



Congregational Connections

Monthly Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | February 2024

A CHANGING CALENDAR AND AN EXTRA DAY

Our modern calendar has 365 days in a year, except for the fourth year which contains 366 days. This is due to the rotation of the earth around the sun taking 365.24 days to complete. It was back in 45 B.C. that the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar adopted this calendar. It was in 525 A.D. that we began dating the years from Christ's birth, and it was in 731 A.D. that we began using B.C. to indicate events like Julius Caesar using a new calendar 45 years "Before Christ"! Pope Gregory XIII revised the calendar again in 1582 with some added wrinkles that have led to the current "Gregorian Calendar" used today.

Did you know that according to the Jewish Calendar the year is 5784 and began at sunset on September 15? Or that according to the Chinese calendar, February 10 marks the beginning of the year 4722? According to the Islamic calendar it is the year 1445 and it began on July 19! I tend to think of the calendar as unchanging and permanent, but there have been a variety of ways to count the years and number our days.

Due to our strange history with calendars, this is the year we add an additional day to February. My real question is: What are you going to do with your additional 24 hours? While February 29 is a Thursday this year, you don't have to use the "actual" day to use your additional time. The business website, "Inc.com" recommends taking a "Blank Day" in which you clear your schedule, not for vacation, but to take time for "self-driven thought, productivity, and realignment." How about a "Day of Gratitude"? A day to give back to the community in service to others out of thanks for all the blessings you have received. How about a "Monk Day"? Especially if you are feeling burned out, this "day to recharge, reflect, and reboot" might be perfect. Turn off the email/texts/phones and spend the day reflecting on inner healing and your relationship with God rather than outward production and accomplishment. Use your day wisely! You have probably heard the saying, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift. That's why we call it the present." This year we have an extra "today" so let's use it as the "gift" that it is.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Scott

ELEVATOR REPAIR WORK UNDERWAY!

Good news! Our elevator repair work started on January 29. When we signed the contract with MEI, they planned to begin work at the end of February. With this new timeline, we might be able to start Lent in the Sanctuary as long as there are no unexpected issues, and we pass the state inspection. As a reminder, the elevator repair has been made possible by a generous, anonymous gift of \$32,000 which funded the initial down payment and 2024 costs of loan payments. Please see *page 15* for more information and stay tuned!



LISTENING SESSIONS REGARDING BUDGET AND POSSIBLE REDUCED MINISTERIAL SERVICES

Our church is facing challenging financial difficulties. Church Council encourages all members and friends to attend their upcoming Listening Sessions:

- Sunday, February 4, at 9:00 a.m. (at church)
- Sunday, February 11, at 11:00 a.m. (at church)
- Thursday, February 15 at 7:00 p.m. (via Zoom)

There is an opportunity to submit questions and feedback for those who are not able to be at the Listening Sessions. You may drop a note in the wooden box outside of Fellowship Hall or email Church Council. Please see *page 5* for more information.

ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE BEGINNING OF LENT

The Season of Lent begins on Valentine's Day this year, February 14. You are invited to begin the season at our Ash Wednesday evening worship service at 7:00. Ash Wednesday worship is a simple, yet profound, service of scripture, song, prayers, and the imposition of ashes as a sign of our frail humanity. It is a worship service in which we acknowledge our faults and failings so that we might truly experience God's acceptance and overflowing love. Together we can set out on our forty-day journey toward Easter with a moving and meaningful service.

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

Be on the lookout for orange text - it's linked up to documents and web pages that you might find helpful or interesting.

SUBMIT INFO 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.

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

We are excited to welcome the following individuals and families who became official members on January 21 - Ben Bechle, Josh and Jocelyn Becker, Sean and Amanda Malloy, Ryan and Erica Petri, and Scott and Abby Raaflaub.

Ben Bechle - "Hi, I'm Ben and I am excited to join First Congregational Church in Port Washington! My partner, Ben, (yes, we have the same name), and I moved to Port Washington in June of 2023 from Eau Claire, WI, to be closer to family and the greater Milwaukee area. I am a licensed professional counselor (LPC) in the state of Wisconsin and I practice as a psychotherapist and substance use counselor for Sheboygan County. I also have a small private practice which I am currently contracted through Life Point Counseling in Port Washington. My partner and I have two wonderful dogs, Penny and Twyla, which we love to spend time with. Some things you may find me doing in my downtime include reading, working out, crocheting, cross-stitching, trying out a new winery or distillery, or spending time in the yard tending to our vegetable garden. I look forward to meeting you and being a member of the faith community at First Congregational Church."



Josh and Jocelyn Becker - "We were both born and raised in Sheboygan. We moved to Port Washington in 2012 after we were hired at our current jobs. I (Jocelyn) am a kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary School here in Port. This is my 13th year teaching in the district. My husband, Josh, is in his 14th year as a Lead Software Engineer for Quad. We have two children - our daughter, Journey, is 8 years old and our son, Jack, is 5 years old. Our family enjoys traveling, especially to the ocean and mountains with my side of the family. We enjoy our yearly fishing trip with my husband's side of the family every June! We have two rescue dogs - Jethro and Rex. Our family loves watching movies, playing games, spending time with family and friends, swimming, and going to our cabins up north."

