

**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](http://Lacrossejailministry.org)  
(Support & Donate).



PRSTD STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
LA CROSSE WI  
PERMIT NO. 234

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



Volume 23 ■ Number 3 ■ Fall 2023

## Your gift is greatly needed!

Donations to our ministry can be made online at [lacrossejailministry.org](http://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" \_\_\_\_\_

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

## WE ARE ALL LEARNING

Assisting with the Buddhist meditation service has been a great experience for me, and I hope that making the service available to the inmates has been helpful to them as well.



Kathleen

For myself, I have repeatedly been both surprised and inspired by the inmates' interest in, and past and current experiences with, meditation practices, and their willingness and eagerness to share about and discuss meditation. Assumptions one might make about folks who are incarcerated are challenged by these positive interactions. This, in-and-of itself, is such a valuable teaching for me. As well, the inmates often

express insights they have gained, and desire for and dedication to personal growth and change through practice, which are very inspiring and are what I believe we all seek. Our shared humanity and shared "Buddha nature" are apparent.

Recently, an inmate who had attended several Buddhist services and was soon to be leaving the jail shared with us the profound impact meditation practice was having for him. He shared his aspiration to continue to practice as he moves through the next steps and the many changes and challenges ahead of him. He expressed much gratitude for the services. He also talked about some of the interesting and delightful connections and insights he experienced through meditation. I know both I and the other volunteer were very moved, and we both felt that we had learned as much from him as he had from our services.

Kathleen

### LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY 2023 BOARD MEMBERS

Harvey Witzenburg  
*President*  
Onalaska United Methodist Church

Rabbi Brian Serle  
*Vice-President*  
Congregation of Sons of Abraham

Nina Shephard, *Secretary*  
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Lynn Blakeley, *Treasurer*  
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

Dan Carlson, *Finance Chair*  
Cornerstone Community Church

Dee Paque, *Circles of Support*  
Roncalli Newman Church

Amy Jo Van Arsdall  
Cornerstone Community Church

Christine Magnuson  
St. Charles Catholic Church, Genoa, WI

Salley Kelsall  
Circles of Support

William Pretasky  
Hope Community Church

Karilyn Parrott  
Bridges United Methodist Church

Krysta Deede  
Onalaska United Methodist Church

# GREETED AT CHURCH

One morning last year, I was in church with my family. When the songs finished, a woman turned around and walked over to me. She was smiling and beaming at me. She said, hi! Remember me? You came into jail Bible study. She put her hands above her head, signifying a crown. I remember you told me we were princess daughters of the king. I'm here with my daughter.



Kimberlee Chavalas

Things are going so good for me now. Thank you for coming all the times you did to visit us. She was so happy, and I was so blessed.

Every time my teaching partner and I leave jail, we marvel at what God does to bring change in the room. I have seen women return to Bible study and share with us how they are encouraging each other in the Bible and in prayer. It is remarkable to see and hear. They have told us that they need hope. When we leave women come up to us and personally tell us, "Thank you for coming. You gave me hope. Please pray for me. I want things to be different." All we do is share the gospel in love. We remind each woman that she is made in the image of God and is so loved. She can be forgiven and free.

I serve because of the mercy and love of God. I am reminded that it could be me in there. It could be my son or daughter, brother or sister needing hope. I count it a joy and privilege to be part of this ministry.

Kimberlee Chavalas

# LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY NOW SERVING IN THE JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

I am so thankful for the opportunity to serve with the juvenile jail ministry program for La Crosse County. When I think of the place in life that some of these young people have found themselves in, well it just makes sense to bring them the truth and love of Jesus.

Jesus says in Mark 2:17, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Sharing that no matter where we may be in life, or what we may have done in the past, Jesus loves us and has made a way for us to be forgiven and enter into a right and real relationship with God....



Bonnar Family

well, that gives HOPE and I am thankful to bring that message to my new friends that I have met during my ministry time with La Crosse County. So, thank you for this opportunity!

