

# Congregational Connections

Monthly E-Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | December 2023

## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

I love this time of year. I think I like it now more than ever. The season, of course, has its detractors, and with good reason! The commercialism and its false promise that all can be made right with the proper gift. The busyness of running around trying to make everything “perfect” for others. There is the cold weather, the brief daylight hours, the shoveling of snow, the icy roads, the same 10 songs played every place you go, etc., etc., etc.

The themes of Advent help keep me rooted in what this season is supposed to be about: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. I hope you will join us for the Sundays and Wednesdays of Advent - these worship services will be great reminders of the “why” behind all of the celebrations. I believe that as we focus on the “why” of Christmas we can avoid some of the negative layers that have been built up over the years.

Here are my reasons “why” I love the season, using the Advent themes: God is in **love** with the world we live in and in love with each of us. Because God loves us, we have grounds for **hope** - as the Apostle wrote: “if God is for us, who can be against us?” When we have God’s love and hope for our future, we are inspired to feel **joy** - we rejoice because of the incredible gifts we have been given. When we see the world surrounded by love, as we are hopeful about the future, and filled with joy, our souls begin to feel the **peace** which “passes all understanding”. I hope you join us this month for all the events and activities and stay focused on hope, peace, joy, and love, and that you have a very merry Christmas!

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Scott



## SUNDAY CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, so we have rearranged our Sunday morning and Christmas Eve services. We will not be holding our 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning service. Instead we invite all those who would like to worship in the morning to attend our 10:00 service, our Confirmation Class will be leading a Christmas Pageant. Our 7:00 and 9:00 evening services will be traditional Christmas Eve services. The 7:00 service will be in Fellowship Hall and the 9:00 will be in the Sanctuary. We hope you will make plans to experience the rich joy of the coming of God's Son into the world in worship!

### 10:00 a.m. Christmas Pageant

Led by our Confirmation Class, this worship service will be held in Fellowship Hall on Sunday morning. Everyone is welcome for a wonderful celebration of Christmas joy. We will join Mary and Joseph as they journey toward Bethlehem. Together we encounter angel messengers and follow the shepherds as they discover a child wrapped in swaddling cloth, laying in a manger.

### 7:00 p.m. Service of Lessons and Carols

Come and worship with us in Fellowship Hall as we sing Christmas Carols and hear the sacred stories of the coming of the baby Jesus into the world. It is a beautiful, inspiring narrative with our Chancel Choir and Christmas Brass leading the way in song. A classic and meaningful service with all the joy of the season brought forward; "O come let us adore him! Christ the Lord".

### 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion

Our late service will be held upstairs in the Sanctuary. Our worship includes the story of Jesus birth, singing the beloved Christmas carols, and adds an essential element of Jesus' ministry as we break bread together and celebrate Communion. What could be more meaningful on a Christmas Eve than sharing the sacrament with one another and with Christ in the beauty of our Sanctuary.



## WORSHIP WITH US

We celebrate two Sunday morning worship services at 8:00 and 10:00. Nursery care is available at the 10:00 service.

## HOLY COMMUNION

The first Sunday morning of each month we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Communion is open to all who seek to follow in the way of Christ, both children and adults.

## LINKED UP

If you are reading this newsletter online, be on the lookout for orange text - it's linked up to documents and web pages that you might find helpful or interesting.

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

If you have a celebration, prayer request, or other contribution for the newsletter, please email us 7-10 days before the first day of the month.

## SIGN UP TO HELP MAKE INAUGURAL BREAKFAST A SUCCESS!

Our church will be hosting our first annual Breakfast with Santa! Breakfast will be served and crafts and activities will be offered. We'd love for everyone to attend and help out in order to make this event a success! If you are interested in volunteering or wish to make a donation to offset the costs of Santa's travels to First Congregational Church, please [click here](#) to sign up! Please consider giving a couple of hours to set up, clean up, cook, serve, be one of Santa's helpers, or help with crafts or activities - thank you!

# Breakfast with Santa

**\$10 child**  
9 & under

**\$12 youth  
and adult**  
2 & under free

**Menu**  
Pancakes,  
Eggs, Ham,  
Milk, OJ,  
& Hot Cocoa



Check out the REAL Santa Claus who will be here  
by visiting his Facebook page "[Santa Claus Scott](#)"

*Photos with Santa ★ Crafts ★ Activities*

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>**  
**8 - 11 am**

Santa will be here  
8:30-10:30

**First Congregational Church**

131 N. Webster Street  
Port Washington

**Purchase Tickets at:**

First Congregational Church Office  
Port Washington State Bank (PW Location)  
Limited Tickets Available at the Door



## FELLOWSHIP WORKSHOP ON DECEMBER 3

### Make & Take Door Swags Plus Cookie Exchange!

Join the Fellowship Team on Sunday, December 3, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for a Christmas cookie exchange and make-your-own holiday door swag! Beckie Perez will show you how to make a swag using fresh Christmas tree boughs. All supplies will be provided. The team will also host a Cookie Exchange. Simply bring three dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies. What a perfect way to get in the holiday spirit!



## ADVENT VESPER COMMUNION SERVICES



Join us in Fellowship Hall on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 in Advent for a candlelit 30-minute service of reflection and communion. The midweek services, December 6, 13, and 20, use scripture, prayer, and a Christmas carol to create a peaceful space amidst the hurry and busy-ness of the season. Pastor Scott will be telling the story behind the writing of a different carol each week and the services will conclude with a simple sharing of Communion. Come and enjoy a respite from the December rush in the beauty of our church; refill your spirit as we allow God's Spirit to bring the light of Christ into our lives.

