



*The Catalyst Sunday liturgy, a creative pursuit of the Wisconsin Conference Catalyst Team, is suggested for use on **Sept. 11, 2022, or on a Sunday of your choosing** (perhaps in the fall during Stewardship, or a Spring renewal). The liturgy features **God as Catalyst**. Rather than an email slumbering in a pastor's inbox, this liturgy is lovingly crafted as an intergenerational, integrated **introduction or reintroduction to the work God can do through a Catalyst Grant**. This liturgy may help you discern a new ministry that could be supported by a Catalyst Grant, plant seeds for God's later activity, or simply help you rediscover the Spirit that's already present, dancing in the hearts and missions of local churches. **Use a little, a lot or adapt it, crediting as appropriate. Blessings!***

Ways of Drawing Interest in this Special Day

- Turn Call to Worship Option A into a brief devotional/conversation and use it at the beginning of each committee meeting that meets within the month or so prior
 - Invite 2-3 who demonstrate interest in those conversations to prepare a 1 minute elevator speech (*live or pre-recorded*) for the Sundays leading up to Catalyst Sunday
- Create a social media event and invite local leaders to worship
- Make a teaser video and share it on church platforms
- Have a bulletin cover design contest; winning design used day of
- Newsletter blurbs, bulletin announcements, special invitations (emailed or otherwise)

Ideas for Worship Decor

Invite 2-3 people to create a visually-inspiring *altar/table/chancel* to enhance the message.

- Since many are visual learners, show the word "Catalyst" (*may be a newer word to some*).
 - Use big, decorative (*stand-alone*) letters to spell C A T A L Y S T—a quirky, non-matching yet cohesive set of letters draws interest
 - Generate curiosity by asking 8 people to bring 8 x 10 frames (*plain styles with bold colors perhaps*); Print each thick, bold letter of CATALYST and place in frames for altar
- Write CATALYST largely in 'bubble' letters on a banner; On a Sunday prior, invite congregation to use tissue paper or art supplies to decorate letters
- Create a bookmark, card, etc. with CATALYST on it for a take-home object

Catalyst Sunday Worship

Creative, meaningful liturgy for Sunday, Sept. 11, 2022 (or as desired)

Welcome *Set the upbeat, meaningful tone of worship with your initial excitement. (See top paragraph for inspiration). Invite all to greet each other to share the Spirit-led energy.*

Entering into Today's Theme

Invite all to look wherever the word CATALYST is displayed. Ask "What does it mean?" "How have you heard it used?" Provide a moment for silent thinking prior to gathering responses; encourage youngest disciples to participate. Offer dictionary definition verbally, in bulletin &/or on screen:

Catalyst *Cat-a-lyst / 'kad(ə)lɪst / noun¹ Its use began at the start of the 20th century for that which increases the rate of a chemical reaction (or enables one). By the 1940s, the figurative sense was in use for someone/thing that quickly causes change or action.*

Calling Our Attention to God's Presence (Call to Worship)

Option A) *After sharing the examples below, invite the whole congregation to verbally offer 3-5 additional responses of their own. Insert responses into Call & Response below & share in it.*

Likely only the leader needs what's below—doesn't necessarily need to be printed in the bulletin:

e.g. God is a catalyst for change! God is a catalyst for healing! God is a catalyst for _____!

Call & Response begins with Many so the One should raise a hand the Many's repeated, "Who is God?"

Many: Who is God?

One: God is a catalyst for change! God is a catalyst for healing!

Many: Who is God?

One: God is a catalyst for _____! God is a catalyst for _____!

Many: Who is God?

One: God is a catalyst for _____! God is a catalyst for _____!

Option B)

Right side of sanctuary: God is remarkable! Ever-changing and steadfast.

Left: God the Prophet creates all things new!

R: God is mysterious! Appearing in the stillness and the public square.

L: God the Catalyst inspires a future with hope!

R: God is innovative! Upturning expectations and equipping the unlikely.

All: Together we worship God, the mysterious, remarkable Prophet, the innovative Catalyst!

