

2020 – 2021
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN



**CHURCH COUNCIL
2020-2021**

OFFICERS

MODERATOR: Jeanne Mantsch

ASSOCIATE MODERATOR: Phil Stepanski

CLERK: Bill Bond

**TREASURER: Lorraine Halls (thru Fall 2020)
Kathy Bretl (appointed Fall 2020)**

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Savannah Anderson

FELLOWSHIP: Marti DeMario

STAFF SUPPORT & REVIEW: Ric Probst

PROPERTY: Jim Clements

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Eric Olson

LITURGY: Mike Spalding (appointed Spring 2020)

STEWARDSHIP: Jason Jacque (appointed Spring 2020)

**PASTOR
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

It has been a wonderful, although challenging, first six months as your Pastor. Wonderful because you have all been incredibly welcoming and because this congregation is filled with talented and dedicated people who care about their church and community. Challenging, because we are still dealing with the fallout of a fourteen-month closure of in-person worship services and the changes that have had to be made to ensure the safety of our families, friends, and neighbors.

Our church is blessed with a great staff. In the office, Amy Gilhooly and Beckie Perez have been incredibly helpful as I have gotten started here. Their warmth and love for the congregation, as well as their insight into the workings of the church, have made my life so much easier and have kept me from stumbling a number of times right out of the gate. Beckie's assistance and scheduling the 75+ cookie deliveries and visits was a great way to begin introducing myself to the church. Amy's Lenten projects and then creation and ongoing work with the "Congregational Connections" e-newsletter is going to help the church maintain lines of good communication each month. Lorraine Halls has been terrific and is continuing to make the financial side of church life more transparent and easier to understand for "non-financial" people like me. I have been thrilled to see and hear the gifted musicians we have working with the choirs and adding so much depth and expression on Sunday mornings: Sherri Melichar, Pru Palecek, and Kai-i Tien are such a gift to the church! Brett Dimmer has done a great job with making sure all of the worship services have been able to be viewed on the church's YouTube channel, as well as adding his own vocals. Brett's attention to detail and editing of those recordings has helped us look and sound good in the virtual world.

I've been impressed with the lay leaders who have stepped forward during this time to deal with things like calling a new minister, the budget shortfall and the reopening plans. Thanks to our Moderator Jeanne Mantsch, Assistant Moderator Phil Stepanski, Church Clerk Bill Bond, and Treasurer Kathy Bretl, the Executive Team has served the church very well. Kathy Bretl has helped to take an officer position that had been under-utilized and begun to shape it into a real asset for our Financial Administrator and a new Finance Team we hope will begin meeting in the new program year. Phil Stepanski has taken on the leadership of the Reopening Team which had the unenviable role of finding a way to safely reopen the church during an often-conflicted pandemic and done a great job with the insightful and encouraging help of team members: Savannah Anderson, Brett Dimmer, Doug McManus, Kerry O'Brien, Tom Roehrig, and Mike Spalding. And I would not be here without the outstanding team that formed to become your Search Committee. They were an impressive group and portrayed the Port Washington church in a loving, optimistic and honest way that helped me hear God's call to be here. Thanks to Joe Mueller, Kurt Blum, Doug McManus, Sarah Riemer, Shandy Roehrig, Holly Ternes, Grace and Joe Wilsnack, and Amy Gilhooly for all their work.

Thanks go to all the Church Council members for their ongoing service to the church in this difficult year. Marti DeMario with the Fellowship Team, Jim Clements with Property Team, Eric Olson with Outreach Team, Jason Jacque with the Stewardship Team, Mike Spalding with Liturgy Team, Ric Probst with Staff Support Team, Savannah Anderson with Christian Education. I'm looking forward to a new program year in 2021-2022!

Courage and Peace,
Pastor Scott

**MODERATOR
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

‘A Year Like No Other!’ How many times have you heard that phrase in the past year? I sometimes felt as though I’d heard or read it almost daily. Well, I guess it was, and the best news, we are hopefully coming out of it, as more and more of us are vaccinated.

I am most grateful to Amy and Beckie, who acted as the glue that was holding us together, as weeks turned into months of not seeing one another – or, at best, seeing each other virtually. Oh, the excitement of seeing actual live people other than those with whom we lived!

We actually accomplished quite a bit during – or in spite of – that time. Our search committee continued to meet and interview candidates. And then, when they felt confident that they had found the right candidate, invited Rev. Dr. Scott McLeod to become our next minister. Getting to know a new congregation feels like a daunting task in any circumstance, but in the midst of a pandemic, it took cookies for Pastor Scott to meet many of us! Thanks to the Fellowship Team!

