

THE FIRST WORD



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



photo taken by Keith Mumma

Free Store Thank YOU

Thank you for the overwhelming success of the Free Store event that happened on June 15th. To everyone who donated items and those who volunteered their time and energy to help arrange and run the event, your dedication and commitment are the heart of what we do. Without your participation this event wouldn't have been possible.

The Free Store was a testament to the spirit of giving and caring in our community. Thanks to the generous donations, many people from our community were able to find items they need.

The Methodist Book of Discipline reminds us to "do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can." This event was a perfect reflection of this quote.

Thank you once again for your generosity, hard work, and dedication.



Kalamazoo Service Project

Kalamazoo Service Project will take place this month the week of July 17th. We have 24 youth between FUMC and Portage Chapel Hill along with 10 adults prepared to serve along side our youth. Project partners include Building Blocks and Wesley Foundation. KSP Participants will be working with the Solar Lights Initiative with Building Blocks installing 23 solar lights on resident properties around the Eastside Neighborhood of Kalamazoo. On the other side of town participants will be swinging hammers and running saws to build a new apartment in the Wesley Intentional Living Community and then heading outdoors for some much needed grounds improvement projects. Many thanks to all who are helping out to support our youth in service this month. There is also opportunity for adults to participate in an indoor painting project at FUMC. Please contact Donna Dunyak at dsdunyak@gmail.com to volunteer. All are invited to join the youth for a church cookout on the front lawn Thursday evening July 20th at 5:30 pm.

Outdoor Columbarium

A few years ago, a \$38,000 gift was received for an outdoor memorial garden/columbarium. Then as we all know, everything came to a screeching halt when the pandemic hit. Late last fall, the Trustees tasked a small committee to explore the feasibility of this project including need, location, design and cost. The Columbarium Committee Chair is Dan Victor, with members Chris Bovid, Steve Hassevoort, Pastor Julie Kline, Ruth LaMachia, Linda Lueth and Thom Victor, representing the Buildings & Grounds, Memorial, Trustees and Pastoral Care areas of the church.

Our indoor columbarium was installed in 1997 and consists of 156 niches in 3 different sizes. Overall it is approximately 70% full/purchased with the medium size niches being 100% reserved. Basically, it is the largest size niches (holding 4 cremains) and the bottom row of small niches which remain available. In addition, cremation is becoming a more popular option than in years past. Knowing that a construction project could take a few years to design, fundraise and build, the Columbarium Committee felt the process should move forward at this time.

Various locations were discussed, including off the parking lot (where the picnic tables are) and in a corner of the front yard, near the flowering dogwood and wide sidewalk along the north side of the sanctuary. Pros and cons (accessibility, privacy, etc.) of these locations were discussed. Steve Hassevoort has drawn a preliminary design for the front yard location, which is reflected below.



At the current time, more detailed design work is being done in order to obtain cost estimates. Once cost estimates are received, a funding plan to cover the total cost will be developed before construction can begin, possibly in 2024.

Should you have any questions or concerns during this planning phase, please email or call Committee Chair Dan Victor at daniel_r_victor@yahoo.com or cell phone 269-330-2333.

2nd Floor Celebration!

The church nursery for infants to three-year-olds located on the 2nd floor is getting an update! We have taken time to reorganize the 2nd floor since First Care's closing over a year ago. We are moving the nursery to be in a better space, closer to the beautiful "Arches" space the children use each Sunday, as well as the Sunday School classrooms, stairs, and elevator, making it a more welcoming and accessible space for our families with young children. We are doing some renovations to this space to make it big enough to be a nursery space for both toddlers and infants. The construction projects for the room began in June and we are hoping it is all done by the end of summer.

Volunteers Wanted for Church Landscaping

Our crew of landscaping volunteers has grown very slim and all are at an age where they must retire. Jim Willoughby has led this small group for the past 11 years, and is ready to pass the baton to those who have the strength and desire to help keep up the various plantings around the parking lot and the church building. The more people willing to volunteer, the less work that will fall on one person's shoulders. For more information, please message Ruth LaMachia at: rlamachia@umc-kzo.org



Annual Conference 2023-Report for First UMC-Kalamazoo

First UMC-Kalamazoo is part of the Michigan Conference which met June 1-4 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme, MI. Our theme this year was "New Every Morning". Several clergy, retired clergy, and laypersons attended with various roles. Most are included in this group picture (missing-Diane Boley, Lisa Batten). Left to right: Pastor Matt, Pastor Thom, David Lundquist, Sue Paul, John Boley, Carol Hodges, Andy Vorbrich, Lisa Coe, Donna Dunyak, Buff Coe, Pastor Julie, Deb Search Willoughby



This meeting of United Methodists around Michigan happens once a year to do the business of the Michigan Conference. There were over 1500 in attendance this year (divided equally between clergy and laity). Most notable to our congregation is that Pastor Julie and Pastor Matt were officially reappointed to FUMC-Kalamazoo for another year (not that we were questioning this before we met). And we welcome Bishop David Bard back to the Michigan Conference to provide his continued leadership.

