



## Home Worship continues "The Great 50 Days"

*In the life of the Christian Church, we have, for centuries, counted the days after Easter as a very special time of celebration and joy. It is called "The Great Fifty Days." It parallels an ancient Hebrew spring harvest celebration called the Feast of Weeks (a week of weeks or 49 days). The scriptures we are pondering are drawn from the Gospel of John, some from the portion of Jesus' teachings in the Upper Room. The context is being "at home with Jesus." And so we invite you to join us "at home with Jesus" through these Great Fifty Days.*

### **SUNDAY, May 10 @ 11 a.m., "Dwelling with the Divine" (John 14:1-14)**

One of the ways that we experience God's comfort and presence is prayer. Prayer is a way for us to dwell with God. When we seek union with God, we dwell in all of the sacred places that Christ has prepared for us. Let us worship, let us find sacred space by praying together, let us truly dwell with the Creating God.

### **SUNDAY, May 17 @ 11 a.m., "The Promise of a Counselor" (John 14:15-21)**

The Gospel writer John devotes five full chapters, nearly 25% of the entire book, to the teachings of Jesus in the Upper Room. We are invited to join them as we shelter in place. In the midst of this dinner conversation, Jesus makes a promise to his followers, a promise that will sustain them in whatever trials they may face, a promise for us today as well.

### **SUNDAY, May 24 @ 10 a.m., "Glorify Me with Your Very Own Splendor" (John 17:1-11)**

*(Summer worship schedule begins)* As Jesus prays for his followers, he speaks of his own splendor that is a reflection of God's splendor. He speaks of his returning to be reunited with God, then turns to humanity and in his final moments of life, calls us to follow in glorious celebration. Jesus prayed that we might be one with him and with one another. In this time of worship, let us pray for unity and discover the glorious light that shines through each one of us.

### **SUNDAY, May 31 @ 10 a.m., "The Miracle While Sheltering in Place" (Acts 2:1-21)**

*(Pentecost)* The Gospel writer Luke shares in the Book of Acts the sequel to his Gospel, the story of the birth of the church. It takes place in Jerusalem, perhaps in the same Upper Room of the Last Supper. The disciples are gathered behind locked doors, fearful of what the future may hold. While sheltering in place, a miracle happens that transforms not only their lives, but the entire world.

WELCOME to this edition of *The First Word*. Articles for the next issue are due no later than Wednesday, **May 27, 2020**. The next newsletter will be mailed **June 3, 2020**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent via email to Jennifer Stupica, Communications Coordinator, at [jstupica@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jstupica@umc-kzo.org).

### Our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of

**Jeannette Nichols**, mother of Timothy Nichols, our church custodian, who died April 17.

**Diane Reece**, who died April 27.

### 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, Miram Cook, Miriam Downey & Thell Woods, Fred Douglas, 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

### Baby Blessings!

Kay Gross and Gary Mittelbach are the proud grandparents of twin granddaughters. **Harmony Rose** and **Poppy Elizabeth** were born on March 22 to John and Breanna Mittlebach in Venice, CA.

Magen and Jeffrey Lindstrom (and big bro Harbar) welcomed **Hazen Jeffrey** to their family on May 4.

### Graduates!

We want to celebrate our graduates! If you have a high school or college graduate (from December through spring) that you would like us to celebrate and lift up in prayer, please email Jennifer Stupica at [jstupica@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jstupica@umc-kzo.org) their name, school they've graduated from, and a photo. We will celebrate our graduates on June 14th!

### Welcome Card to Pastor Matt Weiler

If you would like to send a card to welcome our new Associate Pastor Matt Weiler and his family, who will begin their ministry with us on July 1, here is the address: Rev. Matt & Cara Weiler and family, 3090 Vliet Lane, Kalamazoo, MI 49004.

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 "Home Church") at 11 a.m. on Sundays or on our YouTube channel.** Both are accessible from our website: [umc-kzo.org](http://umc-kzo.org).

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](mailto: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. Prayer requests need to be received by Thursday 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](mailto:@umc-kzo.org). (i.e., [scharnley@umc-kzo.org](mailto:scharnley@umc-kzo.org)).

**New text giving!** You can now make a contribution with text! Simply send a text message on your cell phone to 844-937-0646 (do not type the dashes) with the amount you would like to contribute (i.e., 25) in the message. Within a few minutes, you'll be sent a text with a link to register. Click on the link and enter your cardholder name and debit or credit card information. Once your registration is complete, you will receive a text verification and a receipt of your donation via email. For future giving, send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically! You can even text "repeat" to make it a recurring donation. Text giving is one of the fastest and easiest ways to give. We hope you enjoy this new way to share your generosity, and we thank you for supporting the church.

From Memorial Weekend through Labor Day weekend (May 24-Sept. 6), we will be on our **summer worship schedule at 10:00 a.m.** Until it is safe to worship together again, please continue to join us virtually.

### Helping Our Neighbors ministry

by Kathryn Sappington, Global Mission Fellow

Helping Our Neighbors (HON) is still in action, y'all! We are working diligently to make sure that we are helping those in our immediate area by easing the financial burdens they may be facing. These times are so difficult with many of our neighbors not being able to go to work, yet still being expected to pay for rent, utilities, and groceries.

We have received beautiful donations from some of you wanting to help! During these past weeks, our income for HON has risen to \$12,000. That is all thanks to you, generous donors. You have no idea how much that helps now and will continue to help once we reach that time when Governor Whitmer is able to lift the state's "Stay Home. Stay Safe" restrictions and landlords can begin evicting and utilities can be shut off again.

