





WISCONSIN FAITH VOICES FOR JUSTICE

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STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

Executive Director - Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

Communications Consultant -Tiffany Ellis Hudson

Tech Support - Cierra Nietzel

Intern – Christine Becerra

Volunteer Bookkeeper - Karen Turino

Wisconsin Interfaith Voter

Engagement Campaign Organizer -Rhonda Lindner

Development Associate – Will Baynard

Development Consultants - Dawn Berney, Juliet Page, Matthew Greene, and Sarah Gilday

BOARD MEMBERS

President - Reverend Larry Sexe

Secretary - Vicki Berenson

Rabbi Marc Berkson

Reverend Nick Utphall

Professor Charles Cohen

Reverend Selena Fox

Reverend Willie Brisco

Fatou Ceesay Reverend Karla Renee Garcia

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

t is with mixed emotions that I write this letter to announce the end of my time as Executive Director of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice. When I helped organize Wisconsin faith leaders' response to Governor Walker's Act 10 and his first state budget proposal, I had no idea that I was embarking on a journey that would lead to the creation of this organization.

Over these last 13 years, we have grown from an ad hoc, loose organization with no budget and an all-volunteer steering committee, to an independent, non-profit organization with over 1300 members and supporters, a growing budget, and an agenda that includes workers' rights, immigration justice, voting rights, antiracism, LGBTQ+ rights, affordable housing, health equity, and building bridges among faiths.

I have been deeply blessed in the amazing people that I have been privileged to work with. Our board members, committees, staff, and volunteers have been incredibly dedicated and passionate advocates for justice. I am incredibly grateful to those who have joined together to create our various projects and programs and to all those who have given of their time, energy, and money to serve the people of Wisconsin with us. We have also been blessed in our organizational partners, who can be found on page 2.

I am grateful to all of you, for your support, for your advocacy, for your commitment to working across faiths, and for your passion for justice. I know that the work of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice will continue without me, because all of you are the true backbone of our organization. The board is incredibly dedicated and committed to the work.

I cannot thank you all enough for the last thirteen years. It has been an incredible, gratifying, sometimes difficult, but always inspiring journey!

Faithfully,

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis Executive Director



WFVJ MEMBER CONGREGATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Advent Lutheran Church Beth Israel Center Bethany United Methodist Church Bethel Lutheran Church, Madison General Board of Church and Society Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Church Christ Presbyterian Church Church Women United in Madison, Inc. **Circle Sanctuary** Congregation Shaarei Shamayim First Baptist Church, Madison First Unitarian Society of Madison Social Justice Ministries First United Methodist Church & Society Mission Team Holy Wisdom Monastery Just Dane Lake Edge Lutheran Church Lake Edge United Church of Christ Mission Team Madison Friends Meeting (Quaker) Memorial United Church of Christ - Fitchburg Middleton Community UCC Faith in Action Team North Central Wisconsin Worship Group (Quaker) Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ People's United Methodist Church Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ Snowflower Sangha St. Johns Lutheran Church Still Point Zen Center Temple Beth El

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order of EVENTS

7:00	Registration, Refreshments, and Music BEN WEGER AND FRIENDS
7:15	Opening Prayer and Welcome
	REVEREND NANCY B. CHILDRESS,
	Assisting Pastor of Pastoral Care, FUMC
	REVEREND LARRY SEXE, Board President, WFVJ
7:20	Song
	BEN WEGER AND FRIENDS
7:25	Appreciations and Speaker Introduction
	RABBI BONNIE MARGULIS, Executive Director, WFVJ
	REVEREND SELENA FOX, Board Member, WFVJ
7:30	Keynote Speech
	RACHEL LASER, President and CEO, Americans
	United for Separation of Church and State
8:00	Voice for Justice Award Presentation and Remarks
	Presenter
	REVEREND WILLIE BRISCO, Board Member, WFVJ
	Awardees
	SHERRIE TUSSLER, The Hunger Task Force
	JOHN CHISHOLM, Milwaukee District Attorney
8:15	Speech
	THE HONORABLE MANDELA BARNES
8:25	Final Remarks and Thank Yous
0.23	REVEREND LARRY SEXE
	RABBI BONNIE MARGULIS
8:30	Closing Song
	BEN WEGER AND FRIENDS



June 10, 2024

Greetings Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice Annual Celebration Attendees,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2024 Annual Celebration hosted by Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice (WFVJ).

Since its inception, WFVJ has remained committed to social justice through interfaith partnerships and faith-based programming focused on uplifting and empowering underserved and marginalized communities. Comprised of faith leaders of various identities with unique experiences and diverse backgrounds, WFVJ works to dismantle barriers to justice and dignity by providing housing support and resources to protect human and LGBTQ rights, advance worker protections and health equity, and promote active civic engagement and participation, among other important initiatives. Through several programs and partnerships, the WFVJ has helped to move Wisconsin forward and has played key roles in the protection of absentee ballot drop boxes and enacting the fair maps for Wisconsin I was proud to sign into law.

WFVJ continues to serve as a steadfast champion for the educational, social, and economic equality of all Wisconsinites, and your support of their mission tonight is greatly appreciated.

Like WFVJ, the state of Wisconsin recognizes that our shared values of celebrating diversity, advancing inclusivity, and ensuring equity are critical to shaping the future we want for Wisconsin families and communities.

I hope you all have a wonderful evening, and I wish everyone in attendance a wonderful celebration.

Sincerely,

Tony Eners

Tony Evers Governor



Office of the Mayor

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor City-County Building, Room 403 210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Madison, WI 53703 Phone: (608) 266-4611 | Fax: (608) 267-8671 <u>mayor@cityofmadison.com</u> <u>cityofmadison.com</u>

June 2024

Friends -

Thank you for coming to celebrate Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice.

