

Costa Rica Mission Team Commissioning Sunday, January 29, 2017

Excitement, support, and planning is building as we get closer to the church's second mission trip to help the development of the Methodist Children's Home, a project of the Costa Rica Methodist Church started by missionaries Will and Ella Faircloth. The purpose of the Home is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children who have been declared legally abandoned and are awaiting adoption.

The Costa Rica Mission Team will leave on Saturday, February 4, 2017 for a week of service. Several on the team are returning, while others will be participating for the first time. This year the Team will continue the building of a multipurpose building or perhaps start another house for the children. Presently there are two houses built and occupied, with a goal to have five houses that can house a total of 60 children. The Team will also spend precious time with the children developing relationships through story, song, Bible lessons, and art. We will again connect First Church's Sunday School children with those children at the Home in hopes that friendships will develop. It is a wonderful gift to us on the team, and those in Costa Rica working so diligently on behalf of the children, knowing that our church supports us in this endeavor.

All of you will be with us through your thoughts and prayers! We thank you for your support of our fund raisers and sponsorships in the past year. It is one thing to hear stories, look at pictures, and imagine another's country and culture, but to go there, see it with your own eyes, smell the air and the fragrance of the flowers, touch people with your hands and heart—then it becomes a part of you and enriches your life. May God put his blessing on this Team and those we encounter, as they give us so much more than we could possibly give to them. They enrich us with their lives and their spirits!

On Sunday, January 29, the Team will be commissioned for their work in Costa Rica during the 11:00 service. Commission is a word whose origin means to entrust. The church entrusts those who go on a mission trip with the privilege and responsibility to be God's hands and heart among the people they meet and with whom they work. Those that will be commissioned are: Donna Dunyak, Ray and Susan Eden, Pat Elzerman, Nancy Hillard, David Kingsley, Jane Rettke, Don and Carol Oakley, Mark Oudersluys, Eileen Pearson, Dennis and Becky Pence, Ellen Portis, Lois Schmidt, and Derek Wheaton. ~ Eileen Pearson and Rev. Steve Charnley

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 1, 2017**. The next newsletter will be mailed **February 8, 2017**. 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	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
*Curt Flowers	Bookkeeper
*Thom Victor	Office Assistant
*Denise Wilcox	Contributions Assistant
*Robin Entenman	Office Assistant/Security
Pamala Roman	Custodian
Todd Bloomfield	Evening Custodian
Ernesto Escobedo	Custodian/Security
Michael DeYoung	Evening Security
Linda Winkelman	JFON Legal Assistant (kzoo_assist@jfonwestmichigan.org)
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

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.

Our sympathy and prayers to the family and friends of

Floyd Gardner, father of Tracy Gardner, who died January 3.

Jean Zuidweg, wife of Donald Zuidweg, sister-in-law of Janet Hanson and Alice Carpentier, who died January 17 (memorial info below).

Please keep these friends in your prayers

Bob Baker, Doris Ball, John Boekhout, Hannah Boley, Helen Bray, Skip Decker, Hyesuk DeRoo, Sharon Dougan, Emerson Eidson, Ashton Fredenburg, Russ Gabier, Bob Goodwin, Brenda Haan, Paula Hall, Marge Hastings, Carl Hausermann, Mildred Hedrick, Dolores Heidanus, Nell Holland, Barbara Hughey, Rueith Lewis, Art Mann, Jim Martin, Dave Martin, Marsha McKenzie, Ron Moore, Mandy Morrill, Donna Oudersluys, Collin Palmer, Joan Rohs, Ham Scharf, Mary Helen Thomas, Arlene Triestram, Walter Walker, Lois West, Anne Wolfe, Don Zuidweg

Jean Zuidweg Memorial Service

A memorial service will be held for Jean at Langeland Westside Chapel (9th Street, Oshtemo) on Friday, January 27 @ 11 a.m. Rev. Dan Duncan will officiate. Visitation with the family precedes the service at 10 a.m. A luncheon will be served in the reception hall at Langeland's following the service.

