

the First Word



April 2, 2020

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First United Methodist Church 212 S. Park Street Kalamazoo, MI 49007 269.381.6340 www.umc-kzo.org

Greetings Church Family,

These are certainly trying times for us all. Yet, in the midst of the fear and uncertainty, spring is coming, budding all around us—and we are on the threshold of Holy Week.

Your worship leaders are planning to observe this sacred season by recording in our homes the music and messages of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday so that it can be shared with you. If you do not have access to the internet to watch these services, we can create a DVD of each service and send it in the mail along with a bulletin. If this would be a blessing to you, just call the church at 381-6340 and let us know.

If you do have access to the internet, you can join us for our **livestream** at the time of the publicized time on our website, **www.umc-kzo.org**. You will see a box on our home page that says "CHURCH ONLINE." When you click that, it will take you to the livestream page. If you are unable to connect with us during the time we are livestreaming, all our services are later available for viewing on the church website after they are uploaded to our **YouTube** channel. You can either click the red and white YouTube logo on every page of our website, or click the "Worship" tab and then the "Worship Previous Services" drop down. If neither of these ways of connecting will work for you, please call me at (269) 303-4902 so that we can "visit" together one-on-one about the deep meaning and uplifting power of Holy Week. It is my commitment that, in one way or another, no one in our church family be left out of our celebration of these high and holy days.

We also traditionally receive in this season our Easter offering. Although we will not have an Easter mailing this year, you can participate. The offering will be directed to three areas (\$2,500 to each of our three missionaries): Desiree Segura-April (to support Christian education for children in Nicaragua), Will and Ella Faircloth (to support the Costa Rica Children's Home), and Donna Pewo (to support youth of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma). Any funds received above those commitments will be provided to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund and used for our Helping Our Neighbors ministry. You can share your gift online by accessing our website and clicking the "Giving Online" image on the home page, or by mailing it to the church with "Easter Offering" in the memo.

We are an Easter People. We are Children of the Resurrection. We are the Body of Christ. In the powerful words of the apostle Paul, "There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

Rev. Stephen M. S. Cranley

Holy Thursday - April 9 @ 7 p.m. Livestream, Led by Rev. Julie Kline

On this Holy evening we will gather "around our tables" and hear from all the characters that we have met along the Lenten journey. We will also share Holy Communion. If you are able, please have bread and juice so that we may commune together.

Good Friday - April 10 @ 7 p.m. Livestream, Led by Rev. Steve Charnley

On the darkest day of the year for Christians we will hear a message from Pastor Steve on the "Seven Last Words of Jesus from the Cross."

Easter Sunday - April 12 @ 11 a.m. Livestream, Led by Rev. Steve Charnley

Join your worship leaders in their homes as you watch from yours, as we experience the joy of Easter together. "Alleluia! Christ the Lord is risen today!"

WELCOME to this edition of *The First Word*. Articles for the next issue are due no later than Wednesday, **April 29, 2020**. The next newsletter will be mailed **May 6, 2020**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent via email to Jennifer Stupica, Communications Coordinator, at jstupica@umc-kzo.org.

Our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of

Mollie Clements, who died March 1.

Robert Hamet, husband of Carol Hamet, and father of Molly Geerlings, Amy Hamet, Ryan Hamet, and Peter Hamet; grandfather of Hannah Geerlings, who died March 11.

Dorothy (Dot) Lanells, sister of Jerry Bultema, who died March 20.

Bill Smith, husband of Mary Smith, who died March 29.

Please keep these friends in your prayers

Fred Allen, Dana Anderson, Nina Baker, Doris Ball, Dee Barkley, Jane Barnes, Wanda Boekhout, Lou Bradley, Max & Ellen Brinkley, Dan & Jill Christian, Emerson Eidson, Andreea Frew, Molly & Hannah Geerlings, Ruth Evelyn Graham, Brenda Haan, Carol Hamet, Red Hikade, Nell Holland, Ann Imerzel, Lenora Holliday, David Houseman, Ben Korendyke, Doris Lee, David Locke, Larry Lueth, Ellen McDonald, John McNaughton, Christine & Richard Peavler, Diane Reece, Joan Rohs, Hamilton Scharff, Jan Search, Mary Smith, Kim Taylor, Arlene Triestram, Laurie Ulrich, Jeddy Wilson, Linda Winkelman, Janet Wyndendorf

Church Phone Directory

Stay connected! We hope you will take this time to reconnect via phone, mail, or email to your faith family. If you are in need of an updated church directory, please email Thom Victor at tvictor@umc-kzo.org, and he will email you a pdf to download to your computer, or mail you a hard copy.

