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## MOSES Celebrates New Jail Agreement

By Margaret Irwin

After years of disagreement on the best jail size and ever higher financial hurdles as the predicted cost of the new building skyrocketed by millions of dollars, Dane County has at last achieved agreement on construction of a fully funded six-floor consolidated jail. On April 20, the Board of Supervisors closed the \$13.5 million gap in the \$179.5 million project.

At a joint press conference on April 19, the Board of Supervisors' **Black Caucus** announced their support for the six-floor proposal advocated by Sheriff Calvin Barrett. This agreement came after tough negotiations. The Black Caucus, supported by MOSES, had successfully argued for a resolution to limit the redesign to a five-floor jail; this smaller, more economical size would be adequate if certain criminal-legal reforms were enacted. However, County Executive Joe Parisi vetoed the resolution.

In exchange for their support of the six-floor jail, the Black Caucus asked Sheriff Barrett to back the criminal-legal reforms that would reduce the jail population and create a more humane criminal-legal system. The following reforms were agreed to:

- **End** the contract for housing federal prisoners in the jail
- **Advocate** for moving the control of the Huber (work release) program to the Department of Human Services
- **Commit** to eliminating solitary confinement
- **Urge** law enforcement officers to pursue alternatives to arrest and booking in jail, as was done during the COVID pandemic

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**Executive Committee**

- Rachel Kincade, President
- Sandra Brown, Vice President
- Phil Carlson, Treasurer
- Barbie Jackson, Secretary
- Deanna Grahn, Financial Secretary
- Pamela Gates, Assistant Secretary
- Joan Duerst, Chair, Faith Leaders Caucus

**MOSES Task Forces**

- Justice System Reform Initiative
  - Paul Saeman
  - Jeanie Verschay
- Racial Justice for All Children
  - Barbie Jackson
  - Sandra Brown
- Public Safety
  - Gloria Stevenson-McCarter
  - Pam Oliver

**WISDOM Task Forces**

- Post-Release
- Prison Prevention
- Old Law Parole
- Conditions of Confinement

**MOSES Operational Team Leads**

- Communications
  - Margaret Irwin
- Fundraising
  - Rachel Kincade
  - Joan Duerst
- Member Engagement
  - Karen Julesberg
- Racial Equity
  - Sherry Reames

**MOSES Faith Leaders Caucus**

- Joan Duerst
- Marsha Baldwridge
- Patti La Cross

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- **Commit** to providing monthly reports on the jail population as described in Resolution 320
- **Work** with the Juvenile Court Administrator to develop alternatives to arrest and jail
- **Support** funding and treatment options for those who experience frequent incarceration, hospitalization, and homelessness.
- **Support** having a mental health court.

Barrett and the Black Caucus also announced that they will cooperate on extending the alternative first-responder **CARES** program throughout the county. This program, currently under development in Madison, sends medical and mental health professionals, rather than police, on mental-health 911 calls.

On the day of the board's vote, MOSES President Rachel Kincade sent a letter to the supervisors strongly supporting the deal announced by Sheriff Barrett and the Black Caucus. She noted that it sends a strong message that "two important and complementary goals will move forward together." These goals are "to replace the current jail facility with a more humane and rehabilitative facility" and "to implement multiple reforms in the criminal-legal system."

"Addressing these goals cannot succeed without commitment from all parts of the criminal-legal system." Kincade added. "The deal announced today includes compromises from both the Sheriff and the Black Caucus, but those compromises maintain the goals of making the jail more humane and diverting people away from incarceration toward healing."

*Supervisor Jacob Wright, an ally of the Black Caucus, stated that MOSES's involvement in the Jail Consolidation Project has been invaluable. ■*

## Organizer's Corner

*By Pamela Gates*

**F**rank Davis finished his time as MOSES's interim organizer dramatically and busily, with a Madison Action Day that drew people to Madison from all over the state on April 27. As the local organizer, Frank took charge of everything that needed to be done for months ahead of the actual event, worked on several preparatory Zoom meetings right before it, and was everywhere all at once on April 27 itself.

Frank has been MOSES's interim organizer since January 15. Prior to that, he did several stints as MOSES's Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) coordinator, most recently before the general election in November. In September and October 2022, he and seven volunteers reached about 10,000 households with MOSES and voter-encouragement literature.

