

Our Mission:

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



Volume 26 ■ Number 1 ■ Winter 2025

SECOND CHANCES

Take a few minutes to watch "Second Chances" on our website. You will find out what goes on inside a person's head as they make choices leading to jail and ultimately find recovery and wholeness. The riveting stories are told by formerly incarcerated persons, Joannie and "Sam" (a nameless young man). Here are a few quotes:



Joannie: A person's fall doesn't happen overnight. It comes from wanting to live on the edge of life, getting drunk a few more times a week or taking

more of the medication the doctor gave you. The drugs made me feel wide awake, but it comes with a price.

Sam: Drugs lied to me. They told me it would be a great life. I made bad decisions. It doesn't go from zero to 60. Worse decisions led to catastrophic ones.

Joannie: My partner was charged with selling drugs. I lived with him. Suddenly I was incarcerated. It was my first time being in jail.

Sam: My darkest time was being homeless, walking the streets of La Crosse after being kicked out of shelters. I was looking for alcohol to drown my pain.

You can find the link to their stories at [La Crosse Jail Ministry.org](http://LaCrosseJailMinistry.org) on the opening page just below Our Mission: **Second Chances** (10.37 minutes)

LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY CURRENT NEEDS:

- Shoes (*all sizes*) – gently used
- Sports Bras - new
- Underwear for women - new
- Puzzles – gently used
- Current Paperbacks – gently used
- Magazines – gently used

- Magazine Subscriptions - Skateboarding (*Thrasher*), Sports Illustrated, Men's Health, The Week, People, Us, Wired, Pets, National Geographic, and All Recipes magazines can be sent to Jail Chaplain at 333 Vine Street, La Crosse WI 54601

We have a drop-off location at **Coulee Life Church** (N5761 County Rd SN next to Sand Lake Elementary in Onalaska). There is a bench inside the first set of doors and donations can be dropped there during the week from 9 to 6. In the event the doors are locked, please email infor@couleelife.church or call 608-783-4770.

LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY 2025 BOARD MEMBERS

Chris Magnuson
President

St. Charles Catholic Church in Genoa
President@lacrossejailministry.org

Elliot Bujan
Vice-President

Roncalli Newman Church

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

Sister Nina Shephard, *Secretary*
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Dee Paque, *Circles of Support*
Roncalli Newman Church

Karilyn Parrott
Bridges United Methodist Church

Martin Gunderson
Retired Jail Officer

Mary Atkinson
Catholic

Jay McHenry
Coulee Life

Sandra Hoesser
(San Damiano Chap & St. Rose Convent)

Pastor Laura Wright
First Congregational Church



VOLUNTEERING

Are you looking for a way to volunteer for jail ministry that doesn't involve providing a study or service?

There are lots of different opportunities to get involved with La Crosse Jail Ministry including the following:

- Jail Ministry Board Member
- Collecting clothing donations
- Collecting library donations
- Helping plan events
- Serving at events

- Putting up posters
- Tracking information on community services
- Joining a group to help mentor someone getting out of prison or jail
- Creating a group of people from your faith community to help mentor someone getting out of prison or jail.

If you would like to get involved, go to the volunteer page on our website and fill out the form or you can call the chaplain (608-785-9772).

JAIL MINISTRY 2024 BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers	98
Number of services	104
Number of studies.....	160
Video Visits by Spiritual Advisers	196
Circles of Support groups	4
Chaplain assisted phone calls.....	223
Chaplain visits.....	290

Supplies Given:

Address Book	537
Calendar	218
Drawing Paper (4).....	212
Embossed Envelopes (2)	1723
Folder	545
Glasses	199
Hair Ties (2).....	557
Legal Pad	662
Manilla Envelope	571
Pencil with Eraser.....	697
Playing Cards.....	486
New Spiritual Study Books for those going to Prison.....	23
Rosary	29

This list does not include the number of puzzles, games, books, and magazines handed out this year. It also does not include all the

coats, shoes, boots, hats, backpacks, gloves, underwear, socks, shirts, and sweatpants given out. We are so grateful to all of you that have so faithfully donated and contributed to our supplies. We are especially grateful to Franciscan Perpetual Sisters of Adoration for their very generous support.

DECEMBER 2024

This December we were also able to give everyone in general population deodorant, a moisturizing stick, lip balm, moisturizing soap, a pastry, a Raman, Cheetos and a vanilla cappuccino. We were also able to provide games and puzzles. Thank you for a generous grant provided by First Congregational Church and a grant from Gundersen Health System that made this possible.

