

2022 – 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN



CHURCH COUNCIL
2022

OFFICERS

MODERATOR: Jason Jacque

ASSOCIATE MODERATOR:

CLERK: Rhonda Thompson

TREASURER: Kathy Bretl

TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Shandy Roehrig

FELLOWSHIP: Jennifer Dimmer

STAFF SUPPORT & REVIEW: Ken Matthews

PROPERTY: Bill Bond

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Eric Olson

LITURGY: Mike Spalding

STEWARDSHIP: Jodi Cowen

**PASTOR
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

It is now two and a half years into my ministry with all of you and I finally feel as if I have had a full year of “normal” ministry. In some ways the pandemic feels like it was part of the distant past, but there are reminders of its effects still popping up. It was just last year, in 2022, we were still worried about passing the offering plates during the services! I feel blessed to be engaged in ministry with all of you and am looking forward to the year to come!

There were a couple of new educational opportunities this year as well as continuing patterns of teaching and learning in the church. In the summer of 2022, I started an 8-week BBQ Bible Study on Tuesday evenings. Using a charcoal grill that had been donated to the church, I cooked up hot dogs, burgers, bratwurst, and more, while those who attended brought a dish to pass, salad, or dessert. We shared in a hearty dinner and then turned our attention to studying some of Jesus’ best-loved parables. Beginning in Lent, I co-led with the Rev. Don Niederfrank, a 10-week book study of “Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life” by Marjorie Thompson. The book and subject matter were well received by the group that participated, in-person at church and through Zoom online from home. The Confirmation Class has had five students in class learning about the six areas we focus on: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the Church, and Our Mutual Ministry. Beyond the classroom, they have been serving the church and community in a variety of ways, from monthly worship leadership to monthly mission experiences like walking the Stations of the Cross at Holy Hill, and a fall clean-up day at Daycholah Center.

In July, our church partnered with Pilgrim UCC in Grafton on a Youth Mission Trip to Hazard, Kentucky to work with the Appalachia Service Project from July 10-17. We had a great time and did some good work for families in need—I’m so thankful that Josh Jacque, Taylor Ulicki, and I were able to be a part of this group! In September, I organized a trash clean-up event for church members and friends around the city parks with the assistance of Jon Crain, the town Arborist and friend of the church. There were 18 participants and we picked up many bags of litter along city beaches, paths, and trails.

This past summer, also saw the start of several new teams and ministries. In July, the Capital Campaign Planning Team started meeting on a regular basis. Thanks to Bill Bond, Carolyn Heatwole, Jeanne Mantsch, Joe Mueller, Karen Oftedahl, and Ray Shupe for agreeing to serve on this important team. They have been engaged in trying to meet the needs of the church building for maintenance and repair while trying not to overwhelm our church members with the potential price tag! They helped facilitate the “Awareness Campaign” meetings this past October and November which shared information and received feedback with the congregation. And now we will be voting on our “*Making All Things New: Phase One*” campaign at the Spring Congregational Meeting. I’m hoping the congregation will agree to the \$32,000 campaign goal so we can repair and preserve our beautiful stained glass windows for the generations to come.

In August, the Congregational Care Team started up with assistance from Jennifer Dimmer, the Fellowship Team Representative. Thanks to Jennifer, as well as to Roberta Blumenberg, Chris Drasch, Jeanne Mantsch, Ken Matthews, Bev Mueller, Alice Ruffin, Jane Schwacher, and Meg Tackes for joining the team. The group has been sending Anniversary, Birthday, and cards of concern to our members and friends. The team has also been accompanying me on some of the home communion visits I do, especially around Christmas and Easter.

In January, the church began a new program through Marquette University called “The Examen(ed) Church”. It is a Lilly Endowment funded program designed by Marquette to help congregations discern the way God is leading the church into ministry in the next few years. Part of the process has been to create a “Thrive Team” to begin the work of spiritual discernment—thanks to Karl Pradel, Terry McManus, Louise Mollinger, Scott Symes, and Gary and Meg Tackes for being a part of the team. So far, the team has been meeting on a monthly basis and has also met twice with Marquette staff on the Milwaukee campus. Over the next 12 months the group will be presenting more information to the congregation about how the whole church might participate in listening for God’s call to our faith community.

