

**January
2022**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors:

- **Dennis Artley, Treasurer**
- **Bill Dempsey**
- **Blair Diamond, Vice Chair**
- **Boris Gerber**
- **Vicky Lindsay**
- **Jim McNeil, Chair**
- **Beth Petty**
- **Tammy Veasy**
- **Nancy Wedge**

January

Dates to Remember

- 1
Happy New Year!
- 2
Worship Service
- 6
Epiphany
- 9
Worship Service
- 10
Board of Directors
Meeting
- 16
Worship Service
- 18
Christian Unity Week
of Prayer (thru Jan. 25)
- 23
Worship Service
- 30
Worship Service
and
Annual Meeting



In Gratitude With an Eye Toward the Future

Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case

It is impossible for me to thank all of you who have made it possible for us to not only survive this past year of the pandemic, but also to make significant strides in our common ministry. It not only takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to operate the church.

As we come to the end of this year it has been good to be back to a full staff, minus a residential minister, to help shepherd the church. If you are by the church or when you meet a member of the staff, remember they have served us more than well over the last 12 months. They do much of the work you don't see being done from running off newsletters and bulletins, to keeping the books, to building needed cabinets and keeping this beautiful church clean and safe.

We now have a significant ministry presence on the internet. We have also managed to do hybrid meetings and study groups including both in-person and Zoom participants. I did not even know what Zoom was until the pandemic hit. We now have a Meeting Owl, a device that allows us to see 360 degrees and pick up all the voices around a table. Yes, it does look like an owl when it is turned on. I hope you will sometime ask Jay Kettler or Kat Tomaszewski or another member of the Internet Ministry team to see the broadcast setup in the sacristy next to the organ. The sound board, video board, computer and camera control system are something to behold. I think we now have five members of the ministry team trained or in training to run the broadcasting of our services. We need to thank Kat and the Board of Directors for their willingness to put together and support this new way of doing ministry. I do not think we will ever be able to simply return to the way things were, and even if we could, it would not be healthy to do so. Please see my annual report.

Judith and I look forward to worshipping with you as Reverend Gene Bacon takes over the duties of Transitional Minister for the month of January. We will be taking some family time and day trips in the month of January.

I think we are all excited about a new residential minister and all the possibilities that exist for the church this coming year. We have ventured out in new ministries and new ways of being the church. We are reminded of the words of the Prophet Isaiah 43:18-19 *"Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* We certainly give thanks for all who have gone before us and prepared us for this time and this place. We are prepared and God will guide us. The church has weathered difficult times before and will again. This is our time to meet the challenge with love, courage, hope and forgiveness.

To do this, there are at least six things we must do together as a church, community and nation. First, we must seek and learn the truth. The truth does not simply fall into our laps, but must be sought. Everyone of our trusted sources

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makes mistakes sometimes. Second, the truth will from time to time challenge us and make us uncomfortable but without an honest searching for the truth we will falter and fail. Third, we need to forgive each other as we make our way in these difficult and challenging times. We will not always agree on the way in the wilderness, but we need to forgive each other because all of us will make mistakes. Fourth, we need to speak the truth as we see it. Fifth, we cannot hear just what we want to hear as we make needed decisions. Sixth, we must be willing to admit our mistakes and allow God and others to forgive us. This includes forgiving ourselves.

Through prayer and scripture, worship, and community we must seek God's presence in not only our individual lives, but also our corporate existence. This is a time when the words we speak, and the actions of our lives inform others what it means to be Christian in a much angry and divided world. I truly believe that the church filled with love, hope, kindness, forgiveness, faith, and action has never been needed more in my lifetime. We are called to accept the challenge and live in the newness of life in Jesus as we seek to have the "Mind of Christ."

As we enter the New Year together, let us all follow the guidance of the prophet Micah:

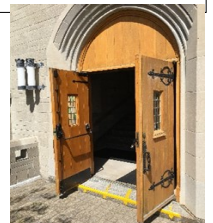
*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, and to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?*

A Happy and Blessed New Year,
Bob

Welcoming Committee Note

Avery Aten, Chair

Our committee's plan is to provide opportunities for small group conversations as soon as we can safely meet. We need to hear the thoughts of everyone, but do not want to put anyone in uncomfortable situations with the ongoing Covid issues in our community. Please watch the Announcements section of the weekly bulletins for notices of upcoming virtual and/or in-person meetings.



Poinsettias for the Altar

Nancy Wedge, Altar Guild



Thank you to all who purchased poinsettias to help beautify our altar for the Christmas season. If you haven't already done so, and you wish to take home the poinsettia you graced the sanctuary with, please stop in to the church to pick it up. Poinsettias that have not otherwise found a home by Saturday, January 8 will be donated to a local charity.

Mitten Tree

Diana Standen

Thanks to everyone who donated to our 2021 Mitten Tree Project. A total of 89 items including mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, sweaters, and toys were delivered to The Salvation Army, Sunday Supper Program, and Hope Shores Alliance because of your generosity!



2022 Annual Meeting This Month

Board of Directors

Our 2022 Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 30 in the sanctuary following the 10:00 worship service. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Topics of discussion and action include membership updates, committees and elected positions, budget review and approval, and much more.

PLEASE JOIN US!

Transitional Pastors to Alternate Months of Service

Judy Suszek, Office Administrator

Reverend Case and Reverend Bacon will begin alternating months of service beginning this month with Reverend Bacon ministering. Each month's presiding pastor will perform all weekly worship services and any additional services, funerals, weddings, baptisms, visits/calls that occur during the month. To reach Reverend Bacon you may call the church office at 989-356-1795, call his home at 989-340-0358, or email him at alpucppastor@gmail.com.

Choir Corner

Kat Tomaszewski, Choir Director and Organist

Happy New Year!

Thank you to our friends and family who made this Christmas season so special! The choir hosted Christmas caroling in downtown Alpena on December 5. This was open to anyone in the community! We met some wonderful people as we caroled throughout Alpena's historic downtown district.

The choir went caroling a second time on December 14. This time, we took a Dial-a-Ride bus from the church and made stops at the homes of some of our members who are not able to get out as much as they used to.

The choir worked so diligently this Advent and Christmas season to prepare musical offerings for our worship services. They pour their hearts into everything they prepare, and I thank them for their dedication to the music ministry of our church. ❤️



First Congregational United Church of Christ
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Phone: 989-356-1795 Fax 989-356-8825
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Email: officeuccalp@gmail.com
Office Hours: 9:00 am — 1:00 pm, Monday — Thursday

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

In person and Online

Transitional Pastors: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case
and Rev. Eugene Bacon

Organist/Choir Director: Kat Tomaszewski

Treasurer: Denise Fusina

Office Administrator: Judy Suszek

Custodian: Mike LaMarre

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January Celebrations

Birthdays

Joe Garant	January 5	James Park	January 13
Herbert Knowlton	January 10	Beverly Olsen	January 17
Max Lindsay	January 10	Vernie Nethercut	January 23
Lillian Banas	January 12	Kathy Moore	January 27
Vicky Lindsay	January 12		



Anniversaries



Bill & Debra Dempsey	January 4	30 Years
Joan & Sonny Chrzan	January 26	59 Years

A Blessing for the New Year

*To leave the old with a burst of song;
To recall the right and forgive the wrong;
To forget the things that bind you fast
To the vain regrets of the year that's past;
To have the strength to let go your hold
Of the not worth while of the days grown old;*

*To dare go forth with a purpose true,
To the unknown task of the year that's new,
To help your brother along the road,
To do his work and lift his load;
To add your gift to the world's good cheer,
Is to have and to give a Happy New Year.*