

the First Word

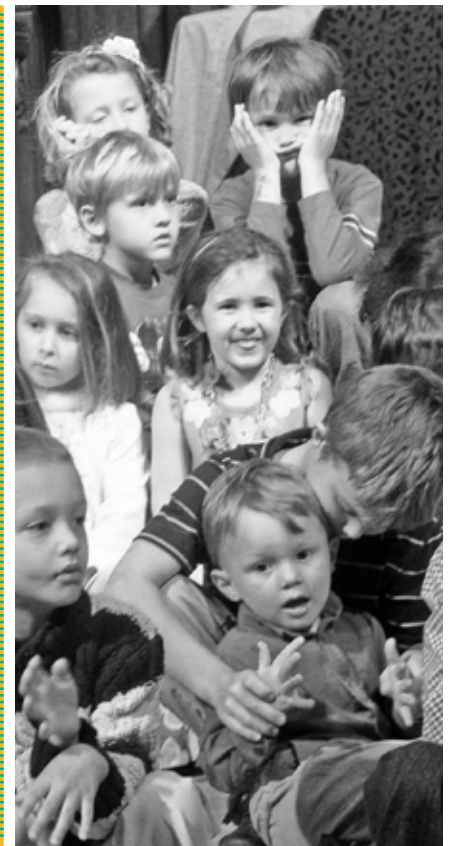


July 20, 2011

Vol. 25, No. 11



We
are
First
United
Methodist
Church
of Kalamazoo



Photos courtesy of Ray Edén & Julie Kline



WELCOME to *The First Word*, a bi-monthly publication, except during the months of June, July, August and December when *The First Word* is published monthly. Articles for the next issue are due no later than Wednesday, **August 17, 2011**. The next newsletter will be mailed **August 24**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should preferably be sent electronically by email to Jennifer Stupica at jstupica@umc-kzo.org. **If you wish to receive an electronic form of this newsletter ONLY, please email Jennifer.**

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

The staff is here to empower and equip the congregation for ministry and mission. Email staff by entering the first letter of their first name and the entire last name, and then: @umc-kzo.org (i.e., jboley@umc-kzo.org).

Rev. John Boley	Senior Pastor
Rev. Sandy Elfring	Pastor of Visitation
Rev. Julie Kline	Associate & Youth Pastor
Rev. Shelly Wisdom-Long	Pastor of Children & Families Ministries
Jacqueline Stilger	Minister of Music
Bernie Foulk	Organist
Joe Konrad	Church Business Administrator
Christi Landreville	Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Stupica	Communications Coordinator
Linda Lueth	Financial Assistant
Bruce Sackett	Custodian
Ernie Escobedo	Custodian
Walter Walker	Evening Security
Deborah Mulder	Day Greeter (AARP)
Julie Meyers	FIRST CARE Director
Ron Grant	(372-0961) Adjunct Pastoral Counselor
Bishop Jonathan Keaton	Bishop of the Michigan Area
Rev. Neil Davis	Kalamazoo District Superintendent

GLOBAL STAFF

Thom and Chris Denman	Red Bird Missionary Conference, Kentucky
Delbert and Sandy Groves	Zambia
Jeff and Ellen Hoover	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Rev. Irina Margulis	Russia
Helen Sheperd	Mongolia

PRAYER CHAIN. Did you know that it is as easy as picking up the phone or e-mailing the office to have your prayers multiplied by many caring members of your church family? Please contact the church office, 381-6340, if you would like to be included in our weekly email prayer chain. If you would like to be added to our phone prayer chain, please contact Harold & Mary Beth Garman, 321-9332.



STEPHEN MINISTRY is a confidential care giving ministry of our church. If you would like a Stephen Minister to walk with you during a difficult time in your life, you are welcome to contact Donna Meninga, 388-5837.

Our sympathy and prayers

to the family of May Fox, who died July 12. May was 99 years old and joined the church in 1997.

Please keep these friends in your prayers

Frank Amtower, Bob Baker, Mary Bullock, Jesse Clements, Mollie Clements, Carl Cooper, Alma Eby, Susan Fox, Carl Hausermann, Cleo Hayden, Rob Hilliard, Richard Hodges, Darlene Hunkins, Dawn Kibler, Jim Montgomery, Ruth Ann Mulder, Ruth Root, Fanny Vail

Please keep these friends recently released from the hospital in your prayers

Hannah Boley

Recent Baptisms

Julie Gatilao Bitely, daughter of Andy & Faith Bitely was baptized on June 26.

Noah Matthew Seals, son of Korin Seals, was baptized on July 10.

