

THE FIRST WORD

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

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP IN PERSON OR ONLINE ON SUNDAYS AT 10AM.



First United
Methodist
Church of Kalamazoo



Photo by Keith Mumma

Advent: Close to Home

This Advent we will use the rich resource "Close to Home" from Sanctified Art to guide our time of worship, provide an Advent devotional booklet for home use, an Advent calendar for children and families, and beautiful artwork and poetry.

In this season of reflection, we consider that when something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. The Close to Home theme acknowledges the "already but not yet" tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, yet God's promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep longing for God to come close to us.

The Advent and Christmas scriptures are rich with home metaphors and imagery. In these scriptures, home is physical and metaphorical, something we seek and are called to build. In many ways, these scriptures are like blueprints—detailing the dreams of a God who makes a home with us. Ultimately, God is our home and resting place. God draws near and makes a home on earth; sacred ground is all around us.

This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home—wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

November 27: First Sunday of Advent
Homesick (Hope)

December 4: Second Sunday of Advent
Laying the Foundation (Peace)

December 11: Third Sunday of Advent:
A Home for All (Joy)

December 18: Fourth Sunday of Advent
Seeking Sanctuary (Love) Children's Pageant

December 24: Christmas Eve
Invited Home
-4pm: Children & Family Worship
-7pm: Lessons & Carols
-11pm: Carols and Communion

December 25: Christmas Day
Invited Home



CLOSE to
HOME

Children's Christmas Musical

The First Beats Children's music ensemble will be presenting a Christmas musical on Sunday, December 18 during the 10am service. We will present Mark Burrow's "Room for Christmas." It will feature our children from 3rd through 8th grade plus children from the younger Sunday school class. The musical explores the idea of bringing new life to the traditional Christmas story, complete with a bossy angel, wise-cracking shepherds and unruly sheep! Through the musical the children discover the true joy and wonder of Christmas by making room for what really matters.

If your child is interested in participating in the show in any manner, please let us know. We will make room for them! (Contact Jackie Stilger, Director of Music, at jstilger@umc-kzo.org.)

Come out and support the children of our congregation as they present this mini-musical. They have been working very hard to make it a wonderful show and we would love to see you on December 18 at 10am!

Join us for Advent Concerts

We are pleased to share that we will once again host Advent Concerts this December. All concerts take place on Thursdays and begin at noon in the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo. Each concert will be followed by a brief reception with the artists. Refreshments will be served. Sponsored by the Music and Arts committee.

December 1: **Larry and Carla Sue**, handbell duo

December 8: **Tweeo jazz trio** featuring Andrew Rathbun, saxophone, Owen Cramer, bass and Joe Miller, drums.

December 15: **Choral Scholars & Friends** featuring Brianna Attard, Hannah Elandt, Isaac Thompson, Carly Braginton, Justin Hamann and Taylor Zickefoose.

Children and Families Ministries News

Christmas Family Fun Night for All: The Children and Families Ministries Team invites all to a Christmas Family Fun Night on Friday, December 2 from 6-8pm in Wesley Hall on the lower level of the church. We'll share pizza and decorate cookies to be delivered to people in our community. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Ms. Julia at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org by Tuesday, November 29, 2022.

Acolyte Sign Up: Acolyte means "helper." Being an acolyte in worship at our church means helping by lighting the candles on the altar. It is important. The altar candles are lit in worship to remind us of God's presence with us. The basic task is to walk up the central aisle carrying a candle lighter, to light the candles on the altar, and to then take a seat with their family. Usually this procession happens during the Opening Hymn of worship. At the end of worship the acolyte snuffs the candle after lighting the taper from the candle, then walks out the central aisle to "carry the light of Christ out into the world." This procession usually happens during the Postlude. (Ms. Julia helps acolytes know when exactly to go up each week.)



Acolytes work in best in pairs. If two children want to sign up together, we ask that both children be 3rd graders or older. New, this year, is the opportunity for a child and parent, or child and grandparent, or child and special adult to sign up to acolyte together. In this case the child could be as young as a 1st grader. (But they would need help to light the altar candles because they will not be tall enough to reach the altar.) To learn more and access the online sign up, please contact Ms. Julia at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org.

Save the dates for upcoming Family Fun Events for All!

Friday, January 13, 2023 from 6-8pm: **Pool Party at Borgess Fitness Center**, join the CFM team for an hour of swimming and then share a potluck meal together after!

Sunday, February 5, 2023 from 2-4pm: **Sledding or Skating party** depending on weather! (Exact details will be decided as this event grows closer.)

Friday, March 10, 2023 from 6-8pm: **Bowling Party at Airway Lanes**

And please also save the date for the **Moms' Retreat** from April 28-30, 2023 at the Ludington beach house. More information will be coming soon for those who would like to sign up!



