

# THE FIRST WORD



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



photo taken by Keith Mumma

## Braiding Our Stories: Aligning our Values, Vision, Mission, and Generosity

*Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church*

### BRAIDING OUR STORY

2023



Values | Generosity | Mission | Vision

### Worship Series

Here we are, a braided story growing now, joined and shaped by voices of all kinds. What a joy it is to sing along with you as we stream into the great Divine.  
~Jennifer Clark "Round the River's Bend"

"Where there is no vision, the people are wild; those who keep the Law find happiness." ~Proverbs 29:18

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." ~John 10:10

### All Saints Sunday

All Saints Sunday November 5. Our tradition each year is to remember and honor our family members who have died in the past twelve months. If there was a death in your family since last year please contact the church office at (269) 381-6340 or email [kalamazoofumc@umc-kzo.org](mailto:kalamazoofumc@umc-kzo.org). please include a photo of your loved one for the worship video. The last day to receive names and photos is November 1.



As a Christ centered community, we are to discover and re-discover the story and the song that God is braiding together in our midst and in our future. In this season of late Fall, we will begin a discernment process that is an act of discipleship which calls us to ask the question, "How can we become a vital Christ centered community in this time and in this place?" We desire to mark a clear path aligned with God's Shalom. This path is marked by the values we have prayerfully discerned, parallels our mission, and establishes a vision undergirded by generosity that is both financial and spiritual. This is sacred work of the people and will unfold in worship, prayer, sharing, discovering and faithful participation. You are invited to contribute to this holy work of listening to the Divine and to one another as we create a compelling vision to bless and bring wholeness.

Each Sunday our altar will be evolving and changing make sure you keep an eye out and see what it will become...

# Giving Campaign Fall 2023

You may recall that the church conducted a Step Up campaign in May to raise money because of a shortfall in pledges for the 2023 operating budget. The good news is that campaign raised over \$140,000! We are very grateful for those who generously stepped forward to increase their giving to the church budget.

Normally, we only ask people to make a pledge to the coming year's operating budget in the fall. It is that time of year, and we are confident that a robust giving campaign and a generous response will mean this will be the only time money will be raised for the 2024 operating budget.

This year's campaign includes:

- Devotions mailed twice a week that began September 25
- Personal stories of generosity told during worship
- Preaching that highlights the importance of financial generosity as a form of discipleship
- Pledges received on Consecration Sunday, October 29

WCO thank you for your prayerful consideration of your financial commitment to First Church.

-The Generosity Team

## Mission Vision Workshop

We welcome you to participate in a Vision Workshop Saturday, October 21

You might be saying to yourself, why do we need to re-envision our Mission/Vision statement? Pastor Julie shared that in a most recent generosity survey over 86% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the vision and direction of FUMC kalamazoo is clear to me. This report also explains the importance of giving generously and that people give to organizations that have a clear mission and the perception is that it is changing lives of others.

"Churches often only look at their existing mission and vision statements in times of crisis and transition. By looking at statements during times of stability, congregations can set a path to walk along, and set goals to grow as an organization and as a body of Christ.

This process is an act of discipleship; how do we become the best Christian body that we can be, in this time and in this place? We lead through prayer, discernment, and by marking out a path for the church that is faithful, clear, and relevant to the current life and climate of the church."

(From p. 5 of Mission and Vision Statement Renewal Workbook for Churches)

KFUMC created and then reviewed our current vision and mission statements in 2005 and 2009. Since this time, the church has continued to grow and build on our historical foundation in the Kalamazoo community. As we discern next steps on our church's journey, we now find ourselves asking these driving questions:

- Who are we after experiencing the Covid 19 global pandemic?
- How might we respond and be relevant to a societal culture which is turning away from organized religion?
- How might we purposefully invest in future generations by building from our historical foundations?
- How does our vision and mission align with our identity as a church and communicate to others what we are about? (connected to our IDI work)
- How might we empower and align the actions of our church leaders?
- How might we articulate a clear vision for our shared life as a church family?

To answer these questions, we must invest in a collective process of discernment and commit to purposeful implementation of the resulting plan. Throughout this series of "Braiding Our Story" you will be asked to participate prayerfully, thoughtfully, and generously.



Values | Generosity | Mission | Vision

## KUDOS

(Kalamazoo United Day Of Service)

Our church is supporting the Kalamazoo United Day of Service (KUDOS) on Friday, October 27 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (lunch provided!). Here's your chance to help people who don't have the means to weatherize or otherwise improve their homes in ways that would make a huge difference. We encourage volunteers to engage with the residents as much as possible with questions and conversation.

Please let Dan Duncan know if you would like to be a part of the team this year at: danduncan56@gmail.com or 616-502-5092



## Adult Sunday School Opportunities.

Classes end on October 15th but more will come so keep an eye out for announcements.

**Bible Basics:** The class will be led by Tammy Eaton and meet in the church parlor. Revival: The class will be led by John Clark in the Fellowship Room. Family

**Foundations:** A Sunday School class for parents of young children will begin with fellowship and coffee in room 209, next to the arches on the 2nd floor.

**Revival** (Fellowship Room)  
John Wesley is considered the founder of the Methodist movement, but he didn't set out to create a new denomination. Wesley's basic message called for a revival of our hearts and souls so that our world might be changed. His story and his faith continue to speak to twenty-first-century Christians. In this dvd-based class, Adam Hamilton explores Wesley's life to challenge us to rediscover our spiritual passion. The class will be led by John Clark.



