

ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19



WISCONSIN
FAITH
VOICES
FOR JUSTICE

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April 30, 2019

Dear Friends,

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice's annual celebration is always an opportunity for me to reflect on the year past, our accomplishments and challenges, and to look to the coming year with anticipation.

This past year has been one of turmoil and violence aimed at our faith communities in the U.S. and around the world, but also one of love and hope, as we have reached out to support and comfort one another. I am proud of the part WFVJ has played in helping to make connections and build relationships among our diverse communities.

In addition to building community among faith traditions, WFVJ is also deeply involved in building coalitions centered on issues of social justice.

- The **Dane Sanctuary Coalition**, which we were instrumental in founding two years ago, has been a locus for work on immigrant justice, from direct service for undocumented individuals, to advocacy on a local and state level.
- Four years ago, WFVJ founded the **Dignity at Work Coalition**, which has become a leader in advocating for policies that make for sustainable work and in turn helps us sustain our families.

As an all-volunteer organization, we could not have accomplished what we have without the help and support of many friends, volunteers, and allies. We most especially want to thank:

- Our wonderful **Board of Directors!** (find the list on p. 9)
- A special thank you to outgoing board members Rev. Michael Rehak and Mary Nervig for all their many contributions to our work!
- **Matthew Westfox** for help in fundraising, clergy organizing, and the Dignity at Work Speakers Bureau
- **Denny Rosenthal** for bookkeeping and financial management
- Our **interfaith community building team** (see list on p. 4) who have helped plan our new Sacred Site Visits and Interfaith Fellowship program, our third annual Iftar, and more!

We are deeply grateful to our many volunteers who help make this happen, and we invite you all to join us in this work!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bonnie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis
President of the Board

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



The **Dignity at Work Coalition** works together to establish higher standards of respect and equality for all who labor, greater compassion for working families, and to foster community solidarity in the service of our mission. Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice is the founding and the backbone organization that supports this work, along with the organizations on our Steering Committee – 4-C Community Coordinated Child Care; 9to5 Wisconsin; the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources; Kids Forward; NAACP of Dane County; Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health; Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired; Worker Justice Wisconsin.

Our accomplishments include:

- **2018 Voter's Guide for Every Working Person** – a guide to questions on economic justice for constituents to ask their candidates. Find it at <http://www.dignityatworkcoalition.org/archives.html>.
- In February, we presented a legislative briefing for Wisconsin's new legislature, highlighting issues related to early childhood education, paid family leave, and transportation.
- Op-eds on the above issues were published in local papers as a follow-up to the briefing. We encourage everyone to write supportive letters to the editor. You can find the op-ed pieces at <http://www.dignityatworkcoalition.org/>.

For more information, including the current full list of member organizations, see www.dignityatworkcoalition.org. Also like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/dignityatworkcoalitionwisconsin. To join the Coalition email dignityatworkcoalition@gmail.com.