## 38th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE SALE



Our 38th Annual Christmas Tree Sale is underway! Please help spread the word! Thank you to all those who have already worked a shift. We need help to fill the rest of the sign-up. Please take a look at your calendar and sign up to help. [Click here](#) to be directed to the SignUpGenius page. Thank you!





## RAISERIGHT GIFT CARD PROGRAM

Consider using Raise Right for gift cards for Christmas shopping and/or Christmas gifts. First Congregational Church will place a RaiseRight order on Sunday, December 10. Complete a **paper order form** and bring a check to church (payable to FCC) by December 10 and your gift cards will be available the following Sunday, December 17. Or you can enroll and place an order by December 10 by visiting **RaiseRight.com/enroll**, our enrollment code is P8I47VHNX56H. By using RaiseRight, you can Christmas shop AND raise some money for church! So far this year, eight families have utilized RaiseRight and together have raised \$737 for our church.

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## 125 YEARS OF CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS - SHARE YOUR PHOTOS!

There is still time to contribute to the Christmas Pageant Bulletin Board highlighting our congregation's past pageants. Send your digital pics to Jane Spalding at [jvrspalding@gmail.com](mailto:jvrspalding@gmail.com). You may scan old photos (color or b&w) or just take a picture of your old photo with your phone. Actual photos may be left in 125th Anniversary mailbox near the church office. Photos will be handled with care, scanned and returned to you. Remember to note the year and identify folks as you are able. Thank you!

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## THE SPIRIT OF GIVING ALIVE AND WELL HERE AT CHURCH!

We'd like to thank everyone who donated to our Gift-A-Child collection this year. As a congregation, we provided gifts to ten children from three families with the categories of items they Want/Need/Wear/Read. Our church signed up to turn in 40 gifts, but instead collected 135 gifts in total! In addition, ten rolls of wrapping paper, assorted tissue paper, gift bags, and bows were collected. All gifts and supplies were delivered to The Food Pantry here in Port Washington for wrapping and distribution.



*Family 1*



*Family 2*



*Family 3*



## CHRISTMAS GIVING AND POINSETTIA ORDERS

In celebration of Christmas, it is one of our traditions to invite members and friends to order a poinsettia and/or donate to one of the six community organizations that our church supports on an ongoing basis: Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, The Food Pantry, Ozaukee Family Services, Balance, and Advocates. Your poinsettia will help decorate our church for Christmas (you may take your poinsettia home anytime after the Christmas Eve services). Your gift of money will help lift the spirits of those who are in need within our own community. You may give in honor or in memory of loved ones. Names will appear in our Christmas Eve bulletins. [Click here](#) for the form. Please submit the information to the Church Office by Monday, December 18. You may contribute using a check or submitting a payment through our church [PayPal](#).

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## THE CHRISTMAS FUND - VETERANS OF THE CROSS OFFERING

We will be receiving financial gifts for the UCC Christmas Fund offering on December 17 and 24. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years. This offering provides important financial help for lower-income retirees. Last year, the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.3 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people just like us. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

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## DECORATING ORNAMENTS FOR TREE SALE CUSTOMERS

We are, once again, decorating ornaments to give to customers as a thank you' at our Christmas Tree Sale. Both kids and adults are invited to decorate wooden ornaments. Our Church School kids already decorated a bunch, but we can use more help! The wooden ornaments are available in the church's Little Free Library off the parking lot. Simply grab a pack, paint/decorate them, and return to church or the Little Free Library.

You may be interested to know that the ornament is adhered to an [Advent pamphlet](#) inviting one and all to join us this season and includes information about our special services.

Thanks for helping to complete the many ornaments needed for distribution!





## THEMES FOR WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

The scripture texts from which our worship themes originate, in a new liturgical calendar year, have a heavy emphasis on the Prophet Isaiah and a variety of Advent readings from the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John. We tend to focus on remembering the coming of the baby Jesus, the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and the Nativity. But Advent also is a season of preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus, which we tend not to reflect on too much in our tradition. Our Advent texts are filled with a tension of “already, not yet” - that is, a God who is already with us in Jesus our Savior, but a God who is not yet known to the world in all Divine glory.

### **December 3: Isaiah 64:1-9    Mark 13:24-37**

*First Sunday of Advent: Hope, Communion Sunday*

The scripture text from the Gospel of Mark on this First Sunday of Advent doesn't seem to have a lot of “hope” in it. It is filled with ominous signs in the heavens and the warning to “Keep awake!” However, we can begin to discern the symbolic images of Christ's victory and the coming of God's Reign - this is our hope even amidst troubling times.

### **December 10: Isaiah 40:1-11    Mark 1:1-8**

*Second Sunday of Advent: Peace, Chancel Choir Sings*

On this Second Sunday of Advent we hear from John the Baptist as he calls the people who hear his words to change their ways - he is making a way in the wilderness for the coming of the Messiah. Our theme for the day is “Peace”. Perhaps we will know peace when we recognize that God is with us - comforting, strengthening, and helping.

### **December 17: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11    John 1:6-8, 19-28**

*Third Sunday of Advent: Joy, Handbell Choir Performs*

We are not finished with the words of John the Baptist yet this Advent! Today we hear from John's Gospel about the Baptist's challenge to “...make straight the way of the Lord.” The words from the prophet, Isaiah, foreshadow the mission of the one who is coming, “...to bring good news to the oppressed.” Joyful news we continue to share every day!

### **Christmas Eve, December 24: Luke 1:46b-55    Luke 1:26-38**

*Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love*

Right in time for Christmas Eve we get the scripture texts that we associate with the story of the nativity. The angel Gabriel invites Mary to be the mother of God and we hear Mary's song of joy, known as “the Magnificat,” when she visits her cousin, Elizabeth, and receives confirmation that Gabriel's words to her were true. One service on Sunday morning at 10:00, our Christmas Pageant, and two evening services at 7:00 and 9:00.

