

Our Vision

MORE Justice is a growing network of faith-based congregations that are culturally, economically, racially, geographically, and religiously diverse – coming together to fulfill our scriptural mandate to “do justice” and make the Central Midlands area a more just place to live for all people.

Member congregations like Our Lady of the Hills work together to empower marginalized people and act powerfully to address serious community-wide problems through direct action.

We seek to transform the systems that cause suffering by holding our local officials accountable for resolving these inequities and injustices. In past years, we have worked on issues such as Gun Violence prevention, Addressing Mental Health, Food Insecurity, and Affordable Housing for Midlands Communities.

What is Justice? How does it differ from Faithfulness or Mercy?

Faithfulness brings us closer to God. Church communities express faithfulness in many ways – worship services, scripture classes, prayer groups, etc.

Mercy helps individuals in need directly. Most Churches provide food and clothing collections, soup kitchens, rent assistance, or hosting refugees. These are examples of using Mercy to help individual people.

Justice, on the other hand, holds our leaders accountable for the fair treatment of all people through their policies and practices. A Justice network allows us to achieve community changes that individually we cannot. We need power to do justice, and our power lies in large numbers of organized people. It is people who put our elected officials into office, and it is that same people power that can hold them accountable to make real change in the Midlands. This is why we need Our Lady of the Hills parishioners to actively participate and provide people power.

General Information

More Justice has more than 25 Midlands Church Members of which Our Lady of the Hills is a partner.

OLH Contact — Marilyn Williams- Leader (727)269-7162

OLH Contact — William Miller (803)920-0179

OLH Contact — Kathleen Herald (803)528-0451

Additional Information can be found on

www.olhcolumbia.org/more-justice



Nuestra Visión

MORE Justice es una red en crecimiento de congregaciones religiosas con diversidad cultural, económica, racial, geográfica y religiosa. Nos unimos para cumplir nuestro mandato bíblico de "hacer justicia" y hacer de la región de

Central Midlands un lugar más justo para todos.

Congregaciones miembros, como Nuestra Señora de las Colinas, trabajan juntas para empoderar a las personas marginadas y actúan con contundencia para abordar graves problemas comunitarios mediante la acción directa.

Buscamos transformar los sistemas que causan sufrimiento, responsabilizando a nuestros funcionarios locales para resolver estas desigualdades e injusticias. En años anteriores, hemos trabajado en temas como la prevención de la violencia armada, la atención a la salud mental, la inseguridad alimentaria y la vivienda asequible para las comunidades de Midlands.

¿Qué es la justicia? ¿En qué se diferencia de la fidelidad o la misericordia?

La fidelidad nos acerca a Dios. Las comunidades eclesiales expresan su fidelidad de diversas maneras: servicios religiosos, clases de las Sagradas Escrituras, grupos de oración, etc.

La misericordia ayuda directamente a las personas necesitadas. La mayoría de las iglesias ofrecen colectas de alimentos y ropa, comedores populares, asistencia para el alquiler o acogida de refugiados. Estos son ejemplos de cómo usar la misericordia para ayudar a las personas.

La justicia, por otro lado, responsabiliza a nuestros líderes del trato justo a todas las personas a través de sus políticas y prácticas. Una red de justicia nos permite lograr cambios comunitarios que individualmente no podríamos. Necesitamos poder para hacer justicia, y nuestro poder reside en un gran número de personas organizadas. Son las personas quienes eligen a nuestros funcionarios, y es ese mismo poder popular el que puede exigirles responsabilidades para generar un cambio real en la región de Midlands. Por eso necesitamos que los feligreses de Nuestra Señora de las Colinas participen activamente y aporten poder popular.

Información general

More Justice tiene más de 25 miembros de las Iglesias de los Midlands, de los cuales Our Lady of the Hills es socio.