Some of those who have been working with HON have been meeting weekly with one another and making calls to those needing assistance. We have been able to help several families, mostly with grocery gift cards. This allows those families to use the money they would've spent on groceries elsewhere. So, once again, I say thank you to those of you who have cared for us through your finances, prayers, or words of affirmation. You rock!

### Pastor's Discretionary Fund

by Rev. Steve Charnley

In this time of unprecedented need, the ministry of the church is called upon to be creative and responsive to the needs of our neighbors who are most vulnerable and in even greater jeopardy. I am most grateful for the way in which our congregation has supported the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, which is a primary source of meeting the necessities of our neighbors and of our members and their families during this crisis.

A significant way in which this is happening is by working closely with our frontline partners at Ministry with Community, where their social workers meet with persons in crisis. Once they have identified the need, we are asked if we can help. With the funds generously provided by our congregation, we can immediately and affirmatively respond. In short order, needs are met and burdens are lifted. Together, we are fulfilling Paul's admonition to the early Christians, "Bear one another's burdens." (Galatians 6:2).

### Missions of the Month

by Terri Kinzi, Outreach Team Chair

The First UMC Mission of the Month program is a tradition at the church and a way to connect to other groups in service to our community. Now more than ever your support is needed. Typically we would have supported the YWCA Traffic/Domestic Assault Center in March, Pretty Lake Camp in April, and the WMU Seita Scholars Program in May through in-kind donations. Due to COVID-19, things have changed. We were unable to collect items for the YWCA. Pretty Lake Camp has been suspended for on-site summer camp and we await their new plans on how we can support them. The WMU Seita Scholars Program has even greater need, as many students have lost their jobs.

As a result of COVID-19, we will be collecting funds to send to our Mission of the Month partners. This month we will focus on the Seita Scholars Program and to make up support for the YWCA. Perhaps you received a \$1200 stimulus check from the government and are able to use it to help others in need. Your gift can be made online at <https://www.umc-kzo.org/online> (designate "Other"), or mailed to the church with "YWCA," "Seita," or "Mission of the Month" in the memo if you want to support both. Funds will be quickly sent to the organization to show our continuing support as a congregation.

**Thank you!** The Outreach Team would like to thank the congregation for their support of Communities in Schools and the February Mission of the Month. We were able to donate 143 items to help support our schools and students in need.

Full-size bottles of body lotion	24
Full-size bottles of shampoo	2
Chapstick	32
Deodorant	27
Hair brushes	2
Boy's briefs	40
Girl's leggings	13
Boxes of thin markers	<u>3</u>
Total	143



## Update on plans for celebrating Pastor Steve’s retirement

At its meeting on April 28, the Church Council discussed plans for recognizing Pastor Steve’s June retirement along with the importance of continuing to adhere to Governor Whitmer’s and Bishop Bard’s directives regarding the use of the church building for large gatherings. Currently all plans for church activities in our building have been canceled or postponed.

In light of this, the Church Council acknowledged that Pastor Steve’s final sermon on June 21 is expected to be done virtually and an in-person celebration of Pastor Steve’s retirement will take place at a date to be determined—not on June 20, as previously announced.

Plans for a modified celebration in June not involving a fuller gathering of folks will be considered and announced later. All celebrations will adhere to the Governor’s and Bishop’s directives.

## General Conference 2020

As with everything else over the past several weeks, things have changed for the United Methodist’s General Conference plans. They have been postponed from the planned May 2020 dates until August 31 - September 10, 2021 (tentatively). Nothing is official yet on plans, legislation, or implications for our church. Rest assured, we will keep you updated.

In the meantime, continued prayers for the United Methodist Church and all those who have been impacted in so many ways by this pandemic will be important. If anyone has questions, please contact Deb Search Willoughby at [dsearchwillo@charter.net](mailto:dsearchwillo@charter.net) or Dave Lundquist at [dlundquist@ameritech.net](mailto:dlundquist@ameritech.net).

You can read more about GC2021 at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/gc2020-venue-cancels-events-into-may>

## Finance updates

by Sandy Gower, Finance Committee Chair

The church’s finances remain stable. At a special meeting of the Church Council on April 9th, the Council approved accepting a loan for \$142,000 from the Small Business Administration (SBA). This is 100% forgivable if used for payroll costs.

While this loan will help our finances in the next few months, we still have many other expenses to cover. Even though we are unable to use our beautiful church building, the utilities remain on and basic maintenance needs to happen. While employees are working remotely, they still need to connect to the computer system within the church.

Our ministries in the community and to our parishioners continue. Your pledges and donations remain critical to the ongoing operation of the church. Look for information on new ways to give electronically in this newsletter. Your gifts can always be mailed to the church at 212 S. Park Street, Kalamazoo MI 49007 or online at <https://www.umc-kzo.org/online>.

### Special Offerings to date

Human Relations Sunday	\$ 382.00
UMCOR - Sunday	\$ 1,725.00
Easter Offering	\$ 5,295.00
Native American Sunday	

### Pastor’s Discretionary Fund

2020 Beginning Balance	\$15,028.00
Income to date	\$17,093.77
Expenses to date	\$ 6,214.90
Balance 4/25/2020	<b>\$25,906.87</b>

### Helping our Neighbors

2020 Beginning Balance	\$ 6,154.43
Income to date	\$12,190.00
Expenses to date	\$ 7,331.75
Balance 4/25/2020	<b>\$11,012.68</b>

### General Fund Financial Picture

	March 2020	YTD 2020
Pledge Income	\$91,230.17	\$ 244,136.56
Other Offering Plate Income	\$ 7,380.00	\$ 20,784.50
Other General Fund Income	\$ 771.83	\$ 1,987.80
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$99,382.00</b>	<b>\$266,908.86</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$76,218.92</b>	<b>\$ 233,136.92</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$23,163.08</b>	<b>\$ 33,771.94</b>