

**March
2023**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

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Dates to Remember

March 1
Supper and Service
(First United Methodist)

March 5
Worship Service

March 8
Supper and Service
(Grace Lutheran)

March 12
Worship Service

March 13
Board of Directors
Meeting

March 15
Supper and Service
(First Presbyterian)

March 19
Worship Service

March 22
Supper and Service
(First Congregational UCC)

March 26
Worship Service

March 29
Supper and Service
(St. Paul Lutheran)



Unpredictable March

Pastor Jon Gougeon

Welcome to March, Lent, St. Patrick's Day and the first day of spring. No wonder the weather in March is so mercurial; it would seem this month could have an identity crisis. For the Church we have the One Great Hour of Sharing offering to support missions and disaster relief around the country and the world. Then we have the season of Lent as we join with other churches on Wednesday evenings for table fellowship and worship.

During Lent I urge you to spend more time in prayer and listening for the still small voice of God. We can do this by giving up some of the frivolous ways we spend our time. We spend too much of our days staring at our screens and social media. Try spending 10 to 15 minutes every day reading the Gospel of John. Try being intentionally kind to others, especially others that may not be agreeable to you. Find a local cause or mission you can support not only with your finances but with your physical presence as well.

We are ambassadors for Christ if we are believers and followers of Jesus. Live your faith, live the Gospel of salvation to all who believe. Trust in God to save you, trust in God to empower you, trust in God's love and share it.

Most of all, be in prayer that God will send, and you will recognize, the right spiritual leader and pastor to guide this congregation into the future.

²⁰But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. Jude 1:20

Be at peace,

Pastor Jon





One Great Hour of Sharing Offering Sunday, March 19

This year the One Great Hour of Sharing theme is **It's Time to Share**, based on Galatians 6:9-10.

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all...

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Galatia to assure them the power of God's Spirit to strengthen them to persist in the work of being generous in caring for others.

Because you didn't give up or quit, the United Church of Christ has been able to provide support that offered hope when situations seemed hopeless. We've offered food, water, medicines, education, and opportunities for sustainable development.

The gifts you give to One Great Hour Sharing are leveraged with those of others across the United Church of Christ bringing a greater impact to the work being done with local and global partners. Your support enables us to respond to a variety of global and local concerns by addressing advocacy, sustainable development, refugee and asylum issues, migration, disasters, and assisting those most in need and vulnerable among us.

Wildfires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding have ravaged communities in the United States and worldwide, leaving families and communities in desperate need of assistance. Some of these disasters have occurred in nearby communities or to friends and neighbors in countries thousands of miles away, across the globe. Strengthened by the power of God's Spirit and your collective generosity, the United Church of Christ continues to work with partners to care for others, and not give up... as together we build a just world for all.

Your contribution will be gratefully accepted at a church service or by mail to the church office. Please either use the One Great Hour of Sharing envelope included in the Sunday service bulletins, or just note on your check "for OGHS". Thank you for your generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering!

Soup Needed

Simple Supper at First Congregational UCC

Wednesday, March 22 is our church's turn to host the community-wide Lenten Simple Supper and Worship Service. We will need 12–15 crockpots of soup for the supper. Please complete the sign-up sheet at the back of the sanctuary or contact the church office at 989-356-1795 or officeuccalp@gmail.com if you can help supply soup.



Daylight Saving Time begins March 12. Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour, and change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Covenant Conversation—Sunday, March 19

The Welcoming Committee

At our January “Congregational Conversation”, ideas were presented about both the style and content, and specifically about what items should be included in our own Open and Affirming covenant. Sample covenants from 16 UCC churches across the nation were reviewed (copies of these are available on the Resource Table in our church middle hallway). The group especially liked the covenant adopted by the Manistee, Michigan church, and picked this as the first draft for our church:



The Members of the Congregation of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Alpena, MI aspire to embrace the inclusive love of Jesus Christ, so we make this covenant with the help of the Holy Spirit. We believe that all persons are created in God's image and are loved, valued, and blessed equally by God. This community of faith is an open and affirming congregation who seeks to welcome all persons, including those of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities, and economic circumstances. All persons are invited to fully share and participate in leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family. Therefore, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this house of worship.

We hope everyone has had the chance to carefully and prayerfully review and consider this first draft. What are your thoughts? Would this covenant convince all individuals in our community that we truly are welcome to all?

To have further discussion regarding our own church's Open and Affirming covenant, a “Congregational Conversation” will be held on Sunday, March 19, in Fellowship Hall immediately following fellowship time. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. If you would like to attend this conversation via Zoom on the internet (or if you have any questions or ideas to share), please speak with any member of the Welcoming Committee (Avery and Marcia Aten, Terry Bell, Bill Dempsey, Edith and Boris Gerber, Dottie and Bill Haase, Jay and Marilyn Kettler, and Beth Petty). We hope to see you then!

Reunion Planning Underway

The Worship Committee

“Church Family Reunion” and Fifty-Year Member Recognition

We are looking for many volunteers and ideas in order to host an event like this!
Please volunteer to help with this celebration.

Please complete the sign-up sheet on the back table or contact a member of the Worship Committee – Gene Bacon, Lynn Borke, Deborah Butler, Dottie Haase, or Patty McNeil.

Reminder—There are still many documents in members' pouches to be retrieved. Kindly stop and look to be sure your pouch does not contain important items waiting for your attention.



*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 a.m.
In Person and Online**

Pastor Emeritus: Reverend Dr. H. Robert Case

Part-Time Interim Minister: Pastor Jon Gougeon

Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski

Treasurer: Denise Fusina

Office Administrator: Judy Suszek

Custodian: Mike LaMarre

Live-Stream Technician: Brayden Broad

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Dates to Celebrate

Birthdays

Grady Barden	March 3	Carol Knowlton	March 20
Craig Waak	March 4	Nick Jarmuzewski	March 24
Ty Barbeau	March 5	Belinda Hanna	March 26
Wendy Bailey Graves	March 7	Jill Bailey	March 27
Beth Petty	March 8	Cindy Straley	March 27
Rev. Gene Bacon	March 12	Spencer Kibbe	March 27
Pat Labadie	March 17		



Anniversary



Jim & Patty McNeil March 9 27 Years

**“Courage is contagious. When a brave person takes a stand,
the spines of others are stiffened.” ` Billy Graham**