Frank had specific tasks as interim organizer. He worked as a liaison between MOSES and Community

Shares of Wisconsin, especially helping MOSES president Rachel Kincade with our Power Hour video for The Big Share in March. He also worked on a video for Madison Action Day that was shown during the course of that event.

What are Frank's plans going forward? He has already started working for Nehemiah Community Development Corp., helping with reentry services for men returning to the community from prison. When we talked for this article, he was on the road, driving to check on a man who had just returned to the community. Already the man had managed to lock himself out of his living facility the night before, with no way to contact anyone for help!

Thank you, Frank, for your continuing efforts for those involved with Wisconsin's criminal-legal system, and for your work to make positive change in the system itself. ■

## A Time to Forgive

By Mark Petersen, Retired Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church,  
in collaboration with Joan Duerst, Patti La Cross, and Marsha Baldwidge

**F**orgiveness is a quiet gift that you leave on the doorstep of those who have hurt you. Some never open the door to receive it, but for those who do, you are giving them a second chance at a beautiful life. As you forgive, you are giving yourself a second chance at that beautiful life regardless of the other's decision."

– Robert Enright, *8 Keys to Forgiveness*

On March 11, the MOSES **Religious Leaders Caucus** hosted a wonderful conference at Door Creek Church called "**A Time to Forgive.**" Our keynote speaker was **Dr. Robert Enright**. If you have three minutes to watch this news clip, you'll have the flavor of our morning together:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wffHBQKq74>

Forgiveness is one of those gifts I have addressed a time or two throughout my ministry. However, reading Dr. Enright's curriculum for education on forgiveness, especially the book titled *8 Keys to Forgiveness*, I felt like an old dog learning new tricks. You can find this book at our local libraries, at <https://internationalforgiveness.com>, and at Amazon, at <https://a.co/d/eWb3VXo>.

Robert Enright came to my attention over a decade ago, during the season of Lent. We used a wonderful video called "**The Power of Forgiveness**," which included enthralling forgiveness stories from an Amish community, from mothers who lost children in the 9/11 attacks, and from the wisdom of **Thich Nhat Hanh**: <https://g.co/kgs/ffayHx>. The clip from Belfast, Ireland, was the one that especially stirred me, because of the beautiful children who wrote colorful notes of forgiveness to those who had hurt their family members. Their teachers were using a curriculum

written by Enright that focused on forgiveness.

"The Power of Forgiveness" video showed a gentle, kind, and giving person dedicating his life to sowing seeds of forgiveness in conflicted places of the world. Part of the process included asking people to answer the question "Who hurt you?" It was the children of Northern Ireland who first introduced me to this amazing professor of forgiveness. Then I learned that he had started the first-ever "**Institute of Forgiveness**" at the University of Wisconsin.

Last summer we (the MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus) were Robert's guests at an International Forgiveness Conference called "**Agape Love and Forgiveness.**" It was here that we sat with educators who were sowing seeds of forgiveness in Taiwan,

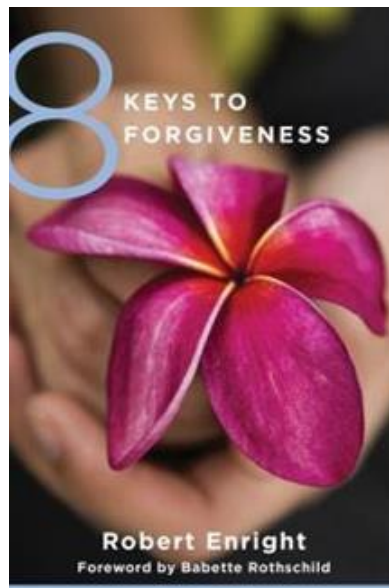
Israel, Palestine, Northern Ireland, and other places of the world. At the conference, we began imagining what it would be like to offer this gift to those incarcerated, asking: "Who hurt you?"

It is our belief that forgiveness is a key to reforming the criminal-legal system. This concept led to a group of faith community leaders studying the book *8 Keys to Forgiveness*. The synergy from this study grew into a need to share this dream. What developed was "A Time to Forgive" conference held at Door Creek Church on March 11. Dr. Enright, Door Creek Church, and MOSES

offered this gift to the community for free.

