

**March
2018**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

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A Word From Our Minister: “Out of Respect for Billy Graham”

Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance III

When evangelist Bill Graham died two weeks ago at age 99, and his memory is being honored as his body lies in state under the U.S. Capitol rotunda, it gives us an opportunity to take stock of how religion and politics have become intertwined in the past half-century here in America.

From Eisenhower’s decision to run for the presidency to LBJ’s decision to leave it, from Nixon’s re-entry into national politics to George W. Bush’s decision to mend his ways, Billy Graham was there to advise them. He knew every president from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush, counseled them all, prayed with them and knew their spouses and their children.

Eisenhower asked, “How do I know if I’ll go to heaven?” Kennedy wondered, “Do you believe in the Second Coming?” (The two men were not particularly close, since Billy had said during the campaign that John Kennedy, as a Catholic, would probably be more loyal to the Pope in Rome than to the U. S. Constitution.) Both Bill & Hillary Clinton needed help with forgiveness. George W. Bush asked Billy Graham if some sins were worse than others. Billy Graham’s faith and America’s politics were tightly knit!

Billy Graham was a savvy observer of America’s popular moods and very well-traveled. He is believed to have spoken face-to-face with more people in more places than anyone else in history, having “preached the Gospel” to 210 million people in 185 countries in 417 crusades since graduating Wheaton College and leading Youth For Christ rallies from 1944 on.

Millions of people came forward during his crusades, giving their lives “over” to Christ. Millions more were “saved” as they watched Billy Graham on television, as our nation began to develop a “celebrity culture.” On three Thursdays this month (March 15, 22, & 29, at 1:00 pm in the Lower Level All-Purpose Room) I will show movies that include Billy Graham’s “crusades” in the storyline. One is from 1965, one from 1972, and one from 1983. Then we’ll talk about what strikes us in those films.

I do not want to disparage the man’s faith nor his accomplishments. However, I wonder whether any President could resist taking political advantage of the friendship of one of America’s most admired men? And was Graham able to resist the temptations that come when partisan politics and power, faith and fame, collide?

George Will, columnist (The Alpena News, Feb. 26, 2018, 4-A), wrote: “Prophets take adversarial stances toward their times, as did the 20th Century’s two greatest religious leaders, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Pope John Paul II. Graham did not. Partly for that reason, his country showered him with honors.” Let’s reflect on that, with respect.

March 2018

Dates to Remember

Every Wednesday
Lenten Soup Supper
(see the back page
for list of locations)

9

Ladies Luncheon

12

Board of Directors

15

“No Frills” Book Club

20

Friendship Room

April 1 Easter Sunday
7:00 am Sunrise
Service @ Yacht Club
10 am Worship

Daylight Saving
Time begins on
**Sunday, March
11th.** “Spring
Forward” one
hour.

Comstock Fund Investments and the New Endowment

As many of you know, in 1986 the church received a very generous bequest of **\$1.1 million** from the estate of Andrew Comstock. This gift was intended to assist those in need and to strengthen our church in the community. With the prudent investments of Boston Advisors and the diligent work of our Investment Committee and Comstock Fund Committees over the years, this fund has given out over \$3 million in grants and currently has assets of **\$2.2 million**. In other words, it has doubled in value even while giving away three times its original bequest. That's amazing!

We have been blessed with this generous gift to assist us in remaining a strong and vital church here in the heart of Alpena. Over the years, our church has received about 40% of the annual distribution for our operating budget and innovative ministries. Thank you.

At our Annual Congregational Meeting on Jan. 28, 2018, we voted to withdraw **\$1.1 million** from the Comstock Fund (the interest income earned on the initial bequest) and invest it in an "endowed" fund at the Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan (C.F.N.E.M.I. here in Alpena) to be used specifically for our church operations. We anticipate a 5% "draw" to generate about \$55,000 income to our annual church budget for our ministries in perpetuity. Of course, as the Endowment grows over the years, so would the amount of the annual 5% draw.

