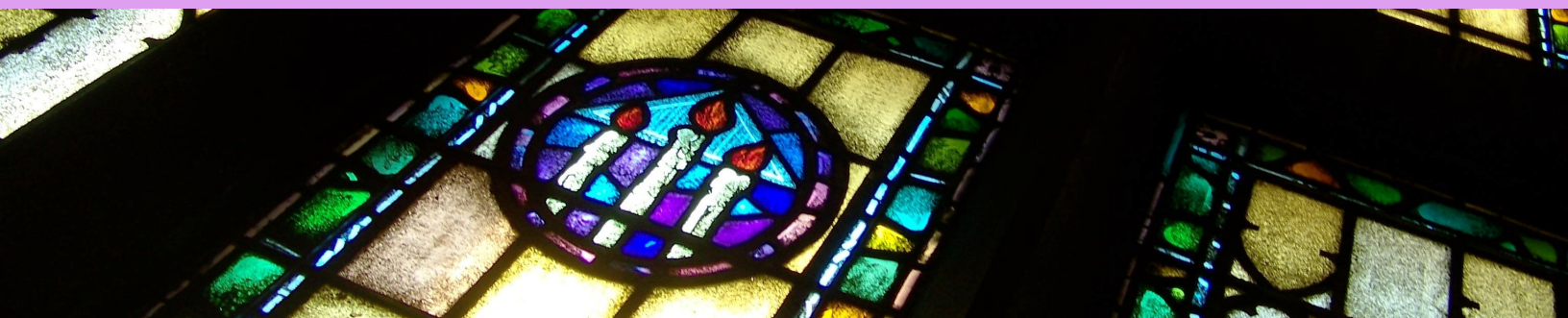


THE FIRST WORD

212 S. PARK STREET, KALAMAZOO, MI 49007 // (269) 381-6340 // WWW.UMC-KZO.ORG



First United
Methodist
Church of Kalamazoo



Advent 2020: I Believe Even When... Fill the Night With Music and Light

BY REV. JULIE KLINE

As World War II was ending, a German prisoner of war was interviewed. At the end of his story he tells a story that has been repeated, retold and embellished over the years. In a shelter in Cologne, where young Catholics were keeping some Jews in hiding because their lives were threatened, American soldiers found the following inscription:

*"I believe in the sun even when it's not shining.
I believe in love even when I don't feel it.
I believe in God even when He is silent."*

As this story has been passed along through the years, it has brought comfort to many during stressful and bewildering times. The inscription has inspired many writers, poets and is the motivation behind the anthem "I Believe" written by Mark A. Miller that will be used throughout our Advent series. The inscription written within one of the most despairing of times, expresses that God is present, even when human evil looms and circumstances are beyond one's control, underneath it all, God is still present.

In this year of 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage in the United States and world-wide, much of our common life, our everyday "normal" has been turned upside down. Everything has changed, including the way in which we worship and create community. As we prepare to enter into the Advent season we know that many of our beloved traditions will need to be altered so that we can keep one another safe and continue to "love our neighbor."

Yet, in this Advent season it becomes ever more imperative that we seek comfort and peace through holy rituals and creating sacred space in our lives. The situation and setting surrounding the poem is very different than the circumstances we face today and we need to honor this.

However, we are in a place and space that also yearns for the power of hope. Hope is that glimmer of light that is miraculous in the deep and sorrowful times of despair. This is why, we as worship planners were captivated by Marcia McFee's Advent series and will use her resources to guide and inspire us, allowing us to believe even when...

Our human history is filled with pain that is often accompanied by fear and can lead to violence and oppression. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. We believe and follow his Light because he showed us a way to live in hope rather than fear. The narrative of the Christ story is following the call to a different response that is one of transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy and peace.

This Advent and Christmas, let us fill the night with music and light and affirm and act on the reasons why we can still "believe, even when" we are discouraged. Emmanuel, God is with us, let us walk and worship with the light of world, igniting the flame of hope within us so that we may glow with a brilliance into this world.