WFVJ has supported thousands of residents over the years when they critically needed a lifeline, be it for housing, health, immigration services, or other basic needs. WFVJ's intentional focus on building interfaith bridges, improving racial equity and social justice, voting and workers' rights is highly respected in our community. I see the value that Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice brings to our community and the ways in which they help realize the City of Madison's vision of an inclusive and thriving Madison.

Congratulations to the 2024 Voice for Justice awardees Sherrie Tussler and John Chisholm. I thank them for their work to make our communities and our state a better place.

Madison is a better city because of the work of organizations such as Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice. Their ability to connect and empower faith communities to work for the common good and a life of dignity for everyone is truly special. Their human-centered approach and advocacy to ensure individuals and families and families thrive socially and economically is worth noting.

On behalf of all Madison residents, businesses, and organizations, I want to thank Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice for their work, and you for supporting them. We are proud you are a part of the Madison community and grateful for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Satya Rholles-Conway

Mayor

MEET OUR SPEAKERS AND AWARDEES

Thank you so much to our speakers and awardees! We are honored to have you with us this evening.



THE HONORABLE MANDELA BARNES

t. Governor Barnes is an alumnus of Alabama A&M University. After his time there, he worked for various political campaigns and in the city of Milwaukee mayor's office, eventually becoming an organizer for Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope, a Milwaukee-based interfaith coalition that advocates social justice. He also worked for the State Innovation Exchange, a national progressive public policy organization.

In 2012, at the age of 25, Lt. Governor Barnes was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, where he served two terms. His tenure in the State Assembly

included serving as Chair of the Legislature's Black and Latino Caucus and becoming a recognized leader on progressive economic policies and gun violence prevention legislation.

As Lt. Governor, Mandela worked closely with Governor Evers to help Wisconsin recover from the pandemic and served as the chair of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change. In his historic U.S. Senate campaign, he broke state fundraising records and came one point away from unseating a two-term incumbent in Wisconsin's closest Senate election in 100 years.

Former State of Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor and State Representative. 2021 Fortune Magazine 40 Under 40, 2022 Farmers Union 'Friend of the Family Farmer' award recipient, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice 'Voice for Justice' award recipient, and Shepherd Express 'Most Beloved Politician' award recipient. Proudly connecting communities all across Wisconsin to move forward together, the former Lt. Governor is the founder of The Long Run, a PAC dedicated to support diverse and groundbreaking pro-democracy candidates around the country who are helping to flip critical swing districts and bring more working-class voices to the table. These include young candidates, candidates of color, LGBTQ+ candidates, and candidates from working class backgrounds who are breaking the mold of what leadership looks like. ◆

RACHEL LASER KEYNOTE SPEAKER

R achel Laser became president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State in February 2018. She is the organization's first non-Christian and female leader in its 76-year history. Rachel is a lawyer, advocate, and strategist who has dedicated her career to making our country more inclusive. In her position at Americans United, Rachel oversees the organization's work to protect freedom of conscience for all and ensure religion is not used to justify discrimination. Prior to coming to AU, Rachel worked as an educator on white privilege and racism and held positions as deputy director of the Religious Action



Center of Reform Judaism, director of the Culture Program at Third Way and senior counsel at the National Women's Law Center (NWLC). Rachel is a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago Law School. She is a former board member of NARAL Pro-Choice America.



JOHN CHISHOLM VOICE FOR JUSTICE AWARDEE

John Chisholm is the District Attorney of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. John has 25 years of prosecutorial experience and spent much of his early time as a line prosecutor trying to reduce gun related violent crime in Milwaukee. John believes strongly in partnering with academic and philanthropic institutions committed to helping justice systems better understand and address the complex challenges of racial and economic inequity in major urban centers, factors that heavily influence rates of violence.

SHERRIE TUSSLER VOICE FOR JUSTICE AWARDEE

A s Chief Executive Officer, Sherrie leads Hunger Task Force as the key decision-maker and strategist. She is a lobbyist and staunch advocate. Sherrie earned a BS in Management and a Doctorate in Humane Letters from Cardinal Stritch University and has led Hunger Task Force since 1997. Sherrie is retiring in June 2024. On announcingher retirement, Sherrie said, "Working at Hunger Task Force has been the opportunity of a lifetime. This job has allowed me to give a voice to people who aren't normally heard, create equity in the various ways charitable food gets to people and to influence the public policies that provide government help to people who don't have enough money for food." ◆



DONATE NOW!

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice rises up and takes action as good allies to our friends and neighbors in need. We could not fulfill the call to carry out this critical work if not for you!



www.wisconsinfaithvoicesfor justice.org/donate.html

CREATING BELOVED COMMUNITY

To create and maintain a healthy, loving community, we must support, first and foremost, the health of its members. Wisconsin ites deserve advocates who attend to the health of their minds and bodies, who promote safety and equity. To that end, and recognizing the intersection of health equity and racism, WFVJ combines health equity activism with anti-racism efforts in our *Creating Beloved Community* initiatives.

A NTI-RACISM EFFORTS Racism and white supremacy can only flourish if people of goodwill stay silent. As people of faith, we can be an effective voice for equity and justice for people of all ethnicities, sexual orientation, gender expression, abilities, ages, and faiths in our community. We celebrate the differences that bring variety to our world, and we lift up every voice in the hopes of creating an equitable future.

