Laity Sunday
January 15 at 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.

“Let’s Take a Ride” (Micah 6:8, Romans 12) - Don’t let the chill of winter get you down! Come and join in the warmth and fellowship of Laity Sunday on January 15 when lay persons of all ages, the young and the young at heart, will lead the morning services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Lay Leader Karen Hassevoort will hope to further chase the winter gray away with a reflection on a bike ride on a beautiful, warm, and abundant autumn day. The uphill struggle and climb—and downhill coast and sense of freedom and joy—is similar to the struggles and celebrations that we all face throughout our lives. How can we support each other throughout the journey? And what is our vision as a congregation for serving our community and the world to encourage and support others with the ups and downs that life brings? Come and celebrate our call to mission and outreach. Reflect on how we might further dream, build, and reinforce our witness to our neighbors and the world through our combined efforts.

Rhythms of the Soul
worship series

January 22
“Hands” by Jewel
Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

February 5
“Try a Little Kindness” by Glen Campbell
Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12

January 29
“Stand by Me” by Ben E. King
Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

February 12
"Lean on Me" by Bill Withers
Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30

February 19
"We Are the World" by Michael Jackson
Scripture: Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18
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  Associate Pastor
*Rev. Dan Duncan  Pastor of Children & Families Ministries
*Rev. Keith Treman  Pastor of Congregational Care
*Jacqueline Stilger  Minister of Music
*Ruth LaMachia  Church Business Administrator
*Christi Landreville  Administrative Partner in Ministry
*Jennifer Stupica  Communications Coordinator
*Bernie Foulk  Organist
Rich Peavler  First Singers Director
Linda Winkelman  JFON Legal Assistant
(kzoo_assist@jfonwestmichigan.org)
*Curt Flowers  Bookkeeper
*Denise Wilcox  Contributions Assistant
*Thom Victor  Office Assistant
*Robin Entenman  Office Assistant/Security
Pamala Roman  Custodian
Todd Bloomfield  Evening Custodian
Ernesto Escobedo  Custodian/Security
Michael DeYoung  Evening Security
Sharon Bunker  Lead Sunday Pre-School Teacher
Julie Meyers  First Care Director (msjulie55@yahoo.com)
Bishop David A. Bard  Bishop of the Michigan Area
Rev. Dwayne Bagley  Kalamazoo District Superintendent
Rev. Cora Glass  Dir. of Discipleship and Resident Director of Wesley Intentional Living Community

Our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of

Terry Mishler, husband of Sharon Dougan, who died December 29.

Marguerite Briggs, long-time member, who died January 1. There will be a combined memorial service for Marguerite and Al Briggs on January 19. More info can be found below.

Please keep these friends in your prayers

Bob Baker, Doris Ball, John Boekhout, Hannah Boyle, Helen Bray, Sandy Brink, Skip Decker, Hyesuk DeRoo, Sharon Dougan, Ashton Fredenburg, Bob Goodwin, Brenda Haan, Paula Hall, Marge Hasting, Carl Hausermann, Mildred Hedrick, Dolores Heidanus, Nell Holland, Barbara Hughery, Rueith Lewis, Art Mann, Jim Martin, Dave Martin, Marsha McKenzie, Ron Moore, Mandy Morrill, Donna Oudersluys, Collin Palmer, Ham Scharf, Mary Helen Thomas, Arlene Triestram, Walter Walker, Anne Wolfe, Jean Zuidwig

Al and Marguerite Briggs Memorial Service

A memorial service will be held for Al and Marguerite Briggs in the sanctuary on Thursday, January 19 at 2 p.m. You may visit with the family beginning at 1 p.m. in the parlor. Refreshments in the Perks area will follow the service.

It's a boy!

Congratulations to Nora Hauk and Max Cherem on the birth of their son, Soren Hauk Cherem. Soren was born on Christmas Eve.

Available in the office

Have you picked up these items?
- 2017 Offering envelopes
- 2017 Officiary/2016 Annual Reports
- Pictorial Directory

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 Mary Beth Garman at (269) 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.