Dignity at Work legislative briefing



Denise Jess and Cassie Steiner

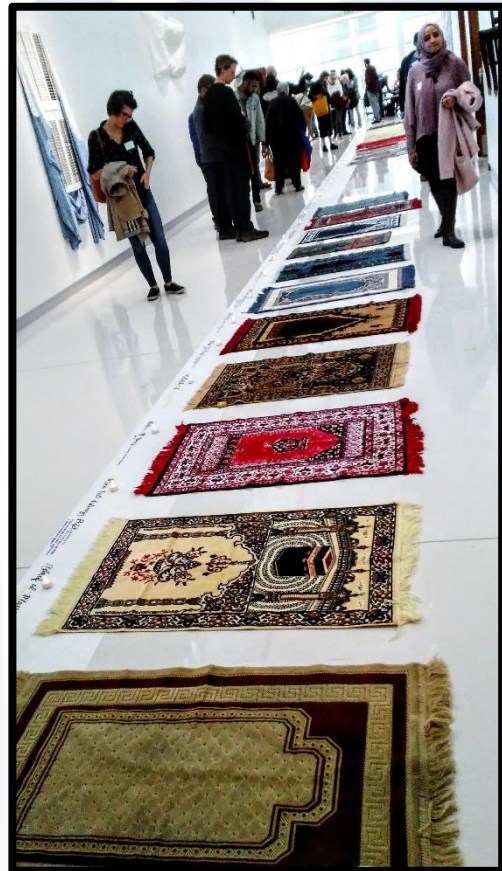
Interfaith Community Building



We are grateful to the following volunteers who helped organize events throughout the year: Sadat Abiri, Lillian Abrams, Jonathan Biatch, Fatou Ceesay, Charles Cohen, Eugene Crisler, Nessreen Debo, Angie Dickenson, Joan Duerst, Marian Ehrenberg, Wade Fransson, Tony Garcia, Miranda Hassett, Sally Jones, Nancy Korn, Patricia Litscher, Laiman Mai, Jessica Ozalp, Teresa Pullara, Erica Serlin, Larry Sexe, Cemile Sahin, Mary Strait, Seema Tahir, Barbara Vlach, Ellen Wallen, Abdallah Zanolny

Our programs included:

- WFVJ Co-sponsored **#BlessedRamadan** project with Wisconsin Council of Churches, to sell Blessed Ramadan lawn signs
- We held our 2nd annual **Interfaith Ramadan Iftar** (break the fast)
- We co-sponsored **Interfaith blood drives** in August and February along with Christ Presbyterian Church
- In early 2019, we initiated a new program – **Sacred Site Visits and Interfaith Fellowship** – a series of visits throughout the year to different faith communities, followed up by small groups meeting over a meal to talk about what they experienced at the site visits. The small groups, or ‘cohorts’ stay together over the course of the year to get to know each other, build relationships, and form new friendships.
- With Jewish Congregations for Social Justice, we co-sponsored the showing of the documentary, **“This is Home”**, on Muslim refugees settling in Baltimore
- With Muslim Women United for Peace, we co-sponsored **“Demystifying Islam”** event
- Assisted in organizing **interfaith vigil** in the wake of the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh
- Organized co-sponsorships from faith communities for **interfaith Forum on White Supremacy** after the shooting at three mosques in New Zealand



Prayer rugs with the names of the Christchurch mosque shootings victims at the **Forum on White Supremacy**

TO OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBORS
**BLESSED
RAMADAN**

WiChurches.org

**2nd Annual Interfaith Ramadan
Iftar** (break the fast) at Edgewood
College's Edgedome



Sacred Site visits kick-off event at St.
Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Madison.
Rabbi Jonathan Biatch



Iftar 2018 planning team. From left to
right: Cemile Sahin, Bonnie Margulis,
Jessica Ozalp, Lillian Abrams, Violet
Ozalp, Marian Ehrenberg, Mary Strait,
Nessreen Debo



Formed in partnership with Voces de la Frontera and Centro Hispano of Madison, **Dane Sanctuary** organizes congregations and organizations to provide physical sanctuary to our immigrant friends and neighbors who are at risk for deportation. We do this as part of the national New Sanctuary Movement.

Our work this year included:

- June 30th press conference on separation of families at the border
- Partnered with Voces de la Frontera on press conference to lift up the plight of undocumented immigrants Maria Portugal and Franco Ferrerya on July 24
- Op-ed “Separating Children from Parents is Inhuman” published in The Cap Times
- Volunteer drivers recruited and trained to drive undocumented individuals to Milwaukee or Chicago for ICE check-ins and deportation hearings
- **Words of Worth** campaign with the Community Immigration Law Center, to send postcards to undocumented people in detention centers at the border

Member Congregations and Organizations

Centro Hispano of Madison
Voces de la Frontera
Beth Israel Center
Community Immigration Law Center
Congregation Shaarei Shamayim*
First Baptist Church
First Congregational United Church of Christ
First Unitarian Society*
James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation*
Lake Edge Lutheran Church
Madison Christian Community*:
Advent Lutheran Church
Community of Hope United Church of Christ

