

# JUSTICE FROM THE HEART

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
OF SACRED HEART PARISH

## FATHER DAVE'S MESSAGE

I just reread last quarter's inaugural edition of this "Justice From The Heart" newsletter. I remain incredibly grateful for Nancy Hemesath's visit to my office in 2017! She waited a little over a year until I had a chance to settle in and get my feet under me here at Sacred Heart. (Well, sort of... I'm not sure my feet are that solidly under me yet today!)

She also presented her request in such a fashion that it was basically impossible for me to refuse. I remember her saying: "We have witnessed the horrible situations in places like Ferguson, MO and Charlottesville, VA. Are we going to wait until something hits closer to home, or do you think we should be proactive?"

Our conversation proved to be prophetic. Thanks to that conversation, and many others involving parishioners who have been doing good work in the area of Social Justice for years, we were able to respond in a positive manner when the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police Officers once again reminded our country of the need for social change.

We were able to gather with our brothers and sisters from St. Benedict the Moor to pray for peace and to plea to end racist behavior. We had already begun to create honest and caring relationships.

I am so inspired by the efforts of our parish community.

FATHER DAVE KORTH  
SACRED HEART CHURCH

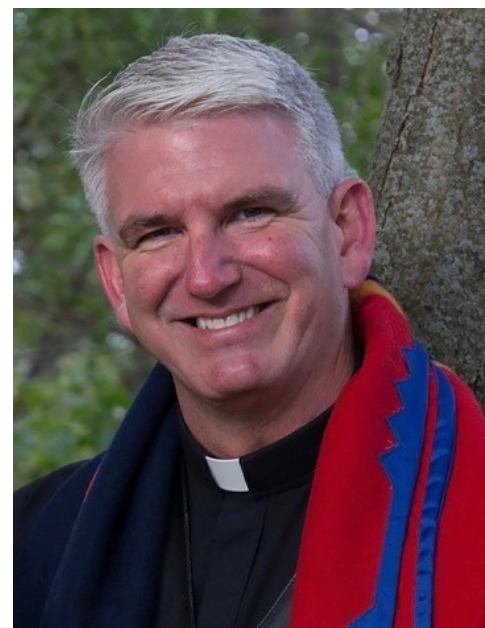
We chose the three priority areas of immigration, the environment, and our neighborhood in our planning session in September 2019.

Today, I am amazed at all that we have accomplished already within these three areas. This second edition of our quarterly newsletter will highlight what our Social Justice Committee teams have been up to recently and invite you to join with us.

Above and beyond these three Social Justice Teams, our entire parish has been investing in going deeper in ways to live the gospel of justice.

Our Advent and Lenten faith sharing groups studied Pope Francis' encyclicals on the environment (*Laudato Si*), social friendship (*Fratelli Tutti*), and on the USCCB's document on racism (*Open Wide Your Hearts*).

We have also read other writers in the field of social justice including Fr. Richard Rohr's "The Universal Christ" and Arthur Brooks' "Love Your Enemies."



Our liturgies continually encourage people through homilies and reflection questions to see how Jesus is repeatedly calling us to conversion of heart and to go out to build the Kingdom of God in our midst.

I am so inspired by the efforts of our parish community. As you read through this edition of "Justice From The Heart", I invite you to be open to how God might be stirring you to get involved with one of our Teams and join the wonderful work for justice being done by our parishioners as they strive to live Micah 6:8... "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Blessings, Fr. Dave

# NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

**Purpose statement of the Sacred Heart Neighborhood Alliance Team:** To develop a presence in and connections to the Sacred Heart neighborhood and North Omaha.

Two dozen parishioners from Sacred Heart and St. Benedict the Moor gathered on April 24th at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Cornerstone Memorial on the corner of 24th and Lake to take part in a service “for healing in our neighborhood and just treatment for all.”

Bundled for a chilly spring evening, the gathered crowd listened as Joyce Goodwin of St. Benedict’s read an excerpt from Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” and Nancy Hemesath of Sacred Heart read from Pope Francis’ “Fratelli Tutti.”

