

THE FIRST WORD



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



Born in Love, by Love, and for Love

When I was a small child our little country United Methodist Church had a reasonably sized youth group that met in the church basement in their own dedicated room. There were some budding artists in the group who had painted the walls of the room with murals of all kinds. It was their space, that is, until the newly appointed pastor came in on a Saturday morning with a bucket of paint and covered all the murals, and threw away all the decorations. The youth leader, deeply hurt, quit the ministry and soon the ministry was no more. I spent my teenage years then hopping around to friend's youth groups because my little church had none to offer. This does not mean that the church who raised me did not value me. To the contrary the people of that church loved and nourished me right into my own call to ministry. They stuck to the vows they made when they baptized me, to "surround me with a community of love and forgiveness..." They prayed for me and they still pray for me. Some of those folks watch my FUMC sermons and even send me notes now and then! Today I very much know I am loved by God by the way the people of that little church loved me.

In many ways I recognize that my own ministry over the years has been a sort of "undoing" of the harm inflicted by that pastor. But I cannot travel at too great lengths down that road. It is not a healthy framework for ministry. The way the rest of the congregation loved me (and continue to love me) however, is a positive framework for ministry. This is especially true in ministry with young people – a population who desire community, love, acceptance, and to be honored for the gifts and skills they have to offer.

Having lived and served in Kalamazoo for the past 13 years I have had the unique opportunity to see the birth and the growth of Youth Tribe through Pastor Julie's leadership. I have long wondered what made this youth ministry so successful in a day when Youth Ministry has such tremendous competition. After two and a half months I understand it is because the people of FUMC have taken seriously the vows made in the Baptisms of our young people. FUMC nourishes and prays for the young people of this church, and even more, celebrates them, creates space for them to learn and to lead, and where my childhood pastor took paintbrush in hand YOU HAND THE YOUNG PEOPLE THE PAINTBRUSH.

As I enter into a new season of Youth Ministry at FUMC I am grateful for the culture which Pastor Julie's leadership has established around our young people. I am also keenly aware that as we find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic our young people need to know now, more than ever, how valued and loved they are – by their church, and by God. These are my goals as I take the reins of leadership– to continue building a ministry in which our young people know love, or as I have said to them many times already as we have gathered (virtually), that they know they are born in love, by love, and for love.

As I enter into this new season of ministry, I look forward to all the ways we as a church can communicate this good news to our young people – that they are loved, so that, one day they can look back and say they know the love of God because the people of FUMC loved them.

Grace + peace

Pastor Matt

Pastor of Community Formation

Children & Families Ministries

by Julia Librizzi, Director of Children & Families Ministries jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org

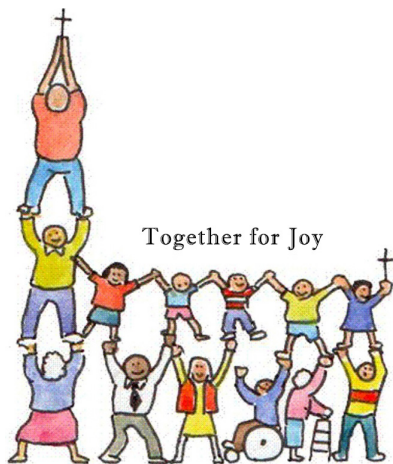
Godly Play. Godly Play is geared to our children 4 years old through 3rd grade. Please join Ms. Julia each Sunday right after online worship, at 11am on Zoom! Find a quiet and cozy spot and come listen to God's stories! Please contact Julia Librizzi, jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org, for more information.

Family Fun Afternoon, October 25, at 3pm! Please join us for an in person and socially distanced Family Fun Afternoon of fall fun! Families are invited to meet in the parking lot and wear costumes (and a face mask the whole time!) We will have a costume parade on foot in the parking lot. Your family will be shown where to park and given more instructions when you arrive. We are going to invite our Children & Families Ministries Volunteers to come watch our parade in the parking lot. We will need to prepare ahead of time so please rsvp to jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org by Wed. August 21st if you plan to attend. Can't wait to connect with our children and families!!!!

Calling all TWEENS! The tween youth group is for our 4th-6th graders! We will start back this year by meeting online through zoom. Please join us for a check in and games on Sunday, October, 4th at noon! Please contact Julia Librizzi, jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org, for more information.

TOGETHER FOR JOY 2020 Giving Campaign

Together for Joy. This is the theme for our 2020 Stewardship Campaign. This has been a very challenging year for all of us due to the COVID virus. It has forced us to learn how to use ZOOM to hold meetings, and we have had to practice social distancing - which means no handshakes or hugs. The good news is that our church has remained strong and very much a part of our lives! It also plays a vital role within the community and has adapted well to the many challenges facing it. You are an integral part of our church family and that is why we are "Together for Joy" in fulfilling our church's ongoing work. We invite you to please join us again this year in our stewardship campaign. Please help us fulfill our commitment to our church by pledging your time, talents and gifts to our Lord so that we may continue the great work of First United Methodist church.



"Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy" ~Psalm 98:8

We want to hear about the things in your life that bring you joy. Check out Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to respond to weekly questions as we come TOGETHER FOR JOY!

Outdoor Prayer Services

Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm

We are continuing our outdoor prayer service every Wednesday evening, **now gathering by the picnic tables behind the church**, until fall becomes too chilly and dark. As the days are getting shorter, **we will be gathering at 6:30pm starting Wednesday, Oct. 7.**

We ask that you bring your own lawn chair or blanket and abide by these requirements:

- Wear a mask and maintain social distance of 6 feet
- Make use of hand sanitizer provided at the events
- Utilizing the sign in sheet
- Sit with family group but do not share space with non-family members

We also request that each participant does a self-health care screening before they arrive. **If you are experiencing any new symptoms listed in last month's First Word or in the weekly Around the Corner, please do not come to the prayer service.**

We will NOT be using the church building, only the back parking lot area.

PLEASE KEEP THESE FRIENDS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Fred Allen • Dana Anderson • Nina Baker • Dee Barkley • Jane Barnes • Lou Bradley • Max & Ellen Brinkley • Harriet Chalker • Dan & Jill Christian • Miram Cook • Fred Douglas • Garman Family • Ruth Evelyn Graham • Red Hikade • Nell Holland • Earl Hyde • John and Carol Holms • Deanna House • Lenora Holliday • David Houseman • Ben Korderdyke • Samantha Knight • Doris Lee • David Locke • Ellen McDonald • Shondo Miller • Claire Peek • Jeanne Plott • Hank Rohs • Gerry Schaberg • Jan Search • Bev Seimers • Joyce Treece • Arlene Triestram • The Waldron Family • Kathy Winchell • Linda Winkelman • The Winkler Family • Janet Wydendorf

Helping Our Neighbors in the Time of Covid

Kim Taylor

Like our world, our modern ministries have never experienced crises such as we face today. We at HON have spent the last several months learning new ways to show our love for our neighbors by being flexible and adaptable to the needs they are experiencing. People were so happy to hear from us, and the fact that we were able to respond with pledges and/or gift cards as well as time to listen, made a lot of difference to a lot of people.

In the last two to three months, we have watched as need has increased dramatically. Many people that we talk to have lost jobs or need to stay home with children. Sometimes people owe large sums to both landlords and utility companies. When we are talking in the thousands of dollars for an individual, it is hard to offer \$100. To help workers, we have been having weekly debriefing meetings where we can get our questions answered, brainstorm, and find support in God's loving community.

One of the greatest problems we see coming out of our meetings is what we see coming down the road, landlords issuing eviction notices due to lack of payment. As the last program ended late in July, we saw what we feared in a huge rush to file evictions. The calls began, and even though we are in another moratorium, they are not stopping. Rules are difficult to understand and contradictory. Sometimes the judges aren't even sure how to proceed. People are more frightened than we have ever seen them. People are worried about losing their children if they can't keep a roof over their heads. Amidst this, we are making connections and reflecting God's love!

All of this is to say that our neighbors desperately need your help. We are working from our homes, each taking calls one day a week. Each week our calls are increasing, and we need help staffing our days. We have a need for people to make calls to our neighbors. We also need a person who is willing to call our local partners to stay on top of who is helping with what and to see how we can improve our partnerships. We could use a person that gets paperwork prepared to send for payment. You might have an idea that we haven't even thought of yet! Please contact Kathryn Sappington or Ruth LaMachia to talk about how you might give of your time.

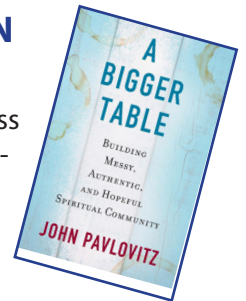
We also need your financial contributions. We know you are bombarded from many wonderful and necessary causes right now, but we ask that if you have more dollars to contribute locally, please consider our work at Helping Our Neighbors. Sometimes we are the only

friendly loving ear a person encounters on a frightening journey.

Lastly but most importantly, your prayers are needed for our neighbors and our ministry, your ministry. In the past few months we are giving out more than what we are taking in so we need your financial help. Thank you for your love and support.

