A Letter from the Co-Presidents

July 8, 2019

Justice Matters seeks to turn big, bold ideas into concrete actions that advance the march of justice. As your Co-President for the last 18 months, I believe there are four elements that we must bring into focus as an organization at this time:

- **Faithful Resilience:** Offering opportunities for people to engage in community when it’s easier to give into cynicism and consumption. Listening for common ground while it’s often easier to divide. Staying focused on the common good while the influence of narrow interests or ‘this-is-how-its-always-been-doneism’ abounds. Justice work is tough. But whatever the challenge, we find resilience and eternal hope in a God who loves justice.

- **Strength in Numbers:** History proves that justice comes when people organize in large numbers to lift up the cries from below. But when it comes to formal justice networks built on relationships, we tend to wait for someone else to do the work. We must realize that you and I are the people we are waiting for.

- **People Must Lead:** Justice asserts that democracy should never rest. When everyday citizens like us listen to one another, determine our shared priorities, identify the solutions we would like see, and expect to be heard as well as to listen, we make democracy work.

- **Sustainability & Ownership:** Justice work requires staff coordination which requires sustainable funding. But more importantly, the more we own this work, the more skin we have in the game.

This is my wish-list for our organization. Enclosed you will see the things God is doing through us in this community: A whole new system of mental health care; homes for people fleeing abusers and people recovering from mental illness and working families who have been priced out of home ownership; a focus on criminal justice reform; more equity in our public schools.

You wouldn’t be reading this if you or your congregation didn’t lean into the work that has yielded our shared success. I am proud and grateful to work alongside you.

With gratitude for what’s taken place and longing for a future with justice and compassion for all.

Peace,

Rose Schmidt & Rev. Randy Weinkauf
Co-Presidents, Justice Matters
ROI: Return on Impact Investing.

Justice Matters' track record should inspire great confidence for anyone with an interest of investing for impact on the common good in the Lawrence, Kansas area.

$100 invested in Justice Matters between 2015 - 2018 has leveraged:

- $380.87 in housing for women fleeing domestic violence, working families, people recovering from mental health crisis, and more. In total, the community will have collectively invested $2,837,500 in permanent affordable housing by 2020. Plus, $1-1.2 million/year will be invested in affordable housing up to 2028.

- $657.72 in mental health care including the construction of a state-of-the-art Mental Health Campus with new drug treatment programs, diversions away from jail, transitional housing, and a community response team. We will collectively invest $4.9 million/year for a whole new system of care beginning in 2020.

- $530.20 in tax savings by leading the effort to reject a sales tax that would have increased taxes by $3,950,000/year to double the size of the jail beginning in October 2018. By stopping this measure, we also prevented a lesser known property tax increase of $5,100,000/year planned for 2021 to cover jail operations.
You can reach us at:

ajustlawrence@gmail.com

www.justicemattersinkansas.org

(785) 218-0941
Ben MacConnell, Lead Organizer
Anna Long, Associate Organizer

Mailing Address: PO Box 442221, Lawrence, KS 66044
Physical Address: 2104 Bob Billings Parkway

THANK YOU.
Justice vs. Charity: a story.

Once upon a time, there was a small village on the edge of a river. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. She couldn't believe her eyes! She looked around at the other villagers working nearby. “Does anyone else see that baby?” she asked.

“Oh, this is terrible,” a woman who had been building a campfire shouted. “Look, there are even more upstream!” Indeed, there were three more babies coming around the bend, and they kept coming.

The villagers organized to rescue the babies. Watchtowers were built on both sides of the shore and swimmers were coordinated to maintain shifts of rescue teams that maintained 24-hour surveillance of the river. Ziplines with baskets attached were stretched across the river to get even more babies to safety quickly.

The number of babies floating down the river only seemed to increase. The villagers built orphanages to keep the babies housed, warm and fed. Then one day at a meeting of the Village Council, a villager asked, “But where are all these babies coming from?”

“No one knows,” said another villager. “But I say we organize a team to go upstream and find out.” “It is too risky. Besides who will continue to rescue the babies?” asked the village elders...

Justice Matters is a vehicle for people to "go upstream" and address the systems of injustice we see in the Lawrence/Douglas County region—in spite of the risks that come with citizen-led leadership.

