



## Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC Annual Report for the work of 2022

This report highlights the work of The Center for Sustainable Justice in 2022. It represents the time and energy of the staff at Lyndale (Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel, Allison Connelly-Vetter and, for the first half of the year, 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:

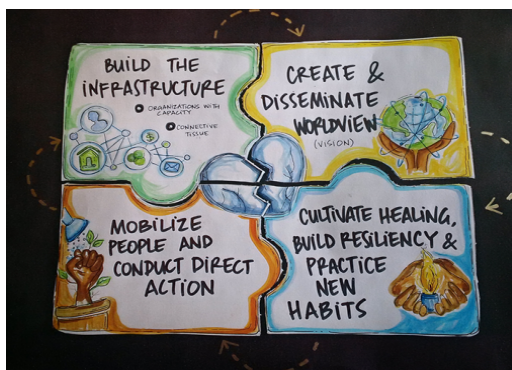
Deepening our questions and spirituality,

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 2022 Annual Report: Deepening and Adaptability**

The Center for Sustainable Justice was started in 2015 and 2022 marks seven years of doing the work of healing justice in a religiously rooted way. Recently, there hasn't been a "normal" or "ordinary" year in the life of CSJ. This year is no different. Two factors have added to the twin pandemics of our national racial reckoning and the Covid pandemic to alter the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice: Rev. Ashley Harness left Lyndale and Rev. Rebecca Voelkel had a sabbatical for which Allison Connelly-Vetter served as Sabbatical Director of CSJ. Working alongside Rev. Craig Simenson, Bridge Pastor, Allison provided additional worship leadership at Lyndale, led monthly MARCH meetings, and supported the work of Lyndale's justice teams. Allison was in-turn supported by members of CSJ's Advisory Council, who provided mentorship and guidance during her sabbatical coverage.

Upon Rev. Rebecca's return from sabbatical, Allison returned to her role as CSJ Faith Organizer and Rev. Joann Conroy (Oglala Sioux) became Lyndale's Interim Pastor for Congregational Life. Rev. Joann also brings a rich history and expertise in the work of justice. Although her focus is primarily on the interim and transition work, she has already added to the work around racial justice and reparations in her short time at Lyndale. Amidst this transition, CSJ's staff and the justice teams at Lyndale have intentionally sought to support the interim process and also provide continuity, consistency and stability. This has been the primary focus of CSJ's internally-focused work in the second half of 2022.

Outside of Lyndale, CSJ continues to provide the primary infrastructure for MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change, and Healing) and has supported MARCH's Sacred Solidarity Network through their cohort experience, which in 2022 was focused on the work of reparation. Additionally, CSJ continues to support MARCH's direct action opportunities which are geared toward religious support of BIPOC-led justice efforts.

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 passing a line-item for reparations in its 2022 budget is a powerful example.)

But, on the other hand, the mechanics of how we've done this work in 2020-2022 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 recounting of the last year around both the themes of adaptability and deepening/ripening of the work.

## CSJ actions, vigils, liturgical work

During 2022, CSJ focused our non-violent direct action and advocacy work in these areas:

### Protect Trans Kids Rally



Protect Trans Kids Rally at the Minnesota State Capitol on March 6, 2022  
On March 6, 2022, CSJ staff Rev. Rebecca Voelkel and Allison Connelly-Vetter joined organizations including OutFront Minnesota, Gender Justice, TransForming Families, the ACLU of Minnesota, and RECLAIM for a rally at the Minnesota State Capitol to protect trans kids. The rally was planned in response to the passage of bills targeting trans youth in states including Texas. The rally included youth and adult speakers and had a message of resilience and hope.

### Minneapolis Teachers Strike Support



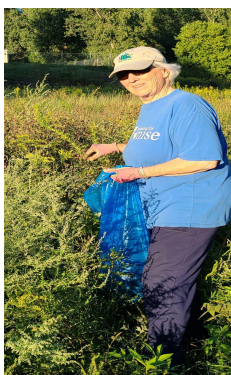
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Educational Support Professionals Strike for Safe & Stable Schools

CSJ supported striking teachers and school staff in March 2022, when the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Educational Support Professionals went on a two-week strike fighting for safe and stable schools. CSJ provided coffee for folks on strike, and opened the doors of SpringHouse to provide a warm place for strikers to regroup and recharge. CSJ also encourage Lyndale

members to donate to the MFT/ESP strike fund and to bring gift cards for teachers to worship for distribution to folks on strike who needed additional financial support. In addition, many members of CSJ and Lyndale spent time on picket lines in support of safe and stable schools. In the end, the unions reached a deal with the Minneapolis Public School district with historic wins in terms of pay, classroom size, teacher and staff support, and more.

