

A stained glass window with a central figure, possibly a religious icon, surrounded by colorful geometric patterns in shades of blue, orange, yellow, and red. The text "Congregational Connections" is overlaid on the image.

Congregational Connections

Monthly E-Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | May 2021

READY FOR IN-PERSON SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

There were times over the last thirteen months that it seemed like this day would never arrive. The weeks and months were made more difficult for our congregation by a transition process that began before the pandemic was on anyone's future projections. When churches began to meet virtually in March of 2020; how could any of us have known all that would take place? Thanks to the historically fast production of three highly effective vaccines, we finally believe that we can worship safely again. **The church will reopen this coming Sunday morning, May 2nd!** We will celebrate Communion in this season of Easter. Perhaps it is theologically fitting that in a season which lifts up resurrection and the movement from death to new life in Christ, we too are able to join together in person once again for life affirming, praise to God!

The Reopening Team made up of Savannah Anderson, Brett Dimmer, Doug McManus, Kerry O'Brien, Tom Roehrig, Mike Spalding, Phil Stepanski and myself put together a plan to reopen the church safely even as the Coronavirus continues to be a threat. Using the best information available from the Ozaukee County Health Department and recommended guidelines from the nationally respected Wisconsin Council of Churches, we recommended to the Church Council in February that we would be able to reopen for in-person worship once the Ozaukee County vaccination rate had hit 50% and new infections stayed at or below 10 new cases per day per 100k residents (seven day average) and the percentage of positive Covid-19 test results stayed at or below 10% (fourteen day average). We believed that increasing protection from the virus as well as decreasing activity of the virus in the community would indicate that it would be relatively safe to resume worship with precautions in place.

(continued on next page)

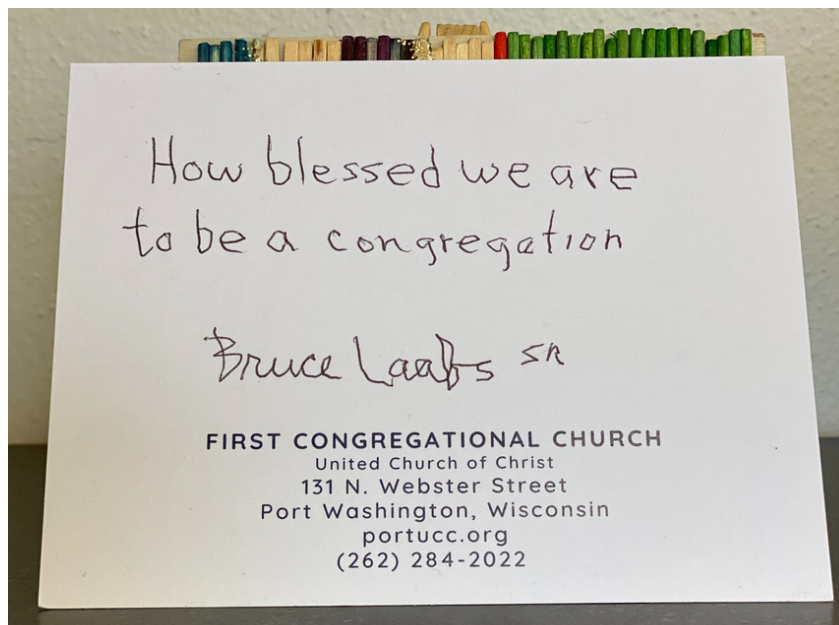
...READY FOR WORSHIP continued...

These decisions have generated some “heat” in the congregation. We have heard from those who felt it was ridiculous that we had not opened long ago, as well as those who were clear that they believed we were moving too quickly and would bear responsibility for new infections. The Reopening Team was very aware of the conflict and steered a middle path between competing views, all while staying committed to their plan despite a slowing and plateauing of vaccinations and the threat of a fourth wave of infections.

Please read the next page which gives more information on reopening and participating in our Sunday morning worship service.

Thank you to all of our members and friends who continued to support the ministry of the church during this unprecedented time. I know we are all anxious and excited to enjoy one another’s fellowship once again, live and in person!

Courage and Peace,
Pastor Scott



A notecard sent to a church family during Lenten Connections. We couldn't agree more, Bruce!