Opening Prayer

Option A) *We live in an unimaginably hard time, O Divine Presence. Our ears rage with violence. Our eyes encounter firsthand the destruction of our planet. Our hearts pierce from the sharpness of grief. The wide-sweeping changes and ongoing unknowns leave us breathless. We are tossed and torn, threadbarren and raw. Yet, continually, we see your fingerprints. You stir within and among. You shout and whisper, coaxing us toward your ways. Hold us close. Amen.*

Option B) *Breathing draws in our awareness of God's Spirit and clears space for us to hear God's call. Congregation takes slow, gentle, deep inhales/exhales as worship leader prompts, reading slowly:*

↑ Breathing in, we live in an unimaginably hard time, O Divine Presence.

↓ Breathing out, our ears rage with violence. Slight pause.

↑ Inhaling, our eyes encounter firsthand the destruction of our planet.

↓ Exhaling, our hearts pierce from the sharpness of grief. Slight pause.

↑ *Breathing in*, wide-sweeping changes leave us tossed, threadbarren, torn.

↓ *Breathing out*, the ongoing unknowns catch us breathless and raw. *Slight pause.*

↑ *Inhaling*, yet, continually, we see your fingerprints in this world.

↓ *Exhaling*, you stir within and among. *Slight pause.*

↑ *Breathing in*, you shout and whisper, coaxing us toward your ways.

↓ *Breathing out*, hold us close. Amen.

Children's Time

Option A) Research popular household items that came about by failure or accident. When possible, show the items or offer pictures of them. God too works through unlikely people and situations to bring something new (*like using a burning bush to have Moses hear from God, etc.*)

Option B) Mix pictures of needs (water, shelter, medical care, etc.) with wants (boat, scooter, baseball bat, etc.) and have young disciples categorize each. Ask, "As a church, which should we spend our time on—meeting needs or wants?" Remember how Jesus healed people who were sick, taught the people new ways of living in community, and fed them with a feast of bread and fish. Jesus still asks us to do this today!

Possible Hymns (New Century Hymnal)

#528 "You Are the Seed (Sois la Semilla)"

#575 "O for a World"

#73 "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In"

#59 "Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling"

#76 "Sent Forth by God's Blessing"

#283 "Spirit of the Living God"

#309 "We Are Your People"

#311 "Renew Your Church"

***Psalm 98:1a, 3-5** Responsively, as a Prayer (Note: assigned as Holy Cross Sept. 14, 2022 psalm)

One: O sing to you a new song, for you have done marvelous things.

All: You've remembered your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen your handiwork.

Make a joyful noise, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

We sing praises to you with lyre and melody.

O sing to you a new song, for you have done marvelous things!

Exodus 32:7-14 (NRSV)

The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

*Note: vs. 14's male pronouns for God can be adjusted for your context ("they/their"; or "God's")

Sermon Possibilities and Ponderings

“Moses implored the Lord his God.” This implies a close relationship. Is it easier or more difficult to encourage a change in a system, a person’s behavior, etc. when you are closely affiliated? Why? God changed God’s mind on the plan to destroy the people. What are crucial building blocks in changing one’s own thinking and/or behavior?

Change is necessary at times in the life and mission of the church so that God’s ways can unfold anew. In this story, God is focused on “Plan A: Destroy the People Because of their Waywardness.” Why are we often resistant to change? Why might we remain in patterns—even if they no longer serve the current needs?

What benefits stem when God changes to “Plan B: Offer Another Chance; Renew the Covenant”? Picture God as Catalyst for renewal/growth in your church and its community. What do you see?

What current needs persist in your community—loneliness, substance abuse, after school care, underfunded music/arts/drama departments? Who might have insight into these needs? What population(s) specifically may need greater support?

What is your church known for and/or what do the people do well? Where might God be calling your church to serve? *“Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation.”* —Aristotle; *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* -Matthew 6:21

[Note: if adhering to the lectionary for Sep 11, 2022, consider the Gospel reading Luke 15:1-10 parables of the lost sheep and lost coin. How do we measure the results of our efforts? When an upset happens to our normal pattern of life, what is the right and loving response - even if it is risky? Try doing more good, and worrying less about what will be gained or lost in the attempt.]

