

2021 – 2022
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN



**CHURCH COUNCIL
2021-2022**

OFFICERS

MODERATOR: Jeanne Mantsch

ASSOCIATE MODERATOR: Phil Stepanski

CLERK: Rhonda Thompson

TREASURER: Kathy Bretl

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Savannah Anderson

FELLOWSHIP: Jennifer Dimmer

STAFF SUPPORT & REVIEW: Ric Probst

PROPERTY: Bill Bond

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Eric Olson

LITURGY: Mike Spalding

STEWARDSHIP: Jason Jacque

**PASTOR
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

It has been wonderful to have gone through an entire program year with all of you since lifting pandemic restrictions. These Annual Reports are always a good reminder of the incredible ministry that this church has carried out over the course of the past twelve months. Perhaps I only speak for myself, but very often we finish one project or special worship, we end a class or achieve some new goal, and we just move on to the next challenge without fully recognizing what has been done or what has been accomplished. Only when we look back at the number of things that have taken place do we recognize the miracle that is life together in the church.

Our church is blessed with a great staff. Amy Gilhooly and Beckie Perez are a dynamic duo in our church offices. Amy turning out beautiful and informative content on the different platforms we utilize in communicating with church members—emails, social media, newsletters, and much more. Beckie organizing and managing all the different people, teams, phone calls, emails, letters and more that come through the front office. And they do so much more! I don't think it is a secret that they are the glue that keeps the place together. Our weekly staff meetings are filled with reminders of ministry items coming up, things we are working on, and checking off the items successfully completed, as well as laughter and coffee!

We have added two new staff members this year. We were so excited to welcome Lydia Clough as our new Handbell Choir director back in August 2021 after longtime director Lori MacRae retired. Lydia impressed the team that interviewed her (Brett Dimmer, Carolyn Heatwole, Ric Probst, Mike Spalding) and has proved herself to be talented, enthusiastic, and simply a great addition to our church. In April 2022 the church welcomed Phil Stepanski as our new Financial Administrator. Phil brings with him a great knowledge of the congregation as well as the experience and accounting skills developed from running his own business. We are very fortunate to have had him step-forward and interview for the position after our previous Financial Administrator, Lorraine Halls decided to leave the position late in 2021. Thanks to the Finance Team; Kathy Bretl, Jim Schmidt, and Sherrie Dimmer for interviewing and recommending Phil to fill this position!

One of the best things about having a full program year at church (and the pandemic beginning to wind down) was to be able to welcome back the Chancel Choir, the Children's Choir and the Handbell Choir. The Chancel Choir had to sing with masks when they first started up late in the fall but were able to switch out of them early in the new year. I really look forward to listening for the music each Sunday. We have such excellent musicians! Please never take the music program of this church for granted! Brett Dimmer does an excellent job with our Chancel Choir, Sherri Melichar does such great work with the kids, Lydia Clough is terrific directing the Handbells. Wow! Week in and week out the music that is offered up in praise of God is top notch. And then on Sundays when our choirs aren't participating, we have incredibly talented pianists; Kai-i Tien playing really excellent music, Pru Palecek offering wonderful pieces (sometimes 4-handed pieces with Glenys Gillam) and of course, Sherri Melichar picking just the right piece to play for that particular Sunday. I'm telling you that most churches don't have a single musician of the quality enjoyed every single Sunday here at First Congregational Church. We are very fortunate.

Covid-19 remained an issue for the faith community over these past twelve months. When the reopening team surveyed the congregation in the fall of 2021 the congregation was divided into thirds. One third believed we should be open to all activities with masks optional, one-third believed masks should be mandatory with

limited activities and one third was willing to move forward with what the church leaders decided to do. With a divided congregation, it meant that as the Reopening Team attempted to navigate shifting circumstances with the Delta and then Omicron variants and shifting guidelines as vaccines and then boosters became available—there were always complaints with any decisions that had to be made. Thanks go to Phil Stepanski, Brett Dimmer, Doug McManus, Kerry O'Brien, Tom Roehrig, and Mike Spalding for providing leadership and making the difficult recommendations when they were asked to do so.

