



# Congregational Connections

Monthly Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | March 2025

## BEGINNING A NEW THING

After a weekend of cross-country skiing in the Northwoods, and a guest preaching visit at First Congregational Church in Appleton, I am pleased to be back with you as we begin the month of March and start our half-time interim ministry relationship. We are embarking on a 'new thing' on the doorstep of entering Lent.

Lent invites us into a time of deepening our relationship with God as we navigate the 40 days leading up to Holy Week and Easter. March will also be a time of intentionally settling into a part-time ministry and getting to know each other better. My office hours will be Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I plan to do most of my bulletin and worship prep from home such that my office hours can be used in relationship with staff, leadership, and our church family. Of course, there will be evening leadership meetings and occasional needs that require time outside office hours. I will respond on a case-by-case basis. Our goal is to have a predictable schedule where my availability is known, and my time is invested where needed most.

While March will be a month of settling in, I want to ensure we focus on the true importance of the **Lenten season**, beginning with our Ash Wednesday service on March 5. During Lent, we often focus on a variety of spiritual practices that might deepen our Lenten experience and relationship with God. Those might include observing fasting days and 'no meat' Fridays. Some will engage in a daily devotional or other spiritual practice. Others might give up some element of their normal routine as a reminder of the season. This newsletter offers a link to the UCC Lenten Devotional, "Into the Deep", on *page 4*. This devotional is available for download in time for Lent. I always find these devotionals meaningful. I also intend to read Robin Wall Kimmerer's book entitled, "The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World". The theme of this book is moving from an economy of scarcity and competition to one of interconnectedness, gratitude, and abundance. This shift embodies the work of Lent, our budding ministry relationship, and our ecumenical Lenten theme.

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## BEGINNING A NEW THING...continued

As we enter a part-time ministry relationship, the natural tendency can be one of scarcity. **"How will we ever be capable of living into our vision for First Congregational Church with only a part-time pastor?"** Yet, flipping that script to one of abundance and possibility, we might say, **"Imagine the possibilities of adding a part-time pastor to the abundance of good things that are already in place at First Congregational Church!"** This is where the goal of 'beginning a new thing', and building on the current strengths in our church family, is truly exciting.

We will be participating in Weekly Community Lenten Services and hosting this service at our church on April 9. The theme of this series is **"God is Enough"**. Thank you to Rev. Daniel Flucke for his leadership within our ecumenical community! This theme embodies the journey that we are embarking on beautifully. Although we don't always have the answers and often feel that we are ill-equipped for the demands placed upon us. I do trust and believe that God gives us the capacity to accomplish what God is calling us to do. That doesn't make life any easier at times but for me it is a reminder that I can't solve every local or world problem that exists, but I can work within the gifts God has provided to do meaningful work to broaden God's abundance in this world. When I feel totally stuck, perhaps I am trying to go way beyond what God expects of me?

How ever you personally choose to spend this upcoming month and season, I encourage you to make it meaningful, refreshing, and rejuvenating for your personal faith life and our church community life as well.

Please know that you can contact me via email at [pastorjim@portucc.org](mailto:pastorjim@portucc.org), and through our church office. In the event of an emergency, you may contact me directly on my cell phone at (262) 384-8124.

With love and blessings as we embark on doing this 'new thing' together!

Pastor Jim



*Jim and Beverly Schleif  
enjoying winter trails in  
northern Wisconsin.*

## AN OFFICIAL WELCOME TO REV. JIM SCHLEIF

Our church and Rev. James Schleif entered into a Covenant/Call Agreement with an official start date of March 1. We welcome and thank Pastor Jim for serving as our half-time Designated Interim!

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## TWO MORNING SERVICES ON MARCH 2

Sunday morning, March 2, we will have our 9:00 Communion service in Fellowship Hall and hold a second Communion service at 10:30 in the Sanctuary. Nursery care will be offered at 9:00. Join us for Pastor Jim's first official Sunday as our Interim!

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## MEET & GREETINGS WITH PASTOR JIM IN MARCH

Pastor Jim will be holding "Meet & Greets" during the month of March in our Church Library for an opportunity to get acquainted. Coffee and Kringle will be provided. The dates are as follows:

**-Tuesday mornings March 4, 11, 18, & 25 from 9:00-10:30**

**-Sunday mornings March 9 & 23 from 10:00-11:30**  
(after 9:00 service)

Pastor Jim will also be joining Men's Breakfast at Rivers Edge in Saukville on March 6 and 20.

We hope you will join us in welcoming Pastor Jim!

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## VISITING WITH PASTOR JIM

Pastor Jim plans to make Thursday mornings an intentional time of visits. Whether it be individual or small-group meetings, he is happy to gather at church, a local restaurant, or your home. Jim encourages you to email to set something up! (pastorjim@portucc.org).



## JOIN US

We have one Sunday morning worship service at 9:00 each week. On the first Sunday, an additional service is held at 10:30.

## HOLY COMMUNION

The first Sunday morning of each month we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion, open to all who seek to follow in the way of Christ, both children and adults.

## LINKED UP

Be on the lookout for orange text - it's linked up to documents and web pages you might find helpful or interesting.

## SUBMIT INFO FOR THE NEWSLETTER

If you have a celebration, prayer request, or other contribution for the newsletter, please email the church office 7-10 days before the first day of the month.