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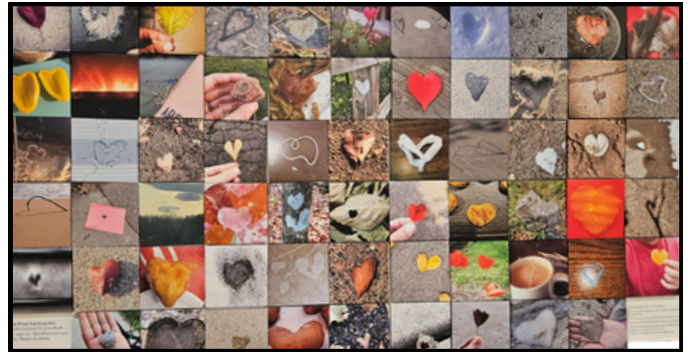
Table of Contents

05 About JONAH

13 Task Forces

27 Teams & Projects

47 Fiscal Support



On the Cover: "Finding What You Look For" is a photo art collage created by Lynn Buske for the 2025 Encounters Art Exhibition.



JONAH'S 2ND ANNUAL FUNDRAISER GALA

April 10

6–8 PM | Florian Gardens

Doors open 5:30 PM

\$75 per ticket

Dinner • Wine Pull • Paddle Auction • Impact Stories
Help us welcome JONAH's 20th year.



For tickets and event details,
please scan QR code with
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Wednesday 5:30 PM

Free Meal

Wednesday 6:00 PM

Building Community

Deepening Faith

Expanding Minds

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Letter from the President

Dear JONAH Community,

Amanda Gorman begins *The Hill We Climb* by asking where we can find light in what feels like unending darkness.

It is a question that feels painfully familiar right now. Where do we find light when cruelty is rewarded, truth is distorted, and vulnerable people are treated as problems to be eliminated rather than neighbors to be loved? Where do we find light when rights we thought were secure are stripped away, when fear is deliberately cultivated, and when the sheer weight of each new injustice leaves us exhausted before we have finished grieving the last one?

Perhaps, before we go looking too quickly for the light, we need to tell the truth about the darkness.

In her collection *I Am the Rage*, Dr. Martina McGowan writes from within the lived experience of racial injustice: the accumulated grief, broken promises, and righteous anger of Black people in America. Her words remind us that rage does not appear from nowhere. It rises when people have spoken and have not been heard. It grows when promises are made and repeatedly broken. It burns when suffering is explained away, minimized, or treated as ordinary.

Those of us who do not carry that particular history must be careful not to claim another's rage as our own. But we are called to listen to it. To believe it. To allow it to disturb our comfort and move us beyond sympathy into solidarity.

Rage can reveal what love refuses to accept. Grief can reveal what matters deeply. And hope – real hope – does not ask us to deny either one.

Hope is not pretending that everything will be all right. It is not waiting quietly for someone else to repair what is broken. Hope is the stubborn decision that the present reality will not have the final word. It is telling the truth and then choosing to act together.

Gorman describes our nation as unfinished. Unfinished does not mean unharmed. It does not



“Hope is the stubborn decision that the present reality will not have the final word.”

excuse injustice or erase the people who have paid its price. It means the story is still being written, and we have a responsibility for what comes next. That is why JONAH organizes. We organize because outrage by itself cannot build the community we need. We organize because isolation leaves people powerless, while relationships help us discover our collective courage. We organize because no one climbs a hill like this alone.

Every conversation that helps someone recognize their own power is part of the climb. Every relationship built across race, faith, neighborhood, and difference is part of the climb. Every person who listens, learns, speaks, shows up, and refuses to abandon a neighbor is part of the climb.

The hill before us is steep. We should not pretend otherwise. Some days we will climb with determination; other days we will need someone beside us to remind us why we began. But we are still here. Still listening. Still organizing. Still building the power to create a community where every person can belong, thrive, and be heard.

Our rage tells us that injustice is unacceptable. Our grief tells us that people and communities are precious. And our hope tells us to keep climbing... together.

Thank you for bringing your voice, your courage, your questions, and your whole self to this unfinished work.

With gratitude, determination, and hope,

Rev. Jen Barnet

President, JONAH

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About JONAH



JONAH members march in the 2026 Memorial Day parade.

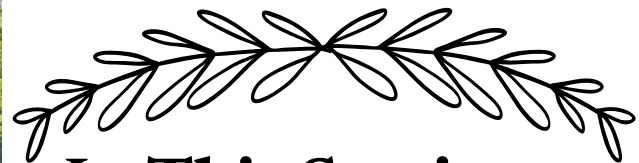
A Prayer for Belonging

I am one with God.

*The light of divine love shines in me
and all around me. I belong in this safe and
loving space. I am home in the heart of God,
and I am deeply connected to everyone here.*

And so it is. Amen.

Rev. Sandra McKinney



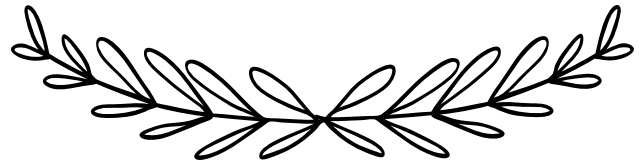
In This Section:

06 Mission & Values

07 Leadership

09 Organizer's Reflection

11 How to Get Involved



The Attitudes and Disciplines of Community Organizing

Attitude #1: What we do is important!

- We have a clear mission that matters to us.
- It is not just about the paycheck or meeting the grant requirements.
- There would be significant consequences if we were not to fulfill our mission (and positive consequences when we succeed).

Disciplines

- Evaluation – "If it is worth doing, it is worth evaluating."
- Agitation – Constantly calling upon each other to improve.
- Accountability – To one another and to the shared interest.

Mission Statement

***To collaborate,
empower, and act toward
resolving critical social
issues impacting the
Chippewa Valley.***

Organizational Structure

JONAH focuses its organizing efforts on the entire Chippewa Valley, both rural and urban areas. When we work on statewide issues, we cover all of western Wisconsin.

JONAH is one of 13 affiliate organizations within WISDOM, a multi-faith statewide network that provides leadership development, training, and technical assistance support to JONAH. WISDOM has adopted their organizing model from Gamaliel, an international faith-based leadership network.



Contact Information

Office Location: 2233 Golf Rd, Eau Claire WI 54701 (inside Hope United Methodist Church)

Website: www.jonahjustice.org

Facebook: facebook.com/JONAHCV

Instagram: instagram.com/jonah_cv/

Organizer's Phone: (715) 497-8732

Our Values

We organize diverse people around these common values:

Radical Inclusivity

Belief in the infinite dignity and worth of every human life, in the ethic of shared abundance, and the intentional inclusion of all persons - especially people who have traditionally lived at the margins of society.

Love

Opposition to all forms of oppression and inequity, and trust in the triumph of love and hope over cynicism, hate, and fear.

Reconciliation

Repairing past harms and restoring people and communities to right relationship.

Living for the Future

Having the well-being of our grandchildren as the criterion for the decisions we make and the structures we support.

Environmentalism

Belief that we are responsible for the stewardship of the natural world.

Antidiscrimination Statement

We, who believe in the infinite dignity and worth of every human life and celebrate diversity, affirm the following, and as policy do not discriminate as such:

People of all ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, educational backgrounds, marital status, physical or mental abilities, theological perspectives, political perspectives, and economic conditions belong in the activities of JONAH and are welcomed with open arms. We commit to finding ways to be more inclusive by strengthening our practice of acceptance and equity for all.

Adapted from Trinity Lutheran, WISDOM Values, and UU statement

Institutional Member Congregations & Board

Chippewa Valley Humanists

Board Reps: Lex Sackett & Lee Newton

Eau Claire Buddhist Sangha

Board Rep: Mary Alea

Eau Claire Catholic Deanery

Board Reps: Helen Jamnick

Eau Claire Friends

Board Reps: Martha Nieman & Cheryl Lochner-
Wright

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Board Reps: Jackie Christner & Paul Savides

First Presbyterian Church

Board Reps: Susan Wagner & John Wagner

Grace Lutheran Church

Board Rep: Diane House

Hope United Methodist Church

Board Reps: Joanne Mellema & Jill Myers

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Board Rep: Ray Koch

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

Board Rep: Jeff Goettl

Menomonie Area Mission Coalition

Board Rep: Wendy Slaback & Rene Melberg

Plymouth United Church of Christ

Board Rep: Dorothy Ann Divine & Jim Fuller

Spirit Lutheran Church

Board Rep: Michelle Pride

St. John's Lutheran Church

Board Reps: Ann Brand & Jane Poethke

Temple Sholom

Board Rep: Mike Steuer

Trinity Lutheran Church

Board Reps: Pat Garber & Kathy Gjesfjeld

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Board Reps: Phil Swanhorst & Mark Quam

Unity of Eau Claire

Board Reps: Marnie Hersrud

University Lutheran Church

Board Reps: Elecia Oleson & Carol Rudd

Become a Member

Don't see your congregation? To inquire about how your congregation can become an institutional member of JONAH, contact Lynn Buske at cvjonahorganizer@gmail.com. Member congregations pay yearly dues, have representation on JONAH's Full Board of Directors, and have year-round access to training and support.

