



Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC Annual Report for the work of 2021

This report highlights the work of The Center for Sustainable Justice in 2021. It represents the time and energy of the staff at Lyndale and CSJ (Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel, Allison Connelly-Vetter and Rev. Ashley Harness) and it represents many hours of faithful, strategic work by the membership and colleagues of Lyndale UCC and our ecumenical and multifaith partners.

Mission, Vision, Focus 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, Focus, Mission and Commitments

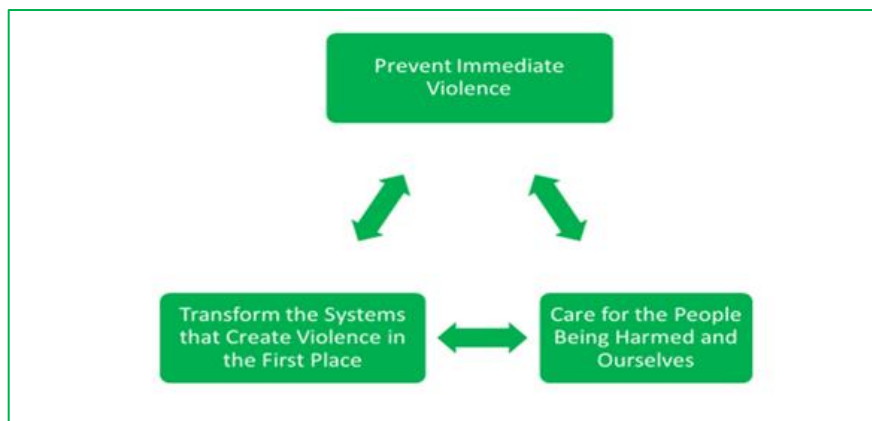
The Center for Sustainable Justice helps build the movement of religious leaders and communities working together on LGBTQ, racial, food and climate justice in the Twin Cities and across the Midwest. We do so rooted in an understanding that movements for justice are strongest and most successful when 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.



Finally, the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice is multi-focal. It is directed inward to educate, nurture and support the people of Lyndale United Church of Christ. It is directed outward to build, facilitate and nurture the religiously-rooted justice ecosystem in the Twin Cities and beyond. And it is a combination of inward and outward designed to support the collaboration of Lyndale folx with wider justice movements. The hope is that this multi-focal work helps us stay concrete and practical enough to serve the real-life experiences of a congregation while radical and creative enough to keep being pushed beyond what we think might be possible.

Introduction to the 2021 Annual Report: Deepening and Adaptability

The Center for Sustainable Justice was started in 2015 and 2021 marks six years of doing the work of healing justice in a religiously rooted way. 2021 also marks the second full year of ministry amidst the Covid pandemic. These two facts are in creative tension with one another: on the one hand, staying focused and working with the congregation and the wider community on some issues creates a kind of consistency that allows for change to happen. On the other hand, the primary skill for working in a pandemic is adaptability and the ability to change our patterns. One place where we see this tension playing out is in our racial justice work. Just after the Center for Sustainable Justice was formed with a focus on the intersections of LGBTQ, racial, climate and food justice, Jamar Clark, an unarmed Black man, was murdered by police in North Minneapolis. In response, an occupation of the Fourth Police Precinct was organized by Black Lives Matter Minneapolis and other Black-led groups. One of the asks of religious communities and leaders was to show up and support the occupation- with food, by participating in protest and vigil, and by preaching and organizing for racial justice in their communities.

Rev. Ashley Harness and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel responded to this call on all three levels and worked with some at Lyndale. However, others at Lyndale felt that, because Lyndale hadn't engaged a process of discernment around racial justice, Rev. Harness and Rev. Voelkel should not have been there representing Lyndale. Out of this conflict grew Lyndale's Racial Justice Task Force that has been working since 2016. Some of our work has included leading a white privilege curriculum for two-thirds of the Lyndale community; conducting a "white audit" of Lyndale's and SpringHouse's worship spaces, contracts, library and community structure; providing numerous Adult Education and worship opportunities on racial justice and dismantling white supremacy; and forming a reparations-focused working group.

Outside of Lyndale, CSJ has provided the primary infrastructure for MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change, and Healing) and has supported MARCH's Sacred Solidarity Network through four cohort experiences, including the work of abolition and helped lead the solidarity efforts from the Twin Cities religious communities to Standing Rock and against Enbridge's Line 3.

Both within Lyndale and with MARCH, the ability to engage the work of dismantling white supremacy and racial justice over several years: building genuine relationships and engaging in ever-deepening learning and practice, have meant that the work has been successful in many ways. (Going from resistance to Lyndale's presence at the Fourth Precinct to Lyndale considering a line-item for reparations in its 2023 budget is a powerful example.)

But, on the other hand, the mechanics of how we've done this work in 2020 and 2021 have had to be re-thought, re-made and adapted almost every month or any time we engaged an event. And so, this CSJ Annual Report reflects both this deepening and this adaptability. Below is a roughly chronological recounting of the last year around both the themes of adaptability and deepening/ripening of the work.

Mask-making!

Throughout 2020 and into the first half of 2021, the Center for Sustainable Justice organized Lyndale UCC Sew-ers to make close to 3500 masks and we recruited our friends to join us! We donated our last masks in May of 2021. Here is an example of our monthly requests that ran from April of 2020 to May of 2021:



Deep gratitude to all the sew-ers for sewing about 3500 masks so far for the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, Central Lutheran Program for the Unhoused and Calvary Lutheran's Food Bank. Rev. Rebecca delivers however many are made each week to our grateful colleagues. To give you an idea of the need: Central Lutheran distributes about 150 masks a week and Calvary also distributes about 150 (Calvary always needs children's and plain colored masks). So, the need is great.

