

FIRST WORD

F E B R U A R Y

GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE, SO DO WE

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Our satellite services – especially those at Friendship Village – have held a deep place in my heart. Serving as pastor during those worship services has been one of the greatest blessings I have received during the 7 years of my time with Kalamazoo FUMC.

At the same time, I recognize that just as the people of which they are composed, ministries have life cycles; when they are no longer serving the need for which they were begun, it is time to bid them a solemn and Holy farewell. When we began the services nearly 7 years ago, we regularly had 15-20 folks who regularly attended our service at Heritage and 20-30 at Friendship Village. Ten regularly gathered for our service at the Fountains, which began in 2019 and ended in 2021. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were unable to gather for nearly 2 years, during which time, a majority of those who attended each of the services joined the Great Cloud of Witnesses. Once we were able to return, facility restrictions and staffing levels prevented us from holding the services in a way that offered all residents of each community the opportunity to attend, as designed. By 2021, we had roughly 5 members living at Heritage and 3 at The Fountains, some of whom attended Sanctuary worship or joined us in other ways, we discontinued those services. At Friendship Village our attendance has ebbed and flowed, eventually settling at a core of 5 regular worshippers.

In light of this reality, we have decided to discontinue our weekly worship service at Friendship Village. Nevertheless, our church should celebrate and be grateful for the ministry shared at our satellite services – where people joined in fellowship and Communion and many were anointed for the first time, we joined in singing the Hallelujah Chorus on Easter, and celebrated Christmas Eve together. These services were not separate from our sanctuary worship – they were extensions of it. Let us remember them with gladness and join together in finding new ways to serve our members and friends in these communities, in ways that better reflect their current needs.

Worship will continue to be shown on Channel 1 at Friendship Village. If residents would like assistance in either livestreaming or receiving a DVD recording of each week's worship service, please contact Pastor Thom at tvictor@umc-kzo.org or (269) 224-9637 for help in joining us for worship. Transportation to sanctuary worship is also available upon request by calling the church.

As a Christ-centered community that includes those residing in each of the retirement communities at which our satellite services were held, let us continue to weave our story with God's story in fellowship and joy!

Blessings,

-Pastor Thom Victor



Pictures taken by Thom Victor of a past service at Friendship Village



Pictures taken by Thom Victor of a past service at Friendship Village

YOUTH TO RETURN TO APPALACHIAN SERVICE PROJECT THIS SUMMER

After a four-year hiatus from Appalachian Service Project, the youth of FUMC will be returning this summer to ASP the week of July 20-27 and we will be traveling with our friends from Portage Chapel Hill. The Youth Summer Mission Experience, much like camp is an essential piece of our youth ministry where friendships and memories are made along with powerful spiritual formation while accomplishing good and meaningful work. The ASP theme this summer is BUILDING KINDNESS.

This week of service is open to all youth who are entering the 7th grade through graduating seniors. The first informational meeting about our return to ASP took place on February 4th and if any interested youth were unable to attend this meeting please reach out to Pastor Matt. In preparation for our return to ASP youth will be expected to participate in 4 planning meetings as well as two fundraisers, and those dates will be provided soon to all participants. As always parents are encouraged to volunteer to join us for this week of service. Much gratitude for the many ways young people are encouraged and supported in ministry at FUMC, and for these past four years of the youth Kalamazoo Service Project weeks.

IT'S TIME TO REGISTER FOR CAMP!

Michigan United Methodist Camping provides quality, Christ-Centered, life changing experiences of camp that, much like our youth mission week are essential parts of the youth ministry at FUMC. There are camps for all ages and there are so many to choose from. While all of the opportunities are sure to be wonderful, I would recommend these two options for middle and high school students that can be found, among all options at the new Michigan Camping website graceoutside.com High School Students who have completed 9th grade through those who will have graduated should register for the High School Camp at Wesley Woods that begins June 16th. Pastor Matt and Deacon Cara have been a part of the leadership team for this camp for YEARS, several members of First UMC volunteer this week, and other FUMC youth will be attending. Middle School Students I would recommend the Wesley Woods camp that begins the week of July 7th. Again, most of our middle school youth will be attending this camp, and, I personally work with the programming and leadership development of this camp staff.

