

the **First Word**

January 28, 2015



Vol. 30, No. 2

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

40
DAYS
THE SEASON
OF LENT

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

February 18, 2015 @ 7 P.M.

You are invited to begin your spiritual Lenten journey with us as we combine with other Bronson Park churches in our Sanctuary for an Ash Wednesday service.

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, **February 4, 2015**. The next newsletter will be mailed **February 11, 2015**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent electronically by email to Jennifer Stupica at jstupica@umc-kzo.org.

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., scharnley@umc-kzo.org).

*Rev. Steve Charnley	Senior Pastor
*Rev. Julie Kline	Pastor of Emerging & Youth Ministries
*Rev. Dan Duncan	Pastor of Children & Family Ministries
*Jacqueline Stilger	Minister of Music
*Ruth LaMachia	Church Business Administrator
*Christi Landreville	Administrative Assistant
*Jennifer Stupica	Communications Coordinator
*Bernie Foulk	Organist
Cari Miller	First Singers Director
*Curt Flowers	Bookkeeper
*Linda Lueth	Contributions Assistant
*Rebecca Hatley-Watkins	Office Assistant
*Robin Entenman	Office Assistant/Morning Security
Pamela Roman	Custodian
Todd Bloomfield	Evening Custodian
Ernesto Escobedo	Custodian/Security
Michael DeYoung	Evening Security
Timothy Landreville	Sunday Evening Security
*Sarah Goodenow	Wesley Visitation Intern
Julie Meyers	First Care Director
Bishop Deborah Kieseey	Bishop of the Michigan Area
Rev. John Boley	Kalamazoo District Superintendent
Rev. Bill Haggard	Grand Rapids District Superintendent

GLOBAL STAFF

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 Wendy Arnold at 323-3244 or Donna Meninga, 388-5837.

Our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of

Becky Sloniker, daughter of Don & Carol Oakley, who died December 31, 2014.

Geneva Smith, mother of Gary (Becky) Lawson, who died December 31, 2014

Please keep these friends in your prayers

Bob & Nina Baker, JL Ball, Wanda Boekhout, Helen Bray, Wayne Conner, Carl Cooper, Skip Decker, Ken Dorn, Krista & Tom Hampton, Rudy Hanson, Nancy Hilliard, Carol Hurley, Nancy Jacobs, Kathleen Kingsley, Dick Knapp, Virginia Krake, Bela Lahner, Liz LaMachia, Allen Lincoln, Richard Long, JoAnne Nelson, Laurie Nelson, Wilma Nelson, Al & Sue Rollier, Lois & Myron Schmidt, Michael Seals, Vickee Seals, Ed Torrance, Jean Zuidweg

Baptized in Worship Jan. 25!

Drew Scott Austin, son of Brian & Brenna (Frew) Austin

Akilani Maribel Fuller and Azontay David Dwayne Fuller, daughter and son of Ken & Barb Fuller

Hannah Brynn Wright and Leah Marie Wright, daughters of Amy & Brian Wright



Share the Supper

On **first Sundays of the month** as part of our mission to both eliminate poverty and improve health, please bring a non-perishable food donation and place it on the altar before worship begins. The food will be blessed during worship as we celebrate Holy Communion.

HIGH LEVEL NEED: hearty soups

Stephen Ministry

Caring for one another, sharing God's love



*We are pilgrims on a journey;
we're together on this road.
We are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

from *The Servant Song*

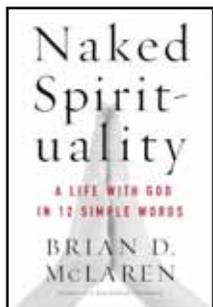
On Sunday, February 8 at 11:00 a.m. our church will celebrate the re-commissioning of our current Stephen Ministers and to commission Dotty Hook upon her completion of Stephen Ministry training.

We thank all the people who have served in Stephen Ministry over the years and we welcome you to rejoin our ministry. For those of you that want to take the training, there will be a class offered beginning the first part of May that concludes in August. We invite you to participate in the training class and upon completion to consider being active in our program.

Please contact Rev. Steve Charnley, 381-6340 or Jan Baker, 342-4092 for any additional information.