The service also included prayers for peace and a reading of the names of victims of violence in North Omaha, followed by quiet reflection accompanied by Fr. Dave on his Native American flute.

**Neighborhood Spotlight:**  
**Global Leadership Group**

The Global Leadership Group is one of the many organizations that the Neighborhood Alliance Team has had the opportunity to connect with and support over the past two years. Founded in 2015 by Dan and LaVonya Goodwin “to restore North 24th Street to a place where strong families live, vibrant businesses thrive, and beautiful neighborhoods grow,” the Global Leadership Group’s efforts include a monthly neighborhood cleanup, youth workshops, and a community garden.

**Global Leadership Group neighborhood cleanup:** Last Saturday of each month, 9:00–11:00. Meet at community garden (next to Goodwin’s Spencer Street Barbershop) 3118 N. 24th St.

**24th Street Business Improvement District**

The Goodwin’s have also led the development of the 24th Street Business Improvement District (BID).

Following the model of business improvement districts in other parts of Omaha like Benson and Blackstone, the 24th St. BID is designed to bring jobs and housing to the North 24th Street corridor and connect to the growth that is happening throughout the rest of the city.

As part of that effort, the BID has been working to develop a 24th Street Landscape Master Plan. Sacred Heart Neighborhood Alliance Team members have attended meetings to provide input and support for the plan. Sacred Heart Parish is a member of the 24th Street Business Improvement District.

**For more information:**

- \***Global Leadership Group:** [globalleadershipgroupomaha.org](http://globalleadershipgroupomaha.org)
- \***24th Street Business Improvement District:** [north24thstreetbid.com](http://north24thstreetbid.com)
- \***24th Street Master Landscape Plan:** [confluence.mysocialpinpoint.com/north24](http://confluence.mysocialpinpoint.com/north24)

PRAYING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS



Parishioners from Sacred Heart and St. Benedict the Moor gather at 24th and Lake.

## HOW TO HELP

**Interested in assisting the Neighborhood Alliance Team?**

Join us in supporting these important North Omaha organizations:

**Omaha Star newspaper:** [theomahastar.com](http://theomahastar.com)  
\$50 yearly subscription/24 issues

**Great Plains Black History Museum:** [gpblackhistorymuseum.org](http://gpblackhistorymuseum.org)  
\$20 individual membership  
\$40 family membership

# IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE TEAM

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

*Though immigration and refugee topics are often politicized, immigrants and refugees are more than classifications, they are real people – brothers and sisters whom we are called to care for and love like our families and ourselves. The Immigration and Refugee Team was born of our desire to welcome, with respect and solidarity, the “foreigners” residing among us.*

## BY GENE SUMMERLIN

The Immigrant Allies Network, made up of members from Sacred Heart, the Immigrant Legal Center, Mothers & Others, OTOC, Sisters of Mercy, First United and Grace United Methodist Churches, ACLU Nebraska and many others, recently held a Zoom meeting to begin planning for post-pandemic activities.

With the change in administrations, there are still uncertainties regarding border issues and immigration policy. On April 26, we held a Zoom meeting with Professor David Weber from the Creighton University School of Law who provided an overview of President Biden’s proposal for comprehensive immigration reform; House and Senate bills addressing DACA and TPS; and House and Senate bills focused on agricultural workers (the Farm Workforce Modernization Act). All of these will likely be hot political topics in the coming year and provide many opportunities to get



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involved in advocacy and education with our elected representatives and community.

Locally, Immigrant Allies members have been involved in support of LB241, which provides additional health and safety protections to Nebraska’s meat and packing plant workers. Efforts in support of LB241 included a number of rallies in Lincoln and several meetings with state lawmakers to discuss the needs for state legislation protecting packing plant workers.