Leadership

Jen Barnet **President**

Andy Thompson **Vice-President**

Mike Steuer **Vice-President**

Nicholas Baumann **Secretary**

Jeff Goettl **Treasurer**

Lori Leach **Bookkeeper**

Lynn Buske **Lead Organizer**

Kari Allen **Communications Director**





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HOPE is proud to support JONAH in their mission and work!

Organizer's Reflection

It's astounding... all the amazing things JONAH's task forces do, and the busy calendar of activities to make the Chippewa Valley more connected, supported, and thriving. But beneath all that is what is truly important, why JONAH exists, and what is often overlooked.

At our foundation, we are a grassroots organizing entity. **This means everything you see happening is not quite as important as how it's done, and in fact isn't possible without the way we do it.**

You see, to JONAH, everything we do starts with investing in people so they feel seen, heard, accepted, clear on their values, and empowered. We acknowledge that we are all striving to be better at listening, collaborating, speaking our truth without trampling on others, but this is also why having that as our core is so important.

People's values and beliefs have deep meaning for them – these are their most personal things. Especially when one's actions trample on another's values and beliefs, that marginalized human being experiences something I cannot truly explain - an erasing, invalidation, de-powering, though those words are inadequate.

What this really means is that radical inclusion is super important. That intention and meaningful connection are everything. That even when we think we have THE solution for how as a community we can make a change on an issue, we should never stop growing our base: inviting people, creating a sense of purpose and belonging, and walking with each other in growing into the best version of ourselves, together.

We are incomplete without everyone's perspective because no one person can have all the answers. To do this well demands sincere investment. While everyone in JONAH is involved for very personal reasons and strives to live into these ideals, it doesn't mean that everyone in JONAH practices this amazingly well

“We are incomplete without everyone’s perspective because no one person can have all the answers.”

all the time. However, we genuinely want everyone who feels called to justice and unity and peace to feel welcomed, valued, and able to take leadership. When we have diverse teams of people who feel this way working together, that's when we achieve the best results for the entire community. As Paul Wellstone famously said, “We all do better when we all do better.” I welcome conversations and ideas at any time, please reach out. There is a space in JONAH waiting for you, because we need whatever unique contribution you have to give, and together we can do what we cannot do alone. This dedication to radical inclusion is crucial to lasting change because it brings everyone along. This type of successful approach takes time and we see that it's the only way. This approach is why we have been here for almost 20 years and why our wisdom is grounded in deep and broad experience. JONAH will continue to be here for 20 more years because we are so connected with people, and, as justice is always evolving as humans evolve, we have the sustainability to stay in it for a long time. There is a proverb someone shared with me recently. It has been attributed as an African proverb (though there is no clear evidence of its real origin), and it says, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

Lynn Buske
JONAH Organizer





Lynn Buske and Mark Pirazzini walk in the Memorial Day parade.



Sharon Dillon, Ann Brand, and Martha Nieman have a coffee chat.



Organizers of the Homeless Memorial Vigil.



Ray Koch and Julian Emerson attend the 2025 annual celebration.



JONAH members connecting at an event.



Jeremy Gragert, Lynn Buske, and Julia Bennker discuss mental health.



Ron Krienke presents a donation to Jen Barnet and Lynn Buske.



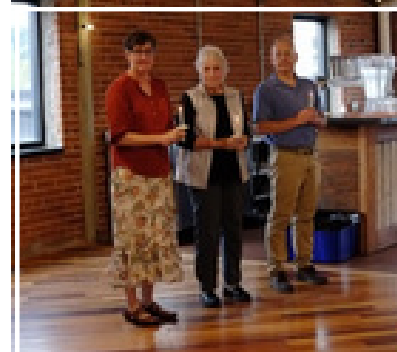
Julianne Lepp and Lynn Buske at a walk for mental illness.



Brady Dehnke and Gracie Lake table at UWEC.



Attendees at the Mental Health Task Force pancake breakfast.



Board representatives at the annual covenanting ceremony.



Book club gathers to discuss immigration.

How to Get Involved

1. First, Connect One-on-One

Reach out to our Organizer. We want to hear your story, your passions, and help you feel informed and personally connected from the start.

2. Learn Our Framework

Consider taking part in a training. It helps you understand our organizing approach so you can take meaningful action with confidence.

3. Find Where You Belong

Based on your experience, values, time, and interest, we'll help you plug into the right role, whether that is behind the scenes or on the front lines.

Become an Individual JONAH Member!

After nearly 20 years of informally welcoming individuals into our network, JONAH is excited to offer official individual membership. This is your chance to deepen your connection and be part of a movement for justice and community well-being in the Chippewa Valley.

By officially registering, you help us strengthen our collective voice, and we help you stay connected with opportunities that match your passions and skills. Scan this QR code, fill out the form, and we will mail you an official JONAH membership card!

This Year's Official Individual Members!

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Alice Kissinger | • Kathy Campbell |
| • Ann Heywood | • Linda Hedding |
| • Anna Martinson | • Mari Jackson |
| • Chris Hambuch-Boyle | • Marge Williams |
| • Cindy Rasmussen | • Nancy and Matt Coffey |
| • Curtis Rohland | • Patty and Jeff Henry |
| • Dale and Jacquie Staebell | • Sandy Ayres |
| • Darlene Cornell | • Sharon K Hydo |
| • David Huber | • Sharyl Miller |
| • Dennis Schultz | • Suzanne Eder |
| • Elizabeth Spencer | |
| • Emily and Greg Moore | |
| • Emma K Barnett | |
| • Gwenn Nyhagen | |
| • Jack and Linda Corey | |
| • Jane Anklam | |
| • Jennie Ross | |
| • Fr. John Schultz | |
| • Judy Blackstone | |



Scan with your
smartphone camera

Be Part of a Team

Join a JONAH task force already organizing around key issues like affordable housing, mental health, environmental justice, immigration, transportation, voter engagement, and more. These teams need both lived experience and committed allies. You can also check if your congregation is a JONAH member and join its core team.



Circle formed at the Palm Sunday Path.

Step into Leadership

Take part in our leadership training to learn community organizing strategies – and help train others to do this social justice work, too. You might mentor new members or step into a guiding role on a project or campaign.



Representatives light candles for each institutional member congregation in JONAH's annual covenanted ceremony.

Offer Your Skills

Use your unique experience to fill in the gaps. We need people to make phone calls, photograph events, write grants, provide childcare, and more. Internship opportunities are also available. Whatever you can offer, there's a place for it here.



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Sunday Services:
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Our Child-friendly Worship Service is also streamed live.

"We believe that God values and embraces each person as a beloved child, that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good, and that Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice."



Task Forces



Mara Langreck listens to people for the mental health “buddy bench.”

Bodhisattva Prayer for All Humanity

*“May I be a guard for those who need protection,
a guide for those on the path,
a boat, a raft, a bridge for those who wish to cross the flood.
May I be a lamp in the darkness,
a resting place for the weary,
a healing medicine for all who are sick,
a vase of plenty, a tree of miracles.
And for the boundless multitudes of living beings,
may I bring sustenance and awakening,
enduring like the earth and sky
until all beings are freed from sorrow
and all are awakened.”*

– Shantideva, Indian Buddhist sage 700 A.D.

In This Section:

- 14 Voices United
- 16 Mental Health
- 18 Environment
- 20 Affordable Housing
- 22 Transportation
- 24 Immigration



The Attitudes and Disciplines of Community Organizing

Attitude #2: We believe in shared leadership.

- Everyone has something to offer, and we need everyone's gifts if we are to succeed.
- We reject a model of a few people with all the answers and the rest of us just following.
- Everyone has leadership potential.
- Meaningful participation is as important as the "result" of our work.

Disciplines

- Effective meetings.
- Leadership development/training.
- Continual organizing, recruiting, invitation, and encouragement to new people to assume significant leadership roles.
- Creating structures with multiple leadership roles and potential "ladders."

Voices United

The Voices United Task Force exists to connect with individuals in the community at all levels, help folks find clarity in their voice, and empower them to use that voice civically to make a difference. Collaboration is extremely vital to this group as we all support each other's strengths and work together to accomplish more than we could alone.