BOOK STUDY DISCUSSION October 14, 7-9pm

In addition to our Sunday Morning Class discussions, there will be an opportunity for a one-time, in person / masked discussion based on the whole book on **Wednesday, October 14, 7-9pm.**



If you are interested in joining this book group, please contact Mary Duncan, mary.whittaker.duncan57@gmail.com or Lisa Batten, lbatten@michiganumc.org for more information and location.

Dream Team Volunteer Opportunities

FUMC has been reaching out to help people in our community with strict adherence to safety precautions during this pandemic. Upcoming volunteer opportunities have been planned with two of our Dream Team partners, Building Blocks and Habitat for Humanity. In both cases, advance registration is required at the websites provided. The Habitat work group is limited to no more than 6 volunteers per date. Youth at least 13 years old are also welcome but are not allowed to use power tools. Please consider getting out and lending a helping hand!

YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER FOR THESE VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES!

Building Blocks: October 3rd, 9 am - 4 pm

Projects include, building an exterior staircase, installing outdoor carpet on cement stairs, exterior painting.

Habitat for Humanity (Charles St. house): Saturday October 17 and Saturday, November 7, 8:30am - 3:45 pm

Specific projects include finishing the front porch, getting the roof installed, wrapping up framing and installation of the windows and doors. All of these things will need to be finished before winter.

Contact Donna Duniak, dsduniak@gmail.com, for more information and how to register!

MISSION OF THE MONTH "THANK YOU!"

The Outreach Team

Thank you, First Methodist, for once again making the children of our community a priority. Through your support of the June Mission of the Month and UMW's contribution, our church was able to sponsor the distribution of shoes to the children of our adopted school, Spring Valley, by partnering with the First Day Shoe Fund.

Under the capable leadership of Andrea Macklin and due to the variety of school reopening plans in Kalamazoo County, this year's shoe distribution looked different. Shoes were distributed at drive-up events scheduled on a recent Friday and Saturday. Spring Valley families drove up to Wings Stadium to receive new shoes for their children on Saturday, September 19. Thanks to FUMC, at least 235 children have new gym shoes that fit!

Fundraising for the First Day Shoe Fund also looks different this year. In a few weeks, we all have an opportunity to support this local nonprofit by participating in their virtual run/walk on October 3-5. The run will help support the 35+ schools supported by FDSF and costs \$35. You can go to their website or contact Andrea@firstdayshoefund.org for more details.

Once again, we extend a huge "thank you" to our FUMC family for generously reaching out to care for the children of Kalamazoo!

MISSION OF THE MONTH - OCTOBER

The Outreach Team has designated the Salvation Army Share the Warmth Coat Drive as the October Mission of the Month. They are in need of new and gently used coats to help keep Kalamazoo warm this winter. By donating your used coats, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and boots you can help make sure our friends and neighbors can stay protected from the cold.

Coats can be dropped off directly at the Salvation Army at:
1700 S. Burdick Street

Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

They have a barrel located in their lobby.

Donations of money are also helpful and greatly appreciated!

FINANCE UPDATE

Sandy Gower, Finance Committee Chair

The Church's finances remain healthy thanks to the generous support of our congregation. Our August income was \$54,122.78 and expenses were \$72,837.66. Thanks to the Payroll Protection Loan we received earlier this year, the General Fund ended August with a balance of \$109,406.50. We will continue to need to use some of this balance to cover expenses during the remainder of the year.

The Finance Committee greatly appreciate the dedication and creativity of our staff to keep things running smoothly through these trying times. We are a very blessed congregation.

Special Offerings as of September 12, 2020

Human Relations Sunday	\$382.00
UMCOR Sunday	\$1,755.00
Easter Offering	\$7,120.00
Native American Sunday	\$635.00
Peace with Justice Sunday	\$285.00
Justice Team/Michigan United/ISAAC	\$1,480.00

ONLINE WORSHIP:

Sunday mornings - 10am-11am

Please worship with us via livestreaming on our YouTube channel accessible from our website: umc-kzo.org

PRAYER REQUESTS:

If you would like to share a prayer request with our clergy and prayer ministry team, **please email 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. **Prayer requests need to be received by WEDNESDAY at noon.**

ZOOM FELLOWSHIP:

Every Sunday, 9:15am - 9:45am.

Join us for a time of virtual fellowship

ZOOM SUNDAY MORNING CLASS:

Immediately following Sunday worship

A link to Zoom Fellowship and Morning Class are included in the weekly Around the Corner email.

Access to the Church Building

For the time being, we are asking that you make an appointment if you need access to the church building. We are in the process of finding contactless ways to allow entry to the building and want to make sure we are staying safe in the meantime. We thank you for your patience as we continue to navigate re-entry.

Please contact Ruth, rlamachia@umc-kzo.org, to schedule an appointment.