

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

Advent 2023

"You are all people who belong to the light and to the day. We do not belong to the night or to darkness." 1 Thessalonians 5:5

Advent means "coming" or "arrival." It's the season of actively waiting and preparing for Jesus to be born, for God's Word made flesh to come into the world. This year, we await the coming of the transcendent light to shine upon us as we listen to the singing bowl at the opening of worship. As we listen to the song of the bowl, we yearn for the light to illuminate the shadows of despair, war, sorrow and hate. It is in this yearning, this opening of our heart space that the God of grace will arrive. Calling upon this transcendent light, we ignite candles of hope, peace, joy and love with people around the world and we wait, for God is coming.

-Rev. Julie Kline

Join Us for Christmas Eve Service



First United Methodist Church

**MEETING THE
TRANSCENDENT
LIGHT**

- 4:00 PM – CHILDREN AND FAMILY WORSHIP
- 7:00 PM – LESSONS AND CAROLS
- 11:00PM – LESSONS AND COMMUNION
- THE 7 PM AND 11 PM SERVICE WILL BE LIVESTREAMED ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL.

Advent Calendar

Join us for all the activities happening during Advent, and make sure you take a moment to walk the Advent labyrinth in Wesley Hall. It will be open starting on the first Sunday of Advent until the conclusion of Advent on Christmas Eve. Join us for the Advent concert series, and make sure you follow our Sunday Worship series, either in person or online.



03
DEC

ADVENT LABYRINTH BEGINS

- MON, WED, THU: 9AM-4PM
- TUE & FRI: 9AM - NOON
- SUN: AFTER WORSHIP

07
DEC

ADVENT CONCERT SERIES:

- IRISH BAND-SELKIE

10
DEC

CAROLING:

- YOUTH GROUP, MANNA AND FAITH MILESTONES
6:00 PM

14
DEC

ADVENT CONCERT SERIES:

- GARY & MARTHA MATTHEWS:
CLASSICAL AND JAZZ
ARRANGEMENTS OF HYMNS

21
DEC

ADVENT CONCERT SERIES:

- ARIS CHAPLIN - JAZZ PIANO

24
DEC

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: LOVE

- 10AM WORSHIP

03
DEC

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: HOPE

- 10 AM WORSHIP

Adult Class opportunity: Join Jennifer Clark in the parlor after worship as she teaches: *I Prepare My Heart for the Manger: Reflecting on Advent Through Poetry.*

10
DEC

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: PEACE

- 10 AM WORSHIP

Adult Class opportunity: Join Jennifer Clark in the parlor after worship as she teaches: *I Prepare My Heart for the Manger: Reflecting on Advent Through Poetry.*

13
DEC

EVENING CANDLELIGHT ADVENT WORSHIP

- 7:00PM

17
DEC

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: JOY

- 10 AM WORSHIP
- Children's Pageant "A Shepherd's Adventure"

Adult Class opportunity: Join Sue Ellen Isacksen as she talks about media literacy. Special tour of the Wonder Media exhibit at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum after that.

The Class will be in the parlor after worship.

24
DEC

CHRISTMAS EVE: GLIMPSE OF THE GLORY

- **4:00 PM** – CHILDREN AND FAMILY WORSHIP
- **7:00 PM** – LESSONS AND CAROLS WITH CANDLELIGHT
- **11:00PM** – LESSONS AND COMMUNION



Youth and Young Adult Ministry Update

Manna, First United Methodist Church young adult program, celebrated fall with gusto this year. In October, we took a trip to Gull Meadow Farms to pick apples. Most of us had never seen so many varieties. We filled our bags with a little of each type and conducted highly scientific research to prove which was the tastiest. After an afternoon of sampling all the farms had to offer, our decision was unanimous. Donuts won by a mile.

Later in the fall, Manna had a Pumpkin Carving Jamboree with special guests Ngoy and Umba Kalangwa, who visited Kalamazoo from Tanzania, where they work for the United Methodist Church. They asked us to support the Susannah Wesley Education and Healthcare Center. If you want to learn more about the Kalangwa's work, you can find them on the General Board of Global Ministries site.