On Feb. 15, our Investment Committee met with Patrick Heraghty, Executive Director of C.F.N.E.M.I, to begin the process of transferring assets into the new "First Congregational Comstock Endowment". It is our hope to have the \$1 million "principle" and the \$100,000 "spendable" in the endowment prior to April 1, the start of the second quarter in the fiscal year.

Mr. Heraghty explained that the Community Foundation calculates its annual draw on a "13-quarter rolling average." With four quarters in each fiscal year, that means it will be three years before the entire Endowment will be generating its maximum funds for our church operating budget. By designating a portion of the original investment as "spendable" gives us the ability to draw the expected 5% from the very start of the Endowment.

Our Investment Committee does something similar with our own Comstock Fund 5% draw at present. We calculate a "rolling average" over the past five years of fund balances, thereby smoothing out any particularly volatile year on the Stock Market. The 5% draw on the remaining \$1.1 million at Boston Advisors will be calculated on July 1, giving our Comstock Fund Committee the new amount they can allocate in grants when they meet in October of this year.

This action by our congregation not only assures that our operating budget will receive the 5% annual distribution from this Endowment, the new CFNEMI Endowment will be a local fund into which those of you who are so inclined can donate your own "bequest" or "planned gift" in the future and thereby increase the value of the fund in perpetuity.

The Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan is nationally accredited and it has a long history of success. It was led by one of our own members, Mr. Lucas Pfeifferberger, and our church is currently the recipient of not only the endowed Pfeifferberger Fund but also of funds established by Jennie Kerr, Olive & Fred Steele, and others.

Mr. Heraghty ran a spread-sheet to project anticipated annual distributions during the next 13 calendar quarters and beyond which, together with market gains and losses and fees over those years (which grow as "reserve" funds), indicate annual draws of \$61,000 in 2021 and \$64,000 in 2022, etc.

This new "endowment" fund will sustain and preserve our church for future generations. The other half of the Comstock Fund will continue to be invested with Boston Advisors to provide community outreach, mission, & innovative ministries grants under guidelines established by our congregation.

I thank the members of our church for their action on this matter. Well done. — Rev. Paul Lance

Save the Date! Sunday, March 11

“One Great Hour of Sharing” STONE SOUP SUNDAY

This year seemed like a good time to revive our “stone soup” lunch. As so many disasters have impacted so many people, all the more reason to find something to throw in the pot for the common good. Join us for a celebration of "Stone Soup" on Sunday, March 11. Bring yourselves, your contribution of money for One Great Hour of Sharing, and whatever **frozen, cooked or canned goods you want to throw in the pots**. (We will keep one gluten-free.) We will have the broth started; any fresh veggies already cut up are welcome.

If your pantry is bare that morning, come anyway! A sign-up sheet is out for a few good volunteers to bring bread. If you are not familiar with the story, here is a very short version:

Once upon a time, a pair of beleaguered soldiers straggled home to a village empty-handed, in a land ruined by war. They were famished, but the villagers had so little they shouted evil words and slammed their doors. So the soldiers dragged out a big kettle, filled it with water, and put it on a fire to boil. They rolled a clean round stone into the pot, while the villagers peered through their curtains in amazement.

"What kind of soup is that?" they hooted.

"Stone soup," the soldiers replied.
"Everybody can have some when it's done."

"Well, thanks," one matron grumbled, coming out with a shriveled carrot. "But it'd be better if you threw this in."

And so on, of course, one vegetable at a time, until the whole suspicious village managed to feed itself grandly.

... Each stew turns out different. Generosity, a resolve to turn bad luck into good, and respect for variety -- these things will nourish a nation of children.



from *High Tide In Tucson*, published by HarperCollins, ©1995 by Barbara Kingsolver.



Come join us at the celebration of **Maundy Thursday**, Mar. 29, at First Congregational United Church of Christ at **6:30 p.m.** We will be gathering around tables in Fellowship Hall for this “Lord’s Last Supper” communion service.

All are welcome.

Good Friday service will be held at St. Paul Lutheran on Mar. 30 from NOON until 3 PM. Rev. Lance will be the **sixth** preacher (around 2:15 pm) asking: “Who do you say that I am?”