Naked Spirituality Lenten Study

February 24 - March 31



Jesus said, "I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

Brian D. McLaren describes twelve simple words of a life with God in his profound book, *Naked Spirituality*. This past fall, members of our church studied words of spiritual awakening and spiritual strengthening. Reverend Steve Charley

and Miriam Downey invite you to study with them six words of spiritual surviving and spiritual deepening.

The Naked Spirituality Lenten study will meet on Tuesday evenings from 6:45-8:45 p.m. from February 24 through March 31. You do not need to have attended the fall class to participate in this Lenten study. Books will be available, and you can sign up to participate by emailing Miriam Downey (medowney@chartermi.net) or by signing up at the reception desk. Please indicate if you will need a book.

Your spiritual life will be strengthened and your soul will be prepared to meet the risen Christ of Easter.

First Care Position Open

by Julie Meyers, First Care Director



First Care, our week day child care center, is currently looking for a dependable and nurturing Lead Infant Room Teacher for ages 6 weeks to 14 months. Open availability required approximately 40 hours per week. Courses and experience in early childhood needed. Please contact Julie Meyers, director, at 344-6147 for more details or email your resume to msjulie55@yahoo.com.

Child care volunteer openings are also available with proper background checks and training for anyone who would be interested.

Deepen Your Effectiveness

Kalamazoo District Leadership Conference

Saturday, February 21 - 9 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Westwood UMC, 538 Nichols Road

We United Methodist are good at conferencing. We do it once a year for our local church (when we met last December), as well as for the annual meeting of the West Michigan Annual Conference in June. Between the local church and the annual conference is our district conference.

The Kalamazoo District Conference is an important time of fellowship, training and decision making. If you've never attended one, this year is the right time. It will be a time of reunion for our former senior pastor, Rev. John Boley, who is now the Kalamazoo District Superintendent and will be leading the conference. It will be a time of learning about making disciples with two great keynote speakers, as well as several special workshops throughout the day.

See the full page flyer on page 4 for a schedule of the day's events. The event is FREE. Lunch is FREE. Go to Register@KalamazooDistrict.org to sign up. We hope to have a large representation from our church.

Bring in your empty pop cans on Sunday, February 8 to help youth missions!

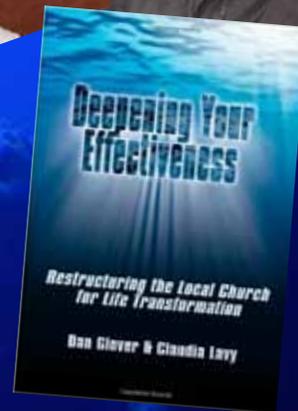
Join the Revolution

KALAMAZOO DISTRICT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 21, 2015 • 9AM-3PM
WESTWOOD UMC • 538 NICHOLS RD, KALAMAZOO

Deepen Your Effectiveness

Every church understands it's supposed to make disciples of Jesus Christ, but not every church has a plan to make it happen. Keynote speakers, Dan Glover and Claudia Lavy, will present a fresh framework for understanding discipleship in the local church based on their book *Deepening Your Effectiveness*. The result is changed lives and a church that intentionally fulfills its commission to make disciples.

Dan and Claudia will lead two distinct **Discipleship** workshops. Other workshops include: **Children's Ministry, Church Council, Missions, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and Worship.**



- 9:00 am Registration
- 9:20 am Welcome & Singing
- 9:30 am Keynote Session I
- 10:40 am Workshop I
- 11:45 am Lunch
- 12:30 pm Workshop II
- 1:35 pm Keynote Session II
- 2:30 pm Business Session & Closing Worship

FREE! Register @
KalamazooDistrict.org

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

by Ruth LaMachia, Church Business Administrator

One of the designated funds that has been set up at First Church is the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. Its intended purpose is to have money set aside which would allow the pastors, and/or someone they designate, to help those in need.

There would not be a Pastor's Discretionary Fund without the very generous contributions from those from our congregation who designated some of their offering to this fund. And to those who have contributed, we say "thank you." In 2014 we received \$8,611; and when we added the \$8,247 that carried over from 2013, we had almost \$17,000 to work with in this effort in 2014.

As Church Business Administrator, administrating this program is one of my job responsibilities along with working with our pastors in assessing needs. Below is how we helped over 175 individuals and families both in our congregation and out in our community.

So what did we help them with?

