

**May
2023**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

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Chairperson
Sandy Jarmuzewski,
Vice-Chairperson
Nancy Wedge,
Treasurer
Beverly Bodem
Bill Dempsey
Ann Diamond
Joe Garant
Boris Gerber
Jim McNeil

Dates to Remember

**Sunday
May 7**

Worship Service

**Monday
May 8**

Board of Directors
Meeting

**Sunday
May 14**

Worship Service
HAPPY MOTHER'S
DAY!

**Sunday
May 21**

Worship Service

**Sunday
May 28**

Worship Service

**Monday
May 29**

Office Closed
HAPPY MEMORIAL
DAY!



Springtime — The Season For Renewal

Pastor Jon Gougeon

It is amazing to me that my time with you as your pastor is rapidly coming to an end. It seems like the time has rushed by. In that time we have celebrated Christmas and Easter and did some new things and some old traditional things. What matters most is that as a body of believers we are trying to find common ground on what matters most.

Questions and issues remain like how do we bring people back to corporate worship? How do we move forward with live streaming and online outreach? What is needed to help us reach out to those who have no knowledge of the saving power that is found in faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior? Have we watered down our message so much that it has become irrelevant and meaningless to the people we are trying to reach?

All these questions are valid and we don't have any easy answers. We have memories of the way it used to be, but we need to move forward, to do old and new things possibly in a new way. The world has changed over the past 20 years let alone the 70 years I have lived. Change is coming at an accelerated rate, one that we cannot contain, a rate that we must adapt to in order to grow and thrive.

Yet the message of the Gospel has not changed. We still offer the love of God as exemplified in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. We still need to love God with all our hearts, minds and souls and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Yes even the ones we might not like, or relate to, or are mean and cantankerous to us. We are trying to find a way of opening up our facilities to the community at large yet keep the safety of members and staff as a priority. I believe all this will take the involvement of all members of the congregation working together and growing together as a community of believers.

I have often wondered when being a Christian became a spectator event. Most people want to sit on the bench and observe and be entertained. When what we need is everyone's participation and action. Worship is supposed to be participatory, involved and the work of the people. If people don't want to spend an hour on Sunday in the presence of God it makes me wonder how they expect to spend eternity.

James 4:7-10 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition):

⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and

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Springtime – The Season For Renewal

Pastor Jon Gougeon

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weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:7-10 (The Message):

⁷⁻¹⁰ So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him make himself scarce. Say a quiet *yes* to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet.

May the Lord bless your days and nights,

Pastor Jon Gougeon

Security Matters Addressed

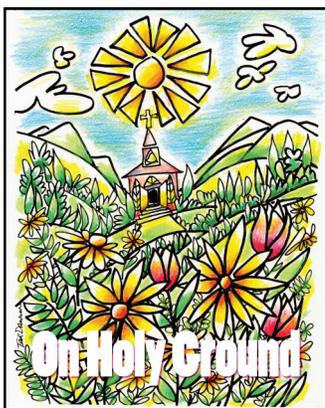
Board of Directors, Deborah Butler, Chair

There are questions being asked about security matters that are currently being taken. First and foremost, we are looking out for the safety of our staff and congregation members. The Board of Directors has put a temporary pause on building use as we develop a security plan. The Board has also made a decision to keep the building locked at all times until we develop a more secure entry system. Members of the Board have participated in a security training session with the Alpena County Sheriff Department, and we have had a security assessment of our building. We are obtaining estimates for possible security equipment. We have initiated a security sub-committee to develop some short-term and long-term plans. It will take a little time, we are hoping in 30-60 days to initiate a security plan. Thank you for your understanding and helpfulness as we navigate this process. I have spoken with other local churches and most have already completed this process. The Board will keep you informed as we begin implementing security changes.

Thank you to all who helped make our Lenten observances and Easter celebrations memorable and glorious!

Strengthen the Church Special Offering – May 28, 2023

Missions Committee



The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of United Church of Christ local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.

Thank you for your continued support of this vital United Church of Christ ministry. In addition to contributions at church on Sunday, May 28, donations may be mailed to the church office.

Church World Service Blanket Appeal – Mothers Day, May 14

Missions Committee

On Sundays May 7 and May 14, you have the opportunity to give the gift of a blanket to someone in need. Church World Service blankets provide comfort as well as protection from harsh weather for refugees, the homeless, and victims of national disasters throughout the world. The simple gesture of giving a blanket to someone in need is an act of compassion with enormous significance. Each person wrapped in a blanket is enveloped in a sense of warmth, safety and love. It's a priceless feeling - just like a mother's touch!

Mother's Day Blanket Gift Cards are available to acknowledge your gifts. In addition, for each \$10 blanket purchased, you may fill out a "honor heart" with the name of an important woman in your life (mother, grandmother, wife, daughter, granddaughter, sister, ...). The hearts are pinned on our blanket in the sanctuary. By Mother's Day help us completely cover the blanket with love!



If you are not able to attend a "live" church service, and wish to purchase blankets, just send your check (made out to First Congregational Church, with note "for blankets") to the church office, with a note listing the names of the important women (or men!) in your life that you wish to honor, and "honor hearts" will be prepared and pinned to our sanctuary blanket. Donations will be accepted anytime in May.

When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. CWS Blankets give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone, helping our most vulnerable neighbors around the world feel safe and keep warm. When our neighbors are in need, the gift of a blanket goes a long way!

Happy Mother's Day!

Church Family and 50-Year Member Reunion

Worship Committee



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. We are having a planning meeting Sunday, April 30 at 11:15 in the Conference Room. All are welcome! The committee is developing a comprehensive guest list for the event including family, friends and former members. To invite family, friends, and former

members, please complete the guest list slips below and return them to the church office. There are additional guest list cards on the table in the middle hallway.

Church Family Reunion Guest List

Friends, Family and Former Members
To Add to Mailing List

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Email _____

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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

Sharon Rickard	May 4	Jack Caplis	May 22
John Briggs	May 5	Ray Moore	May 29
Ann Gerow	May 5	Peggy DiNegro	May 29
Debra Dempsey	May 21	James Standen	May 29
Steve Bailey	May 22	Rev. Robert Case	May 30



Anniversary



Rev. Eugene and Karen Bacon May 11 50 Years

Wishing you a beautiful Mother's Day
and a fun and safe Memorial Day Weekend!