We successfully held a drive to collect food for the Port Washington Food Pantry and paper products for Family Promise, thanks to our Community Outreach Team! Speaking of Family Promise, we continued to feed a larger than usual number of folks, living at the Chalet Motel, once our churches were closed! Our Stewardship Team held a successful Stewardship Drive, including a delicious brat fry at the Saukville Piggly Wiggly! And our Property Team successfully replaced doors and windows in the midst of it all! Our Reopening Team struggled mightily to make the safest decisions regarding when it might be safe to meet – and with what safeguards in place. And our Staff Support Team was busier than anyone would have expected as the year went on, and changes in protocols and congregational needs were met. And Liturgy and Christian Education stayed involved by trying to anticipate whatever changes might be just around the corner, while our Financial Administrator and Treasurer did their best to anticipate the changing landscape of giving.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeanne Mantsch

**TREASURER
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

I began as the Treasurer after the November 2020 Congregational Meeting. The role has evolved since that time in order to utilize best practices. A couple of the new responsibilities are paying the bills and creating a Counter Schedule for Sunday mornings.

In addition, the Treasurer is the Chair of the Finance Team that will be responsible for the following:

- Oversee long-range financial planning
- Help plan for adequate funding for long-range financial management
- Create annual budget in cooperation with the Financial Administrator, Treasurer, Church Council and Teams
- Ensure that assets are protected, and separation of duties is in place
- Review financial policies and procedures annually
- Draft financial policies with Financial Administrator and Treasurer
- Anticipate financial problems and report to the Council
- Oversee financial record keeping
- Help the Council understand the Church's financial health
- Representation at Council meeting by the Church Treasurer
- Ensure all legal reporting requirements are being met in cooperation with the Church accountant

We are in the process of forming the Finance Team and look forward to getting the "ball rolling".

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Bretl

**LITURGY TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

First Congregational Church, UCC has displayed resilience, ingenuity, and a willingness to do the hard work to maintain and strengthen our community of faith in the face of the Covid pandemic. It has been the privilege of the Liturgy team to play a supporting role in our worship life over the past year.

In March of 2020 we were new to online worship. We were keeping the piano in tune so Kai-i, Pru, and Sherri could record special music for Worship in the Gap videos, while Interim Minister Jim McKenzie recorded his sermons at his home. Over the summer and fall, we saw a steady improvement in the quality of the videos, as Brett Dimmer pivoted from choir director to video recorder, editor, and producer.

In November, Rev. Don Niederfrank became our “interim interim” minister, as Pastor Jim’s assignment had ended. Don chose to record the worship services in the sanctuary, so Phil Stepanski and Tracy Bretl began again hanging the seasonally appropriate stained glass windows in the chancel, Jane Spalding provided flower arrangements for the altar table, and Karl Pradel returned to tending the Christ Candle. In addition to the Sunday worship videos, Don led weekly Advent candle lighting services via Zoom. During Advent we were able to see, in the Sunday worship videos, Nicole Lesnik’s progressive installation of the Christmas tree decorations, and nativity figures, culminating with candles and poinsettias on Christmas eve.

In January, Pastor Scott McLeod began his ministry at First Congregational Church with services recorded in the sanctuary, and on May 2 he presided over our first in-person worship service in over a year. Many of the routine chores of the Liturgy Team are back in operation, and we are excited to be working with Pastor Scott and getting to know him. Covid restrictions have required a change to the usher responsibilities, and we are re-thinking how we assign and train ushers.

Lori MacRae, our Handbell Choir Director, retired in May 2021. We are grateful for her 31 years of musical leadership. A search for a new bell choir director is underway, with the intent of having the bell choir ready for the start of the program year.

What we are looking forward to in the coming year: continuing to make our worship services more complete including singing hymns, hearing the choirs, Communion with shared bread and juice.

Special thanks to Brett Dimmer for his hard work and initiatives to continually improve our recorded worship services, and to Kai-i Tien, Pru Palecek, and Sherri Melichar for their flexibility and dedication to provide meaningful music for our services.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Spalding

**STAFF SUPPORT AND REVIEW TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

Our church staff, like everyone in the world, was impacted in many ways by the advent of Covid 19 and the suspension of in person church services.

Since in person services were stopped immediately, our music staff and directors were put on an unpaid furlough, at least until we are able to have larger music groups as part of services. They did, however, have the opportunity to submit material for the weekly online services and were paid for each piece contributed and used. We really appreciated the efforts of those that helped keep music a part of these online services. We also wish to thank the interim ministers and lay members who have kept us going during the online era. We also owe a huge thank you to our front office staff of Amy Gilhooly and Beckie Perez. Make no mistake about it. Without these two incredible staff, and church members, this church would not have operated over the last 15 months.