November Mission of the Month: Underwear Party

This November, we'll once again support Ministry with Community and their annual Underwear Party. A collection box will be located near the security desk. Requested items this year are:

- Men's boxers or boxer briefs
- Women's underwear
- Thermal undergarments (pants & long-sleeved shirts)
- Sweatshirts and sweatpants
- Insulated gloves
- Winter hats
- Neck warmers or scarves
- Hand warmers

For items above, please donate men's and women's adult sizes: M-3XL. In addition, new items only and plain colors preferred. No open-knit or crocheted items, please.

What About Socks? Thanks to the generosity of our community and a few sock manufacturers, socks are not needed this year!



Giving Campaign Update

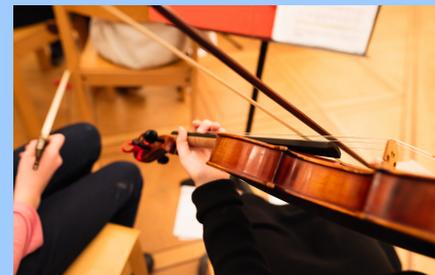
On October 30, we held a Consecration Sunday service for pledges to the 2023 operating budget. The fall Giving Campaign continues with pledges being welcome either through the church website or by mail to the church office. If you'd like to pledge online, please visit www.umc-kzo.org/generosity/stewardship.



Junior First Strings and Winds Orchestra

A youth orchestra has been formed to play at the 4pm Christmas Eve service. Any youth who has had at least one year of music lessons on their instrument is welcome to join.

Upcoming rehearsals will be on Thursday evenings on December 1, December 8, December 15 and December 22. Please contact Anne Sherfield at (269) 760-3803 with any questions.



EPS/Styrofoam Recycling Available Every Day!

EPS collection will now take place every day that our church building is open! Please bring washed food containers or cups, foam labeled 6 or any items made of foam that break when bent to the box at the security desk. (Foam peanuts are not allowed.) Thank you for joining us in another effort to make every day Earth Day!

Wesley Foundation Friendsgiving Gala Sunday, November 20

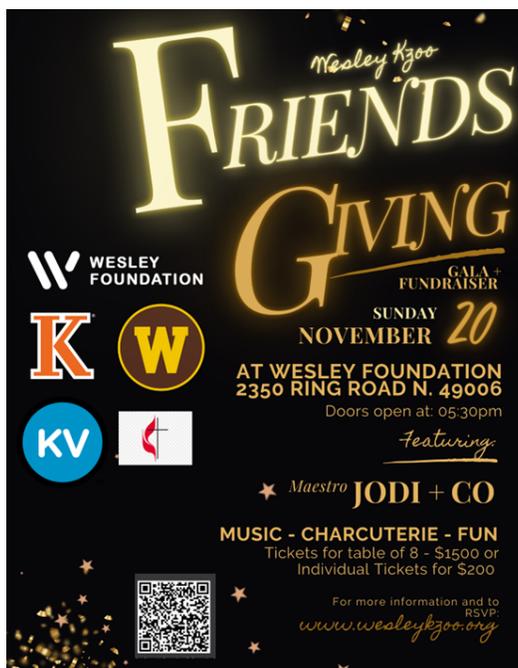
A few Sundays ago we had the pleasure of hosting Jeremy Simpson, Wesley Foundation Executive Director in the pulpit! He shared the rich history of the Wesley Foundation and how we birthed the foundation at WMU and have continued to support it throughout the years. The Wesley Foundation turns 100 next year! Covid and the pandemic era has impacted the organization greatly, particularly during the time when students could not attend in person. The Wesley Foundation is in dire need of funds and support!

You can help support this vital ministry by sponsoring a table or an individual ticket at the Wesley Foundation's Friendsgiving Gala event to be held Sunday, November 20 at 5:30pm! You can also support the foundation financially with whatever you can afford to support them with and ensure young people are cloaked in God's love.

Thank you in advance for accepting our invitation to continue empowering young adults all around the Kalamazoo area. We sincerely believe that with your contribution and support we will continue to reach the next generation. We truly appreciate any and all help you can offer!

There are a couple ways you can choose to give. You can give through our church website at umc-kzo.org, selecting Online Giving and choosing 'Other gifts and payments.' Specify the amount you would like to donate, the frequency, and list Wesley Foundation as the receiver.

You can also give directly to the Wesley Foundation at their website at wesleykzoo.org. Thank you for helping to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World via our young people! If you have any questions, please contact Derek Wheaton at derekwheaton@gmail.com or (269) 998-7829.



Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

George Macleod, who died on November 3.

