

# THE FIRST WORD

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



Dear Friends,

**As we are midway through the season of Advent, our hearts and minds begin to turn toward our celebration of Christmas Eve.** This year we come with anticipation as celebrating the birth of Jesus is a beloved and cherished tradition. We also know that last year we celebrated from home and were not able to gather in the sanctuary and this makes us yearn for our traditions ever more. We also acknowledge that our community is experiencing a high rate of Covid illnesses and hospitalizations, and this too brings its own worries and concerns.

At this time, we are planning to celebrate Christmas Eve at these times:

- **4pm Children & Family Worship:** This child friendly and interactive worship will include a sweet and simple retelling of the night of Jesus' birth and the singing of Christmas Carols. (*Childcare provided.*)
  - **7pm Lessons & Carols:** This traditional favorite celebrates the birth of Christ through the reading of scriptures, singing favorite Christmas carols with the choir, organ and brass ensemble. (*In person and live streamed; childcare provided.*)
  - **9pm Carols & Communion:** This worship will be similar to the 7pm service, with the addition of communion being served. (*Choir, organ and brass ensemble.*)
- Note: "Silent Night" will be sung by candlelight at the 4pm, 7pm and 9pm worship services, proclaiming Christ comes with love and redeems with grace.*
- **11pm Silent Night on the front steps:** Singing "Silent Night" on the front steps and witnessing to our community the light and love of Christ.

**To ensure hospitality and protection for all persons, masks will be required during the entire worship experience.** We urge you to be vaccinated and, if available, be tested before you attend, and if you are not feeling well, please join us via our live streamed worship. Our Christmas Eve worship is well attended by the greater Kalamazoo community. As persons who attend regularly, we ask that you consider staggering your attendance throughout the evening as this will help to create two full worship services, not one overly full worship service. Choir and brass will be a part of leading worship at both the 7pm and 9pm services. We would also ask that you might consider sitting in the balcony as you are familiar with it. We will also plan to have overflow in Wesley Hall and the parlor.

Last year our only in person event was "Silent Night" on the front steps. As the snowflakes drifted from the dark night sky; we knew we had come upon a beautiful tradition. For all who may be hesitant to worship inside, we hope you will consider coming for this simple but inspiring gathering. It is also a witness to our community as we sing to those who may be in the park admiring the lights and paying homage to the nativity.

*O Come, o come Emmanuel! On this night, we remember God has come in the Christ Child.*

## Join Us for Worship Wherever You Are

### IN PERSON AT FUMC KALAMAZOO *Sundays at 10am in the Sanctuary*

Please wear a mask and keep space from one another in the sanctuary. As you exit, use the Park Street doors and visit in the yard or parking lot. Children and Family Ministries Team members will be in the family room (located on the way to the balcony) for families who would like to bring their children for the fellowship of play. Children are welcome in the sanctuary as well.

### LIVESTREAM ONLINE WORSHIP *Join the livestream on Sundays at 10am*

Access online livestream worship at <https://www.umc-kzo.org/live/> or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/c/KalamazooFirstUnitedMethodistChurch/>. Watching on YouTube allows you to make comments and connect to others who are worshipping online.

### ON DEMAND ONLINE WORSHIP *Access past services 24/7 online*

Past services are available on our [website](#) or on [YouTube](#).

### SUNDAY SATELLITE SERVICES

**-Heritage Community: 3pm in the Bistro**  
**-The Fountains at Bronson Place: 4pm in the auditorium**

**-Friendship Village: 6:30pm in the KIVA**  
We are happy to celebrate with one another again and invite retirement community residents to join us for worship. Residents of Friendship Village and the Fountains should sign up with their respective activity coordinator.

# Happy Holidays from FUMC Kalamazoo!



## Farewell to Sara Miller and Welcome to Christiane Stakely

Though we are grateful for her many contributions as Creative Coordinator, we are sad to share that Sara Miller recently worked her final day at FUMC Kalamazoo. Sara was working remotely while living in Baltimore and will be pursuing exciting new opportunities including being part of the Trevor Project and going to seminary. Please join us in wishing Sara well!