Sunday morning worship has continued to be a focal point for the life of the congregation. We discussed at Church Council whether it was necessary to still have two worship services during the program year—and decided to continue the pattern for now in hopes that attendance will pick up. One of the most outstanding features of the church is our music ministry. The Children’s Choir, the Handbell Choir, and the Chancel Choir are all exceptional and a real gift to our Sunday morning services. We have again continued to have special Wednesday evening worship services during Advent and Lent. During Advent, Christmas Carols were used as theme material for the mid-week services. During Lent, the services explored Old Testament texts using a variety of prayer methods. Special thanks to Mike Spalding for doing a great job selecting hymns for worship week to week all year long.

Special thanks to the church staff this program year. Phil Stepanski stepped into the Financial Administrator position in the late spring of 2022 and has done great work. The limitations of QuickBooks in working with the finances of a non-profit, religious organization have become clear, and Phil is working on making a switch to new accounting software. Beckie Perez has continued to do excellent work in the church office and keeps things running smoothly with her knowledge of the congregation and multi-tasking abilities. Amy Gilhooly turns out beautifully done newsletters each month and has been so valuable in helping to organize and create things such as the Stewardship Campaign and “Making All Things New” Capital Campaign materials.

Thank you to ALL the members and friends of the church for your devotion to this faith community. Without you there is no church! I know there is more to say about all that has gone on these past 12 months, but you can read more about it in the rest of these reports!

Courage and Peace,
Scott McLeod

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN PLANNING TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023

In July 2022, we formed a Capital Campaign Planning Team to begin looking at the possibility of a financial campaign to address the maintenance and repair issues of the church building. The Property Team has been lifting many of these costly repair issues since before the pandemic began. Thanks go to Bill Bond, Carolyn Heatwole, Jeanne Mantsch, Joe Mueller, Karen Oftedahl, and Ray Shupe for answering the call to serve on this important team. It has not been easy to deal with the reality that there are expensive repair issues with the building that need to be addressed, but that we are also a faith community still recovering from pastoral transition a multi-year global pandemic. Through the end of summer and start of fall, the team met to discuss the different issues facing the church. They sought and received advice from Rev. Andrew Warner at the Wisconsin Conference Office on possible options. The group decided that the first thing to do would be to reach out to the congregation to share information and receive feedback.

The Capital Campaign Planning Team put together an Awareness Campaign in October and November to do several things. First, simply to get people together. Small group meetings took place at church and in people's homes with lots of opportunities for fellowship. Second, the team wanted to hear from people about their fond memories, the things about the church they valued most, and their hopes and dreams for the future. Everyone who attended had a chance to share feedback and hear what others had to say. Third, the team wanted to make sure everyone was aware of the repair needs the church was facing. A presentation was made with pictures of the building sections in need of attention and potential costs for making the repairs. Thank you to all those who hosted a meeting and to all those who came out for one of the Awareness Campaign meetings. There were a dozen meetings and 52 participants (besides the team members and Pastor).

From feedback received from the Awareness Campaign meetings it seemed clear that a step-by-step, multi-year approach to raising the money and making necessary repairs was desirable. No one doubted that the long list of maintenance items and repair work would eventually all need to be completed. Following the recommendation of the Property Team the group decided to try and address the highest priority item; the stained glass window repairs in the sanctuary. A bid of \$32,000 was submitted as the best available and a plan to ask the congregation for pledges to raise the money was given to the Church Council. The campaign, *"Making All Things New: Phase One"* will be voted upon at the 2023 Spring Congregational Meeting. If the congregation approves the plan, the team hopes that the church will receive the necessary funds over the next 12 months and make the repairs in 2024. Since this is only "Phase One" the team envisions that further funds will need to be raised in order to make the other necessary repairs.