The First Word (USPS953900) is published bi-weekly by First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007. Periodicals postage paid at Kalamazoo, MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.
FRIDAY, Jan 13 - Community Reflection
Led by Kalamazoo College students @ 11 a.m. in Stetson Chapel

SUNDAY, Jan 15 - 31st Annual NMA MLK, Jr. Celebration
Hosted by Mt. Zion Baptist Church (120 Roberson St.) at 4 p.m. with keynote speaker Bishop John Franklin White, presiding prelate of the Fourth Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Church and president of the AMEC Council of Bishops. (See carpooling info on p. 4)

MONDAY, Jan 18
City of Kalamazoo Communitywide Day of Service
8 a.m. at City Hall, 241 W. South Street. Volunteer opportunities available through volunteerkalammadzeo
Convocation at Stetson Chapel, Kalamazoo College at 10:50 a.m.
Pre-MLK Walk Lunch Discussion
1 p.m. at WMU Kanley Chapel Dialogue Center. Participants engage in discussion surrounding the differences and similarities between the Civil Rights era and today. Posters will be available for decorating. food and hot chocolate available.

Commemorative Walk begins at 3:30 p.m. at the flagpole at Kanley Chapel, WMU; proceed to K College Red Square, corner of Thompson & Academy streets, to MLK Park, corner of Rose St. & W. Mich. Ave.
Community Celebration to reflect on community-wide day of service and to celebrate the MLK holiday at The Radisson, from 5-6 p.m. with local performers, hot chocolate and cookies.

TUESDAY, Jan 17
Dream Luncheon
11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Student Commons Lyceum, KVCC. Speaker John Davis will recite a rendition of one of MLK speeches, and students will read their writings on MLK.

WEDNESDAYS, Jan 18 to April 12
Lyceum Lecture Series Spring 2017
Noon to 1 p.m. at Lee Honors College lounge, WMU. Weekly seminars given by WMU faculty and experts from community on the theme "Fulfilling America's Promise: Racial Equality and Justice." FREE and open to the public. Keynote address is March 29, 7 p.m. Chenery Auditorium, with Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, on her work turning grief into advocacy for empowering youth.

Check out the local events below to commemorate the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and join me as we remember his words and actions. Let us, in so doing, build bridges of reconciliation and justice in our community. ~Pastor Steve
Human Relations Sunday
Sunday, January 15

On the Sunday before the remembrance of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, The United Methodist Church will celebrate Human Relations Day. This churchwide Special Sunday is our opportunity as The United Methodist Church to extend a helping hand to our sisters and brothers. Our gifts on this Special Sunday will support a variety a causes, such as ministries that advocate for social justice, serve survivors of domestic violence, nurture at-risk teens, help fathers gripped by addiction and wrap loving arms around young mothers who have nowhere to turn.

Offering envelopes will be included in the bulletins on January 15. Please give generously, if you are able.

2016 Special Sunday Offerings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 DATE</th>
<th>OFFERING DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>GIVEN IN 2015</th>
<th>GIVEN IN 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>Human Relations Sunday</td>
<td>446.00</td>
<td>571.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Wesley Sunday</td>
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<td>2,861.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>One Great Hour of Sharing</td>
<td>1,889.40</td>
<td>1,446.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Easter Offering</td>
<td>7,609.00</td>
<td>7,233.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Easter Outreach Offering</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,328.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Native American Sunday</td>
<td>633.51</td>
<td>557.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Peace with Justice Sunday</td>
<td>255.00</td>
<td>710.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 19</td>
<td>Camp Sunday</td>
<td>1,481.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>Michigan United/Justice Team</td>
<td>2,750.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 11</td>
<td>Christian Education Sunday</td>
<td>469.00</td>
<td>419.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>ASP Sunday</td>
<td>1,301.41</td>
<td>1,795.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>World Communion Sunday</td>
<td>400.00</td>
<td>140.00</td>
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<td>October 30</td>
<td>UMW Sunday</td>
<td>1,455.00</td>
<td>1,799.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Nov. 2015)</td>
<td>United Methodist Student Sunday</td>
<td>83.00</td>
<td>150.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>You Are Not Alone (YANA) special offering</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,991.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 25</td>
<td>Christmas Offering</td>
<td>13,441.47</td>
<td>17,047.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPECIAL SUNDAY OFFERINGS TOTAL $41,741.26 $44,854.82