If you are interested in learning about forgiveness through the *8 Keys to Forgiveness* and Dr. Robert Enright, please visit:

<https://internationalforgiveness.com/>. ■



## A New WISDOM Initiative: Seeking a Second Chance for Prisoners with Excessive Sentences

By Sherry Reames

**H**ow long should someone be incarcerated for a violent crime? **The Sentencing Project** has concluded that 20 years is usually long enough. The prime age for reckless, violent behavior is the late teens and early 20s. The risk of violence declines so much after the brain matures that people almost always age out of crime, particularly by their late 30s and 40s, The Sentencing Project says.

Given the historical popularity of “Tough on Crime” sentencing policies in Wisconsin, it is no surprise that our current prison population includes hundreds of individuals who have already been incarcerated for more than 20 years and should logically be considered for release. If the parole process continues to operate as it should, those individuals will gradually become eligible to present their cases before a Parole Commissioner, demonstrate that they have fulfilled the conditions set by the judges who sentenced them, and persuade the Parole Board that they no longer pose a threat to society – if they ever did.

But the apparent reasonableness of the parole system depends on the assumption that everybody in prison received a reasonable sentence in the first place. And we know that’s not true. Everybody on WISDOM’s Old Law task force knows individuals – often members of their own families – who received such disproportionately long sentences that they have no hope of ever qualifying for parole, no matter how thoroughly they have been rehabilitated. In the hope of doing something for the individuals and families in that situation, the leaders of this task force hope to persuade the governor to start commuting some of the most obviously excessive sentences. He has the legal authority to do that but has never used it.

I serve on a subcommittee that is looking for the strongest candidates for this kind of intervention. We have invited potential candidates and their supporters to apply by sending us the facts about their crime(s),

the sentences they received, and the time they’ve served so far, along with evidence for their rehabilitation, including details about the programs they’ve completed and conduct reports they’ve received. This project is similar to the work some MOSES volunteers did a few years ago, when Alison Mix gathered us at First Unitarian Society on several Saturday mornings to compile a spreadsheet of likely parole candidates to send to the governor and his new parole chair.

Finding good candidates for commutation is riskier, since there is no established process and the stakes are so high. We want the first few cases to be so bulletproof that most of our fellow citizens will agree that the individuals have already served more than enough time, and that the governor is doing the right thing when he intervenes. Then, hopefully, more cases can follow.

What do we mean by inordinately long sentences? Some of the examples before us are mind-boggling. A 200-year sentence for a series of crimes by a 14-year-old child. Two hundred ninety years for a crime at age 17. Life sentences with no possibility of parole until 2040 or 2050 or even 2098 (i.e., NEVER) for other crimes committed by teens or very young men in the 1990s.

Many of the crimes in question were tried and sentenced as first-degree homicides, either reckless or intentional, often as “party to a crime” (which suggests that someone else may have done the actual killing). If there were mitigating factors in these cases, evidently the judges missed them. One young man received a 180-year sentence for an armed robbery in which no one was physically injured. The judge in that case multiplied the normal 15-year sentence by 12 because there were two counts, and because the business that was robbed had six employees.

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The biggest challenge for the task force will be persuading the public that the former “violent offenders” with these draconian sentences are human beings who deserve a second chance. Much of the case can be based on the virtues and abilities that they have demonstrated in recent years. Instead of succumbing to despair over the apparent hopelessness of their situations, many of these individuals have continued their education (completing whole college degrees in some cases), reliably performed key roles within the

prison, served as tutors and mentors for younger prisoners, and proved in a multitude of other ways that they are ready to rejoin society as mature, responsible citizens. But we also need to decide what to say (or not say) about the crimes they committed decades ago and the apparent role of stereotypes like “superpredator” in the way they were sentenced.

Dante Cottingham and Sherry Reames spoke inspiringly about this campaign at Madison Action Day. They also urged us to stay tuned for further developments! ■

# EVICTIION NOTICE

## RJAC’s Housing Group Takes on Eviction Records

*By Pamela Gates*

**D**id you know that the State of Wisconsin retains eviction records for 20 years? Did you know that those records are retained on CCAP, of all places? There is an unfortunate logic to the use of CCAP: an eviction is a court action. The real implication of the CCAP listing, however, is that being evicted is a crime.

And why these records are retained for 20 years is mystifying. It’s hard to come up with any logical reason for such a lengthy and public display of eviction records. Most people work through their financial problems in a much shorter period of time than 20 years. Lengthy punishment for being evicted is incredibly inhumane.