The church did have a couple of staff changes over this difficult period. We had a change in both the Financial Administrator and Treasurer roles. We also changed church cleaning services during the pandemic. Oh, and we welcomed a new full-time minister, Pastor Scott McLeod! Scott's arrival has definitely helped put us on a brighter path toward what we have been missing since Jeff's retirement. His presence has helped take some of the additional strain from the office staff, and it just feels good to have a new minister!!! Thank you, Scott.

Indeed, this has been a tough 18 months. Staff reviews have been conducted and each staff member was affected in a different way with the lack of this church in their weekly life. Certainly, on-line has been offered, but it just wasn't the same for many of our staff. Most yearn the return to Sunday gatherings in this very special place. We hope that as we slowly get back on track and as we conduct the next staff reviews, sometime this late Fall, we will be in a much different place than we've been this past year. But the good news is, I think we've made it.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ric Probst

**FELLOWSHIP TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
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The Fellowship Team is gearing up for a return to activity after more than a year of being dormant during the COVID-19 isolation. Even though we did perk up a bit when Pastor Scott arrived in January and requested our assistance in providing fresh baked cookies to deliver to congregants as he called on them individually as his personal way of getting to know each of us. Team members baked hundreds of cookies to be packaged in gift bags and were happy to be doing what we all love to do.....COOK! Imagine the excitement when we plan our first potluck dinner and welcome back all our church family to once again share a meal together.

Palm Sunday was yet another opportunity to bake cinnamon rolls that were passed out to members who drove through the parking lot to receive a palm branch AND a hot cinnamon roll with their blessing from Pastor Scott. The Ozaukee Press was impressed with our celebration of Palm Sunday during a time when many churches were closed so they featured our church on the cover of their newspaper.

A Brat Fry will be enjoyed by any who care to join the Stewardship Team Sunday, June 27th at the Piggly Wiggly store in Saukville. Desserts will also be available for purchase after being lovingly prepared by the Fellowship Team.

Our team has always had many members over the years, but it's fun to see new faces show up for any event....the more the merrier. Just a few of our "vintage" members include Barb Bahr, Terry Sdun, Holly Ternes, Roberta Blumenberg, Jane Schwacher, Alice Ruffin, Sherrie Dimmer, Jennifer Dimmer, Joyce Bria, Tracy Bretl, Lorraine Halls, Kathy Bretl, Beckie Perez, and Cindy Lopez. Our memories of Jerry Schmit and others who added to this team but are no longer with us, give us lots of stories to tell when we are all gathered in the kitchen at First Congregational Church here in Port Washington.

Any ideas for fun events that will help to bring us all back together again in the weeks and months ahead are always welcome. Feel free to contact me, and I will share your ideas with this awesome group of ladies and occasionally a man or two...Phil Stepanski, David Franks, Gary Bria, and Mike Dimmer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marti DeMario, Chair

**STEWARDSHIP TEAM
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After a couple years of inactivity, our Stewardship Committee was reformed last June with a list of refined roles and responsibilities. With COVID restrictions in full effect, the team met remotely via Zoom video while still having an active role in the community with the placement of two new banners outside of the church, a survey of church members and friends to help understand why we are part of our church, and a Brat Fry on October 3, 2020 to help cover the 2020 loan interest costs for the repairs to our church windows and bell tower. The Brat Fry proceeds and donations brought in \$685.94.

We kicked off our Fall Stewardship campaign by leveraging the UCC themes of Love of Creation, Love of Neighbor, and Love of Children. Execution of our campaign was done 100% remotely with the help of our church Communications Director (Amy Gilhooly). To be effective, our team leverage multi-channels of communications including:

- Written and Video Testimonials
- Facebook Posts
- Updated Church website
- Pastoral Statements as part of *Worship in the Gap*
- Stewardship Mailing
- Postcard Mailings
- Nearly 100 Follow-up Phone Calls

We closed our Stewardship Campaign on target at the end of January with 107 pledges totaling over \$156k in pledges. Every pledge was graciously acknowledged with a handwritten thank you card. Our team is looking forward to our 2021 campaign as COVID restrictions begin to ease.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jason Jacque, Chair
Jodi Cowen
Craig Modahl
Bev Mueller

**PROPERTY TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2021**

I am Jim Clements, your Property and Grounds (P&G) chairperson. I have been asked to give you some insight into what I do and what I have been working on, regarding the church property and grounds. If you are like me, before joining the Council in 2017, I did not know what the folks on the Council did (or do) on a monthly basis nor did I realize the costs associated with the operation of the church. Since joining the Council, I have gained a greater understanding and a greater appreciation of the efforts of the Council and what the Council does to keep the church going each month. After reading this article, I hope you will gain a better understanding and appreciation of what the Council does, specifically the Property Team, and how it keeps our church going.