### Wakan Tipi

This year the Green Team began a partnership with Wakan Tipi, a project restoring sacred Dakota land to its native prairie. The Green Team took on this project explicitly because of the invitation from CSJ and the RJTF to focus our justice efforts on reparations.



From the Green Team's Annual Report: "This past year we were encouraged to see opportunities for reparations work. In this vein we organized crews to pull displaced relatives (weeds) and gather seeds from plants important to Native Americans at the Wakan Tipi site in St. Paul. Prior to our work here we explored through two Adult Education sessions, the importance of this area to the Dakota and how colonialism contributed to its degradation. Thanks to all the people who participated here: Allison C., Brooklyn, Melia, Kathryn L., April C., Grace H, Josh M., and Mary V."



### Lyndale Get Out the Vote work with Faith in Minnesota

Lyndale members participated in Get Out the Vote work through doorknocking and phonebanking with Faith and Minnesota ahead of the November 8, 2022 election. Thanks to the work of Faith in Minnesota and Lyndalians, most of the candidates who Faith in Minnesota was backing won their elections, including Mary Moriarty for Hennepin County Commissioner, Keith Ellison for Attorney General, Tim Walz, Peggy Flanagan, and Steve Simon for Governor, Lieutenant General, and Secretary of State respectively, and a DFL majority in the MN House and Senate.

### Respect for Marriage Act Signing

On Dec 13, 2022, Rev. Rebecca was invited to the White House signing of the Respect for Marriage Act. She reflected on her experience in a blog she wrote for the national UCC website: “As I waited for my Lyft driver to arrive to take me to the White House (there’s a phrase I didn’t know I’d ever write), I called my friend Rev. Harry Knox. When he answered, I immediately got teary.



“It was nineteen years ago when Harry was working at Freedom to Marry that he called me and asked if I, as Interim National Coordinator of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns (The Coalition), would consider applying for a grant to work on marriage. I went on to be the Faith Work Director at the National LGBTQ Task Force and he the Religion and Faith Director at HRC. Our two organizations didn’t always get along, but he and I were true friends. He often quotes the wisdom that ‘you can get a lot done together if you don’t worry about who gets the credit.’ And, in that spirit, he and I were privileged to work with hundreds of pro-LGBTQ spiritual and religious leaders on justice for LGBTQ communities. Harry wasn’t able to be at the White House for the signing of the Respect for Marriage Act, but I carried him with me.

“I carried a lot of other folx, too. Like Rev. Jan Griesinger. Jan died last week. She was the first person I ever came out to. Jan and Sam Lolliger were long-time Co-National Coordinators for The Coalition. When I became the interim National Coordinator, years after I’d come out to her, she was very kind and loving (her gruff exterior belied her very tender heart) and offered me sage advice on strategy.

“These were the things on my heart and mind as I stood on the South Lawn of the White House, amidst a crowd of beautiful drag queens and Marines, of priests and politicians and parents, of children and interns, of ambassadors and press secretaries: it was generous collective action and genuine friendships; it was kindness and badass strategy; it was love, and love, and love that brought us to this day.

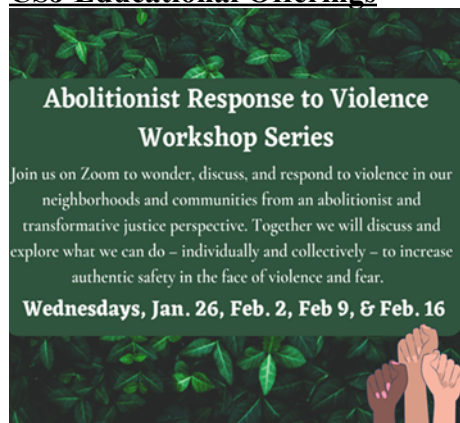
“It seems somehow fitting that the Respect for Marriage Act was signed into law during Advent with its themes of waiting, incarnate/Incarnate love, and preparation. Because there’s been a lot of faithful waiting. And there’s been a lot of strategic preparation. And there’s been a lot of incarnate love and Love: just in the people with whom I stood and talked. Incarnate love in Ambassador Michael Guest who was the second out gay



ambassador; Karine Jean Pierre, the first Black person and the first openly LGBTQ person to be White House press secretary; Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart, Director for Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs for the city of Philadelphia; Rev. Neil Thomas, Senior Pastor at Cathedral of Hope UCC; Jon Hoadley, former Michigan State Representative; Fred Davie, Senior Strategic Advisor to the President at Union Theological Seminary; Sunu Chandy, Legal Director at the National Women's Law Center.

"The Respect for Marriage Act is not liberation. There is much work to be done. And there is, yet, much to be celebrated. Love is love is love. And for its incarnation, we return thanks to God!"