If our middle school and high school students attend these specific weeks of camp they will have special shared experiences that will carry through the year of youth ministry.

On February 11th in Worship, we will take a special offering to support youth camp scholarships. All youth who attend camp from FUMC are offered a \$100 scholarship. If cost is prohibitive please see pastor Matt and we'll make sure you can attend. The cost for camp is \$400 per youth.

RECONCILING MINISTRIES NEW SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES:

This year the Reconciling Ministry Team will be exploring some new practices and studies in spiritual formation. With the liturgical seasons of Lent, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, and Advent, we'll search the scriptures and engage spiritual practices to connect our faith to our Antiracist Identities. Our first class will be Sunday, February 11th and we'll work with the question, "What is the relationship between REPENTANCE and ANTIRACISM?" Pastor Matt Weiler will teach this one-time class following worship and participants will be provided with practices for the season of Lent to explore the question more intently at their own pace. No preparation necessary, all are invited.

First Word for March

Articles for the next issue are due no later than March 1, 2024. The next newsletter will be mailed the second week of March.

Articles submitted to the newsletter should be sent to jcelorio@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.

Children and Families Ministry

February 25th:

Faith Milestones for 3rd-5th graders from 6-7:30pm at the church.

March 15th:

The March Family Fun night will be at Airway Lanes on Friday, from 6-8pm for bowling.

March 17th:

Faith Milestones for 3rd-5th graders from 6-7:30pm at the church.

March 24th:

Children and Families Ministry will have a Palm Parade with the children at the beginning of Palm Sunday and an all church brunch after church on Palm Sunday in Wesley Hall.

On Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday there will not be children's Sunday School after church, but there will be Godly Play after "A Time for the Child in Us All" during worship and childcare available in the nursery.

2024 Bayshore Camp

First Presbyterian and First United Methodist of Kalamazoo are pleased to bring, "Bay Shore Day Camp on the Road," back this summer. Save the dates for August 12-15, 2024 from 8:30am to 4:30pm here at the church for four days of camp for kindergarten to 5th graders. Registration will begin soon!

TAKING ROOT



In January 2023 I sat with two colleagues from First Congregational and First Presbyterian Churches, our neighbors around Bronson Park, and I shared a fragment of an idea. Princeton Seminary was launching a new grant-funded program called the Young Adult Ministry Collaboratory and they were seeking congregations willing to partner and experiment with new young adult ministry projects. "We all have some form of ministry with young adults," I said, "And our churches are VERY similar to one another serving the exact same population. Maybe we can do something together that will be better than if we were to try it alone."

Almost one year to date of that meeting, after an incredible training event at Princeton in September, followed by 12 weeks of meeting, planning, organizing, writing lots of ideas on sticky notes, and conversing with young adults in our churches and around the community, we finally pulled off "Taking Root: A Kalamazoo Service Fair." Young Adults consistently shared with us that they wanted deeper connections and places to connect their passions with service in meaningful ways while building community. In response, we developed an event that featured eight local lesser known service groups, invited (and paid) three young adult local musicians, offered really good food (thanks Donna Dunyak!), served great coffee (thanks Factory Coffee!), gave away great swag (nice work Larry Stuart!) and hosted a wonderful event (thanks Kalamazoo Non-Profit Advocacy Collaborative) where approximately 70 guests and volunteers showed up.

The focus of the Collaboratory was to engage young adults to create an event for and by young adults. And while the event - Taking Root - was a great success the process was an even greater success. Approximately 20 young adults from our three congregations came together to make the event happen and now a one-time event is on the way to becoming a movement. Taking Root will be a downtown collaborative young adult ministry that meets for service, friendship, and for spiritual formation. A retreat is scheduled for the third weekend in March where 20 young adults will come together to dream about what's next. When this all began at Princeton in September, a question was asked of us by the Professor of Youth, Church, and Culture, and my personal hero in the world of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Kenda Creasy Dean. "Where do you see God in this?" It was a question that she asked over and over again throughout our weekend at Princeton, a question she asks in her writing and in her teaching, and a question that our group asked repeatedly every Monday morning as we met together. And my answer to the question is, everywhere. Astonishingly everywhere. God was in the inception of the idea, and God is moving now to launch something new.