Although in-person church services have been shut down during most of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to tend to the daily operational and maintenance issues of the church continue. The business of the church also continues, and the church staff still makes use of the building along with the Port Pre-School program which operates out of our lower level of the church. Just as there are costs to “operate” your home, there are also costs to operate our church. Likewise, just as there are costs to “maintain” your home, there also costs to maintain the church.

As the P&G chairperson, I help to manage approximately \$40,000 worth of operational church expenses annually and I also manage a varied amount of expenses each year to maintain the church structure.

Some of the operational expenses that fall under the chairmanship of Property and Grounds are as follows:

OPERATIONAL COSTS:

Utilities (Monthly) - Electric, Gas, Water, Sewer & Trash (\$550 per month)

Groundskeeping (Spring through Fall) – 4 Lawn treatments (\$70 each)
and lawn mowing 1x/week (\$60 each)

Groundskeeping (Fall through Spring) – Snow removal (\$40 per visit)

Cleaning Services (Weekly) – cleaning/vacuum offices, upper and lower entrance areas, sanctuary, bathrooms, garbage removal, etc. (\$145 per week, prior to 2021 we were paying \$250 per week)

Cleaning Services (Semi-annual) – specialty cleaning items, such as carpets and fabrics (\$500, 2x/year)

Pest Control (Quarterly) – ants, bugs, rodent controls (\$200, 4x/year)

Property and Liability Insurance – (\$2400, 4x/year)

As stated above, there are also costs associated with the maintenance of the church and just as it is with your own house, the longer these maintenance items are neglected, the more these items will cost to repair or replace. Below is a comprehensive list of our maintenance items which you may or may not be aware of:

MAINTENANCE COSTS:

Exterior Building Maintenance and Repairs (windows, doors, roofing, siding, paint)

Exterior Property Maintenance and Repairs (concrete, asphalt, drainage)

Interior Building Maintenance and Repairs (windows, doors, carpets, flooring, walls/ceilings, paint)

Mechanical Maintenance and Repairs (elevator, furnaces, boilers, air conditioning, plumbing)

Electrical Maintenance and Repairs (solar power, sound systems, alarms, security, lighting/outlets)

With the above list of maintenance items, since joining the Council in 2017, I have tackled some of the following maintenance issues:

1.) **Parking Lot, Sidewalk, Curb and Gutter** at the north entrance. This was needed as the parking lot and walkway were broken and irregular and would often hold water or ice at the entryway, obviously a fall hazard to us all. The new concrete and asphalt helped to facilitate proper drainage and removed the uneven walking and wheelchair access. Also, as a part of this reconstruction, another handicap parking space was added and one of the handicap parking spaces was made wider to accommodate loading/unloading from a van. The parking lot is co-owned with the City of Port Washington. With the city doing the repair work, these repairs cost \$3000.

2.) **Entrance Doors and Lock Repair/Replacement.** After 20+ years of use and futile attempts to repair the locks on the exterior doors at the north and east entrances, it was determined that the north doors had to be replaced immediately and that the east doors could get by a little longer with some work on the lock and crash-bars. The replacement of the double doors at the north entrance cost \$9000 and a similar or slightly more expensive cost can be expected for the east doors as they are about two feet taller.

3.) **Windows and Bell Tower Repairs.** Approximately 40 windows on the church received exterior repair. Some of the worst windows on the church received some exterior repairs in the way of sill replacement, new casings, aluminum cladding, paint, and caulking. During the inspection of the windows, it was noticed that the condition of the siding on the bell tower was beyond repair and was in need of replacement and therefore the cedar shake siding was replaced. The cost of window repairs was \$16,500 and the bell tower siding was \$20,000.