From familiar commitments to new challenges, this year has been filled with action. Rabbi Margulis continued her commitment to serving on the Executive Committee and Freedom Fund Dinner committee of the NAACP of Dane County, where she made connections that help bring our community together. Our ongoing partnership with the Urban League of Greater Madison continued, including when tabling at the Urban League's annual Unity Picnic on July 22. Rabbi Margulis spoke at MICAH's launch of their We All Belong campaign, which was designed to counter the spread of white Christian nationalism. Our own presentation on the rise of white Christian nationalism and the intersection with antisemitism is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=izDHBXcCMaU. WFVJ has already given this presentation at several different locations.

We also weigh in on national concerns that affect us all. When the United States Supreme Court banned affirmative action last year, we issued a statement condemning their decision, and reiterate our commitment to equity, compassion, and diversity.

Our newest project is a podcast called **The Talk**. This podcast, a partnership with **100 Black Men**, features African American and Jewish teens discussing their experiences growing up in a largely white Christian centered nation. The insightful youths expounded on a range of fascinating topics spanning five episodes, all of which are currently available for viewing online at www.youtube.com/@wisconsinfaithvoicesforjus2410/ videos. A launch event is to be scheduled soon, and a second "season" has already been given the green light, thanks to generous funding from the Jewish Federation of Madison.

TAKING A FAITHFUL STAND FOR EQUITY (TFSE)

Taking a Faithful Stand for Equity is a working group that gathers for monthly webinars featuring speakers on a variety of topics related to equity and state-wide organizing. This year's webinar topics have included the following:

- The shared revenue bill that will affect how funding flows from the state to local governments
- Representative Francesca Hong's proposed legislation to mandate the teaching of AAPI history in schools (in response to which we sent a sign-on letter from WFVJ, WISDOM, MICAH, Wisconsin Conference UCC, and the Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC), to the Senate Education Committee in support of this bill). The bill passed!



- Renowned Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings' presentations on Critical Race Theory and the backlash against DEI
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) American Indian Studies Consultant David J. O'Connor's seminaron the Native American history and culture curriculum taught in public schools according to Act 31

TFSE webinars are available for viewing at www.youtube.com/channel/UCXtgiW9rGRAOKzT0 www.youtube.com/channel/UCXtgiW9rGRAOKzT0 www.youtube.com/channel/UCXtgiW9rGRAOKzT0 www.youtube.com/channel/UCXtgiW9rGRAOKzT0

In one important webinar sponsored by TFSE, WIVEC, the Wisconsin Public Education Network, and TFSE partnered to host speakers from Law Forward, FREE, and the Wisconsin Public Education Network on the constitutional amendments, school referenda and school board races, and What's On You Ballot. We hosted this webinar in March, and it is available for viewing at the following link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuIWZxwn03w&zt=ls.

To help us stay informed of troubling events in lawmaking around the state, TFSE introduced a statewide Legislative Tracking Project. Three volunteers have formed a leadership team in a pilot project intended to track Wisconsin legislation that addresses equity issues. Some key legislation includes a bill to ban public schools and libraries from carrying materials that depict nudity, sexuality, violence, etc. and a bill to ban the teaching of any topics that say that one race or gender is superior to another - a thinly veiled ban on teaching Critical Race Theory. Refreshingly, a bill we support has also been introduced that will mandate teaching AAPI history in public schools. The Legislative Tracking project will follow the progress of these and other bills and alert the TFSE participants when action is needed. Seventy volunteers have signed up to help.

FAITHFUL ACTION FOR A HEALTHY WISCONSIN

At WFVJ we believe that health is a right, not a privilege. Faithful Action for a Healthy Wisconsin is



NORA HERNANDEZ AND KRISTIN WALLACE at the Watertown Health Equity Workshop

a joint initiative of the WCC and WFVJ. We organize clergy and faith leaders of all faiths across Wisconsin to advocate for equitable public health policies.

This year, we focused our efforts on a workshop we piloted in Watertown. Partnering with the WCC and a group of clergy in Greater Watertown, we arranged and presented a Watertown Health Equity Workshop that we called Building a Healthy Community. On February 4, 2024, 22 participants gathered at Ebenezer Moravian Church to learn about the social determinants of health and the importance of changing the narrative away from one of personal responsibility to a more communal and policy-centered approach. They learned to take the social determinants of health into consideration as major drivers of health disparities and health outcomes. The morning presentations can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zft3eojyXwg. We were supported in this endeavor by a generous grant from the Greater Watertown Health Foundation; the workshop would have been impossible without them. With further funding, we hope to bring similar workshops to other parts of the state.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee MICAH WFVJ Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ Wisconsin Council of Churches WISDOM

PARTNERS

Jewish Community Relations Council – Jewish Federation of Milwaukee. Wisconsin Council of Rabbis

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

One of the most precious rights of the inhabitants of a democracy is the right to vote. Sadly, according to *Fair Vote*, the last presidential election saw a turnout of just over *58%* of the *Voting Eligible Population* (VEP). WFVJ works to support and encourages this civic power, as well as all other avenues of participation in our republic.

ne of our freedoms in America is the right to speak and to advocate on behalf of our beliefs and ideals. WFVJ has made it our mission to train our allies in direct advocacy through letter writing and lobbying. Our advocacy workshop, Moving from Charity to Justice: A Workshop in Faithful Advocacy, is aimed at instructing participants on writing opinion pieces and letters to the editor to raise awareness of the issues we care about. Through these letters, one personal voice may sway hundreds of readers and be heard across the state or even the nation. This year, we have given this workshop at The Crossing (UW campus Ministries), Temple Beth El Madison, and First Congregational UCC in Appleton

Rabbi Margulis was honored to be asked to lead a webinar for WISDOM's School of Democracy on Faith and Civic Engagement, with a focus on how to do interfaith organizing. On February 19, 2024, she was thrilled to attend Governor Evers' signing of legislation creating Wisconsin's new legislative maps (www.bit.ly/4aPTjYB). This is part of our ongoing work as part of the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition.