Isabella Kristina Ledlow, daughter of Nathan & Kristina Ledlow, was baptized on July 17.

Wedding Anniversary Celebration

Congratulations to Chuck & Jeddy Wilson on their 65th wedding anniversary! They were married by on July 19, 1946.

Share the Supper

Wish list: kid's juice boxes



Remember to bring non-perishable food donations on the first Sunday of the month when we celebrate Holy Communion.

Christmas in July continues . .



by Dolores Heidanus
Outreach Team

Please take a "house" tag from the Christmas tree as you exit the church in July. Your donation(s) will help the HRI Family Shelter on Eleanor Street with much-needed supplies.

Since 1988 the house on Eleanor Street has undertaken the critical mission to keep families together while they seek solutions to a housing crisis. This is one of the few programs in Kalamazoo County that allows families to remain together during their stay, minimizing stress to family members. During 2010, the shelter provided 6,519 nights of shelter to 69 households, including 228 individuals and 145 children. 45% of households entering the shelter were families that

were employed, but did not make enough money to support their housing.

Contributions to the HRI Family Shelter support families staying in the shelter and also help them on their way to their new home. Each family leaving the shelter receives a *Welcome Home* basket that includes basic cleaning products.

Monetary gifts are also accepted. Please make your check payable to the church with the memo: "Christmas in July." If you have not picked up a "house" tag from the tree, we are grateful for any soap or cleaning supplies you'd like to donate to the shelter. Thank you for your support!

Men's clothing donations

by Chuck Wilson

The Center for Transformation and KPEP Mentoring Services wish to thank all those who participated in the church's June "Mission of the Month." Your donations of men's suits, shirts, ties, belts, and shoes have filled their closet! The clothing will be used by citizens returning to life outside prison as they dress for job interviews.

The need for dress clothing for men is continuous. If you still have items that were not collected, please call Chuck Wilson at 388 5899 to arrange for pick up.

August "Mission of the Month": school supplies

For August, the Outreach Team is asking for donations of school supplies for Spring Valley Elementary School. Check your sale flyers for the following supplies: washable markers, Elmer's glue, glue sticks, spiral notebooks, colored pencils, #2 pencils, pocket folders, child-friendly scissors and boxes of tissue. You may put your donations in the large basket in front of the mailboxes in the church office.

Promise Helpers needed

The need is great for more mentors (we call them Promise Helpers!) to work with children in the Kalamazoo public schools. Please call Mary Bullock, 343-1132, if you are interested in helping. Another way to help is being a pen pal to a 3rd grader. A monthly letter is all that is needed. This may interest those who travel or winter in the south. Mary can provide you with a name and address of a 3rd grader if you are interested in being a pen pal.

Summer Perks!

by Rev. Sandy Elfring



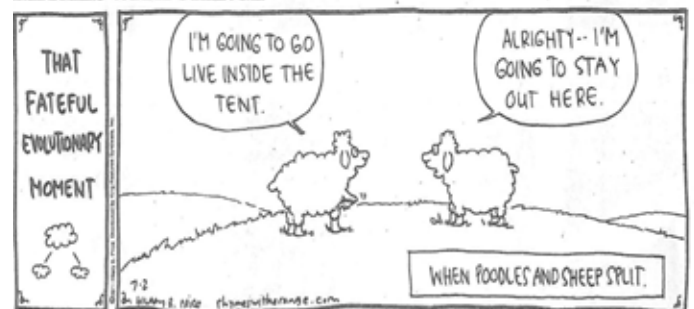
We still have some openings where groups and committees can provide Summer Perks.

We are asking only for a beverage. If you or your group would like to provide a snack, cookies, etc., you are welcome to do that, but it isn't necessary. Coffee will be ready before worship and other drinks before or after — again up to you.

The dates that are currently available are **July 24, 31, August 14, 21, 28 and September 4**. Please call Pastor Sandy at 344-4646 if you or your group or committee would be willing to graciously host Summer Perks on a summer Sunday.

RHYMES WITH ORANGE

HILARY PRICE



A Reflection on Disciple I Bible Study

by Cheryl Anderson

I have been a member of First United Methodist Church for nearly 29 years. I have participated in a variety of projects and groups. However, I can honestly say that one of the best experiences I have had at First Church is my participation in the Disciple I class. This class began last September and just concluded in May. My heart is full, and I want to share it with you!

Over the past few weeks, I have pondered how to tell you about all the amazing aspects of Disciple I. I finally realized the best way to tell you is to go back through those months from beginning to end. I want to describe just how the course progressed, the knowledge increased, and the fellowship grew among those who participated in the class.

