

**September  
2022**

# Still Speaking

*Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena*

## Board of Directors

- Blair Diamond,  
Chairperson
- Deborah Butler,  
Vice-Chairperson
- Dennis Artley,  
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- Bill Dempsey
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- Vicky Lindsay
- Tammy Veasy
- Nancy Wedge

## Dates to Remember

September 4  
Worship Service  
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September 5  
Office Closed  
Happy Labor Day!  
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September 9  
Ladies Luncheon  
~~~

September 11  
Worship Service  
(Godspeed)  
~~~

September 12  
Board of Directors  
Meeting  
~~~

September 18  
Worship Service  
~~~

September 25  
Worship Service



## Closing Thoughts from our Transitional Pastors

*Reverend Eugene Bacon and Reverend Dr. H. Robert Case*

### Farewell Thoughts

*Reverend Bacon*

Even though Karen, Aspen and I plan on remaining active in this congregation as parishioners, I still want to share some memories and thoughts about the time I have served here as pastor. For the last eight months Bob and I have been switching back and forth, one month at a time. Prior to that for about a half year I was taking one Sunday each month to give Rev. Case some time off. A few years ago I stepped in for three months to give Rev. Paul Lance time for a Sabbatical Leave. So I have done some significant pastoral work here, though mainly as a transitional pastor responsible primarily for Sunday services.

During these times we have worshiped together. I remember a number of the services. When Paul was on leave I did a sermon series on the Beatitudes, one sermon for each Beatitude. Many of you seemed to appreciate these. Rev. Case also allowed me to be the primary planner of the Christmas Eve service this past year. It was special for me since I hadn't led one in several years and wondered if I would ever lead one again. The Earth Day service we shared back in May was also important for me. It is a theme I've dealt with annually in a number of the congregations I've served.

We've grown together. I haven't taught many classes here. There was one in the spring on mysticism and the Christian mystics. A while back Paul, Bob and I did a videotaped discussion series on a book Paul selected. I also attended with many of you a number of classes led by both Paul and Bob over the years. We had some free-wheeling discussions that kept us on the growing edge.

There were fun things we did together. Choir practice has always been fun and Karen and I plan on continuing with that. We also had a great time Christmas caroling. In addition I remember the apple cider and donut events, Thanksgiving dinners, a Thanksgiving reader's theater production, and a Fellowship time where we met in small groups in the homes of some of our members. We've had some great conversations during coffee hour, too.

Though I haven't officiated at the funerals of members here (people understandably want their own Pastor or Pastor Emeritus to officiate), I have mourned the loss of members and friends with you.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve and for the opportunity to work together with Bob. You will probably hear me from the pulpit again but not for a while, perhaps when the Interim pastor needs some time off. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve here.

Blessings, now and always, *Gene*

## Closing Thoughts from our Transitional Pastors (Continued from Page 1)

Reverend Eugene Bacon and Reverend Dr. H. Robert Case

### Closing Thoughts

Reverend Case

“Unity is a Christian goal, uniformity is not.”

The Apostle Paul reminds us we are to strive to have *the faith of and mind of Christ Jesus*.

Christianity is a lived experience, not simply an intellectual activity.

After 53 years in the ministry, I have found no other way of describing the Christian life than the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John 16, verses 34-35. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” It is that simple and that hard at the same time.

I have short quotes that help me to try to live out God’s love. I used to have a UCC bumper sticker on our car that read “To Believe is to Care and to Care is to Do”. The faith is not about one or the other, but how they fit together. First Corinthians 13b roots that understanding: “...and if I have faith that I can move mountains, but don’t have love I have nothing.” There is insightful power in understanding that even great faith can be dangerous and empty if it is not filled with love.

A constant companion, one you have heard me say many times, is from the 43rd chapter of Isaiah. Here at the darkest hour of Israel’s history he reminds Israel that God knows them and that they are precious, loved and honored. All people are created in God’s image and are due respect and love no matter how much mud and dust cover that image. It is not so much that we love God, but that God loves us. The understanding that everyone at the core is precious, loved, and honored, changes the way we treat friend and foe, family and stranger, because we are all one in our common humanity. It is this which allows unity without uniformity. We cannot escape the love of God.

Horace Bushnell was a giant in 19th century thought and pastor at Hartford’s Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut. One of his insights was for most Christians, faith is not an instant giving your life to Christ (Conversion Experience), but is a journey that continues all our life. If properly nurtured, children and adults would never know a time when they were not Christian. Christianity is not a singular decision, but a road to be traveled.