Invitation to Give & Serve

Option A) Invite a lay reader to share about God’s activity in a local WI UCC church through the Catalyst Grant. If possible, invite a church leader from a nearby church whose mission has been revitalized with a grant.

Option B) (if using on September 11 or close to it) In recent years, New Yorkers who were babies or toddlers at the time of losing parents in the rubble of the towers have grown and been trained to be firefighters and other emergency workers—often carrying on a parent’s legacy. How might this congregation in this community ‘rise from the ashes’ and be called by God to serve in a new way? Following (or still in the midst of) a pandemic, what new life can emerge or what needs might be met? How might this local church be a Catalyst for change and usher in God’s ways?

Option C) if familiar with Appreciative Inquiry techniques (Discovery, Dreaming, Design, Destiny), lead an interactive session with the congregation:

Question 1: Tell a story about a time when you took a risk as a church reaching out to your neighborhood/community and felt like you made meaningful connections with and a positive impact in your community.

Question 2: Tell a story about a time where you felt you grew as a Christian because of an outreach or mission project you participated in. How did you grow and what caused you to grow?

Question 3: Ten years from now, what is one thing about your church’s presence in the wider community you hope to brag about?

Question 4: What are some of the needs present in your community/town/city? For example, hunger, child care, after school programming, racial disparities, a safe place for young people to hang out, housing, etc.

Question 5: Thinking about the time, talents, gifts, and passions of your congregation, what are some needs your church is particularly gifted to meet and that represent outreach projects you would be willing to work on?

Next, take time to invite people to team up around one of the projects they think they would have time/talent and passion to work on and invite them to start brainstorming about how to start working on these. Then, invite them to set a date and time for another meeting. Remind them that these types of projects can secure funding through a Catalyst grant.

Prayers: of the People, Silent & Pastoral, of Our Tradition²

O Breathing Life, your name shines everywhere! Release a space to plant your presence here. Imagine your possibilities now. Embody your desire in every living thing. Grow through us this moment's bread and wisdom. Untie the knots of shame and guilt binding us, as we release the pain we hold from others' actions. Help us remember you as our source and free us to know your presence always. For, from you, arises every vision, every power, every song from us and our gathering. Amen.

Benediction

¹merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst ²Mark Berry, adapted

Fellowship discussion: prompts to encourage follow-up action

- What dreams do we have for our town? Are they worth taking a risk to achieve?
- What unfulfilled needs does our local community have?
- To what other organizations do congregants belong, that may want to partner with us to help the community?
- What projects and ideas from elsewhere in the state have we found inspiring? *(also see the Catalyst website for examples of past projects across the conference)*
- What would it look like for a small group to meet to suggest the first step? *(and are there remote congregants to whom we should also reach out?)*

Appendix: Additional Information about Catalyst Grants

A program of the Wisconsin Conference UCC

Catalyst grants are available for ideas that transform lives through innovative ministry for the 21st century. The strongest grants will include collaboration with peoples outside your faith community and will have an impact and a vision that reaches beyond the local congregation to benefit the wider community context to which the congregation is called to respond.

All Catalyst Grants are intended to spark creativity and innovation in the Wisconsin Conference. We are convinced that congregations and their leaders are vibrant and vital when they:

- conduct outreach ministry experiments that stretch comfort zones
- form partnerships & deepen relationships within their local communities
- discuss challenging topics
- invest in leadership development
- work collaboratively with others to address justice issues in their communities

Catalyst has a strong preference for projects that represent partnerships between local congregations and their wider communities. Plan to share who is involved in or supporting this project from the wider community. Dozens of grants have been made in the past six years. Grants have inspired projects in every association of the conference, and across rural and urban congregations!

Not sure if an idea is going to fly? Why not try it? The Catalyst Team encourages experimentation and understands that not every idea will take root. We support and encourage the type of learning that comes from failure as well as success.

Please contact program liaison Mary Gross mgross@wcucc.org 262-271-8990 to discuss your project idea.

Examples of past projects and the application form are available at

<https://www.wcucc.org/resource-center/catalyst-vital-innovative-ministries/>