

Minutes of January 6, 2019 MOSES General Membership Meeting

Messiah Lutheran Church
5202 Cottage Grove Rd. Madison, WI 53716

Next Meeting: 3:30-5:30, Sunday, February 3, 2019, at Bethany United Methodist Church, 3910 Mineral Point Road, Madison, WI

56 people attended, of which 4 were new.

Meeting was conducted by Frank Davis, MOSES Organizer and Eric Howland, MOSES President.

Minutes were recorded by Lucy Gibson, MOSES Assistant Secretary.

Opening prayer and reflection

Joan Duerst offered an opening reflection assisted by Sandra Brown of St. Paul AME Church, and Barbara Benson and Kay Frazier of Unity of Madison. Joan detailed MOSES/WISDOM activities this year. She asked, "What gifts do you bring for our journey this year?" She said she has been reading the book *Settlin'* by Muriel Simms, about early black settlers in Madison. She read from the book: In the early 1900s, "several blacks...organized St. Paul AME Church, the first black church in Madison." Joan lifts up congregations and organizations that partner with churches that have membership identified as a "different race." She said that two congregations – St. Paul AME and Unity – are here to help us pray our song-prayer together. Then Sandra, Barbara and Kay led the membership in singing "Let There be Peace on Earth."

Round-robin introductions

Racial Equity Discussions - Group Conversation

Frank Davis asked some of the people at the meeting why they got involved in MOSES. He then talked about why he got involved with MOSES. He said, a lot of us got involved because we got tired of how the system destroyed people. So many of us inside fought back, refusing the definition the system gave them, and decided to define themselves. He asked James Morgan how this worked for him. James said he saw how boys and men, not just African Americans, were being affected. People were literally losing their minds – losing their souls and connectedness to their humanity. He made a vow when he left prison to do everything he could to bring the system down, to change it, but he did NOT make a vow to hate the people who run it. James said they're human, and have families, too. They, too, are under the system. We all make mistakes and poor decisions, some of which harm people. But there's this thing called redemption; this thing called change....for him, it's personal....he thanks the individuals who began MOSES, and all who are part of it now....the voice of this organization reaches places even people in this room aren't aware of....Ann Lacy recently gave him a letter from someone in prison addressed to MOSES. He wishes MOSES continued blessings, wisdom, and insight.

Roy Schenck said we speak about the criminal justice system but when we call it a "justice system" we've lost the battle already. He said we need to start referring to it as the "injustice system."

Frank said a lot of us got involved because we knew people inside the system, but as we got in to try to help change the system, all of a sudden they transformed it and now we have to address Mass Supervision as well as Mass Incarceration. This led into the next agenda item.

Mass Supervision - Introduction to new WISDOM campaign

Frank said there's a study by Columbia University: *Mass Supervision in Wisconsin*. When this is released, on January 23, MOSES/WISDOM will do an action at the State Capitol. The action will be at 10 am on January 23 in room 411 South. The study is put out by Columbia University Justice Labs, and people from there will be present. One thing it shows is that the number of people who are revoked for crimeless revocation is substantially higher in Wisconsin than in the rest of the country.

Frank showed a [Power Point](#) with the following information:

- Truth in Sentencing was passed in 1998. The 1990 yearly budget of the Department of Corrections (DOC) was \$175 million. Our current DOC budget is just under \$2 billion. Between 1990 and 2012, DOC's budget increased by 620%, compared to only a 149% increase in funding for UW.
- "Many of the current reform efforts contain the seeds of the next generation of racial and social control, a system of 'e-carceration' that may prove more dangerous and more difficult to challenge than the one we hope to leave behind." -Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

Frank talked about the stress level to people under "e-carceration." We now have about 67,000 people on electronic supervision in Wisconsin. Some of the issues with this approach include:

- Electronic monitoring is not reliable, leading to additional incarceration, destabilizing families.
- There are many fees under supervision.
- Electronic monitoring is billed to the supervised person, by as much as \$300/month
- There are supervision fees and DNA testing fees.
- You can be on supervision for life, under certain rules.
- Wisconsin supervises people at 1.5 x the national average. We're 7th worst in the nation in e-carceration.

David Liners, Director of WISDOM, continued the presentation. He answered a question about why mass supervision is done if it costs the state money. David says it's cheaper for the State than mass incarceration, but it's terribly expensive for the people on supervision. E.g., Aaron Hicks, a former prisoner, has to pay \$300/month for the GPS monitoring bracelet he wears. These are done by private companies. So we need to be very careful to *not* to lean too hard on the economic argument.