### **December 31: Isaiah 61:10-62:3    Luke 2:22-40**

*First Sunday after Christmas*

Ken Matthews leads our one worship service this morning at 10:00. Our scripture passages for this New Year's Eve are filled with joy as the long-awaited promise of the Messiah is fulfilled. There is great joy in Isaiah's message of God's glory and in the text of Jesus' dedication in the Temple, Simeon and Anna rejoice for they had been waiting for Christ's coming into the world.

# PROPOSED 2024 CHURCH BUDGET & PATHWAYS FORWARD

A Proposed 2024 Budget was presented by Jason Jacque, Moderator, and Phil Stepanski, Financial Administrator, at the Fall Congregational Meeting on November 26. The church is facing some difficult financial choices next year. Traditionally, our church has operated with an annual budget that included a modest deficit between our revenue and expenses. Over the years, we have managed to address these shortfalls through a combination of generous pledges, careful budgeting, and judicious withdrawals from our savings. However, we now find ourselves in the midst of a perfect storm of financial challenges. Our transition from a long-term pastoral relationship, the loss of Port Pre-School, and the ongoing effects of a post-pandemic world have all contributed. Our savings accounts will no longer be sufficient to cover the Proposed 2024 Budget deficit, leaving us in an extremely vulnerable position. At this time, the budget that was presented represents no significant changes to expenses or to income and has a deficit of \$47,832. While this is unsustainable, we have time to make adjustments before an official budget for 2024 will be voted upon by the congregation on January 28, 2024.

## LET US KNOW HOW YOU WOULD LIKE THE CHURCH TO MOVE FORWARD ON THE BUDGET

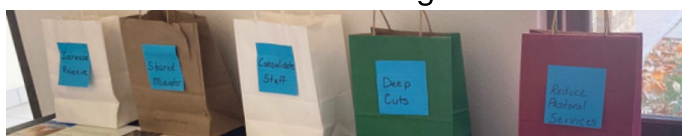
The financial circumstances facing the congregation has led the Executive Team to explore various options to bridge the budget gap. [Click here](#) to view slides that were presented at the Listening Sessions last month. While each of the five current options have its own merits and challenges, none on its own may lead us to a balanced budget, and all of them will require the support and involvement of our congregation:

- 1.) **Increase Revenue:** Focusing on replacing rental income and increasing pledges.
- 2.) **Deep Cuts:** Relying on more volunteers to provide for our congregation.
- 3.) **Staff Consolidation:** Acknowledging that staff provide valuable services but represent a significant payroll expense.
- 4.) **Reduced Pastoral Services:** Transitioning from a full-time to a part-time Pastor, resulting in reduced services.
- 5.) **Shared Ministry:** Reducing costs by sharing a minister with another local UCC congregation.

The Executive Team invites members to look for their table set up by Fellowship Hall to complete slips of paper and place in the “buckets”. A slip of paper includes the following:

- ☐ I FULLY SUPPORT this option and hope to see it incorporated into the 2024 budget.
- ☐ I HAVE RESERVATIONS about this option, but I could support it for the good of the church community because the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.
- ☐ I DO NOT SUPPORT this option - it doesn't align with the direction our church should take.
- ☐ I AM VERY OPPOSED to this option and if it is chosen, it will greatly affect my commitment to our church.      *\*If you are unable to make it to church, email your feedback to [office@portucc.org](mailto:office@portucc.org)*

We ask for your prayers of wisdom and courage as we navigate these financial challenges together. Your involvement and support are crucial as we work to ensure the continued strength and vitality of our beloved church. The Church Council will use the feedback gathered as they continue to discuss these budget issues at their next monthly meeting on December 14.





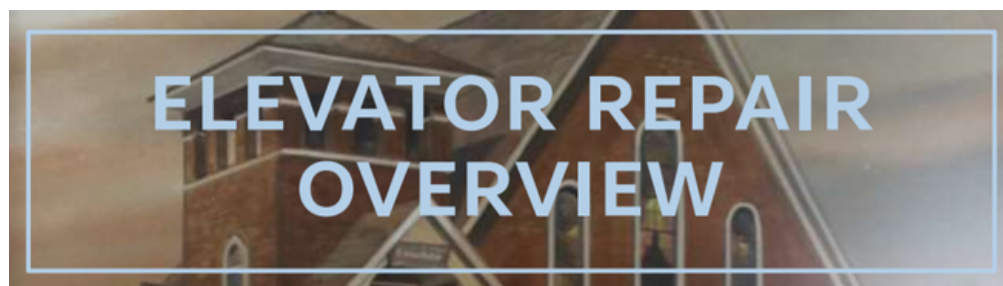
## CONGREGATION VOTES TO APPROVE ELEVATOR REPAIRS

At the Fall Congregational Meeting on November 26 the congregation voted to move forward with a proposal put together by the Property Team to repair the church elevator. The proposal is to contract with MEI Elevator to remove the broken hydraulic jack and replace it. While this may seem like a straightforward project, there are several variables that remain unknown until MEI begins their work and will affect our costs. In careful conversation and consideration with MEI, the Property Team has prepared for expenses that reflect the worst-case scenario, while hoping for the best. Fortunately, the church has received a generous, anonymous financial gift of \$32,000 from one of our church families that will be enough to cover the initial downpayment and first-year financing costs we face as we take out a loan to pay for the repairs.

As discussed during several Listening Sessions held in November and during the Congregational Meeting, the worst-case scenario cost would be \$111,205 and would involve having to redrill the hole in which the hydraulic jack is placed at maximum expense, plus cost overruns of 15%. This would require the church to take out a loan in the amount of \$79,205, with a cost to the church of \$595 loan payment per month in a 30-year/8.5% rate. A more likely scenario is closer to a total repair cost of \$87,779 with the church needing to take a \$55,800 loan and paying \$419 per month to repay.

