

**December
2019**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors:

- Dennis Artley, treasurer
- Blair Diamond
- Bill Dempsey
- Ann Gerow, vice chair
- Dottie Haase
- Vicky Lindsay
- Mike Mack
- Jim Mc Neil, chair
- Beth Petty

Dates to Remember

Dec. 7

SERRV Saturday Sale

Dec. 14

Ladies' Christmas Luncheon

Dec. 24

Christmas Eve

6:30 pm Music

7:00 pm Candlelight
"Lessons
& Carols"

8 pm Christmas Eve
Reception

Dec. 25

Christmas Day
(Office Closed)

Dec. 30

White Fragility
Facilitator Training w/
Rosie Gibson

Dec. 31

New Year's Eve



A Word from our Minister: "Advent Giving"

Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance, Minister

These four weeks that lead up to Christmas are called "**Advent**". It denotes a soon-coming **adventure**.

Something **big**, something **good**, is on the horizon, ready to break forth in glorious light! We say it is "the coming of Christ."

On Dec.1 - the first Sunday in Advent - Rev. Ginny Titus will recognize **Saint Nicholas**, the proverbial "**Santa Claus**", whose generous gift-giving has forever set the tone of the season. In this regard, we ought to think of **others**, and give to those in need.

To that end, I show you here an advent calendar of giving... Here's the challenge: Each day for the next 25 days, please provide an item of food to someone in need. **The list is outlined here.** ... Place it in a box at your home. Then, on Dec. 25, we'll **pass your box** of donations along to the Salvation Army or to the Friendship Room for the feeding & care of our neighbors in need. This is a season of giving. And here's an easy way to do so. May God bless you during these weeks of Advent. — **Rev. Lance**

ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans

Wednesday, Jan 22, 7:00 pm ecumenical worship service in our sanctuary to recognize Week of Prayer for Christian Unity!

The Alpena LARC (Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic) Committee has hosted the annual “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” community worship service in January for a dozen years.

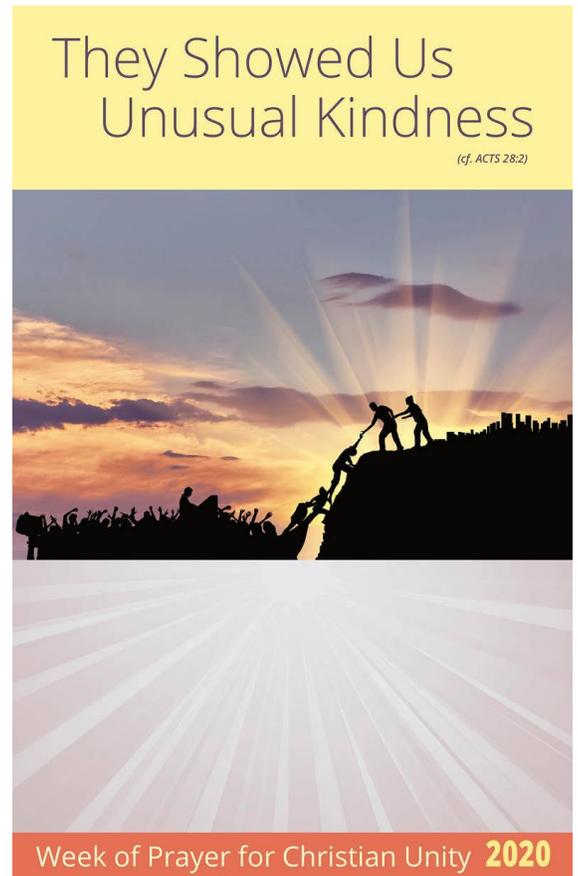
They have graciously included First Congregational UCC in their LARC meetings in Alpena for nearly 20 years... and this year we have been invited to be the location for the Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020, 7:00 pm evening service.

We thank them for the privilege, and we invite you to put it on your personal calendar as well. We will have a soup supper in our Fellowship Hall at 6:00 pm that evening, followed by the worship service at 7:00 pm/

It is our hope this year to widen the scope of churches involved in the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity”. Churches with whom we regularly share Lenten Soup Suppers and Wednesday evening worship service (such as the Presbyterians and the United Methodists) are encouraged to join us for this event.

But we are also asking many more churches in the Alpena Area in the hope that some of them might want to be participants alongside the rest of us.

Tell your friends about this unique service. Invite them to come with you on Wed. evening, Jan. 22, for soup (at 6:00 pm) & worship (at 7:00 pm).



***Chez Ami* — unique catered meals... Here!**

Every Monday and Wednesday, our kitchen produces 250-300 ready-made-meals, thanks to **Ami Lenning**, who runs “**Chez Ami**”. You can order a \$7 meal on Sunday (which will be prepared & picked up on Monday), or order on Tuesday for a meal prepared on Wednesday. Fresh & delicious, and at a reasonable cost. Phone (989) 255-6573, or Facebook/ChezAmi, for current menu.