- When they had shut-off notices for electric, gas, propane, or water.
- When they had needs because of being evicted from their homes.
- When they had been homeless and finally got an opportunity to get a place of their own and needed application fees, deposits or first month's rent.
- When they needed help with a car repair or gas.
- When they needed to spend a night at a hotel because of an emergency situation.
- When they needed transportation to get to a doctor's appointment or to start a new life while working with our pastors or Ministry with Community social workers.
- When they had other needs that just didn't fit into the above categories, but were real needs that were coordinated with the pastors or Ministry with Community social workers.

So how much did we share?

- In 2014 we shared our resources from this fund of almost \$14,000.

So what is the process in getting assistance?

- If you are from our congregation and have a need for assistance, please see one of our pastors to let them

know of your situation and how we can possibly help. If they feel that it is something that we can assist you with, they will discuss the amount and other options if need be.

- If it is a need from someone in our community, we assess the need and determine if it is something we can help with. We try to limit our help to utility shut-off notices and evictions, which we pledge \$50 to their bill. We require copies of their paperwork as well as their ID in order to give them a pledge letter which they will take to other churches and organizations. Once they have all that is required, either by other pledges or their own resources, we then send a payment to the utility or landlord that they owe money.
- We also work very closely with Ministry With Community (MwC) and if there is a need that is unusual or doesn't fit our criteria, I refer people to one of their social workers, as they have the resources to offer other sources of help. Many times MwC will contact me directly with situations they have verified and ask if we would be willing to help, which in most cases we do.

How can you help?

- In 2014 we had over 400 individuals request some type of assistance and were willing to go through our process plus many, many more who requested assistance for situations that we just couldn't verify or justify the need. Conservatively, we have between 10-15 people who come to the church each week asking for some type of assistance; with some weeks that number doubles or even triples. ***So in 2015 to help with this process, Pastor Steve and I are putting together a team of people who will help with this process***—which can be overwhelming at times. If this is something you might be interested in doing, please see let Pastor Steve or myself know.
- If you did the math, we have just a little under \$3,000 going into 2015 to help those in need. If you so desire to help monetarily, just put "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" on your check or in an envelope and it will be directed accordingly.

Again, we thank you for your generous support of this ministry throughout the years and look forward to helping people in need in our congregation as well as in our community for years to come.



EMERGING WORSHIP

February 8 @ 9:30 a.m. in Wesley Hall

"God's Unrelenting Grace"

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15: 1-7

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. John 1: 16

"What are you going to do with your one wild, precious life?" Mary Oliver

We have each been given one wild and precious life and we must ask ourselves as the poet Mary Oliver did, what will we do with it? Grace is a gift from the Divine which is given to us so that we may live into abundance, fully alive, fully at one with the Holy and with one another. We have a tendency to wander away from this Source of Grace, nibbling slowly further and further away until we become lost. The Good Shepherd is like a burst of sunshine on a cloudy day, calling us home and reestablishing our place in the fold of God's grace.

Come worship with us in the midst of the bleak mid-winter to remember that the Son shines upon us, calling us to life!

YOUTH TRIBE

SUNDAY EVENING YOUTH EVENTS

SUN February 1- 6-8pm - Ichthus Super Bowl Party @ Laura & Jay Gross' house!

The early Christians gathered in one another's homes to celebrate and share their faith. They would use the symbol of the fish, or Ichthus to mark where they would be meeting. Some folks will be very interested in watching the game and others of us will be playing cards and board games. I am sure we will all be eating and snacking; please bring something to share with all!

SUN February 8 - 9:20 to noon – Bottle and Can Drive

To raise funds for our summer mission trip, please plan to help collect bottles and cans from church members cars and be willing to go to stores to feed them into the returnable machines.

6-8pm – Ice skating at Millennium Park, or stay at church and play games, or watch a movie. Ice skating will cost \$4 and skate rentals are \$3.

SUN February 15 – 6-8pm - Digging Deep – "Hope Rises"

We have been doing quite a bit of studying about human trafficking, particularly in Cocoa & Class. This "Digging Deep" hopes to bring some of this awareness and social action to the greater Tribe. A portion of our fundraising efforts at the chili cook-off will be given to a ministry that provides safe houses for victims of human trafficking. We will be creating posters and placemats to raise awareness and funds. We'll also watch some videos and discuss how our own choices can impact human trafficking and hopefully cause hope to rise in the lives of others.

SUN February 22 – 12:15-2pm – Chili & Soup Cook Off!