With the congregation's affirmative vote on the proposal, the Property Team will be able to sign a contract with MEI on December 1 and avoid cost increases due to inflation and rising hourly labor rates. The production and delivery of the hydraulic jack will take an estimated 10 to 12 weeks and require about two weeks of onsite work. A loan will be secured through the United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund (where we received the loan for window/bell tower repairs during the pandemic). Further updates will be made as new information becomes available.

We are so appreciative to the Property Team: Bill Bond, Joe Mueller, Gary Tackes and Claude Zimmerman, for all their work on this project. They have had an extremely busy year between the power surge damaging so many pieces of equipment in March, the "Making All Things New: Phase One" Campaign in June and July, and the elevator repair work that started in September. This has been a difficult time for the church with our building, but it would have been an impossible time without their faithful work on our behalf - thank you!



[Click here](#) for the Elevator Repair Overview presented at the Fall Congregational Meeting.

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE - “Because of YOU our Church Changes Lives”

Everyday our church is changing lives. Because of our members and friends at work in our community helping at the Food Pantry, Family Promise, or in the dozens of other community groups you are involved; our church is changing lives. Because of folks like you responding with love to their neighbors who need a helping hand; our church is changing lives. Because of the encouraging word you receive on a Sunday morning, or in a Bible study, or at choir rehearsal, or a service project, or read about in the newsletter; our church is changing lives. So much of the work of our church is made possible because of the financial support we receive from the pledges and offerings you generously provide.

Thank you to all those who have already responded to this year’s Stewardship Campaign. We are grateful for the pledges coming into the church through the Sunday morning offering plates, dropped off at the office, arriving in the mail or submitted online. If you have not already filled out a pledge card, please do so at your earliest convenience. It is so helpful and encouraging to have those pledges coming in so we can plan for the new year. Our church depends upon the wonderful generosity of our members and friends to keep our ministry strong! We would love to have all the pledges back to the Church by December 10. The Stewardship Team will be making calls later this month to gently remind folks to return their pledge. As of November 30, we have received 28 pledges for a total of \$62,151. Last year 94 pledges were received.

Thank you to Jodi Cowen, Jason Jacque, Bev Mueller, and Tyfani Ulicki for serving as the Stewardship Team this year. Thank you also to Craig Modahl, Louise Mollinger, David Franks, and Jodi Cowen for providing testimonials about their love for our congregation and the important role our church plays in their lives.

### **Ways** TO COMPLETE YOUR PLEDGE

#### **Send In The Mail**

Print out the **Pledge Form**  
and send to the church

#### **Complete Form at Church**

There are extra forms available in  
the hallway outside Fellowship Hall



Visit our **Stewardship Page** for more information.



# CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

Hello Church School Families!

Our Church School children were busy this past month decorating ornaments to give out during the Christmas Tree Sale. Using paint, markers, and a little bit of glitter, our youth created one-of-a-kind designs in support of this important tradition. There are still a few ornaments available for anyone feeling a bit crafty. Please contact the Church Office if interested. All completed ornaments are labeled from the First Congregational Church, and attached to promotional information to spread the word of our ministry to those who visit the tree lot. We hope you will take a moment to look at the ornaments while working a shift or two this season.

We invite all youth, ages 4K through 7th grade, to join us during the month of December at our Church School class on December 10 or at our Kids Club event on December 17. We will be creating centerpieces for use during the upcoming Breakfast with Santa event, while reviewing the Christmas Story as told through Luke 2:1-20. Additional nativity themed crafts and a review of Mary's Song of Joy from Luke 1:46-55 is also planned.

A big Thank You to all who participated in the Gift-A-Child program through the Port Washington Food Pantry. As a congregation we sponsored 10 children, offering gifts to cover all 4 categories: something they Need, something they Want, something to Wear and something to Read. Sponsoring service projects is an important part of our Church School program, and we appreciate the generosity offered by our members and friends.

Happy Holidays from the Church School Team!



## KIDS CLUB

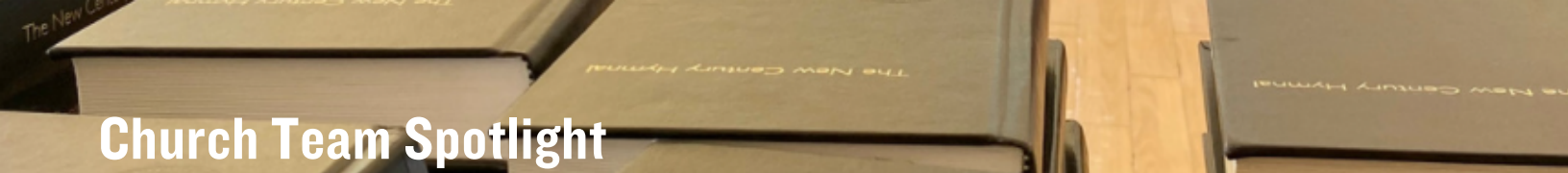
Kids Club, also open to all 4K through 7th graders, meets on the third Sunday of each month. The next Kids Club is December 17 during the 10:00 service. All children will join their families in worship, and following a performance by the Handbell Choir, will gather in the classrooms for an activity.

## FAMILY SUNDAYS

On the fourth Sunday of every month at 10:00, the church hosts a Family Service which includes the participation of our youth, specifically the 8th grade Confirmation Class. The next Family Sunday is on Christmas Eve, December 24.

## NURSERY CARE

Every Sunday morning during the 10:00 service we provide Nursery Care for children newborn through elementary. Care is mostly provided by our 8th grade Confirmation students and their families. Our Nursery is located in the Gilomen Room, across from the restrooms.



