

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.



Photo by Keith Mumma

THANK YOU!

Beloved,

"In this season of Advent as we turn our hearts toward Christmas, we know our yearning. The journey has not been easy over these years and we long for home. We desire a place of deep belonging, of safety, shelter, and with a big sigh, rest. We long for a place where our story is a part of the story. Our Advent journey has been beckoning us to find home. To remember with all that we are, and all that God is creating us to be that God is true home. At times, we traverse away from this grounding, as we stumble along, distracted, busy, consumed by the demands of life. We need Christmas to bring us back to a cosmic love that is humbled and born in a manger that becomes home for all."

Rev. Julie Kline

Community is strongest when we are together, and Christmas is the perfect opportunity to thank God for the love that manifests in our lives, which takes the form of family/friends like you. It invites us to reflect on our year and look forward to what is next and how we can grow through our faith.

Thank you for helping make this a gratifying, successful, and fulfilling year and for being a part of our wonderful community.

Join us for Christmas Eve service



Invited
Home
Christmas Eve

Join us for Christmas Eve worship at the following times:

- 4:00 pm – Children and Family Worship
- 7:00 pm – Lessons and Carols with Candlelight
- 11:00pm – Lessons and Communion
- The 7pm and 11pm will be live streamed on our YouTube channel.

Children and Families Ministries News

Faith Milestones are those firsts as we grow in our faith experiences because we know it doesn't happen just on Sunday mornings. It's part of all we are and all we do as God's beloved people.

This is a new opportunity for our 3rd - 5th graders! Please join, Julia Librizzi and Jocelyn Newman for our second and third "Faith Milestones" meetings on Sunday, January 22, 2023 and Sunday, February 26, 2023 from 5:30-7:30pm. We will share dinner, play games and learn more about our church and our faith! In January we will have a "backstage tour" of the sanctuary and in February we will learn about prayer and communion with hopes of helping to lead communion on Sunday, March 5, 2023. Please contact Ms. Julia at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org for more info.



Acolyte Sign Up: 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. 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. To learn more and access the online sign up, please contact Ms. Julia at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org.

Children are invited to share instrumental solos for prelude December 24 at 4pm service: Director of Music, Jackie Stilger, and Director of Children and Families Ministries, Julia Librizzi, invite the children to consider sharing a musical piece (solo) on their instrument for the 4pm Christmas Eve service prelude.

If your child would like to play something live for the prelude on Christmas Eve, please email Ms. Jackie at jstilger@umc-kzo.org with the title of the piece by Monday, December 19 so that we can include it in the bulletin.

Make sure you to save the dates for the upcoming Family Fun Events!!!

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!

MANNA AND MERCY

Manna and Mercy: God's Unfolding Plan to Mend the Entire Universe

An Eight Week Bible Led by Pastor Matt Weiler Sunday's after Worship January 15-March 5 Manna and Mercy is a Bible Study designed to teach the Narrative Arc of Scripture through the lens of God's liberating actions. During this eight week study we will journey from Genesis to Revelation covering a number key theological insights such as "Not All Things Biblical are Christ-Like" and "God is more interested in Relationship than in the Rules of Religion." Copies of the Book Manna and Mercy will be available and participants should plan on having Bibles and notebooks on hand. This class is designed for persons just beginning to learn about the Bible as well as the Biblical Scholars in our midst.

Giving Campaign Update

As of December 4, we've received \$697,198 in pledges for the 2023 operating budget. This is 96% of where we were in pledges a year ago (\$729,310). This is a definite improvement, but we still want to go beyond last year's total.

If you have not yet made a pledge to this fall's Giving Campaign, please send your pledge card to the church office or make a pledge online at www.umc-kzo.org/generosity/stewardship.



Family Fun!

We also want to give a warm thank you to all the families that came out to the Family Fun Night on Dec. 2nd. Events like this are only possible with your participation and energy.



Chirstmas family fun event



Chirstmas family fun event

Partnering in Outreach Ministry in Downtown Kalamazoo

Since February, outreach representatives from our downtown Kalamazoo churches have been gathering once a month. Representatives from Trinity Lutheran Church, St Luke's Episcopal, First Presbyterian, First Congregational, Faith Temple Baptist, St Augustine's Cathedral, St. Vincent De Paul and FUMC continue to grow and learn together as Christ's body serving our city. The stated goals of these gatherings are to:



- *Learn about and better understand the existing ministries of each of our churches
- *Explore the gaps in ministry and collaborate in response to the needs of our downtown neighbors
- *Make known to other downtown churches the need for volunteers and resources in existing ministries
- *Maximize the impact of the financial assistance made available by our churches while attempting to simplify the path to those resources
- *Continue to discover together how to best shine the light of Christ in downtown Kalamazoo

Since our first gathering, we have created a directory of the existing outreach ministries of our churches which is proving to be a helpful tool for those who daily interact with our downtown neighbors. A spreadsheet has been developed on which the churches document the resources given to our neighbors. A refugee family sponsored by First Presbyterian received needed clothing at the Children's Clothing Closet at St Luke's. A member of our church received work boots from First Congregational in order to begin a new job. FUMC and other congregations began collaborating with a member of First Congregational, who is part of Hope for Creation, in collecting EPS beyond the City of Kalamazoo collection dates.

