WE MUST BREATHE affirms the sanctity of life. There is no place for poverty and racism in our society. Together, with a collective breath, we can transform society toward greater justice, greater good and greater love. Together, as Beloved Community, we must breathe.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT OF REFLECTION

WE MUST BREATHE

We Must Breathe is an affirming message of love. It celebrates the humanity and divinity of God’s creation indiscriminately. To insist “We Must Breathe” is also an act of resistance to racialized violence and bigotry in all of its forms. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the deep-seated socio-economic disparities in our society and world as those disproportionately impacted are from minoritized communities and developing nations. Even now with the emergence of new variants of COVID-19, there is an urgent appeal for wealthy nations across the globe to provide immediate access to vaccinations and aid to those without great financial wealth and resources.

The history of domestic terror, lynching and state sanctioned violence against American citizens due to race is not new. Their awakening witnessed in the streets of the United States and locally here in Chicago, emerged in response to the racial pandemic that preceded even the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The uprisings resoundingly declared Black and Brown lives matter – we must breathe! Alongside Community Renewal Society’s commitment to eradicating racism and poverty, our member congregations endorsed two new platforms: LGBTQIA+ Faith, Race and Equity and Healing Justice and Reconciliation.

With our congregational volunteers and coalition partners, we celebrated four legislative wins that will bring about a more just economy, restore opportunities for individuals leaving the prison industrial system, and build police accountability. CRS was instrumental in advocating for and facilitating the union of the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability (GAPA) and the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression to advance the Empowering Communities for Public Safety Ordinance which passed the Chicago City Council in July 2021 by a vote of 36 to 13. We have arrived at a historic moment for police accountability in the United States. After years of organizing and calls to action, Chicago now has the most democratic and progressive system of civilian oversight of the police in the country.

We celebrate our friends and partners of The Chicago Reporter and Interim Editor Mr. Glenn Reedus for the publications ongoing commitment to investigative journalism and using its platform to uproot systems of oppression. We look forward to celebrating 50 years of integral journalism in 2022 and beyond with your support. Member congregations, funders, and friends of Community Renewal Society have faithfully supported our mission for almost 140 years. We do not take these milestones for granted. We humbly thank you!

We remain at work, steadfast and committed to being instruments of prophetic witness and love. Please continue to hold us in your prayers as we continue to affirm, resist and declare – We Must Breathe!

In Solidarity,

Rev. Dr. Waltrina N. Middleton
Executive Director

P.S. View this video of my report to our member congregations during our 2021 Annual Membership Assembly
GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY TRAININGS

CRS continues to be a leader in training congregations and their members to advocate for issues of importance to their communities. After shifting to virtual trainings, these events included: Building a Faith in Action Team, Introduction to Organizing and Legislative Advocacy. Issue-specific teach-ins were provided on the Empowering Communities for Public Safety Ordinance, the Just Housing and Fair Tax Amendments and the Pretrial Fairness Act.

PLATFORM FOR RENEWAL

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY, GAPA AND ECPS (1)

CRS was instrumental in bringing together the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability (GAPA) and Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression to create the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) Ordinance which passed the Chicago City Council on July 21, 2021. The agreement reached between the two grassroots coalitions and aldermanic allies is a historic step forward in the decades-long struggle for police accountability. ECPS lays the groundwork for more transparency and accountability within the Chicago Police Department by providing Chicago residents with a two-tiered participatory role and oversight authority. The ordinance gives residents a decisive role in shaping public safety in their neighborhoods.

The Police Accountability Issue Team monitored the implementation of the consent decree, the court order mandating changes to Chicago Police Department policy, and provided input on how CPD should respond to individuals undergoing mental health crises.

(1) Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability (GAPA) and Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS)
RESTORING OPPORTUNITIES AND JUSTICE REFORM
More than 1,200 laws and statues in the State of Illinois affect people with records, making it difficult for them to secure housing, employment and education. Member congregations and volunteers worked to eliminate barriers. Through the Restoring Rights and Opportunities Coalition of Illinois, we passed the Employee Background Fairness Act and the Public Housing Access Bill in January 2021. These bills will positively affect thousands of Illinois residents.

JUST ECONOMY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REPARATIONS
The economic harm committed by the criminal justice system was vastly reduced through passage of the Pretrial Fairness Act. This act ends the role of money bond, limits pretrial detention, enables police to issue tickets and reduce arrests and creates more transparency through data. CRS member congregations learned about the perils of cash bond and worked with the Coalition to End Money Bond to pass this legislation.