Courage and Peace,
Scott McLeod

**THE EXAMEN(ed) CHURCH - THRIVE TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

The “Examen(ed) Church” program started on January 21, 2023, with an introductory meeting at Marquette University. The Thrive Team, made up of Terry McManus, Louise Mollinger, Karl Pradel, Scott Symes, Gary and Meg Tackes, as well as Pastor Scott, has now been meeting each month during 2023. During this time, they have been engaged in individual and group prayer and reflection using materials supplied by Marquette. The whole “Examen(ed) Church” process is designed to first train and engage the Thrive Team in prayer methods and spiritual growth practices through use of Ignatius Loyola’s “Daily Examen”. Then the process begins to engage the whole church in spiritual discernment work. What does God have in mind for our congregation? What is God calling us to be about in service of Jesus Christ? The Thrive Team will begin working with the congregation on a series of events in which they hope to help church members clarify the church’s mission and values, to deepen Christian practice, and to enrich our congregation’s engagement with the community around us.

Right now, the Thrive Team is just finishing up “Phase One” of the programs which involves being instructed in and practicing both personal and group reflection using the Examen prayer practices of Ignatius of Loyola. As we move further into the year, the Thrive Team will get more into “Phase Two”, which involves educational workshops covering topics relevant for church thriving: understanding and adapting to the church’s context in today’s culture, clarifying our local church’s mission and values, and continuing to deepen Christian practices. Eventually the team will move into “Phase Three” which has the Thrive Team, church leadership, and the congregation discerning potential responses to the months of reflection on church experience, identity, and the program themes. Finally, in “Phase Four” the Thrive Team would help lead the congregation in assessing the experience and identifying elements of the process the church might sustain moving forward. The team is excited about the months ahead.

Participating in this program, with all the resources, staffing, and support that we will be receiving comes to us free of charge because of a grant the University received through the Lilly Endowment. Furthermore, because this is a “pilot” program, upon completion of the 18-24 month “Examen(ed) Church” process, the church will receive several thousand dollars! Plus, if we come out of the program with specific ministry directives, Marquette will even give us seed money to get the new ministry started. Thank you to the Church Council and the congregation for their support in this process.

Respectfully Submitted,
Scott McLeod

**MODERATOR
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

Stepping directly into the Moderator role without having served as Associate Moderator, in our second full program year post-COVID has been both challenging and fulfilling. Creation of both Congregational Care and Pastor Parish Relations teams have helped with the transition of our new established Minister and a new post-COVID normalization. While our focus moved to providing a full in-person calendar year, thanks to Brett Dimmer, our services are still posted on YouTube for viewing remotely. This didn't mean that we didn't have tough discussions looking at options to move or combine services to increase our in-person attendance.

Without the support of income from Port Pre-School, our budget was a challenge. We managed to fill budget gaps with additional fundraisers such as Brat Frys, Adopt-a-Bill, and the inaugural Dr. Seuss Celebration Breakfast. Thank you to all who offered their time and talents!

To help us look forward, a Capital Campaign Team was created to help lay the groundwork for a proposed Capital Campaign to raise funds to repair the stained glass windows. In addition, in January the church began a new program through Marquette University called "The Examen(ed) Church". It is a Lilly Endowment funded program designed by Marquette to help congregations discern the way God is leading the church into ministry in the next few years. Part of the process has been to create a "Thrive Team" to begin the work of spiritual discernment.

Thank you for your trust in making me your Moderator.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jason Jacque, Moderator

TREASURER/FINANCE TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023

The instructions for Sunday Morning Counters were updated. Also, because our Financial Administrator, Phil Stepanski, has added clarity to and separation of recording accounts, he wanted Special Donations (i.e. Adopt-A-Bill, flowers and donations for Christmas and Easter, etc.) to be kept separate from the weekly offerings, a Special Donations Worksheet was created.

The Finance Team met in August 2022. Phil Stepanski shared the current Financial Reports. We talked about fundraising possibilities, including Adopt-A-Bill, Breakfast with Santa, ordering more Christmas trees, and fundraising for the remainder of our Lighthouse Youth Ministry obligation (\$2,500). We also touched on the need to recruit more members for the team which now consists of the Financial Administrator, the Treasurer, Sherrie Dimmer and Jim Schmit.