New! Pictorial App



Yes, that's right! You can access our new pictorial directory with an app. Works on both I-phones and Android. If you would like more information, please contact Christi in the church office at clandreville@umc-kzo.org or call (269) 381-6340, ext 223.

Rhythms of the Soul

worship series

"Only Kindness Matters"

January 29

"Stand by Me"

by Ben E. King

Led by Rev. Julie Kline

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12



February 12

"Lean on Me"

by Bill Withers

Led by Rev. Steve Charnley

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30



February 5

"Try a Little Kindness"

by Glen Campbell

Led by Rev. Steve Charnley

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12



February 19

"We Are the World"

by Michael Jackson

Led by Rev. Steve Charnley

Scripture: Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18



First Stitchers invitation

by Linda Lueth

We had a wonderful turnout for our luncheon in November to discuss merging the First Stitchers and Warmed by God's Love ministries together. As anticipated, everyone in attendance wanted to make sure our ministries of handmade comforting quilts, blankets, pillows, hats and mittens continues. We all know the need is great.

A name for the combined ministry was discussed and later a vote taken. **First Stitchers** will be the name of the combined ministry going forward, since all of our work requires a stitch of some sort and it follows our church naming tradition (First Care, First Singers, First Bells, First Beats, etc.).

We have been busy! Since September, we have donated 91 items: 34 fleece blankets, 24 small quilts, 16 pillow cases/travel size pillows, 8 knitted hats, 4 crocheted afghans, 3 knitted pairs of mittens, and 2 other pillows! These items have gone to Bethany Christian Services, Spring Valley Elementary School, Eleanor Street Shelter, Ministry with Community and to the Kalamazoo Chapter of Binky Patrol (who facilitate distribution to local non-profits where there is need). The Eleanor Street Shelter was thrilled to receive the juvenile and Christmas print pillow cases and pillows as a family had recently moved in and the shelter did not have any pillows to give them!

Join us for sewing and knitting on Thursday mornings from 9:30 till noon in the Fellowship Room. The sewing machines and supplies are all provided. Bring a brown bag lunch if you can stay for lunch conversation and fellowship. We'd love to have you! If you are sewing/knitting at home, bring your finished items to the church office. Questions, call Linda Lueth at (269) 324-3522 or Ellen Portis at (269) 720-1130.

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 would like to start 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.

Introducing our newest members!

Joined November 20, 2016



Steven & Ann Ball
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quiltingsaball@sbcglobal.net
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Robin & Edgar (Gar) Chapel
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Max Cherem & Nora Hauk
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Leo Hazen & Dianne VanGemert
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Anna Rasmussen
1126 1/2 S. Westnedge Ave
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267-6961



Carolyn & Art Mann
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Kalamazoo, MI 49004
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Brianne Rogers
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989-860-9674
rogsuebr@gmail.com

cont. on p. 5

Our newest members (cont.)

Joined November 20, 2016



David Rohs Scholarship

by Carol Hodges, Trustee

Application Deadline: March 31, 2017



James & Lisa Moore and Miles
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Kalamazoo, MI 49006
744-1219
jamesmoore62@yahoo.com
lisachappell@gmail.com
James cell: 350-0155

The David H. Rohs Scholarship Fund makes available college scholarships of up to \$1000 to youth and young adults who are active participants at First Church. There are three general categories available:

- ▶ Those planning to attend a United Methodist-related college, university, or seminary in the U.S. may receive up to \$1000 from this fund. Those receiving this scholarship have the option of applying for an additional \$3000 from the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation "Dollars for Scholars" fund.
- ▶ Those planning to attend a non-Methodist related college, university or seminary in the U.S. may receive up to \$1000 from the Rohs Fund.
- ▶ Those interested in attending a non-Methodist related community college/trades school in the U.S. may receive up to \$500 from the Rohs Fund.