Abby Bordak-Raaflaub and Scott Raaflaub - "My husband and I are both middle school teachers. I (Abby) teach choir at Thomas Jefferson Middle School here in Port and Scott teaches English/Language Arts at Whitefish Bay Middle School. We have two children - Jackson is 6 and attends kindergarten at Lincoln and Austin, 3, attends 3K at CLC. Our boys enjoy dinosaurs, playing outside, visiting museums and, yes, watching TV. Octonauts and Peppa Pig are current favorites. As a family, we have a pop-up camper for the "good" weather months. Our parents both have a cabin/home on a lake, so campfires, swimming, kayaking and pontooning take up much of our time in the summer. We also have a dog and a cat."



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MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS...continued

Sean and Amanda Malloy -
“My husband and I, (Amanda) moved to Port Washington in 2015. I am a Band Instrument Repair Technician at Brass Bell Music Store, and my husband is a Technical Account Manager at Red Hat. I have been part of the church Handbell Choir for a number of years. We have two boys - Miles, 8 and Max, 6.”



WELCOME



*Church School and Kids Club in January.
See page 8 to learn more!*



A Message From Church Council

OUR BUDGET CIRCUMSTANCES & REDUCING MINISTERIAL SERVICES

One of our objectives as a Church Council is to reach a balanced budget in order to function well as a church. Unfortunately, our past “status quo” budgeted expenditures far exceed our anticipated revenue for 2024. We find ourselves in a place where we need to face deep cuts to our budget. We ask all members and friends of the church to tune in and actively participate in this year’s financial process.

Thank you to the forty or so members who attended the Winter Congregational Meeting on January 28. Please view the current revision of our **Proposed 2024 Budget with Reduced Ministerial Services** that was presented. Instead of approving the budget, a motion was made and vote taken to defer/table the approval to a Special Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 25. This will provide valuable time to further explore reduced ministerial services to a part-time or shared minister. You may [click here](#) to watch a recording of the meeting.

How did we get here?

We want to provide a review of the last several months:

- A “Status Quo” budget for 2024 was presented at the Fall Congregational Meeting in November 2023. Assuming a pledged income equal to that received in 2022, the proposed budget showed a \$47,832 deficit. While a budget with a deficit has been approved in previous years, the value of the deficit was held in savings as a safety net. Unfortunately, our church savings is no longer able to cover a deficit of this magnitude.
- Church Council presented multiple options for consideration to reach a balanced budget. Considerations included deep cuts to various programs and budget items, reduction in ministerial services and staff, and fundraisers to increase income. Church Council committed to evaluating these options in an effort to support a balanced budget, while monitoring the incoming pledges for 2024.
- Congregational feedback was received through various Listening Sessions held in November, at the Fall Congregational Meeting, and through direct communication. Many people provided suggestions which have been taken into consideration and Church Council has been actively assessing the budget line by line.

Where are we now?

While many members and friends have in fact increased their pledge for 2024, fewer pledges have left us with a larger deficit than anticipated. Church Council feels that the only financially viable and responsible option is to recommend a 2024 budget that includes extensive cuts, a \$5,000 increase in fundraising (which will require additional events and initiatives to be determined and run by volunteers), and a reduction in ministerial services from a full-time minister to a part-time or shared minister.

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OUR BUDGET CIRCUMSTANCES continued...

Next Steps:

In February, Church Council will continue its research into the implications of a part-time or shared minister including realignment of roles and responsibilities and additional volunteer support needed from the congregation as a result.

Examples:

- What are the expectations of a part-time or shared minister?
- What does a typical schedule look like for a part-time or shared minister?
- What church services/programs will need to be reduced, eliminated, or covered by volunteer support?
- What additional volunteer efforts/skills are needed to fulfill the mission of our church if we have a part-time or shared minister?
- What are the expected costs/timeline for interim minister support and new minister transition if our current minister resigns as a result of the change to his Call Agreement?

Listening Sessions:

You are invited to attend Listening Sessions this month.

Sunday, February 4, at 9:00 a.m. (at church)

Sunday, February 11, at 11:00 a.m. (at church)

Thursday, February 15 at 7:00 p.m. (via Zoom)

You may submit questions and feedback if you are not able to be at the Listening Sessions. Please drop a note in the wooden box outside of Fellowship Hall or email Church Council (email address provided below).

Call to ACTION for our Congregation:

1. Please attend a Listening Session on 2/4, 2/11 or 2/15.
2. Please attend 2/25 Special Congregational Meeting.
3. Submit questions and provide input, every voice matters!
4. Prayerfully consider our situation and work with us to help find solutions to support our church's mission going forward.



Questions and concerns can be directed to the Church Council group email address at fcc.committees@gmail.com.

Prepared and submitted with devotion and care
by your Church Council Executive Team,

Jason Jacque, Moderator

Jodi Cowen, Associate Moderator

Rhonda Thompson, Clerk

Phil Stepanski, Treasurer

ECUMENICAL MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES

Our church is partnering with four local churches to provide midweek ecumenical services during Lent. The services will move from church to church each Wednesday evening February 21 through March 20. Folks from participating churches and the greater community will meet at the host church for a light supper at 6:00, followed by a worship service at 7:00. Though many of our Lenten practices invite us to individual acts of “repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving, and works of love”, Lent is also a time for the deepening of community. Worshiping with our ecumenical partners in Port Washington and Saukville is a great way to build community! In the early church, the weeks before Easter were a time in which the whole community took responsibility for the preparation of individuals for baptism. Not only were these new Christians enriched by this formation process, but those already within the community were strengthened in their faith along with them. Using readings from Mark’s gospel, the five weeks of services will invite all of us to reflect on what it means to be in community. Please plan to attend the Wednesday evening meals and services as part of your Lenten practice this year. You may learn more on the Facebook [event page](#).



