

**December
2023**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

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

Dates to Remember

December 3
Worship Service
Communion

December 10
Worship Service
Christmas Luncheon

December 11
Board Meeting
5:30 PM

December 17
Worship Service

December 24
Worship Service

December 24
Christmas Eve Service

December 25
Christmas Day

December 26
Office Closed

December 31
Worship Service
Baptism

From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

Where is Bethlehem? It seems to me that Bethlehem can be in our hearts. Jesus came to the little village of Bethlehem. Jesus can come to us, too.

Jesus' coming to the earth centuries ago was part of God's gigantic maneuver to get into our hearts. God's objective is not the conquest of nations, but of people, you and me. It stretches our imaginations to believe that God would bother with this tiny planet, and with us who despoil it – and who all too often ignore God and one another.

Jesus did not come because great hosts of people awaited him. On that first Christmas night, only a few scattered shepherds took note. The rest of the world, and even the little village itself, carried on as if nothing eventful had occurred. Even during Jesus' 33 years on earth, there was no surge of interest and loyalty. At Calvary, virtually everyone had deserted Jesus.

Only in the wake of the Easter resurrection did things happen, and even then rather quietly. Not until three centuries later did Jesus find a place in the courts of the empire. But since that time, the name of Jesus has become the most honored name in the world. Hundreds of millions have acclaimed him King and Lord and Savior.

God's objective remains the same as that Bethlehem night. Not nations, not civilizations, not cultures, not the planet itself (all of these are passing away), but people are in God's eye. And God wants to take up residence within us, to hold us and to keep us, now and forever. You and I are God's Bethlehem. Phillips Brooks says as much in his beloved hymn: "How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n. No ear may hear His coming, but in his world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in."

May you and yours have a blessed Christmas and a righteous New Year.



Christmas Eve Services

Worship Committee



Christmas Eve Services

Morning Worship 10:00 AM

Brief Fellowship Immediately Following Worship

Evening Fellowship and Worship

Fellowship Time with Music, Punch, Cookies

6:00 PM - Fellowship Hall

Christmas Chorale Service 6:40 PM- Sanctuary

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Lessons and Carols

Guest Soloist Caitlin Borke

7:00 PM - Sanctuary



Sunday Fellowship Time

Bill Haase

Many thanks and compliments to our Hostesses for Sunday Fellowship. The many treats and homemade pastries are most appreciated by our church members and guests. Many thanks to those Hostesses doing “double duty” during the last several months of 2023. Several Hostesses and helpers are needed in the coming year. A sign up sheet is located on the table outside the Sanctuary for 2024 Fellowship Hostesses. For questions and concerns, please contact Bill @ 989-340-2124 or dsbhaase@live.com.



Christmas Poinsettia's

Altar Guild

Remember to sign up for Christmas Eve Poinsettia's. Nancy Wedge will be collecting \$20 for each plant ordered. You may designate whether this is in Memory of or in Honor of a loved one on the sign up sheet next to the church office. Deadline for ordering is December 14. Flowerland will deliver the Poinsettia's on December 22.

Dates to Remember

Birthdays

Gavin Plume 12/7
 Janice Snell 12/8
 Jean Gilliland 12/10
 William Dempsey 12/13
 Patricia Leahy 12/15
 Clarence Rickard 12/17

Robert Westenbarger 12/18

Megan Petty 12/18
 Stacy Zeller 12/19
 Robert Silver 12/19
 Nathan Jarmuzewski 12/28
 John Mack 12/28
 Mary Bloom 12/31

Anniversaries

Brian & Belinda Hanna 12/1
 Bill & Debbie Dempsey 12/6
 Ray & Kathy Moore 12/22
 Avery & Marcia Aten 12/27

HOLIDAY POPS

Saturday, December 2, 2023 7:30 PM

Alpena High School Auditorium

3303 S. Third Avenue

Tickets are \$15.00 for adults. Students and children are free.

Veterans of the Cross

Beth Petty, Missions Committee

“Grace upon Grace” John 1:16

The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC for over 100 years. Your generosity will help provide emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, as well as Christmas “Thank you” gifts each December to our lower income retirees.

UCC congregations have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are in need. “From His abundance” we all have received one gracious blessing after another. Let us share our bounty with those who shared with and served us.

Gifts will be collected during the December 10 service and throughout the month of December.

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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Our Mitten Tree

Pat Garant

The change of season brings beautiful sights and fun times. It also brings the 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 area agencies for community neighbors in need. Thank you and bless you for caring.

Have a Blessed Christmas
and a Peaceful New Year!

Food Pantry

Bill Haase

The following is a list of items the local food pantry is requesting at this time: boxed potatoes, (mashed, au gratin, scalloped, cheesy), any kind of Rice-A-Roni or noodles and sauce, canned fruit (any kind), Jello/pudding (box or 4 packs).