

**October
2023**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

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

Dates to Remember

October 1
Worship Service
Communion

Neighbors in Need

October 2
Worship Committee
5:30 PM

October 8
Worship Service

Stewardship
Campaign begins

October 9
Board Meeting
5:30 PM

October 15
Worship Service
Applefest

October 22
Worship Service

October 29
Worship Service

From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

As a Christian, I endeavor to be a bearer of hope. After watching the evening news, however, it can sometimes be a struggle to look to the future with hope. Martin Luther also struggled with looking to the future with hope, as his writing reveals:

“When God wills to punish a people or a kingdom, he takes away from it the good and godly teachers and preachers, and bereaves it of wise, godly, and honest rulers and counselors, and of brave, upright, and experienced soldiers, and of other good men. Then are the common people secure and merry; they go on in all willfulness, they care no longer for the truth and for the divine doctrine; nay, they despise it, and fall into blindness; they have no fear or honesty; they give way to all manner of shameful sins, whence arises a wild, dissolute, and devilish kind of living, as that we now, alas, see and are too well cognizant of, and which cannot long endure. I fear the axe is laid to the root of the tree, soon to cut it down. God of his infinite mercy take us graciously away, that we may not be present as such calamities.”

That was Martin Luther's context over 400 years ago, and, yet, the world has managed to survive. To be sure, our ills are more complex today, but perhaps qualitatively no different. People are people, and calamities have always followed in the wake of human sinfulness. We have no right to take comfort from the fact that in every age there have been cries of doom.

But there is comfort. God is around—actively at work in the world. God loved this world so much that God gave Jesus to die for it. And God can use you and me as salt to help keep the world from death and decay. It may not be the best of all possible worlds, but it is God's world; it is part of God's vast kingdom. The spiritual reality is that we are God's children—God's family. What we sow, we shall reap; this is the law of God's universe. But with our Lord is mercy—and with mercy, hope.

Board of Directors

Deborah Butler

- Six in-house Comstock applications were discussed and approved for submission to the Comstock Committee.
- Heated roof mats will be installed over the elevator roof in October.
- A mandatory elevator upgrade is required by the State of Michigan. The deadline for this is January 2028. The cost will be a minimum of \$22,000.
- Churchwide WiFi upgrade to be installed at the end of September.
- “Mission Moments” will take place during the Worship Service.
- The Stewardship Campaign will begin in October.
- Nancy and Ashley Wedge will again host an all church Christmas Dinner.

From the Welcoming Committee

Boris Gerber

We hope all had an enjoyable summer and are all refreshed and energized for a new church year! Here is another copy of our proposed Open and Affirming covenant, put together last winter and spring by our members who participated at our Congregational Conversations:

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 orientation, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, physical and mental abilities, and economic circumstances. All persons are invited to fully share and participate in leadership, ministry, mission and community service, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, joys, and sorrows 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.

Please continue to tell us your thoughts and/or concerns, and as always any and all are welcome to join our group; just let any one of our current members know: Avery Aten, Terry Bell, Bill Dempsey, Edith and Boris Gerber, Dottie and Bill Haase, Jay and Marilyn Kettler, and Beth Petty.

Neighbors in Need

Pat Garant

In 2023, the Neighbors in Need **"BEHOLD!"** theme continues. This year's focus is on environmental justice. Plastics, electronics, and other non-compostable wastes are being shipped across, and even tossed into, our waterways, launched into space, as well as buried in landfills. As people of faith, we believe these egregious acts are sinful and unholy. We must be better stewards of our planet!

One-third of NIN funds support the Council for Indian Ministries. The Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) is the voice for American Indian people in the UCC. CAIM provides Christian ministry and witness to American Indians and to the wider church. Justice issues that affect American Indian life are communicated to the whole UCC by CAIM.

Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to provide funding grants to UCC churches and organizations leading justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects in their communities.

In addition to donating during Sunday service, you may also drop off or send your check to the church office (made out to First Congregational Church, with note "for NIN") anytime during October.

Communication

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

Communication is extremely important. If you want to call me after normal church office hours, please use my cell phone: (781) 974-2701. If I don't answer, please leave a message. I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Church Secretary Nancy Ross informs me that some people are using multiple email addresses. It would be very helpful if you would tell the office which email address you prefer. It would also be helpful for us to know if you wish to receive correspondence by (snail) mail or by email. Please let Nancy know. Thank you.

Worship Committee

Deborah Butler

- Choir rehearsal began September 14, and began to share its Music Ministry on September 24.
- November 10, Reverend Lillian Daniel, MI UCC Conference Minister will lead us in worship.
- **SAVE THE DATE:** December 10, 2023. All Church Family and Friends Luncheon. More details to follow.
- This year the first Sunday in Advent is December 3. The last Advent Sunday is December 24. Vicky Lindsay will be coordinating the sanctuary decorating on November 26. If you are able to help, please let Vicky know.
- Christmas Eve will have two services: the last Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve.
- December 31 is New Year's Eve. We will have a regular Worship Service.

Dates to Celebrate

Birthdays

Paul Lance 10/1
Linda Clegg 10/3
Sarah Zeller 10/3
Linda Christiens 10/4
Thomas Cook 10/5
Timothy Standen 10/5
Sharyl Davis 10/9

Thelma McDonald 10/9
Bonnie Bartz 10/18
Bobbie Zubi 10/21
Scott Beland 10/25
Lori Zeller 10/26
Marcia Aten 10/27
Nathan Barden 10/27

Anniversary

Jim & Cindy Straley 10/1
Bill & Linda Clegg 10/21
Jay & Marilyn Kettler 10/23



Church Lunch Bunch

Dottie Haase

The next Church Lunch Bunch will be Friday, October 13 at 11:30 am at the Big Boy at 400 S. Ripley. All women and friends are invited. Please note that the time and place have changed from the last lunch. Please contact Dottie Haase @ dsbhaase@live.com or 989-340-4104 if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!

Stewardship Committee

Bill Haase, Dottie Haase, Cindy Straley

October is going to be a busy month at First Congregational United Church of Christ. The Stewardship Team will be sponsoring Stewardship Moments on four consecutive Sundays, beginning October 8. Pledge materials will be mailed on October 9. The Stewardship Ministry will culminate this year with a special Pledge Consecration Service on Sunday, November 5. A pledge Consecration Service gives members and friends of the congregation an opportunity to come forward during morning worship and present pledges. This process is completely optional; pledge cards may be returned to the Church Office at your convenience.

*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**

Intentional Interim 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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Applefest

Deb Butler

Apple Fest is scheduled for Sunday, October 15. We will plan to gather on the front lawn immediately after worship. Dr. Cook will be here with his cider press and will need a couple of strong men to help with unloading equipment. We will also need a few people to help with the serving of delicious doughnuts and cider. Hope to see you there!

Heifer International

Boris Gerber

In total we have sent \$1,525 to Heifer International to help end poverty and hunger!

Here are the animals we are providing:

3 Hives of Bees

3 Flocks of Chickens

1 Flock of Ducks and Geese

2 Goats

1 Alpaca

2 Pigs

2 Sheep

2 Water Buffalo

Mitten Tree

We are looking for someone to coordinate the Mitten Tree beginning in November. This would involve collecting new hats, scarves, mittens, and socks to be distributed to local organizations in time for Christmas. Please let Deb Butler know if you are interested and available.