### **CSJ Educational Offerings**



In January, CSJ offered a four-part workshop series on Abolitionist Responses to Violence. This series was inspired by an uptick of violent crime in Minneapolis and interest among abolitionists (or the abolition-curious) about how to take seriously the actual risk of violent crime (which is frequently much lower than we are led to believe) while holding strong to abolitionist values. 46 people registered for the series, although many of those who registered did not attend the workshop series live but rather participated via recording.

Here is the language we used to advertise the series:

"Join the Center for Sustainable Justice for an Abolitionist Responses to Violence Workshop Series, led by community organizers and activists Jonathan Stegall, Peter Digitale Anderson, and Liz Digitale Anderson. Each gathering of this series will address one of these questions related to violence and an abolitionist response: "Where are we?" "What is abolition and transformative justice?" "What can I do about violent crime?" and "What can we do about violent crime?" This workshop series will run four consecutive Wednesday evenings, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, Feb. 9, and Feb. 16, from 6:30–8 p.m. on Zoom. We look forward to wondering, connecting, and responding together!"

Here are the resources shared with the participants after the series:

- [Workshop #1 Recording](#): Where Are We Now, How Do We Know, and What Are Our Narratives?
- [Workshop #2 Recording](#): What Is Abolition and How Does It Happen?
- [Workshop #3 Recording](#): What Is Transformative Justice and What Can I Do About Violent Crime?
- [Workshop #4 Recording](#): What Can We Do About Violent Crime?
- [Abolitionist Responses to Violence Workshop Series Slides](#) from Liz, Jonathan, and Peter
- [Abolitionist Responses to Violence Resource List](#) from Liz, Jonathan, and Peter
- Peter & Liz Website (houses their ongoing work and teaching): [Fiercely Alive](#): Growing a culture of reconciliation and justice in our lives, communities, and beyond.
- Recommended follow-up trainings and groups from Peter: [Community Safety Training Series from Vision Change Win](#) and [Building Community Alternatives to Police Response Group from American Friends Service Committee](#).

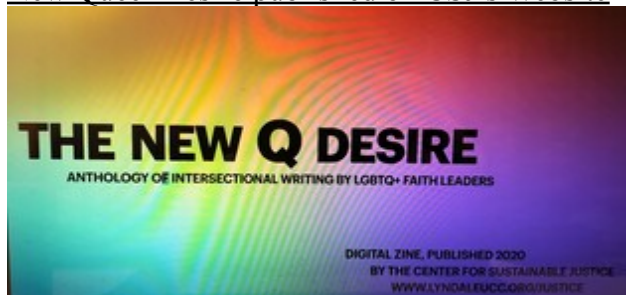
### **About the Facilitators:**

Jonathan Stegall is a designer, a coder, and a faith-rooted organizer and abolitionist. He's passionate about integrating theology, spirituality, and political action. He is a core team member of Reclaim the Block, a police abolitionist group in Minneapolis, and a board member of the Center for Prophetic Imagination, an organization that integrates spiritual formation, political action, and education.

Liz Digitale Anderson is an artist, musician, activist, and mama. She's been shaped by living internationally, building interfaith youth work, and exploring intentional community. Lately she's been writing songs to sing in community that support movements for liberation—she's chasing breakthroughs on all levels that release herself, others, communities, and cultures to be more and more free.

Peter Digitale Anderson is a community peacebuilder who has spent years studying interpersonal and social violence through his work as an organizer and faith leader. He is the Director of Formation at Peace Catalyst International, where he teaches about conflict transformation, nonviolence, trauma resiliency, and social change.

#### New Queer Desire published on CSJ's Website



Rev. Rebecca was honored to have worked with Rev. Dr. Malcolm Himschoot to edit *The New Queer Desire: An Anthology of Intersectional Writing by LGBTQ+ Faith Leaders* as a digital zine. Featuring Miss Major Griffin Gracy, Rev. Louis Mitchell, Beth Zemsky, Rev. Dr. DeWayne Davis, Urooj Arshad, Rev. Lynn Young, Peterson Toscano, Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, Rev. Lawrence Richardson, Bishop Yvette Flunder, Dr. Wendy Harbour, Rev. Alba Onofrio, and

the editors, this collection celebrates the desire that draws us into deeper connections, intersections and transformations. With art, poetry, story-telling and narrative essays, this anthology is a gift to all of us who care about sacred justice and joy. It was published in early 2022 on CSJ's website and is available for free there.

#### Reparations Work

In 2022, 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.

#### Within Lyndale

In 2022 Lyndale's Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF) proposed an additional line-item in Lyndale's budget for reparations. This line-item was voted on and approved without any "opposed" votes at Lyndale's Annual Meeting in June. Leading up to the passage of the line item, the RJTF had one-to-ones with key Lyndale stakeholders, led Adult Education sessions, offered testimony in worship, offered three congregational forums, and communicated up-to-date information about the line item through congregational emails, bulletins, and announcements in worship.

