

**December
2024**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

Deborah Desimone,
Chairperson
Sandy Jarmuzewski,
Vice-Chairperson
Nancy Wedge,
Treasurer
Beverly Bodem
Bill Dempsey
Ann Diamond
Joe Garant
Jim McNeil
Beth Petty

From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

Everything that goes into a great story is found in the Christmas narrative. A young woman is soon to have a baby. An order comes from the emperor that all the people must register in their ancestral city. This sends the young couple on a hazardous journey. The town is crowded; they find room only in a stable, where the baby is born, attended by some lambs and cows. If there were no other elements in the story but these, it still would be moving and tender. But there is more: shepherds, angels, magi, a villainous king, escape to Egypt. And still more. Because Bethlehem is just the beginning. There is a Calvary and an empty tomb and an ascension and the promise of return in glory. The conclusion of the story is yet to be written.

It is sad, but it is true, that even we, who hail Jesus as Lord and Savior, are caught up with the peripheral things of Christmas. "Did you send a card to the Jacksons?" "Have you made the plane reservations yet?" But let us not become altogether cynical. Granted, the money spent for trips, gifts, and cards could have been given to the poor and hungry. But there is a bright side. All sorts of people, many lonely souls, are cheered by the word they get from friends this one time of the year. The anxieties of the long year are minimized, and we remember people who mean something to us. While in our affluent society it may be difficult to find a present that meets a critical need, most gifts are useful, or if not useful, cherished tokens of affection. And most trips bring scattered families together. Surely, at no other time of the year is there such a general aura of good will. Perhaps these are the dividends that flow into our lives from the Christmas story.

When in a burst of love, a woman poured an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment on Jesus' head, the disciples complained that the ointment might have been sold for a large sum – and given to the poor. Jesus gave them a mild rebuke, "She has done a beautiful thing to me." There are times when a generous and even lavish act toward someone, though not practical, is the right thing. This may be true for Christmas.

Dates to Remember

December 1

Worship Service
Communion

December 2

Worship Committee
5:30 PM

December 8

Worship Service
Veterans of the Cross
Holiday Luncheon

December 9

Board Meeting
5:30 pm

December 15

Worship Service
CPR AED Training

December 20

Open House
6:30 to 8:30 pm

December 22

Worship Service

December 24

Christmas Eve Service

December 28

Labadie-Perry
Reception

December 29

Worship Service



Treasurer's Report

Denise Fusina

<u>PLEDGE REPORT</u>	<u>October 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
◇ General Fund Pledge:	\$ 9,250	\$ 92,500
◇ Received:	11,934	98,171

<u>INCOME AND EXPENSE REPORT</u>	<u>October 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
◇ General Fund Income	\$ 11,934	\$ 101,459
◇ General Fund Expense	17,733	197,536

Feed A Family

Bill Haase

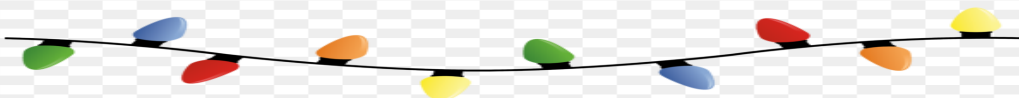


Food pantry needs are: boxed or bagged potatoes; mashed, au gratin, scalloped, cheesy, etc. Hamburger, chicken, or tuna helper; cereal, crackers, kid snacks, soups. Feel free to utilize the donated shopping bags on the middle hallway table.

Special Gathering

Labadie-Perry Family

Please plan to join us in giving Pat and June a loving farewell as they will be moving . A reception in their honor will be held in the Fellowship Hall on December 28 from 3:30 to 5:30 pm. If you know someone who would like to attend but would need transportation to this special gathering for our friends, please feel free to reach out and offer to drive them.



Mitten Tree

Pat Garant



The change of season brings beautiful sights and fun times. It also brings cold weather! Help keep our community warm this winter by donating adult and children sized hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks, slippers, sweaters (store bought, homemade, or gently used). Donations can be hung on the Mitten Tree near the showcase through Christmas. They will be distributed to our neighbors in need. Thank you and bless you for caring!

Brooms

Brooms have arrived. These brooms were sold during the SERRV Bazaar years ago. They are a light weight, corn broom. Cost is \$20. Contact Nancy if you wish to purchase one, two or more (wedge.nancy@gmail.com or 989.356.4402).

Board Highlights

Deborah Desimone

- ◆ Denise Fusina demonstrated and explained a new simpler way to look at the overall budget for next year by combining 'like categories'. She noted both line item and narrative budgets making it easier for the members to understand.
- ◆ The Board approved the Personnel Committee recommendation to increase overall staff salaries by \$1,828.
- ◆ Joe Garant reported 17 pledges to date (\$61,076) with 11 of those pledges increased from last year.
- ◆ Pastor Hotchkin reminded the Board to 'pay attention who is on your doorstep'.
- ◆ The current elevator information has been sent to the Moderator of the Annual Meeting.
- ◆ The Board does not feel comfortable with donation baskets for luncheons, dinners, gatherings hosted by the church.