Scholarship money may be used for tuition and fees, room and board, books, transportation and personal expenses associated with the cost of higher education.

Applications are available online at www.umc-kzo.org/rohsscholarship. They are due to the church office by March 31, 2017. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Julie Kline.



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Maren & Christopher Uggen and Annalie
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Janet Wydendorf
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jwydendorf@charter.net
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Discovering Our Talents in Art

Description: A class in beginning drawing and painting using pastels, pen, pencil, and watercolor (no previous experience needed)

Dates and Time: Wednesday afternoons, 2:00-3:30 p.m., Feb. 15, 22, Mar. 1, 8

Location: Fellowship Room

Other Details: This is a free class. Instructor Susan Noble will provide all materials needed. Sign up at the Welcome Center.



ANGEL TREE

Thank you to our church members for their generosity this Christmas season. Our congregation's Angel Tree donations provided toys for the Salvation Army's Christmas gift distribution to almost 100 children in our area!

~ Pat Stevenson



Children & Families Ministries

by Rev. Dan Duncan
 dduncan@umc-kzo.org

Sunday School and nursery rooms are back! We are pleased to report that the rooms that had tested positive for some lead dust in the window wells are now back in use. The Building & Grounds Committee has sealed off all of the old leaded windows with interior storm windows, thoroughly cleaned the area twice with a professional service, and did some spot painting. All rooms have passed the tests and are cleared for use. Thanks especially to Tom Schaberg and that committee for all the work they did to make this happen, and the Dick Knapp bequest which provided funds for the window upgrades! So, our Sunday a.m. toddler nursery is again back across the hall from the infant nursery (Room 204), and our 1st and 2nd grade Sunday School room is back to Room 210.

Sunday School (9:30-10:30 a.m., beginning in the Arches on the second floor, Pre-K through 4th grades). Upcoming Bible lessons using our United Methodist "Deep Blue" curriculum will be:

- Jan. 29: Born Anew
- Feb. 5: The Sower
- Feb. 12: The Good Samaritan

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

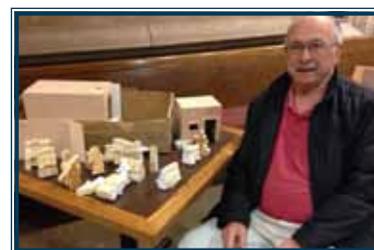
4 -5 year olds—Room 203

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|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jan. 29: Jesus and the Tax Collectors | ST: Pastor Dan | Guide: RuthAnn |
| Feb. 5: Jesus and the Storm | ST: Matt | Guide: Ashley |

6-8 year olds—Room 200

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Jan. 29: Follow Me | ST: Jocelyn | Guide: Shondo |
| Feb. 5: Jesus and the Tax Collectors | ST: Pastor Dan | Guide: Donna |

New Godly Play Stories! Our children and storytellers thank Jim Treece for cutting out over 50 wooden figures, and for crafting houses and boats and other elements of four new Godly Play stories that we will be using this winter. They are all about how we "follow Jesus," and Jim's work saved the church hundreds of dollars from the cost of buying these elements retail.



Jim Treece with hand carved figures, houses, and boats.

First Bells will rehearse during the Gathering Time on Sunday, Feb. 5; and play during the 11 a.m. worship on Feb. 19.

Children and Family Ministries Team will meet next on Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 7 p.m.

Upcoming Snack Heroes:

- Jan. 29: Newman
- Feb. 5: Ledlow
- Feb. 12: Whittaker

Family Fun Night News. Our next Family Fun event will be on a Sunday afternoon, and get us outside and moving for winter excitement: sledding! We'll gather on Sunday, Feb. 12 at 4 p.m. at Woods Lake Elementary (corner of Parkview and Oakland). Bring whatever sledding equipment you have for live experiments with gravity and reduced friction. Parents: extra bonus! Get your workout in AND stay warm by climbing back up the hill repeatedly while hauling sleds and/or kids!