The Racial Justice for All Children’s Housing Group has been studying how children and families are affected by lack of housing, intermittent housing, and/or insecure (such as doubled-up) housing. These

insecurities are likely to result in children’s irregular sleep, irregular meals, and irregular school attendance, all of which affect their ability to learn. In the past year, the group has met with groups, commissions, and committees dealing with homelessness and other housing matters in Madison and Dane County.

On March 18, the MOSES Leadership Board approved the Housing Group’s proposal to take on record retention for housing evictions as one of its major areas of focus. The group plans to work with Legal Action of Wisconsin (LAW), which in 2022 filed a petition with the Wisconsin Supreme Court to significantly reduce the eviction-record retention period. LAW is seeking support from organizations such as MOSES, which can draw attention to the problem and help gather momentum through public opinion to change Wisconsin’s eviction-record retention policy. The Housing Group is planning to develop a public awareness campaign. ■

## Dyslexia Helps Feed School-to-Prison Pipeline

By Pamela Gates

**R**oxann Harvey, a Black parent in the Boston area, found that her primary-school-aged kids were not learning to read as expected. It wasn't until they hit second grade that teachers became concerned; before that, they'd been saying things like "It takes some kids longer," and "Make sure your kids have books," and "Read to your kids." Harvey's kids had shelves of books. But eventually it became clear to everyone that something was amiss, and, again eventually, Harvey was able to get her kids the tutoring they needed – by one of the few Black teachers in her kids' school – to overcome their reading handicap, a condition known as dyslexia.

Up to 20% of school-age kids are **dyslexic**, and the above scenario, at least the first part, is repeated many times over in our schools. The second part, where the kids get the help they need, not so much. Often there is no systematic screening for dyslexia, and kids can just slip through, passed from grade to grade or put in "**emotional behavioral disability**" (EBD) classrooms without ever addressing an academic root cause of their difficulties. The ultimate results can be, and often are, functionally illiterate adults. And according to the Correctional Education Assn., 75% of the people confined in the corrections system are functionally illiterate.

When dyslexia is not addressed, the dyslexic kids suffer, and so do their parents, their teachers, and their peers. The kids are frustrated, consider themselves "dumb," and act out or just give up. It's easy enough for that hopelessness to lead to disciplinary action, which nowadays, particularly as the kids get older, can easily involve the police.

### Dyslexia as a social justice issue

This article will not address the complications that Black parents of dyslexics, in particular, have encountered in Boston and other Eastern Seaboard school districts, but there is documented inequity in

services for Black dyslexic children there – particularly when the children are low-income as well. Blaming other factors and not addressing the reading disability seemed to be a common complaint, and Black parents have begun to see dyslexia as a social justice issue. While our local school systems are constructed somewhat differently, it's likely that it's a social justice issue in Wisconsin as well.

Certainly it's a social justice issue to the child who goes to school to learn but isn't learning, no matter the child's race. On general principle, it's up to the schools to find out how that child learns, and then teach so that he/she/they will learn. A specially trained private tutor can be very helpful, and very expensive as well. But the basic instruction that helps dyslexic kids can also benefit non-dyslexics, so one approach is to use such specialized instruction, under a general heading called the science of reading, in the general classroom.

MOSES's **Education Advocacy Group**, which is part of the **Racial Justice for All Children (RJAC)** task force, has taken on dyslexia as part of its scrutiny of the school-to-prison pipeline.

This group, which meets monthly via Zoom, has been studying dyslexia, reading articles and undertaking advocacy. They recently got the MOSES Leadership Board's approval of dyslexia as their primary advocacy issue. They were also successful in getting dyslexia included as a justice issue in the booklet that WISDOM will distribute on Madison Action Day. They are researching how best to approach the Madison Metropolitan School District to get it to address the very real and far-reaching concern of dyslexia; at present, MMSD is one of many, many U.S. school districts that have no systematic screening for dyslexia.

Additional recommended reading on this topic can be accessed by contacting the MOSES Education Advocacy Group, Sandra Brown and Tracy Frank, co-chairs. ■

## Book Review: *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*

By Jennifer L. Eberhardt, Ph.D., Penguin Books, 2020

Reviewed by Pamela Gates

Jennifer Eberhardt, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, has done considerable research in the area of unconsciously biased thinking. We all do it, she says, and she gives examples from her own (African American) family. She offers stories, science, and strategies to address the problems she perceives everywhere in our society – in our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, and our criminal-legal system.

