

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 taken by Keith Mumma

Fall 2023

In this edition of "First Word" our aim is to offer you a complete overview—or at the very least an introduction—to the different events and activities unfolding at FUMC this Fall season. From educational classes and family-friendly evenings to musical performances and special Sunday Services to look forward to we have a diverse range of offerings to enrich your experience with us.

Rejoice Sunday

Sunday, September 10th is "Rejoice Sunday!" This day marks the return to our Fall schedule and the fullness of unfolding ministry and spiritual formation that creates our shared life as a beloved community. We are a vibrant faith community that ventures to live by our mission statement that proclaims, "We are called to experience God's love, celebrate God's love, and share God's love." As you consider your participation in the life of this church community, I encourage you to lean in a little further. It is good and holy to worship together on Sunday mornings when we pray, sing, and proclaim the good news that we are alive in Christ. The grace and gift of further relationship and community building continue when we gather beyond the sanctuary for study, small groups, ministries for families, children, youth, music, teams, committees, and more. As you read and learn about our shared life consider leaning in and becoming further involved or trying something new beyond the ways you are already participating. Our staff would be happy to answer any questions and direct you to ways of living into full participation through our "prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness!"

I will be away on "Rejoice Sunday" for the first time in seventeen years. I have the honor of officiating at my nephew's wedding. I could not pass on this joyous family occasion. My prayers and rejoicing will be with you in spirit, and I greatly look forward to engaging in this year ahead, together.

Shalom, Pastor Julie

Membership Class

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 explore further the commitment and joy of membership in The United Methodist Church, please contact Pastor Julie at: jkline@umc-kzo.org.



Music at First United Methodist Church

First United Methodist Church offers a broad array of musical ensembles. The Chancel Singers choir is open to all, and music reading abilities are not required. What is required is a love of singing and the willingness to share that love with others in the choir and the congregation. Choral singing is among the most ancient and sacred of the arts and is truly impossible to do alone! Our choirs need you! Participation in the choir will feed your soul, lift you up after a long day and help to build relationships with other church members. It will challenge you to explore new music, and it will give you a solid grounding in several musical genres. Most importantly, it will allow full expression of praise to God for the many wonderful gifts and blessings in our lives. Chancel Singers meet on Thursday evenings from 7:15PM -9:00 PM and fully participates 2-3 times a month in the 10:00 AM service.



Handbell Ensemble rehearses on Thursday evenings at 6:00. We are always in need of substitutes and substituting may lead to a permanent position in the choir, if desired. Handbell ringing experience is not a requirement as we look forward to teaching others to ring and make music in this ensemble. Music reading abilities are required. The ensemble rings about once a month at the 10:00 service and is open to high school youth and adults.

First Beats is our Children's Musical Ensemble. Children in grades 3-8 can participate in this ensemble that sings, rings, play percussion instruments and presents musicals. First Beats rehearses on Tuesdays from 4:15-5:30.

First Bells is open to all children ages 3 and up. They play in worship about every 6 weeks and rehearse during the Sunday school hour. Children only need to recognize colors in order to participate. Led by Carol Grant, our worship is enlivened and enriched by our youngest members!



First Strings is an ensemble led by Anne Sherfield and plays during worship quarterly. This group of orchestral string players plays music that inspires and enhances the worship service. If you play violin, viola, cello or bass, then this group is for you. Please contact Anne Sherfield at arscello.aol.com if interested.

2nd Sunday worship band participates in 2nd Sunday worship at 10:00. The style of music that we present varies from jazz, to country to rhythm and blues. We welcome guitarists, bass players, woodwinds, drummers, and vocalists. Rehearsals are fluid depending on the schedules of the participants, but typically are on Wednesday afternoons.

Please contact Music Director Jacqueline Stilger for more information about any of the musical ensembles. Music ministry happens in the church with the full participation of its congregants in the pew and in the choir pews. Your gifts are needed, and will be most appreciated!