Created for Community

The season of Lent invites us to grow spiritually as individuals and as God’s people together. Join us this year in reflecting on what it means to be in community with one another, with the world, with creation, and with God.

Wednesday, February 21	LIVING HOPE ELCA (SAUKVILLE)
Wednesday, February 28	PARKSIDE COMMUNITY UCC (SAUKVILLE)
Wednesday, March 6	GRAND AVENUE UMC (PORT WASHINGTON)
Wednesday, March 13	CHRIST THE KING ELCA (PORT WASHINGTON)
Wednesday, March 20	FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC (PORT WASHINGTON)



CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

ALL CHILDREN
4K-7th GRADE
INVITED!

While the snow was falling in January, our Church School children were learning about the 3 Wise Men, and their journey to pay homage to Christ. While we did not have any gold, frankincense, or myrrh to share, the children did prepare small gift packages of hand sanitizer, kleenex and candy. On second and third Sundays, they presented these gifts to those attending the 10:00 service. This was a wonderful interaction between our youth and adults, and hopefully brought a smile to many.

In addition, the children picked up their crayons and markers to decorate thank you cards for the Stewardship Team. Those who made a pledge are likely to receive one of these works of art in the coming weeks. At Kids Club, Sherri Melichar led the children in learning the song "Light of God", where a transposition of words led us to Hop, Jump, March, Pray and Sing while having fun through movement.

In February, we will be focusing on a theme of Love with a lesson from Acts 18:1-17 and 1 Corinthians 13. We will talk about what love is - love is patient, love is kind, as well as what love is not - love does not boast, does not envy. Through the story of Peter's visit to the Church in Corinth, we will explore how our church makes us feel and gather ideas to share with the congregation. Please keep an eye out later this month as we decorate our walls with hearts!

In closing, I'd like to take a moment to welcome the new families who have joined our Church School and Kids Club activities the past few months. We are glad you are here and look forward to seeing you and your children again soon.

Blessings,
Shandy Roehrig
Christian Education Team
Representative on
Church Council and
Church School Team Leader



UPCOMING CHURCH SCHOOL SUNDAYS:

- February 11
- March 10



KIDS CLUB

Kids Club, open to all 4K through 7th graders, meets on the third Sunday of each month. The next Kids Club is **February 18** during the 10:00 service. All children join their families for the start of the service, and, following a performance by the Handbell Choir, 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 **February 25**.

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.

WORSHIP THEMES FOR FEBRUARY

February 4: Isaiah 40:21-31 Mark 1:29-39

*Communion Sunday *A reminder that the 8:00 service will be held in the Sanctuary.*

As we celebrate Communion on this Fifth Sunday of Epiphany our scripture texts speak of God's power to heal and get us through difficult times - lifting us "on eagle's wings".

February 11: 2 Kings 2:1-12 Mark 9:2-9

Transfiguration Sunday, Chancel Choir, Church School

The transfiguration is an important transition point in Jesus' ministry. The disciple's get a glimpse of Jesus' true nature and prepare themselves for the difficult journey to Jerusalem. We too, prepare our hearts and minds for a journey of discipleship.

February 14: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 Ash Wednesday

We begin our 40-day Lenten journey with our Ash Wednesday worship service. The Gospel message invites us to make sure our faithfulness and discipleship is about more than just surface appearances—but about a life lived in true relationship with God.

February 18: Genesis 9:8-17 Mark 1:9-15

First Sunday of Lent, Handbell Choir, Kids Club

Our scriptural themes for this Sunday explore our ongoing, covenantal relationship with God - through the rainbow covenant story of Noah's ark in Genesis, and the beginning of Jesus' ministry, with his baptism, wilderness experience, and earliest preaching and teaching all described in just six verses of Mark.

February 25: Psalm 22: 23-31 Mark 8:31-38

Second Sunday of Lent, Family Sunday, Special Congregational Meeting

Jesus proclaims in Mark's Gospel, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." This is a profound and important message worth spending some time to unpack!



SUNDAY SERVERS - ONLINE SIGN-UP



We 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 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 are the primary volunteers, but we need additional help from time to time. 8th graders and high schoolers must be accompanied by a parent.

LUNCH AND STUDY ON WEDNESDAYS

Our weekly Lunch Group meets **Wednesdays at Noon**. Bring your own lunch and join this fun and friendly group for interesting conversation! The group reads and discusses the Bible passages that will be used in worship the next Sunday. You don't need to be a Bible expert to participate. Pastor Scott provides background information about the scripture and the conversation naturally moves on from there. The group shares opinions, stories, insights, and perspectives. Plan to join us for Wednesday Lunch Group - you'll be glad you did!

YOGA OFFERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

Everyone is welcome to participate in a yoga class held **Wednesday evenings at 6:00** at church, led by Dawn Stacey, a licensed yoga instructor and PTA. The group meets in the open classroom space across from the Music Room. Each class costs \$12, payable to Dawn via check, cash, or Venmo.

THURSDAY MORNING MEN'S BREAKFAST

Every Thursday morning at 8:00 a group of members and friends of our church meet for coffee, breakfast, and conversation. This delightful group of men meet at The Beacon restaurant, located downtown on the first floor of the Harborview hotel. Men's Breakfast Group is open to all the men of the church. Everyone places their own order and pays their own bill. It is a great way to spend the morning and jumpstart your day!

