

LA CROSSE COUNTY JAIL MINISTRY

P.O. Box 2675
La Crosse, WI 54602-2675

Looking for an easier way to donate funds?

Donations to support the La Crosse Jail Ministry can be made online at Lacrossejailministry.org (Support & Donate).

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Our Mission:
La Crosse Jail Ministry offers inmates spiritual direction, rehabilitative support, and connections to faith communities.



Volume 19 ■ Number 2 ■ Summer 2022

ONE HOUR A WEEK

Would you have an hour a week to help change a life? That is the question I asked myself eight years ago. On that Sunday we were invited to hear about a program called Circles of Support. At that time the program was sponsored by AMOS, an interfaith group. The leader shared such information as:



Sue McBride

- The US imprisons more people per capita than anywhere else on earth
- People of color are overrepresented
- The Wisconsin recidivism rate is 31.3% with most returning before their first year out of prison
- Newly released prisoners face challenges such as: establishing healthy relationships, finding a place to live, securing employment, overcoming societal stigma, and accessing needed treatment programs
- Community support during the first 6-12 months after release is critical to successful reintegration

The Circles of Support program consists of community members from all walks of life and faiths who work with the local criminal justice system and offenders to help replace

a cycle of crime with a cycle of renewal. Meeting weekly for at least 6 months, the Circle assists men and women with reintegration into the community as they transition out of incarceration. The Circle becomes a foundational web of support that can provide strong human relationships necessary to healthy living. An environment of friendship, mutual respect, listening, goal setting, and accountability, assists the recently incarcerated individual toward a path of health, stability, and resilience.

So, eight years ago, I headed the nudge to get involved and make this a priority. My faith tradition teaches me to care for “the least of these”, which includes the prisoner. In addition, it seemed to be the right, moral, and human response to a societal need. Of surprise is how much I have benefited from my involvement, especially the friendships I have made. The Circles of Support program currently falls under the umbrella of the La Crosse Jail Ministry. More details and volunteer applications can be found on the website lacrossejailministry.org. We have inmates requesting the support of a Circle. Additional volunteers would allow us to be of greater service.

Sue McBride

Your gift is greatly needed!

Donations to our ministry can be made online at lacrossejailministry.org (Support & Donate)

Please cut and mail

La Crosse County Jail Ministry Gift Form—Your Support is Welcome!

Please consider helping Jail Ministry with a tax-deductible donation.



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

YES, I would like to make a donation to Jail Ministry in the amount of:

_____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other \$ _____

This gift is “in memory of” _____

This gift is “in honor of” _____

Plases make checks payable to:
Jail Ministry
P.O. Box 2675
La Crosse, WI 54602-2675

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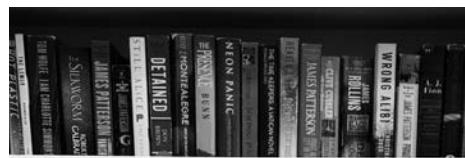
Rabbi Brian Serle
Congregation of Sons of Abraham

FSPA GRANT AWARDED

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration's (FSPA) Leadership Team met and approved the recommendations from the Ministry Grant Fund Committee to support 90 grants and one of them was our ministry! We've been approved to receive \$9000.00 to support our ministry! They stated they are grateful to support our ministry and the people we serve. We are extremely grateful for their support; it's been crucial to providing for our inmates.



These funds have helped us provide for many of our inmate needs and especially have helped us provide faith books for all faith backgrounds. They also have made it possible for us to send a brand-new faith book with inmates who are going to prison. The Recovery Bible is the most requested, but we have also had requests of Qurans, the Jewish Bible, King James Bibles, Study Bibles, Hmong Folklore, and books on Buddhism. Lastly, this grant has made it possible for us to stock our library with books in Spanish, along with books by and for Native Americans and Hmong. We are truly appreciative of their support!



WHY I SERVE LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY

I have been richly blessed throughout my life and I am very grateful for that. Serving on the Jail Ministry Board is a great way for me to give back to the spiritual needs of inmates who are less fortunate than me at this troubled time in their lives. Jail Ministry is an organization that tries to help build bridges from jail to brighter futures for inmates and their families.



Marilyn Arndt

Serving on the Jail Ministry Board has taught me so much. I have learned about so many unfortunate circumstances and bad decisions that have resulted in jail time. I have learned to really appreciate the great work that the jail staff does. I have learned that many people in jail are good people that have gone down a bad track in their lives but may have great potential to turn their lives around and maybe to contribute to society in a positive way in their futures. Many inmates are looking for the encouragement and motivation that can come with a spiritual relationship, regardless of their faith.

I have seen people that have turned their lives around and say that Jail Ministry played a major role in making that happen. I feel that being a part of turning lives around and helping people free themselves from a troubled past to a brighter future is a very fulfilling way to serve. Serving on a Board with so many wonderful, like-minded people make me a better person. I am honored and privileged to be on the Jail Ministry Board. I am so glad that I felt personally called to this important and fulfilling role.

