

**December  
2016**

# Still Speaking

*Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena*

## **Board of Directors:**

- *Dennis Artley, treasurer*
- *Ann Diamond, chair*
- *Kathy Dempsey*
- *Ann Gerow*
- *Dottie Haase*
- *Vicky Lindsay*
- *Mike Mack*
- *Jim Mc Neil, vice chair*
- *Beth Petty*

## **Dates to Remember**

### **Dec 4**

TBAC Chorus Concert  
at First United  
Methodist Church

### **Dec 10**

Ladies Christmas  
Luncheon

### **Dec 11**

"Blue Christmas @ St.  
Paul Lutheran Church

### **Dec 12**

Board of Directors

### **Dec 18**

Special "Christmas  
Fund Offering" for  
Veterans of the Cross

### **Dec. 24**

#### **Christmas Eve**

6:30 pm Music  
7:00 pm "Lessons  
& Carols"  
8 pm Christmas Eve  
Reception

### **Dec. 26**

**(Office Closed)**  
Friendship Room



## **A Word from our Minister:**

### **Advance into Advent**

*Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance*

There is something in the air during these four weeks that lead up to Christmas. It's more than just the count-down of shopping days. It's more than hearing familiar Christmas Carols and seeing snowmen, Santas, and reindeer. It's the expectant feeling that something's coming, something that's pregnant with meaning for our lives.

Here in church, we remember and retell the story of Jesus' coming into the world. On Dec. 4, we will try to get inside Mary's head, the young virgin who discovers she is pregnant. Things were coming too fast and happening out of order! She was troubled by the news, we are told in Luke's Gospel, especially when she realized her baby would be God's Messiah, the long-expected and long-awaited Savior Christ. Would a humble handmaid like her be up to the task of raising Jesus?

On Dec. 11, we will see the story from her husband Joseph's point of view and listen in to a dream recorded in Matthew's Gospel. Should he accept Mary's pregnancy, or divorce her? Should he treat her baby as his own, offering her child the protection of an intact family and a patrilineal heritage to King David, or send them away?

On Dec. 18, we will follow the young couple as they leave their hometown of Nazareth and make their way to Bethlehem to register themselves for the Roman Census. Disruption and dislocation due to government decree at a very vulnerable and tender time in their story. The busyness of the season leaves little room for the Holy Family.

Then on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, we will gather for an evening worship service of "lessons and carols" which puts the whole story into the context of Old Testament prophecy, including shepherds & angels and the wisemen from the East who all seem to know what's going on.

Sunday morning, Dec. 25 (Christmas Day!), we'll talk about what the shepherds may have experienced when they discovered the baby Jesus in the manger. On New Year's Day (Sun. Jan 1), we'll accompany the Holy Family to the Temple for Jesus' dedication. These are old stories, well known, but which still take us by surprise as they unfold.

Join us each Sunday at 10 a.m. as we advance through Advent.

## Celebrating the Birthdays of December

12/7	Gavin Plume	12/17	Clarence Rickard
12/8	Jan Snell	12/19	Robert Silver
12/10	Jean Gilliland	12/20	Paul Hawkins
12/13	Bill Dempsey	12/24	Sharon Stewart
12/15	Pat Leahy	12/28	John Mack
		12/31	Brenda Hawkins



Dec. 1 Brian & Belinda Hanna 24 years  
Dec. 20 Kevin & Joyce Langerfeld 24 years  
Dec. 27 Avery & Marcia Aten 45 years



### Ladies Luncheon

*Dolly Zeller and Jan Snell*

Please mark your calendars and plan to join us for the **Christmas Ladies Luncheon** to be held in the Fellowship Hall on **Saturday, December 10th at 12:00 Noon. Call Dolly or Jan for reservations.** Please plan to pay when making your reservation. Jan will be at coffee hour to collect money for the luncheon

We look forward to seeing you there.

Dolly & Jan

## “Saving Jesus”

### DVD-based discussion group – Thursdays at Noon

Have you ever felt that the Jesus we know from the Gospels has been either kidnapped by the Christian Right or discarded by the Secular Left?

Please join Rev. Lance for a series of **lunch-hour conversations** featuring a host of experts — such as the late Marcus Borg, John Shelby Spong, Diana Butler Bass, John B. Cobb, John Dominic Crossan, Yvette Flunder, Ron Buford, Brian McLaren, Robin Meyers, Helen Prejean, Winnie Varghese, Matthew Fox, Tex Sample, and more — as we explore a credible Jesus for the Third Millennium.

We will meet in the **Lower Level All-Purpose Room** (down 11 stairs) from noon until 1:00 p.m.

## Christmas Fund Offering for “Veterans of the Cross”

*Kathy Dempsey, Mission Committee Chair*

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.



You have the opportunity to be a part of a ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in the annual “Christmas Fund” All-Church Offering for “Veterans of the Cross”.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund on Sunday, Dec 18th, will help provide for the supplementation of small annuities, supplementation of health premiums, emergency grants, and provide Christmas “Thank You” gift checks next December to low-income church retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Please know that any gift you make is truly appreciated and that it will brighten the life of one of God's servants who is facing a moment of personal need. Thank you.