Contactos de miembros de OLH a continuación:

Marilyn Williams- Leader (727)269-7162

William Miller (803)920-0179

Kathleen Herald (803)528-0451

Más información en:

www.olhcolumbia.org/es/more-justice

MORE Justice Accomplishments and Actions

Food Justice

Last year, the City of Columbia launched the Mobile Market—a grocery store on wheels. Now, they are serving an average of 300 customers per week in our most food-insecure neighborhoods. We are very happy to share that in December the Council unanimously approved \$143,400 of remaining funds & a donation to secure an additional year of funding for the Mobile Market—extending the program through January 2026. They also sponsored an additional location, expanding from 3 to 4 city-sponsored locations (as well as the 1 other location Tom’s Creek funds separately). Through these additions, we know that the number served can only grow! There are 2 more opportunities to renew this partnership. The next step is securing funding for those renewals, so we can see this program continue in our neighborhoods for a long time.

Local Housing

For over seven years, we have called for Richland County Council to establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) with a dedicated source of funding, a proven solution used in over 750+ other communities. An AHTF would leverage our tax dollars to create, rehabilitate or sustain affordable homes for low or very-low income households ($\leq 50\%$ Area Media Income or AMI). Because of the work already put in, we have every piece of the puzzle.

- In 2019, the Council formed the Affordable Housing Task Force to create a plan for housing.
- In 2020, Council studied Affordable Housing Trust Funds and made a recommendation to move forward and establish one with a dedicated source of funding.
- In 2021, we secured 4 council members to vote “yes” on that recommendation.
- In 2024, the County added Affordable Housing to their annual strategic plan and created an Ad Hoc Committee.

Since then, there have been only short-term conversations: the \$4M of federal relief funds & the 15% Accommodations Tax being dedicated to housing for immediate housing needs, such as rental or down payment assistance. We need a long-term solution, we need an Affordable Housing Trust Fund!

Gun Violence

In our research that we started in 2019, we found 3 commonalities with the most effective gun violence reduction strategies:

1. Partnership between community, social services, and law enforcement
2. Outside experts evaluating the strategy
3. Direct engagement with people most likely to shoot/be shot

In 2022, The City of Columbia created an office dedicated to this problem. The office has a new name—the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement—but their mission has not changed. ONSSE has three pillars:

1. Strategic planning, evaluating and analyzing data;
2. Implementing community-based programs, establishing policy, cataloging resources, and

3. Identifying violence prevention funding sources, in order to provide training, and promote events/effective partnerships.

Now, the priorities of the gun violence committee are to:

1. Ensure that the Office has all of those pieces we identified as commonalities among successful gun violence reduction strategies, and to
2. Continue attending Office events and community events to support the work of gun violence reduction and engage across the community.

State Housing

This past fall, we voted to expand our housing work by adding a new statewide housing committee formed with our sister organizations, GOAL in Greenville and CAJM in Charleston. We began working together to discern commonalities in the housing problems and solutions our communities have already identified. One threat to thousands of families across our state is evictions.

- South Carolina's eviction filing rate is 20%, more than double the national rate of 7.8%.
- Over 126,000 families were threatened with eviction in 2024.
- It costs a landlord only \$40 to file for eviction in the state. The average across the country is \$109, with the highest being up to \$350.
- An eviction is a part of a family's record forever—even if they resolve the issue, win the case or the case is dropped, the filing never goes away.
- In Richland County, more than 1 in 4 rental households face evictions.
- Less than a fifth of renters are black, but over half of all eviction filings are against Black renters.

We know this is wrong, and that's why we have decided to take action. We are proud to support H 4270, a bill that calls for eviction records to be sealed for cases that are either won or dropped, as well as any eviction case older than six years.

Cover SC

At our Community Problems Assembly in the Fall, we voted to have MORE Justice endorse Cover SC—an organization that seeks to expand Medicaid coverage in South Carolina. We joined nearly 100 organizations, including faith-based organizations from across South Carolina in endorsing this effort.

If you would like to learn more or get involved, see your options below.