



Announcing the Fall 2019 Catalyst Grant Recipients

I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19, NRSV)

The prophet Isaiah speaks these words of hope and promise to a community in exile seeking signs of hope and new life. With these words, Isaiah reminds the people of God's covenant commitment to make a way for the people through the trials and tribulations of life and faith. These covenant promises remain with us today even in the midst of our own experiences of trial. In fact, springing forth in our midst are new things for us to perceive, new ways of being God's people that breathe life and hope and point to possibility. Shared below is a glimpse into just a few of the new things God is doing with and through our congregations throughout Wisconsin. Each of these projects recently received funding from the Catalyst Team in support of their efforts to join with God in their communities and to live out UCC values of radical hospitality, ecumenical partnership, interfaith relationship, and accessibility for all. May these stories be a source of inspiration and hope on the journey.

Perhaps God is doing something new in your midst? Maybe something is springing forth for you to perceive? We'd love to hear about it and join with you. Grant application guidelines are [available here](#). Deadlines for 2020 are March 30 and September 28.

Lighthouse Ecumenical Youth Ministry

[Rev. Kelly Nieman Anderson](#)
<https://lighthouseyouth.org/>

Five congregations from three denominations in Port Washington and Saukville joined forces to create a truly welcoming and affirming Christian youth ministry, which welcomes and celebrates all youth and all types of families. In January 2020, with help from Catalyst Team funds, they will launch "Teen Café," an after school opportunity for youth to gather for homework help, tutoring, snacks, music lessons, board games and relationship building. Through this ecumenical partnership and commitment to providing a radically welcoming place

to gather, connect and explore, these five congregations are experimenting with a new thing God is doing in their midst.

Rock County Composers Lab

[JP Merz](#)

First Congregational UCC, Janesville

JP Merz is a Los Angeles-based, Janesville-born composer whose music has been featured everywhere from Carnegie Hall to Netflix. JP grew up in First Congregational Janesville and is excited about this opportunity to give back to his home community in celebration of the congregation's upcoming 175th anniversary. In partnership with the congregation, Janesville Craig High School and the Else/If Else trio from Lawrence University in Appleton, the Composers Lab will provide 8-10 high school musicians with instruction and support in the art of music composition as they work toward a concert of their own music to be shared in May 2020. This concert will be an integral part of the congregation's 175th anniversary celebration. Through this project, JP and the people at First Congregational are committed to joining with the Spirit of inclusivity as they lift up the voices of young people who might not otherwise have an opportunity to share their gifts in this way.

Radical Hospitality - Lake Edge, UCC, Madison

[Lex Liberatore](#), Pastor, Lake Edge UCC

As of this fall, Lake Edge UCC and Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Church are following the spirit of hope and healing by joining together under one roof. (Read more about this in [this Wisconsin State Journal article](#)). A key commitment of Lake Edge UCC is to ensure that the sanctuary is a space where both congregations feel welcomed and at home. To fulfill this commitment they are undertaking a sanctuary renovation project which will remove the pews to make room for the chairs from Christ the Solid Rock's previous building. The hope is that this gesture of hospitality will build a strong foundation for this newly forming community as these two congregations join together in ministry with one another and the surrounding community.

The Interfaith Ministries Project

Jeanne Williams, Jeanne@riponcongregationalucc.org

First Congregational UCC, Ripon

Ripon College and First Congregational UCC in Ripon collaborate on this project, which provides "Home Away Families" to students attending Ripon College from all over the world. This effort extends radical hospitality to students from a range of cultures and traditions. They have identified two needs they will seek to fill in the coming year:

1. opportunities for students to celebrate their home cultures with appreciative participants, and
2. safe, comfortable space for religious practice and comradery.

An inviting, religiously-neutral space will be created in First Congregational UCC's chapel where students will be invited to practice their own religious traditions and gather to study and socialize. Three cross-

cultural celebrations are also being planned. The Spirit of unity in the midst of diversity is alive and well in and through this project.

Arts and Science Literacy Camp

[James Wick](#)

Christ Church UCC, Milwaukee

The Arts and Science Literacy Camp is an innovative summer camp integrating arts, literacy, and science educational experiences targeting children of low and low-middle income families from Milwaukee. The camp brings summer literacy and educational assistance to an underserved population in the heart of the city. Seven congregations partner to support this educational opportunity demonstrating the UCC's love of children. Catalyst grant funds will provide scholarship support to students and ensure that teachers and other staff are paid a just and equitable wage.

Hope in Action Task Force

[Dawnette Cigrand](#)

Hope UCC, Cochrane

Hope UCC has initiated an effort entitled "Embracing all People" that is intended to reach a variety of people and a variety of ages in and around Buffalo County. In three words, Hope intends to Connect, Nurture and Practice. The biggest challenge to fulfilling this mission is a lack of accessibility to their building. Therefore, they are undertaking a building campaign effort to make their building fully accessible to all people so that they might connect with their neighbors, nurture relationships and practice inclusivity. God rejoices when we work together to create safe, accessible, welcoming spaces.