EMERGING WORSHIP

February 12 @ 9:30 a.m. in Wesley Hall

Rhythms of the Soul worship series

"Only Kindness Matters: The Kindness Project"

Led by Rev. Julie Kline

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 11:28-30 *The Message*

Kindness is really not random. We choose to be kind, the randomness of kindness is only found in who may be the recipient. When kindness is shared it is often authentically intentional and it has a relentlessness about it that is strong and courageous. We choose to be kind to the co-worker who we'd really like to tell off, we choose to open the door for the shopper behind us, we choose to give away our money, our time and our resources. Kindness is a choice, not always an easy one but it is still a choice.

Jesus says, "Come to me. Watch how I do it, learn the unforced rhythms of grace and learn how to live freely and lightly." Let us walk in the ways of Christ and in worship let us celebrate those who have been Christ-like in our lives and have showered us with the gentleness of kindness. Come, join us for the soul feast of Emerging Worship!

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!

The New Years Fest Café committee wishes to thank the 44 people who cooked, served, worked as cashiers, and cleaned up for the New Year's Eve Fest. We served 546 folks! Our famous Sloppy Joes were a big hit again this year, and we almost sold out. We made \$1,500 in profit that evening. *Thanks again, Joyce Treece*

YOUTH TRIBE

SUNDAY MORNING AND EVENING YOUTH EVENTS

by Rev. Julie Kline, jkline@umc-kzo.org



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 Realtor 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

	Jan. 29 8:30 and 11 a.m	Feb. 5 8:30 and 11 a.m	Feb. 12 8:30 and 11 a.m	Feb. 19 8:30 and 11 a.m	Feb. 26 8:30 and 11 a.m	March 5 8:30 and 11 a.m
8:30 Lay Reader	Terry O'Connor	Laurie Nelson	Jan Schoenherr	Carol Hodges	Andrew Vorbrich	Deb Search Willoughby
8:30 Office/Welcome Center	need someone	need someone	Robin Entenman	need someone	need someone	need someone
8:30 Greeters	Ron Moore	Jennifer Stupica	Ron Moore	need someone	need someone	need someone
8:30 Sound/Lights	Greg Anderson	Greg Anderson	Jim Willoughby	Greg Anderson	Jim Willoughby	Greg Anderson
11:00 Lay Reader	Mark Stucky	Laura VanVlack-Ailes	Ginnie Hessler	Joyce Treece	Nancy Hyde	David Kingsley
11:00 Office/Welcome Center	need someone	need someone	Robin Entenman	need someone	need someone	need someone
11:00 Greeters	Dottie Hook Ruth Evelyn Graham	need someone	need someone	need someone	need someone	need someone
11:00 Acolytes	Andrew Wright Sean Willoughby	Emma Hampton Sam Ledlow	Layla Eaton Ryan Ernest	Alex Moon Sean Willoughby	Ella Adams Andrew Hampton	Andrew Wright Sean Willoughby
11:00 Sound/Lights	Bob Lane	Jonah Bolton	Lucas Bolton	Bob Lane	Jonah Bolton	Lucas Bolton
Van Driver	Dave Russel	Mike Cooper	Fred Corbus	Jay Gross	Jake Lisak	Dave Russel

"Thinking of You" card ministry

by Karen Hassevoort, Lay Leader

In the message on Laity Sunday, I announced the kick-off of a "Thinking of You" card ministry at First Church. We want to spread the news about this very simple ministry. **We have a basket of greeting cards and note cards that are located in the Jesus Lounge.** We encourage you to take a card and send a note to someone who may need some extra support or a word of encouragement. You select the recipient, write a caring message to let them know "Thinking of You," and mail it off. (SHORT and SIMPLE.) If you have unused greeting cards or note cards that you would like to donate to the collection, add them to the basket.