It was a full program season of Worship. Thanks to our worship leaders who helped lead almost every worship service this program year. A special thank you goes to Mike Spalding who has done a great job selecting almost all the hymns for congregational singing this year. The “big” seasons of Advent and Lent had mid-week evening worship and Christmas and Easter celebrations were made outstanding by the addition of our Choirs and brass players. The fourteen confirmands helped lead worship every month and I did my best to find a part of the service for all fourteen of them to lead! I also participated in an ecumenical prayer service in September and designed the ecumenical Thanksgiving service in November for the community. A highlight for me was my Installation Service held on Sept. 26th. Thanks to all who came to celebrate as my friend and mentor Tim Perkins delivered a “Charge to the Congregation” and my wife Laura McLeod provided a “Charge to the Pastor” as members of Conference staff and Association churches officially recognized my ministry with this congregation.

Education ministry was also a highlight for me this past year. We started off the fall season with an eight-session “Sacred Conversations to End Racism” led by UCC certified leader, Laura McLeod. A group of between 20-25 church members and friends gathered on Tuesday nights for great conversations around a difficult topic. Every week the Wednesday Lunch group was able to gather for conversation around the lectionary scripture texts for the coming Sunday—such good discussions and interesting insights! The Lenten study, “Embracing the Uncertain” met in person on Sunday mornings and we also had a class online Tuesday nights. Again, great conversations, questions and reflections! The Confirmation program successfully moved through a full year of classes, mission experiences and field trips. Thanks to all the support from parents and families, the fourteen confirmands affirmed their faith at the end of May. Church School met on the 2nd Sunday of each month and followed the scripture texts being used during the worship service that day. The Church School leaders, Savannah Anderson, Jennifer Dimmer, Tina Olson, Dawn Rychtik, and Shandy Roehrig were wonderfully creative and deserve our thanks for making the Bible stories and lessons come alive with meaning for our children.

I’m coming to the limits of space and your attention if I go much further, but I do feel as if I am leaving out as much as I am including in this report. Things like the work of the Property Team led by Bill Bond with Claude Zimmerman, Joe Mueller, Gary Tackes and Mike Dimmer attended to issues in the building or on the grounds each and every week. And the incredible Stewardship campaign put together by Jason Jacque, Jodi Cowen, Bev Mueller and Craig Modahl with Amy Gilhooly pulling it all together and making the team’s thoughts, facts, and figures look great in the materials sent to the congregation. The Ministry Options 2022 Survey that has already been used in matching people’s interests with the church’s ongoing ministry needs. The creation of a Pastor Parish Relations Team (thanks to Doug McManus, Joe Mueller, Sarah Riemer, Shandy Roehrig, and Pam Geiken) to help build and maintain strong, open communication between the parish (all of you) and the pastor (me!). I haven’t mentioned successful fundraisers like the Christmas Tree Sale, the “Adopt-a-Bill” fundraiser, the new “Scrip” or “Raise-Right” gift card program, or a new “Breakfast with Santa” this December! But I have run out of room.

Let me close by thanking our outgoing Moderator, Jeanne Mantsch for all her work during this time of pastoral transition and pandemic chaos. I’m also grateful for the work of Ric Probst on Council and as team

leader with Staff Support and Review. Savannah Anderson has done very well representing the church on the Lighthouse Youth Ministry Board of Directors as well as handling leadership for Christian Education. I'm looking forward to working with Jason Jacque as he moves from Stewardship Team leader to become our new Moderator. And so grateful to our new Council members who have stepped forward and after being elected will come on board in July. Thanks everyone, I'm looking forward to 2022-2023!

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Scott McLeod

**MODERATOR
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

What a ride it's been! I realized early on that I would be moderator through Jeff Suddendorf's retirement, and a probable interim ministry, and maybe – maybe the call to a new settled minister. But the addition of Covid in the midst of all these church-shaking changes was totally unanticipated! And oh! The discussions we had regarding how to move forward...stay open...close and move to on-line services only – mask or not to mask – sing with masking – should the choir be required to be masked as they sang? Weekly reports from the state! Numbers going up – numbers going down! Unhappy members regardless of whatever we decided what was best! Will we survive as a church? Of course, only time will tell, but be assured dear friends – we really tried to do what seemed wisest at the moment! And so here we are – a little scarred, but with a new talented leader in place thanks to the thorough work of the Search Committee, and to all of you for hanging in there with us as we wavered one way – then another! Thank you for the honor of being – or trying to be – your faithful Moderator over the past two years!

