



## **Align Minneapolis 2022 Year in Review**

### ***Ongoing Work of the Organization:***

Align MPLS' Steering Committee met monthly and provided oversight and direction for the work of the organization. The Steering Committee heard and read reports from the working groups of the organization and the Director, and provided vital connection to member congregations and work within the community. The Align MPLS Steering Committee created our "Statement on the Treatment of Our Neighbors Living in Encampments" (full statement here: <https://www.alignmpls.org/encampments>). The Steering Committee provided direction and grounding in faith and community care during a difficult year as we saw the end of federal and state COVID help, the eviction moratorium lifted, resulting in many people losing their housing and entering into homelessness, and rising costs put even greater pressure on our lowest income neighbors.

Congregational organizing is an important part of the work Align Minneapolis does to address homelessness. The core work of the Align MPLS' Organizing Team is to educate, inspire, and activate within Align member congregations. The Organizing Team met monthly and published 3 seasonal Campaign Guides for use within our member congregations that included elements of education, advocacy, giving and volunteer opportunities. The Campaign Guides provided opportunities to link our values, beliefs, actions, and practices. Whether directly serving someone experiencing homelessness or advocating for laws and policies, each act of engagement either introduces, inspires, or reinforces living our faith. Align's Director presented at five member congregations over the course of 2022 to increase awareness about homelessness and Align's work, and engage our network in action. Attendees of two member congregation presentations took action to advocate for policy and budget commitments at the City and State level; over 50 letters were sent to policy-makers from Align congregation members. In 2022 the Organizing Team launched the monthly Align Bulletin, an electronic newsletter that provides timely updates, education, and involvement opportunities to almost 900 recipients.

Align MPLS' Direct Service Provider (DSP) team met monthly to coordinate services and share information as well as oversee Align's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program. Our ERA program, which focuses on preventing homelessness from occurring in a short-term financial emergency, processed an unprecedented number of applications this year following the end of the state RentHelpMN assistance program and the end of the eviction moratorium. The program provided direct assistance to 109 households- 68 single adult or adult-only households, and 41 family households with minor children- for a total of \$211,803 in direct assistance, with an average amount of assistance per household of \$1,963. These 109 households were able to re-stabilize once our program got them caught up on their back-due rent so they could remain in their homes.

In the fall, Align MPLS re-launched our Lunch & Learns which provide opportunities for volunteers in our network to learn more about homelessness and the work we do. The first event was in September and highlighted the variety of services provided by our Direct Service Provider congregations. In November, two members of Street Voices of Change shared in a Q&A-style panel. The Lunch & Learns were hosted by the Align DSP team at member congregation locations and included a Zoom option so attendees could attend remotely as needed.

Street Voices of Change (SVoC) celebrated their 6th Anniversary in 2022! In 2022, Street Voices of Change held two meetings weekly, one at Central Lutheran and one at Basilica of St. Mary. The groups identified goals that were important to them including Housing Support reform, restroom access downtown, and 24/7 safe space,



and made progress toward those goals. Street Voices of Change continued to build community with one another, connection to homelessness resources, and outreach into the community. SVoC leadership met monthly to provide leadership for the group, make decisions on goals, plan for events and speaking engagements, and oversee the budget. Street Voices of Change Speaker's Bureau members provided speakers to 7 speaking engagements throughout the year to tell their stories and share about the work of Street Voices of Change. Nine SVoC members attended the week-long Midwest Academy Organizing Training in June to learn how to effectively do organizing work. Two SVoC members were appointed to the State Shelter Task Force, where they worked diligently to bring the perspective of SVoC to the work of the Task Force which created recommendations for state-wide shelter standards based on the Street Voices of Change Shelter Residents' Bill of Rights. The Task Force completed their report and recommendations for the legislature in December. A full list of SVoC accomplishments for 2022 can be found here: [alignmpls.org/svoc](https://alignmpls.org/svoc). Administrative support by Align continued for SVoC including support for meetings, connecting community requests to the SVoC group, management of grants and expenses and providing supplies as needed.

StreetSong choir gathered during June to talk about the future direction of the choir and to thank choir director Teri Larson for her commitment to the choir. Following a summer break, rehearsals for StreetSong re-started in the fall and weekly and average of 12 singers attend rehearsals, including new people and those who have been singing since the beginning! It is a joy-filled and healing time with community when the choir sings together.

***Partnerships and coalitions:***

Align MPLS continued participation in the Homes for All Coalition, including work within the Policy and Community Engagement subcommittees. The Homes for All Policy committee worked through the course of the fall to develop a prioritized state legislative agenda for 2023, which includes two of the top Align MPLS priorities of Housing Support modification to make it affordable, and increase in housing units through bonding and other investments. Align MPLS continued to participate in the Makes Homes Happen Coalition, which focused on housing development, tenant's rights issues, and housing affordability within Minneapolis.

Align MPLS participated in Ending Street Homelessness collaboration meetings with Downtown partners. The work of the Ending Street Homelessness daytime committee included discussion around downtown activities including the Farmer's Market on Nicollet, and restroom access downtown.

Align MPLS helped with planning for the annual Homeless Memorial March and Service and participated in both the March and Service, which was hosted by Align member congregation Plymouth Congregational Church.

***Align MPLS Administration:***

The Personnel Team of Align MPLS hired a new part-time ERA Coordinator in November; during the hiring process the ERA program was able to continue with the Align MPLS Director covering the workload of the Coordinator position, and with the steadfast participation of Direct Service Provider congregations that work with ERA applicants and complete intakes. In 2022 one grant was awarded to Align MPLS for General Operations. Member congregations pledged to our operating budget and to the ERA program, and some member congregations gave additional gifts to the ERA program so more direct assistance could be provided to prevent homelessness when the huge increase in need was apparent in the summer months. Many individual donors gave to the organization, ranging from \$15 monthly contributions to larger one-time contributions.