

July  
2017

# Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

## Board of Directors:

- **Dennis Artley**, treasurer/ Secretary
- **Kathy Dempsey**
- **Blair Diamond**
- **Ann Gerow**, Vice Chair
- **Dottie Haase**
- **Vicky Lindsay**
- **Mike Mack**
- **Jim Mc Neil**, chair
- **Beth Petty**

## July 2017 Dates to Remember

- 4  
Independence Day  
Office Closed
- 10  
Board of Directors
- 10  
Friendship Room
- 10-14  
ACE-VBS @ First  
United Methodist
- 12  
No Frills Book Club
- 14  
Ladies Lunch @  
Hunan Chinese  
Restaurant
- 17  
Monday Midday Movie  
"The Shack"
- 18  
Tuesday discussions  
about "Emergence"
- 30  
Sunday Seminar with  
John Nethercut

## A Word from our Minister:

### "It takes effort to keep abreast of truth"

One of America's earlier poets, James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), penned these words:

**"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,  
in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side.  
Some great cause, God's new messiah offering each the bloom or blight,  
and the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.**

... **New occasions teach new duties.**

**Time makes ancient good uncouth.**

**They must upward still and onward,**

**who would keep abreast of truth. ...**

**Though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong.**

**Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne.**

**Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
standeth God within the shadow keeping watch above His own."**

It was one of my favorite hymns as a teenager, set to the tune "**Ebenezer**" (#441 in the Pilgrim Hymnal). It's not in the New Century Hymnal for several reasons.

First, its blatant **duality** -- truth/falsehood, good/evil, either/or -- does not allow for shades of grey between the darkness and the light. Furthermore, to use "**darkness**" as a metaphor for "blight" is racially **insensitive** to an "enlightened" age such as modern America. Third, the inclusive use of "man" for the human race and the pronoun "His" for God are suggestive of **patriarchal bias**. Lastly, who says "**standeth**" anymore?

These normative ways of thinking and speaking from our poetic past have been banished from today's heightened awareness of "inclusive" language.

Actually, James Russell Lowell points out what has happened to his poem in the middle stanza: "**Time makes ancient good uncouth. They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.**"

In the effort to keep abreast of truth, our hymnal editors have found his old-fashioned poetry "**uncouth.**" Young people in the UCC will no longer experience this song in all its unedited power, etching its meaning deep in one's psyche. I regret that loss. But, as the poet says, "**New occasions teach new duties.**" We need to play the hand that's been dealt us in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. — **Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance, Minister**

## Alpena Community Ecumenical Vacation Bible School (ACE VBS)

First United Methodist
First Congregational UCC
First Presbyterian
Grace Lutheran
St. Paul Lutheran
Trinity Episcopal

is hosting...

# “Branching Out: Connecting Through Christ”

## VBS DAY CAMP

Monday—Friday, July 10 –14. Each day from 9 AM to 3 PM

at: **First United Methodist Church**

167 S. Ripley Blvd, Alpena (989) 354-2490

*This is a **free** event for children Ages 5-12. Lunch and snacks will be provided.*

*Activities include Bible Adventures, Arts & Crafts, Nature Activities, & Games!*

Registrations can be mailed/dropped off at **First United Methodist Church**

Go to [www.uccalpena.org](http://www.uccalpena.org) to print registration,

or pick one up from the display in our hallway..

***NOTE: Our day to provide snacks and Lunch is***

***Wednesday, July 12th.***



***Please tell Beth Petty if you are available to cook or serve that day.***

## Feed a Family

*Bill Haase*

There were 12 bags of groceries given to the Salvation Army Food Pantry during the month of June. Lets keep in mind that during the summer months, with school not in session, local children may not have food at home. Please be generous with your donations to keep their pantry stocked with healthy choices for families in need.



## Ladies Luncheon

*Jan Snell & Dolly Zeller*

The Ladies Luncheon was held at The Alpena Golf Course on Friday June 9th at 11:30 a.m. It was a fun gathering. Thank you to all who came to lunch with us this season.

The next gathering of the Ladies Lunch will be hosted by Peggy DiNegro, on Friday July 14, at the Hunan Chinese Restaurant at 11:30 a.m. Please join her if you are able. She can be reached @ 989-739-5256.



