

# THE FIRST WORD

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First United  
Methodist  
Church of Kalamazoo



## Easter Offering for 2022

The weather is finally warming up. Tulips and daffodils are beginning to sprout. Spring is on its way! Spring and Easter are a time of new beginnings. One of the missions that we will support this year is the Methodist Children's Home in Costa Rica. At the end of March, they will be dedicating a new building. A letter from Lidia Zirkel to the congregation dated March 9 is below. The other two missions we will support again this year are Dr. Desiree Segura-April and Rev. Emily Everett.

### Methodist Children's Home in Costa Rica

Dear Church Family,

We pray each of you are doing well and enjoying the fullness of Christ in your lives and ministry. [At the time of this writing] In 22 short days we will be celebrating the dedication of the new multipurpose building at the children's home. (March 31 at 10am.) Many of you have spent hours working on this building. It has taken seven years and the love and dedication of so many to make this a reality. Thank all for your dedication and investment in the lives of the children at the Home and now School. We wish you all could be with us for the celebration. You will be greatly missed.

The first of February began our school year. I hope you were able to see the video on our Facebook page, [Methodist Children's Home of Costa Rica](#). The school year has gotten off to a fantastic start. As many of you know, we had not planned on having a school at the Children's Home, yet God had other plans! COVID pushed us to open a branch of the Methodist School at the Home and it has been a tremendous blessing. There is a notable difference in the children. We cannot wait for you to come again and see the school and the children.

May God richly bless you in all that you are doing to reach the world for Christ. In Him, Ray and Lidia Zirkel



Watch for additional information on how you can support these missions in our weekly Around the Corner e-newsletter. You can also donate now on our [website](#) or by sending a check with 'Easter Offering' in the memo line. Thank you for your support of this important work.

## Dr. Desiree Segura-April

Dr. Desiree Segura-April is a missionary we have supported for several years and is with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church serving as a Resource Person for Children at Risk Ministries in Latin America & the Caribbean and living in Honduras. Her role is to equip partner churches and organizations for mission with children-at-risk, helping them to develop holistic ministries, create safe sanctuaries and child protection policies, and implement creative Christian education models.

Desiree is passionate about holistic ministry with children and youth and excited to partner with God's mission through creating and collating resources and facilitating trainings, workshops and retreats for pastors and lay leaders of the Methodist churches and partner organizations. She believes "we should all learn and work together to empower children to fulfill their God-given potential."

## Rev. Emily Everett

Rev. Emily A. Everett is with the General Board of Global Ministries. She serves with the Shade and Fresh Water Program in Brazil, an international partnership sponsored by the Methodist Church in Brazil. She was commissioned in October 2017.

Shade and Fresh Water is a national network of after-school programs for at-risk children and teenagers across Brazil. The main focus areas include character development and social responsibility. While projects are sustained locally and adapted to regional and ethnic differences in the vast country, basic resources are developed and shared nationally. Emily's role is to promote Shade and Fresh Water as an international mission partnership. Emily credits the Global Mission Volunteer Program experience—two months in Brazil—as a turning point in being able to "articulate something of what I felt God had created and called me to do with my life. I was still young and didn't know exactly what that meant, but I knew that my heart would forever be tied in some way shape or form to Brazil and that I found life and purpose and joy in serving God cross culturally."

## Healthy Habits of Hospitality

Throughout the pandemic we have maintained a policy of wearing masks at all indoor gatherings for the love of our neighbor. **Through Easter Sunday, April 17, we will continue to do so.** Currently, leadership is considering implementing a "mask optional" policy after Easter Sunday dependent upon current COVID-19 cases. Loving our neighbor and welcoming all, will be two of our foundational values, as we make policy and decisions around navigating a pandemic that has brought many surprises and unknowns. Please continue to be patient and conscientious of all as we gather as a community of people who have various levels of comfort and unique precautions regarding mask wearing.