November 29: Advent 1

"I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow"
"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God." *Isaiah 40:1*

December 6: Advent 2

"I Believe in Love: Daring Right Relationship"
"And they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God with us." *Matthew 1:23b*

December 13: Advent 3

"I Believe in God: Ode to Joy"
"I live on high, in holiness, and also with the crushed and the lowly, reviving the spirit of the lowly, reviving the heart of those who have been crushed." *Isaiah 57:15b*

December 20: Advent 4

"I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace"
"What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people." *John 1:3b*

December 24: Christmas Eve

"We Believe, Even Now"
"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of a messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news..." *Isaiah 52:7a*

Online Worship:

Sunday mornings: 10-11am

Please worship with us via livestream on our [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmCkzo) accessible from our website: umc-kzo.org

Zoom Fellowship:

Every Sunday, 9:15-9:45am

Join us for a time of virtual fellowship.

Zoom Sunday Morning Class:

Following Sunday Worship

Zoom Fellowship and Morning Class links are included in the weekly Around the Corner email.

Calling Team Connecting With The People

During our Giving Campaign for our ministries of 2021 we proclaimed that we are "Together for Joy." We do know that this takes extra effort during this time of pandemic when we cannot just simply show up for worship and all the many ministry avenues that we usually enjoy. Our Church Council co-chairs, Vickie Winfield and Karen Hassevoort, have been busy putting together a Calling Team that will be reaching out to all that are listed in our church directory. We see this as a continuation of desire to be "Together for Joy."

There was a time when "together" was much easier to define! This pandemic has stretched our definition and has also taught us how important togetherness is and just how we might continue to be creative about how to be together.

Our Calling Team is reaching out to connect with people to check in and to discover just how you are choosing to connect with the church and friends during this time.

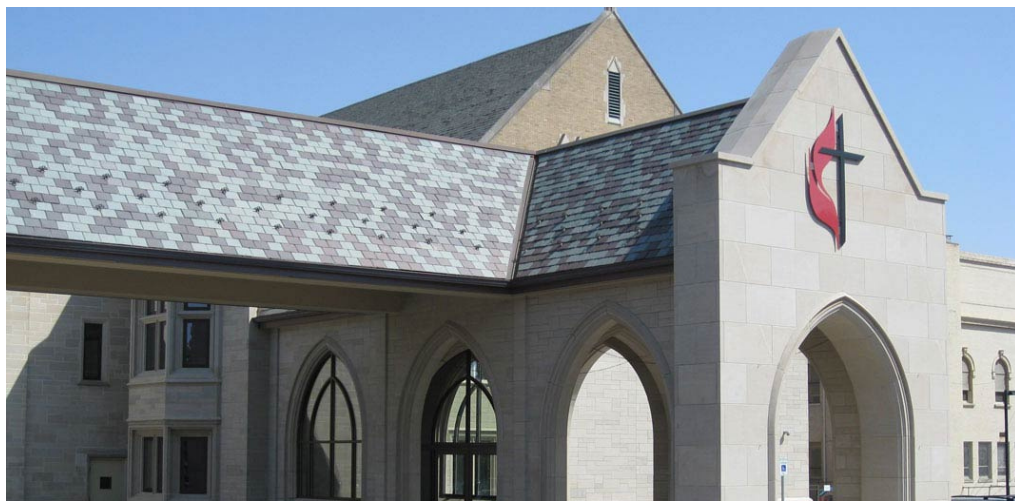
Hopefully, there will be good sharing through the conversation and the callers will be asking specific questions as well.

We want to know:

- ***How are you staying connected with FUMC?*** (Some examples: Online worship, Sunday morning classes, Zoom fellowship, Youth Tribe, Pastoral calls, Outdoor Prayer Service?)
- ***How are you staying informed?*** (Some examples: Around the Corner, First Word, Email, calls from friends?)
- ***What has been most meaningful for you or appreciated by you during this time of online worship?***

You may or may not know the person who is reaching out to you, but we hope you will pick up or return the call and engage with our Calling Team so that we may be better poised to make decisions about how we communicate and how we continue to create opportunities to be "Together for Joy."

