

Religious Leaders Caucus  
May 19, 2021

**MINUTES**

**Attending:** Rev Julius Jackson, Rev. William Wilkinson, Rabbi Peter Stein, Rev Marilyn Cunningham, Rev John McNeil, Rev Conley Zommerman, Jonathan Nwagbaracha, Barry Swan, Peter Veith, Deacon Duncan Harris, Deacon David Palma, Pastor Debbie Rosenfeld, Rev Ed Palumbos, Rev Matthew Nickoloff, Rabbi Drorah Setel, Robert Layer, Dr Gayle Harrison, Karen Costello, Asim Johnson, Carlos Santana, Jon Horne, Roberta Davis, Shirley Bond and Dr Deni Mack

**Each of us gave name, congregation, leadership role & briefly re imagined public safety/policing in 10 years:**

- Public safety will be addressed by peacemaking teams, conflict transformation teams and non-violent physical intervention teams.
- All police will have mandatory anti racial training and de-escalation and cultural and trauma informed response training.
- Mental health teams will be called for mental health calls.
- Police or mental health professionals will go on calls per 911 dispatcher and police will call in mental health teams whenever an incident becomes a mental health issue or when a child is at the scene.
- Police will be non-militaristic; they will be socially empowering for the common good.
- Police will be trained to interact in a variety of situations.
- Police will live in the area they're policing so they know the people & they'll be invested in quality schools and food access.
- In San Francisco mental health teams go on public safety calls. They are embedded in Fire Departments because of the Fire Departments' high trust level.

**PAB:** Rev. Matthew Nickoloff and Rabbi Drorah Setel spoke of PAB priorities:

1. hearing and investigating complaints, ensuring ethical evidence & undistorted testimonies in order to give transparent recommendations to mayor and city council ensuring appropriate discipline.
2. legislation requires PAB examine systems, policies, procedures, and culture of RPD and change what needs changing.
3. Rebuilding trust in the community by communicating the ways people can file complaints. PAB will be accessible and coordinate communications and respect the dignity of people, make lasting transformations of systems of racism and decades of malpractice that have created a lack of trust. PAB will give voice to people. Budgets are moral documents and PAB needs the \$5 million Mayor Warren is proposing for the PAB to be allocated appropriately for true accountability and lasting reform. 7 of the 9 PAB members are people of color. They will make themselves available at La Marketa

and the public market and forums and town meetings in order to hear the voice of the people. Our caucus engaged PAB in lively conversation.

**Police Reform:** Dr. Gayle Harrison and other members of RocACTS met with Chief Herriott Sullivan to discuss 6 suggestions. See RocACTS Suggestions for Safety and Community Relationships attachment to May 19 2021 caucus agenda or ask [deni.mack412@gmail.com](mailto:deni.mack412@gmail.com) to resend.

**Summit 5 invitation from UCLM.** Carlos Santana encouraged attending May 20 and 21 from 10 to 3 pm via zoom featuring various perspectives on policing. See May 19 email from Deni Mack with program and registration info.

**RocACTS Poverty Jobs Housing Task Force.** Asim Johnson reported on our fight for living wages making a difference at Strong, Rochester Regional Health and more. And Asim reported on GM threatening lay-offs of hundreds of workers. *On May 20 Asim sent Deni Mack a letter in support of workers for us all to sign and have signed by our congregants by June 3. Deni forwarded it immediately to religious leaders.*

**Silent vigil with Elders every Saturday schedule** was emailed to all on May 20. For info contact Sr. Barbara Staropoli 585 794 9061 [bstaropolissi@gmail.com](mailto:bstaropolissi@gmail.com) or Barry Swan [barry.a.swan@gmail.com](mailto:barry.a.swan@gmail.com)

**Please recommend edits/rewrites/additions to the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of RocACTS Religious Leader's caucus vision:**

**Who we are:** We are multi racial, multi faith religious leaders committed to building the Beloved Community by developing a culture of compassion. While active in our own congregations we build justice partnerships across the greater Rochester area. Many of us have found we are more effective when we listen to people closest to the pain of injustice. We discern with care and are committed to giving voice to the moral guidance behind justice work. We advise RocACTS board and are a key element of the Leadership Assembly which is the decision-making body for RocACTS.

**What is our current status:** Currently about 20 religious leaders who are serious about collaboration meet on the third Wednesday of each month at noon to reflect together on moral issues confronting our locale. Often about ten others attend who work with RocACTS Education, Poverty, Jobs, Housing, and Justice Systems Task Forces. In the last six months we've met with Rev. Myra Brown re. Police Reform, Dr. Melanie Funchess on community mental health, Mayor Bill Johnson, Dr. Muhammad Shafiq, and Dr. Cephas Archie on RASE recommendations, several medical and racial justice spokespersons and elected officials on

justice issues, Rev Matthew Nickoloff & Rabbi Drorah Setel on PAB and Pastor Wanda Wilson and Frank Staropoli on UCLM recommendations to the mayor for the governor. We've signed position papers written by our own leadership, including Bishop Singh, Faith Leader's Round Table and more.

**Our challenges:** inconsistent attendance due to congregational responsibilities. And so, we urge those who suddenly are not able to attend to send a liaison. Additional challenges are: How can we best call to accountability those charged with implementing RASE recommendations? Since the RASE recommendations were promulgated March 18, we want to encourage process reports before the end of June and by September 18, 2021. All religious congregations challenge those responsible for public safety to provide cultural and trauma-informed response and de-escalation training and mental health professionals be consulted on redesign of police procedures to affect public safety. We cannot do the work of justice alone; when we work together, we are more effective. Invite more religious leaders of color and your pastor and your neighbor's pastor to this caucus.

**Our plans for the future:** Be a place where leaders of a rich variety of religious groups gather to address impediments to the Beloved Community. As well as meeting as a large group we also hope to engage one another in conversations and have one on ones with people in our congregations and beyond to nurture a culture of compassion and empower organizing for justice. Due to COVID we have met via zoom and look forward to meeting in person and participating in press conferences and public actions such as non-partisan candidate's nights and more as our caucus recommends and the pandemic permits.

*The above 1<sup>st</sup> draft is offered to you from our caucus planning team: Dr. Muhammad Shafiq. Rabbi Peter Stein, Rev. Dr. William Wilkinson, Dr. Deni Mack Updated 5/29/21*