we visited seven stations of the Cross.

Station One: Jesus is Condemned was at the site where Medicine Bottle and Little Six (two Dakota leaders) were executed just outside the Historic Fort Snelling.

Station Two: Jesus Carries the Cross was at the site of the Dakota Memorial which marks the concentration camp where thousands of Dakota were imprisoned during the winter of 1862-63.

Station Three: Jesus Falls was at the site of the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, the place from which the survivors of the concentration camp were exiled out of Minnesota and the place to which Dred and Harriet Scot disembarked as they were brought to Ft Snelling as slaves.

Station Four: Jesus Meets his Mother was in the shadow of the Fort and marked all those who resisted even amidst the slavery and attempted genocide: Dred and Harriet Scot brought their case for freedom; the four oaks that were sought to be protected from the Hwy 55 project and were eventually cut down but when the rings were counted, it became clear someone had planted them during the concentration camp. Resistance happens every day against Empire’s violence.

Station Five: Simon Carries the Cross was under the Hwy 55 bridge and commemorated all of those who acted in active solidarity—those who stopped the construction project that would have desecrated the sacred burial ground at Mendota, the indigenous nations who harbored slaves, and all who seek to act in solidarity every day.

Station Six: Jesus is Stripped was at the front entrance of the Whipple Building inside of which ICE holds its deportation hearings and from which hundreds have been deported.

Station Seven: Jesus is Crucified was held at the gates from which hundreds are deported, many to certain death. There, we celebrated communion with these words:

“Voice One: We remember that on the night before Jesus was killed by those who feared him...

Voice Two: On the night before she died of exposure at the concentration camp...

Voice Three: On the night before his trans* body was murdered...

Voice Four: On the night before they were whipped to death by the overseer...

Voice Five: On the night before her body was destroyed by a pipeline...

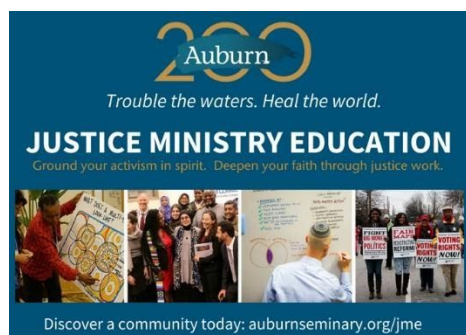
Voice Six: On the night before he was deported by ICE...

Voice One: On the night before he was arrested and crucified...”

And then we served one another communion and shared in a tobacco ceremony that we might help heal the earth that has been so profoundly wounded.

It was in the context of this Good Friday and the Maundy Thursday in which we, at Lyndale, had washed one another's hands and feet in intimate community, that we sang the Easter hymns and claimed Resurrection power even here, even now, even amidst the ongoing crucifixions.

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 2018

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:

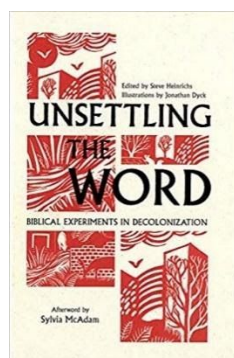
Faith-rootedness	The practice of justice work	Role discernment and knowledge of self
Self-care and communal care	Accountability and relationship building.	

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.

Currently, The Center for Sustainable Justice is in conversation with several partner organizations locally about Justice Ministry Education. Because Auburn Seminary is in a period of examination regarding its role with JME, there are two questions before us: how might we shape a JME for lay, congregational participants and what might a locally-offered program look like? Auburn is committed to answering its questions in 2020 and we hope to have answers locally, too.

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 or the Center for Sustainable Justice Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SustainJustice/>

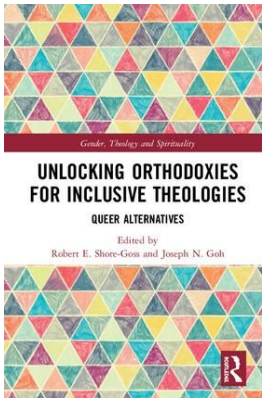


Additionally, in 2019, Rev. Voelkel's theological and biblical work was included in two anthologies. The first is Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization edited by Sylvia McAdam, Jonathan Dyck, Steve Heinrichs.

