

FIRST WORD

A P R I L

GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE, SO DO WE

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"Light precedes every transition. Whether at the end of a tunnel, through a crack in the door, or the flash of an idea, it is always there, heralding a new beginning." ~Theresa Tsalaky

Dear People of First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo,

We have been in a season of staff transition and will continue to be for a time. We appreciate your prayers and your patience as we continue to navigate changes and find our way on a learning curve. As we have moved through this season, we have found that there have been challenges and opportunities. We believe that the light of Christ does indeed guide and provide wisdom as we seek solutions and continue to have a staff team dedicated to the ministries of our church.

Over the last several months we have had three people who have departed from our staff team and are onto new adventures: Ruth LaMachia, Casey Curran, and Robin Entenman although with thanksgiving Robin is still worshiping with us and is actively engaged in our prayer team and caring committee.

We have brought on two new people to our staff team: Ava Loncharte as Building Host and Drew Bolton as Building Superintendent. We have moved two people to new positions: Christi Landreville as Office Manager and Thom Victor as Technology Support Specialist.

Many of these changes have resulted in responsibilities being redistributed, thus several staff members are taking upon tasks that have required new learnings. For example, José Celorio our Communications Coordinator, now prepares our worship bulletins and worship slides. Christi Landreville has a multitude of responsibilities that are new for her, and she is discerning the best way to delegate tasks and balance her workload. Walt Whitfield is working closely with Christi as they dive deeper into all the nuances of our finances and are working with the Finance Team to clean up and streamline our systems. Thom Victor is troubleshooting as he uncovers our needs and shortcomings in our technology systems. Drew Bolton is learning the ins and outs of our large building that has a multitude of complexities and a need for consistent care and upkeep. Ava Loncharte has provided wonderful hospitality as she learns to guide and direct people to the people and places they want to go.

We also recognize that in times of transition, gaps can be created, and needs may not be addressed as they were in the past. We are still working on how we will address the needs of congregational care as we do not have a staff person who is solely responsible for this care at this time. Pastor Matt and I are doing our best to keep up with the most critical needs, tend to the dying, and comfort the grieving. If you feel called to help with visitation, calling, or sending cards to our elders and homebound, and those who are in times of need, please reach out to me. We are seeking leadership for our Caring Committee. Please pick up a magnet from the Welcome Desk for guidance on how you can contribute and engage in CARES (calls, acts of kindness, reach out, engage, spirit tending).

We are also working to build our Audio/Visual Team. We believe that our livestream worship is a vital way to connect beyond our church building. Each week, people depend upon our livestream worship to enliven their spirits and keep them engaged. Our sound and visual technicians enhance our worship experience in the sanctuary each week. We need people who are willing to learn the skills of using our wonderful equipment and become a part of the team that provides this ministry week after week. Please reach out to me if you are interested in helping to create a meaningful worship experience for those who are in the sanctuary and beyond.

There are many opportunities to be further involved in the ministries of FUMC. The above are just a few of the ways that people can be engaged. Contact me or any of the staff team and I am certain we could match your willingness to serve and participate within an area of ministry.

We have recently identified our new vision statement: We are a Christ-centered community where our stories are woven with God's story. We are in this ministry together, staff and laity as we create chapters to our story that are relevant, authentic, inspired, and entwined with the Divine. As staff, we are in transition to further learning, growing, and finding the light that heralds a new beginning. Join us with your prayers, presence, service, and witness, and let us create a community that values love, inclusion, community, and justice.

Shalom,
Pastor Julie Kline

CELEBRATING THE CFM WORSHIP

We want to spotlight the recent CFM Worship Service from Sunday, April 21st. It was a day of community and faith as we gathered together to worship. The service was very special with children involved; their participation in our church is truly remarkable as they represent the future of the church. We want to highlight the sermons by two young members of our congregation. Despite their young age, these children spoke with wisdom, maturity, and joy.

CAMPBELL WEILER

Hi, you may know me as Pastor Matt's daughter or just as Campbell. Before our family came to this church we were at a small church called Sunnyside. It was about 50 people per Sunday kind of church. I was born and baptized there. Sunnyside was like a little family filled with joy and love.

It was late summer of 2020 or early COVID when I heard we were moving to this church, FUMC. I was scared. I didn't know what it would be like. Would we have camp music, communion, and my dad's stories every Sunday? And, most importantly, would they have Waffle church?

Our first Sunday was weird. I mean we were watching it in our living room. Sundays were like that for almost two years. As soon as he got the keys, before he lost them our dad gave us a tour of the church. It was BIG and it was almost overwhelming.

The first Sunday we were actually at the church I may have been a little disappointed. There was no communion, no camp songs, and no stories that I heard over and over again but that never grew old; but it was beautiful. My family has been at this church for 4 years now, and I'm still getting used to it. Our church family is growing and it is starting to feel like home again. I have made so many friends like Grace Harthorn, Neela and Penny. There are also so many opportunities here that I didn't have before, like First Beats and the amazing musicals Ms. Jackie puts on and Milestones with Ms. Julia. Through these, I have discovered more about myself and more about God. Now, every time I walk into church it feels like God is wrapping himself around me and everyone here is sending love and compassion to our family and everyone around us.

GRACE HARTHORN

Hello. My name is Grace Harthorn. I have been going to First United Methodist Church for a little more than a year. I could go on forever telling you all about all the exciting, joyful and educational journeys I've had with this church community. But today I'm going to touch on my first really special experience that I had here.

