

**December
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,
Treasurer
- Bill Dempsey
- Boris Gerber
- Sandy Jarmuzewski
- Vicky Lindsay
- Tammy Veasy
- Nancy Wedge

Dates to Remember

December 4
Worship Service
~~~~

December 11  
Worship Service  
and  
Christmas Luncheon  
~~~~

December 12
Board of Directors
Meeting
~~~~

December 18  
Worship Service  
~~~~

December 24
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
~~~~

December 25  
Merry Christmas!  
No Worship Service  
~~~~

December 26
Office Closed
~~~~

December 31  
Happy New Years  
Eve!



## Anticipation

*An Advent Devotional*

When I think of the Advent season the lyrics from the Carly Simon song “Anticipation” begin to run through my head; “Anticipation, anticipation, Is makin’ me late, Is keepin’ me waitin’”. That is the purpose of the season to wait, watch and anticipate the Coming of the Messiah... not only the annual remembrance celebration called Christmas but also the “end of time; make all things new of the Second Coming.”

I also remember the anticipation and waiting through all the signs of the approaching Christmas as a child. One of the first signs was the arrival of the Sears, Montgomery Wards and Penney’s Christmas catalogs. The going out and gathering the greens for the Advent wreath and finally getting a Christmas Tree. Then the waiting and wondering as my brothers and sister made our Christmas wishes known to our parents. Also listening to the daily radio programs with Christmas themes to the stories.

We tend to confuse helpful readiness for Christmas with all its hustle and bustle of shopping, parties, and preparations as Advent. But the Advent season, more reflective in nature, can feel out of sync with all this noise and busyness.

John the Baptist always feels like the right person to get us ready for Christmas—he is the perfect anti-Santa that we need for our days of Advent. We trade Santa’s jolly laugh for John’s in your face intensity, the twinkle in the eye for a wildness about to interrupt your life, commanding our attention but always redirecting us to Jesus. “Prepare the way for the Lord” is the Advent call to get ready for the coming Messiah.

So how do you prepare for a surprise? More than just remembering Jesus’ first arrival as a baby in a manger, Advent hopes for Christ’s second coming. Advent is a season of expectant waiting, of anticipation, of waiting and sensing that all is not well with the world and longing for it to be made right again. This is a time for restless hearts, and the weariness of a broken world, and we want with all our being to know there’s really more than this.

During Advent we can seek the knowledge of the sin that clutters our lives and see all the ways we need to be saved. Advent helps us hope for restoration, to feel our need for salvation. Advent prepares us for a profound and real Christmas joy; in faith in the God who saves us from our sin, Jesus the Christ.

Back to my Christmas memories, I remember on Christmas mornings very early, my older brothers urging me to see if mom and dad were awake; at the time I was the youngest. So, I would go through the living room to see if my parents were awake, passing by the tree loaded with presents. It was Christmas, and waking my parents who, truth be told, had only gotten to bed a few hours earlier, joyously welcomed the day. Unless we had been to midnight mass, we would head off to Christmas morning service, before any presents would be opened. Once again... Anticipation...

May you all have a blessed Advent season and a Joyful Christmas.

Pastor Jon Gougeon

## Christmas Worship Services

Worship Committee



Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service begins at 7:00 p.m. Saturday, December 24. Please plan to arrive prior to before 6:45 to enjoy a specially arranged choral prelude prior to the service. We extend a warm welcome to the Trinity Episcopal Church choir, as they will be joining our choir to lead us all in music and lift our voices to the heavens Christmas Eve.

### Please Note

There will be no Christmas Day (Sunday) worship service this year.

## Poinsettias for the Altar

Altar Guild



Thanks to all who have ordered poinsettias to grace our altar for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. May God bless those to whom you have dedicated your poinsettias! If you missed the deadline for ordering the florist's poinsettias, you are welcome to purchase one from your favorite vendor and bring it to the church by Thursday, December 22 to have it included in the Christmas Eve altar display. If you have ordered a poinsettia or purchased one of your own, please feel free to take it home with you following the Christmas Eve service or pick it up anytime the following week.

