



THE FLAME

Monthly Newsletter

for

Central and Algonquin United Methodist Churches

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE PASTOR

He Must Increase

Dear Church Family,

Grace and peace to you in these summer months.

As July begins, I want to wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe Fourth of July. I hope the holiday brings time for gratitude, rest, good food, laughter, and maybe a few fireworks enjoyed from a comfortable distance. In this month's Pastor's Perspective, I share a few thoughts about loving our country faithfully while keeping Christ first. I will not repeat all of that here, except to say that gratitude is always at its best when it is joined with humility, prayer, and love of neighbor.

July and August are full of the familiar gifts of summer. There are family gatherings, trips, gardens, cookouts, porch conversations, campfires, baseball games, county fairs, and those rare evenings when the air feels just right. In the Upper Peninsula, summer feels especially precious. We wait a long time for warm days, green trees, open water, and evenings that seem to stretch on and on.

And yet, there is a quiet surprise hidden in the middle of summer. Just as the season seems to be arriving in full, the daylight has already begun to shorten. After the summer solstice, the days decrease little by little. At first we hardly notice. Then one evening we realize the shadows are longer. The porch light comes on a bit earlier. The sun slips away sooner than it did a few weeks before.

Part of me always wants to protest. Summer took its sweet time getting here, and now the daylight is already heading the other direction?

But the church calendar gives us a beautiful reminder right around that turning point. Near the summer solstice, the church remembers the birth of John the Baptist. John's life was never about drawing attention to himself. His calling was to point beyond himself to Jesus. When people wondered about his role, John answered with words that are simple, faithful, and wise: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

That is a holy thought for this season. (continued on the next page)

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Reflections from the Pastor Continued:

As the daylight slowly decreases, may Christ increase in us.

May Christ increase in our patience when plans change.

May Christ increase in our gratitude for ordinary blessings.

May Christ increase in our kindness toward those around us.

May Christ increase in our courage to do what is right.

May Christ increase in our willingness to forgive.

May Christ increase in our ability to notice grace in small places.

John the Baptist understood that the best life is not one centered on self, ego, recognition, or control. The best life is one that makes more room for Christ. That is not always easy. Most of us like being in charge more than we care to admit. But there is freedom in John's words. We do not have to be the light. We are invited to point toward the light.

So as July and August unfold, I hope you receive the gifts of this season with joy. Enjoy the warmth. Enjoy the beauty. Enjoy the people God has placed in your life. Take the drive. Sit by the water. Laugh at the picnic table. Watch the sunset. Give thanks.

And as the summer light slowly changes, may the light of Christ grow brighter in us.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Marty



PRAYER WHEEL FOR OUR MILITARY

Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

We keep our country's military in our prayers, be they young people who are in "for just a hitch" of maybe a few years, or those who choose a military career.

Thank you to our veterans and all those who have served their country.

NOTES AND NOTEWORTHY

Central's Chancel choir is on its summer break. It's a much deserved break, but we miss them, and will be happy to welcome them back, come September. Our musicians add so much to our worship services.



THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

Our summer "Flame" has received financial sponsoring from **Joan Shadnaw** and we thank her very much. We surely do appreciate this, Joan!

We have also received sponsorship for our September issue, and that recognition and thanks will be printed in this space then. Our church family has been so supportive! Thinking ahead, if you would like to donate \$90.00 to cover the cost of an issue, please bring it to the church office or put it in the Sunday offering plate, include your name and specify what the money goes toward.

A REMINDER: The deadline for material to be submitted for our next Flame, the September 2026 issue, is August 15, 2026.

ALGONQUIN AND CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES
MISSION: CONNECTING ALL PEOPLE TO GOD BY BUILDING
BRIDGES OF CARING, OUTREACH AND ACCEPTANCE

MISSIONS/OUTREACH

During the school year of 2024-25 we had spent \$660.10 on supplies for the Back Pack Program for the Sault Elementary School. This year was much higher---\$1,593.95, because of our congregation's generosity, we collected \$1,692 in offering and that didn't include the bins of food we delivered as well. The school definitely appreciated all the help we gave them to provide weekend food for our community children in need. We are still taking donations for Blessing Bags. When I deliver them to the Salvation Army they are well received. I am about to make a 3rd trip. With these being summer months some items that may be needed are sun screen and bug spray.

I am looking forward to September when our meetings will resume. Thank you to all who volunteer to be part of this important and rewarding group. We may be small but we do make a difference.

Submitted by Diane Bell



WE EXTEND OUR CONDOLENCES.....

To the family and friends of LaVerne Perrollaz. She was born on August 2, 1932 in Kenosha, Wisconsin and moved to Sault Ste. Marie as a child, where she lived near to the old family homestead on Riverside Drive. Her mother was Grace Eagle, who was a member of Central United Methodist Church. LaVerne was a summer resident of the Sault, and was a liturgist during that time. Her daughter says she enjoyed doing that service and looked forward to it.

She passed away on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026 at the age of 93, in Friday Harbor, Washington, where she had moved to be near family.