Our work is needed. As our society is politically divided, people feel apathetic or unimportant in our democracy, people are voting without being informed, and disconnection is a rampant disease. We strive to erase the hard boundary lines formed by partisan politics, and to create connection, confidence, and belonging. We strive to uphold the values of JONAH.

In 2026, we continued our voter education and launched new projects.

Most of our energy centered around creating spaces for conversations. We held weekly coffee chats most of the year as a space for people to come practice healthy conversation skills, unburden what's on their minds, and connect with others in a safe environment. It has brought tremendous value to us and our varied attendees. Stop by any time Tuesdays at 8:00am at the JONAH office.



Cindy Rasmussen, Mara Langreck, Cory Welke, and Kim Vlcek practice healthy conversations during JONAH's Common Grounds.

“ We strive to erase the hard boundary lines formed by partisan politics, and to create connection, confidence, and belonging. ”

We also supported a team holding Community Conversations at the public library for across-the-divide discussions. For more information or to participate in Let's Talk, contact Martha Nieman at martha.eiler.nieman@gmail.com. We have a presentation and toolkit for creating your own healthy conversation spaces in your work, home, congregation, or anywhere! Additionally, we hosted a JONAH book club discussion on the book “Restoring Sanity” by Margaret Wheatley.

Contact us to get involved!
vlcekkr@yahoo.com

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It was a big election year as well. For the April, August, and November elections we constructed and distributed voter education information to congregations, individuals, neighborhoods, and on social media. We ensured free rides for voters on election days by coordinating rides to the polls and providing free access to disability van rides. We held a City Council President forum, supported other forums, co-organized a fair maps presentation, and had a watch party for the gubernatorial race. We also sold nonpartisan positive voter signs.

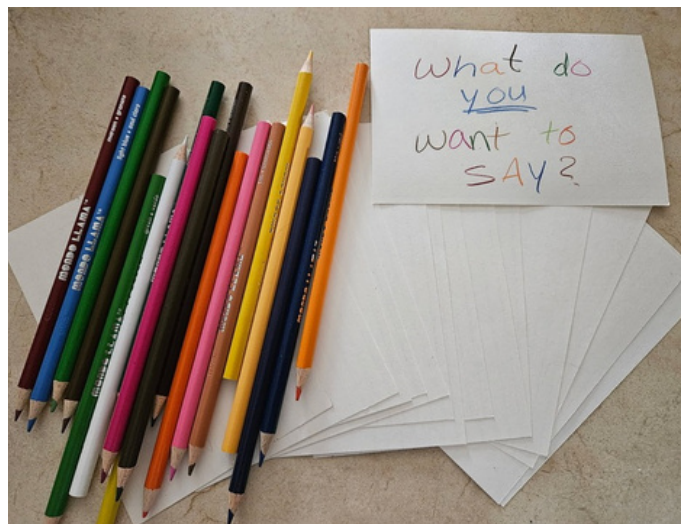


Attendees listen to Eau Claire City Council Presidential Candidates during a forum organized by Voices United.

In 2026, we also supported the organizing of faith voices in the Palm Sunday Path and other related gatherings - a rally and movement to empower faith voices to speak out in support of their values. And finally, we implemented our sixth annual Postcard Project - collecting words/art on



Gubernatorial candidate forum watch party and potluck.



Postcard Project materials.

postcards from community members of all ages sharing what they value or are concerned about. All the postcard art was displayed at JONAH's annual Encounters exhibition and will be mailed to the new governor and county board officials in late January 2027, which will be logged as the voice of the people of Wisconsin.

The goals of Voices United moving forward are:

- Bridge divides by holding conversations and encouraging groups to have their own to practice good communication skills.
- Continue to lift up voices through the Postcard Project.
- Continue to keep voters informed through communications, canvassing, events, and yard signs.
- Stay open to whatever else might be needed to uphold our democracy and the voices of the people who live here.

With gratitude for our partners in this work:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Chippewa Valley Votes | • Wisconsin Civic Power Table |
| • Eau Claire Coalition | • Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition |
| • GROWW | • WISDOM |
| • League of Women Voters - Greater Chippewa Valley | • Wisconsin Public Education Network |
| • Power Up Eau Claire | |

Mental Health

Our Mission: *The JONAH Mental Health Task Force meets to foster authentic connection and identify gaps in care. We work to reduce stigma, increase community understanding, support, and access, and assist in making the Chippewa Valley a place that supports individuals through their challenges.*

Who We Are and Why We Exist:

While 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year, 1 in 6 youth experience a mental health disorder each year, and those numbers are on the rise. Mental health is part of every human experience, yet mental health challenges and illness remain stigmatized, personal challenges are on the rise, and there are barriers to accessing needed care. Each person's experiences are unique, and the term "mental health" includes a wide gamut of experiences, so varied approaches to support are necessary. From traumatic brain injury to post-incarceration experiences, situational trauma to complex trauma since birth, schizophrenia to depression, neurodivergence to developmental disabilities, and suicide to the general day-to-day challenges we all face, there is a lot that needs to be talked about. The JONAH Mental Health Task Force wants to normalize conversations about mental health and equip our community to do so! Youth, adults, and families who are struggling are desperately asking for our system to be more accessible, more affordable, and improved. We are a wide range of both professionals and impacted voices who agree and will tell these stories everywhere we go!



Cory Welke and Gracie Lake at a drum circle activity at the Mental Health Day of Action and Care.

Our Accomplishments:

From October 2025 - October 2026

- Held a pancake brunch at Trinity Lutheran to raise awareness and funds for our projects.
- Connected with spring election candidates on mental health issues.
- Held Green Bandana Project trainings to increase conversations and support, and continued to distribute materials across the Chippewa Valley to reduce community stigma and increase visible support.
- Brought together broad groups to discuss impending healthcare changes and distributed regular educational information about those changes and options for accessing mental health care.
- Successfully advocated for Medicaid to be accepted at the new Rogers treatment facility.
- Held our second annual Mental Health Day of Action and Care at Owen Park in May, during Mental Health Awareness Month. It brought agencies together to collaborate, resources to the community, and opportunities to practice self-care. It also provided space to share advocacy and stories publicly and made everything about mental health more visible.



Mental Health Task Force members Jackie Christner, Lacie Weatherholt (and son), and Cory Welke serve breakfast.

- Hand-delivered and mailed foundational mental health support information to clinics, churches, and schools across the Chippewa Valley directed at youth and parents.
- Hosted a JONAH Book Club read on mental health called *Stories Our Scars Tell* by Brittany Tinsley.
- Executed our first few instances of “Buddy Bench,” where we sit downtown, greet, and listen to people walking by.
- Held our first Interfaith Youth Wellness Event at Trinity Lutheran as a step toward creating a youth mental health advocacy group and an interfaith social group, and hearing from youth on mental health needs.
- Researched needed resources for 19- to 25-year-olds to support their well-being and created a flyer. This is an underserved and underaccessed population. This flyer has been distributed all over Eau Claire.

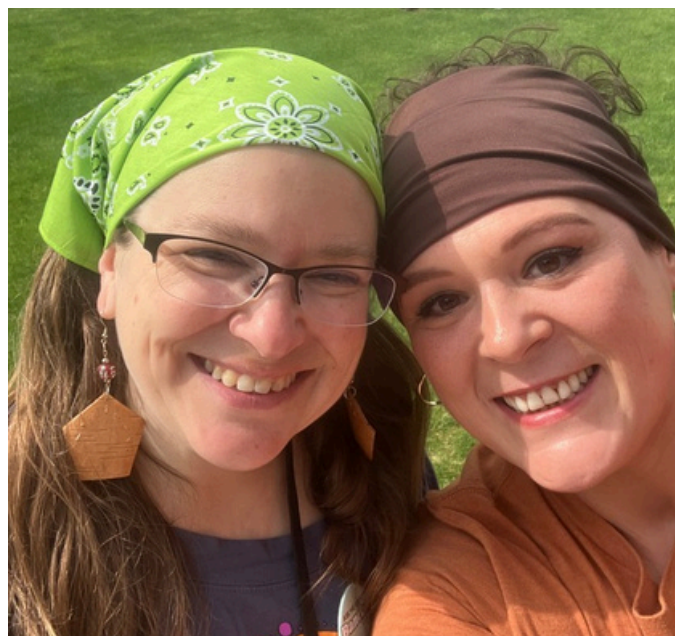
Moving forward, we intend to: hold another Emotional CPR training to continue to normalize mental health and non-hierarchical support, work to create a community of practice for ECPR, share broadly about new resources coming into the community, create trauma-informed language for agencies to ensure inclusive practices for those struggling with mental health challenges, continue to update the community on Medicaid changes, carry out the Green Bandana Project mission, continue our other annual events and fundraisers, and grow our team with new voices and stories.



