

**February
2025**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors

Deborah Desimone
Chairperson
~~
Sandy Jarmuzewski
Vice-Chairperson
~~
Nancy Wedge
Treasurer
~~
Beverly Boden
Bill Dempsey
Ann Diamond
Joe Garant
Jim McNeil
Beth Petty

Dates to Remember

February 2
Worship Service
Communion

February 3
Worship Committee
5:30 p.m.

February 5
Great Religions Class
1:15 p.m.

February 9
Worship Service

February 10
Board Meeting
5:30 p.m.

February 12
Great Religions Class
1:15 p.m.

February 14
Valentines Day

February 16
Worship Service

February 19
Great Religions Class
1:15 p.m.

February 23
Worship Service
Special Congregational Meeting

February 26
Great Religions Class
1:15 p.m.

From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Dick Hotchkin

February is a month in which we will all hear a lot about love. The Hallmark movies will especially feature love during February. Please allow me to share a few thoughts on the subject of love.

Love is not the means to an end. Love is the end itself. If we use love to achieve some other end, we destroy love.

Not even God uses love to manipulate people. Whether we return God's love, whether we are grateful for God's love, whether we in turn love anyone – God keeps on loving us. This is the biblical picture of God, the God revealed in Jesus. God loves us even when we hurt God, as we do with our ingratitude and willfulness. This is the staggering message of the Christian gospel.

It is God's nature to love. If love fails utterly to win us, God still loves us. God has no other nature but love. God's love has no partiality. God has the same love for the prodigal who squanders his inheritance as for the brother who dutifully manages the farm; the same love for an Apostle named Paul who rejoices God's heart as for a tyrant named Nero who breaks God's heart; the same love for a St. Francis who helps people as for a Hitler who destroys people; in a sense, the same love for God's lost children in hell as for God's jubilant children in heaven.

God's deepest wish for us human beings is that we may catch on to this kind of love, and have it become our way of life. Only a few great souls have reached this grace in any large measure, but whenever we are able to reach out to others with no thought of gain, no purpose of changing anyone, but simply to love as we have been loved – then we touch the secret of God's amazing realm.

Membership Declaration Cards

Membership Declaration Cards were distributed at the recent Annual Meeting held on January 26th.

"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 re-establish 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.

Dates to Celebrate

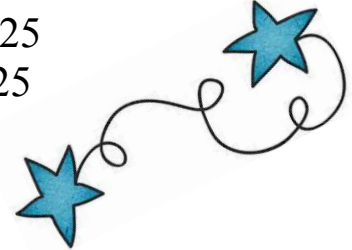
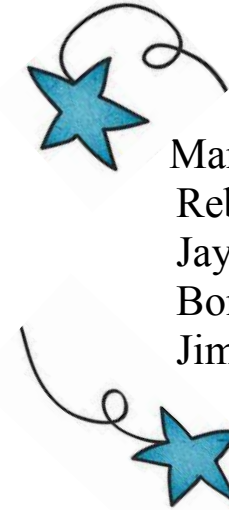
Birthdays

Mary Minnick 2/8
 Rebecca Wells 2/13
 Jay Kettler 2/16
 Bonnie Watkins 2/17
 Jim Straley 2/18

Alison Bloom-Storey 2/21
 Beverly Bodem 2/22
 June Perry 2/23
 Janet Artley 2/25
 Roger Snell 2/25

Anniversary

Tom & Judy Cook 2/5



February Laity Schedule

Altar Guild
Ashley Wedge

February 2

Communion
Bobbi Zubi

Fellowship
Bob & Diana Kelly
Joe & Pat Garant

February 2
 February 9
 February 16
 February 23

Greeters
Dan Kibbe & Ann Gerow
Bill & Debbie Dempsey
Blair & Ann Diamond
Craig Waak & Bev Olsen

February 2
 February 9
 February 16
 February 23

Ushers
Gary & Sandy Jarmuzewski
Nancy & Ashley Wedge
Penny Anderson & Jim Straley
Gary & Sandy Jarmuzewski

February 9
 February 23

Counters
Nancy Wedge
Ashley Wedge

Note: If you see openings where you can help, please feel free to step in.



Thank You!

We thank Nancy Ross for her dedicated service as the church Office Administrator and wish her all the best!



Welcome!

Leslie Reynolds is a recent 26-year retiree of Alpena Public Schools where she worked in various office positions, most recently as the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Education. She and her husband, Ray, have two wonderful adult children, Ryan (and his wife, Maggie) and Kathryn (and Kyle) and live with their fabulous cat, Rockee. Leslie enjoys spending time in the woodshop building birdhouses and feeders and lake life at the cottage on Hubbard Lake during the summer. She is an Alpena native.

Opportunities to Serve

Ushers

Please see or contact Deborah Desimone at (989) 255-2812, deborahlynn53@gmail.com or call the church office.

Lay Readers

Please see or contact Pastor Hotchkin at alpuccpastor@gmail.com or call the church office.

Email Prayer Chain Host

Please see or contact Pastor Hotchkin at alpuccpastor@gmail.com or call the church office.

Fellowship Hosts

Please see or contact Bill & Dottie Haase at (989) 916-4101, dsbhaase@live.com or call the church office.

Pew Arrangers

Please see or contact Nancy Wedge at (989) 356-4402, wedge.nancy@gmail.com or call the church office.

(More details, instructions, and training will be provided for those who are interested in any of the above Ministries.)



Altar Flowers

All who are interested in providing flowers to adorn our altar for Sunday morning worship services are encouraged to complete the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board near the church office. Your flowers can be displayed in memory of someone, in honor of someone, in observance of a holiday, or even in celebration of an event in your life. You may order flowers from a florist of your choice and have them delivered to the church, or you may pick up a beautiful bouquet and bring it in. Altar flower dedications will be published in the bulletin each week. You are welcome to take the flowers with you following the worship service.



