

# 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.



photo taken by Keith Mumma

## Advent Labyrinth

There is a long history of the use of labyrinths in Christian worship. The purpose of the labyrinth is to slow us down and contemplate the themes of Advent. This Advent, we feast upon the transcendent light even as we experience the darkness that exists in the world. We are children of the light. The sacred season of Advent reminds us to live and move in the world and find our center in the everlasting light of God. God's light shines in the darkness; the darkness will not overcome it. This is the season of Advent. We are not alone; we are not separate from the light; we are collectively the light. We celebrate Christmas each year to draw us into the bosom, the center of this God-given light. Labyrinth prayer walking can ready our spirits to be part of God's light keeping and making. When we find our center, Christ can settle into the depths of our hearts, and we kindle our light even in the midst of sorrow or suffering.

The labyrinth will be set up in Wesley Hall throughout the season of Advent. You are invited to walk the labyrinth after worship on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday between the hours of 9 am-and 4pm and Tuesdays and Fridays from 9 am-noon. It is safe for several people to walk the labyrinth at one time, but please allow space for each walker. This labyrinth requires the removal of your shoes to preserve the cloth of the labyrinth. The labyrinth can take 10-20 minutes to walk, depending on your pace and the time you spend in the middle. There will also be prayer stations set up outside the four corners of the labyrinth. Please make use of them to enhance your time of prayer and contemplation. If you have never walked a labyrinth, I encourage you to try this ancient prayer practice to quiet your mind, center yourself, and allow your spirit to be in prayer, curiosity, and expectation. Peace be with you.

Pastor Julie

## Children and Families Ministry

The Children and Families Ministry invites you to a family fun night on **Dec 1, 2023** we will meet in Wesley Hall from 6pm -8pm for a potluck and to create gingerbread houses.

On **Dec. 10th** from 6pm to 8pm Faith Milestones (3rd through 5th graders) will join the Youth Group for caroling.







# Advent Concerts

THURSDAYS AT NOON

DECEMBER 7: SELKIE

IRISH BAND

DECEMBER 14: GARY & MARTHA MATTHEWS

FLUTE AND TRUMPET

DECEMBER 21: ARIS CHAPLIN

JAZZ PIANO

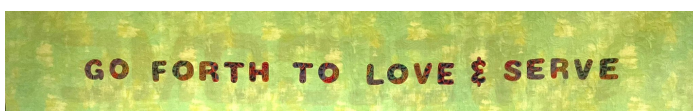
## Advent Concerts at FUMC

The Music Ministry at First United Methodist Church invites you to this year's advent concert series. Join us as we celebrate the season of advent with music.

- **December 7:** Selkie, is a trio of dynamic Celtic musicians who play traditional music and original music with a trademark intensity and drive. The sounds of flute, fiddle, bouzouki, banjo, guitar, accordion, and harp are woven into Selkie's music, along with the vocal harmonies they use for their songs.
- **December 14:** Gary and Martha Matthews, their concerts are a musical and spiritual journey with classical, jazz, and arrangements of the great well-known hymns that you love. What is unique about their concerts is how this well-known music is specifically arranged for the gifts Gary and Martha bring. Gary plays piano and trumpets and sings, while Martha plays a variety of flutes, penny whistles (Celtic Irish sound), piano, and handbells that fit on a "Handbell Tree!" As an ordained pastor Gary has a heart for shepherding God's people and does that through his music and worship leading. He served three churches as their Worship Pastor. Martha holds a Masters in Flute Performance and is a sought-after Handbell Clinician. She is the Director of the Kalamazoo Ringers, the oldest continual community Handbell Ensemble in the United States. She also teaches flute at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, MI. Gary and Martha's concerts include diverse music using the piano and organ, trumpet, voices, flute, and handbells.
- **December 21:** Aris Chaplin, solo jazz piano Aris is an international award-winning jazz pianist and keyboardist at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He has performed at several musical events both locally and abroad. He has performed and played alongside world-class jazz musicians, such as Chris Potter, sāje, Christian McBride, Johnaye Kendrick, Jesus Molina, the Emmet Cohen Trio, and the Paul Keller Orchestra. Aris is based in Kalamazoo, MI and travels around Michigan to perform in different venues. He has performed at venues such as Hill Auditorium, Blue LLama Jazz Club, and the North American International Auto Show COBO Center in Detroit.

## Welcome Sign

We thank Deb Search Willoughby and Nancy Douglas for making the sign above the entrance to the church; we hope you have noticed it as you come in and out of the church. The sign's purpose is to remind us that we should always live by God's example, go out into the world, do all the good that we can, and serve with love and compassion in everything we do in our lives.





