



Congregational Connections

Monthly E-Newsletter of First Congregational Church, UCC | Port Washington, Wisconsin | March 2022

STUDY, WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP LEADING TOWARD DISCIPLESHIP

I'm looking forward to Lent this year. It is a season for introspection and prayer, a time for self-reflection and study; I feel a need to engage deeply this year. Lent is a season of preparation in which we steady ourselves for the difficult work of moving with Jesus toward the cross, with the hope and the glimmer of light that propels us forward toward the joy of resurrection. This month there are so many ways we can grow in our faith and continue to practice discipleship.

There are going to be opportunities for all of us to explore the seasonal themes. There are study opportunities on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings with "Embracing the Uncertain: A Lenten Study for Unsteady Times" as well as Wednesdays at noon with our Lectionary Lunch group. Exploring and reflecting on Biblical texts is an excellent way to equip your heart and mind for the Lenten journey.

There are, of course, opportunities for meaningful worship on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday evenings. Each Sunday morning, we will be discerning God's Word for our lives in the sacred text, in beautiful music and holy praise and prayer. Wednesday evening Vesper Worship services will seek to bring comfort and sustenance as we walk together with the Spirit. All of our communal worship services seek to inspire, challenge and comfort each of us as we grow in discipleship. Worship builds on the foundation of the Biblical text and together they nurture our faith in the shadows of Lent.

Fellowship and building up the personal connections and bonds of friendship in our faith community is another practice of the Lenten Season. Coffee hours after worship, evening meals and potlucks, youth game nights are not only fun and filled with warmth and good humor, but crucial in creating a community that loves one another.

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...STUDY, WORSHIP continued...

The relationships we nurture with one another help strengthen our relationship with God, strengthen our ability to be disciples and strengthen our identity as the Body of Christ at work in the world. Our fellowship is another way we practice our faith during these forty days of Lent.

Finally, this month is an opportunity to step forward in service to our church family and the community in which we live. As our minds are encouraged in study, our souls are moved with praise in worship, and our hearts are filled to bursting with fellowship, we respond with action in discipleship. Everyone is going to be encouraged to engage with the "Ministry Options" survey either online or on paper at church. There are over 65 different ways your church and community are in need of your time and talent. Fill it out and consider the ways you might be able to respond to all of God's gifts this Lenten Season.

May Christ walk beside you as we journey together through Lent.

Peace,

Pastor Scott



Lent will quickly begin this month, on Wednesday, March 2, with our Ash Wednesday Worship Service at 7:00 pm. Let's begin our forty days of Lent together in the sanctuary with a moving and meaningful evening service. Ash Wednesday worship is a simple, yet profound service of scripture, song, prayers, and the imposition of ashes as a sign of our frail humanity. It is a service in which we acknowledge our faults and failings, in order that we might truly experience God's acceptance and overflowing love.



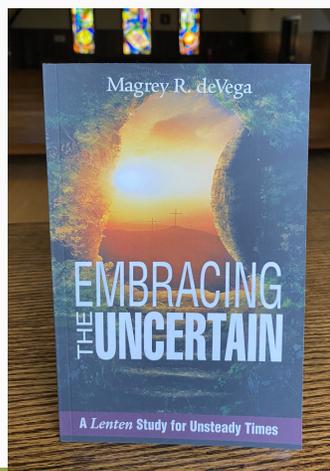
Pastor Scott will be offering a weekly Adult Lenten Study at two different times during Lent. One group will meet after worship on Sunday mornings in Lent (beginning on March 6) from 11:15 to 12:15 in the Dennett Room and the other group will meet via Zoom on Tuesday evenings (beginning March 8) from 6:30 to 7:30. Both sessions will be using the book *Embracing the Uncertain: A Lenten Study for Unsteady Times* by Magrey deVega. Each week a different scripture text is studied in order to help us better understand issues like: faith and doubt, sin and forgiveness, trust and anxiety, life and mortality. It is a timely devotional book for this “uncertain” age.

In “Embracing the Uncertain”, Magrey deVega explores six stories in the Gospels as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem, where he will be crucified. These stories are signposts in the gospel narrative, pointing down at a world filled with uncertainty, yet pointing us forward to a cross that can show us how to follow Jesus with courage, obedience, and the hope of the resurrection. Each chapter includes questions for reflection and discussion and a practical focus for the upcoming week.