## Christmas Luncheon—December 11

Nancy Wedge



Looking forward to seeing everyone at our December 11 Christmas Luncheon and sharing the joys of the season with you! On tap are good food, great fellowship, and much merriment and jollity. If anyone still wishes to purchase tickets, please contact Nancy Wedge at 989-356-4402 as soon as possible. And please remember to contact Nancy if you RSVP'd for the luncheon, but your plans have changed and you can no longer attend.

## Mitten Tree

Diana Standen



Our 2022 version of The Mitten Tree is beginning to sprout gifts, and the basket in the main hallway is ready for your donation. We are collecting hats, gloves, mittens, socks, slippers, scarves, and sweaters to be distributed to those in need. Items may be homemade, store bought, or even gently worn. Please help if you can! The items collected will be sent to Trinity Episcopal Church to be distributed to guests at their Sunday Suppers, to The Salvation Army for children in need and, if supply allows, to

area elementary schools as well.

## Cookie Decorating Party

Kat Tomaszewski, Choir Director

Please join us as we decorate cookies for Sunday Supper (and eat a few, too!) and sing Christmas carols on Saturday, December 17 at 10:00 a.m. Our decorated cookies will be shared with Sunday Supper guests on December 18. Please RSVP to Kat by calling/texting her at 989-255-8750 or emailing her at musicucalp@gmail.com so we will know how many cookies to bake. This event is open to the whole community, so please invite your friends and family! Hope to see you there!



## In Appreciation

Many Hands Make Light Work

Thank you to all who lended helping hands in decorating our beautiful church for the Christmas season – It looks glorious!

Kudos to Pat Garant and Nancy Wedge for updating our bulletin boards with timely, pertinent information – They look amazing!

A very special thank you to members of our Worship Committee who have been working diligently to prepare for the season of Advent. – Nice work!



## The Christmas Fund Offering for “Veterans of the Cross” Sunday, December 11

*“Good news. . . Great joy. . . All the people!” Luke 2:10*

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 will be collected throughout the month of December. It will help provide emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income 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.

In 2020, the United Church of Christ’s Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross provided pension supplementation for 276 retired clergy and church professionals, health benefits supplementation for 89 retired clergy and lay employees, emergency grants for 96 individuals and families, and Christmas Thank You gift checks to 504 retired clergy and employees.

Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Give to this month’s special offering for the Christmas Fund, and you will make sure that low income ministers and retirees have a place to go for help if they need it. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!



*Your contributions will be gratefully accepted at a Sunday service, or by mail or in person at the church office until Christmas. Thank you so much for your help!*

## Seeking Fellowship Hosting Helpers

Bill Haase



As we continue to bring members and friends back into our in-person worship services, we are looking for additional persons or couples to assist the assigned Fellowship hosts each week. If you have been a Fellowship host, you know it's a big job for one person. Contact Bill Haase at 989-916-4104 or complete the sign-up sheet in the Narthex if you can help host any of the Sundays. Please sign up to help. Thank you!

## SERRV Bazaar

A Great Resource for Gifts



First Congregational UCC will not be hosting a SERRV Bazaar this year. However, folks are urged to visit the SERRV website at [www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org) to order one-of-a-kind supplies and gifts from this most worthy organization.

## Dishcloth Fundraiser

Altar Guild



A new shipment of handmade dishcloths has arrived. The cloths are of great value, high quality, and inexpensive. They are double layered knit, ravel-proof, sanitary, and made in the USA! They cost \$2.25 each and available in red, blue, dark green and yellow. The dishcloths are perfect for Christmas stocking stuffers, Easter basket fillers, etc. Contact Nancy Wedge at 989-356-4402 or email [wedge.nancy@gmail.com](mailto:wedge.nancy@gmail.com) if you would like to make a purchase. Proceeds from the sale of the dishcloths help to defray the cost of our altar supplies. Thank you!

