



REJOICE SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 7 | STARTS @ 10AM

We Welcome All

***"This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it!"***

PSALM 118:24

We joyfully invite you to join us in celebrating Rejoice Sunday as we embark on our 2025-26 ministry program year together!

We gather as a diverse family, united by the love of God, embracing all who seek a place of warmth and belonging. Here, everyone is truly welcome—because in the embrace of our faith, there is space for all voices and hearts. We rejoice in the journey we share, growing and learning as a community of faith. As followers of Christ, we are called to be an inclusive church, one that reflects the beauty of God's kingdom.

Join us as we celebrate our journey and commit ourselves to being a place of grace, acceptance, and love. We can't wait to see you all here throughout the year.

Together, let us rejoice in the fullness of our faith and in the wonderful community we build as we experience, celebrate, and share God's love. ~ Pastor Julie

Worship @ 10am

"Choose Life"

Rev. Julie Kline

Holy Communion
Blessing our Teachers
and Choir

Psalms 118:19-29
Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Open House

After Worship

Children

- Kids can visit the Sunday School Room on the 2nd floor
- Meet our dedicated Sunday School leaders
- Learn about our new curriculum, Big Faith

Youth

- Youth are invited to a meet and greet in the lower level Youth Lounge
- Meet our wonderful youth group volunteers
- Hear about our plans for small groups and youth group this year

Perks Social

Enjoy a delicious root beer float provided by our Hospitality Team

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWS BY JULIA LIBRIZZI

FAMILY FUN EVENT! Join us after the blessing of the backpacks on August 24 at 1pm in River Oaks Park, 9202 E. Michigan Avenue (M-96), Galesburg. We'll enjoy the splashpad, playground, and have a potluck lunch. Paperware will be available. In addition to swimsuits and towels, please bring drinks for your family and a dish to pass! There is a small fee of \$5 to enter the park.



River Oaks Park Splash Pad

OPEN HOUSE. See the front page for more info on the September 7 open house! We hope you will visit our classroom (room 206) and meet our rotating Sunday School leaders—Jane Barnes, Lisa Coe, Anne Sheffield, and Joyce Moore—who give so much of their time and creativity to the children in Sunday School. **Sunday School classes begin September 14 after the 10am worship service.**

GODLY PLAY. Almost every Sunday during worship after "A Time for the Child Within Us All," Children 4 years old to 6th grade are invited to participate in their own kind of worship on the 2nd floor in room 200 called "Godly Play." Through the use of stories, manipulatives, and open-ended wondering, Godly Play encourages children to connect with the stories of the Bible and the liturgical practices of the church in a meaningful way. Children will be returned to their family before the closing hymn of worship.

NURSERY CARE. Our Sunday nursery is always available on the 2nd floor in room 208 from 9:45am - 12:15pm. Our caring and trained staff will care for your infant through 4 years old while you attend worship and Sunday School. We are so incredibly grateful for our dedicated nursery staff: Sharon Bunker, Samantha Lee and Debra Linderman!

OFFICE MANAGER POSITION

*** We are hiring! ***

The church is hiring a skilled and organized Office Manager to lead our administrative team and ensure the smooth day-to-day operations of the church. This position plays a vital leadership role, supervising three administrative staff members—the Bookkeeper, Communications Coordinator, and Office Assistant—and co-supervising the Building Hosts. This is a full-time, exempt, salaried position with a requirement to work in-person Monday through Thursday. For a complete job description, visit our website: umc-kzo.org, click the "CONTACT US" tab, and scroll down the page to "JOB OPENINGS."

FALL BOOK STUDY

A six-week book study is being offered on Tuesday mornings from 10-11:30 beginning Sept. 9. Miriam Downey and Nancy Hyde will lead the study of the book, *The Message of Jesus* by Adam Hamilton in the chapel. If you would like to participate, please contact Jan Schoenherr at schoenherrjan@gmail.com to reserve a book.

RECENTLY BAPTIZED IN WORSHIP

Lucas Patrick Nolan, son of Shawna and Patrick Nolan, was baptized on July 6
Leonidis (Leo) Kennedy, son of Ryan and Alicia Kennedy, and grandson of Janine and Jeff Kennedy, was baptized on August 17.

OUR SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF Sally Stevens, who died July 14.