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeanne Mantsch

**TREASURER
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

Here are the highlights for June 2021 through May 2022:

June 2021

The Church reopening process began.

August

Lorraine Halls submitted the paperwork requesting forgiveness of the 2021 PPP Loan in the amount of \$34,447. Forgiveness was granted.

September

The Stewardship Campaign began.

Lorraine, the Team Leaders, and the Finance Team began working on the 2022 Budget.

October

Budget preparation continued.

November

The 2022 Budget was presented at the November Congregational Meeting.

December

The Council learned that Port Washington-Saukville School District will be pulling 4K classes from partner sites and will instead host them at the elementary schools.

Lorraine Halls submitted her resignation from the position of Financial Administrator. She offered to stay on until the end of March 2022, as needed.

In the 2021 Budget, \$2,500 of our \$5,000 obligation to Lighthouse Youth Ministry was approved, with the balance to be raised with a fundraiser. Donations from our generous congregation raised \$2,375, with only \$125 having to come from the Mission Fund (as approved by the Council). \$2,500 has been approved in the 2022 Budget, and we are hoping for the same success in raising the remaining \$2,500 for 2022.

January 2022

Lorraine, the Finance Team, and Pastor Scott met several times to finalize the 2022 Proposed Budget.

The proposed 2022 Budget was approved at the Winter Congregational Meeting on January 23rd, with the understanding that there will be strict controls on spending, in addition to creative fundraising efforts to address the deficit.

The Financial Administrator job description was updated at the Finance Team, in addition to Pastor Scott, will serve as the Hiring Committee.

February

Sadly, Port Preschool decided that the 3K program alone would not be enough to sustain them and they made the decision to close their doors at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. This loss of income will affect our next budget.

Pastor Scott met with Troy Bretl, a long-time member who is also a real estate agent, to discuss how best to market the available space. We are seeking a non-profit tenant. A flyer has been created and it appears in the newsletter.

The Finance Team/Hiring Committee, along with Pastor Scott, interviewed 2 candidates for the position of Financial Administrator and decided to extend an offer to Phil Stepanski.

March

The Council approved and welcomed Phil Stepanski as the new Financial Administrator. His start date was March 1, 2022. Phil met several times with Lorraine to facilitate the transition.

Phil offers office hours on Mondays from 4:30-6:30 p.m. He will be available during that time to answer questions. He can also be reached by email at phil@portucc.org

Thanks to Jennifer Dimmer, Fellowship Team Leader, and Rhonda Thompson, Council Clerk, the Scrip Program was introduced and will be administered by the Fellowship Team. This is just one of the creative ways we will utilize to help decrease the budget deficit. Other resourceful fundraisers are Brat Fries, the Adopt-a-Bill Board, and the Church School's Macaroni Cheese Sale.

In addition volunteers have stepped forward to perform duties that we had been paying for. An example is Mike Dimmer who has volunteered to mow the lawn and has even brought his own lawnmower and is seeing to the repair of the church's mowers. A heartfelt thank you to Mike and all of the other volunteers!

More fundraising opportunities will be introduced in the months ahead and ideas from the congregation are also welcome!

April

The Council voted to move income from the Christmas Tree Sale from On-Budget Income to Off-Budget Income. This decrease in On-Budget Income will then decrease our Mission Budget. Also discussed was moving the Southeast Association Dues from Conference Expenses to the Mission Budget. The Budget will be formally amended to reflect these changes.