## Care Letter Suggestions Encouraged

Worship Committee



The importance of continuing the practice of signing and mailing Care Letters has been expressed by many members of our congregation. We have heard from numerous people that they truly appreciated the Care Letters they have received and to know that they are being held up in prayer by their church community. Care Letters may be requested for those celebrating good news and happy occasions as well as those experiencing hardships and challenges. Please remember to contact the church office if you know of someone who would benefit from receiving a Care Letter.

## Reports Due Notice

Judy Suszek, Office Administrator



In preparation for our 2022 Annual Report as well as the Annual Meeting scheduled for January 29, 2023, each committee is asked to submit their summary report to the church office by December 30. Due to limited activity for many committees, the report may be quite brief, but necessary just the same. Thank you!

## Pastoral Care Requests

Judy Suszek, Office Administrator

Pastor Jon will be holding office hours for those who wish to meet with him. Hours will vary depending on number of requests received as well as Pastor Jon's availability. Please call the office at 989-356-1795 to schedule an appointment if you would like to meet with him.



## Welcome New Members

Sunday, December 11

We are pleased to welcome Craig Waak and Lori Mayer to the First Congregational Church family. Craig and Lori have been attending church services off and on for a few years and are happy to finally be members! They both retired June 1 – Lori from senior management with FedEx, and Craig from his own mobile truck repair business – and moved to their current home on Beaver Lake. The area is not totally new to them as their home has been in Lori's family for fifty years, and they are enjoying spending the majority of their time right now updating it from a summer cottage to their forever home.



Craig and Lori started dating in 2000 and tied the knot in 2013 after a very special 2012 Christmas proposal, which is a story all its own. Their blended family includes four sons, two daughters, and five grandchildren, with one more on the way. They have a very fat (26 pound) cat named Pablo who absolutely thinks he's a dog, and are also blessed to have their mothers still with them. Lori's mom often attends services with them in the summer.

When they're not busy working on projects at home, they love to travel, especially cruising, and spending quality time visiting family and friends.

Please join us in officially celebrating Craig and Lori's membership during the December 11 worship service and Christmas luncheon!

## Stewardship Report

Stewardship Committee

Our Stewardship campaign pledges are still coming in. We will print a complete report in the January newsletter. Thank you for your generosity in continuing to support our church finances and mission projects. These pledges are an important piece of the puzzle for the Budget/Finance committee's planning process.



## Mark Your Calendars

Judy Suszek, Office Administrator

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 29 following the worship service. The meeting will be held in-person in the sanctuary and online as well.

*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](mailto: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**  
**Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski**  
**Treasurer: Denise Fusina**  
**Office Administrator: Judy Suszek**  
**Custodian: Mike LaMarre**

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**Dates to Celebrate**

Birthdays

|                     |         |                    |         |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Gavin Plume         | Dec. 7  | Megan Petty        | Dec. 18 |
| Janice Snell        | Dec. 8  | Michael Mack       | Dec. 19 |
| Jean Gilliland      | Dec. 10 | Robert Silver      | Dec. 19 |
| Bill Dempsey        | Dec. 13 | Stacy Zeller       | Dec. 19 |
| Patricia Leahy      | Dec. 15 | Nathan Jarmuzewski | Dec. 28 |
| Clarence Rickard    | Dec. 17 | John Mack          | Dec. 28 |
| Robert Westenbarger | Dec. 18 | Mary Bloom         | Dec. 31 |



Anniversaries



|                       |             |          |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Brian & Belinda Hanna | December 1  | 32 Years |
| Bill & Deb Dempsey    | December 6  | 3 Years  |
| Ray & Kathy Moore     | December 22 | 32 Years |
| Avery & Marcia Aten   | December 27 | 53 Years |

**BEST WISHES FOR A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS SEASON!**