-Matt Weiler

LENTEN ORGAN SERIES

Join us this Lent for our Lenten Organ Series, all recitals are free and will begin at noon on the following Thursdays in the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo.

February 22

Dr. Julia Brown, Music Director, Mayflower Congregational Church, Grand Rapids

February 29

Christoph Hintermüller

March 7

Lucia Skrobola

March 14

Dr. Mark Wells, Director of Music, St. Joseph Catholic Parish, St. Joseph, MI

March 21

Christine El-Hage Walters & Michael Katopodes
(Christine) Organist/Choir Accompanist, Assumption Grotto Catholic Church, Detroit
(Michael) Music Director, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Warren, MI

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.



LENT WORSHIP SERIES: OUR STORIES & GOD'S STORY

We are the Body of Christ. Each one of us has an individual story that is unfolding and is yet to be created. We are the Body of Christ, and we belong to a specific faith community that is weaving our collective story to God's story. The Holy Spirit is guiding and shaping our story and there is much more to be discovered and lived. We dwell in a narrative that in the end is filled with hope, resurrection, life, and love eternal. As we journey through Lent, we will pair our newly established vision statement and values with the Jesus narrative told primarily through the Gospel writers of Mark and John. Each week will be dedicated to the exploration of one of our values: love, community, inclusion, and justice culminating with our vision statement. One of the classic hymns proclaims, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long". As we journey through Lent and seek the Easter dawn, may we dedicate ourselves to being the kingdom of God here on earth. It is a story to be told and celebrated.



Ash Wednesday, February 14, 7pm worship (Childcare available)

We strive to move toward a reconciling relationship with all.

We gather to place the mark of ashes upon our foreheads to recognize our need for God, our desire to be realigned to the love of God, and to live with a spirit of reconciliation.



First Sunday of Lent, February 18, 10am worship

"I am well pleased." Mark 1: 11b

We value and celebrate love. God is love and all creation is made in love, by love, and for love.



Second Sunday of Lent, February 25, 10am worship

"If any want to become my followers..." Mark 8: 34a

We value and experience community. Community is a sacred relationship with God and with one another.



Third Sunday of Lent, March 3, 10am worship

"What sign can you show us for doing this?" Mark 18b

We value inclusion as all identities belong and are loved in Christ.



Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 10, 10am worship

"The light has come into the world..." John 3: 19a

We value justice as restoration of equity and wholeness.



Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 17, 10am worship

"Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will be my servant also." John 12: 26

We are called to experience God's love, celebrate God's love and share God's love. It is our mission.



Palm Sunday, March 24, 10am worship

"Many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields."

We gather with joy to shout our glad hosannas only to realize that evil had extinguished a life that had burned so brightly. With heavy hearts we turn to experience the depths of Holy Week.

Children and Families ministries will have a Palm Parade with the children at the beginning of Palm Sunday and an all church brunch after church on Palm Sunday in Wesley Hall.



Holy Thursday, March 28, 7pm worship (Childcare available)

"And what I say to you, I say to all: keep awake." John 13: 37

May we keep awake in this holiest of weeks and be willing to abide with Jesus as he shares a final meal with his disciples. Let us take the bread, taste of the cup, and keep alert for the movement of the Holy Spirit.



Good Friday, March 29, 7pm worship (Childcare available)

"Whom are you looking for?" John 18: 4b

In the dark of this night, we discover, we remember the depth of the love that Jesus has for all of us. As we gather, we commit ourselves to answering his invitation to be agents of a love that will not die.



March 31, Easter Sunday, 10am worship

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark..." John 20: 1a

We are a Christ centered community where our stories are woven with God's story. Hallelujah! Christ is alive and in him we find life as we find our story.