(fundraiser for Youth Missions) This event takes a Tribal effort! We will need a whole lot of help to pull this off. If you are planning on going on the summer mission trip, please plan on bringing a crock pot of chili or soup and a dessert to share. Hopefully, many will come for soup or chili, give us a donation towards youth missions and safe houses for victims of human trafficking. We'll ask church folks to vote with their dollars on just who makes the most scrumptious chili or the most savory soup! We will need to set up before and clean up after.



Children & Family Ministries

by Rev. Dan Duncan

dduncan@umc-kzo.org, 269.381.6340 x231

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

The children ages 4 years through 6th grade are using "Grow! Proclaim, Serve" in Sunday School. Over the next couple of months they will be learning about how Jesus healed a variety of people, and also hearing about some of the miracles Jesus performed.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

9:30 a.m. Kids Perks (snack time) and First Bells rehearsal each 1st and 3rd Sunday

Kids Perks and gathering celebration each 2nd and 4th Sunday!

Singing, ringing, sharing and snacking...be there on time!

9:40 a.m. Sunday School

4yr. olds – Kindergarten "Grow! Proclaim! Serve!" Room 203

1st – 2nd Grade "Grow! Proclaim! Serve!" Room 210

3rd Grade "Getting to Know My Bible" Room 209

4th – 6th Grade "Grow! Proclaim! Serve!" Room 304

10:30 a.m. Prompt Parent Pick-up from Sunday school!

11:15 a.m. (following Time With Our Children in worship)

4yr. olds – 2nd Grade "All in One Bible Fun: Fruits of the Spirit"

THANK YOU...

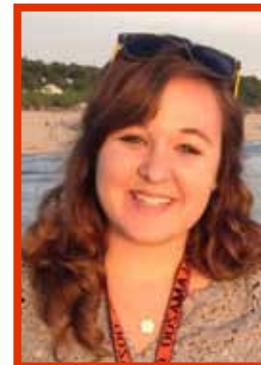
To our third grade class for making a blanket that was donated to our "You Are Warmed by God's Love" blanket ministry. The blanket will go to warm a child in the Kalamazoo community that is facing a difficult situation.

FAMILY FUN NIGHT COMING!

Our next Family Fun Night is Friday, February 20, 6-8 p.m., and is a "Movie Night." Bring a favorite family movie, and we'll pick one by popular vote to watch together. We'll share a meal of pizza, salad and lemonade. Cost is \$3/person. Questions? Contact Pastor Dan (dduncan@umc-kzo.org).

SUMMER CAMP NEWS!

The middle of winter is a great time to make plans for a dynamite summer camp experience for you child or teen, or your family, or yourself! We have six camps in our West Michigan Annual Conference, each offering fun-filled, Christ centered programs that help kids connect with God, God's creation, and new friends, some of which may last a lifetime. Check out the bulletin board in the hallway leading to the sanctuary, or go online to <umcamping.org> for all the details. Because of generous contributions to our Camp Sunday special offering, our church offers scholarships for these summer camp experiences. Questions? Ask Pastor Dan, who has been a leader at several of these camps.



Introducing Abby Keizer!

Sunday morning child care

Hi, my name is Abby Keizer. I'm currently a senior at Kalamazoo College with a major in psychology and a minor in music. I love working and spending time with kids, and I plan to work with them as a career as a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst working with autistic children.

I have also loved and been involved with music for as long as I can remember. Right now, I'm in the Kalamazoo College jazz band and the Limelights (an all-female a capella group).

I am beyond honored to be a new member of the Sunday morning child care crew at First United Methodist Church! I have always wanted to work in a nursery, and am thrilled to finally have the chance. I look forward to seeing everyone and their kiddos every Sunday!



February "Mission of the Month"

by Mark Oudersluys, Outreach Team Co-Chair

February Mission of the Month is non-perishable food donations for Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes

Did you know that in the Kalamazoo area:

- 17% of the families with a child under the age of 18 lives below the poverty line
- 10,500 children are challenged by hunger on a daily basis
- 7.8% of senior citizens live on less than \$12,000 per year
- 15% of the Kalamazoo County population is food insecure
- That in the last fiscal year, Loaves & Fishes has distributed more than 2.3 million meals to the hungry in Kalamazoo county

Did you know that during the last fiscal year our Bronson Pantry:

- Served approximately 10,380 individuals or 7.5 % of all individuals receiving food assistance from Loaves & Fishes in Kalamazoo County
- Distributed 148,000 pounds of food

There will be several barrels placed around the church for your non-perishable food donations during the month of February. We hope you will be able to assist us in becoming another source of food for people in need. An ongoing need is for high protein foods such as tuna, peanut butter and ravioli with meat.