Great World Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism

**Beginning Wednesday
February 5th**

I will be offering a DVD based Great Courses class on the **Great World Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism**. Each class session will consist of two half hour lectures presented by a different scholar for each world religion plus time for discussion and questions. We can expect most classes to last from 1 to 1 ½ hours. There is enough material to cover 30 hours worth of lectures, which is about the amount of time you might spend attending a Seminary comparative religions course. We'll take it one religion at a time, and if there is enough interest, continue through all or most of the lectures. This could easily take us through the rest of winter, spring and on through most of next fall (not including June - August). We might finish sooner if I decide to skip some of the lectures.

The class will be held on Wednesday afternoons at 1:15 pm either in the Board of Directors meeting room or in the Fellowship Hall depending on how many are interested, beginning Wednesday, February 5. If you are interested please contact the Church Office (989-356-1795 or officeuccalp@gmail.com) and let our Office Administrator know.

I am looking forward to our time together.

Blessings,
Gene Bacon

Treasurer's Report

Denise Fusina

In contrast to the expected 2024 deficit of \$101,868, the year 2024 ended positively with a net income of \$4,005. This positive shift was due to a few things - most importantly, your generosity.

- Thanks to members' increased giving, the General Fund Pledges were \$15,000 over the original expectation.
- Comstock Endowment distribution of \$50,000 was not included in the 2024 Budget.
- Mission Pledges received, \$15,724, were saved for future Mission needs.
- Comstock Innovative Grant was partially used, allowing \$9,662 to be used in 2025.
- Dividends and Capital Gains were \$8,500 over budget.

While the overall income was positive, the General Fund deficit was actually \$19,818, which has reduced our Reserve Fund.

There is more work to be done going forward, and a great start is the \$15,000 plus increased 2025 Pledge.

Your increased giving along with consolidated spending and grant receipts have allowed us to plan for a balanced budget this year. That is a long way from the \$100,000 deficit of last year.

Thank you all for your continued support. As always, please reach out by email if you have any questions.

Feed-A-Family

Bill Haase



Food pantry needs:

- canned fruit & applesauce
(the four packs of jello & pudding work well for children)
- boxed potatoes (au gratin, scallop, cheesy)
- rice or noodles packages

Eight bags of food were provided last month! Feel free to use the bags on the table in the middle hallway for your shopping needs.

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday
February, 23, 2025
(Following Worship)

Purpose: To elect a seven member Search Committee.

Board Highlights

- The board thanked former Office Administrator, Nancy Ross, and welcomed Leslie Reynolds as her replacement.
- The board recognized Denise Fusina, Dennis Artley and Joe Garant for their involvement in resolving 2024 deficits to end the year with a positive balance.
- The board continues discussion about pastor's housing and the work to find a resolution to the pending lease expiration at the end of February.
- Plans for an event to celebrate the dedication of the new piano donated by Ann and Blair Diamond in memory of their mother, Barbara Diamond, in whose memory the piano was purchased.
- The board voted to purchase new name tags for the congregation after the Annual Meeting takes place.
- The board appreciates the ability for online donations to be given and noted the platform is being used.
- The Search Committee's work will begin after the Annual Meeting by first concentrating on the church profile.

Annual Meeting

Many thanks to all who joined us for and participated in our 163rd Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Sunday, January 26. Making our voices heard and sharing our ideas, concerns, and hopes are paramount to the continued success of our church. Additional copies of the 2024 Annual Report are available on the table at the back of the sanctuary and in the church office.

Highlights

- ❖ Moderator, Jay Kettler, called the meeting to order in the church sanctuary.
- ❖ Minutes of the January 28, 2024 Annual Meeting and September 15, 2025 Special Meeting were approved.
- ❖ The Clerk, Vicky Lindsay, reported membership as of December 31, 1024 stands at 95 Members.
- ❖ Dennis Artley, Budget/Finance Committee Chair, shared simplified, easier to read reports noting “2024 was a great year.” Starting the year with a \$101,868 deficit, the year ended with a surplus of \$4,005. This was possible with an additional \$15,000 in pledges, significant increased investment income and Community Foundation funds used to help balance the budget. The financial report for 2024 was approved.
- ❖ The 2025 budget was presented reflecting proposed income (totaling \$281,155) and proposed expenses (totaling \$280,290). The 2025 budget was approved.
- ❖ The Special Funds Report was shared which reflects repositioned investments (sold at a gain) which nearly doubled our Legacy and Memorial Funds. The Comstock Fund is also in good standing. The Special Funds Report was approved.
- ❖ Ann Gerow, representing the Nominating Committee, presented the Elected Positions Report. She noted one change impacts the Historian position which will now be handled by the work of a committee. With no additional nominations, the elected positions were approved.
- ❖ Rev. Hotchkin discussed the number of pledging units, noting that we have received 48 pledges of 69 possible pledging units. He shared that most churches see 10% of membership that do not pledge. He also pointed out the importance of the Search Committee’s work to continue searching for a new pastor. He asked the congregation to support the important work of the Search Committee. Timely reports will be shared as the process unfolds.

**Please stop by or contact the church office
to request a copy of the 2024 Annual Report.**

**First Congregational United Church of Christ
201 South Second Avenue
Alpena, Michigan 49707**

**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: Leslie Reynolds
Custodian: Mike LaMarre**

Phone: (989) 356-1795
Website: <http://uccalpena.org>
Email: officeuccalp@gmail.com
Office Hours: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Monday - Thursday

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

**LET ALL
THAT
YOU DO
BE DONE
WITH
LOVE.**

1 CORINTHIANS 16:14 NKJV