CRS member congregations and volunteers worked tirelessly to demonstrate the need for the Fair Tax Amendment. Sadly, the Fair Tax Amendment failed to pass in 2020.

HEALING JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION NEW IN 2021
Recognizing the link between justice and racial healing, CRS hosted healing circles and a film screening in partnership with WTTW. Partnerships with Coloring Mental Health Collective and Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Greater Chicago were established to inform our work.

LGBTQIA+ FAITH, RACE AND EQUITY NEW IN 2021
The Bayard Rustin Fellowship was established to lead our work around LGBTQIA+ justice. Bayard Rustin, a Black, gay civil rights icon, was an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. He spent his last few years fighting discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people living with HIV/AIDS. This fellowship pays homage to Rustin’s deep faith and advocacy!

Member congregations and individuals joined the newly formed Issue Team to identify future campaigns and actions. A partnership with the Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative connects CRS with federal advocacy opportunities, including garnering support for the Equality Act. State-level work included a successful campaign to pass the HIV Decriminalization Bill.

THE CHICAGO REPORTER
The Chicago Reporter actively reflects values that are critical to inclusive, full-scale investigative journalism. The weight of the work done at The Chicago Reporter calls for a newsroom that works collaboratively and tirelessly to investigate racial and economic inequality across Chicago.

In order to accomplish this, The Chicago Reporter underwent restructuring which included an Interim Editor and Publisher and the convening of an advisory table of key stakeholders to chart a path forward. Emphasis was placed on protecting the historic legacy of The Chicago Reporter, while also contending with issues of racism, sexism and classism.
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY: WE MUST BREATHE

Former CRS Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk preached on the history of CRS and the role of the church in unmasking unjust entities, and declared that the breath of God brings life, hope and freedom. Dr. Ulysses W. Burley III delivered the Inaugural Yvonne V. Delk Lecture focused on health inequities faced by under-served communities of color as a result of a historically racist healthcare system.

The Inaugural Yvonne V. Delk Moral Courage Legacy Award was presented to Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk for her long-standing service to the United Church of Christ and to Community Renewal Society. It also celebrates her boundary-breaking milestone as the first person of color and first woman to serve as Executive Director of CRS.

The work of our member congregations and volunteers to advocate for life-changing legislation was celebrated, two new issue areas were introduced and new board members were elected.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. FAITH IN ACTION ASSEMBLY

In partnership with the Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative, participants viewed *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* and attended a panel discussion. The film sparked conversation around the acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community in the larger Black community and explored Rustin’s role alongside King in the Civil Rights era.

As part of a Chicago-wide effort to promote racial healing, CRS hosted two healing circles centered on Dr. King’s concern for suffering at the intersection of poverty and racism. Clips from Dr. King’s speeches were shared and discussed.
### JUNETEENTH
In partnership with the San Antonio Black International Film Festival, CRS presented a screening and panel discussion of *Crawford: The Man the South Forgot* in celebration of Juneteenth.

### RACIAL HEALING AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY
Together with community leaders, CRS engaged in sacred dialogue to discuss solidarity, bridge building, organizing, the ethics of love and honoring the full humanity of all. Chat for Change videos discussed initiatives, movements, policies and more with community leaders and activists.

In response to the fatal mass shooting in the Atlanta area in March of 2021, CRS’ Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Waltrina Middleton, participated in a live panel discussion hosted by the Asian American Christian Collaborative to address the surge in anti-Asian violence in light of COVID-19 and to highlight Black and Asian American solidarity against racism and white supremacy.

To mark the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, CRS co-sponsored an Interfaith Solidarity Service, hosted by the American Friends Service Committee and Chicago Faith Coalition on Middle East policy. Rev. Dr. Waltrina Middleton joined religious leaders of Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions to share words of inspiration, music and prayers to nurture hope in solidarity with Palestine.

### FINANCIALS

**CONTRIBUTED REVENUE**
- **INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS**: $104,725
- **MEMBER CONGREGATION DUES, NONPROFIT DONATIONS**: $43,212
- **FOUNDATION GRANTS**: $180,088

**OTHER REVENUE**
- **ENDOWMENT DISTRIBUTIONS**: $1,878,076
- **OTHER**: $7,589

**TOTAL REVENUE**: $2,213,690

**EXPENSES**
- **PROGRAMS**: $1,141,046
- **FUNDRAISING**: $153,601
- **ADMINISTRATIVE**: $824,998

**TOTAL EXPENSE**: $2,119,645
Thank you to our member congregations and individual donors. We could not accomplish what we do without your financial support.

Become a CRS Sustainer by donating monthly and consider including CRS in your estate plan. Learn more at CommunityRenewalSociety.org.