OUR CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM

We currently offer two dynamic choirs – Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir. Our Chancel Choir rehearses **6:30-7:30 on Monday evenings**, and performs on the second and fifth Sunday of every month. Our Handbell Choir rehearses **7:00-8:00 on Wednesday evenings**, and performs on the third Sunday of every month. Please know that you, your family, and friends are invited to join at any time!



FELLOWSHIP HOUR

We host a Fellowship Hour following our 8:00 service on the first Sunday of each month, and following our 10:00 services on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. This is a wonderful opportunity to visit with other families and friends in the church. Please make an effort to introduce yourself to people you haven't met.

THRIVE TEAM SHARES PRAYER RESOURCES FOR YOU

The Thrive Team made up of Terry McManus, Louise Mollinger, Scott Symes, Meg Tackes, Gary Tackes, and Pastor Scott has completed the first year of a two-year program called The Examen(ed) Church. At the half-way point we are beginning to move outward to engage the congregation in prayerful reflection on the church's mission and purpose. We met monthly in 2023 working on developing our own personal spirituality, reflecting on the challenges of the pandemic, the resilience of the church, and learning about the work of spiritual discernment. During the Lenten season (and beyond) we would like to invite everyone in the church to consider the practice of prayer using the daily examen. Below you will find five different online resources. You could try one for a week, and then try another for another week, and so on. Our team liked the 7-minute Examen. But the others are worth trying out too!

- **7-minute Examen** (God in All Things)
- **26 minute Examen to Music** (A New Liturgy)
- **18 minute Prayer of Examen on Youtube** (Fuller Studio)
- **Pray As You Go** has a number of specific resources for the Examen that are useful
- **A 10 minute examen** (Reunion)

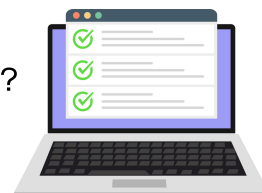
If you don't care to use online resources, Pastor Scott has written resources you could try and see if those might suit you better. We believe the daily examen as a resource for prayer is worthy of our church's attention. When you use the daily examen you will find that: you'll always have something to pray about, your prayers will always contain a sense of gratitude, it will help you find God at work in your life day-by-day, it will help you discern feelings about things and people and circumstance, and it will help you recognize where God is leading. Give it a try!

THRIVE TEAM SEEKING FEEDBACK THROUGH FEBRUARY 14

Recently the members of our Thrive Team connected with over a dozen church members to gather their feedback on three questions related to the mission and values of our church. We now want to pose these questions to the entire congregation and hope that you will take time to consider each one and provide valuable feedback. Your input will remain anonymous, and we plan to share the themes from what we receive with the congregation.

Questions to the congregation:

1. What activities of the church best reflect who we are as a congregation?
2. What aspects of church bring you the most joy?
3. What in church life saddens or drains you?



Please **click here** to complete this short online google survey. We are happy to receive your responses through February 14 (Ash Wednesday). The congregation members we initially connected with universally expressed their pleasure in being asked for their thoughts. We hope that you will feel the same and thank you in advance for your thoughtful feedback.

TRANSITION IN CHURCH FINANCIAL ROLES

We have moved from having a Financial Administrator on staff, to hiring an independent contractor for our accounting needs. At the January 11 monthly meeting, Church Council voted to select Kris(tina) Tontis of **Tontis Accounting Services** as our accountant. At the same meeting, Phil Stepanski, our outgoing Financial Administrator, was appointed to serve as Treasurer on our Church Council Executive Team. Although Phil needed to step down as Financial Administrator due to the demands of his full-time job, we are pleased that he can serve on Church Council in this capacity.



SUMMER YOUTH MISSION TRIP - STILL TIME TO COMMIT

For the third year in a row, our church has been invited to participate with Pilgrim UCC in Grafton on a High School Youth Mission Trip. This summer, the group will be traveling to Ohio to work on Hiram Farm July 7-14. Hiram Farm is a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) non-profit, community project born out of the desire to provide inspiration and meaningful work for the growth of individuals with autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities. It is an organic farm located on 120 acres in Hiram, OH. They have developed their land with respect for the environment, and the health of all individuals working on the farm to model organic sustainable agricultural techniques. There will be an informational meeting on Sunday, February 4, at 11:45 at Pilgrim UCC, located at 1621 2nd Avenue in Grafton.



WHO DOESN'T LOVE SOUP?!

Mark your calendars and join us for a Soup & Salad Potluck Lunch on Sunday, February 18, after the 10:00 service. You are welcome to bring soup, salad, or dessert - or simply come and enjoy a meal hosted by our Fellowship Team!