Blessings, Pastor Julie



FUMC Meal Ministry

There are times when our congregation families are overwhelmed with life - an illness, hospitalization, grief, stress, a new baby, etc, and the last thing to worry about is getting a healthy meal on the table. **FUMC Caring Committee** has a small group of volunteer cooks and bakers to help ease that burden. We are a SMALL group and would love to add some new names to our list. If you would be willing to be available to provide a simple meal once in a while for one of our congregation families, please let coordinator **Dawn Wheaton** know! She can be contacted at **(269) 330-5152** or **dawheaton53@gmail.com**.

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Lou Bradley, who died on Sept. 28.
Patricia B. Johns, who died on Sept. 30.
Shondo Miller, who died on Nov. 3.
Howard Barkley, who died on Nov. 5.
Ellen Brinkley, who died on Nov. 11.
Fred Douglas, who died on Nov. 12.



Please keep these friends in your prayers:

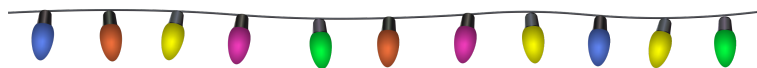
Nina Baker • Barkley Family
Jane Barnes • Brinkley Family
Harriet & Don Chalker
Dan & Jill Christian • Miriam Cook
Douglas Family • Emerson Eidson
Andreea Frew
Ruth Evelyn Graham
Red Hikade • Nell Holland
John & Carol Holms
Deanna & Sara House
Lenora Holliday
David Houseman
Ben & Ena Korendyke
Samantha Knight • Doris Lee
David Locke • Miller Family
Claire Peek • Jeanne Plott
Hank Rohs • Gerry Schaberg
Jan Search • Bev Seimers
Kim & Larry Taylor
Arlene Triestram
Kathy Winchell
Janet Wyndendorf

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**.

Children & Families Ministries

By Julia Librizzi, Director of Children & Families Ministries



It's Not Too Soon to Be Thinking of Christmas Eve!

Does your child play a musical instrument? Our musical director, Ms. Jackie, and Ms. Julia would like to invite all the children to start thinking about a musical prelude for the **5pm Christmas Eve service**! Christmas Eve will be live streamed on YouTube this year, just like our church services, but we know it is important to include the children's preludes during this special family service! Now is a good time to begin thinking about a piece of church related Christmas music your child could share. When your child is ready, please record it, (landscape mode, not portrait, please!), upload it to Google Drive and share it with bernie.foulk@gmail.com to be included in our Christmas Eve service! Please contact jstilger@umc-kzo.org with any questions or for more information.

Stay Connected with Virtual Fellowship for Parents

Our **Family Foundations Zoom class** is meeting at a new time! Please join other parents at **11am on Sundays** for some coffee and conversation! And new this month is **Family Foundation Ladies Night In**! Join us on Zoom with the beverage of your choice for some conversation, laughs and support on **Thursday nights from 8-10pm**. Please contact **Katy McGinnis** at mcginnik82@gmail.com or **Julia Librizzi** at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org for links and more information.



Photo from www.empowermentplan.org

Help Support Those in Need This Winter

As the days and nights get colder, several members of Dawn Patrol and the Outreach Team have become aware of a simple way to help people who are sleeping outside in and around Kalamazoo to be a little more comfortable. We have discovered a way to acquire "**sleeping bag coats**" while, at the same time, providing jobs and training for the formerly homeless people in Detroit who manufacture the coats.

Approximately 20 coats have already been distributed and the positive feedback has encouraged us to expand this ministry as quickly as possible.

Learn more about this non-profit organization at empowermentplan.org and join us in helping some of God's beloved who need assistance by donating \$131 per sleeping bag/coat (includes shipping). Checks should be made out to Empowerment Plan and sent to 2949 Sunset Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49009.

Contact Dick Shilts at dcshilts@hotmail.com or (269) 567-8023 with any questions.

Finance Committee Report

By Sandy Gower

Finance Committee Chair

As we end the third quarter of the year, the General Fund budget remains in good shape thanks to the generosity of our congregation and the Payroll Protection Loan. Our income in September was \$109,048.11 with expenses of \$93,963.85. The balance as of September 30 was \$124,491.94.

The Finance Committee is working on the budget for 2021. One of the many challenges we face in the new year is how long the Covid-19 restrictions will last and what our operations and ministries will look like when we enter a post Covid-19 world.