Cory Welke and Jessica Barrera hang out in downtown Eau Claire to connect with passersby for the Green Bandana Project.

With gratitude for our partners in this work:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Alcoholics Anonymous | • EC Sober Living |
| • At the Roots Peer Support | • Health Dunn Right |
| • Brain Injury Association of Wisconsin | • Larry Winter |
| • Cartwheel Health Services | • Lived Experience Advisory Board |
| • Eau Claire City-County Health Department | • NAMI |
| • Eau Claire Health Alliance | • NorthLakes Community Clinic |
| | • Red House of Hope |
| | • UWEC College of Nursing |
| | • Wisconsin Milkweed Alliance (WIMA) |



Lynn Buske and Lacie Weatherholt sporting their green bandanas.

The JONAH Mental Health Task Force meets twice a month: on the first Thursday at 1pm and the third Thursday at 4pm via Zoom or in person at the JONAH office. Anyone across Western Wisconsin is invited to participate at any time.

Contact us to get involved!
cvjonahorganizer@gmail.com

Environment

Focus #1: Community Outreach

Outreach Goal: Increase public engagement on environmental issues through education and collaboration.

2026 Highlights:

- **EarthFest** - Over 1,000 people attended the EarthFest 2026 at Sonnetag Center. This was a large collaborative effort between EC County Office of Recycling and Sustainability, UWEC, and many community groups including the ETF. Planning for EarthFest 2027 event has started so mark your calendars for April 17, 2027.
- **Sustainability Series** - The series featured monthly talks co-sponsored by the LE Phillips Public Library and the Riverflow Refillery with local speakers on topics such as Climate Anxiety, Soil Health, Water Quality, Air Quality, Plastic Free July, Rewilding Your Lawn, and Home Energy Reduction.
- **Interfaith Green Teams (IFGT)** - The IFGT is an informal group of individuals from area congregations that meet monthly to exchange ideas and learn from each other about environmental issues. To be a part of the IFGT group, email etf.jonah@gmail.com.



Jordan with Plastic Free EC helping Bee Haven attendees compost and sort recycling.

- **Community Events (EC Marathon, Fall Festival, Bee Haven)** - Volunteers from the ETF worked trash stations at community events to engage the public on recycling and composting.



Jordan Hauser of Riverflow Refillery speaking at the Sustainability Series.

A graphic with a blue background. At the top is the 'PLASTIC-FREE EAU CLAIRE' logo. Below it is a large QR code. Under the QR code is a button that says 'TAKE THE PLEDGE!'. At the bottom are social media links: a globe icon followed by 'jonahjustice.org/plastic-free-eau-claire/', a Facebook icon followed by 'Plastic-Free Eau Claire', and an Instagram icon followed by '@plasticfreeeauclaire'.

Focus #2: Waste Reduction

Single Use Plastic Goal: Collaborate with Plastic Free EC (PFEC) to increase the number of restaurants and individuals who pledge to reduce single-use plastic.

Composting Goal: Increase public awareness about composting through education, advocacy, and the launching of a community compost collection site now possible with the new Eau Claire composting ordinance.

2026 Highlights:

- Formed Plastic Free EC (PFEC) community team with the help of a grant from the State Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy. Work will continue into 2027 to create a plastic reduction resource guide to assist retailers, event planners, restaurants and food trucks in making waste-conscious decisions.
- Over 350 individuals and 9 restaurants have taken the PFEC pledge.



Greta Bergeron as the Bag Monster.

Contact us to get involved!
etf.jonah@gmail.com



Focus #3: Biodiversity

Biodiversity Goal: Continue partnering with Chippewa Valley Biodiversity Partnership (CVBP) to preserve and protect biodiversity in the Chippewa Valley, guided by Doug Tallamy's Nature's Best Hope principles: shrinking lawns, planting natives, removing invasives and building pollinator habitat. Details are outlined on the CVBP website: <https://www.cvbiobiodiversitypartnership.org>

2026 Highlights:

- Participated in the Bee Haven Biodiversity Celebration at Phoenix Park where over 400 community attendees gathered to learn what they can do to support the trees, birds, insects, and other aspects of the Chippewa Valley natural world.



Sue Waits excited about getting on the Homegrown National Park Map.

Affordable Housing

This has been a consequential year for the Affordable Housing Task Force. Selected accomplishments this year focused on community collaborations, public education, and system policy changes.

Community collaboration is at our core. Selected collaborations include:

- Paul Savides serves on the Executive Committee of the Housing Our Neighbors Planning Collaborative, the Re-entry Success Planning Committee, the Dairyland Housing Coalition, and is Co-Director of the Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center.
- Susan Wolfgram serves on the Plan Commission, the Legacy Eau Claire-Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, chairs the Community Haven House Advisory Committee, and is Co-Director of the Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center.
- Mara Langreck, Co-Founder of the Lived Experience Advisory Board, serves on the Executive Committee of the Housing Our Neighbors Planning Collaborative, sits on a number of committees locally, and provides system guidance on the value of peer support informing policy and practice.
- Amanda Babb, Program Coordinator at the Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center, collaborates throughout the community and provides widespread tenant education. Notable is the recent collaboration with CVTC and UWEC.
- TJ Atkins, Michelle Pride, Julian Emerson, and Debbie Gough serve on the GAPS Committee of the Dairyland Housing Coalition.
- Task Force members participate in numerous community outreach conversations around homelessness and housing insecurity.



Members of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

“

*Without
stable shelter,
everything else
falls apart.*

~Matthew Desmond

”

We hosted for the second year a three-part educational series in the Library River View Room:

- May 14, “A Conversation with Developers: How to Build Affordable”
- June 11, “Meet the Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center”
- October 8, “Repurposing Spaces to Create Affordable Housing”



Local developers at the “How to Build Affordable” educational series.



Meet the Tenant-Landlord Resource Center educational series.

City Council advocacy and collaboration resulting in:

- An increase in the Flexible Housing Fund from \$250,000 to \$750,000 and lifting to a Level 1 Priority in the Capital Improvement Budget.
- An amendment to the RDA Riverbend and Core District Plans, embedding “Equitable Development Principles” to serve as a lens when development projects move forward to City Council.

Local and State Presentations:

- Paul Savides and Mara Langreck presented at a local series at Lake Street Methodist Church called “Stronger Together: Addressing Homelessness Locally”
- Susan Wolfgram, Amanda Babb, and Mara Langreck will be presenting “Meet ALICE” at the WISCAP Poverty Matters Conference in October



Community members gather for the Stronger Together: Addressing Homelessness Locally presentation.



JONAH Film Festival presentation at UWEC.

If you would like to know more about the Affordable Housing Task Force, contact Susan Wolfgram at wolfgram.susanm@gmail.com.

Scan the QR code to see our Facebook page or visit <https://www.facebook.com/JONAHAffordableHousing/> for more information.



Contact us to get involved!
wolfgram.susanm@gmail.com

Transportation

Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance (CVTA) – 2026 Year in Review

On September 29, 2025, the new Eau Claire Transit Transfer Center located in downtown Eau Claire officially opened to the public and buses started using the new facility. Plans to complete 80 apartment units above the facility are on hold while a private developer for those apartment units resolves financial issues. Half of the apartment units are designated as affordable housing.



Transfer Center grand opening.

On November 11, 2025, the City of Eau Claire adopted its 5-year Transit Development Plan as required by Wisconsin State law. The plan will serve as a guide in planning, developing, and implementing transit services for the City of Eau Claire and area routes that it serves, including Altoona.

Current State funding for transit comes out of a general fund. Advocacy efforts continue for developing a Regional Transit Authority or Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) which would allow for dedicated funding sources with taxing authority. Current Wisconsin State law does not permit RTAs in Wisconsin.

In January of 2026 Eau Claire Transit implemented a new express bus route in downtown Eau Claire to connect people with the



CVTA leaders at the Madison State Capitol.

new Day Resource Center in downtown Eau Claire. The facility offers housing and family service programs and serves as a day resource center for the unhoused. The express bus route is on a trial basis and funded through the end of the summer of 2026.

Transit Equity Day was observed on February 4, 2026, by CVTA and Eau Claire Transit. It is a day to advocate nationally for accessible, fully funded and sustainable public transit. Eau Claire Transit offered free bus rides and paratransit rides for the day. It also honored Rosa Parks's birthday on that day. JONAH also made a \$300 donation in honor of Transit Equity Day.



Phil Swanhorst honoring Rosa Parks on Transit Equity Day.