Last September, my daughter Sarah and I walked in for our first Disciple I class session. As I looked around the room, it struck me that there were several people in the group whose faces I had seen for nearly three decades in church. Yet, I hardly knew the individuals behind those faces. From the very beginning, I so enjoyed finally getting to know people I had only seen from a distance. As relationships developed, warm feelings grew. There were just 14 of us in the class, along with our leader, Pastor John Boley. It was a diverse group of people at different ages and life-stages. Over time, a mutual respect and caring grew among us. It was also pleasant to discover distinct and amusing personality traits in one another. Today, I can say that it was an absolute pleasure getting to know these souls; I truly love these people so much. I can have tears in my eyes and, at the same time, a chuckle – every time I think about each and every one of them!

By now you may be asking, “Well,

okay, but what is Disciple I? What do you do in there?” Disciple I is basically a 32-week crash-course of the entire Bible. Believe it or not, we covered every book from Genesis to Revelation. As stated in Week One of our Disciple study manual, the goal of the class is “to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who know and love God’s word.” While this is a simple statement, it encompasses much.

Disciple I meets for two hours a week (Wednesday evenings in our case). Each week requires three to four hours of outside preparation. This includes reading the Bible and the Disciple study manual. The study manual includes space to take notes and to answer questions about the material. Common elements appear in each week’s lesson which help to maintain a similar pattern of learning throughout the course of the nine month class. Every Wednesday, we began our time together with the reading aloud of “Our Human Condition” which set the stage for the evening’s lesson. We watched a brief video which summarized the week’s readings, and also read aloud some of the scripture which hit the high points of the lesson. Then, most importantly, Pastor Boley led us through a fascinating discussion of our perceptions, thoughts, and conclusions about the material. I am so amazed to tell you that on Wednesday evenings, in a little room tucked away on the third floor of First Church, the table was always beautifully alive with vibrant discussions. The atmosphere was consistently one of permission to explore, to question, to discover, and to feel – always, to feel. What an awesome environment for learning!

For those of us who participated last fall, an added bonus was the opportunity to get to know our (at that time) new pastor. I am so happy to say that John

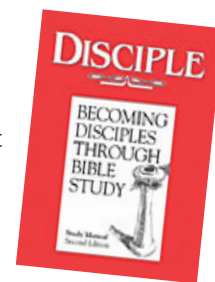
Boley is a master at leading people to the truth through gentle guidance and open encouragement to express themselves.

He was able to pull key points from the group, and then allow for complex questions and individual conclusions. Each member of the group could discover what they needed to know. Furthermore, we became somewhat of a support system for one another. At the end of each class session, there was always an opportunity to share our prayer concerns for the week.

Disciple I provided a compelling overview of an amazing journey through the Bible. While studying the Old Testament, many fine discussions arose within our class while talking about the general history of life, the events of our early world, and the characteristics of God and His hopes for us as a thinking people. As the season progressed, we delved into the New Testament and the study of Jesus Christ—our divine savior who walked the earth in human form. Jesus did this in order to fully understand the human experience, and ultimately, to save us from it.

Without a doubt, Disciple I helped all of us to understand more about God’s word and His love for us. It also further enabled us, as Christians, to love Him more and to love others around us who are also learning more about Him. If I had to describe my thoughts and feelings about Disciple I in just two words, I would have to say knowing and loving. As a result of attending Disciple I, I have greater knowledge about God and an overwhelming feeling of love for everyone involved in the class.

(continued on p. 8)





2011 Special Sunday Offerings

Native American Sunday, August 7



Please mark your calendar for this upcoming UM Special Sunday on August 7.

Your gifts on Native American Ministries Sunday fund ministries to help pave the way for those who aspire to serve Christ's church by making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation

of the world by providing scholarships for Native Americans attending UM schools of theology as well as in helping to develop churches in the Native American Urban Initiative. Because of your generosity, seminarians prepare to serve, congregations are strengthened and communities are transformed.

Please give generously if you are able. You can read more about the lives that have been changed by your gifts to the Native American Ministries Sunday offering on the umcgiving.org website.

Second quarter Giving Statements for those who pledge are available in the Marketplace before and after the 10 a.m. worship service. Please stop by the table and pick up your statement and save us the postage expense! Statements not picked up will be mailed.