I paid the bills until the middle of October 2022, when a family member experienced a medical situation. Thankfully, Phil Stepanski stepped in to pay the bills, and has continued to pay them.

Work on the 2023 Budget began in October by Phil Stepanski, in conjunction with the Team Leaders. The Budget was presented to the congregation in November 2022, and was passed by the congregation in January 2023.

A Sunday Morning counting schedule is in place thanks to these faithful counters—Phil Stepanski and Tracy Bretl, Bev and Joe Mueller, Ken Matthews, and Joe Rychtik. However, more counters would be welcomed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Bretl, Treasurer

**LITURGY TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

This will be my third, and last, annual report for the Liturgy Team, and I am having difficulty finding anything to write about. In 20/21 we were improvising and innovating in order to remotely provide a meaningful worship experience in the face of Covid, and welcoming and adjusting to a new pastor and a new bell choir director. In 21/22 we were back in the sanctuary gradually letting go of the covid safety restrictions, celebrating each step back towards “normal”. In contrast to those years, this past year has felt like we’re back in the groove. When we arrive Sunday morning, everything looks and feels familiar, comfortable – we know what to expect, and can participate in worship without distraction.

I am especially grateful to all our 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 and Tracy Bretl, who select and hang the stained glass panels in the chancel windows for each liturgical season or special services.

Dawn Guschl and Bill Bond, who prepare the Communion elements, and also organize and re-supply the pews.

Karl Pradel, who makes sure the Christ candle is never allowed to go out.

Jane Spalding, flower arranger extraordinaire.

And a special thank you to Brett Dimmer for continuing to produce YouTube videos of our Sunday Services, the Cowen family for decorating the chancel Christmas tree, and to the Property Team for fabricating and installing the safety railings on the chancel steps.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Spalding, Team Representative

**STAFF SUPPORT AND REVIEW TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

The Team has new leadership after the elections last year and the result has been a slow start to formally reviewing the staff members. A review process has now been developed and reviews are underway. Next year the process will be more efficient.

The office staff continues to carry the administrative and communications load for the church and has been on the spot when needed. We all need to give Amy Gilhooly and Beckie Perez a big “Thank You” for all they are doing for us.

All of the Choirs and Church Teams would like to have more members and see more participation in the pews. All of them recognize the difficult times we are experiencing and are moving ahead the best they are able.

Looking forward to better times in the coming months and years.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ken Matthews, Team Representative

**FELLOWSHIP TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

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

We kicked off the Advent season by reviving the tradition of exchanging Christmas cookies. It was fun to gather and see the old favorites back on our Christmas cookie plates. We continued to celebrate Advent by having an Advent craft workshop. Attendees made a couple of Christmas cards, tags and wrappings, and a decoration.

We continued our traditional potlucks- soup and salad dinner and chili dinner and instead held them on Sundays after the 10am worship service. It was wonderful to get together after Sunday worship and enjoy each other's company at the potluck lunches. The Fellowship Team also teamed up with the Church School Team to invite the kids and their friends to host Youth Nights at the church. Though we had to reschedule because of the weather, we were finally able to gather and play traditional hide and seek in the dark of the church and enjoy snacks.

The Team hosted a spring card-making event. We also continued our tradition of serving cinnamon rolls for the congregation on Palm Sunday.

We are excited to provide a sub sandwich luncheon in May to end the church program year. We are looking forward to more events next year.

Fellowship Team worked together with the Stewardship Team and started the first annual Dr. Seuss Breakfast Celebration held in March. It was wonderful to invite the community to come into our church for breakfast and enjoy Dr. Seuss activities.

The Congregational Care Team has been using the cards that were created at craft workshops to send for the birthday card and anniversary card ministry. We hope members and friends have liked receiving a card to celebrate their special day.

The Fellowship Team invites you to try the 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.

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Dimmer, Team Representative

**STEWARDSHIP TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

Our team consisting of Craig Modahl, Bev Mueller, and Jodi Cowen is proud of our 2022-2023 accomplishments and hard work to ensure that we have the funds to continue our church's operations and programs.