May

Results of the Ministry Options Survey were shared with Team Leaders. Three members indicated interest in helping with the Sunday offering counting duties. That brings our total to 6 counters. With 2 counters needed each Sunday, we could use more. If anyone is interested in helping out one Sunday per month, or even every other month, please let me know either in person or by email at kathyb@portucc.org

The Finance Team met with Phil Stepanski for the first time. Phil brought us up to date on several reporting issues that need to be corrected by our accountant who has been difficult to connect with. Phil also shared that he is in the process of fine-tuning procedures.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Bretl
Treasurer

LITURGY TEAM ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2022

Against the backdrop of last year's extreme disruption by Covid, our run of regular and special worship this year seems almost miraculous. Starting in May of 2021, every service has been in person! (Services are still being recorded and posted on our YouTube channel) Some of the highlights follow; any other year they would have been unremarkable, but this year they have felt really special:

- July 25 Patio hymn sing in remembrance of Jane Suddendorf.
- September 26 Installation of our new settled minister Rev. Dr. Scott McCleod.
- Two classes of new members received, totaling 16 new members.
- Participation of our Children's Choir, Chancel Choir, and Handbell Choir on their regular schedule, led by our fantastic directors Sherri Melichar (Children) Brett Dimmer (Chancel) and Lydia Clough (Handbells).
- Congregational hymn singing, led by our talented team of keyboardists Sherri Melichar, Pru Palecek, and Kai-i Tien.
- Celebration of Holy Communion, transitioning from self-service pre-filled juice and wafer packs to receiving bread and juice from servers at the front of the sanctuary.
- Wednesday evening candlelight Advent communion services.
- Three Christmas Eve services, with creche display, poinsettias, and Christmas tree set up and decorated by Eva Perez and her family.
- January 29 Chancel Choir participation in the memorial service for Jim Melichar.
- Ash Wednesday service with music by soloist Erin Arthur.
- Wednesday evening Lenten vesper services.
- Holy Week services culminating in 3 big joyful Easter morning services.
- Choirs ended their year with joint performance by children's and chancel choir.
- End of program year marked by confirmation of 14 of our youth.

Some innovations have added to our worship experience, including the addition of lay leaders on Sunday morning to read scripture and lead prayers, and a series of articles in the monthly newsletter explaining the special days and seasons in the liturgical calendar.

Thanks to all the Liturgy Team members, who have faithfully done all the big and little tasks, often not noticed, that make for a meaningful worship experience in an attractive and well organized and equipped sanctuary: Phil Stepanski, Tracy Bretl, Dawn Guschl, Bill Bond, Karl Pradel, and Jane Spalding.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Spalding, Liturgy Team Representative

**STAFF SUPPORT AND REVIEW TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

As we come to the end of another Church Year, I hope that we all feel that we're in a much better place than we were, even a year ago. That is, in no small way, due to the outstanding staff that we are fortunate enough to have here at First Congregational Church in Port Washington. In my two years in this position, I never ceased to be amazed at the dedication and commitment that the staff has to their duties, and let's be honest, they were the only thing that kept us all feeling like we had a church at all during the dark days of early Covid. The church still faces some pretty steep challenges after re-opening, but having the staff that we do makes any challenge easier. Please continue to let all of the office and music staff know how much we appreciate their work and love for our Church.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ric Probst, Staff Support and Review Team Representative

**FELLOWSHIP TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

Our Fellowship team has had a lot of fun being back in action this year.

We celebrated Christmas by inviting church members to bake Christmas cookies to have at the brat fry that was held at church. We celebrated Advent by having an Advent craft workshop. Attendees made a couple of Christmas cards, an ornament and a decoration. Attendees also helped create large Christmas stockings that were given to Family Promise where they were stuffed with goodies then given to the families of Family Promise.

We continued our traditional potluck dinners - soup and salad night and chili night. The Fellowship Team also teamed up with Church School to invite the kids and their friends to have youth nights at church. The kids completed scavenger hunts and played traditional hide and seek in the dark at the church.

The team hosted a spring card-making event. We also continued our tradition of serving cinnamon rolls for the congregation on Palm Sunday. We were excited to enjoy a potluck lunch in May to end the church program year. We are looking forward to more events next year.