I hope that this gives you a better understanding of what I do (tend to), a better understanding of the costs involved in operating and maintaining the church structure, and a better understanding of how your stewardship dollars are being used.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jim Clements, Chair

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM
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JUNE 2021**

The 2020-2021 program year for our Christian Education program was, no surprise, a challenging one. We entered the pandemic at the end of our prior program year, hoping we were just cutting things a month short, only delaying confirmation by a few weeks, and energized to start the next program year with a host of new and exciting projects and learning opportunities. Unfortunately, that didn't quite go to plan, but in true First Congregational style, we still worked to find ways to engage our families and youth while being mindful of remote learning fatigue. This past year, our Christian Education program has:

- Conducted Services of Confirmation on Sunday, September 13, 2020 in two ways. The confirmand and their family could choose either a private service on the church patio or a group Zoom virtual service.
- Provided Church School and family activities such as a YouTube Church School program and Lego activity in Fall of 2020, decorating ornaments to support our annual Christmas Tree Sale, and family activities during Lenten Connections in Spring of 2021.
- Pastor Scott, upon his arrival, conducted the Confirmation Program for our 2021 confirmands. They met over Zoom until April, and an in-person Service of Confirmation was held on Sunday, May 23.

Thanks to our dedicated team, we are looking forward to an even brighter year to come. Already we are kicking off Family Sunday Fun Day activities once a month for the coming summer to allow families to reconnect, relax, and have some fun while looking forward to a new and exciting Church School year! We can't wait to see you all in person again soon.

Respectfully Submitted,
Savannah Anderson, Chair
Shandra Roehrig
Tina Olsen
Dawn Rychtik
Jennifer Dimmer
Kurt Blum
Amy Gilhooly, Staff Liaison

SEARCH COMMITTEE TEAM REPORT

JUNE 2021

The Fall of 2020 witnessed the completion of the Search Committee responsibility of finding a new minister to lead our congregation. After being given this responsibility in May 2019, and after a long discernment process of fifteen months, during which 27 candidate profiles were reviewed, the Search Committee was able to invite 3 candidates to First Congregational Church in Port Washington for in-person interviews. After the interview process was completed, the committee was very pleased and excited to recommend to the Church Council the selection of Dr. Rev. Scott McLeod as the next minister of our church. With subsequent Church Council approval and recommendations, and following a meet and greet, the congregation, by unanimous vote on September 27, approved the selection of Pastor Scott as our next minister. Rev. McLeod officially started his tenure as our minister on January 1, 2021. He joined us after serving the First Congregational Church in Elkhorn, Wisconsin where he served for 23 years.

The Search Committee was persistent in pursuing the goal of contemplation, interviewing and final recommendation of our next minister. Although temporarily set back by a global pandemic, the committee continued to complete a responsibility they immediately recognized as difficult, but very rewarding.

I would like to thank the members of the negotiating team and additional members who so successfully handled the meet and greet. Many thanks to the church Reopening Team and the UCC Conference Office for all their help in preparation for candidate Sunday.

One more thank you to the following Search Committee members who made the search process so successful: Amy Gilhooly, Sarah Riemer, Shandy Roehrig, Holly Ternes, Kurt Blum, Brad Katzer, Doug McManus, Grace Wilsnack and Joe Wilsnack.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joe Mueller, Chair

REOPENING TEAM REPORT JUNE 2021

The Reopening Team first met in the summer of 2020 to discuss the parameters of if, when and how to open. We did not meet often in 2020 but it was decided to align ourselves closely with the recommendations of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

After Pastor Scott started in January of 2021, he joined the team and recruited several additional members. We started meeting much more regularly and established the parameters we would use to consider in-person worship. Using data for Ozaukee County we looked at % of positive tests based on a 7-day rolling average, new case rates based on a 14-day rolling average and vaccination rates.

On April 29, 2021 all the numbers had fallen (or risen) to the levels that the Wisconsin Council said was the “safer” opening position. The committee recommended to Church that we open for in-person worship with a limit of 40 attendees and following safe protocols. Advance sign-up, masks required, social distancing, no singing or passing of the peace.

Our first in-person worship service was held on May 2, 2021 with 39 in attendance. It was a communion service, and everyone picked up individual communion components on the way in. Seating was managed by the ushers. Front to back on the way in and back to front when being excused.

4 worship services with average attendance of 31 were held in May. There was also a Service of Confirmation held on May 23, at 11:00 a.m. that used the same protocols for safety.

As the numbers continued to improve, we looked at the social distancing criteria and it was recommended to Council that we increase the maximum attendance to 60. That recommendation was accepted, and it was announced that we would accept up to 60 for the June 6th service.

As of the writing of this report, the criteria that we have been watching is very close to the “safest” level of gathering as suggested by the Wisconsin Council. The Reopening Team is scheduled to meet on June 22nd. At that time we will review the current status to establish when or how to change looking ahead.

Respectfully Submitted,
Phil Stepanski, Chair
Doug McManus
Kerry O’Brien
Savannah Anderson
Mike Spalding
Tom Roehrig
Brett Dimmer
Pastor Scott