Let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

Manna

We're excited to announce the return of our Manna gatherings which will be held weekly on Tuesdays at 6:30 PM at KFUMC, starting this Fall season. We have a special event to kick off the Fall Season! Instead of our regular meeting, the first gathering will be a bonfire at the Weiler's house on September 12th to celebrate the start of a new season filled with faith, community, and spiritual growth.

Whether you've been a part of Manna for years or are considering joining for the first time this bonfire offers the perfect setting for reconnection and renewal. For more details email Mandakini Brophy at: mbrophy@umc-kzo.org



Fall Small Groups

Small Groups are back the first and third Sunday of the month starting in September 17th.

Join us as we once again create a fun space where we can come together as a community Sunday afternoons. Work on crafts, play board games, and many other fun activities. This is a fantastic opportunity to become more involved and get to know our church community on a deeper level.

So come along and be part of this wonderful initiative. We look forward to seeing you there!

Also look out for potential announcement on Biking days coming up



Children and Families Ministries Fall Kick-Off

Save the date for Friday, September 8, 2023 from 6 pm - 8pm. We will meet under the pavilion at Oshtemo Township Park located at 7275 W Main St, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. We will tie-dye t-shirts and celebrate the return of Children's Sunday School on Sunday, September 10th right after the worship service! Please bring a dish to pass and email Julia Librizzi at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org by September 5th so we are sure to have enough t-shirts and dye to go around!



Sunday School & Nursery

Children's Sunday School will begin after worship on Rejoice Sunday, September 10th! Please join us! 11:15am to 12:15pm in room 206.

Give your child the gift of a solid foundation for spiritual growth in the Christian tradition. Our curriculum for our children's classes is from our United Methodist publishing house (Cokesbury) and is called "Deep Blue." Using a water motif, Deep Blue reminds us at several levels of the Christian journey, beginning with the waters of baptism, the redemption of the Israelites through the waters of the Red Sea during the Exodus, and the ancient depiction of the church as a sailboat traveling across the sea—a place of refuge. Our children are going to love the multiple learning styles that it uses, and we have a wonderful teaching team—as usual!

The nursery will be available as always for the worship service and during the Sunday School hour, Sharon Bunker will lead the toddlers through an age-appropriate Deep Blue curriculum as well!

Family Foundations

Family Foundations, a Sunday School class for parents of young children will begin in September with fellowship and coffee in room 209 next to the arches on the 2nd floor. In October, Magen Lindstrom and Katy McGinnis will begin to lead a Manna and Mercy class.

Christian Education

Christian education and spiritual formation don't end when a person reaches adulthood – in fact, the deepest questions of faith are with us all life long. Whatever your questions, and however long you've been asking them, you're not alone. Join a class today to discover new ways of walking with God and new companions to walk with you. See you in class!

Sunday Morning Academy Classes meet after 10 a.m. worship. Academy Classes are short-term gatherings for adults which explore a wide variety of faith issues and interests. Most Academy classes are discussion-based, with lots of lively, open-minded, good-humored conversation. Many lend themselves to drop-in attendance. Our exceptional leaders and facilitators come from the congregation and from the Kalamazoo community.

Check Around the Corner for information on upcoming classes.

Grief Group

It often feels like we've been walking through a season of grief over the last couple of years. At times, it feels like we must push through the feelings and move on when perhaps we may prefer to create sacred space to remember, honor, grieve and bear witness to our losses. You are invited to take time to join with others to create that sacred space for those losses you have experienced, recently or in the past. Beginning Sunday, September 17 from 6-7:30 pm, a short-term group will meet in the chapel, led by Jan Schoenherr, LPC, and Deb Search Willoughby, LMSW.

The group will meet every 2 weeks until November 26th. If you would be interested in participating, please fill out our interest form, to get the form contact Jan (269) 579-3377 or schoenherrjan@gmail.com, Deb (269) 762-3259 or dsearchwillo@gmail.com, or any of our pastors.