Caring Committee opportunities
by Robin Entenman and Laura Van Vlack-Ailes

The Caring Committee has three volunteer opportunities available for the coming year.

**Friendly Visitor.** We need two or three new committee members (men especially welcome) to visit our homebound members as a supplement to pastoral visits. This entails a couple hours a month to call on a member, share church news, and get to know each other and have continuing education.

**Meal Ministry.** We are considering starting a meal ministry for people recently released from the hospital. As part of our early planning, we’d like to know if you would be willing to be on a list of people willing to provide an occasional meal.

**Meal Ministry Coordinator.** For the proposed meal ministry, we particularly would like to know if we have a volunteer for coordinating assignments after the pastors identify a need.

If any of these opportunities sound interesting to you, please contact Robin Entenman at 344-2157, or Laura Van Vlack-Ailes at 349-9988 for more information.

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A carpool is forming to attend the annual Northside Minishtal Alliance MLK, Jr. Celebration with guest speaker Bishop John Franklin White on Sunday, January 15 at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. If you would like to carpool with others, meet in the church parking lot at 3:30 for the 4:00 service.
Snack Heroes and Heroines needed again! With the turning of the year, we need to have our Sunday School families sign up for a turn or two bringing a simple and nutritious tasty snack! The sign up will be on the ledge in the Arches. Thanks much!

Listening to the Sermon. 3rd and 4th graders (and parents!): We are offering again the “Listening to the Sermon” sheets which will help these young worshipers to learn how to get the most out of adult worship and messages. These clipboards will be available in their classroom, and also outside the sanctuary. They will be most effective if a parent discusses what they have learned soon after the service!

Sunday School for Pre-K through 4th grade. We begin the morning in the Arches on the second floor for Pre-K through 4th grades. Upcoming Bible lessons using our United Methodist “Deep Blue” curriculum will be:

- Jan. 15: Come to the River
- Jan. 22: Change the Water
- Jan. 29: Born Anew

Sunday School for 5th and 6th graders. This group will “submerge” themselves in issues of Christian faith and life with the “Submerge” curriculum from Cokesbury:

- Jan. 15: Being Called (Jesus Called the Twelve)
- Jan. 22: How the Treat Others (The Sermon on the Plain)
- Jan. 29: Forgiveness (The Woman Anoints Jesus)

Godly Play stories coming up (11:15 a.m. to noon)

4-5 year olds—Room 203

- Jan. 15: Jesus in the Wilderness
  Storyteller: Pastor Dan
  Guide: RuthAnn
- Jan. 22: Follow Me
  Storyteller: Shelly
  Guide: Pat E.
- Jan. 29: Jesus & the Tax Collectors
  Storyteller: Pastor Dan
  Guide: RuthAnn

6-8 year olds—Room 200

- Jan. 15: Jesus is Baptized
  Storyteller: Julia
  Guide: Donna
- Jan. 22: Jesus in the Wilderness
  Storyteller: Jennifer Wright
  Guide: Mary Lee
- Jan. 29: Follow Me
  Storyteller: Jocelyn
  Guide: Shondo

First Bells. Our youngest bell ringers will play during 11:00 a.m. worship on January 15th.

Baptisms. Our next Sunday for baptisms will be February 19. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Dan or one of the other pastors (381-6340) ASAP!