--from the Editors

The book is available from Cokesbury, Amazon, and other online booksellers, as well as an eBook or Kindle edition. The office will also be happy to order one for you if you would like (cost \$10.00), but please get your request in as soon as possible.

You can view a preview of the book online at Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Embracing-Uncertain-Magrey-Devega/dp/1501840584/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=





Beginning on Wednesday evening, March 9 at 6:30, we will be gathering together for a brief evening service of scripture, poetry, prayers, and a brief message. We will be following the weekly themes of the book "Embracing the Uncertain" but without using the same texts or materials. Those who are a part of the study will be further encouraged, and those who are not familiar with the book will find a meaningful worship service all on its own. The Wednesday evening worship service in the quiet of our candlelit sanctuary provides another opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds for the trials of Holy Week and the joy of Easter. Join us for a time of centering and refocusing on following the ways of Jesus.



Everyone who is considering joining the church is invited to come to our two new members classes; Sunday, March 13, and Sunday, March 20, both at 6:00 p.m. at church. These classes are an opportunity to get to know one another a little better, learn about our local church and ministry, as well as learn more about the wider United Church of Christ. The March 13th class will focus on learning more about the United Church of Christ (UCC), the "wider" church beyond Port Washington and then the March 20th class focuses on our local church's past, present, and future.

We will be inviting some of our current church leadership to attend the evening sessions as well that we might get to know one another better and everyone can help answer any questions folks might have. Our New Members would then be invited to join the church on Sunday morning, March 27, during the 10:00 worship service. We are so excited you have found our church; we hope you will consider formally becoming a part of our faith community!



As everyone who has been involved with our congregation for more than a few years understands, the transition period and the pandemic shut-down have changed things around our church. Changes in the church have been matched by changes in the lives of our members. A considerable amount has happened in the last two and a half years! To make sure we are matching the 2022 interests and gifts of our members with the 2022 ministries and activities of our church, we have created a "Ministry Options" Survey we would like every person in the church to complete.

You may [click here](#) to start the survey. The survey can also be accessed on our website, there are paper copies available at church as well. The survey has over 65 different ministry options listed, with brief descriptions, in hope that we can do a better job at matching the gifts, talents, abilities and interests of each person with the wide assortment of ministry opportunities we offer.

In 2022 we are going to need "all-hands-on-deck". So, we would like to invite every member and friend of the church to be involved. We may be a small church compared to many, but we carry out an incredible variety of ministry and mission over the course of a year. All these activities are only possible because of the passions and interests of our members and friends.

As part of your Lenten practices this season, take some time to complete the survey. Consider helping out in a new way, whether it is within the walls of the church or in the wider community. Take pride in marking the areas of ministry in which you already participate and would like to continue; marvel at the variety of opportunities our church provides. Creatively ponder if there are still more ways that you would like to put your faith into action and let us know you'd like to be involved.

There are so many ways to participate: from helping with the flower beds outside, to ushering on a Sunday morning, to assisting with a food drive for the Food Pantry. We need everyone to step forward and be a part of making this "Body of Christ" alive and vibrant. As you read through the list of ministry options, please take time to prayerfully consider the ways you would like to be actively involved and engaged in our mutual ministry.

First Congregational Church

Fellowship Team

Invites You

to a

Spring
**CARD MAKING
WORKSHOP**

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

12:00-2:00 pm

Join us for a Greeting Card Making Event!

Open to all ages, invite your neighbors and friends!