LIGHTHOUSE YOUTH MINISTRY

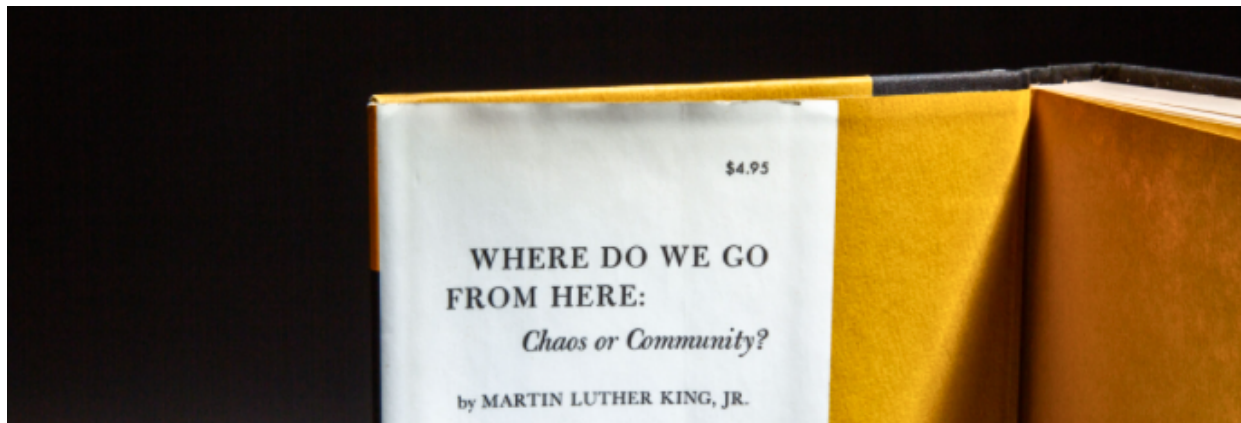
Our church partners with four other churches, Grand Avenue United Methodist Church, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Living Hope Lutheran Church, and Parkside Community United Church of Christ, all located in Port Washington and Saukville, to support our joint ecumenical initiative, Lighthouse Youth Ministry.

All middle school and high school youth are welcome to join the activities and events of the group! This month, Lighthouse will be skiing and tubing at Sunburst on Sunday, February 4. Also, six of our youth will be attending the Quake Retreat in Wisconsin Dells from February 16-18. Also, Lighthouse wants to extend a huge thank you to everyone who donated supplies to help assemble more than 130 birthday kits! They have been distributed to both the Port Washington and Saukville food pantries and were received with great appreciation.

THANKS!



BOOK REVIEW FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH



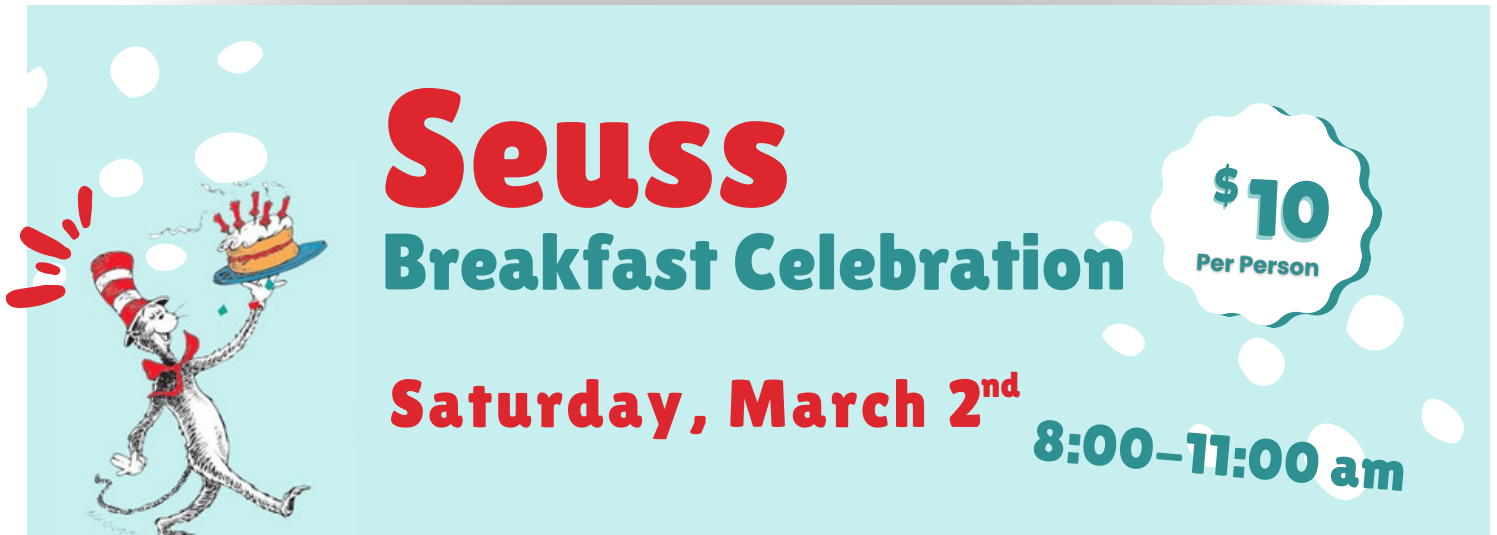
January 15 was a federal holiday commemorating the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. The month of February is Black History Month. In honor of these occasions, two of our members would like to recommend a book to the church as a way to learn more about the legacy of Dr. King and the ongoing work of racial reconciliation and racial justice. This book is available to borrow through the Niederkorn Library or for purchase as an e-book on Kindle.

Louise Mollinger, member of Friends for Justice Team here at church, writes, “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” by Martin Luther King, Jr. is not only the book title, but is one of several questions with which Martin Luther King, Jr. wrestles in his final book (published in 1967), the year before his assassination. Rev. King opens by asking, “where are we?”, reflecting on the violent responses to non-violent demonstrations for equal voting rights, the victory of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the immediate backlash against the promised equality of the new legislation. At length, he goes on to re-commit himself to non-violent direct action as a “powerful demand for justice” not a stance of “resignation and passivity”. In searching for his own answer to the title question, “chaos or community?”, he expands his movement to address the poverty that reaches beyond and across skin colors. He closes this book imagining a world house in which we all live and asks us the question, “do we have the morality and courage required to live together as brothers [and sisters] and not be afraid?” This book remains relevant today.”