Daily Words of Encouragement Artist

Kalamazoo artist Jeff Kennedy has graciously let the church use images of his watercolor paintings in our Daily Words of Encouragement email. Jeff is the husband of member Janine Kennedy and works for Stryker. You can read more about Jeff and his paintings on his blog, <http://drawingflies365.blogspot.com/> or follow him on Instagram, [@flypainter](#).

During this time when the church building is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to bring you the church! **Please worship with us via livestreaming (we also like to call it a "Watch Party") at 11 a.m. on Sundays or later on our YouTube channel.** Both are accessible from our website: umc-kzo.org.

If you are having any **technology difficulties** during this time when electronic communication is so important for us to keep in touch with each other, please contact Derek Wheaton at DerekWheaton@gmail.com. Derek can also help with accessing our livestreamed services, YouTube channel, or to set-up a Zoom meeting.

We suggest you create a **small sacred space** in your home so you have a place you can meditate and worship during this difficult time. You can make it as simple or as elaborate as you wish! Perhaps include a candle and use it as your Peace Candle. If you are able to worship with us via livestream or YouTube, light the candle when the worship leader lights the candle.

If you would like to share a **prayer request** with our clergy and prayer ministry team, please email your prayer(s) to Thom Victor at tvictor@umc-kzo.org. If you do not have access to email, you can call the church at (269) 381-6340 and leave a message. For prayers to be lifted up during worship for the upcoming Sunday, prayer requests need to be received by Thurs. at noon.

All church phone calls are being directed to a voice mail that will be checked multiple times a day. These messages will be forwarded to the appropriate person to handle your call. If you need to contact a specific person quickly, we suggest that you contact them by their email instead, as they will get your message sooner. Clergy, directors, and office staff can be reached by entering the first letter of their first name and their entire last name, and then: @umc-kzo.org. (i.e., scharnley@umc-kzo.org).

If you are not on our **email distribution list** for weekly electronic newsletters and our new Daily Words of Encouragement devotional, please email Jennifer Stupica at jstupica@umc-kzo.org to be added. We have received many words of appreciation for the daily devotional email.

New Pastoral Appointment

by Andrew Vorbrich, Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair



Rev. Matt Weiler
Our new Associate Pastor
beginning July 1

Despite the inconveniences of the coronavirus precautions, I hope you are doing well. Remember to reach out to your church if there is something we can do to help you. Your Staff Parish Relations Committee has not stopped working, although we have stopped gathering in person. Recently during a teleconference meeting, we were introduced to the Rev. Matt Weiler. Rev. Weiler has been selected by the Bishop and his Cabinet to be our next associate pastor!

Pastor Matt currently serves at Sunnyside UMC in the Eastside neighborhood of Kalamazoo. He has been there for the past 11 years and has 13 years of ministry experience. He and his wife Cara have three children in elementary school. The children attend Kalamazoo Public School's Northglade Elementary. They live on the northwest side of Kalamazoo. Cara is an ordained deacon in The United Methodist Church and a licensed social worker. They both graduated from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. Currently, Pastor Matt is completing a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) in Community Organizing at Garrett. The title of his dissertation is "Anti-Racist Identity and Baptismal Covenant."

Matt has an interest in musical performance and has a collection of guitars and other fretted instruments in his home. He has a passion for justice ministry, seeks to develop deep relationships, and loves seeing people's lives being transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. In his free time, Matt loves reading, gardening, hiking with his black lab, and kayaking. The Weiler family loves a good backpacking trip.

Pastor Matt will begin working with us on July 1, 2020. You can expect a physical introduction to him shortly after that. In the meantime, wash your hands, stay healthy, and pray for our church during these challenging times and for the changes that are yet to come.

Church staff wages

by Andy Vorbrich, Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair

In these uncertain times of the COVID-19 virus, SPRC has undertaken to continue wage payments to our church employees as if they are continuing to work their regular hours. Most of our staff are able to work remotely and keep up their normal hours by continuing to handle their job responsibilities and also by doing special projects. However, some of our staff (i.e., building security and custodians) cannot do their job remotely, so are not working at all.