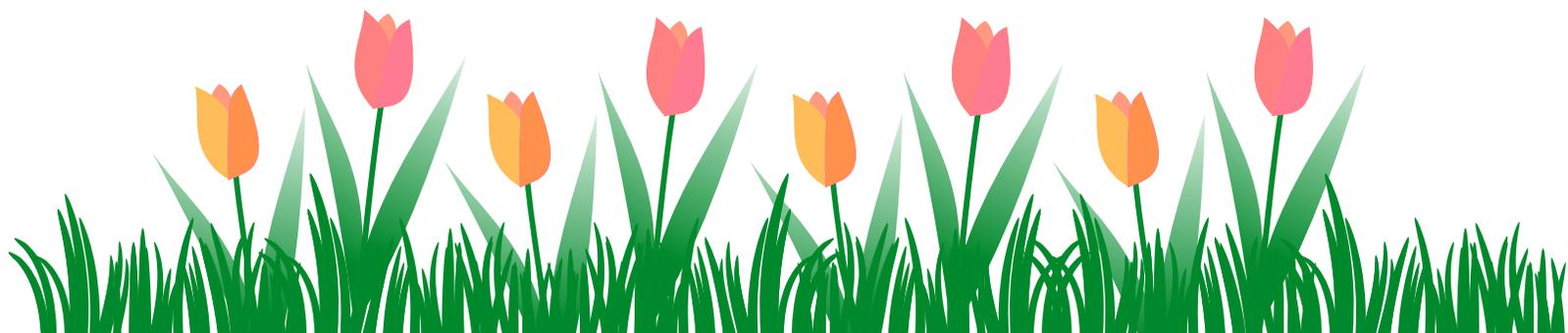
Each attendee will have the opportunity to create

four different spring themed cards

(can alter for Birthday or Mother's Day/Father's Day).

Light snacks and refreshments will be offered.

**Please sign up in advance by contacting
Jennifer Dimmer, Fellowship Team Chair
(jenniferdimmer@gmail.com, 414-303-1813)**



GAME NIGHT Part Two!



Kids had a great time on February 16 at Game Night, Part Two!



A perfect night for Chili Dinner on February 23.



FINDING LENT ON OUR LITURGICAL WALL CALENDAR

Lent is the church season of preparation for Easter, mirroring the season of Advent as preparation for Christmas. "Lent" derives from words that mean "longer days" so appropriate as we journey through the end of winter and experience more daylight each day.

Wednesday, March 2, will be Ash Wednesday this year and the beginning of Lent. (Ash Wednesday's date is calculated from the date of Easter which changes each year.) "Ash" Wednesday comes from the tradition of marking one's forehead with ashes as a sign of repentance. Ash Wednesday is marked on our calendar with an ash-gray panel.

The season of Lent is forty days long. (Sundays are not counted.) "Forty" recalls other faith stories: 40 days of rain for Noah, 40 years of desert travelling for Moses, and especially Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness.

Lent can be an opportunity for personal reflection and spiritual inventory, a time to renew our call to discipleship, to find where our hearts and lives are not aligned with God. Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and study are traditional ways to focus our personal devotions, strengthen our connection to God and motivate our loving actions toward those in need. For some, changing our routines or diets can help to focus our Lenten journey.

The weeks in Lent in our calendar are in shades of purple, the traditional color for the season. Purple has long been associated with both royalty and penitence (feeling regret for wrongdoing). Purple dye was once so expensive and rare that only royalty could afford to have purple clothes. We are also reminded of the Roman soldiers mocking Jesus after his arrest by dressing him in a purple robe and a crown of thorns.

The last week of Lent includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Our calendar marks the end of Lent with a black panel for Good Friday, the remembrance of Jesus' crucifixion. Our seasonal marker for Lent is praying hands, in purple!

We thank Jane Spalding for contributing this article about Lent.



WELCOME OUR NEW FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Finance Team, consisting of Kathy Bretl, Jim Schmit, Sherrie Dimmer, and Pastor Scott, interviewed two candidates for the position of Financial Administrator on Wednesday, February 16. After thoughtful conversation, the Team agreed to nominate one of those candidates, Phil Stepanski, for the position. The Church Council voted via email through Moderator, Jeanne Mantsch, to ask Phil to be the Financial Administrator, we are glad Phil has agreed to take the position.

We believe Phil brings a great knowledge of our congregation, many years of experience running his own company (including keeping the company financials), as well as expertise working with QuickBooks (the accounting software utilized by the church). According to our Church Constitution, because Phil will now become a paid employee, he will need to step away as Associate Moderator in order to take on the role of Financial Administrator. The Church Council has already begun looking for a replacement for Phil on the Executive Team and Council. Lorraine Halls, who resigned from the position in late December, graciously continued as Financial Administrator until we hired someone new and will work with Phil to get him “up to speed”.