CSJ actions, vigils, liturgical work

During 2021, CSJ focused our non-violent direct action work in two primary areas: supporting the resistance to the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline and continuing to respond to the murder of George Floyd and that of other unarmed Black folx such as Daunte Wright.

Line 3

Stop Line 3 Action April 10th Action in Palisade, Minnesota



We were deeply grateful that Lyndalians Luca Cowles, Beth Ellsworth, Fred Smith, Mary Martin and Rebecca and Shannon Voelkel were able to join friends from First Congregational UCC, Edina Community Lutheran Church and several other congregations for prayer, ceremony and witness at the Water Protectors Camp. Jeanine, Josh and Lillian Homan-Dorfman weren't able to join in person but they contributed their prayers and energy.



We learned that the very dirty tarsands oil that is slated to be piped through this pipeline will require felling a boreal forest in Canada the size of Florida. Once this slow-growing, ancient forests is felled, then this huge swath of land will be fractured. The oil that comes from this burns in mega-polluting ways. The emissions from it will equal that of 50 coal-burning plants. It was also very muddy while we were visiting, a palpable sign that this pipeline is cutting through critical wetlands and watersheds. While we felt allied with the mud, since the project has been paused due to how wet it is, we also were heart-broken again by the fact that Enbridge's greed is endangering so much water.

In the face of this, we went to the banks of the Mississippi River, under which the pipeline will go and whose waters any spill will pollute. And we prayed. We prayed prayers of thanksgiving and blessing for the water which is life. We prayed prayers of solidarity and gratitude for the Ojibwe, Dakota and other indigenous leaders whose faithful activism and work we are seeking to follow. And we prayed prayers of repentance and repair for all the ways in which we perpetuate the economic systems and treaty violations that this pipeline represents.

Treaty People Gathering to Stop Line 3-June 5th-8th



We were deeply grateful that Lyndalians Mary Vanderford, Jonathan Stegall, Luca Cowles, Beth Ellsworth and Rev. Rebecca were able to participate in the multifaith delegation to the Treaty People Gathering. The Treaty People Gathering was coordinated and led by a large coalition organized by Indigenous grandmothers focused on supporting Treaty Rights and stopping Line 3 and the multifaith delegation was organized by Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light and Green Faith in support of the larger event.



Over 350 religiously and spiritually-rooted folx joined about 2500 people for the three-day gathering on the White Earth reservation in Northern Minnesota. Hosted by Anishinaabeg leaders, the gathering included education about the history of treaties made between indigenous peoples in Minnesota and the US government, and the violations of those treaties by US officials and citizens, including by the ancestors of many of us white, settler folx who were in attendance. But the violation and outright breaking of treaties isn't only an historical phenomenon, the ways in which Minnesota state government and the US federal government is handling the Enbridge Line 3 project is presently in clear violation of treaties made between Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe and Chippewa) nations and the US government. (To learn more about this, here are two short fact sheets:

https://www.honorearth.org/treaty_rights_fact_sheet_text and
<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/north-star->

<chapter/pdf/TreatRightsFactSheet.pdf#:~:text=Line%203%20would%20violate%20the%20treaty%20rights%20of,in%20return%20for%20money%2C%20goods%20and%20other%20considerations.>)



Although the gathering was through the lens of the importance of treaties, it also focused on the devastating environmental impact this project would have. Slated to run through some of the most important fresh water wetlands in the world including under nearly 60 rivers (three times under the Mississippi, five times under the Shell River, for example), the Enbridge Line 3 will pollute pristine water when it leaks (which is very likely). Additionally, it is already polluting hundreds of millions of gallons of water (amidst a draught) in order to complete the project. And the oil that is slated to run through the pipeline is tarsands oil, a kind of oil that requires a very dirty process for extraction, burns in very dirty ways and produces exponentially more emissions than coal plants.

In order to resist these treaty violations and environmental degradation, we were invited into deep spiritual practice and non-violent direct action including supporting indigenous leaders in constructing a prayer lodge next to the place where Enbridge is already preparing to dig under the Mississippi River, and blocking a pumping station. Both of these actions are connected to the larger call to President Biden to halt the construction of Line 3.

There are some wonderful reflections on the Treaty People Gathering, including this article on Sojo.net about the multifaith delegation and including part of an interview with Rev. Rebecca: <https://sojo.net/articles/when-pipeline-threat-earth-water-and-sacred-spaces> . But for the Lyndalians that participated, the Treaty People Gathering was part of the larger, ongoing work of reflecting on our theologies and spiritual practices which make for repair and reparation. During Lent, we examined the four parts of the reparation spiral:

- Truth-telling (about the Doctrine of Discovery and the histories of slavery, genocide and land theft, especially the role of Christian churches in the ongoing colonization of indigenous, Black and people of color communities)
- Relationships of solidarity and followership (of Black, indigenous and people of color communities, particularly queer and trans* BIPOC communities and leaders)
- Spiritual Practices which mitigate against hoarding (exploring how we can root ourselves in reciprocity, abundance, sharing and collaboration with the natural world and our kindred humans)
- Resource redistribution (including land-back and reparations payments)

For those Lyndalians that went to the Treaty People Gathering, it was one small example of being oriented toward reparation: it was a time of truth-telling; it was practicing followership and solidarity with indigenous leaders, particularly the grandmothers; it was rooted in spiritual practice, in reminding ourselves of the interconnectedness of all of life, in the sacredness of water, in the kindredness of humanity and all of the created world; and it pointed toward the importance of returning lands to indigenous nations.