# Salvation Army in urgent need of youth coats for 22nd annual 'Share the Warmth' drive

Salvation Army in urgent need of youth coats for 22nd annual 'Share the Warmth' drive Giving back to the community: that's the goal of the Salvation Army's 22nd annual Share the Warmth coat drive.

The drive, which kicked off Sunday, aims to collect warm coats for those in need throughout the Kalamazoo and Portage areas.

"It's a much needed event for people of all ages, particularly youth, we're always in need of youth coats," Steve Dykstra, director of development at the Salvation Army, said. "We always run out of those on day one, so if anybody can give us some youth coats that would be much appreciated."



## Young adult centered spaces for meaning, belonging, and purpose.

In September I traveled to Princeton Theological Seminary, along with our Youth and Young Adult Resident Jonathan Townley and four other traveling companions from First Congregational and First Presbyterian Churches. As a collective we have been selected to participate in the Princeton Seminary "Ministry Collaboratory." This by the way is among several made up words/names you'll read in this report. It is a hybrid of "Collaboration" and "Laboratory". Get it? Collaboratory. Okay, enough.

The purpose of the "Collaboratory" is to find new innovative ways for the church to create young adult centered spaces for meaning, belonging, and purpose. In September, Princeton seminary gathered 19 pair of pastors and young adults and together we did some learning about ways young people are doing exciting innovative ministry around the country. We also spent time at the Princeton "Farminary" (here's another made up word) a working farm where sustainable agriculture and theological reflection have become a part of the core curriculum for Masters of Divinity students. The weekend was wrapped in prayer, and theological reflection that has us asking "Where and how are young adults meeting God these days?"

The next step for our group is a three month "design sprint" culminating in a "Pop Up Project" sometime in December or, more likely, January. The Pop Up Project is designed and led by young adults with pastors walking alongside. The project can really be anything that engages Young Adults in the community while prioritizing young adult relationships. At this point I haven't a clue what we will come up with and frankly, what we design will be far less important than the journey. The journey is where relationships will be strengthened, and where the Holy Spirit will be at work among the young adults of the Bronson Park Churches. By the way, our collective has been affectionally named "The Bronson Parkinary." (there's your last made up word for now, I promise)

We will be sure to provide updates along the way in our church email and on social media and want to say a big thank you to First United Methodist Church for your willingness to be innovative, to try new things, and to center the voices and experiences of young people.

So if you want to know how to pray for young people this fall say a prayer for God's movement among the Bronson Parkinary Collective.

grace + peace

Pastor Matt

## Thank You from Ruth LaMachia

Thank you for all the cards, hugs, and conversations since I lost my husband, Bill, in August. I am so grateful for my church family, both staff and congregation, who have surrounded me with so much love and care.

Blessings,  
Ruth

## Indigenous Peoples' Day

Indigenous Peoples' Day is celebrated on the second Monday of October. This year, it falls on October 9, to honor the cultures and histories of the Native American people.

In celebration of this, we invite you to get to know one of our many indigenous cultures. Kalamazoo rests on what used to be Potawatomi land. Their story is fascinating, and their culture is equally interesting.

Scan the QR code to learn more.



## The First Word for November

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **October 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](mailto:jcelorio@umc-kzo.org). Articles may be edited for space and content.



Dr. Matt Weiler photo taken by Keith Mumma

# Introducing Walt Whitfield our new Financial Assistant



Walt Whitfield has a bachelor's degree in accounting and is currently pursuing his MBA. He brings with him almost 15 years of non-profit accounting and bookkeeping experience.

He is a devoted husband and father to three biological children: twins aged 20 who attend Michigan State University and a 6-year-old daughter. In addition, he has two stepsons aged 13 and 14.

Despite his children and wife attending or having attended MSU, Walt remains a staunch Michigan Wolverine fan. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his family, watching sports, and listening to music. He joined this our church community in the beginning of June and has been thoroughly enjoying his time here.

## Youth and Young Adult Ministry Update

Manna, FUMC's flagship Young Adult program, celebrated its annual kick-off in early September with a barbeque at Pastor Matt's House. Each member brought a salad, side, or desert to share. We learned: vegan macaroni and cheese is made with cashews, a certain grocery store in town makes a mean blueberry pie, and that despite our best efforts none of us can be considered cornhole proficient. In October, Manna will celebrate the season by picking apples together after church on Sunday the 22nd. Tuesday, the 24th is the Manna pumpkin carving jamboree. Manna meets every Tuesday from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm in the youth lounge.

Lectio, a contemplative prayer group for young adults, also began this month. Lectio will explore the practices of Lectio Divina, imaginative prayer, mandalas, and more, in order to discover how God is speaking to us through scripture and art. Also, we have coloring pages! Lectio meets every Wednesday from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm in the youth lounge.

Youth group began this month with a scavenger hunt in downtown Kalamazoo. The youth, armed with cameras, captured pictures of: something that represented themselves, joy, and fall. One youth even photographed themselves doing a handstand; don't worry this was for a picture of joy, not fall. Youth group meets every Sunday from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm in the youth lounge. Confirmation, for youth in 7th and 8th grade, meets on the third Sunday of each month after church.

Thank you for your continued support of or involvement in youth and young adult ministries at FUMC. Through these joy filled activities, we build the community that is the church, and create space for young people to form meaningful and lasting friendships. I believe the Irish saying, Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas na daoine, "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live." In this work, I get to witness young people sheltering one another at every meeting, in every group. May this shelter allow them to grow and thrive for years to come.

Blessings,  
-Jonathan Townley



Julia Librizzi on September 24th, 2023



Rev. Julie Kline on September 24th, 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
- Carolyn Murphy

## 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).