In October 2022, we kicked off our Fall Stewardship Campaign by leveraging the United Church of Christ theme "Beloved, Love" based on 1 John 4:7. The campaign allowed everyone to exhibit their love of our church community through giving of our time, talents, and treasures. We executed our campaign plan with the partnership of Pastor Scott, Communications Director Amy Gilhooly, Office Manager Beckie Perez, and Financial Administrator Phil Stepanski. The fall campaign included:

- In-person, written, and video Testimonials from church members
- Facebook posts supporting our campaign theme
- Updated church website
- Pastoral statements as part of worship
- Stewardship newsletter mailing
- Follow up phone calls, texts, and emails
- Thank you cards created by our Church School kids that were sent to those who pledged

We closed our Stewardship Campaign at the end of December with 94 pledges totaling just over \$162,000. We would like to thank everyone, especially the 10 families who have pledged for the first time, along with 52 families that have increased their pledges. Every pledge was graciously acknowledged with a handwritten thank you card.

The Stewardship Team also spearheaded several fundraisers in the past year. We carried on our Brat Fry tradition with a successful sale in May 2022. In early March 2023 we partnered with the Fellowship Team and launched a new event, a Dr. Seuss Celebration Breakfast. It was a fun event for the community, and we hope to continue it in the future.

Overall, our team is thankful for all of the members and friends who support our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jodi Cowen, Team Representative

**PROPERTY TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

I would like to start my report by expressing my appreciation to the members of our Property Team. Claude Zimmerman, Joe Mueller, and Gary Tackes who have given their time, expertise, and talents so much in the last calendar year to make “all my lies come true”. They have pulled together a solid schedule of Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly and Annual inspections so throughout the year we stay ahead of any maintenance issues.

Coming out of Covid we thought that we were in great shape and then we were hit with a major electrical issue. We had to suddenly “drop everything “ and develop an emergency repair plan. The list of mechanical issues and equipment that was damaged (fried) by the March 10, 2023, storm and subsequent power surge was incredible.

The list goes like this:

- Boiler control board
- Solar panel control board
- Fire protection control board
- Automatic doors control panels (4)
- 15 CFI outlets
- Microwave
- Two power strips
- Thermostat in Pastor’s office
- Severe roof damage over the sanctuary

I know I forgot something...Thank the Lord for property insurance!!

I would like to close my report by inviting any of our congregants to join our monthly meetings that just changed to the second Friday of each month at 11:00 as well as read our meeting minutes in our monthly church e-newsletter. Feel free to reach out to any of the team members with your questions or issues with our little church.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Bond, Team Representative

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

Our Christian Education Program consisting of Jennifer Dimmer, Tina Olson, Dawn Rychtik, Payton Katzer, Savannah Anderson, and Shandy Roehrig had an eventful and positive 2022-2023 program year. Our Church School met monthly, with an average attendance of 13 children per class ranging from 4k to 7th grade. Children created individualized name tags, which they added ribbons to during each visit and displayed between lessons.

Utilizing a resource called the Seasons of Fusion, from the Seasons of the Spirit curriculum, a different story was highlighted each month. Several of the stories were utilized to highlight opportunities to support our congregation and community.

A food drive was held in October, followed by a gift-a-child holiday drive during November.

The children decorated ornaments to give out during our church Christmas tree sale fundraiser.

In January, the children made thank you cards for the Stewardship Team to send to those who pledged.

In March, the children rolled up their sleeves to make 30 pans of macaroni and cheese raising nearly \$770 to support the church.

We finished the year with a collection drive of new or gently used art supplies to support a refresh of the children's activity bags for use in the sanctuary.

The team also hosted one Youth Night, which was unfortunately rescheduled several times due to inclement weather.

We closed our year with a celebration, wishing our 7th graders well as they move into confirmation next year, and served cake during Fellowship Hour.

Our Confirmation Program continued this year with five confirmands, who in addition to leading the service once per month, also participated in several activities. They spent time working at the Port Food Pantry, wrapped gifts during the holiday season, led the annual Christmas Pageant on Christmas Eve, and participated in Holy Week services.

