

Our Racial Justice Covenant

And what does God require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

All humankind is created in God's image, and each of us is a beloved child of God. The presence of inequality and racism embedded in our systems harms God's creation. As followers of Jesus, we are called to confront and heal the racial injustices that separate humanity from God's will and God's kingdom.

We, the First Congregational Church of Wilmot, UCC commit to: walking humbly in a continuous journey of learning about past and present racism and inequality; challenging race-based injustice to change cycles of oppression; becoming allies with Black, Indigenous and all People of Color; and reaching out to collaborate with local and distant community partners. We covenant to allow our deep sorrow about the evil of racism to sustain our passion to work toward justice and equality for all God's people.



Royalties for Spirituals

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WILMOT

An Open and Affirming, Racial Justice Church

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The Earliest Days of Spirituals

“When Africans came against their will to be enslaved in America, they brought with them a richly textured heritage that included singing and dancing as daily activities, interwoven into everyday routines, expressions of a worldview in which communion with the spirits and with tribal sisters and brothers (those living as well as those dead) was not only desirable, but necessary for life, as much as food or water. Although there were certainly major cultural differences among members of the various tribes of African peoples captured for American slavery, the role of music and dance was amazingly similar from tribe to tribe, and these activities were always essential features of the lifeblood of the people.”

... “enslaved Africans required a new linguistic medium to communicate their commitments to each other and to the spirits. Fortunately, their past histories provided such a medium. Just as West Africans before slavery had come together in counterclockwise-movement dance rituals to worship the gods and commune with each other, ethnically diverse Africans in America now employed the same ritual in forming their new tribal identity as African Americans. The result was a ceremony eventually known as the ring shout.”

Jones, A C. (2023). *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of Spirituals*, Orbis Books

Royalties for Spirituals

As part of on-going support for the First Congregational Church of Wilmot’s Racial Justice initiative, the Music Committee is sponsoring a special collection to the UCC Royalties for Spirituals Fund.

We recognize that one of this congregation’s most beloved musical genres, the African-American Spiritual, was created by artists who were never compensated for their work. Though the time has long past for the original composers to be paid, the UCC Music Association has set up a fund to both recognize this injustice and pay reparations in the form of “royalties”.

In the past, through these payments, the UCC Music Association has distributed monies to organizations such as [Hamilton-Garrett Center for Music and the Arts](#) in Roxbury, MA; the [Chicago Music Association](#), which was formed in 1919 as the founding branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. (NANM); and the [Artists Collective](#) in Hartford, CT.

For more detailed information on this program, the UCC Music Association has some wonderful history, the enclosed prayer and examples at **Royalties for Spirituals Webinar** (<https://uccma.wildapricot.org/Royalties-for-Spirituals>).

FCCW collections towards this initiative will run June 22 through July 6h, 2025, via Online Giving (www.wilmotucc.org) or by check with a memo “Spirituals Fund.”

We thank you for your generous support of this initiative.

Our Prayer

“With great respect and deep gratitude for the extraordinary musical contributions made to American music by Black people, we offer our thanks and praise to God for the creators of the Negro Spirituals and their descendants.

*...each time we sing the spiritual songs of enslaved Black people in our worship together:
We will sing and hear them with holy reverence and open hearts;*

We will honor the unnamed musicians who created them;

...We understand that the debt owed to Black musicians and artists can never be fully repaid.

Through our prayers, our gifts and our actions, we will strive to do all that we can to end systemic racism in America.