Marilyn Arndt

HONOR YOUR LOCAL CORRECTION OFFICERS

National Corrections Officer Week was May 1 to 7 this year. It is a week designated to recognize and honor the women and men who work in the field of corrections. Imagine a group of officers assigned to a neighborhood which was inhabited by no one but people who have been charged with crimes. Those officers are also unarmed, patrol on foot and heavily outnumbered. I think we would be very concerned for their safety.

Well, that is exactly what our Correction Officers have been assigned to do. I watch them treat our inmates with respect and do all they can to keep them healthy and safe. They live under constant alert and are often treated to verbal abuse, threats and worse. They risk their safety to keep our community safe, each other safe and inmates safe. I have truly been impressed by how hard they work and by the work they do here in the jail.

If you know someone who works in corrections, let them know how grateful you are for their service. If your faith background prays, please



Paula Konetchy

remember to pray for them and the safety of everyone in the jail (staff and inmates). Our ministry plans to honor them with a meal again this December.

Let us know if your faith community would like to join us in honoring them.

HOW THE LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY CHANGED MY LIFE

I am the spiritual leader of Congregation Sons of Abraham. I ascended to the pulpit of our La Crosse synagogue just three years ago. Continuing a relationship of many years between the jail ministry and our congregation was very important to me as I learned about our community relationships and obligations. Judaism is over 3000 years old and has survived many civilizations now long gone. Our Bible reminds us of our Divine obligation to welcome the stranger, to support the widow, the orphan and those who have less than we do. Perhaps our greatest foundational event was the liberation from slavery, and the Exodus from Egypt to freedom.



Rabbi Brian Serle

These mitzvot – important obligations to do good work – require that we help those who are imprisoned, with both psychological and physical support, help them regain their freedom, and help them as they rejoin society.

Soon after my rabbinical ordination, I began to visit a male inmate in the La Crosse Jail. We met weekly to discuss the Bible readings he was doing, as well as to talk about current events, and anything else that was on his mind. He expressed an interest in learning more about my faith, and to start eating Kosher food, which the jail gladly supplied. When he was transferred to New Lisbon Correctional Institution, we were able to continue corresponding using emails. I was so grateful to be able to keep in touch with this fine gentleman.

More recently, I was contacted by a female inmate. She wanted to learn more about our faith, and study Torah each week. We did so, using the Securus video visit software. Although there were connection problems with the software, we were both grateful to develop a trusting relationship,

as well as give her someone interesting to meet with each week. I am pleased to see she was finally released recently.

Another male inmate was also very appreciative about our constant contacts. After a few months, he was released to rehab, and we are staying in touch now that he's on the "outside."

Finally, I have been contacted by regular mail each week from an inmate at Jackson County Jail in Black River Falls. So far, this is only by snail mail, as they have no electronic access. I look forward to meeting his needs.

Members of our congregation have volunteered to lead monthly prayer services when requested by inmates. Chaplain Ann Wales of the La Crosse Jail Ministry has been exemplary in her dedication to making inmates' lives better and adding some grace and love to their lives. I am so grateful to be working under her leadership and direction.

Working with inmates on Bible study and pleasant conversation has given new meaning to my life as a member of the clergy here in La Crosse. We are always looking for ways to serve our fellow humans, and the Jail Ministry is one of those mitzvot – those good deeds – where there is an immediate appreciation and immediate reward. I am so grateful for all this.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

What is a faith community? When we refer to a faith community, we're talking about a community that has fellowship around a particular faith.



Ann Wales

So it could be Buddhism, it could be Christianity, it could be Islam, it could be Jewish, etc. Many different faith communities are celebrated and worshiped in La Crosse County.

Jail ministry seeks to serve all faith communities. I, as a chaplain, am required to do so as a part of my role

in the jail. But honestly, it's something that we all desire to do.

Having lived in the Middle East (Lebanon) for two years, I am very familiar with what it is like to be in the minority religiously. This was before the world-wide web existed, so I know what it's like when you can't access materials that help you grow in your faith. I also know what it's like to not have materials in a language you understand. Having had this experience, I work hard to help all the inmates pursue the faith of their choice. I also work hard to provide our inmates who are limited English-proficient with materials in their language.

Does this mean that I believe all these different faiths are true? No, I believe what I do because I believe it's true. I want to reflect my faith by being respectful of everyone's choice to believe what they believe is true.

Donations Needed

We need men's sweatpants. Sometimes when someone is arrested, they're not in proper clothing or their clothing is dirty. And sometimes they change size between the time they are arrested and released. Maybe they didn't have access to food before, or now they are spending their time working out. Whatever the reason, they now need something to wear that's comfortable and will easily fit.

Our library needs paperback books in Spanish and ones in large print, both fiction and non-fiction. We are also in need of dictionaries, legal dictionaries and Scrabble dictionaries. They prefer ones that are fairly current. For any other suggestions, please email the chaplain.

New drop off location: Coulee Life Church at N5861 County Rd SN, Onalaska. The times to drop off donations are Monday through Friday 9am to 6pm or Sunday from 9:30 to 10:00am right before the service. Thank you, Pastor Craig Coe, for providing this option.

Thankfully,
Ann Wales, Chaplain