Thanks to a dedicated team, our Church School Program has continued to re-establish itself following the pandemic. As we look ahead, the team is considering adding additional game/youth nights and continuing to explore ways in which to tie our church community into our service projects and monthly lessons.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shandy Roehrig, Team Representative

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

We had another great year with our Community Outreach Team at First Congregational Church. We coordinated donations to the Port Washington Food Pantry relating to specific needs including back-to-school supplies, bedding, and birthday gifts.

Our highlight was assisting Church School in the wonderful Christmas gift-a-child initiative through the Port Food Pantry. Participating donors were matched with a child in our community and given gift suggestions from the parents based on age and gender. The gift suggestions were in the categories of something the child wants, something they need, something to wear, and something to read. Through the generosity of our congregation, we gave many children gifts from each category. Collectively, through the generosity of others in the community, over 78 children received Christmas gifts. We are looking forward to participating again next year.

We are excited to grow our relationships with the six service organizations we support: Balance, Family Promise of Ozaukee County, Port Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Advocates of Ozaukee County, and Ozaukee Family Services.

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, Team Representative

**PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

The responsibility of the Pastor Parish Relations Team (PPR) is to help facilitate direct communication between church members and our minister. We are a support role for both members and our minister to help make both parties feel as comfortable as possible when sometimes difficult issues need to be addressed.

Communication can be done through our PPR email (that Pastor Scott reads) or in small group settings with members of the PPR Team with Pastor Scott present. Our goal is for membership to have open communication with their pastor. Please feel free to reach out with any thoughts, feedback, or concerns to portuccppr@gmail.com.

At present, the PPR Team is compiling information to create a self-evaluation form for the minister as well as a gathering of questions for their own use in review of the pastor. The evaluation process is driven by the minister's current professional functions and a series of "twelve characteristics for establishing a self-evaluation of a minister". This self-evaluation/evaluation process is lengthy but quite direct. Because of this, the PPR Team hopes to have a draft of such an evaluation form completed by this Fall when it will be forwarded to the Staff Support and Review Team for review and approval.

We appreciate your understanding and are here for both the membership and the minister.

Team members include Sarah Riemer, Shandy Roehrig, Pam Zeman, Doug McManus, Joe Mueller, and Pastor Scott.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joe Mueller, Team Representative

**CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

The Congregational Care Team got underway in August of 2022. Under the “umbrella” of the Fellowship Team, Jennifer Dimmer and Pastor Scott invited those who had indicated on their “Ministry Options Survey” an interest in helping with a “Greeting Card Ministry” and also those who were interested in helping with some “Pastoral Care” of fellow members to gather for an organizational meeting. The group decided that it would be a thoughtful way to reach out to our members by starting a new ministry of sending birthday and anniversary cards and cards of concern to everyone. Thanks to Chris Drasch, Jeanne Mantsch, Bev Mueller, Alice Ruffin, Jane Schwacher, and Meg Tackes for each taking two months of the year to send out the cards. Many thanks also go to Chris Drasch who has been sending out cards to members and friends who are experiencing special joys or concerns. Thank you to Jennifer Dimmer for the various “Card Making Workshops” she has sponsored this year. The workshops on Sundays after church have been fun fellowship events, plus—many of the cards that were created during the workshop have been used in this ministry.

The Congregational Care Team has also been helping Pastor Scott in bringing home communion to some of our folks who are unable to worship with us. Thanks to Roberta Blumenberg, Jeanne Mantsch, Alice Ruffin, and Meg Tackes for being a representative of the congregation as we brought communion to people during Advent and Lent. We hope this ministry of care for the members and friends of the church continues to grow. If you know anyone who needs a card, or would like a visit, please talk to Pastor Scott or any member of our team.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Scott