**With caution and love for all, we remember these habits of hospitality:**

- If you are feeling unwell, please join us [online](#).
- We expect that all persons who are able, will be vaccinated.
- Wear a mask, covering both your nose and mouth.
- Maintain a 6' physical distance between family groups as we worship and sit in every other pew--as the ribbons indicate.
- If you have gathered with others and have the possibility of a COVID exposure, please join us [online](#).
- Greeting one another can be a little awkward. Best practice is to not share a handshake and make use of hand sanitizer provided or wash hands.

## Easter Flowers and Memorial Information



Members and friends of FUMC Kalamazoo have an opportunity to remember loved ones by providing Easter tulips for the floral decoration on Easter Sunday, or by giving a monetary gift to the church Memorial Fund.

Those wishing to provide a tulip should complete the form on our website (or request a form through the church office) and return it with a check for \$5 per plant or pay online on the church website. You may take your flower home after the 11am worship service on Easter Sunday.

Memorial gifts may be made for any amount online through our website or by check and returned with information regarding designation. Living persons may also be honored with tulips or a Memorial Fund contribution. **Please submit your flower order and/or memorial information by Wednesday, April 6.**



## Updates from Children and Families Ministries

**'Camperships' now available:** Summer is coming! Now is a great time to plan for a fun and faith-building experience for your child at one of our many United Methodist camp locations. For generations, Christian camping has turbo-charged the faith formation of people of all ages. We invite you to explore the incredible variety of options at this website: [umcamping.org](http://umcamping.org). And, our church provides "camperships" of \$100 towards the camp cost, making this an even sweeter deal for a life-changing experience! Please contact Julia Librizzi at [jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org) or Pastor Matt Weiler at [mweiler@umc-kzo.org](mailto:mweiler@umc-kzo.org) with any questions or to request a campership.

**Tween Group!** The youth group style meeting for 4th through 6th grade children ("twens") will meet in the Youth Lounge after church at the same time as Sunday School once a month. Save the dates for our Tween Group:

- Sunday, April 24
- Sunday, May 22 for downtown fun!

**Palm Sunday Family Fun:** Please join us on Palm Sunday (April 10) at 10am for a Palm Parade led by the children at the 10am worship! After church in Wesley Hall, we will have a story walk for the book by Glenys Nellist, *Twos the Morning of Easter*. Families will walk around Wesley Hall in the basement of church and go from table to table to do an activity at each table and collect Easter eggs. At the end of the story walk, each family will get to take home their own copy of the book!

**Save the date for Family Fun** at Airway Lanes for bowling on Friday, May 6 from 6-8pm.

## 2022 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

As we worship together and gather in small groups for Lent, our intention is to quiet things down and heighten our attention to the "still, small voice" of God and our own True Self. Worship moves us into meditating on the holy text and creating space to be intentional in God's presence as we kneel at the communion rail, light candles and add our prayers to the prayer quilt in the sanctuary. If you worship from home, we encourage you to create a sacred space that allows you to journal your prayers, light candles and add a few pillows for a place to kneel in prayer. Come and rest, come and listen.

-April 10 @ 10am **Palm & Passion Sunday: Listening to Your Heart** (Matthew 26:36-46)

-April 14 @ 7pm **Maundy Thursday: Finding Jesus**

-April 15 @ 7pm **Good Friday: Listening for the Inner Jerusalem**  
**-TWO EASTER SERVICES ON APRIL 17**  
**8am & 10am Easter Sunday: Listening for a Stone Rolled Away**

## Finance Committee Update By Sandy Gower Finance Committee Chair

I hope you all are enjoying the tastes of spring we've had the last couple of days. We are off to a strong start thanks to your generosity. In January, we had income of \$48,3432.83 and expenses of \$87,541.40 giving us a deficit of (\$39,198.57). In February, we had income of \$104,686.79 and expenses of \$84,492.63 giving us a monthly deficit of (\$20,492.63). The year-to-date deficit is (\$18,672.59).

We are truly a blessed to have such a generous congregation. I pray for peace and good health for all of you.