PLEASE KEEP THESE FRIENDS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Judy Aardema
 Wayne Conner
 Nancy Douglas
 Robin Entenman
 Carol Hurley & family
 Jan & Tom Kayser
 Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis
 Judy McClelland
 Ellie Miller
 Mumma Family
 Susan Noble
 Peavler Family
 Anna Rasmussen
 Lois & Jim Richmond
 Hank Rohs
 Mary Lou Sanderson
 Gerry & Tom Schaberg
 Michael Seals
 Carol Shilts
 Barb Skuza
 Sally Stevens Family
 Jacqueline Stilger and family
 Marcia Stobie and family
 Lori Valkema
 Christine VanOstran

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.

SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF THE FIRST WORD

Articles for the next issue of *The First Word* are due on Friday, September 12. Submissions should be emailed to the church office, Kalamazoofumc@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.

ADULT SUNDAY ACADEMY CLASS

Beginning Sept. 14, Rev. John Boley and other retired clergy, will be facilitating a Sunday morning adult Academy Class series entitled, "A Potluck of Hot Potatoes." We invite you to join them in learning with lively discussion of some of the controversial topics of our faith life. All of these Hot Potatoes present different understandings of God and the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and play out heavily in current cultural and political dynamics. (Youth that are not attending confirmation class, are warmly welcomed to join any Academy Class!)

9/14 – Biblical Fundamentalism
 9/21 – Calvinism and Determinism
 9/28 – Atonement Theories
 10/5 – Process Theology
 10/12 – Prosperity Theology
 10/19 – Christian Triumphalism

SPLENDID SUPPERS FOR SEVEN

BY CO-LAY LEADERS MARY WHITTAKER DUNCAN AND VICKEE SEALS

We are launching another round of Splendid Suppers for Seven! We have four hosts who have offered to open their homes beginning in the middle of September and continuing into October. This is a great opportunity to get together with people in our church community that you might not already know. Once again, hosts' names will be kept secret throughout the sign-up. But this time, we are introducing a twist that involves drop boxes and more mystery! Look for the drop boxes and sign-up strips on the Welcome Desk. Choose a date and general location that works for you, and deposit a completed sign-up strip into the slot. Then watch for a postcard in the mail which will include your hosts' name and address and your side dish assignment. We hope you'll join in the fun.

It is bittersweet to announce that my last day as Communications Specialist will be August 28. It's been an honor to return to my old position for a few months and be among you and the worship team. They want to honor me with some cake, so please join me after worship on Sunday, August 31 and say "hello"! - Jennifer Stupica

FILL YOUR SOUL WITH MUSIC

Our church offers a broad array of musical ensembles. Participation will feed your soul and help build relationships in the church. Contact Director of Music, Jacqueline Stilger, jstilger@umc-kzo.org for more info!

Chancel Singers Choir is open to all, and music reading abilities are not required. What is required is a love of singing and the willingness to share that love with others in the choir and the congregation. They rehearse on Thursday evenings from 7:15-9pm.

Handbell Ensemble rehearses on Thursday evenings at 6pm. We are always in need of substitutes and substituting may lead to a permanent position if desired. Handbell ringing experience is not a requirement as we look forward to teaching others to ring. Music reading ability is required. The ensemble rings about once a month at the 10am service.

First Beats is our children's musical ensemble. Children in grades 3-8 can participate in this ensemble that sings, rings, plays percussion instruments, and presents musicals. First Beats rehearse on Tuesday from 4:15-5:30pm and often sing on the third Sunday/month.

First Bells is open to all children ages 3 and up. They play in worship about every six weeks. They rehearse during the Sunday School hour and only need to recognize colors in order to participate. Our worship is enlivened and enriched by our youngest members!

First Strings is an ensemble that plays during worship about four times a year. This group of orchestral string players play music that inspires and enhances the worship service. If you play violin, viola, cello, or bass, then this group is for you. Please contact First Strings Director Anne Sherfield at arscello.aol.com if interested.

DOWNTOWN CHURCHES PICNIC, SEPT 21

Come to an all-church picnic in Bronson Park on Sunday, Sept. 21 from 11:30am-2pm! Food trucks will be available to purchase lunch or you are welcome to bring lunch from home. There will be live music! This event aims to bring the downtown church communities an opportunity to build relationships. This event is sponsored by Taking Root, an ecumenical collaborate of young adults from downtown Kalamazoo churches. For more info on this event or Taking Root, contact Rev. Matt Weiler.

