

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

Port Washington, Wisconsin



2024 – 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
Church Council  
2024-2025

OFFICERS – Executive Team

MODERATOR: Jodi Cowen

ASSOCIATE MODERATOR: Tracy Greymont

CLERK: Rhonda Thompson

TREASURER: Phil Stepanski

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Shandy Roehrig

FELLOWSHIP: Jennifer Dimmer

STAFF SUPPORT & REVIEW: Nancy Hinneberg

PROPERTY: Bill Bond

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Jeanne Mantsch

LITURGY: *Vacant*

STEWARDSHIP: Matt Riemer

**PASTOR  
ANNUAL REPORT  
JUNE 2025**

I greet you in the name of the Holy One, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer!

As I reflect on our time together since March 1, my mind swirls as it seems we have had a whirlwind of activity in the last few months together. I have truly enjoyed immersing myself in our church family, worship, activities, and traditions and I look forward to continuing to get to know you and our church better.

My sense is that we shared a very meaningful Lent, Holy Week, and Easter celebration. I have shared two impactful and meaningful funeral services with you, and we recently celebrated the Rite of Confirmation with four wonderful confirmands. June brought Pentecost Sunday and a scheduled baptism on June 15. We also look forward to an upcoming opportunity for an holding an Inquirer's Gathering in the upcoming months. These are all important milestones in the lifecycle of the church, and I am pleased to be sharing them with you.

In getting to know and witness the life of our church family, I continue to be impressed with the number of deeply faith-filled and dedicated members, leaders, and volunteers that we have here at First Congregational Church. We have all the foundational blocks needed to build and continue really good church! I also see where pastoral transitions and an extended pastoral absence have been challenging for us. I see areas where bringing continuity, consistency, communication and collaboration to our efforts is needed. I see that as part of the role that I can assist with as we continue to work together.

I also look forward to digging deeper into our church relationships as I reach out to those who aren't attending worship or church activities currently. This can be for a variety of reasons including health, mobility, age, and just plain losing connection with our church. I am prayerful that mindful attention of these relationships as well as those present will help build a stronger and more vibrant church. I am very appreciative to those I have met since my start date who have either returned to active status or are interested in joining our church family.

All these are signs that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and calling us to continue doing new things in service to Christ Jesus in our place and time. I look forward to continuing to grow into our relationship together and the exciting opportunities of things to come!

With appreciation, love, and blessings,  
Pastor Jim

## MODERATOR ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025

I would like to begin by offering my heartfelt thanks to our Church Council for another remarkable year. Every team member went above and beyond to bridge the gap during this significant time of transition and change. Many new members joined our Council last July, just as we began our search for an interim minister. None of us anticipated that this search would span nearly a year—but throughout this period, Council members stepped up with dedication, helping to manage the daily operations of the church and support our staff in countless ways.

We are truly grateful that our prayers were answered when Pastor Jim Schleif was called to serve as our Designated Interim Minister in March. His arrival has brought renewed energy, spiritual guidance, and steady leadership.

While First Congregational Church continues to face challenges, we also continue to discover joy and grace in the journey. Here are just a few highlights from this past year:

- **Worship Leadership:** We were blessed to welcome a variety of pulpit supply ministers, each bringing unique perspectives and insights that enriched our spiritual lives and deepened our faith.
- **Accessibility:** Despite ongoing elevator repairs, we remained committed to our Accessible to All (A2A) values by holding worship services in Fellowship Hall.
- **Facilities:** Temporary rental space usage taught us valuable lessons, preparing us to be more strategic and informed as we continue our search for a long-term tenant. Our amazing Property Team keeps stepping up—tackling repairs, solving technical issues, and keeping our grounds looking beautiful and welcoming.
- **Restoration:** Our stunning stained glass windows were repaired this spring, thanks to the generosity of a recent *Making All Things New* Capital Campaign.
- **Financial Planning:** A successful Stewardship Campaign, followed by diligent and thoughtful budget planning, enabled us to present a balanced and realistic budget for 2025 that reflects our commitment to living within our means.
- **Christian Education:** Thanks to the creativity, care, and dedication of our Christian Education Team and volunteers, our Confirmation Program continued—even without a settled minister.
- **Teamwork and Resilience:** Every church team and countless members stepped up to support one another. Together, we adapted, persevered, and found a “new normal” as we prepared to welcome our next leader.