Another team member, Terry McManus writes “This is a prodigious work. Dr King folds together and skillfully analyzes and contextualizes the stories of people, politics, social structures, race relations, and economics of the civil rights movement of the 1960’s. His prescient observations and recommendations are surprisingly apropos and extremely relevant to our world today. I highly recommend this book.”

SEUSS BREAKFAST ON MARCH 2

Please plan to attend our upcoming breakfast and help spread the word! More information will be released in the upcoming weeks, including ways everyone can help. Thank you!



LOOKING AHEAD TO HOLY WEEK

As you plan for next month, we invite you to mark your calendars for Holy Week.

March 24, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Palm/Passion Sunday

The worship begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem as we pass out palms for everyone, but we also begin the passion of Holy Week with Jesus speaking truth to power. Our Fellowship Team will serve cinnamon rolls after both services.

March 28, 7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service of Tenebrae

This night we share communion in remembrance of the Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples and experience the growing shadows of the worldly powers gathering to end Jesus' life. Worship will feature a choral quartet, communion, and scripture telling the story of that night.

March 29, 7:00 p.m. Good Friday

We hear the story of Jesus' crucifixion, through music, scripture, and proclamation. We recall Jesus' suffering and his last words from the cross. Here we contemplate Jesus' sacrifice for his disciples and the whole world.

March 31, Easter Sunday Morning Services at 6:00, 8:00, 10:00

The 6:00 a.m. service begins in darkness and welcomes the sunrise. The twin services at 8:00 and 10:00 feature the joyful, beautiful music of our Chancel Choir and the excitement of Brass accompaniment to our hymns.



Church Team Spotlight

OUR PROPERTY TEAM

Submitted by Gary Tackes on behalf of the Property Team

Our team has been overseeing many building projects, the most pressing being the elevator. We have good news to report about the timeline for our elevator repair. MEI received the new jack from the manufacturer early and started the repair work on January 29. If all goes well, we will have a working elevator in about two to three weeks. This allows us time to settle back into the sanctuary prior to Easter Sunday, which is early this year, March 31. During the repair, Claude Zimmerman and I will take turns being at church as much as possible, to assist and answer questions as the crew does their work. It will be wonderful to worship in the Sanctuary again.

Our team also took the initiative to explore property insurance premiums. Bill Bond contacted several insurance companies, met with their representatives, and provided them with tours of the building. On the recommendation of Bev and Joe Mueller, one of the insurance companies he contacted was Church Mutual. Their quote and one other were substantially lower than our current insurance company premiums. They also offer some useful benefits that will help our church and keep costs down. Because of his efforts, we will save \$8,400 this year!

The church fire alarm system, which was among the many things damaged by the power surge last March, is finally fully functional. The failed light beam smoke sensor across the ceiling of the church sanctuary was replaced in mid-January. Long lead times on a new panel followed, but other problems lengthened the repair time.

One of the two security lights on the west side of the building stopped working. I replaced the light sensor and converted it from a mercury vapor lamp to LEDs. The other light will be converted as the weather gets warmer. The Property Team is gradually converting the church's interior and exterior lighting to longer lasting, lower maintenance, and lower operating cost LEDs. The Property Team has been looking into building security issues stimulated by ideas from a conference that Beckie Perez and Claude Zimmerman attended in November. A subsequent meeting with the Port Washington Police Department was conducted by the team. Nothing has been decided at this time.

Future/ongoing topics for discussion – air conditioner and furnace maintenance, circuit breaker identification, 'whole house' surge suppressors, spring window washing, and exterior building maintenance. If you have anything you'd like to discuss or if you'd like to join the Property Team, please contact one of us, we'd love to have you join us!

Respectfully,

The Property Team

Bill Bond, Property Team Representative on Church Council

Joe Mueller, Gary Tackes, Claude Zimmerman

SPECIAL THANKS

To Josh Jacque for raising \$1,154 for elevator repairs through Go Fund Me.

To Missy White for being the Confirmation Class parent helper on January 8.

To Mike Dimmer for snow blowing and shoveling the heavy snowfall on January 11, 13, and 14, and for being “on call” throughout winter.

To Claude Zimmerman and Bill Bond for overseeing the church Fire Alarm Inspection.

To Gary Tackes for troubleshooting a phone outage at church.

To Meg Tackes and Chris Drasch for sending birthday, anniversary, and cards of concern to our members and friends in January.

To the Fellowship Team for hosting a Potluck Lunch on January 21. Special thanks to Sherri Melichar for providing 20 pounds of beef, and to Jennifer Dimmer who prepared the meat through the night so that it was ready to go on Sunday!

To the following folks who helped set-up/take-down, served the meal, and baked desserts for Mike Nowicki's Memorial Service Reception on January 22: Jennifer Dimmer, Jane Spalding, Lorraine Halls, Jeanne Mantsch, Louise Mollinger, David Franks, Marti DeMario, Barb Bahr, Tracy Greymont, Bill Bond, Claude Zimmerman, and Gary Tackes.

To our Property Team for overseeing the Elevator Repair Project. The repairs began on January 29.

To Tina Olson for being the Confirmation Class parent helper for their Mission Experience to Congregation Israel Ner Tamid in Milwaukee on January 30.