2015 Special Sunday Offerings

2015 DATE	OFFERING DESCRIPTION	GIVEN IN 2014	GIVEN IN 2015
<i>January 18</i>	<i>Human Relations Sunday</i>	426.00	421.00
February 15	Youth Missions Sunday +	3,918.40	
<i>March 15</i>	<i>One Great Hour of Sharing</i>	1,745.83	
April 5	Easter Offering	7,853.00	
<i>May 24</i>	<i>Peace with Justice Sunday</i>	242.00	
June 21	Camp Sunday	177.00	
July 19	Michigan United/Justice Team	1,226.00	
<i>August 16</i>	<i>Native American Sunday</i>	1,942.00	
September 6	Christian Education Sunday	408.00	
September 27	ASP Sunday		
<i>October 4</i>	<i>World Communion Sunday</i>	692.00	
November 1	UMW Sunday	3,139.99	
N/A	Bishop's Appeal (2014: Malaria)	* 5,081.68	
<i>December 7</i>	<i>United Methodist Student Sunday</i>	423.00	
December 24	Christmas Offering	13,040.10	
SPECIAL SUNDAY OFFERINGS TOTAL		<u>\$40,331.00</u>	

* Figure does not include the Emerging Worship special offering for this ministry, nor prior years' gifts that we can count towards our \$8,100 goal.

Those Sundays in bold italics are the six Special Sundays of the United Methodist Church. Giving to Special Sundays prepares students to become leaders for the church and the world; empowers the poor and victimized to live fuller lives through self-improvement programs; challenges injustice; and pays administrative costs for disaster relief.

December 2014 General Fund Financial Picture

Note: Building Fund numbers are not included

	Dec. 2014	2014 YTD	2013 YTD	2014 Budget	% of Budget
*Total Income	\$ 77,357	\$ 901,668	\$ 893,327	\$ 900,671	100.1%
Total Expense	\$ 89,885	\$ 876,651	\$ 836,114	\$ 900,671	97.3%
Net Income/(Loss)	\$ (12,528)	\$ 25,018	\$ 57,213		

* Income includes 2014 pre-paid pledges of \$144,776 and \$122,680 received in 2013.