Christiane (Chris) Stakely joined FUMC Kalamazoo as our new Office Assistant in late November. Chris plans to primarily work in the office on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Originally from Rhode Island, Chris moved to Michigan from Ohio in 2018. She has three sons, two dogs, two cats and is fluent in French. In addition to visiting her grandchildren, Chris enjoys cooking (especially French foods) and spending time outside. Please join us in welcoming Chris at [cstakely@umc-kzo.org](mailto:cstakely@umc-kzo.org).

## Life Labyrinths

A poem by Mark D. Stucky

Nothing frightful lurks in sacred labyrinths.  
No Minotaur inside waits to devour us.  
No complex branches exist to confuse us.

Only a single, circular path,  
winding back and forth,  
silently invites us.  
A path sketched on the ground.  
A path for prayerful healing  
of any monsters in our minds.  
A path intended for mindfulness,  
peace, and private pilgrimage  
toward contemplative centeredness.

As in life, our path curves  
and endures sudden detours  
and substantial reversals.



Our goal comes closer to us  
but then recedes from us  
over and over again.  
But we can be certain  
we'll eventually enter  
that elusive center.

(Note: The labyrinth  
will be available in  
Wesley Hall through  
Advent as part our  
Big Deal Weekend  
lead up events.)

## Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Nina Baker, who died on December 4.  
Betty Glen, who died on November 19.  
Dotty Hook, who died on November 20.  
Howard Vindedahl (father of Ann Kneas),  
who died on November 27.

## Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Fred and Lana Allen  
Anderson Family  
Ball Family  
Baker Family  
Binns Family  
Nina Baker  
Doris Ball  
Wanda Boekhout  
Harriet & Don Chalker  
Andreea Frew  
Glen Family  
Ruth Evelyn Graham  
Nell Holland  
Hook Family  
Hurley Family  
John & Carol Holms  
Deanna & Sara House  
Lenora Holliday  
David Houseman  
Doris Lee  
Ellen McDonald  
Bob McClelland  
Myrta Messikommer  
Gautam Parthasarathy & Family  
Jeanne Plott  
Mary Lou Sanderson  
Jan Search  
Skuzza Family  
Kim & Larry Taylor  
Chris Uggen & Family  
Vindedahl Family  
Kathy Winchell  
Winkler Family  
Keene & Liza Wolfe  
Janet Wyndendorf

## Prayer requests:

If you would like to share a prayer request with our clergy and prayer ministry team, please visit [www.umc-kzo.org/contact-us/prayer-request/](http://www.umc-kzo.org/contact-us/prayer-request/). If you do not have internet access, please call the church at (269) 381-6340 and leave a message. Prayer requests need to be received each **THURSDAY by noon** for inclusion in our weekly list for the prayer ministry team.



## FUMC Kalamazoo is Home to a Little Free Library

In August 2013, Dolores Heidanus and the Outreach team approved the distribution of new books to children who visit our food pantry. Since that time, we have given over 4,000 books to children who otherwise may not have had a book of their own.

Research shows that during the first 3 years of life, important brain development is happening and it is critical that children are read to as they begin the path to becoming readers. In Kalamazoo County alone, nearly 25,000 adults are not functionally literate which translates into being unable to read a job application, prescription label, a story to their child and other tasks involving print.



Plans for the distribution of food in our food pantry have changed but thanks to the efforts of Dionna Roberts and Kellen Dean, one of 32 beautifully painted Little Free Libraries has been planted at our church. Each of the 32 libraries are placed with the intent of reaching children who may live in what is considered a "book desert." The libraries, painted by local artists, provide diverse books in an effort to have all children see themselves in literature.

Not only will families with children visiting the pantry have access to new books but also the children of First Care. We are grateful to join this Kalamazoo Art of Planting Little Free Libraries effort as we continue to work toward creating a literate Kalamazoo by providing books for all children from birth. Please direct any questions to Donna Oudersluys at donnaoudersluys@gmail.com. -The Outreach Team

## Helping Our Neighbors Launches Phase 2 of the Phone Ministry Project

Last winter while distributing sleeping bag coats to homeless folks at the encampments, we often asked our friends what they needed most: "a cell phone" was a frequent answer. Many didn't have a phone to make appointments for job interviews or doctor checkups; in fact, neither could they contact family members or other camp members who were also struggling. Also concerning was the fact that when they saw trouble break out, they couldn't even call 911!