Madison Mennonite Congregation*
Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ*
Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
Family Farm Defenders
Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society
Pres House – UW Madison
St. Francis House
Teaching Assistants’ Association
Temple Beth El
The Crossing
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom – Madison
Worker Justice Wisconsin

*denotes host sites

Dane Sanctuary Steering Committee: Christine Neumann-Ortiz (Voces de la Frontera); Diana Perez (Voces de la Frontera), Karen Menendez Collier (Centro Hispano), Rev. Winton Boyd (Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ); Baxter Richardson (Orchard Ridge UCC), Ruthanne Landsness (Orchard Ridge UCC), Jeanne Lydon (James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation), Dorit Bergen (First Unitarian Society), Corkey Custer (Madison Christian Community), Ellen Lindgren (Madison Christian Community), Leila Pine (James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation), Rev. Leslie Schenk, Sergio Gonzalez.

ADVOCACY

- WFVJ co-sponsored **People of Faith United for Justice Advocacy Day**, along with Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Jewish Federation of Madison, Lutheran Office for Public Policy – Wisconsin, Madison-area Urban Ministry, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Wisconsin Jewish Conference
- **Action alerts** on SNAP (aka food stamps); Wisconsin state budget; immigrant rights
- Co-sponsored with Wisconsin Council of Churches, Lutheran Office of Public Policy, and Feeding Wisconsin and presented on webinars with clergy around the state on the federal **Farm Bill** and **SNAP**
- **Madison Faith Leaders Find U.S. Attorney General's Misuse Of Scripture To Tear Children Away From Parents Offensive** – open letter to U. S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, written by Rabbi Bonnie Margulis of WFVJ and Rev. Susan Schneider of Trinity Lutheran Church, Madison; and signed by Community of Hope UCC Steering Committee, Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, Madison-Area Urban Ministry, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, and 76 clergy and people of faith, published in Madison365.com – <https://madison365.com/madison-faith-leader-u-s-attorney-generals-misuse-of-scripture-to-tear-children-away-from-parents-offensive/>
- Presented testimony to the Joint Finance Committee in opposition to undemocratic lame-duck session bills that sought to undermine the authority of Governor Evers and Attorney General Josh Kaul
- Submitted testimony to the Assembly Committee on Health in opposition to AB 1, which purports to protect people with pre-existing conditions but fails to include a prohibition on annual or life-time limits and fails to provide for subsidies to help low-income Wisconsinites afford coverage
- Voces de la Frontera **Lobby Day** and Press Conference on **Drivers' Licenses for All**



Press conference on **separation of families**

Forward Together Wisconsin is a state-wide, intentionally inclusive and diverse moral movement that brings together a broad coalition of individuals and organizations. We are led by personal conviction, faith or philosophy and are committed to work through nonviolent action for



This past year we hosted a **Social Justice Connections Fair**, bringing together twenty-three social justice organizations to give them the opportunity to share their work with the public. Entertainment was provided by Grammy-award winning Native American singer Bill Miller. Organizations exhibiting at the fair ranged from environmental organizations, to education advocates, to hunger relief, to Native American rights, and to advocates for voting rights and others.



Exhibitors at the Fair



Grammy-award winner Bill Miller
sings at the Fair

COALITIONS

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice works very closely with faith communities, social service organizations, and advocacy organizations. We are indebted to all our partners for their generosity in sharing resources, materials, information, and opportunities to raise the religious voice in the public square.