# Church Team Spotlight

## OUR LITURGY TEAM

As the saying goes, “many hands make light work”. This holds true for the members of the Liturgy Team. There are several moving parts and behind-the-scenes happenings that the Liturgy Team provides support to our pastor in planning many aspects of our worship services. The team works to make the sights and sounds in the sanctuary (and Fellowship Hall) support the mood and message of the specific service throughout the year.

- We make sure hymnals, bibles, visitor cards, offering envelopes, and sharp pencils are available each Sunday.
- We arrange the altar table with flowers and candles, and hang the stained-glass window panels, to mark the seasons, both natural and liturgical.
- We prepare the Communion elements. We keep the Christ Candle lit.
- We decorate the church for Advent and Christmas.
- We select hymns and other music for each service which will reinforce or illuminate the theme or message of the service.
- We also manage the procurement, maintenance, and storage of liturgical supplies in the sanctuary closets.

While we rarely hold meetings, we coordinate with each other and with the minister regularly. Reach out if you would like to help the team!

Tracy Greymont  
Liturgy Team Representative on Church Council



## THANKS FROM THE PPR TEAM

The PPR (Pastor Parish Relations) Team would like to thank all church members who completed and submitted the Pastor Evaluation Survey. All questions and comments were thoroughly summarized and then discussed by the PPR Team on November 19. The next step in the Pastor evaluation process is the receipt of the Pastor's self evaluation which is expected shortly. Pastor Scott's self evaluation will then be summarized and reviewed by the PPR Team. A presentation of the member's survey evaluation results of Pastor Scott will be made to the Church Council with Scott present. It is only after this initial presentation to the Council that Pastor Scott's self evaluation will be discussed in a revisit with the Council. After the two evaluation comparisons are reviewed and completed, goals will be set to address participant's comments.

It is the intent of the PPR Team to have the evaluation process completed by Christmas with results to the Congregation as soon as possible after the new year. At this point the evaluation process is on schedule as set by the Team. Please direct any questions to members of the PPR Team.

Pastor Parish Relations Team  
Pam Geiken, Sarah Riemer, Shandy Roehrig, Doug McManus, Joe Mueller



# A THREE-PART SPOTLIGHT ON **LIGHTHOUSE** YOUTH MINISTRY

1 DECEMBER EVENT

2 OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

3 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR *(next page)*

We are one of the five founding churches that began the ecumenical youth ministry program in Port Washington/Saukville known as “Lighthouse” in 2018. Our church partners with Grand Avenue United Methodist Church, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Living Hope Lutheran Church, and Parkside Community United Church of Christ. Lighthouse Youth Director, Christin Flucke, welcomes all middle school and high school youth to join the group at any time! Here is their event this month:



**Sunday, December 10th from 6:00-8:00 pm -  
Christmas Movie Night**

Put on your ugly Christmas sweater or your favorite pjs and settle in for a classic Christmas movie complete with delicious cookies and hot cocoa.

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## 2 OUR GOAL: RAISING \$2,500 FOR LIGHTHOUSE YOUTH MINISTRY

Each year since its inception, Lighthouse seeks \$5,000 for the continuation and growth of its ministry from each partner church. The yearly contribution entitles us to continue as a partner church with representation on its board and helps to ensure this valuable community ministry continues. This year, we have contributed \$2,500 from our church budget and this month, we are seeking an additional \$2,500 from church members and friends who care deeply about this youth programming effort.

Beginning December 3, there will be a Lighthouse display board with giving tags of different dollar amounts (\$25, \$100, \$250) totalling \$2,500. You are invited to take one (or two!) of the tags and write a check to our church. If it is easier, you may make your donation through the **church PayPal account**, just be sure to note that “Lighthouse” is where your gift is to be directed. Thank you!

If you have questions about Lighthouse, please talk to Pastor Scott or Meghan Manderscheid, who represents our church on the Lighthouse Board. We are still looking for an additional volunteer to help represent the church with Meghan on the Lighthouse Board of Directors. If you want to support youth ministry in our community, volunteering on the Board would be a great way to help!

### 3 ANNUAL REPORT FROM LIGHTHOUSE YOUTH DIRECTOR, CHRISTIN FLUCKE

Dear First Congregational Church,

Lighthouse Youth Ministry is a cooperative youth ministry effort of five local congregations from three different denominations, organized as an independent 501c3 non-profit organization. Each congregation provides \$5,000 in annual financial support to assist with operational and staffing costs, as well as two representatives to serve on the board of directors. Board members meet monthly along with the congregational pastors and the youth director in order to provide support to the youth director and monthly programming, oversee the ministry's finances, and serve as communication liaisons.

Our vision for Lighthouse Youth Ministry is to be a safe and affirming community where all youth are: \*WELCOMED regardless of religious affiliation or beliefs, \*EMPOWERED to explore questions of faith and life, and \*EQUIPPED to serve their community and the world.

Throughout 2023 we offered regular youth programming, meeting roughly twice a month during the school year for a variety of fellowship and service activities. Attendance at any given event currently averages around 10 students, and in 2023 we served a total of 38 different students. This year participants have enjoyed a variety of fun events including game and movie nights, a trip to Sunburst, and a canvas painting night this fall to create artwork for the Lighthouse HQ building. We've also had numerous opportunities to practice loving and serving our neighbors through activities like our 2nd "Trick-or-Treat so Others Can Eat" event as well as assembling birthday kits for the local food pantries and Easter baskets for kids through Family Promise. We are very grateful to all of our supporting congregations for your help in collecting the items needed for these projects!