“White Fragility” -- *Why it is so hard for white people to talk about racism?*

Multicultural educator **Robin DiAngelo** uses that term to refer to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged about their racial presumptions.

Emotions such as **anger and fear, guilt and shame**, surface when an open and honest discussion of racial stereotypes and experiences takes place. These behaviors in turn, function to re-instate “white equilibrium” and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialog. *People get “stuck” in their prejudices* and don’t even realize it.

In a community that is **97% white**, it may seem odd to want to talk about “racism”. And yet, that’s what our church is going to promote in January 2020 here in Alpena.

The big event will be a workshop led by Rosie Gibson, retired nurse & trainer from Cincinnati, who will facilitate a Saturday workshop on the themes from this book on **Jan. 18, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm** in Fellowship Hall... open to the Alpena public.

Prior to that event, **Dottie Haase** will lead a book discussion for those who have read the book “White Fragility” on **Wednesday, January 8, at 7:00 pm**. Several copies of the book are available from Bri in the Church Office for those who want to read it in December. Rev. Lance has taken the book with him to read on vacation.

Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear? Or are the cultural blinders so ingrained that we cannot recognize our discriminatory behaviors... without a strong dose of guilt and defensiveness? The topic is relevant, and the timing is right. Please pick up a copy of the book (or download it to your Kindle or Tablet) and plan to join in the discussion in January.

For those who are especially interested in helping the conversation move forward, Rosie Gibson will offer a **‘facilitator training’ day on Mon., Dec. 30**, from 10 am to 2:00 pm in our Fellowship Hall. These eight people will help guide the table discussions during the Saturday, Jan. 18, workshop.

For more information, or to register for the event, contact Rev. Lance at 356-1795. The invitation to this workshop on “White Fragility” will be throughout the United Northern Association UCC churches and neighboring communities. The Saturday workshop will cost \$20 to register, but that will include the book and the meal. (If people already have their own copy of the book, it will be only \$10 to register.)



U.C.C. Christmas Fund Offering for “Veterans of the Cross” (Dec. 15)

Beth Petty

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

You have the opportunity to be a part of a ministry that cares for the **active and retired clergy** (and lay employees) of the United Church of Christ through your participation in the annual “Christmas Fund” All-Church Offering for “Veterans of the Cross”.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund on **Sunday, Dec 15th**, will help provide for the supplementation of small annuities, health premiums, & emergency grants, as well as provide Christmas “Thank You” gift checks next December to low-income church retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose **low-income annuities** make it difficult to meet increasing costs of living. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Last year, the United Church of Christ’s “**Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross**” provided pension supplementation to 379 retired clergy and church professionals, and 174 received health insurance supplementation. Over 400 received a special Christmas “thank-you” check. Over \$60,000 in emergency grants were made to those struck by catastrophe.

Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. You may not be able to write checks to rescue retirees from poverty. You may not be able to help your pastor with his student debt or her medical bills—mostly because your pastor has good boundaries and probably won’t come to you for help. But you can help anyway.

Give to this month’s special offering for the Christmas Fund, and you will make sure that low-income ministers have a place to go for help if they need it, make sure that those retirees have support when they need it, and make sure that this season our church can be a church for those who need it throughout the UCC. **Thank you.** This offering will be collected on Dec. 15 in the worship service.

December Anniversaries

Brian & Belinda Hanna, 12/01 - 29 years

Avery & Marcia Aten, 12/27 - 50 years



Pew Rack "Arrangers" are Looking For Volunteers

HELP! The pew rack arranging team needs additional members. Each member straightens the pews six or seven times a year. Contact Lynne Stewart at 471-2323 to help out.



Nursery Rooms Clean Up

Dottie Haase

Thanks to everyone who helped with cleaning out the 2 nursery rooms-- Ashley Wedge, Edith & Boris Gerber, Beth Petty, & Tom Grubaugh. We took a big load of toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized to St. Vincent de Paul. We put puzzles together, found lost parts to games, etc. Thanks to everyone that helped.



December Birthdays



12/07 Gavin Plume

12/08 Jan Snell

12/10 Jean Gilliland

12/13 Bill Dempsey

12/15 Pat Leahy

12/17 Clarence Rickard

12/18 Robert Westenbarger

12/19 Mike Mack

Stacy Zeller

Robert Silver

12/28 John Mack

12/31 Mary Bloom



Pat Labadie will be the speaker for the December Sanctuary Lecture series, at the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. His topic for December 12 from 7-8:30 pm will be “Celebrating 150 years of Great Lakes Freighters.” Pat is the Historian and Exhibit Coordinator for the Marine Sanctuary.