FEBRUARY 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 Blood Pressure Clinic Holy Communion 8:30 AM Worship 9:30 AM Sunday School for All Ages 11:00 AM Worship 12:15 PM Young People 4:00 PM Notified 5:30 PM You Are Not Alone 6:00 PM Youth Tribe</p>	<p>2 7:30 AM Sunrise Patrol 2:00 PM JustFaith</p>	<p>3 10:00 AM Worship Planning 11:00 AM OLLI Class - Pilgrimage 12:15 PM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM Emmaus 4th Day 4:15 PM First Beats - Children's Choir 7:00 PM EMM Rehearsal 7:00 PM NA 7:00 PM SPRC</p>	<p>4 7:30 AM Dawn Patrol 9:30 AM OLLI Curriculum 10:30 AM Committee Meeting 10:30 AM Community Healing Centers Group 7:00 PM Children & Family Ministries 7:00 PM JustFaith 8:00 PM Emerging Worship Band</p>	<p>5 9:30 AM First Stitchers 1:30 PM Prayer Group 6:00 PM Handbell Ensemble 6:00 PM Higher Ground Counseling 6:30 PM NA 7:00 PM Depression Bipolar Support Alliance 7:00 PM Pub Theology 7:15 PM Chancel Choir</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8 Stephen Ministry Commissioning Youth Can & Bottle Drive 8:30 AM Worship 9:30 AM Emerging Worship 9:30 AM Sunday School for All Ages 11:00 AM Worship 12:15 PM Young People 4:00 PM Notified 5:30 PM You Are Not Alone 6:00 PM First Singers 6:00 PM Youth Tribe</p>	<p>9 7:30 AM Sunrise Patrol 2:00 PM JustFaith 5:30 PM First Care Board Meeting</p>	<p>10 10:00 AM Worship Planning 11:00 AM OLLI Class - Pilgrimage 12:15 PM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM Emmaus 4th Day 4:15 PM First Beats - Children's Choir 7:00 PM EMM Rehearsal 7:00 PM NA</p>	<p>11 7:30 AM Dawn Patrol 8:00 AM First Word Collating 9:30 AM Caring Committee 10:30 AM Community Healing Centers Group 1:30 PM Stephen Ministry 6:00 PM Lou Gehrig's Support Group 7:00 PM JustFaith</p>	<p>12 9:30 AM First Stitchers 1:30 PM Prayer Group 6:00 PM Handbell Ensemble 6:00 PM Higher Ground Counseling 6:30 PM NA 7:00 PM Depression Bipolar Support Alliance 7:15 PM Chancel Choir</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15 Blood Pressure Clinic 8:30 AM Worship 9:30 AM Confirmation Class 9:30 AM Emerging Conversations 9:30 AM Sunday School for All Ages 11:00 AM Worship 4:00 PM Notified 5:00 PM Interfaith Coalition for Peace & Justice 5:30 PM You Are Not Alone 6:00 PM First Singers 6:00 PM Youth Tribe</p>	<p>16 7:30 AM Sunrise Patrol 2:00 PM JustFaith 4:00 PM Center for Transformations Board</p>	<p>17 10:00 AM Worship Planning 11:00 AM OLLI Class - Pilgrimage 12:15 PM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM Emmaus 4th Day 4:15 PM First Beats - Children's Choir 6:00 PM EMM Board Meeting 7:00 PM EMM Rehearsal 7:00 PM NA 7:00 PM Ruth Circle</p>	<p>18 Ash Wednesday 7:30 AM Dawn Patrol 9:30 AM Anna Circle 10:00 AM Trustee Meeting 10:30 AM Community Healing Centers Group 11:30 AM Buildings and Grounds 1:00 PM Lydia Circle 1:00 PM Miriam Circle 6:00 PM Wild Ones Board Meeting 7:00 PM JustFaith</p>	<p>19 9:30 AM First Stitchers 1:30 PM Prayer Group 5:30 PM Outreach Team 6:00 PM Handbell Ensemble 6:00 PM Higher Ground Counseling 6:30 PM Emerging Worship Planning 6:30 PM NA 7:00 PM Depression Bipolar Support Alliance 7:15 PM Chancel Choir</p>	<p>20 9:00 AM Communities in Schools 6:00 PM Family Fellowship Fun Night</p>	<p>21 12:00 PM Confirmation Retreat</p>
<p>22 8:30 AM Worship 9:30 AM Confirmation Class 9:30 AM Sunday School for All Ages 11:00 AM Worship 12:15 PM Youth Tribe Chili Cook-Off 4:00 PM Notified 5:30 PM You Are Not Alone 6:00 PM First Singers</p>	<p>23 7:30 AM Sunrise Patrol 2:00 PM JustFaith 7:00 PM Justice Team</p>	<p>24 10:00 AM Worship Planning 12:15 PM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM Emmaus 4th Day 4:15 PM First Beats - Children's Choir 7:00 PM Church Council 7:00 PM EMM Rehearsal 7:00 PM NA 7:00 PM Naked Spirituality</p>	<p>25 7:30 AM Dawn Patrol 8:00 AM First Word Collating 10:30 AM Community Healing Centers Group 1:30 PM Stephen Ministry 6:00 PM Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones 7:00 PM JustFaith 7:00 PM Relational Ministry Team 8:00 PM Emerging Worship Band</p>	<p>26 9:30 AM First Stitchers 1:30 PM Clergy Cluster 1:30 PM Prayer Group 6:00 PM Handbell Ensemble 6:00 PM Higher Ground Counseling 6:30 PM NA 7:00 PM Depression Bipolar Support Alliance 7:15 PM Chancel Choir</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>

Staff Sharing



Jacqueline Stilger
Minister of Music

"My life goes on in endless song, above earth's lamentation. I hear the real though far off hymn that hails the new creation. No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to this Rock I'm clinging. Since Love is Lord of Heaven and Earth, how can I keep from singing?"