DATE	OFFERING DESCRIPTION	GIVEN IN 2010	GIVEN IN 2011
January 16	Human Relations Sunday	\$ 393.00	\$ 516.50
February 20	Youth Missions Sunday	1,008.47	1,832.33
March 13	One Great Hour of Sharing	2,193.16	1,783.75
March 20	UMCOR - Japan Relief	--	1,460.00
April 10	UMW Sunday	1,834.75	1,962.00
April 24	Easter Offering*	6,470.44	6,351.00
May 29	Peace with Justice Sunday	903.10	473.00
June 19	Camp Sunday	652.00	349.00
July 10	MOP (Michigan Organizing Project)	1,554.00	1,500.00
August 7	Native American Sunday	617.00	
September 11	Christian Education Sunday	684.00	
October 2	World Communion Sunday	509.00	
November 27	United Methodist Student Sunday	251.00	
December 25	Christmas Offering**	9,996.40	
SPECIAL SUNDAY OFFERINGS TOTAL		\$27,066.32	

* The 2011 Easter offering will go towards missionary support in Zambia and Russia (\$2500 each) with the balance going to the Russia Initiative.

** The 2011 Christmas offering will go towards missionary support in Mongolia, Congo and Kentucky (\$2500 each) with the balance going to the Foods Resource Bank.

You can celebrate any of the UM Special Sundays at any time of the year by going to the UMCgiving website: www.umcgiving.org

Those Sundays in bold italics are the six Special Sundays of the United Methodist Church.



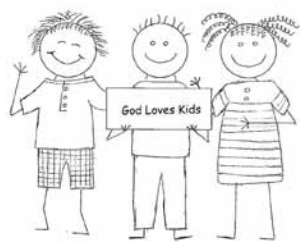
June 2011 General Fund Financial Picture

Note: Building Fund numbers are not included

	JUNE 2011	YTD 2011*	YTD 2010*	Annual Budget**	YTD as a % of Budget
Total Income	\$ 50,599	\$ 494,381	\$ 529,277	\$ 862,700	57%
Total Expense	\$ 68,972	\$ 424,293	\$ 473,540	\$ 862,700	49%
Net Income/(Loss)	\$ (18,373)	\$ 70,088	\$ 55,737		

*YTD income includes \$122,566 for 2011 and \$135,305 in prepaid pledges for 2010.

**The revised annual budget was adopted by Church Council in April 2011.



Children & Families Ministries

by Rev. Shelly Wisdom-Long

A SUMMER-FULL OF SCRIPTURE CONTINUES!

If your child is between the age of 4 years and 2nd grade, we hope that they will join us in room 203 right after the “Time with Our Children” on Sunday mornings! They will enjoy hearing Bible stories, doing crafts, singing songs, painting murals and munching on healthy snacks waiting for them to experience and enjoy. Friends are warmly welcome to come along. Here’s what’s coming up!

Date	Theme	Scripture	Leaders
July 24	With All Your Heart	Matthew 22:37	Carla Baublis & Pastor Shelly
July 31	Promises, Promises	Matthew 28:20	Megan Long & Andrea Murphy
August 7	Love Your Neighbor	Mark 12:31	Hannah Turner & Matt Severson
August 14	Joy to the Lord	Luke 1:14	Pastor Shelly & Nate Hawthorne
August 21	Reapin’ Rewards	2 Corinthians 9:6	Andrea Murphy & Brook Czerniak
August 28	Race for the Lord	Philippians 3:14	<i>*need volunteers</i>
September 4	Random Acts of Kindness	Colossians 3:12	<i>*need volunteers</i>

*Can you help on August 28 or September 4? Let Pastor Shelly (381-6340) or Andrea Murphy (324-5847) know today!

FOODS RESOURCE BANK ANNUAL CELEBRATION IS AUGUST 28TH

All First Church families are invited to the Dugan Farm in Otsego on Sunday afternoon, August 28, to celebrate the harvest for the Foods Resource Bank. The Otsego UMC Praise Band will begin playing around 12:45 with a hot dog roast and lunch immediately following. There will be a presentation about the programs FRB supports in Kenya and lots of games, activities and a hay ride for kids of all ages! Y’all come! You’ll have a great time! (Directions to the farm will be available late August at the Welcome Center!)

DO YOU HAVE A RISING THIRD GRADER?

If so, Pastor Shelly needs to know! Our upcoming third graders will receive their Bibles on Sunday, September 11, at the 11:00 a.m. service. Please send your child’s name as they would like it printed on their new Bible to Pastor Shelly at swisdomlong@kzo-umc.org. We hope to have each child's name imprinted on their Bible, so the sooner this info is received, the better!

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD FOLKS


The Children and Families Ministry Team is looking for a few good folks to lead/teach in the 2011-2012 Children’s Sunday School area. Commitment can be for as short of a time period as 1- five week session or may be expanded to 2-five week sessions during the year or even 3-five week alternating sessions if you so desire. Training, materials and love from our precious children are all included when you sign up! Call Pastor Shelly (382-6340) or Andrea Murphy (324-5847) for more information.