Family Fun Night coming! Our January “Family Fun Night” will be at Borgess Fitness Center (3025 Gull Road; take a left on the drive just before Nazareth Rd.), Friday Jan. 13 for swimming and a potluck meal. Cost is an economical $1 per person! Be there at 5:45 p.m. to get into your swim togs; swimming from 6-7 p.m., with potluck dinner from 7-8 p.m. Here is a great event for all ages, and for us to be together as a larger church family! Beverages and tableware provided. Questions? Contact Pastor Dan (dduncan@umc-kzo.org) or Jocelyn Newman (jwrig03@hotmail.com).
SUNDAY, January 15

Cocoa & Class @ 9:30am ~ Pharisees: The Party Game
We can play this game with 5-48 people! Each player has a mission. As a disciple find and excommunicate the Pharisees. As a Pharisee convince the disciple you are innocent while secretly stoning them each night, one by one. Dozens of different possibilities can happen to help both the Pharisees and the disciples to accomplish their tasks. It’s a great way to learn and have a lot of fun! Come, engage and be inspired!

Youth Tribe @ 6-8pm ~ Mindful Missions
As usual for Mindful Missions, we’ll break into smaller Tribes and go spread some kindness around our community. It is hot cocoa mission time, shoveling, cookie making, hats & gloves to Bronson Park and maybe some shopping for diapers and wipes. Come dressed to be outside and bring your spirit of servanthood and joy!

SUNDAY, January 22

Cocoa & Class @ 9:30am ~ Pharisees: The Party Game
It’s a party again with the Pharisees and the Disciples. Who will find ways to avoid the mission of the other? Let’s learn, drink cocoa, eat cookies and enjoy one another’s company.

Youth Tribe @ 6-8pm ~ Digging Deep: CH-ch-ch Changes!!
There are times in our lives when we readily embrace changes. It is fun growing taller, meeting new friends, discovering new things that we are good at and enjoy! It’s not so easy when you’re parents divorce, or someone you love dies, or you are disappointed by a rather mundane facet of life. Change, it’s going to happen. Let’s talk about ways we deal with it and hopefully, find some new and different ways to deal with the hard stuff.

SUNDAY, January 29

Cocoa & Class @ 9:30am ~ “Rhythm of Our Souls”
We have begun a tradition in our congregation that we use some of our favorite songs in worship that are usually outside of the hymns that we usually use. These are the songs that when they come across our ears we turn it up! Depending on where we are we might even start singing at the top of our lungs. Together we are going to pick some music videos to watch and discuss. Come and join us for some soul music.

Youth Tribe @ 6-8pm ~ Sledding or Skating Party
Hopefully, we will have some snow! If we do we’ll meet at the church and go to Kindleberger Park and slide down some hills! Oh Yeah!

SUNDAY, February 5

Cocoa & Class @ 9:30am ~“Rhythm of Our Souls”
For another week, we will check out some of our favorite songs and watch the music videos that accompany them. We’ll find rhythm and hopefully, some inspiration for our souls.

