

March
2025

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

Deborah Desimone

Nancy Wedge

Co-Chairpersons

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Joe Garant

Vice-Chairperson

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Sandy Jarmuzewski

Treasurer

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Beverly Boden

Bill Dempsey

Ann Diamond

Jim McNeil

Beth Petty

From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

I have been thinking about *The Lord's Prayer*. Most young children will say "daddy" or "papa," rarely "father." It would seem strange if, in *The Lord's Prayer*, we were to address God as "Dad." But scholars tell us that the word Jesus used in the prayer was an informal address, more like "Daddy" than a stern, formal "Father." You and I are God's children, confident of God's love and understanding. In *The Lord's Prayer*, we approach God spontaneously in trust.

Our Heavenly Father is a being of infinite power. God is a judge of unrelenting righteousness. God is not a dad who, to get chummy with God's children, plays their games. God does join them, but not in touch football. God joins them in their sorrows and guilt, in their fears and hopes. According to the gospel writer John, in Christ Jesus, God became flesh and dwelt among us.

Ancient Judaism taught that God was so exalted and holy that a mere human being should not ever utter God's name. God is "high and lifted up," in Isaiah's words, awesome in power and majesty. It was Jesus who brought God into view as Father and Friend. "My Father and I are one," says Jesus. In Christ Jesus, God became a servant, a friend, a father.

Even in our warmest and most intimate moments, we cannot quite face God as we would a close friend across the table. Instinctively, we know that we are talking to an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-holy, and everywhere-present being. God is Friend, but much more than a friend. God is Father, but much more than a father. God is King and Judge.

It may be that some people have lost the awareness of God's fierce wrath against all unrighteousness. As a consequence, they may have made God a Lord of sentimental love – a kind of indulgent father who is neither angered nor grieved by their failure to be all that God created them to be. This is to lose sight of the profound depth of God's compassion. God is our God, who, in Jesus, died to make us God's own again. As we approach Lent, let us remember that wondrous spiritual truth.



Dates to Celebrate



Birthdays

Craig Waak 3/4

Beth Petty 3/8

Rev. Eugene Bacon 3/12

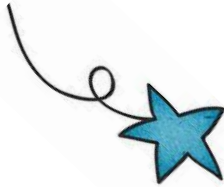
C. Patrick Labadie 3/17

Carol Knowlton 3/20

Jill Bailey 3/27

Cindy Straley 3/27

Jackie Bell 3/28



Anniversary

Jim & Patricia McNeil 3/9



March Laity Schedule

Altar Guild

Pat Garant

Communion

Pat Garant

March 2

Fellowship

Ron & Lynn Borke

Beth Petty

Greeters

March 2 *Kathy Moore & Joe Garant*

March 9 *Beth Petty & Open Spot*

March 16 *Craig Waak & Ron Borke*

March 23 *Bobbi Zubi & Jim Straley*

March 30 *Tammy Veasy & Open Spot*

Ushers

March 2 *Ashley Wedge & Nancy Wedge*

March 9 *Penny Anderson & Jim Straley*

March 16 *Gary & Sandy Jarmuzewski*

March 23 *Ashley Wedge & Nancy Wedge*

March 30 *Penny Anderson & Nancy Wedge*

Counters

March 9 *Tammy Veasy*

March 30 *Nancy Wedge*

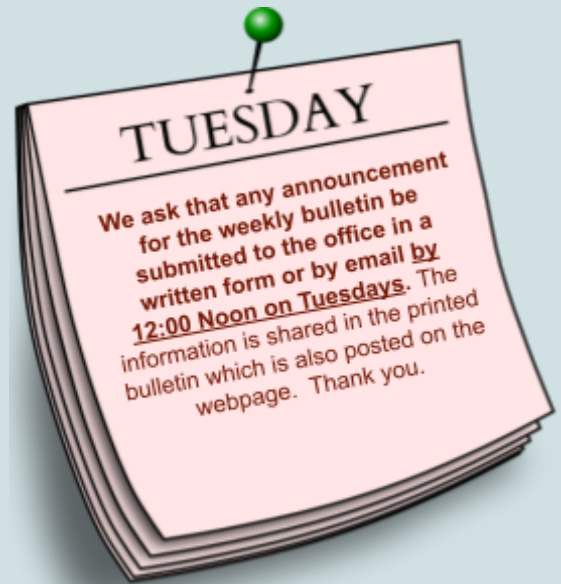
Note: If you see openings where you can help, please feel free to step in.



Important Reminders



The **Great World's Religions class** facilitated by Rev. Gene Bacon continues each **Wednesday at 1:15 p.m.**



Please submit articles for **April's Newsletter** by **March 24th**

March Days to Remember

2nd	Worship Service Communion	
3rd	Search Committee Worship Committee	4:30 PM 5:30 PM *Cancelled*
5th	Ash Wednesday St. Paul Lutheran Church	
9th	Worship Service	
10th	Search Committee Board Meeting	4:30 PM 5:30 PM
16th	Worship Service	
17th	Search Committee	4:30 PM
23rd	Worship Service	
24th	Search Committee	4:30 PM
30th	Worship Service	
31st	Search Committee	4:30 PM



Ladies Luncheon

Bobbi Zubi

We are taking a winter break.