## Special offerings as of February 2022

### FUMC Special Offerings

Human Relations Sunday	\$1621.44
UMCOR Sunday	\$ 0.00
Easter Offering	\$ 200.00
Native American Sunday	\$ 0.00
Peace With Justice Sunday	\$ 200.00
Justice Team Michigan United/ISAAC	\$ 0.00
ASP Sunday Youth Missions	\$ 0.00
World Communion Sunday	\$ 100.00
Christmas Offering	\$ 702.75
UMW Sunday	\$ 0.00
UM Student Day	\$ 50.00
YANA	\$ 0.00
Phase 2 HON Phone Project	\$5947.62



## New Member Opportunity: Sundays, April 3-May 15, 2022

(No meeting on Easter Sunday)

As we worship together, we frequently refer to the vow of faithfully participating in the congregation through your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service and your witness. This is one of the vows that is made as persons are received into our community of faith. Another profession of faith that is regularly used as a part of our communal prayer life is that we accept the freedom and the power given by God to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. If you would like to further explore the commitment and joy of membership in The United Methodist Church, please contact Pastor Julie at [jkline@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jkline@umc-kzo.org). We will begin a new membership class on April 3 and receive new members on May 22. This class may be in person or on Zoom, depending upon the preferences of participants and if we have persons from outside the Kalamazoo area who would like to participate. The time will also be determined after speaking with interested persons.

## Updated Vanco Mobile App Now Available for Download

The current GivePlus app will stop working on April 30, 2022.

Vanco is replacing their GivePlus Mobile app with a new app, Vanco Mobile. The new app has additional features and is designed to make mobile giving easier. The Vanco Mobile app can be downloaded from either the Apple App store or the Google Play store. Once you've downloaded Vanco Mobile, you can search the app and join our church. All scheduled recurring gifts will process as planned and members should be able to log in using their existing username and password. You can find additional set up instructions and launch materials in Vanco's online Resource Center at [vancopayments.com/egiving/vanco-mobile-migration](http://vancopayments.com/egiving/vanco-mobile-migration).



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

Deanna House, who died on February 18.

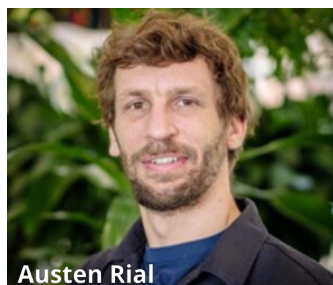
Jean Wright, who died on March 13.



## Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Fred and Lana Allen  
Wanda Boekhout  
Bovid Family  
Don & Harriet Chalker  
Terry Crockett  
Miriam Finch  
Graham Family  
Ashton & Mary Ellen Fredenburg  
Nell Holland  
Lenora Holliday  
David Houseman  
Bob Hunt  
Hurley Family  
Hyde Family  
Doris Lee  
Bob & Judy McClelland  
Ellen McDonald  
Durrell & Marsha McKenzie  
Myrta Messikommer  
Gautam Parthasarathy & Family  
Peavler Family  
Jeanne Plott  
Anna Rassmussen  
Richards Family  
Mary Lou Sanderson  
Jan Search  
Skuzza Family  
Chris Uggen & Family  
Vindedahl Family  
Kathy Winchell  
Keene & Liza Wolfe  
Janet Wyndorf

## Farewell to Austen Rial and Welcome to Tom Stemple



Austen Rial

**Austen Rial** joined the FUMC Kalamazoo staff in August 2017 in the Building Maintenance role and over the years he worked closely with the Building & Grounds Team to identify maintenance projects through out the building and make repairs--and at times taking on extra training to accommodate the unique needs of our historic space. Though we are saddened to say goodbye to Austen, we are grateful for his service and happy that he is able to relocate to be closer to family. Please join us in wishing Austen well!



Tommy Stemple

**Tom (Tommy) Stemple** joined FUMC Kalamazoo earlier this year to take over the Building Maintenance role. Retired from Iron Workers Local 1 Chicago, Tommy moved to Michigan eight years ago. Tommy has been married for 30 years and has three sons, two stepsons, one grandson and one granddaughter, who holds a special place as the first girl born in their family. In addition to repairing and fixing things--and staying busy, Tommy enjoys music and peace. He wants to do the best job for the church he can and respect the responsibility of maintaining our building. Please join us in welcoming Tommy at [tstemple@umc-kzo.org](mailto:tstemple@umc-kzo.org).