Youth Tribe @ 6-8pm ~ Super Bowl Ichthus @ Jaqua Realtors – Hawthorne family
Ichthus Super Bowl party! We will be at the Jaqua Relator office at 221 S. Drake, Kalamazoo. This event is hosted by the Hawthorne family. Some of us will watch the game avidly, the commercials even more enthusiastically and others can play Euchre and other board games. The Hawthornes will be sharing a Super Bowl commercial Bingo that sounds like lots of fun! Some snacks and drinks will be provided, but please bring some more snacks and drinks to share.
### Sunday Morning Partners in Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Jan. 15</th>
<th>Jan. 22</th>
<th>Jan. 29</th>
<th>Feb. 5</th>
<th>Feb. 12</th>
<th>Feb. 19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>8:30 and 11 a.m</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Lay Reader</td>
<td>Andy Vorbrich</td>
<td>Carol Hodges</td>
<td>Terry O'Connor</td>
<td>Laurie Nelson</td>
<td>Jan Schoenherr</td>
<td>Carol Hodges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 Office/Welcome Center</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Greeters</td>
<td>Bill &amp; Mary Lee Dimond</td>
<td>Ron Moore</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
<td>need someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 Sound/Lights</td>
<td>Greg Anderson</td>
<td>Jim Willoughby</td>
<td>Greg Anderson</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 Lay Reader</td>
<td>Carol Holms</td>
<td>Joyce Treece</td>
<td>Mark Stucky</td>
<td>Laura VanVlack-Ailes</td>
<td>Ginnie Hessler</td>
<td>Joyce Treece</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 Office/Welcome Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 Greeters</td>
<td>Tom &amp; Gerry Schaberg</td>
<td>Melanie Perry Jim Cousins</td>
<td>need someone</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 Acolytes</td>
<td>Collin Bland Ella Adams</td>
<td>Andrew Hampton Alex Moon</td>
<td>Andrew Wright Sean Willoughby</td>
<td>Emma Hampton Sam Ledlow</td>
<td>Layla Eaton Ryan Ernest</td>
<td>Collin Bland Alex Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 Sound/Lights</td>
<td>Robyn Lane</td>
<td>Jonah Bolton</td>
<td>Bob Lane</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Driver</td>
<td>Jay Gross</td>
<td>Jake Lisak</td>
<td>Dave Russel</td>
<td>Mike Cooper</td>
<td>Fred Corbus</td>
<td>Jay Gross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMING JANUARY 15!!**

**Bringing convenient electronic giving to our church and its members and friends**

Starting Sunday, January 15 we will be offering new electronic giving options as a way to automate your regular weekly offering. Electronic giving offers convenience for our congregation and helps provide donation consistency.

**Direct Debit Giving** is used to automatically transfer funds from your checking or savings account to the church’s bank account. (If you already use this way of giving, you will continue to stay with the program you already are enrolled in unless you let us know you wish to change.) Authorization forms will be available at the Welcome Desk.

**Want to use your credit or debit card?** This option will be available using Online Giving. You will be able to go to the Generosity Tab on our church website (www.umc-kzo.org) at any time to set up an automatic donation plan, change your donation plan, or make a one-time donation using not only your credit or debit card, but also your checking or savings account.

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**Below is a list of current items in our Lost & Found box located at the Welcome Center:**
- child's purple, pink, orange, denim jackets
- woman's navy sweatshirt
- water bottle
- Navy throw
- beige shorts
- black yoga pants
- Detroit Tigers hat
- 2 men's black jackets
- black hoodie jacket
- stainless coffee cup
- gray skirt
- gray knit hat
- navy Michigan "bike rider" t-shirt
- woman's leather boots
- 2 leather gloves (don't match)
- 3 umbrellas
- 2 scarves
- bean bag chair
- white sweater
Matching Opportunity for Building Fund Gifts
by Molly W. Williams, Finance Chair

After nine years, our church’s $4.1 million capital expansion and renovation project is very close to being paid for. This is the year we hope to fully retire the remaining debt. As of the end of 2016, the balance we owed was $335,000. Some pledges yet to be completed by June 2017 will lower that balance even further.

I am delighted to share the wonderful news of a matching gift offer for additional donations to the building fund. One of our members has offered a 50% match on new gifts to retire this building debt. That means that every new dollar given toward this effort will be matched with an additional 50 cents — up to the donor’s limit of $100,000. I am very grateful for this extraordinarily generous offer, and I hope that we can take full advantage of this opportunity. To do so will require us to raise $200,000 in new gifts, enabling us to pay all of the remaining loan balance.

Here’s the fine print. Donors who are still completing a pledge made three years ago to the Forward in Faith-III capital campaign are fulfilling a prior commitment; that’s not new money. But those who have completed their building fund pledges and can continue to give beyond; or if you didn’t make a pledge toward the building fund but have been giving anyway; or if you haven’t previously contributed to this effort and you’re able to participate now — these are all new contributions that are eligible for the match. Our Contributions Assistant Denise Wilcox will tally new gifts as they arrive. As always, when making donations to our church, please clearly designate their purpose (e.g., building fund, operating budget, special offering) using the memo line on checks, a notation on offering envelopes, or a separate note to Denise.

