

# First Congregational Church



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May 26, 2020

Dear Members of First Congregational Church:

I hope my letter finds you well. It's not an easy time in this separation but we can do it. Many of you have told me how much you miss gathering in church, seeing your fellow members and worshipping as one. To be honest with you, this Interim Minister misses you as well. I look forward to the time when we can gather as a whole church in person, look around and say, "God was with us in 'safer at home' and God is still with us now." Let's be a forward-looking people.

I thought I should reach out to you to give you an update. I know most of you are wondering where we are in terms of opening the church, our search for a new settled minister, how we're doing financially, how our outreach and missions have been affected, and how things will change when we resume gathering in the church. We've all added the term "Zoom" to our common lexicon and indeed it is used frequently. The electronic platform Zoom has allowed many of our meetings to continue in at least a virtual way.

\*We're taking our cues from the Wisconsin Conference UCC office as to when to **reopen our doors**. We understand that even though the state has reopened, our decision as a church to begin holding worship will be a decision made in concert with the Wisconsin Conference. Rest assured that we have had many conversations about how best to provide a safe environment for you in which to gather. And we are committed to making that happen.

\***The Search Committee** has continued their work and is in close contact with a couple of good candidates. The Committee hopes to meet with them face to face before long and determine if one of them is our long-awaited settled minister. We hope to have someone in place by the fall. We'll keep you posted.

\***Financially**, like many churches, we are challenged. Our giving is down, our pledges are less than we need, and our costs continue. Please help by supporting your church to make sure that we don't fall into a hole that would be difficult to climb out of. These are difficult times. We are an important resource in the community, and we need to secure our church's financial well-being.

\*We have not been as active with our **missions** as we would have been in a time of open doors, but we did make quite an impact with making masks. Your contributions of time and effort

resulted in the creation of over **50,000 masks** that went to our local police, fire and EMT departments, nursing homes and other shelters, homeless, and riders of the mass transit buses in Milwaukee. Thank you for your generosity. We also continue our mission work with Family Promise. At present, you'll find that we're "rolling out the **Food Pantry barrel**" by our front door. We invite you to participate by contributing non-perishable food items to the collection barrel.

\*We know that there will be **changes** in the way we do church. At least for the foreseeable future the Passing of the Peace, the common cup of communion, social distancing seating, disinfecting, and the inclusion of more virtual meetings will become more commonplace.

Please know that we are still here, active and available. Summer office hours will resume next week, Tuesday – Friday mornings. Please feel free to contact the church office if you have any questions, concerns, or pastoral needs.

The Church has faced many challenges in its long history. These will not be considered major impediments. We have faced persecution, isolation and dissension. We have undergone major divisions and seen dictators and tyrants try to undermine our faith. But we are still strong, still viable, and still serving our community and the world. We will listen, as faithful members of the United Church of Christ, to discern the places where God is still speaking, still calling us to discipleship. And we will continue to be a beacon of light in Port Washington and beyond, bringing God's love and compassion to all we have been blessed to serve.

Faithfully,  
Pastor Jim