## Coming Soon: Children's Nature Playscape on Bronson Park

Ground was broken on the Children's Nature Playscape on Bronson Park--a new addition to our downtown landscape--on March 22, 2022. The Children's Nature Playscape on Bronson Park is a project dedicated to transforming a reclaimed green space into a nature park for the children of Kalamazoo. The Playscape will be a space where children are encouraged to engage in creative unstructured play with natural elements in a park-like setting to help foster their cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development.

The project team aims to open the playscape this spring. Learn more about the Playscape and ways our community can support it at [kalamazooplayscape.org](http://kalamazooplayscape.org).



## 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.



## Academy St. Doors Updated

Our doors off of Academy St. were recently updated to improve building security. The doors serve as an emergency exit to be used by FUMC Kalamazoo, Justice for Our Neighbors and First Care Preschool and Daycare. Thank you to Buildings & Grounds for overseeing this project. Our building inscription remains: *Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done Through Mind and heart and hand*

## UMC General Conference Postponed Until May 2024

### Opportunities Being Planned To Learn More

Since early 2019 United Methodists eagerly awaited the May 2020 General Conference where over 800 delegates from around the world would make important decisions about the future of The United Methodist Church. It was expected that the General conference would approve the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, a proposal that would allow theologically conservative churches to leave the UMC and join a new denomination created by the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

The pandemic caused the May 2020 General Conference to be postponed and, after two further postponements, on March 3 it has been postponed again until May 2024. The reason for these delays was due to the pandemic and the inability of delegates from outside the United States to obtain visas.

Although it is unlikely that final decisions by the General Conference will affect our church very much, it is nevertheless important that our congregation be aware of these developments. Deb Search Willoughby and David Lundquist are currently planning opportunities for our congregation to learn more about what is happening within the denomination and how that may impact our church. Be watching for announcements about these opportunities for learning and discussion.

## HON Distributes 400 Phones

The Helping Our Neighbors (HON) Phone Ministry Project reached another important milestone on March 22, 2022 while at the Douglass Community Association: They distributed their 400th phone!

Thank you to Helping Our Neighbors, our dedicated volunteers, Daniel and the team at Cricket, our community partners and to all of our generous donors. Without support, this goal would not have been reached. But the need continues and so does the work. There is still time to support this ministry. Please visit our website or send a check to the church if you'd like to contribute.



## March Mission of the Month: Sunnyside UMC Community Garden

For the March Mission of the Month, we are supporting the Sunnyside UMC Community Garden. This large community garden supplies fresh grown produce to Loaves & Fishes and the Freestore at Sunnyside to people who are food insecure, but like all gardens it takes a lot of work! We hope to provide funds for Sunnyside to hook up to city water for irrigation of the garden. For the month of March, you can donate money for this ministry during the services, by text, on the church website or by mailing a check to the church, designating March Mission of the Month. In partnership with Sunnyside UMC, small group opportunities will be available throughout the growing season for you to get your hands dirty. Please save the date for May 21 for a small group planting opportunity and watch church communications for more information. Thank you for your support!



## Dream Team Prayer Corner



Thank God that Habitat for Humanity now has a licensed contractor on their team and can move forward with building homes.

Pray for staff at the YWCA as they finalize the purchase of another transitional house for women and children made possible by FUMC Dream fund contributions.

Ask God's leading as you consider contributing to the Dream in these final months of the campaign for affordable housing for all.

-The Dream Team

## Kalamazoo Earth Day Festival 2022

In the spirit of promoting collaborative action that leads to a more sustainable, supportive, and equitable community, the Kalamazoo Earth Day Festival is coordinating an entire month of activities and we encourage you to join us this April to do the work of making our community a better place for all.

Find events and information at [www.kalamazooearthday.com](http://www.kalamazooearthday.com)



## The First Word for April

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **April 11, 2022**. The next newsletter will be mailed the week of **April 18**. 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.