June Mission of the Month Thank you

Thank you to all who contributed board books or money for books that will be distributed in our Little Library. We received 57 board books and money to purchase at least 15 more books thanks to your generosity during the June Mission of the Month. We appreciate your help in launching lifelong readers in our community!

The Outreach Team

The First Word for November

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **September 28, 2023**. The next newsletter will be mailed the first week in November. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent to jcelorio@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.



Julia Librizzi and children of FUMC photo taken by Keith Mumma

Youth Group

There are so many ways for young people to experience, share, and celebrate God's love at FUMC and while Youth Group is not the only place it is the primary place where young people can be themselves and grow in faith together. Youth Group is open to all youth in 6th grade through 12th grade and weekly gatherings will begin on Sunday September 17th from 6-7:30pm. Every week we gather and create space to experience Christ-Centered Joy and Friendship and Spiritual Formation. A typical Sunday evening includes fun games along with time for small group discussions for middle school and high school students. For a full Fall schedule please see the weekly email distributed by Pastor Matt Weiler, or contact Pastor Matt directly at mweiler@umc-kzo.org

Kalamazoo Service Project 2023 to be Celebrated in Worship September 17th.

It was another successful year for Kalamazoo Service Project as the youth from First UMC partnered with our friends from Portage Chapel Hill UMC. This year's theme was JOY IS... service, worship, friendship, peace-making, play, and remembrance. Together we worked with Building Blocks to install 30 solar lights for Eastside Neighborhood Residents, complete the fencing around the Sunnyside UMC Growing Community Garden, begin an ongoing construction project in the Wesley Foundation Intentional Living Center, and address some much need landscaping around Wesley Foundation. In addition to the great work accomplished by the youth we gathered every evening for team building and play. Highlights for the week included a wet and wild day on the front lawn at Portage Chapel Hill and a Thursday night lock-in, in the Youth Lounge.

Kalamazoo Service Project will be celebrated in worship on Sunday September 17th in a service led and designed by our youth. We will also hold a special offering for youth missions to support next summer's mission trip and / or other youth service opportunities throughout the year.

Much gratitude to all of the adult volunteers who worked alongside our young people at KSP, to Donna Dunyak for feeding us each night, and to the congregation of First United Methodist Church for years of generosity that supports our young people. This Summer was the last Youth KSP for now as next Summer we will once again travel for an away mission trip. More information about that trip will be coming soon.

Confirmation Class

Confirmation is now a two-year program at FUMC open to all youth who are entering 7th grade or older. Any student who begins confirmation this Fall, whether they are a 7th grade student or an older student will participate for two full years. Our current 2nd year students will be confirmed on Sunday May 19, 2024

Confirmation class will take place this year one Sunday per month beginning September 10th following worship, and then every 3rd Sunday of the month following. Classes will run for 1 hour to 90 minutes with a few longer classes in the Spring for 2nd year students. A detailed schedule will be provided to participant families. There will be a confirmation retreat at Wesley Woods on November 3-5, as well as some fun opportunities in the works for Winter and Spring. All new and returning students must register for confirmation and can find a link in the weekly Youth Group communications, or, you may contact Pastor Matt Weiler directly at mweiler@umc-kzo.org



Jessica Harthorn on August 20th, 2023



Dr. Matt Weiler on August 20th, 2023

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Mark A. Warnicke who passed away August 25th

Bill LaMachia who passed away August 30th

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

- The Chalker Family
- Christine
- Miriam Downey
- Ashton and Mary Ellen Fredenburg
- Lenora Holliday
- Houseman Family
- Nancy Hyde
- LaMachia Family
- Elaine Martin & John St. Laurent
- LaMachia Family
- Judy McClelland
- Durrell McKenzie
- Mumma Family
- Susan Noble
- The Rawsy Family
- Anna Rassmussen
- Mary Lou Sanderson
- Barb Skuza
- Ben S.
- Nelson & Mary Stapleton
- Tom and Marcia Stobie
- Jim Treece
- Toshalis Family
- Lori Valkema
- Nina Victor
- Warnicke Family
- Williams Family
- Willoughby 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.