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## Stewardship Wrap-Up Report

The theme for this years Stewardship Drive was “**Roots and Leaves**”. We talked about the deep “roots” of our church. We talked about our church being the oldest organized church in Alpena, and that we were founded by Daniel and Sarah Carter in 1862, when they held services in their home. Daniel Bisbee was the founding Minister. Many other spiritual and lay leaders followed Mr. and Mrs. Carter and Pastor Bisbee over the past 154 years.

We discussed that the “leaves” of the church are the people. We have many programs and volunteers, who are helping our church to produce fruit, which is new members and our ability to share the word of God in our community.

The Stewardship Committee is pleased to announce that our final figures are as follows: 78 Pledges, which include General Fund for \$133,392.00 and the Mission Fund for \$17,004.00 for a total of \$150,396.00. Of the 78 Pledges, 30 have increased their pledge, 23 have stayed the same, 16 have decreased their pledge, and we have 9 new pledges.

The Stewardship Committee wishes to thank all of you for your support, and wish all of you a wonderful Holiday Season.

*Bill Dempsey-Chair*

*Kathy Dempsey*

*Dennis and Janet Artley*

*Jim and Patty McNeil*

*Rev. Paul and Patty Lance*



## SERRV Saturday Sale

Marcia Aten and Belinda Aguirre

We had a good SERRV bazaar in October with lots of great help from volunteers new & experienced. Sales were below last year's record levels - which means we still have plenty of items, including new items we have added (and reduced prices on others) for our

### 10th annual December Downstairs Sale SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 10 AM -2 PM

The sale will take place on the first floor instead of in Fellowship Hall. A few good helpers and a lot of good shoppers are needed! Please join us and bring a friend. Reminder slips are available at the care letter podium.

Belinda Aguirre and Marcia Aten, for the SERRV team



## An idea for Christmas Gifts

Christmas is just around the corner and I have the perfect stocking stuffer – dish cloths. These cloths are of great value, high quality and inexpensive. They are double layered knit, ravel roof, sanitary and made in the USA! Cost is \$2 each and is available in colors of red, blue, yellow, green and natural (profits help to defray the cost of altar supplies). Call Nancy Wedge, 356-4402 after 7 p.m. or send an email [wedge.nancy@gmail.com](mailto:wedge.nancy@gmail.com) to place your order.

## Christmas Eve Reception

We are in need of cookies, cheese and crackers, and sweet breads for Saturday, Dec. 24.

Please see the sign-up sheet for the Christmas Eve Reception on the Care Letter podium.

Please contact Patty Lance (340-0258) if you have any questions. Thanks.



## The Mitten Tree

Diana Standen

A collection basket for children's mittens is by the display case in the hallway. Other items accepted are: hats, gloves, scarves, slippers, socks, and sweaters (any size) .

All the items collected will be donated to organizations such as Salvation Army or Trinity Church's Sunday Supper. Whether hand-made or purchased, your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated.

We will be collecting mittens through Sunday, December 11. Thank you!



## Board of Directors November 2016 Meeting Highlights

Gerrie La Cross, Secretary

- ◆ **Comments:** Vicky Lindsay and Deb Butler are restarting “storytellers corner” every Sunday. Looking for more volunteers. Bill Dempsey commented on the success of the Harvest Dinner. Thank you to Lindsay’s and Gerber’s for their hard work.
- ◆ **Financial Report:** The budget is in great shape for the end of the year. Discussion of proposed budget for 2017 with actual pledged income. Final vote on that will be at the December meeting
- ◆ **Stewardship:** Board felt there should be more emphasis on the General Fund with a better explanation of how the Mission Fund relates to the over-all church budget and ministries.
- ◆ **Personnel:** Committee submitted salary recommendations for 2017. All staff evaluations have been completed for 2016
- ◆ **Fellowship:** A new committee has met twice after Sunday services. They have identified people willing to chair individual events.
- ◆ **Mission:** 19 baskets were given to local families for Thanksgiving.
- ◆ **Worship:** Underground Church will take a break until January 2017. Advent began on November 27th. Hanging of the greens will take place on Sunday, Dec 4th.
- ◆ **Comstock:** Board received approval of the General Fund request. All in-house requests were granted with the exception of the song and dance group.
- ◆ **Property:** Discussion of a bill from Omega Electric. Mike has repaired the tiles in the hallway in front of the Lounge — some were loose, possibly from the flood last March.
- ◆ **Pastoral Relations:** Comments can be directed to Dan Kibbe, Lynne Stewart, or Jeff Gerow
- ◆ **Columbarium:** Discussion of policy regarding refunds for those who may change their decision to use the columbarium. No change to the policy which has been in effect since inception.
- ◆ **Pastor’s Report:** An advertisement has been placed in Experience Alpena. Kim Nunneley has begun a group called The Common House, as well as a yoga group here. New things happening with Christian Education with the restarting of the Storytellers Corner. Rev. Lance and Gerrie met with Allegra and the new web-site should be up and running by the end of the year.

Full Board Minutes are available by request: email to [office@uccalpena.org](mailto:office@uccalpena.org)

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Email: [officeuccalp@frontier.com](mailto:officeuccalp@frontier.com)  
Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm Monday – Thursday

**Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.**

**Fellowship Time: 11:00 a.m.**

**Minister: Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance III**

**Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case**

**Choir Director & Organist: Kat Tomaszewski**

**Treasurer: Denise Fusina**

**Secretary: Gerrie La Cross**

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*Merry Christmas*

and Happy New Year!