Even as we acknowledge the challenges of this past year, I feel a renewed sense of hope and purpose. I look forward to the journey ahead, confident that with God’s guidance and the strength of our community, First Congregational Church will continue to grow and thrive.

Thank you for the honor of serving this past year. May we move forward together in faith, service, and love.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jodi Cowen, Moderator

# **TREASURER ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025**

The 2025 budget that was approved in January had a deficit of approximately \$2500. Since the budget was approved, we received additional pledges that more than make up for the difference. Since our cash position is healthy, we made all payments for 2025 to the Southeast Association of the Wisconsin Conference UCC, OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission), and the six local service organizations we support on an ongoing basis.

## **Building Fund**

This fund has been called by different names in the past including Capital Fund and Building Repair Fund. We have decided that "Building Fund" will be the official name moving forward. We received a sizable anonymous donation for this fund, along with prior donations and memorials. The balance is currently \$25,986.19.

## **Fundraisers**

The May 4 Brat Fry raised \$943.36 and our Spring Adopt-a-Bill to-date raised \$2945.

## **Financial Duties**

There have been continued discussions regarding the division of financial duties that are split between the Treasurer, the Office Manager, and the Accountant. I have reached out to several members and friends in order to rebuild the Finance Team.

## **Elevator Loan and Insurance**

Our elevator loan from The Cornerstone Group has a balance of \$66,000. We have received 3 bids for the control system upgrade. The Property Team will review the bids and make a recommendation to Church Council. The contractor's bid will be forwarded to our insurance company to see what additional insurance payments we might receive.

Respectfully submitted,  
Phil Stepanski, Treasurer

# **LITURGY TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2024**

Over the past year, we have been deeply grateful for the generous support we've received during this time of transition.

We are especially thankful to our dedicated members who have lovingly contributed their time and energy to making the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall warm inviting spaces that beautifully reflect the spirit of each season throughout the church year.

We are also profoundly blessed by the many individuals who provided pulpit supply and led our congregation in worship. Our heartfelt thanks go to the following:

- Rev. Joby Brown
- Pastor John Eyster
- Rev. Jim Gorman
- Rev. Craig Modahl
- Rev. Don Niederfrank
- Rev. Muriel Otto
- Revs. Tom and Debbie Payden
- Eric Walker
- Rev. Bob Wells
- Paul Zachow

Respectfully submitted,  
Tracy Greymont, Associate Moderator

# **STAFF SUPPORT AND REVIEW TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025**

This year continued to be a challenging year for the staff as the majority of the year relied upon Guest Leaders and coordination with Church Council. Job descriptions were updated for the Office Manager and the Communications Director to reflect their current roles and additional responsibilities they were performing.

Throughout the year, the processes surrounding the financial administration of the church were identified and refined. This included more fully defining the financial tasks of Office Manager, Treasurer and our external Accountant. This work will continue into the next year as we continue to streamline our financial processes for optimal efficiency.

In March, our new half-time Designated Interim Minister, Pastor Jim Schleif, joined our church staff and began the onboarding process. The Office Staff is primarily involved in this transition and continues to work with Pastor Jim in understanding roles and responsibilities within the new half-time pastoral environment.