All Saints Catholic School Christmas Bazaar

When: Saturday, December 14th
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Where: All Saints Catholic School at St. Mary's
Campus (500 N. 2nd Ave.)

For more information or to make a donation, call All Saints School at 989-354-4911, Mary Winton at 989-916-5449, or Diana Donajkowski at 989-



SERRV Updates & Upcoming Events

Narcia Aten

On October 26, we managed to have a very successful SERRV bazaar, food tasting fundraiser, and finale to our raffle, all at the same time - with lots of great help from volunteers, new & experienced - a huge thank you to you all. It was a very lively day!. Between the folks who produced the beautiful raffle items, sold the tickets, made all the tasty food, and pitched in at the cashier tables and in the kitchen, a lot of hard work and love went into the event.

A full financial report will come later, but SERRV sales were slightly above last year's levels, several special orders are in progress, and our tables were so bare that new items were added for our 12th annual December SERRV Downstairs Sale SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 10 AM to 2 PM The sale will take place on the first floor instead of in Fellowship Hall. A few good helpers and a lot of good shoppers are needed! Please join us and bring a friend. Reminder slips are available at the care letter podium.



Change lives

NEAR & FAR BY SELLING SERRV PRODUCTS

Board of Directors Meeting Highlights from November 2019

Bri Fastnaught, Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by chairperson, James McNeil. Rev. Lance offered the opening prayer. The October minutes were reviewed in their most recent form and accepted as is.

Jill Busha shared with the Board her experience working at the drug treatment center and leading two groups in Serenity Bible Study. She also shared a poem that was written by one of the members of her Bible study groups about addiction and triggers. Dennis Artley shared that some members of the congregation have inquired why the choir is singing less - Kat has been using her vacation time and utilizing a list of alternative music that Rev. Lance shared with her in the spring. James McNeil suggested that ten minutes to the hour a prelude start so members of the congregation can start to enter a worship focused frame of mind.

Dennis Artley shared that the Church's finances are in good order. Rev. Lance shared that some of the funds allotted for mission pledge support were going to the Besser Museum preservation efforts, in part because Lillian Banas helped to bring one of the buildings to the Museum's collection. Rev. Lance also pointed out that the church is currently **\$1,948 under budget** whereas last year it was \$39,000 over budget. Part of this difference can be attributed to changes in the way Comstock money is spent. Other notable savings include a \$10,000 savings on the pastor's insurance, a \$3,000 savings on building maintenance, and a \$2,500 savings on phone and internet service. Dennis Artley also went over the tentative 2020 budget, which will be presented to and voted on by the congregation during the annual meeting in January.

The lease on the printer in the Church office is set to expire in January. The options provided by the leasing company, Michigan Office Solutions, were to either upgrade the lease to a new machine or buy out the current one. The Board voted to upgrade the lease. The cost will be \$306.88/month and extra copies cost \$0.01 for black and white and \$0.07 for color; compared to the current cost at \$290.11/month and \$0.02 black and white copies and \$0.12 color.

The Board also voted to support the following proposed revisions to the Comstock Fund Committee guidelines. These changes will not be final until voted in by the congregation at the annual meeting in January. The changes are (1) remove 10% contribution to the Church's General Fund (2) authorize **"up to 20%** of the amount available for innovative ministries or programs and/or capital projects of this church" (3) authorize "the remainder of the amount available for Mission/Outreach projects, local, state, national, or international." (4) remove section 11: "five year plan" has ended.

At the time of the meeting, there were 22 tallied pledges in the amount of \$65,896 to the general fund and \$9,220 to the mission fund for a total of \$75,116. There were also 12 pledges that had not yet been counted. *(We're much past this number now!)*

Rev. Lance shared that there are several regular visitors in attendance at service, and that many of these visitors have expressed interest in becoming members of the congregation next time there is an installment ceremony during service. There are also several upcoming events: **12/8** Blue Christmas with Rev. Ginny Titus, **12/15** Veterans of the Cross special collection, **12/29** the seven principles of Kwanza, **1/5** Epiphany, **1/8** Dottie Haase hosts seminar on white fragility, **1/18** a workshop on racism with Rosie Gibson, **1/19** Rosie Gibson guest preaches at service, **1/22** week of prayer soup supper, and **1/26** annual meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

*First Congregational United Church of Christ
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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.

Minister: Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance III
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case
Choir Director & Organist: Kat Tomaszewski
Kids Club Director: Jeffrey Mindock
Treasurer: Denise Fusina
Secretary: Bri Fastnaught
Custodian: Mike LaMarre

Still Speaking

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December SERRV

Downstairs Sale!

*Don't miss your last chance to shop
handmade, sustainable gifts this year!*

Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

On the first floor