

**April
2024**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

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From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

We know that life is serious business and that faith is not to be taken lightly. But seriousness is not the opposite of joy. We have all known people with a delightful sense of humor who at the same time have been highly faithful and responsible people. In answer to the question, "What is the chief end of man?" the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy God forever." We need not wait to enjoy God until we reach heaven; we begin here and now.

The thought of enjoying God was strange to the religions that prevailed at the time when Jesus walked the earth. We see this in Homer's *Odyssey*, the account of Odysseus, the hero of Troy, and his perilous journey back to his home in Ithaca. The gods and goddesses harried Odysseus every step of the way. How could people enjoy gods and goddesses who with envy and caprice were a constant threat to their happiness?

It is not so with the God of the Bible. God created all things for the sheer joy of creating. It must have been a high moment for God when God made us in God's own image. God intended to enjoy us, and God intended for us to enjoy God.

To be sure, things turned out rather badly. Human beings turned from God, became afraid of God, and plunged into all sorts of sin and pain. But that did not end it for God. God sent Jesus to suffer, die, and be raised again. God had created us for joy, and God would not be diverted.

Through Jesus, we are restored to God, to God's creation, and to one another; and are on the path of enjoying God again. God has forgiven us, and God has given us the Holy Spirit in order to usher us into God's kingdom. In God's realm, God leads us into arenas of joy – and chief among the joys is God Godself!

Dates to Remember

April 7
Worship Service
Communion

April 8
Board Meeting
5:30 pm

April 14
Worship Service

April 21
Worship Service

April 28
Worship Service



The 50 Year Membership Celebration will be June 23, 2024.

Phishing Scams

Office Administrator

Please be aware that there is a scam going on that is targeting people of this church. It began about 4 years ago. An email was received, from “Pastor Lance” to a staff member, requesting that they purchase gift cards for him for several family members’ birthdays. The email went on to say that the reason for this is that he was currently with another very ill family member, who was in the ICU, and did not know when he would be able to purchase the cards himself. “Pastor Lance” indicated that he would pay the staff member back. This incident cost the church \$500. More recently, several members and staff received similar emails from “Pastor Hotchkin” requesting they purchase gift cards due to similar circumstances. If you look closely, it is not Pastor Hotchkin’s email. **Please do not respond to them.** These are called phishing emails that contain at least one of the following telltale signs:

- ◇ Asks for sensitive information
- ◇ Uses a different domain
- ◇ Contains links that don’t match the domain
- ◇ Uses unsolicited attachments
- ◇ Is not personal
- ◇ Uses poor spelling and grammar
- ◇ Tries to panic the recipient



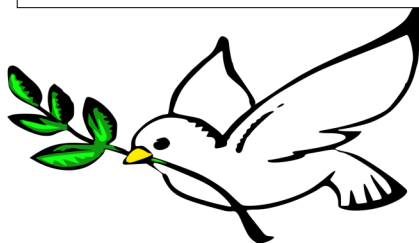
If you believe you have been a victim of these phishing scams you can:

1. Forward the phishing email to the Anti-Phishing Working Group at reportphishing@apwg.org.
2. Forward the phishing email to SPAM (7726).
3. Report the phishing attempt to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

Membership Declaration Cards are available on the table in the back of the sanctuary or by calling the church.

Peace Gathering

Alpena Peace Community



You are cordially invited to a peace Gathering on April 14, 2024 from 7 to 8 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 119 W. Dunbar St., Alpena. Come and take part in an evening of gentle music provided by Mr. David Usher, followed by intermittent readings, quiet reflection, and light refreshments.

Homebound/Shut-in Ministry

Pastor Dick

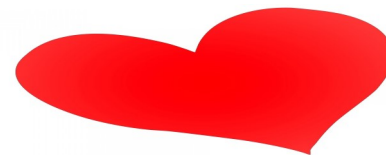
If you are interested in having someone visit or bring you communion, please let either Pastor Dick or Gary Jarmuzewski know. With many older and homebound members, some may feel somewhat neglected and lost in the activities of our church. We would love to have you stay connected and feel a part of our church community.

Dates to Remember

Birthdays

Joan Chrzan 4/1
 Miranda Plume 4/11
 Lori Mayer 4/11
 Janet Southwell 4/12
 Brian Hanna 4/12
 Katie Mack 4/15
 Kristen Barden 4/19
 Dottie Haase 4/19

Dennis Artley 4/20
 Lydia Hanna 4/21
 Aspen Bacon 4/23
 Debra Grubaugh 4/24
 Patricia McNeil 4/24
 Jere Standen 4/24
 Bob Kelly 4/28
 Donna Marsh 4/28
 Patty Lance 4/29



Anniversaries

Max & Vicky Lindsay 4/8
 Curt & Sharyl Davis 4/12
 Dan & Alison Storey 4/17
 Pat Labadie & June Perry 4/28



A new prayer chain is starting at First Congregational UCC!

This will be an email prayer chain using this address: prayeruccalp@gmail.com

All people, members and friends, are invited to and can sign up to be on the prayer chain via their email. Prayer requests are sent to the email address. These requests will usually be looked at every day, monitored by a church member (not by our church secretary). The prayer request will then be sent to all those on the email distribution list (although those receiving the email do not see the full distribution list).

For privacy reasons, no one's full name is put in without their approval. An example: Request from John Smith: "I ask for prayers for my friend Sam Jones who is recovering from cancer" will be changed to "John Smith asks for prayers for his friend Sam who is recovering from cancer." Also, the request can be edited to take out too much detail.

To join this email prayer chain, just send an email (from the email address you wish to use) to the new prayer chain email prayeruccalp@gmail.com.

Any questions, or if you wish to join the team monitoring and sending out the prayer requests, please call Edith Gerber at 860-794-7528.

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

Still Speaking

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Welcome Spring!

Isaiah 61:11

For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign Lord will make
righteousness and praise
spring up before all nations.