To all those who donated items to the Lighthouse Youth Group birthday kit mission project to support clients of local food pantries.

To our January Nursery Caregivers: Kylee and Tina Olson, Dawn and Chloe Rychtik, and Addison and Leeann Wellenstein.

To our January Ushers: Claude Zimmerman, Joe and Bev Mueller, Joe Rychtik, and Margaret Niederfrank.

To our January Worship Leaders: Claude Zimmerman, David Franks, Jeanne Mantsch, Phil Stepanski, and Jane Spalding.

To the Petri family for donating new toys to the Nursery.

OUR CHURCH COUNCIL

Executive Team

Moderator: Jason Jacque (2024)
Associate Moderator: Jodi Cowen (2024)
Clerk: Rhonda Thompson (2025)
Treasurer: Phil Stepanski (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 December minutes were approved at the January 11, 2024 Church Council meeting.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Church Council Minutes December 14, 2023, 6:30pm

Call to Order by Jason Jacque, Moderator, @ 6:39 pm

Pastor Scott, Jason Jacque, Tracy Greymont, Bill Bond, Claude Zimmerman, Eric Olson, Jodi Cowen, Jennifer Dimmer, and Rhonda Thompson.

Opening Meditation – (Jodi)- Read an advent prayer.

Approval of the Minutes – November 2023 (Rhonda) -Jennifer motions to approve the November minutes and Bill seconds the motion. The minutes are approved.

Review of Fall Congregational Meeting Minutes (Rhonda)- The meeting was well attended with several attending via Zoom. Jodi questions if a specific number needs to be given for the yes and no votes. There was no tally taken to be exact, the wording for the minutes on the vote will be with “majority” of votes.

Financial Administrator Updates (Phil)

- Monthly Budget Review - Looking at the Budget vs Actual Report through December 14 of 2023, Gross Profit total of \$218,531 (2023 Budget is \$202,186), Total Expenditures come to \$205,762 (2023 Budget is \$255,926) for a balance of \$12,768 (2023 Budget is estimated to end with \$53,740 deficit). The Bank Account Balances as of November 30, 2023 are as follows: Main Checking is \$53,730.77; Scrip Checking is \$1810.98; Mission Account is \$2210.00 (Mission Commitment is \$2010.00); Memorial Account Savings is \$28,789.00 (Making All Things New Commitment is \$24,080.00) and the Cornerstone Fund is \$25,650.82. Total money available is \$86,101.57. The Window Loan balance is paid. The Home Depot Raise Right gift card balance is at \$39.56.

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CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

- Stewardship Pledge Update - As of December 13, 56 pledges have been received for a total of \$125,296. That's an average of \$2237. Of the 56 pledges, 31 increased the pledge amount; 15 stayed the same; seven decreased; and three are new pledges. More EFT pledges would help with cash flow in the bank account.
- We have collected \$1050, about half of the needed Lighthouse funds and received a \$200 donation for the Breakfast for Santa. A gift of \$1000 was received from Carl Anderson's brother.
- Christmas Tree Sales Update - As of December 13, with the last cash deposit on December 8th, Christmas tree sales have put us ahead for a total of \$4,331.56. There is a plan for leftover trees to be used. The Food Pantry does have a few vouchers for families to get trees.

Old Business

- Property Team, Building maintenance (Bill)
 - Elevator Repairs Update-MEI has been here to start working on the elevator. Phil has not started the loan paperwork as of yet, but it shouldn't take long.
 - Smoke Detectors-Bill is paying out of his pocket for the smoke detector evaluation which is \$490 for his error in missing the separate charges. The invoice for the repair is for \$2723 and the plan is to submit the invoice to insurance, but if they don't cover it, that will put Property over budget.
 - Solar Panels-Claude Zimmerman says the solar panels are similar to old Christmas tree lights in that when one bulb goes out a whole section goes out. Thus it's important to have inspections or tune ups to make sure every part is functioning at 100%. There is a module that tracks the performance of the solar panels live and roughly costs \$800. We are about half way through a 50 year life expectancy.
 - Tree Trimming- A few more trees have been thinned with hopes for clearing more over the holiday break.
- Rental Space update (Pastor Scott)
 - Advertising of space if budget remaining from Financial/Administrator role advertising.-Pastor Scott has received the contact name of an adult care facility to see if they were in need of renting our space, but is waiting to reach out until the elevator is working. Although they may have a lengthy process.
- Council updates from Pastor Parish Relations (Shandy)- The survey results were shared and are for Council review only. They will meet with Pastor Scott on December 19th to work through results. Goals will be outlined and shared at a later date in 2024 with the congregation. The current team members will be reaching three years of service and will be looking for new members to join the team. Pastor Scott would like some of the existing members to stay on for ease of transition.
- Council Positions: Stewardship/Financial Administrator (Pastor Scott)-
 - Accountants/Advertising/Expanded Search Radius- There is an accountant that is considering the Financial Administrator position. Adding payroll to the job description might make it more appealing and should be considered. No need to advertise for Financial Administrator.
- Brunch with Santa December 16th (Jodi)- The backdrop is being built. Food should be covered. There is \$184 in ticket sales. Volunteers are good. An advertisement was run in Ozaukee Press the week of the event.