The ministry has begun! "Thinking of You" notes have been sent! Pastor Julie reported that the Youth Tribe prepared and sent a number of cards recently. What a wonderful group activity! Perhaps your group would like to include this as part of their next

meeting. It only takes a few moments to write a caring thought, and it can make a HUGE difference and really lift someone's spirits!

Let's empty our basket of cards and refill it many times this year. Wouldn't that be a wonderful "problem" to have—keeping our card basket filled! As the signs by the basket indicate, the "job description" for this ministry can be filled by those of any age or skill level, you simply need a caring heart and a willing spirit. Not only will you make someone's day, but it is guaranteed to leave you with a warm, fuzzy feeling and a happy heart!

Small words of encouragement and support can make all the difference as we encounter difficulties in our life journeys. For questions, please contact Michel Pierce at 375-4526 or Karen Hassevoort at 569-5160.



FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Our food pantry needs your donations of laundry detergent (which they split up into smaller bottles), and travel size shampoo, conditioner, hand soap, and lotions. Please drop them off at the food pantry window.

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 Please visit our website www.umc-kzo.org for info on upcoming worship and events. The website also includes our calendar, photo galleries, online giving opportunities, and ways you can be involved in the ministries of the church.

Year End Financial Reports

by Molly Williams, Finance Committee Chair

The annual operating budget of the church is approximately \$900,000, covering personnel, office and building operations, programs of worship, education, and congregational care, and our support of the wider United Methodist Church—including worldwide programs of mission, justice, and service.

In 2016, income was \$886,819, and expenses were \$907,763, resulting in an operating deficit of \$20,944. There were reserves from prior year surpluses allowing us to cover this deficit. Our reserve balance carried forward to 2017 is \$61,931.

We continue to pay down the remaining loan balance from our building renovation and expansion project nine years ago. During 2016, the building debt was reduced from \$623,278 down to \$335,000. Additional donations in early January 2017 reduced the balance even further to \$321,000. With the matching gift opportunity announced earlier this month, we encourage additional donations and hope to fully retire this obligation during 2017.

Our church also supports a variety of other ministries. Special Sunday offerings (about once a month) fund programs of the wider United Methodist Church and other causes of concern to our local church. Those Sunday offerings, reported periodically in *The First Word*, totaled \$44,855 in 2016. These include Christmas (\$17,047) and Easter (\$7,233) offerings that are used to support several missionaries and other local ministries as designated by our Outreach Team.

Separate accounts are maintained for the following activities:

- JFON (Justice for Our Neighbors) ministry operated with donations of \$29,266.
- Income supporting Youth Missions was \$14,341.

- Memorial Gifts received throughout 2016 totaled \$11,784.

In addition, there is a long list of ongoing ministries that are supported with contributions throughout the year.

Those not otherwise mentioned above include:

Emerging Worship Offerings	\$ 1,796
Food Pantry	2,770
Kalamazoo Area Moms	478
Youth Programs	1,238
Children’s Offerings	176
Camp Scholarships	525
Vacation Bible School	2,316
Music Programs	5,252
Costa Rica Mission Trip	19,622
UMCOR (hunger coins, Flint water)	8,430
Wesley Foundation capital campaign	25,872
You Are Not Alone (YANA)	8,631
Helping Our Neighbors	11,357
Pastors Discretionary Fund	<u>18,274</u>
TOTAL	\$106,737

In 2016, total giving to our church exceeds \$1,353,300. These gifts enable us to carry out our mission to Experience, Celebrate, and Share God’s Love. We are grateful for the continued faithfulness and generosity of our members.