WISCONSIN INTERFAITH VOTER ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN (WIVEC)

Wisconsin is currently one of the most gerrymandered states in the union. We work to end gerrymandering and safeguard every citizen's sacred right to vote. Our **Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign** works to promote participation by all Wisconsinites in our election processes, particularly those whose lives are most affected by public policy and whose voices are least often heard. WIVEC is led by **Rhonda Lindner**, its **Statewide Interfaith Organizer**, who is tireless in her efforts to ensure that every Wisconsinite's vote is counted.

As 2024 is a crucial election year and Wisconsin is a key state, our activities in the last twelve months have ramped up to meet the current challenges to our democracy. We maintain ongoing participation in the Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition (WVRC), attending weekly meetings and serving on several subcommittees, cognizant of our role as the only faithbased organization with WVRC. WFVJ also recently joined another body, United for Democracy (UFD), who are dedicated to promoting ethics on the U.S. Supreme Court and to court reform. WIVEC this year has launched a new partnership with UW-Madison campus ministries, including The Crossing, Pres House, the new Center for Interfaith Dialogue, and Hillel to bring civic engagement programming to their students. We are grateful to the Madison Jewish Federation for their generous support of this program to organize students for voter registration and get-outthe-vote events this fall.

Along with Souls to the Polls, we tabled at the Milwaukee Juneteenth celebration on June 19, 2023, and a month later took part in a day-long meeting with Election Protection and the WVRC to gear up for this year's election season. We organized congregations around the state to send postcards to low propensity voters to remind them of the upcoming primary, and on February 28, 2024, we presented our Voter Engagement Training with the Center for Interfaith Dialogue and other invited campus ministries.

On May 29, 2024, Lindner was invited to speak on a panel at the VoteRiders National Text Bank. Along with former Senator Russ Feingold, she spoke of the need to protect voting rights and to ensure the administration of free and fair elections. She outlined the three areas of WIVEC's voter engagement initiatives: Voter Registration, Voter Education, and Voter Protection, and invited all Wisconsin attendees to the statewide WIVEC Pray with Your Feet, Pray with Your Vote launch, planned for June 20, 2024. The kick-off event will feature Reverend David Hart as our keynote speaker and will take place

simultaneously in four cities: Milwaukee, Kenosha, Madison, and Appleton.

On September 19, 2023, Rhonda Lindner organized five different National Voter Registration Day throughout the day in the Milwaukee area, including a program at area high schools to educate students on the need for voter IDs and an evening online program with the League of Women Voters and others to provide information on voter registration.

In May, WIVEC has held two webinars: the first was to show the newly updated and revised documentary from Brave New Films "Suppressed and Sabotaged: The Right to Vote." At that webinar we also heard from All Voting is Local-Wisconsin Director Sam Liebert on voter suppression efforts and how to combat them in Wisconsin (find the video at https://bit.ly/3yHBhKR). The second webinar was on organizing in congregations. On this occasion, Rabbi Margulis gave a presentation on the faith roots of social justice and spoke about the 501c3 do's and don'ts in an election year. Lindner presented an overview of the WIVEC program and how WIVEC can help congregations engage in the important work to get out the vote in November (this video can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAkaea[ISYg).

We are grateful to All Voting is Local and Interfaith America for funding our Poll Chaplain Project. The presence of faith leaders and clergy at polling places has been shown to calm voters and reassure them that the faith community is there to help protect their right to vote. As an interfaith organization devoted to civic justice, we feel that this program is a perfect contribution to upholding the strength of our democracy. We are currently hiring interns and parttime organizers for Madison, Milwaukee, and outstate locations. We hope to have 50 chaplains at polling places around the state this November!

This year has seen, and will continue to see, harmful anti-democracy referenda on our ballots. To raise awareness of two such referenda that were on the ballot in April, we commissioned the composition of a series of articles explaining the constitutional amendments from different faith perspectives. We hope that these will speak to the members of different faith communities and help them to place their civic duty to vote in a faith context. We recruited Presbyterian, Jewish, and Buddhist, leaders to work on articles, which are available to read at https://bit.ly/4c3ODPU.

100 WOMEN ON THE MOVE

100 Women on the Move is an initiative that brings together 100 women across race, faith, and age to mobilize their communities to get out the vote. It is a partnership of Souls to the Polls, MICAH, WIVEC, and Tikkun Ha-Ir, and is led by Anita Johnson, Brenda Jackson, and Rhonda Lindner, three veteran Milwaukee organizers.

The inaugural meeting of 100 Women on The Move was held on March 7, 2024, and saw 70 women unite to learn and plan activities to get out the vote through their congregations and communities. We appreciate the support of the **Giving Circle** toward this effort!

