

June
2023

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

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

Dates to Remember

Sunday, June 4
Worship Service

Friday, June 9
Ladies Lunch

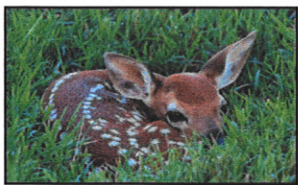
Sunday, June 11
Worship Service

Monday, June 12
Board of Directors
Meeting

Sunday, June 18
Worship Service
HAPPY FATHER'S
DAY!

Sunday, June 25
Worship Service

Sunday, July 2
Worship Service,
Church Family
Reunion and
50-Year Member
Celebration



Lifesaving Station or Clubhouse?

Pastor Jon

As a child I always liked the month of June. It signaled the end of the school year and the beginning of three months of freedom. June appears to be a month for transitions, graduations, weddings, travel, vacations, and in my denomination the saying of good-bye to pastors who would start new appointments on July 1st. So it is with us, as this is my last full month as your interim pastor. I have enjoyed serving in this church, but I do look forward to going back to my much interrupted retirement.

I believe I have received more in blessings from my time with you than I could possibly have given. I pray that our time together has been a time for healing, renewal and finding some direction. We cannot approach church as if it is still 1955 anymore. We must find ways of proclaiming the timeless message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in to new generations and the lost in this community.

Unfortunately, I nor does any other clergy person have all the answers. We must rely and trust that God will lead us in the way of Christian discipleship. Only the Lord can grow the church; we simply need to tell the story of God's love and Jesus' sacrifice that gives us the way of salvation. Proclaim Christ crucified and risen and salvation by faith. I remember a story that struck me early in my pastoral career: *Parable of the Lifesaving Station*:

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for those who were lost. Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and gave of their time, money, and effort to support its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club's initiations were held. About this time a large ship wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split among the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving

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Lifesaving Station or Clubhouse?

Pastor Jon

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as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station. So they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

This parable skillfully critiques the tendency of religious communities to move toward a “club” mentality, and it asks us to evaluate the “real time” contribution of faith communities by the actual difference they make in the lives of their surrounding community.

In the parable, there is a moment when what was a lifesaving station turns into a club. From there forward, the primary reason for joining that club was the benefit of membership. Previously, the primary motivation was that of serving the souls who normally would have been lost to shipwreck on that rocky seacoast. The impact of that shift is that, eventually, those rescued (now by independent contractors) were no longer welcomed into the clubhouse. They first had to be cleaned up and made respectable! Church leaders across denominations say that this part of the parable sounds like a description of their home church.

I believe this church is at this crossroad or has even moved beyond it. Is Alpena First Congregational United Church of Christ a clubhouse or a lifesaving station? Only you can make that decision together. I also remember a statement made that went like this; If your church building suffered a disastrous fire and was destroyed would the surrounding community mourn its loss and help you rebuild or would they want the property for something useful like a parking lot?

God’s blessing and grace to you all,

Pastor Jon

United Northern Association Spring Meeting

Delegates



The spring meeting for the United Northern Association was a combined meeting of the Covenant, Eastern and our United Northern Association for the worship service which celebrated Earth Day on April 22. The meeting was conducted via zoom. After the worship service the three Associations separated, and each held zoom meetings. Because of technical difficulties, delegates Dottie and Bill Haase were not able to attend the zoom meeting, but here is a report of the meeting:

- About 20 people were in attendance for the Northern Association.
- Minutes and treasurer’s report were approved and accepted.
- There are 2 openings in the Northern Board. The Association is having trouble filling vacancies. Because local churches are struggling to fill their committee vacancies, that makes it a lot harder fill UNA vacancies.
- Cadillac will be hosting next year’s Spring Meeting on April 27, 2024.

We Celebrate Our Fifty Year Members

Congratulations!

Please join us Sunday, July 2 to celebrate our fifty year members at the 10:00 worship service and the Church Family Reunion festivities on the lawn.

<i>Dennis Artley</i>	1962	<i>Chris McCoy</i>	1963
<i>Janet Artley</i>	1962	<i>Mary Minnick</i>	1966
<i>Lillian Banas</i>	1956	<i>Vernie Nethercut</i>	1962
<i>Kay Beland</i>	1963	<i>*James Park</i>	1950
<i>Richard Bloom</i>	1959	<i>Carl Silver</i>	1963
<i>Alison Bloom-Storey</i>	1953	<i>Robert Silver</i>	1962
<i>Jeannine Boyce</i>	1955	<i>Janet Southwell</i>	1965
<i>*Joan Chrzan</i>	1950	<i>Jere Standen</i>	1957
<i>Ann Diamond</i>	1972	<i>Bonnie Watkins</i>	1962
<i>Blair Diamond</i>	1964	<i>Nancy Wedge</i>	1970
<i>Jean Gilliland</i>	1956	<i>Rebecca Wells</i>	1971
<i>*Dixie Julian</i>	1950	<i>David Zeller</i>	1966
<i>Herb Knowlton</i>	1958		

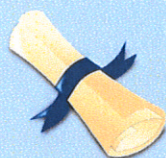
** Denotes longest member*

Congratulations
One and All!



We Celebrate
You!

Shout Out to Graduates —



Congratulations to **Connor Caplis** who graduates this spring from Alpena High School. Connor is graduating in the top 10% of his class and plans to study engineering at University of Michigan.

Congratulations to **Jon Petty** who has graduated from Central Michigan University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, Psychology Major.

Congratulations to **Youssef Hani Zubi** who graduates June 18 from Davis University, California with a Civil Engineering Degree.

