

# FIRST WORD

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GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE, SO DO WE

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BISHOP DAVID A. BARD

## A New Chapter in The United Methodist Church: Embracing Change and Widening the Table

Bishop David Bard shared some transformative updates in a recent letter from General Conference. In his letter to the Michigan Conference Bishop Bard shares some of the most significant updates from the 2020 General Conference. The conference implemented three changes, known as “The Three R’s” - Regionalization, Revision of The United Methodist Social Principles, and Removal of language limiting LGBTQ+ participation. These changes mark a shift towards a more inclusive, decentralized church structure, with a renewed commitment to social justice and ethical living.

As we explore these changes, we begin a new chapter in the church’s history.

## The Three R’s: A Historic Shift

The General Conference was quite eventful, with a steady stream of news and updates. Among the legislative proposals and various insights, the Three R’s were particularly noteworthy for signaling change and progress. Regionalization is about giving more control and flexibility to local church bodies, which supports cultural adaptability. The update to The United Methodist Social Principles shows a stronger dedication to social justice and ethical practices. Importantly, eliminating restrictions on LGBTQ+ participation is a major move toward being more inclusive.

## Widening the Table

The Bishop has been a strong advocate for fostering inclusivity within The United Methodist Church. These recent changes are in alignment with that vision. Now, pastors can officiate at weddings without the burden of ecclesiastical charges, regardless of whether the couple is in a same-sex relationship. Individuals are encouraged to respond to God’s call on their lives, and the Boards of Ordained Ministry will discern these calls, irrespective of sexual orientation.

For those who may find these developments challenging, the Bishop offers reassurance. We are now genuinely embracing the ability to agree to disagree without fear of church penalties or punitive processes. Appointments will continue to be made, thoughtfully considering the church and community context. Churches and pastors will have the autonomy to make decisions about weddings, reflecting the evolving landscape of inclusivity and acceptance.

## Looking Ahead

As we process these significant changes, the Bishop encourages us to remain centered in the risen Christ and anchored in our Scriptures. The aspiration is for The United Methodist Church to shift its focus more freely toward its mission: making disciples of Jesus Christ. Through this mission, people can encounter the healing and liberating grace of God in their lives, contributing to a world that becomes more just, loving, and compassionate.

As we step into this new chapter, we eagerly anticipate sharing this ministry journey together, embracing change, and expanding our table.



## **MESSAGE FROM SPRC**

Our church's 2024 period of staffing transition continues to go smoothly. We want to start by commending the continuing dedication and solution-seeking skills of the entire FUMC staff. They have been working extremely well together and, in the midst of this transition period, recently led our congregation through a meaningful journey through Lent and Easter. We hope our congregants will join us in expressing gratitude to our fine staff.

Our FUMC staff members, alongside volunteers serving on committees and ministry teams, are continuing their weaving of our stories with God's story and helping us all lean into our shared values of community, love, inclusion, and justice. Transition details are falling into place every day, yet the discernment process will continue in several areas throughout the summer. By next fall we should be through our transition period.

If you are unsure of who to contact about your particular question or need, please call our main church phone number (381-6340) and our staff team will work together to direct you to the correct person. For reference, please see the detailed staff list below, containing more complete job titles than sometimes fit into our bulletin as well as some key extension numbers. Mail can be addressed to any of our staff at 212 S Park St, Kalamazoo 49007. Please contact the office to obtain email addresses as needed.

### **Clergy**

- Lead Pastor - Rev. Julie Kline (Ext 232)
- Pastor of Community Formation - Rev. Matt Weiler (Ext 229)

### **Lay Staff**

- Director of Music - Jackie Stilger (Ext 245)
- Organist - Bernie Foulk (Ext 240)
- Director of Children and Families Ministries - Julia Librizzi (Ext 231)
- Office Manager - Christi Landreville (Ext 223)
- Bookkeeper - Walt Whitfield (Ext 236)
- Communications Coordinator - Jose Celorio (Ext 224)
- Office Assistant - Chris Stakely (Ext 227)
- Technology Support Specialist - Thom Victor (Ext 222)
- Building Superintendent - Drew Bolton (Ext 201)
- Building Hosts - Andrew Weare, Ava Loncharte (244)
- Youth and Young Adult Resident - Jonathan Townley
- Custodian - Michael Lee
- AV Team - Bryan Heany, Drew Eaton
- Nursery Workers - Sharon Bunker, Debra Linderman, Samantha Lee
- Choral Scholar - Lauren Estep

## **First Word for June**

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

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.

## **Children and Families Ministry**

Attention families of K-5th graders, Bayshore is back! Lunch and snacks will be included! The theme for this year will be "I AM " Through Old Testament stories about Moses and the Israelites and New Testament stories about followers of Jesus. This day camp is for children entering kindergarten through 5th grade.

Monday August 12 - Thursday August 15, 2024, 8:30am to 4:30pm. There is no cost, but space is limited, so please register your children today. Contact Ms. Julia at [jlibrizzi@umc.org](mailto:jlibrizzi@umc.org) for more information.

## **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](mailto:jboley54@gmail.com).

## UNPROMPTED THOUGHTS

We're thrilled to announce a new series in 'First Word.' Each month, we'll bring you a thought, story, or piece crafted by the diverse minds of our staff.

Join us as we unfold the stories of transformation and triumph, starting with a piece by Christi Landreville, whose influence has been instrumental in guiding us through these times of change.

*It's a challenge. Being human and living day-to-day is challenging. In the middle of February of this year I agreed to a new thing. A challenge that is. I knew the challenge would include unfamiliar processes that fall outside my experience, and I would be faced with learning new things, new words, and new organizational relationships. Each piece of learning includes dozens of tiny pieces of learning stacked up to complete one single task. I think of it like knitting. My family knows that I am a knitter. I learned to knit so long ago I don't remember not knowing how to knit. Learning the basics is easy, but the hard part about knitting is knowing how to fix it when you discover a stitch has gone awry several rows (hours, days) of knitting ago! That's what this challenge feels like. I can see things that need to be reworked, but what I have yet to learn is how to do the fixing! I'm reminded of a viral video of the actors Dan Levy and Catherine O'Hara in a scene from the TV show Schitt's Creek. They are cooking together and the recipe says to "fold in the cheese." The hilarious dialogue continues about folding in the cheese with no further description of what it means to fold in the cheese. (Google it. Funny stuff.) That's a little bit of how this challenge feels.*

"Now I know only in part; then I will know fully." 1 Corinthians 13:12b.

*Christi*

## FIRST BEATS

The children's musical will be presented on May 31st at 7:00 and June 2nd during worship. We will present "Through the Roof!", a retelling of the story of Luke 5:17-26. The story is about a paralyzed man who is forgiven and healed by Jesus after being lowered through the roof by four friends. The May 31st show will have desserts afterward in the Perks area.



The children of first beats photo taken by jackie stilger

## 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

David Lundquist who died on May 2nd

## 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
- 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/](http://www.umc-kzo.org/contact-us/prayer-request/). or, please call the church at (269) 381-6340 and leave a message.

## 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!