We attended to hard matters, including the disaffiliation of 60 congregations, the closing of 9 others, and reducing the number of districts in Michigan from nine to seven (the Greater Southwest District will not change significantly). At the clergy session, members approved the withdrawal of 13 ordained clergy (elders/deacons) and 9 local pastors. We heard reports of staff reductions in the Conference office, and approved a significantly reduced budget. As Bishop Bard stated, there's been some "hard travelin'" over the past year as he called us to remember that God still calls us to be God's love in our world. Our work is not done.

Legislative Committees met pre-conference to address a list of resolutions and petitions. One item was approved in committee: "A Call to Promote Justice for Palestinians" and passed on the consent calendar. Another petition seeking to support 3rd grade readers was tabled indefinitely as work was already in process for this through the Conference support of "Readers to Leaders". A petition to "Recognize the Unborn Baby" was also indefinitely tabled following defeat in Legislative Committee. The remaining legislation was approved by the conference.

We heard reports of Michigan Conference's varied work in Mission and Ministry. Readers to Leaders was extended to 2024's Annual Conference. We learned that Michigan Conference is No. 1 in Mission Giving through the Advance.

Conference clergy and laity engaged in Advocacy Day at the State Capitol in March to seek gun safety, local churches engaged in disaster recovery around the world and congregations offered God's love in our communities in many ways.

Our conference business is balanced with inspirational worship and bible study each day. In addition to the gifted preaching by Bishop Bard, we had a guest preacher, Rev. Grace Imathiu, Sr. Pastor of First UMC-Evanston IL who offered assurances and challenges to our future work. This year nine persons were ordained, five of them from the Greater Southwest District, and three of those came through Wesley of Kalamazoo. How joyful it is to send these persons out to do ministry in all their unique ways!

-Deborah Search Willoughby

Wesley Woods High School Camp

Pastor Matt Weiler shares his appreciation for United Methodist summer camps, specifically the Wesley Woods High School Camp, through his progression from attendee to camp pastor. The camp provides a liberating environment where societal pressures dissolve and individual uniqueness is celebrated.

Scan the Qr code below for the full article.



The First Word for August

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



Pastor Matt Weiler photo taken by Keith Mumma

Collaborating in Outreach with Downtown Outreach Churches' Collaboration (DOCC)

Did you know that during the past 18 months, FUMC has collaborated in outreach with nine downtown churches working together to reach out to our downtown neighbors? When a HON volunteer offers someone \$100 to help avoid a power shut-off or to help an unsheltered individual move into an apartment, information can be entered on a shared DOCC spreadsheet to save that individual time. Earlier this year within two hours, our faith communities came together to pay the funeral expenses for one of our neighbors.

In 2022, DOCC participants created a directory of existing ministries in our churches and copies of that resource are available in all of our churches. Does a family need clothing? We are now able to direct them to the Clothes Closet at Trinity Lutheran or the Children's Closet at St Luke's. Beyond the financial resources that are documented on the spreadsheet, DOCC helps to maximize the ministries of all of our churches.

Opportunities (such as Trinity Lutheran's Blood Drives and First Presbyterian's class, Christians and Race) have been announced in our churches. Collaborative outreach was apparent when Trinity Lutheran's Clothing Closet coordinator gratefully received bags of men's clothing after our free store closed since Trinity's closet of free items is always low on men's wear. And next door, First Congregational's Drop-In Childcare Center was pleased to accept toys from the free store that will be distributed to parents or used in their center.

In addition to these efforts to minister together, nine local non-profits have made presentations to DOCC gatherings helping our churches to better understand the support available in our community.

We celebrate with you this opportunity to serve and learn together and the relationships we are building with our brothers and sisters in Christ from: St Augustine Cathedral, St Vincent De Paul, First Baptist, First Congregational, First Presbyterian, St Luke's Episcopal, Ascension Greek Orthodox, Trinity Lutheran and Faith Temple Church of God.

In August, DOCC will sponsor a table at Northside Ministerial Alliances Anti-Gun Violence Family Carnival and each of you are invited to attend so be on the lookout for more details. And when you see the acronym DOCC (Downtown Outreach Churches' Collaboration), please lift in prayer this effort to share the love of God as one body in downtown Kalamazoo.

Representing FUMC's Outreach team at the DOCC gatherings are Ann Sweany and Donna Oudersluys. Please feel free to direct questions to either one of them.

The Outreach Team



Photo taken by Keith Mumma, Rev. Julie Kline preaching during pride Sunday



Photo taken by Keith Mumma, Dan Duncan during the blessing of the children on July 2.

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Mary Jane Kreidler who passed away May 31st

David Houseman who passed away on June 29th

Liza Wolfe who passed away on June 29th

Jerry Toshalis who passed away on July 11th

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

- Lana Allen & family
- The Chalker Family
- Christine
- Destiney & Jasmine
- Miriam Downey
- Ashton and Mary Ellen Fredenburg
- Lenora Holliday
- John & Carol Holms
- Nancy Hyde
- Bill and Ruth LaMachia
- Elaine Martin & John St. Laurent
- Judy McClelland
- Durrell McKenzie
- Mumma Family
- Susan Noble
- The Rawsy Family
- Anna Rassmussen
- Charles, Micah, Garret, & Emery Rose
- Rudy
- Mary Lou Sanderson
- Barb Skuza
- Ben S.
- Nelson & Mary Stapleton
- Tom and Marcia Stobie
- Jim Treece
- Lori Valkema
- Nina Victor
- 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/, 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.