Eau Claire Transit initiated a Microtransit program on July 25, 2025. The pilot program was intended to test ‘on-demand,’ curb-to-curb travel in the lower-density neighborhoods on Eau Claire’s north side. The program was funded through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant program. The microtransit service was managed and operated by Via Transportation in partnership with Eau Claire Transit. Unfortunately, the program ran out of funds and ended on July 3, 2026. The Eau Claire Transit Commission and the Eau Claire City Council will continue to evaluate the microtransit ridership numbers collected during the test pilot program and further evaluate public feedback to determine if microtransit is feasible and financially sustainable.

Eau Claire Transit is currently reevaluating some fixed bus routes and may implement changes on some routes in 2027 if deemed feasible and approved.

With gratitude for our partners in this work:

- 1000 Friends of Wisconsin
- All Aboard Northwest (AANW)
- All Aboard Wisconsin (AAWI)
- Bike Chippewa Valley
- Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission (CSCRC)
- Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL)
- City of Eau Claire-Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
- Coalition For More Responsible Transportation (CMRT)
- Eau Claire Transit Commission (ECT)
- Rail Passengers Association (RPA)
- West Central WI Rail Coalition (WCWRC)
- WI Transit Riders Alliance (WTRA)
- Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers (WisARP)
- Wisconsin Bike Federation
- Wisconsin Public Institute Research Group (WISPIRG)
- WISDOM

Please note that CVTA is in a working relationship with the listed partners and affiliates. There are no official established partnerships with any of the listed organizations.



Bike Week group ride.

Passenger rail efforts continue to move forward in Eau Claire, the Chippewa Valley, and Wisconsin. Amtrak recently announced plans to extend Hiawatha passenger rail service from Milwaukee to Madison known as Hiawatha West, with startup service expected in 2029 or 2030. The service would eventually be extended to connect with Eau Claire and the Twin Cities when funding becomes available. The Eau Claire to St. Paul Corridor project which is part of the FRA Corridor ID program is ready to move into the next stage which is Service Development planning. A 10% local match will be required for this phase. The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission is working with local entities to achieve the match. Additional state support and funding will be necessary to move passenger rail projects forward in WI.



Sue Suechting and Mark Quam table for transportation.

To inquire more about CVTA, contact us at chippewavalleytransitalliance@gmail.com or on Facebook.

Contact us to get involved!
**chippewavalleytransit
alliance@gmail.com**

Immigration

Interpretation of our immigration laws and their enforcement changed, creating fear and uncertainty.

Our response: “Join our neighbors, advance hope.”

Our work? Learn, collaborate, and act with our neighbors to affirm, “You belong here. You are our neighbors,” as we work together for a more just and safe community.



Los Alegres Bailadores performers at the Multicultural Festival.

- For **7 months**, we stepped up our efforts of distributing nearly 1,500 Know Your Rights cards in English, Spanish and Hmong and included numbers to call for help in ICE-related situations.
- Nearly **300** Chippewa Valley community members obtained Legal Observer training to prepare for ICE presence. Voces de la Frontera of Milwaukee and Monarca of the Twin Cities provided training and support throughout the year.
- **74 Days** is the length of time Minneapolis-St. Paul experienced the ICE Metro Surge and the shadow spread into western Wisconsin.
- For **5 months**, towns along the I-94 corridor felt the fear of ICE targeting neighbors with brown skin while observers photographed the arrests.

- We continued regular meetings with local and county law enforcement.
- One partner, Chippewa Valley Indivisible, took the lead in setting up private chat groups where trained observers reported on ICE movement in our area and community needs.
- At least **100 people said “yes”** to helping with transportation and food because our neighbors were afraid to walk their children to school, go grocery shopping or drive to work.
- **2 tons of food** were distributed each week for 3 months.
- **355 neighbors** were served.
- At the **11th annual visit from the Mexican Consulate**, **130 neighbors** met with the Mexican Consulate at a JONAH member church, where they were able to renew passports, update government documents and review US immigration law.
- In **3 sessions**, with our partners, we provided information and opportunity for neighbors to complete “preparedness” papers, in case of family separation.
- **2000 community members** joined us for the 2025 Chippewa Valley Multicultural Festival



Hazel Garay performs Nicaraguan dance at the Multicultural Festival.

Our work continues. We are grateful for those groups and individuals we have worked with and met along the way.

- 2025-2026
- Chippewa Valley Multicultural Festival committee members
- Beacon House
- Bridge Builders of the Chippewa Valley
- Chippewa Valley Indivisible
- CVTC
- DECI
- Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association (ECAHMAA)
- Eau Claire Community Foundation
- ECASD
- EC Tenant Landlord Resources
- Free Clinic
- JONAH faith community
- Literacy Chippewa Valley
- Mexican Consulate
- Monarca
- Nexus
- Power Up
- Vecino a Vecino (Neighbor to Neighbor)
- Voces de la Frontera
- Volunteer lawyers
- Welcoming New Neighbors
- World Relief
- UWEC Multicultural Center

“

*You belong here.
You are our neighbors.*

”



Cultural exhibit at the Multicultural Festival.

Task Forces



Piñata activity at the Multicultural Festival.

Contact us to get involved!

joyce4334@gmail.com

Immanuel Lutheran Church Trust Fund

Making small grants for innovative projects in the Chippewa Valley, including:

- Northwest Synod of WI Young Adult Service Learning Program
- Stand in the Light Memory Choir
- Luther Park Solar Array
- Lutheran Social Services Libertas Center renovation
- Get Jesus Fit (Beer, Yoga, Book, Trail, Question, and Serve Church)

For information and grant applications, visit

www.Immanuelec.org

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8:30 AM • TRADITIONAL

10:30 AM • CONTEMPORARY (SEPT. - MAY)

10:00 AM • PRAISE IN THE PARK - PHOENIX PARK (JUNE - AUG.)

WEDNESDAY EVENING

SEPTEMBER - MAY

5:00 PM • COMMUNITY MEAL

6:00 PM • WORSHIP

6:45 PM • YOUTH EDUCATION



Teams & Projects



JONAH interfaith clergy host press conference on fair elections.

A Prayer for Justice

In poignant sadness, we think of our ancestors, who lived and died with a spirit of competition and cooperation. We recognize that they chose one over the other: suppressing one another, elevating some, neglecting others. We pray on the consequences of those choices.

With heart-rending hope, we pray for our descendants, who will live and die with our choices. Therefore, we choose to sow the spirit of justice: cooperation with each other, building of bridges, determination to protect one another, and championing the many together, to end the greed, waste, and neglect of injustice.

We all possess sacred worth.

Amen.

Rev. Sara S.V. Bishop

In This Section:

- 29 Leadership Training
- 31 Religious Leaders & Interfaith Green Teams
- 33 Fundraising
- 35 Congregation Core Teams
- 39 Communications
- 41 Encounters Art Exhibition
- 43 Book Club & Film Festival
- 45 Save the Dates



The Attitudes and Disciplines of Community Organizing

Attitude #3: Success depends on relationship.

- People remain committed primarily because of relationships, not strategic plans.
- Relationships are built one at a time through listening.
- Relationships are important for growing our own organization or congregation, and for success in the public arena.

Disciplines

- Commitment to building relational power.
- One-on-ones — as an individual discipline and as part of the organizational culture.
- Being transparent about "self-interest" and listening.
- Respect; cultivation of diversity.

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Leadership Training

Our leadership model is one where everyone is seen as a leader, belonging and collaboration are central, those closest to the problem are the voices we seek to learn from, and root cause strategizing with evaluation is the foundation. The Gamaliel Foundation developed the model of community organizing training that JONAH is formed around, thanks to support from our parent organization, WISDOM. In order to build that base of powerful leaders, we need to train people to see in themselves the leadership they hold, and we need our task force leaders and board members to know our model well. So we hold trainings to teach our modules.

Our model is defined by and carried out through our Attitudes and Disciplines. The four attitudes can be found on each section page in this yearbook (pages 5, 13, 27, and 47).

Our Leadership Training Team includes people who have attended Weeklong Leadership training, have extensive educational background, and are excited about our model. Current active trainers: Paul Savides (retired teacher, 19 years of community organizing experience and training), Lynn Buske (8 years as a trained community organizer and 15 years of education experience), and Sam Ahrens (longtime educator, trainer, and peer support specialist).



Lynn Buske and Paul Savides train new JONAH members.

