



**Wisconsin Conference
United Church of Christ**

Catalyst Grants Support Racial Justice Efforts

By Rev. Tisha Brown

Racial justice, Black Lives Matter, White privilege, White supremacy, Juneteenth, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many more...

These are words, concepts, a movement for social justice and a few of the names of siblings in Christ who've been murdered by police that are flooding our social media feeds, filling our television and radio airwaves and reverberating on our streets. For some of us, the attention being paid to the cries of African Americans has been a long time coming and we are diving in with both feet to attend rallies, march for justice, buy from Black-owned businesses and do our part to see and confront the systems and structures of our society that deny the humanity of some of God's people simply because of the color of their skin. For others of us, this time of awakening to racial injustice is relatively new and we aren't quite sure how to respond, who to listen to or where to turn.

Regardless of where you stand at this time in history, it is difficult to deny that it is long past time for America to confront racism and prejudice and for white people to acknowledge privilege and seek to divest of it in every possible way. Since 2018 when the Wisconsin Conference annual meeting emphasis was racial justice, the Catalyst Team has been providing grants to congregations seeking to inform themselves and to take action to dismantle racism, and address white privilege. **Grant funds and resources are available for your congregation to undertake a time of study or to contribute to a movement for justice in your area.**

The descriptions and additional information about the projects Catalyst has funded over the last two years is provided below in the hopes that it might spark your ideas and ignite your commitment to develop a project to address racial justice and white privilege in your congregation and wider community. The United Church of Christ has always been a leader in justice movements throughout its history. Now is the time for us to stand together to affirm that Black Lives Matter and to disrupt structures of white privilege to the best of our ability.

Catalyst funds are available to support your efforts. The next grant deadline is Monday, October 5, 2020. Contact [Tisha Brown](#) for more information.

Here are some examples of how churches have used Catalyst Grants to address white privilege and work for racial justice in the last two years.

The Madison Christian Community's "The Big Read" project was a multi-congregation effort to read and discuss *The Trouble I've Seen* by Drew Hart. Grant funds provided books and partial funding of speaker fees and other event costs. A detailed description of this event and how it grew from an idea to a reality is [available here](#).

The BIG Read



First Congregational UCC in LaCrosse used their Catalyst grant funds to support a community-wide effort unfolding in LaCrosse called "Creating a Healthier Multicultural Community." This multi-year project involved a community-wide read of *Waking Up White*, combined with a variety of community events and discussions. Catalyst funds helped to support community events and speaker fees. [Click here to read](#) more about this project and its impact in LaCrosse.

Five UCC congregations in the Southeast Association (2 urban and 3 suburban) came together in 2018 to form the **Southeast Wisconsin Racial Justice Consortium**. Their goals were to provide mutual support, to raise awareness of systemic racism and to



speaking up as faith communities on racial justice issues. They led a five-part speaker series in Port Washington, inviting a variety of speakers to address racial justice issues. This series also included a book discussion of *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond. A flyer the group created describing these events is [available here](#). Catalyst funds supported speaker fees, book purchases and other event costs.

Lake Edge UCC and Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Churches created an alliance and are now sharing a building on Buckeye Road in Madison. Catalyst grant funds provided support for a sanctuary renovation intended to promote hospitality and mutual ownership of sacred space as the two congregations come together as equal partners in ministry. [Read about this special alliance here](#).