Manna has also begun to engage in contemplative prayer. I am excited to see where this journey will take us. In early November, the youth group took a retreat to Wesley Woods. We played glow-in-the-dark capture the flag, where the youth taped glow sticks to one another's backs (for safety) and ran through the field searching for LED flags. The game proved to be a group favorite. In all seriousness, many youth cited the retreat as a much-needed space for rest and friendship in the midst of a hectic semester. I have seen the youth deepen their friendships and connection to their spirit over these months.

In November we asked the youth to write a list of the people who cared about them and the places they felt safe. The youth took this activity seriously. For several minutes, the only sound in the room was of markers on paper and the gentle noise of thinking. Several youth asked me for instructions like, should I write my name on this? And can I staple mine out of order? I told them to do what they wanted, there was no grade, and the writing was for them to look at when they needed reassurance of the good in their life. I know that for many of the youth, our church is one of their safe spaces. Thank you for being part of the community that cares for them.

It brings me deep joy that this church supports a program where young people can engage in thoughtful and meaningful conversation, listen to one another through challenges, and express themselves as they truly are. Thank you FUMC for your ongoing passion for these ministries.

Blessings,

- Jonathan Townley



Children and Families Ministry

Caroling:

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

Camping:

Families of all ages, shapes, and sizes are invited to go camping with church friends. We plan to camp at Lake Michigan Camp & Retreat Center in Pentwater, MI from June 7 - June 9, 2024. A block of sites has been reserved and a one-night deposit is required before December 31 to hold a site for your family. Questions? Contact Katy McGinnis, mcginnik82@gmail.com (text 269-267-3999) for more information.



New Years Fest

Volunteers are needed to welcome visitors to our church during New Year's Fest. A Sign up sheet is in the Perks area on Sunday mornings or contact Dan at djbunker@charter.net, or phone 269-217-8780. Featured events will include Alan Smola, returning with new illusions and magic in the sanctuary; the Otsego Jazz Band, and Ventriloquist Richard Paul in Wesley Hall.

Everyone who volunteers will receive free admission buttons to enjoy other entertainment around the park. (www.NewYearsFest.com)

Celebrating 2 Years and 2,000 Books

Do you remember your first books? For many local children, new, engaging books are not part of their early development. Understanding that early exposure to books and reading to children from birth are critical steps to becoming a reader, the Outreach Team approved the distribution of books in the food pantry in 2013.

That distribution came to an end during the pandemic but in November of 2021, we were chosen to be the site of a Little Free Library. Just two years later, we celebrate with you that just under 2,000 books have moved from that library into the hands of children in our community.

If you have ever taken a peek inside the library, you may have noticed that we try to provide holiday and seasonal selections and especially during the summer, we add books for junior and senior high readers.

If you would like to contribute books, keep in mind that the books you give may be the only books a child receives! Our goal is to provide diverse, engaging, new or very gently used books so please no books with torn pages, writing in them, or chewed on board books. If you wish to donate, leave the books at the security desk in a bag marked "Little Free Library".

To those of you who gave board books during the June Mission of the Month, thank you for working with us to create a literate Kalamazoo of lifelong readers!
The Outreach Team



Sunday Classes

December 3rd and 10th: Join Jennifer Clark for her Advent poetry class, December 3rd and 10th. Advent is the season of preparation in anticipation of the coming of the Christ child. Over two classes, we'll use poetry to reflect on advent themes such as waiting, preparing, and wondering. Jennifer Clark will facilitate, offering the opportunity for small and large group discussion. Through various works, including selections from Advent Anticipations: Poems for Meditation (which includes original writings by FUMC members and friends), we'll prepare our hearts for the manger. The Class will be in the parlor after worship.

December 17: Sue Ellen Isacksen will talk about media literacy with a special tour of the Wonder Media exhibit at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum after that. The Class will be in the parlor after worship.

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Jo Ellen Bentley Reece who passed away September 27th

Dorothy Young (Ruth LaMachia's Mother) who passed away November 18th

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/ 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.