For now, but always keeping an eye on the church's cash flow, we will continue to pay our staff the amounts that they have come to depend on to continue living. You can do your part in this by maintaining your giving level to the church. Our expenses are not taking a holiday, so please continue to give as if the offering plate were being passed by you. The church is still receiving their mail, and will ensure that your gifts and checks are deposited. You can also use our electronic giving option which can be found on our website, umc-kzo.org (click the "Online Giving" image on the home page, or under the "Generosity" tab). This will help us continue our ministries and continue our relationships with our valued employees. If the church gets to the point where we cannot afford to maintain these wages, we will have to address this policy again.

Sewing masks for COVID-19 response

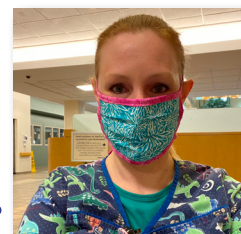
Details about making/delivering fabric masks for our community and first responders:

Google: **Phoebe Putney Health Systems Mask Pattern**

When your masks are complete, drop-off at the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department

311 E. Alcott St., Kalamazoo
Mon.-Fri, 9am - 4pm

Collected masks will be immediately sent to laundry/processing to be prepared for usage.



Katy McGinnis
wearing one of her
hand-sewn masks

March Mission of the Month

During March we were collecting items for the YWCA Traffic/Domestic Assault Center: **diapers** (sizes 3, 4, 5, 6), **baby wipes, full-size shampoo and conditioner, full-size body wash, and men and women's deodorant.** Please hold on to these items so that we may donate them to the YWCA when the church building opens again.

Dream Team Updates

by Mark Oudersluys, Team Chair

During this time of crises and uncertainty, the work of our Dream Fund partner agencies are needed more than ever. The Dream Team has been in close contact with them to determine how they are doing, and if there was anything we could do to support them. Three of our partner agencies directly provide affordable housing to low income families. However, the individuals that they serve have been the first to be adversely impacted by business closures and job losses. This in turn, is adversely affecting our partner agencies and causing them to re-examine what they can do over the next several months to help their clients as much as possible. When asked what we can do to support them, the answers have been significantly different from past needs. Most will need funding assistance soon. We will keep you posted in future communications on ways that you can help support them.

The Dream Team thanks the congregation for their support of our goal of providing affordable housing in Kalamazoo. Due to your generosity, we have been able to fund all of our projects for the first of our three year campaign. Our partner agencies continue to be amazed at your caring and generosity.

Finance Update by Sandy Gower, Finance Committee Chair

As we find our way through these truly unprecedented times, I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. Even though we are not able to gather together in person, the ministries of the church continue. As our community continues to cope with the ever-changing landscape of this crisis, our ministries will be even more important. We have started the year on a steady financial footing. Both revenue and expenses are in line with expectations. Even though we are not gathering in person, your financial support is still important. While we worship virtually, you can still support the church by contributing on line through the website, <https://www.umc-kzo.org/online> or mailing your contribution to 212 S. Park St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. Stay well, check in with loved ones, and continue our prayers that this crisis will soon pass.

A Note from Justice For Our Neighbors Ministry

by Ann Sweany, JFON Clinic Coordinator & Kathy Purnell, Staff Attorney

We are deeply grateful to have the capacity to be open and operational at this time during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to meet the legal needs of immigrant and refugee clients in Southwest Michigan. In order to protect our clients and volunteers, all monthly in-person intake clinics have been suspended and have been replaced with new procedures to interview and screen clients without any physical contact. Engaging our clients during this time underscores our common vulnerability and how absolutely nothing can be taken for granted especially, with clients that may become more deeply marginalized by a lack of safe/reliable transportation, a lack of quick access to translators, and/or limited ability to communicate by phone or internet.

JFON would also like to remind everyone to BE COUNTED in the 2020 census. While we need to remain physically distanced at this time, our collective voice is impactful to the level of economic support and political representation that Michigan communities will receive for the next decade by the 2020 census. Take good care, stay safe, and best wishes to all.

You Are Not Alone Ministry

by Ray Sweany

Our Sunday evening meal, YANA, has been temporarily postponed. It is clear that the Governor and our Bishop are supportive of efforts to get food assistance into the community for those who are on the margins during the months that we are asked to "Stay Home. Stay Safe." The study committee will continue to discuss how we can best serve those in need and make recommendations to the Church Council in the near future.