David said Minnesota has way more people on supervision than we do, but they don't lock up their people who are on supervision. But in the idea of democracy and liberty, this isn't a good position to put people in. Wisconsin prisons and jails are way over capacity right now. In a sense that's an opportunity. One thing that could happen is old-law parole eligible people could be paroled. But the second lowest-hanging fruit for the state is revocations. Right now we have about 4,500 people in prison for crimeless revocation. They either broke a rule, or were accused

of a crime they were never convicted of. There's no bailing out on that. It's legally 21 days or less you can be kept in jail; in reality, it averages 90 days, and this disproportionately affects black people. Also, this is a weapon someone who is mad at you can use – if someone just accuses you of something, you can be put in jail, and probably will be. In the Dane County jail right now, there are some 400 on revocation holds.

In the Federal system, if you're being investigated for breaking a rule or for being accused of a crime, you get a phone call and they tell you they're investigating you, and then ask if you have anything to say about the charge. When they're done with the investigation, they may imprison you if they find you did something wrong, but not before the investigation. The only place in Wisconsin you don't go to the county jail is if you're on a revocation hold in Milwaukee, where you'd be put in the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF). It was built only for revocation holds. It has no air conditioning, and goes above 100 degrees in the summer. One person dies in there every year, on average. It has gotten very little attention until WISDOM started working on it. Milwaukee County supervisors who work across the street from it weren't aware of it.

Question: what can we learn from other states? David: Tom Gilbert put together a little chart which we should put on the website, of states that have reduced their prison population, and the main thing they've done is reduce their revocation rates. They concurrently got the biggest drop in violent crime in the country. David said the improvements are in places like Texas and South Carolina and Michigan and Mississippi and Louisiana, not liberal bastions.

David said most of these practices, with the exception of the unprincipled Wisconsin law, which circumvents due process, that you HAVE TO incarcerate somebody when there's an accusation of a crime, can be changed by rule changes. Every other decision is a discretionary decision made within the DOC. There's no law that says we have to incarcerate anybody for the crimeless breaking of a parole rule.

The legislature without the Governor can't appropriate money to build a new prison. There's a lot that can be done, but it needs public support. It's hard to change the culture of the DOC. There's been a big change of parole officers in 20-30 years. Most used to be social workers; now most are law enforcement officers.

David said that Gamaliel (the nation-wide organization of which WISDOM and MOSES are part) has decided to take on mass supervision. Tied into this is voting rights. People on supervision and people in prison can't vote. Florida just restored voting rights to everyone on supervision.

Question: is WISDOM involved with DOC?

David: Yes, and there are a lot of people in the DOC who get this although a lot who don't. This week there'll be a lot of new people at the top of the DOC. WISDOM's David Liners and Sarah Ferber are on the Governor's task force on criminal justice reform, and other good people are on it. The issue of revocations is something others are talking about, too.

Kevin Carr is the new Secretary of the DOC. He was 2nd in command under Sheriff Clark, and the reputation was that the department ran OK as long as Kevin was there. Sheriff Clark ran off and did his speeches and stuff. But when Kevin moved over to be a US Marshall, that's when the Milwaukee County Police ran off the rails.

Eric Howland said that part of the lame duck session made a law that the new acting cabinet members can't start acting until they're confirmed by the Senate.

David said that we really need to keep encouraging Governor Evers to do the right thing, and then support him when he does.

Barbie Jackson said there are so many people who want to know what we can encourage our congregations to do. As a first step, everybody can encourage people to get out to the meeting on the 23rd. David said WISDOM is also doing the same event that night in Milwaukee and Eau Claire, and the next night in Green Bay, so we're not bringing people down from those areas for the meeting here on the 23rd.

David said the faith communities' statement will come out soon. There will also be budget hearings in between, and there's a chance for people to go to those.

Jeannie Verschay asked, Could you talk about administrative actions that are possible? David said, for example, that the new Secretary of the DOC can just say, we won't send people back to jail for crimeless revocations.

Patti LaCross suggested that we can take some of the salient facts from this meeting and get them into our congregation bulletins for the next two weeks. Eric encourages us to read this [New York Times article](#) for additional discussion of this topic and some good quotes that maybe used for church bulletins.

Upcoming projects:

WISDOM outreach to Governor Evers transition team

Eric read in the newspaper that the panel David is on is advisory, and will continue beyond the transition period.