Here is the approved line item proposal:

#### **Lyndale Reparations Budget Line-Item Proposal**

The Lyndale UCC Stewardship Council will be presenting a budget at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on June 5, 2022. Included in that budget will be a new line-item devoted to reparations payments to Black and indigenous communities.

#### **Background**

The Lyndale Racial Justice Task Force has been working for the past year, at the behest of the Council, to research and propose some actions that Lyndale UCC can collectively take. One of those is a reparations line item in the budget because this is an ongoing act of reparations, not a one-off endeavor. (The Racial Justice Task Force will also be engaging the congregation in a lot of other work: truth-telling, relationships of solidarity and followership of BIPOC orgs and leaders and theology and spiritual practices which support repair work.

Additionally, the RJTF will likely have other options for individual members as well as the congregation to pay reparations, engage land-back strategies and other forms of reparation payments.)

### Next Steps

The Racial Justice Task Force will be sponsoring a series of small group meetings to discuss the Reparations Line-Item during the week of May 1st-May 8th. Please sign up for one of those or let the RJTF know if you'd like to talk 1-1. Additionally, there will be a Town Hall Forum on May 22nd following worship. The vote on the budget, including the reparations line-item, will be June 5th following worship.

### Proposal

The Racial Justice Task Force has been in close conversation and followership with Black and indigenous colleagues and this proposal is what we, as a white/settler congregation are being asked to do. Therefore, the Racial Justice Task Force recommended to Council that Lyndale's first collective reparation payment be done as a budget line-item and that the amount be based on what our property taxes would be. This ask comes to us from Black and indigenous colleagues because: we live on Dakota land and this is a land-based calculation. Additionally, property taxes have a long history of being used as a tool to promote educational and housing disparities and to block intergenerational transfer of wealth for BIPOC families.

If Lyndale were not a non-profit, our portion of the SpringHouse property taxes would be about \$27,000/year. It is interesting to note, too, that this is almost exactly a tithe of Lyndale's budget.

The proposal is that we use a goal of a five year ramp up to that: naming one-fifth of \$27,000 or about \$5500 in the budget for 2022-2023. Going forward, our intention is to add an additional one-fifth each year (\$5500, \$11,000, \$16,500, etc) until we get to the goal of \$27,000 annually. However, the Stewardship Council will take seriously its fiduciary role and engage in an annual, honest assessment of where we are financially. We recognize that we must be economically sustainable in order to healthfully engage our collective liberation and "build the Realm of God, here and now."

Finally, this year, the Racial Justice Task Force is proposing that our reparation payments go to CommunityWell, the reparations fund of MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change and Healing), the Twin-Cities-based coalition committed to the work of dismantling white supremacy that we've been working with for many years, because we have deep relationship there and they align well with our values of being pro-LGBTQ and working at the intersection of both indigenous and Black communities. CommunityWell has been in existence for more than five years and has funded Black and indigenous organizers and organizations throughout the Twin Cities. This choice for CommunityWell to be the recipient of our first reparation payment is made for this year only. Going forward, the Council and the Reparations Task Force will work together to decide the annual recipient.

To support our reparations work both within Lyndale and in the Twin Cities, Minnesota and nationally, Rev. Rebecca received a Louisville Research grant which has supported the reparation work for 2022. Here is a report on that grant and the reparations work it has enabled.

Rev. Rebecca is the lead researcher on a grant from the Louisville Institute for 2022 in which she is looking at existing models of historically and predominantly white/settler congregations working on reparations and writing a curriculum to be used in white/settler congregations in order to promote reparation work. From the original proposal:

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?

This research took place on four levels. The first level was within Lyndale and was done in deep collaboration with the Racial Justice Task Force (see above for more information on this work, including the reparations line-item). The research on reparation models also focused on the Twin Cities, on state-wide reparation efforts and on examples nationally. In order to faithfully conduct this research, Rev. Rebecca focused on these goals:

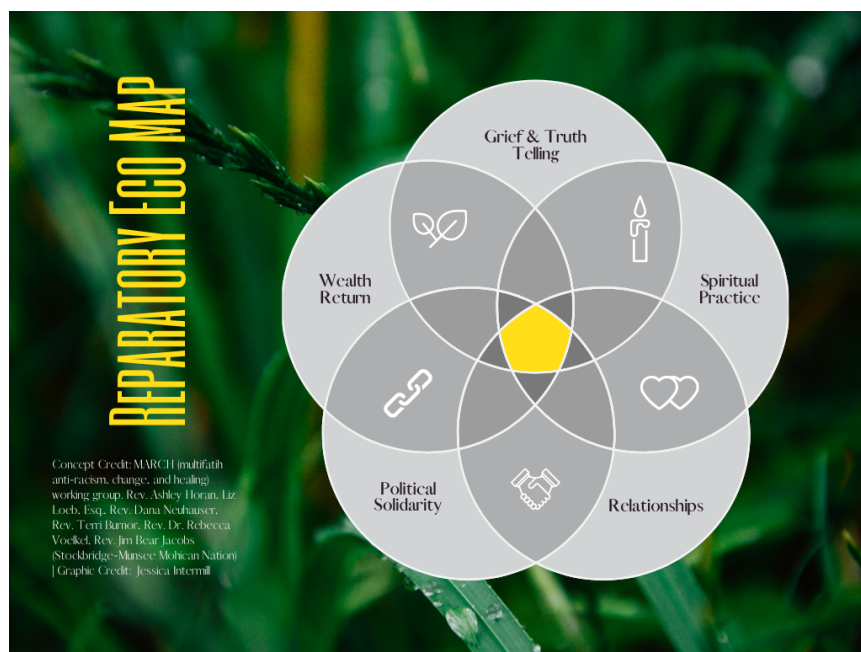
1. Set-up a system of accountability to and support from BIPOC colleagues. This includes creating a set of accountability partners, including those that are paid consultants. In 2022, Rev. Rebecca completed the following:
  - Worked all year with Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray as her primary paid Accountability Partner. Stephen helped her design her interview questions, prepare for interviews, de-brief interviews, review the developing paradigm and give her ongoing theological mentorship and feedback. Additionally, he and she will be writing a book on spiritual and theological roots of reparations that will act as an accompanying text to the Sacred Reckonings curriculum.
  - Additionally, she has created regular check-in meetings with Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri and Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Stockbridge Mohican). They are the Co-Directors of the Racial Justice Program at the Minnesota Council of Churches and are running the Reparations Process there. Both Pamela and Jim Bear have reviewed the Sacred Reckonings material and have provided support and accountability throughout the year.
  - Additionally, she has had conversations, interviews, read materials by and sought to create relationships of followership and solidarity with:
    - Bishop Dr. Yvette Flunder, Presiding Prelate, The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries
    - Melvin Bray, Principal Consultant for Collabyrinth
    - Tony De La Rosa, Transitional Synod Executive, Synod of Mid America
    - Rev. Dana Neuhauser, Minister of Public Witness, New City Church, Minneapolis and Steering Committee Member, MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change, and Healing)
    - Sharon Day (Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe), Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Task Force



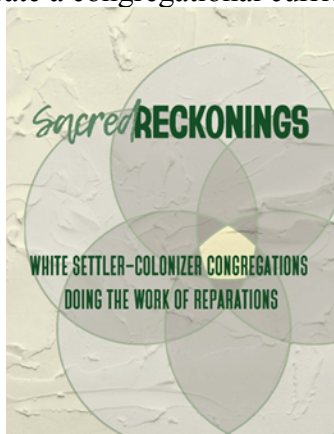
- o Alfred Walking Bull (Sicangu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe), Development Director for Tending The Soil
  - o Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota, Ho-Chunk descendant), Activist & Writer, Board member of SisterSong and the American LGBTQ+Museum
  - o Rev. Dr. DeWayne Davis, Lead Minister, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis
  - o Rev. Joann Conroy (Oglala Sioux), President, ELCA American Indian/Alaska Native Lutheran Association
  - o Louie Blue Coat (Standing Rock Lakota), Acting Director, Dakota Association of the United Church of Christ
  - o Jen Martel (Cheyenne River), Sitting Bull College Visiting Center Coordinator
  - o Rev. Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor for Justice and Mission, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis
  - o Rev. Eric Jackson, D.Min, Pastor, Plymouth Congregational Church, Syracuse
2. Conduct at least 20 interviews of leaders and congregations engaged in reparations work around the country. These will happen: within Lyndale, in the Twin Cities Reparation efforts (MARCH's SSN congregations in particular), across Minnesota (MCC's Truth and Reparations Process and Restorative Actions) and across the country (SURJ faith, Columbus Mennonite, Auburn Seminary's white racial justice cohort, etc).
- Rev. Rebecca was able to conduct these interviews with some of the folx above as well as several folx within Lyndale, at Columbus Mennonite Church, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey, Macky Alson as well as other reparation colleagues.
  - Working collaboratively with Dr. Sharon Groves and Melvin Bray, they created, recruited for and have been facilitating a Reparations Accountability Group for 13 pastors and leaders of congregations. One third are BIPOC and two-thirds are white and we meet every other week for six months. They are using the Sacred Reckonings curriculum as their guide and receiving real-time feedback as to its effectiveness.
  - Working closely with Rev. Dr. Malcolm Himschoot, Rev. Rebecca designed and led a Sacred Reckonings Consultation based on the Sacred Reckonings curriculum with the racial justice teams of the congregations whose leaders are in the Reparations Accountability Group. Additionally, they had representatives from several congregations who took part in the Sacred Solidarity Network training in the Spring. Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, Jessica Intermill, Esq and Rev. Rebecca led that experience on Nov 4 & 5, 2022 with about sixty people in attendance.
3. Test whether the 4-pillar schema of reparations is the best model for building a curriculum. The 4-pillar shema includes:
- Truth-telling (Doctrine of Discovery, individual and congregational histories of ill-gotten wealth, individual and congregational connections to GI Bill, Redlining, land-grants, denominational and congregational connections to Boarding schools, etc.)
  - Relationships of Solidarity and Followership of BIPOC leaders and organizations,
  - Spiritual practices which mitigate against hoarding (Kenosis of the Father, surrender, sabbath-sabbatical-jubilee, 12-steps, confession-repentance-repair-reconciliation)
  - Resource redistribution (Land-Back, congregational line-items for reparations, paying reparation fees every time a spiritual is sung, restorative actions: wealth surrender)