I have a lot more of these quotes that help me to travel through life’s journey, and they may not be direct quotes by the way I remember them. No matter who you are, your political orientation, your theological beliefs, or your sexual or racial identity, we here at First Congregational Church have tried to live up to the standards because: ***No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.***

As I leave as pastor of our church home, I would like to leave you with one more quote and benediction that I learned when I found it on the “web”. It is based on a quote from Henri Frederic Amiel: “Life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who make the journey with us. So...be swift to love, and make haste to be kind. And the blessing of God, who made us, who loves us, and who travels with us be with you now and forever. Amen.”

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Judith and I came to this church in 1984. She spent almost 30 years as choir director, and I have been some form of pastor for 22 years. This is and will be our church home, but as I leave this transitional minister position, I want to say from the depth of my soul, THANK YOU for allowing me into your lives and for your support and companionship on this exciting journey. I am required to take a few months off, not years this time, to allow for a smooth transition to our new future together. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Rev. Gene Bacon for all the help he has given me and look forward to worshipping together.

Once again, thank you for all you have given Judith and me over the last 38 years, *Bob*

## Godspeed Service Rescheduled

Worship Committee



The Godspeed Service for Reverend Case and Reverend Bacon has been rescheduled for Sunday, September 11 at 10:00am. Please plan to join us for this special ceremony and fellowship time to celebrate the pastors and all they have done for our congregation over these last two challenging years.

## Pulpit Supply Pastors Onboard

Board of Directors

Extending a warm welcome to the Reverends Tim Murtaugh, Laraine Sundin, and Jon Gougeon!

Throughout September and October (with the exception of the September 11 Godspeed Service) these ministers will lead our Sunday worship services and bless us with their knowledge and compassion for sharing the word of Christ.



- Reverend Tim Murtaugh is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and lives in Frankfort, Michigan with his wife, Jennifer. He is a native of Ann Arbor and studied at Hiram College, Vanderbilt Divinity School and Saint Paul School of Theology. In addition to serving Disciples of Christ congregations, Rev. Murtaugh has served United Church of Christ congregations in Wayland and Benzonia.
- Born and raised in Alpena, Reverend Jon Gougeon and his wife, Kitty, have recently returned to the area. They have two children and two grandchildren, all of whom live in Alpena as well. Rev. Gougeon received a call to ministry while serving as youth leader at First United Methodist Church. He took training and classes to become a Licensed Local Pastor in UMC, and was appointed to the Garfield, Alger and Sterling United Methodist Churches in 2003. While serving the three churches, he attended Methodist Theological School of Ohio in Delaware, Ohio, completing his seminary studies in 2009. He was appointed to Reese United Methodist Church in Reese, Michigan in 2010. Rev. Gougeon has retired to the Alpena area and has served as pulpit supply pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Hubbard Lake and Alpena Free Methodist Church in Alpena.
- We will share a brief introduction to Reverend Laraine Sundin in the October newsletter.

Welcome one and all! We are happy to have you onboard, and look forward to worshipping with you in the weeks to come!

## In-House Comstock Applications Due

Judy Suszek, Office Administrator



All in-house requests for 2023 Comstock grant funds must be reviewed and approved by the church's Board of Directors at the September 12 board meeting prior to being submitted to the Comstock Committee for their review. In-house applications may be submitted via email to [officeuccalp@gmail.com](mailto:officeuccalp@gmail.com), or in hard copy delivered to the church office by Tuesday, September 6.

## Facebook Posts Welcome

Cindy Straley—Facebook Coordinator



If you have information or personal items of interest such as family weddings, funerals, or celebrations to share via our Facebook page, please reach out to me at [cindyinspire@gmail.com](mailto:cindyinspire@gmail.com) or 989-464-2361.

## Celebrating 160 Years Serving Christ and His People

*Historical Committee*

This poem is found on the inside cover of the 125th anniversary celebration booklet, celebrating this church and its congregation. It was written by Bob Kelly specifically for this momentous era in our history:

### *The Church's Message*

*To understand a church  
one must worship alone,  
enter an empty sanctuary  
and sit in semi-darkness  
while memories and dreams  
vibrate in waves,  
maintaining this meditation  
until receiving the message  
that church reaches forth  
cushioning broken dreams,  
renewing desire,  
invigorating flesh.*

*Bob Kelly  
1-11-87*

## Congregational Conversations Resume

*Welcoming Committee*

The next Congregational Conversations gathering is scheduled for Sunday, September 18 at 11:30 am, immediately following Fellowship Hour. We encourage everyone to participate with the goal to recognize, accept, and understand our differences in open and respectful exchange of personal experiences and knowledge.

To sign up for the September 18 gathering, please call or email the church office (989-356-1795, [officeuccalp@gmail.com](mailto:officeuccalp@gmail.com)).