WIVEC STAFF

Peter Bakken (retired August 2023) – Co-lead Reverend Breanna Illéné (WCC) – Co-lead Bonnie Margulis – Co-lead Rhonda Lindner – Interfaith Organizer

PARTNERS

ACLU-Wisconsin All Voting is Local Beth Hillel Temple in Kenosha Christ Presbyterian Church in Madison Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun Fellowship Jewish Federation of Madison Jewish Federation of Milwaukee League of Women Voters Milwaukee Zen Center and Buddhist Peace NAACP of Dane County and Milwaukee Souls to the Polls Supermarket Legends Temple Beth El in Madison The Disability Votes Coalition The Urban League of Greater Madison The Wisconsin Voter Rights Coalition Tikkun Ha-Ir Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee Voces de la Frontera Voter ID Coalition

LGBTQ+ JUSTICE

In the wake of recent attacks on LGBTQ+ lives – book banning, multiple anti-trans bathroom bills, a major push to curtail access to gender-affirming care – WFVJ considers it our moral duty to stand strong with our queer siblings. We continue to fight for the rights of all Wisconsinites to give and receive love and to be accepted and embraced fully by our state.

his past year, our actions have focused on supporting the LGBTQ+ community through co-sponsoring events meant to lift up and celebrate our friends' lives and loves and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights with our state legislature.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBERANCE

Last November, for the third year in a row, WFVJ annual Transgender Day of presented its Remembrance Interfaith Service. Hosted bv Memorial Church of Christ and attended by over 150 people, this service is dedicated to the memory of all our transgender siblings who lost their lives to violence or suicide in the previous year. Transgender Day of Remembrance is celebrated annually across the nation; it is a chance for members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies alike to gather for mourning and support. Our 2023 service was honored to be sponsored by 24 congregations and six organizations. We were also proud to have raised almost \$1000 for donation to Fair Wisconsin (which works to protect LGBTQ+ Wisconsinites), Proud Theater (Wisconsin's queer youth theater), and GSAFE (which works to protect LGBTQ+ students). You can video of service watch the the at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGERQIDZgUQ.

INTERFAITH PRIDE SERVICE

After the heartwarming reception received by our first ever Interfaith Pride Service, we were once again grateful for the full turnout at our second year. Bethany United Methodist Church hosted this time around and welcomed community members for a celebration in song and unity. We heard words from clergy and advocates on the subjects of love, affirmation, support, and, sadly, concern for the state of LGBTQ+ rights in Wisconsin and in the United States. We called on each other to continue, each and every day, to lift up the rights of every member of our community, and we reaffirmed our commitment to this cause. During the service we created a mural of our hands, each containing a message of support. The mural was on display at Bethany UMC for a few weeks and then traveled to First Congregational UCC in Watertown for a few more. It is available for display in any of our congregations upon request. The service itself is available to be viewed here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMsKVY2QZDM&t=19 22s.

PRIDE MONTH

Representatives from WFVJ attended several Pride events last summer. To kick off **Pride Month**, many of our clergy members attended the annual Pride flag raising ceremony at the capitol. Since 2019, Governor Evers has ordered the **Rainbow Pride Flag** to fly over the **Wisconsin State Capitol**. This year, for the first time, the flag that was raised was the **Progress Pride Flag**, which was created to symbolize the inclusion of marginalized communities within the LGBTQ community, such as LGBTQ individuals of color and the transgender community, as well as those who are living with and who have been lost to HIV/AIDS.

Later in the summer, we tabled during the annual outreach Madison Pride Festival, as we have done for many years now. This year, for the second year in a row, we also attended the Watertown Pride event, which sadly was disrupted by neo-Nazis and religious protesters. We helped to document the protesters and advised Watertown clergy in their organizing efforts to promote a welcoming and inclusive Watertown. Despite the intimidation tactics of the neo-Nazi group



Blood Tribe, the Watertown Pride celebrants stood tall and would not be discouraged. We must follow their lead. Happy Pride Month!

ADVOCACY

Despite the efforts of our allies and partners, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation continues to be introduced across the country. On June 6, 2023, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) announced a national State of Emergency for LGBTQ+ people in the United States. In response, we wrote an open letter to Wisconsin to raise awareness of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ bills being introduced around the country, including in Wisconsin. Twenty-eight congregations and 192 clergy and people of faith signed the letter, which was released at a press conference held at First Baptist Church in Madison on June 28, 2023. The letter can be read at <u>bit.ly/4e0NdaU</u>.

As some of the legislation alluded to above is being introduced here in Wisconsin, WFVJ participates in a coalition led by Fair Wisconsin that tracks antiLGBTQ+ legislation, including, for example, anti-trans proposals aimed at barring children from playing sports on teams of their identified gender. One of the bills that has been introduced would have a chilling effect on doctors providing gender-affirming care to minors. To combat this initiative, we submitted testimony to the Assembly Committee of the Judiciary. To read more about AB 502, visit bit.ly/3VjHyW5. We mobilized clergy and faith leaders to testify at hearings at the capital on this and other anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ rights bills throughout the year. On October 12, 2023, we sent an open letter to the media calling upon our legislators to protect LGBTQ+ rights and to oppose all anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. The letter was signed by 27 faith organizations and congregations and 118 clergy and faith leaders. We will continue to monitor Wisconsin's actions regarding its LGBTQ+ community and do our utmost to advocate for gender affirming care, equity, and affirmation. \blacklozenge

INTERFAITH COMMUNITY BUILDING

WFVJ is dedicated to building bridges between faith communities, to building interfaith understanding and cooperation, and to creating a community that celebrates and embraces our differences while coming together for action on areas of mutual concern.

FVJ sponsors two interfaith clergy councils: the Greater Milwaukee Faith Voices for Justice, and the Multifaith Coalition of South-Central Wisconsin. Clergy and faith leaders come together monthly for mutual support, learning, action, and understanding. Members are Jewish, Christian, Unitarian, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha'i, Quaker, and Nature Spirituality, among others. Activities are targeted to the needs of each community.

