

Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC

Annual Report for the work of 2023



This report highlights the work of The Center for Sustainable Justice in 2023. It represents the time and energy of the staff at Lyndale and the Center for Sustainable Justice, who included throughout the year Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel, Allison Connelly-Vetter, Rev. Dana Neuhauser, Julica Hermann de la Fuente, Jessica Intermill, Esq. Liz Loeb, Esq. and collaboration with Rev. Joann Conroy, Lyndale's Interim Minister for Congregational Life. 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

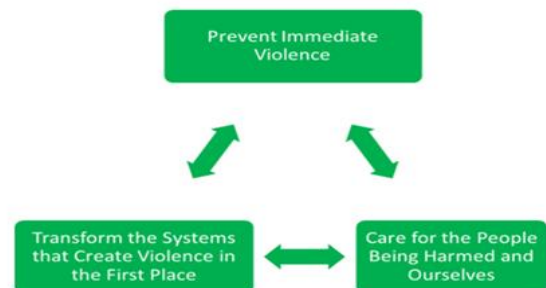
The Center for Sustainable Justice helps build the movement of religious leaders and communities working together on LGBTQ, racial, food and climate justice in the Twin Cities and across the Midwest. We do so rooted in an understanding that movements for justice are strongest and most successful when 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 2023 Annual Report: Shared Leadership and Meaningful Gatherings

The Center for Sustainable Justice was started in 2015 and 2023 marks eight 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. In early September 2023, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel and members of her family were in a horrific car crash. Thanks to skilled emergency response professionals Rebecca and her family members survived the crash, but Rebecca's intensive recovery efforts placed her on medical leave through the end of 2023.

However, the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice did not cease in Rebecca's absence! Organizers, faith leaders, and educators Dana Neuhauser, Jessica Intermill, and Liz Loeb stepped in to lead the work of Sacred Reckonings (see more below), while members of Lyndale's Social Justice Forum teams and Stewardship Council took on more internal leadership roles. Rev. Joann Conroy, Interim Director for Congregational Life, also supported the congregation through this time of intense transition and shock. All who have been involved with the work of the Center for Sustainable Justice in 2023, and especially in the final quarter, should be proud of the fabulous ministry that has been accomplished even under new and additional leadership. Clearly, the mission of the CSJ extends beyond any one person's vision or energy.

Both with and without Rebecca's direct involvement, The Center for Sustainable Justice prioritized hosting and supporting meaningful gatherings of all sorts this year. From a Vocational Discernment Workshop to a "Pizza and Polyamory" panel discussion to supporting a vigil at George Floyd Square and hosting a Queer Prom, CSJ committed itself to infusing joy, learning, and deepened relationships throughout its local, national, and global community.

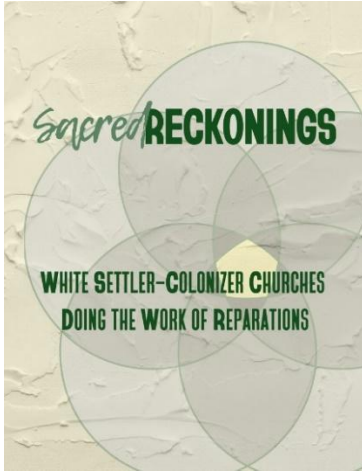
Additionally, much of CSJ's ministry this year was continuing Rev. Rebecca's work on the *Sacred Reckonings* curriculum. *Sacred Reckonings* is an eleven-step guide for racial justice teams from white settler-colonizer congregations to lead their churches through a reparations process. It is both an organizing and educational guide. CSJ has introduced new congregations and faith leaders to the work of reparations through this guide, including via trainings and other events. Please read on to learn more about all we have accomplished on the *Sacred Reckonings* project this year.

From transition and newness to carrying on long-term work, this year has held many additional milestones for the Center for Sustainable Justice. Below is a recounting of the last year around both the themes of shared leadership and meaningful gatherings.