Task Force Reports

Justice System Reform Initiative: Paul Saeman reported that we've been waiting for a mental health study that was supposed to be done much earlier. Mary Graebel at the County has made a selection and it has to go through the County Exec's office. The monthly meeting is this Thursday, 6:30-8:00 at the Madison Police Station Southern District, 825 Hughes Place, Madison.

Ralph Jackson, who is a MOSES representative on the citizens' group advising the replacement jail, said the group has met informally twice. They are no longer going to build on top of the Public Safety Building, but alongside it. They'll have 2-story cell blocks, south-facing, so there is opportunity to have a lot of natural light. Their next meeting will be in February or March.

Tina Hogle announced that Resolution 420 of Dane County will be voted on January 22nd at the PP and J (Public Protection and Justice Committee) meeting. The meeting is 5:00pm in the City-County Building, room tba, but on the third floor. The more people who support the resolution, the more likely it will pass. The resolution urges an allocation of space for personal support groups to meet, in order to meet psychological, social and emotional needs. It could be used for tutoring, religious gatherings, mutual support groups, parenting groups, etc. Space should be designed and decorated to be inclusive. The Dane County Board recognizes the right of people to have access to such services.

WISDOM Task Force Updates

- Old Law: Sister Fran Hoffman reported there was a meeting in Milwaukee on Nov. 26 with Barron and Beverly Walker. Efforts of the Old Law advocacy group helped to get Barron Walker released. Eric said the outcome of his case applies to other cases as well.
- Solitary: Talib Akbar reported we have some scheduled events for the solitary confinement truck project. We're scheduled to meet a couple days in February with the performance of Talib's play *Like an Animal in a Cage*. One is at Sister Brown's St. Paul AME Church and one is in Appleton. Talib said we do need support for the truck project, and we need places to go display it. Talib is incurring debts himself and could use contributions for running the truck. We need help contacting all the schools throughout the state to try to get venues for the truck (and for the play). Talib also indicated he is in communication with someone who is in contact with a lot of incarcerated people. She's looking for people to be pen pals with prisoners. Please contact [Talib](#) if you would like to be a penpal.
- Prison Prevention: (no report)
- Post Release: (no report)

Announcements:

- WISDOM Racial Equity Statement
Barbie Jackson explained that we agreed to do regular racial justice circles at our meetings last May. At the same time, Rachel Morgan, Frank Davis, Jerome Dillard and she have been participating with WISDOM on the WISDOM Racial Equity Statement, to guide all the affiliates under the leadership of a Pastor Marilyn Miller from MICAH. The statement will be presented in the same way when they meet with the WISDOM leadership in the middle of January. Several people then read from each section of the statement after which the members applauded the statement.
- Grace Episcopal will have an offering January-April: Lynn McDonald, retired UW Sociology Professor, has arranged for one of her colleagues to present 4 programs. The first is on Jan 20, 11:30-2:00, "When the Diagnosis is Racism." The next are "Signs and Symptoms," "Causes and Conditions," and "How to Reverse Racism."
- Religious Leaders Conference Call: David announced there will be a conference call for religious leaders to work on a statement about mass supervision by faith communities, to take back to our religious communities, as a measure for getting people involved for the January 23 gathering. The conference call is on January 10th @ 11 am. For more information about how to participate, contact [Joan Duerst](#).

- Racial Inequality and the Criminal Justice System: There will be a program, Saturday, February 9, 2019, 9:30 am-1:00 pm @ Lake Edge Lutheran Church, organized by St. Paul AME Church and Unity of Madison.

January	February
<p><u>Mass Incarceration Action</u> January 23 @10 AM State Capitol Building After presentation, Campaign planning at Grace Episcopal Church at W Washington and the Square</p> <p><u>MOSES Leadership Board Meeting</u> January 31 @4:00 PM - 6:00 PM, 1 St. Paul AME Church, 4525 Diamond Drive, Madison, WI 53714</p>	<p><u>MOSES General Meeting</u> February 3 @3 PM Networking, 3:30 PM program location Bethany United Methodist, 3910 Mineral Pt. Rd.</p>

WISDOM conference calls 605-468-8012

- Solitary: Jan. 8 4:00 PM (2nd Tuesday) Use code 423950
- Prison Prevention: Jan. 8 5:00 PM (2nd Tuesday) Use code 423950
- Old Law: Jan. 12 8:30 AM (2nd Saturday) Use code 423950
- Post Release: Jan. 24 7:30 PM (4th Thursday) Use Code 423951

One Word Evaluation (round robin)

ROC Wisconsin Prayer