FAMILY CAMP IS COMING

There is still time for you to sign up for Family Camp, August 5 – 7! Campfires and swimming, games and good times...you don’t want to miss it! Call Joyce Moore @ 553-9802 for more info or to sign up today!

Calling all 3rd Graders!

All children entering third grade this fall will receive a Bible as a gift from the congregation during worship on September 11, which is Return & Rejoice Sunday. If your child is starting 3rd grade, please contact Rev. Shelly by emailing her at swisdom-long@umc-kzo.org. She will need to know how you want your child’s name in his or her Bible.



Foods Resource Bank

"Growing lasting solutions together"

We hope by including these stories of various aspects of Foods Resource Bank programs located in West Africa, Nicaragua, Armenia and Guatemala, you will better understand the wonderful things that FRB is accomplishing for overseas food security. If you would like to learn more about FRB, please contact our Growing Project leader, Fay Woolrich, 382-4303.

Community Medicine Chest Nicaragua Carazo program

When medical attention is an hour away by horse, and the doctor is "in" only one day a week at that distant location, having a community medicine chest administered by trained volunteers is important to the well-being of a community.

In the Carazo program, community centers contain a basic medicine chest filled with common medications at low prices.

The medicines in the community "botiquín" help in treating such ailments as rashes, stomach upsets, diarrhea, coughs and colds that occur especially during the rainy season, and staving off more serious complications from any of these.

In one of the Carazo communities, the medications are dispensed by two people trained by FRB's local partner, Christian Medical Action (AMC) – Carlos and Mario. These two volunteers use a basic rural medical treatment book to diagnose the problems, and make referrals for anything they cannot handle. This simple practice, and the supply of commonly used remedies, brings faster relief. Just as importantly, it saves time and money in traveling by horse to the nearest doctor or the nearest pharmacy even further away. People who require attention between the days the doctor is available no longer needlessly suffer.

" ... to produce enough food to share, barter or sell to purchase food staples and medications..."

Growing food is a critical component of all FRB programs; a medicine chest, identified as a need by program participants, helps people to have healthy bodies in order to utilize the food they eat.



Growing Celebration

by Fay Woolrich, Outreach Team



Put Sunday, August 28 at 1 p.m. on your calendar for a "Growing Celebration" at Dugan Farm

Please join us for an afternoon of good fun with members from the Otsego and Plainwell United Methodist Churches. As usual, there will be a potluck with table service and beverages provided. The celebration will include music and speakers who will share their experiences of visiting programs in Siberia and Africa. Norm Braksick, first Executive Director of FRB will be the guest speaker of the day. Norm once said, "We were all saddened by the very visible horror of September 11. But what we don't realize is that eight times as many people died that day around the world of hunger, malnutrition, and starvation, and that's not only on one day, but every day, and still today." Special activities are planned for the children as well as the wonderful hay ride. Please bring lawn chairs and roasting tools for hot dogs. All generations will have a good time. Maps will be available at the Welcome Center closer to the event. For questions, please call Fay Woolrich at 269-382-4303.

Disciple I *(cont. from p. 4)*

As I looked around the table on the evening of our final meeting (a potluck supper at the home of a classmate), I could feel the camaraderie which had developed in the group over nine months. I felt tremendous love. I looked around, I listened, and I felt a special sense of family. I couldn't help but think, "Oh, thank you God for yet another blessing in my life!" I am confident that the other people sitting around that table were thinking similar thoughts.

I read in a book once, "The Bible is a love letter from God to the world. Instead of having a beginning, a middle, and an end, the Bible tells an on-going story—one in which YOU play an important part." Participating in Disciple I Bible class is an excellent way to be part of that story. I hope you will consider the possibility when a new session of Disciple I begins this fall.

I can honestly tell you that the more I learn and understand about God's word, the more I want to know. I cannot wait to study, in greater detail, a few specific books of the Bible in Disciple II this fall. For now, I want to leave you with a sentence from the Disciple I study manual which really struck a chord in me: ***"Once you gain a familiarity with the Bible, and are touched by God's spirit, you will hunger and thirst for more."*** Folks, no truer words were ever spoken!

Congratulations to those in our congregation who participated in this past year's Disciple I class:

Hamilton Scharff, Dave Martin, Anne Martin, Amber Walker, Kim Taylor, Cheryl Anderson, Sarah Anderson, Judy Kingsley, David Kingsley, Rich McDougal, Tammy Eaton, Andy Eaton, Nancy Douglas, Fred Douglas, and John Boley (facilitator).