LIGHTHOUSE ACTIVITY IN MARCH - MAKING SOUP

On Sunday, March 20, from 12:00 - 3:00, middle school and high school youth are invited to meet at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 420 W. Whitefish Road here in Port Washington, to make soup! Learn how to make vegetable soup that will be prepped, cooked, packaged, and delivered to local food pantries by Lighthouse kids. Please bring an ingredient to add to the soup: container of vegetable broth, carrots, peas, celery, green beans, onions, or corn.





MARCH SCRIPTURE TEXTS AND SUNDAY WORSHIP THEMES

March 6: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Luke 4:1-13

Communion Sunday and First Sunday in Lent

As Jesus began his time in the wilderness we also begin our journey into the depths of spiritual life. Like the people of Israel we are encouraged to remember moments of survival and gifts of “milk and honey” in the past.

March 13: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Luke 13:31-35

Church School Sunday; Chancel Choir and Second Sunday in Lent

In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of God’s promises and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible. Today, living traditions and rituals can help to keep us on our journeys of faith in the midst of hardship.

March 20: Isaiah 55:1-9

Luke 13:1-9

Handbell Choir and Third Sunday in Lent

God invites us to open ourselves to the sound and sight, and to the presence and call of God’s generous goodness all around us and within us in hope that we might bear the fruit of discipleship.

March 27: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Family Sunday; Children’s Choir and Fourth Sunday in Lent

The story of the prodigal son reminds us that God’s welcome intends to leave no one on the outside looking in. We become ambassadors for Christ, reaching out in love.

OUR THANKS

To Grady Karrels, Mia Blum, Graham Garthus, Avery Roehrig, and their families for providing Nursery Care in February.

To the Church School Leadership Team (Shandy Roehrig, Jennifer Dimmer, Tina Olson, Dawn Rychtik, and Savannah Anderson) for organizing Church School's Mac 'n' Cheese fundraiser on February 13. The kids prepared and sold 28 pans for a total of \$555 which will be donated to the church window repairs loan.

To Jennifer Dimmer and Tina Olson for hosting another Game Night and dinner at church on February 16. We had a great crew of kids join in the fun!

To Kitchie Allen, Jason Jacque, Don Niederfrank, Meg Tackes, Mike Spalding, Kathy Bretl, Joe Mueller, and the Confirmation Class for serving as Worship Leaders in February.

To Shandy Roehrig for serving as parent helper for the Confirmation Class mission project, assisting Lighthouse in assembling over 75 birthday kits at the Saukville Community Food Pantry on February 20.

To Dani Peiffer for serving as parent helper at the Confirmation class on February 21.

To Meg Tackes for providing calzones to the entire Wednesday Lunch Group on February 23.

To Tom Roehrig and his son, Noah, for putting down additional salt around the church on Wednesday, February 23.

To Jennifer Dimmer and the Fellowship Team for hosting a Chili Dinner on February 23. It was a perfect night for chili!

To Matt and Sarah Riemer, Kitchie Allen, Tom and Shandy Roehrig, and Scott and Niki Nelson for providing Fellowship Hour in February.

To Mike Dimmer, Gary Tackes, and Joe Rychtik for volunteering to be on a snow removal/salt application rotation for the remainder of winter.

To Mike Spalding for tuning the church pianos on a regular basis.

To Jane Spalding for organizing the seasonal décor closet.

To Jim Schmit for collecting the Food Pantry donations in the entryway every Wednesday and dropping them off at The Food Pantry here in Port Washington.

APPROVED JANUARY CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

(The January Minutes were approved at the February 10, 2022 meeting.)

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Church Council Minutes

January 13, 2022

Call to Order – By Jeanne Mantsch @ 7:02 PM

Pastor Scott, Jeanne Mantsch, Mike Spalding, Ric Probst, Jennifer Dimmer, Kathy Bretl, Jason Jacque, Phil Stepanski, Savannah Anderson, Eric Olson, Joe Mueller, and Rhonda Thompson

Opening Meditation – Jennifer Dimmer- Jennifer shared a collection of notes that she has written for her children. She has left them the notes that ask them to "Open your heart..." to kindness,.. to elbow bumps,.. to respectfulness,.. to love,.. to silence,.. to prayer,.. to peace,.. to forgiveness,.. to family.