Our membership.

First Presbyterian Church  Peace Mennonite Church
First United Methodist Church  Plymouth Congregational Church
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  St John Catholic Church
Haskell Catholic Campus Center  St Luke AME Church
Immanuel Lutheran Church  St Margaret Episcopal Church
Lawrence Islamic Center  Trinity Lutheran Church
Morning Star Church  Velocity Church
Ninth Street Missionary Baptist Church  Victory Bible Church
Oread Friends Meeting

Our leadership.

Rose Schmidt, First UMC, Co-President
Rev. Randy Weinkauf, Immanuel Lutheran, Co-President
Rev. Eric Galbreath, Ninth Street MBC, Vice-Co-President
Brent Hoffman, Morning Star, Vice-Co-President
Pat Lechtenberg, St John Catholic, Treasurer
Aileen Ball, First UMC, Recording Secretary
Ann Spangler, First UMC, Corresponding Secretary
Barbara Palmer, At-Large Executive Committee Member

Our future.

Justice Matters will be conducting a thorough Strategic Planning process involving clergy, board members, and key research committee members in August 2019. We will determine immediate next steps as well as define a long-term plan to grow the organization. In the short term, it appears as the we will identify a new area of interest through our house meeting process in the fall.

Adding new areas of interest built around our values for justice is only possible through the tremendous impact we have had on affordable housing and mental health. Plus, in the area of Restorative Practices in Schools: all Lawrence Public Elementary Schools will be using restorative circles next year. Lawrence Memorial Central Middle School will have all staff trained in Restorative Practices in August and Billy Mills Middle School will be trained in November.
How the Common Good is Done: A Four Step Process

Listen.

Every year, trained leaders from Justice Matters organize small group discussions to understand the shared concerns people have for the city we love.

Vote.

Once concerns are cataloged, leaders gather to democratically select priorities. To date, Justice Matters has effectively addressed: affordable housing, mental health, jail alternatives, childhood trauma, and public education improvements.

Research.

Justice Matters places a premium on engaging people to define the problem and solutions they want to see in the community. Hundreds of people participate in research activities each year.

Action.

Justice Matters has gathered the largest recorded number of people in Lawrence in each of its five years to call for improvements to the common good of the city.
Affordable Housing in Lawrence

Top left: Justice Matters’ first Action brought life to the City of Lawrence’s dormant Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Top right: With $100,000 from the Trust Fund, Tenants to Homeowners, Habitat for Humanity, and the Willow Domestic Violence Shelter leveraged approximately $400,000 in other funds to build three permanently affordable family homes in East Lawrence. Lower: One permanently affordable home provided an avenue for this formerly homeless working family to build equity toward ownership.

After proving that a funded Affordable Housing Trust Fund is an important, high impact investment, Justice Matters continued to focus attention on affordable housing for several years, leading the campaign to repurpose an existing revenue source that will put $10-12 million into permanently affordable housing between 2019-2028. This work has already led to supportive, transitional housing for people in recovery after a mental health crisis and domestic violence survivors.
In 2015, Justice Matters led a delegation of civic leaders from Douglas County to witness first-hand a local mental health system in San Antonio that focuses on treatment over incarceration and expensive emergency room visits.

With persistent citizen engagement over the course of four years, Justice Matters separated mental health from a proposed jail expansion. We then hired the attorney that found a way to exclusively fund a new behavioral health system in Douglas County. The funding proposal passed with over 70% voter approval in the November 2018 election.

Above: The Douglas County Behavioral Health Campus will open in 2021 along the river on 2nd Street, north of the Bert Nash offices. It is expected to be one of the best models for local behavioral health care in the state of Kansas. The facility will provide the citizens of Douglas County a local entry point for treatment including detox and crisis recovery. Trained police officers will be expected to take people in crisis who may have otherwise wound up in jail. People can also walk in or be taken by loved ones who may have otherwise faced long transfer waits at the Lawrence Memorial Hospital’s Emergency Department. The campus also features transitional and permanent supportive housing to assist people in long-term recovery. Major funding for transitional housing on the campus was made possible through the previously-mentioned Affordable Housing Trust Fund.