Look for more information and meeting dates in April!



Worship Opportunities for Lent

Worship Committee

We will be joining other Christian Churches for two Lenten Ecumenical Worship Services.

March 5	Ash Wednesday	Soup Supper Worship	St. Paul Lutheran St. Paul Lutheran	5:30 p.m. 6:30 p.m.
April 18	Good Friday	Worship	Trinity Episcopal	12:00 noon

*The theme this year is "The Seven Last Words of Christ."
Hymns, special music and a combined choir anthem from
the six participating churches will be interspersed between
the homilies.*



Membership Declaration Cards

Membership Declaration Cards were distributed at the recent Annual Meeting held on January 26th.

"To maintain membership in good and regular standing, a member will annually sign a card that reads: 'I declare that I am a member of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena, Michigan.' A former member may re-establish good and regular standing by signing such a card at any time."

Membership cards will be available on the table at the back of the sanctuary, by calling the church and requesting one, or by stopping in the office during regular business hours.

Search Committee Announcement

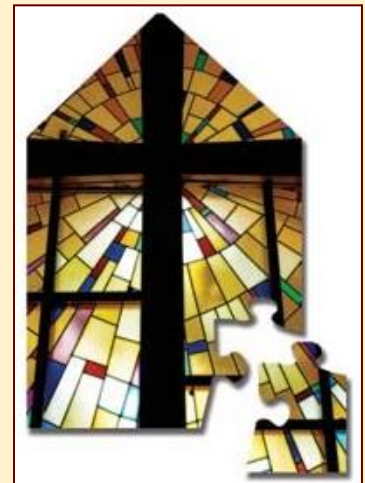
We are pleased to announce that the members of the Search Committee were officially approved by the congregation during the Special Meeting held on February 23rd. This dedicated group of individuals will begin meeting weekly on Monday evenings at 4:30 PM to carry out the important work of the committee.

We ask for your prayers and support as they embark on this journey to seek the best path forward for our congregation. Updates on their progress will be shared as available.

Thank you to each committee member for their willingness to serve in this vital role.

**Ann Diamond
Dennis Artley
Jay Kettler
Lori Mayer**

**Nancy Wedge
Gary Jarmuzewski
Mary Minnick**



Treasurer's Report

Denise Fusina

Our budget plan for 2025 showcases the changes that people can and do make when they work together toward a common goal. Last year we expected a six-figure loss, which turned around to a net income of \$4,005. With your continued generosity, we are confident we can move forward to a balanced budget for 2025! This means we will be able to retain our savings and operate within the generosity of your pledging as we improve our financial stability, as well as grow the life of our church.

Your pledges this year total \$136,000, which account for approximately one-half of our yearly income. The other half will come from gifts, grants, room use donations, and interest. How does this income support our ministries? Each month, I will share different ways your pledge impacts our ministries.

For example, worship and music are powerful parts of our life together. We hear the stories of faith, and our spirits are lifted by the beautiful music, prayer, scripture readings, preaching, and communion. We share important milestones of our lives through baptism, confirmation, marriage, communion, and burial. These events, along with Fellowship Time, special luncheons, and volunteering bring us together as a family. The richness of our spiritual family allows us to share the Good News further as we reach out and extend welcoming hospitality to our neighbors.

Our stewardship and the giving of time and talents provides an opportunity to reveal, to God and the world around us, what is in our hearts. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

Feed-A-Family

Bill Haase

Food pantry needs:

- TUNA, HAMBURGER & CHICKEN HELPERS
- BOXED POTATOES (AU GRATIN, SCALLOPED, CHEESEY)
- PANCAKE MIX & SYRUP
- PUDDING (4 PACK JELLO OR FRUIT CUPS)



Feel free to use the bags on the table in the middle hallway for your shopping needs.

Board Notes from February

- ❖ Board Officer Elections:

Co-Chairpersons	Deborah Desimone & Nancy Wedge
Vice Chairperson	Joe Garant
Secretary/Treasurer	Sandy Jarmuzewski
- ❖ The financial audit was completed by Ann Gerow and Trish McClaren. The Board discussed the Special Funds account and acted to require future quarterly audits of the Special Funds account in addition to the regular audits each year.
- ❖ The Board discussed the ongoing effort to secure pastoral housing once the current lease runs out at the end of April. The Board may consider the purchase of a home if one which satisfies the established needs requirement becomes available.
- ❖ A new magnetic name badge is being designed which will replace the current name badges in the near future.

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

**Sunday Worship ~ 10:00 AM
In Person and Online**

**Transition Minister: Reverend Dr. Richard E. Hotchkin
Pastor Emeritus: Reverend Dr. H. Robert Case
Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski
Treasurer: Denise Fusina
Office Administrator: Leslie Reynolds
Custodian: Mike LaMarre**

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Website: <http://uccalpena.org>
Email: officeuccalp@gmail.com
Office Hours: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Monday - Thursday

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