*Biased* is very readable. The stories Eberhardt tells let the text flow easily from one topic to another. MOSES member Bonnie Magnuson asked me to review it for the newsletter, assuring me that its readability was comparable to Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*. She was right.

Eberhardt introduces her book with a story about a consultation with the Oakland, Calif., police department. She had been asked to speak to the entire department, and she could tell as she approached the podium that the rank and file were not full of welcome for her. So – how to start her talk? She decided to start with a personal story from several years back. She was on a plane with her 5-year-old son. They were almost the only African Americans on the plane. “That man looks like Daddy,” her child said. Eberhardt looked around, but the only Black man in sight did not look at all like her husband.

And then her child said, “I hope that man doesn't rob the plane.” Eberhardt worked through this interchange with her son, gently probing why he thought that, since he knew Daddy wouldn't rob a plane. But the picture of unconscious bias it portrayed, a bias so strong that it could show itself in a 5-year-old middle class African American child, was quite vivid, and it worked to ease the tension in the auditorium full of police officers.

In fact, after Eberhardt was done speaking, an African American officer came up to tell her his own story. He was working as an undercover officer and one day noted someone who looked very suspicious. He began following the man, who was shabbily dressed and moving rather furtively. Eventually he noticed that the man was mimicking his movements – and finally he realized that he was following his own image, reflected in the giant windows of a large public building nearby!

And this is only the introduction. Eberhardt divides the rest of her book into three parts: “What Meets the Eye,” “Where We Find Ourselves,” and “The Way Out.” Chapters have such titles as “Nurturing Bias,” “A Bad Dude” (a police killing of an unarmed Black man, and all the resultant agonies), “Male Black” (police descriptions of suspects that make every Black male suspicious), “How Free People Think” (about teaching in a California prison, and the bias in the criminal-legal system), and “The Scary Monster” (historic efforts to use science to prove Black inferiority, and how truly vicious it could get). She devotes a whole chapter, titled “Higher Learning,” to a rally and counter-rally in Charlottesville, Va., responding to the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue from a city park.

Eberhardt starts her last chapter, titled “Conclusion,” with this hopeful sentence: “We all have the capacity to make change: within ourselves, in the world, and in our relationship to that world.” She follows her conclusion with a series of questions that could be very helpful for MOSES's Racial Equity discussions.

In short, this book is useful reading for every one of us, as we muddle through our interactions in MOSES and in the rest of the world around us. Even Bryan Stevenson says: “The hope for progress is greatly increased by this groundbreaking book.” ■

## Meet Returning Citizen Roxanne Elliott

By Sherry Reames

Roxanne Elliott's childhood was marked by trauma after trauma. Her mother was murdered when Roxanne was 4 years old. She and her siblings went to live with a grandmother, who singled out Roxanne for abuse while sparing her older brother and sister. The grandmother whipped Roxanne with an extension cord and continually subjected her to verbal abuse that dehumanized her and robbed her of self-esteem.

Roxanne never understood why she was targeted, and she had no allies to help her deal with it. Her brother and sister tended to avoid trouble by staying away from her, rather than coming to her defense. With everyone outside the family, she had to pretend nothing was wrong, because they were one of just two Black families in an otherwise all-white neighborhood, and her grandmother cared above all about keeping up the appearance of perfect respectability.

In response to all these pressures, Roxanne started secretly drinking at home by the time she was 9, getting into fights at school, and using marijuana. In her teens she tried running away and was in and out of group homes. At 16 she left home for good, but promptly got involved with a man more than twice her age – another dysfunctional situation. They both drank too much, smoked marijuana, and sometimes fought violently. By the time she left that relationship, a few years later, she had shot him and been placed on probation for reckless use of a weapon. She got off easily that time because he pleaded in her defense.

Roxanne's next dysfunctional relationship, again with a much older man, was worse. In 1988, when she was 22, she shot and killed him. She was convicted of intentional first-degree homicide and sentenced to life plus five years.

She spent most of the next three decades at Taycheedah, serving the time but not really changing inside. Although she was transferred several times to a minimum-security facility, she kept getting in trouble and getting sent back to Taycheedah. She even spent years in "the hole" for fighting. Everybody knew she was angry, but no one knew why.