Save the Date

Monday, April 16, & Tuesday, April 17, 2018



Former UCC General Minister & President,

John Thomas,

will facilitate a Church Leaders Retreat at
our church (First Congregational UCC)

**Church Ministers... lay leaders...
officers, delegates, and others in our**

**Northern Michigan United Church of Christ congregations and U.N.A.
Association are invited to meet from Noon on Monday (April 16)
until after lunch on Tuesday (April 17).**

The two-day retreat is *free of charge* with meals included.

We will look at ministry in our own particular time and place through the lens of the Prophet Elijah narrative in three parts:

- (1) On the Run: "This isn't what I expected!"
- (2) The Tree and the cave: "Angels will feed us."
- (3) "What are you doing here?": Setting Out and Going Back

Contact Pat Leahy to register (989) 657-5749. Call Rev. Lance with questions.

This will be a wonderful time to meet other UCC church members, reflect on what we are doing as a church here in Alpena, and refresh ourselves.

Board of Directors February 2018 Meeting Highlights

Gerrie La Cross, Secretary

The Board of directors did not meet in the month of February. Several of the members were traveling on the scheduled time and would not be back. There would not have been a quorum. It was decided to cancel this month and they will meet next on Monday, March 12th at 5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. All are welcome to attend.

March Birthday and Anniversary Wishes

- 3 Grady Barden
- 8 Beth Petty
- 12 Eugene Bacon
- 17 Patrick Labadie
- 20 Carol Knowlton
- 23 Barbara Diamond
- 26 Belinda Hanna
- 27 Cindy Straley
- 27 Spencer Kibbe



Jim & Patty McNeil
March 9
 Wedding Anniversary



Ladies Luncheon

Jan Snell and Dolly Zeller

The Ladies Luncheon group met at the Ramada of Alpena on Friday, February 9th. After some discussion by the group, it was decided that our next lunch will be on **Friday, March 9th, at 11:30 at The 19th Hole**. Come join in the fun. There is a sign-up sheet on the podium... hope to see you there.

Hosted by:
 Jan Snell and
 Dolly Zeller



Save the Date: Sunday, March 11 *Boris Gerber*

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering



God is most tangibly present in this world where people hunger, thirst, lack adequate clothing and shelter, and are sick or imprisoned. Christ claims people who suffer as family members.

Christ is so present in them that when you feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger – you feed and care for, and welcome, Christ. When you give through O.G.H.S. to those who suffer from natural disasters, war, or systemic poverty, you let them know: **You are here.**

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is the Lenten Offering of the United Church of Christ (and several other mainline denominations) that supports disaster, refugee, and development actions. This offering supports

partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education, agricultural development, emergency relief, and refugee ministries both international and domestic disaster response.

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Email: officeuccalp@frontier.com
Office Hours: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm Monday – Thursday

Sunday Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Underground Church 5:00 p.m.

Minister: Rev. Dr. Paul A. Lance III
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case
Choir Director & Music: Kat Tomaszewski
Treasurer: Denise Fusina
Secretary: Gerrie La Cross
Custodian: Mike LaMarre

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2018 Ecumenical Lenten Series

The “I AM” Sayings of Jesus



The offering from the series will be split between the Salvation Army’s “Call Us for Help”, the “Friendship Room” at St. Bernard’s, and the “Wash Your Coat” program.

Date	Host Church	Theme	Preacher
Wed., Mar 7	St. Paul Lutheran	“The Door of the Sheep”	Rev. Tom Orth
Wed., Mar 14	First United Methodist	“The Bread of Life”	Rev. Bill McClure
Wed., Mar 21	First Presbyterian	“The True Vine”	Rev. Paul Lance
Thursday, Mar 29	Trinity Episcopal	“The Servant”	Rev. Karen Thompson

Soup supper begins at 6:00 p.m. with a worship service to follow at 7:00 p.m. So mark your calendars for the upcoming dates as we travel together through Lent.

In addition to the above, on March 29, a “Maundy Thursday” Service will be held at First Congregational UCC beginning at 6:30 p.m. in our Fellowship Hall. We will share communion around a big table and remember Jesus’ “Last Supper”, his prayer in Gethsemane, his arrest, and his midnight trial.



Please come.