In reflecting on the experience of participating in the Treaty People Gathering, Rev. Rebecca wrote this as her part of the sermon the Sunday following the gathering which was entitled, *Listen to the Grandmothers: Honor the Treaties, Pray for Your Very Dear Friend and Live in a Good Way*. Following the sermon we celebrated a water communion which is included here, too.

When my Grandmother Voelkel died, I got her copy of *Psalms/Now* with artwork by Sister Corita Kent and translations of the Psalms written by Leslie Brandt. You've heard me talk about how important my Grammie, Mary Doyle MacKenzie Unwin, was in my life. But I don't talk much about my Grandmother Voelkel. Our relationship was a bit more complicated. In fact, when I opened her book this week, I noticed that she had listed her name inside the front cover as Mrs. Elmer Voelkel. {Sigh}

But today, we are sharing about our experience at the Treaty People Gathering Against Line 3 and one of the most important lessons we learned was to listen to the grandmothers. So, it seemed important to share a bit from my own grandmother. And she loved the Psalms, and she loved this particular interpretation of them.

Today's assigned reading is from Psalm 20 and in this reading of it, the psalmist is praying fervently and intimately for their very dear friend...

May G-d reach out to touch you and heal you; may G-d fulfill your crying need in this hour. And may we soon rejoice together over your deliverance...those who surround us put their trust in rockets and computers, but such will fail to solve the real problems of our lives. It is only in the name of G-d that we who fall can find the grace to rise again.

As I have been reading this psalm, through the lens of the Treaty People Gathering, I have been praying as if my very dear friend is the water, is the rivers, is the watershed. And I've been praying as if "those who surround us" put their trust in drilling pads and tarsands oil and Border patrol helicopters that seek to intimidate.

I have been praying in this way because there were two primary lessons from the Treaty People Gathering: The first is as Mary Vanderford said, listen to the Anishinaabe grandmothers and honor the treaties made by their ancestors with our ancestors. The second lesson was: remember that God is Creator, maker of heaven and earth... maker of four-legged and two-legged... maker of water and fire, earth and air... maker of all of life. And the God who created and is creating still has placed us among a creation of plenty. We are not to destroy on God's holy mountain but we are to live in a good way: of respect, of reciprocity.

On Monday, the day of the action, we started in a prayer circle that was, perhaps, the most meaningful multifaith prayer experience I've ever had. Great-grandmother Mary started us and I'd like to play some of her words. [video clip]

After Great-Grandmother Mary spoke and Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Jew, Hindu and other indigenous leaders prayed, we marched to the Mississippi River, to the place where Enbridge plans to make the first of three tunnels under the Mississippi. There are so many things to lift up about this, but one piece seems worth sharing in this context. As the whole 2000 folx marched, there were thousands upon thousands of dragonflies about three feet above our heads. The Star Tribune described it this way: "Prayers, songs and drums led marchers to one of the Mississippi River crossing points for the new pipeline as dragonflies swarmed overhead." It was as if they were covering and protecting us. It was as if the Anishinaabeg grandmother's prayers and all of our followership told the dragonflies that we were living in reciprocity, that we were living in a good way, that we were walking as students, like we should. And, knowing of the grandmother's prayers, the dragonflies were there to keep anything (mosquitoes and maybe even Enbridge) from biting us.

Water Communion:

This morning, our communion is going to be a water communion. As we were gathered in the sweltering heat on Monday, the marchers paused regularly and the grandmothers told us to take a drink from our water bottles and to do so with intention, remembering that we were there to protect and be allies with the water. In that spirit, I invite you into a space of water communion, of praying for our very dear friend.

Let's start with each of us making sure we have a glass of tap water close at hand.

I invite you to take a slow drink of water...
notice how it wets your tongue and your cheeks...
notice how it flows down your throat and into your esophagus...
Imagine how it makes its journey toward the stomach...
Envision how it moves from the digestive system into the renal system with the blood, a river of
cleansing...
Feel it being absorbed... Streaming fluids floating our cells, washing and nourishing through endless
riverways of gut and vein and capillary ...

I invite you to take another slow drink of water...
This water that comes to you as nourishment... comes from rainwater that fell into a small brook...
that grew into a stream and then, merged into a river...
the earth's capillaries and veins...
This water that comes to you as nourishment made its way through lakes that held the lives of fish and
frogs, of aquatic plants, of manoomin (sacred wild rice)...
This water that comes to you as nourishment may have held your canoe in the Boundary Waters, it may
have flowed under the stone arch bridge, it may have nurtured the Great Blue Herons in their rookery on
the Mississippi.

I invite you to take a third slow drink of water...

Water—blood, lymph, mucus, sweat, tears, inner oceans tugged by the moon, tides within and tides
without. Streaming fluids floating our cells, washing and nourishing through endless riverways of gut and
vein and capillary. Moisture pouring in and through and out of you, of me, of us, in the vast hydrological
cycle.

You are that, I am that, we are that. Amen.

Treaty People Walk for Water- August 24th and 25th



We were deeply grateful that Lyndalians Jonathan Stegall, Lyn and John Pegg and grandson, Kamau, Jeanine Dorfman and her brother Aaron and Josh and Lillian Homan-Dorfman and Teresa Hermann and Rev. Rebecca and Shannon Voelkel were able to participate in the Treaty People Walk for Water. The Treaty People Walk for Water was held over the course of August 7th to the 25th and was a #StopLine3 solidarity prayer walk from the Headwaters of the Mississippi River to the Minnesota State Capitol. The Walk was organized by indigenous leaders in collaboration with MNIPL and MN350. Lyndalians were able to participate in a few legs of the walk but those who did the whole event traversed 256 miles.