- Medicaid Matters – advocacy for health care reform; preserving BadgerCare; opposing attempts to overturn and undermine the Affordable Care Act
- Public Benefits Coalition – working together to preserve the social safety net, including access to affordable housing, child care, health care, transportation, education, and nutrition
- Better Budget Coalition brings together social justice organizations to advocate together for a state budget that reflects the needs and the values of all Wisconsin residents
- Transit Riders Coalition – advocating for public transportation in rural and urban areas

BRINGING OUR WORK TO THE COMMUNITY

A central aspect of our mission is to educate our communities about the **intersection of faith and public life**; to **lift up the issues** that face our state and country; and to **provide tools to empower people** to take action. In addition to the above, we have engaged our congregations and the public in the following ways:

- **Moving from Charity to Justice:** A Workshop on Faithful Advocacy – Temple Beth El and Christ Presbyterian Church in Madison co-sponsored our three-session workshop on how faith communities and people of faith can be effective advocates for social justice
- Organized a focus group of faith leaders with UW Hospital and other health agencies for their annual Community Health Care Assessment
- Created and posted to YouTube a video on how to **register and vote**
- Organized a training on how to register people to vote and recruited congregations to hold voter registration drives; co-sponsored another training with First Unitarian Society
- Created and disseminated over 100 **Voter Pledge Cards**
- Organized a **Know Your Rights** training with the ACLU at Centro Hispano for the immigrant community in the wake of ICE raids in Wisconsin



WISCONSIN FAITH VOICES FOR JUSTICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Sadat Abiri
Islamic Center
Madison
Muslim

Mary Nervig, LCSW
Madison
ELCA

*Matthew Nicgorski, CPA
Madison

Vicki Berenson
Madison Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Madison
Quaker

Rabbi Marc Berkson
Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
Milwaukee
Reform Judaism

*Professor Charles Cohen
UW-Madison, Emeritus
Madison
Reform Judaism

Reverend Nick Utphall
Advent Lutheran Church
Madison Christian Community
Madison
ELCA

Linda Ketcham
Madison-Area Urban Ministry
Madison
United Church of Christ

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Madison
Reform Judaism

Reverend Michael Rehak
The Institute for Congregational Identity
Cambridge
ELCA

*Reverend David Hart
Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church
Madison
UMC

Reverend Oscar Rozo
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Beaver Dam
Comunidad de Todos los Santos
Watertown
Episcopal

Reverend Larry Sexe
Deerfield Lutheran Church
Deerfield
ELCA

**Denotes new members*

MEMBER CONGREGATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Organizational members are listed in order of joining, with the most recent members last.

- Madison-Area Urban Ministry, Madison
- Wisconsin Friends Action Network (Quakers), Madison
- First United Methodist Church and Society Mission Team, Madison
- Temple Beth El, Madison
- Beth Israel Center, Madison
- Lake Edge Lutheran Church, Madison
- Still Point Zen Center, Random Lake
- North Central Wisconsin Worship Group (Quakers), Merrill
- Lake Edge United Church of Christ's Mission Team, Madison
- Snowflower Sangha, Madison
- Board of Church & Society, United Methodist Church Wisconsin, Sun Prairie
- First Unitarian Society Social Justice Ministries, Madison
- Advent Lutheran Church, Madison
- Memorial United Church of Christ, Fitchburg
- Middleton Community United Church of Christ Faith in Action Team, Middleton
- Madison Friends Meeting (Quakers), Madison
- Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Madison

MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

Funding for Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice comes solely through membership dues from member congregations and organizations and the generosity of our individual supporters. All funds go toward the support of all our programs – for web and listserv hosting; materials for workshops and events; for outreach and publicity materials; for food at events; and for travel around the state. We continue to expand our donor base and are exploring grant options from local and statewide foundations and other funding sources.

Our annual congregational/organizational dues structure is:

Congregation/Organization Over 200 members	\$100
Congregations/Organizations Under 200 members	\$ 50

Individuals are encouraged to contribute whatever you can!

All contributions and dues payments are much appreciated. We are 501c3 non-profit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible. Donations can be made on our website – www.wisconsinfaithvoicesforjustice.org, or by check payable to Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and sent to:

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c/o Madison Christian Community
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Madison, WI 53717