The Fellowship Team invites you to try a gift card program for fundraising for our church through RaiseRight. By planning ahead and purchasing gift cards, you can continue shopping at your favorite stores and also raise money for First Congregational Church. Please contact Jennifer Dimmer or Rhonda Thompson for more information about the RaiseRight program.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Dimmer, Fellowship Team Representative

**STEWARDSHIP TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

In 2022, our Stewardship Committee completed its second Fall Stewardship Campaign since reforming. In addition to running our campaign, our team also sponsored a Fall and Spring Brat Fry to help cover the loan interest costs for the repairs that were done in 2020 to our church windows and bell tower.

We kicked off our Fall Stewardship campaign by leveraging the UCC theme Rooted in Love. Execution of our campaign was done via mixed media with the help of our church Communications Director (Amy Gilhooly) including:

- In Person, Written, and Video Testimonials that supported our campaign theme
- Facebook Posts supporting our campaign theme
- Updated Church website
- Pastoral Statements as part of Worship
- Stewardship Newsletter
- Postcard Mailings
- Follow up Phone Calls & emails

We closed our Stewardship Campaign at the beginning of January with 109 pledges totaling over \$153k. We would like to especially thank our 2 new families that are now pledging along with our 19 families that have increased their pledges. Every pledge was graciously acknowledged with a handwritten thank you card.

Our team is looking forward to our 2023 campaign.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jason Jacque, Stewardship Team Representative
Jodi Cowen
Craig Modahl
Bev Mueller

**PROPERTY TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

This year your Property Team has had a challenging and fulfilling year.

We have established a "Building check list" with items identified as needing weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual inspections.

We have also identified areas of repair or replacement needs to your little church.

We were able to present to your Church Council a list of those repair needs with several quotes for each area (stain glass, roof and HVAC).

The Council has committed to focusing on the needs in 2022 and beyond.

We have established monthly Property Team meetings on the last Fri. of every month at 11:00 in the church (somewhere that isn't being used).

As your Property Team Chairman, I invite anyone with interest to come join us any last Fri. of the month property team meeting.

Knowing what our Congregants want for their little church is the most important thing for this Team.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Bond, Property Team Representative

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

It was great to be back in the classroom for 2021-2022 Christian Education. Church school was back to our normal rhythm, guided by a more structured curriculum courtesy of Pastor Scott, who also once again led our Confirmants for the year. As ever, we strove to provide meaningful lessons paired with fun and engaging activities that make Church School the place to be on the second Sunday of each month during the program year. Some of the highlights from our Church School adventures:

- We kicked off the year with an Earth Day themed lesson, learning about God's creation and our role as its stewards
- Our Mac & Cheese fundraiser was back, this time to raise funds for our window repairs
- And our most recent lesson was a celebration of the women of faith in the bible and in our Church through the story of Tabitha, where we also raised money in support of Family Promise

As always, a big thank you to our dedicated team that makes all of this possible. We've had such a great year, and know that next year promises just as much fun and excitement. We hope to see you there!

Respectfully Submitted,
Savannah Anderson, Christian Education Team Representative
Shandy Roehrig
Tina Olson
Dawn Rychtik
Jennifer Dimmer

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2022**

We are looking forward to a great upcoming year with our Community Outreach team at First Congregational Church. Some past highlights included strengthening our relationship with Family Promise where we had a very successful "Paper Drive" earlier this year that collected much needed paper-goods for Family Promise. Including some specifics like diapers. I received a very nice thank-you note from Family Promise thanking our congregation for its continued generosity. In addition to our work with Family Promise we were also able to give charitably to Chris Fraser for his "Go Fund Me" campaign to achieve his life dream of going to Disney World back in February.

We are very excited to continue working with our Justice Team. The Justice team has put together an amazing agenda for the next several months that we are very excited to help support them with. In times like these it is more imperative than ever that we stay open to everyone in our community. With Covid looking like it is easing a bit we are excited to reconnect with and grow our relationships with Advocates, Balance, Ozaukee Habitat for Humanity, and Port Food Pantry. Please continue to reach out with any additional ideas or needs that may help us better serve our community. We look forward to seeing you in our amazing community.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eric Olson, Community Outreach Team Representative