Approval of the Minutes – December, 2021- Phil motions to approve the December minutes and Jennifer Dimmer seconds the motion. The minutes are approved.

Monthly Budget Review (Kathy)- Lorraine's update on line 46430/Pledges, she says there is good news, the giving units have been generous, but she noticed that an entry of \$3600 deposited in June was entered twice and has since deducted the repeat entry. Line 62400/Loan Payment for Windows was pushed back from September to November due to Cornerstone's computer problems so the loan repayment is pushed back or delayed leaving us \$2000 under budget in 2021. Overall we ended up about \$15,000 short which is reflected in the church checkbook balance that is also down \$14,000 with a balance of about \$24,000.

Pastor's Moment (Pastor Scott)-Pastor Scott was asked to take a poll on behalf of the staff as to whether or not the newsletter is worth the effort? With attendance low, electronic communication may be beneficial, but frequency of the newsletter could possibly be scaled back if it makes it worth it financially. Team Leaders should develop a list of ministry opportunities the church provides where volunteers are needed. Then members can fill out a form as to how they might volunteer. Volunteers and opportunities can be referenced when needs arise.

Old Business

Stewardship Committee Report – (Jason)-Pledge totals come to \$152,535 for 2022 with 99 pledges, opposed to the 113 pledges for 2021. There are two new pledges; five households that have stopped giving; five households that decreased their pledge and 19 households that increased their pledges. After a few more calls to see if there are any additional pledges thank you cards will be written to those that pledged.

2022 Budget - (Kathy) -The emailed budget needs some updates so this will not be the budget that gets presented to the congregation. Thanks to Jason, council adjusted a couple of line items to finalize the 2022 budget for the Congregational Meeting. Mike Spalding motions to approve this adapted budget once formulas are double checked and the revised version is sent out to Council. Phil seconds the motion. The vote is approved to use this latest 2022 Budget.

Long range planning – Pastor Scott is reading a book "How To Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going" by Susan Beaumont and thinks this is fitting and maybe helpful for Council to read also. This committee is fitting with the needed building repairs and would be well served to consider the building needs before working on figuring out where our ministry is leading and what changes are

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CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES continued...

Building maintenance updates – (Bill)- Given by Joe Mueller on behalf of Bill. Is it possible to get Year To Date amounts/totals from Monthly Budget reports on monthly basis to help control spending? Timers are installed and functioning. Bill plans to meet with staff to go over a few things. First, to establish carpet cleaning schedule and budget. Secondly, when fire protection does inspections Property Team would like to be on site. Thirdly, the elevator contract by Otis is in it's third year of a five year contract. Property Team feels a shorter contract makes better financial sense and is looking for better practices. Current building practices allow for emergency repairs to be fixed immediately all other building repairs are ordered if they are under \$250. Lastly to have a better sense of details with pest control and window washing. The Property Team would like to initiate bids on any planned maintenance that exceeds \$2000. They feel \$5000 for maintenance budget is not enough with a growing list of repairs needed inside and out. Maybe educating the congregation could bring awareness and more funds.

Youth Ministry Fund Raiser (Savannah)-We raised close to \$2300. Pastor Scott is looking for approval from council to complete the \$2500 commitment by using mission funds. Kathy motions to use the mission funds and Jason seconds. The vote is approved. They are doing a community needs assessment from five supporting congregations and also the community for hiring, planning and programming for the years to come. To figure out what the students need and want from youth ministry. There is still a need for two board members.

New Business

Resignation of Finance Administrator-Lorraine is resigning, but will be available to help transition. A hiring team will need to be assembled, including the Finance Team as well as Jim Schmitt and Sherrie Dimmer. Kathy will ask Jim and Sherrie if they'd like to be a part of the hiring team.

Latest recommendation from Wisconsin Council of Churches- The WCC recommends a return to remote worship for the next four to six weeks. After discussion, Council is fine continuing with services as is and moving forward.

Winter Congregational Meeting (Jeanne)- It will be held with the same format as last meeting, in person or online Sunday, January 23 at 11:15am.

