



# CREATING A MORE Just <sup>AND</sup> Loving COMMUNITY

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## November 2025 Newsletter



### Network Assembly Success!

It was standing room only in the fellowship hall of the Old West Florida Enrichment Center on October 28th. More than 130 people from 18 congregations gathered to conduct CAJM business, hold a covenant ceremony with new congregations and hear the concerns that rose from our house meetings.



## Hunger and Food Insecurity Continues Its Research

The Hunger and Food Insecurity Team has been meeting regularly and productively—and continues to add new members. CAJM members who are interested in this vital social justice work are warmly invited to join us. We are especially seeking a **Co-Chair** to serve alongside Chair Susan Robinson (Holy Comforter).

**Purpose** - Our goal is to equitably decrease the high rate of hunger and food insecurity in the Tallahassee area, with the long-term vision of a community where everyone has enough to eat.

Based on our research, we have compiled a list of many hunger and food resources in Leon County, building on the Leon County Board of County Commissioners' *Status Report on Efforts to Address Food Insecurity* (September 15, 2025). This resource list is now posted on the CAJM website: [capitalareajustice.org](https://capitalareajustice.org) → [Impact](#) → [Food Insecurity](#)

Several team members also attended the recent six-week series hosted by Trinity United Methodist Church, "Hunger in the Midst of Plenty." This highly informative series explored many local resources in depth. Recordings are available on [Trinity's YouTube channel](#).

The team has also met with leaders working in Food Insecurity Monique Ellsworth, CEO, Second Harvest of the Big Bend, Dr. Tracy Woodard, Florida State University, Human-Centered Design course and Miaisha Mitchell, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Greater Frenchtown Revitalization Council / Tallahassee Food Network (TFN).

We are grateful that both the Leon County and City of Tallahassee commissions recognize the importance of addressing hunger and food insecurity and have held very informative meetings with Commissioner Rick Minor, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, Abby Thompson and other staff. These meetings have reinforced the value of coordinated efforts. Future plans include meetings Dr. Kimball Thomas, Director of the combined Department of Housing and Community Resilience and Department of Community Services for the City of Tallahassee.

### **Need for Strengthening Communication and Policy**

We have identified a need for **better communication and coordination among the many resources** in our area, so that residents can be more

fully and effectively served. These include:

- Encouraging and supporting efforts to expand and improve resource information available through 2-1-1
- Supporting efforts to update and share Second Harvest site information
- Sustainable food policies that can help address the injustice of hunger and food insecurity in a lasting way
- We've learned that teaching people to grow their own food—through personal and community gardens—is an essential part of addressing hunger and food insecurity.
- Continuing the generosity of local residents, who are actively involved in helping provide food to those in need.

If you have information, contacts, or resources that could support our research and advocacy, please share them with:

**Susan Robinson** - [surobins@me.com](mailto:surobins@me.com)



## Ending Gun Violence in our Communities

In its first Nehemiah Action, CAJM asked for support of a proven research-based Gun Violence Interruption Strategy. CAJM also requested the increased use of Civil Citations to divert youthful offenders to supportive programs that would support a more positive direction in their lives.

After initially supporting this approach, the Commission decided to shift its support to a Violence Reduction Strategic Plan submitted by the Leon County Sheriff's Department. The plan is being implemented through the Council on Men and Boys. The performance of the plan is being evaluated by FSU working with FAMU. CAJM has supported the Council's work since its inception. CAJM members serve on the Advisory Council and monitor the performance of the effort. Recently several CAJM members attended a three-day Professional Community Intervention

Training focused on equipping neighborhood leaders with tools to identify and defuse conflicts before they escalate.

Engaging the at-risk targets in the program has so far been disappointing. The use of Civil Citations by law enforcement has also been less than hoped for. We are, to quote one of those first Nehemiah Action speakers, "disappointed but not deterred."

Together we will continue to stay engaged with current efforts while pressing for improved tactics and fulfillment of the commitments made to employ civil citations to help our young people.

Please reach out to the Claudia Blackburn at [healthycb@gmail.com](mailto:healthycb@gmail.com) to help the Strategy Team.





# 2 NEW ISSUES

## Two New Issues Chosen

CAJM will form strategy teams and begin research work at the kick-off on December 9th. Please join us and pitch in. We hope to have representatives from all our congregations on each one of the existing or new teams.

## Immigration

The Network Assembly listened in dismay to the stories of injustice shared by immigrant families. Many in Florida's Big Bend are living in fear. Some are farm, construction and other essential workers who help feed and meet our basic needs. Others are activists, journalists and students fleeing from government persecution. Many are women and children who have come to escape violence from gangs or domestic abuse. All are deserving of due process and humane treatment.

## Mental Health

Mental Health concerns arose in EVERY house meeting this fall. The stories shared ranged from unhoused neighbors who experience psychosis with no crisis options beyond police. Exhausted and isolated parents and caregivers who support loved ones with no or limited access to mental health support. Many shared concerns about wait lists, insurance and other barriers to care. The tie between mental health, homelessness and addiction was mentioned by many as was the isolation of the elderly and rising anxiety and panic among young people.



# Our Successful Affordable Rental Housing Project Moves to Monitoring

## *Patience, Persistence, and Hope: CAJM is in the Loop*

By Bob Deyle

Assistant County Manager Shington Lamy has assured our Affordable Housing Strategy Team that they will build us into their notification protocols so that we are alerted when applications are received for the county's new affordable rental housing gap financing and incentive program and when they go before the County Commission for approval.

The County has \$625,000 allocated for the program for fiscal year 2025-26 plus another \$125,000 at their disposal from the city's share of the annual Blueprint Economic Development allocation.

Our patience and persistence have paid off! Over the past three years Strategy Team members held more than 30 team meetings, attended at least nine city and county commission meetings and six Blueprint Board meetings, and held over 30 individual meetings with city and county commissioners.

Let's celebrate these folk: Co-chairs Rev Sylvia Jones, Gita Pitter, and Bob Deyle; team members Rev James Houston, Rev Bob Gibbs, Lin Brannon, Bill Phelan, Pam Leslie, and Bob Apgar; Executive Directors Leah Wiley and Bryan Stringer; and CAJM Co-president Rev AJ Mealor.

**CONFUCIUS**

The person who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.

**MAYA ANGELOU**

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated.

**NELSON MANDELA**

It always seems impossible until it's done.

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR**

We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.



## Building Coalitions

CAJM hosted a sister social justice organization on November 18th at Bethel AME Church. PEACE – People Engaged in Active Community Efforts - has been working in Palm Beach County for 30 years! As we sat with each other and shared dinner, we also shared our collective visions for our communities. PEACE was in town to lobby the Legislature on mental health issues in Palm Beach County. The solutions they are pushing for will help in our region as well. It was an inspiring night filled with joy and a commitment to learning and working together.



## Please Welcome our Newest Congregations!

Holy Comforter Episcopal Church  
Grace Mission Episcopal Church

## Upcoming Events

### Research Kick-off

December 9

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Jacob Chapel Baptist Church,  
2333 Lake Bradford Road



## INVEST in CAJM

If you have pledged, please complete your pledge before December 31, 2025. If you have not yet invested in CAJM, please do so now!

<https://www.capitalareajustice.org/invest/>

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