DISCIPLE

BECOMING DISCIPLES
THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Make plans to join in one of the Disciple classes being offered this fall

This fall we will be offering two Disciple Bible Study Classes:
1) Disciple I - the introductory class that does the grand sweep of the Bible. It will be offered on Tuesday evenings. No prior knowledge or biblical ability is required. Sign ups will be available soon. 2) Disciple II - covers the books of Genesis, Exodus, Luke and Acts. It will be offered on Wednesday nights and is generally reserved for those who have taken Disciple I. More information coming soon.



United Methodist Women

AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, August 24, 9:30 a.m., Parlor
Executive Board Meeting and UMW Program Planning. Bring a brown bag lunch.

Thursday, August 25, 9:30 a.m., Parlor
Circle Program Planning Meeting

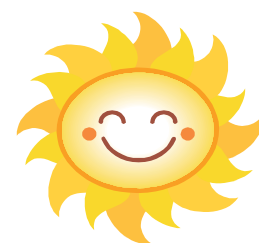
Dear UMW friends,

I wish to thank some special people who helped UMW with their events this past year. We are very appreciative of all their hard work!

- 1) Those who worked on the District Meeting that was held here on June 15 and made the event a memorable one for all.*
- 2) Those who worked at the Parade of Homes "House #18 and made all feel welcome.*
- 3) Nancy Hyde, Ellen McDonald and Mary Smith for helping me deliver over 100 children's books to Spring Valley.*
- 4) Those who helped at Spring Valley Elementary as Promise Helpers this past year.*

~Joyce Treece

Sunday Morning Servants



We need summer volunteers!

Please sign up for the Sunday(s) of your choice to help greet, participate in worship as lay liturgist, welcome guests at the Welcome Center, or help answer phones on Sunday mornings. On Sundays you can sign-up on the large grid that is available at the Welcome Center. During the week you can contact Christi Landreville in the office at 381-6340, or email her at clandreville@umc-kzo.org. *Thank you!*

	July 24 10 a.m.	July 31 10 a.m.	August 7 10 a.m.	August 14 10 a.m.	August 21 10 a.m.	August 28 10 a.m.
Van Driver	Vickie Winfield	Jay Gross	Andrew Lehman	Vickie Winfield	Jay Gross	Andrew Lehman
Lay Reader	Linda Lueth	Robin Entenman	Joan Rohs	Dorothy Osborne	Lois Schmidt	Connie Lyszyk
Office	Nancy Hyde	Fay Woolrich	Marilyn Tonander	Jeanne Plott	Joyce Treece	Harriet Chalker
Welcome Center	Need someone	Ginnie Hessler	Need someone	Need someone	Need someone	Need someone
Greeter	Barbara Smith	Lou Bradley	Gordon & Jan Bundy	Dick & Avis Keene	Sarah Frederick	Peter & Theresa Aranda
Greeter	Chuck & Mary Ann Jaqua	Don & Harriet Chalker	Charles & Dorothy Osborne	Mildred Hedrick Linda Fazio	Need someone	Need someone
Acolytes	volunteer on Sunday	volunteer on Sunday	volunteer on Sunday	volunteer on Sunday	volunteer on Sunday	volunteer on Sunday
Sound & Lighting	Riley Lundquist	Stuart Wheaton	Bob Lane	Rich Peavler	Gordon Bundy	Greg Anderson
MARTHA'S TABLE	Eli Lake Jeff Swenarton	Betty Daniell	Need someone	Briggs family	Geerlings family	Need someone

Forward in Faith II Update

by Linda Lueth, Financial Assistant

As of July 19, the *Forward in Faith II* capital campaign had received 227 responses with 174 pledges for a total of \$1,030,998. How blessed we are to raise over a million dollars again in today's economy! Our first *Forward in Faith* 3-year capital campaign in 2008, before our \$4 million construction project started, had 311 pledges for a total of \$1,822,296. That pledge period ended on June 30. Nearly all pledges were paid in full; some paid more to help offset those who had died/moved or found their financial circumstances had changed and some are completing their pledge later this year.

In the second campaign, the outpouring of gifts during July has allowed us to reduce the outstanding loan balance to \$1,985,000. This is significant when you realize that back in early spring we were estimating that the loan balance would be \$2.2 million at the end of the year! As we reduce principal as quickly as possible, we save on interest expense.

You may hear from a *Forward in Faith II* committee volunteer this month as we try to contact those members whom we have not heard from yet, so that we can conclude the capital campaign and give you final results next month.



First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo

The First United Methodist Church Endowment Fund

One way to express your passion and love for First Church is by including FUMC among your bequests.