Fellowship Dinners (Jennifer)- Jennifer would like to proceed forward holding the dinners for those that are comfortable even if the numbers will be small.

Port Pre-school and the future- Abby, President of Port Preschool board, is considering the adjustment of it's organizational structure due to the 4K program ending. They were wondering if a member of the church would like to take on a leadership role to be the constant for a possible rotating board if it continues as a "stand alone" program.

Any other new business to come before the Council- Nothing, Kathy motions to adjourn and Savannah seconds it. Meeting is adjourned at 9:14 PM.

MARCH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 - Caitlin Calder | 16 - Bridget Bretl |
| 2 - Levi Franke | John Claerbaut |
| 3 - Nancy Hinneberg | 17 - Philip Skowbo |
| 4 - Emma Kasza-James | Angelo Lopez |
| Brooke Peiffer | 18 - Zoe Mantsch |
| Caitlin Zozak | 22 - Cynthia Zozak |
| 5 - Dennis Condon | 23 - Calhan Norman |
| Chris Wach | 25 - Tim Cira |
| 8 - Amy Gilhooly | John Arndt |
| Brad Mueller | 26 - Dawn Rychtik |
| 12 - Hannah Lemke | 27 - Darcy McManus |
| Joe Mueller | 29 - Jason Jacque |
| 15 - Dave Eslinger | 30 - James Johnson |
| | Rowan Norman |



MARCH WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

- 4 - Eric and Jackie Oleson
- 15 - Joe and Dawn Rychtik

Please contact Beckie Perez, at office@portucc.org, if you would like to add a Birthday or Anniversary.



MARCH 2022 CALENDAR

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
		1	2 Ash Wednesday 12 pm Wednesday Lunch Group 7 pm Ash Wednesday Worship Service Handbell Choir Rehearsal	3 8 am Men's Breakfast – The Beacon 7 pm Executive Team	4	5
6 First Sunday in Lent 8 am/10 am Communion Worship Service Nursery Care 9 am Fellowship Hour 11:15 am Adult Lenten Study	7 5:45 pm Children's Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	8 6:30 pm Adult Lenten Study- Zoom	9 12 pm Wednesday Lunch Group 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal	10 8 am Men's Breakfast – The Beacon 7 pm Church Council	11	12
13 Second Sunday in Lent 8 am/10 am Worship Service 10 am Church School Nursery Care Chancel Choir 11 am Fellowship Hour 11:15 am Adult Lenten Study 6 pm New Member Class	14 5:45 pm Children's Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	15 6:30 pm Adult Lenten Study- Zoom	16 12 pm Wednesday Lunch Group 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal	17 8 am Men's Breakfast – The Beacon	18	19
20 Third Sunday in Lent 8 am/10 am Worship Service Handbells Nursery Care 11:15 am Adult Lenten Study 6 pm New Member Class	21 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	22 6:30 pm Adult Lenten Study- Zoom	23 12 pm Wednesday Lunch Group 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal	24 8 am Men's Breakfast – The Beacon	25 1 pm Property Team	26
27 Fourth Sunday in Lent 8 am Worship Service 10 am Family Service New Members Children's Choir Nursery Care 11 am Fellowship Hour 11:15 am Adult Lenten Study 12 pm Spring Card Making Workshop	28 5:45 pm Children's Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal Confirmation Class	29 6:30 pm Adult Lenten Study- Zoom	30 12 pm Wednesday Lunch Group 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7 pm Handbell Choir Rehearsal	31 8 am Men's Breakfast – The Beacon		

CHURCH INFORMATION

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

131 North Webster Street

Port Washington, WI 53074

(262) 284-2022

website - portucc.org, email - office@portucc.org



Church Office Hours

Monday - Friday mornings from 8:30 - 11:30

Pastor Scott's Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays, and by appointment

Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Scott McLeod, Pastor - pastor.scott@portucc.org

Amy Gilhooly, Communications Director - amyg@portucc.org

Beckie Perez, Office Manager - office@portucc.org

Phil Stepanski, Financial Administrator

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PayPal is an easy way to give to the church to pay your pledge and/or make an extra financial gift. You can find the PayPal button on the home page of the church website (portucc.org) or use this QR code. Thank you!