## Let's Celebrate July Birthdays for:

July 4 Christopher Granum	July 17 Mary Boes
July 9 Allison Modrzynski	July 20 Boris Gerber
July 11 Kathleen Dempsey	July 23 Jennifer Speaks
July 12 Charlotte Wilson	July 25 Esther Donald-Briggs
July 13 John Caplis	July 26 Edith Gerber
July 16 Wendy Lewis	



## Wednesdays with Walter Brueggemann (on VHS tape, that is)

When UCC minister and Old Testament Professor Walter Brueggemann was at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, he recorded four lectures on the "Exile Experience in Babylon... and in America." As I point out in the article on the next page, the cultural change Judaism had to face is not unlike the changed conditions we "mainline" churches face today. We will view and discuss his lectures on Wednesdays at 1 pm in Fellowship Hall on July 26 ("Loss"), August 2 ("Order"), Aug. 9 ("Obedience"), and Aug. 15 ("Emancipation"). **Rev. Lance**

## Where is the Church in Today's Society... and Where are We Headed?

(A "mini essay" by your Minister, with several items for your calendar)

### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL



There is little doubt that the Church in the United States finds itself in a radically changed situation. Whereas "mainline" denominations like our own used to play an important role in society, in the community, as well as in people's individual lives, today we are more likely on the "sideline".

People do not necessarily seek out a familiar denomination when they move to a new town, as they did in the 1950's and 60's. Many of the growing churches across America are "non-denominational" – with names that do not indicate anything about their religious heritage and affiliations. People join churches like "The Journey" or a "Vineyard Fellowship", a "Calvary Chapel" or "Word of Life", a "Huron Shores Fellowship" or "New Life" congregation without knowing that they are Baptist or Pentecostal or fundamentalist. All kinds of "off brand" churches draw new members.

Not only are the long-established denominations such as ours (and the Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.) not finding ready recruits to join our ranks, those of us who remain are getting **older**. All across the country, our numbers are dwindling and our active members are aging. It makes each congregation wonder about its own viability in its local setting in the not-too-distant future.

This summer, I have decided to tackle the question of where the church **is** in today's society and where we might be **headed** in the near future. This will play out in three or four distinct ways, one or another of which might be of interest to you. ***Please choose among them; do not feel that you have to take part in them all!***

First, since I will begin July in Baltimore at the UCC's "**General Synod**", I will take three Sundays after Coffee Fellowship Time to report out on our denomination's national policies and pronouncements: July 9, an overview of UCC issues and General Synod activities; July 16, becoming an "Immigrant Welcoming" denomination and other USA programs; and July 23, "Solidarity with Palestinian Children" and other international initiatives. Then, on **Sunday, July 30, at 2:00 pm**, we will have two hours with **John Nethercut**, learning about his social justice legal advocacy work and what we might do on a local level to make a difference in many struggling lives. (See the article on the next page of this Newsletter.)

Second, on Monday, July 17, at noon in Fellowship Hall, I will show the movie, "**The Shack**", which is a modern re-telling of religious questions which re-imagines some answers for a new generation. Later that week (Wednesday & Thursday, July 19 & 20, at 1:00 pm each day), we'll discuss implications of what that film portrays. You do not need to come to the film to discuss the book "The Shack" (if you've read it).

Third, I will lead a discussion of "**Emerging Christianity**" on five **Tuesdays** at 1 pm (July 18 – Aug. 15) using a DVD featuring the late Phyllis Tickle, a keen observer of cultural change within "Christendom" who raises key questions and issues that need to be addressed.

Fourth, I will show Prof. Walter Brueggemann's lecture series "**The Exile Experience in Babylon and in America**" at 1:00 pm on four **Wednesdays** (July 26 – Aug. 16). We will use the experience of the Exile, when Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Jewish people had to learn to live faithfully in a context where conventional institutional support had been taken away, as a parallel to our own social context as a newly marginalized, decentralized, and disestablished group of people that has lost much of its "clout." How can we be faithful followers of Jesus in today's polarized world driven by a secular culture of consumerism, materialism, and militarism?

I hope one or two of those topic will engage you as we think about our future. The summer "vacation" period gives us time to wrestle with deep subjects, if we care to. — Rev. Paul Lance

On **Sunday, July 30, at 2:00 pm** at the First Congregational UCC, **John Nethercut**, son of Gordon & Vernie Nethercut, will talk with us about how lawyers are involved in social justice movements, using his own life story and experiences that he has had at a number of advocacy and organizing groups over the years.

In particular, John will use examples from the **Public Justice Center's** work to illustrate various issues and strategies. He will focus more on people's motives and possible ways they can be involved rather than get lost in the weeds of legal advocacy.