**Reparations Accountability Group for Pastors of Predominantly White/Settler,
Welcoming and Affirming Congregations
and**

***Sacred Reckonings: A Consultation for Welcoming and Affirming Congregations Doing Reparations Work
Trainings***

Description:



Starting in October of 2022 and ending in March 2023, a Reparations Accountability Group of twelve pastors from welcoming and affirming congregations met every other Tuesday afternoon for six months. This Reparations Accountability Group was a space of story-telling, support, analysis and strategy about how these pastors can provide leadership within their congregations around reparations. The group consisted of pastors who, with their congregations, have already begun the work of both racial justice and reparations. In other words, they are completely convinced of the value and importance of the work of reparations. This group supported its members in trying some things out and doing very practical, applied work in service of reparations. The membership of this cohort was two-thirds white/settler pastors and one-third BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) leaders.

Additionally, the racial justice teams/task forces of the congregations which the pastors represent participated in a Reparations Consultation (virtual) called *Sacred Reckonings* over a two-day period of November 4-5, 2022. We had fifty-two people participate. This Consultation introduced the Reparatory Eco-Map (see below) and the beginnings of what is now *Sacred Reckonings: White Settler-Colonizer Churches Doing the Work of Reparations*. *Sacred Reckonings* is an eleven-step guide for racial justice teams from white settler-colonizer congregations to lead their churches through a reparations process. It is both an organizing and educational guide.

The *Sacred Reckonings* Consultation began the process of training the congregations whose pastors were part of the Reparations Accountability Circle in the *Sacred Reckonings* process. Additionally, each congregation made a \$500 reparations payment at the end of the Reparations Accountability circle. This \$500 is not intended as a sum total of reparation work, but rather as a good faith first effort. The Reparations Accountability Circle was an experiential process, rather than a study group. These contributions will be used to help them initiate reparations payments. Examples of what they did include:

1. Beginning of a congregational budget line-item for reparations.
2. Paying Indigenous and Black communities/organizations in their local area which will be chosen after relationship-mapping done in the Consultation.
3. Pooling resources with all the other Consultation partners to begin collective reparation payment.



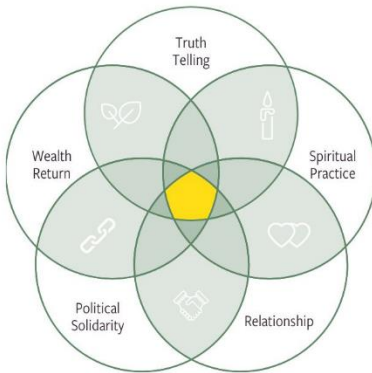
A note about the tone and tenor of this group: we worked very hard to create a space of deep collaboration and support. This was an intentional orientation to combat and transform white supremacist logic. Any “mistakes” or “failures” that we shared about our reparations work were shared for deepening our knowledge and workshoping to make our collective work better. Another way to put this is that we were working toward the goal of “beyond being a ‘good one.’”

Process:

This was an opportunity for us to get real about how white settler-colonizer religion and the supremacist logics which undergird it (homo-, bi-, trans-hatred, sexism, racism, etc.) have shaped the material realities of BIPOC lives. We wanted to be forward looking and envision how we can reorder inequalities within our churches and denominations, repair the damage done while those inequalities were allowed to persist, and reimagine the ways in which we relate to one another.

At the core of both the Reparations Accountability Group and the Sacred Reckonings Consultation is the Reparatory Eco-Map (shown below).

Description:



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

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, and yearly practice which can help mitigate against hoarding and remind us of our deep groundedness and unconditional belonging is necessary for

reparations. In particular, the wisdom of embodiment from decades of pro- LGBTQ work will be a focus on how operate together.

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

Political Solidarity: any reparations process must have concrete actions of followership and solidarity in which White Settler-Colonizer churches and individuals engage in protest, advocacy, activism, non-violent direct action and other actions at the direction and behest of BIPOC communities, particularly queer and trans BIPOC communities.

Wealth Return: any reparations process must include the return of money, land and resources. As we do our work, particularly in relationship to Dakota, Anishinaabeg (and those communities which are Indigenous to the land in which convening participants live) 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.

At the end of this experience in March of 2023, participants reported that they had acquired new ways of recognizing and being which will aid them, as individuals and as congregations, to act in solidarity and partnership with Native Americans and American descendants of enslaved Africans, particularly those who are queer and trans, who may have very different asks as it relates to reparations. Additionally, participants continue to meet quarterly to be community for one another so that relationships of mutual learning and support continue to extend beyond this experience.

