

the First Word



April 9, 2025

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First United Methodist Church

212 S. Park Street

Kalamazoo, MI 49007

269-381-6340

www.umc-kzo.org

HOLY WEEK

CHILDCARE AND
LIVESTREAMING
WILL BE AVAILABLE
AT ALL THREE
SERVICES!



HOLY THURSDAY

APRIL 17
7PM

In these final hours of accompanying Jesus to his grave, can we seek a posture of trust just as the first disciples did as Jesus washed their feet? Can we allow ourselves to be embraced and loved by our neighbors and God? Will we care for one another as Jesus commands? In the turbulent events that are to follow, will we remember to show our love? Let us commune with the Holy through breaking bread, drinking the cup, singing hymns, and praying together. The Chancel Singers will lead us musically along with the clergy as we experience this time of abiding discipleship.

APRIL 18
7PM

GOOD FRIDAY



On this night, we walk the way of sorrow with Jesus as we pray, listen, sing the reflective hymns of Good Friday, and hear the question, "Why have you forsaken me?" Jesus' final lament gives voice to all those who have been forsaken—those who suffer injustice, those who are abandoned, those who are unjustly convicted. Instead of trying to answer this question with logic or theology, we are invited to live it, to sit with it. This is a time of deep reflection and becoming awake, staying awake, and recognizing the deep need within and around us.

EASTER SUNDAY

APR 20
10AM



After nights of deep darkness, we come in the bright light of Easter morning and celebrate that Christ is risen indeed! Resurrection is possible. It is a glorious morning filled with tulips, lilies, brass and timpani, voices raised in joy, all proclaiming "Alleluia!" On this glorious morning, let us hear the call of life calling to life. Christ is Risen! Our worship will culminate with the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* as all are invited to sing.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MINISTRIES *by Julia Librizzi*

Upcoming Family Fun Events - Mark Your Calendars!

Friday, May 9 – Oshtemo Park/Potluck, 6 - 7:30pm

Fri-Sun, July 11-13 – Family Camp in Pentwater, MI

Please join us for family camping at Lake Michigan Family Campground in Pentwater, MI from July 11-13, 2025. We have a group of sites blocked off for our group under "First UMC of Kalamazoo Katy McGinnis." Full hook up sites, electric and water sites, and platform tent sites available. Call 231-869-5627 to reserve your family's site.

Sunday, August 24 – River Oaks Splash Pad/Potluck, 1 - 3pm

Faith Milestones (Grades 3-5) Events

Sunday, April 13 from 6 - 7:30pm – Lent, Games, Dinner

Friday, May 16 from 6 - 8pm – Scavenger Hunt Downtown, Dinner Kalamazoo

Mom's Retreat in Ludington Beach

We still have openings for this fun weekend planned for April 25-27 at Ludington Beach House that includes yoga, prayer, devotional time, free time, and meals (dinner at restaurant cost on your own). Cost is \$200. Please contact Julia Librizzi at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org if you have questions or need the registration and payment links sent to you.

Bay Shore Day Camp on the Road

Our summer day camp is scheduled for August 11-14 (Monday - Thursday) from 8:30am - 4:30pm. Sign-ups and more details about this incredibly fun day camp experience located at our church for children entering kindergarten through 5th grade will be coming soon!

YOUTH MINISTRIES *by Rev. Matt Weiler*

Sunday, April 13 - PALM SUNDAY

No Sunday School - Palm Sunday Brunch after worship

ASP Cookie Fundraiser before worship and during Palm Sunday Brunch 6-7:30pm Youth Group in the Youth Lounge - Small Groups

Sunday, April 20 - EASTER!

No Sunday School or evening youth group

Sunday, April 27

No Sunday School

2:30pm CROP Walk

Sunday, May 4 - Kalamazoo Marathon

No Sunday School, Youth Group will follow special worship at 5pm

Sunday, May 11 - Mother's Day

No Sunday School

Senior Celebration Sunday in worship

No evening Youth Group

Sunday, May 18 - Confirmation Sunday

6-7:30pm Cooking and eating together in the youth lounge

****May 4 Worship Time Change!****

Because of the 2025 Ziegler Kalamazoo Marathon the morning of Sunday, May 4 in downtown Kalamazoo, our worship is at a *special time of 5pm*. Please mark your calendars for this change!