THE GREATER MILWAUKEE FAITH VOICES FOR JUSTICE

Last August, the Greater Milwaukee Faith Voices for Justice organized an interfaith picnic at Underwood Baptist Church in Wauwatosa. It was a beautiful cap to an eventful summer. Almost 30 faith leaders gathered, representing Jewish, Christian, Catholic, Sikh, Muslim traditions. We took the opportunity to share with each other our stories of our first times engaging in social justice work, and then heard presentations from several of our partner organizations on their current programs and initiatives. Partners included the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Tikkun Ha-Ir, the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, the Presbytery of Milwaukee, MICAH, and the Jewish Community Relations Council. WFVJ also presented our work and that of \WIVEC. We came home from the outing with a renewed commitment to interfaith cooperation; the challenge now is how to keep the momentum going!

THE MULTIFAITH COALITION OF SOUTH-CENTRAL WISCONSIN

The Multifaith Coalition of South-Central Wisconsin continues to meet and be a source of support and bridge building in the greater Madison area. In times such as these, when world events, fear, and uncertainty threaten to divide us, it is imperative that we maintain

the connections and relationships that we have labored to build. Now, more than ever, we must hold fast to the bonds that tie us and continue to treat each other with grace and compassion. Recent meetings featured presentations by the director of the Madison Office on Civil Rights and from Leah Rolando, a Project Coordinator for Safe Communities, who presented on the role faith communities can play in harm reduction, suicide prevention, and drug abuse intervention. She also shared resources and trainings that Safe Communities can provide our congregations.

INTERFAITH INTERSECTIONS

Interfaith Intersections is Interfaith our Community Building Initiative's "second phase" of its interfaith community relations mandate. This program, which seeks to educate all comers on the traditions and beliefs of a wide variety of faith traditions, grew out of our Sacred Site Visits, which began in 2019. The Sacred Site Visits consisted of educational trips to different houses of worship, with the purpose of learning about the faith traditions to which they were home. Interfaith Intersections goes deeper, as we host panels and speakers to discuss the complex and varying natures of their beliefs. Throughout the last year, we have held five such events at five separate houses of worship. At each location, we listened to panels and then broke into small groups to talk about questions of morality, ethics, and spirituality.

We began the season in October at the Madison Baha'i Center, where a panel consisting of Baha'i, Muslim, and Jewish representatives enlightened us about the foundational teachings of each of their faiths. I think we all learned something new! For example, many westerners are not very familiar with the Baha'i faith tradition, so it may have been a surprise to hear that a core tenet of the Baha'i faith is the belief in the need for unity among and between societies and nations. Our November event found us at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. We were joined by 35 people, watching in person and online, as Buddhist, Baptist, and Jewish speakers discussed their respective faith's views on dying, death, and the afterlife. The diverse beliefs of these three traditions are an excellent example of the vast range of opinions on this topic.

Fast forward to the new year, and we traveled to Madison Christian Community, where a panel consisting of Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i speakers discussed sin and wrongdoing. Twenty participants tuned in, both live and online.

The second event of the year was in April at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The topic was fasting and self-denial, and panelists represented the Baha'i, Conservative Jewish, and Lutheran (ELCA) traditions. Serendipitous timing for such a theme, as Lent had only recently ended.

Finally, just last month, we ended the year where we began. Back at the Madison Baha'i Center, panelists came from the Quaker, Baha'i, Muslim, and Buddhist traditions to speak on the topic of forgiveness.

If you missed these opportunities, do not worry! All but one of these fascinating discussions were recorded and are available to watch at the following link: <u>www.youtube.com/@wisconsinfaithvoicesforjus2410/</u> <u>videos</u>. In addition, we have three more events scheduled for the rest of 2024, and you can find out all about the details on our website here: <u>www.wisconsinfaithvoicesforjustice.org/interfaith</u>_ intersections.html. ◆

INTERFAITH INTERSECTIONS

PLANNING TEAM Chuck Cohen Eleanor Margulis Lillian Abrams Mary Strait Phil Haslanger Sally Jones



Annual Report 2023-2024

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

According to the *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, nearly five thousand Wisconsinites are homeless on any given night. Nearly half are unsheltered and over a quarter are chronically homeless. Housing is a social determinant of health. Access to safe and affordable housing provides physical safety, as well as an environment free of toxins and irritants. We believe that housing should be a right, and we work toward the day that shelters are unnecessary and the word 'homeless' becomes defunct.

FVJ is both mobilizing the faith community statewide to address the affordable housing crisis and representing the faith community on a number of committees and coalitions in Dane County and statewide.

FAITH-BASED AFFOR DABLE HOUSING ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Our Faith-Based Affordable Housing Advocacy Committee is a new team that grew out of the first Faith-based Housing Summit, held in early 2023 in partnership with the WCC. Its mission is to reimagine our conceptions of our houses of worship as useful for more than worship itself. What would it look like if faith communities used our assets such as buildings, people, and the faith that calls us to love our neighbor to advocate for housing justice in our cities? This committee seeks to mobilize faith communities to leverage their power to help find solutions to the ongoing affordable housing crisis our society faces. Their work has begun by hearing speakers, learning, and doing outreach to help as many people as possible become advocates for affordable housing.

This year, meetings included presentations by Kelly Westlund, the Housing Educator in Bayfield, and Reverend Jim Honig, President of the Door County Community Land Trust. The two speakers educated us about their work and about both opportunities and barriers for affordable housing in Door County and Bayfield, as examples and models of how similar activities might be employed in Dane County.