It all started on February of 2023. My father was out of town so it was me, my sister Lillian, and my mother. Since we moved in late December we had just started to settle. It was an ordinary night when we decided that it was time for us to find a church. My mother spent her time researching Methodist churches in our area until she found one for us to attend that Sunday. We all agreed If we liked the church we would return the following Sunday. If not, we would find a new church to try.

When Sunday rolled around we woke up at an appropriate time and dressed in our nicer attire. Driving to the large, stone building I felt a sort of certainty of this new entity.

Walking into FUMC everything just sounded and felt so happy and friendly. Almost everyone was smiling or talking bubbly to one another. A few minutes later everyone was seated and ready to listen. A jazz band was playing for the prelude and it was candy for my ears. That day it felt as though God was there with me. Wrapping his arms around me in peace and joy. With the booming words of the preacher telling the stories of God. Sitting on the balcony I stared in awe at the magnificent stained glass. The sun was shining at the perfect angle. Like God calling me forth from heaven. That was truly a time where I felt so connected to God.

To wrap it all up, mouth watering donuts were calling to me at the end of the service. In the car after church the question of them all came up. My mother asked me and my sister whether this was the right church for us or not. I knew as well as Lilly what we were going to say. I knew deep down in my soul. That this church. First United Methodist Church. Was truly where I needed to be.

First Word for May

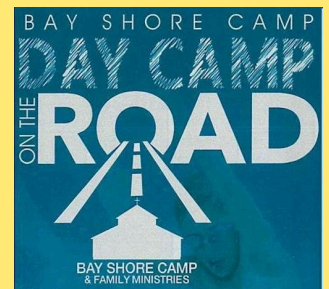
Articles for the next issue are due no later than May 15, 2024.

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

2024 Bay Shore 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!



Educational Opportunity

Bishop David Bard and his spouse Julie will be leading a trip to Greece and Egypt through Educational Opportunities next November 10 – 20. John and Diane Boley will be participating as tour hosts. This great trip will see the splendors of ancient Greece and Egypt, including Corinth, Athens, Cairo, the Pyramids and a Nile cruise. If you are at all interested, please contact John Boley at 989.400.0355 or jboley54@gmail.com.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Are you looking for a way to get to know the church building better and to help keep it maintained for generations to come? Do you possess good organization and communication skills? If so, we invite you to consider volunteering to be the chairperson for First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo's Building and Grounds Committee! The current chairperson has retired after serving for 9 years. The Building and Grounds Committee is currently made up of 11 dedicated members and focuses on the maintenance of our beautiful church building (inside and out!) and the surrounding grounds. When prudent, the Committee seeks out and compares proposals from contractors, makes recommendations about maintenance solutions to the Board of Trustees for authorization and funding, and works with church staff to manage project implementation and completion. The chairperson organizes, plans, and distributes agendas for monthly meetings of the Building and Grounds Committee. These meetings are typically held virtually and involve the presence of two staff members. Additionally, the chairperson attends monthly virtual meetings of the Board of Trustees.

This is a very rewarding way to get to know your church and to help meet its needs for the benefit of the entire congregation and all whom we serve in this place!

For more information, please contact Tom Schaberg at 269-352-5234.

New Director at Wesley

Wesley at WMU is excited to introduce Andrew Stange as our new Director and Campus Minister. With a rich history at Wesley, Andrew's journey began in 2006 as a dedicated student, evolving into a committed volunteer post-graduation, and most recently as a valuable member of the Wesley board of directors. In the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic and several director transitions over the past three years, the board made the strategic decision to appoint Andrew internally, ensuring stability during this critical time.

Andrew brings a wealth of experience from his tenure at Water's Edge UMC, First UMC of Rolla, Holland First UMC, and MI Conference Communications, making him uniquely qualified to lead Wesley into its next chapter. We extend a warm welcome to Andrew as he, alongside the board, remains steadfast in upholding our core values of forming community, exploring faith, and seeking justice. Andrew shares, "This is an exciting new chapter in both my personal journey and the life of Wesley at WMU. I look forward to what the students and I will be able to create through collaboration in ministry together. Here's to the next 100 years of ministry at Wesley at WMU!"

The board of directors at Wesley at WMU remains steadfast in its dedication to anti-bias/anti-racism initiatives, fostering an inclusive environment through collaborative decision-making rooted in prayerful discernment. We are committed to amplifying the voices of those historically marginalized, guided by the abundance of God's grace, and striving for transparency in our communication processes while upholding personal integrity. Over the next year, together with our new director, we are actively shaping a comprehensive plan for anti-bias/anti-racism training, education, and actionable steps. Together, we embark on a journey to fulfill God's vision for Wesley to be an "authentic, transforming, Christ-centered community."

Join us Monday, May 13th at noon for lunch as we welcome Andrew as our new director!

Our Sympathy and Prayers to the Family and Friends of:

Jan Search who died on March 16th

Ellen McDonald who died on March 23rd

Bela Lahner who died on March 26th

Barbara Patterson who died on March 26th

Jill Christian who died on April 3rd

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

- Don Chalker
- Christine
- Lenora Holliday
- Judy McClelland
- Susan Noble
- Anna Rassmussen
- Mary Lou Sanderson
- Barb Skuza
- Tom and Marcia Stobie
- Lori Valkema
- Carol & family
- Ruth LaMachia
- Sally Stevens
- Hank Rohs
- RuthAnn and Bill Uggen
- Michael Seals
- 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

Coffee service happens every Sunday at Kalamazoo FUMC. Join us after worship in the Perks Area on the first level of the church. We look forward to sharing coffee and fellowship with you!