Another big highlight of the year was offering a weekend service trip in August which we called "Hunger Quest". We had six youth participants for the whole weekend, plus four additional students who were able to join us for a portion of the weekend. The theme of the trip was on the issue at the local level as well as on a global scale. We volunteered at a community garden in Milwaukee, served close to 100 people through a community meal in Saukville, and helped pack enough meals at Feed My Starving Children to feed 39 kids in a different country for an entire year. Through videos, discussions, games and worship we learned more about world hunger and poverty and how we as Christians are called to respond. We even got a taste of what it's like to be hungry by fasting for 24 hours. Then, we ended the trip with a fun afternoon at Six Flags. This was a great experience for all involved, and we can't wait to offer a similar trip experience next summer!

As 2023 draws to a close, we thank you for your support, especially most recently at our Giving Tuesday Spaghetti Supper and Silent Auction! Looking ahead, our 2024 plans include a youth conference in the Wisconsin Dells, partnering again with the food pantries and Family Promise to provide birthday kits and Easter baskets, our 2nd annual "Egg My Yard" fundraiser, another summer service trip, and many more opportunities for students to gather together in community for fun, learning, and service to others!

You may contact me at (262) 483-9582 or [christin.flucke@lighthouseyouth.org](mailto:christin.flucke@lighthouseyouth.org). Thank you, and may God continue to bless our work together as we serve God's beloved children!

Christin Flucke, Lighthouse Youth Director



# TREE LOT SET-UP



Thanks to all those who helped on Saturday, November 11 to set up the lot for the Christmas Tree Sale: Bill Bond, Don Cross, Mike Dimmer, Scott McLeod, Ralph Perez, Tom Roehrig, Noah Roehrig, Joe Rychtik, Matt Schlehein, Scott Symes, Chris Wach, and Claude Zimmerman.

# CHRISTMAS TREE UNLOADING



## Port High students get in the Christmas spirit by lending a hand

Port Washington High School freshmen (from left) Haley Leute, Elaina Perez and Piper Morgan were among the student volunteers who unloaded hundreds of fresh Christmas trees at the First Congregational Church lot at the corner of Grand Avenue and Webster Street across from the Niederkorn Library last week. The church's annual sale of trees and wreaths is one of its key fundraisers, and it has become tradition for Port High students to help with the heavy lifting of unloading the trees as part of the school's Port Pride program, which encourages community volunteerism.

*Photo by Sam Arendt*



Special thanks to church members Elaina Perez, Sam Pasten, Graham Garthus, Dylan Crain, and 22 Port Washington High School students who unloaded 465 Christmas trees in just under an hour on November 21. The students earned Port Pride volunteer hours and enjoyed pizza in Fellowship Hall. Thanks also to Elaina Perez and friends who attached beautiful bows to 30 wreaths which are available at the Christmas Tree Sale.



NOVEMBER ACTION PHOTOS



Handbell Choir on November 19



Roberta Blumenberg's 90th Birthday Party



Bow-Making  
Workshop  
on November 12



Bows for Wreaths  
at the Christmas Tree Sale!



# OUR CHURCH COUNCIL

## Executive Team

Moderator: Jason Jacque (2024)  
Associate Moderator: Jodi Cowen (2024)  
Clerk: Rhonda Thompson (2025)  
Treasurer: *currently vacant* (2025)

## Team Representatives

Christian Education: Shandy Roehrig (2024)  
Fellowship: Jennifer Dimmer (2025)  
Staff Support and Review: Ken Matthews (2024)  
Property: Bill Bond (2025)  
Community Outreach: Eric Olson (2024)  
Liturgy: Tracy Greymont (2025)  
Stewardship: *currently vacant* (2025)

## CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The October minutes were approved at the November 9, 2023 Church Council meeting.

### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Church Council Minutes October 19, 2023

Call to Order by Jason Jacque, Moderator, @ 6:36 pm.

Pastor Scott, Jason Jacque, Bill Bond, Eric Olson, Jodi Cowen, Jennifer Dimmer, Ken Matthews, and Rhonda Thompson.

Opening Meditation - (Jennifer) - Jennifer read a daily devotion, The Cave by Kaji Dousa.

Approval of the Minutes - September 2023 Shandy motions to approve the September minutes and Bill seconds the motion. The minutes are approved.

#### Financial Administrator Updates - (Phil Stepanski)

- Monthly Budget Review - Looking at the Budget vs Actual Report through August of 2023, things are progressing as expected. Gross Profit total of \$151,072 (2023 Budget is \$202,186), Total Expenditures come to \$169,425 (2023 Budget is \$255,926 ) for a \$18,353 deficit (2023 Budget is estimated to end with \$53,740 deficit). The Bank Account Balances as of September 30, 2023 are as follows: Main Checking is \$856.36 ; Scrip Checking is \$1674.89 ; Mission Account is \$1890.00 (Mission Commitment is \$1690.00 ); Memorial Account Savings is \$40,753.02 (Making All Things New Commitment is \$23,780.00) and the Cornerstone Fund is \$25,650.82 . Total money

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## CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

available is \$48,435.09 . The Window Loan balance total is \$1094.75.  
The Home Depot Raise Right gift card balance is at \$39.56.

- Job Description/Projects List- There was an ad placed for the Financial Administrator in the Ozaukee Press. Today we received an application. The Finance Team would conduct the interview with a staff liaison. Phil should be included in the interview also.