Sacred reckonings Trainings in 2023

Sacred Reckonings: White Settler-Colonizer Churches Doing the Work of Reparations officially launched in March 2023. It is an organizing and educational guide for congregational teams who want to lead their churches in reparatory action. It offers tools and exercises to tailor a reparations process to the cultural context of individual congregations and leads congregational teams through an 11-Step process to reparations.

The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted the first training cohort for Sacred Reckonings in October followed by an online only training that convened in November. Between the two trainings we had 48 participants representing 13 congregations from 4 states. The day and a half long training focused on equipping the participants to lead a reparations process in their own congregational settings. Participants thoughtfully engaged the material, asked probing questions, and made connections to other congregations across the country.

Trainers Rev. Dana Neuhauser and Julica Hermann de la Fuente were grateful to have Jessica Intermill, Esq. co-author of the guide, join the team in Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel's stead. The training team is looking forward to having Rebecca back in the new year and anticipate many exciting updates.

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



The Center for Sustainable Justice is a key member of the Steering Committee of MARCH and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel serves as facilitator of the MARCH table. Rev. Voelkel is also part of the training and curricular development team for the Sacred Solidarity Network and one of the architects of CommunityWell, the MARCH-hosted reparations fund administered by the Center for Sustainable Justice.

MARCH is an open coalition of explicitly pro-LGBTQ faith leaders from diverse communities, religious institutions, and spiritual traditions. MARCH works to build a movement of people of faith and conviction and spiritual and religious communities as partners in the spiritual, moral, political work of dismantling white supremacy and other intersecting oppressions in solidarity with movements for justice led by frontline communities. MARCH builds 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.

In particular, MARCH seeks to root its work in the wisdom, relationships and successes of the Welcoming and Affirming Religious Movement. MARCH uses this strategy to deepen the welcome and affirmation of LGBTQ persons of color into religious communities and to work to dismantle the interwoven systems of heterosexism, homo-, bi- and trans-phobia and racism and to build a world of justice and embodied love for all.

MARCH relies heavily on the strategies of *Building an Inclusive Church* and has designed much of its work to help congregations learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the Welcoming Process around LGBTQ people. From this analysis and seeking to deepen congregational and individual welcome and affirmation, MARCH works in the following areas:

Sacred Solidarity Network:

MARCH has hosted six cohorts of congregations over the past seven years in what has become an important network of welcoming, multifaith congregations. In the Fall of 2021, MARCH hosted a virtual cohort of the Sacred Solidarity Network 101 curriculum with three United Methodist congregations. From February through May of 2022, we hosted a Sacred Solidarity Network 201 series on Reparations. One hundred and forty-eight individuals from thirty-eight faith communities – including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Unitarian Universalist communities from Minnesota and beyond – engaged in the reparations work through this series, including the graduate congregations of the SSN 101 curriculum. This 201 series formed the basis for what is now *Sacred reckonings: White Settler-Colonizer Churches Doing the Work of Reparations*.

In 2021-2022, we completed the Sacred Solidarity Network (SSN) 101 Curriculum. It includes the following:

Sacred Solidarity Network

Module 1: Social Location



- Social Location (Learning targets: Help people recognize that everyone has a social location and that our individual identities are connected to systems of oppression. Everyone has multiple identities and we have complex relationships to systems of power.)
- Personal & Family History (Learning targets: Help people recognize their individual selves as embedded in systems and in one's familial history. Individual and racial/religious/class identities are impacted by systems. Start to make the connections between our own embodiment and the ways in which we've been shaped-- culturally, socially, spiritually, bodily-- by white supremacy culture.)
- Systemic White Supremacy & White Supremacy Culture (Learning targets: Help participants make the connection between the system of white supremacy and the culture, processes, mores, policies, etc of their local congregation. Also, help participants make the connection to the ways in which we, personally, are shaped and formed and operate within white supremacy culture. We can't (solely) read or think our way out of white supremacy.)
- Difference Between White Supremacy & Interpersonal Meanness & Bigotry (Learning targets: Because our personal identities are connected to systems of oppression, we can be as nice as we can be and yet still perpetrate white supremacy.)
- Religion's Collusion With & Resistance to White Supremacy Culture (Learning targets: Help people understand the ways in which white supremacy culture is rooted in a particular kind of theology. Uncover the ways in which each of our religious traditions have colluded with the perpetration of white supremacy culture.)