The collection is described this way:

For generations, the Bible has been employed by settler colonial societies as a weapon to dispossess Indigenous and racialized peoples of their lands, cultures, and spiritualities. Given this devastating legacy, many want nothing to do with it. But is it possible for the exploited and their allies to reclaim the Bible from the dominant powers? Can it serve as an instrument for justice in

the cause of the oppressed? Even a nonviolent weapon toward decolonization? In Unsettling the Word, over 60 Indigenous and Settler authors come together to wrestle with the Scriptures, rereading and re-imagining the ancient text for the sake of reparative futures.



The second is Unlocking Orthodoxies for Inclusive Theologies: Queer Alternatives edited by Joseph N. Goh and Robert E. Shore-Goss.

The collection is described this way:

This book enters a new liminal space between the LGBTQ and denominational Christian communities. It simultaneously explores how those who identify as queer can find a home in church and how those leading welcoming, or indeed unwelcoming, congregations can better serve both communities. The primary argument is that queer inclusion must not merely mean an assimilation into existing heteronormative respectability and approval.

Chapters are written by a diverse collection of Asian, Latin American, and U.S. theologians, religious studies scholars and activists. Each of them writes from their own social context to address the notion of LGBTQ alternative orthodoxies and praxes pertaining to God, the saints, failure of the church, queer eschatologies, and erotic economies. Engaging with issues that are not only faced by those in the theological academy, but also by clergy and congregants, the book addresses those impacted by a history of Christian hostility and violence who have become suspicious of attempts at "acceptance". It also sets out an encouragement for queer theologians and clergy think deeply about how they form communities where queer perspectives are proactively included.

Religiously-rooted Direct Action



June 2019 was the one year anniversary of the mass protest in outrage over the Trump administration's policies of separating families at the border, putting children in cages and practicing torturous actions against asylum seekers. Mary Vanderford was one of the organizers for this year's march and Rev. Rebecca spoke at the rally. Many Lyndale folx took part as we continue to embody our Immigrant Welcoming covenant.



The immigration crisis continues to impact us all. At the end of July, several Lyndalians joined the #NeverAgain non-violent direct action at the Whipple Building (the epicenter of Minnesota's detention and deportation of immigrants and refugee seekers) that was led by our Jewish colleagues in support of immigrant leaders. It was powerful and moving to stand with descendants of survivors of the Holocaust to say an emphatic no to the concentration camps at the Border.



Many folx at Lyndale and SpringHouse participated in the Youth Climate Strike at the Minnesota Capitol in September. The national United Church of Christ covered our participation in the #YouthClimateStrike as we joined thousands of other UCCers and millions of multifaith colleagues around the world. In this article:

https://www.ucc.org/news_from_coast_to_coast_ucc_turns_out_for_youth_led_climate_strikes_09242019, it noted: "The strike at the Minnesota State Capitol drew people from numerous UCC congregations, such as UCC of New Brighton; Macalester Plymouth UCC and Olivet Congregational UCC, St. Paul; and First Congregational UCC, Lyndale Congregational UCC and Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis.



"As a Christian pastor, I was deeply honored to be following the leadership of youth," said the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, director of the [Center for Sustainable Justice](#) at Lyndale UCC. "In particular, I was honored to be a follower of brown, Black and indigenous youth whose voices lifted a clarion call: our theologies, our actions and our faithful practice must be united to protect our planet. All of our lives depend upon our ability to end the violence of extraction, dependency on fossil fuels and the racism which results in poor and communities of color bearing the brunt of our climate crisis. I really believe that in order to be a person of faith in today's world, I have to be following this movement."