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CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

- 2024 Budget – Listening Sessions feedback (Jason)-
 - Status Quo would require members to increase their pledge by \$10.36 a week or \$538 a year per giving unit.
 - The Increase Revenue option was most popular, but not enough ideas were provided with no dollar value to place in a budget line. Renting income has very limited options and looks slim for getting any income let alone make up the amount of \$20,000. A committee should be formed to follow through on increasing revenue options. Getting a permit to sell/serve alcohol should be considered. The Fundraising lines will be increased to \$5000 for 2024 budget.
 - Deep cuts have already been done over the years. This was the least voted for option.
 - Consolidate Staff is an option, but it was felt that job descriptions are unknown and should be shared for this consideration.
 - Reducing Services did not get a lot of support and had negative responses. This probably doesn't need to be considered.
 - Shared Minister seems to be viewed as the better option. Council agrees to ask UCC for a meeting to get a better idea of what this might look like for the church.
 - Overall some members felt that the building was more of the focus than the people of the church. There were several emails with concerns and suggestions. A paper ballot vote process might be a good idea for anonymity. The Council will need to get a final budget plan to the members prior to the Winter Congregational Meeting in January.
- Eric motions to table new business team updates until the next meeting. Jennifer seconds the motion. The Council agrees to table new business.
- Additional Team Updates (Shandy, Eric, Jennifer, Tracy, Ken)-Tabled

New Business

- Trive Team- Tabled

Any other new business to come before the Council?

Closing Prayer and Adjournment for closed session on Thursday December 21, at 9:45 pm
Submitted by, Rhonda Thompson - Clerk



RAISERIGHT GIFT CARD FUNDRAISING PROGRAM



Jennifer Dimmer and Rhonda Thompson, our church RaiseRight Coordinators, will be placing an order on Sunday, February 11. The gift cards will be available at the church for pick up starting on Sunday, February 18. You can enroll and place an order on the company website, RaiseRight.com/enroll. Our church enrollment code is **P8I47VHNX56H**. Or, you can complete the **paper form** and write out a check to the church. Thank you!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



3-	Tyson Blum	14 -	Jackie Oleson
4-	Abigail Clements		Beckie Perez
	Brady Fleischmann		Amy Wilsnack
	Gary Bria		Dennis Brede
	Wally Wilsnack	15-	Claire Rychtik
5 -	Kai-i Tien		Matt Riemer
8-	Susan Joplin		Amy Laabs
9 -	Craig Modahl	16-	Julie Calder
10 -	Claude Zimmerman		Nicholas Sanem
	Payton Yellen		Benjamin Sanem
12 -	Sarah Bloemer	17-	Jane Spalding
13 -	Lilyan Kunsmann	19-	Jonas Cira
		20-	Miles Stimac
		22-	Brook Holmes
		24-	Dani Peiffer
		28-	Sydney White

FEBRUARY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

14- Patrick and Kay Rego



Please contact Beckie Perez, at office@portucc.org if you would like to add a Birthday or Anniversary.





FEBRUARY 2024 CALENDAR



Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
				1 8 am Men's Breakfast- The Beacon 6:30 pm Executive Team (Zoom)	2	3
4 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 8 am Communion Service 9 am Church Budget Listening Session Fellowship Hour 10 am Communion Service Nursery Care 11:45 am Mission Trip Info Meeting @ Pilgrim UCC	5 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	6 9:30 am Staff Meeting	7 12 pm Lunch Group 6 pm Yoga 6:30 pm Cub Scouts 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal	8 8 am Men's Breakfast- The Beacon 6:30 pm Knellsville 4-H Club 7 pm Church Council	9	10
11 Transfiguration Sunday 8 am Worship Service 10 am Worship Service Chancel Choir Church School Nursery Care 11 am Church Budget Listening Session Fellowship Hour	12 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	13 9:30 am Staff Meeting	14 Ash Wednesday 12 pm Lunch Group 6 pm Yoga 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm Ash Wednesday Service	15 8 am Men's Breakfast- The Beacon 7 pm Church Budget Listening Session (Zoom)	16 11 am Property Team	17 1-3 pm PW Pride
18 First Sunday in Lent 8 am Worship Service 10 am Worship Service Handbell Choir Kids Club and Nursery Care 11 am Soup and Salad Lunch Hosted by Fellowship Team	19 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm Confirmation Class	20 9:30 am Staff Meeting	21 12 pm Lunch Group 6 pm Yoga 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal 6/7 pm Ecumenical Lent Dinner and Service @ Living Hope	22 8 am Men's Breakfast- The Beacon	23	24
25 Second Sunday in Lent 8 am Worship Service 10 am Family Worship Service - Confirmation Class Leads the Service Nursery Care 10:45 am Special Congregational Meeting Fellowship Hour	26 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	27 9:30 am Staff Meeting	28 12 pm Lunch Group 6 pm Yoga 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal 6/7 pm Ecumenical Lent Dinner and Service @ Parkside UCC	29		



CHURCH INFORMATION

First Congregational Church - United Church of Christ
131 North Webster Street
Port Washington, WI 53074
(262) 284-2022
website - portucc.org email - 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
cell phone - (262) 903-0449, home phone - (262) 723-1100
Amy Gilhooly, Communications Director - amyg@portucc.org
Beckie Perez, Office Manager - office@portucc.org

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"First Congregational Church, Port Washington, WI"

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 at portucc.org

RECORDINGS OF WORSHIP SERVICES

We record our Sunday worship services each week. You may subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) ("First Congregational Church of Port Washington"). This allows you to receive notification when a service is uploaded.

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) or use this QR code. Thank you!