Thank you too to all who donated coats, sweatpants, shirts, gloves, mittens, hats, socks,

WHY I CHOSE TO VOLUNTEER

The reason I decided to volunteer is because I have been on their side of things. I used to be the girl in and out of jail. I was on the run, and I was battling drug addiction.



Emily Parker

Eight years ago, I was sent to the hole in jail for 20 days and was handed a Bible to pass time. I began reading it and, in that cell, I decided to give my life over to Christ. Having had my life completely transformed, I decided that sharing the hope that I found is what I've been called to do.

How long have you volunteered and how do you volunteer? I've had the privilege of going in to do bible studies with the ladies for about 2 years.

What makes it rewarding volunteering for Jail Ministry? It's rewarding to see lives changed and to see heart transformations in these women.

Emily Parker

Horizon Christian Fellowship

underwear, shoes and boots. We will be able to give those getting out of jail a warm start. Many of you also donated puzzles, playing cards, paperbacks, magazines, etc. All your items help to decrease stress, create social interactions and increase reading skills.

Lastly, in December, 73 donations were processed for Jail Ministry. Our chaplain could not serve in the jail, bus tokens could not be given to those getting out, haircuts and beard trims could not be given and many of our supplies for our inmates could not be purchased without your donations. We are grateful, honored, and humbled by your support!

WHY I SERVE

LA CROSSE JAIL MINISTRY



Elliot Bujan

Serving at the jail ministry is a deeply motivating experience fulfilling multiple personal and social purposes.

This is an opportunity that transcends spiritual growth, shows compassion and empathy all the way to opportunities to make a difference at the social and community circles. The extent of my experiences involves various roles ranging from actively participating in Circles of Support, sharing my faith and empathy to incarcerated individuals through video visits and as a board member to ensure the mission of the ministry lives on.

Circles of support recognizes that everyone recently released from jail (*core member*) deserves dignity, respect, our encouragement and support to find their purpose in life. Amazingly, I've learned quite a bit about myself. Video visits are a way for me to live out my faith in a tangible way by spending time with incarcerated individuals sharing scripture, and hope. Lastly, fulfilling the role as a board member is about working with an extremely dedicated group of individuals with a great passion for the good of others. It is an exceptional opportunity, and I am proud to be a part of this organization. I would encourage you to find out more about the La Crosse Jail Ministry and get involved.

Elliot Bujan

Roncalli Newman Church, La Crosse, WI

**FORMER RESIDENTS OF THE
JAIL GAVE OUR MINISTRY
\$189.00 IN 2024!**

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

My prayer as a chaplain in our jail is that whatever I do for residents, it is done with a servant attitude and is helpful to them. I recently received a message in jail from a resident thanking me for spending the time talking and praying with them. Residents often thank me, but rarely do they take the time to also send me a message of thanks. It sure was encouraging.



Ann Wales

I've been encouraged a great deal these past couple of weeks. For example, I hand out a lot of spiritual material for many different faiths. I often wonder, will this make a difference? I happened to meet with a resident the other day who has been reading the Bible, is in a Bible reading group in his block, is attending church services and Bible studies. I asked him about his journey. He told me that when he came to jail last year,

he read a comic book version of the Bible called, "The Action Bible". He then read it again. After reading it the second time, he felt he understood enough that he could now move on to an actual Bible. He is amazed at how much he understands. He gets out next week and has a plan for what church to attend to continue his learning. If you pray, please pray for him. Currently, 3 jail blocks also have people gathering to read and study the Bible. It is so exciting. They could use your prayers too.

Please take the time to read the interview with Emily, one of our volunteers. Her story also encouraged me to keep on collecting and handing out spiritual material.

More encouraging news is this month we have added four more volunteers who will provide video visits to spiritually mentor our residents. These volunteers are serving or have served in our jail ministry. They have a heart for this population and desire to help them grow in their faith. It is another tool to help build those connections to faith communities. These volunteers are helping us build bridges to brighter futures for the people we serve.

Ann Wales, Chaplain

APPRECIATION OF JAIL STAFF

The job of working in the jail is very hard. Recently a person who witnessed it firsthand wrote the following to jail staff:

"You are genuinely kind, caring, intelligent people who serve the most difficult population in La Crosse County under the most high-pressure circumstances. You handle the worst of the worst situations as quickly, professionally, and humanely as possible. You are expected to be EMTs, therapists, IT techs,



investigators, personal caretakers, administrative assistants, and even parents in some cases, while also maintaining the safety and security of over one hundred people. And despite how mentally and physically draining it is, you still come back the next day to do it all over again."

LA CROSSE COUNTY JAIL MINISTRY

P.O. Box 2675

La Crosse, WI 54602-2675

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
La Crosse, WI
Permit #588

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).



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