Both in the Sacred Solidarity Network Reparations group in the Spring of 2022 (with 38 congregational representatives attending) and in the interviews and conversation, it became clear that a more overlapping, integrated Reparatory Eco Map was more helpful to defining and describing the reparations

journey for congregations. While the language is similar, there are important shifts in the conception of the process as being circular and separating out political solidarity that may or may not be related to genuine relationships. Here is what emerged as the schema:



4. Plan, recruit for and lead the MARCH/Sacred Solidarity Network Reparations Circle (Feb 28, March 28, April 25, May 23)
  - Sponsored by CSJ and with the leadership of Rev. Rebecca, Jessica Intermill, Liz Loeb, Rev. Ashley Horan, Rev. Terri Burnor and Rev. Dana Neuhauser, the Reparations Circle had 147 people representing 38 congregations attend. It was early on in the Louisville Institute research process but they got very good feedback about the direction in which the reparations work was heading.
5. Create a congregational curriculum on Reparations



Rev. Rebecca has spent the Fall working with Jessica Intermill, Esq who is a tribal and treaty rights attorney and member of the MARCH steering committee. Together, they have taken all the information from the interviews, the beta-testing, the group facilitation and Consultation and written *Sacred Reckonings: White Settler Colonizer Congregations Doing the Work of Reparation*. The finished copy will be available by the end of January. They will also be finishing a documentary to accompany the curriculum based on the interviews that Rev. Rebecca did throughout the year. And, by the end of 2023, they hope to have the book that Rev. Dr. Stephen Ray and Rev. Rebecca are writing to also accompany the congregational work of the curriculum.

### Sabbatical Time

Below, Rev. Rebecca Voelkel and Allison Connelly-Vetter reflect on the experience of Sabbatical in the Summer of 2022:

### Rev. Rebecca Voelkel's Sabbatical Reflections

Rev. Rebecca took sabbatical time amidst all the work on reparations and much of her experience is tied to that. She writes some reflections:

"I can't express how grateful I am for having been granted a sabbatical in the summer of 2022. The time away was funded through the Louisville Institute grant I received and much of the time was spent doing interviews for the grant. Additionally, one month of the time was spent on a family trip to Ireland and Scotland which was very important to the reparations work in which I've been engaged this year. I described some of that in my sermon on October 9, 2022 entitled "Truth-speaking, Memory and Healing." It can be found on Lyndale's website: <http://www.lyndaleucc.org/sermons/truth-speaking-memory-and-healing/>

"Much of what formed my thinking about the experience is based on Great Grandmother Mary Lyon's wisdom at the Treaty People Gathering in June of 2021 in which she says:

*[T]hen you nourish, and you plant your feet on the short residence you have here on mother Earth. You see, everything in this planet is made up of those four elements. That's all we are... we cannot survive without one another. Those four elements show no prejudice. Mankind, womankind- out of people for profit- did that to separate and to conquer and to divide. I also spoke yesterday: when you come forth, please don't say "I am just a white person," sing your ancestor songs. Say "my grandparents were from" and that rhythm goes from there. You never say "I am," you say "my grandparents are from." [What] people don't realize is what happened to us indigenous people, on these lands, also happened to all your family otherwise you'd be home. So we share something in common that is left out of our history books...*

-Great Grandmother Mary Lyons (Anishinaabeg) at the Multifaith Prayer Service for the Treaty People Gathering Against Line 3

"I tried to capture some of the lessons in our annual family Christmas letter, "[t]hese words have mentored us this year. They were particularly resonant as we spent the month of August in Ireland and Scotland, visiting our ancestral homelands. It is impossible to capture all the experience meant. In many ways, it was deeply paradoxical. The weather was absolutely beautiful and hiking: at Giant's Causeway, Bengooria, on Inisheer, in Kilarney National Park, on the Dingle Peninsula, in the Wicklow Mountains National Park, and on the Isle of Skye, was at once grounding and transcendent. Being on the sea and feeling the wind on our faces and in our hair brought us back to ourselves. There was a spiritual connection with the land and waters that felt ancient.