She married Jack Perrollaz on August 4, 1956 and he preceded her in death. They had 4 children, Eric, Darin, Evan and Andrea, 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren, as well as many international exchange students who called her "mom". She received a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Oakland University and was a part of founding the Hospice of Southeastern Michigan, one of the first hospice centers in the U.S. In 1987 she was named Michigan Hospice Nurse of the Year.

A Celebration of Life will be held on July 10 at the Grillroom 1901 Riverside Drive from 1 to 4 p.m. and all her friends are invited to attend.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes....Revelation 7:17b

Remember to keep up with your pledge and your giving to our two churches. Your continued faithfulness will help us keep current with our bills and obligations!!

BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY BLESSINGS AND WISHES

Central Birthdays

July 6 - Kevin Larson	Aug 1 Seth Baker
July 7 - Nancy Kirkpatrick	Aug 4 - Betty MacDonald
July 7 - Colleen Arbic	Aug 12 - Julie Hill
July 9 - Andrew Baker (12th)	Aug 13—John Wilkinson
July 11—Grady Hartman	Aug 22—Barbara Cook
July 28 - Ginger Bath	Aug 30 - Kelley Bunker
July 30 - Susan Brown	

Central Anniversaries

July 14 - Nancy and Doug Kirkpatrick (47th)
July 22 - Amy and Gar Artley (20th)
July 23 - Katelyn and Nick Bell (10th)
Aug 2 - Megan and Nate Moran (12th)
Aug 4 - Gayle and Bob Johnson (64th)
Aug 8 - Colleen and Bernie Arbic (61st)
Aug 17 - Kara and Dave LaLonde (35th)
Aug 22 - Tom and Harriette Robinson (62nd)
Aug 23 - Marge and Earl Tomlinson (68th)
Aug 27 - Sherry and Ron Hutchins



Algonquin Birthdays

July 1 - Jim Shea	July 28 - Sandy Ellis
July 3 - Amanda Shea	Aug 9 - Katie Vert
July 7 - Emily Smith	Aug 17 - Madelyn Baril
July 17 - Ashley Young	Aug 20 - Jackie Harwood
July 18 - Sandy Gaus	Aug 20 - Grace Rousseau
July 19—Kaitlyn Anderson (23rd)	Aug 25 - Jerry Harwood
July 23 - Mason Atkins (15th)	Aug 27 - Janice Wilson
July 23 - Susan Belleau	Aug 27 - Ryan Atkins
July 26 - Peter Pratt	Aug 29 - Mary Beth Vollick

Algonquin Anniversaries

July 12 - Marcia and Sam White (60th)
July 29 - Mary Beth and Todd Vollick (11th)
Aug 23 - Michele and Peter Pratt (24th)

ALGONQUIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1604 W Fourth Avenue

Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783

Worship Servants are:

July 5 - Communion Steward, Bernita Sibbald and Greeters, Mary Beth and Todd Vollick and Usher, Todd Vollick

July 12 - Liturgist, Bev Atkins, Greeter, Sharon Bennett and Usher Bob Sibbald

July 19 - Greeter, Laura Anderson, Usher Bob Sibbald and Coffee Hour, United Women in Faith

July 26 - Liturgist, Bev Atkins, Greeters, Todd and Mary Beth Vollick and Usher, Mary Beth Vollick

August 2 - Communion, Sharon Bennett and Greeter and Usher, Laura Anderson

August 9 - Liturgist, Bev Atkins, Greeter, Rachel Pratt, Usher, Bernita Sibbald

August 16 - Greeter, Sharon Bennett, Usher, Bob Sibbald

August 23 - Liturgist, Bev Atkins Greeters, Bob and Bernita Sibbald and Usher, Bernita Sibbald

August 30- Greeter, Rachel Pratt and Usher, Bob Sibbald

News to Share: May Change Jar donations - \$178 for VBS. The June Change Jar will help to fund cleaning of the steeple. August Change Jar will go to Hospice.

Submitted by Bernita Sibbald

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

This update on Central's finances is based on the most recent information available.

Overall income stands at 44% and expenses are at 45% of the budget. The individual income accounts are as follows: pledged offering is at 49%, non-pledged and loose offering is 7%, other income stands at 3%, miscellaneous income is 27% and apportionments are at 56%. As indicated, the church is working with a deficit budget and members are encouraged to keep their pledges current.

The Finance Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the counters for their dedication and faithfulness in counting the weekly offering all year long. There are six teams who do their best to record correctly all offerings throughout the year. They deserve a big THANK YOU!! To help them and to ensure that your contribution is placed in the correct fund, please indicate clearly the fund name on your envelope.

Submitted by the Finance Committee

Pastor's Perspective—Faithful Love of Country

As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, gratitude and tension seem to be arriving together. Many of us are thankful for the freedoms, opportunities, and blessings we have known. At the same time, Christian language and national identity are being blended together in public celebrations, political speeches, prayer gatherings, and news coverage in ways that deserve careful attention. That raises an important question for followers of Jesus: *What does it mean to love our country faithfully?*

Years ago, before I was a United Methodist pastor, I was asked to serve as pulpit supply for a nearby church that had recently lost its pastor. The arrangement was for six weeks, though there was an undercurrent that it might possibly lead to something longer.