We have created an asynchronous, accessible curriculum including all of the interviews, didactic sessions, grounding exercises, and reflection activities for congregations who want to work through the Sacred Solidarity Network 101 curriculum. This asynchronous curriculum will be used with any future SSN 101 participants in a hybrid format of both synchronous and asynchronous learning. You can find our SSN 101 video recordings here on the Center for Sustainable Justice Vimeo page: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/9618652>.

Educational Events

Understanding that the work is always a balance of deepening knowledge, inspiring action and rooting spiritual practice, MARCH hosts regular educational opportunities. Given the rising white nationalism in our country, MARCH has partnered with SURJ and Faith and Prejudice to host several trainings for white leaders around relationship and community-building.

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 listserv, Facebook page, Twitter presence and Signal)

of congregations and religious leaders who have been present at marches, protests and events ranging from the Poor People’s Campaign to the Capitol to protest the killing of Philando Castille to the #FreeThemAll campaign to get those in prison or ICE detention released to avoid contracting Covid-19 and the efforts at responding to the George Floyd murder. Currently, our primary organizing is around resistance to Line 3 in Northern Minnesota. Following the leadership of Indigenous organizations, we have been mobilizing individuals and congregations to be present in prayer and protest in Northern Minnesota around Line 3 and working closely with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and Planned Parenthood on supporting congregations and people of faith in processing the impacts of the anti-abortion Dobbs Supreme Court decision.

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 Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC)-led organizations and how people of faith can transfer resources and money to those communities. MARCH members began mapping the resources of MARCH member communities and the needs of several BIPOC-led organizations with which MARCH members have relationships. Additionally, MARCH representatives (including CSJ’s Director) have been part of a coalition of multifaith organizations and the Minnesota Council of Churches examining both a state-wide reparations piece of legislation and a state-wide, Christian church-focused Truth and Reparations Process.

Multifaith Worship Opportunities



MARCH is first and foremost a multifaith coalition and, as such, seeks to speak and act in religiously-rooted ways in all that it does. Additionally, it provides multifaith worship opportunities on a regular basis. MARCH consistently provides prayer and ritual spaces focusing on racial justice and reparations for LGBTQ+ affirming congregations. This year, MARCH helped sponsor a number of opportunities for prayer and vigil at George Floyd Square, including on the third anniversary of George Floyd’s murder.

3. **Educational Events.** Here are a few of the educational events sponsored by the Center for Sustainable Justice in 2023.



OYATE Film Screenings

The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted two film screenings of OYATE in February of 2023. At both screenings we were led in discussion and Q&A by Jennifer Martel (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), who is a producer and story supervisor on the film and the Sitting Bull Visitor Center Coordinator with whom CSJ had worked on the creation of *Sacred Reckonings*. For the Sunday screening We were also joined by Stuart Lohnes, who is a musician featured in the film.

About the film: "In the wake of the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests, Indigenous People across the nation are using their newfound platform to shed light on the wide array of injustices committed against them in an effort to wake up the world and embark upon the process of decolonization.

OYATE elevates the voices of Indigenous activists, organizers, and politicians as they offer their perspective on that complicated history, contextualize the

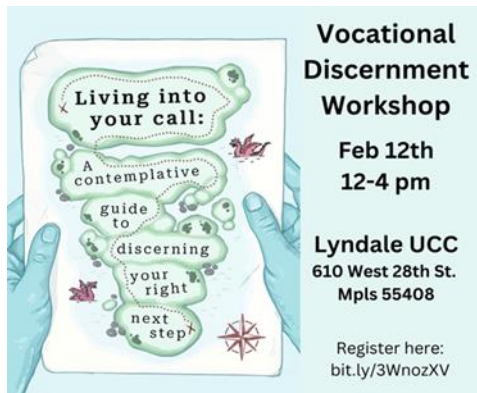
[#NoDAPL](#) movement, illuminate the interconnectivity between the issues facing Indian Country today, and look towards a more sovereign and sustainable future for their people."

The film features perspectives from Chase Iron Eyes, Phyllis Young, Secretary Deb Haaland, Tokata Iron Eyes, Stuart James and more.

