

**December
2020**

Still Speaking

Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Board of Directors:

- **Dennis Artley, treasurer**
- **Bill Dempsey**
- **Blair Diamond**
- **Boris Gerber**
- **Ann Gerow, vice-chair**
- **Nancy Wedge**
- **Vicky Lindsay**
- **Jim Mc Neil, chair**
- **Beth Petty**

Dates to Remember

**6
Sunday Worship
Virtual Only**

**13
Sunday Worship
Virtual Only**

**14
Board Meeting in
Fellowship Hall 5:30pm
Everyone is welcome
(masks required to enter;
seated more than 6-feet
apart)**

**20
Sunday Worship
Virtual Only**

**25
Merry Christmas!
(Church Closed)**

**27
Sunday Worship
Virtual Only**

**31
New Year's Eve**



A Word From Our Minister: Your Transitional Pastor

Rev. Case

From the Pasteur

When you get this newsletter Thanksgiving will have passed. Like many of you I have been thinking about family this week and giving thanks for their lives. In this time of Covid spread I especially remember my grandfather on my mother's side. My paternal grandfather died when I was five, and I remember little of him. My grandfather came here at the turn of the twentieth century with his uncles, because in England his parents were having a hard time feeding the family. He was somewhere in his early or mid-teens. They moved to the Keweenaw Peninsula to work in the copper mines. They were miners in Cornwall England. He came with what we would call a sixth grade education. After he left he never saw his parents or siblings again. There never was enough money for him to visit England. He only communicated with his remaining family by letters the rest of his life.

Then I think about my father spending three plus years in China – Burma – India during the Second World War flying over the Himalayas also called the Hump delivering supplies to China.

Of course there were the Pilgrims who sailed the Atlantic for two months arriving in November off the eastern shore. As I mentioned in my sermon on the 22nd about half died that first winter. They of course left all they knew behind.

I have been blessed by my best friend and partner for 51 years and children and grandchildren who bring me joy. Not all people have been as fortunate as I have been in my life and I remember them also.

Gratitude fills me for all the people who have sacrificed for me and our communities over the centuries. I am sure all of us have family, friends, teachers, church, co-workers, or neighbors who have enriched our lives beyond measure. This Thanksgiving I am richly blessed and thankful for the people who have helped help me grow and still help grow along life's journey.

Why am I thinking of this? One of the reasons is I am getting tired of the whining and complaining about having to wear a mask or staying at home for one Thanksgiving and possibly a holiday season. While some people have lost their jobs and become food insecure or are in fear of losing their homes, complaining falls into insignificance. All of us want to be with family and many of our age are concerned about how many Thanksgivings we have left. But, compared to the sacrifices others have made for us, we have no reason to complain.

I am reminded again of the words of **Martin Luther in 1527 during an epidemic**, almost five hundred years ago, when he wrote: "... and through me others may not be infected and inflamed with the result that I become the cause of their death through my negligence. ... At least I have done what he gave me to do and am responsible neither for my death nor the death of others."

It is my prayer that you had a hope filled Thanksgiving and will have a love and friendship filled holiday season as we prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth.

Bob

U.C.C. Christmas Fund Offering for “Veterans of the Cross” (Dec. 15)

Beth Petty

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

You have the opportunity to be a part of a ministry that cares for the **active and retired clergy** (and lay employees) of the United Church of Christ through your participation in the annual “Christmas Fund” All-Church Offering for “Veterans of the Cross”.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will be collected throughout the month of December. It will help provide for the supplementation of small annuities, health premiums, & emergency grants, as well as provide Christmas “Thank You” gift checks next December to low-income church retirees. Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose **low-income annuities** make it difficult to meet increasing costs of living. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

In 2018, the United Church of Christ’s “**Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross**” provided pension supplementation to 379 retired clergy and church professionals, and 174 received health insurance supplementation. Over 400 received a special Christmas “thank-you” check. Over \$60,000 in emergency grants were made to those struck by catastrophe.

Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. You may not be able to write checks to rescue retirees from poverty. You may not be able to help your pastor with his student debt or her medical bills—mostly because your pastor has good boundaries and probably won’t come to you for help. But you can help anyway.

Give to this month’s special offering for the Christmas Fund, and you will make sure that low income ministers have a place to go for help if they need it, make sure that those retirees have support when they need it, and make sure that this season our church can be a church for those who need it throughout the UCC. **Thank you. Your contributions will be gratefully accepted by mail or in person at the church office until Christmas.**

Thank you so much for your help!- Beth



BABY CARE KITS-Diana Standen

Mary Minnick and I delivered 50 Baby Care Kits to Immanuel Lutheran Church, and on October 10 the kits, along with kits and quilts from several area churches, left on a U Haul truck bound for the Orphan Grain Project in Sebawaing, Michigan. This project is an international relief project found in 26 states and 60 countries.

Thanks goes to our UCC Needle crafters: Priscilla Homola, Mary Minnick, Jennie Morey, Diana Standen, and Elaine Thompson for knitting, crocheting, and embroidering many hand-made items; and Mike LaMarre for his help moving boxes. Cloth diapers were purchased through your mission funds.