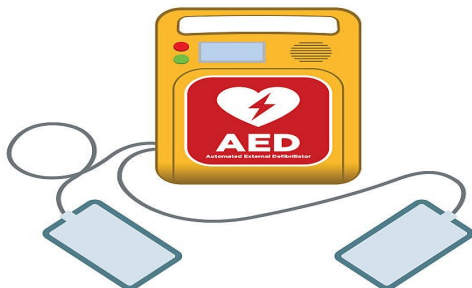
Nutcracker

Vicky Lindsay

Vicky Lindsay has reserved a block of seats to the Nutcracker on Sunday, December 20 @ 2:00 pm. If you are interested, tickets are \$12. Please see Vicky for more information or call her at 989-464-5260. Please join us for fun and fellowship!



For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the LORD. Luke 2:11



Andy Marceau from the Alpena Fire Department will be here **December 15** to provide CPR and AED Training immediately after the worship service.

The AED has been moved to a central location per Andy's recommendation.

“Why are our doors still locked?”

Property/Security Committee and Board of Directors

In order to enhance communication within our congregation, we are taking a step to answer the question, “why are our doors still locked?”

The Property/Security Committee along with the Board of Directors have spent many long hours discussing and researching the dilemma of having the empty building open and unattended. When we first started the conversation, we became aware of 5-6 instances of individuals sleeping in our building, having contact with staff members and parishioners. One of the individuals was described as having a potential for violence if they are off their medications. Another who was in the building several days, maybe a week, left disturbing signs of violence. We also have a couple of instances of members feeling that assault was imminent. Over many years there have been issues with a wallet stolen from an office closet during worship, offering checks and cash stolen from offices, safes broken into, bed bugs which needed to be fumigated at additional cost to the church. This has been a long term problem. Over the last two weeks, we have seen or been told of potentially violent individuals staying in the Memorial Garden. We had an individual present at the Lockwood Street door, who could not get in and did not see a number to call, so went across the street and asked the merchant to call the church so they could be let in. The staff member could not see the individual through the office or door window and was taken by surprise by the individual who appeared confused, talking about Rev. Lance and working with him. The individual was let in, trying to be open and inviting. It became apparent very quickly that some form of intoxication was involved. The person tried the Pastor’s office which was locked and proceeded to go down to the basement. After some time, the individual came upstairs and mentioned that the ‘historical room was locked’. This individual was in the building for almost an hour before they were coaxed to leave. The next morning the front double doors were found to be unlocked.

Taking all this information into account, the Board of Directors and the Property/Security Committee researched many options. The cost on these options was prohibitive at this time as working with concrete block walls as well as power sources and visual aspects are an issue and concern. With this in mind, it was decided that the most cost effective and aesthetically pleasing solution was to lock the building and dispense keys. This will continue until we are able to determine future space usage and financial resources. If we are able to monetize our space, it is inevitable that we will have to seek a comprehensive solution to make the building once again available to the community. The Board is in full support of our current solution and ask for your support.

It should be noted that over time, moving from the past to our current society, that we live in a much different world. The United Church of Christ, local law enforcement, and experience tell us that we may be able to make some things better with financial resources, but it will not be the same as the past.

If you have any further questions, suggestions, or comments, please feel to speak to any Board member. Thank you for your understanding and patience.

Dishcloths



A new order of dish clothes has been ordered and received. These cloths make great stocking stuffers or secret Santa gifts. Cost is \$2.50 each with colors of red, blue, yellow, and green available. Contact Nancy Wedge if you would like to purchase (wedge.nancy@gmail.com or 989.356.4402).

Dates to Remember

Birthdays

Gavin Plume 12/07
 Janice Snell 12/08
 Jean Gilliland 12/10
 Bill Dempsey 12/13
 Pat Leahy 12/15
 Clarence Rickard 12/17
 Megan Petty 12/18
 Robert Westenbarger 12/18
 Michael Mack 12/19
 Robert Silver 12/19

Stacy Zeller 12/19

Nathan Jarmuzewski 12/28

John Mack 12/28

Mary Bloom 12/31

Anniversary

Bill & Debbie Dempsey 12/06



Laity Schedule for December

Communion:

December 1 Vicky Lindsay

Counters :

December 8 Ashley Wedge

December 29 Dennis & Janet Artley

Greeters:

December 1 Blair and Ann Diamond

December 8 Beth Petty and Kathy Moore

December 15 Craig Waak and Tammy Veasy

December 22 Dan Kibbe and Bobbi Zubi

December 29 Mary Minnick and Deborah Desimone

Lay Readers:

December 1 William Dempsey

December 8 Lori Mayer

December 15 Jim McNeil

December 22 Pat Labadie

December 29 Lynn Borke

Ushers:

December 1 Max & Vicky Lindsay

December 8 Boris Gerber and Penny Anderson

December 15 Gary & Sandy Jarmuzewski

December 22 Nancy and Ashley Wedge

December 29 Pat Labadie and Sandy Jarmuzewski

Fellowship Hosts:

December 1 Joe & Pat Garant

December 8 Holiday Luncheon

December 15 Craig Waak & Lori Mayer

December 22

December 29

Altar Guild

Vicky Lindsay



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 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: Nancy Ross

Custodian: Mike LaMarre

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Thank you to all who attended the Thanksgiving Potluck. There was great food and fellowship. Thanks to those who helped with cleanup. It was appreciated.

A special thank you to Ashley Wedge for doing the decorating.