A grant from the United Methodist Michigan Conference Board of Justice, along with gifts from our church's Helping Our Neighbors program, Special Ministries Fund and the Memorial Fund, as well as a gift from another local congregation, allowed us to begin Phase 1 of the HON Phone Ministry Project at Ministry with Community on October 22, 2021.



The need was overwhelming! Scores of people need a cell phone, but are without the means to buy one. That's why our church's Phone Ministry Project needs to continue. In order for us to move forward, we need more funding. Our goal for Phase 2 is \$15,000. That seems like a lot, but think what it can do. This amount would enable us to provide another 100 phones and accessories to some of our neighbors "who ain't got it so good."

While any donation would be helpful, if 100 people will donate an average of \$150, this dream can become a reality. What a joy it was to hear from Danielle, who only a few days after we gave her a phone, had been able to set up a job interview and was on her way to Target to begin her new job! Or to see the gleam in the eyes of Gloria who, at age 71, was given her FIRST EVER cell phone. As Tim Mullikin and I helped her set it up, our hearts melted at her excitement and gratitude!

Think of how important your cell phone is to you and then think of those who need one, but can't afford one. We hope you will help by becoming part of our Adopt a Phone endeavor. There are multiple ways to give:

1. Mail a check to FUMC Kalamazoo at 212 S. Park St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007 and include HON Phone Ministry Project in the memo line.
2. Make an Online Donation to HON Phone Ministry Project on the [church website](#).

## Finance Committee

By Sandy Gower

### Finance Committee Chair

November was a busy month for the Finance Committee. We wrapped up budget discussions and presented the Church Council with a 2022 Budget of \$1,133,592.

Our income increased a little again in October. We had income of \$61,619 and expenses of \$82,985. That gives us a monthly deficit of \$21,366. Our income from pledges continues to be strong and we once again had an increase in offering plate income in October.

If you have not already, please return your pledge cards for next year. You can also complete your pledge card online on the Churches website. Your pledges are crucial for us to plan for next year's activities.

I hope you all have a safe and healthy Christmas.

Blessings,  
Sandy

## Special Offerings as of November 2021

### FUMC Special Offerings

Human Relations Sunday	\$285.00
UMCOR Sunday	\$1155.00
Easter Offering	\$8769.25
Native American Sunday	\$685.55
Peace with Justice Sunday	\$280.00
Justice Team Michigan United/ISAAC	\$1757.17
ASP Sunday Youth Missions	\$5531.95
World Communion Sunday	\$235.69
Christmas Offering	\$3000.00
UMW Sunday	\$0.00
UM Student Day	\$530.21
YANA	\$300.00
Phase 2 HON Phone Project	\$406.89

### Michigan Conference Special Offering

Christian Education Sunday	\$50.00
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## Celebrating Virginia VanPeenen

Hello Church family: Birthdays are to be celebrated and we surely like to celebrate. Virginia VanPeenen, a long time member, will turn 110 on January 29, 2022. We would like to throw her a card shower. She lives near her daughter at **810 Kingswood; Cary, NC 27513**. Please send your best wishes along to Virginia! Thank you from Robin Entenman and Laura VanVlack-Ailes, Caring Committee co-chairs.

## Thank You for Your Support of Our November Mission!

Once again, our congregation responded to the needs of our neighbors! Thank you for all that you provided for the Ministry With Community Underwear Party event. Your generosity surpassed years past and once again you have made a difference! The following gifts filled a car for delivery to Ministry With Community:

- Thermal underwear bottoms: 24
- Thermal underwear tops: 22
- Children's thermal underwear sets: 2
- Socks: 55 pairs
- Gloves: 18 pairs
- Underwear briefs: 73
- Hooded sweatshirt: 1
- Hats: 7
- Scarves: 7

-The Outreach Team



## Join us for upcoming Big Deal Weekend Lead Up Events!

The Reconciling Ministry Team is organizing the **Big Deal Weekend from March 18-20, 2022** and the theme is "Intersection: exploring identity in Christ through faith and anti-racism." Read on for details on upcoming lead up events to help us learn and prepare!