PLEASE KEEP THESE FRIENDS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Wayne Conner
Nancy Douglas
Robin Entenman
Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis
Judy McClelland
Ellie Miller
Mumma Family
Susan Noble
Lois & Jim Richmond
Hank Rohs
Mary Lou Sanderson
Gerry & Tom Schaberg
Michael Seals
Barb Skuza
Sally Stevens
Tom and Marcia Stobie
Lori Valkema
Warzybok Family
Deb Search 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 call the church at (269) 381-6340 and leave a message.

E-MAIL LIST

We also have a weekly E-Newsletter called "Around the Corner." If you would like to be on the church's email list to receive important church news electronically, please contact Jennifer Stupica, jstupica@umc-kzo.org.

MAY ISSUE OF THE FIRST WORD

Articles for the next issue of the newsletter are due on Friday, May 9. Submissions should be emailed to Jennifer Stupica at jstupica@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.

PASTOR JULIE'S RENEWAL LEAVE

Pastor Julie's renewal leave will begin on Monday, April 21 (the day after Easter) and continue through July 7, 2025. This time will not be focused on a "plan" or a "project," but will be centered on rest and spiritual nourishment. This is also a time for the congregation to trust that God will do wonderful work through our laity leaders, staff, and ministries.

During Pastor Julie's renewal leave, we will welcome several guest worship leaders on Sundays. In addition, retired clergy and Stephen Ministers will be available for congregational support. Please call the church at (269) 381-6340 if you are in need of pastoral care.

Pastor Julie's weekly CUPPA time of inspiration at 2pm, will continue until April 16.

FUMC IS HIRING A BOOKKEEPER!

We're seeking a skilled and detail-oriented bookkeeper to join our team! This part-time role (20-25 hours per week) offers flexible, hybrid work opportunities. The ideal candidate will be able to work independently, maintain accurate financial records, collaborate with other church staff and our Finance Committee, and support our church's mission and values. If you or someone you know is interested in this position, please view the below link for a complete job description and contact email address:

<http://michiganumc.org/bookkeeper-kalamazoo-first-umc/>

OUR STORY IS NEVER OVER

Connecting Through Prayer Quilts

Sunday, May 11 following worship

Fellowship Room

Led by Deb Search Willoughby



During Advent our worship visuals included quilt blocks that depicted our weekly themes. Rather than just hide them in a storage closet where they may never again see daylight, we will use these blocks to make a prayer quilt for someone needing to be wrapped in God's love. Anyone of any age or skill level is invited to explore how the Spirit can move to create a gift as we connect with one another, try out something that may be different or new, and pass that creation on!



ASP COOKIE FUNDRAISER

The youth have worked hard to bake and decorate these fabulous and delicious cookies for their ASP summer trip fundraiser! You will be able to purchase them on Palm Sunday before worship and during the Palm Sunday brunch following worship on April 13!

*To deepen our connection to each other and our community as part of "Our Story is Never Over" Project, we pivot from exploring Awareness (Lens to Mirror) to **Connection** (Transactional to Transformational) relationships. We will focus on how our relationships can be transformed and made richer, and kindness and gratitude can become our connective tissue and bring healing.*

To this end, we bring you a dramatic staged reading of



WHO STOLE THEM CHURCH HATS?

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LOCAL PLAYWRIGHT BUDDY HANNAH

SUNDAY, April 27

Join us after worship on April 27 in the sanctuary for a dramatic staged reading of "Who Stole Them Church Hats?" This one-act play is written and directed by local playwright

Buddy Hannah and presented in collaboration with Allen Chapel A.M.E.

Hannah's play, in both poignant and humorous ways, speaks to community building through relationships. It also shows how some things—like judging others and our own personal biases—can get in the way of deepening our connection to others and to building the Kingdom of God.