Strategic Planning Process

Since the presidential election of 2016 there has been a lot that has been uncovered about our nation. It isn't new but it has been exposed in a particular way—levels of white nationalism, xenophobia, homo-, bi- and transphobia, misogyny, ableism which have surprised many. And the extent to which folx are willing to go along with kind of brutality that is an almost daily assault on the bodies and spirits of marginalized folx reminds us of how deeply entrenched systems of oppression are.

As a church that seeks to follow the Gospel of Jesus, this national context has us regularly asking ourselves, what would Jesus and the God of healing, justice and liberation have us do and be in this moment? How are we to be resisters of present-day Herods and Pharaohs—both the Empire Christianity in the larger society and the Herods and Pharaohs that dwell within us and within our ways of operating in community? How are we to not just resist but also claim the realm of God here and now—in our worship, in our loving, in our sharing?

One way Lyndale has been answering these questions is through the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice which we started in September of 2015. In September of 2018, on our third anniversary, we decided to start a strategic planning process which asked how this experiment is going and how might we work to make the ministry more faithful, more strategic, more loving and just. Under the leadership of Jonathan Stegall (who has

led strategic planning processes using stakeholder and community research methods), Pastors Ashley and Rebecca and the CSJ Advisory Council have been working on this conversation.

Those participating on the CSJ Advisory Council are both Lyndale members and external partners of CSJ: Allan Henden, Mary Martin, Elly Wagner, Mary Vanderford, Melia Derrick, Liz Loeb (Kaleo Center) and Ashley Horan (Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance).

Strategic design process summary

The process

- Conducted stakeholder interviews with each of the nine members of the Advisory Council to understand their contexts and their goals for this project
- Achieved a consensus of what the organization's goals are for this project
- Created research goals and questions to learn how to achieve these goals
- Conducted individual user interviews with five people who interact with CSJ in various ways (internal and external to Lyndale)

Project goals

- **Advisory council:** Define cohesive, relational, and collective norms for an advisory group that can support each other and take fundraising, financial planning, or other appropriate responsibilities with CSJ and in relation to the church council.
- **Mission and vision:** Define a deep understanding of the identity, mission, and purview of CSJ within Lyndale and within the broader Twin Cities justice ecosystem, and determine appropriate ways to articulate it.
- **Organizational structure:** Articulate and explain the relationship and distinctions, and roles in leadership and ownership, between Lyndale UCC and CSJ.
- **Decision making:** Define a process, and a path for those who want to be involved in it, for evaluating and making decisions in CSJ's work.
- **Finances:** Improve financial support of CSJ, within Lyndale and more broadly, with the ultimate goal of paying Rebecca more and increasing her hours.
- **Involvement:** Understand and improve the pathways people within Lyndale and within community partners can take to participation and support of CSJ's work.
- **Movement work:** Communicate the ways CSJ does intersectional movement building and the ways it facilitates change within Lyndale.

User interview summary

These interviews have been helpful in helping us understand the context people have. Some common themes have emerged. There's a distinction that isn't necessarily between those who are themselves internal and external to Lyndale, but maybe is more on where their focus is.

People who think first about Lyndale tend to have less understanding of what Rebecca does and how it fits into the broader movement in the Twin Cities. People who see Rebecca's work outside Lyndale see it as trusted, essential, far bigger than her work at Lyndale, and deeply intersectional and theological.

People who see this work mostly at Lyndale are more likely to have concern around what CSJ's relationship is to Lyndale, what it does and what its responsibilities are, how Rebecca and Ashley relate, what CSJ seeks to do and how it is held accountable.

What to do next

We believe these observations align well with what we've articulated as the organizational goals for this project, and that pursuing those goals with a focus on *what CSJ is and where it faces is important*. By this, when its work is focusing outside Lyndale, we can help people within Lyndale see what it is doing and the impact it is having. When the work focuses inside Lyndale, we can help people see how it is rooted in the nature of what CSJ is.

Areas of focus for the Center for Sustainable Justice for work in 2020

Direct Action Training

For 4-5 Direct Actions that CSJ sponsors or co-sponsors, host a training/orientation and spiritual practice (15-30 min) to ground and orient participants to theories of change, movement building strategies, and to expose them to some of what CSJ is and does and the space it holds in local movement work. (Try this for a year as a "prototype"). By regularly asking participants a set of questions, we can learn how well this training works and improve it over time.