Interested? If you would like more information, please contact Jeanne Grubb, Endowment Committee Chair, at 1-269-544-0054

Justice Team thanks First Church for their support

by Mollie Clements

This congregation indeed listens to Jesus the Christ.

It has heard him tell the parable of the sheep and the goats with the inherent command to care for ‘the least of these.’ Look at all the things our Outreach Committee does! A clothing drive for ex-offenders in August, the making of fleece blankets and pillows all year round, but then especially for the children of prisoners as they go to Camp New Day (which was, of course, begun by our church). There is the nourishment provided the hungry and thirsty through our Loaves and Fishes food pantry. There is the caring for the hungry who are far away by our participation in the Foods Resource Bank. There is our commitment to U.M.C.O.R. for global relief and rehabilitation. There is the outpouring of energy, money and sweat from our youth and those who accompany them in going to rehab inadequate housing in Appalachia. This is just the top of the list! How many times are leftovers from a feast at the church taken over to the Eleanor Street Family Shelter (which also was started by our congregation)? What about the missionaries we support? What about Habitat? What about the ramps? Absolutely, we are listening to the Christ!

But Jesus also talked about the Kingdom of God, bringing good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to those who cannot see, and letting the oppressed go free. This is justice work. It requires linking ourselves with other congregations and organizations to build people-power capable of holding powers and principalities accountable to act for the common good. This congregation has listened with a sensitive heart and realized the depth and scope of what Jesus was about and realized that He has called us to change the very structures of society to enable the availability of the abundant life to those usually forgotten. The Michigan Organizing Project (M.O.P.) is the agency through which we focus our efforts in this broader direction.

Last year our church hosted the “Hear the Cry” Prayer Service for M.O.P. where more than 400 people heard the plight of the broken immigration system and the suffering of individuals and families that ensues. This year, 58 members of our congregation attended M.O.P.’s Nehemiah Assembly to enable city, county and state government representatives to dramatically hear the need for changes to bring about Christ-like dignity and justice.

Then on July 10, "MOP Sunday," \$1500 was given in offering to cover our congregation’s M.O.P. membership fee of

\$3.75 per pledging unit. In the midst of our present economic downturn, unemployment and under-employment, it was like a miracle that so many gave what they could and enabled this fiscal responsibility to be met, with some left over for other justice projects! The Justice Team thanks you!

Now there is more that you can do if you are so led. One of the current big drives of M.O.P. is to persuade the County Commissioners Court to put on the November ballot a .33 millage on property taxes to sustain the county’s Housing Trust Fund. You helped enable its creation about five years ago with a million dollars given by county, cities, townships and individuals to give homes to homeless families. The results have been incredible of people able to get jobs, get healed of addictions, children able to better perform in school, families able to move on to houses which they fully fund themselves. But now the funds are running out. If you would this month phone your county commissioner and tell him or her that you support this ballot initiative, your call might be the critical one for a positive decision! Every call will make a difference.

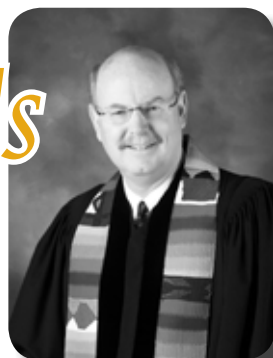
Other continuing work being done by M.O.P:

- (1) helping to build a state-wide coalition to address state issues of justice
- (2) persuading state representatives and senators to refuse to pass an anti-immigrant law similar to that of Arizona
- (3) requesting Western Michigan University and other agencies to take the question of felony off of job applications and save it for the interview process, thus enabling ex-offenders and other ‘at-risk’ people better opportunity to secure jobs
- (4) urging the state legislators to require that ID.s be given prisoners as they are released
- (5) steadily holding the county accountable to its pledge of adequate, dignity-giving dental care facilities and equipment for the uninsured and those on Medicaid
- (6) asking the city for a wage-theft ordinance

The struggle for justice is on-going. It never ends. However, there are days when the spirit of triumph is in the air, when victories seem to be on the horizon, when it seems that Jesus is right here with us, clothing us with possibility. This is the case right now for our Justice Team because of your participation in justice-making activities. Again, we thank you!

Pastor's Pen

Rev. John Boley
Senior Pastor



Yesterday, Diane and I delivered our daughter Hannah to Lake Louise United Methodist Camp for a week of high school camp. Hannah has been going to camp since she was in third grade, and she absolutely loves high school camp at Lake Louise. It is a highlight of her year, indeed, her whole life.

Lake Louise Camp is a beautiful setting. It is part of the Lake Louise United Methodist Community, which includes the camp, a couple of other camps, and all of the cottages around this beautiful lake.

