

**February
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

Jesus could have said, "I will show you the way, I will point you to the truth, and I will guide you to the good life." But Jesus made the strange and glorious claim, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

None other in all history has made such an audacious claim. Hundreds of millions of people throughout the centuries have believed it. They have not thought Jesus demented or a fool or a charlatan for using this language. They have believed Jesus to be God come to earth.

We talk about the way of Jesus, the way of the cross. The finest minds of the world have wrestled with the question of truth as a value to be pursued. And we speak of a style of life. But we who are believers come back to this quiet claim, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and stand in wonder and awe before this person, Jesus of Nazareth. In the final analysis, it is Jesus who holds us, not a way of life or a style of life, or any philosophical or theological system of truth. We are held fast by Jesus, the Lord of our life.

This may sound like something too vague, too intangible, too mysterious to be real. But doesn't our experience in human love give us the real clue? Life gets wrapped up in a person – a person we love and who loves us. We are held fast by a person, not by a common way of life, not by a truth that we both accept. Jesus is supremely that kind of person. Jesus has given us himself, and we give ourselves to him.

Jesus is indeed the Son of God – God of God, Light of Light – and all the truth and beauty and goodness of the universe are brought together in him. The highest goal of life is not to embrace a truth, but to be embraced by Jesus.

Dates to Remember

February 4
Worship Service
Communion

February 11
Worship Service

February 12
Board Meeting
5:30 PM

February 14
Ash Wednesday
(Grace Lutheran)

February 18
Worship Service

February 25
Worship Service

February 28
Lenten Soup and
Bread Supper

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life....

John 14:6

Worship Opportunities for Lent and Easter

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee announces that we will again participate in the combined Wednesday night Lenten worship services with the following churches: First United Methodist Church, Grace Lutheran, St. Paul Lutheran, First Presbyterian, and Trinity Episcopal. We are scheduled to host on Wednesday, February 28 with a Soup and Bread Supper at 6:00 pm followed by worship at 7:00 pm.

To host the Lenten Supper, we will be needing 10-12 Crock Pots of soup. A sign up for soup donations will be posted the first of February on the back of the podium by the care letters.

We are also planning our traditional Sunrise Service at the Boat Harbor and a continental Breakfast at the Yacht Club.

A full schedule of Lenten and Easter worship opportunities will be posted as soon as final details are available.

How Many Times Is Love in the Bible?

Valentines Day—February 14

There's no denying that the Bible is chock full of words—over 770,000 of them, in fact, depending on which translation you're reading! With so much text to sift through, it's only fair to wonder just how many of them discuss "love," a simple word that cuts straight to the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Community Choir Tre Ore Service Practices

Kat Tomasewski—Sandy Jarmuzewski

Practice for Community Choir will be March 7 and 14 at the First United Congregational Church at 7:00 pm. The final practice will be held March 29 at 11:15 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church on Ripley Blvd. Please call Kat at 989-255-8750 or Sandy at 989-255-7894 with any questions.

Food Pantry Needs

Bill Haase/Boris Gerber

The following is a list of items the local food pantry is requesting at this time: canned Spaghetios, ravioli, macaroni and cheese, packages of crackers and peanut butter and/or crackers and cheese, 4 packs of jello or pudding, snacks, cereal, and poparts.

Dates to Remember

Birthdays

Greg Granum 2/3
 Avery Aten 2/3
 Mary Minnick 2/8
 Richard Bloom 2/12
 Rebecca Wells 2/13
 Jay Kettler 2/16
 Bonnie Watkins 2/17

Jim Straley 2/18

Diedra Westenbarger 2/20
 Alison Bloom-Storey 2/21
 Beverly Bodem 2/22
 June Perry 2/23
 Jan Artley 2/25
 Roger Snell 2/25

Anniversaries

Tom and Judy Cook 2/5
 Jere and Diane Standen 2/11



Membership Declaration Cards

The following Proposed Amendment for Membership was passed at the recent Annual Meeting held on January 28.

“To maintain membership in good and regular standing, a member will annually sign a card that reads: ‘I declare that I am a member of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena, Michigan.’ A former member may reestablish good and regular standing by signing such a card at any time.”

Membership cards will be available on the table at the back of the sanctuary, by calling the church and requesting one, or by stopping in the office during regular business hours.

Ladies Luncheons

Dottie Haase

The dates for the Ladies Lunches through June 2024 are: February 9, March 8, April 12, May 10, and June 14. We plan to meet at the Big Boy on Ripley Blvd at 11:30 AM. All are invited. Feel free to bring family and/or friends. Please contact Bobbi Zubi at 989-657-9996 if you have any questions. We hope to see you there!

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

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Mission Statement

As approved at the 162nd Annual Meeting

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, 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.

Leap Year Facts

- Without leap year, our calendar would be off by about 24 days every 100 years.
- People born on a Leap Day are called 'Leaplings' — (more than 4 million people).
- The lunar calendar adds a whole leap month every 3 years.
- The Summer Olympics are held every four years on leap years.