Pastor Kevin Bonnar  
Kicking Bear Foundation

The La Crosse Jail Ministry currently has 2 Christian volunteers with another 2 getting set-up to start. We also have the Vice President of our Board, Rabbi Brian Serle, and a Buddhist Chaplain ready to serve as well if there is a need. We are grateful for all these volunteers starting this new ministry for us.

# DO YOU LIKE PLANNING EVENTS?

**We are looking for volunteers to be on a committee to plan an annual fundraising event for the jail ministry. We are thinking of a Tail Gate food tasting event for Fall of 2024. If you would be interested in serving, please email our president, Harvey Witzenburg at [president@lacrossejailministry.org](mailto:president@lacrossejailministry.org)**



# DONATIONS NEEDED

Please drop off all donations at Coulee Life Church in Onalaska (right next to Sand Lake Elementary on Sand Lake Road). The doors are open every weekday from 9 to 6.

- Paperback books – specifically we need James Patterson, Lee Child, Stuart Wood, and fiction books by authors who are black.
- Large print paperback books (*suspense and thriller*)
- Men's magazines
- Warm coats and boots

# WHY I CHOSE TO VOLUNTEER

Some of you may be familiar with me and my background but for those who are not, I began my law enforcement career in 1983 with the La Crosse County Sheriff's department. I served twelve years in the patrol division and had been promoted to sergeant. I requested to be transferred to the jail division as a sergeant so that I would gain experience working with inmates.



Steve Helgeson

I thoroughly enjoyed working with the inmates and three years later became the captain/jail administrator. One of the areas I was most proud to be a part of was jail ministry. Jail ministry serves so many important roles that are critical both to inmates and their families. The chaplain and volunteers are a safe and neutral forum where inmates can speak confidentially about a multitude of personal concerns.

I believe religious programming provides a necessary step toward changing their lives. The chaplain and volunteers facilitate religious worship in addition to spiritual guidance. For some inmates this is their first introduction to religion and for others it is an opportunity to return to practicing their beliefs.

I spent 12 years as the elected sheriff and retired after serving 35 years with the department. I missed working with inmates. I spoke with Chaplain Ann Wales regarding possibilities to volunteer. I feel fortunate to have been given this opportunity to assist with Sunday services, training and as an advisor.

Steve Helgeson

# JULY 4TH



The general population in the jail was given deodorant, powder, dial soap and a journal this last July 4th. The hygiene products are due to the generous contributions of our community and a grant provided by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. The journals came from a Project Proven teacher, Willa.



Willa Mackenzie

She works for Western Wisconsin Technical College and teaches many of the classes in the jail. She is respected and appreciated by all.

The people in the jail were very happy and expressed their gratitude. One stated, "I really want to say thank you very much for the hygiene items! I was very surprised. God is good and works in mysterious ways." Another one said, "Thank you for blessing us with the gifts of hygiene. Some people really need it in here and now people in the block smell much nicer."

The ministry also provided ice cream for the staff. Their hard work is appreciated as they work to keep the community, the inmates, and other staff safe.



Officers Laure Newcomb & Toby Berg

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

It is amazing to me the similarities I find between myself and those I serve.

I find myself so often producing examples in life that meet the specific need they have currently. I haven't been addicted to drugs or alcohol but have succumbed too often to a sweet tooth. I haven't been arrested for stealing but have made purchases when I should have not just because I wanted it now (wrong time, wrong price, on credit, etc.). I have not physically harmed someone in my life but have often regretted thoughts and words. I may not have been abused (physically, mentally, emotionally) by family members that I struggle to forgive, but I have struggled to forgive people in my life as I have been forgiven. I have been scared, stressed, and nervous about what is going to happen in my life. I have seen my life blow up and have lost my home, family members, and possessions. I may not have been sitting in a jail when I wondered what my purpose was, but I have wondered which led me to my faith.

It's good for me to reflect on how the same we all are here in jail. Through my faith, I am working to not see everyone as good or bad. I know I don't measure up to the standard of being perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect. I see us all as sheep, wandering lost or being found or having been found. I am praying that while I serve here, I am of help to my Shepherd who so loves these sheep.

Ann Wales, Chaplain



Ann Wales, Chaplain