FAITH-BASED HOUSING SUMMIT

For the second year in a row, WFVJ partnered with the WCC to organize a regional Faith-Based Affordable Housing Summit. The summit took place on February 1, 2024, in Wausau, and about 45 participants came from local churches, the synagogue, and local agencies. There, we heard a presentation by **Reverend Mark**

Elsdon on houses of worship repurposing unused space for affordable housing, and received information from other community activists about local efforts in Wausau

OTHER COMMITTEES AND PARTNERSHIPS

WFVJ is also committed to our ongoing participation with the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP). Together we are building a statewide housing advocacy coalition to address the affordable housing crisis. As part of this effort, Rabbi Margulis sits on WISCAP's Affordable Rental Housing Subcommittee. This past year, she worked with the Badger State Housing Alliance (BSHA) to plan its part in WISCAP's advocacy day. Rabbi Bonnie then participated in the February advocacy day and met with the head of the Senate Committee on Housing, as well as with Senator Kelda Roys. BSHA organized presentations on issues around affordable housing in Wisconsin and relevant legislation, after which the advocates spent the day lobbying elected officials within the Capitol.

In addition to WISCAP, we represent the faith community on the Dane County Regional Housing Strategies Advisory Committee. The purpose of this committee is to address the affordable housing crisis in a strategic way as a county, rather than as individual towns and cities. Its concluding meeting was in August, and a final report was issued in the fall. Following the release of the report, the advisory committee was reconstituted as an oversight committee. With a plan in hand, the next phase will be implementation.

Finally, we continue to meet with Dane County Emergency Management to recruit congregations to provide emergency welcome centers in crisis situations, including severe weather, active shooters at local schools, or in the advent of bus- or planeloads of migrants being sent to our state from border states.

IMMIGRATION

Based on our shared faith commitments to social justice, the member congregations and organizations of WFVJ and the **Dane Sanctuary Coalition** ally with vulnerable immigrant and refugee communities. We do this, under the leadership of WFVJ and guided by **Voces de la Frontera** and **Centro Hispano**, by providing and supporting physical sanctuary when needed. We also provide a conduit for information, education, advocacy, and trainings on related immigrant justice actions.

A large part of WFVJ's immigration reform efforts revolves around education and advocacy. On January 25, 2024, we co-sponsored and tabled at Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Advocacy Day. Led by the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, the day focused on four new bills that have been introduced regarding DACA recipients in Wisconsin. The bills will help DACA recipients to:

- Receive professional licenses to become teachers, nurses, electricians, plumbers, etc.
- Pay in-state tuition for even if they have lived in Wisconsin most of their lives
- Receive a tax credit to help them renew their status every two years
- Become police officers and sheriff's deputies

We have also taken our efforts directly to the government, both state and federal. To address statewide concerns, we arranged a series of meetings with Governor Evers's and government agencies' staff. At these meetings, we and our organizational partners in immigrant justice shared information about what we are witnessing in our local communities - the pressing needs and the gaps in services and aid. In turn, the staffers were able to help guide us regarding the stateprovided programs and resources from which we and the community can seek help. To reach the federal government, WFVJ and our partners penned a statement/open letter from faith community calling for the creation of a just and humane immigration system. The letter bears over 195 signatures from faith-based organizations, congregations, clergy and faith leaders, and individual people of faith, and was released at a press conference on July 19, 2023, at Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ in Madison, You can watch the press conference on the Dane Sanctuary Coalition YouTube channel at <u>bit.ly/3UYp1Nq</u>.

Rabbi Margulis continued this year to visit organizations and houses of worship to speak about immigration justice. Most recently, she attended James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation and spoke to their Immigration Justice committee to provide updates on the current legislative picture, both federally and in Wisconsin.

DANE SANCTUARY COALITION (DSC)

The Dane Sanctuary Coalition engages both in direct action and advocacy for our undocumented and asylum-seeking siblings. The coalition also works with congregations and multiple agency partners to find home hospitality or emergency shelters in hotels for asylum seekers and was able to find placements for several families this past year.

Many of our events are designed to raise awareness of the dire state of immigration in the USA, as well as of the inhumanity at our southern border. In September, Madison Christian Community hosted the DSC and our partners Voces de la Frontera, Jewish Social Services of Madison, and the Community Immigration Law Clinic (CILC) for a screening of the documentary "Seeking Asylum: A Mother's Journey." The film follows the experiences of Kensy, a Honduran-born woman seeking asylum from the United States. Much of "Seeking Asylum" had to be filmed on Kensy's cell phone, as she documented her efforts and the challenges she and her family faced.

Later on, in March, members of **Beth Israel Center** gave a moving presentation on their October trip to volunteer at Casa Alitas, a migrant welcome center in Tucson, Arizona. Casa Alitas is dedicated to providing humanitarian aid to legally processed asylum-seekers.

The visitors described engaging in volunteer activities and told the stories of the lived experiences of the migrants they served.

As a continuation of our ongoing efforts to inform our community about immigration issues, the DSC Advocacy and Communications Committee has been working to create a series of toolkits for congregations to use for presentations on Immigration and the Dane Sanctuary Coalition. We are grateful to Centro Hispano for supporting an intern for us last summer to work on this project.

Finally, on April 8, 2024, we held a coalition wide meeting at First Unitarian Society. Twenty-five attendees came to hear our keynote speaker, Mary Campbell. The national director of Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO), Campbell visited us to speak about the AMMPARO, the ELCA's immigration initiative. She gave an overview of AMMPARO's work around the world and here at home, an update on the current situation at the border, and information on how AMMPARO could help support the work of the Dane Sanctuary Coalition, particularly our volunteer driver program. The volunteer driver program, led by Dan Zimmerman since 2017, connects volunteer drivers from all around the state with people who have recently been released from detention in Juneau, Wisconsin, and are left without a way to travel away from this very remote jail facility. Our volunteers also take asylum seekers to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) checkins in Milwaukee and to immigration court hearings in Chicago and stay with them through the day to provide support and assistance. During 2023 we received 368 requests for rides and fulfilled 320 of those requests (86.96%), an amazing achievement for a volunteer organization. \blacklozenge