This year we provided the following public and private trainings:

- We started the year with our JONAH New Member training, where 15 people came to learn and start their path of involvement. Folks can join JONAH anytime, but this training works for folks we haven't met yet and is a more formal process.
- In the spring we offered our favorite and most powerful training - Building Relationships Through 1-on-1 Conversations. 15 people attended. We feel the most important thing we can teach others is how to truly build relationships with neighbors, in which they feel heard and valued. This year our trainers learned a lot from our attendees, most of whom were young adults.
- We provided trainings on Discovering Self-Interest in the fall for about 20 people who were ready to gain clarity on what they are passionate about, how they can help others, and what their next steps are.
- Our training team also hosted small group Intro to Organizing Trainings for two groups of 3, and gave mini-trainings at JONAH's Public Meetings with guest trainer Sarah Bishop about building small communities in times of trial for about 25 people total.
- On the private side, we gave 1-on-1 trainings to two other groups of about 13 people each, presented to three university classes of 25 on Community Organizing and Leadership and provided trainings to agencies when asked.
- Collaboratively, we helped train at and sent five leaders to WISDOM's 5-week virtual leadership training, and we shared Gamaliel's weeklong leadership immersion with local aspiring leaders and partner organizations.

Altogether, in 2026, JONAH's Leadership Training Team trained over 200 people.

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"Without stable shelter, everything else falls apart" - Matthew Desmond



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Paul Savides, Sue Eder, Michelle Pride, Susan Wolfgram, Mara Langreck,
Debbie Gough, TJ Atkins, Maia Bomar, Phil Ruge-Jones, Amanda Babb
Not pictured: Julian Emerson, Elyse Harvey

Religious Leaders

The mission of the Religious Leaders luncheons is to gather interfaith religious leaders to support, inform, and engage with justice topics. JONAH is an interfaith organization made up of diverse congregations and volunteers. Dialogue and relationships across faiths matter because we are catalysts in our own congregations and need to stay connected to the bigger picture in our community.

Congregational leaders or anyone who identifies as a religious leader are welcome. Attendees are typically pastors or ministers who benefit from dialogue with peers. This past year, we organized a Homeless Memorial Vigil in December and a Vigil for Love and Unity: Prayer for all those affected by ICE in February. We held discussions on a variety of topics including immigration, civic action, and the Palm Sunday Path.

We gather every second Tuesday of the month at 12:30pm. The location and justice topic of discussion vary each month. This group typically does not meet in the summer. Contact Christine at christine@stjameseauclaire.org or Kari at ka.jonahorganizer@gmail.com for details.

Interfaith Green Teams

The Interfaith Green Team (IFGT) was created as an offshoot of the JONAH Environmental Task Force in about 2022. We consist of about a dozen local congregations, representing a broad spectrum of denominations and the diversity of faith groups in our community. We do not have a specific charter or charge other than a mutual desire to advance efforts to care for the Earth. Those causes run the gamut of issues, including pollution, recycling, climate change, renewable energy efforts, water conservation, habitat and plant preservation and restoration, climate justice concerns, and finally engaging in local and regional policy development. Our efforts



Religious Leaders social gathering.



Homeless Memorial Vigil.

predominantly are geared toward increasing our knowledge and understanding of the issues and sharing that information amongst ourselves so that we can spread it to our respective congregations.

The Interfaith Green Team traditionally meets on the third Wednesday of each month. It is hosted on a rotating basis by each of the participating congregations and typically attended by 15-25 representatives of the participating congregations. The agenda typically includes updates from our affiliated groups, JONAH's Environmental Task Force and the Chippewa Valley Biodiversity Partnership (CVBP). Through these connections, we have a better finger on the pulse of what is



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happening regarding environmental concerns in the community, which we relay to our congregations. In this way, we can bring the power of numbers in a coordinated fashion to CVBP- and JONAH-supported initiatives and community issues. In particular, this past year we promoted the local “Leave the Leaves” campaign. In addition, we highlight new resources or information to share from local, regional or national sources that our members come across. This way the entire group capitalizes on any new knowledge that is pertinent to their congregations.

Our activities include visiting speakers and educational field trips. In October, we toured the Riverflow Refillery to learn about local sustainability opportunities and resources. We also had an interactive booth at the EarthFest event at the Sonnentag Center this past spring. Currently we are working to support the Plastic Free Eau Claire initiative. We like to think of ourselves as a megaphone that amplifies the voice of JONAH, the Environmental Task Force, and groups like the CVBP on issues that resonate with our congregations.

Join by emailing etf.jonah@gmail.com.

Fundraising

The goal of the fundraising team for 2026 was to support the entire organization in its need for increased income. We decided to find new ways to generate fundraising income to sustain our mission, as well as continue and boost our regular, expected fundraising income sources (brat stand, thrift sale, fundraising mailers).

The fundraising team asked each member congregation to host a special fundraiser this year to benefit JONAH, and coached them through the thought process. Every effort, large or small, directly impacts our ability to move forward.

We also added a new fundraising approach with the first annual JONAH Gala held on March 14 at the 29 Pines Convention Center. With the theme “Enchanted Forest,” approximately one hundred



First Annual Fundraiser Gala.

people enjoyed two hours of food, drinks, entertainment by EC Women in Theater and Altoona High School Show Choir students, a silent auction, and fun! There was an added component of an online auction as well. Save the date of April 10, 2027 for the second annual Gala, which will be at Florian Gardens.

Another new avenue was special outreach to membership. We focused our spring mailing letter on encouraging people to consider Sustaining Membership as this gives us predictable income. At the same time, to show appreciation for our current Sustaining Members, we called each one of them to thank them personally and check in! Through another outreach effort, thanks to the wonderful efforts of an intern, we were able to make phone calls to the majority of our membership list from the past 19 years. We were able to make contact with a lot of people! This not only let us hear from them and create some connections, but also helped us update our list.

The last new item we'd like to share is about what we received! This year we were blessed with two surprise and generous fundraisers that some collaborative friends of JONAH gave us. Ron Krienke and Dave Markquart put on an amazing production of Jesus Christ Superstar as a fundraiser for the Eau Claire Children's Theatre, the Community Table, and JONAH. The results were astounding and our hearts were deeply touched! Another unexpected gift was from Benny Haas, owner of The Plus, who offered to have not one, not two, but three pizza fundraisers for



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JONAH. These came at a crucial time in some financial transitions and we felt truly blessed. Thank you for these considerate gifts.

The fundraising team sees raising funds as the collective job of everyone who loves JONAH, and we welcome support in these efforts at any time! We also are proud to be a small but mighty group having a good time raising money for a great cause in the Chippewa Valley.

The 2026 Fundraising Team includes Lynn Buske, Jill Myers, Jacque Staebel, and Rebecca Wurzer.

Core Teams

Core teams are created when a group of people at one of JONAH's institutional member congregations is ready to ramp up their involvement and extend the work of JONAH. They do this by creating opportunities for education and engagement with social justice issues, as well as ensuring JONAH information is shared with their congregation. Core teams can be pre-existing committees that work on social justice issues in the local community. Ask your Board Representative to learn more.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

The Social Responsibility Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Eau Claire engages in social action and outreach to help bring about change and to improve the lives of people and the communities in which they live. By integrating social justice work into the overall life of the congregation, the Committee helps to make a significant impact on targeted social justice issues in the Chippewa Valley and beyond.

The Committee prepares meals and provides volunteers for Sojourner House, an overnight shelter in downtown Eau Claire, on the first Friday of each month. In addition, we have engaged a wider group of volunteers from the congregation to rehab an apartment operated by Western Dairyland that provides transitional housing for community members. Another important initiative is our involvement in Round Table Revival, which began through the Social

Responsibility Committee and helps people integrate back into the community, post-incarceration, through mentorships. We also sell fair trade coffee, which supports farmer co-ops and creates more fairness in the food industry.

Along with these ongoing projects, the Social Responsibility Committee engages in even more efforts to help make our world a better place. We coordinate the 50/50 Share the Plate Project at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, in which half of every Sunday's offerings received in our collection plate are given to organizations advancing social justice. Past recipients have included JONAH, which UUC helped to start in 2007. The 50/50 Share the Plate has also supported, and/or will support in the future, Bolton Refuge House, Feed My People, World Food Kitchen, and many others. In addition, the Committee advocates for important issues through its members serving on JONAH's Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance and by encouraging people to vote through postcard-writing campaigns that are coordinated with our statewide Unitarian Universalist network. We have also engaged in other forms of advocacy by recently co-sponsoring with Unity Church the presentation of the film "Buy Now: The Shopping Conspiracy." This documentary demonstrates how shopping habits in our society produce large amounts of waste that contribute to major environmental problems in our modern life. Another annual activity of the Committee is to participate in Eau Claire Earth Fest, where we have joined with other organizations to share our work with the wider community.

Through dedication and a commitment to advocating for and working to promote social justice, the Social Responsibility Committee is helping to make a difference in our community and in other places through the wide range of diverse projects in which we are engaged. We will continue this work now and for many years into the future to help create more fairness, equity, and justice in our world.

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The Spirit Lutheran Foundation serves our community by awarding grants to programs that enhance the quality of life in the Chippewa Valley, and assists our neighbors across the globe with national and international missions and disaster relief.