For most of the way, there were thirty or so walkers. By the time we joined, there were about seventy. And then on Wednesday, August 25th several hundred folks met the walkers at the Martin Luther King, Jr Community Center for a shared meal. And then we walked the final 1.5 miles in silent prayer. When we arrived at the Capitol, the crowd swelled to 2000 people.

Like the Treaty People Gathering in early June that many of us participated in, the Treaty People Walk for Water was done through the lens of prayer, sacred practice and the importance of treaties and focused on the devastating environmental impact Line 3 will have. Slated to run through some of the most important fresh water wetlands in the world including under nearly 60 rivers (three times under the Mississippi, five times under the Shell River, for example), the Enbridge Line 3 will pollute pristine water when it leaks (which is very likely). Additionally, it is already polluting hundreds of millions of gallons of water (amidst a drought) in order to complete the project. And the oil that is slated to run through the pipeline is tarsands oil, a kind of oil that requires a very dirty process for extraction, burns in very dirty ways and produces exponentially more emissions than coal plants.

In order to resist these treaty violations and environmental degradation, we were invited into deep spiritual practice along the walk. And following the ceremony and rally at the Capitol on Wednesday, several teepees were constructed and several folks engaged in prayer and ceremony until they were violently removed on Friday morning the 27th. The sight of praying folks being dragged away from their prayer lodge encapsulates, in many ways, the problems with this project: violent extraction violates the creation.

As we ended the Walk, one of the leaders, Joe, said to all of us who are walking in solidarity: “I want you to promise you won’t abandon us.” This desire for a covenant, combined with the wisdom that this struggle against Line 3 isn’t just for our indigenous kindred but for ALL of us and the planet, formed a deep lesson for me. This walking is akin to the spiritual practice that many of our ancestors engaged. It is a kind of pilgrimage, a kind of prayer with each step. And when I am walking and praying with God’s creation and my kindred human beings... along the Mississippi River from which the water that I rely upon for survival comes... I am practicing a kind of communion that is sacramental.

Ongoing Opposition to Line 3

Enbridge completed its Line 3 and oil is flowing through it. However, opposition continues in many forms. The Center for Sustainable Justice will continue to follow the leadership of indigenous organizations. One example is our co-sponsorship of a UCC collaboration (Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan conferences of the UCC) that is spending the beginning of 2022 hosting a series on the Great Lakes watershed. Frank Bibeau, a member of the White Earth Band of Chippewa and the attorney for Honor the Earth is leading a training on treaties and the connection between the support of treaties and climate justice. The Center for Sustainable Justice is committed to long term work and witness for climate justice.

Protest and Witness in the Wake of George Floyd’s Murder



Much of the Derek Chauvin murder trial happened during Lent of 2021. It is hard to overstate the liturgical power of Holy Week celebrated at George Floyd Square. Such was our experience the Monday of Holy Week as many from Lyndale and the MARCH community gathered for a vigil. Moving from the Say Their Names cemetery to the place where Chauvin brutally murdered Mr. Floyd and then to the mutual aid gate and then to the list of twenty-four demands, it was a palpable journey from crucifixion to acts of resurrection and resistance. And then, just after the third Sunday of Easter, thousands gathered again at George Floyd Square to hear the verdict in the Chauvin trial.

Daunte Wright and Derek Chauvin Trial verdict



Even as the Derek Chauvin murder trial was still unfolding, 20-year-old father, Daunte Wright was murdered by Brooklyn Center police officer Kim Potter. We were deeply grateful that Luca Cowles, Rebecca Lawrence, Claire Klein, Jacob Ristow, Rebecca Voelkel, Melia and Jess Derrick and Beth Ellsworth were able to gather for a vigil with Daunte's family the day after his murder. And many Lyndalians have been praying with their feet and witnessing with their bodies both at the site of his murder which has become a memorial and at the Brooklyn Center police department demanding justice.

And as the Twin Cities held its collective breath and awaited the verdict in the Chauvin trial, many Lyndalians were present at George Floyd Square, at the Hennepin County Government Center and keeping vigil at home. Lyndale and the Center for Sustainable Justice were grateful to be able to co-sponsor, with dozens of kindred congregations, faith communities and organizations, the Day of Verdict Prayer Vigil. Here is the video of most of the vigil:

<https://www.facebook.com/PrayersForJusticeForGeorgeFloyd/videos/454023459194470>

Daunte Wright's murder happening amidst the Derek Chauvin trial and the deep uncertainty that there would be a guilty verdict, even amidst overwhelming evidence and testimony, brought home the reality that there remains much work to be done. Those of us who name ourselves as Christians and seek to follow the liberating life of Jesus have a particular role to play in this multifaith, intersectional movement for justice. There are many right next steps. One of those is our shared work on the Minneapolis Charter Amendment.

First Anniversary of the Murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police



In preparation for the **First Anniversary of the Murder of George Floyd**, leaders at **George Floyd Square** are planning commemorations for **May 25th** (the first anniversary of George Floyd's murder) from **1:00 pm to 9:00 pm**.

As part of the anniversary commemoration, there will be a candlelight vigil. We are invited to support these by purchasing some of the supplies off of this [Amazon Wishlist](#).

We are also invited to put May 25th on our calendars and plan to mark the date with our neighbors at 38th and Chicago at George Floyd Square.