If you are interested in immigration issues and want to stay up to date on upcoming events, please join the “Immigrant Allies Network – Nebraska” on Facebook. The group was created for immigrant allies across the state of Nebraska and serves as a meeting place for organizations to promote upcoming events, ask for community support, and raise awareness of important issues and causes. If you need assistance joining the group, just let me know.

Contact:  
gene.summerlin@huschblackwell.com.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

**Mothers and Others: Justice and Mercy for Immigrants** is a group that advocates with and for immigrants, is a public voice on immigrant issues and educates and takes action in support of immigrants. One of the ways it carries out this work is to stand along 72nd St. with signs that address some of the immigration issues. We do this every Thursday morning, from 8:00 till 9:00 a.m., in front of Mercy Villa. You do not have to join our organization. You do not have to show up every week. Just show up any Thursday you are available. Signs are provided. Parking is in the Mercy Villa parking lot. Mercy Villa is directly north of the College of St. Mary. We would love it if you could join us in our witness.

# GREEN TEAM

## WHY COMPOST?

**BY BRENT CRAMPTON**  
DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS  
HILLSIDE SOLUTIONS

### How can composting help fight climate change?

Composting transforms food waste into nutrient-dense soil which farmers and gardeners in our community use to grow trees, flowers, and food. In a miraculous yet scientific way, plants suck carbon (pollution) from the air and feed it to microorganisms in the ground. Those microorganisms literally poop out nutrients that feed plants. Those plants in turn taste incredible, and get better at sucking more carbon pollution out of the air.

**Methane:** Over half of what's in the landfill is compostable. Most folks assume these materials simply break down into dirt. In reality, waste in a landfill produces methane gas, which is 120 times as potent as carbon dioxide.

**Leachate:** The water from food mixes with everything else in the landfill, producing a toxic sludge called leachate, which can get into our waterways and do some nasty stuff.

You can do your part by composting at home using fruit, veggies, and yard material. It won't smell and it won't cost anything. You can start today using things around your home. You can put the finished composted product on anything that grows, including your lawn.

If you do not have the means to compost at your home, simply bring your scraps to the bin at Sacred Heart located south of the Parish Hall.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Have you noticed more community gardens popping up as you travel around various parts of Omaha? That's because they play an important role in our neighborhoods! Community gardens are places where people can grow food. They also lead to more exercise, better nutrition, a greater sense of community, enrichment of the soil, more green space in an urban area, and economic savings.

Some of the community gardens that grace North Omaha: City Sprouts is the longest running community garden in Omaha, founded in 1995. It has two locations:

-1815 N Street in South Omaha

-4002 Seward St. in North Omaha.

It seeks to cultivate healthy communities and sustainable, equitable food systems through gardening, education and youth employment. For more information see [info@omahasprouts.org](mailto:info@omahasprouts.org). Big Muddy began nine years ago and is an urban farm located in the Gifford Park neighborhood near 3322 Burt. Its main focus is its Aspiring Farmer Program offering internships and housing to five aspiring farmers. They welcome groups to tour their facility. If interested please contact Holly Cimino at [Hollycimino7@gmail.com](mailto:Hollycimino7@gmail.com).

The Big Garden has helped to start 170 community gardens throughout Nebraska, Kansas, and SW Iowa. Their goal is "to reduce hunger by increasing access to fresh, healthy produce, and teaching people to grow, cook, & preserve their own." Their campus at 5602 Read Street has an on-site greenhouse in which they grew 15,000 pounds of food last year, donating most to a food pantry. For more information: [info@BigGarden.org](mailto:info@BigGarden.org).

No More Empty Pots is a community-centered nonprofit offering a variety of programs centering on food. These include community education programs, a roof-top garden, an eight-week Culinary Certificate program, a Food Entrepreneur Program, and a neighborhood Cafe. NMEP also sources produce for Community Harvest meals from local farmers. The Food Hub for NMEP can be found at 8501 N 30th St. and their email is [info@nmepomaha.org](mailto:info@nmepomaha.org)

### Farmer's Markets

Farmer's markets are another way of accessing some of the benefits of community gardens. They too can build community, and provide an economical way of obtaining fresh fruits and vegetables (as well as other items). Some have music, and most provide a fun, relaxing atmosphere. On top of that, buying local food that does not have to be transported from distant locations is a wonderful way to show concern for Mother Earth. Check out local listings for farmer's markets near you.