It has been exciting to see these and other collaborative efforts grow in number and we are eager to learn where the Spirit will lead us in the months ahead.

-Ann Sweany and Donna Oudersluys, representing FUMC's Outreach team

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Truth Racial Healing and Transformation Circles

To celebrate the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and National Day of Racial Healing - Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Kalamazoo will be hosting three free racial healing experiences to the public on Monday, January 16th, 2023. TRHT is an excellent way for the people of First United Methodist Church to deepen our collective and individual Antiracism work, and so the Leadership Team Invites anyone interested to participate. TRHT Kalamazoo brings together individuals from varying identities and racial backgrounds to discuss personal narratives and provide insight, understanding, and appreciation of one another. Through sharing our unique experiences related to race and identity, we are working together towards trust, connectedness, forgiveness, balance, and wholeness. The circle provides the opportunity to engage the heart through truth telling and openness to listening to the experiences of others. By engaging at this level, we hope to illuminate past and current truths about the trauma and harm caused by racism, both individually and collectively.

All interested in participating together may meet in the FUMC parking lot on Monday January 16th at 9am and travel together to The Douglass Community Association for the 9:30-12:30 experience. Other times and locations are also available and more information, along with registration can be found at this link Or at the TRHT Facebook and Instagram Pages which can be accessed through their website here <https://www.kalfound.org/truth-racial-healing-transformation>

Space is limited for each space and anyone who wishes to participate must RSVP by Friday, January 6th. If you plan on attending and traveling together please also notify our church council co-chairs Derek and Lori at churchcouncil@umc-kzo.org

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Chris Uggen, who died on November 29

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Lana Allen & family
Don and Harriet Chalker
Christine
Destiney & Jasmine
Ashton Fredenburg
Lenora Holliday
John & Carol Homs
Nancy Hyde
Nancy Johnson
Dan Kitchen
Bill and Ruth LaMachia
The MacLeod family
Elaine Martin & John St. Laurent
Bob & Judy McClelland
Durrell & Marsha McKenzie
The Rawsy Family
Anna Rassmussen
Charles, Micah, Garret, & Emily Rose
Rudy
Mary Lou Sanderson
Scott Sanderson
Shannon
Barb Skuza
Nelson & Mary Stapleton
T, who is adopting 6 nieces & Nephews
Jim Treece
The Uggen family
Lori Valkema
Liza Wolfe
Thell Woods
Janet Wyndendor

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.

RECONCILING MINISTRY TEAM LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

Our third year of serving as RMT co-chairs is coming to a close and we are passing the baton to a dynamic trio! Mandakini Brophy, Cara Weiler and Phil Van Orman have agreed to co-lead beginning in January and are bubbling over with enthusiasm and ideas. We know that the work the Team has done towards becoming a fully welcoming congregation will carry on with gusto!

As we reflect on our "tour of duty", we are indebted to the effort of previous Team leaders and the ongoing commitment of past and current Team members. Over time we have laid the groundwork for our goals and values, developed our Call to Action, and then responded to the Call to Action with the Big Deal Weekend. In mustard-seed fashion, the Weekend sparked several beyond the RMT to offer additional opportunities for exploration and introspection.

We have no way of knowing how far our ripples extend, but we feel momentum growing! We are thankful for all who have helped shape our work, and for those who hold tight to the vision for an inclusive, ever-expanding table.

-Lisa Batten and Mary Whittaker Duncan

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.

Blue Christmas

For all of us who have experienced loss. Truly in this pandemic, this is all of us, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. As a result, churches around the world have adopted the practice of having a "Blue Christmas." In the Northern hemisphere, the nights get longer and darker and this can have an impact on our spiritual lives. This worship is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle. In this pandemic season of life, we imagine that grief and loss will be magnified and nearly universal, and we need a service like this more than ever. Come and worship, in the candlelight, in the dark, in the presence of the One who holds you and among a faith community that will sit beside you through the longest nights.

Please join us on December 14 at 7pm

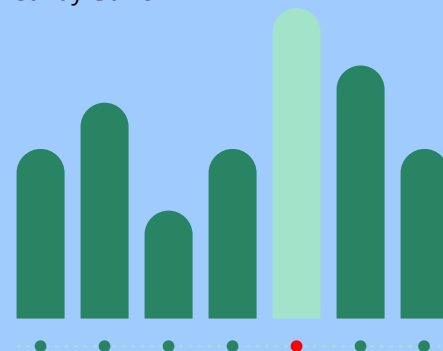
Update from the Finance team

The Finance Team has been busy working on the 2023 Budget. Our General Fund operating budget is primarily funded through the generosity of our wonderful congregation. If you have not yet returned your pledge card (or completed online) please do so. In September the General Fund had income of \$64,783.53 and expenses of \$79,252.12 for a monthly deficit of (\$14,468.59). Our October income was \$53,798.59 with expenses of \$64,448.23 for a monthly (\$10,469.64). That leaves us with a year-to-date deficit of (\$98,594.42). The carryover funds from 2021 are not reflected in the income so we will not end the year in a deficit situation.

My term as Chair of the Finance Team is coming to an end. It has been my pleasure to serve you.

May you all have a very peaceful and blessed Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sandy Gower



The First Word for January

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



Pastor Julie Kline and Rev. Matt Weiler on second saturday of advent December, 4th