We Engaged A Mediator – And This Is What Happened

A Letter From Our Mediator

Earlier this year I was asked to assist members of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Alpena with a dilemma. They were seeking someone to mediate conversations on the topic of becoming an Open and Affirming church. To be clear, the team was not attempting to make the decision on whether to become Open and Affirming (that is your job as a congregation), the team was seeking to come to agreement on how, and when, to go about educating the congregation and asking for a vote on the topic.

I like a challenge and they were kind people, so I agreed to assist.

From the first meeting, I knew the mediation meetings were going to be...interesting – a mix of both emotional and logical dialogue. The members of the group came to the table with loads of memories, history, and experiences on the topic. They were in different places regarding how and when to take steps forward on exploring the topic of Open and Affirming for the church. Some wanted to keep going with what they had been doing and set a goal sooner than later to call for a vote, while others wanted to stop the process and wait for a new pastor to come on board. Some wanted to make changes to the education that was taking place, and others wanted to increase the amount of education that was happening.

It was very clear from day one that at some level, the group all wanted the same thing – to do what was best for the congregation and community. The details of how to achieve that and what “best” looked like was where the disagreements were surfacing.

Through several mediation sessions over a few months, we worked our way through these conversations. During this process there were times that were heated, but other times we laughed. Accusations were made but so were apologies. Sometimes tensions were thick, and people were trying to talk all at once to get their points made, while other times the silence was deafening, yet spoke volumes.

After our final mediation, which ended with a successful compromise (I'll share a note about that at the very end), I am so glad I said yes to working with this group. The journey was a difficult one, with stress, emotion, tension, and heated conversations, but it was incredibly fulfilling to watch the process happen.

The commitment that group has to their church and their faith was evident and powerful. The fact that this group navigated these challenging conversations that were full of opposing views and perceptions, with a willingness to come back to the table multiple times until a compromise was reached is refreshing and admirable. It is something your church should be proud of – having people willing to do the hard work to move the congregation forward and work toward becoming an even more incredible church.

To bridge the gap between those who wanted to completely stop any education on the topic until a pastor was found, and those who wanted to continue, or even increase education while the search for a pastor was on-going, they chose to jointly write/approve articles in upcoming newsletters about the topic and the process, with this being the first article.

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Seeking Committee Members

Board of Directors

Calling all First Congregational United Church of Christ members – If you are interested in serving on one of the following board-appointed committees, please call the church office (989-356-1795), Deborah Butler, Board Chair (989-255-2812), or Sandy Jarmuzewski, Board Vice-Chair (989-354-4542):



Budget/Finance

Comstock

Counters

Investment

Missions

Personnel

Property

Stewardship

Worship

Thank you for considering to assist with these key, integral panels in service of our church family.

Blanket Sunday Wrap-up

Missions Committee

Thanks to all for your gifts to our Blankets program. At our Mother's Day Blanket Sunday we raised \$1,600, that's 160 blankets, that Church World Service will be providing to families in need.

As families and communities around the world recover from emergencies and struggle in the face of unprecedented challenges, we are standing with them. Your contribution provides warmth, comfort and hope to neighbors near and far.



Ladies Summer Luncheons

Food, Fellowship and Kabitzing

The First Congregational Church Ladies Luncheons are back! The gatherings are scheduled for the second Friday of each month for the remaining summer months at Hunan Chinese Restaurant on M-32 in Alpena. We will gather at 11:45am, and all are welcome. Reservations are not necessary, but feel free to call Peg DiNegro with any questions. Peg may be reached at 352-281-2283. So, mark your calendars for June 9, July 14, August 11, and September 8. Hope to see you there!

We Engaged a Mediator – And This Is What Happened

A Letter From Our Mediator

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This topic is not going away for your congregation, and you have a role in this process. Start educating yourself on the topic of Open and Affirming. Visit the United Church of Christ Open and Affirming website that is filled with resources. Talk to friends and other members of the congregation to discuss different views on the topic. Prepare yourself so you can be confident you are making an informed decision when it comes time for the vote at your church. And through this entire process, remember that at the end of the day you are all part of one congregation of people who have hearts filled with love and share a very strong faith.

Jackie Krawczak
Mediator

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

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Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Dates to Celebrate

Birthdays

Carol Lund	June 2	Carl Silver	June 16
Caitlin Borke	June 2	Ann Diamond	June 17
Ferrol Osgood	June 4	Lynne Stewart	June 19
Pat Garant	June 4	Sonny Chrzan	June 19
Judy Cook	June 5	Jeffrey Gerow	June 21
Noah Modrzynski	June 5	Levi Straley	June 22
Karen Bacon	June 7	Emeline Hanna	June 23
Curtis Davis	June 8	Olivia Lindahl	June 23
James McNeil	June 11	Judith Case	June 24
Brandon Borke	June 11	Jared Plume	June 25
Terry Bell	June 15	Gavin Barden	June 29



Anniversaries

Gary & Sandy Jarmuzewski	June 1	10 Years
Sharon & Clarence Rickard	June 2	44 Years
Herb & Carol Knowlton	June 12	52 Years
Steve & Jill Bailey	June 14	54 Years
Roger & Janice Snell	June 18	68 Years
Boris & Edith Gerber	June 19	47 Years
Bob & Judith Case	June 21	54 Years
Chris & Julie McCoy	June 21	53 Years
Craig Waak & Lori Mayer	June 22	10 Years
Joe & Pat Garant	June 26	3 Years



First Congregational UCC Alpena

**Church Family Reunion and 50 Year Member
Celebration**

**July 2, 2023
11:30 following Worship
On the church lawn**

Bring family & friends and help us celebrate!

**Wild Rose Band 11:30 to 12:30
Corn Hole Games
Simple picnic lunch will be provided**

**Pick up tickets on Sundays during Fellowship Hour
or
Call the church office to have them mailed
On event day they will be entered into a door prize drawing**