The above quote is from a hymn thought to be written by Baptist preacher Robert Lowry and was published in 1869. It is a hymn that speaks of maintaining a sense of peace and joy in Christ, even during times of hardship and trial. While not at all popular in the early 20th century, the tune and text have gained in popularity over the last 40 years. Some give folk singer Pete Seeger credit for making the hymn more widely known, although Seeger sang it with an altered text.

The scripture reference that is widely associated with the hymn is James 1:2, "Count it all joy, my sisters and brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds."

This hymn has been sung here at First UMC by the congregation and as a choral anthem. It was most recently sung at the memorial service of Rob Hilliard, as Rob loved this music and the message that it conveyed. He referred to it as "my theme song."

Rob knew the value of shared song, and he knew the value of singing in a group that can create harmonies around you. Study after study is showing that singing produces chemicals in your brain that help to reduce stress and it releases other endorphins that are associated with feelings of pleasure and contentment. Singing is good for you and there is further proof that singing in a group releases oxytocin in the brain. Oxytocin is a chemical that manages anxiety and stress.

Research goes on to say that you do not have to even

be particularly skilled in singing to reap the benefits! Stacy Horn, a singer in a community choir and author of *Imperfect Harmony: Finding Happiness While Singing With Others* says this: "One of my main goals in our weekly rehearsals is not being heard. Over the years I have become a master at the art of voice camouflage, perfecting a cunning combination of seat choice, head tilt and volume. Luckily in 2005, investigators found that the group singing experienced the same benefits, even when 'the sound produced by the vocal instrument is of mediocre quality.'"

Horn's take on not wanting to be heard is very amusing to me for many reasons. I have known many people over the years who are not at all confident in their singing skills. Horn has overcome a fear of singing in public, but still doesn't want to be heard above the others. I hear that from congregational members all the time. The point is to actually do it! Sing! Whether it be from the pew or from the choir, the joys of singing together as Christians, singing authentic songs of praise to our Creator, is healthy and good for our hearts, souls, and minds.

Rob Hilliard knew the value of singing intrinsically. We have a lot to learn from the life of Rob Hilliard. In times of trial and hardship, he clung to his family, friends, and faith. He endured his trials with peace and was his joyful, positive self throughout. I want to lead that kind of life and I'll start by following Rob's lead and keep on singing. Let's do it together.

Dear First Church, thank you for your prayers, support, and love for Rob and I for the past several months. Thank you to so many who helped make Rob's memorial service such a beautiful tribute to him.

With love and appreciation, Nancy Hilliard and family



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 212 S. Park Street
 Kalamazoo, MI 49007
 (269) 381-6340

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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.



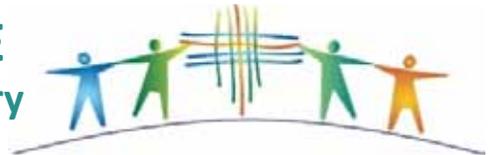
2015 First Word Schedule

Article Deadline	Mailing Date
February 4	February 11
February 18	February 25
March 4	March 11
March 18	March 25
April 8	April 15
April 22	April 29
May 6	May 13
May 27	June 3
June 17	June 24
July 15	July 22
August 19	August 26
September 9	September 16
September 23	September 30
October 7	October 14
October 21	October 28
November 4	November 11
November 18	November 25
December 2	December 9

Articles are due on the deadline!
Late submissions will only be published if space permits.
Articles may be edited for space and content.

YOUNG PEOPLE

A small group ministry for ages 18-35



SUN February 1 @ 12:15 p.m. – Worship Planning

Young People will be leading worship on February 15 using U2's song "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" in the worship series "Rhythms of the Soul." Please plan to come and brainstorm ideas and figure out who is doing what in worship.

THURS February 5 @ 7 p.m. - Pub Theology

Join us at Olde Peninsula - good conversation, good food, good company! ALL ARE INVITED!

SUN February 8 @ 12:15 p.m. – Worship Planning

Hopefully, we will have it almost all figured out but this will be a quick meeting to check in with one another about leading worship on February 15.

February 15 – Leading Worship @ 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Our text for the day is Mark 9: 2-9 which tells of Jesus being transfigured before the disciples Peter, James and John. Jesus was transformed before them and became amazingly bright and radiant. This is a miracle that happens to Jesus himself and it leaves the disciples confused and wondering just what to do and what it is that has happened. We spend quite a bit of time in our lives looking for meaning and purpose, hoping the Divine will show up, show us the way, and help us to find what we are looking for.