THANK YOU! Our annual Free Store was a huge success. Wesley Hall was PACKED with items to give away to our community. We thank everyone who donated, helped with set up, bagged "purchases," cooked hotdogs, and also the big job of cleaning up the day after. Well done, First Church!

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO FINANCIAL UPDATE

	2023	2024	Month Ending 7/31/25	Year to Date 7/31/25	2025 Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget
TOTAL INCOME	1,155,208	1,053,747	107,981	748,352	1,152,334	64.94%
TOTAL EXPENSE	1,118,942	1,166,950	89,257	625,787	1,202,200	52.05%
EXCESS / (DEFICIT)	36,266	(113,203)	18,724	122,565	(49,866)	

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

BY REV. MATT WEILER

SEPTEMBER 7 | REJOICE SUNDAY!

Following worship, all youth and parents are invited to come down to the youth lounge for a meet and greet open house and to hear about our plans for youth group in the coming year. Meet our wonderful youth group volunteers, hear about our plans for small groups, learn about this fall's Wesley Woods Retreat, and complete the ever-important release and liability waivers!

On the evening of September 7, Youth Group will kick-off with a special potluck and night of games at Fray's Park (1006 Piccadilly Rd, Kalamazoo). Youth can meet up at the north end of the park at 6pm. Bring a dish to share, and plan on playing and maybe getting a little bit wet. We'll end at 7:30pm. The following week, September 14, we will begin our weekly evening meetings in the Youth Lounge from 6-7:30pm. Pastor Matt sends weekly communications about our youth ministries. If you would like to be on the mailing list, email Pastor Matt at mweiler@umc-kzo.org.

YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE

Sunday evenings from 6-7:30pm

September 7 @ Fray's Park

Potluck and Games

September 14 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Getting to know our small groups and leaders.
Snacks and Games

September 21 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Small Groups - Three Big Questions

September 28 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Sharing a Meal and Games!

October 5 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Small Groups - Three Big Questions

October 12 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Small Groups - Three Big Questions

October 19 @ FUMC Youth Lounge

Skeletour and Food

October 24-26 @ Wesley Woods Camp

Annual Fall Retreat with Portage Chapel Hill

MANNA: YOUNG ADULTS MINISTRY

BY RUTH BUTTERS, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT RESIDENT

Manna is a ministry for young adults that meets each Tuesday evening at 6:30pm in the lower level of the church. Outside of Tuesdays, we have outings or special gatherings about once a month including nature walks, kayaking, gardening, and potluck meals. We also love Capri Suns. We use our time together to be joyful, deepen relationships with each other, and grow in our faith. In the Bible, Manna represents God arriving to a people who were yet discovering who they were and teaching them how to live and be together. Our group is like Manna, because our community keeps us nourished and growing. To join or for more information, contact Ruth Butters, Youth and Young Adult Resident, at RuthTButters@gmail.com.



ANOTHER WONDERFUL ASP WEEK

BY REV. MATT WEILER

This summer, First UMC sent 32 youth and adults along with another 13 youth and adults from Portage Chapel Hill to Johnson County, TN for another wonderful experience with Appalachia Service Project.

We built ramps, painted ceilings, poured concrete, and hung siding. We experienced some local bluegrass music (Pastor Matt even stood in with the band for a few songs), ate lots of ice cream from a local country store, and overall had a deeply enriching time together. This year's theme was "Be the Light." Throughout the week we reminded ourselves that through our work we were being the Light of Christ for our new friends in Appalachia.

Trips like these are possible only by the generosity of prayers and financial gifts from this congregation. Thank you, as always, for your kind support and constant uplifting of youth ministries at First UMC. Be sure to join us in worship on September 21st as we tell the stories of Appalachia in worship and collect an offering for next year's trip!

ADULT MISSION TRIP, OCT 2-5, 2025

Join us on a mission trip to Detroit, October 2-5. This is our second year of working with Cass Community Social Services, a Detroit-based agency that helps to provide food, housing, health/mental health services, and job programs in areas of concentrated poverty. There are many ways that volunteers can be used for the weekend. No special skills required! Cost is only \$90 for the long weekend (we'll stay in Cass Community UMC's basement and they provide meals. For questions or to sign up, please contact Dan Duncan (616) 502-5092, or danduncan56@gmail.com.