## Mission / Vision Workshop

*Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Our shared vision is our guiding light, leading us to a future filled with love, compassion, and grace.*

On October 21st, members of the congregation as well as staff, came together to work on the visioning workshop. The workshop marked a turning point for us as we came together to explore our core values, define our purpose, and set a new course. We firmly believe that our church's strength lies not just with our leadership but with every single one of you – our congregation. Your presence and active involvement made the workshop a success. It was incredible to see the diverse perspectives.

At the core of the workshop was collaboration. We formed small groups to brainstorm and refine our vision statement. The result? A clear path of what it is that resonates with each of us. The power of working together brought us a step closer to our future vision.



The writing team took all the ideas and energy from the workshop and crafted an official vision statement. Your insights played a crucial role in shaping the statement and we are very excited to share it with you very soon.

We will have more opportunities for all of you to participate. We want to align our mission statement with our actions and what we aspire to be as a church. Your thoughts, ideas, and continued participation are invaluable.

A big thank you to everyone who participated in the Mission Vision Workshop. Your presence and active engagement are evidence of your dedication to our church's well-being. Let's move forward together with faith, hope, and unity trusting that divine guidance will lead us to a future brimming with purpose and joy.

## HON Phone Ministry

The HON Phone Ministry just celebrated its Second Anniversary! In the last 24 months, this Ministry has provided 1,383 phones to Kalamazoo's underserved population. That's more than 57 phones per month! The Ministry currently partners with 66 caseworkers from 19 different community organizations to provide these phones. Special thanks go out to Cricket Wireless as well as volunteers Jan VanShaik, Linda Gilligan, Dick Shilts, Len and Cathie O'Neill, Patrick Bird, Ali and Frans Tanadi, Dave Lundquist, Molly Williams, and Ruth LaMachia for their consistent teamwork in making this Ministry a reality. Please consider donating online or by check to: FUMC, with HON Phone Ministry in the memo line.



## The First Word for December

Articles for the next issue are due no later than **November 25, 2023**. The next newsletter will be mailed the first week in December. 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.



Thom Victor photo taken by Keith Mumma



# Wesley Woods Camp

The first weekend in November the youth of FUMC and Portage Chapel Hill UMC went on retreat to Wesley Woods Camp in Dowling . The weekend was filled with play, rest, firebowl worship, and lots of good food culminating in friendships, an abundance of joy, and great memories.

Pastors Matt Weiler and Jess Davenport led confirmation students in two learning sessions focused on the History of The UMC and the essentials of Wesleyan Theology. Our Youth and Young Adult Resident Jonathan Townley led other youth in contemplative prayer experiences. The entire weekend was focused on the themes of Belonging, Agency, and Purpose in Christian Discipleship. In gratitude to our other leaders, Deacon Cara Weiler and Katy McGinnis.



# The Bronson Parkinary



In early October a group of young adults from First United Methodist Church (FUMC), First Presbyterian, and First Congregational began gathering to create a new project called "The Bronson Parkinary." This new project aims to create a pop-up event that will bring young adults in our community closer together, promote connections, and strengthen our bonds as neighbors and friends.

The Pop Up Project is designed by and led by young adults, with pastors walking alongside them. It can be anything that engages young adults in the community and prioritizes young adult relationships. But it doesn't have to be exclusively for young adults. For example, the event could be young adults starting a new community meal for unhoused persons or opening a Free Coffee Shop where people come to play board games or maybe even an art gallery.

The Parkinary team has been meeting weekly to brainstorm and plan their vision for this project. This project has followed guidelines on community-building initiatives created by Princeton Theological Seminary. These guidelines have been carefully studied and the principles and practices have been proven to foster a strong sense of community togetherness.

One of the most significant and recurring themes in this project revolves around inclusivity and community engagement. It's not just about organizing an event; it's about creating memorable and positive experiences and connections within our Kalamazoo community. Stay tuned for more updates on Parkinary as the event approaches. We hope to see you there, supporting and celebrating this fantastic community initiative!

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

*Bill LaMachia who passed away August 30th*

*Jo Ellen Bentley Reece who passed away September 27th*

## Please keep these friends in your prayers:

- Chalker Family
- Christine
- Miriam Downey
- Ashton and Mary Ellen Fredenburg
- Lenora Holliday
- Houseman Family
- Nancy Hyde
- LaMachia Family
- Elaine Martin & John St. Laurent
- Judy McClelland
- Durrell McKenzie
- Mumma Family
- Susan Noble
- Rawsky 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
- Doug and Jane Vernon

## 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).