However, to get a sense of the breadth of advocacy issues John deals with, here is a short description of his organization:

“The **Public Justice Center** pursues systemic change to build a just society. Founded in Maryland in 1985, the P.J.C. uses legal advocacy tools to pursue social justice, economic and race equity, and fundamental human rights for people who are struggling to provide for their basic needs.

The P.J.C. is a civil **legal aid** office that (a) provides advice and representation to low-income clients, (b) advocates before legislatures and government agencies, and (c) collaborates with community and advocacy organizations.

The P.J.C. chooses projects and cases that will make a significant impact on systems, laws, and policies. Current projects include bringing actions on behalf of...

low-income tenants,  
 low-wage workers,  
 immigrants,  
 homeless and foster students, and  
 families needing health care and benefits.

The P.J. C. uses appellate cases to establish good law in poverty and civil rights cases and to coordinate a national coalition that works to establish a right to counsel for indigent persons in basic human needs civil cases.”

We will meet in Fellowship Hall at 2:00 pm on Sunday afternoon, July 30 and be done by 4:00 pm. Please tell your social justice friends to join us! The seminar is free and open to the public. ***Please help us get the word out to others in Alpena who think that we can do better with some of our more vulnerable neighbors. Thank you!***

## Board of Directors June 2017 Meeting Highlights

*Gerrie La Cross, Secretary*

- ◆ The Lance Family has received many cards from the congregation (and from the community) at the loss of Dodi Lance, who had been an active member here for more than 50 years.
  - ◆ Finances are in good shape at this time. All is on track for the year.
  - ◆ The Board considered a proposal from the Investment Committee regarding establishing an Endowment Fund within the Comstock Fund investments. The Board asked Ann Diamond to present details of the proposal to a joint meeting of the Comstock Fund Committee and the Investment Committee prior to our next Board of Directors meeting on July 10.
  - ◆ The Board thanks Deb Butler, Herb Knowlton, Diane Standen, and Patty McNeil for their service this past year on various committees from which they are stepping down.
  - ◆ The Board approved the following appointments: for Worship committee, Patty McNeil; for Investment Committee, Ann Diamond; and for Property Committee, Edith Gerber and Terry Bell. Most members of our standing committees remain the same from last year. **We thank them all.**
  - ◆ Beth Petty reports that our community ecumenical VBS plans are going well. Watch for them in the 4th of July parade! Encourage your friends and neighbors to send their children, July 10-14, at the First United Methodist Church. We will serve lunch on Wed., July 12. Rev. Lance will open the day on Thursday, July 13. Other adult volunteers are also helping. **Thank you to them.**
  - ◆ Worship committee has been busy with “50 year +” members, graduation, and choir celebrations. August 13 will be **Heifer International Sunday** with the focus on animals for the Third World.
  - ◆ **Wacky Wednesday** is finished for the summer... until August 21-25 when they will resume with a week-long two-hour session (10 am to noon, Mon—Fri). The after school group, led by Jeffrey Mindock, will begin meeting weekly again on Wednesday, August 30, when school is back in session.
  - ◆ John Nethercut, from the Public Justice Center, will give a presentation on Sunday afternoon, July 30th. He will be speaking about social justice issues and how to become involved.
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## Office Coverage

Our Church Secretary, Gerrie LaCross, will be out of the office from August 29 to October 2 recovering from her second knee surgery. There are 18 time slots to be filled. We are looking for a few people who would be willing to volunteer to cover the office on various days during those five weeks. Thank you very much!



**Office hours are from 9:00 to 1:00, Monday thru Thursday.** Please call the office @ 356-1795 if you are willing to help. We also need someone to take minutes for the Sept. 11th board meeting. (5:30-7:00 p.m.)

Main duties for these volunteers will be greeting guests, answering the phone, opening mail, and printing the weekly worship bulletins. During September, Comstock Fund requests begin to arrive both via email and US Postal mail. (Gerrie should be back by the first of October to deal with them for the committee.)

Rev. Lance will **also** be away during the month of September. **Rev. Bob Case** will be filling in for him until he returns on Sept. 27. The only exception will be on Sept. 3, Labor Day weekend, when Rev. Gene Bacon will be our guest minister. **Thank you to them** for helping keep our doors open!

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Coming Soon to a Theater Church Near You!

## Heifer Fair – Sunday, August 13

On the lawn of our church following our morning service.