"We also experienced deep kinship and spiritual connection when we visited with Maggie's second cousins and their families: Denis, Marian, Rosemary, Paul and Sarah Shannon with Aunt Brigid in Wexford. And time with Jim, Mary and James Shannon who live on the Shannon farm in Hackettstown and Mary and Oliver Whelan. And then, when we went to Inverness to inter Rebecca's Great Aunt Christina MacKenzie Russell in the family plot in Tomnahurich Cemetery. There was a deeper wholeness for all of us and Shannon, whose full name is Shannon MacKenzie George Voelkel, came to know more of who she is and where she comes from.

"But the paradox emerges as we also learned of the depth of colonization that both Ireland and Scotland have endured, most recently at the hands of the British. About halfway into our trip, we went to the town of Cobh (Queenstown). It was the point of emigration for thousands of Irish, including Maggie's papa, Patrick Shannon.

"As we drove toward the town, our bus driver said, "now, you're going to be reading a lot about what some call 'the Great Potato Famine.' But I don't want you to use that language because it connotes a shortage of food. I

want you to use the language of ‘The Great Hunger’ because between 1846 and 1851 when a million Irish died of starvation and a million more emigrated, the British government and business exported three times the amount of food that would have fed the entire population. There was no need for folks to starve except the economics of colonization.” The same was true as we traveled through Ross and Cromarty in Scotland and visited the monument to the Highland Clearances which saw thousands violently thrown off their lands, banning of Scottish Gaelic and policies of starvation and forced emigration. *You never say, “I am,” you say “my grandparents are from.” [What] people don't realize is what happened to us indigenous people, on these lands, also happen to all your family otherwise you'd be home...* Our experiences made these words ring so very true. And they brought us home to Minnesota with a deeper love of our grandparent’s songs, an increased desire to sing them more proudly, and a renewed sense of the power and importance of repair and reparation. *That's all we are... we cannot survive without one another...* “

“Much of the work on the Sacred Reckonings curriculum is geared toward supporting white folx in doing the work of repair in ways that are healing and liberative for everyone, including themselves, in the way that Great Grandmother Mary Lyons suggests.

### Sabbatical Director of the Center for Sustainable Justice Report

One of the projects Allison took leadership on during her time as Sabbatical Director for CSJ was creating and implementing Connect + Repair gatherings. These gatherings, hosted by the Racial Justice Task Force, were opportunities for connection and story-sharing over a shared meal.

Here is how Allison advertised the Connect + Repair gatherings:

“Join the Racial Justice Task Force for a story-sharing gathering at SpringHouse. We will enjoy some delicious food from Los Ocampo and have time to simply be together and build community through sharing stories that are close to our hearts these days. I thought of the three of you as you have done so much to ensure that Lyndale is a welcoming, warm, robust community, and that is what we hope this event will facilitate!

These stories can be about anything, really: faith, values, family, community, Lyndale, Minnesota, home, travel, justice commitments, personal development or growth, etc. We will share these stories in small groups of two or three to get to know one another better and find some common threads that connect us across difference and through the ongoing pandemic.

We are calling this gathering "Connect and Repair" and we chose that name because through our line-item listening sessions we found that (as you may know) many Lyndalians are feeling disconnected lately and in need of rebuilding relationships with one another (or, for our new members, building relationships for the first time!). This gathering is hosted by the Racial Justice Task Force but there will be no programming or educational element to this event, simply community building.”

The gatherings were successful in gathering comparatively large groups of Lyndalians to connect outside of worship. Of the four gatherings, the first was the largest, hosting almost 20 people from all corners of the Lyndale community. The next three gatherings included around 10 people, which was similar to the number of lay members present in-person on a given Sunday for worship. The RJTF received overwhelmingly positive feedback on these events.

Allison also led several worship services on justice issues for Lyndale this summer. She coordinated a worship service on reproductive justice after the overturn of Roe v. Wade. She invited a seminary colleague, Carolyn Browender, to guest preach. Carolyn is an expert on faith-based efforts to increase abortion access. Allison also led a worship service on disability justice in honor of the 32nd anniversary of the passage of the Americans with

Disabilities Act. Allison received positive feedback on both of these worship services, with Lyndale members reporting that the services were both educational and hopeful.

### 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 four 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.

### Green Team: Earth Week

The Green Team hosted an Adult Education session for Earth Week this year in addition to distributing Earth Week kits to SpringHouse children and youth. The Green Team also led a birding outing in May, a plant exchange in June, and a SpringHouse garden harvest party at the end of the growing season, and engaged in the Wakan Tipi work which is described above.