The OYATE screenings were sponsored by the Center for Sustainable Justice at Lyndale UCC in partnership with:

- Calvary Lutheran Church
- First Christian Church (DOC)
- First Congregational of Minnesota
- First Nations Kitchen
- Intermill Land History Consulting
- Leadership Center for Social Justice at United Theological Seminary
- Minnesota Council of Churches
- Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
- Nativity Lutheran Church
- Plymouth Congregational Church
- Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community
- St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church
- The Creation Justice Team of the Minnesota Conference of the UCC
- The Unitarian Universalist Association
- Westminster Presbyterian Church

Vocational Discernment Workshop



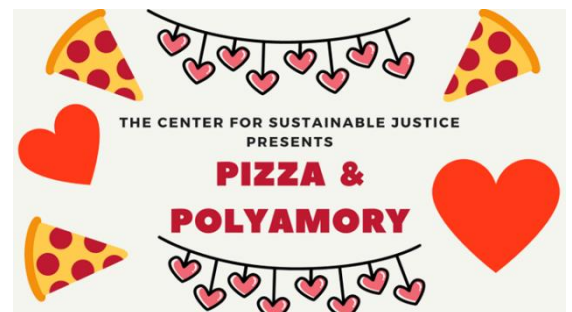
The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted a Vocational Discernment led by Quaker minister Greg Woods in February. Greg also preached for Lyndale worship that same day on the topic of love and vocation. The workshop facilitated participants' reflection, individually and in pairs and small groups, on these deep questions: What are your gifts? What do you have to offer the world? And, what might your next vocational steps be?" Participants were mostly queer and came from diverse backgrounds and were discerning various vocational questions, most frequently questions of profession or paid work.

4. Celebrating LGBTQ People

In the current political climate in which LGBTQ, and particularly trans, non-binary, and genderqueer people, are being targeted, the Center for Sustainable Justice has sought to explicitly celebrate queer and trans folk through worship, educational events and celebrating queer joy!

Pizza & Polyamory

In April of 2023, the Center for Sustainable Justice hosted Bekah Maren Anderson, M. Div, for a pizza lunch and a discussion on polyamory. We had thirty participants present for a conversation about the basics of polyamory, covering terminology, history, expressions, and mythbusting as well as the Christian theological foundation for supporting polyamory, and the many ways that polyamorous people experience discrimination from the church and our society.



Bekah Maren Anderson, M. Div, (she/her) is the Director of Pastoral Care and Community Connections at the Julian Way. Bekah is an out queer, disabled, and polyamorous person, and is a theologian and writer at those intersections. Bekah lives in Danbury, CT where she is a Member in Discernment with the United Church of Christ in the Southern New England Conference

God Loves Trans People Sunday



On Sunday, April 23, the Center for Sustainable Justice sponsored an Adult Education session and Sunday worship at Lyndale UCC centering non-binary and genderqueer experiences.

Adult Education, led by Rev. Rebecca, included watching Season 1, Episode 3 from "Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness" titled "Can We Say Bye-Bye to the Binary?" About the episode: "In this 20-minute episode Jonathan takes a deep, personal dive into why systems of power are threatened by gender nonconformity and then communes with a Wabanaki two-spirit elder and other nonbinary leaders."

Rev. Rebecca then led the group in wondering and dreaming together about how we can queer the gender binary in our own lives and how to make the world safer and more liberating for those living beyond the gender binary.

After Adult Education, Max Brumberg-Kraus (they/them) led in worship and offered a sermon centering trans, non-binary, and genderqueer experiences. The whole experience was offered online and many folx joined for the experience beyond the Lyndale community. Reflecting on "God Loves Trans People Sunday," Rev. Rebecca wrote,

"What a blessing to be together for God Love Trans & Non-binary Folx Sunday. Both Adult Ed and our worship service with Max Brumberg-Kraus preaching were sacred spaces! Max wrote to me about their deep respect for this community after having experienced the conversation in Adult Ed and their reception during worship. Thank you for being the kind of community that embodies its values of radical welcome. Especially in these times of violence directed toward our trans, non-binary and gender queer kindred, it is a blessing."

Totally Fabulous, All-Generations Queer Prom June 16



The Center for Sustainable Justice hosted a Totally Fabulous, All Generations Queer Prom event on Friday, June 16th from 7-10 p.m. at the SpringHouse Ministry Center. This was a free, intergenerational and sober event celebrating queer and trans lives and experiences. We had seventy-five folx join us for dancing, family-friendly drag performances, fabulous food, a photo booth, and the opportunity to dress up and celebrate queer joy! The event was a huge success and many remarked on how, in this political climate, celebrating queer and trans folx was powerful, gospel work.