How it makes progress

- We can repeatedly test our assumption that people inside and outside Lyndale can more deeply understand what CSJ is, what it does, how it fits into local movement work, and our progress toward this understanding.
- We can integrate more preparation/explanation of what and why we are doing something into all the work and action that CSJ does, both inside and outside Lyndale.
- By including a role for both Rebecca and Ashley when possible, we can show their relationship and roles to people as they participate in them.

Existing Lyndale contexts

Use existing Lyndale contexts (Adult Education, Lenten study, worship, other options to be determined) to articulate how CSJ does movement work and how it moves change into Lyndale. Again, by regularly asking participants a set of questions, we can learn how well this kind of integration within Lyndale works and improve it over time.

How it makes progress

- We can repeatedly test our assumption that we can better communicate CSJ's role in facilitating change within Lyndale, and the theological and political nature of its intersectional work.
- This also allows us to show more of the relationship and roles Rebecca and Ashley hold, and how they differ and complement because of CSJ's role within Lyndale.

One on ones with Millennials, Gen Xers who are not involved with Social Justice Forum

Do 10 1-1's with Millennials, Gen Xers within Lyndale who are not involved with Social Justice Forum to build more connection to CSJ's work.

How it makes progress

- We can learn other pathways people within Lyndale can take toward participation and support of CSJ's work, as well as how they understand leadership, ownership, and other relationships between Lyndale and CSJ.

Refine job titles/descriptions for Rebecca and Ashley

With the Personnel Committee, refine job/role descriptions and titles for Ashley and Rebecca that align more clearly with what they are doing and communicate them out to the larger community.

How it makes progress on these goals:

- We can more formally articulate the existing relationship Ashley and Rebecca, Lyndale and CSJ have.
- We can directly communicate this to people who are concerned, but also can proactively use it to inform the above activities and how Ashley and Rebecca articulate their participation in them.

Work with 1884 fund and with Liz

With the Social Justice Forum/Social Justice Committee work with 1884 fund to determine what portion of the fund goes toward the work of CSJ. With Liz Loeb, build a fundraising plan to increase the CSJ budget to increase Rebecca's pay and hours

How it makes progress

- Between these two paths, we can work toward a more sustainable budget and amount of hours for Rebecca.

Further work for the Advisory Council in 2020

- **Advisory council:** Define cohesive, relational, and collective norms for an advisory group that can support each other and take fundraising, financial planning, or other appropriate responsibilities with CSJ and in relation to the church council.

Research goal: Learn/articulate an appropriate way for this advisory council to exist and function

Research questions:

- What are the protocols and covenants the group operates within? Roles? Sharing of power? Listening and speaking?
- What capacity exists in the advisory group to take on responsibility?
- What responsibilities does CSJ (especially Rebecca) feel are appropriate for the advisory group to take on?
- What kind of relationship do advisory council participants want to have with each other?
- What ways do advisory council members need/want support from one another?
- What is the appropriate relationship between the advisory council and the Lyndale Stewardship council?

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) spent 2019 as the Center for Sustainable Justice Ministry Intern at Lyndale UCC 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 theological 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 and is currently in the ordination process in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and is a dervish at Ateshi Ask (Fire of Love) Sufi Community.

Budget for The Center for Sustainable Justice

		2019	Notes
SOURCES OF SUPPORT			
Grant sources		33,000	Carpenter Foundation, UCC New and ReNewing Grant
Lyndale UCC		7,000	
Individual contributions		4,000	
TOTAL SOURCES		\$44,000	
EXPENSES			
Conference and Gatherings		\$10,000	
MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing)		\$4,500	
Community Actions		\$1,000	
Operating Expenses / Overhead			
Director's Salary		25,000	
Office Equipment & Supplies		1,000	
Printing & Postage		2,500	
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$44,000	