Reparations Work

In 2021, The Center for Sustainable Justice engaged the work of reparation as a primary focus. There were four levels of this work: within Lyndale, within the Twin Cities Community, across the state of Minnesota and nationally. As with most of our work, these levels overlapped and informed each other. Here is what we said about our Lent 2021 focus on reparations:

This Lent has been a particularly powerful journey for us at Lyndale UCC. Our exploration of Reparations, both in Adult Education and in worship, has blessed us with deep embodiment practices, with new partners in the sacred work of racial justice and with a growing clarity of how we can practice repair in spiritually grounded ways. We followed the outline of work that CommunityWell (the reparations fund sponsored by MARCH- Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing) has created. It names the reality that reparations work includes at least a four-fold path. Below is a description of that four-fold path and some of the resources to support us on the journey.

REPARATIONS REQUIRE:

- truth-telling about the history and present of white supremacy;
- spiritual practices that mitigate against hoarding;
- relationships of genuine solidarity;
- resource redistribution.

Truth-telling: any reparations process must include the honest, truth-telling about the histories of colonization, violence and extraction. The Doctrine of Discovery, the history of white supremacy and extractive capitalism have all shaped and mis-formed our individual, communal and collective lives.

To help us get at this reality, Susan Raffo created an embodiment practice on Truth-telling and the Land. You can find it here:

<https://vimeo.com/531971203>

Additionally, here is an overview of our session in Adult Education:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/m812r23wv2wko5/Lenten%20Reparations%20Practice-%20Truth-Telling%202.28.21.pptx?dl=0>

Relationships of solidarity: any reparations process must include following the leadership of BIPOC organizations and leaders. The forming of genuine relationships with frontline communities: Black, indigenous, people of color in any location in which reparations are being practiced is essential.

To help us ground and prepare for this work, Susan Raffo created an embodiment practice on Solidarity. You can find it here: <https://vimeo.com/531974986> Additionally, Rev. Ashley preached on relationships of solidarity and you can find it here: <http://www.lyndaleucc.org/sermons/lent-solidarity-communion-reparations/>

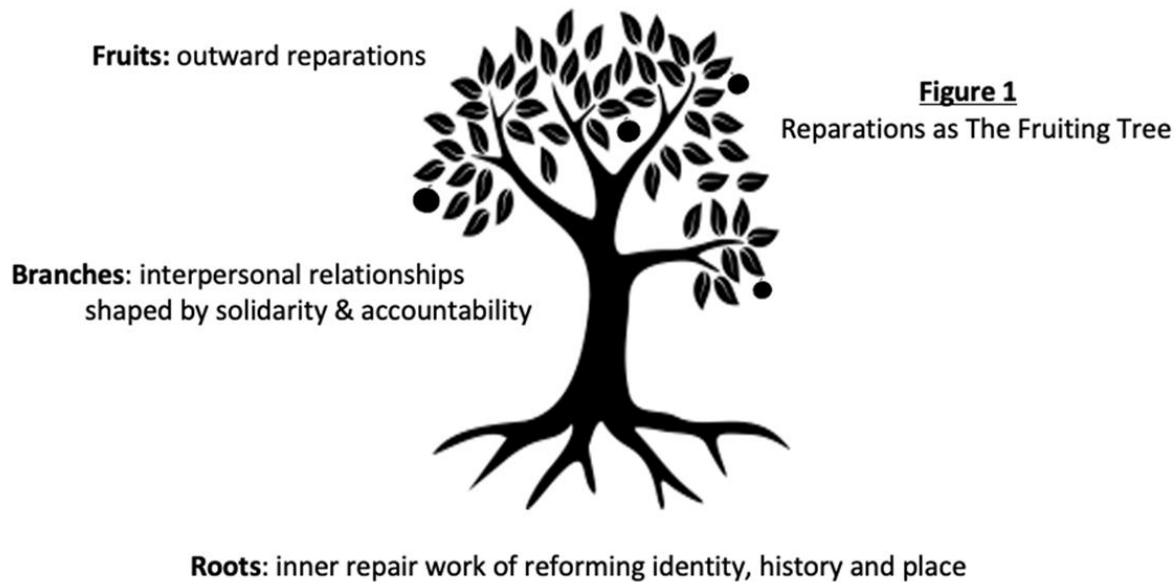
Spiritual practices: any reparations process must include grounding ourselves, over and over again, in practice. Repair work is never a one-and-done experience. Instead, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly practice which can help mitigate against hoarding and remind us of our deep groundedness and unconditional belonging is necessary for reparations.

To help us with this work, Liz Loeb shared her powerful teaching. You can find it here: <https://vimeo.com/531980850> And Rev. Rebecca preached on the lies that white supremacy tries to teach us about disconnection, competition and isolation. She reminded us that we belong, unconditionally, to one another and the created world. You can read her sermon here: <http://www.lyndaleucc.org/sermons/reparations-spiritual-practices-to-mitigate-hoarding/>

Resource Redistribution: any reparations process must include the redistribution of money, land and resources. As we do our work, particularly in relationship to Dakota, Anishinabe and Black communities, we are called to examine how our individual, congregational and national wealth can be equitably redistributed in order to make amends for the land theft and stolen labor perpetrated in our nation and by our ancestors.

To help with this sacred work, Susan Raffo created an embodiment practice on enoughness and resources in which she reminds us that all resources are collective. You can find it here: <https://vimeo.com/532002855>

In Adult Education, we heard from Columbus Mennonite Church who have added a reparations line-item to their budget which is based on what their property tax would be if they weren't a non-profit. Additionally, Rev. Brennan Blue who is working on his Doctor of Ministry looking at reparations processes for predominantly white congregations shared his reflections on reparations. You can find his reflections here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5-Y_e_AZAo and here's a graphic he designed to describe the process.