Here is the language we used to invite people to join us for Queer Prom: "Whether you are young or young at heart, this is an event for all generations to come together and dance the night away. We welcome everyone from all walks of life to celebrate who they are and who they love. This is a night to dress up, let loose, and have fun with your queer and trans family."

We will also be collecting a free will offering for Iowa Safe Schools. The mission of Iowa Safe Schools is to provide safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environments and communities for LGBTQ and allied youth in Iowa through education, outreach, advocacy, and direct services. Learn more about Iowa Safe Schools and find donation information here: <https://www.iowasafeschools.org>.

We will also have a family-friendly drag performers, a DJ, a photo-booth, a low-sensory space, and hors d'oeuvres. We will provide childcare for young children, and we ask that there is at least one adult for each congregation with a youth group participating. We believe that this event will provide a safe space for all to come together and create community. Come join us for a night of music, dancing, and fabulousness! Let's celebrate our diversity and show the world how totally fabulous we are. We can't wait to see you there. Let's make this a night to remember!"

Co-sponsors for the event were:

- MN Conference UCC
- University Lutheran Church of Hope
- Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ
- Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
- Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community
- SpringHouse Ministry Center Youth Ministry
- United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities Leadership Center for Social Justice
- Robbinsdale Parkway United Church of Christ
- First Universalist Church of Minneapolis
- First Congregational Church of Minnesota, UCC
- First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-Minneapolis
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church Mankato
- The Costume Collective
- Queermunity Collaborative
- Matt Lewellyn-Otten

Rev. Rebecca Voelkel offers this reflection on the Queer Prom: "We want to share a HUGE thank you to EVERYONE who helped with the Queer Prom. We had 75 folx at SpringHouse for an amazing evening. It was, indeed, very intergenerational with toddlers and elders in their seventies and eighties and everyone in between. We had one person who just turned seventy who thought they were an ally all their lives but recently came out as non-binary. This was their first event as a member of the community and they were beaming! The drag performers from Iowa Drag Brunch stayed, as did the DJ and her wife who operated the photo booth. Each shared the power of being in a church that welcomed their wholeness and celebrated their humanity. We also had a young trans person who was just newly out in her tween years and she danced the night away with her beaming mom. Lyndale beloveds, this is sacred ministry and we can be so deeply grateful that God has given it to us to embody. Thanks be to God!"

6. Theological and Biblical-Rooting

All that the Center for Sustainable Justice does is rooted in and committed to theological and biblical reflection. In blogs, worship, sermons, through social media and implicitly and explicitly through each of its programs, The Center for Sustainable Justice seeks to draw from and craft liberatory and honest theology and Biblical interpretation. Many of these sermons can be found on the Lyndale UCC website (<http://www.lyndaleucc.org/>) or the Center for Sustainable Justice's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SustainJustice/>

Additionally, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel teaches in the Social Transformation Program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and is working at sharing resources and models learned in the field and working at the Center for Sustainable Justice with social transformation-focused seminarians.

Allison Connelly-Vetter, Faith Organizer from January-September 2023, is active in the field of disability theology. She co-convenes with Bekah Maren Anderson the Disability Theology Discussion Group, a spiritual reflection and community building space for and by disabled, Mad, chronically ill, mentally ill, immunocompromised, neurodivergent, folks and others impacted by ableism. Allison is also co-chair of the United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries Board and regularly offers presentations and workshops on disability theology for congregations across the country.

across RACE Leadership Conversations

Across Race: Leadership Conversations

In 2023, the Center for Sustainable Justice also published *Across Race* as part of its work at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and racial justice work. Responding to the ask for a research-based resource to guide conversations between pastors of color and white-founded congregations, *Across Race: Leadership Conversations* covers ten topics identified by pastors in a nationwide cross-case study. A white, trans author and a Black colleague ground and explore Christian essentials and opportunities in a process designed for lay and clergy partnership

over the course of a year. Written by Rev. Dr. Malcolm Himschoot and Rev. Dr. Renée C. Jackson. This research and publication was made possible by relationships across the United Church of Christ, the Methodist Theological School of Ohio, and the Center for Sustainable Justice.