**Green Team Purpose Statement:** *To educate our parish on the care of our common home which leads to action on behalf of Mother Earth.*

**At left, Dakota Stock plants a community garden at Common Ground in North Omaha.**



# OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

## BY THE NUMBERS

In an effort to better understand the dynamics of our parish neighborhood, the Neighborhood Alliance Team has studied census data provided by team member Dennis Walsh which compares the Sacred Heart neighborhood with Douglas County. The data, as shown in the tables below, reveals examples of both continuing inequality (median household income) as well as positive changes (% of families below poverty level). The team plans to continue to explore this data and share our findings in future issues of this newsletter.

### 2019 Median Household Income

Sacred Heart neighborhood	\$27,585	Douglas County	\$64,629
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### Percentage of families below poverty level

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Sacred Heart area	45%	39%	34%	32%	25%
Douglas County	11%	10%	9%	9%	8%

\*(Neighborhood = area from 30th to 14th Streets, Cuming St. to Ames Ave.)

## FARMERS MARKETS

When spring arrives and gardens are planted, we know that the farmer's markets are soon to follow. Below is a list of farmer's markets in the Omaha area.

- Bellevue Farmers Market**, begins June 5th 8:00-noon, Saturday, Washington Park
- Farmers Market Council Bluffs**, began May 6th, 4:30-7:30: Thursdays, Bayliss Park
- Florence Mill Farmers Market**, begins June 6th, 10:00-3:00, Sundays, 9102 N. 30th St.
- The Gifford Park Neighborhood Market**, begins June 4th, 5-8:00 p.m., Fridays, 520 N. 33rd St
- Night Market at Turner Park**, July 16 & 30, Aug. 13 & 27, Sept. 10; 6:00-10:00 p.m., Fridays, Midtown Crossing at Turner Park
- Omaha Farmers Market Baxter Arena**, began May 2nd, 9:00-1:00, Sundays, 2425 S 67th St.
- Omaha Farmers Market/Old Market**, began May 1st, 8:00-12:30, Saturdays, 1011 Jackson
- Papillion Farmers Market**, begins June 2nd, 5-8:00 p.m., Wednesdays, City Park
- Village Pointe Farmers Market**, began May 1st, 8:30-12:30, Saturdays, parking lot behind Old Navy

### ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER DAY - MAY 1

On May 1 over 25 Sacred Heart parishioners came together for a day of service to honor St. Joseph the Worker. A deanery-wide project, people from various parishes volunteered at the Heart Ministry Center, the St. Martin de Porres Center, a community garden, and 1 Block at a Time (sponsored by "I Choose Love"). Most of our parishioners worked on the 1 Block at a Time beautification project along Binney Street from 30th St. east to Florence Blvd. One home owner shared how she was concerned that she would not be able to fix up her home that had been in her family for many years. Imagine her joy when she received a call from "I Choose Love". It was truly a God-incident! (See picture)

I have been asked to join the Board of "I Choose Love" by its founder Les "PeeWee" Harrison, a graduate of Sacred Heart School and former professional basketball comic who traveled with Meadowlark Lemon. You can learn more about "ICL" from their website: [ichooseloveusa.org](http://ichooseloveusa.org). - Fr. Dave



At far left, Fr. Dave worked alongside Cathy Ninneman, Greg Lickteig, Joan Lieben, and Jane Kelly, as they scraped the paint off a house on the corner of 25th and Binney. The homeowner, her mother, and her daughter joined the group as they scraped the paint off—an opportunity for sharing and relationship building.

At immediate left, Phil Alcocer digs for the Common Ground garden on May 1.