The Forward in Faith-III campaign concludes June 30, 2017. By then any outstanding pledges should have been paid. Annual giving statements to be issued in a few weeks will include information on all 2016 gifts made to First UMC, including the status of multi-year pledges to the building fund.

We have until December 31, 2017 to repay the loan to the issuing bank. I certainly hope we can finish this liability during 2017 without negotiating a loan extension. If you can consider a gift of any size to retire this obligation, now is the time. Let’s lift this burden so that we can move on to other efforts — wherever God calls us to experience, celebrate, and share God’s love.

Thank you for your continued faithfulness and generosity.

Sanctuary clean-up day
by Deb Karnemaat

Join us on Saturday, January 14, 2017 from 9 a.m. to noon to help clean the sanctuary after the busy holiday season. Please bring a bucket if you have one. Contact Rich and Deb Karnemaat at 324-4216 if you are able to help, so they know how many are coming.

Nursery staff changes
by Rev. Dan Duncan

Our former Lead Preschool Teacher on Sunday mornings, April Siplon-Siepman, has tendered her resignation due to too many demands in her life at present. Sharon Bunker, who has been taking care of our infants, will assume this role as she continues to care for the infants, effective immediately. We are now looking for a nursery worker on Sunday mornings to fill out our staff. If you know anyone who would serve well in this position, have them contact Pastor Dan!

Pub Theology invites you to join them at Olde Peninsula on Feb. 2
by Diane Owen-Rogers

Let’s celebrate Ground Hog’s day! Did he see his shadow or not? Join us for Pub Theology on Thursday, February 2nd from 7-9 p.m. at the downtown Kalamazoo Old Peninsula Brew Pub and Restaurant. We will discuss ways we embrace winter and look forward to spring in our faith journeys. Feel free to bring a friend and a question to add to the fellowship.
Christian Education at First Church: It’s for Life!

Learn and grow in faith together – all life long

Sunday Morning Academy Classes are short-term gatherings for adults which explore a wide variety of faith issues and interests. Most Academy classes are discussion-based, with lots of lively, open-minded, good-humored conversation. Our exceptional leaders and facilitators come from the congregation and from the Kalamazoo community. Drop-in attendance always welcome.

Classes running January 8 - 29 at 9:30 a.m.

The Story of God (Parlor)
Morgan Freeman (who played “God” in the 2003 movie "Bruce Almighty") flew 100,000 miles to seven countries to trace the origins of the world’s great religions. In this National Geographic Channel series, he sets out on a global journey to uncover the meaning of life, the question of God, and everything in between. The result is a survey of themes that these religions share. We will discuss the questions and learn about how humans have answered them over the centuries and around the world. This will help us each gain our own insight into how we understand God. Topics covered include "Beyond Death" and "The Apocalypse." Our Academy Class will be facilitated by Ron Grant. Note: You can watch the full episodes on line at channel.nationalgeographic.com. This will allow you to view episodes you may miss on a Sunday or to preview a segment to prepare for class.

Opening Ourselves to Grace (Fellowship Room)
What is grace? How does John Wesley's understanding of grace affect our faith journey? This dvd-based class offers a way to understand the basic concept of grace as the theological expression of God's love for humanity and for each individual. Playing off of the metaphor of musicians practicing their craft, grace is defined in light of works of piety and works of mercy and applies grace to our individual and corporate discipleship journeys. The class will be led by John Clark.

Bible Readers Beware! (Room 304)
This class will guide participants in uncovering, discovering and recovering the power and wisdom of the scriptures without resorting to literalism or inerrancy. In other words, how can I read the Bible with understanding and find direction for my life and hope for my world? The class is hosted by Family Foundations, the ongoing class aimed at the parents of young children, but all are welcome. It will be led by Pastor Steve Charnley the first four weeks of the year. Titles for the upcoming three classes:

January 15    “Cruising Route 66”
January 22    “The Greatest Sermon”
January 29    “Odds and Ends”

First Church will be providing a Sunday night dinner for the students at Wesley Campus Ministry on the evening of Sunday, January 15th. The Outreach Team will provide the main entree, which will be a taco bar since it has been such a success in the past!