I was excited. It was a true country church—out a ways, with a classic white building, a long history, and people who clearly cared for it. I remember thinking, “This could be a good fit.”

Then the service began. The liturgist invited everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. That was how they began worship every Sunday. And as I stood in the pulpit, I could see a picture of George Washington staring back at me from the balcony.

I felt uncomfortable. Not angry. Not offended in some dramatic way. Just deeply aware that something felt out of order. After the service, I spoke with the leadership and shared my concern. They listened politely. I finished the six weeks. The possibility of something longer quietly disappeared.

I do not believe the people of that church meant harm. I do not believe they loved Jesus any less than I did. But I had touched something they considered settled, and that moment stayed with me.

The question was not whether Christians may love their country. Of course we may. The question was whether a worship service should ask for national allegiance before it offers praise to God.

There is a difference between patriotism and Christian nationalism. Patriotism can be a healthy gratitude for one's country and a desire to serve the common good. Christian nationalism goes further. It treats national identity as though it carries sacred authority. It tangles Christian faith and national loyalty together until love of country starts to sound like loyalty to God. It can use Christian language to bless national power, excuse national sins, or suggest that faithful Christians must embrace one particular version of America.

For followers of Jesus, that is dangerous ground. Jesus helps us draw the line. He once said, “Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” Caesar may have a place. Government, civic duty, and love of country may have a place. But Caesar does not get everything. Our final allegiance belongs to God.

We do not have to deny the religious language woven into our nation's history. The Declaration itself speaks of rights endowed by our Creator. Those words matter. But calling upon God is not the same thing as claiming ownership of God.

The United States is a nation for which we can be deeply grateful. But it is not the centerpiece of God's plan for humanity. Christ is. The story of salvation does not begin in 1776, and it does not culminate in Washington, D.C. God's kingdom is larger than any nation, including our own.

That matters because the gospel never teaches us to ask God to bless us while forgetting everyone else. When Christians pray for our country, we do so as people called to love our neighbors, welcome the stranger, pray for our enemies, and remember that every person bears the image of God. A faithful prayer for America should make our hearts larger, not smaller. Faithful love of country gives thanks, but it does not worship. It honors sacrifice, but it does not ignore sin. Our nation's story includes courage and cruelty, sacrifice and selfishness, liberty and exclusion, noble ideals and painful hypocrisies. That is not a reason for despair. It is a reason for humility. A country, like a person, cannot become healthier by pretending its wounds are not there. Naming our failures is not hatred of country. It is one way love becomes honest. (continued on the next page)

Faithful Love of Country Continued:

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The best love of country is not fragile. It does not fall apart when the truth is told. It is strong enough to give thanks and repent in the same breath. It is strong enough to cherish our freedoms while asking who has been denied them.

That kind of love does not simply wave a flag. It seeks the good of our neighbors, tells the truth about our wounds, and keeps praying for a better future.

So this July, we can give thanks. We can give thanks for freedoms we did not earn, blessings we do not want to take for granted, and sacrifices we did not personally make. We can pray for our leaders, our communities, our neighbors, our veterans, our public servants, and especially those who are most vulnerable.

But we can also remember this: our deepest hope is not in America. Our deepest hope is in Christ. And because our hope is in Christ, we are free to love our country faithfully—not blindly, not fearfully, not worshipfully, but honestly, gratefully, and with hope.

Submitted by **Pastor Marty**

RECIPE ROUNDUP CORNER

(We know we have many wonderful cooks in Algonquin and Central churches. We invite the sharing of your favorite recipe. Just write them out, include your name, and turn them into the box marked for "the Flame" outside of our secretary's office, or email them to Barb Larson at blarson1517@charter.net. It can be desserts, entrees, beverages, appetizers, etc.)

COOKIE DOUGH BROWNIES

2 cups sugar 1 ½ cup flour ½ cup cocoa ½ tsp. salt

1 cup oil 4 eggs 2 tsp. vanilla

Combine sugar, flour, cocoa & salt. Add oil, eggs & vanilla. Pour into 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 deg. For 30 minutes. Cool

Filling: ½ cup butter, ½ cup brown sugar, ¼ cup White sugar, 2 Tbsp milk, 1 tsp. vanilla and 1 cup flour. Cream butter and sugars. Add milk & vanilla. Spread over cooled brownies.

Glaze: 1 cup chocolate chips and 1 Tbsp shortening. Melt together and spread over filling.

Submitted by Robin Myers

(Bev Proulx tried the scones recipe I put in last month's "Flame." She said, "It was quick, easy and a yummy treat." Thanks, Bev for giving it a try! Barb L.))



CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
111 EAST SPRUCE STREET
SAULT SAINTE MARIE, MI 49783-2189

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July/August 2026

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SAULT STE. MARIE, MI

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PLANT SEEDS OF KINDNESS

AND WATCH LOVE BLOOM

(This was on the roadside sign last summer

at Algonquin United Methodist Church, and it is well worth us seeing it again!)