Music Directors, Brett Dimmer and Lydia Linendoll are pleased with the direction of the Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir. Both have seen the addition of new members over the past year. The Chancel Choir includes 17 members and the Handbell Choir 12 members. Lydia has inventoried and categorized all the sheet music. Through several generous donations, as well as several compositions by Brett, our choral sheet music inventory has grown this year at no additional cost to the congregation. Sherri Melichar brings 30 plus years of playing the piano and organ for our congregation and as choir accompanist. Kai-i Tien and Pru Palecek have played the piano at alternating church services for over 10 years.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Hinneberg, Team Representative

## **FELLOWSHIP TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025**

Our Fellowship Team had a lot of fun this past year. We provided a number of potlucks on Sundays after church services - brunch, pulled pork, hot beef, soup and salad. We also continued our tradition of serving cinnamon rolls for the congregation on Palm Sunday. In March, Fellowship Team provided soup and salad when our church hosted a community Lenten service.

The team kicked off Advent by creating swags. Participants created one for themselves and extras for to be sold at the Christmas Tree Sale. We also continued our Christmas Cookie Exchange.

The Fellowship Team helped with Breakfast with Santa. This is a wonderful event, and it is exciting to see community members join us. We plan to continue this tradition.

A lot of these events were moved to the old classrooms because of the elevator not working. The Fellowship Team and many volunteers worked together to move tables and chairs back and forth to Fellowship Hall and the old preschool classrooms. Our priority has been to worship together and be there for everyone. We have been fortunate to do that with our large space.

The Congregational Care Team has continued to mail birthday and anniversary cards. We hope you enjoy receiving a card to celebrate your special day.

The Fellowship Team invites you to try the gift card program, RaiseRight, our ongoing fundraiser. By purchasing gift cards, you can continue shopping at your favorite stores and also raise money for First Congregational Church. Please contact me or Rhonda Thompson for more information.

Please ask me if you have any questions about the Fellowship Team or if you'd like to join the team.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Dimmer, Team Representative



# **STEWARDSHIP TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025**

The 2024 Fall Stewardship Campaign aimed to support a balanced budget to address our church's day-to-day operations and ensure our programs continue. This effort included planning for a Designated Interim Minister salary and benefits. Our campaign began in October and highlighted what the congregation's collective efforts do to support the church, as well as the community, through gifts of time, talents, and treasures. The campaign was led by Matt Riemer, and supported by Communications Director Amy Gilhooly, Office Manager Beckie Perez, and Treasurer Phil Stepanski, as well as the guidance of last year's Stewardship Team Representative and current Moderator Jodi Cowen, and also Doug McManus. This year's campaign included:

- In-person and written testimonials from church members
- Facebook posts supporting our campaign
- Updated Stewardship Page on our church website
- Stewardship Campaign mailing
- Follow up phone calls, texts, and emails
- Thank you cards

We closed our Stewardship Campaign at the end of December with pledges totaling just over \$158,000 for the approved budget. We would like to thank everyone who pledged, from new members to those who were able to continue or increase their pledges. Every pledge was graciously acknowledged with a handwritten thank you card.

Respectfully submitted,  
Matt Riemer, Team Representative

# **PROPERTY TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2025**

The last twelve months have been a challenge for your Property Team.

With almost six months of trial and error, our attempt to repair the electrical issue with our broken elevator has FAILED. We are now gathering quotes from three contractors to replace and update all the electrical control systems. This work will bring our elevator up to the current electrical code. Along with the mechanical work already done, we will have a like-new elevator with a possible 20+ years of service life.

We organized a Church Workday on April 19 and the grounds were mulched. We plan to have a summer workday to clean out the storage shed, and we may need some help. Date to be determined.

Our roofing system over the sanctuary is approximately 30 years old and has given us good service. Recently, we noticed many shingles and parts of broken shakes on the ground. We will gather three quotes to replace the roof over the Sanctuary, as well as gutters, shakes, and downspouts. We will request a maintenance package to make sure we have similar longevity.

On a personal note, this will be my last Annual Report as your Property Team Representative. The folks you all should search out and thank are Claude Zimmerman, Joe Mueller, Gary Tackes, and Mike Dimmer. They did all the hard work. I just held the ladder and the light.

