



**Wisconsin Conference
United Church of Christ**

Re-purposing and Re-imagining Our Church Buildings

By Rev. Tisha Brown

Over the last few years, I have found myself wondering from time to time what God might be up to when it comes to our church buildings. As we are learning during this pandemic, we do not need our buildings to continue to BE the church. However, every congregation's building is a vital and important legacy shared from generation to generation. Our buildings have been and continue to be an important resource for gathering communities of God's faithful people and for providing hospitable spaces within which we can do God's work to heal, reconcile, care for, and love the world.

The irony of talking about church buildings during a time of social distancing when most of our buildings sit empty is not lost on me. However, we will not be staying safer at home forever and the question of how best to share the treasure of our buildings today and into the future is one we should all be pondering. My hope is that sharing the following stories might spark ideas, generate conversation, and open hearts and minds to the question of what God might be up to with your church building. Maybe a Catalyst grant could help your congregation make your dream for your building come true. The next Catalyst grant deadline is October 5, 2020. [Click here](#) for grant guidelines and to download a copy of the application.

Over the last four years, the Catalyst team has provided grants to five different congregations in support of their efforts to re-envision how their church building might best serve them and their wider community now and into the future. These are just a few examples (see below) that we hope might spark your imagination as you ponder how your building can best serve you now and into the future.

~Tisha

Union Congregational in Green Bay turned an unused portion of their building into a vibrant incubator space in which they plan to incubate and launch new community service organizations. Read more about this exciting project - how it got started, how it went from idea to reality and where it is now [here](#).

One goal of First Congregational UCC in Ripon's Catalyst grant proposal was to create an inviting, religiously neutral space for students from around the world who are in attendance at Ripon College. The College and the Church are neighbors and partner together in a variety of ways. You can read more about this project [here](#).

The [Lighthouse Youth Ministry](#) renovated their newly leased space, which sits next door to one of their partner churches. This newly renovated and welcoming space is now home to youth from all five congregations and the community and provides a safe gathering space for all who enter its doors.

[Hope UCC in Cochrane](#) is undertaking a building campaign called "Lifting up Hope" to make their building fully accessible to all people so that they might connect with their neighbors, nurture relationships and practice inclusivity. As Dawnette Cigrand wrote in their application, "God rejoices when we work together to create safe, accessible, welcoming spaces."

[Lake Edge UCC and Christ the Solid Rock](#) united in ministry in 2019. The two congregations now share as equal partners in the building located on Buckeye Road in Madison. To symbolize this partnership, they decided to renovate the sanctuary to make the space feel like home for both congregations. The Catalyst Team was thrilled to support this innovative approach to hospitality.

[Click here](#) for more information about how to apply for a Catalyst Grant and to download a copy of the grant application. We look forward to hearing from you!