DSC STEERING COMMITTEE

Joyce Anderson Karen Menendez Coller Kristi Sprague Leila Pine Reverend Julia Burkey Reverend Kelly Asprooth-Jackson Reverend Leslie Schenk – Treasurer Ruthanne Landsness Stephanie Selgado

DSC EMERGENCY SHORT-TERM HOUSING PLANNING TEAM

Charles Tubbs Sr – Dane County Office of Emergency Management Director Julia Burkey Phil Haslanger Toni Swandby

DSC ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Bianca Tomasini – Co-chair Emily Kuhn – E-newsletter Editor Erica Serlin Leila Pine – Co-chair Mark Peters Reverend Tim Schaefer – Webmaster Sally Jones Toni Swandby

DSC HOST CONGREGATIONS

Congregation Shaarei Shamayim First Unitarian Society Madison Christian Community (Advent Lutheran Church and Community of Hope United Church of Christ) Madison Mennonite Church Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ

DSC VOLUNTEER DRIVER COORDINATORS

Dan Zimmerman Dineen Grow

DSC SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Centro Hispano Community Immigration Law Center Family Farm Defenders Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors Teaching Assistants' Association Voces de la Frontera Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Worker Justice Wisconsin



Continued from page 17

DSC VOLUNTEER HOUSING ORGANIZER Betsy Abramson

DSC SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS

Beth Israel Center Christ Presbyterian Church First Baptist Church of Madison First Congregational United Church of Christ James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation Lake Edge Lutheran Church Lake Edge United Church of Christ Midvale Lutheran Church Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society Pres House Santa Maria ELCA St. Francis House Temple Beth El The Crossing, Inc

DSC STEERING COMMITTEE

Reverend Leslie Shenk, Treasurer Reverend Julia Burkey, Orchard Ridge Ruthanne Landsness, Orchard Ridge Joyce Anderson, Madison Christian Community Leila Pine, supporting congregations Reverend Kelly Asprooth-Jackson, First Unitarian Society Kristi Sprague, First Unitarian Society Karen Menendez-Coller, Centro Hispano Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Voces de la Frontera Stephanie Selgado, Voces de la Frontera



In Memory of

DINEEN GROW

The Dane Sanctuary Coalition mourns the loss of our friend Dineen Grow. Dineen co-led with Dan Zimmerman on the volunteer driver program. We are grateful for her leadership. She will be greatly missed.

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Karen Kuhn Karen Hagen Kathleen Vos Ken Warren Lynn Silverman Madison Insight Meditation Group Marsha Cohen Mary Nervig Michael Rehak Middleton Community Church UCC Middleton Community United Church of Christ Faith in Action Team Paulette Harder Peter Williams Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society Pres House Raluca Vais-Ottosen Rebecca Meier-Rao Reverend Willie Brisco Robert Skloot Roger Pettersen Roger Williams Roni Berenson Ruby Dow Samuel Pettricca Sarbpal Hundal Selena Fox St. Mark's Lutheran Church Steve Holmes Steve Zekoff United in Christ Lutheran Church - Morrisonville UW Center for Interfaith Dialogue

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Adam Clausen Anonymous Anonymous Bianca Tomasini Bill Dunlop Celeste Robins Common Grace Dale Kushner Ellen Rasmussen Gail Shea Holy Wisdom Monastery Jane Smith Jason M Mack Jason Poole-Xiong Julie Woodward Larry Golopol Laurie Zimmerman Leila Pine Linda Frank Linda Pils Lutheran Campus Ministry in Madison Madison Christian Community: Advent Luthera and Community of Hope Marc Berkson Marcia Vandercook Marcus Allen Mary Runge Michael Burch Patricia Eddings Peter Bakken Phil Haslanger Renee Bauer Ron Berger Sadat Abiri Sarah Gilday Sherry Reames St. John s Lutheran Church Stacy Graff Susan Elias Susan Kiernan Thomas Reif Vica-Etta Steel Vivian Ehrlich William Rumpf WMA

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In gratitude to Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

for her devoted service to the cause of justice and for bringing our faith communities together in hope and good works. Thank you for your exemplary leadership.

You have made Wisconsin better. You have made us better.

Mazal tov!

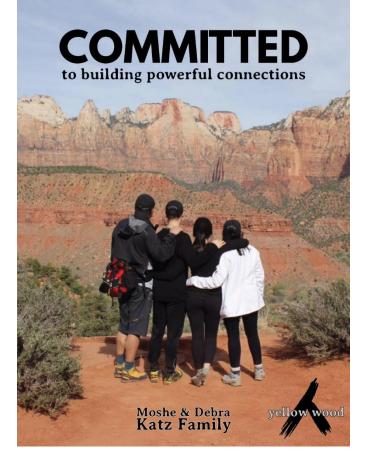




Congratulations Rabbi Bonnie

Margulis

Temple Beth El congratulates Rabbi Bonnie Margulis for her years of dedicated service to Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice.





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To Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

and

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

May you go from strength to strength.

Rabbi Marc E. Berkson and the entire Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun family

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GOVERNOR TONY EVERS AND SENATOR MARK SPREITZER at the 2023 Progress Pride Flag raising at the Capitol

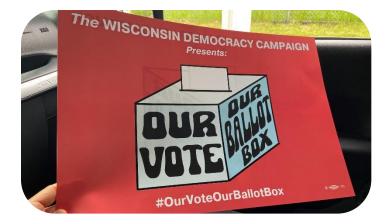


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LT. GOVERNOR MANDELA BARNES advocating for the return of drop-boxes







DSC VOLUNTEERS lobbying at the State Capitol





Dane Sanctuary Coalition



THE TALK Participants



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