In the Fall of 2021, the Racial Justice Task Force (Lux Magnolia, Lyn Pegg, Nancie Hamlett, Allison Connelly-Vetter, Ron Rooney, Paul Thuras and Rev. Rebecca) met several times. As they said at the time, “because we are hopeful to embody a consistency between how, why and what we’re doing, we have been engaging embodiment practices at each meeting and using a circle decision-making process.

“As a way to organize our work, we are utilizing the same framework that Lyndale used for Lent in 2021. These are just the beginnings of our planning, but here are some of our notes coming out of our retreat:

- **Pillar of Truth-telling**
 - Community practice groups
 - White supremacy culture assessment - individual and communal
- **Pillar of Relationships**
 - MARCH CommunityWell--asset mapping
 - Covenant of reparation/pledge for individual/community-wide work
 - Committee members map relationships with BIPOC leaders & orgs
 - Create a tapestry of reparations as art project at the end of our reparations groups
- **Pillar of Spiritual Practice**
 - Dreams for how we can engage our spiritual practices for reparations
 - Art work/visuals; public declaration of values - personal and collective
 - Tangible steps to take to realize those dreams in 2021 - 2022
 - Examination of conscience service
 - Weave spiritual practice as part of our work (into the other pillars)

- **Pillar of Resource Redistribution**

- Work toward getting a line item in the budget
- Resource team (reparations coaches for land genealogy) to help people uncover the history of the land they are on and help facilitate what they might do.

The Racial Justice Task Force also talked about the ways in which our collective work around the Charter Amendments (particularly Questions 2 & 3) are also connected to our focus on reparations. Both the question of genuine public safety and the question of affordable, accessible housing are ways in which we can participate in healing and justice in our City.

Louisville Institute Research Grant

Based in the strong work both within Lyndale and in collaboration with MARCH, other Twin Cities colleagues focused on racial justice and reparations and an Auburn Seminary-hosted, national gathering of white folx working on racial justice, in October, Rev. Rebecca applied for a Louisville Institute research grant to explore historically and predominantly white congregational models of reparation work. In the application she wrote:

Core Question: Given the history of the Doctrine of Discovery and Chattel Slavery and their ongoing impact on North American life, how can historically white congregations participate in healing and reparation? What models of racial reparations vis a vis Black and indigenous communities already exist to support both individual white people and historically white congregations in the work of racial justice? What new models are needed to repair both fullness of material life and spiritual wholeness?

Project Quotation: The prophet Isaiah calls us to be repairers of the breach, James Forman's Black Manifesto called for \$500 million in reparations payments from white churches and synagogues, indigenous elders call for the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery... white congregations need concrete ways to heed the call in ways that make for life abundant.

Summary/Abstract: In 1969, James Forman challenged the white Church and Synagogue to account for their roles in the undergirding and propagation of racism in the US and to pay \$500 million in reparations as an act of healing and atonement. Some engaged the challenge, most did not. Over fifty years later, the presence and power of racism is unquestionable- and many are re-engaging the demand. This time, the work is in a post-Standing Rock context, one which understands that reparations must include attempted indigenous genocide and land theft.

This project will explore the question of how historically white congregations can do the work. What models already exist? How does the work differ for individual members, for congregations looking at their internal policies, and for congregations and denominations looking to embody a reparations ethic in the larger society? What difference does geography, local history, and local, state and federal policy make? How can historically white congregations do the work in ways that are accountable to Black and indigenous communities without further harming those communities?

I will interview and consult with those congregations and organizations who are already experimenting with these questions, including colleagues in MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing) and their twenty-one congregational graduates of their Dismantling White Supremacy program; The Minnesota Council of Churches and their Truth and Reparations Process; Columbus Mennonite Church and their congregational reparations budget line-item; and SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) which has a robust congregational program.

Based on these interviews and consultations, I will:

1. Suggest theological, spiritual, relational and material questions for congregations,
2. Propose steps and processes that historically white congregations can engage in order to do reparations work,
3. Offer organizing and movement-building strategies in order to bring reparations work to scale.

We are excited to share that this research has been funded by the Louisville Institute and will be completed during the course of 2022.

Yes4Minneapolis/Yes on Question 2 Campaign

As shared above, there is a through-line between CSJ's work with MARCH, the work around reparations, and the non-violent direct actions we've taken and supported around Line 3 and in resistance to extrajudicial murder of Black and brown folx. One way all of these actions have come to fruition is in the Yes4Minneapolis/Yes on Question 2 campaign.

In 2020 and 2021, the Center for Sustainable Justice supported the work of the [Yes4Minneapolis coalition](#) working to pass Charter Amendment Question 2, a community-led movement to create a Department of Public Safety in Minneapolis. From the Yes4Minneapolis organizers: "It all started in Minneapolis. Following the murder of George Floyd last summer, we witnessed a community movement against state-sanctioned violence — a movement to better protect Black lives and have true safety in the city of Minneapolis. We marched. We organized. We listened. And, most importantly, we learned that Minneapolis residents agree that our current police-only approach to public safety is broken. Yes 4 Minneapolis (Y4M) is a unifying campaign bringing together voters, families, faith leaders, labor unions, small businesses, mental health professionals, teachers and more because we have an opportunity to create a system that works for all of us. Together, we must amend the city charter that was written in 1961 by the Police Federation, forcing us to build on a broken system of violent, armed police-only response. Our movement demands our city leaders move toward a comprehensive, higher standard in public safety, where qualified professionals, like mental health responders and social workers, as well as police, can work to make all our communities safer. We can align our city's safety infrastructure with our values. We marched. We organized. And now we get to vote."