### Old Business

Elevator Repair - (Bill) - Update/ Quotes - The Property Team has received three quotes. The Property Team prepared a spreadsheet for comparison of Otis, MEI, and Northwestern Elevator with estimated cost lead time and what's included or not in service/repair. There will be a drilling fee separate from any of the companies' repair costs. That estimate is \$30,000-\$45,000. We are currently in the last year of a five year service contract with Otis. That cost is \$1,600 annually. A bill from Otis for the initial exploratory work is \$4,600. The Property Team is advising that we budget a 15% increase in the estimated cost to cover what is hidden and not known when it comes to actually repairing the elevator. The Property Team is estimating an all-in repair cost of \$115,805. They are hoping to meet once more to try to figure out more of the unknowns and possibly get a repair maximum dollar amount. To make a more informed decision. An anonymous member would like to cover half of the cost of the elevator repair up to \$32,000. What other options can be considered? Lifts are not an option as floor to floor height exceeds the maximum lift height. The platform is not wide enough for caskets either. They will locate a contractor to quote building a ramp if it's even possible. With the cost as high as it is, a loan is more than likely needed. There are a couple of options beyond a local bank. Another source might be another Cornerstone Fund or a Church Building and Loan. The interest earned on either of those loans goes to help support the denomination.

-Congregational Meeting-The Council voted to have a special meeting once we have the information to present and the congregation has been made aware a meeting will be happening as soon as possible.

Property Team/Building Maintenance - (Bill) Goetzke was here and the fire and safety equipment is operational except for a sensor in the sanctuary, but supplies to fix that have been ordered. Doors are all fixed. Solar panels are still needing repair.

2024 Budget (Jason) - This draft of the budget does not have any elevator repair costs included. Jason presented a budget packet for talking points for the Council. Costs continue to outpace pledges. Seventy five percent of income comes from pledges. Pledge trends the past few years show decrease, but they may be leveling off. Building and Operation Expenses

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## CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

have been cut. Mission costs are fixed to pledge income. There are some tough decisions that need to be made on how to go forward with some listening and talking sessions with the congregation. There are four options with various cuts to the budget and various impacts on the bottom line of the budget. Council will need to refine the budget options by the end of October for November 2 Executive Council meeting and listening sessions November 5 for congregation. The new budget should include a repair line expense of \$1000 a month or \$12,000 annually for elevator or ramp.

Rental Space Update - (Pastor Scott)-Harbor Village Infants Program. Pastor Scott has not heard back. He will follow up and contact them again.

-Advertising of Space - Beckie and Jason decided to run the first ad for Financial Administrator and then focus on the space. Should we advertise in the Newsletter for a member to help promote and find potential renters for the classroom space. Pastor Scott will write something up for the newsletter. Some investment would need to be made to upgrade.

Council Updates from Pastor Parish Relations - (Shandy) - Shandy says survey is live and due to end at the end of the month. The responses have been slow to come in. They were hoping for a return of a minimum of 50, but ideally 70. Responses are secure with no way to trace it back; only date and time appears. Paper responses are electronically submitted and then shredded. It is anonymous. Filling out the survey partially is acceptable. At the end of the month they will graph and trend it.

Ministry Options Survey - (Pastor Scott) - The survey is closed. Pastor Scott will email responses out to the Council. He had about 25 responses. He will email the Council the results.

Council Positions - (Jason/Pastor Scott) Treasurer/Stewardship/Financial Administrator - Pastor Scott is hoping to have Stewardship materials ready to go by November 8th. They are trying to simplify it and keep it to one sheet of paper. The target date for return pledges would be the second Sunday of December. This allows a change in pledge line amount for budget vote in January. One application turned in as mentioned above for Financial Administrator, but nothing for Treasurer.

Brunch with Santa - Planning is in express mode. It's set for Saturday December 16. Price will be \$10 a child and \$12 for an adult. Tickets can be sold at PWSB and the tree lot. Amy has it on her radar to create flyers. Same food as the Seuss event back in March. Is there any limit as to the number of tickets that can be sold, based on time with Santa? There will be activities and reading while in line.

Additional Team Updates (Shandy, Eric, Jennifer, Tracy, Ken) - Shandy says Church School is piloting a new Kids Club the third Sunday of the month in November and December. They will start in the service and then will head

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# CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

into the classrooms for an activity. If Kids Club works they may try an evening activity. Eric, with Community Outreach, dropped the food off and they were thankful. Eric plans to reach out to collect ten children for families to sponsor for Holiday gift giving. The Fellowship BBQ was a hit. Next month they will make bows to put on the wreaths. Jennifer will assign teams for Fellowship Sundays. Ken says Staff Support and Review will start this year's staff reviews.

## New Business

Christmas Tree Sales (Pastor Scott)- The sign has been updated with a new graphic logo. The tree supplier is limited on taller trees. They reached out to see if Costco will sell us some. The lot will be set up Saturday Nov 11 at 8 am. Beckie is going to get Sign Up Genius ready again. The team plans to meet Wednesday before Thanksgiving to make sure every little detail is ready. They cut a half hour off the weekday night shift.

Worship Location - Results of the survey show the majority prefer holding the service in Fellowship Hall. The Sanctuary is available for use. Eventually the service could be streamed into the Sanctuary. Shandy motions we continue to hold Sunday 8 & 10 am services in Fellowship Hall, sharing that the Sanctuary is open for individual and personal use; special services- Communion Sundays, the 8am service will be in the Sanctuary as will the 9 pm Christmas Eve service, once technology is set up the service will be streamed into the Sanctuary, evaluations will be ongoing. The vote passes.

Any Other New Business to Come Before the Council? Shandy asked if the cost of the mugs was covered with donations. Donations would still be collected. The mugs will be available for sale to members.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment at 9:43 pm  
Submitted by, Rhonda Thompson - Clerk



# PROPERTY TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Our Property Team is an active church team comprised of a handful of folks from our church. The team keeps a close eye on our church and works to maintain all aspects of our church building and grounds. The team would like to share their recent monthly meeting minutes - [November 2023 Property Team Minutes](#)



# RECORDINGS OF WORSHIP SERVICES

We continue to record our Sunday worship services each week for those who are unable to attend. Be sure to subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) ("First Congregational Church of Port Washington"). This allows you to receive immediate notification when a service is uploaded.