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Trinity Lutheran Church

Current Strive Members are: Pastor Patrick Patterson, Trinity's Caring For Creation Committee chair Pat Mertens, JONAH members Kathy Gjesfeld and Patricia Garber, and current council member Lynn Buske. We would love for folks passionate about peace and justice to join us!

We have a brown bag lunch meeting every month on the fourth Tuesday at 12pm to discuss updates surrounding peace and justice issues that affect Trinity and our community. Our bulletin board is outside the church office so you can stay informed on peace and justice work at Trinity and beyond.

At our meetings, we hear updates from JONAH and support their work, talk through Caring for Creation activities, discuss recent events and how Trinity is poised to advocate, find ways to carry out Trinity's commitment to be a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation and to do antiracism work, and more.

Things we have done this year:

- Hosted the local Palm Sunday Path activity: faith voices standing up for "the least of these" affected by recent policies.
- Also hosted a press conference organized by area clergy about fair and safe elections.
- We partnered with WCC on poll chaplain training and efforts.
- Our team initiated rolling bulletin boards on important justice topics to increase congregation understanding, which the rest of JONAH has adopted.
- Supported the Hmong Refugee Celebration.
- Continue to engage in collaboration to support Latinx community needs.
- Provided space and volunteer time for the JONAH mental health-related pancake brunch.
- Paid for Trinity's JONAH yearbook ad, and kept representatives on their board.
- Volunteered for some JONAH activities, and sat on their Voices United civic engagement task force.
- Advocated for an Earth Sunday.
- Tabled at Pride Fest.

Our future goals include advocacy around ageism, as well as continuing our current efforts, and remaining open to other needs that support our congregation's interest and needs as well as our community beyond. We firmly believe we can create more peace and justice!

University Lutheran Church

Our core team focuses on our specific and unique needs at University Lutheran Church. ULC is unique because we serve college students and community members at the Ecumenical Religious Center on the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus. Our core team focuses on both the needs of the students and the needs of our community members and how best to support each other.

Our team is grateful for the one to one training offered by JONAH Leadership. We are committed to becoming more deeply acquainted with our university and University Lutheran community.



Students and congregation members gather for a Wednesday evening meal and worship.

In August 2025, we had the opportunity to support a UWEC student when the Multicultural Center reached out to us with a student in financial need. We asked the church council to consider supporting this student and ULC contributed to the student's fall tuition.

In April 2026, we hosted Amanda Babb, the director of the Tenant and Landlord Resource



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Our Saviour's Lutheran Church



WORSHIP TIMES
SEPTEMBER – MAY
Sunday Morning - 8:00am & 9:30am
 Education hour - 10:30am
Wednesday Evening - Youth classes,
 midweek meal, and music groups

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Sunday Morning - 8:00am in the Church
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Center. Amanda joined us for a Wednesday evening prayer and meal to share more information about the resource center's services and to answer questions regarding renting.

Our ULC JONAH Core Team continues to meet regularly and is dedicated to serving our students and members.

First Congregational Church of Christ

The First Congregational UCC Eau Claire Core Team has been in existence since 2008. Founding members Jackie Christner and Paul Savides continue to serve and to introduce congregation members to the work of JONAH. The Core Team has become deeply embedded in the life and culture of our congregation, as we intentionally build and foster relationships within the congregation to understand, learn from, and work together to build a more peaceful, just, inclusive, and compassionate world.

The JONAH Core Team activities during 2025-26 include the following:

- Held JONAH Sunday on October 12, 2025. The topic was homelessness in Eau Claire. Core Team member Paul Savides shared information about actions and activities underway to prevent and end homelessness. Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) members Mara Langreck and Justin Fierke shared their stories of their experience with homelessness.
- Provided meals once a month for Roundtable Revival gatherings and recruited other congregation members and groups to help provide meals.
- Held twice yearly unused medication collections and collaborated with the Creation Justice Team to collect and reuse or recycle medication containers and batteries.
- Met one-to-one with new church members to welcome them to the congregation and share information about JONAH and our team.
- Met with members of the Facilities Committee to discuss accessibility modifications for people with mobility issues.

- Promoted JONAH activities and opportunities in the wider community.

Members of the JONAH Core Team in 2025-26 included Sandy Ayers (Mission Education and Social Concerns Committee liaison), Jackie Christner, Shannon Joshi (staff liaison), Elina Lane, Deb Mathson (secretary), Paul Savides (chair), and Lynn Wilson.

Goals for the coming year include:

- Organize monthly meals for Roundtable Revival meetings.
- Organize JONAH Sunday on October 18.
- Hold two unused medication collections.
- Collaborate with other church committees to provide educational opportunities for the congregation.
- Increase the number of Givers Every Month (GEMs) to JONAH.
- Hold one-to-one conversations with new members of the congregation.
- Work with other JONAH congregations to facilitate the formation of core teams within their congregations.
- Promote JONAH actions, activities, and opportunities.

Communications

JONAH Communications shares information across many platforms, including weekly email blasts, the monthly JONAH Journal newsletter, social media, and this yearbook! Special thanks to our email and newsletter editors: David Huber, Richard Swanson, Michelle Pride, Rebecca Wurzer, and Jill Myers. Thanks also to our Yearbook Team: Leah Olson-McBride, Lori Leach, Lynn Buske, and Kari Allen. If you enjoy writing, proofreading, or photography, contact Kari at ka.jonahorganizer@gmail.com to get involved.





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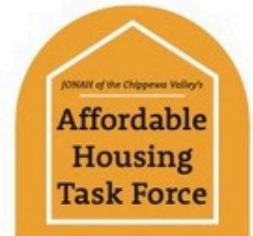
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 **JONAHAffordableHousing**



Dr. Susan Wolfgram

Co-Chair JONAH Affordable Housing Task Force

Co-Director Eau Claire Tenant-Landlord Resource Center

wolfgram.susanm@gmail.com

Encounters Art Exhibition

Encounters: Telling Marginalized Stories through Art is an annual event where people can encounter powerful stories through local art. The 2025 event theme was Celebrating Differences, and included special events of live music, poetry readings, and a Hmong dance performance. The 2026 exhibition is November 13-16 at the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association (ECAHMAA). Every person carries a story that reaches beyond the labels others place on them. This exhibition explores the question: What defines who you are beyond labels?



Exhibition planner and art professor, Jill Olm, talks with her students about her art piece.



Students help set up the exhibition with Organizer, Lynn Buske.



Max Davis talks about their process of writing their poem at the Artist Meet and Greet.

Bottom three photos taken by Soul Shine Photography.



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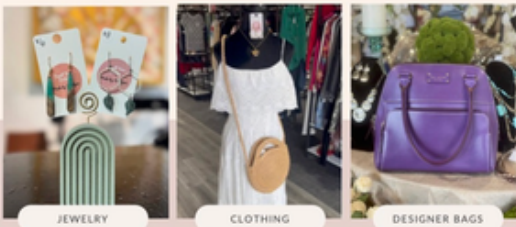
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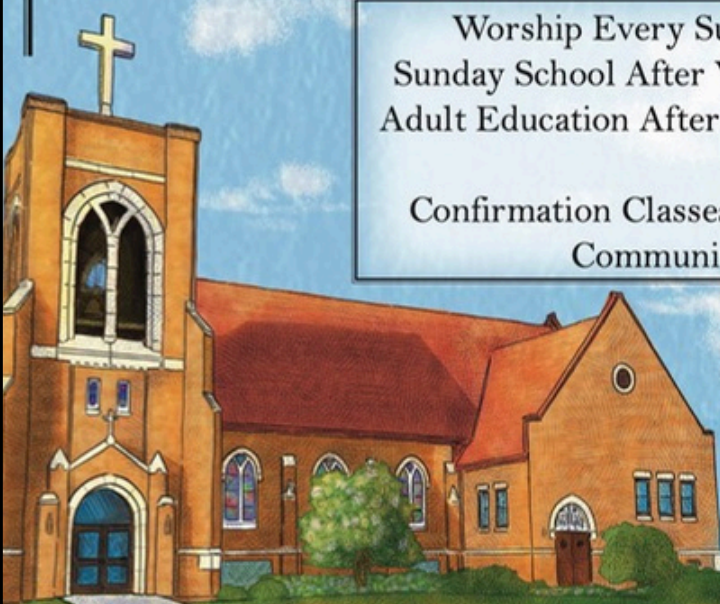


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Book Club

The JONAH Book Club is a welcoming space for people who believe that reading, learning, and conversation can help us better understand the world around us and inspire us to work toward a more just and compassionate community. The book club focuses on books that explore social justice, equality, inclusion, human rights, organizing, and the experiences of people whose voices are often overlooked. Through reading and discussion, we have an opportunity not only to learn from authors but also from one another. We can also reflect on how the ideas in these books connect to our own lives and community. Whether you are a longtime reader, someone who enjoys thoughtful conversation, or simply curious about social justice issues, you are invited to join. The JONAH Book Club will meet in 2027 every other month on the second Thursday at 6:15pm starting in January. We gather at Dotters Books, 307 S Barstow St, a wonderful setting to come together, share ideas, and build relationships.