Help **Heifer International** end poverty and hunger!

(p.s. Have you seen Clare's animal diorama in our hallway display case?)



### **Anniversaries**

July 2: Dennis and Janet Artley	57 Years
July 3: Jeffery and Ann Gerow	34 Years
July 14: Paul and Patty Lance	39 Years
July 15: John Briggs and Esther Donald Briggs	17 Years
July 19: John and Laura Caplis	14 Years
July 31: Scott & Jennifer Speaks	18 Years



### **Tuesday Discussions about “Emerging Christianity” (1 pm, in Fellowship Hall)**

Phyllis Tickle authored over two dozen books about religion and spirituality and was considered a foremost authority on religion in America when she passed away last year. Each session begins with 15 minutes video presentation by Phyllis, followed by filmed interaction with a small group discussing the changing face of American Christianity. We will meet on **July 18 & 25 and August 1, 8, & 15**. Please join me in this important conversation. [Rev. L.](#)

*First Congregational United Church of Christ*  
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Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm Monday – Thursday

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

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

**Underground Church 5:00 p.m.**

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

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

**Choir Director & Music: Kat Tomaszewski**

**Treasurer: Denise Fusina**

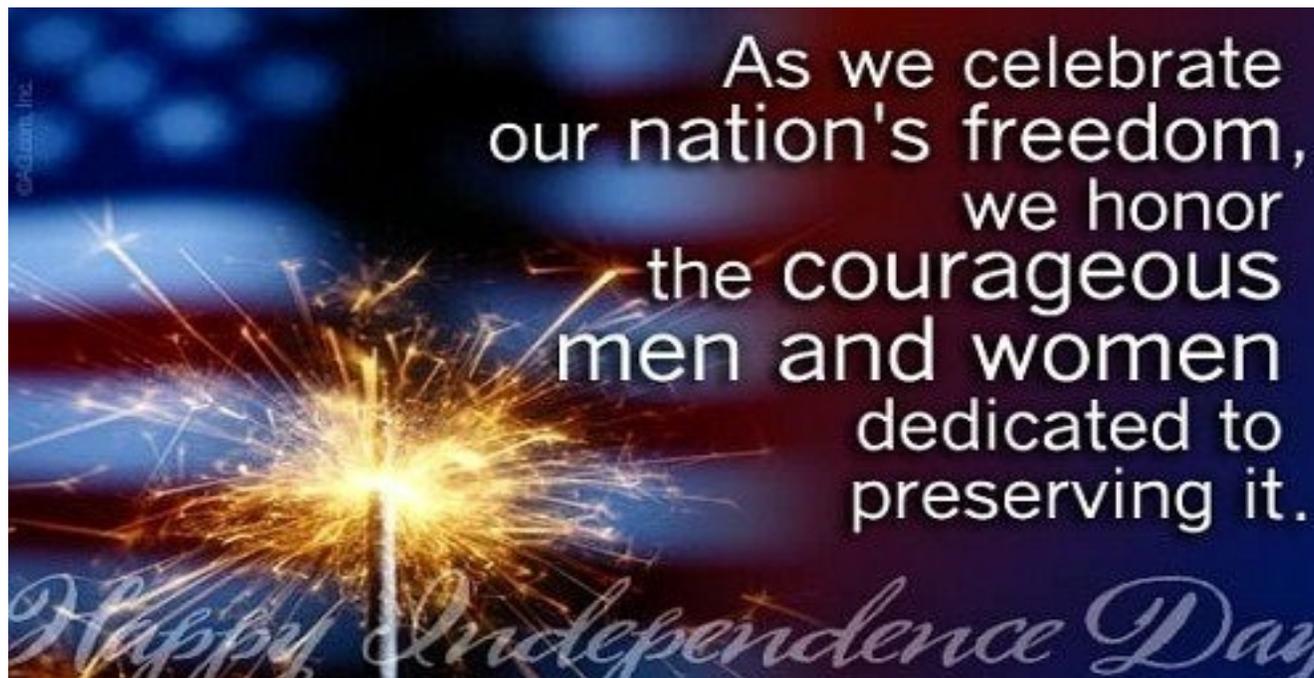
**Secretary: Gerrie La Cross**

**Custodian: Mike LaMarre**

## *Still Speaking*

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

Have a safe and Happy Fourth of July holiday.



There will be **no Underground Church** on July 2  
and the Church Office will be **closed** on Monday & Tuesday, July 3 & 4.