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 (when applicable) help plan, support and facilitate the Social Justice Forum. It is in this context that all five teams have developed and done their work. Please find more information about the work of these teams in the Lyndale UCC 2023 Annual Report. One important item to share is our excitement around our 2023 Reparations payment of \$5,500 to the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute Urban Farm. For more information see www.epnifarm.org

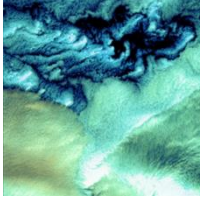
Fiscal Agency partners

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.

Lastly, we are the fiscal agent for Mist Ranges, an environmental justice organization in Uganda.

A HUGE Thank-You to our Funders



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Neighbors in Need Grant and additional funding



Without the support of these 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.



Allison Connelly-Vetter (she/her) was the Faith Organizer with the Center for Sustainable Justice from January-September 2023. Her work focused 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 Allison lives with her spouse, Brooklyn, in Minneapolis.



Rev. Dana Neuhauser (she/her) served as Sacred Reckonings Organizing and Training Consultant from September-December 2023. Rev. Dana Neuhauser (she/her) is an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church. She has a heart for racial, LGBTQIA+, and environmental justice and seeks to invite and equip others to work for justice in the world as part of faithful living. She is a trainer and consultant for Sacred Reckonings and Minister of Public Witness for New City Church in Minneapolis, MN. Dana serves on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Council of Churches, the Board of Directors of Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light and the Steering Team of MARCH (Multifaith Anti-Racism Change and Healing) Coalition.



Jessica Hermann de la Fuente (she/ella) served as Sacred Reckonings Training Consultant from September-December 2023. She is a coach, trainer and facilitator for liberation, transformation and justice, and is currently completing her path toward ordination in Unitarian Universalism. In addition to this entrepreneurial work, Julica is also enjoying her position as Special Advisor for Justice and Equity at the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.



Jessica Intermill, Esq. (she/her) served as Organizing Consultant from September-December 2023. Jessica is a systems builder with a policy heart. She brings 15 years of experience as a treaty-rights and tribal-law attorney to her work in building inclusive pathways that serve all our neighbors. In her efforts around legal structures and processes, she often asks "does it work?" "who does it work for?" and "how can we make it work better for everyone?"

As a Strategic Policy Consultant at Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, she now organizes faith and spiritual communities to advocate for people-centered policy at the intersection of racial, environmental, and climate justice.

Jessica grew up in Kansas and Nebraska, where she learned her core values of *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah* in communities that did little to welcome Jewish children. She has drawn on this foundation to build a **land-history consulting firm**, co-facilitate a four-month reparations curriculum for communities of faith with **MARCH**, create an Indian Law moot court at South High School, and serve on the Gateway to Legal Education Advisory Board at Mitchell Hamline School of Law and Minnesota's Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Decision Process Advisory Task Force



Liz Loeb, Esq. (she/her) supervised and offered support to CSJ staff from September-December 2023. Liz Loeb (she/her) is a civil rights attorney, community organizer, and non-profit director who brings 25 years of high-level experience leading organizations in movements for social change. As a white, queer, Jewish woman, Liz knows that who we are shapes the work that we do. Liz believes in our shared interdependence, and seeks to address challenging issues with humor, compassion, and courage.

Liz currently serves as the Associate Director of Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light – an organization that works nationally and statewide at the intersection of climate justice and racial justice. She also works as a consultant with organizational clients committed to improving equity-based outcomes. Liz has previously served as Co-Director of Kaleo Center for Faith, Justice & Social Transformation, as the Director of Strategic Campaigns for Neighborhoods Organizing for Change, and as the Democracy Campaign Director at TakeAction Minnesota, where she successfully led the statewide campaign to defeat a voter restriction ballot initiative in Minnesota. She has served on multiple local and national Boards of Directors, and completed two terms as a Civil Rights Commissioner for the City of Minneapolis.

Liz is a 500-hour registered yoga teacher, a former actor and classical musician, and a lover of musical theater. She lives on Dakota land in Northeast Minneapolis with her partner Sarah and their toddler Lyra.



Reverend Joann Conroy served as an Intentional Interim Pastor for Congregational Life at Lyndale United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, MN from September 2022-December 2023. 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.