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Lana Allen & Family
 Don & Harriet Chalker
 Ashton Fredenburg
 Holland Family
 Lenora Holliday
 John & Carol Homs
 Houseman Family
 Nancy Hyde
 Nancy Johnson
 Bill & Ruth LaMachia
 Elaine Martin & John St. Laurent
 Bob & Judy McClelland
 Durrell & Marsha McKenzie
 Anna Rassmussen
 Rawsky Family
 Mary Lou Sanderson
 Scott Sanderson
 Barb Skuza
 Nelson & Mary Stapleton
 Jim Treece
 Uggen Family
 Lori Valkema
 Liza Wolfe
 Thell Woods
 Janet Wydendorf

Welcome to Jose Celorio, New Communications Coordinator

Sharing a note from Jose Celorio, our new Communications Coordinator who began his role here at FUMC Kalamazoo a few weeks ago.

I want to introduce myself to all of you! I'm taking over for Bethany as the Communications Coordinator. I was born in Mexico and moved to the United States for college. I attended Western Michigan University and graduated with a communications major. While getting my degree I worked for Farmers Insurance as a producer and was responsible for most of their marketing campaigns.



Jose Celorio and his wife, Megan, in Madrid, Spain

After graduation, I decided to pursue my master's degree and moved to Spain to achieve that goal. During that time, I worked for my favorite soccer club, Real Madrid C.F. Working for the communications department of one of the most significant sports entities in the world was one of the most fulfilling experiences in my life. I returned to the United States and married my wonderful wife, Megan. During my job search, GOD put First United Methodist Church in my path, and I'm so grateful and excited that he did.

We are happy to have Jose as part of the FUMC staff. If you'd like to welcome Jose to his new role, his email is jcelorio@umc-kzo.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/. 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.

After Worship Coffee Service Volunteers

Sunday coffee service has resumed at FUMC Kalamazoo. Join us after worship in the Perks area on the first level of the church. We look forward to once again sharing coffee and fellowship with you! If you have questions or would like to assist, please contact Ruth LaMachia at rlamachia@umc-kzo.org.

Academy Class on the Future of The United Methodist Church After Worship on November 20

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. The pandemic caused the postponement of that General Conference until May 2024.

In the meantime, several things have happened that will shape the UMC's future. Every local church and all parts of The United Methodist Church have experienced the pandemic and its impact on ministry. In many places membership and finances are less. In others, ministry and finances have remained vital. A small percentage of churches have left or are choosing to leave the denomination (a process called "disaffiliation") to become part of the Global Methodist Church, a newly formed body attracting those who no longer feel they can be part of The United Methodist Church.

It is important that our congregation be aware of these developments. Deb Search Willoughby and David Lundquist will lead an **Academy Class on Sunday, November 20 at 11:15am in the Parlor**. This class will provide the opportunity to hear more about what is happening within the denomination, to discuss and ask questions, and to learn how the UMC's future may or may not impact First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo.

Seeking New Year's Fest 2022 Event Volunteers



Plans are well under way for New Year's Fest 2022 and First United Methodist Church of 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 performances at the other venues around Bronson Park. If you can help, please sign up in the Perks area on Sunday mornings or email Sharon and Dan Bunker at djbunker@charter.net.

Thanks for being part of the 37th celebration of Kalamazoo New Year's Fest. You can find more information on what's in store for this year's event at www.newyearsfest.com.

Can You Lend an Ear to Helping Our Neighbors?

Ears wanted! Our Helping Our Neighbors ministry (HON) is in need of volunteers to help those who need assistance with utilities or avoiding eviction. Since the pandemic, this ministry has been operating by phone, answering calls daily. If you have a compassionate heart and are comfortable talking on the phone and using email, you can be a HON volunteer!

HON is hoping to staff this rewarding and much needed ministry with enough volunteers for each day of the week to be shared by two volunteers. Will you lend your ear? For information, contact Ann at rasweany@charter.net, or Ruth at rlamachia@umc-kzo.org.

Bronson Park Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 25

The City of Kalamazoo will host its Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on Friday, November 25 in Bronson Park! Festivities are planned from 5 to 7pm. The lighting of the park will occur at approximately 6pm. Everyone in the community is invited to celebrate the holiday season and the diverse traditions that make it so special. The event will feature family activities, live performances as well as local food vendors. Find additional event information at www.kzoo.org/Events.



Emotional Support Training

YWCA Kalamazoo is looking for volunteers to help victims of sexual assault by providing emotional support while they meet with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. If you'd like to be a part of this community, training will take place on December 15 & 16, 2022. The positive impact is invaluable!

For more information, please contact Lindsey King, Emergency Response Team Advocate at lking@ywcakalamazoo.org or (269) 345-5595 ext. 326.



Bronson Park Food Pantry Volunteers Needed

Our Food Pantry is open every Wednesday from 12:30-2:30pm for "drive up" food delivery. Prepacked dry goods, plus fresh items are available for ALL who come. If you are interested in volunteering in our pantry, please contact Dawn Wheaton at dawheaton53@gmail.com.



Pastor Julie Kline during All Saints Sunday worship on November 6, 2022

The First Word for December

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **December 5, 2022**. The next newsletter will be mailed the week of **December 12**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent to jcelorio@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.