## Soup Kitchen Update

*Sandy Jarmuzewski*



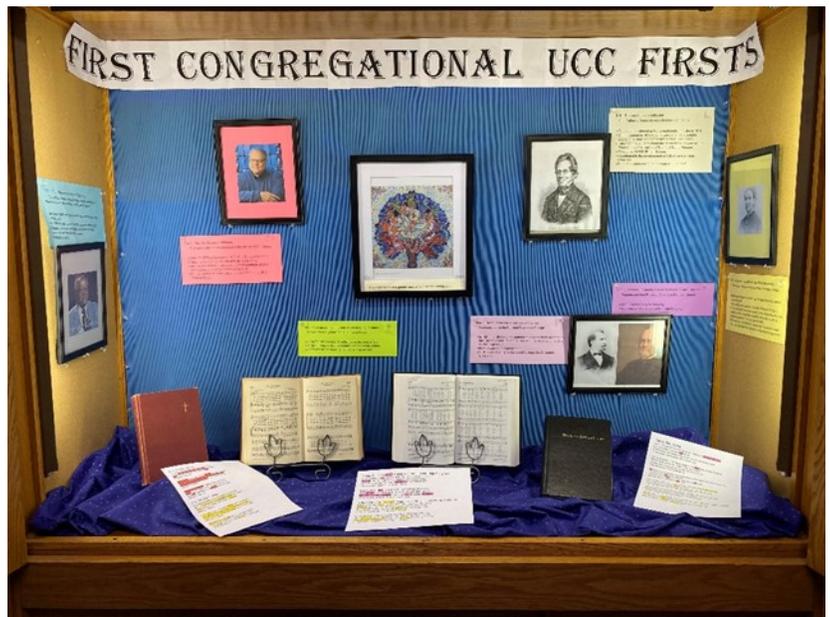
The Soup Kitchen has begun to serve indoors again as of September 1. If you are interested in being part of a UCC team, please call me at 989-255-7894 or email me at [slouisajarmu@gmail.com](mailto:slouisajarmu@gmail.com). The commitment would be one evening per month for approximately 2-1/2 hours. We need five to six people for the team. Thank you for your consideration!

## Celebrating UCC “Firsts”

*Welcoming Committee*

The Welcoming Committee would like to draw your attention to some of the **Firsts** that are celebrated by the United Church of Christ. The display case in the hallway outside the secretary’s office is full of information about UCC **Firsts**. Included in the display are these **Firsts**:

- ◆ 1815 Antoinette Louisa Brown—first woman ordained as a mainstream Congregationalist minister.
- ◆ 1852 Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet—First Father of American education for deaf people and a Congregationalist minister.
- ◆ 1864 Edward Miner Gallaudet, son of Thomas-First president of the National Deaf-Mute College.
- ◆ 1967 Reverend Joseph H. Evans, D.D.- First African American as Secretary and President of a mainline church denomination (UCC) in the USA.
- ◆ 1972 Rev. Dr. William R. Johnson—First openly gay person ordained in a mainline church (UCC).
- ◆ 1995 first gender neutral/-non-violent language hymnal--(New Century Hymnal).
- ◆ All hymn lyrics revised to reflect a gender-neutral God.
- ◆ All hymn lyrics revised to remove references to violence.
- ◆ Some traditional tunes retired rather than revised.



Be sure to look at the display case to see copies of the hymnals and copies of the hymns and the words that have been changed.

## Ladies Luncheon

*Food, Fellowship, and Kabitzing*

Our next Ladies Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, September 9, 11:45am at Hunan Chinese Restaurant on M-32 in Alpena. 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. Hope to see you there!

## Greeters Return

*Worship Committee*

It is with joy we welcome back our troupe of worship service greeters this month. The greeters will once again be welcoming members and visitors alike to our Sunday morning worship services. Please be sure to greet the greeters with a smile, and thank them for volunteering their time and energy to brighten our days!

“Ah, September! You are the doorway to the season that awakens my soul.”

~Peggy Toney Horton

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

Phone: 989-356-1795 Fax 989-356-8825  
Web Site: <http://uccalpena.org>  
Email: [officeuccalp@gmail.com](mailto:officeuccalp@gmail.com)  
Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, Monday – Thursday

**Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.**  
**In person and Online**

**Transitional Pastors: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case**  
**and Rev. Eugene Bacon**

**Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski**

**Treasurer: Denise Fusina**

**Office Administrator: Judy Suszek**

**Custodian: Mike LaMarre**

*Still Speaking*

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## September Celebrations

### Birthdays

Nancy Wedge	September 6	Lois Gibbs	September 20
Bill Clegg	September 7	Laura Caplis	September 21
Penny Anderson	September 8	Cheryl Mack	September 27
Matthew Bailey	September 10	Claire Caplis	September 28
Blair Diamond	September 14	Nicole Petty	September 28
Connor Caplis	September 15		



### Anniversary



Dennis & Beverly Bodem      September 21      59 Years

“Some people, no matter how old they get, never lose their beauty — they merely move it from their faces into their hearts.” ~Martin Buxbaum