



## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## UCF Awards Over \$100K to Conferences for Clergy Support

**New York, August 10, 2020** -- United Church Funds (UCF) today announced that Brown Endowment grants of over \$100,000 has been awarded so far this year to 13 United Church of Christ (UCC) conferences. These grants will allow these conferences to implement support programs and leadership development for authorized ministers who are addressing and responding to the crisis and trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and protests for racial justice.

Charles Buck, UCF President & CEO, said, "From the grant proposals we have received, it's clear that churches and pastors are not excluded from the disruption and stress caused by the pandemic and recent racial upheaval. They need long-term support to continue leading their congregations in a healthy and sustainable way. United Church Funds is pleased that the Brown Endowment Fund that we administer is helping churches and faith leaders recover from the impact of COVID-19, and elevating churches' role in addressing systemic racism."

The UCC conferences receiving grants are Central Atlantic, Florida, Illinois South, Indiana-Kentucky, Kansas-Oklahoma, Missouri Mid-South, Northern California Nevada, New York, Penn Northeast, Penn West, South Central, Southern and Southwest.

Nearly all of the proposals cited the significant toll on parish clergy and institutional chaplains as they have had to set up an operational remote worship and pastoral care in a short time, deal with the increased workload and minister to grieving families and church members. In addition, several conferences have witnessed increased racial tension in their communities, and they see a heightened need to support pastors as they navigate the stresses of lifting up a prophetic voice while receiving threats for speaking out against racism.

David Greenhaw, a member of the Brown Endowment Committee that reviews grant proposals, expressed admiration for the creative efforts that conferences demonstrated to help their clergy in this time of remarkable upheaval. "However, I was also struck by the fact that the suggested approaches tend to lean on psychological or therapeutic interventions.

It clearly demonstrates the importance of providing long-term resources to clergy and chaplains so that they can continue leading their congregations during this unprecedented time,” he said.

The conferences will use the funds in a variety of ways, including programs and training focusing on mental health; traumatic stress and crisis debriefings; conflict mediation, coaching and reconciliation techniques; online trainings; and Communities of Practice cohorts and retreats.

The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, Associate Conference Minister of the New York Conference, said, “Congregations wrestle with how to recover from the impact of COVID-19. We are grateful that the Brown Endowment grant will allow us to offer programs and training to provide the skills our pastors need to lead congregations through these types of life-cycle transitions.”

The Rev. Shana Johnson, Illinois South Conference Minister, said, “We’ve been looking for ways to provide as much ongoing support as possible to our clergy and chaplains. The COVID-19 pandemic and the racism upheaval are not one incident but an ongoing event that compounds and complicates the grief and trauma. We are planning to use the Brown Endowment grant to implement a long-term trauma debriefing process to help with the burnout and to further equip our chaplains and pastors with the resiliency skills needed to continue to serve in a new normal.”

Penn Northeast Conference plans to implement the “Recover from the ...isms training” to bring awareness and progression to societal issues through online training in corporate environments, church workshops, speaking engagement and other civil and social organizations. The Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates, Penn Northeast Conference Minister, said, “Set to launch in October 2020, the online training aims to reach 150 ministers initially. The ability to record the training will allow us to reach out to more ministers in the longer-term.”

Campbell Lovett, Consulting Conference Minister for South Central Conference, said, “Our conference covers a large geographical area with a few churches and staff, and we lack formal clergy support that can connect our ministers in this challenging time. To address this, we will use the Brown Endowment grant to create Communities of Practice, a series of online sessions to discuss issues our ministers are facing, such as self-care, expanding online presence, stewardship and fundraising, as well as leadership in an uncertain time.”

Dr. Edith Guffey, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference Minister, plans to use the Brown Endowment grant to offer support that will bolster skills and confidence of its pastors in addressing conflict and anxiety. “Several pastors in the Conference have been part of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative and have taken the Mediation Skills Training Institute. Both programs have been excellent tools in helping pastors understand and process what is happening in their congregation. With the Brown Endowment grant, more of our authorized ministers will have access to these beneficial training programs,” said Dr. Guffey.

The Helen and Richard Brown Endowment for Pastoral Scholarships derive from a generous gift received in the 1990s, designated to support pastoral ministry in the UCC. United Church Funds serves as trustee of the Brown Endowment, helping to ensure funding for pastoral education and development. Since its inception, the initial gift of \$5 million now provides over \$300,000 annually to UCC Conferences, seminaries and global partners, providing individual scholarships for seminarians, grants for continuing education for authorized ministers, and support for seminarians in UCC/Disciples global partner churches.

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### **About UCF**

United Church Funds (UCF) is the leading provider of socially responsible, values-aligned investment management services to United Church of Christ churches and ministries, as well as all faith-based organizations. We offer customized investment portfolios and prudent investment strategies that provide competitive returns while also reflecting our clients' values in seeking to achieve a just world. UCF also offers endowment governance consulting, planned giving programs and superior, personalized service from our dedicated Client Services team. To learn more about how UCF can help your church or faith-based organization further its mission while achieving its long-term financial goals, please visit [www.ucfunds.org](http://www.ucfunds.org), email us at [info@ucfunds.org](mailto:info@ucfunds.org) or call us toll-free at 877-806-4989.