## SPECIAL THANKS

To our November Church Servers:

Worship Leaders - Don Niederfrank, Jeff Ulicki, David Franks, Kitchie Allen, Jane Spalding, Bill Bond, Jodi Cowen, and our Confirmation Class

Ushers - Joe and Bev Mueller, Claude Zimmerman and our Confirmation Class parents

Nursery Caregivers - Matt and Sarah Riemer, Avery and Shandy Roehrig, Kylee and Tina Olson, and Ruby and Jean Hoffman

Communion Servers - Don Niederfrank, Ken Matthews, Jeff Ulicki, and Jason Jacque

Church Offering Counters - Ken Matthews, Kathy Bretl, Phil Stepanski and Tracy Bretl, Joe and Bev Mueller, and Joe and Dawn Rychtik

Fellowship Hour Host Groups - Chancel Choir, Wednesday Lunch Group, and Handbell Choir

To Leann Wellenstein for being the parent helper at the Confirmation Mission Experience at the Port Food Pantry on November 8 and at the class session on November 20.

To our Christmas Tree Sale Fundraiser Team composed of Joe Rychtik, Scott Symes, Louise Mollinger and David Franks, and newcomers, Don and Connie Cross, for getting the sale up and running.

To Louise Mollinger, David Franks, and Alice Ruffin for hosting a 90th birthday celebration for Roberta Blumenberg in Fellowship Hall on November 15.

To Ralph Perez for recruiting 26 Port Washington High School students to unload our 465 Christmas Trees on November 21.

To Nancy Walle, Jane Spalding, Jeanne Mantsch, Jennifer Dimmer, Joshua Jacque and Beckie Perez for making beautiful bows to adorn the Christmas Wreaths that are being sold at our Tree Sale.

To all those who contributed to and attended the Giving Tuesday Spaghetti Supper and Silent Auction on November 28 to support Lighthouse Youth Ministry.

To Congregational Care Team member Jane Schwacher for sending out birthday and wedding anniversary cards for the month of November.

To all those who participated in the Gift-A-Child program through the Port Food Pantry. Our church members and friends contributed 135 gifts!

To Jane Spalding and Tracy Greymont for decorating our church for Advent.

Thanks to Brett Dimmer and Gary Tackes for installing an ethernet cable between the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall; allowing us to carry audio/visual HD signals between those two locations. Special thanks to Brett Dimmer for his continued work with recording our services as well as creatively finding new audio/video arrangements for Fellowship Hall.

Thanks to Scott Symes for the purchase of our new Christmas Tree Sale signs, we have a new design and a new vinyl banner on the Tree Lot trailer. Thanks to Mike Dimmer for cutting and painting a new plywood sign upon which the new graphics were applied.

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



- 4- Eric Olson
- 5- Jessica Clements  
Kelly Perket
- 6- David Wickesberg
- 14 - Lily Dimmer
- 15 - Jim Schmit
- 16 - Elijah Perez  
Gary Tackes
- 18- Kelly Blum
- 20- Nicole Nelson
- 21- Taylor Peiffer
- 22- Maximus Shupe
- 25- Courtney Cowen
- 26- Vegas Mantsch  
Emma Riemer
- 27- Michael Rego

## DECEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES



- 26- Howard and Alice Clausing
- 27- Steve and Cheri Farnsworth

*Please contact Beckie Perez, at [office@portucc.org](mailto:office@portucc.org), if you would like to add a Birthday or Anniversary.*

## SUNDAY SERVERS - ONLINE SIGN-UP

We continue to utilize SignUpGenius for Sunday Servers sign ups. If you have any questions, please reach out to Beckie in the church office.

### USHERS

Greet congregants, hand out service bulletins, and collect the offering at the 8:00 or 10:00 Sunday morning worship service.

### WORSHIP LEADERS

Help Pastor Scott lead the congregation in responsive readings, unison prayers, and scriptures during the 8:00 or 10:00 worship service.

### NURSERY CAREGIVERS

Watch over children newborn through elementary in our nursery during the 10:00 service. The 8th grade Confirmation Class will be helping out, but we need some additional help. 8th graders and high schoolers must be accompanied by a parent.



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## CHURCH INFORMATION

First Congregational Church - *United Church of Christ*  
131 North Webster Street  
Port Washington, WI 53074  
(262) 284-2022  
website - [portucc.org](http://portucc.org), email - [office@portucc.org](mailto:office@portucc.org)



### Church Office Hours

Monday - Friday mornings from 8:30 - Noon

### Pastor Scott's Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays, and by appointment

### Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Scott McLeod, Pastor - [pastorscott@portucc.org](mailto:pastorscott@portucc.org)  
cell phone - (262) 903-0449, home phone - (262) 723-1100  
Amy Gilhooly, Communications Director - [amyg@portucc.org](mailto:amyg@portucc.org)  
Beckie Perez, Office Manager - [office@portucc.org](mailto:office@portucc.org)  
Phil Stepanski, Outgoing Financial Administrator - [phil@portucc.org](mailto:phil@portucc.org)

## STAY CONNECTED

Like us on **Facebook**

"First Congregational Church, Port Washington, WI"

Subscribe to our **YouTube Channel**

"First Congregational Church of Port Washington"

Receive our E-Blasts (emails)

*Please let us know if you would like to be added or have a new email address*

Check out the church website - [portucc.org](http://portucc.org)

## ONLINE GIVING WITH PAYPAL

PayPal is an easy way to give to the church to pay your pledge and/or make an extra financial gift. You can find the **PayPal** button on the home page of the church website ([portucc.org](http://portucc.org)) or use this QR code. Thank you!