Folks gather to talk about an environmental book at Dotters.

Books can be requested from the library, purchased locally through Dotters, or ordered through Bookshop.org. Registration for any or all sessions can be made through the JONAH website. We are always looking for volunteers who might be interested in leading the discussion on any of these important books, as well as suggestions for good reads for next year!

Special thanks to Sarah Bishop and to Dotters for making this partnership happen so smoothly! And thanks to Rebecca Wurzer for being the glue and inspiration.

2027 JONAH Book Club Schedule

January 14: *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson

March 11: *Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women That a Movement Forgot* by Mikki Kendall

May 13: *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit* by Lyanda Lynn Haupt

July 8: *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* by David Wallace-Wells

September 9: *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Y. Davis

November 11: *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGhee

Film Festival

Together: What Affects One, Affects Us All

This year we showed 11 films over four days, all related to social justice issues: from Black history in Wisconsin to addressing the childcare crisis. We had amazing partners, including Wisconsin Farmers Union, UWEC Social Work Macro Group, UWEC American Indian Studies Department, the Affordable Housing Task Force, First Presbyterian Church, and many panelists of local experts. The festival brought people together to learn from films, local experts, and one another, connecting national and global issues to the experiences of people in our own community.



Local childcare experts debriefing after a film.

CHIPPEWA VALLEY VOTES

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CVV collaborates with other nonpartisan organizations to:

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- Work to reduce barriers to the ballot including free rides to the polls,
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- Fight voter suppression including advocating for an independent restriction commission to draw fair voting maps.

Our jail voting education program empowers citizens who are incarcerated to register to vote and obtain an absentee ballot.

Our outreach to unsheltered individuals helps eligible citizens obtain WI State IDs, allowing them to register and vote, and obtain community services.



CVV and LWV-GCV volunteers at Dunn Co Jail

CVV is a volunteer-based, nonpartisan organization.

web: chippewavalleyvotes.org

Facebook: [chippewavalleyvotes](https://www.facebook.com/chippewavalleyvotes)

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Save the Dates

Engage with JONAH this year!

**November 4 & 7, 2026
Self-Interest Trainings**

**November 13-16, 2026
Encounters Art Exhibition**

**February 1, 2027
New Member Training**

**February 16, 2027
Public Meeting**

**March 13, 2027
1:1 Training**

**April 8, 2027
Madison Action Day**

**April 10, 2027
Fundraiser Gala**

**April 28-May 1, 2027
Film Festival**

**May 28-29, 2027
Thrift Sale**

**June 21, 2027
Public Meeting**

**August 16, 2027
Public Meeting**

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Susan Wolfgram
Director
susan@ectlrc.org



Paul Savides
Director
paul@ectlrc.org



Amanda Babb
Program Coordinator
info@ectlrc.org

Fiscal Support



Jessica Barrera, Cheryl Lockner-Wright, Christine Warloski, Jeff Goettl, and Joanne Mellema enjoy volunteering at the JONAH brat stand.

A Prayer for Generosity

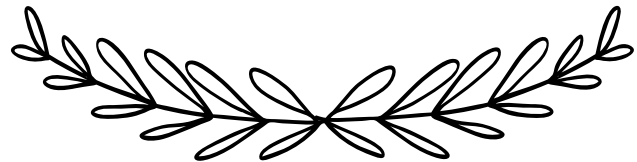
Generous One:

You created this world and all that inhabits it, a gracious and generous gift, indeed! Generosity is an output of Your love to us. May that love empower us to be generous people rooted in love, truth, and justice for the flourishing of all Your beloveds. Amen.

Rev. René L. Mehlberg
First Congregational UCC, Menomonie WI

In This Section:

- 49** Financial Report
- 51** Sustaining Members
- 53** Individual Donors
- 54** List of Advertisers



The Attitudes and Disciplines of Community Organizing

Attitude #4: It's not just about us.

- The mission of our group/organization is not simply to maintain our own existence.
- We are here to engage in the public arena, beyond our own boundaries, to make a difference.

Disciplines

- Collaboration: Identification of potential allies, based on shared interests.
- Clear understanding of public relationships ("No permanent friends; no permanent enemies.")
- Commitment to identifying issues and actions.



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Financial Report 2025

In 2025, we saw a major change in funding for JONAH. In 2025, the grant income from our main source, WISDOM, dropped by nearly \$72,000, from the 2024 amount of \$84,000, which is reflected in the deficit for the year. In 2024 grant income represented 52% of our operating revenue. In 2025 grant income represented only 13% of our operating revenue. This decrease in grant income was partially offset by increases in events and fundraising income. We

apply for grants whenever we can, but grants are generally not available for our normal operating expenses, so we are increasing efforts in the area of events and other fundraising.

We utilize most of our funds for our talented staff who work very hard to provide professional communications, leadership training, and task force support. You will notice the professionalism of the annual report, our website, and our communications. Without a communications professional on staff this would be very difficult. Our lead organizer continues her great work in connecting people throughout the community to talk openly about issues affecting all of us.

JONAH's work is centered on building relationships (collaboration), training leaders (empowerment), and strategizing around critical issues (action) in our community, and your support helps us do that.

JONAH's community impact is largely through the volunteer task force efforts. Your contributions go to supporting that work in a broad as well as a direct way. All of our work is deeply interconnected.

The restricted funds you see are funds from either direct project grants or designated gifts that are only allowed to be used for those specific efforts. While this can be empowering for an issue, it can also be binding for the organization as a whole. When you give a general gift you are ensuring the longevity of this work in building a community that works for everyone in the Chippewa Valley.

JONAH Financials January - December 2025		
INCOME	2025 Actual	% of Budget
Donor Support Income	39,233.00	43.61%
Grant Income	12,267.00	13.64%
Event and Fundraising Income	33,160.00	36.86%
Additional Income	5,303.00	5.89%
TOTAL INCOME	89,963.00	100.00%
EXPENSES		
Event and Fundraising Expenses	12,896.00	8.92%
Operations	7,541.00	5.22%
Contract Services	11,893.00	8.23%
Employee Wages and Benefits	96,762.00	66.93%
Affiliation Dues	13,989.00	9.68%
Misc. Expenses	1,500.00	1.04%
TOTAL EXPENSES	144,581.00	100.00%
NET INCOME (DEFICIT)	(54,618.00)	
2025 Restricted Funds*		
	2025 Expenditures	Balance as of 12/31/2025
Affordable Housing Task Force	23,282.00	2,486.00
Child Poverty Task Force	1,125.00	625.00
Environmental Task Force	34,387.00	3,509.00
Immigration Task Force	3,248.00	90.00
Mental Health Task Force	10,346.00	422.00
Transit Task Force	1,158.00	2,149.00
Welcoming New Neighbors	27,931.00	10,764.00
Other Restricted Task Force Funds	2,157.00	1,475.00
*Restricted finds include donations received that are designated to a specific task force or task force project and restricted task force specific grants.		

We remember and honor our beloved JONAH members who have died in 2026:

- Ann Benson
- Betty Gertner
- Judy Blackstone
- Phyllis Grohn
- Mary Daniels
- Lloyd Shepherd





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Sustaining members are our most reliable source of income, contributing \$15,000 this year. Right now, that covers about one month of JONAH's operating costs. As a local nonprofit, consistent and dependable gifts make the greatest impact. Even \$5 a month matters, because knowing we can count on those funds allows us to plan ahead and accomplish more for our community. Please consider becoming a Sustaining Member by setting up automatic monthly or annual donations through our giving form, using the QR code on the right. Sustaining support creates the stability that helps JONAH thrive. Thank you to all of our donors for making this fiscal year possible! The names listed below contributed at least one sustaining donation from August 2025-August 2026.



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Council | 34 River Valley Community Death Care |
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Therapy Clinic | 38 Tastefully Simple (Denise Bender) |
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| 46 Eau Claire Tenant Landlord
Resource Center | 52 Northern Spirit Radio | 02 University Lutheran Church |
| 08 Edward Jones (Ted Oeffler) | 42 NorthLakes Community Clinic | 52 Urban Style |
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(Eau Claire) | | 48 Western Dairyland |
| | | 44 WHYS Radio |
| | | 40 Wisconsin Public Education Network |

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