Thanks to Paul Lance for all his support and help for the last seven years. He will truly be missed.

MITTEN TREE-Diana Standen

A Mitten Tree will be set up in the display case Sunday, November 8, and basket provided for donations of mittens, hats, scarves, gloves, slippers and sweaters for our annual drive. Items will be given to elementary schools,



****For Covid updates, Please see our Facebook page and/or our website****

Advent for Families

The Christian New Year begins with Advent and as we prepare for Christmas we will begin Children/Family segments during the Sunday worship recordings. We have several Advent calendars for families in the church. On Sunday I will open the calendar door for that day and there will be a brief presentation for children. We hope that children will find something during the service to help them prepare for Christmas. If you wish an Advent Calendar please call the church or stop by during our limited hours and we will give you one. There will also be a special gift for the family tree as we get closer to Christmas. The presentation will also be separate from the service if you wish to use it during the week.

Fellowship

I suspect that I am not the only one who misses the fellowship during and after worship. Here are a couple of ideas for us to consider. First, I really miss seeing you during the taping of the worship service for airing on Sunday. (Is there anyone out there?) Is there a way we can let each other know that we are not watching alone. Maybe you could send greetings to the church and before the service begins we could send very brief messages or greetings to others. For example ... sends greeting to you as she will be watching this week. I'm not sure exactly how this would work but would welcome comments on how this might be done. We keep hearing we are "Alone Together" and I feel the alone more than the together. How do we do the together better. Second, it has been suggested that we do a Zoom fellowship after church. We could look at maybe [one o'clock](#) for half an hour. How do you think that would work? I am still very new at this Zoom thing, but I know it works. Please let me know if you are interesting in starting this on Sundays. (Revdrcase@hotmail.com or officeuccalp@gmail.com). If you have any ideas to improve our fellowship please contact us at either email address or by phone.

Changing to meet our different needs.

We have purchased a video/audio system that will let us go to live worship with the service recorded so others may watch at a later time. We are very excited about this development. The Board, Kat, Paul, and I have been working on this for some time. They started wiring and installing cameras this week and stay tuned because we hope to have news in the very near future having it up and running. The system will improve our ability to get the services and other programs to you and the quality will greatly improve. It is my hope that we will have this up and running for Christmas Eve services.

Christmas Eve

There is no way we are going to have a traditional Christmas Eve service. However, we are working hard at producing a meaningful service for us to participate in. Kat has arranged for trumpet, sax, organ, vocal and other special music arrangements. We will also have some sort of candlelight service either in person or virtually. Right now it is impossible to predict if we can worship in person. If we do there will be two services one [at five o'clock](#) and one at [seven o'clock](#) and we will be asking you to make reservations for one of the two services. More information will be following and we will keep you up to date via Facebook, WEB site, email and snail mail. The easiest way will be to check in on Facebook or our WEB page. We will update every Monday or as soon as a change in policy has been made. We will return to face to face worship as soon as it is deemed safe.

Covid Information

Right now Alpena is still designated, by **Covid Act Now**, as a red area which means we are actively experiencing an outbreak. This along with Health Department 4 WEB site is being used by several area churches to make evaluations. If you wish to firsthand read the information we are using I commend these sites to you.

The Board has a subcommittee charged with making decision and you can call me anytime to find out where we are. I give updates to the subcommittee every Monday and Thursday. As of right now we are the 28th county out of 83. We started out as 80th out of the 83 counties and are heading in the wrong direction. I have decided to put weekly updates on the church's WEB site to keep you informed.

Personal

Pastoral care and contact is completely different during this Covid and Transitional period. I am in the office only one day a week and I am not making personal calls. That does not mean I do not care. If there is any way I can be of help by phone, email, or in person please let me know. I need you to help me make sure we are doing the best we can in this Covid and Transitional period.

Bob

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Email: officeuccalp@gmail.com
Office Hours: 10:00 am — 2:00 pm Monday — Thursday

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m. – Virtual Only

Transitional Minister: Rev. Dr. H. Robert Case
Choir Director/Organist:: Kat Tomaszewski
Treasurer: Denise Fusina
Secretary: Kristi Blackaby
Custodian: Mike LaMarre

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Newsletter of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Alpena

Birthdays and Anniversaries in December

Let's Celebrate December Birthdays

Gavin Plume	12/07
Janice Snell	12/08
Jean Gilliland	12/10
William Dempsey	12/13
Patricia Leahy	12/15
Clarence Richard	12/17
Robert Westenbarger	12/18
Megan Petty	12/18
Robert Silver	12/19
Michael Mack	12/19
Stacy Zeller	12/19
Nathan Jarmuzewski	12/28
John Mack	12/28
Mary Bloom	12/31

Wedding Anniversaries in December

Avery & Marcia Aten	51 years
Brian & Belinda Hanna	30 years
Ray & Kathy Moore	30 years
Bill & Debra Dempsey	?? Years



Thank you to Vickey and Max Lindsey, Ann and Jeff Gerow, Boris Gerber, and Blair Diamond for putting up the Christmas Decorations in the sanctuary. Getting the very tall Christmas tree up is quite