The Center for Sustainable Justice mobilized with the Lyndale Activistas, members of the Social Justice Forum, and external partners in the Yes4Minneapolis Coalition (including ISIAAH and Reclaim the Block) to support the Yes4Minneapolis campaign by attending and hosting info sessions and house parties, by door-knocking, phone-banking, and text-banking, by having conversations about the campaign issues with friends and families, by donating to the campaign, and by spreading the good news far and wide of the possibility for *real* public safety in Minneapolis. CSJ offered this invitation and encouragement to its network: "As people of faith, we are supporting the Public Safety Charter Amendment because our spiritual commitments compel us to live into a vision of love and justice for our communities — and that's what voting Yes on Question 2 is all about. We are called to enact justice, peace, and liberation in the world, and we know that supporting and passing the Public Safety Charter Amendment will do just that. Together we can win this charter amendment vote and co-create authentic and holistic safety in Minneapolis for all of us. Rooted in our faith commitments, we invite and encourage you to play an active role in this important effort in this election. Feel free to reach out to Allison Connelly-Vetter, staff member of the Center for Sustainable Justice, with questions or support needs as you get or stay involved. We are sending care and energy to each of you in this last stretch as we co-create and collaborate with God's vision of love and peace for our community."



Unfortunately, even after an immense mobilization and education campaign by the Yes4Minneapolis coalition, Question 2 did not pass. CSJ Faith Organizer Allison Connelly-Vetter wrote this to the congregation after the election: “Following the November 2 election, I, and I imagine many of you, felt defeated and angry about the election results. In particular, I was deeply disappointed and exasperated that Question 2 did not pass. However, I have been comforted by drawing near to our spiritual ancestors, who have experienced cycles of loss and change and renewal over the past two thousand years (and beyond). I have immense trust and confidence in the brilliance of local and national organizers, especially queer and trans BIPOC leaders, and I still believe that something better is possible. I know that together, even in the midst of this heartbreaking loss, we will create the world we long for and the world we deserve.”

CSJ Partnerships

Most of CSJ’s work is done in deep partnerships. While the above sought to chronicle the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice, the descriptions below are of the ongoing work that happens on a monthly or regular basis.

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 three 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 and the Faith Organizer help plan, support and facilitate the Social Justice Forum. It is in this context that all five teams have developed and done their work.

South Minneapolis Sanctuary Coalition

The Center for Sustainable Justice has supported Lyndale’s and SpringHouse’s involvement in the South Minneapolis Sanctuary Coalition as Sanctuary-Supporting and Immigrant Welcoming congregations. For the past four years, we have collected gift cards to purchase food and supplies and held a yearly fundraiser for families living in sanctuary. We are deeply grateful for the ways in which this concrete, palpable partnership has literally helped save lives. One beautiful story that we learned this Fall is as follows:

When Lyndale UCC and SpringHouse voted to become Sanctuary-Supporting and Immigrant Welcoming in 2017/2018, one of the ways we’ve practiced this promise is to work with the South Minneapolis Sanctuary Coalition which pairs sanctuary-supporting congregations with sanctuary congregations who have guests. We have been one of the congregations that has supported Diego and Rebecca and their family as they’ve lived at Shir Tikvah for the past three years. Their presence and story has been confidential for safety reasons but they’ve recently been able to move out so we are able to celebrate Shir Tikvah’s faithfulness, lift up deep gratitude for ALL who’ve donated gift cards and money to support their family, and return thanks to G-d for their finding a home of their own and beginning the next chapter of their lives. Here’s a small excerpt from an article about them from *TC Jew Folk*:

“Diego and Rebecca’s refugee journey to the United States started eight years ago when he was sent photos of his murdered brothers after years of extortion. It has ended with a family of seven moving into their own

residence in Minnesota. But for exactly 37 months — they lived in the basement of [Shir Tikvah Congregation](#) in Minneapolis.

“Diego and Rebecca (not their real names) and their five children — the youngest is 2-and-a-half and Shir Tikvah’s basement had been the only home he’s known — have been able to freely leave the synagogue for their own residence because they received a stay of deportation, a one-year reprieve while they wait for some permanent resolution that allows them to stay in the United States. But until that letter came, leaving the shul was a risk. “

To read the whole article, go here: <https://tcjewfolk.com/hiding-in-plain-sight-how-a-family-lived-at-shir-tikvah-for-3-years/>

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:

The SSN is a cohort-based program that is designed to train congregational/community teams to lead their congregations/communities through a racial justice/dismantling white supremacy process. Since the Fall of 2016, we’ve trained 21 Christian, Jewish and UUA congregations. As noted at the beginning of this Annual Report, deepening and adaptability have been the guiding themes for 2021. So, also is true with MARCH and SSN.

In response to the murder of George Floyd, the Sacred Solidarity Network developed and ran a five-part series on Police and Prison Abolition for SSN graduate congregations and any community affiliated with the MARCH network. These were completely online sessions designed as such with asynchronous materials to supplement the synchronous training time. Seventeen congregations were represented (with an average of 40 people per session) as the history of abolition, definitions and theologies of punishment and abolition from various religious traditions were explored. Out of this series, MARCH and the Center for Sustainable Justice began in earnest it’s participation with the efforts to change the Minneapolis City Charter to expand the definition of public safety beyond policing.