I want to thank Church Council for all their help, patience, and hard work over my last two terms. We fought our way through a lightning strike surge that caused multiple electrical problems in the building, and on our property, among other challenges.

I am leaving the position in great hands as Gary Tackes has agreed to become your next Property Team Representative.

We ask for your patience and God's help to resolve this elevator failure so our church can once again worship in our Sanctuary.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Bond, Team Representative

# **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2026**

Christian Education had a fun-filled program year for 2024-2025. Our Church School met monthly, holding 9 classes between September and May and Kids Club met 8 times. On average, we had 11 children in attendance during Church School and 4 children at Kids Club. Most of the attendees ranged in age from 3K through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with limited participation from children in 5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> grade. Children created individualized name tags, which they added ribbons to during each visit. Rather than selecting new curriculum, we leveraged the Shine collection purchased several years ago. The materials refer to a scripture passage and tell the story in a way easy for children to understand. Supplemental activity guides were utilized when planning for Kids Club.

Each month we focused on a new lesson, with various activities to support the theme. In total, 11 Scripture passages were covered from Genesis, Luke, Mark, Matthew, and John. We began with God Creates the World, making our name tags to kick off the program year. We next covered the Garden of Eden, with a guest speaker from the Lake Michigan Bird Observatory. Our next story was God's Promise to Noah. In December, the Proctor Family created a journey to Bethlehem covering the birth of Jesus. They donated a nativity set for each child (including the Confirmation students). We kicked off the new year meeting John the Baptist, followed by Jesus in the Desert and Jesus Visits a Wedding. Our last story was from Matthew to Love our Enemies. For our last class we made stained glass windows which we offered to members of the congregation. We hosted fellowship with coffee, cake, and cookies to close out the program year.

A goal for the year was for each child to learn the Lord's Prayer. We created a craft in September which included the whole prayer for each child to keep at home. Since not all our students are of reading age, we began each of our classes by reciting the prayer together. At our last class in May, the children recited the prayer for the congregation during the Benediction.

Our Confirmation program continued this year with four confirmands. Without a settled pastor, we had volunteers within our congregation teach classes once per month. Topics included the Bible, God, the Sacraments, Jesus and the Nativity, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity, Lent, Holy Week and the history of the United Church of Christ.

We continued the tradition of having the Confirmands participate in the worship service. This was a little tricky due to our reliance on Pulpit Supply, but the confirmands did have an opportunity to serve in multiple ways, including hosting fellowship. During the program year the confirmands toured the Port Washington Food Pantry and made sandwiches for The Guest House, a homeless shelter for men in Milwaukee. They also helped serve at the Breakfast with Santa church fundraiser, provided nursery care, and led the annual Christmas Pageant the Sunday before Christmas. On the Saturday before Easter, they walked the Stations of the Cross at Holy Hill. Each participated in Confirmation Sunday, where they read their Statements of Faith.

Thanks to our volunteers, Jennifer Dimmer, Dawn Rychtik, Tom Roehrig, and Amanda Malloy for all their help to ensure another successful year. While we did not have any new families join the program, we had strong consistency with attendance. Looking ahead, we plan to utilize the Shine curriculum again, focusing on the Bible stories and incorporating service projects where possible. We also plan to leverage volunteer assistance for the Confirmation program again next year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Shandy Roehrig, Christian Education Team Representative

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM  
ANNUAL REPORT  
JUNE 2025**

Last summer, we participated in a back-to-school drive for classroom essentials. In addition, we continued various collections of donations related to requests from Family Promise and the Port Food Pantry. Once again, Lighthouse Youth Ministry facilitated a collection to create Birthday Kits for local food pantries.

We are happy to grow our relationships with local service organizations who benefit from our support.

One major highlight was creating a Community Outreach Nook as a centralized location for members to collect information. Thank you to Renee Proctor for designing and updating the Nook.

Please continue to reach out with any additional ideas or needs that may help us better serve our community.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanne Mantsch, Team Representative