**FRIENDS FOR JUSTICE TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT
MAY 2023**

Friends for Justice of First Congregational Church of Port Washington is a group of individual church members who come together around issues of justice. The group speaks to, but not for, the First Congregational Church of Port Washington. Brief Background: Friends for Justice (formerly The Justice Team) began its discussions of justice work in 2018. With support of a Catalyst grant from the Wisconsin Conference UCC (November 2018), the group collaborated with four other UCC congregations (2 urban; 2 suburban) to implement a 5-part Lenten Speaker Series in 2019, titled “WOKE! A Community Conversation about Racial Justice”. Friends re-organized in Summer, 2020, creating a JUSTICE page on the Church website with racial justice resources and the following guiding statement: But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24) Responding to God’s will, expressed in the prophet Amos’ words and Jesus’ call to love our neighbors as ourselves, we seek to encourage and facilitate learning and action in our congregation that furthers a just society and world. With partial support of a Catalyst grant (WI Conference UCC), Friends sponsored an 8-session weekly study series “Sacred Conversations to End Racism” beginning September 14, 2021, in person at our Church. The series presenter was UCC-trained facilitator, Reverend Laura McLeod. June 2022-June 2023: The Friends group attempts to communicate with the Church Community Outreach Team representative about our discussions and events. Over the past year, members met approximately monthly via Zoom to discuss which justice issues might be lifted up throughout the year. The following justice actions were supported by our group:

- June 2022: The local LGBTQ group, P.W. Pride, asked our Church to display the newly designed Port Washington Pride flag at our church. With the full support of the Church Council, the Pride flag was displayed on the south side of our Church throughout the month of June.
- July 28, 2022: (Member leader: Ellie Wilmeth from a Lutheran congregation in Cedarburg). Friends’ members participated in a Black Lives are Sacred MKE witness on Grand Avenue in Port Washington. Black Lives are Sacred is a non-denominational religious group that has organized weekly public witness events in Milwaukee and neighboring counties since July 2020. They witness “to proclaim the sacredness of Black lives, amplifying Black voices and inspiring people of faith to do the same.” Friends for Justice at FCC hosted an ice cream social following the one-hour witness.
- September 25, 2022: (Member leader: David Franks). A group visit to the America’s Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee was cancelled due to lack of response from people outside of the Friends group. Several group members had already visited the Museum and recommended it as a worthwhile educational trip, especially for families.
- November 2022: Indigenous Peoples Month. (Member leaders: Kathy Bretl, Jeanne Mantsch, Jane Spalding, Louise Mollinger). In recognition of Wisconsin’s living Native Peoples, Friends for Justice coordinated with Pastor Scott for the worship service on November 20. Partial video clips of Menominee and Potawatomi oral traditions were shown during the worship service, with the Congregation asked to “Listen to Other Voices.” Friends also hosted Fellowship Hour after the 8:00 and 10:00 worship service on November 20, including displays of Native-related books, a Wisconsin Indigenous timeline, and historical records related to our Church’s land. The following tribal video stories were shared in the November Church Newsletter; both tribes occupied our Church land prior to European settlement: o Menominee Tribe -

<https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/tribal-histories-menomineehistory/> o Potawatomi Tribe-
<https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/tribal-histories-potawatomihistory/>

- December 7, 2022: (Member leader: Joe Mueller). The Friends meeting, titled “Affordable Housing in Port Washington”, was held in the Dennett Room. Joe Mueller and his grandson, who is a realtor, provided handouts on the status of affordable housing in Port and led an interesting discussion on this challenging topic.
- January 2023: (Member leader: David Franks). Wisconsin UCC Racial Justice Task Force. David shared information with us on the monthly zoom meetings of this UCC group, which was newly organized to bring various justice efforts together. David has attended several of this group’s meetings.
- February 2023: (Member leader: Louise Mollinger). Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Intermittently since April 2021, the Friends group has been gathering resources, studying, and discussing the topic of Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. After much discussion, the group concluded that making a land acknowledgement statement related to FCC’s land would be hollow without commitment to additional meaningful justice actions. To promote further consideration of meaningful justice actions, we are planning two Learning Sessions, May 10 & 24, in person at church. These sessions are open to all interested Church members.

Respectfully Submitted,
Louise Mollinger and Kathy Bretl, Friends for Justice Team Members