A 2017 expense budget of \$956,638 was approved by Church Council last November based upon requests from administrative committees and ministry teams and income estimates from the fall pledge campaign. By mid-January 2017, pledges received from 256 donors total \$738,631. Other income, including estimates of unpledged giving, support from the trustees and endowment fund, and the use of some additional reserves will support this budget.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

by Mark Oudersluys, Outreach Team Chair

Thank you for your generous giving to the 2016 Christmas Offering. Your gift enabled us to help support the following local ministries of the church. (Note: Additional funds arrived for the Christmas Offering in 2017 after the books closed for 2016. Additionally, there were funds left from 2015 in the Outreach Team's budget that were designated to be used for non-budgeted items.)



- 1) Foods Resource Bank - \$4,000
- 2) Center for Transformation - \$4,000
- 3) Pastor's Discretionary Fund / Helping Our Neighbors - \$4,000
- 4) Refugee Assistance - \$4,000
- 5) Hoover Missionaries (retiring) - \$2,500

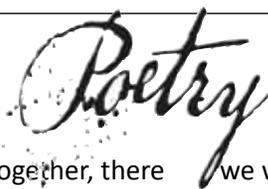
Upcoming JFON event needs volunteers

by Ray and Ann Sweany

If I die on this sinking dingy, tell my story!*

Poetry is the voice of the heart, and poets have been moved by the trials and courage of the immigrants. This has all crystallized into a small anthology of poetry and some essays that has been shepherded by Jennifer Clark and Miriam Downey.

Writers and poets were asked to consider immigration and what it means to be a neighbor. The outpouring has been amazing. Among those contributing are former poet laureate Ted Kooser, Buddy Hannah, Naomi Shihab Nye, and our own FUMC member, Lisa Stuckey! Also included are the writings of some of the students at Arcadia Elementary School where there are 27 Arabic-



speaking students. Altogether, there are 26 contributors to the anthology in addition to six student contributions. The book will be published by Celery City Books.

There will be a release party at Arcus Center on the Kalamazoo College campus on April 19. This will be a joint effort of JFON, Friends of Poetry, and JFON volunteers from Kalamazoo College. Some of the contributors and other luminaries will read from the book interspersed with music with some good food to help make it happen.

The book will cost \$10, the price of which will include a significant donation to JFON. To date, the event will be publicized on Zinta Aistars' program on WMUK and by Lori Moore. We are expecting a crowd and

we will need help to make this event work. Those interested should contact Ann Sweany or Miriam Downey, a.sweany@jfonwestmichigan.org or miriamdowney0@gmail.com. **We will meet on Tuesday, February 14 at First UMC at 9:00 a.m. to work out some of the necessary jobs. Find out how you can plug in!**

Imagine where this can go from here! Our poetry will be a part of the program at the WMU Ethics Center on October 12. Many of the authors can read their work and share their reflections in other settings.

**Transmission of a refugee as his dingy flooded off the coast of Greece. He survived and was granted asylum in England.*

Syrian refugee family update

by Ray Sweany

The Syrian refugee family arrived in Kalamazoo in early December. They are being hosted by the First Presbyterian Church. Our church has been attempting to help. The family is making a lot of progress, but the job of hosting would make your head spin. Problems arise, and before you know it a solution is in hand. Still progress is being made.

While they were originally housed in Parchment, it became apparent that the children could be best served in either the Portage or Kalamazoo Public Schools. They will move to the Edison neighborhood in February and now attempts are being made to get the children in school prior to the move.

The father and mother are both finding employment with employers who are attempting to utilize their skills in spite of language problems. Mark Oudersluys, and Ann and Ray Sweany have attended some of the

meetings of the Kalamazoo Refugee Council that meets twice monthly at Common Grounds on the WMU campus and at several meetings with Samaritas (formerly, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan), and Bethany Christian Services. In those meetings, we have learned of the frustrations and the victories of the hosts across the community. At each meeting, we share with people what JFON can do to help, although they will not need a Green Card until the end of their first year, which seems like a long way off.