Additionally, we completed the SSN 101 five-session hybrid curriculum and had our first pandemic SSN cohort complete the training in a hybrid way. The first three sessions were viewed ahead of the Zoom-based synchronous sessions, each of which lasted two hours and were pedagogically designed to do exercise and small group work together. The fourth and fifth sessions were done as one synchronous session focused on applying

learnings to each congregation's context. The asynchronous video content and the spiritual grounding exercises can be found at the Center for Sustainable Justice's Vimeo account: <https://vimeo.com/user112322978>

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.

As noted above, much of MARCH's mobilization focus in 2021 has been on the response to George Floyd's murder and that of other unarmed Black folx (such as Duante Wright) and in resistance to Enbridge Line 3 pipeline. Additionally, as also noted above, MARCH worked closely with Reclaim the Block and the Yes4Minneapolis campaign to change the Minneapolis Charter.

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. In 2021, MARCH leadership (including Rev. Rebecca) has been working closely with several community partners to launch a state-wide reparations effort. At the end of 2020, the board of the Minnesota Council of Churches voted to create a 10-year reparations project. As stated below, these efforts went public in the Fall of 2021. This project will be a primary partner for both MARCH and CSJ.

Minnesota Council of Churches Truth and Reparations Program

One of MARCH's and CSJ's primary collaborative partners is the Minnesota Council of Churches (MCC) Truth and Reparations Program. In September, the Truth and Reparations Program launched its first public event. This is how they described it:

Minnesota Council of Churches- Inaugural Truth and Reparations Event: Sept 24th-25th

Co-directed by Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Mohican) and Pamela Ngunjiri, the Truth and Reparations initiative is a ten-year program for Christian churches within Minnesota to engage in questions of truth-telling, spiritual practice, relationships of solidarity and reparation.



This inaugural event will feature Christine Diindiisi McCleave, Chief Executive Officer of the Twin Cities-based [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#), who will give the keynote address on Friday night. She is an enrolled citizen of Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Nation and a leader and an activist for Indigenous Rights advocating for truth, justice, and healing for the genocidal policy of U.S. Indian Boarding Schools.



[Yohuru Williams](#), a history professor at St. Thomas University, will give the keynote address Saturday morning. He is the Founding Director of St. Thomas' [Racial Justice Initiative](#) and the author of several books, including *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement*. Here is more information about the event: <https://healingmnstories.wordpress.com/2021/08/24/mn-council-of-churchs-inaugural-truth-telling-event-is-sept-24-25-first-step-in-reparations-work/>

Fiscal Agency partners

One of CSJ's ministries is supporting innovative work that doesn't have official non-profit status. This work has shifted and changed through the years. Currently, CSJ serves as the fiscal agent for David Weiss's work as a public theologian in his blog: Full Frontal Faith (<https://davidrweiss.com/davids-blog/>) in which he covers a wide variety of theological work, including climate justice. We also support the work of Chris Heeter and the Healing the Healers series which provides hands-on wilderness experiences for frontline workers during the pandemic. And we support two out queer international students who are in the US to study.

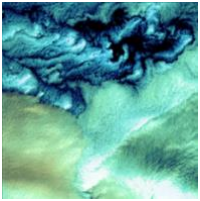
In Memoriam

The Center for Sustainable Justice lost one of its Advisory Council members and dearest friends when Eleanor (Elly) Ruth Wagner died in September of 2021. Not only did Elly support the visioning and leadership of CSJ, she participated in almost every action CSJ supported or organized. She was a vegan extraordinaire, a climate justice champion, a singer of resistance songs and a gardener of peace and herbs and flowers. Here are a few pictures from some of the protests and marches she participated in. Thanks be to Goddess for her life and witness!



Elly Wagner praying with her feet





A HUGE Thank-You to our Funders

E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST New and ReNewing Church Grant

Without the support of these two funds, our work as the Center for Sustainable Justice would be greatly diminished. And, so, we return thanks to God for their support!

Our Staff



Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel (she/her), an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, is the Pastor for Justice Ministries and Director of the Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC. 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 can be found at www.RevDr.RebeccaMMVoelkel.com.



Rev. Ashley Harness (she/her) is the Pastor for Congregational Ministries at Lyndale UCC 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.



Allison Connelly-Vetter (she/her) is a Faith Organizer with the Center for Sustainable Justice. Her work focuses on supporting internal and external efforts towards reparations in faith communities. Allison graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary with a focus on interdisciplinary approaches to disability theology and Madness. She leads workshops, classes, and presentations on disability theology for congregations, academic institutions, and conferences across the country. Along with her colleague, Bekah Anderson, Allison co-facilitates the Disability Theology Discussion Group, a spiritual reflection space by and for disabled, Mad, mentally ill, chronically ill, and

neurodivergent folks. When she is not deep in disability theology or working for the Center for Sustainable Justice she is serving as a Communications Coordinator and Children, Youth, and Families Program Coordinator for Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community. Allison lives with her spouse, Brooklyn, in Minneapolis.

Budget for The Center for Sustainable Justice

	2021	Notes
SOURCES OF SUPPORT		
Grant sources	\$37,500	Carpenter Foundation, UCC New and ReNewing Grant
Lyndale UCC	\$6,237	
Individual contributions	\$1950	
TOTAL SOURCES	\$ 45,687	
EXPENSES		
MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing) staff support and SSN 101 filming	\$7250	
Community Actions (Line 3, Chauvin Verdict, George Floyd Anniversary)	\$1850	This includes helping to host the Treaty People Gathering multifaith service.
Question 2 Organizing	\$850	
Operating Expenses / Overhead		
Director's Salary	\$32,237	
Faith Organizer	\$3,500	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$45,687	