

# THE FIRST WORD



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

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



## YANA Celebrating the Legacy

Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with Ray Sweany about YANA (You Are Not Alone). It's not every day that I meet people who care so deeply about others, although since I started working at this church, I encounter more and more of these extraordinary individuals. Ray's passion for YANA and the good it did was palpable.

YANA was birthed out of the necessity that arose when Martha's Table, a meal-providing initiative at First Congregational Church, was announced to be suspending its services. Ray, a chemistry professor and avid runner, along with others at First United Methodist Church, took it upon themselves to fill this gap.

Ray's understanding of nutrition, developed from his academic background and personal fitness habits, played a key role in shaping YANA. He was very aware that those in need often struggled to access nutritious meals, and he was adamant about offering balanced, fiber-rich meals, carefully considering the essential macronutrients - fats, proteins, and carbohydrates.

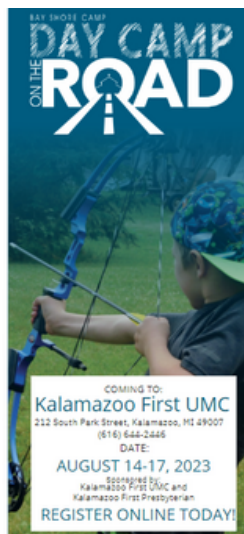
There was a moment during our conversation when Ray shared a touching story from the YANA program. One of the regular attendees asked to read the John Wesley quote inscribed on the walls of Wesley Hall: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." This heartfelt incident underlined the spiritual resonance that YANA had for its community, serving not only as a provider of meals but also as a spiritual haven.

Ray told me that these weekly dinners often served as a form of "church" for many attendees. He would commence each gathering with a heartfelt, inclusive prayer, setting the tone for an evening of not only feeding bodies but also nourishing souls and nurturing community bonds.

Ray also mentioned that the generosity didn't stop within the walls of Wesley Hall. Many attendees would take food from the dinners to share with those outside the church who were in need, extending the circle of compassion and care further into the community. In retrospect, YANA's legacy is evident not just in the nutritious meals it provided but in the community it built. It showcased the power of faith and love in action.

As we close this chapter of our communal journey, let's remember the words of John Wesley, words that inspired and guided us through our YANA journey: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." It is in the spirit of these words that we will continue to serve, to care, to love, and to make a difference, one meal, one smile, one act of kindness at a time.

## Children and Families Ministries News



### Bay Shore Camp

Attention families of K-5th graders! Please join us Monday August 14 - August 17, 2023 for a day camp from 8:30am to 4:30pm. The camp will be located in our church and we are collaborating with our neighbors at Kalamazoo First Presbyterian.

Lunch and two snacks will be included! The theme is "GOD IS". Through the Old Testament stories about David kids will learn that God is Loving! Activities will include arts and crafts, archery, bible study, climbing wall, games, and water activities. The cost is free but the spaces are limited so please register your child/children today. Contact Julia Librizzi for more information at: [jllibrizzi@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jllibrizzi@umc-kzo.org)

### Faith Milestones

On May 7th, the children of our congregation came together to celebrate the culmination of their faith journey with a series of fun and engaging activities. This memorable event highlighted the importance of bonding, learning, and appreciation in our faith community.

It was a beautiful evening in our city, filled with laughter and unforgettable moments. The children began their adventure with a scavenger hunt downtown, making their way to Bronson Park and the Mall. The children discovered the first item on the list: a statue representing them. This beautiful work of art serves as a reminder that when justice and mercy prevail, children may play safely.



As the scavenger hunt continued, the evening was made all the more special with a delightful stop at Benny DiCarta's where they enjoyed huge slices of pizza.

One of the last surprises on the scavenger hunt was the discovery of the Seal on the Mall, this was accompanied by a beautiful poem by William Jay Smith. This poetic touch added a sense of wonder and awe to our evening further enriching our shared experiences.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who made this faith milestone celebration possible. Your support and dedication have been invaluable to our journey. We couldn't have done it without you!



## First Beats

Join us for the First Beats musical production, "It's Cool in the Furnace," on June 2 at 7:00 PM. This show tells the inspiring story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and their faith and love for the one true God. The show is full of catchy tunes, beautiful ballads and crazy decrees from King Nebuchadnezzar. The talented children of FUMC have worked hard to bring this story to life.

Following the performance, enjoy an ice cream sundae bar in the Perks area, where you can treat yourself to a delightful dessert. If you're unable to make it on June 2nd, the show will also be presented during worship on June 4th.

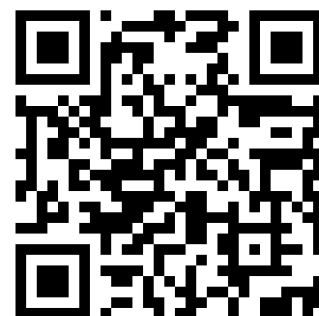
Please plan to see the show and support our dedicated and wonderful children at FUMC!



### Connection Campaign

If you haven't filled out the connection campaign here is an online version.

Our congregation is always planning new initiatives, and we want to ensure that everyone stays informed and feels included in our journey together. Please take a few moments to fill out the form, which you can find in the perks area. Your participation really helps us! Thank You!





## Helping Our Neighbors Phone Project

In today's world, having access to a reliable means of communication can make all the difference. For those struggling with addiction, homelessness, or other severe personal issues, a simple phone call can serve as a vital lifeline, connecting them with support networks, resources, and opportunities to heal and rebuild their lives. The Helping Our Neighbors (HON) ministry, recognized this need and decided to take action.