At last, a segregation-unit officer who'd known her for years recognized how broken she was feeling and asked whether she needed to see a psychiatrist. That doctor finally listened to her, and for the first time Roxanne started letting it all spill out. A few months later, she was sent to the trauma unit at Winnebago, where over the next six months she started to heal, learning to love and respect herself, realizing that the abuse wasn't her own fault, and even being able to forgive her grandmother.

Until that time, she had seemed destined to remain behind bars for the rest of her life. But after her treatment at Winnebago, she steadily made progress.

She was allowed to return to minimum security, did some work release, and finally earned parole. She was released on parole in April 2022, almost exactly a year ago.

Nowadays, Roxanne is living quietly in her own apartment in Milwaukee. She has a full-time job at a metal factory, assembling and painting familiar products, like the screens and donation boxes that are used at McDonald's. She stays in touch with good female friends, walks out-of-doors in nice weather, and meets for mutual support with other members of EXPO and FREE.

Roxanne is surprisingly philosophical about the length



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of time it took for her to receive the psychological help she needed from the system. “It’s only by the grace of God that I got that healing,” she says. “Nobody thought it would ever happen.”

When asked what advice she would give to other incarcerated people, Roxanne says they should ask themselves why they are the way they are and

recognize the impact of trauma on their lives. “Don’t be ashamed to say what happened to you,” she admonishes. “Look inside yourself and be ready to do the necessary work in order to change for yourself!”

When asked what she’d like to say to those of us who don’t have lived experience with the system, she says, “Remember that we are people like you. Never look down on any of us. We could be your own child!” ■

### **Attention!!! Writers and Posters!!! Help wanted on the MOSES Communications Team!!!**

The Communications Team works behind the scenes to help MOSES members carry out their work of ending mass incarceration and mass supervision. We do this through a bimonthly newsletter and an annual yearbook that highlights the work done during the past year.

People who serve on the newsletter/yearbook team enjoy writing, keeping people informed, and working with a small group to accomplish this task. The skills we have as a group include writing, editing, proof-reading, recruiting other writers, and keeping an ear to the ground to know what’s going on.

We also want to amplify our presence on social media platforms – Twitter, Facebook, Tik Tok, and YouTube. We are looking for people skilled in using social media who want to spread the word about MOSES.

If you are interested in joining the newsletter group or the social media group or want to learn more, get in touch with Margaret Irwin at [mbirwin@charter.net](mailto:mbirwin@charter.net).

### **Upcoming Meetings**

**General Membership** (Hybrid, as of this edition)

- Sunday, May 7, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 4, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, July 9, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

**Leadership Board** (via Zoom)

- Saturday, May 20, 9-11:45 a.m.
- Saturday, July 15, 9-11 a.m.

**Task Forces** (via Zoom)

- **Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI)**  
May 11, June 8, July 13, 6-7:30 p.m.
- **Public Safety**  
May 18, June 15, July 20, 6:15-7:30 p.m.
- **Racial Justice for All Children**  
June 6, July TBD, Aug. 1, Sept. 5, 4-5:30 p.m.

# Let Justice Roll Down Like a River

*Amos 5:24*

*An Evening with Kelli Thompson, State Public Defender*

**Thursday, May 18, 2023, from 5:30-7:30 pm  
at Lake Edge Lutheran Church on Monona Drive in Madison**



## Free and open to the public

*Supported by a grant to Lake Edge Lutheran Church  
from the Ecumenical Housing Fund through  
the Madison Community Foundation*



**To register for this free event use the link above**

or copy & paste this: [tinyurl.com/JusticeRollEvent](https://tinyurl.com/JusticeRollEvent) or use the QR code:

*Please register by Monday, May 8 to be assured of a meal!*

**Meal served beginning at 5:30 pm, with program to follow**

Directions to Lake Edge Lutheran Church: From Monona Dr. turn onto Lake Edge Blvd., then turn left on Hegg Ave. into the church parking lot.

***A free will offering will be taken to benefit the work of MOSES***

*MOSES is a nonpartisan, interfaith organization  
whose mission is to build collective power to dismantle  
the systems of mass incarceration  
and mass supervision and to eradicate  
the racial disparities in our community  
that contribute to them.  
more at: [mosesmadison.org](https://mosesmadison.org)*