I remain in awe of the continuing generosity of this congregation in your gifts of time and money. We just completed our annual stewardship drive and I urge you, if you haven't already, to return your pledge cards. Pledge cards can be returned by mail or online. I hope you find peace in these troubled times. Stay safe!

Special Offerings as of November 7, 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 |
| ASP Sunday Youth Missions | \$1,455.00 |
| World Communion Sunday | \$25.00 |
| Christmas Offering | \$257.00 |

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.**

Mission of the Month in the Time of Pandemic

Our FUMC 'Mission of the Month' was instituted by the Outreach Team many years ago to assist local organizations in Kalamazoo. It has become another way in which we Share God's Love. When everything shut down in March due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it has not been possible to continue our Mission of the Month support in the manner to which we have all grown accustomed. Nonetheless, the need is as great, if not greater now, when so many people are struggling.

We've successfully provided Mission of the Month financial support to many organizations since April—YWCA, First Day Shoe Fund, WMU SEITA Scholars, Great Lakes Bay Region flood victims and Spring Valley Elementary school supplies. Going forward, there continues to be opportunities to assist, either as cash* or in-kind donations.

November Mission: 21st Annual Ministry with Community Underwear Party-Drive-thru Event

Monday, December 7 from 4-6pm

Drive thru collection at Ministry with Community's parking lot, located at 500 North Edwards St., Kalamazoo

- Seeking donations of thermal or sweatshirt pants/long-sleeved shirts (M-4XL), winter gloves, hats, scarves, men's boxers or boxer briefs and women's underwear. New and unwrapped, adult-sized items only, please.

Learn more at ministrywithcommunity.org or call (269) 343-6073.

December Mission: Salvation Army Angel Tree 30th Anniversary Toy Drive (Further details below.)

*Ministry of the Month note:

Monetary donations are always welcome and sometimes preferred by participating agencies. Donate online or mail your check to KFUMC with the designated agency in the Memo Line. All money received will be sent to the Ministry of the Month recipient.



Angel Tree Donations for 2020

The FUMC Christmas tradition of supporting the Salvation Army Angel Tree will be modified this year in response to the global pandemic.

Members will be able to make monetary donations online (select 'Other' and type Salvation Army) or by mailing a check to KFUMC (212 S. Park Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007) with Salvation Army in the Memo Line. The church will send one check to the Salvation Army. Members may also purchase a gift for a child, ages infant through 16, and drop it off to the church vestibule Mondays through Thursdays, from 9am to 4pm.

For more information on the 30th Anniversary Angel Tree Toy Drive, please visit sawmni.org/wmni

Gifts and donations are due by Wednesday, December 9!

Youth Ministry Update

It probably goes without saying that **Youth Ministry** in the midst of this pandemic is an adventure in and of itself, especially at FUMC in the fall when we have so many special traditions to fulfill! With the many adjustments we have had to make, I hope that this is a year of strengthening relationships with, and partnership with the families of our young people as we are working together to grow and to serve.

The first of our fall traditions completed this year was the annual **Apple Pie Fundraiser** for Appalachian Service Project, but we made it work! A large gathering of youth and their families gathered in a cool yet beautiful autumn Sunday afternoon and assembled loads of pies and crisps OUTSIDE. At the time of writing this piece I cannot yet comment on the final distribution of the pies and crisps but I can say how grateful I am to all of FUMC for adapting to our adjusted mode of operations this year and using our new pre-order system.

As I reflect on my first six months with this congregation I am **grateful** to serve in a place that so clearly values the inclusion and spiritual development of our young people. Their experience of the grace and love of Jesus Christ has so much to do with how this love spills out in support from the congregation.

In Gratitude,
Rev. Matt Weiler
Pastor of Community Formation

Friendship Village Satellite Service Paused

Due to the worsening pandemic, our in-person satellite service at Friendship Village has been temporarily paused. Weekly CD and DVD recordings are still available for those who would like to receive them by mail. Residents at The Fountains and Friendship Village may receive them via contactless delivery by the beginning of worship on Sunday mornings. **Please contact Thom Victor via email at tvictor@umc-kzo.org, or by phone at (269) 241-2501 to request a recording.**