

SOUTHWEST ASSOCIATION: Division on Social Concerns
Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
January 2021

The Southwest Association announces open application for the 2021 FY year grants for justice and witness activities through Association congregations in partnership with local social service, partnering churches, or other local groups. All Association churches are welcomed to apply, particularly those in more rural areas. We want to encourage applications from congregations who have not applied in the past. Any application will be considered, but priority will be given to designated special COVID-19 ministry (**See Below**). Individual grants tend to be a maximum of \$1000.

Social Concerns grants are designed to extend churches reach into the communities where they minister. They are also meant to partner local church with other agencies, groups, or service providers in an effort to build relationships, and better coordinate the delivery of services to meet immediate needs. Although strongly encouraged, direct participation by the local church with any group or agency is not required. All that is required to apply for a grant is a relationship with a local group or agency. In effect, the church is sponsoring a grant to go to a local group and only needs to attest to the work the group does, will do. The local church is responsible for completing and submitting the application and any required follow up.

SPECIAL COVID-19 PRIORITY

In this time of pandemic, the Association sees an opportunity for local church to reimagine what it means to be the body of Christ alive in the area they serve. Building coalitions and deepening existing relationships can help church rebrand and relaunch themselves to their communities. If we want to remain a viable force for the Good News today, we must be ready to address the needs and concerns we see before us.

Social Concerns will prioritize applications that address any of three identified COVID-19 related needs:

1. Rental Assistance/Eviction Prevention- COVID has made eviction a pressing concern for many. Social Concerns recommends local churches consider ways to intervene and be a force for providing this vital emergency aid. Congregations are encouraged to take an inventory of local options for rental and eviction assistance in their area prior to requesting funds for this purpose. (Madison and Dane County= The Tenant Resource Center; The Community Action Coalition= Many areas throughout Wisconsin) It is important not to duplicate an already effective local program. Better to partner in creative ways to extend the reach, or add capacity to an experienced local provider.
2. Food Insecurity- Lack of transportation, isolation, loss of income, socially distanced employment all have created new problems for many families on the margins. Churches partnering with local food banks on "pop-up" food pantries, bring the food to the people. For example, Second Harvest (and other Wisconsin food banks) have joined with church led coalitions serving isolated and particularly vulnerable populations. Special COVID-19 programs have allowed larger pantry programs to provide food at little or no charge. All that's needed is a partner or two, and a little organizing.
3. High Speed Internet- Many families required to provide online access for remote learning for their school age children, have problems affording or maintaining high speed internet. Finding creative ways to not only provide funds, but to support remote learning is important at this time. Many children are falling behind their peers because of poor connectivity or a lack of stimulation. Some communities have formed learning pods; where families team to provide good internet and the supportive environment working parents and children require.