If you are interested in providing a side dish or dessert for this meal, you may bring it to the downstairs kitchen the morning of January 15. Please mark them "Wesley meal." If you'd like to be a part of the meal set-up or would like to enjoy the evening to build relationships with the students, please contact Donna Dunyak at (269) 341-1976 or donna.s.dunyak@zoetis.com.

The students are very grateful for the wonderful home cooked meals that First Church provides to them. Your support of this ministry to Share God's Love with the students at Wesley Campus is greatly appreciated.
### JANUARY 2017

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As I look out my window at Bronson Park, I see that the candy cane lanes have been disassembled and stored away for another year. The lighted decorations, which were quite interesting this year, have, for the most part disappeared. What remains from the Christmas season display is the Nativity, set in the northwest corner of the park, quite close to our church and our Congregational neighbors. There is a parable to this delay in disassembly. We are reluctant to leave Christmas behind. We would rather join the kneeling wise men, adoring shepherds and the reverent figures of Mary and Joseph and stare in rapt wonder at the baby. I can relate, for my wife, Cindy, and I just can’t seem to get enough time with and pictures of our new grandchild, Maria.

For some this January, there is genuine foot dragging as we approach the inauguration of a new president, one whose campaign heightened tensions and highlighted divisions which exist in our nation. We’d all like to hope that come January 20th we will hear an invitation to work together, lifting up the least and doing our best as citizens of a vibrant democracy. One is reminded of the words from past inaugurals, notably the one in 1961, when the president challenged each individual to “ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.” From the earliest days of democracy in Athens in ancient Greece, there has been a call for civic pride lived out in civic duty. Sometimes we are tempted to ask Cain’s question from the biblical story in Genesis, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Back in the early days of the Black Power movement, Eldridge Cleaver said, “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.” Let us resolve, regardless of how we voted in November, to be part of the solution. Let us pray for our new president, the members of our Congress, and all those who occupy positions of authority and decision making. Then, let us work side by side, regardless of political party or preference, working to improve country and our community.

The nativity in Bronson Park will, no doubt, be packed up by the time you read this, and stored away for another Christmas to come. However, the echoes of the angel’s voices still reverberate in the air and in our hearts, “Peace on earth, good will to all.” That is the best of inaugural messages as we begin a new administration in our 240 year old democracy.
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.

2017 First Word Schedule

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Articles are due on the deadline! Late submissions will only be published if space permits. Please submit articles typed exactly as you want them to appear in the newsletter. Articles may be edited for space and content.

January Circle Meetings

Anna Circle - no meeting
Lydia Circle - Wednesday, January 18 at 1 p.m.
Friendship Village A-1 Lounge
Program: "Kalamazoo County Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Council," by Sarah Joshi

Miriam Circle - no meeting

Ruth Circle - Tuesday, January 17 at 7 p.m.
Church parlor
Program: "Anna Howard Shaw," by Rev. Steve Charnley

The first General Meeting of the year is scheduled for Wednesday, March 1. The Business Meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. Program starts at 10:45 a.m. Both are located in the parlor. Lunch will be served at noon (reservations required) in Wesley Hall. Program: "Pastoral Care Ministry/Travels" by Rev. Keith Treman. All women are invited!

WINTER WEATHER POLICY

The church will always be open for worship on Sunday mornings. But please use your best discretion in deciding when to venture out. Weekday meetings may be cancelled if travel is dangerous. Team and committee chairs are asked to contact the church and their members if a meeting is cancelled. Please check our website, Channel 3 news, Facebook page, and email for closing notices. Please note the church office may be open, even though area schools are closed due to weather.