

**April
2023**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

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Vice-Chairperson
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Bill Dempsey
Ann Diamond
Joe Garant
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Dates to Remember

April 2
Worship Service

April 6
Supper and Service
(Trinity Episcopal)
and
Maundy Thurs. Svc.
(First Congregational)

April 7
Tre Ore Service
(Grace Lutheran)
and
Good Friday Service
(First Congregational)

April 9 – Easter
Sunrise Service &
Breakfast
and
Easter Service &
Fellowship

April 10
Board of Directors
Meeting

April 16
Worship Service

April 23
Worship Service

April 30
Worship Service

Spring Is In the Air

Pastor Jon Gougeon

So the saying goes... “April showers bring May flowers.” Unless, due to climate change, it brings snow or floods or doesn’t show up at all as in a spring drought. Yet we Christians still have hope. Hope for lives of joy, peace and eternal life lived out in our faith in the risen Jesus Christ. We celebrate that faith as we move into the Easter season in April. Thinking about Easter reminds me to mention the upcoming Holy Week services: April 6, Trinity Episcopal, simple supper and Maundy Thursday service starting at 5:00pm; Our own FCUCC Holy Thursday service at 6:00pm in the “Upper Room;” Good Friday services at Grace Lutheran at 12:00 noon and 6:00pm at FCUCC church. Then we celebrate Easter Sunday with sunrise service at the boat harbor at 7:00am followed by a light breakfast at the Yacht Club. Our Easter worship service in the sanctuary begins at 10:00 am. Many opportunities are available for the faithful to gather as the “Body of Christ” at the end of the Lenten Season and beginning of Easter time.

As a church the search for a settled Pastor continues, pray daily that the “right” pastor for such a time and place as this will be called by God to lead this congregation into the future. A sense of the need for renewed commitment to Jesus and the church appears to be percolating through the congregation. We look at the ways things have been done in the past and need to determine what direction the body wants to take. Pray continually for God’s guidance and direction for this body of believers in your collective journey forward.

Christianity and discipleship is all about renewal, revival and making things new. We have the timeless message of the gospel of salvation, we just need to find a new way of presenting, promoting and proclaiming it.

²⁵ **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand at last on the earth;**
²⁶ **and after my skin is destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. - Job 19:25-26,**
Modern English Version

¹⁷ **The Lord your God is in your midst, a Mighty One, who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will renew you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. - Zephaniah 3:17, Modern English Version**

May Grace and blessing be your way in the Lord,
Pastor Jon



Church Family and 50-Year Member Reunion

Save the Date



Mark your calendars for July 1 and 2! First Congregational United Church of Christ is holding a Church Family and 50-Year Member Reunion Extravaganza. For those interested in working on the planning committee, please add your name to the signup list on the care letter podium or call the church office. The committee is developing a comprehensive guest list for the event including family, friends and former members.

To be sure we don't miss anyone, please complete the guest list slips (see insert) and return them to the church office. There are additional guest list cards on the table in the middle hallway.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Missions Committee



Although the official One Great Hour of Sharing drive has ended, donations will gladly be accepted throughout the month of April. Please note "for OGHS" on your check. Thank you for your contributions and generosity toward those in need.

Easter Basket Fillers Available

Nancy Wedge



Looking for an Easter basket stuffer? Well, I have wonderful dishcloths (red, green, blue and yellow) available for purchase at \$2.25 each. They make nice Easter basket fillers, and all proceeds go toward altar supplies. Call Nancy Wedge at 989-356-4402.

Association of Lifelong Learners Program

Reverend Bob Case to Present

Reverend Bob Case will present a program entitled "How We Got the Bible, The First 300 Years of Early Christianity" Wednesday, April 5, 10:00am, at Alpena Community College's Madeline Briggs Center. Please contact ALL at 989-358-7207 for more information.

Open and Affirming Task Force

(Formerly Welcoming Committee)

At a meeting including Welcoming Committee members and concerned church members, it was requested for clarity that the Welcoming Committee change its name. Upon receiving the request that more church members be actively involved and included in the task force, we once again invite one and all to join the task force, and/or attend our meetings. The next meeting of the "Open and Affirming Task Force" is Thursday, April 13 at 7:30pm. We meet via Zoom, just click the "Join Fellowship Hour [HERE](#)" button on our church website.



At the Sunday, March 19 Congregational Conversation, the following Open and Affirming Covenant was agreed upon for our church members to consider:

The Members of the Congregation of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Alpena, MI aspire to embrace the inclusive love of Jesus Christ, so we make this covenant with the help of the Holy Spirit. We believe that all persons are created in God's image and are loved, valued, and blessed equally by God. This community of faith is an open and affirming congregation who seeks to welcome all persons, including those of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith

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Open and Affirming Task Force

(Formerly Welcoming Committee)

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backgrounds, physical and mental abilities, and economic circumstances. All persons are invited to fully share and participate in leadership, ministry, mission and community service, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, joys, and sorrows of our church family. Therefore, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this house of worship.