In the month of May HON achieved a significant milestone in its ongoing mission to support those in need. On May 5th, the ministry celebrated the distribution of 1,050 cell phones to people who needed them most, reaffirming their commitment to serving the community with open hearts and open hands.

A cell phone might seem like a strange gift to those in need, but in reality, it can mean so much. It can be the key to securing a job interview, arranging a safe place to sleep, or connecting with a long-lost loved one. Most importantly, it provides a channel for individuals to access vital support systems, such as therapists, counselors, or even just a sympathetic ear in a time of crisis.

The HON ministry's phone program is more than just a testament to the power of giving; it is a shining example of what can be achieved when a community comes together with empathy and compassion to lift up those who need it most. Thanks to the collective efforts of countless volunteers, donors, and supporters, HON's impact on the lives of their recipients will undoubtedly continue to grow.

As we celebrate this remarkable achievement, let us remember the individuals whose lives have been touched by the gift of a phone, and the importance of standing together as neighbors, supporting one another.



## FUMC Podcast Coming

We are very excited to announce the upcoming launch of FUMC's new podcast, "Making Meaning"! This unique platform will provide an enlightening space for spiritual exploration, meaningful dialogue, and above all, the sharing of real ministry experiences through storytelling. We firmly believe that stories have the power to deepen our understanding.

"Making Meaning" brings together the seasoned wisdom of Pastor Matt Weiler and the fresh perspectives of our dynamic Young Adult Resident Mandakini Brophy, who obtained a Master's in Social Work. Their rich and diverse insights will provide a balanced and enlightening exploration of faith.

With his vast pastoral experience, Pastor Matt will lead us on a journey through the deep waters of faith. Mandakini Brophy, on the other hand, brings a deep comprehension of social work and its impact on community and personal lives, offering a unique perspective to enrich the spiritual journey.

They'll delve into scripture, share personal stories, and discuss how to find deeper meaning in our daily lives. This will be a space for us all to ponder, learn, and grow in our spiritual journeys.

Whether you're seeking thought-provoking discussions during your morning commute, or looking for some enlightening conversation as you unwind, "Making Meaning" is a great opportunity.

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

*Janet Wyndendorf who passed away April 22nd*

*Christopher K. Mumma who passed away on March 31st*

*Harriet Chalker who passed away on April 8th*

*Jacquelyn Knowlton who passed away on April 18th*

## Please keep these friends in your prayers:

The Chalker family  
Christine  
Miriam Downey  
Ashton Fredenburg  
Lenora Holliday  
Nancy Hyde  
Bill and Ruth LaMachia  
Judy McClelland  
The McKenzie family  
The Mumma family  
Susan Noble  
Anna Rassmussen  
Mary Lou Sanderson  
Barb Skuza  
Nelson & Mary Stapleton  
Tom and Marcia Stobie  
Jim Treece  
The Uggen family  
Lori Valkema  
Nina Victor  
The Walker family  
Roger Williams  
The Wolfe family

## 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/), or, 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 Kalamazoo FUMC. 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](mailto:rlamachia@umc-kzo.org).

## Kalamazoo Service Project July 17-20. Register Now!

Registration for Kalamazoo Service Project is live now. Scan the Qr code on this page to access the sign up sheet. The deadline for signing up is May 31st, though the sooner you sign up the better! KSP is open to all youth entering 7th grade in the fall through Seniors graduating this spring.

We are also in need of a minimum of 12 adults who will volunteer their time the entire week, guiding youth through their projects and maintaining a safe and loving and fun experience. Adult volunteers can email pastor Matt directly with your interest at: [mweiler@umc-kzo.org](mailto:mweiler@umc-kzo.org) We hope to have all adult leaders secured by May 31st.



The cost for participation in Kalamazoo Service Project this year is \$100.00. If \$100.00 is not feasible for your family please contact Pastor Matt as scholarships are available.

Looking forward to another great year of KSP with some new twists to the week....

## Our Shared Life

Children's Nature Playscape, next to First Congregational Church, has reopened for the season. It is open to children and their families on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays are set aside for groups that make reservations. Contact [nora@kalamazooplayscape.org](mailto:nora@kalamazooplayscape.org) with questions or if you would like to reserve a Wednesday.

On Monday, June 5, at 4:30 p.m. in Bronson Park, the 'Moms Demand Action Wear Orange Event' will provide an opportunity to hear from local leaders in the gun violence prevention advocacy movement, and from survivors, as well as learning about how we can join in the actions in Kalamazoo to promote gun safety changes.

On June 21, from 11 a.m. to 4:45 p.m, our downtown neighbor, Trinity Lutheran Church on South Westnedge, will hold its Summer Red Cross Blood Drive.



Rev. Julie Kline Photo taken by Keith Mumma

## The First Word for June

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **June 6, 2023**. The next newsletter will be mailed the week of **June 12**. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent to [jcelorio@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jcelorio@umc-kzo.org). Articles may be edited for space and content.



Rev. Julie Kline and Pastor Matt Weiler Photo taken by Keith Mumma

## Drive into Service with Us!

Our church is currently looking for dedicated bus drivers to help on Sunday mornings.

This is a fantastic chance to play a vital role in our community, ensuring everyone can attend our services regardless of their transport situation.

So, if you have a valid driving license, a safe driving record, and a heart for service, we would love to hear from you! Or, if you know someone who fits the bill, spread the word!

Interested? Please message Robin at (269) 910-2963 for more details about this opportunity. We can't wait to embark on this journey with you!