Buddy Hannah
Local Playwright

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO FINANCIAL UPDATE						
	2023	2024	Month Ending 2/28/25	Year to Date 2/28/25	2025 Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget
TOTAL INCOME	1,155,208	1,053,747	239,644	376,153	1,253,334	32.64%
TOTAL EXPENSE	1,118,942	1,166,950	87,979	175,444	1,202,200	14.59%
EXCESS/(DEFICIT)	36,266	(113,203)	151,665	200,709	(49,866)	

PALM SUNDAY BRUNCH

Please join us in Wesley Hall for a Palm Sunday brunch immediately following worship. There will be baskets by the doors of Wesley Hall to take a goodwill offering to cover the cost of brunch. We hope you will join us!

APRIL MISSION OF THE MONTH

Our April Mission of the month will help support the Seita Scholars Program. This program supports students who have aged out of the foster care system and attend WMU. Items needed are toilet tissue, laundry detergent, dryer sheets, feminine hygiene products, shampoo/conditioner, lotion, razors (multi-pack), and body wash. There is a collection box by the food pantry for your donations. Meijer gift cards (\$10-25) are also welcome. Gift cards may be put in the offering plate on Sunday or turned in at the church office Monday through Thursday, 9am-4pm. Thank you for your continued support of our monthly Missions of the Month!

SENIOR CELEBRATION SUNDAY

High School Seniors! On **May 11** during worship (also Mother's Day), all graduating seniors are invited to join us for worship, be recognized, and receive a blessing as part of our liturgy. Please email mweiler@umc-kzo.org to let Pastor Matt know: (a) if you will be present in worship on May 11, (b) if you have interest in also being a participant in worship, (c) include a senior photo that you would like displayed during worship. Congratulations seniors!

FAITHFUL WITNESS WEDNESDAYS

Steps of Kalamazoo City Hall at noon

CONTINUES IN APRIL!! We invite you to gather on the steps of Kalamazoo City Hall with Kalamazoo clergy on Wednesdays at noon. This nonpartisan vigil focuses on the unique opportunity of faith communities to raise a prophetic and pastoral call to Congress to work for "we the people," protect the vulnerable, and stand against the harm that is inflicted every day. We are praying, working, and using our voices for the common good. Please join us!



Rev. Dan Duncan will be leading an adult kayak camp to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore near Munising, MI in the Upper Peninsula for the last time this summer. There is no better way to experience the grandeur of this area. No previous kayaking experience needed—just a spirit of adventure and desire to be immersed in God's creation. **Kayaks and camp gear are provided! Dates are Aug. 18-23.** Dan is happy to answer any questions at danduncan56@gmail.com or 616-502-5092.

CROP WALK

Save the date of **Sunday, April 27** for the annual Kalamazoo Valley Crop Hunger Walk. The walk will begin and end at Trinity Lutheran Church, 504 S. Westnedge Ave. For the first time FUMC will have two separate teams raising funds for the Crop Walk. The youth and young adults (Youth Tribe and Manna), and a separate team formed by the Outreach Team. Each team has pledged to raise \$1500 this year. You can donate online to either team, or maybe both, and monitor their progress at: <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/crophungerwalks/event/kalamazoomi>

JOIN THE CARES TEAM!

C - Calling and cards
A - Acts of kindness
R - Reaching out
E - Engaged with one another
S - Spirit led



This ministry team connects and cares for members and friends of Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church, especially our elders and those with ongoing health concerns or significant life events. Contact Judy Kingsley judykings@charter.net to learn more and join our efforts to share God's love or receive CARE from a team member.

CHARTRES LABYRINTH

There is a long history of the use of labyrinths in Christian worship. Labyrinth prayer walking can prepare our spirits to be part of God's Kingdom. **The labyrinth is set up in Wesley Hall through Good Friday, April 18.** You are invited to walk the labyrinth before and after worship on Sundays, or Monday - Thursday between 9am-4 pm.

HOLY WEEK EXTENDED WALK TIMES: On Holy Thursday, the labyrinth will be available from 9am to 8:45pm. On Good Friday, you may walk the labyrinth from 6:15pm to 8:30pm.

Several people can walk the labyrinth at the same time, but please allow participants to walk slowly. Our labyrinth requires the removal of your shoes to preserve the cloth of the labyrinth. There will be information about the history of the labyrinth and the rhythm of walking it. We encourage you to try this ancient prayer practice to quiet your mind, center yourself, and allow your spirit to be in prayer.