February Mission of the Month

by Mark Oudersluys, Outreach Team Chair



While the weather right now may be somewhat warmer than usual, Winter weather will soon be back. Many individuals in our community are not prepared for this return of cold weather. To assist them in keeping warm through the coming months we will be collecting hats, gloves, scarves and socks. The items donated will be given to both Ministry with Community and the Gospel Mission. Please assist us in helping individuals in our community stay warm and healthy.





Staff Sharing

Jacqueline Stilger, Minister of Music

The view from my nook and cranny of First UMC is beautiful! Actually, it is the nook and cranny itself that is quite wonderful. The choir room has received a much needed renovation and the work is almost done. Tom Schaberg and his terrific crew on the Building and Grounds Committee have seen the renovation through with careful attention to detail and with a very open mind and listening ear.

Tom, Ruth LaMachia, and I began laying plans for the renovation at the beginning of the summer of 2016. With the careful guidance of Tom, the project began to take shape. We gained the support of the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Trustees and received financial help from the Richard Knapp Bequest Fund. Tom encouraged me to dream big and think of how technology could be useful in the choir room. I am not a 'techie' person (just ask my kids or anyone who works in the church office!). So thinking in those terms was not easy for me. We did come up with a plan that would allow for technology in the room with a newly mounted screen and a laptop for teaching, viewing, and listening. I look forward to discovering all of the different ways that we can use it to help the music ministry grow and develop.

Construction on the choir room began right after Christmas. The old ceiling tiles and lights were removed and a beautiful new ceiling with ample lighting was installed. The repair of the ceiling was vital, as several of the old tiles had been falling down at random times! Major plaster repair happened in the choir room and the storage closet off of the room. The storage closet, which houses all of the Orff instruments used by the children's choir, had been heavily damaged by water over the years.

The entire choir room has been freshly painted,

removing scuff marks and the 1980's teal green color, giving it a light, airy feeling. The church decorating committee was very helpful in coming up with the chosen paint color and other endless details. Many thanks to them for their help. The old chalkboard was removed and a whiteboard installed. Still to come is the baseboard installation and a new bookshelf to assist in keeping our new space clean and organized. With several music groups using the room throughout the week and my lack of organizational skills, things can really start to pile up!

After cleaning and waxing the floor, we hope to be able to move back in this week. It will be a joy to rehearse and practice in this room. Not just because it looks great, but because of the love and care that went into making it happen and because of the support that this congregation gives to the music ministry here at First UMC.

Music helps to shape and inform our faith and through it, can move us to action. In the words of hymn/poet and writer Brian Wren, may it *"move us to love one another, welcome strangers, love our enemies, treat family members with care and respect, stand with the downtrodden and dispossessed, and spread the good news of Jesus Christ."*

May it be so!

Peace,

Jackie



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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.



2017 First Word Schedule

Article Deadline	Mailing Date
February 1	February 8
February 15	February 22
March 8	March 15
March 22	March 29
April 5	April 12
April 19	April 26
May 3	May 10
May 17	May 24
June 14	June 21
July 12	July 19
August 16	August 23
September 6	September 13
September 20	September 27
October 4	October 11
October 18	October 25
November 8	November 15
November 22	November 29
December 6	December 13

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.

Pub Theology invites you to join them at Olde Peninsula on Thursday, 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.



Wesley of Kalamazoo's Intentional Living Community Open House Feb. 5

by Rev. Cora Glass, Dir. of Discipleship & Resident Director of Wesley Intentional Living Community

The Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo's Intentional Living Community is looking for our fall 2017/summer 2018 residents. The WILC houses eight students and a residential director. Students living in the WILC attend Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, or Kalamazoo Valley Community College. WILC residents strive to live as a Christian community and covenant to share their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and Christian witness with one another. Community members and students are welcome to come to our open house to see what happens at the WILC. **We will host two open houses: Sunday, February 5 and Thursday, February 9 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.** Contact wesleyofkalamazoo@gmail.com with questions or for rental details.