

**Arts and Science Literacy Camp
Year 2020 Catalyst Grant Recipient**

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The Arts and Science Literacy Camp (ASLC) has been a Year 2020 recipient of a generous UCC Wisconsin Conference Catalyst Grant.

Arts and Science Literacy Camp. One ministry touching the three Great Loves of the United Church of Christ:

- ✓ **LOVE OF CREATION:** a summertime science-based curriculum emphasizing different weekly nature themes
- ✓ **LOVE OF NEIGHBOR:** A networked collaboration of seven different churches embracing summer education for children throughout the city of Milwaukee
- ✓ **LOVE OF CHILDREN:** A literacy program directed towards low income or disadvantaged children in grades K3 – 7th

ASLC is an innovative summer camp integrating arts, literacy, and science educational experiences targeting Milwaukee children of low and low-middle income families. Weekly the camp serves 50 students ranging from K3 through 7th grade. ASLC has a nine-week, twelve-session summertime curriculum. This transformative ministry brings summer literacy and educational assistance to an underserved population in the heart of Milwaukee.

This camp is a natural outgrowth of networked ministries conducted between Tippecanoe Presbyterian and **Christ Church UCC**. These other ministries include Devine Intervention (a winter time overnight warming room), Larry Under the Bridge (a weekly bag lunch program for the homeless), Share Our Suppers (SOS is a summertime Friday evening meal for low income individuals and families) and Hungry Hearts (Milwaukee ear southside Saturday meal distribution). ASLC is now one more avenue to serve the underserved.

Presently ASLC is a collaborative effort of seven partnering churches including **Christ Church UCC and Plymouth UCC from Milwaukee**, as well as Grace Presbyterian Church, Hephatha Lutheran Church, Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Immanuel Presbyterian, and Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church. All sessions are conducted at Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church in the heart of Milwaukee's Bay View community. Both **Christ Church and Plymouth UCC** have directly contributed financially to ASLC through targeted congregational fund raising and a church endowment grant. Additionally, both churches participated in the Winter ASLC fundraiser and auction that raised over \$4500 for ASLC. Also, **Christ Church** congregants have made in-kind donations of supplies, snacks, lunches, and have individually participated as teaching aids during the summer sessions. **Christ Church and Plymouth church both have representatives on the ASLC Advisory Committee.**

Funds provided by the Catalyst Grant have been used to maintain the sliding student fee scale that allows low-income families to participate in this program. The ability to maintain this fee structure ensures that the goal of offering a summer literacy programming to underserved, low-income families is able to be achieved. Unprecedented growth has placed financial constraints on this initiative. The camp has grown, in one year, from 350 seats to over 550 seats in the 2019 camp. This growth has occurred, due in part, to reductions in Milwaukee Public Schools summer educational programs.

ASLC is a community-based multi-cultural literacy ministry. ASLC concentrates first and foremost on the advancement of literacy in the Milwaukee community. Currently, campers consist of students with special needs, children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (including homeless and low-income families), a balance of boys and girls, and a racial mix of Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic campers. Certified teachers, artists, musicians, along with reading and science specialists help the students explore weekly nature themes around the community. Summer camp tuition is determined by a sliding scale based on family income.

The ASLC program is conducted at Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church, utilizing a basement hall and an open sanctuary space. This is centrally located on the southside of Milwaukee in the heart of the Bay View community. ASLC has partnered with Hephatha Lutheran Church located in Milwaukee's central city. Children from the community surrounding Hephatha attend ASLC via a shuttle service. ASLC complements Hephatha's neighborhood ministry by offering special learning opportunities to those that are oftentimes underserved because of limited resources.

Most educators are in agreement that engaging students, during the summer vacation months, in meaningful learning activities is one way of increasing pupil achievement. ASLC addresses that need by improving children's literacy skills through the use of nonfiction reading, writings in their handmade journals, and educational activities utilizing the "Whole Child" approach to learning. Students participate in music lessons, theater classes, art explorations, and field trips based on different weekly nature themes. ASLC utilizes this integrated approach to provide experiences to enrich students' background and knowledge. These activities are all conducted in a safe and nurturing environment that may be lacking in some of the student's normal summer neighborhoods.

Costs of this program have intentionally been kept low through many in-kind contributions. ASLC prides itself on having a highly dedicated staff of teaching specialists which is at the core of the success of this program and they are paid a fair wage.

Success, as well as the future growth of ASLC, will be dependent on effective fundraising. Additional funding will be necessary to continue the granting of camp tuition scholarships and maintaining the camp sliding fee schedule based on family income. This will be accomplished through expanding congregational and community partnerships that wish to embrace this community ministry and encouraging present partners to elevate their level of financial

participation. **This year's Catalyst Grant from the Wisconsin Conference of the UCC has been immensely important to the continued operation of this summer camp.**

Note: The Covid pandemic has severely curtailed this year's ASLC program (summer 2020). The on-site program has been replaced with periodic work packets developed by the teaching staff and regular Facebook updates. **Alternative program plans included Christ Church as one of three education sites to house the ASLC summer program.** Each site was planning on accommodating 10 students and two teaches in a shortened and limited summer session. This proposal was structured to address appropriate social distancing and sanitation measures necessary to initiate the camp. ASLC families have been a strong force trying to drive this initiative under the appropriate circumstances. **Unfortunately, to date, the alternative plan to conduct an abbreviated summer camp in 2020 has not been practical for implementation.**

Additional information about the program can be found at:

<https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/camp-sneaks-learning-into-fun-to-help-boost-literacy-in-milwaukee-students>

<https://www.facebook.com/ASLCforkids/>

If you would like to explore joining in this exciting ministry please contact Jim Wick, jameswick73@gmail.com