I have been delivering my kids to Lake Louise Camp for many years now. I always enjoy walking around the camp, looking out on the lake, and feeling and seeing the rustic beauty. This particular camp has offered so much to the thousands of high school youth who have been here over the years.

In my younger years as my kids were growing up, I spent a lot of time being a counselor or a Dean of the elementary camps that we offer in the church. I spent over ten straight years being a part of the elementary camps at Lake Michigan Camp in Pentwater. It was hard work, but was always rejuvenating. Lake Michigan Camp is another beautiful United Methodist camp on the glorious shores of Lake Michigan.

So, I am reminded of why camp is so important—there is not a greater setting for Christian spiritual formation. Camp combines a beautiful natural setting, with dynamic interpersonal encounters. It combines the genuine feel of the presence of God in nature, with dynamic Christian community. There is no other place, including the local church, which has this combination of elements to bring such powerful spiritual experiences. *Christian camping changes lives.*

I am retired now from the exhausting but rewarding work of being a Dean or counselor in a camp setting. That is for younger people. But, I am grateful that I did that for many years; and, I am grateful that my three children have received a full complement of Christian camping—for each of them—from third grade on.

Here at First UMC of Kalamazoo, let's do our best to ensure that our children are offered Christian camping experiences.

Blessings,

Sharing an update on Rev. Bruce Felker...

Fred Douglas regularly corresponds with Rev. Bruce Felker who was the Wesley Foundation Director a few years ago and was also an active part of First Church. Rev. Felker often preached here and was a regular liturgist at the 8:30 service. At that time, Wesley Foundation did not have a separate worship service and was an active part of First Church's worship. Bruce now lives in Texas, but still owns a home in Michigan, which he usually visits during the summer. He would make a

stop and visit us and worship on Sunday either on his way up or back. This summer, Bruce sends this message to his friends at First Church:

"I'm in the middle of cancer treatments. Finished 11 weeks of chemo and start 33 days of radiation on July 5. It has been tough, but I have responded to the chemo. I usually head for my home in Michigan in the summer, but not this year. I will continue to help in Bankston (Texas) at St. Paul's until I get this cancer finished."

Upcoming Inquirer's Class

There will be an Inquirer's class offered the beginning of October. Anyone interested in joining the church or inquiring about membership is invited to attend. For more information on the class, please contact Rev. John Boley at 381-6340 or email jboley@umc-kzo.org.

Companions in Christ Reunion

The annual Companions in Christ Reunion will be held on Wednesday, August 24 in Wesley Hall. The potluck supper will begin at 6 p.m. All the 100+ Companions who have been a part of the ongoing classes over the past 10 years are invited to attend!

Marc Adams, Author/Activist to speak at Kalamazoo Public Library

PFLAG (Parents, Family, Friends of Lesbians and Gays) of Southwest MI Chapter presents gay author and activist Marc Adams. Adams will present "Hope Needs Only Hands & Hearts" on Monday, August 8 @ 7 p.m. in the Kalamazoo Public Library's Van Deusen Room (third floor). Local organizations co-sponsoring this event are: Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, Community AIDS Resource & Education Services, Kalamazoo GLBT Professional Network and Kalamazoo Alliance for Equality. All are invited to attend to hear this inspirational speaker.

Ramp Up News

by Tom Schaberg

A BIG THANK YOU to ten tough men who worked a day and a half in 88° F. heat to build a beautiful ramp in Pavilion Estates. The customer was extremely appreciative! All told, we invested 149 man hours in this 63-foot ramp, with the materials costing about \$1100.00.

Our ramp builders this time were: Harold Garman, David Martin, Bill Smith, Jim Treece, Keene Wolfe, Emerson Eidson, Roger Williams, Ed Birch, Royce Bland and Jim Evans.

A SPECIAL THANKS to Bill Smith in the design of this ramp, and to Keene Wolfe and Jim Evans for arriving early to help set up and for hauling the trash away at the end of the day.

We will not build a ramp in August, **but we are scheduling a ramp for our annual "Do All the Good You Can Do Day" on September 24.** This ramp build will also be our annual youth-build. In addition, we will send a small crew including youth to build a 25-foot picket fence in front of the ramp we built on Forest Street in May. Please put September 24th on your calendar if you'd like to help!



WE ARE A RECONCILING CONGREGATION. First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo invites all persons to join us on our journey of faith. Jesus Christ calls us to be an inclusive church that exemplifies the kingdom of God. We strive to move toward reconciling relationships with all, affirming those who are marginalized for any reason, including sexual orientation or gender identity. We welcome all with open hearts, open minds, open doors.



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