What is an Open and Affirming Covenant, and why is it needed? The intent of our church adopting a covenant is to send a public message to those often excluded or marginalized in both public and church life (due to their race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, family structure, faith background, physical and mental ability, or economic circumstances), that they indeed have a home in our church family, and we not just “welcome” them, but we affirm or support their circumstances and relationships. All sacraments and rites of our congregation are available to them, including baptism, confirmation, communion and marriage. We also send a message to all in our community who identify with the values Open and Affirming represent, and who want their children to learn the faith in a welcoming church.

Please continue to tell us your thoughts and/or concerns, to any member of the Open and Affirming Task Force (current members are Avery Aten, Terry Bell, Bill Dempsey, Edith and Boris Gerber, Dottie and Bill Haase, Jay and Marilyn Kettler, and Beth Petty) and join us at our next or any of our future meetings!

Food Support Donations Report

Missions Committee

Last month families who receive food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) experienced a significant reduction in their benefits. To address the effects of the pandemic in May 2021, all eligible households began getting extra monthly benefits. These extra benefits have now ended - at the same time that food costs have risen sharply with inflation. Regular benefit amounts are based on household size, income and deductions. The amount of the decrease varied depending on each group's circumstances. As an example, single-person households with a monthly income of \$700 saw their total monthly benefit drop from \$281 to \$71. A four-person household with a net income of \$1,700 saw their assistance drop from \$939 to \$429.

Using Comstock and Mission pledge funds received from our church membership, our church has sent the following monetary donations to local groups who are helping address hunger and other basic needs for families in our community:

\$1,000 to **Sunrise Mission Homeless Shelter** Our only homeless shelter. In addition to shelter, this mission offers other services to assist the homeless such as case management, referrals to other community agencies, food, and warm clothing.

\$1,000 to **Sunrise Community Food Pantry** On Hubbard Lake Road, helps with food needs in primarily northern Alcona county.

\$1,000 to **School Success Workers** (United Way of NE Michigan) When these professionals become aware first-hand of student family needs, for example extra food assistance, they come to the United Way for financial assistance.

\$1,000 to **Salvation Army** To help purchase groceries and other supplies for the food pantry serving the greater Alpena area.

\$1,000 to **Feeding Kids Ministry** (Resurrection Lutheran Church) Provides weekend food packets to children in Alpena who are fed during the week with school breakfasts and lunches, but do not have an adequate supply of food on the weekends. Also lunches during the summer at Ella White and Sanborn Elementary Schools.

\$1,000 to **Alpena Baby Pantry** Families needing food assistance also may need other material support, such as diapers!

\$1,000 to **Alpena Senior Citizens Center** Supporting the “Together We Can Fight Senior Hunger” program. They provided 59,535 Meals on Wheels, 11,973 Curbside/Congregate Meals (71,508 total). The center's average meal prep cost is \$8 for Meals on Wheels and \$7 for Curbside/Congregate. The Meals on Wheels donation is \$1.02, the average Curbside/Congregate Meal donation is \$2.25.

\$300 to **Alpena Lions Club**. To be an event sponsor at their May 20th Thunder Bowl Lanes “Strike Against Hunger” Bowling Fundraiser. Supporting food banks in Alpena.

*First Congregational United Church of Christ
201 South Second Avenue
Alpena, Michigan 49707*

Phone: 989-356-1795

Web Site: <http://uccalpena.org>

Email: officeuccalp@gmail.com

Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, Monday – Thursday

**Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.
In Person and Online**

Pastor Emeritus: Reverend Dr. H. Robert Case

Part-Time Interim Minister: Pastor Jon Gougeon

Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski

Treasurer: Denise Fusina

Office Administrator: Judy Suszek

Custodian: Mike LaMarre

Live-Stream Technician: Brayden Broad

Still Speaking

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Dates to Celebrate

Birthdays

Joan Chrzan	April 1	Dennis Artley	April 20
Lori Mayer	April 11	Lydia Hanna	April 21
Miranda Plume	April 11	Jere Standen	April 24
Janet Southwell	April 12	Patty McNeil	April 24
Brian Hanna	April 12	Bob Kelly	April 28
Katie Mack	April 15	Donna Marsh	April 28
Dottie Haase	April 19	Patty Lance	April 29
Kristin Barden	April 19		



Anniversaries

Max & Vicky Lindsay	April 8	45 Years
Curtis & Sharyl Davis	April 12	54 Years
Alison Bloom-Storey & Dan Storey	April 17	24 Years
Pat Labadie & June Perry	April 28	50 Years



Joyous Easter Blessings to You and Your Loved Ones!

