

THE HELEN LEONHART FUND

of the Western Association - Illinois Conference, UCC

Helen Leonhart died in 1996 at the age of 102 years. She and her husband were lifelong members of the United Church of Christ and its predecessor, the Congregational Church. The Leonhart family farmed in rural Henry County. After moving to Geneseo upon retirement, they became members of First Congregational UCC. Helen served a number of years as organist of her church. She and her husband travelled widely, and she maintained her interests until her passing.

Always quite generous in giving to her own congregation, she was encouraged to consider the wider church in her estate. Among the bequests of her estate was a gift to the Association of which her home congregation was a part. Through her generous legacy, the Helen Leonhart Fund was established to support mission causes and special projects of the Western Association and its member churches and partners.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Association has determined the use of these funds to create opportunities for the people of Western Association to experience the risen Christ through fellowship, service, and education.

GUIDELINES

- The Leonhart Grants are one-time grants, intended to be seed money for a new project or funds to enable a local church or church related organization to carry out a project that is beyond the organization's financial capacity.
- The project design must demonstrate the involvement of the church or organization members in the project and indicate the financial commitment of the church or organization.
- The goal(s) and expected outcome of the project must be clearly stated as well as how the project relates to the above Mission Statement.
- The project design needs to show clear mechanisms for accountability, reporting and oversight.
- The grantee will be expected to provide an initial report to the Western Association at its Fall 2026 Meeting, reporting on the progress of the funded project.
- The grantee will be expected to provide a report of the final evaluation of the project in electronic format to the Association at a future date to include a report of all funds expended in the project.
- In the event that a proposed project does not materialize, reports provided by the grantee will be reviewed by the Leonhart Committee. The return of the grant funds could be requested based on this review.
- An invitation may be extended to a grantee to make a presentation on the project at a regularly called meeting of the Western Association.

LEONHART FUND GRANT COMMITTEE MEMBERS, 2026:

Rev. Lauren Padgett
Ursula Webster
Bob Meinershagen
Ken Harding