**January 9-February 13, Sunday morning class at 11:15am following worship in person in the Parlor at FUMC Kalamazoo or online via Zoom:** Author Ibram X. Kendi says that no one can say that they are "not a racist." The two choices are "racist" and "antiracist." We invite you to join Dan Duncan and Mark Stucky in a study of Kendi's book *How to Be an Antiracist*. Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism—and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other...this is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society. We will meet in the Parlor after worship for six weeks beginning Sunday, January 9 or you may join us remotely using Zoom. Please let us know if you're interested in participating in by emailing Dan at danduncan56@gmail.com by Sunday, January 2. Books are available at the church office for \$15 (or use your own).

**January 13 at 7pm in the parlor at FUMC Kalamazoo: Visual Media Series event.** In her new book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and Oprah's Book Club pick, Isabel Wilkerson explores the impact of the American caste system—a rigid hierarchy of human divisions—and its connections to caste systems in India and Nazi Germany. She documents how the Nazis studied American race laws as they planned the German Nuremberg Laws, and she points forward to ways that we can move beyond artificial and destructive separations towards a common humanity. In this program, Wilkerson and Rabbi Angela Warnick Buchdahl, Senior Rabbi at New York's Central Synagogue and the first Asian-American person to be ordained as cantor or rabbi in North America, discuss *Caste*, the legacy of the Holocaust, and what lies under the surface of American life today. Join us to watch the [YouTube video](#)!

## Change the World Offering: St. Luke's Diaper Bank

We are collecting diapers and wipes through Sunday, January 19, 2022 to **support St. Luke's Diaper Bank** and take care of babies here in our community. We're accepting diapers of all sizes (sizes 3 & up most needed). If you're unable to bring in diapers and wipes, we also accept monetary donations to purchase those items through the online giving link on [our website](#). Read on for some fast facts!



- Without diapers, babies cannot attend childcare facilities or participate in early childhood education.
- 1 in 3 US moms reports suffering from diaper need.
- Diapers can cost \$70-\$100 a month and babies need 6-10 diapers a day.
- Diaper need impacts the health (mental, physical, and emotional) as well as the economic well being of children and their caregivers.
- Low income families are not as likely to have private laundry facilities, meaning cloth diapers are not an option.

Learn more about St. Luke's Diaper Bank, a ministering agency of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, at [www.stlukesdiaperbank.org/](http://www.stlukesdiaperbank.org/).

## Dream Team Prayer Corner



Our Dream Team partners for affordable housing are: Kalamazoo Collective Housing, Building Blocks, the YWCA, Community Homeworks, Habitat for Humanity and Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing. Praise God for the visionary leadership of each of these housing partners during 2021. Ask God to provide wisdom, stamina and the support needed to implement the partners' plans for 2022. Continue to pray for these partners throughout the year ahead as they work to insure safe and affordable housing for all.

-The Dream Team



## New Year's Fest 2021

Plans are well under way for New Year's Fest. and FUMC Kalamazoo will again be part of the celebration! We will have entertainers in the Sanctuary and Wesley Hall and are looking for volunteers to help throughout the evening.

Shifts are two hours each, but flexible with your schedule. Everyone who volunteers will receive a pass to attend other shows around the park. Sign up in the Perks area on Sunday mornings or email Sharon and Dan Bunker at [djbunker@charter.net](mailto:djbunker@charter.net).

Thank you for being part of Kalamazoo's 36th New Year's Fest!

## The First Word for January

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **January 10, 2022**. The next newsletter will be mailed the week of **January 17**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent to Bethany Gauthier at [bgauthier@umc-kzo.org](mailto:bgauthier@umc-kzo.org). Articles may be edited for space and content.