### Activistas

In 2022 Lyndale's Activistas team was engaged in the following work:

- Support for the Minneapolis teacher's strike. (Spring 2022 and described in detail above)
- Solidarity with the people of the East Phillips Neighborhood – fighting against environmental racism. Mpls. Public officials are considering demolishing the Roof Depot and putting in its place a truck public works yard, stirring up the asbestos contamination at the site. Court hearing was December 15th, 7:30am. Court will announce its opinion early in January 2023.
- Partner with ISIAH as it continues to focus on rent stabilization, public safety, and climate action in the city of Minneapolis.
- Solidarity with MIRAC as it demonstrates at Senator Klobuchar's office – demanding that she bring the American Dream and Promise Act up for a vote in the Senate. (Fall 2022)

### Simpson

Lyndale continues to volunteer regularly to serve a meal at Simpson shelter. Simpson is temporarily moving locations while their building is renovated. They will relocate to Zion Lutheran Church until the renovation is complete. Lyndalians continue to be actively engaged in this ministry and outreach opportunity, and there is never trouble filling the volunteer slots.





### 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



### 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 nearly 50 Christian, Jewish and UUA congregations. As noted at the beginning of this Annual Report, deepening and adaptability have been the guiding themes for 2022. So, also is true with MARCH and SSN.

In 2022, the primary focus of the Sacred Solidarity Network has been the work of reparations. In the Spring of 2022, SSN hosted a four-part Reparations Circle which drew 147 people from 38 different congregations around the country.

#### 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 to all the work in opposition to Line 3.

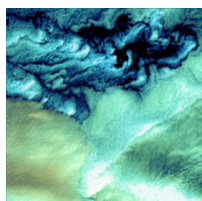
#### CommunityWell

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.

### **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.

### **A HUGE Thank-You to our Funders**



E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST Neighbors in Need 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). She is the co-editor of *The New Queer Desire: An Anthology of Intersectional*

*Writing by LGBTQ+ Faith Leaders* (Center for Sustainable Justice: 2022) and has also contributed to several recent books including: *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization* (Orbis: 2019), *Unlocking Orthodoxies for Inclusive Theologies: Queer Alternatives* (Routledge: 2020) and *Claiming God: Essays in honor Marilyn McCord Adams* (Pickwick Publications: 2022). 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.RevDrRebeccaMMVoelkel.com](http://www.RevDrRebeccaMMVoelkel.com).



**Rev. Ashley Harness (she/her)** was the Pastor for Congregational Ministries at Lyndale UCC until May of 2022 and a communications strategist with over a decade of experience

in non-profit media work. 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. 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.

**Reverend Joann Conroy** serves as an Intentional Interim Pastor for Congregational Life at Lyndale United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN. Reverend Conroy served as Chaplain for the Good Samaritan Society/Sanford Health, Maplewood, MN. For nine years. Other areas of current ministry include the St Paul Area Synod Advocates' for Racial Justice; Justice Ministry education program, Auburn Seminary, New York; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Core Team – Isaiah, Sanctuary Church Response Team; American Indian Alaskan Native Lutheran Association President; Native American Alaska Native Curriculum Development Team, LSTC; Navajo Lutheran Mission Wisdom Keeper Seminary advisor; National Lutheran Campus Ministry Board of Directors; ELCA Ethnic Association Presidents team; ELCA Women's 50th Committee; Healing MN Stories Steering Committee; Ecumenical and Inter Religious Relations & Theological Discernment Ad Hoc Committee to establish pastoral guidelines for ministry in a multi-religious world; Lutheran World Federation Caring for Creation team; Twin Cities Inter-religious Volunteer Chaplains.

Previous Calls : Lutheran Campus Ministry, SD School of Mines and Technology, 2002- 2008; Woyatan Lutheran Church, Rapid City, SD 2003-2008 Pastor/Developer: Ministry among Native American people of Rapid City, SD, and Outreach to ex-offenders, and to the homeless; SD Synod Multicultural Center, Rapid City, SD Pastor Developer 2002-2003; Atonement Lutheran Church Rapid City, SD ; Associate Pastor 2000-2003; Episcopal Diocese of SD, 2010 – 2013 Clergy Supply/Interim on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation and in Rapid City, SD.

## Budget for The Center for Sustainable Justice

	2022	Notes
<b>SOURCES OF SUPPORT</b>		
Grant sources	\$60,000	Carpenter Foundation, UCC Neighbors in Need, Louisville Institute
Lyndale UCC	\$17,000	
Individual contributions	\$845	
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$77,845</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Reparations Research	\$10,000	Interview Stipends, Travel Expenses
Curriculum Development	\$15,000	Collaborators stipend, Transcription costs, editing
Operating Expenses / Overhead		
Director's Salary	\$39,845	
Faith Organizer	\$13,000	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$77,845</b>	